

CAPITALISM, IMPERIALISM, AND REVISIONISM

Notes on the Current Situation

LONG MARCH Editorial Committee

Introduction

The below document outlines the perspective of the **LONG MARCH** Editorial Committee on some of the main trends in the contemporary world situation with which the communist movement is presently faced. Our theoretical orientation regarding the political economy of modern capitalism-imperialism is further developed in **A FEAST THAT STARVES**, while our ideological outlook is outlined in depth in **ON MAOISM**.

The contemporary conjuncture must be understood according to its principal contradiction: the struggle between the oppressed nations and imperialism (the highest stage of capitalism).

In our analysis of the structure and nature of that contradiction, we take the stand of the international proletariat by upholding Lenin's observation that the principal characteristic of imperialism is that it is *finance capitalism in decay*. This decay is the product of the inevitable tendency towards crisis and reorganization inherent to the structural mode of capitalist production itself.

Marx' *Capital* lays bare the nature of the capitalist mode of production as a permanent process of crisis and restructuring:

[T]he periods in which capitalist production exerts all its forces regularly turn out to be periods of over-production, because production potentials can never be utilised to such an extent that more value may not only be produced but also realised; but the sale of commodities, the realisation of commodity-capital and thus of surplus-value, is limited, not by the consumer requirements of society in general, but by the consumer requirements of a society in which the vast majority are always poor and must always remain poor.¹

The development and exertion of the full strength of the productive forces of modern capitalism is always at odds with the actual process of accumulation of capital by the bourgeoisie because of the linked problems of: (1) tendential increase in organic composition of capital, which fetters the realization of capitalist profits, and (2) the corresponding law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

By realization, we mean the realization of the surplus value of the total social product generated through exploitation at the point of production, which depends on the *replacement* of all parts of the social product in terms of material form and *value*. **That is, the process of capitalist production aims for all the commodities which it produces to be consumed, but that possibility is always closed off by the limits set by the restricted consumptive capacity of the working class.**

In order to understand the character of this contradiction, Marx divides the category of commodity production such that "two major departments of capitalist production must be distinguished, namely (Department I), the production of *means of production*—of articles

which serve for productive consumption, i.e., are to be put back into production, articles which are consumed, not by people, but by capital; and (Department II) the production of *articles of consumption*, i.e., of articles used for personal consumption.”²

If we take for granted the basic Marxist premise that capitalist production *in particular* (as opposed to production in general) is always *self-expanding* production of value (the *accumulation* of capital, M-C-M’),³ it becomes immediately clear that

*[p]roduction does indeed create a market for itself: production needs means of production, and they constitute a special department of social production, which occupies a certain section of the workers, and produces a special product, realised partly within this same department and partly by exchange with the other department, which produces articles of consumption. Accumulation is indeed the excess of production over revenue (articles of consumption). To expand production (to “accumulate” in the categorical meaning of the term) it is first of all necessary to produce means of production, and for this it is consequently necessary to expand that department of social production which manufactures means of production, it is necessary to draw into it workers who immediately present a demand for articles of consumption, too. Hence, “consumption” develops after “accumulation,” or after “production”; strange though it may seem, it cannot be otherwise in capitalist society. Hence, the rates of development of these two departments of capitalist production do not have to be proportionate, on the contrary, they must inevitably be disproportionate. It is well known that the law of development of capital is that constant capital grows faster than variable capital, that is to say, an ever larger share of newly-formed capital is turned into that department of the social economy which produces means of production. [...] Hence, products for personal consumption occupy an ever-diminishing place in the total mass of capitalist output. And this fully corresponds to the historical “mission” of capitalism and to its specific social structure: the former is to develop the productive forces of society (production for production); the latter precludes their utilisation by the mass of the population.*⁴

The process of accumulation of capital therefore depends on the growth and reproduction of the means of production (Department I), and only secondarily the growth of Department II (insofar as the expanded reproduction of Department I depends on the growth of the variable capital necessary for production, and thus the *expansion of the pool of laborers available for exploitation by the capitalists*). But this secondary component in fact establishes a definite limit on realization *in general* since the personal consumptive power of the worker is in fact *reduced tendentially* by the diminishing portion of Department II commodities in the production process in general, and by the increasing disenfranchisement of the working class as *consumers*.

A *crisis* occurs when the existing *relations of production* (by which we mean the conditions of exploitation) foreclose expansion of capital, when the expansion of productive forces outpaces average profitability, or when an increase of accumulation does not increase the

mass of surplus value or profit (leading eventually to an absolute over-accumulation). The problem of disproportionate expansion of production (itself the expression of disproportionate production across the two departments) would indicate the possibility for a rational, “proportionate” production process at the level of the total capital⁵ were it not for the overall tendency for the rate of profit to fall compared to the total mass of already accumulated capital.

This contradiction, between the growth of the productive forces and the existing relations of production, becomes the fundamental drive behind the cyclical crises which define the process of capitalist development. Put another way, crises resulting from overproduction in relation to overall relative profitability, a contradiction rooted in the class struggle in production, are the inevitable structural result of the capitalist system.

What do these crises mean for the capitalist system as a whole?

Contrary to the vulgar Marxists, we hold that this tendency towards crisis, which is concretely a *permanent struggle to defer crises*, will not “of itself” inevitably result in the collapse of the capitalist system. And indeed, while specific crises as determinate historical forms are always already consequences of the class struggle and the development of the subjective forces of the proletariat (insofar as they are expressions of the class struggle in production), the last two centuries have demonstrated that, absent *conscious political intervention* by a Communist Party equipped with the class science of the proletariat (today, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) and aimed at revolutionary armed struggle for the seizure of state power, the capitalist system will in fact *integrate the spontaneous class struggle of the proletariat into the productive process through co-management* and continue to adjust its structure and state system in order to ensure the reproduction of the conditions for accumulation.

Imperialism

Imperialism, as an outgrowth of the birth of finance capitalism, is the key aspect of the expanded reproduction of capitalism in the face of these crises. When we assert that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, we are asserting that the vast plunder accumulated by the beneficiaries of today’s imperialist system is the final holdout of a rotten economic arrangement limping towards its doom, lashing out desperately to maintain its rule.

The imperialist system is characterized by the violent territorial division and re-division of the world into captive markets for the export of the capital from the imperialist countries to offset these falling profits, either through direct military occupation of the semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries or indirect rule via their comprador- and bureaucrat-capitalist allies.

Following Lenin, we emphasize that **the export of capital is the defining feature of imperialism:**

“Capitalism is commodity production at its highest stage of development, when labour-power itself becomes a commodity. The growth of internal exchange, and, particularly, of international exchange, is a characteristic feature of capitalism. The uneven and spasmodic development of individual enterprises, individual branches of industry and individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system. England became a capitalist country before any other, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, having adopted free trade, claimed to be the “workshop of the world,” the supplier of manufactured goods to all countries, which in exchange were to keep her provided with raw materials. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this monopoly was already undermined; for other countries, sheltering themselves with “protective” tariffs, developed into independent capitalist states. On the threshold of the twentieth century we see the formation of a new type of monopoly: firstly, monopolist associations of capitalists in all capitalistically developed countries; secondly, the monopolist position of a few very rich countries, in which the accumulation of capital has reached gigantic proportions. An enormous “surplus of capital” has arisen in the advanced countries... As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap. The export of capital is made possible by a number of backward countries having already been drawn into world capitalist intercourse; main railways have either been or are being built in those countries, elementary conditions for industrial development have been created, etc. The need to export capital arises from the fact that in a few countries capitalism has become “overripe” and capital cannot find a field for “profitable” investment.”⁶

Thus, as a consequence of the general tendency of capitalist development (overproduction and a correspondingly falling rate of profit) the bourgeoisie in the advanced capitalist countries accumulate a vast body of capital but lack avenues for profitable investment in their domestic markets, and are forced to look beyond their borders for new sources of value to prop up a system whose internal contradictions leave it in a state of perpetual decay and risk of collapse.

In the imperialist period, this principally takes the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) organized by multinational finance capitalist firms, who extract their profits through vertical integration—the consolidation of production, logistics and distribution under the ownership of a single multinational firm—of “globalized” value chains, as well as in the form of interest repayments and financial transfers from the oppressed countries. As the Peruvian comrades argue,

“FDI has become increasingly important since the mid-1960s [and] is done as a “package.” [It] is the principal form taken by “productive capital” imported to the oppressed countries (if FDI is seen from the perspective of these countries), which

generates a greater deformation of its productive structure, since practically the only sectors of the economy which will grow are those which are related to the needs of the world market.

When these needs change, whether for economic or extra-economic reasons, what is left behind are unemployed thousands, ghost towns, abandoned mineshafts, and trash of all kinds —consequences which bear a high social & economic cost as well a high cost for the resources of the country, and more “need” for imperialist capital to commence anew and end in the same way. This is the vicious circle of imperialist domination, the maintenance of third-world countries as colonial or semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries wherein bureaucratic capitalism develops.

Through this FDI package, the imperialist monopolies increase the import and export of imperialist capital’s commodities as inputs for the production of a final product. These “inputs” represent the total parts required for the production of the “final product” to occur in the FDI-receptor country —“production” which in the majority of cases consists only of assembly or often only packaging. This is what the bourgeois economists call “international fragmentation of production”, “new international division of labor”, etc.”⁷

The specific appearance of this contemporary “international division of labor” has its roots in the old colonial order: the borders, treaties and alliances of the traditional colonial powers still set the terms for much of the global organization of the imperialist system, and enabled the deliberate underdevelopment of the economies of the colonized countries. To again quote from the Peruvians,

“The imperialist countries draw superprofits from the oppressed countries, over which each of them exercises or “enjoys to some degree a colonial monopoly” despite the nominal political independence or formal sovereignty of the oppressed countries. That is the similarity that Lenin establishes between the colonialism of the phase of capitalism characterized by free competition, and the colonialism in the phase of imperialism.”

Beginning in 1917, this process of territorial division was challenged on the world stage by the emergence and consolidation of the first revolutionary working class dictatorship: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and its international expression in the Communist International. This was followed by the victories of socialist and new democratic revolutions around the world, particularly in China.

The birth of modern revisionism

By 1956, the victory of the revisionist line in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, represented by Khrushchev and his clique, enabled the transformation of the first socialist state from a bastion of resistance to imperialism into an imperialist power itself. Abandoning Marxism-Leninism altogether after Stalin’s death,⁸ the right-wing of the

CPSU reversed the gains of the October Revolution and placed the USSR firmly on the capitalist road, declaring the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat and embracing a policy of “peaceful coexistence” with the out-and-out capitalists. As the Communist Party of China described,

“In the Soviet Union at present [e.g., in 1964], not only have the new bourgeois elements increased in number as never before, but their social status has fundamentally changed. Before Khrushchev came to power, they did not occupy the ruling position in Soviet society. Their activities were restricted in many ways and they were subject to attack. But since Khrushchev took over, usurping the leadership of the Party and the state step by step, the new bourgeois elements have gradually risen to the ruling position in the Party and government and in the economic, cultural and other departments, and formed a privileged stratum in Soviet society.

This privileged stratum is the principal component of the bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union today and the main social basis of the revisionist Khrushchev clique. The revisionist Khrushchev clique are the political representatives of the Soviet bourgeoisie, and particularly of its privileged stratum.”⁸

The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union meant that the ‘Cold War’ period which followed was principally defined by an *inter-imperialist* conflict: between the Soviet social-imperialist bloc and the U.S. imperialist bloc (represented by NATO). The redivision of the world on that basis continued essentially uninterrupted until the final collapse of the USSR in 1991.

The anti-revisionist sections of the International Communist Movement persisted in the wake of the degeneration of Soviet socialism, looking to China (and temporarily to Albania) for political leadership. But after the 1976 arrest of the Gang of Four by the counterrevolutionary Hua-Deng clique, China too began to experience capitalist restoration and transformation into a social-imperialist power, although it remained largely marginalized by the existing superpowers until the collapse of the Soviet bloc.⁹

Three decades after the collapse of the Soviet social-imperialist system, we are once again witnessing the redivision of the world by imperialist powers, as Chinese social-imperialism—via the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt and Road Initiative—increasingly challenges the global hegemony of the U.S. imperialists. As the Indian comrades have correctly observed, China has rapidly grown as an exporter of capital and expanded its direct and indirect control of extractive industry across the world:

“Chinese imperialism accumulated capital from industrial production in a very rapid way as a result of which it could also accumulate a large amount of Finance Capital together with its heavy Bank Capital. This is seen in the abnormal fast growth of the domestic and foreign exchange resources. These resources increased from 165 billion dollars in 2000 to 3,305 billion dollars by March 2012. The foreign exchange resources of China are equal to that of the same of the six

next largest countries. Foreign exchange resources would be utilized as Finance Capital in the form of loans. A share of the surplus value achieved through the country taking loan goes to the share-holders. In order to have special utility rights over foreign exchange resources, they are normally stored in the form of relatively safe foreign government bonds, as a part of International agreements or in the form of bank deposits in the IMF. In fact, 3.3 trillion dollars of the gross property of China are foreign exchange reserves. [...]

From 2008, while on one hand the world economic crisis intensified, on the other China emerged as a major exporter of capital. Due to the financial and economic crisis of 2008 that spread to Europe from the US, many big private and public banks in the US and many capitalist countries became bankrupt. China utilised this situation when the governments of those countries were providing finance and investments to the Multi-National Organisations/ Corporations in the form of stimulus packages and flooded its investments into the foreign countries. The Chinese government and its new capitalist class are extensively investing capital especially for raw material and for industrial properties not in the country but outside. Chinese capital flooded in other countries also taking the chance of the closure of giving and taking of loans across the world, the reduction of share values and the increased demand from many corporations for money, all due to the crisis.”¹⁰

While the U.S. empire remains the main enemy of the peoples of the world, China, Russia, Japan and the European imperialist powers continue to divvy up the oppressed nations for capital- and commodity-export and resource extraction. The accentuation of the inter-imperialist contradictions between these powers, particularly by the looming threat of global ecological collapse, is beginning to intensify to the point of open military conflict, as has already occurred in Ukraine, Venezuela, and now Iran. As China further consolidates its colonial monopolies in Africa and the Pacific, confrontation between the American imperialists and the Chinese social-imperialists becomes inevitable.¹¹

But the intensification of the inter-imperialist contradiction offers openings for the national liberation movement in the countries dominated by imperialism. Despite the overwhelming technological and military resources of the imperialists and their junior partners, the masses of the oppressed nations have taken up armed resistance to throw off the yoke of exploitation. Today, the key flashpoint of armed struggle against imperialism is the movement of the Palestinian people against the genocidal U.S.-backed Zionist occupation. The courageous resistance to the occupation, and the fight for a free Palestine, has for a half-century inspired class fighters around the world to take up the struggle against imperialism, whether in the belly of the advanced capitalist countries or in the national liberation struggles raging throughout the Third World.

The class struggle at home

The threat of displacement of U.S. imperialism from its position of global dominance has also intensified the domestic class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, particularly in the wake of the economic and political crises which ensued from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But far from representing the “death knell” of capitalism, crises, whether precipitated by a pandemic or by capitalism’s internal dynamism, function as warning signs for the bourgeoisie, reflecting the need for an adjustment of the production process and a disciplining of labor to ensure the continuation of the capitalist system. As the Ugandan anti-revisionist thinker Dani Nabudere argued, “crisis, while positing an end to the capitalist production and accumulation process, is at the same time the *precondition for its continuance on a higher level until collapse.*”¹²

This ongoing spiral of crisis, adjustment, and continuance of capitalist production at a higher level variously entails

“[D]estroying part of the mass of capital or by promoting its devaluation or annihilation by other means. This reduction of use-value and of the means of production will not affect the rate of surplus-value or the mass of surplus-value since these are to be seen in relation to the existing use-value of capital and its existing productive capacity,

[...or resolving] the competition which gave rise to the crisis...by the restructuring towards greater concentration or monopoly. This helps the capitalist to decrease the value of labour power, which, coupled with the relative surplus population which results from the crisis, will help depress wages and increase the amount of surplus-value

*[... or] the introduction of new industries [which] enables new investment to be made in areas of low composition of constant capital in order to yield a high rate of surplus-value. Moreover, the possibility of increasing constant capital enables the capitalist to intensify the exploitation of labour, including prolonging the working day, and hence assures the capitalist of increased surplus-value.”*¹³

To these, we would add the expansion of the function of the state apparatus (in both its repressive and ideological expressions) in order to enforce the artificial depression of wages, constriction of spending on social reproduction programs organized by the state, *as well as the integration of the demands of the working class into the “higher level” of productive organization as a mediator of its own exploitation.* The latter involves the objective needs of capitalist production being reframed through the subjective demands made by so-called representatives of the working class, e.g. collaborationist unions, the social democrats, and so on.

This reflects a specific political and ideological process carried out at the level of a structural determination—not, then, as the product of a cabal of capitalist conspirators, but in a real sense the politico-ideological progenitor of any such cabal. In the working class movement today, this takes the form of modern revisionism.

This project realized some of its most absolute expressions—the degeneration of the Communist Parties themselves—in the form of the Browderism in the U.S., Khrushchevite revisionism in the USSR, the “Historic Compromise” in Italy, and the 1976 ascension of the Hua-Deng counterrevolutionary faction in China, but has been a practical fact since the English industrial and then colonial monopolies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Marx, Engels, and Lenin all observed this:

[T]here 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 and 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.’”¹⁴

The function of fostering the development of social-chauvinism and modern revisionism in the context of the restructuring process is to, on one hand, ensure that the ruling class retains the initiative in the class struggle in production, and on the other, to artificially inflate

the consumptive capacity of an upper strata of the working class through the allocation of a greater portion of the social product.

While Engels established clearly in his preface to *The Condition of the Working Class in England* that it was only “during the period of England’s industrial monopoly” that the English working-class were able, to a certain extent, “to share in the benefits of the monopoly” Lenin correctly observed that the persistence of the *colonial* monopoly continued to provide the British bourgeoisie with the resources to promote opportunism. In each case, this capacity depends on the excess of profits generated through high productivity or colonial (and later imperialist) extraction being available to “buy off” the upper strata of workers.

When, due to falling profit rates or a change in the inter-imperialist power structure, the resources to promote opportunism become less readily available, these circumstances shift. Democratic rights are rolled back, social programs dismantled, plants are shuttered, wages fall.

The effects of this process are acutely felt by women workers, who already face a two-headed monster in the form of superexploitation: the extraction of surplus-value from women workers directly (in the workplace) and indirectly (through their unpaid work facilitating the process of social reproduction). As the Proletarian Feminist Research Group argues, women are pivotal to

“...the process of reproduction of the worker and their family—the cost of which determines the value of labor-power and therefore informs the variable capital expenditure of the bourgeoisie in any given industry... The bourgeoisie therefore benefits directly from the maintenance of patriarchal ideology insofar as it ensures the continued extraction of social-reproductive labor from women on a “voluntary” basis.

It should come as no surprise, then, that, contrary to Engels’ prediction that the proletarianization of women would leave less time for domestic work, and would therefore lead to the socialization of reproductive labor via the state apparatus, we have seen the opposite: women continue to perform an immensely disproportionate share of the “domestic” work necessary for social reproduction, from housework to childcare, even after their mass return to the workforce during the 20th century. And while limited social-reproductive functions have been taken on by the state apparatus (live-in caregiver programs, disability insurance, state-sponsored childcare etc.; minor revindications won through struggle or adopted by the bourgeoisie to ameliorate class tensions and secure production relations), these programs are regularly contested by the austerity policies of neoliberalism. Where they do exist, such programs offer substandard care, and typically employ women from oppressed nations under abysmal conditions for extremely low pay.”¹⁵

The collapse of the shoddy remnants of the “welfare state” and the decline of real wages thus sharply impact those strata who already shoulder the burden of social reproduction *on top of* their exploitation in the workplace.

This is the main motivation for the political and ideological assault on the democratic rights of women and LGBT people currently being undertaken by the reactionaries: the reaffirmation of the patriarchal family-form as the basic unit of social reproduction, and the political disenfranchisement of women, serves to entrench working women’s superexploitation for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. LGBT people, who cannot be readily assimilated into the ideological and practical structures of the family-form, are similarly targeted by this process, resulting in even more pronounced oppression and social violence, particularly in light of the “culture war” ideological scapegoating encouraged by the reactionaries:

“[T]he family-form is maintained and perpetuated in part by the repression of sexual practices which resist assimilation into heterosexual ideological formations. These formations themselves structure and impose ostensibly immutable sex categories into which all people must fall. It is in this regard that transgender people find themselves in contradiction with the demands of patriarchal structures of gender and sexuality. That is, the existence of transgender people presents a challenge to ideological claims regarding the immutability of sex, and is therefore presented as a destabilizing threat to the institution of the family.

Just as the social reactionary wing of the bourgeoisie argued that homosexuality and gay marriage were threats to the nuclear family (and to the broader social order which, they would have us believe, rests upon it) these same reactionaries see transgender people as destabilizing even more fundamental ideological categories upon which the family as a social relation is constructed [...] Our position is...that the existence of transgender people is in contradiction with certain core precepts of patriarchal ideology, and that, consequently, the repression of transgender people as a social group is tied to the ideological demands of the capitalist family-form. The bourgeoisie therefore retains a material interest in the ongoing legal and social repression of transgender people.

The evidence of this repression and ostracization is indisputable, even according to the metrics of bourgeois sociology. A 2012 United States study showed that 18- to 64-year-old “transgender adults were more likely to be living in poverty (31% vs 9%) and unemployed (33% vs 12%) compared to their non-transgender peers” 50 years after the Stonewall uprising, transgender people are still more likely to be wage-workers than their cisgender neighbors—a 2015 study identified that legal discrimination, lack of family recognition, and hostile educational environments (along with lower wages on average) all contribute to the significant lumpenization of transgender people, many of whom turn to extralegal work or are forced into the sex trade.”¹⁶

Because its state formation occurred through a process of displacement and settler-colonization, the integrity of the U.S. social formation also relies on the national oppression of Black Americans and the Indigenous nations, as well as the direct colonial occupation of Puerto Rico and Hawaii. The desperation of the ruling class to stave off crisis can also be seen in the intensification of this national oppression, as we have seen with the vicious deployment of ICE against communities of national minorities around the country, particularly in California, where the banner of Chicano national struggle has been taken up by the anti-ICE mass movement.

This domestic national oppression is further reinforced through the chauvinism of the labor-aristocratic strata described above (which is composed overwhelmingly, though by no means entirely, of white workers). As the hegemony of U.S. imperialism is challenged, and the security of imperialist superprofits increasingly comes under threat, the privileged place of that strata vacillates accordingly; the ruling class has seized on this instability in order to promote reactionary ideology and further entrench existing divisions in the working class. We will develop this argument further below.

In the face of this attack, the proletariat is experiencing a crisis of leadership. **The degeneration of the communist party of the U.S. into revisionism has left the proletariat bereft of a political headquarters for nearly a century.**

This degeneration can be traced to the closure of the ‘Third Period’ of the Third Communist International. This ‘period’—really an orientation adopted in 1928 to correspond to an anticipated general crisis of capitalism, imperialist decay, and an inevitable revolutionary upsurge—was characterized by a strategic line of “class against class,” militant proletarian independence and relentless struggle against ideological opportunism.

But by the end of the 30s, it had given way to a fundamentally class collaborationist position—the so-called Popular Front. While that strategy was able to defeat German Nazism in the Great Patriotic War, it fostered the opportunistic collaboration with non-proletarian political elements, laying the groundwork for the revisionist degeneration of the Comintern-aligned parties in the post-war years.

Fascism and bourgeois democracy

The Popular Front strategy is best represented by the line advanced by comrade Dimitrov in ‘The Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism,’ presented in the 1935 Seventh Congress of the Comintern.

Dimitrov’s speech argued that,

at the time of the October Revolution, the Russian Bolsheviks engaged in a life-and-death struggle against all those political parties which, under the slogan of the defence of bourgeois democracy, opposed the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. The Bolsheviks fought these parties because the banner of bourgeois

democracy had at that time become the standard around which all counter-revolutionary forces mobilized to challenge the victory of the proletariat. The situation is quite different in the capitalist countries at present. Now the fascist counter-revolution is attacking bourgeois democracy in an effort to establish the most barbarous regime of exploitation and suppression of the working masses. Now the working masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the necessity of making a definite choice, and of making it today, not between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism.

The consequent resolution of the Seventh congress of the CI, on 'Fascism, Working Class Unity and the Tasks of the Comintern,'¹⁷ describes fascism as "the establishment of the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, the most chauvinist and the most imperialist elements of finance capital"—this definition remains dangerously common within our trend, despite its complete liquidation of the key element of the Leninist concept of the state, namely that "even the most democratic bourgeois republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie."¹⁸

The Seventh Congress definition of fascism implies a) that sectors of the finance capitalist bourgeoisie *could* be won over to an anti-fascist policy, and b) that this is the case because the structure of the state retains relative autonomy with regards to the political class project of the bourgeoisie as a whole (such that 'control' by the "most reactionary...elements of finance capital" could alter its character). But as comrade Gonzalo taught, "With regard to identifying fascism with terror, with repression, we think that this is a mistake. What is involved in this case is the following: if one remembers Marxism, the State is organized violence, that is the definition that the classics have given us. All states use violence because they are dictatorships. How else would they keep the people down in order to oppress and exploit them?"¹⁹

While it is certainly true that circumstantial disarticulation of the state, as the unitary expression of total capital (by either the "most reactionary" elements of the bourgeoisie or by the class struggle of the proletariat) is possible, such disruption does not alter the characteristic structure of the state as the instrument of class domination by the bourgeoisie. *Only* its armed overthrow by the revolutionary proletariat is capable of fundamentally altering the character of the state apparatus, and that altering only when the working class takes action "to destroy this machine of oppression and to establish proletarian dictatorship."²⁰

To our view, the principal feature characteristic of fascism lies precisely in corporativism, or, as comrade Gonzalo put it, "the setting up of the state based on corporations, which implies the negation of parliamentarism. [...] [Mariátegui] said that the crisis of bourgeois democracy expresses itself clearly in the crisis of parliamentarism. [...] Identifying fascism with terror means not understanding Mariátegui, who in "Figuras y aspectos de la vida mundial" ["Figures and Aspects of World Life"--TRANS.], when talking of H.G. Wells, tells us that the

bourgeois State goes through a process of development and that it is this process that leads to a fascist and corporative system.”²¹ Or, elsewhere,

*[Corporativism] is the power of the big bourgeoisie organized through organs with representatives from different strata, guilds, or other groups, who with their “expertise” and “in agreement” make political decisions—instead of representatives elected through elections, as in bourgeois parliamentarism (note that both forms serve to maintain the bourgeois dictatorship). Examples of such corporative organs are the fascist unions in Germany under Hitler and Italy under Mussolini, as well as the “Self-defense Committees”, “Development Committees”, COFOPRI, FONCODES, INADE etc. in Peru. Social democracy (social fascism in Lenin’s words) in countries like Germany or Sweden also develop, especially since the end of World War II, a clear and manifest corporativism; the so-called “Swedish model”, “the spirit of Saltsjöbaden”, is a very clear example of this “agreement” between the classes, which in reality is an agreement between the factions of the bourgeoisie and its lackeys, under the supervision of the state and in favor of the big bourgeoisie. These are examples that show that the “negation of parliamentarism” does not necessarily imply the abolition of parliament or of elections, but that this negation is also expressed in the power of the executive, in the total failure of the illusion of parliamentary democracy etc.*²²

The Dimitrovice articulation abandoned a concretely Leninist approach to fascism and the theory of the State, evacuating communist politics of their revolutionary character—no longer committed to the overthrow of capitalist social relations but to their co-management with the bourgeoisie—and thus realized the social democratization of the Third International: the birth of modern revisionism. This sacrifice of working class political independence in favor of a popular unity with the bourgeoisie in the name of ‘anti-fascism’ was nothing short of an absolute betrayal of the proletarian revolution:

*in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois limitations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy in the working-class movement in all the advanced countries, and notably by the experience of the past five years. This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity economy prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can only be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens; that is, the proletarian class.*²³

That this shift in orientation occurred contemporaneously with Stalin’s 1936 Draft Constitution of the USSR—which declared the end of class struggle under Soviet Socialism—indicates a broader trend of conciliation towards bourgeois elements both within and outside the Comintern (not to mention the CPSU itself). The draft reads:

The proletariat is a class exploited by the capitalists. But in our country, as you know, the capitalist class has already been eliminated, and the instruments and means of production have been taken from the capitalists and transferred to the state, the leading force of which is the working class. Consequently, there is no longer a capitalist class which could exploit the working class. Consequently, our working class, far from being bereft of the instruments and means of production, on the contrary, possesses them jointly with the whole people. And since it possesses them, and the capitalist class has been eliminated, all possibility of the working class being exploited is precluded. This being the case, can our working class be called a proletariat? Clearly, it cannot. Marx said that if the proletariat is to emancipate itself, it must crush the capitalist class, take the instruments and means of production from the capitalists, and abolish the conditions of production which give rise to the proletariat. Can it be said that the working class of the U.S.S.R. has already brought about these conditions for its emancipation? Unquestionably, it can and must be said. And what does this mean? This means that the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. has been transformed into an entirely new class, into the working class of the U.S.S.R., which has abolished the capitalist economic system, which has established the socialist ownership of the instruments and means of production and is directing Soviet society along the road to communism.

This theorization provided left-cover for the all-out attack on Bolshevik institutions and collapse of the Soviet socialist system heralded by the Khrushchev era only some 20 years later.

We consider this period of vacillation within the Comintern to be the source of the modern revisionist degeneration of both former Comintern-affiliated parties and its broader ideological creep precisely because we necessarily conceive of revisionism as *internal to the class movement* rather than an external enemy. The emergence of fundamentally bourgeois ideological positions within the Comintern (and their eventual ascension to political and organizational command thereof) is a direct product of the capitulation of the left-wing to class collaborationist elements.

One divides into two: the revolutionary class organizations—the communist parties, and, in this case, their international expression in the Comintern—are cut across by a revisionism immanent to the working class movement and which articulates a specific phase in the development of the *class struggle itself*, expressed within each instance of the overall structure of global capitalism. We use the shorthand of ‘modern revisionism’ to refer, then, to a multiplicity of revisionisms, which are in the last instance subject to the ideological and organizational aspects of the bourgeois counterrevolutionary forces *internal to the working class movement*.

Our above theses on the degenerating role played by the “Popular Front” revisionist trend must be grasped according to, on the one hand, the basic problem of proletarian autonomy (or what has elsewhere been called working class political independence) and on the other,

an urgent need to impose a clear conception—against all reformist and revisionist illusions which today dog our trend—of the two fundamental aspects of the Marxist theory of the state: class dictatorship and the invariance of the armed struggle for power, which today takes the form of people’s war.

This is the political background against which we assert that the main task today remains the rectification of the general line of anti-revisionist trend through the organizational assimilation of the Marxist theoretical tradition and two-line struggle between the existing circles over its application to the concrete conditions of the U.S. social formation. The completion of this process is a precondition to the re-emergence of a genuinely revolutionary communist party. It is only under the leadership of such a party that the struggle for socialism can be waged and won.

- 1 Marx, *Capital*, Volume II, Chapter 16
- 2 Lenin, "The Theoretical Mistakes of the Narodnik Economists," in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.
- 3 c.f. Marx, *Capital* Draft Chapter 6 (The Results of the Direct Production Process): "The *surplus value* is reconverted into additional capital, is manifested in the formation of new capital or capital of greater size. Thus *capital* has created capital; it has not just realized itself as capital. The *accumulation process* is itself an immanent moment of the capitalist production process."
- 4 Lenin, "Accumulation in Capitalist Society," in *A Characterisation of Economic Romanticism*
- 5 The position taken by Kautsky and the social democrats.
- 6 Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. This emphasis on capital exports as the key feature of imperialism is understood to be in contradiction with conceptions emphasizing, on the one hand, the annexationist policies of particular states (a conception which excludes the economic aspect of imperialism, which is determinant) and, on the other hand, those theorists of imperialism who jettison Leninism in favor of theories of "center-periphery" "world-systems theory" and "unequal exchange," rooted in Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*.
- 7 Peru People's Movement—Reorganization Committee, "Notes on the process of bureaucrat capitalism in the Third World countries."
- 8 The roots of this revisionist turn can be traced back to the 1936 Draft Constitution, which will be discussed later.
- 8 Editorial Departments of Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) and Hongqui (Red Flag), "On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU."
- 9 We will address the mechanism of capitalist restoration in detail below.
- 10 Communist Party of India (Maoist), "China: A Modern Social-imperialist Power."
- 11 For more on this question, see our document 'A Feast That Starves.'
- 12 Dani Nabudere, *The Political Economy of Imperialism*. Emphasis ours.
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism." Emphasis ours. The crucial function of what the comrades of the New Labor Organizing Committee refer to as "state unionism" (following the CPB[rf]) is exposed here: the "capture" of the working class struggle in bourgeois-legalistic organs, resulting in opportunism and reformism as dominant trends within the labor movement.
- 15 Proletarian Feminist Research Group, "The Political Economy of Women's Oppression."
- 16 Proletarian Feminist Research Group, "Ideology and the Gender Question."
- 17 Resolution of the Seventh Comintern Congress on Fascism, Working Class Unity and the Tasks of the Comintern. 20 August, 1935
- 18 Lenin, 'Thesis and report on bourgeois democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' March, 1919.
- 19 PCP, "Interview with Chairman Gonzalo." 1988
- 20 *op cit.*
- 21 *op cit.*
- 22 PCP, 'On Fascism: Reaction all along the line.'
- 23 Lenin *op cit.*