

Platform

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The World Anti-imperialist Platform

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

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Imperialism and the Split in Socialism

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin | October 1916

Is there any connection between imperialism and the monstrous and disgusting victory opportunism (in the form of social-chauvinism) has gained over the labour movement in Europe?

This is the fundamental question of modern socialism. And having in our Party literature fully established, first, the imperialist character of our era and of the present war¹, and, second, the inseparable historical connection between social-chauvinism and opportunism, as well as the intrinsic similarity of their political ideology, we can and must proceed to analyse this fundamental question.

We have to begin with as precise and full a definition of imperialism as possible. Imperialism is a specific historical stage of capitalism. Its specific character is threefold: imperialism is monopoly capitalism; parasitic, or decaying capitalism; moribund capitalism. The supplanting of free competition by monopoly is the fundamental economic feature, the quintessence of imperialism. Monopoly manifests itself in five principal forms: (1) cartels, syndicates and trusts—the concentration of production has reached a degree which gives rise to these monopolistic associations of capitalists; (2) the monopolistic position of the big banks—three, four or five giant banks manipulate the whole economic life of America, France, Germany; (3) seizure of the sources of raw material by the trusts and the financial oligarchy (finance capital is monopoly industrial capital merged with bank capital); (4) the (economic) partition of the world by the international cartels has begun. There are already over one hundred such international cartels, which command the entire world market and divide it “amicably” among themselves - until war redivides it. The export of capital, as distinct from the export of commodities under non-monopoly capitalism, is a highly characteristic phenomenon and is closely linked with the

economic and territorial-political partition of the world; (5) the territorial partition of the world (colonies) is completed.

Imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalism in America and Europe, and later in Asia, took final shape in the period 1898–1914. The Spanish-American War (1898), the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and the economic crisis in Europe in 1900 are the chief historical landmarks in the new era of world history.

The fact that imperialism is parasitic or decaying capitalism is manifested first of all in the tendency to decay, which is characteristic of every monopoly under the system of private ownership of the means of production. The difference between the democratic-republican and the reactionary-monarchist imperialist bourgeoisie is obliterated precisely because they are both rotting alive (which by no means precludes an extraordinarily rapid development of capitalism in individual branches of industry, in individual countries, and in individual periods). Secondly, the decay of capitalism is manifested in the creation of a huge stratum of rentiers, capitalists who live by “clipping coupons”. In each of the four leading imperialist countries - England, U.S.A., France and Germany - capital in securities amounts to 100,000 or 150,000 million francs, from which each country derives an annual income of no less than five to eight thousand million. Thirdly, export of capital is parasitism raised to a high pitch. Fourthly, “finance capital strives for domination, not freedom”. Political reaction all along the line is a characteristic feature of imperialism. Corruption, bribery on a huge scale and all kinds of fraud. Fifthly, the exploitation of oppressed nations - which is inseparably connected with annexations—and especially the exploitation of colonies by a handful of “Great” Powers, increasingly transforms the “civilised” world into a

parasite on the body of hundreds of millions in the uncivilised nations. The Roman proletarian lived at the expense of society. Modern society lives at the expense of the modern proletarian. Marx specially stressed this profound observation of Sismondi.²⁾ Imperialism somewhat changes the situation. A privileged upper stratum of the proletariat in the imperialist countries lives partly at the expense of hundreds of millions in the uncivilised nations.

It is clear why imperialism is moribund capitalism, capitalism in transition to socialism: monopoly, which grows out of capitalism, is already dying capitalism, the beginning of its transition to socialism. The tremendous socialisation of labour by imperialism (what its apologists—the bourgeois economists—call “interlocking”) produces the same result.

Advancing this definition of imperialism brings us into complete contradiction to K. Kautsky, who refuses to regard imperialism as a “phase of capitalism” and defines it as a policy “preferred” by finance capital, a tendency of “industrial” countries to annex “agrarian” countries.³⁾ Kautsky’s definition is thoroughly false from the theoretical standpoint. What distinguishes imperialism is the rule not of industrial capital, but of finance capital, the striving to annex not agrarian countries, particularly, but every kind of country. Kautsky divorces imperialist politics from imperialist economics, he divorces monopoly in politics from monopoly in economics in order to pave the way for his vulgar bourgeois reformism, such as “disarmament”, “ultraimperialism” and similar nonsense. The whole purpose and significance of this theoretical falsity is to obscure the most profound contradictions of imperialism and thus justify the theory of “unity” with the apologists of imperialism, the outright social-chauvinists and opportunists.

We have dealt at sufficient length with Kautsky’s break with Marxism on this point in *Sotsial-Demokrat* and *Kommunist*.⁴⁾ Our Russian Kautskyites, the supporters of the Organising Committee⁵⁾ (O.C.), headed by Axelrod and

Spectator, including even Martov, and to a large degree Trotsky, preferred to maintain a discreet silence on the question of Kautskyism as a trend. They did not dare defend Kautsky’s war-time writings, confining themselves simply to praising Kautsky (Axelrod in his German pamphlet, which the Organising Committee has promised to publish in Russian) or to quoting Kautsky’s private letters (Spectator), in which he says he belongs to the opposition and jesuitically tries to nullify his chauvinist declarations.

It should be noted that Kautsky’s “conception” of imperialism - which is tantamount to embellishing imperialism—is a retrogression not only compared with Hilferding’s *Finance Capital* (no matter how assiduously Hilferding now defends Kautsky and “unity” with the social-chauvinists!) but also compared with the social-liberal J. A. Hobson. This English economist, who in no way claims to be a Marxist, defines imperialism, and reveals its contradictions, much more profoundly in a book published in 1902⁶⁾. This is what Hobson (in whose book may be found nearly all Kautsky’s pacifist and “conciliatory” banalities) wrote on the highly important question of the parasitic nature of imperialism:

Two sets of circumstances, in Hobson’s opinion, weakened the power of the old empires: (1) “economic parasitism”, and (2) formation of armies from dependent peoples. “There is first the habit of economic parasitism, by which the ruling state has used its provinces, colonies, and dependencies in order to enrich its ruling class and to bribe its lower classes into acquiescence.” Concerning the second circumstance, Hobson writes:

“One of the strangest symptoms of the blindness of imperialism [this song about the “blindness” of imperialists comes more appropriately from the social-liberal Hobson than from the “Marxist” Kautsky] is the reckless indifference with which Great Britain, France, and other imperial nations are embarking on this perilous dependence. Great Britain has gone farthest. Most of the fighting by which we have won our Indian Empire has been

done by natives; in India, as more recently in Egypt, great standing armies are placed under British commanders; almost all the fighting associated with our African dominions, except in the southern part, has been done for us by natives.”

The prospect of partitioning China elicited from Hobson the following economic appraisal: “The greater part of Western Europe might then assume the appearance and character already exhibited by tracts of country in the South of England, in the Riviera, and in the tourist-ridden or residential parts of Italy and Switzerland, little clusters of wealthy aristocrats drawing dividends and pensions from the Far East, with a somewhat larger group of professional retainers and tradesmen and a larger body of personal servants and workers in the transport trade and in the final stages of production of the more perishable goods: all the main arterial industries would have disappeared, the staple foods and semi-manufactures flowing in as tribute from Asia and Africa. ... We have foreshadowed the possibility of even a larger alliance of Western states, a European federation of Great Powers which, so far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a Western parasitism, a group of advanced industrial nations, whose upper classes drew vast tribute from Asia and Africa, with which they supported great tame masses of retainers, no longer engaged in the staple industries of agriculture and manufacture, but kept in the performance of personal or minor industrial services under the control of a new financial aristocracy. Let those who would scout such a theory [he should have said: prospect] as undeserving of consideration examine the economic and social condition of districts in Southern England today which are already reduced to this condition, and reflect upon the vast extension of such a system which might be rendered feasible by the subjection of China to the economic control of similar groups of financiers, investors [rentiers] and political and business officials, draining the greatest potential reservoir of profit the world has ever known, in order to consume it in Europe. The

situation is far too complex, the play of world forces far too incalculable, to render this or any other single interpretation of the future very probable; but the influences which govern the imperialism of Western Europe today are moving in this direction, and, unless counteracted or diverted, make towards such a consummation.”

Hobson, the social-liberal, fails to see that this “counteraction” can be offered only by the revolutionary proletariat and only in the form of a social revolution. But then he is a social-liberal! Nevertheless, as early as 1902 he had an excellent insight into the meaning and significance of a “United States of Europe” (be it said for the benefit of Trotsky the Kautskyite!) and of all that is now being glossed over by the hypocritical Kautskyites of various countries, namely, that the opportunists (social-chauvinists) are working hand in glove with the imperialist bourgeoisie precisely towards creating an imperialist Europe on the backs of Asia and Africa, and that objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty bourgeoisie and of a certain strata of the working class who have been bribed out of imperialist superprofits and converted to watchdogs of capitalism and corruptors of the labour movement.

Both in articles and in the resolutions of our Party, we have repeatedly pointed to this most profound connection, the economic connection, between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the opportunism which has triumphed (for long?) in the labour movement. And from this, incidentally, we concluded that a split with the social-chauvinists was inevitable. Our Kautskyites preferred to evade the question! Martov, for instance, uttered in his lectures a sophistry which in the Bulletin of the Organising Committee, Secretariat Abroad⁷⁾ (No.4, April 10, 1916) is expressed as follows:

“... The cause of revolutionary Social-Democracy would be in a sad, indeed hopeless, plight if those groups of workers who in mental development approach most closely to the ‘intelligentsia’ and who are the most highly skilled fatally drifted away from it towards opportunism. ...”

By means of the silly word “fatally” and a certain sleight-of-hand, the fact is evaded that certain groups of workers have already drifted away to opportunism and to the imperialist bourgeoisie! And that is the very fact the sophists of the O.C. want to evade! They confine themselves to the “official optimism” the Kautskyite Hilferding and many others now flaunt: objective conditions guarantee the unity of the proletariat and the victory of the revolutionary trend! We, forsooth, are “optimists” with regard to the proletariat!

But in reality all these Kautskyites - Hilferding, the O.C. supporters, Martov and Co. - are optimists ... with regard to opportunism. That is the whole point!

The proletariat is the child of capitalism - of world capitalism, and not only of European capitalism, or of imperialist capitalism. On a world scale, fifty years sooner or fifty years later - measured on a world scale, this is a minor point - the “proletariat” of course “will be” united, and revolutionary Social-Democracy will “inevitably” be victorious within it. But that is not the point, Messrs. Kautskyites. The point is that at the present time, in the imperialist countries of Europe, you are fawning on the opportunists, who are alien to the proletariat as a class, who are the servants, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the vehicles of its influence, and unless the labour movement rids itself of them, it will remain a bourgeois labour movement. By advocating “unity” with the opportunists, with the Legiens and Davids, the Plekhanovs, the Chkhenkelis and Potresovs, etc., you are, objectively, defending the enslavement of the workers by the imperialist bourgeoisie with the aid of its best agents in the labour movement. The victory of revolutionary Social-Democracy on a world scale is absolutely inevitable, only it is moving and will move, is proceeding and will proceed, against you, it will be a victory over you.

These two trends, one might even say two parties, in the present-day labour movement, which in 1914-16 so obviously parted ways all over the world, were traced by Engels and Marx in England

throughout the course of decades, roughly from 1858 to 1892.

Neither Marx nor Engels lived to see the imperialist epoch of world capitalism, which began not earlier than 1898-1900. But it has been a peculiar feature of England that even in the middle of the nineteenth century she already revealed at least two major distinguishing features of imperialism: (1) vast colonies, and (2) monopoly profit (due to her monopoly position in the world market). In both respects England at that time was an exception among capitalist countries, and Engels and Marx, analysing this exception, quite clearly and definitely indicated its connection with the (temporary) victory of opportunism in the English labour movement.

In a letter to Marx, dated October 7, 1858, Engels wrote: “... The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.” In a letter to Sorge, dated September 21, 1872, Engels informs him that Hales kicked up a big row in the Federal Council of the International and secured a vote of censure on Marx for saying that “the English labour leaders had sold themselves”. Marx wrote to Sorge on August 4, 1874: “As to the urban workers here [in England], it is a pity that the whole pack of leaders did not get into Parliament. This would be the surest way of getting rid of the whole lot.” In a letter to Marx, dated August 11, 1881, Engels speaks about “those very worst English trade unions which allow themselves to be led by men sold to, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie.” In a letter to Kautsky, dated September 12, 1882, Engels wrote: “You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. 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.”

On December 7, 1889, Engels wrote to Sorge: “The most repulsive thing here [in England] is the bourgeois ‘respectability’, which has grown deep into the bones of the workers Even Tom Mann, whom I regard as the best of the lot, is fond of mentioning that he will be lunching with the Lord Mayor. If one compares this with the French, one realises, what a revolution is good for, after all.”⁸⁾ In a letter, dated April 19, 1890: “But under the surface the movement [of the working class in England] is going on, is embracing ever wider sections and mostly just among the hitherto stagnant lowest [Engels’s italics] strata. The day is no longer far off when this mass will suddenly find itself, when it will dawn upon it that it itself is this colossal mass in motion.” On March 4, 1891: “The failure of the collapsed Dockers’ Union; the ‘old’ conservative trade unions, rich and therefore cowardly, remain lone on the field. ...” September 14, 1891: at the Newcastle Trade Union Congress the old unionists, opponents of the eight-hour day, were defeated “and the bourgeois papers recognise the defeat of the bourgeois labour party” (Engels’s italics throughout). ...

That these ideas, which were repeated by Engels over the course of decades, were so expressed by him publicly, in the press, is proved by his preface to the second edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1892. Here he speaks of an “aristocracy among the working class”, of a “privileged minority of the workers”, in contradistinction to the “great mass of working people”. “A small, privileged, protected minority” of the working class alone was “permanently benefited” by the privileged position of England in 1848-68, whereas “the great bulk of them experienced at best but a temporary improvement”. ... “With the break-down of that [England’s industrial] monopoly, the English working class will lose that privileged position ...” The members of the “new” unions, the unions of the unskilled workers, “had this immense advantage, that their minds were virgin soil, entirely free from the inherited

‘respectable’ bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better situated ‘old unionists’” ... “The so-called workers’ representatives” in England are people “who are forgiven their being members of the working class because they themselves would like to drown their quality of being workers in the ocean of their liberalism ...”

We have deliberately quoted the direct statements of Marx and Engels at rather great length in order that the reader may study them as a whole. And they should be studied, they are worth carefully pondering over. For they are the pivot of the tactics in the labour movement that are dictated by the objective conditions of the imperialist era.

Here, too, Kautsky has tried to “befog the issue” and substitute for Marxism sentimental conciliation with the opportunists. Arguing against the avowed and naive social-imperialists (men like Lensch) who justify Germany’s participation in the war as a means of destroying England’s monopoly, Kautsky “corrects” this obvious falsehood by another equally obvious falsehood. Instead of a cynical falsehood he employs a suave falsehood! The industrial monopoly of England, he says, has long ago been broken, has long ago been destroyed, and there is nothing left to destroy.

Why is this argument false?

Because, firstly, it overlooks England’s colonial monopoly. Yet Engels, as we have seen, pointed to this very clearly as early as 1882, thirty-four years ago! Although England’s industrial monopoly may have been destroyed, her colonial monopoly not only remains, but has become extremely accentuated, for the whole world is already divided up! By means of this suave lie Kautsky smuggles in the bourgeois-pacifist and opportunist-philistine idea that “there is nothing to fight about”. On the contrary, not only have the capitalists something to fight about now, but they cannot help fighting if they want to preserve capitalism, for without a forcible redivision of colonies the new imperialist countries cannot obtain the privileges enjoyed by the older (and weaker) imperialist powers.

Secondly, why does England’s monopoly explain

the (temporary) victory of opportunism in England? Because monopoly yields superprofits, i.e., a surplus of profits over and above the capitalist profits that are normal and customary all over the world. The capitalists can devote a part (and not a small one, at that!) of these superprofits to bribe their own workers, to create something like an alliance (recall the celebrated “alliances” described by the Webbs of English trade unions and employers) between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists against the other countries. England’s industrial monopoly was already destroyed by the end of the nineteenth century. That is beyond dispute. But how did this destruction take place? Did all monopoly disappear?

If that were so, Kautsky’s “theory” of conciliation (with the opportunists) would to a certain extent be justified. But it is not so, and that is just the point. Imperialism is monopoly capitalism. Every cartel, trust, syndicate, every giant bank is a monopoly. Superprofits have not disappeared; they still remain. The exploitation of all other countries by one privileged, financially wealthy country remains and has become more intense. A handful of wealthy countries - there are only four of them, if we mean independent, really gigantic, “modern” wealth: England, France, the United States and Germany - have developed monopoly to vast proportions, they obtain superprofits running into hundreds, if not thousands, of millions, they “ride on the backs” of hundreds and hundreds of millions of people in other countries and fight among themselves for the division of the particularly rich, particularly fat and particularly easy spoils.

This, in fact, is the economic and political essence of imperialism, the profound contradictions of which Kautsky glosses over instead of exposing.

The bourgeoisie of an imperialist “Great” Power can economically bribe the upper strata of “its” workers by spending on this a hundred million or so francs a year, for its superprofits most likely amount to about a thousand million. And how this little sop is divided among the labour ministers, “labour representatives” (remember Engels’s

splendid analysis of the term), labour members of War Industries Committees,⁹⁾ labour officials, workers belonging to the narrow craft unions, office employees, etc., etc., is a secondary question.

Between 1848 and 1868, and to a certain extent even later, only England enjoyed a monopoly: that is why opportunism could prevail there for decades. No other countries possessed either very rich colonies or an industrial monopoly.

The last third of the nineteenth century saw the transition to the new, imperialist era. Finance capital not of one, but of several, though very few, Great Powers enjoys a monopoly. (In Japan and Russia the monopoly of military power, vast territories, or special facilities for robbing minority nationalities, China, etc., partly supplements, partly takes the place of, the monopoly of modern, up-to-date finance capital.) This difference explains why England’s monopoly position could remain unchallenged for decades. The monopoly of modern finance capital is being frantically challenged; the era of imperialist wars has begun. It was possible in those days to bribe and corrupt the working class of one country for decades. This is now improbable, if not impossible. But on the other hand, every imperialist “Great” Power can and does bribe smaller strata (than in England in 1848-68) of the “labour aristocracy”. Formerly a “bourgeois labour party”, to use Engels’s remarkably profound expression, could arise only in one country, because it alone enjoyed a monopoly, but, on the other hand, it could exist for a long time. Now a “bourgeois labour party” is inevitable and typical in all imperialist countries; but in view of the desperate struggle they are waging for the division of spoils it is improbable that such a party can prevail for long in a number of countries. For the trusts, the financial oligarchy, high prices, etc., while enabling the bribery of a handful in the top layers, are increasingly oppressing, crushing, ruining and torturing the mass of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat.

On the one hand, there is the tendency of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists to convert a

handful of very rich and privileged nations into “eternal” parasites on the body of the rest of mankind, to “rest on the laurels” of the exploitation of Negroes, Indians, etc., keeping them in subjection with the aid of the excellent weapons of extermination provided by modern militarism. On the other hand, there is the tendency of the masses, who are more oppressed than before and who bear the whole brunt of imperialist wars, to cast off this yoke and to overthrow the bourgeoisie. It is in the struggle between these two tendencies that the history of the labour movement will now inevitably develop. For the first tendency is not accidental; it is “substantiated” economically. In all countries the bourgeoisie has already begotten, fostered and secured for itself “bourgeois labour parties” of social-chauvinists. The difference between a definitely formed party, like Bissolati’s in Italy, for example, which is fully social-imperialist, and, say, the semi-formed near-party of the Potresovs, Gvozdyovs, Bulkins, Chkheidzes, Skobelevs and Co., is an immaterial difference. The important thing is that, economically, the desertion of a stratum of the labour aristocracy to the bourgeoisie has matured and become an accomplished fact; and this economic fact, this shift in class relations, will find political form, in one shape or another, without any particular “difficulty”.

On the economic basis referred to above, the political institutions of modern capitalism - press, parliament associations, congresses etc. - have created political privileges and sops for the respectful, meek, reformist and patriotic office employees and workers, corresponding to the economic privileges and sops. Lucrative a soft jobs in the government or on the war industries committees, in parliament and on diverse committees, on the editorial staffs of “respectable”, legally published newspapers or on the management councils of no less respectable and “bourgeois law-abiding” trade unions - this is the bait by which the imperialist bourgeoisie attracts and rewards the representatives and supporters of the “bourgeois labour parties”.

The mechanics of political democracy works in the same direction. Nothing in our times can be done without elections; nothing can be done without the masses. And in this era of printing and parliamentarism it is impossible to gain the following of the masses without a widely ramified, systematically managed, well-equipped system of flattery, lies, fraud, juggling with fashionable and popular catchwords, and promising all manner of reforms and blessings to the workers right and left - as long as they renounce the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of bourgeoisie. I would call this system Lloyd-Georgism, after the English Minister Lloyd George, one of the foremost and most dexterous representatives of this system in the classic land of the “bourgeois labour party”. A first-class bourgeois manipulator, an astute politician, a popular orator who will deliver any speeches you like even r-r-revolutionary ones, to a labour audience, and a man who is capable of obtaining sizable sops for docile workers in the shape of social reforms (insurance, etc.), Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie splendidly,¹⁰ and serves it precisely among the workers, brings its influence precisely to the proletariat, to where the bourgeoisie needs it most and where it finds it most difficult to subject the masses morally.

And is there such a great difference between Lloyd George and the Scheidemanns, Legiens, Hendersons and Hyndmans, Plekhanovs, Renaudels and Co.? Of the latter, it may be objected, some will return to the revolutionary socialism of Marx. This is possible, but it is an insignificant difference in degree, if the question is regarded from its political, i.e., its mass aspect. Certain individuals among the present social-chauvinist leaders may return to the proletariat. But the social-chauvinist or (what is the same thing) opportunist trend can neither disappear nor “return” to the revolutionary proletariat. Wherever Marxism is popular among the workers, this political trend, this “bourgeois labour party”, will swear by the name of Marx. It cannot be prohibited from doing this, just as a trading firm cannot be prohibited from using

any particular label, sign or advertisement. It has always been the case in history that after the death of revolutionary leaders who were popular among the oppressed classes, their enemies have attempted to appropriate their names so as to deceive the oppressed classes.

The fact that is that “bourgeois labour parties,” as a political phenomenon, have already been formed in all the foremost capitalist countries, and that unless determined and relentless struggle is waged all along the line against these parties - or groups, trends, etc., it is all the same - there can be no question of a struggle against imperialism, or of Marxism, or of a socialist labour movement. The Chkheidze faction,¹¹⁾ Nashe Dyelo and Golos Truda¹²⁾ in Russia, and the O.C. supporters abroad are nothing but varieties of one such party. There is not the slightest reason for thinking that these parties will disappear before the social revolution. On the contrary, the nearer the revolution approaches, the more strongly it flares up and the more sudden and violent the transitions and leaps in its progress, the greater will be the part the struggle of the revolutionary mass stream against the opportunist petty-bourgeois stream will play in the labour movement. Kautskyism is not an independent trend, because it has no roots either in the masses or in the privileged stratum which has deserted to the bourgeoisie. But the danger of Kautskyism lies in the fact that, utilising the ideology of the past, it endeavours to reconcile the proletariat with the “bourgeois labour party”, to preserve the unity of the proletariat with that party and thereby enhance the latter’s prestige. The masses no longer follow the avowed social-chauvinists: Lloyd George has been hissed down at workers’ meetings in England; Hyndman has left the party; the Renaudels and Scheidemanns, the Potresovs and Gvozdyovs are protected by the police. The Kautskyites’ masked defence of the social-chauvinists is much more dangerous.

One of the most common sophistries of Kautskyism is its reference to the “masses”. We do not want, they say, to break away from the masses

and mass organisations! But just think how Engels put the question. In the nineteenth century the “mass organisations” of the English trade unions were on the side of the bourgeois labour party. Marx and Engels did not reconcile themselves to it on this ground; they exposed it. They did not forget, firstly, that the trade union organisations directly embraced a minority of the proletariat. In England then, as in Germany now, not more than one-fifth of the proletariat was organised. No one can seriously think it possible to organise the majority of the proletariat under capitalism. Secondly - and this is the main point - it is not so much a question of the size of an organisation, as of the real, objective significance of its policy: does its policy represent the masses, does it serve them, i.e., does it aim at their liberation from capitalism, or does it represent the interests of the minority, the minority’s reconciliation with capitalism? The latter was true of England in the nineteenth century, and it is true of Germany, etc., now.

Engels draws a distinction between the “bourgeois labour party” of the old trade unions - the privileged minority - and the “lowest mass”, the real majority, and appeals to the latter, who are not infected by “bourgeois respectability”. This is the essence of Marxist tactics!

Neither we nor anyone else can calculate precisely what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will be revealed only by the struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution. But we know for certain that the “defenders of the fatherland” in the imperialist war represent only a minority. And it is therefore our duty, if we wish to remain socialists to go down lower and deeper, to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and the whole purport of the struggle against opportunism. By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social-chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of the workers, that they are the vehicles of bourgeois ideas and influences, that they are really allies and

agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful vicissitudes of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices.

The only Marxist line in the world labour movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against opportunism, to utilise the experience of the war to expose, not conceal, the utter vileness of national-liberal labour politics.

In the next article, we shall try to sum up the principal features that distinguish this line from Kautskyism.

Notes

- 1) The reference is to the First World War of 1914–18. p. 5 - Lenin
- 2) See Karl Marx, Preface to the second edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. p. 6
Die Neue Zeit (New Times) - the theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. Up to October 1917 it was edited by Karl Kautsky, later by Heinrich Cunow. Some of the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were first published in *Die Neue Zeit*. Engels gave regular advice to the editors and frequently criticised them for permitting deviations from Marxism in the journal. In the late nineties, after the death of Engels, the journal regularly carried articles by revisionists. During the First World War (1914–18) the journal occupied a Centrist position, in reality supporting the social-chauvinists. p. 7
- 3) “Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to subjugate and annex ever larger agrarian territories irrespective of the nations that inhabit them” (Kautsky in *Die Neue Zeit*; September 11, 1914). - Lenin
- 4) *Sotsial-Demokrat* - Central Organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, published as an illegal newspaper from February 1908 to January 1917. p. 7
Kommunist - a journal started by Lenin; published in Geneva in 1915 by the editorial board of the newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat*. Only one (double) issue appeared. p. 7
- 5) Organising Committee (O.C.) - the leading centre of the Mensheviks, supporters of the petty-bourgeois, opportunist trend in the Russian Social-Democratic Party. It was formed in 1912; during the world imperialist war it took a social-chauvinist stand, justifying the war led by the tsarist government and preaching nationalistic and chauvinistic ideas. p. 7 - Lenin
- 6) J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism*, London, 1902. - Lenin

7) Bulletin of the R.S.D.L.P. Organising Committee, Secretariat Abroad - a Menshevik Centrist organ, published in Geneva from February 1915 to March 1917. Altogether ten issues appeared.

8) [PLACEHOLDER ENDNOTE.]

9) War Industries Committees were set up in Russia in May 1915 by the big imperialist bourgeoisie for aiding tsarism in conducting the war. In an attempt to bring the workers under its influence and instil defencist sentiments into them, the bourgeoisie decided to form “Workers’ Groups” of the War Industries Committees, thereby showing that a “class truce” between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was established in Russia. The Bolsheviks advocated a boycott of the War Industries Committees and were successful in securing this boycott with the support of the majority of the workers. p. 4 - Lenin

10) I recently read an article in an English magazine by a Tory, a political opponent of Lloyd George, entitled “Lloyd George from the Standpoint of a Tory”. The war opened the eyes of this opponent and made him realise what an excellent servant of the bourgeoisie this Lloyd George is! The Tories have made peace with him! - Lenin

11) Chkheidze faction - the Menshevik group in the Fourth Duma led by N.S. Chkheidze. Officially followed a Centrist policy in the First World War, but factually supported the Russian social-chauvinists. In 1916 the group was composed of M.I. Skobelev, I.N. Tulyakov, V.I. Khaustov, N.S. Chkheidze and A.I. Chkhenkeli. Lenin criticises their opportunist policy in several articles, including “The Chkheidze Faction and Its Role”, “Have the Organising Committee and the Chkheidze Group a Policy of Their Own?”

12) *Nashe Dyelo* (Our Cause) - a Menshevik monthly, chief mouthpiece of the liquidators and Russian social-chauvinists. Published in Petrograd in 1915 in place of *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn) which was closed in October 1914. Contributors included Y. Mayevsky, P.P. Maslov, A.N. Potresov and N. Cherevanin. Six issues appeared altogether.

Golos Truda (Voice of Labour) - a legal Menshevik paper published in Samara in 1916, after the closure of *Nash Golos* (Our Voice). Three issues appeared.

1914-2014: Imperialism means war

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

This article is based on the presentation I made to an international seminar in Brussels on the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. Subsequently it was published in Lalkar in the Nov-Dec 2014 issue. Its increasing relevance today in consequence of the conflict in Ukraine has prompted me to republish it in the current issue.

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

The real socialists, such as the Bolsheviks, rightly denounced the First World War as imperialist and predatory on both sides, which the working class was duty-bound to denounce and use the occasion to overthrow its own ruling class, instead of joining it in the name of 'defence of the Fatherland'.

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

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

There is an urgent need to bring home to the working class the knowledge that the First World War cannot be mechanically transplanted to the present situation in Ukraine; that the defeat of Nato in Ukraine promises to advance the cause of the proletariat and oppressed people all over the world.

Precisely for this reason, Russia must be supported in its just defensive war. Harpal Brar.

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

- created new nation states
- turned the United States of America into a leading world power, replacing British imperialism as the premier imperialist predator
- ushered in the October Revolution and the era of proletarian revolution and the downfall of imperialism
- through the Versailles Treaty prepared the ground for the Second World War, which in turn gave birth to a mighty socialist camp and accelerated the rising tide of national liberation movements, and
- sowed the seeds of all the troubles afflicting the present-day Middle East.

Chronology of events leading to the war

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

23 July 1914 The Austrian government, accusing the Serbian government of complicity in the assassination, issued an ultimatum threatening war if the latter did not cooperate fully into its investigation and the suppression of anti-Austrian agitation on Serbian territory.

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

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

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

02 August 1914 The Tsar declared war on Germany

03 August 1914 Germany declared war on

France because Russian mobilisation threatened Germany and France was allied with Russia in the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia)

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

Since Russian mobilisation had practically ranged Germany against the Triple Entente, Germany came up with an answer through the Schlieffen Plan, which envisaged a 6-week knock-out campaign against France through Belgium, before moving the bulk of German forces east to confront mighty Russia.

The above is merely the sequence of events and a pretext for the war, but not its real cause, with which we shall deal later on.

Mass slaughter

The First World War was characterised by killing on an industrial scale. It claimed the lives of well over 10 million, with twice as many wounded. German losses in the war totalled 1.8 million dead, not counting the 750,000 civilians who died of hunger and starvation. Britain lost nearly 900,000 soldiers; including the wounded, British casualties came to 2 million. By the end of the first year of the War, the French had suffered nearly a million casualties, the Germans 800,000, and 86,000 of the 120,000 British Expeditionary Force sent to France had been killed or wounded. On 22 October 1914, 27,000 French soldiers met their death in just one day.

Individual battles, with their colossal loss of life, are seared into the memory of European peoples. The battles of Passchendaele (a million dead or wounded), Verdun (700,000 casualties), the Somme (in excess of a million casualties) and the Marne (half a million), have come to symbolise the industrialised slaughter of millions of people at the hands of the blood-thirsty system of imperialism, that twice plunged humanity in the 20th century into world wars, together claiming the lives of 100 million, with twice as many wounded, in order to decide which group of the imperialist bandits was

to grab what share of the booty.

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

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

Attempts to confuse the working class

Bourgeois papers and media have been full of discussion about this war – most of it useless, designed to confuse the working class and the oppressed peoples. In Britain the thrust of the media coverage of the war is to blame Germany for this mass slaughter on a gigantic scale and to portray Britain's role as a defender of democracy and sovereignty of nations, it being further stated that Britain went to war for she was outraged by the German violation of the neutrality and sovereignty of Belgium, forgetting of course to mention that plucky little Belgium had then only recently slaughtered 10 million Congolese in its very lucrative colony.

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

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

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

end of the Second World War in 1945. Millions of people have been slaughtered in the imperialist wars led by US imperialism against the people of Korea, Indo-China, Congo, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya and Syria. And now as these lines are being written, US and EU imperialism is busy preparing the conditions for a war with Russia, through the destabilisation of Ukraine, with the sole aim of preserving, and extending, its domination over the entire region stretching from the Middle East to the former eastern Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union – as well as a means of securing total world domination..

However, in all these discussions on the burning questions of war and peace, the most important thing that is usually forgotten, which receives insufficient attention, and which, therefore, causes so much futile controversy, is that “... people forget the fundamental question of the class character of the war; why the war broke out; the classes that are waging it; the historical and historico-economic conditions that gave rise to it ...” (V. I. Lenin, War and revolution – p. 398).

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

War – a continuation of policy

First, according to Leninism, war is the continuation of politics by other (forcible) means. This famous dictum of Clausewitz’s, one of the most profound writers on military questions, has always rightly been regarded by Marxists as “... the theoretical foundation for their understanding of the meaning of every war” (V.I. Lenin, The Political Report of the Central Committee to the Eighth All-Russian Conference of the RCP(B), 2 December 1919). In order to evaluate a given war, and define

one’s attitude towards it, one must look at the class character of the war, i.e., the class waging the war, the policy and aims pursued by that class prior to the war – and not who attacked first. While the philistine is capable of justifying any war by the formula that “... the enemy has attacked us”, “the enemy has invaded my country” by pleading the “defence of the fatherland”, Marxism, with its refusal to stoop to the level of the philistine, requires “... an historical analysis of each war in order to determine whether or not THAT PARTICULAR war can be considered progressive, whether it serves the interests of democracy and the proletariat and, in THAT CASE, is legitimate, just, etc.” (Emphasis in the original – V.I. Lenin, A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism, p. 32).

Looking at any particular war in its historical perspective, Marxism says: “IF the ‘substance’ of a war is, FOR EXAMPLE, the overthrow of alien oppression ..., then such a war is progressive as far as the oppressed state or nation is concerned. If, however, the ‘substance’ of a war is redivision of colonies, division of booty, plunder of foreign lands ..., then all talk of defending the fatherland is ‘sheer deception of the people’” (Ibid., pp. 32-33).

How, then, asks Lenin, are we to reveal and define the “substance” of a war? He answers this question thus:

“War is the continuation of policy. Consequently, we must examine the policy pursued prior to the war, the policy that led to and brought about the war. If it was an imperialist policy, i.e., one designed to safeguard the interests of finance capital and rob and oppress colonies and foreign countries, then the war stemming from that policy is imperialist war. If it was a national liberation policy, i.e., one expressive of the mass movement against national oppression, then the war stemming from that policy is a war of national liberation” (Ibid., p. 33).

Lenin adds: “The philistine does not realise that war is the ‘continuation of policy’, and consequently limits himself to the formula that ‘the enemy has attacked us’, ‘the enemy has invaded my country’, without stopping to think what issues are

at stake in the war, which classes are waging it, and with what political objects” (ibid.).

Comparing the First World War (decidedly an imperialist war on both sides) with the French revolutionary wars of the 18th century against monarchist, autocratic, semi-feudal and reactionary Europe, the latter, says Lenin, were nothing but the inevitable continuation of the policy of the victorious revolutionary classes in France. When the French bourgeoisie and the revolutionary peasantry overthrew their monarchy, got rid of their nobility, and established a democratic republic in a most revolutionary fashion, this shook the whole of semi-feudal Europe to its foundations. As a result, all the monarchist nations of Europe formed a coalition and “... lined up against revolutionary France in a counter-revolutionary war”.

And during this war, the revolutionary people of France revealed “... gigantic revolutionary creativeness” similar to the creativeness and energy they had displayed during the revolution – and on a scale “... never shown for centuries”.

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

“Peace prevailed in Europe, but continued because the European peoples’ domination over hundreds of millions of colonial inhabitants was effected by constant, uninterrupted, never-ending wars which

we, Europeans, do not consider to be wars, because all too often they resembled not wars, but the most brutal slaughter, extermination of unarmed peoples” (V.I. Lenin, War and revolution, pp. 400-401).

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

Lenin, developing Clausewitz’s analysis further, stated that “war is not only a continuation of politics, it is the epitome of politics” (V.I. Lenin, Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets, p. 224). In other words, war, under the conditions of capitalism, is not an aberration, a break from the norm of political struggle, but quite the opposite, especially in the latest of stage of capitalism – imperialism. Wars under capitalist imperialism are normal business – as normal as the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie and oppression of the oppressed nations by a tiny handful of imperialist oppressor states.

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

Just as the politics which the ruling classes of the belligerent powers pursue during the war is the continuation of the politics pursued by them long before the outbreak of the war, likewise the peace following war is merely the continuation of the “VERY SAME politics, with a REGISTRATION of the changes brought about in the relation of forces of the antagonists as a result of military operations. War does not alter the direction of pre-war policies,

but only ACCELERATES their development” (V.I. Lenin, The peace programme, p. 163).

Inevitability of wars under capitalism – the First World War

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

“It is beyond doubt”, observed Lenin, “that capitalism’s transition to the stage of monopoly capitalism, to finance capital IS CONNECTED with the intensification of the struggle for partitioning the world” (Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, p. 74).

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

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

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

development whereby some countries spurt ahead and others lag behind. If, as happens often, those countries who were economically weak yesterday, and therefore whose share in the global booty is relatively meagre, race ahead of their rivals and become more powerful, thus rendering the old division obsolete, they cannot fail to demand a new division – a new partition – on the basis of bourgeois ‘justice’. The new, younger and stronger robbers claim the same ‘sacred’ right to rob as the older and fatter bandits. This can only be achieved by the former robbing the latter, as the younger robbers “... came to the capitalist banquet table when all the places had been taken up ...” And these matters, under the conditions of capitalism, are settled by means not very peaceful for “... finance capital and the trusts do not diminish but increase the differences in the rate of growth of the various parts of the world economy. Once the relation of forces is changed, what other solution of the contradictions can be found UNDER CAPITALISM than that of force?” (Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, p. 91).

In the middle of the 19th century, Britain was the workshop of the world. It produced 50% of the world’s cotton fabric, 60% of coal and 70% of steel. However, by 1914, it produced just 20% of the world’s cotton fabric 20% of its coal and 10% of its steel. On the other hand, by this time Germany and the USA had both overtaken Britain as industrial powers. And yet Britain possessed the largest empire, ruling over a fifth of the world’s land mass and a quarter of its people. Its colonies were three times of French colonies and 10 times those of Germany.

In parallel there was the growth of monopoly which made way for the transformation of free competition capitalism to monopoly capitalism – finance capitalism.

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

British military expenditure rose by 150% between 1887 and 1914. By 1913, France disposed of a

700,000-strong army, backed by 3 million reservists. Likewise in Germany, spending on the army and navy increased 10-fold between 1870 and 1914. In the last 4 years of peace, the aggregate military spending of the Great Powers had trebled. When the war started, 6 million conscripts proceeded to the front immediately, with another 13 million held in reserve in the rear.

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

As Lenin pointed out at the time, had the Triple Alliance gone to war to safeguard Belgian neutrality, as it hypocritically pretended, in such a case "... the sympathies of the socialists would, of course, be on the side of Germany's enemies." But, he added, "the whole point is that the Triple Entente is waging war not over Belgium: this is perfectly well known and only hypocrites conceal this. England is grabbing Germany's colonies in Turkey; Russia is grabbing Galicia and Turkey; France wants Alsace-Lorraine and even the left bank of the Rhine; a Treaty has been concluded with Italy for the division of the spoils (Albania, Asia Minor) ..." Lenin went on to say that: "the defence of the fatherland" had no relevance in the First World War, which was an "imperialist war, war between reactionary-bourgeois, historically obsolete governments, waged for the purpose of oppressing other nations." He went on: "Whoever justifies participation in the present war perpetuates imperialist oppression of nations. Whoever advocates taking advantage of the present embarrassments of the governments to fight for the socialist revolution champions the real freedom of really all nations, which is possible only under socialism" (Lenin on War and Peace, Foreign Languages House, Peking, 1966, pp. 12-13).

Earlier in the same article, Lenin states that from 1876 to 1914 the 6 'Great' Powers grabbed 25 million square kilometers, that is an area two and a half times that of Europe. In the process, they had managed to enslave over half a billion inhabitants of colonies and subjected them to brutal treatment and, he went on to say "the Anglo-French bourgeoisie are deceiving the people when they say they are waging war for the freedom of peoples and for Belgium; actually they are waging war for the purpose of retaining the colonies they have inordinately grabbed. The German imperialists would free Belgium, etc., at once if the British and French would agree 'fairly' to share their colonies with them ... from the standpoint of bourgeois justice ..., Germany would be absolutely right against England and France, for she has been 'done out' of colonies, her enemies are oppressing an immeasurably far larger number of nations that she is ... but Germany is fighting not for the liberation, but for the repression of nations. It is not the business of Socialists to help a younger and stronger robber (Germany) to rob the older and overgorged robbers. Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between the robbers to overthrow them all. To be able to do this, the Socialists must tell the people the truth that this war is ... a war between slave owners to fortify slavery" (Ibid., p. 10).

As for Russia, capitalist imperialism had been fully revealed by Tsarism's policy in regard to Persia, Manchuria and Mongolia. As Lenin repeatedly pointed out, in no other country was the majority of the population so brutally oppressed as in Russia. Of the 170 million inhabitants of Russia at the time, approximately 100 million (57% of the population) were oppressed, treated as aliens and denied all rights. Tsarism was fighting not merely to retain this prisonhouse of nations but to extend it by seizing further territories and crushing the liberties of other peoples.

Further, Tsarism considered the war to be an instrument for diverting attention from the rising discontent within Russia and as a means of suppressing the rising revolutionary movement, as

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

Besides, the powers that comprised the Triple Alliance had concluded secret treaties for the repartitioning of the world. After the October Revolution, the Bolshevik government published these treaties and exposed the fraud and hypocrisy of the assertions of these powers that they were fighting for the liberty of nations against German militarism and expansionism.

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

“Imperialism strives to violate democracy, strives towards reaction both in foreign politics and in home politics. In this sense, imperialism is undoubtedly, the ‘negation’ of DEMOCRACY IN GENERAL, DEMOCRACY AS A WHOLE, and not of only ONE of the demands of democracy, namely self-determination of nations” (V.I. Lenin, A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism, p. 43).

And further: “War is a continuation of policy ... ‘World Domination’ is, to put it briefly, the substance of imperialist policy, of which imperialist war is the continuation” (Ibid., p. 35).

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

teachings on the question of war.

Just wars

Marxist-Leninists do not oppose all wars. Apart from imperialist wars, there are other wars, wars which are just, which move mankind forward, and which, therefore, deserve the support of the proletariat. “Socialists cannot”, said Lenin, “without ceasing to be socialists, be opposed to all war” (The military programme of the proletarian revolution, pp. 78-79).

Such wars, which socialists, far from opposing, are wholeheartedly in favour of are:

(a) War against the bourgeoisie

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

Marxism teaches, and life confirms, that no ruling class voluntarily gives up its rule and retires from the scene. What is more, in the face of the growing mass movement of the oppressed, the ruling exploiting classes are almost unfailingly the first to resort to counter-revolutionary violence to suppress and crush the oppressed classes. In these circumstances, the oppressed class, if it does not want to betray its own fundamental interests, if it does not want to give up its historical right to rebel, its right to revolution, has no choice but to counter with revolutionary violence the counter-revolutionary violence of the oppressing class. Although the working class would prefer not to resort to violent means, peaceful revolution is but a rare phenomenon, for no ruling class peacefully gives up its class privileges and class rule willingly, voluntarily and peacefully.

(b) Wars against absolutism

Second: there are wars against absolutism and medievalism, as for instance in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and statelets, Nepal, the Philippines and many other countries in Asia and Latin America. In these places, medieval autocracy and absolutism, in close alliance with imperialism, especially US imperialism, subject their peoples to a barbarous existence, deprive them of the most elementary civil liberties and stand in the way of economic and social progress. The struggle of the peoples of these countries for a democratic revolution, for the overthrow of medievalism, is as just, legitimate and progressive as was the revolutionary struggle of the various European people against feudalism and alien oppression in the period from 1789 to 1871. Therefore, this struggle deserves our wholehearted support. The freedom of the peoples of these countries from the shackles of serfdom, the destruction of the most vile, harmful and reactionary institutions (as for instance serfdom and autocracy and patriarchal savagery), the utter rout of despotism and the latter's protector, imperialism, would have a most beneficent and morally uplifting effect of the peoples of these countries and open before them a vista of economic development and national and social progress.

Capitalism, which during the epoch of 1789-1871 played such a progressive and liberating role in the struggle against serfdom, feudalism, absolutism and alien oppression, long ago (between 1890 and 1910) gave way, through the concentration of production, to monopoly capitalism – imperialism, which strives for domination and not freedom “... Free trade and competition have been superseded by a striving towards monopolies, the seizure of territory for the investment of capital and sources of raw materials ... From the liberator of nations, which it was in the struggle against feudalism, capitalism in its imperialist stage has turned into the greatest oppressor of nations. Formerly progressive, capitalism has become reactionary; it has developed the forces of production to such a degree that mankind is faced with the alternative of adopting socialism or of experiencing years and

even decades of armed struggle between the ‘Great’ powers for the artificial preservation of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges and national oppression of every kind” (Ibid., pp. 301-302).

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

“A more striking example,” observed Lenin, “of this decay of the entire European [and American, we should add] bourgeoisie can scarcely be cited than the support it is lending to REACTION in Asia for the sake of the selfish aims of the financial manipulators and capitalist swindlers” (Backward Europe and advanced Asia, p. 99).

(c) Wars of victorious socialism

Third: the wars waged by victorious socialist countries against imperialism in defence of socialism, against bourgeois states attempting to crush the socialist states would be just, legitimate and progressive and, therefore, worthy of the support of the whole of progressive humanity. Such, for instance, was the war the Soviet Union waged against the imperialist predatory coalition in the early days of the Soviet regime. Such, too, was the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the Nazi marauders, unleashed upon the Soviet Union by German imperialism. Such indeed would be the wars today of the DPRK, Cuba, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Laos, etc., were imperialism to dare to launch wars against these countries.

(d) Wars of national liberation

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

American imperialism and their surrogate, Israeli Zionism. Such indeed was the war of resistance by the Libyan people against the entire might of the imperialist camp, which resulted in the overthrow of the legitimate Libyan government, the murder of its Head of State, the slaughter of tens of thousands of Libyan people, the wholesale destruction of the country's infrastructure, leaving it in ruins as a failed state. Such indeed is the war of resistance of the Syrian people led by the Ba'ath Party against imperialist-backed murderers and jihadists who have been wreaking havoc on this beautiful country with great secular traditions.

In the words of Lenin:

“The history of the twentieth century, this century of ‘unbridled imperialism’, is replete with colonial wars. ... One of the main qualities of imperialism is that it hastens the development of capitalism in the most backward countries, and thereby extends and intensifies the struggle against national oppression. That is a fact. It inevitably follows from this that imperialism must often give rise to national wars” (The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution: I).

In the case of such national revolutionary wars, in case of wars of national resistance against imperialist brigandage, it is incumbent on the socialists and proletarians of the oppressor nation to side with the oppressed nation and wish, and work for, the defeat of their own imperialist bourgeoisie, for “Socialists always side with the oppressed ...” (V.I. Lenin, ‘Open letter to Boris Souvarine’, p. 196) and “any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slave-holding and predatory ‘Great’ Powers” (V.I. Lenin, Socialism and war, pp. 302-303).

It is sad to have to remark, but would be shameful to cover up the fact, that vast numbers of ‘socialists’ in the centres of imperialism today, even those who call themselves communists, have failed, on one pretext or another, to support the resistance of the victims of imperialism against predatory wars waged against them by imperialism – from

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

War cannot be abolished without the overthrow of capitalism

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

“Imperialism,” said Lenin, “has put the fate of European civilisation at stake: this war, if there does not follow a series of successful revolutions, will soon be followed by other wars; the fable of the ‘last war’ is an empty, harmful fable, a philistine ‘myth’ ...” (Position and tasks of the Socialist International, p. 40).

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

“... Neither the bourgeois pacifists nor the socialist pacifists realise that without the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois governments, peace NOW can only be an imperialist peace, a continuation of the imperialist war” (V.I. Lenin, Bourgeois pacifism and socialist pacifism, p. 192).

Thus the struggle for peace must be inextricably linked with the struggle to eliminate the division of society into classes, with the struggle for revolution and socialism, for “... it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace ... which inevitably engenders imperialist war, it is impossible to escape that inferno, EXCEPT BY A BOLSHEVIK STRUGGLE AND A BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION” (V.I. Lenin, The fourth anniversary

of the October Revolution, p. 56).

In an earlier pronouncement, Lenin emphasised the connection between peace and the end of a class-divided society thus: "... the proletariat struggles against war and will always struggle against it unremittingly without, however, forgetting for a moment that war can be abolished only with the complete abolition of society's division into classes ..." (V.I. Lenin, *European capital and the autocracy*, p. 268).

Imperialist wars, inter-imperialist as well as wars waged by imperialism against the oppressed peoples, wars waged for the division of spoils and for the robbery of weak nations, with their resultant destruction and devastation, ruination and exhaustion of all peoples, the torments of hunger and misery to which they subject the masses of the people – bring humanity face to face with the dilemma: "either sacrifice all culture or throw off the yoke of capitalism by revolutionary means, eliminate the domination of the bourgeoisie and win a socialist society and lasting peace" (V.I. Lenin, *For bread and peace*, p. 386).

Opportunist distortions on the question of war and peace

The opportunists of the Second International, and their latter-day descendants, the Khrushchevite revisionists have built up a veritable arsenal of distortions on the question of war and peace, with the sole purpose of prettifying imperialism, blunting the fighting capacity of the proletariat through a combination of covering up the danger of war represented by imperialism and intimidating the masses with the notion that war would destroy humanity. Kautsky's renegacy went so far as to assert that the source of war was not imperialism but the liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the USSR, which he referred to as the dictatorship, while the imperialist states presumably were nothing but pure democracies.

Revisionists and opportunists are forever attempting to obliterate the distinction between just and unjust wars and propagate the erroneous theory that weapons are the decisive factor and

that, therefore, in view of the overwhelming superiority in armaments enjoyed by the imperialist states, it will be pointless for the proletariat and the oppressed people to confront imperialism with armed combat.

Instead of linking the struggle against war to the struggle for the abolition of imperialism, to elimination of the division of society into classes, the opportunists spread the illusion that world peace can be maintained, and equality of nations secured, through disarmament, and that money saved from disarmament can be put aside for the assistance of backward countries – failing to grasp the simple truth that imperialism is in the business of extracting the maximum of profit in the pursuit of which it seeks domination, not freedom and equality. Imperialism would not be imperialism if it stood for assisting people at home, never mind the oppressed peoples abroad.

It was not for nothing that Lenin exposed the hideousness of theories put forward by the opportunists, pointing out that their pacifist utterances merely served "as a means of COLONISING the people, as a means of HELPING governments to keep the masses in submission in order to continue the imperialist slaughter!" (V.I. Lenin, *To the workers who support the struggle against the war, and against the socialists who have deserted to the side of their governments*, p. 232).

Ever since the outbreak of the First World War, it is social-democracy, having betrayed the working class and joined the bourgeoisie, which has played the chief role in stupefying the masses on questions of war and peace, as indeed on every other question. And it was not for nothing that Stalin observed that "... Social Democracy is the main channel of imperialist pacifism within the working class – consequently, it is capitalism's main support among the working class in preparing for new wars and intervention" (*Results of the July Plenum of the CC, CPSU(B), CW Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, Vol XI p. 210*).

On the question of war and peace, as on many other questions, Khrushchevite revisionism was to follow in the footsteps of Bernstein, Kautsky and

other leading revisionist social democrats of the renegade Second Socialist International.

Khrushchevite revisionism and war

The Khrushchevite revisionists went further than even the social-democrats by turning to nuclear fetishism and nuclear blackmail as the theoretical basis and guiding principle of its policy on the question of war and peace and a number of related issues. It came to hold that, with the appearance of nuclear weapons, the distinction between just and unjust wars had been rendered obsolete. “The atomic bomb”, asserted the Khrushchevites, “does not distinguish between imperialists and working people, it strikes at areas, so that millions of workers would be killed for every monopolist destroyed” (Open letter of the CC of the CPSU to all party organisations, to all communists of the Soviet Union’, 14 July, 1963).

According to Khrushchev and his fellow renegades, all the major contradictions in the world – that between capital and labour, between imperialism and socialism, between imperialism and the oppressed nations, and the inter-imperialist contradiction between various imperialist countries – had all ceased to exist with the emergence of nuclear weapons. In their view there remained but one contradiction, namely, the fictitious contradiction fabricated by them between the alleged common survival of imperialism and oppressed classes and nations, on the one hand, and their complete annihilation on the other.

Struggle against opportunism

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

The First World War accelerated the development of opportunism and transformed it into social chauvinism, transformed the secret alliance between the opportunists and the bourgeoisie into an open one.

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

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

Likewise, they share the ideological and political content that is class collaboration instead of class struggle; renunciation of revolutionary methods of struggle, assisting one’s ‘own’ government in its embarrassed situation instead of taking advantage of such embarrassments for revolution. That opportunism is the basis of social chauvinism is clear from the conduct of the opportunists in the decade prior to the start of the First World War. At the 1907 Stuttgart International Socialist Congress, while international Marxism was opposed to imperialism, international opportunism was already in favour of it. As soon as the war broke out, almost all the opportunists became social chauvinists.

The history of the international working-class movement over the last 100 years furnishes irrefutable evidence that the misfortunes of the working class movement are inextricably connected with the influence exerted by opportunism over the working class. Opportunism in the working class, far from being an accidental phenomenon, has deep economic roots, namely, in the superprofits extracted by the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries from the robbery of the entire world, a part of which can, and is, used to bribe the upper stratum of the workers – the labour aristocracy – and thus engender a split in the working class. This upper stratum of ‘bourgeoisified workers’, thoroughly petty-bourgeois in their life style, the size of their earnings and their world outlook, serve as “the principal SOCIAL ... prop of the bourgeoisie

... the real AGENTS OF THE BOURGEOISIE IN THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the ‘Versaillais’ against the ‘Communards’”. Lenin adds: “unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problems of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution” (V.I. Lenin, Preface to the French and German editions of *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*, p. 14).

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

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

Out of the vast sums thus obtained, it is possible to use a portion of the same for the purposes of bribing the labour aristocracy in all sorts of ways: “The whole thing”, continues Lenin, “reduces itself precisely to bribery. This is done in a thousand different ways: by raising culture in the largest centres, by creating educational institutions, creating thousands of soft jobs for the leaders of the co-operative societies, for the trade union leaders and parliamentary leaders. This is done wherever modern, civilised, capitalist relations exist. And these billions of superprofits serve as the economic basis upon which opportunism in the working-class movement rests” (V.I. Lenin, *The*

international situation and the fundamental tasks of the Communist International, p. 230).

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

“(1) ECONOMICALLY, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the SUPERPROFITS the bourgeoisie of these nations obtains by extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. To a CERTAIN DEGREE the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of THEIR OWN bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

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

“(3) IDEOLOGICALLY, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for workers of the oppressed nations. This has been EXPERIENCED, for example, by every Great Russian who has been brought up or who has lived among Great Russians” (V.I. Lenin, *A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism*, CW Vol 23, pp. 55-56) .

Thus is formed, on the basis of imperialist superprofits, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the upper stratum of the proletariat in the imperialist countries – an alliance which is directed against the interests of the proletarian masses at home and the oppressed nations abroad. Ever since the outbreak of the First World War, in Europe this alliance has been represented by social democracy. In Britain, the political expression of this alliance is the Labour Party, which right from its inception has been, is now, and will always be a bourgeois labour party, representing the interests of British imperialism and the upper sections of the working

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

From this Lenin concludes: “The only Marxist line in the labour movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against opportunism ...,” and by demonstrating that the opportunists are “... alien to the proletariat as a class ... are the servants, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the vehicles of its influence”, and that “... unless the labour movement RIDES itself of them, it will remain a BOURGEOIS LABOUR MOVEMENT” (Imperialism and the split in socialism, pp. 111-120).

And further: “Most dangerous ... are those who do not wish to understand that the fight against imperialism is a sham and humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism” (Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, pp. 118-119).

Opportunism and the First World War

Prior to the then impending War there were large-scale demonstrations of working people against its outbreak in almost every imperialist country. However, as soon as the war broke out, all the socialist parties belonging to the Second International, with the sole honourable exception of the Bolshevik Party in Russia, betrayed the working class and deserted to the side of their respective bourgeoisies in the name of defending the ‘fatherland’. The German Social-Democratic Party, the largest and most important in the Second International, gave stark evidence of its utter renegacy when all its 110 members of parliament voted for war credits on 4 August. In doing so they betrayed their solemn commitments formulated in the November 1912 Basel Manifesto of the Second International, which had characterised the

then-coming war as imperialist and required of the socialists that they turn such war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. With actions such as these on the part of socialist parties, the Second International collapsed. Towards the end of the war, revolutionary situations arose in a number of countries, including Russia and Germany. While in Russia, led by the Bolshevik Party, which had waged a 30-year long struggle against opportunism, the Russian proletariat stormed the citadels of Russian imperialism, in Germany the betrayal by social democracy led to proletarian defeat.

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

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

In March 1917 (the February revolution), the Russian Tsar was brought down by a revolutionary insurrection in Petrograd. The November 1917 (the Great October Socialist Revolution) overthrew the provisional government that had been committed to continuing the war. The Bolsheviks rallied the workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia with slogans “All power to the Soviets” and “Peace, bread and land”. The new revolutionary government made peace with Germany, nationalised factories and encouraged the peasantry to take control of the land. In taking Russia out of the war, the October Revolution ended the slaughter on the eastern front.

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

In Germany, 200,000 engineering workers went on strike against cuts in the bread ration in April 1917. Disaffection permeated the sailors of the fleet at Kiel. Poor conditions, harsh military discipline

and privileges of the officer class had helped to fill the cup of discontent to overflowing. In January 1918, the wave of strikes spread across Germany with half a million workers out in Berlin and half a dozen other industrial centres. Workers' Councils emerged spontaneously.

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

By the autumn of 1918 (between September and November), the central powers had collapsed. As a result there was revolutionary upsurge in Austria, making way for a coalition led by social-democrats, whose main job it was to save Austrian capitalism. On 29 October 1918, German sailors mutinied, and by 3 November Kiel was controlled by a Revolutionary Council. Within days, huge demonstrations broke out all across Germany, with scores of German towns controlled by workers, sailors and soldiers. By 9 November, the revolutionary movement had spread to Berlin. Karl Liebknecht addressed a crowd of several hundred thousand from the balcony of the imperial palace and proclaimed a "social republic" and "world revolution". These developments helped to bring the war to an end on the western front.

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

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

Bourgeois historiography of the war

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

..." (Engels, Preparatory material for the history of Ireland).

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

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

The widespread sentiments of the masses were often expressive of the incipient protests, anger and consciousness of the reactionary character of the war. As, unlike Russia, there was no revolutionary party in Britain at the time capable of utilising these sentiments for revolutionary struggle against British imperialism, these sentiments found their outlet in the dead end of bourgeois pacifism and daydreaming about a world without armaments and war, simultaneously with the continued existence of capitalism. There was total lack of any ability or willingness, consciousness or courage, to connect the war with imperialism and to relate imperialist war to imperialist peace.

As the trickle of memoirs turned into a flood, the sentiment of waste multiplied, with the British commander-in-chief, Douglas Haig, being portrayed as the "butcher of the Somme", a callous nincompoop who had presided over 2 million British casualties. Even before the end of the war, the horrendous slaughter of so many innocents which had turned the mood in the trenches to one of sober resignation, plunged working-class communities into mourning and moulded middle-class patriots into anti-war poets, creating fertile ground for anti-war activity.

The sense of disillusion and cynicism was reinforced by the Versailles Treaty, which imposed extraordinarily harsh terms on Germany and, while holding the latter solely responsible for the war, the victors got down to redividing the world – the sole purpose for which the war had been fought on both sides.

The French grabbed Togo and Cameroun in West Africa, the British secured Namibia in southern Africa and Tanzania in east Africa. In the Middle

East, while the French were given Syria and Lebanon, the British received Palestine, Jordan and Iraq. Only the Turks proved strong enough to prevent the carve-up of their country. On 16 April 1919, showing their true liberatory character, the British authorities perpetrated the Amritsar Massacre, in which General Dyer's armed thugs killed over 1,000 innocent Indians.

John Maynard Keynes, in his *The economic consequences of peace*, denounced the Versailles treaty for the treatment it meted out to Germany. Basil Liddell Hart, a widely-read British military theorist, whose battalion was nearly destroyed at the Somme, in addition to attacking the professional fitness of British generals, questioned the very decision for Britain to get involved in a bloody land war on the continent

In the early 1960s, Alan Clarke's *The Donkeys*, concentrating on the early failures of the British military leadership, played to the stereotypes of the 'chateau generals' commanding thousands of his men to their deaths prior to comfortably tucking into a sumptuous dinner. Clarke's book inspired Joan Littlewood's 1963 satirical musical 'Oh what a lovely war', which was later made into a film. It is in this context that the current and relatively recent historiography of the war must be seen.

The controversies concerning the causes, strategies and consequences of the war refuse to be laid to rest. Earlier this year, Michael Gove, then the Education Minister, attempted, not very successfully, to reclaim the Centenary commemoration on behalf of those for whom the war was a just cause fought for 'liberal values'. He complained that for too long the War had "been seen through the fictional prism of dramas such as 'Oh what a lovely war!', 'the monocled mutineer', 'Blackadder', as a misgotten shambles – a series of catastrophic mistakes by an out-of-touch élite. Even to this day there are left-wing academics all too happy to feed those myths".

Apart from the small matter that not everyone critical of Britain's participation in, or conduct of, the war, can be characterised as a left-wing academic, what Gove, if he had any interest in

the truth, should have said is that, apart from those who belong to the Leninist tradition, almost everyone of the countless writers on the war – supporters as well as opponents – have been guilty of spreading myths, illusions, misrepresentations and downright falsehoods of one kind or another.

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

Margaret MacMillan

Margaret MacMillan, warden of St Anthony's at Oxford. In her book, *The war that ended peace – how Europe abandoned peace for the First World War*, (October 2013), she pins primary responsibility for the war at the doorstep of Germany and to a lesser extent on Austria-Hungary. While she does not entirely accept the thesis advanced by Fritz Fischer, who caused a sensation in the early 1960s by arguing that his country's annexationist aims pre-dated the Great War and bore a close resemblance to the Nazi war aims, she does perceive German militarism and the commitment of general staff under Helmuth von Moltke to fighting a two-front war, requiring rapid and unstoppable mobilisation, as a catalyst. In issuing a 'blank cheque' to Austria-Hungary offering unconditional support for its punitive attack on Serbia following the Sarajevo assassination, she says, the German leaders were prepared to risk war. She adds that the three men with the power to decide between war and peace – the Kaiser, von Moltke and the Chancellor Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg – saw opportunities rather than threats.

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

Christopher Clark

By contrast, Christopher Clark, Professor of Modern European History at Cambridge, in his *The sleepwalkers: how Europe went to war in 1914*, (2012), says that the start of the war “was a tragedy not a crime. The two sides simply sleep-walked into it.” He goes on to say: “There is no smoking gun in this story, or, rather, there is one in the hands of every major character.” The last sentence, however inadvertently inserted, means a lot more than Mr Clark must have intended it to mean. For surely, the two imperialist blocs had been preparing for this war over a long period of time with the aim of grabbing each other’s colonies, markets, spheres of influence, raw materials and avenues for investment. Britain and France could have satisfied Germany by making over to her a portion of their vast empires and other sources of loot. Equally, Germany could have decided to rest content with the much smaller share she already possessed. If either of these imaginary scenarios had come to take place, there would have been no war. But this is not how things happen in the world of finance capital. Imperialism would not be imperialism if it did not give rise to regular re-partitioning of the world. Who is to blame either side for being driven to it? The answer lies, or rather the solution to the problem lies in the revolutionary overthrow of the entire system.

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

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

He concludes: “The protagonists of 1914 were sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by

dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world”.

Sir Max Hastings

In his book, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to war*, he has no time for Mr Clark’s reluctance to apportion blame. Germany, he writes, deserves the most blame because it alone had the power to stop the conflict and decided not to do so.

Niall Ferguson

In his book: *How Britain made the modern world* (2003), Ferguson portrays the British empire as an instrument for the promotion of commerce, provision of clean government, establishment of the rule of law, and creating the conditions for an eventual transition to parliamentary democracy. He says that he does not claim, as did Lord Curzon, that “the British Empire is under Providence the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen”, nor, as General Smuts claimed, that it was “the widest system of organised human freedom which has ever existed in human history”, the Empire was never that altruistic. Nevertheless, he maintains “that no organisation in history has done more to promote the free movement of goods, capital and labour, than the British Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. And no organisation has done more to impose western norms of law, order and governance around the world. For much of its history, the British Empire acted as an agency for relatively incorrupt government. Prima facie, there therefore seems a plausible case that the Empire enhanced global welfare, in other words, it was a Good Thing.”

It was the staggering cost of fighting the imperial rivals, he says, that ultimately ruined the British Empire. In other words, “the Empire was dismantled not because it had suppressed subject peoples for centuries, because it took up arms for just a few years against the far more oppressive empires. In the end, the British sacrificed the Empire to stop the Germans, Japanese and Italians from keeping theirs. Did not that sacrifice alone expunge all the Empire’s other sins? It did the right

thing, regardless of the cost. And that is why the ultimate, if reluctant, heir of Britain's global power, was not one of the evil empires of the East, but Britain's most successful former colony, i.e., the US."

If this isn't an unreserved and subservient apologia for Anglo-American imperialism, and an utter falsification of history, one would be hard put to find one. Professor Ferguson's defence of British/American imperialism reminds one of the following shrewd observation made by Plekhanov:

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

There is, however, method in the madness of the bourgeoisie and its intellectuals – ideological and political representatives – for the fight over the past is actually part of the struggle to control the present and the future. Whatever the intentions of the bourgeois intellectual gentry, the net result of their writings, in this case on the question of the First World War, is to absolve imperialism from being the cause of the slaughter of scores of millions of innocent people and to prepare them for the present-day imperialist wars and carnage.

What real educational purpose is served by history books and articles that portray the imperialist world war as either a 'mistake', an 'accident', or a 'tragedy', into which the two armed imperialist camps, having prepared over decades for precisely such a war, simply sleepwalked? What value can writings have which present the war as a struggle between 'good' (i.e., on the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie of their choice) against 'evil' (the opposing bourgeoisie), between 'democracy' (i.e., Anglo-American and French imperialism) and 'autocracy and militarism' (i.e., German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism)? What can one learn from histories that portray the Anglo-American imperialist bourgeoisie, no less bloodthirsty and rapacious than the German

bourgeoisie, as having been motivated in this war by the sole desire to "defend liberal values" and "promote democracy"? Even less is there to learn from histories that attribute the outbreak of the war to German violation of neutrality and territorial integrity of Belgium, which, we are reminded, the European powers had pledged to respect by the 1839 Treaty of London.

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

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

Imperialist crisis and preparations for new wars

Imperialism is gripped by the worst-ever crisis known to it, and this crisis is driving imperialism ultimately to war as the only way out of it. No one can say with certainty who the next big war will be between. One thing, however, is certain, i.e., that beginning with the war against Yugoslavia, through the wars in the Middle East, to the present troubles in Ukraine, imperialism is engaged in encircling Russia and China. It is attempting to encircle Russia because Russia is the only country with the armaments that can challenge the armed might of US imperialism and because of the vastness of its resources; while China is targeted because, in addition to its social system, it is well on course to become the largest economy in the world in the next half decade (in fact, on the basis of purchasing power parity, it is already the largest economy), and this economic might is enabling China to become the dominant power in Asia as well as, through its economic aid to Africa and Latin America, to

encroach on imperialism's traditional ability to loot unhindered. Should imperialism dare to launch a war against Russia or China, devastating though such a war would be, it will sound the death knell of imperialism. If the First World War ushered in the Great Socialist October Revolution, if the Second World War gave birth a mighty socialist camp covering a third of the world's territory and a quarter of its population, any war against Russia or China would put an end to imperialism in its entirety. Should such a war break out, it is the deeply held conviction of our party that the proletariat in the imperialist countries ought to side against its own bourgeoisie and work for the victory of Russia/China in resisting imperialist domination and subjugation and for proletarian revolution in their own respective countries.

Imperialism – the eve of proletarian revolution

To conclude, imperialism has sharpened all the contradictions to the extreme – the contradiction between labour and capital, between a handful of imperialist oppressors and the vast majority of humanity inhabiting the oppressed countries, and between the various imperialist groupings. Spurred on by the economic crisis, it is driving full steam ahead towards war.

Imperialism, by sharpening all the contradictions of capitalism, faces humanity with the choice: either revolution or war and barbarism. The Leninist theory of revolution and Leninist tactics and methods of organisation offer the only road to salvation to the proletariat faced with the stark choice: "Either place yourself at the mercy of capital, eke out a miserable existence and sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon – this is the alternative imperialism puts before the vast masses of the proletariat. Imperialism brings the working class to revolution" (J.V. Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, Works Vol 6, pp. 74-75).

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

Chilean Communist Party (Proletarian Action)

Part 2: Criticism of the ideological foundations of the CPG

- A handful of countries?
- “Imperialist pyramid” or Lenin’s theory of imperialism?
- Idealism hidden in “imperialist pyramid”
- Methodological error
 - No participation of communists in governments led by the bourgeoisie?
 - Are there no stages between capitalism and socialism?
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Part 2: Criticism of the ideological foundations of the CPG

A handful of countries?

We will develop our critique of the foundations of the CPG’s “pyramid theory” on the basis of one of its publications, entitled “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid”¹⁰⁾.

It puts forward the following fundamental idea:

“3. Certain forces use arbitrarily the assessment of Lenin in his well-known work IMPERIALISM THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM that a handful, a very small number of states plunder the vast majority of the states across the globe. As a consequence, imperialism is being identified with a very small number of countries, which can be counted in the fingers of one hand while all the others are subordinate, oppressed, colonies, occupied due to their subservience to the liberal viewpoint.”¹¹⁾

Those who invoke one of the most basic

theoretical deductions of Lenin’s theory of imperialism, namely, that a very small number of states plunder the vast majority of the states of the world, would do so arbitrarily, according to the CPG, because they would thereby identify imperialism with a small group of countries and all the others only as “subordinate, oppressed, colonies, occupied due to their subservience to the liberal viewpoint”¹²⁾; in other words, they would sharply divide the world into two diametrically opposed parts: On the one hand, there would be a handful of imperialist countries and, on the other, a huge group of subordinate, oppressed, colonized or occupied countries.

This reductionist point of view, which evidently contradicts the dialectical methodology, is imputed by the CPG to all those who adopt this essential postulate of Lenin. However, this imputation says more about the one who imputes than about the one who is imputed. It is rather the CPG that distinguishes itself by a simplistic method of analysis and reflects this simplism in others.¹³⁾

Lenin’s postulate that the imperialist states are a handful of countries is and will continue to be valid in the face of the progressive process of concentration of political power that derives directly from the concentration of production and distribution on an international scale.¹⁴⁾ But from this interpretation does not follow what the CPG accuses those of us who maintain that this postulate is true: that the non-imperialist countries are mere subordinates of imperialism. A dialectical analysis of imperialism recognizes both the contradictions between imperialist states themselves, between non-imperialist states and, of course, the contradictions that exist between imperialist and non-imperialist states.

We consider it essential to defend the analytical

principles used by Lenin in developing his theory of imperialism and its main derivations. We reject the CPG's attempt to surreptitiously eliminate or substitute another interpretation for one of the most fundamental theoretical derivations of Lenin's theory of imperialism, the "handful of imperialist countries," because we believe that this collapses the entire Leninist theory of imperialism, which in turn will lead to false and harmful conclusions for the correct development of the communist forces in the world.¹⁵⁾

"Imperialist pyramid" or Lenin's theory of imperialism?

The method of analysis of the CPG is diametrically different from that of Lenin. The CPG analysis, based on the moral concept of "it is capitalist = it is evil", leads him to put in the "sack of imperialist countries" any country recognized by the United Nations that is not "purely socialist-communist". Without realizing it, the list of imperialist countries begins to grow exponentially, since at present practically no country meets this criterion of "pure socialism-communism". The "sack" is filling to overflowing. From the pear shape of the "sack", a little narrower at the top and a little thicker at the bottom, the CPG extracts with "imaginative acuity" and "remarkable capacity for abstraction" the three-dimensional version of the triangle: a pyramid and entitles it: Imperialism.

This reasoning of the CPG can be translated into a new equation similar to the one already known, but applied to the imperialist reality: (almost) all the countries of the world = imperialist countries = imperialism.

The CPG then imagines imperialism as a great pyramid in which countries are arranged from top to bottom, like books on a shelf. The powerful countries are at the top, the less powerful at the bottom. Since this shelf is shaped like a pyramid, there are only a few countries at the top, the "powerful capitalist states", to which, as the CPG points out in a desperate attempt to link its idea of the "imperialist pyramid" with Lenin's theory

of imperialism, Lenin's expression "a handful of countries" (without using the word "imperialist", however) "could" be applied:

"Today there are few countries which are at the summit, in the first positions of the international imperialist system (it is illustrated with the scheme of a pyramid in order to show the various levels occupied by the capitalist countries) a handful of countries one could say according to the Leninist expression. But this does not mean that all the other capitalist countries are victims of the powerful capitalist states, that the bourgeois class of most countries has submitted to the pressure, despite its general interest that it has been corrupted."¹⁶⁾

Nowhere does the CPG give, or even attempt to give, any theoretical demonstration that its postulate of the "imperialist pyramid" is a Leninist postulate, but it repeatedly insists on affirming it, as if by affirming something it makes the affirmation to that something. We see this practice repeatedly in this text and in others as well. Another example is the following quote. In it he asserts in the same way that there was a direct connection between Lenin's postulate and the idea of the "imperialist pyramid", again without presenting a theoretical foundation for the assertion. In this quotation, however, a "as" is added. This "as" seems to want to establish an "explanatory" link between the statement "a small number of countries are found at the summit of the pyramid"¹⁷⁾ and "finance capital spreads its tentacles to every country in the world". If the sentence were reversed, it would read: "Since finance capital spreads its tentacles to every country in the world, a small number of countries are found at the summit of the pyramid". It can be seen that in the wording of the sentence there is no discernible connection between the cause ("finance capital spreads its tentacles to every country in the world") and the effect ("a small number of countries are found at the summit of the pyramid"). If finance capital extends its tentacles to all the

countries of the world, how can it be explained that there are a small number of countries at the top of the “imperialist pyramid”? Or more precisely, why is the structure of imperialism according to the CPG in the form of a pyramid and not another (for example, a sphere or a bottle)?

“When Lenin spoke about a handful of countries that plunder a large number of countries, he was highlighting with many examples and details, a variety of forms of looting regarding colonial, semi-colonial and non-colonial countries. A small number of countries are found at the summit of the pyramid, as finance capital (one of the 5 basic characteristics of capitalism in its imperialist stage as the merger of banking and industrial capital) spreads its tentacles to every country in the world. The position regarding a “handful of countries” defines various forms of relations between the capitalist countries which are characterised by unevenness, this is what the pyramid describes in order to illustrate the global capitalist economy.”¹⁸⁾

The expression “extends its tentacles” presupposes an organic center, a head, like that of an octopod, from which these tentacles emanate. But precisely this center is not mentioned. It would have been different if the CPG had formulated something like this: “Countries that have large amounts of financial capital and export it from the top of the pyramid”. But that would have led directly to a distinction between the countries that hold magnificent amounts of financial capital and those that do not. There would have been a clear division between the countries of the world. And it is precisely this separation that the CPG seems to want to deny. For them, practically all countries are imperialist. Financial capital becomes an abstract “thing” without an organic center and insubstantial, without materiality, which seems to float like air above heads, above societies. It is more appropriate to describe the CPG’s idea of finance capital not so much as tentacles, because they have to come from a center, but rather as ropes that coil

evenly around the globe. Although this conception is closer to the CPG conception of finance capital, it also does not explain why some countries are at the top of the imperialist pyramid and others at its base, or more precisely, why the structure of imperialism according to the CPG is pyramid-shaped.

The CPG endeavors to offer something resembling an explanation. To this end, it begins by surreptitiously replacing the Leninist division into ‘imperialist states’, on the one hand, and ‘states colonized by finance capital’, on the other, by ‘powerful capitalist states’ and - as a logical consequence of its analytical thread - ‘weak capitalist states’. According to the CPG, there would be no dialectical opposition between the imperialist countries and the countries colonized by the finance capital of the imperialist countries, but their pyramid, which orders the capitalist countries from the powerful to the weak in descending order. Basically, therefore, all countries would be equal, according to the CPG. What varies is only the degree of “power”.¹⁹⁾ Let’s illustrate this with a color: all countries are blue, but some are bluer and some are less blue. This creates a gradient of the color blue. The color blue represents the amount of “power” a country has. The weaker the blue color, the less “power” a country has.

Thus, the CPG no longer separates states into plunderers and plundered, but distinguishes them according to the “degree of power” they hold. In this way, it abolishes at a stroke the dialectical and materialist analysis of the imperialist phase of capitalism used by Lenin, which, independently of subjectivities such as the reactionary or progressive exercise of domestic or foreign policy, conceives these two groups of countries or states as opposed to each other.

In contrast to the CPG interpretation of imperialism, Lenin’s vision (succinctly described), if it were to be represented in colors, would require at least two and their gradations: a blue color, for example blue like the NATO logo, for the imperialist countries and red for the plundered countries. Within the non-imperialist world, there

would also be the gradation described, for example, from very red for the least subjugated countries to less red for the most subjugated countries. But there would also be gradual color transitions between blue and red, indicating the degree of servility (i.e., voluntary submission) to the imperialist states. For imperialist countries, there would also be a gradation of the color blue indicating their degree of capacity to exercise imperialism vis-à-vis other countries. In addition, there could be a gradual mixture with a third color (for example, green), for the imperialist countries which at the same time are subjected to the imperialist country par excellence (in our time, the United States). And finally, there could also be a mixture with more or less shades of red, for the imperialist countries which are subjected to the imperialist country par excellence, but which at the same time try to follow a foreign policy partially independent of it.

Lenin's whole theory of imperialism is based on the realization that it is a handful of states that constitute the imperialist states and that they make super-profits by exploiting the whole world:

*"The imperialism of the beginning of the twentieth century completed the division of the world among a handful of states, each of which today exploits (in the sense of drawing superprofits from) a part of the "whole world" only a little smaller than that which England exploited in 1858; each of them occupies a monopolist position in the world market thanks to trusts, cartels, finance capital and creditor and debtor relations; each of them enjoys to some degree a colonial monopoly (we have seen that out of the total of 75,000,000 sq. km., which comprise the whole colonial world, 65,000,000 sq. km., or 86 per cent, belong to six powers; 61,000,000 sq. km., or 81 per cent, belong to three powers)."*²⁰⁾

What a pronounced difference between Lenin's words and those of the CPG.

In short, the CPG insists on understanding imperialism as a set of countries with different

"degrees" of capitalism, so it is faced with an unresolved dilemma: Lenin spoke of a handful of imperialist countries (which is not the same as speaking of "a handful of countries" without the word "imperialist"). The CPG is confronted with a huge sack/shelf/pyramid of some 190 imperialist countries! What to do? The CPG's answer is simple: not to recognize that there is something wrong with their argument, but to accuse of arbitrariness those who believe that one of the main theoretical conclusions of Lenin's theory of imperialism is correct.

Idealism hidden in "imperialist pyramid"

It is necessary to refer to the evaluative term "victims":

Once the CPG has carried out the aforementioned process of ranking the approximately 190 countries in its "imperialist pyramid," each niche in the pyramid is given one of the following two labels: "victim country/state" or "non-victim country/state."

So if, according to Lenin, a country is a colony, dependent and plundered by the imperialist countries, independently of the domestic or foreign policy pursued, independently of its role in international politics and whether we like or dislike its present role in it in international politics and even independently of its present historical role, then the Congo, Saudi Arabia or Venezuela are all equally colonized, dependent and plundered countries. But the analytical subjectivism of the CPG gives these states, which are in a particular niche of the pyramid, the moral qualification of victims or non-victims. Possibly two of these countries would be labeled as non-victims by the CPG, namely Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Congo would probably enjoy the "privilege" of occupying a very low place in the pyramid and being labeled as a "victim" by the CPG.

From these designations, the CPG derives its support or rejection of countries, processes and international policies.

Methodological error

From the perspective of the communist method of analysis, the CPG incurs two methodological defects:

- The CPG confuses two essential terms: ‘imperialist countries’ and ‘capitalist imperialism’.²¹⁾
- The CPG does not analyze social relations, but things (in this case countries).

It is true that the terms ‘imperialist countries’ and ‘capitalist imperialism’ are closely related and can even be used as synonyms in certain circumstances, since one is derived from the other. However, they must be distinguished: Imperialist countries are those whose national bourgeoisies live not only at the cost of the capitalist exploitation of the national working class, but also at the cost of the added value generated by the international working class, i.e., of international capitalist exploitation; and in view of this fact, they allow themselves to pass on ‘generously’ part of this added value (extracted from the other countries) to their own working class in order to appease its fighting impetus. This reveals a serious fact from the point of view of the international struggle of the proletariat: In the imperialist countries the working class is bribed by their bourgeoisies. The working class, at least a large part of it, supports its bourgeoisies in international exploitation and sides with them in defending the interests of the imperialist state, because the working class of the imperialist world understands, consciously or unconsciously, that this state also guarantees it a higher standard of living than it would have without such an imperialist character of the state.

Capitalist imperialism is the system of generalized capitalist exploitation on an international scale, resulting precisely from the capacity of certain countries to exploit the rest of the world. This system of international exploitation is based on a very specific type of capital, finance capital or, to put it less abstractly, banking-industrial monopoly capital, whose axis is in banking, i.e., it is based in banking and from there directs economic and political activities in the countries and on an

international scale. The main characteristic of imperialism is, then, that the domination of finance capital has become universalized.

In this reality that emerged around 1900, a special relationship arises between countries: imperialist countries that export enormous amounts of financial capital and dependent countries that are exploited and colonized by that same financial capital. It is the imperialist countries that extend finance capital to the rest of the world. This is the cause of today’s wars, because the expansion of capital is followed by military expansion. Although the imperialist system is much more complex than what we have just described, this relationship is the most elementary one that characterizes contemporary societies, and any analysis of the present, including that of the national class struggle, must necessarily start from this fundamental relationship.

Based on the method of investigation of materialist dialectics, Lenin does not focus on the countries themselves, but on the relations that arise and exist between countries.

The CPG does exactly the opposite. Its “theory” of the “imperialist pyramid” focuses its gaze not on the relations between countries, but on the extremes of these relations, i.e., on the countries themselves. The logical derivation of this, in our opinion, flawed method of analysis is to elevate all countries to imperialism. This remains true even if the states are ordered according to the criterion of the “amount of capitalism” contained in each of them. In other words, the set of capitalist countries (similar to set theory in mathematics) would constitute imperialism, according to the logical statement: a country is capitalist, therefore it is imperialist. The CPG “adds” one capitalist country to another capitalist country until it has added them all together and obtains imperialism, so that the capitalist mode of production itself is elevated to imperialism, or rather equated to it. And since there is practically no country today in which there is not some degree of mercantile relations and capitalist production, the idea of the CPG can be

summed up in that the totality of the countries of the earth constitute imperialism.

Thus, the fundamental contradiction that Lenin had pointed out in his theory of imperialism, namely, the contradiction between imperialist and non-imperialist countries and the consequent relations of dependence, exploitation and subjugation, is theoretically suppressed, eliminated, abolished.

The mixture of conceptual confusion and political purism proposed by the CPG has led it to the elaboration of a “theory” of imperialism that is clearly not Leninist and does no good to the international communist movement.

But we recognize boldness in the CPG. It dares to equate its concept of “imperialist pyramid” with that of the international imperialist system, i.e., according to the CPG: imperialist pyramid = international imperialist system:

“Their persistence in denying the existence of the imperialist pyramid namely the existence of international imperialist system [...].”²²⁾

Thus, those who deny the idea of the “imperialist pyramid” would consequently deny the existence of the international imperialist system of exploitation. At least that is what the CPG believes.

But as we have seen, the “Leninist approach” proposed by the CPG has much of “approach” but little of Leninism, despite the use of the term “Leninist”.

The confusing conclusions of the CPG

No participation of communists in governments led by the bourgeoisie?²³⁾

The idea of the “imperialist pyramid”, based on theoretical elements that are not consistent with materialist dialectics, leads the CPG to conclusions such as the following:

“Their persistence in denying the existence of the imperialist pyramid namely the existence of

international imperialist system (talking about a very small number of countries which can be characterized imperialist mainly due to their hegemonic position and their ability to decide on the launching of a local or general war) is not at all accidental on the part of some people or a product of a mistaken view but conscious. Their willingness to undertake responsibilities in a bourgeois management government arises from this; sometimes in the name of the “country’s exit from the crisis”, the “salvation of the people from the humanitarian crisis”, the “restoration of the country’s sovereignty” even the ... “development of the productive forces, through state capitalism.”²⁴⁾

The criticism of the CPG in the previous paragraph to the opportunist postulates that have ultimately abandoned the class struggle, the struggle for political power and the struggle for socialism, seems correct to us, but not the argumentation applied. The CPG elevates non-participation in bourgeois governments (in its words: “bourgeois management governments”) to a universal principle, regardless of the reasons that may motivate such participation, even if they are as fundamental as those mentioned in the quote.

We find it remarkable that the CPG is not capable of analytically evaluating the different bourgeois governments of the present and, consequently, of proposing an adequate national and international policy for the working class. For the CPG, the working class must always and at all times wage a solitary struggle, without seeking tactical or strategic alliances. The CPG sees the working class as Don Quixote, fighting alone for universal justice.²⁵⁾ Any bourgeois government, even if it is progressive, patriotic, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, promotes national industrialization, nationalizes enterprises of strategic interest for the country, openly opposes NATO, etc., must be rejected by the purist CPG, on the same level as the US and the EU. Being bourgeois, there should be no communist support, much less cooperation. From criticism of opportunist positions, the CPG moves to the most

extreme purism.

Perhaps the CPG could return to the reading of the communist manifesto in which in the section “IV Position of the Communists before the different Opposition Parties” it is pointed out for example that:

“In France, the Communists ally with the Social-Democrats against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution.

In Switzerland, they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois.

In Poland, they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846.

In Germany, they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie.”²⁶⁾

The bourgeoisie, as is well explained in the Communist Manifesto, does not constitute a homogeneous mass. Within it there are progressive and patriotic sectors with which the working class can and should form tactical and even strategic alliances. If it does not do so, the working class weakens its own forces to oppose the big capitalists, leaving the small and medium sectors of the bourgeoisie at the mercy of reaction and even allowing the penetration of fascist ideas in them. The Communist Manifesto rightly made it one of its central concerns to point out to the proletarian masses and to the communists the need to establish alliances with sectors of the bourgeoisie, on condition that they then undertake revolutionary action against the absolute monarchy. Monarchy no longer exists, at least not in most countries.

But imperialism does. And the need to establish patriotic, anti-imperialist, popular and progressive alliances with the most advanced sectors of the national and international bourgeoisie continues and will continue to be in force until the day when imperialism is definitively defeated.

Are there no stages between capitalism and socialism?

From the incomprehension of the tactical necessity of the working class to establish relations with progressive and even revolutionary sectors of the bourgeoisie, to the rejection of the existence of stages between capitalism and socialism, these are the great theoretical leaps of the CPG:

“Thus, in practice certain people defend the existence of a stage between capitalism and socialism, with the clear purpose on the one hand of ensuring that the working class will give up the struggle for working class power and on the other, to promise that in the distant and unspecified future capitalism will be transformed peacefully with reforms and without sacrifices into socialism, their own “socialism”, which often provides for the coexistence of capitalist ownership with some forms of self-management.”²⁷⁾

Starting from the correct rejection of the opportunist postulates which claim that the conquest of political power by the working class and its allies would be possible without the use of all the means of struggle, including the indispensable armed struggle, the CPG makes an Olympic leap of argumentation up to the negation of the stages between capitalism and socialism; a feat it achieves in a single sentence without considering necessary the slightest theoretical justification. The question remains unanswered as to what theoretical argument would support a link between the rejection of opportunism and reformism, on the one hand, and the denial of the existence of stages between capitalism and socialism, on the other.

The CPG could ask itself questions about the validity of its approach: In the CPG's opinion is it legitimate to work in a bourgeois parliament, according to the legal and institutional framework created by the owners of big imperialist and national capital, but not in a bourgeois government? Does the CPG really believe that it can achieve more for the working class from parliament than through a patriotic and revolutionary government in alliance with honest sections of the bourgeoisie? Does the CPG intend to establish socialism in Greece immediately, from parliament,²⁸⁾ as soon as the working class has taken political power, with the leadership of the CPG, which today, we repeat, is waging a parliamentary struggle and... all this without "bourgeois" allies at any time? On what industrial basis does the CPG want to build socialism in Greece? How is a socialist Greece to survive in a world in which the rest of Europe, and indeed the rest of the world, remains capitalist? With which states does the CPG think socialist Greece should ally itself if none of the countries recognized by the United Nations meet its demanding requirements?

What will the Hellenic people do, living in a socialist oasis in the middle of the imperialist ocean?

It is impossible to know what Lenin, if he were alive, would have responded to the CPG, given its remarkable ability to jump from correct to chimerical positions in a single paragraph or even a single sentence, but it is possible to review his responses to the positions of the "left communists," which seem to us similar to those of the CPG today.

In 1917, in his writing "The State and the Revolution", he taught us that:

"Opportunism today, as represented by its principal spokesman, the ex-Marxist Karl Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx's characterization of the bourgeois position quoted above, for this opportunism limits recognition of the class struggle to the sphere of bourgeois relations. (Within this sphere, within its framework, not a single educated

liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle "in principle"!) Opportunism does not extend recognition of the class struggle to the cardinal point, to the period of transition from capitalism to communism, of the overthrow and the complete abolition of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms, and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie).

Further. The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society", from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat."²⁹⁾

Thus, Lenin wrote in 1918 in "Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality" the following:

"Firstly, the "Left Communists" do not understand what kind of transition it is from capitalism to socialism that gives us the right and the grounds to call our country the Socialist Republic of Soviets. [...] No one, I think, in studying the question of the economic system of Russia, has denied its transitional character. Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not

that the new economic system is recognised as a socialist order.

But what does the word “transition” mean? Does it not mean, as applied to an economy, that the present system contains elements, particles, fragments of both capitalism and socialism? Everyone will admit that it does. But not all who admit this take the trouble to consider what elements actually constitute the various socio-economic structures that exist in Russia at the present time. And this is the crux of the question.

[...] Those who fail to understand this are committing an unpardonable mistake in economics. Either they do not know the facts of life, do not see what actually exists and are unable to look the truth in the face, or they confine themselves to abstractly comparing “capitalism” with “socialism” and fail to study the concrete forms and stages of the transition that is taking place in our country. [...] The best of them have failed to understand that it was not without reason that the teachers of socialism spoke of a whole period of transition from capitalism to socialism and emphasised the “prolonged birth pangs” of the new society.[...]”³⁰⁾

Or in 1919 he said in “Economics and Politics In the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”:

“Theoretically, there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period which must combine the features and properties of both these forms of social economy. This transition period has to be a period of struggle between dying capitalism and nascent communism - or, in other words, between capitalism which has been defeated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble.”³¹⁾

Lenin replied to the “left communists” who hoped, like the CPG today, to reach “heaven in one leap” that there is an inevitable transition process between capitalism and socialism³²⁾ and that

socialism cannot be established immediately.

The quotations we have used in this part of the text are consciously from Lenin and from the period in full struggle for the conquest of political power. We have avoided quoting Marx or Engels, for the following reason: the proletariat, under the wise leadership of the Bolsheviks, had conquered political power and established the dictatorship of the proletariat, but these facts did not mean the realization of socialism! In other words, the conquest of political power in the hands of the working class is not synonymous with the establishment of socialism, nor can it be, because the bases of production necessary for the realization of socialism must be prepared, the appropriate new socialist State must be erected, the class struggle must be waged with greater force, imperialism must be combated, etc.

It seems to us that if such arguments were valid in those years when the class struggle was at its height and the proletariat, with the support of the peasantry, conquered political power, they are even more valid today, when part of the socialist camp ceased to exist. One of the most important lessons of the dissolution of the USSR for the new generations of the working class is that the realization of socialism requires even greater efforts than the first generations had imagined.³³⁾

But the CPG claims to perform two miracles at once: the conquest of political power without alliances with “bourgeois management government” and the immediate realization of socialism. With this entelechy, the CPG believes it has overcome the postulates of the opportunists and reformists who affirm that it is possible to transform capitalist society into socialism “peacefully with reforms and without sacrifices”.

Erroneous positions are not harmless

The “leftist” positions of the CPG seem harmless because they apparently have a just intention; that of confronting those who promise that it is possible to achieve socialism without revolution and the seizure of political power. However, they

are not. These chimeras are the basis of harmful positions such as calling socialist China and Russia imperialist countries!³⁴⁾

In the first place, it should be mentioned that we believe that communists should if possible not only participate in patriotic, popular governments with a socialist perspective, but also promote them, together with anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, progressive and democratic bourgeois forces. To do this, communists must have both a communist political program and a patriotic and popular program through which they can enter into contact with such groups and combine their forces to achieve common goals.

At a time when the seizure of political power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat are far from being a real possibility, as is the case today in the absolute majority of societies (including Greece), it is legitimate, from the point of view of political tactics, for the communists to go, even “behind” the democratizing bourgeois forces that are trying to carry forward structural changes, such as the nationalization of enterprises of strategic interest for the homeland, the reversal of privatizations and the deindustrialization of the country, the development of a system of national planning to reactivate the national industry, the strengthening of the military power of the country (which will be very necessary to defend a democratic and popular process against the destabilizing attempts that will come from outside), to fight in the countries subjected by NATO for its expulsion from the national territory, to strengthen the international political relations with the socialist countries, but also with the bourgeois democratic, progressive, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist countries and with economic organizations such as the BRICS, CELAC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (to avoid as far as possible the sanctions and the economic siege that such a process will undoubtedly bring), wage a real war against the big capitalists of organized crime, promote a drastic tax reform and strengthen the trade union movement and link the working class

with the other sectors that share its destiny.

Precisely this necessity is quite explicitly denied by the PCG. The result of this is that the PCG proposes a solitary struggle of the proletariat handing over to reaction its possible allies. The probabilities of success of a solitary struggle of the proletariat without alliances with sectors of the democratic petty bourgeoisie, with the peasantry (in countries where there is still a sufficient mass of peasantry) and even with sectors of the patriotic big bourgeoisie, are very low, because all these forces will pass to reaction and the latter will have the immeasurable support of imperialism.

Incorrect and damaging derivations

We have already seen the fatal consequences of the analysis based on the “imperialist pyramid” in the case of Venezuela.³⁵⁾ Let us now consider a more complex case from the point of view of the political purism proposed by the CPG: Saudi Arabia. We believe there is a fairly widespread consensus among communists that this monarchical state has been a lackey of the United States, as have all the Gulf monarchies to a greater or lesser extent. Saudi Arabia has played a nefarious role against Syria, even helping to fund NATO terrorist mercenaries there. It has enabled U.S. military influence in the region through the five U.S. military bases it has there. It has waged a criminal war against Yemen in the interests of NATO, causing the largest humanitarian crisis of these days. From the perspective of anti-imperialism, there is probably little positive to say about this country.

But nothing remains outside the universal law of the cosmos: movement. Nor does international politics, which is in full swing. Unexpectedly, an agreement was reached between Saudi Arabia and Iran that can be described as historic, especially since it was mediated by China. After a year and a half of bilateral negotiations, the two countries reached an agreement that puts an end to the diplomatic rift that had lasted seven years since 2016. Saudi Arabia has even announced the start of a foreign policy more focused on the region

than on servility to the United States. This is not the first time that Iran and Saudi Arabia have re-established diplomatic relations after a rupture. This time, however, it is taking place in the context of a general weakening of US and EU imperialist influence in the region and, what seems to us particularly important, with the aforementioned mediation by China.

China has achieved a historic agreement between the two countries without having a single military base in the region.³⁶⁾

This political development is very important from the point of view of the anti-imperialist struggle and international peace, and should cause at least a positive sense of relief among communists around the world, as it reduces imperialist influence in the region and thus the risk of regional military conflicts. We welcome this important agreement brokered by China and hope that it will mean the end of Saudi Arabia's war against Yemen.

However, despite the importance of this political event, the CPG did not utter a single word, not even of disapproval. On its English-language website, there is not a single article referring to this event. If there had been, it would probably have been a negative assessment. CPG political purism would probably have pointed out: When a capitalist Iran, a capitalist Saudi Arabia and a China that the CPG also considers capitalist sit around a table to negotiate an important diplomatic agreement, nothing good can come of it. Why? The answer the CPG would probably give would be simple. Ignoring the complex contradictions in the vast web of dependency, subjugation and struggles for national sovereignty that constitute imperialism, it would simply answer: they are all capitalists. ...

However, the absence of any reference to this political event, important for international politics and diplomacy, speaks even less in favor of the CPG's "method of analysis", the so-called "imperialist pyramid", than a negative reference to this fact, because this shows that its method leads to a remarkable inability to recognize internationally relevant political facts of the moment - relevant

from the point of view of international peace and anti-imperialism.

From the point of view of communist tactics, it is possible to appreciate certain aspects of bourgeois governments and processes. The valuation depends above all on the level of development of the consciousness and organization of the working class. At a time of low development, as for example currently in Brazil, the value that can be given to a president such as Lula is different than if the working and popular masses of Brazil were on the verge of taking political power. In such a case, communists would not have to call for a truce with him, but to bypass the government (despite its positive aspects), because this government would mean paralyzing the revolutionary impulse. In the present circumstances of Brazil, on the other hand, it is legitimate both to recognize the many positive aspects of Lula's government and to denounce those that are detrimental to the interests of the proletariat, always encouraging it - the proletariat - to advance on the road to emancipation from wage slavery.

The difficult dilemma is not the question of communist participation in or support for bourgeois governments, but the question of when to participate or support them, when not to do so, and how not to depend on per diems received in public office and parliament. Any bourgeois government that lays certain foundations that facilitate the future construction of socialism (for example, the strengthening of national industry or the expulsion of NATO military bases) is worthy of integration.³⁷⁾ But communists must work resolutely in it to deepen the process itself and direct it toward socialist revolution.

Therefore, a communist should not reject on principle all the economic and political measures of a social-democratic government, nor those of a reactionary (or right-wing) government,³⁸⁾ if some of them represent progress or, at least, do not set back the working class in its struggle for its emancipation. A communist party assumes the correct aspects of the bourgeois governments,

rejects their negative manifestations, that is, those that threaten the advance of the working class towards the conquest of political power, and proposes its own program for the country as a synthesis of both aspects without dogmatism. What must not happen under any circumstances is that the communist party abandons its own program and replaces it with bourgeois programs (like that of Syriza in Greece, for example), that it loses contact with the popular masses and stops denouncing and mobilizing against anti-working class and anti-popular measures.

These political subtleties seem absent in the CPG analysis.

In the third and final part, we will address what we consider to be the dangerous CPG postulate that socialist China and Russia would be imperialist, and show why these claims are unfounded and highly damaging. We will respond to arguments such as the following:

“The WAP argues that “That there is no economic data to justify characterizing China or Russia as imperialist. These are countries that do not live by superexploiting or looting the world. They do not put other countries into military, technological or debt slavery” and that “Russia and China are not aggressive imperialist powers but, on the contrary, are targeted by our enemies because they stand in the way of the USA’s complete global domination”.

With these statements, the WAP once again seeks to distort reality. It is as if China and Russia do not participate in the G20 summits, the meetings of the 20 most powerful capitalist states of the world, together with the USA, Germany, the UK, France, etc. It is as if the Chinese and Russian monopolies do not export capital to other countries, aiming for the profit that comes from exploiting the labour power not only of the workers of their own country, but also of many other countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, wherever their monopolies develop. It is as if the Russian “Wagner” private army is deployed in Africa for charitable reasons

and not to defend the interests of the Russian monopolies operating there. It is as if China is no longer moving in a similar direction to safeguard the Belt and Road Initiative by military means. It is notable that this initiative includes the small but very important in geographical terms state of Djibouti - whose debt to China amounts to 43% of its Gross National Income - where China’s first military base outside its borders was inaugurated in 2017”³⁹⁾

Notes

10) We consider that the term “imperialist pyramid” used by the CPG is confusing or even erroneous, since it implies that a thing, a pyramid, is imperialist (i.e., the pyramid is imperialist). We believe that by this term the CPG means: “the pyramidal structure of imperialism”. At least that is how we interpret it. The imprecision of terms is a constant in the text to which this footnote refers.

11) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

12) What does “subservience to the liberal viewpoint” mean? What is a liberal viewpoint supposed to be? For us, the statement “due to their subservience to the liberal viewpoint” is ambiguous.

13) In the first part of the article we saw that the CPG reduces the evaluation of international political reality to a single universal equation: it is capitalist = it is evil. What could be more reductionist than such an assumption?

14) In the first part of this article we have already outlined what, in our opinion, currently constitute this handful of countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan.

15) We have already seen a foretaste of the fatal conclusions to which this revision of Lenin’s theory could lead in the case of Venezuela in Part 1 of this article, in the section “Reactionary Venezuela?”. There we saw that the CPC calls on communists to reject the government of Nicolás Maduro in line with the imperialist sabotage against the country.

16) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

17) In the quote it says: “A small number of countries are found at the summit of the pyramid, as finance capital (one of the 5 basic characteristics of capitalism in its imperialist stage as the merger of banking and industrial capital) spreads its tentacles to every country in the world.”

The part highlighted in black in parentheses is inaccurate. Finance capital is not a characteristic of imperialism. Rather, one of its characteristics is the merging of banking capital with industrial capital, from which finance capital emerges. A thing (in this case “finance capital”) cannot be the characteristic of a social relation (in this case “capitalism in its imperialist stage”). It is a phenomenon, a fact (in this case, “the merging”) that can be. In other words, the issue is exactly the opposite of what the PCG says.

Lenin puts it this way: “[...] it is convenient to give a definition of imperialism that includes the following five basic features: [...] 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this ‘finance capital,’ of a financial oligarchy”.

This inaccuracy of the CPG is only one of many. The sheer scale of such inadequacies suggests to us that the CPG has not grasped Lenin’s theory of imperialism.

18) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

19) It is not clear what the CPG means by the term “power” or, more precisely, “powerful”: political power, economic power, military power? All at the same time? In what sense would these states be powerful?

20) V.I. Lenin: “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, VIII. Parasitism and decay of capitalism”, 1916, at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch08.htm>

21) This time we place the term “capitalist” explicitly because of an argumentative thread that we develop below.

22) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

23) “Bourgeois management government” is another imprecise term used in the quoted text, which is neither defined nor explained. What does the CPG mean by this term? It reminds us of concepts taught in business subjects, where terms such as “management of a company” are often used. Does the CPG apply these terms to state policy? What would the bourgeoisie manage? The state, the economy? For the CPG, would there be in the same way governments “managed” by the bourgeoisie and governments “managed” by the proletariat? Is it not true that every government today, in the capitalist world, is a government that represents the interests of the owners of big domestic and foreign capital and acts in their interests, and that this reality can only change to the extent that the working class and the great popular masses achieve political power? Is it possible to have a government “managed” by the proletariat without having changed the character of the capitalist State?

We believe that the terms “reactionary governments” or “pro-imperialist governments” or “popular democratic governments” or “lackey governments of imperialism” or “progressive governments” etc. better describe the character of the various bourgeois governments in this case.

Since the CPG does not make much effort to define its terms (it is impossible to say whether it does so deliberately or for lack of theoretical capacity), this opens up a multitude of questions and imprecision. We shall interpret the term “bourgeois management governments” as governments acting to a greater or lesser extent in the service of big national and foreign capital. In this sense, the vast majority of the governments of the non-socialist countries would be “bourgeois management governments” in the opinion of the CPG. If we have misinterpreted this term, we are grateful for the fraternal correction of the CPG.

In our opinion, we had said, it is clear that no government can be “of proletarian management”, because without the seizure of political power this is not possible. A proletarian government presupposes that the State is in the hands of the proletariat. If one follows the reasoning of the CPG, which rejects any type of “bourgeois management government” one can conclude that, in its opinion, the communists should only “assume responsibilities” (another diffuse term) in the “proletarian management government”. And since “proletarian management government” are impossible without the seizure of political power by the workers and other popular masses and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the CPG implicitly points out that the communists should exercise government only once the proletariat and its allies, under the leadership of the communists, have seized political power. Until then, the communists can stay quietly at home or engage here and there in parliamentary work.

24) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

25) The “principlism” of the CPG does not always seem coherent. One example: We agree with the CPG that a government like that of Zyriza has not favored the workers and other popular strata of the country. But the same is true of Gabriel Boric’s government in Chile, in which one of its sister parties, the Communist Party of Chile (CPCh), which in no way can be considered a small party like the PCV and the PCM, participates. While the CPG maintains absolute silence on the involvement of the CPCh in a bourgeois government lackey of the U.S., which attacks the indigenous Mapuche of Chile, the students and workers, and which is one of the few governments in the region that has firmly sided with Ukraine and supports the fascist Zelensky government, the CPG vehemently attacks governments like those of Nicaragua and Venezuela that oppose the U.S.. What is the reason for the CPG’s resounding silence on the CPCh’s “willingness to undertake responsibilities in a bourgeois management government”?

26) Karl Marx y Friedrich Engels: “Manifiesto of the Communist Party”, first published: February 1848, in: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifiesto/index.htm>

27) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

28) Let us not forget that the CPG obtained 7.23% of the parliamentary

votes in the last elections, in the bourgeois parliament of Greece. In this context, two facts must be pointed out: The CPG rejects the alliance with “bourgeois management governments”, but participates in the parliament, one of the most important systemic structures of the bourgeoisie, through which the bourgeoisie manages to transfer the class struggle into the bourgeois institutional framework. The second fact to highlight is that in these elections there was a high abstention of 48%, mostly from proletarian sectors. Taking into account such a high level of abstention, it is difficult to understand the arrogance of the CPG, considering that the abstention was five times higher than the votes of this party.

29) V.I. Lenin: “The State and Revolution”, first Published: 1918, in: <https://www.marxists.org/ebooks/lenin/state-and-revolution.pdf>

30) V.I. Lenin: “‘Left-Wing’ Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality”, first published May 9, 10, 11, 1918, in: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/may/09.htm>

31) V.I. Lenin: “Economics and Politics In the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, first published: Pravda No. 250, November 7, 1919, in: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/oct/30.htm>

32) It should be clarified that the term communism was used as a synonym for socialism.

33) It would have been more correct that the CPG would have pointed out that there are no stages between ‘capitalism’ and the ‘seizure of political power’. This statement would also have been debatable and its evaluation would depend above all on the objective and subjective conditions of each country, but it would have been more correct, because the ‘seizure of political power’ is a necessary condition for the beginning of the construction of socialism and lies precisely between bourgeois and socialist society.

34) In the third part we will examine the false foundations on which the CPG reaches such conclusions and the great damage they do to the communist movement and the struggle of the working class with these false classifications.

35) We have already pointed it out: on an erroneous basis the CPG draws conclusions harmful to the international workers movement. We have already seen how badly the CPG advises the CPV at the present time, how much damage it is doing to the struggle of the proletariat in Venezuela and to the Bolivarian process and by that means to the proletarian struggle throughout the world! The CPG should call on the CPV not only not to withdraw from the process but on the contrary to be part of it, to support it in spite of its possible shortcomings, of course not to be silent in criticizing certain shortcomings if necessary, but always with the maximum loyalty to the Venezuelan homeland and to the Bolivarian process, to present to the people of Venezuela at every moment an adequate tactic, patriotic and revolutionary, and an accurate analysis, to be the most determined defenders of the Bolivarian process and to be in the front line pushing the process forward so that it does not stagnate, give up or involute. But the CPG calls on the CPV to join de facto the national reaction and imperialist intervention!

36) But as we will go deeper in the third part China would be imperialist according to the CPG.

37) In Chile these were the cases of the governments of Salvador Allende and Pedro Aguirre Cerda. Other examples are the current

processes in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Although they are bourgeois processes, these governments are resolutely laying the foundations of national sovereignty, so fundamental for the development of socialism in the future, they are strengthening their army, fundamental for the defense of the homeland against an imperialist invasion, they are raising the standard of living of the great popular masses (not by means of the exploitation of other countries but by means of social struggle), they are raising the intellectual level of the great masses of the country, etc.

38) A case in point is the Hungarian Prime Minister, Victor Orban. His dissenting positions on NATO have led him to be considered undesirable in the imperialist world, even though his country is a member of NATO. It is to be welcomed that, despite the permanent pressure he faces from the hegemonic NATO countries, Orban tries to pursue a policy that is as sovereign as possible for a NATO member country.

Positive elements can also be found in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has managed to adopt a sovereign position within NATO in Turkey’s interest, vis-à-vis NATO’s stance. He has skillfully managed an elegant back-and-forth between NATO and Russia and China. No other government of a NATO member country can boast of a similar ability to move deftly between NATO interests and engage with other countries, even those labeled as “challenging” NATO security interests, as the president of the Turkish country in particular has done. After President Orban, French President Macron comes closest to this.

The list could be extended: If you compare the Trump and Biden administrations, you can see a greater danger to humanity in Biden than in Trump. Trump tried to get out of several war scenarios in which the US is involved. Biden, on the other hand, has opened a new war front in Ukraine and risks a real all-out war against Russia. It is quite possible that Biden will open another war front around Taiwan and the South and East China Sea.

Recognizing these aspects does not mean renouncing communist “principles”, but making an analysis without dogmatism or ideological purism, as communists should do.

39) Communist Party of Greece (CPG) “The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid, Written contribution of the KKE at the 9th International Conference of the CWPR ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’”, in: <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/The-Leninist-approach-of-the-KKE-on-imperialism-and-imperialist-pyramid/>

Who are those who fear Lenin's revolutionary legacy and why?

Patelis Dimitrios | Collective of Struggle for the Revolutionary Unification of Humanity, Greece

On April 22, 1870, the brilliant leader and theoretician of the revolutionary movement, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, Lenin, is born. He died on January 21st, 1924.

What was his contribution to society, the revolutionary movement and science? Does studying his life and work have meaning in our time?

Associated with his name is the organic dialectical coupling of revolutionary theory, revolutionary way of life and praxis, in contrast both to the mindless pragmatism of the opportunistic activism of the self-serving politicians, and to the abstract theorising of “professorial science” (Marx), detached as it is from the practical needs of the revolutionary movement.

In Lenin we see the embodiment of the creative dialectical development of revolutionary theory (along with its three components) and practice of the communist movement during the transition of capitalism into its imperialist stage, in the era of world wars and socialist revolutions.

He is responsible for the conception and organisation of the “new type” party as a collective instrument for the production of revolutionary theory and the “introduction” of this theory to the respective historically determined working class, for the conscious organisation of the practice of revolutionary action, at all levels, with all available means and ways, in varying circumstances.

Lenin proved that “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. ... the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory” (V.I. Lenin. What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement. D. Engels On the Importance of the Theoretical Struggle).

This is admitted by many in words. However,

Lenin did not tolerate the slightest complacent retreat onto any supposedly eternally sufficient theoretical acquis, nor any transformation of theory into a dogmatised repository of dead positions, retrieved opportunistically and selectively at will. No metaphysical schematisation and no stereotypical vulgar sloganeering.

Lenin bequeathed to us an extremely rich and valuable body of writing (see V.I. Lenin Internet Archive: Works Index).

In the example of Russia, he demonstrated the law-abiding development of capitalism, despite the abundance of feudal, archaic communal, patriarchal, etc. remnants in society, economy and culture, but also the revolutionary duties of the communists in overcoming the long delay in development, which capitalism was unable to carry out.

Lenin is the only Marxist thinker who, after the death of K. Marx, has substantially addressed the problems of the basic artery of the investigation of the dialectical method, dialectical logic and the development of the materialist conception of history.

While the First Imperialist World War is ablaze, Lenin does not treat it as “one of the same”, he does not content himself with haphazard analogical historical assessments, citing examples of wars of other eras. He sees the radical changes that have taken place and realises the theoretical and methodological inadequacy of the available Marxist science in investigating the new stage of monopoly capitalism.

That's exactly when, alongside his economic studies on the monopoly stage of capitalism, imperialism and on the philosophical & methodological needs thereof, he undertook a thorough, detailed and systematic study of Hegel's

Logic, whereupon he formulates in a sharply critical and self-critical manner in the form of a paradox, a problem: “Aphorism: It is impossible completely to understand Marx’s Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel’s Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!” (Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. *Conspectus of Hegel’s Science of Logic - Book III* Written: September-December 1914). Since then, things do not seem to have improved significantly ...

The fundamental importance of this problem was not long realised by post-Marx thinkers. Only Lenin realises it in part, and poses in the *Philosophical Notebooks* the problem of the distinction of the Logic of “Capital” (although he does not pose it in its universal generalised form, i.e., he does not put forward the distinction of the system of laws and categories as the objective of research). This is a task that several decades later was undertaken by important Soviet thinkers and was accomplished by Victor Alekseevich Vaziulin: *The Logic of K. Marx’s “Capital”* (Moscow 1968, 2002) Viktor Alekseevič Vazjulin “Die Logik des “Kapitals” von Karl Marx”.

In saying “half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx”, Lenin includes the acclaimed polymath Marxist C. B. Plekhanov, attributing to him zero understanding of the great Logic: “Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectics) probably about 1,000 pages ... Among them, about the large Logic, in connection with it, its thought (i.e., dialectics proper, as philosophical science) nil!!!” (Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks*, Vol. 38 of *Collected Works*. Volume XIV. Volume II of the *History of Philosophy. The Philosophy of the Sophists*).

V.I. Lenin identifies a fundamental deficiency in the conception of B. Plekhanov and other Marxists of the time of dialectics, manifested in the appeal to examples and analogical assessments as substitutes for dialectical theory [“is taken as the sum-total of examples”] (*On the Question of Dialectics*. Written:

1915. Source: Volume 38, pp. 357-361).

On this methodological basis he developed his extremely valuable research on imperialism (see Lenin. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. A Popular Outline*. Written: January-June, 1916. Published: First published in mid-1917).

Lenin, on the basis of the imperative needs of the times and the circumstances of the First World War, proceeds to an accelerated exploration of the new stage of imperialism, monopoly capitalism, as the highest and last stage of capitalism, the eve of the socialist revolution. The scientific theory of imperialism was founded by Lenin who established that at the end of 19th - beginning of 20th century the capitalist mode of production acquired some new important features: in the development of productive forces-a high level of concentration of production leading to the formation of capitalist monopolies; in the sphere of production relations-the establishment of domination by these monopolies.

According to Lenin, “domination, and the violence that is associated with it” (Lenin. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. I. Concentration of Production and Monopolies*), which was introduced by monopolies into the economic relations of capitalism, caused in its political superstructure a turn from bourgeois democracy to reaction (up to the establishment of fascist regimes). All this enabled Lenin to draw the conclusion that capitalism had entered a special, imperialist stage of development: “imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance, in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed” (VII. *Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism*. Vol. 22, pp. 266-67).

Monopolisation of economy determines the historical place of imperialism as the highest and last stage of the development of capitalism,

as decaying, parasitic and dying capitalism. It determines the peculiarities of functioning of all economic laws of capitalism at this stage, including the law of uneven economic and political development of capitalist countries. This unevenness is sharply increasing and acquiring spasmodic, conflicting character, which in the conditions of complete division of the world among the imperialist states generates world wars. The imperialist states and their coalitions pursue aggressive foreign policies, which reflect the striving of monopolies for world domination. Within the country this policy is accompanied by growing militarisation of the economy. Monopolisation leads to an ever-increasing socialisation of production and thereby to still sharper aggravation of class antagonisms, thus creating objective prerequisites for the victory of socialism.

Lenin, in correctly highlighting the basic features of this stage, emphasised the findings concerning the connection, of vital importance for the revolutionary movement of the time, between the law of unequal development under imperialism and the problematic of the “weak link in the imperialist chain” (on which the Bolsheviks’ methodical and effective revolutionary action is based) and the prospect of the outbreak of revolutionary situations that can lead to victorious revolutions, initially in a group of countries or even in one country (as it eventually happened in imperialist Tsarist Russia and its colonies).

This constitutes an essential contribution to the creative development of Marxism, beyond the doctrinal “orthodoxies” and rigidities that served as an alibi for the apostasy from the revolutionary process of Kautsky, Bernstein, the Austro-Marxists and the bankrupt Second International as a whole.

Unfortunately, although more than 100 years have passed since then, the majority of current marxists and “marxists” do not understand the urgency of the need for a scientific, theoretical and methodological investigation of the modern stage of imperialism ...

The outbreak of the First Imperialist World War

had a catalytic effect on the workers’ revolutionary movement, sharply outlining both the irreconcilable contradictions of society, as well as whether and to what extent the various components of the movement actually served the working class and its interests, the prospect of communism, or the interests of imperialism, the bourgeois and/or petty bourgeoisie.

The war, thus, as Lenin showed, put everyone to the test, brought to the surface in sharp detail the theoretical and practical correspondence/discrepancy of social, ideological and political subjects with the times and the conjuncture, and finally, demonstrated the historical decay and bankruptcy of movements that once started out as revolutionary. Connected with the above is the revelation of the conditions and symptoms of the bankruptcy of the Second International (V.I. Lenin. *The Collapse of the Second International*. Written in the second half of May and the first half of June 1915. Published in 1915 in the journal *Kommunist* No. 1-2).

It starkly brought to the foreground the correlations of the forces at work, the social/class contradictions at the national and international level and the ways of their mediated ideological-political and organisational expression, especially in the imperialist countries. That is, in those countries that are stronger in terms of capital, the bourgeoisie of which, making use of the mechanism of exploitation due to the inequality on a global scale, through the extraction of monopolistic super-profits, have been able to bribe the well-off and corrupted in the indolence of the managerial/executive practice of the long peaceful period of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, the trade union and political leadership of its working class, by the consolidation of the position and role of the privileged layer of the “working class aristocracy” in ensuring social cohesion and consensus.

Thus, the main tendencies of the movement stood out in relief: that of “class peace”, opportunism-reformism and that of militant revolutionary consistency, communism, that of bourgeois/

middle-class social chauvinism (de facto complicity with the bourgeoisie and its imperialist alliances) and that of revolutionary internationalism, with their respective strategies and tactics.

The tendency of right-wing opportunism - reformism, was hidden through manipulative practices behind artificial majorities and internal party coups of bureaucratic balancers, behind “revolutionary rhetoric”, with oaths of faith in the “pure” strategy of socialism-communism, which was postponed to the indefinite future (as the culmination of an automatic “process of evolutionary maturation of conditions without a subject”, behind “adherence to the orthodoxy of Marxism”, etc. (See e.g., the work of Karl Kautsky). Lenin criticised the hypocritical positioning of the degenerate social democrats practically in favor of “their own imperialist” (against his one-sided defeat) with equivocal positions of “equal distance between victory and defeat”: “To repudiate the defeat slogan means allowing one’s revolutionary ardour to degenerate into an empty phrase, or sheer hypocrisy. What is the substitute proposed for the defeat slogan? It is that of “neither victory nor defeat”” (V.I. Lenin. *The Defeat of One’s Own Government in the Imperialist War*. *Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 43, July 26, 1915. Published according to the text in *Sotsial-Demokrat*. *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1974, Moscow, Vol. 21, pp. 275-280).

Lenin had not thought of giving either the concept of or the word “tactics” to the opportunists in order to boast of the “pure and untainted” “strategy” of the Bolsheviks. The revolutionary dialectical method mandates the organic interconnection of each pair/duple of categories within the system of concepts, categories and laws of the totality of revolutionary theory and methodology. Any eclectic detachment of one of the poles from its dialectical counterpart and from the above system, ensures a drift into revisionism, into metaphysical one-sided positions and fixations, into a reduction of theory to doctrinal formulations, with disastrous practical consequences ...

Any metaphysical adherence to some “pure strategy” detached from tactics is the surest path towards the subsequent engagement in creeping tacticism, with oaths of loyalty to the ... strategy of the hereafter ...

Thus, Lenin made clear the socio-economic basis of the opportunist degeneration of the workers’ movement, its subordination to the bourgeois regime with the “workers’ aristocracy” acting as a Trojan horse, being the product of the buy-out of the privileged strata of the working class with a share of the monopoly super-profits resulting from the parasitism of the monopolies of the imperialist countries at the expense of the colonies, the weaker and dependent countries.

He connected with this phenomenon of a compromising/conformist way of life, ideology and action the incorporation into the bourgeois regime of the bureaucratised unions and working class parties, the integration of the degenerated parties into the strategy of the imperialist countries and the financial oligarchy.

Lenin’s relentless criticism revealed the crude revision of Marxism by the degenerating or the already degenerated parties and their cadres/ideologists, with swings between dogmatism and revisionism, with the reduction of Marxism to economism, with the substitution of the law-governed revolutionary dialectic of development with mechanistic evolutionism (which they understood as a “process without a subject”), the consequent relegation of “pure strategy” to the “automatic maturation of conditions”, the creeping tacticism disguised by the cloak of “revolutionary orthodoxy” (cf. Carl Kautsky), etc.

Moreover, it highlighted the vital force and potential of those new innovative and genuinely revolutionary forces of the time, which - led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks - creatively developed revolutionary theory, diagnosed with its help the character of the times, of the conjuncture and of the war, and conquered the historical initiative of the movements which led to the triumph of the First Victorious Early Socialist Revolution, the

Great October Socialist Revolution.

Thus, Lenin and the Bolsheviks with their comrades, planned and took charge of the world revolutionary forces. On a solid theoretical, programmatic and organisational basis, they carried out the break-up of the Second International (after the split of the Social Democratic Party of Russia into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks), with the independent consolidation and formation of the tendency of the consistent revolutionary communist forces (which led to the Third Communist International).

This theoretical and practical formation of the revolutionary subject, the creative development of revolutionary theory and methodology on the basis of which the dialectical relationship between strategy and tactics was connected with exceptional flexibility in the respective conjuncture (and especially in the contribution to the transformation of the revolutionary situation into a victorious revolution), led to the legendary victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the first victorious early socialist revolution, which launched the transition of humankind towards socialism, the triumph of the first workers' and peasants' state and the launching of socialist construction.

Of particular importance is Lenin's theoretical and practical contribution to the escalation of the subject's upgrade from the crisis situation to the revolutionary situation.

The escalation of the crisis situation can lead to a revolutionary situation, which manifests itself through a matrix of crisis phenomena of economic, social and political character. Its main features are, according to V.I. Lenin, the following:

Firstly, the inability of the ruling classes to maintain their form of dominance unchanged, with the manifest opposition of the subjugated to a possible prolongation of the effectiveness of this form of dominance;

Secondly, extreme deterioration of destitution and misery of the oppressed classes (absolute or relative destitution);

Thirdly, a significant rise in the political energy of

the masses, which is driven by the crisis situation and by the attitude of the ruling classes towards independent historical intervention.

The revolutionary situation cannot be viewed in a static way, as a mere manifestation or coincidence of disjointed traits.

It is the outcome of an escalating, deep and multi-level dynamic conflict process, a process of combined exacerbation of crisis phenomena, unfolding within the structure and history of society, in which objective and subjective conditions are involved, realised in various degrees and ways by the subjects involved. Indeed, in the context of this process, the revolutionary situation functions as a milestone and starting point for further escalation of social changes, in conjunction with the conscious organised intervention of the socio-political subject.

Lenin shattered the illusion of those who expected the advent of "pure class opposition" as grotesquely dangerous and undermining, as a metaphysical, non-historical dichotomy, on one side of which would supposedly be the socialist revolutionaries and on the other the imperialists.

He relentlessly denounced the ludicrous scholastic formulations of those who imagine the movement and the revolutionary process in the following way: "To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. - to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says, 'We are for socialism', and another, somewhere else and says, 'We are for imperialism', and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a 'putsch'. Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution

without understanding what revolution is”.

He also clarified that: “The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it - without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible - and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for difficult reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately ‘purge’ itself of petty-bourgeois slag ... The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene. ... We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat’s great war of Liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis” (V.I. Lenin *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*. Collected Works, Moscow 1962, Vol. 22).

It is not the erstwhile historical and/or self-appointed class vanguard and any party that will determine the “politically and ideologically correct” struggle through trials on paper, but, on the contrary, it is the frontal struggle in its escalation that will reveal the vanguard of the working class and its prospects: “The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution, by allying to

itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the Socialist revolution by allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie” (Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 110-111).

Lenin placed particular emphasis on the unity of words and deeds, the role of comradely scientific discourse and dialogue in the pursuit of truth, the duties, education and culture of the young communist, the importance of revealing their leading role as a personality who inspires, unites and leads by example.

Therefore, the revolutionary critical approach to Marxism by V.I. Lenin is extremely fruitful, productive and of fundamental theoretical and practical importance - despite its historical and methodological limitations. Lenin understood that the development of Marxism under the new historical conditions is the only way for this theoretical and methodological system to exist (evident in his studies of imperialism, dialectics, etc.).

The official Soviet ideology, as well as a significant part of the left to this day, considered the term “Marxism-Leninism” to mean an amorphous, internally undifferentiated and historically undefined conglomeration of positions and “quotes” from the classics to be used at will, without taking into account the level of theoretical development, methodological depth, specificity and differences of approach to different theoretical and practical issues that each of them addressed at different stages of the historical development of Marxism.

This instrumental-apologetic use of Marxism was accompanied by a dogmatic, non-historical and abstract (largely theocratic) conception of the “classics”, who presented themselves as an “indivisible and consubstantial trinity” (later as “quartet”, “quintet” with alternating versions

regarding the person-“incarnation” of the 4th hypostase etc.) without even considering their historical differences and specificities.

On the other hand, the superficial attempts connected with the branches of so-called “Western Marxism” (see the various versions of neo-Marxism) of portraying the classics of Marxism (among which Lenin is certainly included) as being antithetical to each other, essentially reduce Leninism to one of the many (historically and geographically limited, “Asian” etc.) “interpretations” of Marxism, which in fact leads to an apologetic of capital and further detachment of theory from revolutionary political practice, to the degeneration of Marxism into an academic, “professorial” (Marx), “legal” and innocuous for the exploiting classes preoccupation. What makes the Bourgeoisie and their servants fear Lenin and the Leninists is his revolutionary consistency, the organic and indissoluble unity of theory and practice, the applied practical effectiveness of the struggle, the science and art of the victorious socialist revolution!

The theoretical and methodological assessment of Lenin’s works should be the focus of separate studies. With Lenin, the circle of revolutionary leaders who were concurrently, to a greater or lesser extent, on the ramparts of revolutionary social theory and philosophy is essentially closed.

For all this and much more, which cannot fit into this article, Lenin and his revolutionary legacy are feared by the forces of imperialism, the financial oligarchy, the national and transnational, state, international and deep state instruments of the capitalist regime and every reactionary force. That is why they portray him as a bloodthirsty and cunning dictator ...

However, his works are an invaluable legacy to the revolutionary communist movement, that has been faced with novel and unprecedented tasks emerging with the escalation of the ongoing World War III.

No assessment based on analogies of historical experience (of the First World War or even the Second World War) is sufficient for an accurate

diagnosis of the specific historical situation and the context that it came from. Every claim to the contrary, every approach and practice resorting to mechanistical historical assessments based on analogies and self-delusions using selective misappropriations of passages from Lenin, constitutes a symptom of unhealthy crawling empiricism and a confession of desperate impotence, both theoretical and practical ...

Both prevalent versions, bureaucratic degeneration or integration into the regime (silencing of discourse or discourse for the sake of discourse) converge into generalised practices of manipulative “encroachment”: severing of the processes of critical decision making from actual collective discourse, deliberation and synthesis on a scientific basis with the involvement of the great majority of the members, cadres and friends of their organisations, to considering it the exclusive right and responsibility of the “higher-ups”, in terms of the clergy: “in secret and above board”, i.e. beyond any democratic and rational control. The retrospective draping of the predetermined decisions of the highest clergy in scientifically-looking garters is the job of the “ideological instruments” of propaganda and the imposition of unanimity ...

This is a deadlocked feedback loop of growing reliance on dead-end practices and tactics, with increasingly incongruous “theoretical wrapping”, systematically degenerating into a patchwork of irrational dogmas, ideological constructs and stereotypes, that are becoming more and more unrelated to authentic revolutionary theory and methodology.

Lenin systematically exposed and denounced all these practices of inescapable law-governed bureaucratic degeneration in the making. Today they have become much more reliant on the technologies of manipulation, and are intertwined with elements of political marketing and postmodern bourgeois dogmas ...

Those who masquerade as leninists by engaging in falsification, revision and abuse of the legacy of

Lenin, cannot hide their theoretical and practical nudity, their bankruptcy, being mercilessly made more and more evident with the escalation of the war. These “leninists” are literally terrified of the original Lenin, of the revolutionary vitality of his theoretical and practical works, of his abhorrence of bureaucratic degeneration, of wayward opportunism, of the absence of an authentic developing revolutionary theory and dialectical methodology, without which - according to Lenin - every revolutionary project is unattainable and/or doomed to failure.

Lenin is terrifying to all bureaucratist “leninists”, for his commitment to scientific communist discourse, even at the most critical junctures, such as during the 10th Party Congress, when in conditions of famine, ongoing imperialist intervention and bloody class (“civil”) war, he proposes the publication of an internal party bulletin to publish the views of a minority of members, for distribution to all party members throughout the country.

Those who, in conditions of legality of the communist parties in a long period of peace, are afflicted by such insecurity that they cannot tolerate any trace of open, public, scientific communist discourse and debate on the key issues of the times, of society and the movement, except for ritualistic parodies of a predetermined pseudo-discourse, with speeches that are authorised beforehand by the higher clergy, pack-mentality applauders or (where appropriate) even stooges to shame and silence any deviation from the leadership’s long-standing “correct line”... A leadership that narcissistically presents itself as the exclusive embodiment of the “collective wisdom of the Party”! ...

He is also feared by those fraudulent bureaucrats of the regime’s governmental “left”, who care about their attachment to the “polyphony” of bourgeois pluralism and “democratic processes”, who reduce the discourse to an arena of harmless defusion and manipulation, to a sterile “discourse for the sake of discourse”, as long as it does not translate into revolutionary thought and action.

He is feared by all demagogues, all manipulative deceivers, all opportunists and revisionists for his authentically communist relationship to the truth: “Our tactic is to tell masses the truth. We must tell them the truth even when it is not favourable to us; only then will they believe us. We shall be invincible in that case - and only in that case - if we always, at all turns of history, tell the masses the truth, if we do not pass off wishful thinking as reality, if we do not lie out of so-called “tactical considerations” ... Because tactics is not at all so much separated from strategy as it seems to some comrades ...” (from the novel by Emmanuel Kozakiewicz: “The Blue Notebook”).

Lenin’s theoretical and practical legacy becomes extremely important now that the World War III is escalating, it is necessary and imperative to organically link the anti-imperialist struggle with the struggle for socialist revolution and communism. Lenin proved the organic relationship between anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, national liberation, national independence, anti-fascist, etc. tasks and movements, which can be effectively and consistently accomplished by revolutionary fronts. In those fronts the communists ought to play a leading and decisive role, insofar as these objectives are organically linked to the revolutionary perspective of communism, of the actual unification of humanity.

He is therefore feared by all conservative and reactionary forces, the agents of opportunist subversion of the movement and revisionist confusion, precisely because with his theoretical and practical acquisitions he is an inspiration to every living revolutionary force of progress, giving it a foundation, strength and hope. Such is the fate of the brilliant revolutionary thinker who paved the way for victorious socialist revolutions, our own Vladimir ...

How the KKE uses Marxist terminology to cover its retreat from Marxism

What is the impact of the anti-Marxian theory of the ‘imperialist pyramid’?

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

On the basis of a Marxist analysis of the rapidly escalating imperialist war drive, anti-imperialists of the communist movement came together last year to form the World Anti-imperialist Platform. This was done in order to apply our energies to what has been identified as the most pressing priority facing our movement at this moment: to rally the widest possible forces in support of the struggle against the US-led imperialist bloc – a struggle which has the potential to unleash the next, decisive wave of socialist revolutions if correctly approached.

Launched in Paris last year, the Platform’s founding statement¹⁾ outlines the tasks that we believe all socialists and anti-imperialists must focus on during this crucial period of crisis and war. To help mobilise forces for this struggle, a part of the work the Platform engages in is necessarily in the ideological arena – opposing and exposing the wrong ideas (in particular the idea that Russia and China are imperialist countries)²⁾ that are confusing and demobilising workers, preventing them from joining wholeheartedly in the struggle against the US-led imperialist war drive and in support of the targets of US-led imperialist aggression.

This stance has brought the Platform into conflict with the anti-Marxist position of the Greek communist party (the KKE), which has been vociferous in condemning³⁾ it in the most blood-curdling terms, condemning as ‘opportunist’ and ‘reactionary’ every organisation that has taken part in Platform activities or signed the Paris Declaration, and using every means at its disposal to disrupt and sabotage our work.

The so-called ‘theory’ of the pyramid

It is important to realise that this dispute over

the correct analysis of the present war is not an abstract one. As followers of scientific socialism, we understand that without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice. Without establishing a correct understanding, it is impossible for socialists to act in ways that benefit the workers’ cause; to work out which actions will lead to the development of the revolutionary forces and to the defeat of our enemies.

Without a correct theory, the working-class movement has no guide to effective action; it slips automatically into practices that can be safely contained within the parameters of bourgeois politics. This is why wrong theories must be vigorously opposed by communists – the victory of the correct line is a prerequisite for the victory of the revolution. The whole history of the Bolshevik revolution provided ample proof of this fact.

So what is the theoretical position being put forward by the Greek communist party? And what activity does it lead to in practice?

First, the KKE’s new theory of the ‘imperialist pyramid’⁴⁾ bases itself on the incorrect assertion that every economy in which trade takes place and commodities are produced is a capitalist economy.

At a stroke this vulgarisation negates the Marxist historical understanding of the development of commodities; the understanding that capitalism is the stage of human social development in which commodity production is the dominant form of production. It ignores the fact that commodities have been produced since the time of the earliest class societies: that they existed in slave-owning and feudal societies, and that they will continue to exist for some time to come in socialist society. The KKE’s theoreticians appear to believe⁵⁾ that anyone

who produces something for sale on the market, whether internal or external, anyone who uses money, is a capitalist.

And they follow this vulgarisation with another and even more problematic one. They tell us that, since capitalism globally has now entered its monopoly phase (as demonstrated by Lenin); since capitalist production tends everywhere towards concentration and towards monopoly (as demonstrated by Marx, Engels and Lenin), then every capitalist country in the modern era is also an imperialist one (as firmly rebutted by Lenin).⁶⁾

This, we are told, goes as much for the capitalists of Burkina Faso as for the capitalists of the USA. Apparently, the desire to grow one's capital reveals a desire to become an imperialist – and this desire is all that counts. According to the theory of the 'pyramid', every country that engages in trade, from Great Britain and France to Cuba and the DPRK, is guilty of imperialism – the various states of the world simply occupying different levels on the great global 'pyramid' of imperialism.

According to this travesty of Marxism, the contradictions between the various countries are all 'interimperialist', to be explained by their competing imperialist interests and the desire to displace one another from the top of the 'pyramid' of world imperialism. Such a definition, we should note, includes within its scope even the Soviet Union of J.V. Stalin's time.

Again, with one stroke of the pen, and without a shred of evidence to back up its wild claims, the KKE 'theorists' have vulgarised and distorted the Leninist concepts regarding the monopoly control of the global economy and interimperialist rivalry until their fundamental essence has totally disappeared.

In true opportunist style, the KKE's theoreticians have picked a few random truths taken from Lenin's work on imperialism and, by robbing them of all context, turned them into a hollow and empty dogma which explains nothing and enlightens nobody.

Lenin's material description of the global

monopoly-capitalist economy revealed how a handful of dominant powers are able to use their financial, technological and military power to exploit and oppress the vast majority of nations. In place of this many-sided picture, with its historical development, overarching features, trends of development and glaring contradictions, the KKE has extracted one or two truths in such a way as to void them of all meaning.

Capitalism tends to monopoly says Lenin. Yes indeed. Now we are in the monopoly stage, all capitalism is imperialist says the KKE. $2+2=5$, in fact. By this sleight of hand, the authors of this theory have presented us with the picture of a world in which imperialism, having been found in every country, is thus to be found nowhere.

Without explaining how they have done so, without a shred of evidence to justify overturning the Leninist conception of the present global system of extreme exploitation and inequality between nations, which Lenin himself described as "basic, significant and inevitable under imperialism",⁷⁾ the creators of this theory have disappeared what they contemptuously refer to as the "so-called national question".⁸⁾

When and how the fundamental question of the liberation of the oppressed nations from their superexploited position as providers of superprofits to the parasitical monopoly financiers of the imperialist heartlands stopped being a real issue and became merely a 'so-called' issue, the authors of this profundity do not trouble to explain.

This is a particularly serious error considering how Anglo-American imperialism stepped up its campaign of wars for domination of all countries after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The ensuing 'unipolar moment' of the 'world's policeman' was a period of classical neocolonialism; of imperialism seeking domination (not democracy)⁹⁾ over all the less developed, non-monopolist nations that lacked the technological, financial and military power to resist.¹⁰⁾

In the name of Leninism, claiming to see monopoly everywhere, the KKE has obscured our

vision of the actual, historically-evolved global monopolist powers – those countries whose real, historically-accumulated stores of capital enable them to use their monopolistic power to control governments and economies all over the world, and to continuously extract tribute from the world's masses – under a welter of imaginary 'monopolists'.

They have transformed the materialist conception of the world economy into a kind of idealist identity politics: you are a monopolist because you would like to be one; you are a monopolist because you are a capitalist in the era of monopoly; you are a monopolist because you run a sector of the state economy without competition, even if that sector happens to be run under the direction of a socialist or people-oriented nation-liberation government!

At the same time, they have also reduced communism to an identity. Communists of the KKE- approved type are no longer people who study socialist science in order to bring its powerful truths to the masses and help provide leadership and direction to the revolutionary movement for liberation and socialism, but simply people who hate capitalists – and who prove this by wearing the right badge, t-shirt and cap, being a loyal supporter of the right team, and chanting the right slogans against the appointed enemy.

Such 'communists' are now to be found all over the western world. They no longer have a positive role to play in the transformation of society; in the evolution of history. Instead they have transformed themselves into eternal 'oppositionism': 'anticapitalists' who will never overthrow capitalism; 'antiwar activists' who will never stop a war; 'antiracists' or 'anti-sexists' who will never do anything that threatens the real, economic roots of racism or sexism.

In the name of Lenin, the KKE and their kind have in fact put Lenin's epoch-defining teachings and revolutionary practice against imperialism into the dustbin.

NGO-isation of the working-class movement

We appear to be witnessing in the KKE a

particularly striking example of the modern phenomena of the NGO-isation of the left, in which professional machineries are created whose primary function is not to gather and train the forces for revolution, but merely to recreate and maintain the machine. These organisations must remain 'radical' enough to garner a certain percentage of working-class votes, and to win a certain number of elected positions, but not so radical as to bring down the retribution of the ruling class's state machinery onto their heads.

Fundamentally, in order to maintain their machineries and their hard-won place in the political life of their countries, such parties must not rock the boat of bourgeois politics. Some letting off of steam – a pressure valve for working-class anger – is acceptable, even necessary, but no action that seriously calls into question the status quo or undermines the bourgeois order can be attempted. Any such action would be bound to bring punishment to the party – starting with media blackouts and leading on to vilification of party leaders and policies, hounding of members, and eventually to the party's outlawing, the confiscation of buildings and bank accounts, and the persecution, arrest or exile of its leaders as the economic and war crises escalate and domestic political stability is undermined.

This retreat from revolution into 'oppositionism' is not a new phenomenon, it is simply the latest reflection of the split in the working class and the assimilation of its leadership into the bourgeois state machinery that has been going on in various forms since the early 1900s.¹¹⁾ Nor is it confined in our day to the KKE. Something similar has taken place in many parties of a certain size during the recent period, when the ebb of the tide of revolution and the theoretical degeneration of the communist movement combined to create a sense of pessimism and defeat.

That the KKE is one of those parties that epitomises this transformation and retreat is evidenced by the professionalisation of its core cadres – not in the Leninist tradition of

workers who have been freed up to devote their lives to revolutionary activity but in a spirit of bureaucratisation and careerism. The main criteria for such workers is not deep study and selfless devotion to serving the masses, but groupthink, willingness to carry out the busywork of machine-maintenance, and unquestioning (unthinking) loyalty to a leadership that is taking the party – and the workers under its influence – in entirely the wrong direction.

Exporting opportunism and sectarianism

The retreat into opportunism¹²⁾ by the KKE – a party with a great revolutionary tradition, with a mass base, and with and a long-established position in the political, social and cultural life of the Greek people – is a terrible blow to the class struggle in that country. The more firmly its leaders stick to their erroneous line and vilify all those who sincerely try to bring them back onto the revolutionary path, the more certain it becomes that the working people will have to form a new party in order to lead their struggle for social liberation.

This is indeed a great setback; a tragedy for the Greek working people who have suffered and struggled so hard for so long.

But the actions of the KKE do not stop at the borders of Greece. Using its international prestige as the inheritor of the Greek revolution; using its impressive professionalism, its strength in numbers and its financial power, the KKE has been systematically injecting its anti-Marxist muddle ('theory') everywhere it has influence. It has been assisted in this by the theoretical confusion that prevails in much of our movement, which is a legacy of the revisionism of the post-Stalin USSR and the Sino- Soviet split, and which helps it to promote its militant-seeming but anti-materialist line everywhere – even going so far as to use bribery, threats, coercion and manipulation to get its way, or at least to disrupt the work of those who won't go meekly along with its agenda.

In many parties, themselves sunk into a morass of social-democratic oppositionism, these

false friends have been knocking at an open door. Such parties as the Communist Party of Mexico, the Communist Party of Sweden or the Kommunistische Organisation¹³⁾ in Germany, for example are led by those who are only too happy to have a revolutionary-sounding justification for abandoning the difficult positions of the class war and echoing Nato propaganda – in particular the propaganda about Russian or Chinese 'imperialism', 'expansionism', 'aggression' etc.

In other cases, the KKE has used its controlling influence in the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) to manipulate young members against the elders of their parties. In still others, it has used its extensive network of international officers to cultivate strong personal relationships with international secretaries and tried to use them as the promoters of its anti-worker line. Confusion, inner-party warfare and splits have been the result in communist parties all over the world.

The case of Spain¹⁴⁾ is well-known to all. Other operations, from Pakistan to Poland, from Mexico to the USA, from Germany to Switzerland, are talked about more quietly. But no one who operates in the international communist movement is unaware of at least some of the stories of Greek sectarian interference and subversion.

Reinventing Trotskyism

What is the practical outcome of the so-called 'theory' of the pyramid?

The practical effect on the policy of parties that have accepted this line is to characterise the present conflict in Ukraine as one between two imperialist powers in which the working class has no side.

And since every country that produces commodities for trade is described as 'imperialist', future wars even between the DPRK or China and the USA will likewise be characterised as 'interimperialist'.

To tell the workers such lies at such a moment is a criminal act, which amplifies imperialist war propaganda and demobilises the antiwar movement.

It is to place the communists, who should be at the heart and the front of the anti-imperialist antiwar movement, giving it practical steel and theoretical clarity, onto the sidelines. No simultaneous calls for ‘working-class unity’ can cover the true, wrecking nature of such activities.

In place of working-class unity against imperialism, their call is for ‘a plague on both your houses’ – for inactivity and passivity.

As Lenin wrote in 1916: “War is often useful in exposing what is rotten and discarding the conventionalities.”¹⁵⁾ The conventional assumption that the KKE is a leading revolutionary communist party must be discarded and its rottenness recognised and responded to.

At its heart, the KKE’s ‘Leninist’ pyramid is a reinvention of Trotskyism.

Like Trotsky, the promoters of this ‘theory’ refuse to recognise the imperialist reality of oppressed and oppressor nations.

Like Trotsky, they refuse to recognise the need to unify the proletarian struggle in the imperialist countries with the anti-imperialist struggle in the oppressed nations.

Like Trotsky, they refuse to see the revolutionary potential in any class other than the proletariat.

Like Trotsky, they refuse get their hands dirty with any alliance that might allow them to take a concrete step towards the goal of socialism, which thus remains an abstract, unattainable dream.

Like Trotsky, they cover their reinforcing of imperialist propaganda against all anti-imperialist leaders and movements with revolutionary-sounding phrases about working-class solidarity.

Like Trotsky, they have converted themselves, whether willingly or by accident, into vehicles for spreading imperialist propaganda within our movement.

Given the persistent, aggressive and determined pursuit of this disorganising line, and the vitriolic ad hominem attacks on all those who try to show the working class why such a line is a political error, we can only conclude that the KKE’s leaders have fully committed themselves to the camp of

opportunism. More than that, they have become the ringleaders of that camp – the organisers and directors of the section of our movement that works to hold back the struggle of the international working class for revolutionary anti-imperialist unity, and thus holds back our struggle for socialism.

A false analogy in place of concrete analysis

In their own documents, and in the those of their adherents,¹⁶⁾ the proposers of this anti-Marxian ‘theory’ like to compare Nato’s present proxy war against Russia on the territory of Ukraine with the first world war, describing it as an ‘interimperialist’ conflict between two monopolist powers over control of resources, markets and avenues of superexploitation. Indeed, in a speech to a party meeting last year, former KKE leader Aleka Papatriga went even further, declaring that the “people of Ukraine” (that is, the neo-nazi proxy government headed by US-backed actor-stooge Volodymyr Zelensky) were waging a “just war” against “Russian aggression”.¹⁷⁾

How this assertion squares with the party’s avowal elsewhere that the (‘so-called’) national question no longer exists will require wiser heads than ours to decipher. Nor can such a statement be squared with the KKE’s assertion that the war in Ukraine is an ‘inter-imperialist’ one! Perhaps the KKE has different lines to present to different audiences?

Likewise, how this assertion differs from the imperialists’ claims that they are innocently (‘justly’) ‘defending Ukraine’s sovereignty with Nato weapons’ (a sovereignty the USA had been steadily eroding for three decades and fully usurped nine years ago), only the KKE can explain.

Lenin pointed out in 1915 that “no socialist will dare in theory deny the necessity of making a concrete, historical appraisal of every war”.¹⁸⁾ But the KKE’s ‘theoreticians’ have made no such appraisal – they have merely made an analogy with WW1 with no substantiating evidence to back up their ahistorical assertion.

No systematic detailed proof has been given

for the characterisation of Russia's economy as 'imperialist', just as no systematic detailed proof has been given for the same claim that is made about China, Brazil, India – and even Iran and Venezuela. No concrete, historical appraisal has been made to demonstrate how these countries live by exporting capital, superexploiting the globe, and repatriating the superprofits thus earned back to their home territories. No evidence has been provided to show how these nations live by 'clipping coupons' from such parasitic activity. No evidence has been given to show how the workers of these countries are bribed into social peace by means of the crumbs they receive from such monopoly profits.

To date, the only facts and figures quoted by the KKE in defence of its ridiculous position have been cherry-picked at random to throw a sop to the credulous.¹⁹⁾ This is at one with their entire methodology, where sprinkled quotations of Lenin are substituted for a serious study of the entire body of works by Marx, Engels and Lenin. Of course, from 95 such volumes, a few quotations taken at random and out of context might appear to prove anything, but only the insincere sophist argues in this way.

The presentation of a few random statistics in support of such serious assertions is not a meaningful attempt to understand the Ukraine war in all its complexity, but eclecticism that obscures the truth; a classic case of searching online for 'evidence' to prove a predetermined point. Such 'analysis' brings forcibly to mind Lenin's description of similar practices that were being indulged in by former eminent Marxists such as Georgy Plekhanov and Karl Kautsky during WW1:

"From the standpoint of Marxism ... one can merely smile at the 'scientific' value of such methods as taking the concrete historical assessment of the war [or of a nation's economy in the KKE's case] to mean a random selection of facts which the ruling classes of the country find gratifying or convenient, facts taken at random from diplomatic 'documents', current political developments, etc [or from bourgeois press

clippings]. The scientific concept of imperialism, moreover, is reduced to a sort of term of abuse applied to the immediate competitors, rivals and opponents of the two imperialists mentioned [or of the US-led Nato imperialist bloc] ..."²⁰⁾

Similarities and differences between the world wars

On one point, however, the KKE is certainly correct: the present war, which will no doubt be looked back on as the opening of World War 3, has been brought about, just as were the first and second world wars, by the deep overproduction crisis of the global capitalist economy.

In 1914, two imperialist blocs faced one another and fought over who should have what share of the world's territories and markets. It was a purely interimperialist war. And it fatally weakened the global imperialist system, bringing about the era of proletarian revolution, just as Lenin had predicted. World War 1 led directly to the October Revolution of 1917 – and the global capitalist- imperialist system has been living on borrowed time ever since.

In 1939, the war that was already being fought in several theatres around the world (eg, Spain and China) transformed into a global conflict with the entry of British imperialism against Germany. This, too, was an interimperialist conflict over control of territories and resources on the part of Germany, France and Britain. But the German invasion of the USSR, and the Soviets' strategic manoeuvring of the USA and Britain into forming an alliance, changed the character of World War 2, so that its primary character became that of an antifascist war.

It was on this basis that workers in the imperialist countries were mobilised to fight on the same side as their rulers: to defeat the fascist threat and defend the Soviet socialist motherland. Britain, France and the USA continued to pursue their imperialist aims, but they were induced to do so in a way that prevented them from joining with Nazi Germany to destroy the USSR. As a result, the Soviet Union was able, at a tremendous cost to

itself, to defeat the greatest war machine humanity had ever seen, to liberate much of Europe, and to give a tremendous impulse to the spread of socialism across Europe and Asia.

After WW2, with the imperial powers of old Europe and Japan fatally weakened, unable any longer to maintain their military and technological dominance, the imperialist powers huddled together under the protective umbrella of the USA – the only imperialist power whose economy, productive capacity and military capability had been strengthened by WW1 and WW2 rather than weakened. Without the financial backing and military support of the USA, the imperialists of Europe and Japan could not have survived – they would have been expropriated and displaced by the rising workers, and the triumphant march of socialism would have been pretty well unstoppable.

But history never moves in a straight line. Life did not follow the confident predictions of the communist and anti-imperialist liberation fighters of the 1940s. The help of the USA²¹⁾ combined with powerful bribes to their own working-class populations²²⁾ allowed the weakened imperialist powers to recover to a certain extent, while the revisionism of the post-Stalin USSR and parties aligned with it led to the slow undermining of the strength and prestige of socialism and to the ultimate collapse of the revisionist Soviet regime.

The dissolution of the world's first socialist state and of the people's democracies of eastern Europe came at a vital moment for the imperialists, who were once more facing a severe global crisis of overproduction. They were saved by the orgy of imperialist looting that ensued as the wealth of the Soviet and east European peoples was plundered, while the masses of the world were further demoralised by the apparent triumph of bourgeois politics and economics over Marxism.

But while the Soviet Union and European people's democracies were dissolved, socialism and anti-imperialism did not disappear from the world. China, the DPRK, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba continued to defend their socialist societies in the

face of huge pressure. Countries that were targeted by a newly-confident imperialist camp for 'regime-change' operations mounted tremendous resistance. And Russia, which for a time had allowed itself to be ruled by comprador agents of imperialism, got up off its knees, replaced its comprador leadership with a national- bourgeois one, and determined that it would henceforth use its vast resources for its own purposes, defending its right to national sovereignty by making use of the technological, military, educational and economic base that had been bequeathed to it by its Soviet builders.

In the face of a renewed global crisis of overproduction, the imperialists have determined that, in the present conditions, their best chance of saving themselves and their system remains in huddling together under the military and economic leadership of the USA and aiming their combined force at the destruction of the primary centres of independence and sovereignty in the world – Russia and China. In doing so, they hope to bring about a repeat of the carnival of pillaging they enjoyed after the collapse of the USSR. They want to break Russia and China into pieces, subdue their peoples and plunder their considerable resources.

Thus we can see that the third world war will be primarily characterised by a confrontation between the camps of imperialism²³⁾ and anti-imperialism. And that the workers of the world have everything to gain by ensuring the victory of the anti-imperialist camp and the defeat of the imperialists, which will be a hammer blow to the entire edifice of monopoly capitalism on the planet and thus a giant step towards socialist revolution in all corners of the world.

In promoting this understanding, our comrades of the World Anti-imperialist Platform have been accused of the crime of 'social-chauvinism'; of calling for the victory of one imperialist power over another, as the social democrats so notoriously did a century ago. A moment's reflection will reveal the hollowness of this parallel, however. The call of communists in Britain, France, Italy and the USA for the defeat of Nato imperialism cannot at all be

equated with the treachery of the social democrats of 1914, who mobilised workers to fight in defence of their own rulers' empires.

War and the split in socialism

In one respect only is the KKE's analogy with 1914 correct. The outbreak of the first world war revealed the deep split that had been developing in the socialist movement during the 'peaceful' decades leading up to the war. In developing the working class's struggle for socialism in Russia, Lenin placed huge importance on exposing and opposing the rottenness of the opportunist wing of our movement and bringing together the revolutionary sections from each country into a common struggle.

This work, begun at the Zimmerwald conference of 1915, was one of the cornerstones of the Bolsheviks' success in 1917, and it was the basis of the formation of the world communist movement and the revolutionary third international (the Comintern), under whose guidance the world's workers were able to advance so successfully.

The present war in Ukraine has likewise drawn a line around the world and revealed a deep split in the socialist movement.

The Platform has every intention of following the great example set to us by Comrade Lenin. From him we have learned the vital importance of fighting for revolutionary ideology at a time of world economic crisis and war; at a time when the imperialists are doing everything possible to divert the anger and confuse the minds of the immiserated masses.

Let workers and oppressed peoples everywhere understand: this is not an abstract question of armchair theorising, but a fight for a correct understanding of our concrete conditions in order to allow us to determine the form that our practical activities should take. And this practical work is a matter of life and death for our movement and for humanity. Let us be in no doubt: the victory of the imperialist camp over the anti-imperialist countries would set back the cause of liberation and socialism

by 20, 30 or even 40 years – with all the attendant misery, death and destruction.

This is why we must expose and oppose the rotten theory and activity of the KKE and others like them, who have transformed themselves into the agents of imperialist ideology in the working-class movement.²⁴⁾

This is why we must do everything in our power to unite the forces of anti-imperialism, providing them with a correct understanding so that they are able to identify who are their friends and who are their enemies at this crucial moment in history; so that they are able to form the strongest possible alliance in order to achieve victory in the crucial battles that are coming.

One last point on the question of the international communist movement must also be made. We are being accused of 'splitting the movement' by attacking the KKE. But we cannot split what is not whole. Our movement is already deeply divided. Indeed, it has been for many decades.

The present war has revealed not only the deep divide within our movement generally but also the absolute rottenness of the group of parties clustered around the KKE and the futility of expecting anything useful to come to the working class from trying to preserve 'unity' with such elements – with individuals and organisations that have clearly shown themselves to be on the side of the imperialist camp.

Once again, we call to mind the words of Lenin, when he described the betrayals and rottenness of the majority of leaders of the Second International during World War 1: "This contradiction [between the revolutionary words and opportunist deeds of the social-democratic leaders] was a boil which just had to burst, and burst it has."

"Is it worth trying, as Kautsky and co are doing, to force the pus back into the body for the sake of 'unity' (with the pus), or should the pus be removed as quickly and thoroughly as possible, regardless of the pang of pain caused by the process, to help bring about the complete recovery of the body of the labour movement?"²⁵⁾

Further: “The split in the labour and socialist movements throughout the world is a fact. We have two irreconcilable working-class tactics and policies in respect of the war. It is ridiculous to close your eyes to this fact. Any attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable will make all our work futile.”²⁶⁾

While the KKE talks empty about ‘class solidarity’, about ‘Leninism’, and about some future revolution that it has no practical programme for achieving, a real revolutionary crisis is developing and spreading all over the world which is being either ignored or condemned by the KKE and its ilk. The overproduction crisis of the global capitalist-imperialist economy is at its root, and the war drive, impelled by this economic crisis, is accelerating its development.

This is not the moment to stand on the sidelines wagging our fingers at everyone who tries to act, nor is it the moment to try to reconcile what is irreconcilable. The task of socialists is to explain, clearly and fearlessly, that the US-led Nato bloc is trying to save its blood-drenched system at the expense of the workers of the world. That the oppressed, independent and socialist countries are increasingly banding together to resist their onslaught, and that this movement is to be welcomed, supported and enhanced in every way possible.

As Lenin said: “War inflicts horrible sufferings on the people, but we must not, and we have no reason at all, to despair of the future.”²⁷⁾

The coming conflicts will undoubtedly be hard; they will undoubtedly require much struggle and sacrifice from the workers and oppressed peoples everywhere. But we have a bright future waiting for us on the other side, if only we are prepared to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to ensuring a decisive victory against the decadent, parasitic, moribund imperialist world order.

Notes

1) The Paris Declaration, 15 October 2022, published on wap21.org.

2) Note, in particular, the following claim made by former KKE general secretary Alexandra Papriga: “At the end of the 20th century

there were three imperialist centres as they were formed after the world war: the European Economic Community, which later became the European Union, the USA and Japan. Today the number of imperialist centres has increased, while new forms of alliance have also emerged such as the alliance centred on Russia, the alliance of Shanghai, the alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (Brics), the alliance of the countries of Latin America: Alba, Mercosur etc.” (On imperialism – the imperialist pyramid, published in *El Machete* (theoretical and political journal of the CP of Mexico), April 2013)

3) See, for example, On the so-called World Anti-imperialist Platform and its damaging and disorienting position by the international relations section of the KKE, 1 April 2023.

4) On imperialism – the imperialist pyramid by Alexandra Papariga, April 2013.

5) KKE, *The Agrarian Question in Greece, 1980*, cited in Ed: G Cox, P Lowe, M Winter, *Agriculture: People and Policies, 1986*, chapter 2, Capitalism, petty commodity production and the farm enterprise by D Goodman and M Redcliff.

6) In his article ‘The revolutionary proletariat and the right of nations to self-determination’, refuting Karl Radek’s (Parabellum’s) proposition that imperialism had made the national question redundant, Lenin stressed that the focal point of any communist programme “must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky ... This we demand, not independently of our revolutionary struggle for socialism, but because this struggle will remain a hollow phrase if it is not linked up with a revolutionary approach to all questions of democracy, including the national question.” (October 1915)

7) Later in the same year Lenin again wrote: “Imperialism is the epoch in which the division of nations into oppressors and oppressed is essential and typical.” (The Peace Programme, March 1916) Indeed, this understanding of the fundamental essence of the imperialist system was at the core of the Bolsheviks’ successful revolutionary strategy and tactics.

8) The Leninist approach of the KKE on imperialism and imperialist pyramid by the international relations section of the KKE, contribution to the ninth international conference of the CWPR on ‘Lenin and the contemporary era’, 2013.

9) V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, 1916*, chapter 9.

10) Yet the KKE insists that “The situation in Africa, in regions of Eurasia and the middle east bear out the fact that all the capitalist countries are incorporated in the international imperialist system, irrespective of whether they have the ability to carry out their own expansionist political line.” (A Papariga, op cit)

11) The revisionist communist parties have been firmly attached to the left wing of social democracy ever since the postwar period. From that time until today, displacing the workers from the revolutionary path has been the main function of the public face of bourgeois politics (as opposed to the real business of ruling the country that goes on behind closed doors). The European Union, as an imperialist entity with huge resources, has magnified the funds and organisational

mechanisms available for the corruption of Europe's working-class parties.

12) Opportunism: the selling out of the long-term interests of the movement for short-term gains, real or perceived, political or personal: "Opportunism is a manifestation of the bourgeoisie's influence over the proletariat." (Opportunism, and the Collapse of the Second International by V.I. Lenin, December 1915)

13) The 'World Anti-imperialist Platform' – opportunists in 'anti-imperialist' garb by the KO's international commission, 6 May 2023. (The KO split into two parts around 18 months ago. One part is at present clarifying its understanding of imperialism while holding to the idea that the German working class's main enemy must be German imperialism and Nato, the other part has written this article declaring, among other things, that to side with Russia and China in the present war is 'opportunist', and that the Platform is spreading 'bourgeois propaganda' by supporting Russia's goal of denazifying Ukraine.)

14) See Position of the KKE on the developments in the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (PCPE) by the international relations section of the KKE, 4 May 2017 and To the comrades of the KKE, to the parties that are members of the Communist European Initiative by the PCPE, 4 May 2017.

15) Opportunism and the collapse of the Second International, January 1916, Collected Works Vol 22, pp. 108-120.

16) See Joint statement by the general secretaries of the Communist Party of Greece, the Communist Party of Mexico, the Communist Party of the Workers of Spain and the Communist Party of Turkey, 8 July 2022.

17) Former general secretary of KKE, Aleka Pappariga, says that Ukraine is fighting a 'just war', KKE meeting in Corfu on 22 March 2022, Proletarian TV.

18) Opportunism, and the collapse of the Second International, Collected Works Vol 21, pp. 438-454.

19) On the political economy of contemporary imperialism: The concept of the 'imperialist pyramid' and its critics by Thanasis Spanidis, In Defence of Communism blog, 7 June 2023.

To provide just one example of the specious reasoning contained in this piece: GDP data in table one is used to show that China has already outstripped the USA to become the world's 'biggest economy' and that this 'proves' that it has joined the imperialist club. But no reference is made to GDP output per head of the population – a list in which China currently appears in 71st place and Russia at 56th. The fact that India and south Korea also appear in this list of 'top ten biggest economies' does not appear to have given the author pause for thought as to whether the data is really demonstrating what he wants it to.

20) Preface to N Bukharin's pamphlet, Imperialism and the World Economy, December 1915.

21) Help which included the Martial plan to finance west European reconstruction, the division of Germany, the overthrow of communist forces in western Europe, and assistance in a string of neocolonial wars in Malaya, Korea, Vietnam, Angola and elsewhere aimed at retarding the wave of national-liberation victories.

22) The granting of welfare states which persuaded workers in the west that they could enjoy the advantages of socialism without having

to make a socialist revolution.

23) The US-led Nato alliance in most of the world, supplemented by the US-led 'triple alliance' of the USA, Japan and south Korea in east Asia, which has been dubbed the 'Nato of the east', and which may well be subsumed into Nato as the war drive progresses and more European countries are persuaded to send military hardware into the Pacific, even as Japan and south Korea have been persuaded to send military supplies to Ukraine.

24) An early draft of this article was published by mistake and withdrawn for finalising. While its essential analysis was correct, our opponents read it and took umbrage at the blunt way in which some of the points were made. Feeling offended about being called 'agents of imperialism', they are indignant about our 'lack of evidence'.

Of course, in the legal sense, they are right. We have no conclusive evidence of malintent, nor are we in any position to properly investigate such a charge. In many cases, evidence of crimes against our movement may not emerge until after a successful revolution, when the workers have taken hold of the state's secret archives.

The political point, however, is that whether the leaders of the KKE are acting deliberately as agents or accidentally ('in good faith') against the interests of the proletariat is immaterial. As Lenin pointed out in 1920: "As far as the individual is concerned, there is a very great difference between a man whose weakness of character makes him a traitor and one who is a deliberate, calculating traitor; but in politics there is no such difference, because politics involves the actual fate of millions of people, and it makes no difference whether the millions of workers and poor peasants are betrayed by those who are traitors from weakness of character or by those whose treachery pursues selfish aims." (A Publicist's Notes, February 1920)

25) Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International, January 1916, Collected Works Vol 22, pp. 108-120.

26) The tasks of the opposition in France, 10 February 1916.

27) Speech delivered at an international meeting in Berne, 8 February 1916.

The three major goals of the World Anti-Imperialist Platform

Stephen Cho | Coordinator of the Korean International Forum

When the World Anti-Imperialist Platform (the Platform) was founded, three major goals were stipulated. These were: the strengthening of the anti-imperialist struggle, the strengthening of the ideological struggle within the anti-imperialist and communist movements, and the strengthening of the world's communist forces. These are the most important goals according with the essential character of the Platform, and they are closely related.

Since its establishment in Paris, France in October 2022, the Platform has devoted its energies to these three major goals by holding international conferences and by organizing demonstrations and rallies alongside its other activities – in Belgrade, Serbia in December 2022; in Caracas, Venezuela in March 2023; and in Gwangju and Seoul, South Korea in May 2023.

The first goal of the Platform is to promote the anti-imperialist struggle

This is the most important goal of the World Anti-Imperialist Platform. Strengthening the world anti-imperialist struggle means strengthening such struggles in one's own domestic country as well as coordinating with other anti-imperialist struggles around the world. The anti-imperialist struggle of each country and the corresponding anti-imperialist struggle on a worldwide level are in a dialectical relationship between the individual and the general.

'Anti-imperialism' means opposing the forces of imperialism. In this sense, 'opposing' means not only opposing the imperialists' *policy*, but also the existence of the imperialist *system* itself. It means fighting until all traces of imperialism are eliminated. And 'opposing' does not only mean the negation of the physical existence of imperialism

but also the affirmation of the existence of an opposite to imperialism – a commitment to socialism.

This is not antifascism; it is anti-imperialism. In the second world war, the anti-fascist forces won victory by forming anti-fascist fronts on a global scale. Today, when the third world war is imminent, the front that must be organized globally is an anti-imperialist one, although this does not preclude the formation of anti-fascist fronts in particular countries or regions. It is worth remembering that fascism during the second world war was just one variant of imperialism, a way to maintain the dominance of the imperialist ruling classes over their domestic populations during a period of intense class struggle. The fascism that we see in the world today, by contrast, is exported by the imperialists to their puppet states in the oppressed and colonized countries that are subordinate to imperialism.

In the current conditions, imperialism is the main target of our attack, while fascism is an auxiliary target.

Various forms of struggle must be combined. We need to always pay attention to the combination of political struggle and economic struggle; legal struggle and semi-legal struggle; large-scale struggle and small and medium-scale struggle; focused struggle and decentralized struggle; daily struggle and struggle at particular opportunities; spearheading struggle and mass struggle.

The second goal of the Platform is to intensify ideological warfare

The targets of ideological warfare are revisionism, opportunism and sectarianism. Revisionism denies the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism, opportunism sells out the long-term interests of

the revolution to the short-term interests of all or a few and commits Right and “Left” errors, while sectarianism divides our ranks. Revisionism is an ideological problem, opportunism is a matter of political line, and sectarianism is an organizational problem. Revisionism, opportunism and sectarianism are closely interrelated as three aspects of the same entity. They are all effects of the capitalist class’s pressure on the struggle of the working class, and tend towards bringing about a split in the ranks of socialism, thus neutralizing us as a major force in world politics.

Today, the main focus of the Platform’s ideological warfare is the sectarian opportunism of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). The leadership of the KKE has fallen into the trap of revisionism, since it expelled the sincere revolutionary general secretary Nikos Zachariadis and his revolutionary comrades from the party in 1957 under the influence of Nikita Khrushchev, the ringleader of modern revisionism. In recent times, the KKE has caused confusion and division within the communist ranks inside or outside its own country, engaging in severe Right and “Left” opportunism and sectarianism.

‘Solidnet’, the authoritative solidarity network in the international communist movement, has virtually finished its life as it has failed to fulfill its periodic, political and organizational duty owing to the sectarian opportunism of its principal organizer, the KKE. This is comparable to the failure of the Second International to fulfill its role because of the opportunism of Karl Kautsky and others, and its end with the first world war.

Will the KKE’s theory of the ‘imperialist pyramid’ surpass in infamy Kautsky’s theory of ‘Ultra-imperialism’? Just as Kautsky drew on English bourgeois economist JA Hobson’s ideas about ‘Inter-imperialism’, so the KKE’s pyramid theory is tainted by petty-bourgeois theories, including Trotskyism, defining all capitalist countries as having some level of imperialist development and stating that “every capitalist country in the world without exception, constitute the imperialist

pyramid”. (‘On Imperialism – The Imperialist Pyramid’ by Aleka Pappariga, 2013)

The KKE has had the temerity to revise the very title of Lenin’s epoch-defining work ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’ of 1916. In the history of revisionism, it is rare to find such an audacious case of revising even the title of a book. In this sense, Lenin’s foresight in emphasizing the importance of ‘stage’ in the title shines through. Like this, the ‘Imperialist pyramid’ theory denies ‘stages’ and thus denies any tactics in the revolutionary movement.

It is no coincidence that the KKE, as Trotsky also did, denounces the Comintern’s tactic of organizing an international united front against fascism, denies the revolutionary nature and existence of national-liberation struggles in the oppressed world, and committed left-opportunist errors during the popular uprising in its own country in the early 2010s.

It no longer surprises anyone that Dimitris Koutsoúmbas, the general secretary of the KKE, in an interview with the mainstream media in May, likened Russia’s special military operation to NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia. The war in Ukraine has brought to the fore the ideological problems of the KKE. It is the nature of such opportunism as that of the KKE’s leadership to betray Leninism while quoting Lenin’s words; to recycle the words and justifications of the Nato imperialists while claiming to be against imperialism; and to immerse itself in Eurocommunism while condemning it.

The problem is that the leadership of the KKE, as revisionists and opportunists have historically done, incites other parties to follow the same path of revisionism and opportunism, and if they refuse, it intervenes in them organizationally to break them up. These criminal acts, which have taken place countless times, from Spain a few years ago to Argentina this year, objectively confirm that the KKE is the leading international sectarian force dividing the international communist movement today.

The Platform fights not against the KKE itself

but against the revisionism, opportunism and sectarianism of its leadership. The leadership of KKE opposes Leninism while referring to Leninism, opposes revolution while referring to revolution, and opposes anti-imperialism while referring to anti-imperialism. Thus the ideological warfare against the revisionism, opportunism and sectarianism of the KKE's leadership ends with an accurate description of Leninism, revolution and anti-imperialism. In this sense, the recent decision by the congress of the Communist Party of Belgium (PCB-CPB) is very encouraging.

The third goal of the Platform is to consolidate the international communist forces

The reason we talk about consolidating not the communist parties but the communist forces is that the communist powers at present are not only organized in parties but also in other types of political organization.

As we know, after the 1990s, communist forces everywhere went through some very hard times. The prerequisite of the principle that there should be only one communist party in any given country is that the traditional communist party in each country should follow a correct revolutionary line and should play its historic role with consistency and dedication. But in reality, many parties did not do so. In the present conditions, it is an inescapable reality that militant communists in many countries have had to create alternative political organizations outside of the traditional party formation in order to conduct revolutionary activities.

In the global anti-imperialist struggle, not only communist but also many non-communist forces from oppressed countries can join together under the banner of anti-imperialism. In this sense, to strengthen the world anti-imperialist struggle means creating a united front, with communists in the lead. Strengthening the forces of international communism in this united front context is like strengthening the revolutionary forces in any one country. It guarantees a better and more resolute leadership for the whole struggle. Strengthening the

international communist forces in such a context is like strengthening the party in a domestic context.

Just as the relationship of a party and a united front can be compared to the relationship of the vanguard and the transmission belts in one country, so the international communist forces and the world anti-imperialist forces have to build the relationship of the locomotive and the rail cars of this struggle 'train' on a global scale, metaphorically speaking. In other words, the international communist forces must further develop their role within the world anti-imperialist movement as a vanguard that can put forward the correct line and powerfully organize and mobilize the people. While the anti-imperialist struggle targets maximum force against the primary enemy, the communist movement aims to build a vanguard for the masses' struggles, not only against imperialism, but for socialism, which is the only real solution to the problems facing humanity.

The international communist forces achieved great advances in the period of the great turn. The First International was formed after the February Revolution of 1848, the Second International after the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Third International after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The first world war was the decisive trigger in exposing the rottenness of the Second International, which had been steadily misled by Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky after the death of Friedrich Engels. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the Third International was built. During the period of the second world war, the Third International was dissolved for the reasons that the subjective forces of the revolution in each country had strengthened, and in order to facilitate the inclusion of the USA and Great Britain into the world anti-imperialist front.

With the victory of the world antifascist front in the second world war, the international socialist camp was greatly enlarged, spreading across eastern Europe and east Asia, while national-liberation movements in the oppressed world

gained unstoppable momentum.

During the second world war, the ‘world antifascist front strategy’ of Josef Stalin and Georgi Dimitrov was the most important stratagem leading to the victory of the antifascist forces, isolating the fascist camp and preventing the world’s imperialists from devouring the socialist USSR together.

Nowadays, the world anti-imperialist front that has been formed by the socialist DPRK and China with capitalist Russia and other countries should be regarded in a similar light as the world united front against fascism that the socialist Soviet Union created with the imperialist USA and Britain – as a force capable of smashing the main enemy and unleashing a new wave of revolutions in the world as the imperialist system falls ever deeper into crisis and fails to re-invigorate itself through new conquests in war.

In 2022, the Ukrainian war escalated in eastern Europe. When war spreads to South Korea and Taiwan, it will be indisputable that the third world war has arrived. This world war, which has undoubtedly been provoked by the imperialist side, will bring about another period of great transition following the victory of the war of liberation in east Asia, decisively hastening the doom of the imperialist forces, and moving the world into a period of great upsurge.

The anti-imperialist struggle, ideological warfare and the communist forces are interconnected

The anti-imperialist struggle is our practice, ideological warfare is our theory, and the communist forces are our organization. Anti-imperialist struggle and ideological warfare have the relationship of practice to theory, while ideological warfare and the communist forces have the relationship of theory to organization. The communist forces and the anti-imperialist struggle have the relationship of organization to practice.

In the present day, anti-imperialism is justice and pro-imperialism is injustice. History demands of us that the just anti-imperialist front and the just anti-imperialist war must be victorious. The proletariat

and people of the world must be united under the banner of anti-imperialism and advance towards the final victory of socialist revolution.

In this serious moment, when the full outbreak of the third world war is imminent, the Platform will do its utmost to accomplish its sacred three-point goals of strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle, strengthening the ideological struggle, and strengthening the international forces of communism.