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The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up

V. I. Lenin

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Issue No. 2 of the *Herald* (*Vorbote* No. 2, April 1916), the Marxist journal of the Zimmerwald Left, published theses for and against the self-determination of nations, signed by the Editorial Board of our Central Organ, *Sotsial-Demokrat*, and by the Editorial Board of the organ of the Polish Social-Democratic opposition, *Gazeta Robotnicza*. Above the reader will find a reprint of the former and a translation of the latter theses. This is practically the first time that the question has been presented so extensively in the international field: it was raised only in respect of Poland in the discussion carried on in the German Marxist journal *Neue Zeit* twenty years ago, 1895–96, before the London International Socialist Congress of 1896, by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky and the Polish “independents” (champions of the independence of Poland, the Polish Socialist Party), who represented three different views. [see The Rights of Nations to Self-Determination] Since then, as far as we know, the question of self-determination has been discussed at all systematically only by the Dutch and the Poles. Let us hope that the *Herald* will succeed in promoting the discussion of this question, so urgent today, among the British, Americans, French, Germans and Italians. Official socialism, represented both by direct supporters of “their own” governments, the Plekhanovs, Davids and Co., and the undercover defenders of opportunism, the Kautskyites (among them Axelrod, Martov, Chkheidze and others), has told so many lies on this question that for a long time there will inevitably be efforts, on the one hand, to maintain silence and evade the issue, and, on the other, workers’ demands for “direct answers” to these “accursed questions”. We shall try to keep our readers informed of the struggle between the trends: among socialists abroad.

This question is of specific importance to us Russian Social-Democrats; the present discussion is a continuation of the one that took place in 1903 and 1913; during the war this question has been the cause of some wavering in the thinking of Party members: it has been made more acute by the trickery of such prominent leaders of the Gvozdyov or chauvinist

workers’ party as Martov and Chkheidze, in their efforts to evade the substance of the problem. It is essential, therefore, to sum up at least the initial results of the discussion that has been started in the international field.

It will be seen from the theses that our Polish comrades provide us with a direct answer to some of our arguments, for example, on Marxism and Proudhonism. In most cases, however, they do not answer us directly but indirectly, by opposing *their* assertions to ours. Let us examine both their direct and indirect answers.

1. Socialism and the Self-Determination of Nations

We have affirmed that it would be a betrayal of socialism to refuse to implement the self-determination of nations under socialism. We are told in reply that “the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society”. The difference is a radical one. Where does it stem from?

“We know,” runs our opponents’ reasoning, “that socialism will abolish every kind of national oppression since it abolishes the class interests that lead to it....” What has this argument about the *economic* prerequisites for the abolition of national oppression, which are very well known and undisputed, to do with a discussion of *one* of the forms of *political* oppression, namely, the forcible retention of one nation within the state frontiers of another? This is nothing but an attempt to evade political questions! And subsequent arguments further convince us *that* our judgement is right: “We have no reason to believe that in a socialist society, the nation will exist as an economic and political unit. It will in all probability assume the character of a cultural and linguistic unit only, because the territorial division of a socialist cultural zone, if practised at all, can be made only according to the needs of production and, furthermore, the question of such a division will naturally not be decided by individual nations alone and in possession of full sovereignty [as is required by “the right to self-determination”], but will be *determined*

jointly by all the citizens concerned....”

Our Polish comrades like this last argument, on *joint* determination instead of *self-determination*, so much that they repeat it *three times* in their theses! Frequency of repetition, however, does not turn this Octobrist and reactionary argument into a Social-Democratic argument. All reactionaries and bourgeois grant to nations forcibly retained within the frontiers of a given state the right to “determine jointly” their fate in a common parliament. Wilhelm II also gives the Belgians the right to “determine jointly” the fate of the German Empire in a common German parliament.

Our opponents try to evade precisely the point at issue. The only one that is up for discussion—the right to secede. This would be funny if it were not so tragic!

Our very first thesis said that the liberation of oppressed nations implies a dual transformation in the political sphere: (1) the full equality of nations. This is not disputed and applies only to what takes place within the state; (2) freedom of political separation. This refers to the demarcation of state frontiers. This *only* is disputed. But it is precisely this that our opponents remain silent about. They do not want to think either about state frontiers or even about the states as such. This is a sort of “imperialist Economism” like the old Economism of 1894–1902, which argued in this way: capitalism is victorious, *therefore* political questions are a waste of time. Imperialism is victorious, *therefore* political *questions* are a waste of time! Such an apolitical theory is extremely harmful to Marxism.

In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx wrote: “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.” Up to now this truth has been indisputable for socialists and it includes the recognition of the fact that the *state* will exist until victorious socialism develops into full communism. Engels’s dictum about the *withering away* of the state is well known. We deliberately stressed, in the first thesis, that democracy is a form of state that will also wither away when the state withers away. And until our opponents replace Marxism by some sort of “non-state” viewpoint their arguments will constitute one big mistake.

Instead of speaking about the state (which *means*,

about the demarcation of its *frontiers*!), they speak of a “socialist cultural zone”, i.e., they deliberately choose an expression that is indefinite in the sense that all state questions are obliterated! Thus we get a ridiculous tautology: if there is no state there can, of course, be no question of frontiers. In that case the *whole* democratic-political programme is unnecessary. Nor will there be any republic, when the state “withers away”.

The German chauvinist Lensch, in the articles we mentioned in Thesis 5 (footnote), quoted an interesting passage from Engels’s article “The Po and the Rhine”. Amongst other things, Engels says in this article *that* in the course of historical development, which swallowed up a number of small and non-viable nations, the “frontiers of great and viable European nations” were being increasingly determined by the “language and sympathies” of the population. Engels calls these frontiers “*natural*”. Such was the case in the period of progressive capitalism in Europe, roughly from 1848 to 1871. Today, these democratically determined frontiers are more and more often being *broken down* by reactionary, imperialist capitalism. There is every sign that imperialism will leave its successor, socialism, a heritage of *less* democratic frontiers, a number: of *annexations* in Europe and in other parts of the world. Is it to be supposed that victorious socialism, restoring and implementing full democracy all along the line, *will* refrain from *democratically* demarcating state frontiers and ignore the “sympathies” of the population? Those questions need only be stated to make it quite clear that our Polish colleagues are sliding down from Marxism towards imperialist Economism.

The old Economists, who made a caricature of Marxism, told the workers that “only the economic” was of importance to Marxists. The new Economists seem to think either that the democratic state of victorious socialism will exist without frontiers (like a “complex of sensations” without matter) or that frontiers will be delineated “only” in accordance with the needs of production. In actual fact its frontiers will be delineated democratically, i.e., in accordance with the will and “sympathies” of the population. Capitalism rides roughshod over these sympathies, adding more obstacles to the rapprochement of nations. Socialism, by organising production *without* class oppression, by ensuring the well-being of *all* members of the state, gives *full play* to the “sympathies” of the population, thereby promoting and greatly

accelerating the drawing together and fusion of the nations.

To give the reader a rest from the heavy and clumsy Economism let us quote the reasoning of a socialist writer who is outside our dispute. That writer is Otto Bauer, who also has his own “pet little point”—“cultural and national autonomy”—but who argues quite correctly on a large number of most important questions. For example, in Chapter 29 of his book *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, he was doubly right in noting the use of national ideology to cover up *imperialist* policies. In Chapter 30, “Socialism and the Principle of Nationality”, he says:

“The socialist community will never be able to include whole nations within its make-up by the use of force. Imagine the masses of the people, enjoying the blessings of national culture, baking a full and active part in legislation and government, and, finally, supplied with arms—would it be possible to subordinate such a nation to the rule of an alien social organism by force? All state power rests on the force of arms. The present-day people’s army, thanks to an ingenious mechanism, still constitutes a tool in the hands of a definite person, family or class exactly like the knightly and mercenary armies of the past. The army of the democratic community of a socialist society is nothing but the people armed, since it consists of highly cultured persons, working without compulsion in socialised workshops and taking full part in all spheres of political life. In such conditions any possibility of alien rule disappears.”

This is true. It is *impossible* to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this *requires* the abolition of classes, i.e., the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation—socialist production—is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but this foundation must *also* carry a democratically organised state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes *reality* “only”—“only”!—with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the “sympathies” of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the *practical* elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated

drawing together and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state *withers away*. This is the Marxist theory, the theory from which our Polish colleagues have mistakenly departed.

2. Is Democracy “Practicable” Under Imperialism

The old polemic conducted by Polish Social-Democrats against the self-determination of nations is based entirely on the argument that it is “impracticable” under capitalism. As long ago as 1903 we, the *Iskra* supporters, laughed at this argument in the Programme Commission of the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. and said that it was repetition of the distortion of Marxism preached by the (late lamented) Economists. In our theses we dealt with this error in particular detail and it is precisely on this point, which contains the theoretical kernel of the whole dispute, that the Polish comrades did not wish to (or could not?) answer *any* of our arguments.

To prove the economic impossibility of self-determination would require an economic analysis such as that used to prove the impracticability of prohibiting machines or introducing labour-money, etc. No one has even attempted to make such an analysis. No one will maintain that it has been possible to introduce “labour-money” under capitalism “by way of exception” in even one country, in the way it was possible for one small country to realise this impracticable self-determination, even without war or revolution, “by way of exception”, in the era of the most rabid imperialism (Norway, 1905).

In general, political democracy is merely one of the possible *forms* of superstructure *above* capitalism (although it is theoretically the normal one for “pure” capitalism). The facts show that both capitalism and imperialism develop within the framework of *any* political form and subordinate them *all*. It is, therefore, a basic theoretical error to speak of the “impracticability” of *one* of the forms and of *one* of the demands of democracy.

The absence of an answer to these arguments from our Polish colleagues compels us to consider the discussion closed on this point. To make it graphic, so to say, we made the very concrete assertion that it would be “ridiculous” to deny the “practicability” of the restoration of Poland today, making it dependent on the strategic and other aspects of the present war. No reply was forthcoming!

The Polish comrades simply *repeated* an obviously

incorrect assertion (§ II, 1), saying that “in questions of the annexation of foreign territories, forms of political democracy are pushed aside; sheer force is decisive.... Capital will never allow the people to decide the question of their state frontiers...” As though “capital” could “allow the people” to select *its* civil servants, the servants of imperialism! Or as though weighty decisions on important democratic questions, such as the *establishment* of a republic in place of a monarchy, or a militia in place of a regular army, were, *in general*, conceivable without “sheer force”. Subjectively, the Polish comrades want to make Marxism “more profound” but they are doing it altogether unsuccessfully. *Objectively*, their phrases about impracticability are opportunism, because their tacit assumption is: this is “impracticable” *without* a series of revolutions, in the same way as democracy *as a whole*, *all* its demands taken together, is impracticable under imperialism.

Once only, at the very end of §II, 1, in the discussion on Alsace, our Polish colleagues abandoned the position of imperialist Economism and approached the question of one of the forms of democracy with a concrete answer and not with general references to the “economic”. And it was precisely this approach that was wrong! It would, they wrote, be “particularist, undemocratic” if *some* Alsatians, without asking the French, were to “impose” on them a union with Alsace, although part of Alsace was German-oriented and this threatened war!!! The confusion is amusing: self-determination presumes (this is in itself clear, and we have given it special emphasis in our theses) freedom to *separate* from the oppressor state; but the fact that *union* with a state presumes the consent of *that state* is something that is “not customarily” mentioned in politics any more than the “consent” of a capitalist to receive profit or of a worker *to* receive wages is mentioned in economics! It is ridiculous even to speak of such a thing.

If one wants to be a Marxist politician, one should, in speaking of Alsace, attack the German socialist scoundrels for not fighting for Alsace’s freedom to *secede* and attack the French socialist scoundrels for making their peace with the French bourgeoisie who want to annex the whole of Alsace by force—and both of them for serving the imperialism of “their own” country and for fearing a separate state, even if only a little one—the thing is to show *how* the socialists who recognize self-determination would solve the problem in a few weeks without going against

the will of the Alsatians. To argue, instead, about the horrible danger of the French Alsatians “forcing” themselves on France is a real pearl.

3. What Is Annexation?

We raised this question in a most definite manner in our theses (Section 7). The Polish comrades did *not* reply to it: they evaded it, insisting (1) that they are against annexations and explaining (2) why they are against them. It is true that these are very important questions. But they are questions of *another kind*. If we want our principles to be theoretically sound at all, if we want them to be clearly and precisely formulated, we cannot *evade* the *question* of what an annexation is, since this concept is used in our political *propaganda* and agitation. The evasion of the question in a discussion between colleagues cannot be interpreted as anything but *desertion* of one’s position.

Why have we raised this question? We explained this when we raised it. It is because “a protest against annexations is nothing but recognition of the right to Self-determination”. The concept of annexation usually includes: (1) the concept of force (joining by means of force); (2) the concept of oppression by another nation (the joining of “*alien*” regions, etc.), and, sometimes (3) the concept of violation of the *status quo*. We pointed this out in the theses and this did not meet with any criticism.

Can Social-Democrats be against the use of force in general, it may be asked? Obviously not. This means that we are against annexations not because they *constitute* force, but for some other reason. Nor can the Social-Democrats be for the *status quo*. However you may twist and turn, annexation is *violation of the self-determination* of a nation, it is the establishment of state *frontiers contrary to the will* of the population.

To be against annexations *means* to be in favor of the right to self-determination. To be “against the forcible retention of any nation within the frontiers of a given state” (we deliberately employed this slightly changed formulation of the same idea in Section 4 of our theses, and the Polish comrades *answered us* with *complete* clarity at the beginning of their § I, 4, *that* they “are against the forcible retention of oppressed nations *within* the frontiers of the annexing state”)—is *the same* as being in favour of the self-determination of nations.

We do not want to haggle over words. If there is a party that says in its programme (or in a resolution

binding on all the form does not matter) that it is against annexations, against the forcible retention of oppressed nations within the frontiers of *its state*, we declare our complete agreement in principle with that party. It would be absurd to insist on the word “self-determination”. And if there are people in our Party *who want to change words* in this spirit, who want to amend Clause 9 of our Party Programme, we should consider our differences with *such* comrades to be anything but a matter of principle!

The only thing that matter is political clarity and theoretical soundness of our slogans.

In verbal discussions on this question—the importance of which nobody will deny, especially now, in view of the war—we have met the following argument (we have not come across it in the press): *a protest against* a known evil does not necessarily mean recognition of a positive concept that precludes the evil. This is obviously an unfounded argument and, apparently, as such has not been reproduced in the press. If a socialist party declares that it is “against the forcible retention of an oppressed nation within the frontiers of the annexing state”, it is *thereby committed to renounce retention by force* when it comes to power.

We do not for one moment doubt that if Hindenburg were to accomplish the semi-conquest of Russia tomorrow and this semi-conquest were to be expressed by the appearance of a new Polish state (in connection *with* the desire of Britain and France to weaken tsarism somewhat), something that is quite “practicable” from the standpoint of the economic laws of capitalism and imperialism, and if, the day after tomorrow, the socialist revolution were to be victorious in Petrograd, Berlin and Warsaw, the Polish socialist government, like the Russian and German socialist governments, *would* renounce the “forcible retention” of, say, the Ukrainians, “within the frontiers of the Polish state”. If there were members of the *Gazeta Robotnicza* Editorial Board in that government they would no doubt sacrifice their “theses”, thereby disproving the “theory” that “the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society”. If we thought otherwise we should not put a comradely discussion with the Polish Social-Democrats on the agenda but would rather conduct a ruthless struggle against them as chauvinists.

Suppose I were to go out into the streets of any European city and make a public “protest”, which I then published in the press, against my not being permit-

ted to purchase a man as a slave. There is no doubt that people would have the right to regard me as a slave-owner, a champion of the principle, or system, if you like of slavery. No one would be fooled by the fact that my sympathies with slavery were expressed in the negative form of a protest and not in a positive form (“I am for slavery”). A political “protest” is *quite* the equivalent of a political programme; this is so obvious that one feels rather awkward at having to explain it. In any case, we are firmly convinced that on the part of the Zimmerwald Left, at any rate—we do not speak of the Zimmerwald group as a whole since it contains Martov and other Kautskyites—we shall not meet with any “protest” if we say that in the Third International there will be no place for people capable of separating a political protest from a political programme, of counterpoising the one to the other, etc.

Not wishing to haggle over words, we take the liberty of expressing the sincere hope that the Polish Social-Democrats will try soon to formulate, officially, their proposal to delete Clause 9 from our Party Programme (which is also *theirs*) and also from the Programme of the International (the resolution of the 1896 London Congress), as well as *their own* definition of the relevant political concepts of “old and new annexations” and of “the forcible retention of an oppressed nation within the frontiers of the annexing state”.

Let us now turn to the next question.

4. For or Against Annexations?

In § 3 of Part One of their theses the Polish comrades declare very definitely that they are against any kind of annexation. Unfortunately, in § 4 of the same part we find an assertion that must be considered annexationist. It opens with the following ... how can it be put more delicately? ... the following strange phrase:

“The starting-point of Social-Democracy’s struggle against annexations, against the forcible retention of oppressed nations within the frontiers of the annexing state is *renunciation of any defence of the fatherland* [the authors’ italics], which, in the era of imperialism, is defence of the rights of one’s own bourgeoisie to oppress and plunder foreign peoples....”

What’s this? How is it put?

“The starting-point of the struggle against annexations is renunciation of *any* defence of the

fatherland....” But ally national war and any national revolt can be called “defence of the fatherland” and, until now, has been *generally* recognised as such! We are against annotations, *but...* we mean by this that we are against the annexed waging a war *for* their liberation from those who have annexed them, that we are against the annexed revolting to liberate themselves from those who have annexed them! Isn’t that an annexationist declaration?

The authors of the theses motivate their... strange assertion by saying that “in the era of imperialism” defence of the fatherland amounts to defence of the right of one’s own bourgeoisie to oppress foreign peoples. This, however, is true *only* in respect of all imperialist war, i.e., in respect of a war *between* imperialist powers or groups of powers, when *both* belligerents not only oppress “foreign peoples” but are fighting a war to *decide* who shall have a *greater share* in oppressing foreign peoples!

The authors seem to present the question of “defence of the fatherland” very differently from the way it is presented by our Party. We renounce “defence of the fatherland” in an *imperialist* war. This is said as clearly as it can be in the Manifesto of our Party’s Central Committee and in the Berne resolutions reprinted in the pamphlet *Socialism and War*, which has been published both in German and French. We stressed this twice in our theses (footnotes to Sections 4 and 6). The authors of the Polish theses seem to renounce defence of *the fatherland in general*, i.e., *for a national war as well*, believing, perhaps, that in the “era of imperialism” national wars *are impossible*. We say “perhaps” because the Polish comrades have *not* expressed this view in their theses.

Such a view is clearly expressed in the theses of the German *internationale* group and in the Junius pamphlet which is dealt with in a special article. In addition to what is said there, let us note that the national revolt of an annexed region or country against the annexing country may be called precisely a revolt and not a war (we have heard this objection made and, therefore, cite it here, *although* we do not think this terminological dispute a serious one). in any case, hardly anybody would risk denying that annexed Belgium, Serbia, Galicia and Armenia would call their “revolt” against those who annexed them “defence of the fatherland” *and would do so in all justice*. It looks as if the Polish comrades are *against* this type of revolt on the grounds that there is *also* a bourgeoisie in these annexed countries which

also oppresses foreign peoples or, more exactly, could oppress them, since the question is one of the “*right to oppress*”. Consequently, the given war or revolt is not assessed on the strength of its *real* social content (the struggle of an oppressed nation for its liberation from the oppressor nation) but the possible exercise of the “*right to oppress*” by a bourgeoisie which is at present itself oppressed. If Belgium, let us say, is annexed by Germany in 1917, and in 1918 revolts to secure her liberation, the Polish comrades will be against her revolt on the grounds that the Belgian bourgeoisie possess “the right to oppress foreign peoples”!

There is nothing Marxist or even revolutionary in this argument. If we do not want to betray socialism we *must* support every revolt against our chief enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states, provided it is not the revolt of a reactionary class. By refusing to support the revolt of annexed regions we become, objectively, annexationists. It is precisely in the “era of imperialism”, which is the era of nascent social revolution, that the proletariat will today give especially vigorous support to any revolt of the annexed regions so that tomorrow, or simultaneously, it may attack the bourgeoisie of the “great” power that is weakened by the revolt.

The Polish comrades, however, go further in their annexationism. They are not only against any revolt by the annexed regions; they are against *any* restoration of their independence, even a peaceful one! Listen to this:

“Social-Democracy, rejecting all responsibility for the consequences of the policy of oppression pursued by imperialism, and conducting the sharpest struggle against them, *does not by any means favour the erection of new frontier posts in Europe or the re-erection of those swept away by imperialism*” (the authors’ italics).

Today “imperialism has swept away the frontier posts” between Germany and Belgium and between Russia and Galicia. International Social-Democracy, if you please, ought to be against their re-erection in general, whatever the means. In 1905, “in the era of imperialism”, when Norway’s autonomous Diet proclaimed her secession from Sweden, and Sweden’s war against Norway, as preached by the Swedish reactionaries, did not take place, what with the resistance of the Swedish workers and the international imperialist situation—Social-Democracy ought to have been against Norway’s secession, since

it undoubtedly meant “the erection of now frontier posts in Europe”!!

This is downright annexationism. There is no need to refute it because it refutes itself. No socialist party would risk taking this stand: “We oppose annexations in general but we sanction annexations for Europe or tolerate them once they have been made”....

We need deal only with the theoretical sources of the error that has led our Polish comrades to such a patent... “impossibility”. We shall say further on why there is no reason to make exceptions for “Europe”. The following two phrases from the theses will explain the other sources of the error:

“Wherever the wheel of imperialism has rolled over and crushed an already formed capitalist state, the political and economic concentration of the capitalist world, paving the way for socialism, takes place in the brutal form of imperialist oppression....”

This justification of annexations is not Marxism but Struveism. Russian Social-Democrats who remember the 1890s in Russia have a good knowledge of this manner of distorting Marxism, which is common to Struve, Cunow, Legien and Co. In another of the theses (II, 3) of the Polish comrades we read the following, specifically about the German Struveists, the so-called “social-imperialists”:

(The slogan of self-determination) “provides the social-imperialists with an opportunity, by demonstrating the illusory nature of that slogan, to represent our struggle against national oppression as historically unfounded sentimentality, thereby undermining the faith of the proletariat in the scientific validity of the Social-Democratic programme....”

This means that the authors consider the position of the German Struveists “scientific”! Our congratulations.

One “trifle”, however, brings down this amazing argument which threatens to show that the Lensches, Cunows and Parvuses are *right* in comparison to us: it is that the Lensches are consistent people in their own way and in issue No. 8-9 of the chauvinist German *Glocke*—we deliberately quoted it in our theses—Lensch demonstrates *simultaneously* both the “scientific invalidity” of the self-determination slogan (the Polish Social-Democrats apparently believe that *this* argument of Lensch’s is irrefutable, as can be seen from their arguments in the theses we have quoted) *and* the “scientific invalidity” of the slogan against annexations!!

For Lensch had an excellent understanding of that

simple truth which we pointed out to those Polish colleagues who showed no desire to reply to our statement: there is no difference “either political or economic”, or even logical, between the “recognition” of self-determination and the “protest” against annexations. If the Polish comrades regard the arguments of the Lensches against self-determination to be irrefutable, there is one *fact* that has to be accepted: the Lensches also use *all* these arguments to oppose the struggle against annexations.

The theoretical error that underlies all the arguments of our Polish colleagues has led them to the point of becoming *inconsistent annexationists*.

5. Why Are Social-Democrats Against Annexations?

In our view the answer is obvious: because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression.

In the view of the Polish Social-Democrats there have to be *special* explanations of why we are against annexations, and it is these (I, 3 in the theses) that inevitably enmesh the authors in a further series of contradictions.

They produce two reasons to “justify” our opposition to annexations (the “scientifically valid” arguments of the Lensches notwithstanding):

First: “To the assertion that annexations in Europe are essential for the military security of a victorious imperialist state, the Social-Democrats counterpose the fact that annexations only serve to sharpen antagonisms, thereby increasing the danger of war....”

This is an inadequate reply to the Lensches because their chief argument is not that annexations are a military necessity but that they are *economically* progressive and under imperialism mean concentration. Where is the logic if the Polish Social-Democrats in the same breath recognise the progressive nature of *such* a concentration, refusing to re-erect frontier posts in Europe that have been swept away by imperialism, and protest *against* annexations?

Furthermore, the danger of *what* wars is increased by annexations? Not imperialist wars, because they have other causes: the chief antagonisms in the present imperialist war are undoubtedly those between Germany and Britain, and between Germany and Russia. These antagonisms have nothing to do with annexations. It is the danger of *national* wars and national revolts that is increased. But how can one declare national wars to be *impossible* in “the era of

imperialism”, on the one hand, and then speak of the “danger” of national wars, on the other? This is not logical.

The second argument: Annexations “create a gulf between the proletariat of the ruling nation and that of the oppressed nation... the proletariat of the oppressed nation would unite with its bourgeoisie and regard the proletariat of the ruling nation as its enemy. Instead of the proletariat waging an international class struggle against the international bourgeoisie it would be split and ideologically corrupted...”

We fully agree with these arguments. But is it logical to put forward simultaneously two arguments on the same question *which* cancel each other out. In § 3 of the first part of the theses we find the above arguments that regard annexations as causing a *split* in the proletariat, and next to it, in § 4, we are told that we must oppose the annulment of annexations already effected in Europe and favour “the education of the working masses of the oppressed and the oppressor nations in a spirit of solidarity in struggle”. If the annulment of annexations is reactionary “sentimentality”, annexations *must not* be said to create a “gulf” between sections of the “proletariat” and cause a “split”, but should, on the contrary, be regarded as a condition for the *bringing together* of the proletariat of different nations.

We say: In order that we may have the strength to accomplish the socialist revolution and overthrow the bourgeoisie, the workers must unite more closely and this close union is promoted by the struggle for self-determination, i.e., the struggle against annexations. We are consistent. But the Polish comrades who say that European annexations are “non-annullable” and national wars, “impossible”, defeat themselves by contending “against” annexations with the use of arguments *about* national wars! These arguments are to the effect that annexations *hamper* the drawing together and fusion of workers of different nations!

In other words, the Polish Social-Democrats, in order to contend against annexations, have to draw for arguments on the theoretical stock *they themselves* reject in principle.

The question of colonies makes this even more obvious.

6. Is it Right to Contrast “Europe” With the Colonies in the Present Question?

Our theses say that the demand for the immediate

liberation of the colonies is as “impracticable” (that is, it cannot be effected without a number of revolutions and is not stable without socialism) under capitalism as the self-determination of nations, the election of civil servants by the people, the democratic republic, and so on—and, furthermore, that the demand for the liberation of the colonies is nothing more than “the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination”.

The Polish comrades have not answered a single one of these arguments. They have tried to differentiate between “Europe” and the colonies. For Europe alone they become inconsistent annexationists by refusing to annul any annexations once these have been made. As for the *Colonies*, they demand unconditionally: “Get out of the colonies!”

Russian socialists must put forward the demand: “Get out of Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, etc.”, but, it is alleged, they would be guilty of “utopianism”, “unscientific sentimentality” and so on if they demanded a similar freedom of secession for Poland, Finland, the Ukraine, etc. British socialists must demand: “Get out of Africa, India, Australia”, but not out of Ireland. What are the theoretical grounds for a distinction that is so patently false? This question cannot be evaded.

The chief “ground” of those opposed to self-determination is its “impracticability”. The same idea, with a nuance, is expressed in the reference to “economic and political concentration”.

Obviously, concentration *also* comes about with the annexation of colonies. There was formerly an economic distinction between the colonies and the European peoples—at least, the majority of the latter—the colonies having been drawn into *commodity* exchange but not into capitalist *production*. Imperialism changed this. Imperialism is, among other things, the export of *capital*. Capitalist production is being transplanted to the colonies at an ever increasing rate. They cannot be extricated from dependence on European finance capital. From the military standpoint, as well as from the standpoint of expansion, the separation of the colonies is practicable, as a general rule, only under socialism; under capitalism it is practicable only by way of exception or at the cost of a series of revolts and revolutions both in the colonies and the metropolitan countries.

The greater part of the dependent nations in Europe are capitalistically more developed than the colonies (though not all, the exceptions being the Albanians

and many non-Russian peoples in Russia) But it is just this that generates greater resistance to national oppression and annexations! Precisely because of this, the development of capitalism is *more secure* in Europe under any political conditions, including those of separation, than in the colonies.... “There,” the Polish comrades say about the colonies (I, 4), “capitalism is still confronted *with* the task of developing the productive forces independently....” This is even *more* noticeable in Europe: capitalism is undoubtedly developing the productive forces more vigorously, rapidly and independently in Poland, Finland, the Ukraine and Alsace than in India, Turkestan, Egypt and other straightforward colonies. In a commodity producing society, no independent development, or development of any sort whatsoever, is possible without capital. In Europe the dependent nations have both *their own* capital and easy access to it on a wide range of terms. The colonies have no capital of *their own*, or none to speak of, and under finance capital no colony can obtain any except on terms of political submission. What then, in face of all this, is the significance of the demand to liberate the colonies immediately and unconditionally? Is it not clear that it is more “utopian” in the vulgar, caricature-“Marxist” sense of the word, “utopian”, in the sense in which it is used by the Struves, Lenches, Cunows, with the Polish comrades unfortunately following in their footsteps? Any deviation from the ordinary, the commonplace, as well as everything that is revolutionary, is here labeled “utopianism”. But revolutionary movements of *all* kinds—including national movements—are more possible, more practicable, more stubborn, more conscious and more difficult to defeat in Europe than they are in the colonies.

Socialism, say the Polish comrades (I, 3), “will be able to give the underdeveloped peoples of the colonies *unselfish, cultural aid without ruling over them*”. This is perfectly true. But what grounds are there for supposing that a great nation, a great state that goes over to socialism, will not be able to attract a small, oppressed European *nation* by means of “unselfish cultural aid”? It is the freedom to secede “*granted*” to the colonies by the Polish Social-Democrats that will attract the small but cultured and politically exacting oppressed nations of Europe to union with great socialist states, because under socialism a great state will mean so many hours *less* work a day and so much more *pay* a day. The masses of working people, as

they liberate themselves from the bourgeois yoke, *will gravitate* irresistibly towards union and integration with the great, advanced socialist nations for the sake of that “cultural aid”, provided yesterday’s oppressors do not infringe on the long-oppressed nations’ highly developed democratic feeling of self-respect, and provided they are granted equality in everything, including state construction, that of, experience in organising “their own” state. Under capitalism this “experience” means war, isolation, seclusion, and the narrow egoism of the small privileged nations (Holland, Switzerland). Under socialism the working people themselves will nowhere consent to seclusion merely for the above-mentioned purely economic motives, while the variety of political forms, freedom to secede, and experience in state organisation—there will be all this until the state in all its forms withers away—will be the basis of a prosperous cultured life and an earnest that the nations will draw closer together and integrate at an ever faster pace.

By setting the colonies aside and contrasting them to Europe the Polish comrades step into a contradiction which immediately brings down the whole of their fallacious argument.

7. Marxism or Proudhonism?

By way of an exception, our Polish comrades parry our reference to Marx’s attitude towards the separation of Ireland directly and not indirectly. What is their objection? References to Marx’s position from 1848 to 1871, they say, are “not of the slightest value”. The argument advanced in support of this unusually irate and peremptory assertion is that “at one and the same time” Marx opposed the strivings for independence of the “Czechs, South Slavs. etc.”

The argument is so very irate because it is so very unsound. According to the Polish Marxists, Marx was simply a muddlehead who “in one breath” said contradictory things! This is altogether untrue, and it is certainly not Marxism. It is precisely the demand for “concrete” analysis, which our Polish comrades insist on, *but do not themselves apply*, that makes it necessary for us to investigate whether Marx’s different attitudes towards different concrete “national” movements did not spring from *one and the same* socialist outlook.

Marx is *known* to have favoured Polish independence in the interests of *European* democracy in its struggle against the power and influence—or, it might be said, against the omnipotence and pre-

dominating reactionary influence—of tsarism. *That* this attitude was correct with most clearly and practically demonstrated in 1849, when the Russian serf army crushed the national liberation and revolutionary-democratic rebellion in Hungary. From that time until Man's death, and even later, until 1890, when there was a danger that tsarism, allied with France, would wage a reactionary war against a *non-imperialist* and nationally independent Germany, Engels stood first and foremost for a struggle against tsarism. It was for this reason, and exclusively for this reason, that Marx and Engels were opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and South Slavs. A simple reference to what Marx and Engels wrote in (1848 and 1849) will prove to anyone who is interested in Marxism in real earnest and not merely for the purpose of brushing Marxism aside, that Marx and Engels at *that* time drew a clear and definite *distinction* between “whole reactionary nations” serving as “Russian outposts” in Europe, and “revolutionary nations” namely, the Germans, Poles and Magyars. This is a fact. And it was indicated *at the time with incontrovertible* truth: in 1848 revolutionary nations fought for liberty, whose principal enemy was tsarism, whereas the Czechs, etc., were in fact reactionary nations, and outposts of tsarism.

What is the lesson to be *drawn* from this concrete example which must be analysed *concretely* if there is any desire to be true to Marxism? Only this: (1) that the interests of the liberation of a number of big and very big nations in Europe rate higher than the interests of the movement for liberation of small nations; (2) that the demand for democracy must not be considered in isolation but on a European—today we should say a world—scale.

That is all there is to it. There is no hint of any repudiation of that elementary socialist principle which the Poles forget but to which Marx was *always* faithful—that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations. If the concrete situation which confronted Marx when tsarism dominated international politics were to repeat itself, for instance, in the form of a few nations starting a socialist revolution (as a bourgeois-democratic revolution was started in Europe in 1848), and *other* nations serving as the chief bulwarks of bourgeois reaction—then me too would have to be in favour of a revolutionary war against the latter, in favour of “crushing” them, in favour of destroying all their outposts, no matter what small-nation movements arose in them. Consequently, instead

of rejecting any examples of Marx's tactics—this would mean professing Marxism while abandoning it in practice—we must analyse them concretely and draw invaluable lessons for the future. The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part *may* contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial-monarchist intrigues of other countries; if so, we must *not* support this particular, concrete movement, but it would be ridiculous to delete the demand for a republic from the programme of international Social-Democracy on these grounds.

In what way has the concrete situation changed between the periods of 1848–71 and 1898–1916 (I take the most important landmarks of imperialism as a period: from the Spanish-American imperialist war to the European imperialist war)? Tsarism has manifestly and indisputably ceased to be the chief mainstay of reaction, first, because it is supported by international finance capital, particularly French, and, secondly, because of 1905. At that time the system of big national states—the democracies of Europe—was bringing democracy and socialism to the world in spite of tsarism. Marx and Engels did not live to see the period of imperialism. The system now is a handful of imperialist “Great” Powers (five or six in number), each oppressing other *nations*: and this oppression is a source for artificially retarding the collapse of capitalism, and artificially supporting opportunism and social-chauvinism in the imperialist nations which dominate the world. At that time, West-European democracy, liberating the big nations, was opposed to tsarism, which used certain small-nation movements for reactionary ends. Today, the socialist proletariat, split into chauvinists, “social-imperialists”, on the one hand, and revolutionaries, on the other, is confronted by an *alliance* of tsarist imperialism and advanced capitalist, European, imperialism, which is based on their common oppression of a number of nations.

Such are the concrete changes that have taken place in the situation, and it is just these that; the Polish Social-Democrats ignore, in spite of their promise to be concrete! Hence the concrete change in the *application* of the same socialist principles: *formerly* the main thing was to fight “against tsarism” (and

against certain small-nation movements that *it* was using for undemocratic ends), and for the greater revolutionary peoples of the West; the main thing *today* is to stand against the united, aligned front of the imperialist powers, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the social-imperialists, and *for* the utilisation of all national movements against imperialism for the purposes of the socialist revolution. The *more purely* proletarian the struggle against the general imperialist front now is, the more vital, obviously, is the internationalist principle: “No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations”.

In the name of their doctrinaire concept of social revolution, the Proudhonists ignored the international role of Poland and brushed aside the national movements. Equally doctrinaire is the attitude of the Polish Social-Democrats, who *break up* the international front of struggle against the social-imperialists, and (objectively) help the latter by their vacillations on the question of annexations. For it is precisely the international front of proletarian struggle that has changed in relation to the concrete position of the small nations: at that time (1848–71) the small nations were important as the potential allies either of “Western democracy” and the revolutionary nations, or of tsarism; now (1898–1914) that is no longer so; today they are important as one of the nutritive media of the parasitism and, consequently, the social-imperialism of the “dominant nations”. The important thing is not whether one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of the small nations are liberated before the socialist revolution, but the fact that in the epoch of imperialism, owing to objective causes, the proletariat has been split into two international camps, one of which has been corrupted by the crumbs that fall from the table of the dominant-nation bourgeoisie—obtained, among other things, from the double or triple exploitation of small nations—while the other cannot liberate itself without liberating the small nations. without educating the masses in an anti-chauvinist, i.e., anti-annexationist, i.e., “self-determinationist”, spirit.

This, the most important aspect of the question, is ignored by our Polish comrades, who do *not* view things from the key *position* in the epoch of imperialism, the standpoint of the division of the international proletariat into two camps.

Here are some other concrete examples of their Proudhonism: (1) their attitude to the Irish rebellion of 1916, of which later: (2) the declaration in the

theses (11, 3, end of § 3) that the slogan of socialist revolution “must not be overshadowed by anything”. The idea that the slogan of socialist revolution can be “overshadowed” by *linking* it up with a consistently revolutionary position on all questions, including the national question, is certainly profoundly anti-Marxist.

The Polish Social-Democrats consider our programme “national-reformist”. Compare these two practical proposals: (1) for autonomy (Polish theses, III, 4), and (2) for freedom to secede. It is in this, and in this alone, that our programmes differ! And is it not clear that it is precisely the first programme that is reformist and not the second? A reformist change is one which leaves intact the foundations of the power of the ruling class and is merely a concession leaving its power *unimpaired*. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power. A reformist national programme does *not* abolish *all* the privileges of the ruling nation; it does *not* establish complete equality; it does *not* abolish national oppression *in all its forms*. An “autonomous” nation does not enjoy rights equal to those of the “ruling” nation; our Polish comrades could not have failed to notice this had they not (like our old Economists) obstinately avoided making an analysis of *political* concepts and categories. Until 1905 autonomous Norway, as a part of Sweden, enjoyed the widest autonomy, but she was not Sweden’s equal. Only by her free secession was her equality manifested *in practice* and proved (and let us add in parenthesis that: it was this free secession that created the basis for a more intimate and more democratic association, founded on equality of rights). As long as Norway was merely autonomous, the Swedish aristocracy had one additional privileges; and secession did not “mitigate” this privilege (the essence of reformism lies in *mitigating* an evil and not in destroying it), but *eliminated* it *altogether* (the principal criterion of the revolutionary character of a programme).

Incidentally, autonomy, as a reform, differs in principle from freedom to Recede, as a revolutionary measure. This is unquestionable. But as everyone knows, in practice a reform is often merely a step towards revolution. It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation, to gather, assess and organise its forces, and to select the most opportune moment for a *declaration* ... in the “Norwegian” spirit: We, the autonomous diet of such-and-such a

nation, or of such-and-such a *territory*, declare that the Emperor of all the Russias has ceased to be King of Poland, etc. The usual “objection” to this is that such questions are decided by wars and not by declarations. True: in the vast majority of cases they are decided by wars (just as questions of the form of government of big states are decided, in the vast majority of cases, only by wars and revolutions). However, it would do no harm to reflect whether *such* an “objection” to the political programme of a revolutionary party is logical. Are we opposed to wars and revolutions *for* what is just and beneficial to the proletariat, *for* democracy and socialism?

“But we cannot be in favour of a war between great nations, in favour of the slaughter of twenty million people for the sake of the problematical liberation of a small nation with a population of perhaps ten or twenty millions!” Of course not! And it does not mean that we throw complete national equality out of our Programme; it means that the democratic interests of one country must be subordinated to the democratic interests of *several and all* countries. Let us assume that between two great monarchies there is a little monarchy whose kinklet is “hound” by blood and other ties to the monarchs of both neighbouring countries. Let us further assume that the declaration of a republic in the little country and the expulsion of *its* monarch would in practice lead to a war between the two neighbouring big countries for the restoration of that or another monarch in the little country. There is no doubt that all international Social-Democracy, as well as the really internationalist section of Social-Democracy in the little country, *would be against substituting a republic for the monarchy* in this case. The substitution of a republic for a monarchy is not an absolute, but one of the democratic demands, subordinate to the interests of democracy (and still more, of course, to those of the socialist proletariat) as a whole. A case like this would in all probability not give rise to the slightest disagreement among Social-Democrats in any country. But if any Social-Democrat were to propose on *these* grounds that the demand for a republic be deleted altogether from the programme of international Social-Democracy, he would certainly be regarded as quite mad. He would be told that after all one must not forget the elementary logical difference between the *general* and the *particular*.

This example brings us, from a somewhat different angle, to the question of the *internationalist* educa-

tion of the working class. Can such education—on the necessity and urgent importance of which differences of opinion among the Zimmerwald Left are inconceivable—be *concretely identical* in great, oppressor nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?

Obviously not. The way to the common goal—complete equality, the closest association and the eventual *amalgamation* of *all* nations—obviously runs along different routes in each concrete case, as, let us say, the way to a point in the centre of this page runs left from one edge and right, from the opposite edge. If a Social-Democrat from a great, oppressing, annexing nation, while advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were for one moment to forget that “his” Nicholas II, “his” Wilhelm, George, Poincare, etc., *also stand* for *amalgamation* with small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II for “amalgamation” with Galicia, Wilhelm II for “amalgamation” with Belgium, etc.—such a Social-Democrat would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be *no* internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Social-Democrat of an oppressor nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the *chance* of secession being possible and “practicable” before *the* introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand.

It is our duty to teach the workers to be “indifferent” to national distinctions. There is no doubt about that. But it must not be the indifference of the *annexationists*. A member of an oppressor nation must be “indifferent” to whether small nations belong to *his* state or to a *neighboring* state, or to themselves, according to where their sympathies lie: without such “indifference” he is *not* a Social-Democrat. To be an internationalist Social-Democrat one must *not* think only of one’s own nation, but place *above it* the interests of all nations, their common liberty and equality. Everyone accepts this in “theory” but displays an annexationist indifference in practice. There is the root of the evil.

On the other hand, a Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula: “voluntary *integration*”

of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *both* the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighboring state of X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest.

People who have not gone into the question thoroughly think that it is “contradictory” for the Social-Democrats of oppressor nations to insist on the “freedom to *secede*”, while Social-Democrats of oppressed nations insist on the “freedom to *integrate*”. However, a little reflection will show that there is not, and cannot be, any *other* road to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road *from the given* situation to this goal.

And now we come to the *specific* position of Dutch and Polish Social-Democrats.

8. The Specific and the General in the Position of the Dutch and Polish Social-Democrat Internationalists

There is not the slightest doubt that the Dutch and Polish Marxists who oppose self-determination are among the best revolutionary and internationalist elements in international Social-Democracy. How *can* it be then that their theoretical arguments as we have seen, are a mass of errors? There is not a single correct general argument, nothing but imperialist Economism!

It is not at all due to the especially bad subjective qualities of the Dutch and Polish comrades but to the *specific* objective conditions in their countries. Both countries are: (1) small and helpless in the present-day “system” of great powers; (2) both are geographically situated between tremendously powerful imperialist plunderers engaged in the most bitter rivalry with each other (Britain and Germany; Germany and Russia); (3) in both there are terribly strong memories and traditions of the times when they *themselves* were great powers: Holland was once a colonial power greater than England, Poland was more cultured and was a stronger great power than Russia and Prussia; (4) to this day both retain their privileges consisting in the oppression of other peoples: the Dutch bourgeois owns the very wealthy Dutch East Indies; the Polish landed proprietor oppresses the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasant; the Polish bourgeois, the Jew, etc.

The particularity comprised in the combination of these four points is not to be found in Ireland, Portugal (she was at one time annexed to Spain), Alsace, Norway, Finland, the Ukraine, the Lettish and Byelorussian territories or many others. And it is this very peculiarity that is the *real essence* of the matter! When the Dutch and Polish Social-Democrats reason against self-determination, using *general arguments*, i.e., those that concern imperialism in general, socialism in general, democracy in general, national oppression in general, we may truly say that they wallow in mistakes. But one has only to discard this obviously erroneous *shell* of general arguments and examine the *essence* of the question from the standpoint of the *specific* conditions obtaining in Holland and Poland for their particular position to become *comprehensible* and quite legitimate. It may be said, without any fear of sounding paradoxical, that when the Dutch and Polish Marxists battle against self-determination they do not say quite what they mean, or, to put it another way, mean quite what they say.

We have already quoted one example in our theses. Gorter is against the self-determination of *his* own country but *in favour* of self-determination for the Dutch East Indies, oppressed as they are by “his” nation! Is it any wonder that we see in him a more sincere internationalist and a fellow-thinker who is closer to us than those who recognise self-determination as verbally and hypocritically as Kautsky in Germany, and Trotsky and Martov in Russia? The general and fundamental principles of Marxism undoubtedly imply the duty to struggle for the freedom to secede for nations that are oppressed by “one’s own” nation, but they certainly do not require the independence specifically of Holland to be made a matter of paramount importance—Holland, which suffers most from her narrow, callous, selfish and stultifying seclusion: let the whole world burn, we stand aside from it all, “we” are satisfied with our old spoils and the rich “left-overs”, the Indies, “we” are not concerned with anything else!

Here is another example. Karl Radek, a Polish Social-Democrat, who has done particularly great service by his determined struggle for internationalism in German Social-Democracy since the outbreak of war, made a furious attack on self-determination in an article entitled “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (*Lichtstrahlen*—Left Radical monthly prohibited by the Prussian censor, edited by J. Borchardt—1915, December 5, Third Year of Pub-

lication, No. 3). He quotes, incidentally, *only* Dutch and Polish authorities in his support and propounds, amongst others, the argument that self-determination fosters the idea that “it is allegedly the duty of Social-Democrats to support any struggle for independence”.

From the standpoint of *general* theory this argument is outrageous, because it is clearly illogical: first, no democratic demand can fail to give rise to abuses, unless the specific is subordinated to the general; we are not obliged to support either “any” struggle for independence or “any” republican or anti-clerical movement. Secondly, no formula for the struggle against national oppression can fail to suffer from the *same* “shortcoming”. Radek himself in *Berner Tagwacht* used the formula (1915, Issue 253): “Against old and new annexations.” Any Polish nationalist will legitimately “deduce” from this formula: “Poland is an annexment, I am against annexations, *i.e.*, I am for the independence of Poland.” Or I recall Rosa Luxemburg saying in an article written in 1908, that the formula: “against national oppression” was quite adequate. But any Polish nationalist would say—and quite justly—that annexation is *one* of the forms of national oppression, *consequently*, etc.

However, bake Poland’s *specific* conditions in place of these general arguments: her independence *today* is “impracticable” without wars or revolutions. To be in favour of an all-European war merely for the sake of restoring Poland is to be a nationalist of the worst sort, and to place the interests of a small number of Poles above those of the hundreds of millions of people who suffer from war. Such, indeed, are the “Fracy” (the Right wing of the P.S.P.) who are socialists only in word, and compared with whom the Polish Social-Democrats are a thousand times right. To raise the question of Poland’s independence *today*, with the *existing* alignment of the *neighbouring* imperialist powers, is really to run after a will-o’-the-wisp, plunge into narrow-minded nationalism and forget the necessary premise of an all-European or at least a Russian and a German revolution. To have put forward in 1908–14 freedom of coalition in Russia as an independent slogan would also have meant running after a will-o’-the-wisp, and would, objectively, have helped the Stolypin labour party (now the Potresov-Gvozdyov party, which, incidentally, is the same thing). But it would be madness to remove freedom of coalition in general from the programme of Social-Democracy!

A third and, perhaps, the most important example. We read in the Polish theses (III, end of 82) that the idea of an independent Polish buffer state is opposed on the grounds that it is an “inane utopia of small impotent groups. Put into effect, it would mean the creation of a tiny fragment of a Polish state that would be a military colony of one or another group of Great Powers, a plaything of their military or economic interests, an area exploited by foreign capital, and a battlefield in future war”. This is all very *true* when used as an argument *against* the slogan of Polish independence *today*, because even a revolution in Poland alone would change nothing and would only divert the attention of the masses in Poland from *the main thing*—the connection *between* their struggle and that of the Russian and German proletariat. It is not a paradox but a fact that today the Polish proletariat as such can help the cause of socialism and freedom, *including the freedom of Poland*, only by *joint* struggle with the proletariat of the neighbouring countries, against the *narrow Polish* nationalists. The great historical service rendered by the Polish Social-Democrats in the struggle against the nationalists cannot possibly be denied.

But these same arguments, which are true from the standpoint of Poland’s *specific* conditions in the *present* epoch, are manifestly untrue in the *general* form in which they are presented. So long as there are wars, Poland *will* always remain a battlefield in wars *between* Germany and Russia, but this is no argument against greater political liberty (and, therefore, against political independence) in the periods *between* wars. The same applies to the arguments about exploitation by foreign capital and Poland’s role as a plaything of foreign interests. The Polish Social-Democrats cannot, at the moment, raise the slogan of Poland’s independence, for the Poles, as proletarian internationalists, can do *nothing* about it without stooping, like the “Fracy”, to humble servitude to *one* of the imperialist monarchies. But it is *not* indifferent to the Russian and German workers whether Poland is independent, they take part in annexing her (and that would mean educating the Russian and German workers and peasants in the basest turpitude and their consent to play the part of executioner of other peoples).

The situation is, indeed, bewildering, but there is a way out in which *all* participants would remain internationalists: the Russian and German Social-Democrats by demanding for Poland

unconditional “freedom to secede”; the Polish Social-Democrats by working for the unity of the proletarian struggle in both small and big countries without putting forward the slogan of *Polish* independence for the given epoch or the given period.

9. Engels Letter to Kautsky

In his pamphlet *Socialism and Colonial Politics* (Berlin, 1907), Kautsky, who was then still a Marxist, published a letter written to him by Engels, dated September 12, 1882, which is extremely interesting in relation to the question under discussion. Here is the principal part of the letter.

“In my opinion the colonies proper, i.e., the countries occupied by a European population—Canada, the Cape, Australia—will all become independent; on the other hand, the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated—India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions—must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it *would* have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algeria and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing *for us*. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses. One thing alone is certain: *the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing*. Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds...”

Engels does not at all suppose that the “economic” alone will directly remove all difficulties. An economic revolution will be a stimulus to *all* peoples to *strive* for socialism; but at the same time revolutions—against the socialist state—and wars *are* possible. Politics will inevitably adapt themselves to

the economy, but not immediately or smoothly, not simply, not directly. Engels mentions as “certain” only one, absolutely internationalist, principle, and this he applies to *all* “foreign nations”, i.e., not to colonial nations only: to force blessings upon them would mean to undermine the victory of the proletariat.

Just because the proletariat has carried out a social revolution it will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses. But it will be inevitably led to realise this truth by possible errors (and selfish interest—attempts to saddle *others*).

We of the Zimmerwald Left all hold the same conviction as Kautsky, for example, held before his desertion of Marxism for the defence of chauvinism in 1914, namely, that the socialist revolution is quite possible *in the very near future*—“any day”, as Kautsky himself once put it. National antipathies will not disappear so quickly: the hatred—and perfectly legitimate hatred—of an oppressed nation for its oppressor *will last* for a while; it will evaporate only *after* the victory of socialism and *after* the final establishment of completely democratic relations between nations. If we are to be faithful to socialism we must even now educate the masses in the spirit of internationalism, which is impossible in oppressor nations without advocating freedom of secession for oppressed nations.

10. The Irish Rebellion of 1916

Our theses were written before the outbreak of this rebellion, which must be the touchstone of our theoretical views.

The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914–16 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions.

The war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, and for *imperialism* as a whole. Every crisis discards the conventionalities, tears away the outer wrappings, *sweeps* away the obsolete and reveals the underlying springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations! In the colonies there have been a number of *attempts* at rebellion, which the oppressor nations, naturally did all they could to hide by means of a military censorship. Nev-

ertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny Among their Indian troops; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam (see *Nashe Slovo*) and in the German Cameroons (see the Junius pamphlet); that in Europe, on the one hand, there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the “freedom-loving” English, who did not dare to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions, and, on the other, the Austrian Government passed the death sentence on the deputies of the Czech Diet “for treason”, and shot whole Czech regiments for the same “crime”.

This list is, of course, far from complete. Nevertheless, it proves that, *owing* to the crisis of imperialism, the flames of national revolt have flared up *both* in the colonies and in Europe, and that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of the Draconian threats and measures of repression. All this before the crisis of imperialism hit its peak; the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie was yet to be undermined (this may be brought about by a war of “attrition” but has not yet happened) and the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries were *still* very feeble. What will happen when the war has caused complete exhaustion, or when, in one state at least, the power of the bourgeoisie has been shaken under the blows of proletarian struggle, as that of tsarism in 1905?

On May 9, 1916, there appeared in *Berner Tagwacht* the organ of the Zimmerwald group, including some of the Leftists, an article on the Irish rebellion entitled “Their Song Is Over” and signed with the initials K. R. It described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a “putsch”, for, as the author argued, “the Irish question was an agrarian one”, the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a “purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing”.

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic assessment coincided with that of a Russian national-liberal Cadet, Mr. A. Kulisher (*Rech* No. 102, April 15, 1916), who also labeled the rebellion “the Dublin putsch”.

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good”, many comrades, who were not aware of the morass they were sinking into by repudiating “self-determination” and by treating the national movements

of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened by the “accidental” coincidence of opinion held by a Social-Democrat and a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie!!

The term “putsch”, in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorworts*, March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie *and a section of the workers* after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls such a rebellion a “putsch” is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.—to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*. So one army lines up in one place and says, “We are for socialism”, and another, somewhere else and says, “We are for imperialism”, and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a “putsch”.

Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which *all* the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest *prejudices*, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But *objectively*, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious work-

ers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe *cannot* be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it—without such participation, *mass* struggle is *impossible*, without it no revolution is possible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But *objectively* they will attack *capital*, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for difficult reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately “purge” itself of petty-bourgeois slag.

Social-Democracy, we read in the Polish theses (I, 4), “must utilise the struggle of the young colonial bourgeoisie against European imperialism *in order to sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe*”. (Authors’ italics.)

Is it not clear that it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe to the colonies in *this* respect? The struggle of the oppressed nations *in Europe*, a struggle capable of going all the way to insurrection and street fighting, capable of breaking down the iron discipline of the army and martial law, will “sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe” to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the power of the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa.

The French chauvinist press recently reported the publication in Belgium of the eightieth issue of an illegal journal, *Free Belgium*. Of course, the chauvinist press of France very often lies, but this piece of news seems to be true. Whereas chauvinist and Kautskyite German Social-Democracy has failed to establish a free press for itself during the two years of war, and has meekly borne the yoke of military censorship (only the Left Radical elements, to their credit be it said, have published pamphlets and man-

ifestos, in spite of the censorship)—an oppressed civilised nation has reacted to a military oppression unparalleled in ferocity by establishing an organ of revolutionary protest! The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a *part* as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, the French—the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy’s slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more, so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where, and with what force some powder magazine will “explode”. We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat’s great war of Liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise *every* popular movement against *every single* disaster *imperialism* brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are “opposed” to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a “putsch”, we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the

way for the general onslaught in 1905.

11. Conclusion

Contrary to the erroneous assertions of the Polish Social-Democrats, the demand for the self-determination of nations has played no less a role in our Party agitation than, for example, the arming of the people, the separation of the church from the state, the election of civil servants by the people and other points the philistines have called “utopian”. On the contrary, the strengthening of the national movements after 1905 naturally prompted more vigorous agitation by our Party, including a number of articles in 1912–13, and the resolution of our Party in 1913 giving a precise “anti-Kautskian” definition (i.e., one that does not tolerate purely verbal “recognition”) of the *content* of the point.

It will not do to overlook a fact which was revealed at that early date: opportunists of various nationalities, the Ukrainian Yorkevich, the Bundist Liebman, Scrnkovsky, the Russian myrmidon of Potresov and Co., all spoke *in favour* of Rosa Luxemburg’s arguments *against* self-determination! What for Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish Social-Democrat, had been merely an incorrect theoretical generalisation of the *specific* conditions of the movement in Poland, became *objective* opportunist support for Great-Russian imperialism when *actually* applied to more extensive circumstances, to conditions obtaining in a big state instead of a small one, when applied on an international scale instead of the narrow Polish scale. The history of *trends* in political thought (as distinct from the views of individuals) has proved the correctness of our programme.

Outspoken social-imperialists, such as Lensch still rail both against self-determination and the renunciation of annexations. As for the Kautskyites, they hypocritically recognise self-determination—Trotsky and Martov are going *the same way* here in Russia. *Both of them*, like Kautsky, say they favour self-determination. What happens in practice? Take Trotsky’s articles “The Nation and the Economy” in *Nashe Slovo*, and you will find his usual eclecticism: on the one hand, the economy unites nations and, on the other, national oppression divides them. The conclusion? The conclusion is that the prevailing hypocrisy remains unexposed, agitation is dull and does not touch upon what is most important, basic, significant and closely connected with practice—one’s attitude to the nation that is oppressed by “one’s own” nation.

Martov and other secretaries abroad simply preferred to forget—a profitable lapse of memory!—the struggle of their colleague and fellow-member Semkovsky against self-determination. In the legal press of the Gvozdyovites (*Nash Golos*) Martov spoke *in favour* of self-determination, pointing out the indisputable truth that during the imperialist war it does not *yet* imply participation, etc., but evading the main thing—he also evades it in the illegal, free press!—which is that *even in peace time* Russia set a world record for the oppression of nations with an imperialism that is much more crude, medieval, economically backward and militarily bureaucratic. The Russian Social-Democrat who “recognises” the self-determination of nations more or less as it is recognised by Messrs. Plekhanov, Potresov and Co., that is, without bothering to fight for the freedom of secession for nations oppressed by tsarism, is *in fact* an imperialist and a lackey of tsarism.

No matter what the subjective “good” intentions of Trotsky and Martov may be, their evasiveness objectively supports Russian social-imperialism. The epoch of imperialism has turned all the “great” powers into the oppressors of a number of nations, and the development of imperialism will inevitably lead to a more definite division of trends in this question in international Social-Democracy as well.

The Zenith of Zionist-Imperialism

Mazdoor Kissan Party (Pakistan)

The eruption of the US-led war on Iran in February 2026 stands as one of the most catastrophic geopolitical events of the 21st century. Although it carries the hallmarks of the impulsive and abrupt actions of the Trump administration, it is the culmination of a decades-long project. Driven by an aggressive, uncompromising Zionist-imperialist policy, the United States has relentlessly marched toward this conflict, prioritizing the regional hegemony of Israel over global stability, international law, and the democratic will of its own citizens.

To understand the 2026 events, one must look at the preceding decades of relentless hybrid warfare designed to isolate Iran and subjugate the broader Middle East. The US strategy has been to impose suffocating, illegal economic sanctions to starve the Iranian population into submission, while systematically dismantling any sovereign state or movement that dared to challenge US-Israeli supremacy. This campaign of destabilization has left a trail of ruined nations in its wake. Independent governments that took a favorable view toward Iranian resistance or opposed Western hegemony—such as Syria, Libya, and even Venezuela across the globe—were subjected to relentless regime-change operations, proxy wars, and crushing embargoes.

Simultaneously, the US and Israel targeted the frontline factions resisting Israeli occupation and expansionism. In Palestine, the population has been the victim of genocide and mass starvation. Freedom fighters and organizations like Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon have been seriously weakened. The goal was to strip Iran of its regional allies, leaving it vulnerable to direct military intervention. This campaign of isolation was coupled with a diplomatic offensive designed to buy Arab complicity. The heavily coerced “Abraham Accords,” for example, are talked up as peace treaties, but underneath the surface, they were transactional arms deals and diplomatic bribes designed to isolate the Palestinian struggle and forge a unified, US-backed anti-Iran axis out of compliant Gulf monarchies.

However, the question remains: why would the

United States pursue a foreign policy that entails endless trillion-dollar wars, the destruction of its global standing, and the alienation of the global majority? The answer has to do with a particular class stratum that wields disproportionate power and has utterly compromised American democracy.

US foreign policy in the Middle East is not driven by an objective calculation of American national interests, nor does it reflect the desires of the American working class. Instead, it has been effectively hijacked by a pervasive, highly organized Zionist lobby.

This domestic network exerts an unparalleled, almost totalizing stranglehold over the US legislative and executive branches. Through massive campaign financing, political intimidation, and the relentless smearing of critics, this lobby ensures that US policy aligns perfectly with the most extreme, expansionist elements of the Israeli state.

Billions of dollars flow unquestioningly in direct military and economic aid to Israel, and carte blanche political cover is provided for illegal settlements, all at the behest of this foreign lobby. Elected representatives in the US prioritize the militaristic ambitions of the Israeli apartheid state over the economic and security interests of their own people, making theirs a democracy in name only.

However, although the lobby has triumphed in getting the US embroiled in the war with Iran, the geopolitical blowback has proved disastrous for these architects of the war.

The worldwide economic impacts of the 2026 Iran war have been devastating. The disruption of global energy supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz has triggered a brutal international economic crisis. Long-established trade routes that normally relied on the Hormuz strait are being permanently changed. Spikes in oil prices have led to rampant global inflation, destroying the purchasing power of the working classes across the Global South and the West alike. Even countries ever so far removed from the conflict have had this chaos brought home to them in economic terms. Ordinary citizens worldwide are paying

the price for a war engineered by this poisonous special-interest lobby elite.

Beyond these effects on ordinary people, when you look at the state-level changes, they are simply mind-boggling. The US military budget used to be around \$700 billion in 2022—already a very large number—but just four years later in the present, the Trump administration has asked Congress for \$1.5 trillion, potentially more than doubling it in this brief span of time! The effects of this massive inflation of the military budget in the first place will have intensely negative economic effects because it will focus the economy on unproductive manufacturing—like bombs, tanks, and other engines of destruction—rather than productive manufacturing, such as medical equipment, tractors, and other engines of production. And obviously, if this were approved, it would signal that the country will expand the war and bring more conflict to other parts of the world. The world is not blind to what the massive inflation of the US military budget represents.

With such reckless militarism, some historic shifts have already started to occur in the regions affected by this imperialist warmongering. Recognizing that the US-Israeli axis respects no sovereignty and possesses an unquenchable appetite for regime change, regional powers are establishing their own alliances, such as the pact between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. On the other hand, it has also caused some splits, such as the UAE leaving OPEC and entering into closer coordination with Israel and the US. Increased rivalry, market divisions, and militarism within the region are ensured.

If there is one silver lining in this madness, it is that the nature of Zionist-imperialism has been exposed to the world as never before. Although this well-resourced and powerful elite has an international reach and the means to punish the opposition that dares to speak against it, the Iran war has forced the governments and populations of the world to reckon with the consequences of Israeli-American unilateralism. Even under circumstances where critiques are hushed and suppressed, the voices against it are becoming more frequent, growing louder and bolder.

Marxists of the present day must nevertheless be bold and take up the challenge of this opposition. They must take up the issue with their publics and clarify the nature of this era of constant militarism—whose effects are not just quarantined away in a distant land but are affecting all of us here and now

in real terms—so that we may claw back some of the independence that is lost each time we concede our livelihoods to the whims of imperialism.

Fundamentals of Dialectical Materialism (I)

Escarpo | Unión Proletaria (Spain)

These notes are the result of a course for militants that was given at Unión Proletaria on dialectical materialism.

The sources of these notes are mainly three texts that I cite below and which were recommended as “compulsory reading.”

- “Manual of Philosophy” by Víctor Afanasiev
- “History of Philosophy” (2 volumes) by M. T. Iovchuk and others.
- “Elementary and Fundamental Principles of Philosophy” by G. Politzer

Afanasiev was a Soviet philosopher who was also director of the newspaper Pravda. He was known above all for his manuals of Marxist philosophy. The objective he had in his manuals was to present dialectical materialism and historical materialism in a systematic way.

Miguel Trifonóvich Iovchuk graduated in philosophy in 1931 from the Academy of Communist Education. He held various positions in Belarus and at Moscow State University. Together with the co-authors of History of Philosophy: Teodoro Ilich Oizerman and Ivan Yakovlevich Schipanov, he was commissioned to be the general editor of this new version of the official Soviet manual of History of Philosophy.

Georges Politzer. The famous philosophy manual, which had the ability to bring the principles of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to the working class. Politzer taught Marxist philosophy at the Workers’ University of Paris. Maurice Le Goas was a student of these courses. He asked Politzer to correct some notes he had in his course notebooks. He found them well done. Unfortunately, he did not have time to make the final correction of the book we are talking about. The Nazi invasion of France took place, and he met a heroic death in the struggle against the Nazi invaders.

Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy

Philosophy, its object and its place among the other sciences

Marxist philosophy is called upon not only to explain the world in a rigorously scientific manner, but also to serve as a technical instrument for transforming it.

The word “philosophy” comes from ancient Greek. It was formed from two words. Phileo, which means love, and Sophia, which means wisdom. Literally, the word philosophy means love of wisdom.

The successes of the special sciences, especially mathematics and mechanics, induced philosophers to study the methods that had made it possible to achieve them in order to clarify the possibility of using them in philosophy. For example, philosophers often attempted to use the axiomatic method of mathematics to create philosophical systems. Attempts were also made to universalize the principles of classical mechanics in order, on the basis of them, to explain not only the phenomena of inorganic nature, but also biological and even social processes.

Materialism and idealism

However varied philosophical doctrines may be, all of them have as their theoretical starting point, clearly or not, the problem of the relationship between consciousness and existence, between the spiritual and the material. The great problem of all of them is the problem of the relationship between thinking and being.

Among pre-Marxist thinkers, the German materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach stands out. He was the one who came closest to a correct understanding of the meaning and importance of the fundamental philosophical problem. He criticised the religious doctrine concerning the creation of the world by a supernatural force, by the spirit, by God, and defended an opposite conception: the spiritual arises from the material. But it was Engels who formulated the supreme problem of philosophy for the first time in a scientifically consistent manner.

If it is admitted, as the idealists do, that consciousness and the spirit are primary and determining, it will be necessary to seek the origin of the social calamities that cause so much suffering to workers

in societies divided into antagonistic classes (subjugation, misery, wars, etc.) in the consciousness of two individuals, in their mistakes and defects, and not in the character of the material life of men, in the economic system of society and in its class structure.

Among the varieties of idealism, objective idealism (Plato, Hegel, etc.) must be mentioned first. According to this form of idealism, the spiritual exists outside or independently of matter, of nature, or before it, as universal reason, “universal will” or “unconscious universal spirit,” which determines all material processes.

Unlike objective idealism, subjective idealism (George Berkeley, Ernst Mach, Richard Avenarius and others) considers that the objects we see, touch and smell do not exist independently of our sensory perceptions.

Dialectics and metaphysics

The history of philosophy is not only a struggle between materialism and idealism; it is also a struggle between dialectics and metaphysics.

Metaphysicians consider objects and phenomena isolated from one another, immutable in their essence and free from internal contradictions. The metaphysical way of thinking is manifested in the denial of internal contradictions as the driving force of development.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy is a doctrine that argues the paths to be followed in order to transform the world through the revolutionary path for the benefit of the free, multilateral and harmonious development of the human personality.

The struggle between materialism and idealism ultimately reflects the class struggle of society.

Lenin said that Marx’s philosophical materialism had shown the proletariat the way out of spiritual slavery. At the same time, the theory of social revolution is organically linked to the dialectical approach to social phenomena and to the theory of development, according to which gradual quantitative changes logically lead to qualitative changes in the form of leaps.

The ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the revisionists praise non-partisanship, defending the idea of a “third line” in philosophy situated, according to them, above materialism and idealism. But is it possible that in a society divided into classes there can be ideologists and thinkers situated above the classes (which are antagonistic) and who disregard

their interests?

The materialist philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which expressed the interests of the nascent bourgeoisie, then the progressive class of society, and fought the religious, idealist and feudal conception, was partisan. And at the same time, despite its limitations, it promoted the advance of science and of society as a whole. But the situation changed radically when the bourgeoisie ceased to be progressive and became reactionary.

A conception of the world that correctly reflects the laws governing the development of the phenomena of nature and society defends the interests of the classes that carry progress and to which the future belongs. Under present conditions, that conception of the world is Marxism-Leninism, the conception of the most advanced class—the proletariat—and of its vanguard, the Communist Party. Thanks to the emergence of dialectical and historical materialism, a scientific-philosophical conception of the world was created for the first time in history that encompasses nature and society and constitutes the theoretical basis for the conscious, communist reorganization of society.

The bourgeois ideologists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had presented the suppression of feudal social relations as the establishment of the kingdom of reason, justice and equality, and even of fraternity among men, but the capitalist reality of the nineteenth century refuted those social illusions.

In England, during the 1830s and 1840s of the nineteenth century, the first revolutionary mass proletarian movement emerged: Chartism. The emancipatory struggle of the working class of those times had a spontaneous, unorganized character; it lacked a clear class consciousness. Marx and Engels were the ones who saw the need to change that spontaneous movement through the fusion of scientific socialism by means of the organization of mass proletarian parties, called upon to be the vanguard and leading detachments of the proletariat.

The theoretical sources of Marxism are: classical German philosophy, classical English political economy and French utopian socialism. Let us speak first of classical German philosophy.

Marxist philosophy is the highest form of the materialist conception of the world. Marx and Engels held in high esteem the achievements of philosophical materialism before them; the explanation of the world proceeding from itself, without resorting to

supernatural causes.

The conception of knowledge as a reflection of being, atheism, the tendency to explain the history of humanity by natural factors, etc., but at the same time they pointed out the historical limitation of this materialism.

First of all, pre-Marxist materialism had a mechanistic character; it only took into account the laws of mechanical motion. The mechanistic conception of the world directed against the religious world-view was progressive in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when mechanics had achieved greater development than the other sciences, but by the middle of the nineteenth century it had already become completely insufficient, especially for explaining biological, psychic and social processes.

Pre-Marxist materialism was primarily metaphysical, that is, fundamentally it considered nature and society immutable. Of course, in those times it was not only materialists who were metaphysical, but also the overwhelming majority of idealists.

The third defect of old materialism consisted in the fact that, restricting itself to the materialist conception of nature, it could not explain social life from a materialist point of view. It is true that these materialists fought the religious interpretation of history and demonstrated that supernatural forces did not act in social life, but natural forces. However, they saw the origin of the movement of society in spiritual, ideal factors, in the conscious activity of historical personalities—Kings, rulers—since these existed, but the pre-Marxist materialists did not see the material source of those ideas, feelings and passions; they did not see the material basis of social life.

Hegel already criticized the mechanistic and metaphysical character of the materialism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hegel asserted that materialism was mechanistic and metaphysical by nature and that, because of this, it was incompatible with dialectics. In the struggle against materialism, Hegel developed, on an idealist basis, the dialectical doctrine of development. In defining contradiction, Hegel stressed that it cannot be interpreted as an anomaly. Contradiction is the reciprocal action of opposites. It is the principle of all self-movement.

Feuerbach's materialism brought the development of classical German philosophy to a close and traced (it is true, only in the most general form) the paths for the subsequent development of philosophical

materialism. This explains the influence that his philosophy (like that of Hegel) exerted on Marx and Engels during the period of formation of their conceptions.

The philosophy of Marxism and the great discoveries of the natural sciences in the mid-nineteenth century

The development of capitalism and the growth of large-scale industry stimulated the progress of the natural sciences, and these not only contributed to increasing production, but also undermined the idealist and metaphysical interpretation of nature.

The most important achievements of the natural sciences in the decades from the 1830s to the 1850s, achievements in which Marx and Engels saw confirmation of the philosophy created by them. These achievements were: the discovery of the law of the transformation of energy, the discovery of the cellular structure of living organisms and the creation of the evolutionary doctrine: Darwinism. Descartes introduced into science the principle of the constancy of the quantity of motion.

At the beginning of the 1840s, the German physician Julius Mayer discovered the law of the conservation and transformation of energy, according to which a certain quantity of motion in one of its forms (mechanical, thermal, etc.) is transformed into a quantity of motion equal to it in any other form.

For their part, James Joule and Heinrich Lenz established the mechanical equivalent of heat. That is, they calculated the quantity of mechanical energy provided by one unit of thermal energy. It was demonstrated that heat, light and other states of matter are qualitatively determined forms of its motion, which neither arises nor is destroyed, but is continuously transformed.

The representatives of pre-Marxist materialism asserted that motion is not introduced into matter from outside, but is its mode of existence. With the discovery of the new law, it became possible to establish this philosophical postulate on the basis of the natural sciences and to understand dialectically the connection between matter and motion.

Another no less important achievement of the natural sciences was the discovery of the cellular structure of living organisms. This discovery led directly to the dialectical materialist conception of organic nature.

The organism arises and develops through the multiplication of cells with uninterrupted renewal: birth

and extinction.

Darwin's evolutionary theory was the third great discovery of the natural sciences in the mid-nineteenth century. He put an end to the idea that the various species of animals and plants were not connected with one another by anything, but were accidental "creations of God," and unchanging, and he placed theoretical biology on a scientific basis for the first time.

Darwin, on the basis of an immense amount of empirical material, formulated a series of laws of the formation of species, also considering man as the highest link in the general chain of the development of the animal kingdom. In doing so, he dealt a major blow to the religious conception of the world. These discoveries provided Marx and Engels with the necessary scientific-natural premises for creating a consistently scientific philosophy: dialectical and historical materialism.

Marxism, Lenin pointed out, arose as the direct and immediate continuation of the grandiose achievements of preceding social thought, and the genius of Marx lies in the fact that he provided a solution to the problems posed by his eminent predecessors.

In 1841, while still an idealist (Hegelian), Marx wrote his doctoral thesis, and in it proclaimed militant atheism as his philosophical principle, the essence of which consisted, in his view, in fighting against all earthly and heavenly gods, against every humiliation of the human personality. In 1842 and 1843 Marx began his transition from idealism to materialism, from revolutionary democracy to communism. The state is now defined by him as a political system that guarantees the interests of the possessing classes, hostile to the working masses.

In arguing the thesis of the universal historical socialist mission of the proletariat, Marx reached the following conclusion: "In the same way that philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat, the proletariat finds its 'spiritual' weapon in philosophy."

In 1844 the great friendship between Marx and Engels began. From 1844 to 1846 they created two great works, "The Holy Family" and "The German Ideology," in which they subjected idealist philosophy to systematic criticism and developed the foundations of dialectical and historical materialism. Lenin called "The Poverty of Philosophy" and "The Communist Manifesto," published in 1847 and 1848 respectively, the first works of mature Marxism.

Thus, in order to solve the problems that the philos-

ophers of the past had posed but could not resolve, it was first necessary to find a correct starting point for theoretical and political work. That starting point for Marx and Engels was the struggle against the exploitation of man by man, against the economic and political basis of social oppression and inequality.

Only by taking as a starting point the situation, needs and interests of the most dispossessed and most revolutionary class could the materialist conception of history be created, which reveals the decisive role of the working masses and of material production in the history of humanity. And it scientifically demonstrates the inevitability of communism.

It is impossible in principle to unite idealism and materialism, the dialectical and metaphysical modes of thinking, since they exclude one another. Marx and Engels dialectically reworked the materialist doctrine of the modern age, including Feuerbach's philosophy. They also reworked Hegel's dialectical method according to a materialist criterion, which, due to its idealist character, was not suitable for scientifically studying the processes of nature and society.

Lenin said: "Marx's historical materialism is a formidable achievement of scientific thought." The chaos and arbitrariness that until then prevailed in conceptions concerning history and politics were succeeded by an astonishingly complete and harmonious scientific theory, which shows how, through the growth of the productive forces, one type of social life develops into another, higher one. As, for example, capitalism arises from feudalism.

Philosophy, by becoming a scientific conception of the world, fully adopts the positions of science, which is always open to new deductions. It progresses without ceasing. And it is enriched with new theses while renouncing those already outdated.

Marx said sarcastically: "Until now philosophers had the solution to all enigmas on their work tables, and foolish and profane people had nothing left but to open their mouths to catch the 'fried nettles' of absolute science." This means that philosophy, insofar as it is conceived as "absolute science," is not actually a science. Scientific philosophy is not a revelation proclaimed by a genius.

Marx and Engels put an end to the opposition of philosophy to the practical activity of man, in particular to the emancipatory movement of the workers. For many centuries philosophizing was considered a disinterested and impartial contemplation and intel-

lection of reality, whose sole purpose was to satisfy the need to know for the sake of knowing.

Marx and Engels spoke out from the very beginning of their scientific and socio-political activity against the “non-partisanship” of philosophers before social reality: revolutionary effectiveness, uncompromisingness toward everything obsolete, sincere and manifest partisanship, rigorous scientific character, hostility to dogmatism and its ossified formulas, the bold posing of new problems, and creative development irreconcilable with the revisionist adulterations of scientific theory. All these features of dialectical and historical materialism express the essence of the revolution that the emergence of Marxism signified.

The founders of Marxism, in creating and developing their doctrine, pointed out more than once that our doctrine is not a dogma, but a guide to action. Lenin based himself on this principle, which distinguishes Marxism from all preceding doctrines, when stressing the need to continue developing Marx’s doctrine (without excluding philosophy).

Marx and Engels created a doctrine at a time when the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism was not directly posed, not on the order of the day. Lenin developed Marxism under new historical conditions at the beginning of the epoch of the collapse of capitalism, which had entered its final stage, imperialism.

In one of his first works, “Who Are the ‘Friends of the People’ and How Do They Fight Against the Social-Democrats?,” Lenin refuted the subjectivist interpretation of social phenomena by the populists, who placed at the forefront of the historical process the activity of individuals who “think critically.” He showed that Marx’s doctrine of the socioeconomic formation, of the replacement of modes of production as the basis of the historical process, does not exclude recognition of the decisive role of the masses and classes in history.

Lenin devoted great attention to criticizing the theory of spontaneity in the workers’ movement. In the book “What Is to Be Done?” and in other works, he scientifically argued the role of revolutionary theory, of socialist consciousness introduced by the Marxist party into the spontaneous workers’ movement. Without revolutionary theory there is no and cannot be a revolutionary workers’ movement. In his work “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,” Lenin made a profound analysis of the revolution in the Natural Sciences that began at the end of the

nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in physics, thanks to the discovery of the phenomena of radioactivity, the electron, and the complex structure of atoms, previously considered the ultimate and indivisible “building blocks of the Universe.”

In refuting the idealist deductions made from the latest discoveries in physics, Lenin developed the dialectical materialist conception of matter, showing that the physical, chemical, etc. properties of matter discovered by science are specific characteristics of objective reality. Lenin’s work “Philosophical Notebooks,” which is the continuation and expansion of the basic theses formulated in his book “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,” is of immense importance for the development of Marxist philosophy.

In the article “On the Significance of Militant Materialism,” which can be considered Lenin’s philosophical testament, the task of creating and strengthening the alliance of Marxist philosophers and natural scientists is argued, in order to continue creatively developing dialectical materialism and perfecting the methodology of the natural sciences.

Lenin did not limit himself to defending dialectical and historical materialism in the struggle against the enemies of Marxism and to developing Marxist philosophy in all its aspects. In addition to this, he applied this philosophy to analyze the new epoch of imperialism, of imperialist wars, of socialist revolutions and of the building of the new society, responding to the questions posed by the development of capitalism and the world revolutionary movement.

Lenin’s book “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” and the works internally connected with it—concerning the First World War, the bankruptcy of the Second International, the national question, the prospects of the socialist revolution and the new correlation of class forces—contain a profound dialectical analysis of the new epoch and reveal the new laws and tendencies of the development of monopoly capitalism.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy starts from the knowledge of the existence of objective reality, of matter in eternal motion and development. In the materialist philosophy and in the Natural Sciences before Marx, many profound theses concerning matter were formulated, which retain their value in contemporary knowledge. We refer above all to the thesis that matter is the universal substantial basis of all phenomena, and has not been created by anyone. It is

indestructible, eternal in time and infinite in space and has an objective existence independent of consciousness. The French materialists of the eighteenth century argued the thesis that matter and motion are inseparable, because motion is an extremely important attribute and a form of existence of matter.

The idea of the qualitative homogeneity of material substance served as the basis for the mechanistic picture of the world. Newton's laws of mechanics were considered universal laws of nature, as fundamental principles of being that condition all other laws of nature and society. The reality is that the new discoveries testified precisely to the falsity of the metaphysical principles of the explanation of the world. In refuting the mechanistic conception, they confirmed the truth of the dialectical materialist doctrine of matter.

In pre-Marxist philosophy, the primary and immutable material substance was admitted as a *sui generis* "support" for different objects and their properties. Dialectical materialism rejects the existence of such a substance.

The division into systems and elements is relative. Every system can be an element of an even greater entity of which it forms a part. In the same way, an element will be a system if its internal structure and internal connections are considered. Systems exist objectively as integral, ordered entities: the Galaxy, the Stars, the Solar System, the Earth (as a planet), molecules, Atoms, etc. There are different types of biological and social systems. Cognition of matter is carried out only through the study of its properties and the concrete forms of its system of organization.

Motion and its principal forms

When we know the world around us, we see that there is nothing absolutely motionless and immutable in it, that everything is in motion and passes from one form to another. In all material objects the motion of the elementary particles of atoms and molecules takes place. Every object is in reciprocal action with the surrounding world, and this interaction implies motion of one kind or another. Any body, even one that is at rest in relation to the earth, moves together with it around the Sun, and together with the Sun in relation to other stars of the Galaxy; the latter moves in relation to other stellar systems, etc. Equilibrium, rest and absolute immobility exist nowhere.

The study of the classification of the fundamental forms of motion corresponds in great measure

to Frederick Engels, who in his work "Dialectics of Nature" distinguished the physical, chemical, biological and social forms of motion and analyzed their content.

All living organisms are open systems. By constantly exchanging energy with the surrounding environment, the living organism continually recreates its structure and functions and maintains them in relative stability.

The highest stage of development of matter on Earth is human society with the social forms of motion inherent to it.

Space is a real objective form of existence of matter in motion. The concept of space expresses the coexistence of things and the distance between them, without extension, and the order in which they are situated in relation to one another.

Time is a real objective form of existence of matter in motion. It characterizes the succession of the development of material processes, the distance between the different phases of these processes, their duration and their development.

All the experience of human life and the progress of science refute the idealist notions of space and time. Can it perhaps be accepted that space and time are products of consciousness, of the spirit, of the idea, or that they exist only in consciousness, when, as the natural sciences prove, the earth existed in space and developed in time many millions of years before man existed with his consciousness, his spirit and his ideas? The change in our notions of space and time cannot be confused, as Lenin stressed, "with the immutability of the fact that man and nature exist only in time and space; beings outside time and space, created by the priests and admitted by the imagination of the ignorant and oppressed masses of humanity, are the product of a diseased fantasy. They are tricks of philosophical idealism, and the useless fruit of a bad social regime."

Dialectical materialism differs substantially from metaphysical materialism by the postulate that proclaims the indisputable connection of time and space with matter.

Metaphysical materialism, while admitting the objective reality of space and time, nevertheless considers them autonomous essences, as empty containers independent of matter, destined to hold bodies and material processes.

A similar point of view was held by Isaac Newton, founder of classical mechanics. For him, space and

time were objective. But they existed independently of matter in motion, were completely immutable, and were not linked to each other. He called them “absolute.”

Newton’s ideas about “absolute space” predominated until the beginning of the twentieth century, when, with the creation of the theory of relativity, it became clear that it was an error to disconnect space or time from one another and separate them from matter in motion.

Without taking into consideration the connection of space and time with each other, and with matter in motion, it is impossible to understand the physical processes that occur at speeds close to the speed of light, nor those related to large values of energy.

In antiquity the idea already crystallized, and achieved great diffusion under the influence of religion, that in addition to the material world known to everyone, there exists another immaterial world in which “spirits,” “supreme reason,” and “supreme will” reside.

Engels demonstrated that it is not the world that reflects the properties of thought, but, on the contrary, it is thought that reflects the properties of the world. The unity of the world—matter and idea—consists in its materiality, which has its proof not precisely in a few prestidigitator’s phrases, but in the long and arduous development of philosophy and the Natural Sciences.

The heliocentric system created by Copernicus was one of the most important milestones in the cognition of the material unity of the world. Until Copernicus, the idea predominated that the centre of the Universe was the Earth, around which was “the Celestial Sphere” with its “ideal” celestial bodies, the Sun, the Planets, the Moon and the Stars. Copernicus refuted these ideas by creating the heliocentric doctrine. He demonstrated that the Earth is by no means the Centre of the Universe, but only one of its planets. With this it became clear that the “idea” of a “terrestrial world” and a “celestial world” had no basis whatsoever.

In former times the origin of man was unknown, and this gave rise to the idea that certain immaterial forces had created man through a “miracle.” However, a time came when this problem was given a scientific solution, which excluded the religious conception of immaterial forces and the mysterious supernatural world. That solution was initiated by the evolutionary doctrine of Charles Darwin. For its

part, Marxism made a decisive contribution to clarifying this problem, demonstrating the role played by labour in distinguishing man from the animal world. Historical Materialism has proved the falsity of the idea that social progress and history advance by “divine will,” laying bare the objective laws and material causes of the development of society.

In the world there has never existed, does not exist, nor will there ever exist anywhere anything that is not matter in motion or that has not been engendered by matter in motion. Precisely therein consists the unity of the world. The world is material, it is one, eternal and infinite, and man himself is its highest product on Earth, a part of the great whole called Nature.

The idea of the “soul” as an immaterial, life-giving and cognizing principle arose in antiquity, when the natural causes of dreams, fainting, death and the various cognitive, emotional and volitional processes could not be explained. The ancients arrived at false conceptions of these processes. For example, dreams were interpreted as impressions of the “soul” which, during sleep, left the body and wandered through various places. Death was presented as a variety of sleep in which the soul, for unknown reasons, did not return to the body.

Dialectical materialism starts from the fact that consciousness is a property not of matter in general, but of highly organized matter, and is linked to the activity of the human brain. As the founders of Marxism stressed, consciousness can never be anything other than existence made conscious, and the existence (being) of men is the real process of their life.

Some idealist philosophers even nowadays try to challenge the thesis that consciousness is a function of the brain. This point of view was upheld, among others, by Avenarius, one of the founders of empirio-criticism. Lenin said when criticizing this position: “since we do not yet know all the conditions of the relation that we observe at every moment between sensation and matter organized in a definite way, we shall therefore admit as existing nothing more than sensation: to this the sophism of Avenarius is reduced.” (Materialism and Empirio-Criticism).

The way in which consciousness exists—and in which something exists for it—said Marx, is knowledge... Something arises for consciousness insofar as it knows that something. (“Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts”). Consequently, consciousness is impossible without man’s cognitive attitude toward

the objective world. One of the most widespread bourgeois doctrines about the unconscious in our days is that of the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. He studied the sphere of the unconscious in all its aspects, determined its place and role in psychic disturbances and conceived methods of influencing it in order to suppress them. But Freud erroneously asserted that consciousness is determined by the unconscious, which for him was a set of instinctive aspirations charged with high energy. According to Freud, the structure of the individual, his behaviour and his character, as well as all human culture, are ultimately determined by the innate emotions of men, by their instincts and inclinations, whose nucleus is the sexual instinct.

Marxism rejects these irrational ideas. Man's sensations reflect the real world with relative fidelity. As the means of the direct connection of consciousness with the world, sensations are, in the final analysis, the source of all our knowledge about objects and phenomena. Lenin defined sensations as the transformation of the energy of external excitation into the fact of consciousness. The loss of the capacity to feel inevitably leads to the loss of consciousness. While sensations reflect only some properties of things, the thing as a whole, in the unity of its various properties reproduced sensorially, is reflected in perception. In man, perception ordinarily includes the discernment of objects, their properties and relations. Therefore, the character of perception depends on the level of knowledge that man possesses and on his interests.

If man is a social being by nature, it means that only in society can he develop his true nature, due to which we must measure the power of his nature not by concrete individuals, but by the strength of society as a whole: ("The Holy Family").

Man becomes a conscious being, rises to the level of the personal and to the heights of the thought of his epoch, only in the course of social development.

The starting principle of the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of consciousness is the recognition of the indissoluble connection that exists between consciousness and activity, practice.

Consciousness and the objective world are two opposites that form a unity. The basis of this unity is practice, the intense concrete sensory activity of men, which manifests itself in labour, in the class struggle, in scientific experiment, etc.

Consciousness is characterized by the active creative attitude toward the external world, toward

itself and toward human action. Reality is created in human consciousness, not in an inert aspect, as reflected in a mirror, but transformed in a creative manner. Consciousness has the faculty of creating images that anticipate reality. Lenin had precisely this active, creative and transformative role of advanced scientific consciousness in mind when it directs the mass action of millions and millions of people. "The consciousness of man," he said, "not only reflects the objective world, but creates it... The world does not satisfy man, and he decides to change it through his activity." What is life? A special and complex form of the movement of matter. Its most important features are excitability, growth and reproduction based on metabolism.

The origin of consciousness and language is linked to the transition of our anthropoid ancestors from the appropriation—with the help of natural organs—of objects already prepared, to labour, to the manufacture of artificial instruments, to human forms of vital activity and to social relations, which arose on the basis of this activity. The transition to consciousness and language represents a tremendous qualitative leap in the development of the psyche. Labour as an activity directed toward a concrete purpose is the fundamental condition of all human life and of the formation of consciousness. Labour, says Engels, "is the basic and fundamental condition of all human life, and it is so to such a degree that, to a certain extent, we must say that labour created man himself."

The emergence of consciousness is directly linked to the birth of articulated speech, of language, which naturally expresses the representations and thoughts of men. Like consciousness, language could only be formed in the process of labour, which required joint and coordinated actions by men, and could not be carried out without close contact, without communication between them.

It is not in the brain as such that the causes of the emergence in man of sensations, thoughts and feelings lie. The brain by itself, as it comes from the "hands of nature," cannot think as human beings do. Society teaches it to do so. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that the human capacity to think does not reside solely in the structure of his brain. It is formed through the culture accumulated throughout history, through education and instruction, and through a determined activity with the help of the means and methods created by society.

Numerous philosophers of ancient Greece consid-

ered that the whole world and every object were the result of a process of formation. It is true that their opinions, despite all their perspicacity, were naive. But the very fact that the problem of development was posed as the universal law of everything that exists already left a profound mark on the history of the cognition of the world.

Materialist dialectics arose as a result of the synthesis of the achievements of science and also of the historical experience of humanity, which demonstrated that social life and human consciousness, just like nature, are in a state of constant change and development. In the world, all systems are formed only as a result of the reciprocal action of the elements that make them up. In the same way, all the properties of bodies arise on the basis of interaction and motion, and manifest themselves through them. Interaction is universal: it encompasses the multiple changes in the properties and states of objects, all types of connections existing between them.

Materialist dialectics does not devote itself to inventing or artificially creating connections and laws, but points out to science the task of discovering them in the objective world itself. The laws of dialectics govern everywhere and encompass all aspects of reality. They are laws of nature, society and thought.

Law of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes and vice versa

In the dialectical doctrine of development, the centre of gravity does not consist simply in asserting that everything develops, but in scientifically understanding the mechanism of this development. Because today, in an age of astonishing scientific successes and grandiose social transformations, no one dares any longer to deny development. Everyone “agrees” on this development. But as Lenin pointed out, this “agreement” is sometimes of such a nature that through it the truth is falsified. Lenin says: “the two fundamental conceptions... of development (of evolution) are: development in the sense of decrease and increase as repetition, and development as the unity of opposites (the splitting of the unity into two poles that mutually exclude each other and the relation between them).”

The first conception is lifeless, poor, dry. The second has vitality. Only the second gives the key to leaps of “continuity broken,” to the “transformation into its opposite,” to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new. (Lenin, “On the Question of

Dialectics”).

We are surrounded by things and objects among which we already know that certain connections and relations exist. Metal, for example, has properties such as density, compressibility, melting temperature, thermal and electrical conductivity, etc. It could be deduced from this that a thing is nothing more than a set of such or such properties, and that therefore knowing it means establishing what properties it consists of.

However important the properties of a thing may be for defining it, that thing is not reduced to them. Some properties may change, and even disappear, without the thing ceasing to be what it is. Capitalism, in the process of its development, changes a series of properties inherent to it; pre-monopoly capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism, but for that reason it does not cease to be capitalism. The quality of things inevitably leads us to quantity. The latter allows us to know more deeply the essence of things. For example, science could not for a long time understand the cause of the qualitative difference of colours: red, green, violet, etc.; it succeeded in explaining it only when it was established that the difference in colours is determined by the quantitatively different wavelength of electromagnetic waves.

Quantitative changes have external relations with things only within limits determined for each of them. Sometimes even the slightest exceeding of these limits or boundaries implies a radical qualitative change in the thing.

The dependence of quality on quantity can be seen in the example of the qualitative diversity of atoms. Each nuclear species is determined by the quantity of protons contained in its nuclei. If one proton is added or removed, the atom will be qualitatively another. Quantitative changes take place continuously and gradually. Qualitative changes take place in the form of breaks in continuity.

“Life and the development of nature,” said Lenin, “comprise both slow evolution and abrupt leaps, breaks in continuity.” If development as the unity of one and the other form is denied, then one of two possible but equally erroneous notions of the world must be admitted: either to consider that all its richness, the various manifestations of inorganic and organic nature, the multifaceted kingdom of plants, animals and men, have always existed and have changed only quantitatively, or to suppose that all this arose by miracle, all at once, suddenly. These

notions have been put forward in the history of science and philosophy, but both have been refuted by the entire course of cognition and historical practice.

Both conceptions have achieved wide diffusion in social theories. All reformism in the workers' movement is based on the one-sided hyperbolization of the continuity of gradual quantitative development, from which it follows that capitalism "integrates" itself into socialism without the need for social revolutions, through the gradual accumulation of socialist elements that arise in bourgeois society. In opposition to the reformists, anarchists and petty-bourgeois revolutionaries deny all importance to the continuous quantitative form of development and recognize only social cataclysms and revolts. By supposing that social conditions can be changed only by this path, they fall into political adventurism and do not take into consideration the objective conditions necessary for revolutionary leaps.

The leap is a form of development considerably faster than continuous development. It is the period of most intense development, when the old and obsolete are transformed, clearing the ground for new, higher stages of development. For example, social revolutions give a gigantic impulse to the development of the material and spiritual life of society. The same importance they have in science, where they signify new and great discoveries.

When development takes place as the unity of continuity and leaps—whereby one measure gives way to another or is transformed into another—development may take the form of a "key line of measures" (Hegel).

The law of the unity and struggle of opposites

The contradiction between quality and quantity is only one of the manifestations of a general law. According to this law, internal contradictions are inherent in all things and processes, which precisely constitutes the source and driving force of their development. Lenin called the doctrine of contradictions the "nucleus" of dialectics.

Aristotle characterized the opinions of the thinkers of antiquity on this question with the following words: "All recognize that things are composed of opposites; at least, all declare that opposites are the principle." But it was Heraclitus, the dialectician of ancient Greece, who analyzed the problem of contradictions most deeply for those times. Since everything passes and changes, he held, the nature

of things lies in their contradictory character, and everything occurs only by virtue of the struggle of opposites. Hegel deserves immense credit for elaborating the dialectical doctrine of contradictions, but his views on the problem are permeated with idealism. The enemies of dialectics combat precisely the recognition of objective contradictions.

A living being is the unity of identity and difference, both because it is similar to other living beings and because, in carrying out the process of its life, it negates itself, that is, simply speaking, it moves toward its end, its death; and this means that every object and every phenomenon is a unity of opposites. Internal contradiction is an inalienable property of every object and every process. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute. This means that the logical consequence of the struggle of opposites is the disappearance of the existing object as a determinate unity of opposites, and the emergence of a new object with a new unity of opposites.

Contradictions are not something motionless or immutable. Once they arise, concrete contradictions develop and pass through definite phases and degrees. No phenomenon disappears and gives way to others before its contradictions are revealed and unfold to their full extent, since only in the process of this development are the premises for the leap to a new qualitative state created.

At the beginning of its development, contradiction has the character of a difference, that is, of a contradiction not yet unfolded. Afterwards, the difference deepens and is transformed into an opposite, which must be understood as a contradiction already revealed, whose opposing aspects can coexist less and less within the framework of the previous unity. At this stage of development, the contradiction becomes, to use Marx's expression, an "absolute contradiction," that is, a correlation of opposites which is "an energetic and intense form, which drives toward resolving this contradiction." Marx offers in "Capital" a classic example of this development and growth of contradiction as applied to society. He shows that capitalists, trying to obtain the maximum profit, are compelled to develop more and more each day the property that has, in essence, a social character. And the more social production becomes, the more it enters into contradiction with the private property of the capitalists, and the more imperative becomes the need to replace the latter with socialist social

property.

The regular culmination of the process of development and struggle of opposites is the second stage: the stage of resolving the contradiction. While the entire preceding process takes place within the framework of unity, of the interrelation of opposites, the stage of resolving the contradiction signifies the suppression of this unity, its disappearance, which coincides with the radical qualitative change of the object.

The Russian revolutionary democrat A. Herzen called dialectics the “algebra of revolution.”

Lenin devoted great attention to the problem of antagonism and contradiction. In his observations on N. Bukharin’s book “The Economy in the Transition Period,” in which the concept of contradiction appeared in an undifferentiated manner and was identified with the concept of antagonism, he pointed out that antagonism and contradiction are different things, that under socialism the former will disappear, but the latter will continue to exist.

The antagonistic character of contradictions also determines the forms in which they take place and develop, and the way of resolving them. It involves the intensification and deepening of the contradiction, which logically culminates in a sharp conflict between the opposing aspects in the transformation of these into polar extremes. Hence also the methods of resolving contradictions of this type: the consistent class struggle and social revolutions, which put an end to the domination of obsolete classes. A non-antagonistic contradiction is one that exists between classes and social forces whose conditions of life determine the community of their objectives and interests.

Such are the contradictions between the working classes: the working class and the peasantry, and between certain elements of socialist society.

Another essential peculiarity of the development and overcoming of non-antagonistic contradictions under socialism consists in the fact that the movement of society is no longer determined by spontaneity, but by the conscious activity of the people, the Communist Party and the Socialist State, an activity that expresses the objective needs of social progress.

The socialist world of today, with its successes and prospects, with all its problems, is still a young social organism, in the process of growth, in which not everything has settled and much still bears the imprint of past historical epochs. The world of

socialism is entirely in motion and is continuously improving. Its development, of course, takes place through the struggle of the new against the old, through the overcoming of internal contradictions.

Each stage of the development of society has as its principal contradiction one contradiction, which determines the essence of that stage. For example, in the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917 in Russia, that principal contradiction was the one that already existed between the landowning regime, between the tsarist autocracy and all the forces, especially the working masses that fought against them. The contradiction changes from one stage to another, and what under certain conditions may be a non-principal contradiction, under new conditions becomes principal. The contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie already existed during the period of the February revolution in Russia, but at that time it was not the principal one. It became so after that revolution.

Every object, being a relatively independent system, has its internal contradictions, which are the principal source of its development. The differences between several of these objects manifest themselves as external contradictions. They are closely linked to internal contradictions and are in interaction with them. If an object is considered as an element of a broader system of which other objects also form part, the contradictions between those objects will already be internal, that is, they will be contradictions of the given, broader system. For example, the current relations between the socialist system and the capitalist system, at the level of the development of each of them, are external contradictions.

As a summary of everything that has been said, we can now define the essence of the law of the unity and struggle of opposites. It is a law by virtue of which all objects, phenomena and processes have inherent internal contradictions, opposing aspects and tendencies, which are in a state of interconnection and mutual negation. The struggle of opposites gives an internal impulse to development and leads to the growth of contradictions, which are resolved at a certain stage through the disappearance of the old and the emergence of the new.

The law of the negation of the negation

In pre-Marxist philosophy there existed circular theories called cyclical theories, which recognized upward development in society, but assumed that

upon reaching the highest point, society retreated to the starting point and development began again. One of these theories was that of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. The ideologists of the progressive bourgeoisie defended the point of view of the incessant development of society, although they considered the bourgeois regime to be the summit of social progress.

In analyzing the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes and the struggle of opposites, we have already seen that negation plays a substantial role in the process of development. Qualitative transformation is possible only as a negation of the old state. The contradictory character of the thing means that it carries within itself its own negation.

“In no field,” said Marx, “can a development take place that does not negate its previous forms of existence.” Now, what is negation? In the usual meaning of the term, the concept of negation is associated with the word “no,” rejecting something, etc. There is no doubt that without rejecting something there can be no negation. But dialectics considers negation as an aspect of development. “To negate in dialectics,” Engels pointed out, “does not simply consist in saying ‘no,’ in declaring that a thing does not exist, or in destroying it arbitrarily.”

The meaning of dialectical development lies in a mode of negation that conditions subsequent development.

What happens afterwards when, through negation, a new initial form, an opposite, arises? The answer to this question will be given to us, better than anything else, by the example of the development of any object from beginning to end. For this purpose let us use the investigation contained in “Capital” by Karl Marx. The starting point of the entire development of social production was a form in which there existed the unity of the worker and his instruments of labour, that is, the instruments of labour belonged to the producer himself.

Marx calls this form “infantile production” (in the sense of the infancy of the human race), since it was characteristic of primitive community and small family agriculture. But the increase in the productivity of labour reached, over time, such a level that the initial primitive form of union between the producer and the instruments of labour became a brake on the further development of production. Private property in the means of production appeared, and the latter became separated from the person who worked. This

was the first dialectical negation of the starting form. But upon reaching its complete development in capitalist society, this form of separation between labour and the instruments of labour, which was once the negation of their unity, itself regularly prepares its own negation. This already constitutes the second negation, the negation of the first negation, which is therefore defined as the negation of the negation.

The contradiction is resolved through the establishment of socialist property. With this, the unity of the worker and the instruments of labour is achieved, but at a much higher level of development of production than before. Therefore Hegel was right when defining the second negation, that is, the negation of the negation, as the synthesis that overcomes the first “abstract, untrue moments,” that is, abstract and not “true” in the sense of being one-sided and incomplete. This dialectical character of development also manifests itself clearly in the progress of knowledge. For example, when studying the nature of light, the idea was first advanced that it was a flow of luminous corpuscles, of particles. Later the wave theory appeared, opposed to the first. Twentieth-century physics encountered the fact that neither of these views explained reality by itself, nor can either of them separately explain all luminous phenomena, but together they explain them!

In other words, the contradiction between two opposed one-sided views was resolved through their higher synthesis in a new theory, which considers light as a unity of corpuscular and wave properties.

The law of the negation of the negation, through its action, causes development not to have the form of a line, but of a circle, in which the final point coincides with the initial one. But since this coincidence occurs on a higher basis, development has the form of a spiral, each of whose circles and turns signifies a more developed state.

The process of negation is often presented in the following terms: “thesis” (starting point of development), “antithesis” (first negation) and “synthesis” (second negation), seeing in this triad the essence of development.

The law of the negation of the negation, like every law of dialectics, imposes no scheme; the only thing it does is guide the correct study of reality.

The ascending character of development should not be understood in a metaphysical manner, as a rhythmic process without deviations or zigzags. It is important to bear this in mind, especially when

it concerns social development, in which different classes and parties act, having their own interests and struggling for their objectives.

The law of the negation of the negation is a law whose action is conditioned by the connection and continuity between what is negated and what negates; as a consequence of this, dialectical negation is not a hollow, “inane” negation that rejects all previous development, but a condition of development that affirms and preserves within itself all the positive content of the preceding phases, repeats at a higher level some features of the initial stages and, as a whole, has a character of ascending advance.

The Path to Collapse

Mücadele Birliği (Struggle Unity, Türkiye)

I

What do we mean by a “world system”? Let’s settle for the simplest explanation: it is the process by which a mode of production with economic and political cohesion becomes dominant in different regions of the world, and the relationships of cooperation, division of labor, and domination among these regions take shape around that dominant mode of production. World-system connections are not unique to modern times; they also existed among slave-owning and feudal societies. Just as in today’s imperialist-capitalist system, the strength and cohesion of these historical networks depended heavily on military, technological, and logistical capabilities—all of which were fundamentally determined by the development of productive forces.

The development of the slave-based mode of production into a world system took thousands of years; it reached its peak with the Roman Empire and underwent a centuries-long process of decline that accompanied the empire’s dissolution. At the height of its power, Rome was a world capital. It was referred to as such in all diplomatic correspondence of those years, and indeed, in the known world of that era, “all roads led to Rome.” While commercial colonies and military garrisons, which ensured the security of caravan routes, guided the development of the slave-based world system, “Pax Romana” military alliances were being organized.

First, the Pax Romana collapsed with the division between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires; then, slave revolts broke out one after another, and invasions by barbarian tribes dried up the trade routes, bringing an end to economic unity. Finally, in A.D. 476, when a Germanic military leader seized the throne in Rome, the slave-based world system had long since disintegrated, and feudal lordship had begun to prevail in Rome’s small, immediate territories.

It also took centuries for feudalism to develop into a world system. Four centuries after the fall of Rome, the Holy Roman-German Empire founded by Char-

lemagne brought hegemonic power—which would change hands many times thereafter—to the feudal world system. River barges and sailing ships replaced commercial caravans pulled by pack animals; windmills replaced waterwheels. The Crusades could only have been the product of feudalism that had reached the level of a world system.

At first, various coastal regions broke away from this feudal world system. The Netherlands in 1640 and England between 1640 and 1688 had been the scenes of bourgeois revolutions. The turning point that made these revolutions defining events of an era came from France, the heart and soul of the feudal world system. The Great French Revolution of 1789 had so terrified and shaken the rest of the feudal world that, had the military might of Tsarist Russia not intervened, the system could easily have been completely shattered. By this time, however, the world was effectively split into two, and feudalism had been permanently branded as obsolete. Consequently, the revolutions of 1848 swept through like a devastating storm, shattering a feudal order that still retained—to varying degrees—the traits of a world-system. When Russia, long the last military bulwark of feudal rule, remained a mere spectator to these events, the final nails were driven into the nobility’s coffin. The 1848 Revolutions spread from country to country as fast as carrier pigeons could fly, making them impossible to contain through a military alliance. Three years later, when the last barricades finally fell, the ruins of feudalism as a world-system were left in their wake. The surviving regimes had no choice but to adapt to the inevitable. During this same period, empires left to navigate their own fates—the Ottoman Empire, China, Russia, and Japan—became the staging ground for a wave of reforms that paved the way for capitalism.

Thus, as the feudal world system first fragmented and then began to withdraw from the world stage one by one, capitalism—which would itself take the form of a world system—began to emerge right alongside and right above it. It did not take centuries for capitalism to become a world system and domi-

nate the globe. For England had accumulated more than enough power and capacity to raise the banner of the new order upon the ruins of the old.

As the capitalist mode of production expanded into an imperialist world-system, steam engines yielded to internal combustion engines, railways to aviation, and the telegraph to satellite communications. Consequently, networks, institutions, military pacts, economic divisions of labor, and international cooperation—along with the relations of domination that shaped them—attained an unprecedented density, turning the world into what is fashionably, if somewhat tritely, called a ‘global village.’ Yet the density of this system was matched only by the sharpness of its internal contradictions. The eventual rupture came early: the 1917 October Revolution and the popular revolutions of 1945 spread to one-third of the globe an alternative destined to become the imperialist system’s gravedigger.

By the mid-20th century, there were now two world systems that were mortal enemies of one another. The side with the longer history, accumulated resources, and experience was the imperialist-capitalist world system. Moreover, facing a mortal enemy head-on accelerated the formation of military pacts and facilitated the concentration of all the economic and coercive instruments of imperialist domination—designed to subjugate the rest of the world—into a single center: U.S. hegemony.

In contrast, the socialist system—which was embarking on the experience of becoming a world system for the first time—was forced to devise solutions against both a severe economic blockade and military threats. The Sino-Soviet split cast doubt on the hegemon—the primary condition for consolidating a world-system. The fact that countries that had carried out their revolutions were at very different stages of development created resistance to economic integration, another key condition. The military pact that was established (the Warsaw Pact) was entirely defensive in nature and ineffective. However, aside from the USSR and Cuba, countries such as Angola, the Horn of Africa, Namibia, and Afghanistan—which had shown limited cooperation only for the Vietnamese Revolution—were unable to participate actively in military operations aimed at protecting the socialist world. Geographical distances gave the system a highly fragmented structure, which led to numerous economic and military difficulties.

Despite such weaknesses in this initial experiment,

the existence of the socialist world-system served as a beacon of hope for the oppressed and exploited masses of the imperialist-capitalist world—a vivid, living example that bolstered their resilience in the face of suffering and the losses of struggle. Socialism could only succeed as a center of attraction against the imperialist-capitalist system—with which it clashed head-on in every arena—by maintaining its character as a world-system.

However, the inevitable weaknesses of this first experiment ultimately prevailed, and the socialist world-system repeated the path of collapse followed by its predecessors. Economic integration began to unravel: China had long since declared its own distinct path, while the people’s democracies of Eastern Europe were now borrowing the resources they needed from the capitalist world. Soon after, the military pact collapsed almost overnight. The loss of these two pillars undermined the claim to being a world-system, swiftly neutralizing the ideological lines of defense built upon it. This created a fertile ground for counter-revolutions rooted in a petty-bourgeois worldview. The final nail in the coffin was the collapse of the USSR—the system’s cornerstone, if not its hegemon. Most importantly, the enemy—the imperialist-capitalist world-system—remained fully intact, operational with all its institutions and military alliances. In just three years, socialism had ceased to be a world-system, leaving the remaining socialist countries to fend for themselves.

From the analysis presented so far, it is possible to discern the broadly similar paths leading to the collapse of a world-system. Undoubtedly, like any brief summary applied to such a vast history, this conceptualization remains incomplete. Yet, while it may not fully capture every nuance, this framework is robust enough to shed light on the contemporary debates we will address.

A world-system enters its final collapse when:

1. The military alliance that explicitly sustains it becomes untenable or is officially or effectively dissolved;
2. The economic infrastructure, financial architecture, and commercial relations—which ensure its effective functioning by making interest alignment beneficial for every sovereign actor—can no longer reproduce themselves, causing the interests of the parties involved to diverge rather than converge;
3. The ideological lines of defense that legitimize its existence have collapsed;

4. A psychology of defeat takes hold within the system's ruling class—manifesting as a sense of despair born from the absence of an exit strategy—leading these ruling groups to turn on one another;

5. As a result of all this, the barriers holding back the destructive rage of the oppressed and exploited masses lose their efficacy;

6. And, marking the definitive turning point, the hegemonic power that has upheld the system across all domains (military, economic, ideological) realizes it can no longer bear the system's weight and steps aside—or is abandoned by those who recognize it can no longer shoulder the burden.

It is only under these conditions—and at a pace dictated by the density of global systemic integration, the reach of the hegemonic power, and the level of development in communication and transport—that the system is ultimately consigned to the dustbin of history by the forces poised to build a new society and a new world-system.

Within this general framework, the fifth factor—the destructive rage of the masses—was not an effective driver in the collapse of the socialist world-system. Moreover, these phenomena may appear in different historical periods as causes and effects of one another in varying sequences. Now, in light of this theoretical framework, we can examine how the imperialist-capitalist system is progressing toward its own 1989–91 moment.

The past 80 years under U.S. hegemony in the imperialist-capitalist world-system were marked by military alliances, where political coercion became inextricably linked with economic coercion. The overarching impact of military pacts on the world-system stemmed from cutting-edge weapons technology reaching unprecedented levels, alongside the absolute necessity of remaining on constant alert against a more advanced social order—the socialist world-system.

NATO served as the direct front line pitted against the socialist world and constituted the core of this military alliance structure, though it was not the only element. The School of the Americas (SOA)—which trained collaborationist armies in Latin America and turned torture and military coups into routine policy—hung like a sword of Damocles over the peoples of the Global South. Pacific Command, stationed across the quadrangle of Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Korea, formed a containment wall encircling the periphery of the socialist

bloc. Spanning a vast geography that included the Middle East and Africa, CENTCOM—the central command overseeing hundreds of military bases—was another formidable instrument of the military alliance directly managed by the United States.

The first significant fissure in NATO appeared as early as the 1990s. European imperialists, eager to level the playing field against dominant U.S. influence, began quietly floating the argument that “since NATO was established to counter the socialist bloc, and the socialist world has now collapsed, NATO is no longer needed.” The civil war they instigated and fueled in Yugoslavia presented EU imperialism with an opportunity to assert itself. They succeeded to some extent, bringing the warring parties together at Dayton without involving the U.S. However, as negotiations were underway, the Srebrenica Massacre—staged by mercenary militias deployed by the U.S.—derailed their plans. With the EU masters suddenly rendered helpless, Clinton emerged with his smug smirk as the savior who rescued Europe from a crisis. In the Kosovo crisis of 1999, orchestrated to finish this unfinished business, no one looked back at Berlin or Paris anymore; all eyes were fixed on Brussels, home to NATO headquarters, and on its American commanders. The blood of tens of thousands had been injected into a comatose NATO like a lifesaving serum.

That same year, NATO concluded that the 21st century would be a “Century of Uprisings.” This was no mere pretext manufactured to ensure NATO's survival; it was intended to transform NATO into the “pivotal force of a global civil war” as a countermeasure to the most extensive challenge the imperialist-capitalist world-system had ever faced.

Yet the U.S., having easily quashed ambitions for European strategic autonomy within NATO, would pay a heavy price for this maneuver. Much like Japan, the European Union imperialists set aside the development of their own military capabilities, diverting their resources instead toward pursuing economic advantages against the United States. Sidestepping military competition created an asymmetrical vacuum within NATO. When France moved in 2011 to execute the UN resolution against Libya without waiting for NATO, the full extent of this void became glaringly apparent. When then-French President Sarkozy took this step—likely driven by a rush to destroy evidence of his financial dealings with Gaddafi—he was horrified to discover within a week that strategic

military munitions had been completely exhausted. It thus became clear that NATO, a major force in this global civil war, was nothing more than a lame horse with a horseshoe on only one hoof. And everything ultimately depended on the power, prestige, and ability of the United States—the sole owner of that single horseshoe—to maintain its image of deterrence.

With the aim of filling the void, the EU prioritized NATO's expansion program, and Ukraine—with its immense military-industrial potential—was selected as a target equivalent to 10 Eastern European countries. Much later, a report by the Hudson Institute would admit the extremely compelling justification for U.S. participation in this game instigated by Europe: "The USSR must be completely erased from human history; it must be destroyed. Its traces are all too present in Russia today." But they failed miserably; their opponents were both formidable and strategically astute. While the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics mounted a massive resistance against the fascist coup in Ukraine, the Moscow government patiently waited until the date NATO withdrew from Afghanistan, thereby securing its rear.

The most reliable NATO weapons in Ukraine were crushed by Russia's superior military technology. The axis power of the global civil war turned into a lame horse floundering in a deep pit, and the U.S.'s military capacity failed to generate the power needed to pull it out of the pit that had trapped it. From then on, developments gained downward momentum, leading NATO toward its demise. First, the Greenland crisis eroded trust among allies; then, the Hormuz standoff pulled the rug out from under the alliance, which had been propped up with great difficulty. France and Germany openly began seeking an EU military alliance—not out of hope that they could create something better, but because they no longer wanted to carry a dead weight.

Another equally practical observation is this: Once it became abundantly clear in Ukraine that imperialist capitalism had lost the military capacity to guarantee a world system under U.S. hegemony, it became evident that not only NATO but all other military pacts have also ceased to exist. As a result of this practical line of thinking, Japan has moved to repeal the constitutional provision that has limited the development of militarism since World War II. In reality, Japanese military technology is by no means lagging behind that of the U.S.; on the contrary, it has surpassed it in

some areas. For example, when the U.S. failed in its years-long tests of a hypersonic missile, it turned to the Japanese, who, in an extraordinarily short time, developed an extremely expensive hypersonic missile system for the U.S.—one unit costing \$40 million. To view Japan's attempt to lift the constitutional barriers that limit militarism simply as the rise of "imperial nationalism" is a superficial perspective. Japan is doing this in preparation for the day when imperialist capitalism as a global system will cease to exist, and those left behind will be abandoned to their own fate.

Another imperial power following the same path is Germany. Boris Pistorius, the perennial defense minister and darling of German financial capital, aims in his "overall defense concept" to fill the strategic vacuum emerging within NATO with a Europe-centered leading military capacity. When Prime Minister Mertz—who feels no need to conceal the economic collapse—admits, "we are no longer a welfare state," and the Chief of the General Staff, referring to the war in Ukraine, confesses, "we need this war for at least another five years; otherwise, we cannot transition to a security society," it becomes much clearer that Germany is indeed preparing for a Europe-wide civil war. Thus, the major powers of the imperialist-capitalist world system are readjusting their military capabilities—either solely for regional security or in preparation for a civil war. The military pacts that encircle the globe—one of the main pillars of the world system—are being replaced by armies geared toward civil war.

The blow this development deals to economic integration and relations of domination is undeniable. An American general once said, "Without McDonnell Douglas, McDonald's couldn't open a single branch anywhere." Now it is time to examine the massive tectonic shifts in the economic foundation of the imperialist system, as well as the major earthquakes and destruction they have caused.

II

Looking at the war and the standoff over control of the Strait of Hormuz, one thing becomes clear: A story begins and ends where it started.

When the U.S. ascended to the throne of hegemony in the imperialist-capitalist world system, the entire world was busy clearing away the rubble of World War II. The U.S. had anchored the division of labor

and relations of domination that would emerge in the world system to be built upon this rubble to a single peg: the 1 ounce of gold = \$35 peg. This anchor, intended to revive the imperialist-capitalist world system, offered a definitive guarantee. It assured the capitalist world: "Conduct all international monetary transactions based on the dollar anchor; I am ready to exchange every penny you accumulate for dollars." However, by the 1970s, this guarantee had become untenable. The productivity gap between the U.S. and other imperialist powers had rapidly narrowed, and in dependent countries, an import-substituting, tariff-protected industrial infrastructure had generally become operational. The capitalist world had reached a stage where it could realize the social scale of production on a global level. Under these circumstances, having a national currency pegged to gold serve as a global equivalent was like forcing the global production chain into a shirt that was far too tight.

To overcome the crises this tight shirt inflicted on capital, the U.S. took its first step by setting the exchange rate at 1 ounce of gold = \$70, but the backlash it faced was staggering. No one wanted to hold dollars; the throne of hegemony was being shaken to its foundations. Every minor tremor sent the dollar at the top reeling. Because the foundation was inflexible—as if paved with stone—gold, whose value had changed very little over the centuries, had to be replaced by a more flexible universal measure of value capable of absorbing the shocks of such tremors. From this perspective, oil was the most suitable commodity. Its high rate of rent allowed it to maintain its position as a commodity that stabilizes supply, despite the rapid fluctuations in its price. Thus, the world's demand for oil would be able to dictate the demand for the dollar. The problem was that, in the early 1970s, oil prices were very low, and the rent band was quite narrow. The U.S. would resolve this issue in a manner befitting its position as the imperialist hegemon: First, provoke; then, facilitate the outbreak of war; and finally, play the role of arbiter.

The story is well known: The first move involved the idea of an "Arab mission" which led to the 1973 Arab-Zionist Israeli war and caused oil prices to skyrocket tenfold in a short period. The stage was set for the second move. According to an agreement reached in 1974, oil profits, laden with massive profit margins, would be held in U.S. banks, and with that same money, dependent countries now struggling

to purchase oil would be turned into debtors. This move also served to establish the cornerstone of the era euphemistically termed "neoliberal."

Undoubtedly, the massive piles of petrodollars flowing from the Gulf were not the sole source of the debt capital that has held the capitalist world captive since those years, but the cornerstone that indexed the ever-growing mountain of debt to the dollar and kept it in balance was in the Gulf. This was so crucial that whenever a threat to the dollar's throne emerged, a military intervention in the Gulf would follow. When Saddam in Iraq decided in 1990 to conduct oil exports in currencies other than the dollar, the 1973 scenario played out once again: Provoke, start a war, intervene!

When the dot-com crisis erupted in the late 1990s, the dollar's throne was shaken once more, and this time the scenario was designed for a global civil war—which brings us to today... The U.S. seemed confident that the same scenario would play out. However, the buffoons in the Trump administration were so consumed by arrogance that they overlooked a fundamental truth: "The fact that the U.S.'s military and political claims have outstripped its actual capabilities is a classic process of imperial decline." In the past, military attacks on the Gulf to maintain the dollar's dominance had been fervently supported by the rest of the imperialist capitalist world. But this time, when the U.S. called for help, its allies in Europe and Asia were looking the other way. Hegemony had run its course.

Much has been written about the global cost of the ongoing crisis in the Strait of Hormuz. Already, there have been an 80% increase in LNG prices, a 70% increase in freight costs, a 100% increase in jet fuel prices, and a 30% increase in fertilizer prices. The International Energy Agency issues daily statements calling this "the greatest oil crisis in history." Refineries, filling stations, and pipelines are increasingly becoming dysfunctional and approaching the point of becoming scrap. But beyond all this, what is truly collapsing are the financial mechanisms of the imperialist-capitalist world. Insurance for large container ships and tankers is the most important derivative of the petrodollar and, just as much as the petrodollar itself, a key element of Wall Street's role in the global economy. In the very first weeks of the war, risk premiums skyrocketed by 1,000 percent, and policies were canceled one after another. Yet these policies constituted a massive portion of

the global credit line overseen by Wall Street. To understand the importance of insurance giants in the global financial arena, one need only look back to 2008. To rescue the insurance giant AIG, the U.S. Treasury was willing to spend hundreds of billions of dollars almost overnight, yet companies like GM and Chrysler were denied a mere \$10 billion in support. The reason is quite clear. Credit and money created through speculation, manipulation, and debt relationships ultimately rely on a wall of insurance. Giants like AIG are like Atlas, the titan who carries Wall Street on his shoulders. These insurance titans owe their stability to the role they play in global trade. The damage inflicted on the global financial architecture by policies canceled due to the Hormuz conflict is rending the wall of security to shreds. It is not difficult to foresee the aftershocks of this devastation. Funds that have been relying on having their equity capital insured while engaging in highly risky manipulation operations are rapidly exiting the market. The drying up of hot money flows leaves every position—overloaded with debt in the short term—vulnerable to collapse. Already, the supply shock in oil has thrown monetary balances into disarray, and a series of dependent countries—from Egypt to Thailand to South Korea—have been placed under the threat of a “sudden halt” in production and circulation. Across this vast geography, there is a massive concentration of proletarian and working-class masses, and events are rapidly heading toward an uprising.

Given the advanced level of economic integration—which creates a tight alliance of interests—within the imperialist capitalist world system, the stance of these allies in turning their backs on the U.S. may seem surprising. First and foremost, the EU is so dependent on the U.S. in terms of defense, energy supply, technology, and financial relations that “if the transatlantic ties were severed, not only would both sides be weakened, but 300 years of Western hegemony would also come to an end.”

It is a well-known and well-documented fact just how advanced the economic integration of the imperialist-capitalist world system is; there is no need to go into detail. What concerns us here is the outcome. The more advanced the integration of a world system, the more sensitive it is to its “weak link.” And now that weak link is the collapse of the petro-dollar and the insurance pump upon which the global financial network is built. Yes, the story ends where it began. The second step in the historical pattern observable

in the collapse of a world system is unfolding in full. The economic structure and financial network can no longer reproduce itself and is fracturing along the lines of conflicting interests.

It has become a practical reality to assume that the military alliance no longer exists, and the mechanisms sustaining economic integration are being shattered one after another by shock waves. What remains is the disappearance of the ideological defense line, a strategic vacuum following the establishment of a defeatist mentality among the ruling elites, and, as the final step, the system’s hegemonic power officially declaring that it can no longer bear this burden. In light of recent developments, we will see that the momentum gained in these remaining steps of the collapse policy far exceeds what was anticipated.

Another milestone in the policy of collapse is the destruction of the defensive lines that legitimize an order as a world system. Today, the Trump administration is providing the most stark demonstration of the demolition of the ideological wall. The fact that the shadow of these small-minded people—whose performances are often mocked but more often inspire revulsion—has stretched so far and grown so large signifies only one thing: The sun is setting.

We find the fundamental class reality behind the repulsive performance of a handful of buffoons in this year’s storm-stirring Davos Report. This year’s Davos Summit, through its report and keynote speeches, presented a complete picture of the collapse of an ideological wall. “The global order is shaped more by power competition than by the pursuit of cooperation (...) strategic isolationism (...) global fragmentation (...) a new economic reckoning is on the horizon (...) All of this concerns the future of the ‘social contract’ more than the markets (...) The chasm between the streets and the elites is widening.”

Those at the summit of the world-system are declaring it openly: the system is fracturing, a reckoning is near, and bourgeois society itself is in the crosshairs. The masters of this imperialist-capitalist order are acutely aware of both their capabilities and the potential of those they rule. Unlike the petty bourgeoisie, they do not cry out that “now is the time of monsters,” nor do they share the anxiety over an unready vanguard—a concern that finds no echo on capital’s balance sheets. The ruling elite calculates every step with the coming revolutionary storm in mind. Every line of the Davos Report quakes with

this very fear.

That the masters of a four-century-old system have pivoted from denial to panic within a single year is a historically profound shift. The collapse of this world order is well underway: its military alliances and economic architecture have fractured irreversibly, while its ideological lines of defense have crumbled. This provides indisputable proof that, at critical historical junctures, events unfold in leaps and bounds.

Unsurprisingly, a race to assign blame for this historic failure is gaining momentum at the top. A major rift erupted at the Davos Summit. The Canadian Prime Minister—interrupted twice by applause—declared: “This is not a transition, but a rupture. We always knew the ‘rules-based order’ was a fiction—one useful for sustaining American hegemony. We put the sign in the window because it benefited us. Now, we are taking it down. The old order will not return, and nostalgia is not a strategy.”

Accusations flew from the podium. Ursula von der Leyen, who only a year prior had gifted Trump a \$2 trillion EU fund, suddenly declared a “parting of ways with the U.S.” This shift in attitude extended beyond the summit: as the Hormuz crisis escalated, German Chancellor Merz noted bluntly, “Iran is humiliating the U.S.”

Although attempts to scapegoat others may evoke the ancient ritual of casting a sacrificial goat into the wilderness, it offers no comfort to the ruling class. They know all too well that the rage of the working masses knows no bounds. We can gauge the depth of this anger from the main report of the Munich Security Conference, aptly titled “Under Destruction.” The report places the concept of *Zerstörungslust*—the raw lust for destruction—front and center, signaling a profound collapse of faith in the myths of progress and reform. People no longer merely oppose the status quo; they are consumed by a desire to tear it down first and ask questions later—a sentiment born from a genuine severing of ties with an order that has inflicted immense suffering.

This reveals the fifth pillar of the world-system’s collapse: the pent-up rage of the exploited no longer respects any barrier. Neither the naive hope that things will improve, nor the numbing promises of reform, nor the habit of submitting to centuries-old institutions can contain it any longer. This break from the status quo is fueled by deep-seated hatred. For a revolution, violent and explosive emotions are far more potent than docile, calculating apathy.

Finally, we arrive at the factor that determines the end point: the hegemonic power—the cornerstone of the world-system—declaring, “I am out of the game.” The U.S. administration under Trump is executing this withdrawal by actively dismantling the pillars of the global order. Tariff rates changing multiple times a day have gutted the WTO framework built over four decades. The Greenland crisis was an open admission that the U.S. will no longer shoulder the burden of NATO and the Atlantic Alliance. Moreover, despite plunging the world into an unprecedented energy crisis, its relentless blockade in the Strait of Hormuz reflects a stark reality: Washington now preserves its power not by sustaining the world-system, but by undermining it. Telling core institutions—including the UN—to fend for themselves, the U.S. has forced even the EU to break its silence and declare, “Enough is enough!”

The policy of collapse has advanced in giant leaps. The disintegration of a four-century-old world-system—unfolding in a matter of years—demands the very audacious optimism that a Leninist would never hesitate to embrace.

To imagine a revolution without leaps is sheer foolishness. The path toward collapse is accelerating toward its seismic climax—the moment when imperialist capitalism ceases to function as a world-system. Beyond this threshold, regional imperialist blocs and individual capitalist states may linger for a time, but they will be left to face their fates alone. The outcome is clear: social upheavals and an era of revolutions—reaching into the very imperialist centers—are entering their most critical, rapid, and impactful stage.

Expansion of Wars, Convergence of Battlefronts, and the Imminent Eastern European War

Stephen Cho | Coordinator of the Korean International Forum

The expansion of wars and the convergence of battlefronts are accelerating. The West Asian and Ukrainian wars are expanding, with an increasing possibility of the Ukrainian war escalating into an Eastern European war. The West Asian and Ukrainian wars are converging and the likelihood of European NATO involvement in the West Asian war is rising. Military tensions in East Asia are also escalating rapidly. The potential convergence of the war in Ukraine with the East Asian war, as well as that of the West Asian war with the East Asian war, is also growing.

US imperialism is being defeated in the West Asian war centered around the war in Iran. US military bases not only in the Gulf states of West Asia, but also in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, have been mostly destroyed, along with numerous aircraft, including aerial refueling tankers. This is precisely why US imperialism and Israeli Zionists have recently been unable to carry out aerial bombardment of Iran. The sheer power of Iran's combined strikes using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones has been fully demonstrated. Iran's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) policy has, in effect, been realized.

Iran has driven recent changes in the situation in the Red Sea by concentrating the support capabilities on Ansar Allah forces. Even without a full-scale assault from Iran, Saudi Arabia is facing a critical crisis solely due to attacks by Ansar Allah forces in southern Yemen and Shia militias in northern Iraq. In September, Ansar Allah forces in Yemen drove out government forces from key strategic positions near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, thereby gaining full control over the area. This signifies that the West Asian war has expanded from the Persian Gulf into the Red Sea. As Saudi Arabia's Aramco oil refining facilities and part of its pipelines were destroyed, oil prices surpassed \$100 a barrel.

Trump rejected Mohammed bin Salman's request for strikes against Ansar Allah. In reality, the USA lacks the weapons to attack Ansar Allah forces. This

is the fundamental reason why the USA agreed with Ansar Allah forces that they would not attack each other. While Saudi Arabia attempts to navigate this crisis through a Mecca Joint Defense Agreement with Pakistan and Türkiye, the likelihood of full-scale military intervention by Pakistan and Türkiye remains low, given the strategic alliance between Ansar Allah and Iran. BRICS and the SCO are the strategic organizations of the anti-imperialist camp countering the G7 and NATO of the imperialist camp. At the SCO summit held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in late August and early September, Pakistan participated as a full member alongside Iran, while Türkiye participated as a partner.

US imperialism has depleted most of its advanced conventional weaponry through NATO's war in Ukraine, the Israeli Zionists' wars in Palestine and Lebanon, and its own war with Iran. It will take several years just to expand these production lines, which have been scaled back for a long time, to the necessary capacity. Crucially, China holds a monopoly of more than 90% on the supply of rare earth elements required for high-performance permanent magnets (NdFeB), which are essential for controlling advanced weaponry. Even with extraordinary levels of investments, it would take 10 to 15 years for the USA to replace Chinese rare earth magnets in its advanced weapon supply chains with domestic and allied sourcing. This is why the US government remains on the defensive against China, even while waging a tariff war against the world.

It has become even clearer that NATO cannot defeat Russia in the war in Ukraine. NATO's objective is to exhaust Russia's national power through a proxy war fronted by Ukrainian neo-Nazis, while accelerating the full-scale escalation of World War 3 by raising the possibility of expanding the Ukrainian war into an Eastern European war and combining it with a West Asian war. To this end, drone weapons, whose effectiveness has been proven in modern warfare, are being utilized to the maximum.

On the occasion of the NATO Defence Ministers' meeting in Brussels in June, the UK Ministry of Defence officially announced a new large-scale military package. This includes a plan to supply 150,000 drones, linked with local production in Ukraine. On the final day of Russia's general elections in September, Ukraine launched a large-scale drone attack. Although drones may not alter the outcome of the war or its overall course, they can demonstrate that Ukrainian neo-Nazis remain active and, they can threaten Russia's "red lines."

In July, Ukraine attacked an Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea. The Ukrainian drone strike caused an explosion aboard the ship, resulting in casualties. This served as a symbolic event showing that the Ukrainian and West Asian wars have become linked as a single theater. Although it has been temporarily defused, it could recur at any time.

In August, when Bulgaria approved the deployment of US aerial refueling tankers to its air force bases, Iran strongly condemned it. Subsequently, Iran warned that if US imperialism were to launch large-scale air strikes against Iran, it would retaliate by striking NATO bases in Bulgaria and Cyprus. The growing possibility of direct warfare between Iran and European NATO comes as no surprise.

In September, Russia bombed a train passing through the Ukrainian region near the Polish border. On board this train were a former British prime minister, a former Swedish prime minister, and a former US CIA director who were returning from a strategic conference in Kiev. The following day, in international waters off Denmark, a Russian naval vessel fired two warning flares at a Danish helicopter conducting surveillance. The day after that, a drone suspected to be Russian was shot down over Lithuanian airspace by NATO air defense. Russia and NATO are now in a highly volatile situation on the brink of war.

In the same month, the Lithuanian parliament was pursuing constitutional amendments to legalize the deployment of nuclear weapons. The Finnish parliament had already passed legislation in June rescinding its ban on the introduction and deployment of nuclear weapons, fully integrating the country into NATO's nuclear sharing system. The deployment of NATO tactical nuclear weapons in close proximity to Russia—such as in Finland and Lithuania—represents a decisive provocation against Russia's "strategic patience."

In mid-August, Vladimir Putin visited the Kuril Islands, followed immediately by Russian missile test launch exercises in the region. This was a counter-measure against Japan's first Tomahawk test firing from an Aegis destroyer in late July and US imperialism's plans to deploy intermediate-range tactical nuclear missiles in East Asia. This reads as a concrete sign that the Eastern European war and the East Asian war are imminent, and that the possibility of their convergence has grown.

Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and China are the most powerful and representative anti-imperialist states. During World War 2, the Soviet Union and the communist forces of Korea and China fought together against Japanese fascism. During the Korean War, China entered the war, and the Soviet Union provided weapons and other forms of support. The DPRK and Russia fought together in the Kursk liberation battle. In the great confrontation between the anti-imperialist camp and the imperialist camp, the Eastern European war and the East Asian war constitute a single, closely interconnected battlefield.

The decline of the USA and other G7 countries is accelerating in proportion to the rapid growth of China and other BRICS countries. The hegemony of the imperialist camp is weakening rapidly, and all the wars and covert operations currently pursued by imperialism stem from efforts to preserve at least part of that hegemony. The war in Iran is simultaneously deepening divisions within the imperialist camp and strengthening unity within the anti-imperialist camp. The anti-imperialist camp is pursuing strategies aimed at further deepening divisions within the imperialist camp, with China at the center of these efforts.

The one-year postponement of the trade war agreed upon by the Chinese and US leaders at APEC summit in the 'Republic of Korea (ROK)' last November was extended by another two months to January next year, through the Beijing summit in May and the Washington summit in September. The key issues between the two countries were postponed to the China-US summits to be held in Shenzhen, China, in November and in Miami, USA, in December after the US midterm elections. This time as well, the Chinese and US leaders each emphasized "tremendous progress" and "pursuing constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability." This has been a consistent trend between the two leaders since the

Beijing summit.

Meanwhile, in the current war situation, the deployment of intermediate-range tactical nuclear missiles is, in a word, a provocative trigger for war. The decisive factor leading to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in Eastern Europe was the attempt by the USA and other NATO members to integrate Ukraine into NATO as a precondition to deploy intermediate-range tactical nuclear missiles there. Russia's "Special Military Operation" in February 2022 occurred after the USA suddenly withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021, CIA Director William Burns visited Russia in November, discussions over Ukraine's NATO membership became increasingly frequent, and the Ukrainian neo-Nazi armed forces' "plan for a full-scale invasion of the Donbas in March" was confirmed.

The UK's efforts to goad Ukrainian neo-Nazis through large-scale military support and thereby drive a war of attrition against Russia evoke the "Great Game" between Russia and the UK in the early 20th century. The "Cold War" after World War 2 can likewise be viewed as a "New Great Game" between the Soviet Union and the USA. It is no coincidence that, in the 21st century, the Western imperialist powers, including the USA, have sought to isolate, divide, and dismantle Russia and China under the names of the "Eurasian encirclement strategy" and the "Asia-Pacific strategy."

Facing a crisis caused by the rapid depletion of advanced conventional weapons, the USA is operationally considering the deployment of those very hazardous intermediate-range tactical nuclear missiles in East Asia. The danger has doubled through Japan's first Tomahawk test launch. In East Asia, an "Asian version of NATO" comprising the USA, Japan, and the 'ROK' has been established, and aggressive joint military exercises such as "Freedom Edge" are being expanded every year and being carried out without exception. This year, the DPRK commissioned the Choe Hyon and Kang Kon, the world's first advanced destroyers capable of launching tactical nuclear cruise missiles, into the West Sea and East Sea, respectively. The commissioning ceremony for the Kang Kon was held on September 6, the day before Freedom Edge began, with Chairman Kim Jong Un in attendance.

Under its "New Cold War" strategy, the imperialist camp is seeking to provoke World War 3 in order to frame Russia and China, alongside the DPRK and

Iran, as a "New Axis of Evil." What is needed for its full-scale escalation is a war in Eastern Europe and a war in East Asia, both of which are now within sight. Just as a war in the 'ROK' and a war in Taiwan are linked, the Eastern European war and the East Asian war are closely interconnected. The current situation is such that if a war breaks out in one theater, a war in the other is bound to break out almost automatically. The imperialist camp is aiming for an Eastern European war in the second half of 2026 to replace the East Asian war that failed to materialize in the second half of 2024. As the imperialist camp's war offensive intensifies, the expansion of the wars and the convergence of battlefronts are accelerating. The world is now witnessing the imminent Eastern European war.