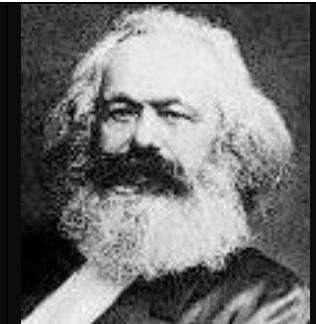


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# **THE CRISIS DEEPENS Marxist Critiques**

**May 1, 2011**

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## Introduction

This is the third pamphlet on the current crisis of capitalism produced by the Crisis Group of The Institute for the Critical Study of Society. The first, “On the Current Capitalist Crisis” appeared in April, 2009. The second, “Obama and the Current Capitalist Crisis” in January, 2010.

This, our latest effort, appears at a time when thankfully the illusionary “Obama will fix it” era has mainly ended. Only those who have given up on the goal of a fully democratic, egalitarian, free and just society of human solidarity can believe that Obama and the two corporate ruling class parties can solve the problems of the people of the U.S. The class struggle, however, continues with if anything greater intensity as the ongoing crisis of capitalism deepens.

Not that Obama has been ineffectual from the point of view of capital. With a smiling face and clever, reassuring speeches, he has pushed forward capitalist “solutions” to the crisis: bailing out the mega-banks and other corporations while cutting into union power and the social wage; extending military adventures into North Africa and Asia; championing life destroying technologies such as nuclear power and off-shore oil drilling in the face of disasters suggesting alternative ecological courses; pushing the privatizing of schools while whittling away at reproductive rights and Medicare; and so forth...for now.

In the wake of the historical fight-back by labor and its allies in Wisconsin and elsewhere across the U.S., the metaphor of “class war” is increasingly becoming etched into the popular consciousness. Whether they are Republicans in the Midwest or Democrats on each coast, both major capitalist parties serve the same master in trying to shift the crisis to the backs of the multinational working class. Through practical struggle, working people are coming to understand that those who control the means of production and command the pinnacles of finance are playing for keeps. No concessions will appease these capitalists. The only solution is to turn relations completely around; that is, revolution.

This pamphlet aims at going deeper into a critique of the system and the revolutionary way forward -- deeper into an understanding of the U.S. power structure, deeper into Marx’s revolutionary philosophy; deeper into the structure of imperialism; deeper into the world revolutionary process; and deeper into the relevance of early Bolshevism today.

Our essays are wide-ranging, covering various aspects of the deepening crisis and the popular struggles that are responding to it.

1. “War on the Working Class: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Responds to the Crisis of Capitalism,” by Laurence H. Shoup, presents a critique of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a powerful ruling class organization. He shows that the Chamber is run by the largest corporations; that it helps set U.S. imperialist policies; that its version of “democracy” is based on large-scale bribery; that the Chamber is engaged on a class war on the working class; that its policies are anti-ecological and life destructive; and that ecosocialism is the life-giving alternative.

2. “Once Again: ‘Today’s Economic Crisis Resurrects Karl Marx and the Search for an Alternative to Capitalism,’” by Ron Kelch, argues that the intense discussion about the meaning of new revolts that have emerged out of the crisis has revealed the distinctiveness of Marx’s philosophy of revolution in permanence including re-examinations of Lenin’s *Imperialism* and Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution.

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3. “What’s New with Imperialism,” by Roger D. Harris, discusses new phenomena, not yet fully expressed in the imperialism of a century ago, which include no imperialist spheres of interest, globalized military, new forms of hegemonic control, accelerated primitive accumulation of capital in the periphery, emergence of the informal sector as a world historical player, peace at the center/war at the periphery, and autonomous zones in the periphery.

4. “The World Revolutionary Process,” by Eugene E. Ruyle, argues that both capitalism and socialism are best understood in global terms. Between global capitalism and global socialism lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of one into the other, the period of the world revolutionary process. The social formations of this period of transition—when the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorships of the proletariat*—exhibit distinctive features that are not those of the communist future.

5. “Bolshevism’s Relevance: Lenin-Trotsky Differences on Theory and Practice,” by Raj Sahai, who writes that when the USSR collapsed in 1991, it was believed by many that Bolshevism is also dead and gone. But what did Bolshevism stand for and how is it that it had such an impact on the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century? The essay examines Bolshevism’s relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by looking at the how Lenin’s and Trotsky’s ideas in the context of the Russian Revolution differed and draws some conclusions for our time.

The members of the Institute for the Critical Study of Society are active in different aspects of people’s struggles in the Bay Area and globally. Some are affiliated with specific political parties and tendencies, others are not. We respect one another, but we do not necessarily agree on all issues. Accordingly, the opinions expressed in each article are those of the authors only and do not represent a group consensus on the issues discussed.

We are united, however, in our respect for the work of Karl Marx and our belief that his work will remain as important for the class struggles of the future as they have been for the past. As a group, we continue to draw inspiration from the work of Karl Marx, including his *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

# War On The Working Class: The U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Responds To The Crisis Of Capitalism

Laurence H. Shoup

## Introduction

Capitalists have to constantly devise ways and means to overcome the chronic problems of their degenerating system. One central source of these problems is the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, which is a source of both crisis and conflict between and among the capitalists. Another factor is the fact that capitalism constantly undermines the conditions for its own (and everyone's) existence by destroying nature to accumulate capital.

The capitalist class has a number of organizations, usually identified as “think tanks” or “policy organizations,” that undertake the system-managing tasks of advance planning, including idea generation, policy development, propaganda, and political action. Examples of such powerful bodies include the Business Council, Business Roundtable, Brookings Institution, Committee for Economic Development, American Enterprise Institute, and the Council on Foreign Relations. One of the most central and powerful of these capitalist organizations is the little-studied United States Chamber of Commerce, which the *Washington Post* recently called “the largest advocacy group in the nation.” It has been especially active during the current crisis of capital and its activities have amounted to a renewed war against working class interests at home and abroad.

## A Portrait of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 1912, the Chamber is in its own words: “the world’s largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chapters and industry associations.” Thousands of state and local Chambers of Commerce and hundreds of business associations are part of the U.S. Chamber, it is estimated to have about 300,000 members.

### *Large or Small Business?*

Although it stresses its small business connections, the organization largely reflects the interests of its large corporate members. For example, the top leadership of the Chamber is composed of very wealthy men with close ties to the largest U.S. corporations. The Chamber’s current president and CEO (since 1997) is Thomas J. Donahue. Donahue’s pay from the Chamber for one year’s work (2008) was \$3.7 million. He is also a director of Union Pacific Corporation. At Union Pacific, Donahue’s fellow board members include the retired chairman of Conoco Phillips, a general partner of Brown Brothers Harriman, the former chairman and CEO of Weyerhaeuser, and former executives with DuPont, Phelps Dodge, and Louisiana Pacific.

Donahue is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), another central organization of the biggest corporations and wealthiest families making up the U.S. capitalist class. The Chamber is also (since 2004) a corporate member of the CFR. The Chamber’s board chairman, Thomas D. Bell, Jr., is also a CFR member and has been a corporate executive at Ball Corporation (an industrial corporation with about 14,000 employees); Young and Rubican (an advertising agency with about 16,000 employees); Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation; Norfolk Southern; and SecurAmerica. The immediate past chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and current chairman of the Chamber’s executive committee is Robert S. Milligan, who is also the

chairman of M.I. Industries, and serves on the President's Council of the National Association of Manufacturers. His wife is on the Board of Directors of Wells Fargo Bank and other corporations. In sum, while extensive ties to smaller businesses exist, the leadership of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is most closely tied to large manufacturing and transportation corporations that dominate key sectors of the U.S. economy and society. The Chamber is also closely tied to other key sectors of the capitalist class, including top financial capitalists, through the CFR.

### **The Chamber's Political and Economic Activities**

The Chamber is simultaneously a think tank, a membership organization, and a partisan political (overwhelmingly Republican) organization with numerous branches and activities. The Chamber's key activities and sub-organizations include an in-house law firm, the National Chamber Litigation Center, which typically files over 100 new cases each year. In 2009, for example, it brought suit in court 134 times, challenging a variety of what the Chamber calls "anti-business measures."

#### *Geopolitical Role*

The U.S. Chamber also sponsors an "Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Energy," the work of which includes studying the geopolitics of U.S. energy security risks, focusing on securing oil and gas supplies in the Middle East through U.S. foreign and military domination. General James L. Jones, Jr., the president of this Institute, was tapped by President Obama to be his National Security Advisor. Before entering the government, Jones was also a director of Chevron and Boeing Corporation, two of the largest multinational corporations. The current vice president of the Institute is Frederick C. Smith, who, like Jones, is a former U.S. military officer. Smith spent time in Iraq during the Bush years as a senior military advisor. His job was to disband the Iraqi army and create a new "Ministry of Defense" for Iraq along American lines. He recalled that the British advisers with whom he worked in Iraq made the "greatest contribution" due to their "imperial background," which made them able to contribute more to the "nation building" (ie. creating a U.S. colony), efforts in which he was engaged. This type of colonialist thinking is pervasive at the higher reaches of the Chamber's foreign policy apparatus, and laid the groundwork for the dispossession and exploitation of the Iraqi people. It was a key background factor in the destruction of so much in Iraq, including hundreds of thousands of its people, in order to attempt to achieve U.S. "energy security."

#### *Spreading Capitalist "Democracy"*

The Chamber also runs the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), which is part of the U.S. government-funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In 2009 the entire CIPE operating budget came from NED, the Department of State and USAID. As is the case for other Chamber programs, the purpose of CIPE is to push private enterprise capitalism and "market-oriented reform" on vulnerable nations and peoples, especially those of the developing world and Eastern Europe. Nations under U.S. military occupation or threatened by violence from U.S. armed forces are among the key targets of CIPE. This is illustrated first by the locations of its six field offices as of September 2010—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt, Romania, and Russia. Also illustrative of CIPE priorities is its funding by region. Fully 45% of its total funding program in 2009 went to the Middle East and North Africa, with another 14% to Asia, 12% to Eurasia, and 10% to Latin America. Assuring control of the world's key energy sources by promoting "private enterprise" in key countries, like oil-rich Iraq, is thus a central part of the Chamber's planning. As reported in CIPE's 2009 *Annual Report*, it has been very active in "developing a favorable investment climate" in Iraq by instructing Iraqi business men on such

topics as organization management, business environment analysis, provincial investment strategy development, and marketing. In its work it cooperates closely with the U.S. embassy in Iraq, by far the largest embassy in the world (and the largest embassy ever built by any country in world history).

CIPE's 21-person board of directors consists of the same type of corporate ruling class leaders that run the Chamber. Six of the 21 are members of the Council on Foreign Relations, including the Chamber's president and CEO Thomas J. Donohoe. The 21 have current or had former executive positions in leading U.S. corporations, most of which have extensive military or foreign business interests. These include Intel, Raytheon, Rand, Nike, Bankers Trust, Northwest Capital, Gap, Google, Facebook, and the Fairfax Group.

### *Lobbying and Bribing Politicians*

Another central component of the Chamber's work is political lobbying and campaign funding activities, amounting to highly organized bribery. It devotes substantial amounts of money pressing politicians to do their bidding, making the Chamber, in the words of *The New York Times*: "the biggest lobbyist in the United States." The effort is "bi-partisan" in that Democrats and Republicans are both lobbied extensively by the Chamber. But about 90% of the Chamber's campaign donations go to fund attack ads against Democrats or directly aid Republican candidates. The Chamber spent tens of millions of dollars during the 2010 election year, mostly to help elect Republicans, focusing strategically on the close races that determined, especially, the control of the House of Representatives. The money for this ambitious agenda comes from a handful of donors. A study by *The New York Times* (10-22-10), found that although the Chamber says it represents 3 million businesses and has about 300,000 members, nearly half of its \$140 million donations in 2008 came from only 45 donors. There is little doubt that these big donors, typically giving over \$1 million at a pop, give to the Chamber as a way to launder their money to hide their interest, such as when Dow Chemical gave \$1.7 million in 2009 so that the Chamber could work against regulations that Dow opposed. Although the Chamber tries to keep its donors secret, the *Times* discovered that other recent large corporate donors to the Chamber have included Goldman Sachs, Chevron/Texaco, Prudential Financial, News Corporation (owner of the Wall Street Journal and Fox News), and a foundation closely linked to American Insurance Group (AIG). This aspect of the Chamber's activities reinforces the overall view that this organization is controlled by and serves the interests of the largest corporations, using corporate ruling class money to further undermine what minimal democracy still exists in the U.S. political system.

### **The July 14, 2010 Open Letter to Obama and the Capital Strike**

On July 14, 2010 the U.S. Chamber of Commerce laid out its reactionary policy positions in a critical "open letter" to President Obama. With this letter the Chamber illustrated that the capitalists are never satisfied with a President unless that President is 100% for big business and the rich, and Obama is viewed as standing at the inadequate level of around 90%. The Chamber stated at the outset of the letter that it had supported the Obama administration's bailouts of giant corporations on Wall Street and in the auto and insurance industries, as well as the economic stimulus program (a major part of which was government aid to business). The Chamber argued, however, that Obama had gone too far, straying "from the proven principles of American free enterprise" with "major tax increases," "massive deficits," and "job-destroying regulation." Ignoring the key roles of capitalist free market policies in general and the Republican Party in particular in generating today's crisis, the Chamber blamed the Obama administration and the capitalist state for the unemployment, underemployment, low consumer confidence, depressed

housing and stock markets, and the sputtering economic recovery characteristic of the current moment. Arguing that the role of government is to “establish the right conditions” for the private sector in order to “foster economic growth” (i.e., protect the class system, make profits and accumulate capital for those already rich), the Chamber stated that the Obama administration and Congress had not fulfilled their roles. Instead, the Chamber said that the Democrats had created “uncertainty,” causing banks to be “reluctant” to lend and American corporations afraid to invest. What the Chamber was actually doing with this statement was justifying a capitalist strike by business, encouraging non-investment because it believed that business could gain government concessions and paralyze the very weak reformist tendencies in current government with this tactic.

The U.S. Chamber identified government policies that would set the “right conditions” for American business to end a capitalist strike. These policies amount to the rape and ruin of both fragile ecologies and the American people for short-term gain. These include tax relief for business; “modernization of entitlements” (code words for gutting the Social Security and Medicare benefits that retired working people depend upon and have, in fact, already fully paid for); full-scale drilling in “oil, gas, and shale leases” on government land; full-scale timber harvesting on nation forest lands; opening of foreign markets; privatizing the nation’s transportation and water infrastructure by removal of regulations and legal and financial limitations on private investment; stopping the Labor Department’s “restrictive workplace policies” and forthcoming “sweeping changes” in “union-management relations” expected from the National Labor Relations Board; incentives and “legal surety” for investment in “clean coal technologies, carbon capture systems and massive expansion of nuclear power”; and an end to the “regulatory burden” on business or jobs that will cause jobs to “simply disappear or be sent offshore.” In sum the Chamber is in effect saying: “force down workers wages further and assure us more profit or we will continue our capital strike by holding or sending our capital to other nations.”

President Obama has rewarded the Chamber of Commerce’s lobbying and its critique with further subservience to business interests at the expense of working class needs. On February 7, 2011, Obama paid homage to the Chamber, visiting its headquarters. There the President stated: “We need to make American the best place on earth to do business”, promising “...we will lay the foundation for you to grow and succeed.” At about the same time, the President appointed Jeffery Immelt, General Electric’s CEO, to head his new economic advisory board, called the “Council on Jobs and Competitiveness.” That Immelt was a poor choice for this position was obvious from the twin facts that GE has been a leading exporter of American jobs, sending them overseas to increase profits and at the same time it has escaped paying taxes in the United States. Predictably, Thomas J. Donohue, the Chamber’s President, “welcomed” the appointment as a “promising step”, adding that “actions” serving concrete capitalist interests remained the ultimate test for Obama.

### **Conclusion**

The audaciously reactionary program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, aiming at a bailout of the wealthy at the expense of the working class, can be critiqued at a number of levels. First, although it is an organization that supposedly opposes the cost, scale, and power of the federal government, it is clear that the Chamber and many of the businesses within it welcome federal help for their own corporations and the capitalist class generally. The Chamber admits that it supported the stimulus and bailouts of top Wall Street firms, auto corporations, and American Insurance Group, paid for by the taxpayers. Its own CIPE program is also totally government funded. In its open letter to President Obama, the Chamber also demanded incentives and legal



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safeguards from the government. Yet it wants cuts to Social Security and Medicare, leaving out the fact that those “entitlements” have been paid for by recipients through payroll deductions. In short, the Chamber’s hypocrisy is breathtaking; it is happy to take the government’s corporate welfare handouts, but does not want other elements of society, especially workers, to receive a dime of benefits.

The Chamber is also profoundly mistaken when it complains about “job-destroying” regulations. Wall Street firms, British Petroleum, American Insurance Group, Massey Coal, Exxon-Mobil (just to cite a few examples), and numerous other death-dealing, job killing, and ecology destroying capitalist organizations have been and still are seriously under-regulated. These and other powerful corporations have been able to and still frequently kill working people with their safety violations, wipe out jobs with their speculation and inflict serious damage on life-giving ecologies with minimal government interference.

### *Class War as an Instrument of Domination*

The Chamber’s rule or ruin policies are class war from above. This includes its encouragement of a capitalist strike and export of jobs. The U.S. Chamber assumes that capitalism is an eternal order, not subject to challenge or change. It cares mainly about profit and little about human life, human development, higher culture, or ecological preservation. Believers in the divine right of capital to rule, Chamber leaders want to utilize the sphere of government as their own personal errand boy. The Chamber assumes that capital creates all value and the workers are only an expense. In reality, it is the workers who create all value, but are exploited and turned into an alienated commodity by capital. At bottom the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is governed by a will to defend the power, property, and privileges of capital at any price, even the destruction of the earth itself. The Chamber’s recent activities show that the big businesses of the U.S. want to completely dominate -- economically, politically, culturally and socially -- this country and the world, creating a kind of plutocratic neo-feudalism with workers as the new serfs.

### *The Enemy of Nature*

As the personification of capital, which dispossesses the vast majority of our people from their right to the means of production that they need to survive, the Chamber of Commerce must be critiqued from a standpoint outside of the capitalist system. The perspective taken as appropriate here is a critique of capital from an ecosocialist perspective. Joel Kovel has done this most profoundly in his path-breaking work: **The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World** (2002, 2007). As Kovel points out, the current crisis facing humanity, especially the ecological crisis, grows out of the normal workings of capitalism, the brutal overlord that currently rules the world. These normal workings include especially a radical eco-destructiveness embedded in capital’s DNA, summed up by the term “expand or die.” Having this constantly growing system (always stressing and acting upon the necessity of endless growth) dominating economic and social development on a finite planet with limited resources will and is leading humanity and many other life forms towards catastrophe. Capitalism’s normal operation also precludes it from being reformed in any serious fashion; as a system it is not capable of real reform.

### *What is to be Done*

This means that we, the workers, must go on the offensive, confront and overthrow the power of a small class of wealthy capitalists as represented by the Chamber and end its alienating reign or face destruction of our world. What has to be created in its stead, through a massive struggle for our commons, is “free associations of the producers,” a society in which the means of production

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(part of the commons) will be assessable to all, and people will create and freely self-determine which collective association they want to engage for mutual productive activity. These free associations will produce mainly for individual and collective use (i.e., stress use-values) and radically reduce the domain of exchange-value (i.e., reduce production and sale of commodities in order to accumulate capital). This means full employment and worthwhile work that people control themselves. In such an ecosocialist system, forms (both means and ends) of productive use-value activity that foster ecosystem integrity will be valorized and practices that harm that integrity will be ended. Fully democratic practice will also be central in this ecosocialist future, involving coming into our full species power, beyond current notions of property and the state. In short, the transformative vision that we are moving towards must be wider and deeper than any subsumed under the labels of past struggles. We must aspire to construct free lives with a higher meaning than accumulating things and asserting power over nature and others. Only by consciously developing our creative human powers, and unifying in a class struggle from below, can we remake ourselves and achieve our full humanness, our potential of becoming fully self-realized.

*Laurence H. Shoup is a historian, author and activist living in Oakland, California. His latest book is **Rulers and Rebels: A People's History of Early California, 1769-1901**, iUniverse, 2010.*

# **Once Again: “Today’s Economic Crisis Resurrects Karl Marx and the Search for an Alternative to Capitalism”**

Ron Kelch

A retrospective since my first ICSS article with that title on April 16, 2009.

## **I. The Dialectic of Crises and Revolts**

Many new revolts emerged out of the global financial meltdown of 2008 and the ensuing economic contraction, but nothing as deep and dramatic as the ongoing revolutions now called “Arab Spring of nations,” so named because for many they bring to mind the democratic revolutions against European autocratic regimes in 1848.

The self immolation of a well educated Tunisian youth, Mohamed Bouazizi, protesting his lack of opportunities and a state that stopped him from even trying to eke out a living peddling fruit on the street, triggered a sustained mass movement that overthrew the entrenched regimes of Ben Ali in Tunisia and then Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. In both countries, a growing mass self-organization and discipline triumphed over despots, propped up for decades by European and, especially U.S., imperialism.

This multi-faceted revolution is perhaps best captured through the amazing transformation of human beings in organizing their daily lives together as they fought the Mubarak regime for eighteen days in Cairo’s Tahrir square (for a more comprehensive view see “Revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya shake world order” by Gerry Emmett, *N&L*, March-April, 2011). Eyewitnesses report a self-organization on a scale of up to a million people at its height. Everywhere participants freely stepped up to perform necessary functions, from the preparing and distributing of food to staffing security check points and defending the square against Mubarak’s thugs.

Far from spontaneity and organization being only opposites, in remarkable moments of their unity a whole people acts with such a sense of purpose, it challenges the very foundation of value production (capitalism) and the idea that there is no alternative to its multiple crises. The proof of theory then becomes sustaining and deepening the unity of spontaneity and organization, not only in relation to what that unified action is in opposition to, but its own positive development as the basis of a non-capitalist future. After all, getting rid of Mubarak was the “easy” part of resolving the crisis in the conditions of life and labor under capitalism.

During Karl Marx’s time mass creativity emerged when Parisians created their own spontaneous form of totally new social relations from below in 1871. He declared that the greatest achievement of their Commune, though brutally defeated, was “its own working existence.” When Marx then laid out the principles from which a non-capitalist future could develop from this new unity of spontaneity and organization, he defined his own concept of a Marxist organization (*Critique of the Gotha Program*). No Marxists after Marx, including Lenin, to whom we will return, made Marx’s concept of organization their own.

Marx’s concept of the future made explicit the theoretical foundation from which at every stage he engaged with those struggling for control over their own lives and labor, a struggle which doesn’t stop with the formal (bourgeois) democracy of political freedom but continues in permanence, continuously working out self-determination and democracy in all the ways humans

materially and spiritually reproduce themselves in their everyday lives. That includes what Marx called the most fundamental man/woman relation.

One of the most remarkable developments in Tahrir Square was the open, day and night, extensive participation of women, leaping past barriers and a pervasive practice of sexual harassment. Young women, such as Asmaa Mahfouz, whose video plea to demonstrate against police brutality on January 25th in Tahrir Square went viral the week before, have been a leading voice in the movement just as they were in recent textile strikes. Yet, when women returned to Tahrir Square on International Women's Day as the country was voting on a new constitution, they were attacked with cries of "Not Now!"

President Obama rightly abandoned Ali and Mubarak as being on the "wrong side of history", yet the constitutional lawyer in the White House, hopes "history" means that the Arab revolutions can be constrained along the lines of formal democracy, as he tries to put a human face on the long history of U.S. imperial domination. But there is no escaping the internal contradictions of capitalism at home or abroad.

Events in Egypt have helped to rejuvenate the U.S. labor movement in mass strikes and demonstrations in Wisconsin against governor Scott Walker's attempt to totally erase bargaining rights of public sector workers. Demonstrators dubbed Walker their Mubarak while other demonstrators, fighting the inhuman and illegal effects of what the Michigan governor calls "financial martial law," are out to "Walk like an Egyptian." If a 25% youth unemployment rate helped fuel the revolution in Egypt, Matthew Klein in the *New York Times*, said the potential for revolution in the U.S. is not that far behind with its 21% unemployment rate for young workers.

## II. A Return to Lenin's *Imperialism*

The multi-faceted revolts in today's global economic crisis demands working out a positive alternative to capitalism. That means going beyond old dualities that led some proponents of anti-imperialism to be defined by what they are against, often tail-ending new forms of counterrevolutionary anti-imperialism like Islamic fundamentalism or narrow nationalism. Facing a new reality, many are returning to reexamine past revolutionary theories, notably Marx, Lenin and Luxemburg.

For example, in light of today's new stage of finance capital there have been attempts to update Lenin's *Imperialism*. One such effort, "Notes on Contemporary Imperialism" by the Indian Marxist economist, Prabhat Patnaik, has caught the attention of Marxists for addressing how the new stage of finance capital has impacted imperialism. However, when Patnaik suggests that global finance capital should be fought not with proletarian internationalism but through "selective de-linking of the national economy from the global economy" he is not updating but breaking with the dialectic structure of Lenin's *Imperialism* which did not just analyze imperialism as a new objective economic stage but worked the way national struggles against imperialism are integral to proletarian internationalism.

*Imperialism* was Lenin's first work after he went off to the library to study Hegel's *Logic* when his organization, the Second "Marxist" International, collapsed. There isn't space here to go into the importance Lenin placed on the need to study Hegel's dialectic directly after the leading "Marxists" in his organization supported national chauvinism and the slaughter of the first world war, abandoning the socialist principle of internationalism. However, Lenin's distinctive dialectical approach to imperialism speaks to today's world.

There were plenty of other commentaries on the new stage of imperialism, which take the form as Patnaik's does, of an analysis of a new objective stage of capitalist development. Hilferding was one. Lenin's Bolshevik colleague Bukharin wrote "Imperialism and the World Economy." All Bolsheviks agreed on the principle of national self-determination. A difference emerged over what does the national struggle against imperial domination mean in relation to proletarian revolution. For Bukharin the struggle for national democratic rights was utopian and a diversion from the proletarian struggle because democracy is an illusion under imperialist capitalism. This is also a view that has appeared in some leftist commentaries on the Arab Spring.

Lenin called this view "imperialist economism" because it overlooked the subjective "democratic tendencies among the masses" in countries like Ireland struggling for national self-determination. Lenin saw those "democratic tendencies" as a new subject which could be a catalyst for the proletarian struggle against capitalism in its latest phase (for a more thorough discussion see "The Irish Revolution and the Dialectic of History" in *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 172). Even more than in Lenin's time the global cross fertilization of mass opposition to imperialism in the new stage of finance capital is pervasive and immediate today as seen by new revolts in Wisconsin as well as the reawakening of the popular revolt against that bastion of counterrevolutionary anti-imperialism, the Islamic Republic in Iran.

For Lenin, the dialectic of a new objective economic stage of capitalism pointed to the creativity of a new subject, a deeper subject confronting the totality of the crisis of capitalism, unlike the "aristocracy of labor" that had transformed into its opposite and backed the imperialists and their super profits, even as competitive capital had been transformed into its opposite, monopoly capitalism. The point was that a new subject emerged in the struggle for democratic rights in dominated nations as well as the deeper and lower layers of the proletariat in the imperialist country.

Lenin's analysis is far from being dated in today's global finance capital. Indeed, the Irish masses have returned to the historical stage. This time it is against global finance capital, which is inseparable in their case from what is now called German "hegemony" over the Eurozone.

### **III. Ireland and Mass Strikes in Europe**

In one of the biggest demonstrations in Ireland since its revolutionary birth in 1916, 100,000 marched in Dublin on Nov. 27, 2010 against the terms of an 85 billion euro loan package put together by the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The marchers were outraged over the Irish government agreeing to new taxes on workers, huge spending cuts in public sector services, as well as a 1 euro decrease in the hourly minimum wage, which will drive wages down for all workers.

As one marching mother put it: "It's not the short-term, immediate pain that worries me....I don't want my toddler to end up in a sweatshop." The Irish economy, which has already shrunk 15% since 2008 with unemployment stuck at over 13%, now faces the specter of a more protracted downward spiral, accelerated by the "rescue" loan, which will have to be repaid at a crushing 6.7% interest.

A prominent sign at the demonstration read in German "6.7% Nein Danke!" (No Thanks) because Germany has insisted on punitive terms for rescuing Eurozone countries who were the victims of speculative finance capitalists. Ireland had no substantial problems with public debt or deficit spending. Indeed, with a public debt of just 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2007, it was more fiscally prudent than even Germany, whose debt was 50% of GDP. Ireland ran up a huge

debt with a \$70 billion bailout of its banks, in hock to mostly foreign bondholders who were facing huge losses after the 2008 collapse of their speculative real-estate bubble. Foreign bondholders repaid Ireland by betting against the government's ability to pay its debt, driving up interest rates and precipitating the present crisis.

Mass strikes and youth revolts throughout Europe have broken out against draconian austerity measures, especially England, which though it is outside the Eurozone, has an economy going down again because a conservative government's severe retrenchment. In Greece alone workers have staged over eight general strikes after their "rescue loan" in May. As austerity drives further economic contraction, a wave of rescues may force multiple countries to breakup the Eurozone and default on their national debts.

European economic integration, including the eventual introduction of a single currency, was promulgated after World War II to foster "human solidarity" and put an end to Europe's plague of bloody nationalism and permanent war. The revolution that led to Irish independence, which as noted above became an important political and philosophic point of departure for Lenin, was against their British imperial overlords then thoroughly embroiled in World War I. It helped to inspire the anti-capitalist revolts in Russia and the rest of Europe.

Can internationalism and genuine human solidarity emerge now that Irish workers, along with their Greek counterparts, are again leading the fight for autonomy and self-determination--this time against global finance capital?

#### **IV. The Rate of Profit and Capital's Class War**

The financial crises and revolts in Ireland and the rest of Europe are the latest fallout from the September 2008 meltdown of capitalism's global system of finance, after which the world's political leaders worked together with a no-holds-barred infusion of cash from state treasuries to bail out the banks in the name of preventing a total collapse of the financial system and another Great Depression. In this moment of what Marx once dubbed "capitalist communism," the financial sector's tremendous losses, which had been tallied as years of fictitious profits, were transferred to workers, who continue to experience depression-level unemployment and are now the designated owners of the bloated national debts. This outrageous reversal of fortune and totally inverted justice keeps spurring new revolts and a search for an alternative to capitalism's business and politics as usual.

The disappearance of fictitious profits revealed a much lower rate of profit being generated in the real economy, where now finance capital, which is again making record profits on paper, is conducting a class war to boost profits, while capital in the real economy is on strike, sitting on a cash hoard of over \$2 trillion in the U.S. alone. During the speculative bubble, consumers in Europe and especially the U.S. were hailed as the heroes of the world economy, but they are now considered profligate. Once the state saved the finance sector, there was no place for the further Keynesian state intervention to boost consumer demand because, for capitalists, workers demand too much and not enough demand is directed to capital goods for capital to accumulate.

Like the economic integration of Europe under the EU, it has been an article of faith that globalization, or globally integrated production, will stave off a drift into war in an economic crisis. Yet while finance capitalists practice solidarity in saving their status as lords of the universe and in waging class war, the now evident collapse in the rate of accumulation also brought new tensions over trade between competing centers of finance capital like the U.S. and

China. In the trade arena, German and Chinese mercantilism are called “acts of war,” as are U.S. efforts to devalue the dollar by flooding the world with its currency.

The trade war between centers of finance capital is background to competition over real weapons. Skirmishes, as on the Korean peninsula, can set off a nuclear war. For example, China and Japan clashed over a Chinese fishing boat, resulting in China’s rulers withholding rare earth elements crucial to Japan’s high-tech car components. This scared the Pentagon because those elements are critical to smart weapons, even as worries mounted about a new Chinese missile that can take out U.S. aircraft carriers. China’s neighbors, who were asserting their independence from the U.S., suddenly lined up behind U.S. imperialism and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s gunboat diplomacy in the area afraid of China’s new military assertiveness.

The very day U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates showed up in China in January to meet Chinese president Hu Jintao to try to promote friendlier relations with China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the PLA sent its own message by testing successfully its first stealth fighter jet, purportedly unbeknownst to Hu and the civilian leaders.

As seen in the Republican victory in the U.S. House of Representatives, the outrage over bailouts and economic hardship can also turn to national chauvinism and racism, attacking Muslims and blaming economic problems on immigrants and unionized workers. The result is that President Obama seems to accept what he once denounced: “the new normal” of the deepest long-term unemployment since the Great Depression. Obama joined the drive to make workers pay for the exploding debt due to the cost of wars and tax cuts for the wealthy, by entertaining deficit reduction plans that cut Social Security and Medicare as well as going after the pay and benefits of workers in the public sector.

There is no political solution to the crisis. That is why, for Marx, the significance of political upheavals is only as they reflect the struggle for self-determination in everyday life against alienated labor, which is the source of all value and surplus value that manifests itself as profit for the capitalist.

## **V. Marx’s Revolution in Permanence is not Trotsky’s Two Stage Permanent Revolution**

Marx’s philosophy of revolution in permanence speaks to Arab masses’ search for the meaning of the new moment they created, which went beyond the confines of a new, albeit more democratic, form of the state. Even as old dualities pull on the Left the new moment has generated a flurry of discussion on spontaneity, anti-imperialism, and “what is socialism?” if not global, proletarian self-emancipation.

One recent International Discussion Group (IDG) meeting took up the relevance of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution to the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Trotsky’s theory was presented as the proponent of internationalism vs. socialism in one country as well as a two stage theory of revolution which moves from the bourgeois democratic stage to the proletarian stage. The only addition was that Trotsky learned about the need for the party from Lenin. The excitement, however, was over ongoing revolutions on the ground in the Arab world, over **THEIR** having initiated this “two step” process. For Marx, “process” was never an abstraction apart from the concrete development of self-determination on the ground. There seems to be little recognition of the wide gap between Lenin and Trotsky on “process”, that is, what it means to be concrete about process in relation to socialism.

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Further, both Lenin and Trotsky have to be measured by Marx's revolution in permanence, from when he initiated it in 1843 in "On the Jewish Question" and then developed and practiced it his whole life, including having singled out the Russian peasantry and their *Mir* as the possible springboard for a socialist beginning.

The distinction between Lenin and Trotsky isn't just that, as Trotsky says, he was Lenin's "pupil" when it came to the peasantry. Rather the distinction is that theory in Marx's sense is not just a prediction or laying out stages but rather Marx's theory has an organic and real life relation to how self-determination deepens in revolution among multiple subjects. The practice of Marx's revolution in permanence is measured by the development of freedom in the concrete, that is, not limiting revolution to achieving civil freedom and abstract legal rights in the state. When civil society overthrows the authoritarian state, as happened with seemingly lightning speed in Tunisia and Egypt and is now catching on throughout the Arab world, the question is whether the idea of freedom can not limit itself to the political arena and, instead, be realized in everyday life reflected, as noted above, in the self-organization in Tahrir Square.

Though Lenin didn't measure up to how revolution in permanence shaped Marx's concept of organization, when it came to his fights within the party there is much affinity with Marx's approach, beginning with singling out in his *April Theses* the importance of the new spontaneous form of organization, the soviets and especially his intra party fight after the revolution, in the Trade Union Debate. For those raising Trotsky as a model for today, this debate itself and the issues it raised seemed to have disappeared from their discourse.

At the IDG discussion on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution many said its relevance to today's momentous events in the Arab world is that revolution is a process. That is true if by "process" one's guide is not a prediction based on two discrete stages but rather, Marx whose concept of liberation engaged the gulf between bourgeois and proletarian aspirations at **each** stage. This, however, wasn't the case with Trotsky who never raised his theory concretely in relation to revolutionary moments. The harmful consequences of Trotsky's approach were most glaring after the revolution.

For many, revolutionary theory hangs on the necessity of "defending the revolution," an idea which also can become an abstraction if it isn't about the living subjects who make the revolution. "Defending the revolution" was certainly an issue when the counterrevolution attacked after 1917. In the civil war Russian workers willingly gave Trotsky extraordinary powers as head of the Red Army, yet the real test came **after** the civil war when the workers wanted their trade unions back, generating the Trade Union Debate.

Trotsky wanted to incorporate the trade unions into the state and called for the continued militarization of labor. It brought him into a sharp dispute with Lenin. Lenin's argument was also especially sharp against Bukharin's claim that both Lenin and Trotsky were right because one needs both politics and economics. Lenin says Bukharin's eclecticism here inserts an unwarranted "and" between politics and economics violating Hegel's "dialectical logic [which] demands that we take an object in its development, its 'self-movement.'"

For Lenin at that moment, the measure for whether the revolution would achieve a new socialist society was the development of workers, educating themselves about the management of the whole economy in their own trade unions and other organizations. This often forgotten and little noted Trade Union Debate (Lenin, *CW*, vol. 32 p. 19-107) reveals the substance of Lenin's cryptic but sharp critique of his co-leaders in the "Will", especially in regards to Trotsky's administrative mentality and Bukharin, the voluminous theoretical writer and favorite of the party, who, nevertheless Lenin said lacked comprehension of the dialectic.



## VI. Marx, Finance Capital and the Dialectic

The totality of the present crisis calls for a return to **Marx's** philosophy of liberation and Marx's take, as he investigated the capitalist economy as a whole, on the "object in its development, its 'self-movement.'" Many commentators today criticize financialization of the economy in general as a reflection of a new stage of "stagnation within production" but for Marx stagnation results specifically from a continued decrease of living labor relative to dead labor or machines, creating a decline in the rate of profit. Because the capitalist begins from total costs with labor viewed only as an expense, Marx says "the extortion of surplus-value loses its specific character." This "specific character" is twice removed from view with the illusion of creating value from nothing through speculative finance capital. Production is the source of both profit and the **illusions** of finance capital. Under finance capital, says Marx, "the way that surplus-value is transformed into the form of profit... is only further extension of that inversion of subject and object which already occurs in the course of the production process itself. We saw in that case how all the subjective productive forces of labour present themselves as productive forces of capital." (Vol. 3, p. 136)

This quote sends the reader looking at the mystery of financial crises back to the alienated inversion of reality in production which holds the minds of the capitalists in thrall and escapes radicals who take a merely economist approach to Marx. To capitalists, it always appears as though an increase in value results from technology. New technology lowers socially necessary labor time and makes those commodities issuing from it temporarily sell above their value, which is determined by the average socially necessary labor time. The "crisis" hits when all capitalists get the same technology (or are driven out of business) and commodities sell for their now lower value, the amount of labor time "in" them.

For a whole society the day of reckoning can reveal, to those willing to see it, that no value is created except by living labor, which declines relative to the amount of capital it takes to put in motion each unit of living labor time. Labor-power itself is a commodity, which when put to use in the value creating process, creates more value than it itself has. The worker's own labor is alienated, a mere means to life in the value creating process. The social power of value in things, commodities and capital, is an alien despotic power that dominates their creators. There is no way out except through workers overcoming the inversion of subject and object by creating their own relations in production where dead labor, technology, dominates living labor.

The domination of dead over living labor is not an abstraction to anyone who has worked where the speed of production is set by the capacity of the machine. However, in the most capital intensive energy sector this domination and anti-human inversion of "subjective forces of labor present[ing] themselves as productive forces of capital" has repeatedly shown how lethal it is to both workers and nature. Three recent dramatic moments did catch widespread attention: 1) the 11 workers killed in BP's Deepwater Horizon explosion, along with the ensuing oil spill's massive ecological damage; 2) the 29 miners killed in the Massey Energy coal mine; 3) the now ongoing nuclear disaster from Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi plant. In each case disastrous consequences can be traced to criminal shortcuts on safety. That is so because what counts as real is neither human capacities, which are merely costs, nor the life sustaining capacity of the planet but rather the machine. The totally illusory value generating capacity of the machine trumps, in the minds of capitalists, safety, environmental or even legal constraints. Laws when they impede this obsessive belief are bypassed whenever possible and the power of wealth is used in the political system to gut them as interference with the need to accumulate.

Capitalists roared back after the finance system was saved by the state to package themselves as opponents of the oppressive state in order wage war against workers and environmental regulation. Thus, the CEO of Massey Energy, Don Blankenship, spoke at a "Tea Party" event he

spent \$1 million to promote, while his regular violation of mine safety rules, only now officially acknowledged, resulted in the murder of 29 miners at the Upper Big Branch explosion. Blankenship was also on the board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which, freed from any restraint from election laws by a reactionary Supreme Court, poured unprecedented funds into the 2010 elections (see “War on the International Working Class: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Responds to the Crisis of Capitalism” by Larry Shoup in this pamphlet). The intense conflict in the political arena, where the total dissemblance of a “Tea Party” whose anti-government stance is government in the service of the unbridled barbarism of capital accumulation, can only be resolved in production which is the source of the totally illusory perspective of value production.

## VII. What was a “Marxist” Organization to Marx?

As Marx saw in the Paris Commune, Lenin in the soviets and many saw in the possibility for a new reality emerging out of mass creativity in Tahrir Square today, there is the possibility to begin anew with a new sense of objectivity built on new, freely associated human relations. That makes it imperative to return to Marx’s concept of organization inseparable from principles that would define a non-capitalist future.

Marx outlined his concept of organization in distinction from the prevailing statist Lassallean view of organization promoted by a socialist gathering at Gotha in 1875. A Lassallean workers’ party that would represent workers’ interests in the state was the real source of Lenin’s concept of the party from which Trotsky learned about organization. Most Marxists after Marx, including Luxemburg, considered Lassalle to be the one who worked out the organization for Marxism. That was so even though the First International in which Marx was the leading voice was much more prominent at its high point than Lassalle’s party. Marx had never made a fetish out of a particular organization like the First International whose moment had past with the defeat of the Paris Commune. That didn’t mean that Marx himself didn’t constitute himself and colleagues that agreed with him as an organizational tendency between moments of mass creativity.

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program* Marx told his supporters that he wanted nothing to do with the program they signed on to because it compromised fundamental principles. Central to those principles was Marx’s concept of labor, including not only wage labor but also the peasantry. Lassalle misconstrued the former and allied himself with the landowners who oppressed the latter. Here Marx was intimating his multi-dimensional concept of liberation as a movement through all the ways humans materially and spiritually reproduce their humanity. In order to give an indication of the fundamental principles that would guide a post-value producing future, Marx returns to ideas he first worked out in 1844 with his concept of alienated labor through which he critically appropriated Hegel’s dialectic.

Thus, Marx’s 1875 principle for labor to “become not only a means to life but life’s prime want” echoes his 1844 concept of labor as “life activity” that is “free, conscious activity” in distinction from alienated labor, which makes labor into a mere “means to life” (CW 24, 87; CW 3, 276). While not immediately realizable, this principle mediates from the start the direction of organizational life in a post-capitalist society. It is in the middle between the “the higher phase of communist society” and the immediate lower phase. Why the change of direction of organizational life in the lower phase? Value-production is organized around value in things, commodities and capital. Capitalism turns labor itself into a commodity, labor-power, which is a means to accumulate capital for the capitalist and a mere means to life for the laborer. The foundation for post-value production is a new beginning in social life processes, the social connections through which labor is organized. From the start, the lower phase of post-value production begins from a new kind of individual for whom labor is directly social which means

that labor is freely associated and each one expends, as Marx puts it in *Capital*, her “labor-power in full self awareness as part of a single social labor force.”

A post value producing future now turns on principles externalized by social individuals who recognize themselves as such, but the ruling principle is not merely the necessary communal appropriation of the means of production. In 1844 Marx considered socialism that defined itself as collective vs. private property to be merely a first negation that is still defined by what it is against, that is, defined as a form of property and not focused on human labor. He then went on to warn, “We should especially avoid counter posing society as an abstraction against the individual. The individual is the social entity.”

In 1875, Marx again begins from the individual as the social entity to define his organizational principles for a post-value-producing society, namely, the development of labor’s productive powers is now coupled with the individual’s “all-round development” as well as ending the individual’s “enslaving subordination to the division of labor, especially the division between mental and manual labor” (CW 24, 87).

With his Lassallean bent on organization Lenin never got beyond the revolutionary politics of transforming the state, achieving what Marx called a “dictatorship of the proletariat” or “the proletariat organized as the ruling class.” Missing from Lenin’s concept of organization are principles that Marx said would shape a new beginning **in production**. Lenin had undergone a profound self-reorganization on the basis of a direct engagement with Hegel’s dialectic, but not when it came to organization. Though Lenin made the self organization of workers and peasants the goal through which the new state was to be run by the population “to a man, woman and child”, he never let go of the vanguard party in spite of the many modifications it underwent, like the need for it to be checked by non-party masses. Lenin did draw on Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Program* to guide his concept of the state and its future withering away, but nowhere does Lenin make the principles Marx laid out in *Critique of the Gotha Program* the conceptual framework for his own organization.

Lenin, even at his highpoint, didn’t align his own organizational concept with Marx’s principles. Though Lenin makes the state under political control of workers the goal in his most serious work of revolutionary theory, *State and Revolution*, his concept of production is factory style discipline and equal pay across the whole society. Lenin’s enthusiasm for the “mechanism of social management” exemplified by the German postal service as a model for a socialist economy is not just a matter of accounting and control or taking workers as they are upon emerging from capitalist production. (see Tom More’s essay, “The moment Lenin missed: what kind of labor?” Dec. ‘08-Jan. ‘09 *N&L*) At the start of the new state Lenin was eager to introduce the then latest capitalist formula for increasing productivity, Taylorism. Taylorism is about labor discipline through pushing the division of labor to the extreme by fragmenting work processes down to the simplest mind dulling tasks.

Later, in the Trade Union Debate as noted above, Lenin did attack Trotsky and other co-leaders for wanting to continue, after the civil war, to run the trade unions as part of the state machinery to extract labor discipline. However, when Lenin struggled against his own party’s lording it over workers and their independent trade unions instead of using persuasion, the “dialectic” was raised very generally as the foundation for uniting politics and economics against Bukharin’s eclecticism. If Lenin didn’t extend his own unique philosophic perspective on the “dialectic” to organization, he did leave a very sharp critique of his co-leaders within the party right up to his death.

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At stake was the nature of theory in determining whether the transition Russia was in was going to something new beyond capitalism or back to another form of capitalist despotism. Bukharin's *Economics of the Transition Period* anticipated much of the theoretical posturing about the nature of Russia after Lenin's death. When Lenin saw Bukharin's statement that "once the destruction of capitalist production relations is really given, and once the theoretical impossibility of their restoration is proven ...," he replied "'Impossibility' is demonstrable only practically. The author does not pose dialectically the relationship of theory to practice."

In light of what happened to Russia and many other aborted and unfinished revolutions, perhaps ours can be the age that finally appreciates the need for Marx's organizational principles explicitly based on a new relationship of theory to practice that develops a new kind of labor in production.

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**Further Reading:** Dunayevskaya, Raya, *Marxism and Freedom*, (Humanity Books, 2000), Chapter 10 "The collapse of the Second International and the break in Lenin's thought."

# What's New With Imperialism

Roger D. Harris

See *Notes on Terminology* at the end of the essay for definitions of *metropolis*, *periphery*, *primitive accumulation of capital*, and other technical terms.

Today's world is clearly different from when Lenin wrote his classic *Imperialism* (1916). Lenin anticipated the role that finance capital would play in his famous work. But it is only in the current historical period that (Patnaik 2010): "modern imperialism is marked by the hegemony of international finance capital, which is the driving force behind the globalization and the pursuit of neoliberal policies..."

Integral to the ascendant role of international finance capitalism are new phenomena, which in my opinion characterize the current period and were not yet fully expressed in the imperialism of a century ago: no imperialist spheres of interest, globalized military, new forms of hegemonic control, accelerated primitive accumulation of capital in the periphery, emergence of the informal sector as a world historical player, peace at the center/war at the periphery, and autonomous zones in the periphery.

The central role of U.S. imperialism and its global reach characterizes the present day world. As the world's only superpower, the U.S. is at the moment both in a position of nearly uncontested power as well as great vulnerability.

## 1. *No Imperialist Spheres of Interest*

Although there were previous hegemonic capitalist based empires, such as the British, these existed within an uneasy and often incendiary context of rival empires each with their constantly contested spheres of influence. Today there is one hegemonic power – the U.S. – and the entire world is its sphere of influence. No corner of the world, however remote, is considered outside of the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism. No *coup d'état* or regime change by other means takes place either with the explicit or more likely implicit blessings of the world hegemon or at the peril of eliciting the wrath of the leviathan.

## 2. *Globalized Military*

Today the U.S. acknowledges an international network of some 700 foreign military bases plus another some 300 "black" or secret military bases (Johnson 2004). And this is not counting bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries where the U.S. military is in active combat. In addition, a nuclear armed Strategic Air Command is in perpetual flight around the globe as is a fleet of nuclear armed submarines in stealth cruise under the world's seas along with intercontinental ballistic missiles on both U.S. soil and abroad...all at combat readiness with the capacity to strike nearly instantaneously anywhere on the planet.

The U.S. military might is roughly equivalent to the strength of all the world's other militaries combined. The U.S. has the physical means to wage war on the world, if its strategic interests are threatened, and has the declared intention of single world mastery.

As Fidel Castro (*Reflections*, March 28, 2011) has commented:

"In 1936 there was an intense confrontation between two systems and two ideologies approximately equal in terms of their military might. Then, weapons seemed like toys compared to current ones.

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Humanity's survival was guaranteed, in spite of their destructive and locally deadly power. Entire cities, and even nations, could virtually be devastated. But never could human beings, in their totality, be exterminated various times over by the foolish and suicidal power developed by contemporary science and technology."

### 3. *Other New Forms of Hegemonic Control*

What is euphemistically called the "international market" and its institutions (e.g., the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, etc.) working hand-in-glove with the military enforces the world domination of financial capital under the aegis of the U.S. and its allies. In this modern period, other forms of hegemonic control and domination are also employed in concert with the market and the military. These other forms of hegemonic control include the media, other agencies of the U.S. government, and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) financed by the U.S. government.

Culture is a tool of control. Mickey Mouse is not a globally recognized icon due to his artistic merits alone. And it is not due to just the quality of its investigative reporting that U.S. commercial news outlets such as CNN can be viewed nearly everywhere in the world.

While having a lower profile, U.S. NGOs infiltrate civil, economic, and political society throughout the periphery on an immense scale (Petras 1997). NGOs for instance played a decisive role as extensions of U.S. imperialism in the recent partitioning of Sudan and in the subsequent establishment of a regime in the southern half friendly to neoliberalism. A similar role is played by outright non-military organs of the U.S. government – both overt and covert – such as USAID and the CIA with semi-official agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Institute, International Republic Institute, etc. These agents of the U.S. government make a profound contribution to maintaining and extending U.S. hegemony.

New communication and information technologies have also been employed by the imperialists as means of command and control. The technologies themselves are class-neutral. Popular rebellions as well as their enemies can both use Twitter. But the "digital divide" has mainly benefited those of means.

### 4. *Accelerated Primitive Accumulation of Capital in the Periphery*

As Patnaik (2010) and Amin (2011) describe, within the current period there has been a massive immiseration of the popular classes (e.g., peasants, workers, etc.) in the periphery. Far from being isolated from the imperialism of the metropolis, the periphery has been profoundly impacted driving the majority of the world's population into ever deeper poverty and misery.

The primitive accumulation of capital is accelerating in the periphery. While primitive accumulation of capital has been a constant feature throughout the history of imperialism, its scope and velocity have increased in recent times, dispossessing entire populations such as the rural Mexican farmer since the imposition of NAFTA in 1994.

Huge swaths of land are being expropriated by transnational interests in the periphery and converted to what is called the "new green revolution" of industrial agriculture with high chemical inputs, reliance of substantial irrigation projects, mechanized methods, production for export, and often using genetically modified organisms. Soy beans are blanketing the Southern Cone of South America. Palm oil plantations are replacing tropical forests across the humid equatorial zones of the world. The landscape of the planet has literally been transformed, adversely impacting both humanity and the environment that is the basis for our material being.

5. *Emergence of the Informal Sector as a World Historical Player*

A vast new sector of humanity has been created—the informal sector—driven by the accelerated primitive accumulation of capital in the periphery (cf. Davis 2006). These people are mostly former peasants who have been forced off the land. These are the people inhabiting the shanty towns, barrios, favelas, and so forth of the rapidly emerging mega-cities in the world. They neither receive regular wages nor till the land for subsistence. They are the market women, the children selling Chiclets on the street, the casual laborers, and so forth trying to eke out a living.

The informal sector is created by the conditions of modern imperialism and is by far the fastest growing component of humanity. Sometimes referred to as “marginalized,” they are more properly understood as those that have been “excluded” (Amin 2003). They are concentrated in the periphery, but are also found in the metropolis. They serve as a vast “reserve army of labor,” but transcend that role both quantitatively and qualitatively.

No longer peasants, but not quite the traditional proletariat, the informal sector constitutes a new actor on the world historical stage. The classical working class traditionally tended to have a more masculine countenance, although women played major and often leading roles in struggles. Today’s struggles by the informal sector are said to have a more decidedly “feminist and youthful face,” especially in Latin America. Women and youth in general have been amongst the most militant and active in the various uprisings.

The informal sector is the grouping that bourgeois population growth theorists identify as the so-called “surplus” or “excess” population... “too many people.” These reactionary theorists blame the victims of world hunger—in the midst of food surpluses—rather than the underlining inability of the globalized capitalist system to equitably support the peoples of the world even when the material means are present. That is, for the first time in the history of humanity, there is enough capacity to meet the basic needs of all.

This new global actor cannot be accommodated by the current world economic and social system. That system is structurally incapable of supplying jobs to these ever growing multitudes or otherwise meeting their basic material needs. A new factor of global instability and potential change is being created by the processes of internationalized capitalism; a factor which is created by but cannot be accommodated by capitalism.

The informal sector was instrumental in contributing to the political base that has overthrown neoliberal regimes in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, to cite just South America. The informal sector has shown itself to be part of the potentially revolutionary grouping of popular classes along with the peasants and workers. They are also the recruiting grounds for right-wing paramilitaries, fundamentalist religions, and drug traffickers. The resolution of these conflicting roles will be a subject of historical practice.

6. *Peace at the Center / War at the Periphery*

While the various imperialist states in the global metropolis constantly compete with each other, the hegemonic role of the U.S. serves among other purposes to contain and adjudicate that competition. This can change in the future, but for the present, inter-imperialist wars such as the First and Second World Wars are not on the horizon. Nor are proxy wars being fought among the imperialist rivals in today’s world politics. The imperialist system, of course, is not frictionless and there will be disputes. But even with the financial crisis of 2008, the makings of armed conflict among the principals were not there. In that respect, the twenty-first century is different

from the preceding one (cf. Hobsbawm 1994). On one hand, all of the other imperialists accept U.S. hegemony and, on the other, the U.S. will tolerate not even a hint of challenge.

The other side of the coin of a relative and uneasy peace among the imperialists of the metropolis is the constancy of war in the periphery to enforce and extend the imperialist world order...Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Haiti, Columbia, etc. The rule of capital is not a natural one, but one that must be imposed and maintained by force.

A cruel exception to the dichotomy of metropolis/periphery or in Lenin's terms imperialist/oppressed nations is the composition of forces waging war in the periphery. To be sure, the metropolis forces with the U.S. as the paramount hegemon take the lead. But they are joined in many instances by nations from the periphery as in the example of the armed subjugation of Haiti under the auspices of the United Nations. Military troops are supplied by the U.S., France, and Canada, but also by sister Latin American nations including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Brazil has the dubious distinction of heading the operation. In addition, police personnel are supplied by such severely internally conflicted nations as Burkina Faso, Columbia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka among others, demonstrating that neo-colonialism has survived into the twenty-first century.

#### *7. Autonomous Zones in the Periphery*

An emerging aspect of the constant war in the periphery has been the development of autonomous zones within peripheral countries where the central government has lost control. It is currently unthinkable for a region within any of the metropolis countries to have autonomous zones, but these are actually fairly common in the periphery. Better known examples are the Zapatista territory in Mexico, the Naxalites in India, the FERC in Columbia, and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). But closer examination reveals less known autonomous bastions of rebellion throughout the states of the periphery such as the Tauregs in Mali or the Casamance area in Senegal.

Such autonomous zones have the potential to be revolutionary contagions, spreading to other areas and ultimately seizing state power. Whether they are a solution or merely a symptom of our age remains to be seen.

#### *Age of Revolution*

To characterize the current age of imperialism as simply the period of the hegemony of the imperialists is to ignore the other side of the historical dialectic. This is also the age of revolution. Perhaps the most significant development since Lenin penned his treatise in 1916 has been the Russian Revolution and the other subsequent socialist revolutions in China, Cuba, and elsewhere along with national liberation struggles in Asian and Africa. While the world revolutionary process is currently mainly on a defensive, the conditions for a positive reversal are present and are even now erupting with the surge of popular rebellion in the Arab world.

The storm center of anti-imperialist revolution in the twentieth century was the periphery or the semi-periphery as in the case of Russia. The twentieth century working classes in the metropolis have largely supported their own rulers and supplied the troops for imperial domination of the periphery. Although the working classes in the metropolis are exploited – they produce more value than they receive back in compensation – they have also benefited from a generally higher standard of living than their counterparts in the periphery, due to the imposition of “imperialist rent” (cf. Amin 2011).



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In the new millennium, the material basis for the internationalist unity of workers and other popular classes in the metropolis with the periphery is ripening as the crisis of imperialism itself is becoming redolent. One of the by-products of globalization has been the universal “race to the bottom” forced on workers by their rulers. (In the U.S., the Democrats and Republicans are playing the “good cop-bad cop” routine, but both branches of the ruling class are united in their objective of bailing out Wall Street and placing the burden on the Main Street.) Major sectors of humanity in the metropolis are becoming more and more like those in the periphery in terms of high infant mortality, homelessness, employment insecurity, and other deteriorating indicators of the quality of life.

The response of the rulers in the metropolis to the financial crisis of 2008 in particular has been an ever more aggressive program of austerity imposed on their own working classes in an attempt to extricate the capitalist system from its systematic crisis. *The task internationally for the workers and other popular classes is to extricate themselves from this system of crisis.* A more benign imperialism that curbs its rapacious acquisitiveness is structurally impossible. The disposed peoples want revolution; nations want liberation; and states want independence (Amin 2011).

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## Notes on Terminology

- **Capitalism** is a political-economic formation based on the private ownership of the means of production by a ruling class, which operates for profit and where the “market” has a pervasive influence on societal life.
- **Hegemony** is another term for rule with the connotation of domination and pervasive authority over others.
- **Imperialism** is used in the sense of Lenin as a stage of capitalism characterized by the domination of the economy by corporations that exercise near monopoly control of the markets in which they operate. Lenin called imperialism the *highest stage of capitalism* in the sense of being the final stage of capitalism.
- **Metropolis/periphery** is used to roughly mean the same as First World/Third World, Global North/Global South, developed/developing countries, center/periphery and so forth. Eighty percent of humanity lives in the periphery. The metropolis is a “triad” composed of the U.S., western Europe, and Japan according to Amin (2011). These are not traditional Marxist categories, though they are used by modern Marxists such as Amin and Patnaik (2010). Lenin spoke of the imperialist and the oppressed nations.
- **Neoliberalism** is the form of capitalist policy where the role of government (i.e., the “state”) is primarily maintaining “security” (e.g., police, military, surveillance) rather than promoting the common welfare (e.g., education, health care, public services) or regulating demand (e.g., “Keynesianism”), which are left to unregulated “market” mechanisms.
- **Primitive accumulation of capital** is a phrase used by Marx to mean the “separation of labor and the worker from the conditions of labor” such as when peasants are forced off of their ancestral lands, marking a transition from a peasant mode of agricultural production to a capitalist mode of agri-business.

# The World Revolutionary Process

Eugene E Ruyle

Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples “all at once” and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism. . . . The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically*, just as communism, its activity, can only have a “world-historical” existence . . . . Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. . [Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*.)]

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*. [Karl Marx, 1875. *Critique of the Gotha Program*]

Our ICSS Crisis group began working on these essays in late 2010, which tied with 2005 for the hottest year on record. As we continued into 2011, we witnessed the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, a clarion call for a renewed anti-nuclear movement. The linkages between nuclear power and nuclear weapons have been clear from the beginning of the nuclear age, and the need to move away from both nuclear energy and fossil fuels—the Energies of Death—have never been more urgent.

At the same time, our spirits have been raised by the uprisings across the Arab world. Coupled with those in the American Midwest, these are vivid reminders that Marx’s red mole of revolution is still burrowing, and that we have no way of knowing where she will next emerge. A few short months ago, who could have said Cairo or Madison? Yet the mass demonstrations in these cities far exceed anything we have seen in recent years.

Liberals may argue that, after all, our nuclear establishment is quite responsible and is learning the lessons of Fukushima, and that nuclear power, for all its faults, is better than coal, and that the Egyptians only want American-style democracy, and that Wisconsin workers are a bit selfish, after all, in these times of fiscal hardship. Perhaps, but as socialists—or communists, to use Marx’s term—we want to see these revolutions made “permanent,” as Marx put it, until “the proletariat has conquered state power . . . not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world.” Our concern is not to make capitalism and imperialism a bit more human, but to abolish them: “not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one.” We want a world in which all people are healthy, well fed, clothed, housed, and well educated, a world in which, as the *Communist Manifesto* put it, “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” We also know that this world must be made ecologically sustainable so that humans can live in harmony with their brothers and sisters and with Mother Earth.

But socialists here in the United States are faced with a difficult situation. Why, in this most highly developed capitalist nation, are workers not more interested in socialism? The usual answers given to this question, unfortunately, lead us to think within the framework of the nation-state and look to factors internal to particular nations.

Too frequently, socialism is discussed from the standpoint of some particular country, such as the United States, Sweden, Cuba, China, or Venezuela, and the prospects for socialism are discussed from standpoint of the class relations and material conditions within that country as though

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capitalism were an economic system that exists within nations at different levels of development. Or it is discussed in general and theoretical terms. Either way, the question is approached in abstraction from the reality that capitalism is global system, within which there are two kinds of nations: imperialist nations and oppressed nations.

Just as capitalism is a global system, so socialism must be a global system. Between global capitalist society and global socialist society must lie a period of revolutionary transformation, the period of the world revolutionary process. As Lenin stressed, this period will last an entire historical epoch. It began in 1917, after a long period of earlier development. The revolutionary transformation of the global system is proceeding under its own dialectic but cannot be completed as long as world imperialism threatens any and all attempts to build socialism.

Thus, in spite of whatever claims may be made by their proponents, neither the Soviet Union, China, nor Cuba can be placed in either the lower or higher phase of communism sketched by Marx in *Critique of the Gotha Program*. As long as global capitalism exists and world imperialism remains a threat, the revolution will need to protect itself while it builds socialism. Under such conditions the state, as Marx stressed in the *Critique*, “can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”

So, when we refer to the Soviet Union, China, or Cuba as socialist countries, this is not to say that they conform to some abstract notion of what socialism should be, or what socialism may be sometime in the future. Rather, these nations made decisive breaks with world imperialism in 1917, 1949 and 1959 and began the difficult process of building socialism. They are therefore part of the global revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, but cannot become socialist until world imperialism has been overthrown, or at least weakened to the point it can no longer threaten them.

The world revolutionary process, in its broadest sense, is the process of transformation of class society into a global classless society. Class society has been around for over five thousand years. The first phase in its transformation was led by the European bourgeoisie, later phases by the international proletariat. The process will be completed as the world’s peoples chose socialism over barbarism. To assess the prospects for socialism in the U.S., or the prospects for the uprisings in Egypt, Wisconsin, or elsewhere, therefore, we cannot restrict our analysis to the particular nations concerned, but must look at this world revolutionary process

In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels stress that their theoretical conclusions did not spring from the heads of some universal reformer, not even their own. Instead, they “merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.” It is important to understand that this “existing class struggle” has been undergoing continual change in the seventeen decades since the *Manifesto* was written. As we review development of the world revolutionary process, we see that there have been revolutionary waves, stronger in some countries than others, as well as periods of relative calm during which, nevertheless, struggles continue to bring evolutionary developments toward socialism. We see changes in organizational form, tactics, and general scope of our struggle. In seeking to assess current prospects, Marx and Engels surely would not content themselves by merely repeating their analyses of 1848. They would critically examine the struggle as it has unfolded since 1848 and as it currently exists in order to gain a better understanding of the world revolutionary process and the emergence of global socialism.

The following sketch is by no means comprehensive, but does mark a first effort to understand the nature and significance of the world revolutionary process. A more detailed analysis is currently in progress (see Further Reading at the end).

## **The World Revolutionary Process I: The Revolutionary Bourgeoisie**

The world revolutionary process was initiated by the bourgeoisie, which has played a “most revolutionary” role in history, according to the *Communist Manifesto*. By creating the world market and incorporating all earlier forms of class rule within the global capitalist system, by creating “more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together,” and by putting “an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations” which bound humans to their natural superiors, the bourgeoisie initiated a revolutionary process which would put an end to class rule itself. The ideals raised by the first phase of the world revolutionary process—freedom, equality, democracy—continue to inspire revolutionary activity around the world. The fossilized remains, so to speak, of these ideals continue to exist in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence of the United States. The attempt to bring actual social practice into line with these ideas continues to be a revolutionary force in America and the rest of the world. “But,” as the *Manifesto* points out, “not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the proletarians.”

## **The World Revolutionary Process II: The Revolutionary Proletariat**

Within decades of the historic French Revolution, the vanguard of world revolution shifted from the bourgeoisie to the working class, as working class movements such as the Chartists began to appear and uprisings of workers broke out as early as 1831 and 1848. In 1871, the workers of Paris established the first working class government in history. (It was preceded by history’s only successful slave revolution in Haiti in 1804.)

These stirrings of working class revolution were given theoretical form by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* and other works. By the time of their deaths in 1883 and 1895, Marx and Engels could see their ideas being confirmed in the actual struggles of the working class in the leading European nations. The working class was becoming increasingly class conscious and powerful; socialist parties were becoming more powerful, successful, and respectable.

But these very successes tended to blind the followers of Marx and Engels to important changes that were occurring within the capitalist system. It began to appear as though socialism could evolve gradually, through peaceful electoral methods, rather than through a working class revolution that would necessarily involve violence. It seemed obvious that the nations that had led the world into capitalism—England, France, Germany—would also lead the world into socialism. All that was necessary was for the workers to elect their representatives to parliament, and use their political and economic power to wrest ever-greater reforms from the capitalists. As Engels himself noted, “We, the ‘revolutionists,’ the ‘overthrowers’—we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal means and overthrow” (Engels 1895:571).

But history, which Engels said turns everything upside down, had decreed otherwise. With the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the representatives of the leading socialist parties in Germany, France, and England voted to support the imperialist war and send their workers off to kill each other. Only the Italian and U.S. socialist parties opposed the war. The outcome of the war was a socialist revolution, not in the leading capitalist nations of Europe, but in backward Russia. What happened?

The answer lies in Lenin and Leninism. By creatively applying Marxism to the changed conditions of the early twentieth century, Lenin not only *interpreted* the world, but *changed* it. The world revolutionary process entered a new phase.

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When Marx was writing *Capital*, he based his analysis on England, which was the leading capitalist nation, and his analysis focused on the capitalism of his time. By the beginning of the twentieth century, capitalism had matured into monopoly capitalism and imperialism, into an international system covering the entire world. Within this world imperialist system, there were two kinds of nations, the imperialist nations and the oppressed nations. The capitalists of the imperialist nations of England, France, and later, Germany, were able to thereby exploit not only their own workers, but also the workers and peasants of the oppressed nations in the colonial world.

This transformation in the nature of capitalism necessarily led to a transformation in revolutionary activity. It was no longer practical to talk of revolution occurring within each capitalist nation according to the degree of development of capitalism within that nation, as did the theorists of the Second International. Rather, one had to work for an international revolution in which the entire imperialist system would undergo a revolutionary transformation into socialism. This revolution would not necessarily break out first in the imperialist nations where the capitalists were strongest, but in the oppressed nations, where the chain of world imperialism was weakest. As the tide of revolutionary activity shifted out of Europe to the oppressed nations of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the weakest link turned out to be Tsarist Russia, which has been undergoing what later would be called dependent development. The development of capitalism in Russia was led by foreign capital. The developing working class, although large in absolute numbers, remained a minority of the Russian population. This was the background for the February and October Revolutions of 1917 that created the Soviet Union, humanity's first conscious attempt to build socialism.

Lenin understood that the shift in the locus of revolution necessitated a shift in revolutionary tactics. In the oppressed nations, the working class was not the majority of the population. Accordingly, the working class had to ally itself with other oppressed classes, specifically the peasants, who formed the majority of the population in the oppressed nations. This worker-peasant alliance, symbolized by the hammer and sickle, became the basis for revolutionary activity in the oppressed nations.

Further, the oppressed nations lacked the institutions of parliamentary democracy and political freedoms that had emerged from the class struggles in the imperialist nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This necessitated a different form of struggle than had developed within the imperialist nations themselves. In order to conduct class struggle under these conditions, the proletariat needed a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries recruited from the most class conscious members of the working class and organized around the principle of democratic centralism.

In the imperialist nations, by contrast, the struggle of the working class becomes deflected by the development of an aristocracy of labor. The imperialists are able to use the super-profits gained by the oppression of their colonies to bribe a sector of the working class. This imperialist bribe becomes the material basis for the opportunism displayed by the Social Democratic parties of the Second International that are committed to reform rather than revolution. This becomes a source of the strength of the bourgeoisie within the imperialist nations.

Thus, Leninism sees capitalism, revolution, and socialism in global terms. The change from capitalism to socialism involves a global transition, not simply individual nations choosing capitalism or socialism. Leninism developed two further concepts for thinking about this global transition: the global crisis of capitalism and the world revolutionary process. The global crisis of capitalism is manifest in inter-imperialist rivalries, the two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the rise of socialism. The world revolutionary process is unfolding along three lines: the

emergence of socialism in the formerly oppressed nations such as the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, continuing struggles for national liberation in the oppressed nations; and continuing working class struggles in the imperialist nations themselves.

Lenin also founded the Communist International, the first truly global organization to try to integrate our entire species, preceding the United Nations by decades. The British Empire may have circled the globe but it never aspired to embrace our entire species. That was the aim of the International.

By 1980, it seemed as though the global transition to socialism was assured as more and more of the oppressed nations broke free from imperialism, while the leading imperialist nation seemed to hit a new low with the election of a second-rate cowboy movie star as President of the United States.

### **The Empire Strikes Back: The Role of U.S. Imperialism**

With the victory of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Leninism became an international movement, and posed a real threat to imperialism. The international bourgeoisie countered this threat economically, politically, militarily, and ideologically

As Marx observed, whatever differences may exist among capitalists, they “form a veritable freemason society vis-à-vis the whole working-class.” Marx further observed, after the overthrow of the Paris Commune:

The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly. Even the atrocities of the bourgeois in June 1848 vanish before the infamy of 1871. The self-sacrificing heroism with which the population of Paris – men, women, and children – fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versailles, reflects as much the grandeur of their cause, as the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over! (*Civil War in France*)

The “undisguised savagery and lawless revenge” of Marx’s time pales in comparison with what bourgeois civilization has done since, from the attempt to “strangle the Bolshevik baby in its crib” to the creation of nuclear weapons. Many capitalists had hoped that the Nazi invasion would destroy the Soviet Union and with it, socialism. Instead, at Stalingrad and elsewhere, the Red Army defeated the Nazi war machine, and the Soviet Union emerged from WWII as a victorious superpower with tremendous prestige throughout the world.

Inspired by the Soviet example, the postwar world has seen repeated attempts “to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie.” All such attempts have been met by violent repression by imperialism, specifically United States imperialism, typically in the form of overt action by the U.S. military or covert action by the CIA. Thus, the attempt of the Vietnamese to free themselves from French colonialism was met by one of the most vicious attacks in history. The attempt of the democratically elected Mosaddegh government in Iran to nationalize British oil companies was met with a vicious CIA engineered coup in 1953. The attempt of the Arbenz government in Guatemala for very limited land reform involving some of United Fruit’s unused land led to another overthrow in 1954. When Chile elected a socialist President, Salvador Allende in 1973, and began to nationalize the copper companies, there was another violent overthrow in which hundreds of Chileans were murdered.

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Such intervention was essential for capitalism to survive the challenge emerging from the October Revolution. As Thomas Friedman noted,

For globalism to work, America can't be afraid to act like the almighty superpower that it is. . . . The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. (*New York Times*, March 28, 1999)

But imperialism and the global capitalist system are not maintained by force alone. Other organizations of imperialist control are important, such as the institutions growing out of the Bretton Woods system, including the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, and the mysterious Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland. Increasingly, the imperialists are keeping the oppressed nations in line using financial methods, such as the infamous SAPs, or Structural Adjustment Programs.

It is clear that, were it not for the actions of U.S. imperialism, the world would be a much different place. As a species, we would be much closer to socialism. The role the United States has played is analogous to that which Marx worried England would play in relation to a revolution on the continent of Europe, as “the rock which breaks the revolutionary waves.” (“The Revolutionary Movement,” January 1849.) The United States could not play this role with a fully class conscious working class, and it is not surprising that American workers are like the British workers that Engels complained about in a letter to Kautsky:

You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general: the same as what the bourgeois think. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies. (London, 12 September, 1882)

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of Americans do support the American system, and, implicitly or explicitly, the two party system, corporate capitalism, and the U.S. military. Such support is largely unthinking, but it is also an expression of what Hunter S Thompson has called “that dark, venal and incurably violent side of the American character that almost every country in the world has learned to fear and despise.” Yet there is another side to the American character, as seen in the many Americans who, like Martin Luther King, are “convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.” The question for Americans, and for our species, is which of these two sides of the American character will prevail.

### **The World Revolutionary Process III: Seattle and After**

The overthrow of the Soviet Union represented an incalculable loss and a tremendous setback for socialism and for people's struggles around the world. However, the revolutionary process itself was by no means stopped. Within ten years a new movement revealed itself within the very heart of the Empire.

Seattle had precursors in the U.S. and globally, for the world revolutionary process had already been transforming itself. The effect of Seattle was to jump start this process on a new foundation. World revolution is no longer centered in Moscow, Beijing, or anywhere else. It is truly a global movement with a multiplicity of components.

The old components still exist. Although the Communist Party was overthrown in the Soviet Union, the Communist Parties of China, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere still exist, although major



policy changes have taken place. Labor unions and socialist, communist, and social democratic parties are still with us, although their strength has been reduced, especially in the heartland of imperialism, the United States.

One of the most distinctive aspects of this new phase of the world revolutionary process is the “revolt of the globalized” that developed in opposition to the neoliberal globalization policies of the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank, as well as various “free trade” policies such as NAFTA. It is itself a global movement that converges in exuberant gatherings of 60,000 people or more whenever the major international agencies of imperialism meet. It also converges at the various World Social Forums that began in Porto Allegre, Brazil in 2001. According to Paul Hadden, in *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*, this movement has over one million organizations and tens of millions of working toward ecological sustainability and social justice throughout the world:

This movement, however, doesn't fit the standard model. It is dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent. It has no manifesto or doctrine, no overriding authority to check with. It is taking shape in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, companies, deserts, fisheries, slums—and yes, even fancy New York hotels.

Millions of people around the world protested the impending war in Iraq on February 15, 2003, leading the New York Times to observe that “there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.” (*New York Times*, 2/16/03)

In Asia, socialist parties have won elections in Nepal and Kerala. The Naxalite insurgency of India, with a Maoist ideology, is active in about 40% of India's land area. In Latin America, socialist parties have won elections in Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, and elsewhere, and a number of nations are attempting to break free from the financial stranglehold of imperialism, forming the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), including the nation states of Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and, before the coup, Honduras.

Although many on the left think the Peoples Republic of China is a capitalist society, it continues to be governed by the Chinese Communist Party that led the world-historic Chinese Revolution of 1949. The long-term impact of China's development on world imperialism is by no means clear. Vietnam and Korea are also officially socialist nations, even though their socialism may not satisfy some Western “Marxists.”

Cuba, with its participatory democracy and ecological sensitivity, provides perhaps the most popular “model” of socialism, but Cuba is still a nation-state within a global capitalist world, faced with extreme hostility from its nearby superpower. Its positive features inspire many, but it must be understood that these cannot truly blossom until the global capitalist system is transformed.

Mention should also be made of the strength of socialist and social democratic parties and labor unions in the leading imperialist nations of Europe. Although many on the left might dismiss European social democracy as reformist and opportunist, they have obtained real accomplishments in living and working standards and in health care, education, and social benefits. Like nearly everything else on the planet, such benefits are under attack by neoliberalism. Without suggesting that Europe is a model for global revolutionary change, it should nevertheless be considered as an important component of the world revolutionary process.

The United Nations is another product of the world revolutionary process. It was established after WWII to achieve world peace and provide a framework for cooperation in economic

development, social progress, human rights, and achievement of world peace. It clearly has undemocratic elements, such as its Security Council, and it is often co-opted to serve the imperialist foreign policy of its most powerful member. But it remains an important agency for global peace and the well being of our species, and must be considered an important component of the world revolutionary process. In 1948, the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is currently considering a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth that would further undermine the hegemony of global capitalism.

Thus, even this cursory overview shows a rich, diverse, and massive opposition to global capitalism. What really unites all these movements is that collectively they are capable of providing alternatives in the impending overthrow of U.S. imperialism. They provide the raw material solving the problems created by global capitalism.

Although global corporations could not survive without the coercive institutions of the U.S. Empire, humanity could do quite well without them. To the TINA of the neoliberal establishment, the world revolutionary process says TAPAS, “There Are Plenty of Alternative Solutions.” The nature of the world that will emerge as the institutions of imperialism are overthrown may be seen in the movements which are resisting the devastation of imperialism, for these movements are truly building a new world in the womb of the old.

While it is important to emphasize the positive features of the world revolutionary process, it is also important to adopt a critical stance and understand its shortcomings. The world revolution process lacks a theory. True, it has many theories—anarchism, deep ecology, eco-feminism, postmodernism—but it lacks theory in the sense that Marxism-Leninism provided a single, overarching theory for the world revolutionary process of the Twentieth Century. Some may see this as a good thing, but we must wonder if a movement that does not understand its own history can lead us into a new future. The movement is often anti-communist and sees the Soviet Union as something to be forgotten. China bashing is frequent, and China is usually seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The movement tends to be anti-corporate but not anti-capitalist. Further, while many NGOs and other civil society organizations are truly grassroots organizations, funding for NGOs frequently comes from bourgeois sources and, in some cases, the CIA. This includes the World Social Forums funded by the Ford Foundation. We wonder to what extent this compromises the revolutionary potential of the movement.

### **Egypt, Wisconsin, and the World Revolutionary Process**

As this essay was going through its successive drafts, we watched with hope and anticipation the unfolding of the revolutionary process in Middle East and the Midwestern United States. These uprisings are linked together not only by the internet, global communication networks, and feelings of solidarity, but also they are linked by U.S. imperialism itself. The Mubarak regime in Egypt was installed and supported by the U.S. to serve imperial interests, and this is the same imperialism that is sucking the wealth out of communities across the United States, leading to the resistance we see in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

It is too early to know how these uprisings will unfold or how U.S. imperialism will respond. But it is clear that a new chapter is being written in the history of the world revolutionary process.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As our *Manifesto* notes, historical class struggles have ended, each time, “either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

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The stakes have never been higher, for “the common ruin of the contending classes” may involve the extinction of our species itself, something that was never really in question before 1945. Now, the very survival of our species is threatened by the nuclear weapons created by U.S. imperialism while the relentless drive for profits has created environmental destruction on a scale that threatens the ability of our Mother Earth to sustain human life.

On the other hand “a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large” would raise our species into the next higher plane of human existence, into a social order as different from our own as ours is from the indigenous people who once inhabited America. As the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan noted, it will be a return, on a higher level, to the liberty, equality, and solidarity of the ancestral commune. Socialism—or communism, to use Marx’s term—has world-historic significance in ending our adolescence as a species and our emergence into maturity.

Following this metaphor, perhaps the world revolutionary process is our rite of passage, a kind of initiation that is fraught with hardship, danger, and suffering but carrying with it a truly awesome potential. Accordingly, the social formations that emerge in the course of the world revolutionary process cannot be judged either by the norms of bourgeois society nor those that will develop in our communist future. They must be understood in its own terms.

As Lenin remarked, the transition from global capitalism to global socialism will involve an entire epoch, an epoch which will be marked by characteristics of both the capitalist past and the socialist future. But it will also exhibit its own characteristics, for, as Lenin tells us, the class struggle is *intensified* during the epoch of the world revolutionary process.

Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this *hope* is converted into *attempts* at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters—who had not exploited their overthrow, never believed it possible, never conceded the thought of it—throw themselves with energy grown tenfold, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of the ‘paradise’ of which they have been deprived, on behalf of their families, who had been leading such a sweet and easy life and whom now the ‘common herd’ is condemning to ruin and destitution (or to ‘common labour’..).

During the Cuban Missile Crisis the Kennedy brothers were willing to blow up the entire world rather than give ground to the Soviet Union. Apparently they sincerely believed the Cold War slogan, “Better Dead Than Red.” It is perhaps understandable that hereditary members of the U.S. ruling class would rather die than give up their wealth and privileges. What is less understandable is their willingness to make this decision not only for themselves and their wealthy counterparts, but for all humanity. No ruling class in history has been guilty of such arrogance. No ruling class in history has developed the instruments and institutions of death and destruction to such an inhuman degree.

How will history judge such people? And how will she judge those who stood up to the attacks of the bourgeoisie and the means they had to employ to protect themselves from imperialist aggression? Future generations, if indeed they will exist, will no doubt consider the plea of Bertolt Brecht, that “we who wished to lay the foundations of kindness could not ourselves be kind,” and not judge the revolutionaries of the twentieth century “too harshly.”

We hope that our great grandchildren will not share the hypocrisy of bourgeois apologists in conflating the violence that sustains an unjust social order with the violence necessary to overthrow capitalism and defend an emerging socialist order. As the pacifist A. J. Muste observed in 1928:

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If Ramsay MacDonald, for example, is to be called a pacifist because he favors the League of Nations and disarmament—though he helps to keep the British navy in trim when he is in power, and tells Indian revolutionists he will have the British army shoot them down if they go too far—then it will be difficult to prove that Stalin and Litvinov are not entitled to the same designation.

The violence used to sustain the unjust social order of the bourgeoisie and the violence necessary to overthrow it may look similar, and both may offend our sensibilities, but sociologically and ethically, they are quite different.

Socialism is world-historic in the sense that it must be a global society, encompassing our entire species. It cannot co-exist with capitalism because capitalism cannot allow any alternative to exist. For this reason, the world revolutionary process must continue, as Marx said, “until all the more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance . . . not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world.” Only then will humanity be able to enter the first phase of communist society, into a just and ecologically sustainable world.

In Marx’s day, “the dominant countries” would have included, at a minimum, France, England, and Germany. Today, global capitalism is much more complex. It is maintained primarily by U.S. imperialism, which has a variety of military, financial, and ideological control mechanisms at its disposal. In this sense, as Samir Amin has recently noted, the overthrow or collapse of U.S. imperialism becomes “the first priority and the first condition” for the emergence of humanity into the new phase of human existence.

We look to Marx for our understanding the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, but we also remember that Marx had few real examples to study. The Paris Commune was crushed within a few months. Even Lenin only had a few years to work on the process of revolutionary transformation. Now, however, we have seen nearly a century of attempts to build socialism within this period of revolutionary transformation. Our task is to proceed as Marx would, by the careful and detailed study of this process about which Marx could only make the most general inferences.

Our Manifesto correctly states that: “Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class.” But this statement should not be interpreted narrowly or dogmatically. The *Manifesto* also recognizes the important role of other classes:

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the progress of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.

Clearly, for Marx and Engels, the working class is “the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands,” but other classes are expected to play a significant role. Lenin understood this. As the world revolutionary process was moving out of the imperialist nations and into the oppressed nations where the working class was a small minority, it was necessary to mobilize the majority against the old order, so Lenin formed the worker-peasant alliance, symbolized by the hammer and sickle.

Now, in the 21st Century, about one half of the world population remains rural, which means they are probably either peasants or indigenous peoples, or both. Clearly, although the working class

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in the imperialist nations, especially the United States, must play a crucial role in confronting the imperialists, they cannot do so alone. An alliance with other classes is needed. Such an alliance must be a two-way street. All partners must learn from the others, it cannot simply be a case of indigenous people accepting Marxism and working class ideology. Instead, Marxism and the working class must also learn from the indigenous peoples of Mother Earth. Such alliances are in fact developing. The question is, can they develop rapidly enough to save us from the impending catastrophe?

As we seek to find our way in the complex global processes of the Twenty First Century, it is vital that we maintain our understanding that Lenin was right in the Twentieth Century, just as Marx was right in the Nineteenth. Our task is to do for Leninism what Lenin did for the Marxism of his day: understand its strengths as well as its shortcomings and creatively apply Marx and Lenin to our changing reality. In pursuing this goal, a sober assessment of the world revolutionary process so far is essential.

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**Further Reading:** A longer version of this essay, with full citations, is in preparation. The latest version is posted on Ruyle's web page, [www.cuyleruyle.com](http://www.cuyleruyle.com), under "Ruyle's writings on Anthropology and Marxism."



**Karl Marx on the owners of the globe**  
*Capital, Vol 3*

From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.

## **Bolshevism's Relevance: Lenin-Trotsky Differences on Theory and Practice**

Raj Sahai

### **Introduction**

When the USSR collapsed in 1991, even many Marxists believed that Bolshevism was also dead and gone. But what did Bolshevism stand for and how is it that it had such an impact on the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century? Does it have any relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? As we observe Lenin's 141<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary, April 22, 1870, I will attempt in this essay to examine bolshevism's relevance by comparing Lenin and Trotsky's ideas in the context of the Russian Revolution and draw some conclusions for our own time.

The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party ("RSDLP") split in 1912 into two factions: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Bolshevism was associated with Lenin's conviction that a social revolution requires two things to succeed: (1) a centralized and disciplined party organization of dedicated Marxist revolutionaries and, (2) A revolutionary program to struggle for state power based on an alliance between the proletariat and the oppressed classes, which in case of Russian empire were primarily the peasantry that comprised over 80 percent of the population and secondarily the national minorities. With Lenin's death in 1924, an ideological struggle took place over the course to be pursued and in that struggle, Trotsky separated from others in the Party. He was ousted and exiled in 1926. Followers of Trotsky believe it was Lenin & Trotsky who together represented true bolshevism, and what emerged under Stalin's leadership was a deformation of bolshevism.

Trotsky laid out his ideas of "Permanent Revolution", a thesis he developed originally in 1905 and subsequently published it in a pamphlet titled 'Results and Prospects' in 1907, in which he stated that the revolution in Russia that started with the opposition to the Tsarist autocracy could not stop at Bourgeois-Democratic stage, but will be compelled to cross over to a socialist revolution. However, to sustain socialism in Russia, support of an advanced European proletarian state will be essential. He also believed that he was consistent with Karl Marx in the slogan of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat', while the two class alliance of workers and peasants expressed in the slogan of 'Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants' that was Lenin's formulation was a deviation from Marxism.

### **How Marx conceived "Permanent Revolution"**

The concept of 'permanence' in revolution was originated by Karl Marx in the following context:

"The decomposition of man into Jew and citizen, Protestant and citizen, religious man and citizen, is neither a deception directed against citizen-hood, nor is it a circumvention of political emancipation; it is political emancipation itself, the political method of emancipating oneself from religion. Of course, in periods when the political state as such is born violently out of civil society, when political liberation is the form in which men strive to achieve their liberation, the state can and must go as far as the abolition of religion, the destruction of religion. But it can do so only in the same way that it proceeds to the abolition of private property, to the maximum, to confiscation, to progressive taxation, just as it goes as far as the abolition of life, the guillotine. At times of special self-confidence, political life seeks to suppress its prerequisite, civil society and the elements composing this society, and to constitute itself as the real species-life of man, devoid of contradictions. But, it can achieve this only

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by coming into violent contradiction with its own conditions of life, only by declaring the **revolution to be permanent**, (emphasis added) and, therefore, the political drama necessarily ends with the re-establishment of religion, private property, and all elements of civil society, just as war ends with peace.” (Marx ‘On the Jewish Question’ page 13, published in 1843)

Thus in Marx’s concept, man can liberate himself only by eliminating private property, law, democracy, religion, in fact the entire basis of state and civil society. It is only then that the revolution can be declared to be permanent.

“Dictatorship of the Proletariat” was also a phrase coined by Karl Marx, which he advanced for the transitional stage between capitalism and communism. Here is how Marx and Engels used the term “permanent revolution”, in public discourse, in the 1850 address to the first International Association of Workers, or “First International”:

“While the democratic petty bourgeois wants to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far – not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world – that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers. Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one.”

So it can be concluded from the above that Marx and Engels see revolution’s permanence only with elimination of private property and ceasing of competition between the proletarians of **all the leading countries** of the world, and not just in one country, and further, that means the founding of a new world society free of wage slavery and alienation.

### “Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants” vs. “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”

In ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme,’ Marx describes the nature of the state in the transitional period between capitalism and communism thus: “Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but **the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.**” (Emphasis in the original)

Lenin’s slogan ‘Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants’ represented a two class alliance that included urban workers as well as peasants: rich peasants (“kulaks” – capitalist farmers of moderate size land holdings, also village money lenders), middle peasants (working but employing a few farm hands) and poor peasants (subsistent family farmers), and agricultural workers. This alliance was directed against the Tsarist absolutism, its supporters in landlords and the urban capitalist class, which was tied to imperialist capital, primarily of Britain and France. It was on the basis of this slogan that Bolsheviks brought the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, which represented the middle and poor peasants; to their side. The Bolsheviks succeeded in the October 1917 revolution to overthrow the bourgeois rule and established the first worker and peasant power in the USSR in the form of the worker and peasant soviets replacing the parliamentary social democracy headed by Kerensky, one that compromised with the capitalists and imperialists. From the above, it appears that Lenin is not consistent with Marx’s definition of the transitional state, because he includes a property owning class, poor peasants, in the alliance.



In contrast to the above, Trotsky wrote in his ‘Results and Prospects’ published in 1907, later further articulated in ‘Permanent Revolution’, published in 1930, the relationship of proletariat and peasantry in Russia within his conception developed in 1905 in the following :

“The Russian bourgeoisie will surrender the entire revolutionary position to the proletariat. It will also have to surrender the revolutionary hegemony over the peasants. **In such a situation, created by the transference of power to the proletariat, nothing remains for the peasantry to do but to rally to the regime of workers’ democracy. It will not matter much even if the peasantry does this with a degree of consciousness not larger than that with which it usually rallies to the bourgeois regime.** (Emphasis added) But while every bourgeois party commanding the votes of the peasantry hastens to use its power in order to swindle and deceive the peasants and then, if the worst comes to the worst, gives place to another capitalist party, the proletariat, relying on the peasantry, will bring all forces into play in order to raise the cultural level of the countryside and develop the political consciousness of the peasantry. From what we have said above, it will be clear how we regard the idea of a ‘proletarian and peasant dictatorship’. It is not really a matter of whether we regard it as admissible in principle, whether ‘we do or do not desire’ such a form of political co-operation. We simply think that it is unrealizable – at least in a direct immediate sense.” .....”But how far can the socialist policy of the working class be applied in the economic conditions of Russia? We can say one thing with certainty – that it will come up against political obstacles much sooner than it will stumble over the technical backwardness of the country. Without the **direct State support of the European proletariat** (emphasis added) the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship. Of this there cannot for one moment be any doubt. But on the other hand there cannot be any doubt that a socialist revolution in the West will enable us directly to convert **the temporary domination of the working class** (emphasis added) into a socialist dictatorship.”

### Lenin’s Critique of ‘Permanent Revolution’

As the reader will note in the above paragraphs, Trotsky believed the peasantry will follow either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat and that the proletariat of Russia will be forced to dominate the peasant class and so it will a temporary victory, which eventually with the support of European proletarian state could transition to socialism, i.e., socialism in Russia alone was impossible. It would seem then that Trotsky’s concept is similar to that of Marx in that revolution’s permanence depends on the proletarians of leading countries gaining political power and then eliminating competition, as in the “United States of Europe” but Lenin reached a different conclusion and it was that capitalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had reached a new stage, its “Highest Stage” in imperialism, had divided the world among a handful of capitalist countries, and given how social democrats in Germany sold out to their national capitalists, Lenin advocated a path that unites workers and majority peasants of Russia, to make a revolution in two stages. Lenin explained:

“To bring clarity into the alignment of classes in the impending revolution is the main task of a revolutionary party. This task is being shirked by the Organizing Committee, which within Russia remains a faithful ally to Nashe Dyelo, and abroad utters meaningless “Left” phrases. This task is being wrongly tackled in Nashe Slovo by Trotsky, who is repeating his “original” 1905 theory and refuses to give some thought to the reason why, in the course of ten years, life has been bypassing this splendid theory. ...From the Bolsheviks Trotsky’s original theory has borrowed their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, while from the Mensheviks it has borrowed “repudiation” of the peasantry’s role. ...The peasantry, he asserts, are divided into strata, have become differentiated; their potential revolutionary role has dwindled more and more; in Russia a “national” revolution is impossible; “we are living in the era of imperialism,” says Trotsky, and “imperialism does not contra-pose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation.” Here we have an amusing example of playing with the word “imperialism”. If, in Russia, the proletariat already stands contra-posed to the “bourgeois nation”, then Russia is facing a socialist revolution (!), and the slogan “Confiscate the

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landed estates” (repeated by Trotsky in 1915, following the January Conference of 1912), is incorrect; in that case we must speak, not of a “revolutionary workers” government, but of a “workers’ socialist” government! The length Trotsky’s muddled thinking goes to is evident from his phrase that by their resoluteness the proletariat will attract the “non-proletarian [!] popular masses” as well! Trotsky has not realized that if the proletariat induces the non-proletarian masses to confiscate the landed estates and overthrow the monarchy, then that will be the consummation of the “national bourgeois revolution” in Russia; it will be a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry!” ...A whole decade—the great decade of 1905-15—has shown the existence of two and only two class lines in the Russian revolution. The differentiation of the peasantry has enhanced the class struggle within them; it has aroused very many hitherto politically dormant elements. It has drawn the rural proletariat closer to the urban proletariat. ...However, the antagonism between the peasantry, on the one hand, and the Markovs, Romanovs and Khvostovs (all landed aristocrats - RS), on the other, has become stronger and more acute. This is such an obvious truth that not even the thousands of phrases in scores of Trotsky’s Paris articles will “refute” it. ... **Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal-labor politicians in Russia, who by “repudiation” of the role of the peasantry, understand (it to be) a refusal to rise up the peasants for the revolution!** (Emphasis added.) That is the crux of the matter today. The proletariat are fighting, and will fight valiantly, to win power, for a republic, for the confiscation of the land, i.e. to win over the peasantry, make full use of their revolutionary powers, and get the “non-proletarian masses of the people” to take part in liberating bourgeois Russia from military-feudal “imperialism” (tsarism). **The proletariat will at once utilize this ridding of bourgeois Russia of tsarism and the rule of the landowners, not to aid the rich peasants in their struggle against the rural workers, but to bring about the socialist revolution in alliance with the proletarians of Europe.**” (Emphasis added. From: ‘Two lines in the Revolution LCW vol. 21, 419-420).

The above two quotes, one from Trotsky and the other from Lenin show how the two concepts differ. Trotsky believed that the peasants will follow the revolutionary proletariat passively; Lenin is looking for revolutionary alliance; Trotsky believes socialism in Russia is blocked by the peasants ultimately and so it can only be achieved when the proletariat in Europe gains **state power** and then the majority peasant country Russia can become socialist with the help of a **European proletarian state**. Lenin in contrast sees alliance with poor peasants as crucial and also believes socialism in Russia can and will be achieved with the help of **proletarians of Europe**, but does not require for this task the **European proletarian state**. These crucial differences perhaps explain the reason for Trotsky’s ambivalence in the period before the revolution towards the Bolsheviks. In his ‘April Theses’, referring to the position of those who wished to support the war continuing against Germany, but were in support of the working class and peasants, Lenin said the following:

“The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defensism (meaning continuation of defense of Russia in First World War started under the Tsar with Germany—Ed.), only on the condition: that the power pass to the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat; that all annexations be renounced in deed and not in word; that a complete break be effected in actual fact with all capitalist interests.”

The point to note here is that Lenin is demanding that power pass on not just to the proletariat, but to proletariat and poor peasants aligned with the proletariat. In other words, this was a two-class alliance, not that he sought power for the proletariat who will then lead the peasants, as Trotsky formulates in ‘Results and Prospects’ the later named ‘Permanent Revolution’. Lenin sees and promotes class-struggle within the peasantry, Trotsky writes off peasants as being incapable of that struggle.

But did Lenin change his view later and come over to Trotsky’s thesis? No, that is not true. Here is what Lenin said after the revolution:

“Bolshevism has popularized throughout the world the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, has translated these words from the Latin, first into Russian, and then into all the languages of the world, and has shown by the example of Soviet government that **the workers and poor peasants, even of a backward country, even with the least experience, education and habits of organization, have been able for a whole year, amidst gigantic difficulties and amidst a struggle against the exploiters (who were supported by the bourgeoisie of the whole world), to maintain the power of the working people, to create a democracy that is immeasurably higher and broader than all previous democracies in the world, and to the creative work of tens of millions of workers and peasants for the practical construction of socialism.** (Emphasis added)...Bolshevism has actually helped to develop the proletarian revolution in Europe and America more powerfully than any party in any other country has so far succeeded in doing. ...the mass of workers in countries are realizing more and more clearly every day that Bolshevism has indicated the right road of escape from the horrors of war and imperialism that Bolshevism can serve as a model of tactics for all.” (Lenin: ‘The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky - What is Internationalism?’ November, 1918 - last three paragraphs combined)

In the 1918 text above Lenin does not say “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” but he has reduced this term to only “dictatorship of the proletariat”. But he uses the term “workers and poor peasants, even of a backward country” to describe this alliance, which is now closer to proletarian dictatorship concept, but is still different than “workers leading the peasants” a term that Trotsky argues is the heart of “dictatorship of the proletariat”. Further Lenin is saying clearly that socialism is possible to be constructed by workers and poor peasants in a backward country.

In his book ‘*The Year 1905*’, written in 1922, Trotsky described his concept of ‘permanent revolution’ thus:

“It was precisely in the interval between January 9 and the October strike of 1905 that those views which came to be called the theory of “**permanent revolution**” (emphasis in the original) were formed in the author’s mind. This rather high-flown expression defines the thought that the Russian revolution, although directly concerned with bourgeois aims, could not stop short at those aims; the revolution could not solve its immediate, bourgeois tasks except by putting the proletariat into power. And the proletariat, once having power in its hands, would not be able to remain confined within the bourgeois framework of the revolution. On the contrary, precisely in order to guarantee its victory, the proletarian vanguard in the very earliest stages of its rule would have to make extremely deep inroads not only into feudal but also into bourgeois property relations. **While doing so it would enter into hostile conflict, not only with all those bourgeois groups which had supported it during the first stages of its revolutionary struggle, but also with the broad masses of the peasantry, with whose collaboration it – the proletariat – had come into power. ..The contradictions between a workers’ government and an overwhelming majority of peasants in a backward country could be resolved only on an international scale, in the arena of a world proletarian revolution.** (Emphasis added.) Having, by virtue of historical necessity, burst the narrow bourgeois-democratic confines of the Russian revolution, the victorious proletariat would be compelled also to burst its national and state confines, that is to say, it would have to strive consciously for the Russian revolution to become the prologue to a world revolution.”

From the above paragraphs, it is very clear that even in 1922, five years after the revolution, Trotsky believed the Russian revolution is headed for a confrontation with the peasantry, because he thinks the entire peasantry represents bourgeois revolution, and will not go beyond that limit. In his opinion then, it will require a world revolution to complete the socialist revolution in Russia. Thus a socialist revolution in one country, Russia, he concludes is impossible. According to Trotsky, “**The peasant follows either the worker or the bourgeois. That means that the ‘democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’ is only conceivable as a dictatorship of the proletariat that leads the peasant masses behind it.**” (Emphasis added. Quoted from “What is the Permanent Revolution’ Basic Postulates, #5).

## Lenin's Critique of Kautsky

In the same 1918 pamphlet noted earlier, Lenin answered Kautsky's critique which also distinguished his concept from that of Trotsky:

"The question which Kautsky has so tangled up was fully explained by the Bolsheviks as far back as 1905. Yes, our revolution is a bourgeois revolution as long as we march with the peasants as a whole. This has been as clear as clear can be to us; we have said it hundreds and thousands of times since 1905, and we have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process or abolish it by decrees. ...Beginning with April 1917, however, long before the October Revolution, that is, long before we assumed power, we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached fantastic dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) will demand steps forward, to socialism. For there is no other way of advancing, of saving the war-weary country and of alleviating the sufferings of the working and exploited people. ....The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First, with the "whole" of the peasants against the monarchy, against the landowners, against medievalism (and to that extent the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). Then, with the poor peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks, the profiteers, and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist one. **To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese wall between the first and second, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of its unity with the poor peasants, means to distort Marxism dreadfully, to vulgarize it, to substitute liberalism in its place.**" (Emphasis added.)

While the above is a critique of Kautsky, not Trotsky, what one has to notice is that Lenin is not making the proletariat as the leader, and the poor peasants as the follower. He is not saying that the peasants are not revolutionaries. He is not laying out postulates for a "permanent revolution" but describing the dialectical movement that weaves the classes aligned to overthrow capitalism: workers against industrial capitalists and poor peasants and the semi-proletarians of the countryside against the capitalist farmers, once the medievalism has been overthrown. Lenin continues:

"The vacillations of the petty bourgeoisie, of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, helped to enlighten the people and to repel the overwhelming majority of them, all the "lower sections", all the proletarians and semi-proletarians, from such "leaders". The Bolsheviks won predominance in the Soviets (in Petrograd and Moscow by October 1917); the split among the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks became more pronounced. ....The victorious Bolshevik revolution meant the end of vacillation, meant the complete destruction of the monarchy and of the landlord system (which had not been destroyed before the October Revolution). We carried the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion. **The peasants supported us as a whole. Their antagonism to the socialist proletariat could not reveal itself all at once. The Soviets united the peasants in general. The class divisions among the peasants had not yet matured; had not yet come into the open. ...That process took place in the summer and autumn of 1918.** (Emphasis added). The Czech counter-revolutionary mutiny roused the kulaks. A wave of kulak revolts swept over Russia. The poor peasants learned not from books or newspapers, but from life itself, that their interests were irreconcilably antagonistic to those of the kulaks, the rich, and the rural bourgeoisie. Like every other petty-bourgeois party, the "Left Socialist-Revolutionaries" reflected the vacillation of the people, and in the summer of 1918 they split: one section joined forces with the Czechs ...while the other section that mentioned above remained with the Bolsheviks."....."**On the other hand, if the Bolshevik proletariat had tried at once, in October-November 1917, without waiting for the class differentiation in the rural districts, without being able to prepare it and bring it about, to "decree" a civil war or the "introduction of socialism" in the rural districts, had tried to do without a temporary bloc with the peasants in general, without making a number of concessions to the middle peasants, etc., that would have been a Blanquist distortion of Marxism, an attempt by the minority to impose its will upon the majority; it would have been a theoretical absurdity,**

**revealing a failure to understand that a general peasant revolution is still a bourgeois revolution, and that without a series of transitions, of transitional stages, it cannot be transformed into a socialist revolution in a backward country.”**(Emphasis added.)

The above paragraphs clearly show how Lenin’s dialectics of the revolution stands in stark contrast to that of Trotsky’s in ‘Permanent Revolution’. Lenin is articulating transitional stages within the revolution. Class consciousness for Lenin is a developing (dialectical) process within the peasant masses, for Trotsky it is the character only of the proletariat. So, what happened that made these two men work together was that Lenin’s unwavering revolutionary program attracted a revolutionary Trotsky, who until then was equidistant from both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, to join the Bolsheviks finally as revolutionary upsurge seemed imminent. But Lenin’s formulation prevented a split between workers and peasants, and retained their support instead of the peasants following the capitalist parties, and that assured success of the revolution and victory in civil war. So, it was not that Lenin who came over to Trotsky’s ‘permanent revolution’ theory but Trotsky accepted Lenin’s less than “pure” Marxism that was in fact the Marxism as applied to qualitatively changed world from Marx’s own time, now completely dominated by “Highest Stage of Capitalism”, that is imperialism and one that was dialectical in its unfolding. Lenin waited for class consciousness to sharpen within the peasant masses which occurred after the October 1917 revolution. Because Trotsky was unable to grasp the revolutionary potential of the poor peasants in this qualitatively new stage, which Lenin explained in his ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’ and because he saw the entire peasantry as rooted in “ancien regime”, he failed to understand the nature of class struggle in its full depth in the epoch of imperialism and the dialectical process within the revolution. This crucial mistake in understanding the dialectics of class struggle is what led Trotsky to suggest militarization of the working class to reinvigorate industrial production, so that it could be exchanged with the peasants for food, rather than extending of the NEP that Lenin had instituted, as a concession to the entire peasantry, until the mass of the peasants could be differentiated along class lines, described above in Lenin’s text.

### **Lenin’s Critique of German Left Communists**

In ‘Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder’, Lenin had this to say to the German Left Communists, who had proposed total rejection of any compromise, such as working in reactionary trade unions and in bourgeois parliaments:

“Since 1905 they (the Bolsheviks) have systematically advocated an alliance between the working class and the peasantry, against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism, never, however, refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instance, during second rounds of elections, or during second ballots) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the bourgeois-revolutionary peasant party, exposing them as petty-bourgeois democrats who have falsely described themselves as socialists. During the Duma elections of 1907, the Bolsheviks entered briefly into a formal political bloc with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Between 1903 and 1912, there were periods of several years in which we were formally united with the Mensheviks in a single Social-Democratic Party, but we **never stopped** (emphasis in original) our ideological and political struggle against them as opportunists and vehicles of bourgeois influence on the proletariat. During the war, we concluded certain compromises with the Kautskyites, the Left Mensheviks...and with a section of the Socialist-Revolutionaries....However, we never ceased and never relaxed our ideological and political struggle... At the very moment of the October Revolution, we entered into an informal but very important (and very successful) political bloc with the petty-bourgeois peasantry by adopting the *Socialist-Revolutionary* agrarian program **in its entirety** (emphasis in the original), without a single alteration—i.e., we effected an undeniable compromise in order to prove to the peasants that we wanted, not to “steam-roller” them but to reach agreement with them. At the same time we proposed (and soon after effected) a formal political bloc, including

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participation in the government, with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who dissolved this bloc after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and then, in July 1918, went to the length of armed rebellion, and subsequently of an armed struggle, against us.” (LCW31 p17-118, written in April-May 1920).

From the above, it becomes very clear that Lenin did not change his theory to accommodate to Trotsky’s ‘permanent revolution’. Secondly it showed Lenin was flexible in strategy when he compromised with certain sections of the Left, or even with the petty bourgeoisie, without giving up his ideological stand, and how it contrasts with the trend in Left revolutionaries of today, who see every tactical compromise as betrayal. History has amply confirmed Lenin as so many revolutions that followed showed that it was: (a) not in the mature capitalist, i.e., imperialist countries, where the social revolutions materialized; (b) that significant layers of workers in imperialist countries could be “bribed” by the super-profits extracted from the Third World sufficiently to blunt their class consciousness for a long time, so they could be the brake on the revolution, evidenced by a century of such success; and (c) that the oppressed, i.e., the poor peasants played an active part in all of these revolutions: USSR, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba etc., in alliance with, and not as a passive followers of workers.

### Socialism in One Country

The second most important aspect of Trotsky’s thesis at odds with Lenin is impossibility of socialism in one country. Lenin disagreed:

“A United States of the World (not of Europe alone) is the state form of the unification and freedom of nations which we associate with socialism—about the total disappearance of the state, including the democratic. As a separate slogan, however, the slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first, because it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others. ...**Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone. After expropriating the capitalists and organizing their own socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country will arise against the rest of the world — the capitalist world — attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their states.** (Emphasis added.) The political form of a society wherein the proletariat is victorious in overthrowing the bourgeoisie will be a democratic republic, which will more and more concentrate the forces of the proletariat of a given nation or nations, in the struggle against states that have not yet gone over to socialism. The abolition of classes is impossible without a dictatorship of the oppressed class, of the proletariat. A free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states.” (LCW V.21, ‘On the Slogan for a United States of Europe’ p339-343, published in August, 1915)

In the above quoted text, Lenin is not just allowing but actually describing the likely development of world socialism starting with a few countries, or that in fact it may only be possible to begin with one country, given uneven development as the absolute law of capitalism. Mao, Ho, Fidel and others who succeeded in leading social revolutions and capturing power amply confirmed Lenin’s conclusion.

## Lenin's Critique of Trotsky on the Role of Trade Unions

Finally, the differences between Lenin and Trotsky on the question of the role of the trade unions bring out again the concept that Trotsky had in his 'permanent revolution' thesis that Lenin criticized yet again:

“...the trade unions are a link between the vanguard and the masses, and by their daily work bring conviction to the masses, the masses of the class which alone is capable of taking us from capitalism to communism. On the other hand, the trade unions are a “reservoir” of the state power. This is what the trade unions are in the period of transition from capitalism to communism. In general, this transition cannot be achieved without the leadership of that class which is the only class capitalism has trained for large-scale production and which alone is divorced from the interests of the petty proprietor. **But the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organization embracing the whole of that class, because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts (by imperialism in some countries) that an organization taking in the whole proletariat cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship. It can be exercised only by a vanguard that has absorbed the revolutionary energy of the class. The whole is like an arrangement of cogwheels. Such is the basic mechanism of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of the essentials of transition from capitalism to communism.** (Emphasis added) From this alone it is evident that there is something fundamentally wrong in principle when Comrade Trotsky points, in his first thesis, to “ideological confusion”, and speaks of a crisis as existing specifically and particularly in the trade unions. If we are to speak of a crisis, we can do so only after analyzing the political situation. It is Trotsky who is in “ideological confusion”, because in this key question of the trade unions' role, from the standpoint of transition from capitalism to communism, he has lost sight of the fact that we have here a complex arrangement of cogwheels which cannot be a simple one; for the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised by a mass proletarian organization. It cannot work without a number of “transmission belts” running from the vanguard to the mass of the advanced class, and from the latter to the mass of the working people. In Russia, this mass is a peasant one. There is no such mass anywhere else, but even in the most advanced countries there is a non-proletarian, or a not entirely proletarian, mass. That is in itself enough to produce ideological confusion..., but it is Trotsky himself who is confused. ... **He seems to say that in a workers' state it is not the business of the trade unions to stand up for the material and spiritual interests of the working class. That is a mistake. Comrade Trotsky speaks of a “workers' state”. May I say that this is an abstraction? It was natural for us to write about a workers' state in 1917; but it is now a patent error to say: “Since this is a workers' state without any bourgeoisie, against whom then is the working class to be protected, and for what purpose?” The whole point is that it is not quite a workers' state. That is where Comrade Trotsky makes one of his main mistakes. We have got down from general principles to practical discussion and decrees, and here we are being dragged back and prevented from tackling the business at hand. This will not do. For one thing, ours is not actually a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state. (Emphasis added).**

“The trade unions,” says Trotsky, “have, for various reasons, not yet succeeded in mustering the necessary forces and working out the necessary methods enabling them to solve the new task; that of *“organizing production”* (Trotsky's italics, p. 9, thesis 8), “set before them by the proletarian revolution and formulated in our Program”.”

Lenin then points out that in the Bolshevik Party program it is laid out differently:

“The trade unions being, on the strength of the laws of the Soviet Republic and established practice, participants” (note the cautious statement: participants only) “in all the local and central organs of industrial management, should eventually arrive at a de facto concentration in their hands of the whole administration of the whole national economy, as a single economic entity” (note this: should arrive at a de facto concentration of management not of branches of industry and not of industry as a whole, but of the whole national economy, and moreover, as an economic entity. In economic terms,

this condition may be considered fulfilled only when the petty producers both in industry and agriculture account for less than one-half of the population and the national economy). “The trade unions ensuring in this way” (the way which helps to realize all the conditions listed earlier) “indissoluble ties between the central state administration, the national economy and the broad masses of working people, should draw the latter” (that is, the masses, the majority of the population) “into direct economic management on the widest possible scale. At the same time, the participation of the trade unions in economic management and their activity in drawing the broad masses into this work are the principal means of combating the bureaucratization of the economic apparatus of the Soviet power and making possible the establishment of truly popular control over the results of production. ...; **finally, we find a highly cautious statement: “making possible” the establishment of “popular”—that is, workers’ and peasants’, and not just purely proletarian—“control”.** (Emphasis added)... It is obviously wrong to boil this down to the Party Program “formulating” the trade unions’ task as “organization of production”. **And if you insist on this error, and write it into your platform theses, you will get nothing but an anti-communist, syndicalism deviation.**” (Emphasis added. LCW - 25 January, 1921 ‘Once Again On the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin’)

So, in the above polemic, Lenin clearly articulated three important differences with Trotsky, (1) that the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised by the mass of that class at least initially, (2) the trade unions in a workers state must stand for the material and spiritual interests of the workers, i.e., the workers’ state usurping that role is undemocratic and, (3) the role of the trade unions as “organizing production” which makes them not just participants but dictators, which is quite different than how Lenin sees it, reading the same party program. The party program calls for “popular control”, not “proletarian control” and the word “popular” means workers and peasants, and if you left out peasants, it deviates from Bolshevism, and if you, Trotsky, insist on trade union’s task as “organization of production”, rather than participation along with the masses in the economic management and curbing bureaucratization, you will end up in **anti-communist syndicalism deviation!**

In summary it is fair to conclude that given all the differences from 1905 to 1922, Trotsky differed substantially with Lenin’s Bolshevism and therefore could not have carried forward the Bolshevik program had the party elected him as its leader upon Lenin’s passing from the scene.

### **The Relevance of Bolshevism Today**

Based on the above, the relevance of Bolshevism should become clear in today’s world as the masses have initiated new struggles in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle-East. Oppressed masses today include workers in the “Informal” sector of the global economy in addition to those that are organized in unions, which are often less than a fraction of the working classes. The surplus population; that advanced capitalism in late 20<sup>th</sup> century version of neoliberalism has generated largely in the Third World until recently; has begun to also create it in the imperialist countries since the 1980s. This constitutes the combined “oppressed” and the “proletarian” classes in the “informal” sector: destitute or near destitute that eke out survival by selling products or services on the streets of the metropolises of the world and even in the small towns, which the capitalist state under its “neoliberalism” guise considers not at all responsible for unlike in the post 1930s depression era, when in the imperialist centers, it (under Keynesian guise) provided social security and living wage jobs to a substantial majority. In addition the peasant economy constitutes one-half of the population of Egypt (in fact of the world), so as a percentage of population it is less significant in Egypt than in Russia of 1917, but to ignore one-half of the population and especially if the conscripted soldiers are disproportionately higher from this layer, which I suspect is the case, it is of great material significance in the ‘balance of forces’, a Leninist concept that is most significant in revolutions and wars, should there emerge a revolutionary



socialist party that can help create soviets of workers, the “informal” sector oppressed, peasants and soldiers and that development can then lead to capture of power by this proletariat led alliance. But between the “informal” sector and peasants (and often a section of the poor peasants are part of the informal sector between sowing or harvest times), there is large mass of the oppressed. Peasants all over the world again under the neoliberal regime of capital are the victims of the finance capitalists. This is not to suggest that the Russian model of Bolshevism can be mechanically duplicated in Egypt or anywhere else. Each country will have its own unique path of the overcoming imperialism and capitalism. However, the Bolshevik idea of revolutionary alliance of Workers and oppressed masses remains valid in this writers’ opinion substantially in nearly all countries of the world.

In the US, the peasant population is relatively small. Most of the agriculture is of monopoly capitalist structure. Consequently, land owning peasants have a marginal role to play in a social revolution, should the capitalist system further deteriorate, and unemployment reach depression era numbers. However, in the US, there are millions of small businesses that are being squeezed by the big business and financial capitalists in the form of banks and insurance companies so hard that many of them are at the verge of or are in fact going bankrupt in the current crisis of capitalism. Yet the small businesses employ 80% of the workers in the US. In order to survive, small business is reducing or eliminating worker benefits and lay off workers. At present the small business is still under the spell of capitalists. However, there may come a point where it may split up, and the lower sections of it, where the owner works along with a few workers may look for another alliance to survive. The Latin immigrants and African American populations constitute the oppressed in the US. Low wage women workers, often single mothers whose problems are both of oppression and exploitation combined constitute another layer. Bolshevism calls for organizing of all these layers that constitute revolutionary potential separately with their own organizations that will form the alliance of workers and very small businesses and oppressed minorities, in the struggle to overcome ravages of capitalism and imperialism. The privileged layers of workers, such as the highly paid workers in emerging industries: in high technology, bio-technology, military industries, and certain security services, majority of tenured academics, senior managers of corporations and capitalists of all types will of course be in the opposition to the movement against capitalism. However, this situation in the US will only come when competition will force the US capitalists to further reduce the social wages for its workers and lay off a higher percentage of workers than is the case now. This process, due to the introduction of greater automation will only intensify, as cities, counties and states and private business employers lay off more workers and cut the benefits of the retained workers in the globalized capitalist production. While this outcome is by no means the only one in the present crisis of capital, return to pre-crisis economy is highly unlikely in this writer’s opinion. The objective conditions for transition to socialism in the US are now fully in place and for the vast majority of the workers, socialism is the only way to reverse the decline in their conditions. Although the majority of US workers still have faith in capitalism, this faith is partly due to belief that socialism has been tried and it has failed. But if their conditions of life continue to deteriorate, they will be open to give socialism another chance. Bolshevism provided the vision and a basis of unity to struggle and succeed a century back. A similar need exists today.

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**Karl Marx on his dialectical method.  
“Afterward to the Second German Edition” of *Capital***

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of “the Idea,” he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of “the Idea.” With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.

The mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic I criticised nearly thirty years ago, at a time when it was still the fashion. But just as I was working at the first volume of “Das Kapital,” it was the good pleasure of the peevish, arrogant, mediocre *Epigonoï* [Epigones – Büchner, Dühring and others] who now talk large in cultured Germany, to treat Hegel in same way as the brave Moses Mendelssohn in Lessing’s time treated Spinoza, i.e., as a “dead dog.” I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.

The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society impress themselves upon the practical bourgeois most strikingly in the changes of the periodic cycle, through which modern industry runs, and whose crowning point is the universal crisis. That crisis is once again approaching, although as yet but in its preliminary stage; and by the universality of its theatre and the intensity of its action it will drum dialectics even into the heads of the mushroom-upstarts of the new, holy Prusso-German empire.



**EXCERPTS FROM**  
**THE MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY**  
**(1848)**

**Karl Marx & Frederick Engels**

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. . . .

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. . . .

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

**Proletarians of all countries, unite!**