Back to the 1930s?

US Power and the New Course Towards War

Critique of H. Ticktin’s concept of decline and transition

N Bukharin and A Lomov: from Kommunist (April 1918)

Review of Back to the Future: Rebranding Social Democracy
Are we going back to the 1930s? 1
US Power and the New Course Towards War 8
Are we now in a period of transition from capitalism to socialism? H. Ticktin’s concept of decline and transition 26
Two Articles from Kommunist (April 1918):
Introduction 35
Economic Notes, A. Lomov 38
Review of Trutovsky, The Transitional Period, Nikolai Bukharin 41
Review of Back to the Future: Rebranding Social Democracy, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams 45
Life of the Organisation 53

For correspondence write to:
CWO, BM CWO
London
WC1N 3XX
email: uk@leftcom.org

Or visit our website:
http://www.leftcom.org

Subscriptions to Revolutionary Perspectives (3 issues) and Aurora (at least 4 issues) are

UK £15 (€18)
Europe £20 (€24)
World £25 (€30, $30)

How to pay:
By cheque made out to the ‘CWO’ and sending it to the address above.
By emailing us at uk@leftcom.org and asking for our banking details.
By Paypal using the ‘Donate’ button on our webpage.
You can also take out a supporter’s sub by adding £10 (€12) to each sum. This will give you priority mailings of Aurora and other publications including free pamphlets as they are published.
Are We Going Back to the 1930s?

You need to be well over 80 to directly remember anything about the 1930s. For those in the succeeding generation, the nearest to real experience of that time was listening to our parents who preferred to forget about them. Tales of the Means Test, of going hungry, lacking shoes, not being able to afford a doctor and the shadow of unemployment and war are not the stuff of bedtime stories. The impact of that on their consciousness could be a discussion all on its own. However it does raise the question about how historical experience, whether we like it or not, shapes our current perceptions and outlook. It might be worth examining this methodological issue before we get into the comparison of the 1930s with today.

History Lessons

Many people know the famous opening of Marx's article “The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon” in which he alleges “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add the first time as tragedy the second time as farce”. Leaving aside the issue that Hegel did not actually say this, it remains a great image which has been deployed many times (and often by ourselves) to make comparisons between historical events. What Marx goes on to add though is more significant for our discussion today:

The tradition of all past generations weighs like a nightmare upon the brains of the living. At the very time when they appear to be engaged in revolutionising things and themselves, in bringing about what never was before, at such very epochs of revolutionary crisis do they anxiously conjure up into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battle cries, their costumes to enact a new historic scene in such time-honoured disguise and with such borrowed language.

There is a warning for us here about the use, and abuse, of history. We cannot avoid history – it is the collective memory of humanity and, apart from our direct personal experience, it is the only basis for informed thinking about the future we have to go on. We can though be misled in our interpretation of it since we try to look at history through the discernible patterns of the past. This runs the danger that we don’t always grasp the significance of what is new in the epoch we live in. Something may be happening which we are unaware of but which sets a new pattern for the future.

We have a concrete example of this in our own past. In the 1970s the ideas of the communist left first came to the UK. This itself was no historical accident as
The Wall Street Crash. Thus banks were allowed to get involved in developing "new financial instruments" which basically recycled debt, and in the end, became pure speculation. What had happened was that instead of gearing up to a world war, the system had found a new way of posposing the consequences of the crisis, via the speculative (speculative) phase where fictitious capital is created. The final phase of the bubble would have to burst some time but could not believe that the system could hold on until 2007-8.

### From this work, those of us who formed the CWO, could see that the cycles of accumulation of capital, which in Marx's day had lasted about every ten years or so, had been altered by the gradual centralisation and concentration of capital. Thus since the capitalist cycle of accumulation led to an economic crisis on two occasions, an early conclusion was that the working class had to overthrow the system of capital. The crisis was a permanent systemic crisis. What happened was that instead of gearing up to a world war, the system had found a new way of postponing the consequences, via speculation. However, as Marx makes clear, the speculative stage will be a major phase in a new manifestation of the crisis.

The response of the capitalist states to this new manifestation of the crisis was more predictable. Allowing capital to operate unchecked would have led to the collapse of the entire financial system. Hencetowards the Wall Street Crash look like a minor blip. The major states were thus forced to act. Massive bail-outs followed by quantitative easing were the only solutions. These measures dealt with the symptoms but not the cause of the crisis. The crisis has not gone away but we are in an entirely new situation which the world has not experienced before.

### 2018 is not the 1930s

Which means talk of "going back to the 1930s" is misplaced. However, there are plenty of reasons why some commentators have been saying this for at least the last two years. What had happened was that, with the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, the major capitalist states had argued that the boom was predicated on the massive destruction of capital. But now, with the collapse of the capitalist states around the world and the end of the Cold War, the rate of profit would reassert itself, and the world would be plunged into crisis once again.

The response of the capitalist states around the world to this new manifestation of the crisis was more predictable. Allowing capital to operate unchecked would have led to the collapse of the entire financial system. Hence towards the Wall Street Crash look like a minor blip. The major states were thus forced to act. Massive bail-outs followed by quantitative easing were the only solutions. These measures dealt with the symptoms but not the cause of the crisis. The crisis has not gone away but we are in an entirely new situation which the world has not experienced before.

### From this work, those of us who formed the CWO, could see that the cycles of accumulation of capital, which in Marx's day had lasted about every ten years or so, had been altered by the gradual centralisation and concentration of capital. Thus since the capitalist cycle of accumulation led to an economic crisis on two occasions, an early conclusion was that the working class had to overthrow the system of capital. The crisis was a permanent systemic crisis. What happened was that instead of gearing up to a world war, the system had found a new way of postponing the consequences, via speculation. However, as Marx makes clear, the speculative stage will be a major phase in a new manifestation of the crisis.

The response of the capitalist states to this new manifestation of the crisis was more predictable. Allowing capital to operate unchecked would have led to the collapse of the entire financial system. Hence towards the Wall Street Crash look like a minor blip. The major states were thus forced to act. Massive bail-outs followed by quantitative easing were the only solutions. These measures dealt with the symptoms but not the cause of the crisis. The crisis has not gone away but we are in an entirely new situation which the world has not experienced before.

### 2018 is not the 1930s

Which means talk of "going back to the 1930s" is misplaced. However, there are plenty of reasons why some commentators have been saying this for at least the last two years. What had happened was that, with the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, the major capitalist states had argued that the boom was predicated on the massive destruction of capital. But now, with the collapse of the capitalist states around the world and the end of the Cold War, the rate of profit would reassert itself, and the world would be plunged into crisis once again.

The response of the capitalist states around the world to this new manifestation of the crisis was more predictable. Allowing capital to operate unchecked would have led to the collapse of the entire financial system. Hence towards the Wall Street Crash look like a minor blip. The major states were thus forced to act. Massive bail-outs followed by quantitative easing were the only solutions. These measures dealt with the symptoms but not the cause of the crisis. The crisis has not gone away but we are in an entirely new situation which the world has not experienced before.
One concrete factor is missing compared to the 1930s. Hitler came to power on the promise that he would secure Germany's economic independence, something that was seen as a prerequisite for Germany's political and military expansion. The US economy at the time was seen as the source of Germany's economic problems, and the US had the power to make Germany pay for these problems through economic sanctions. This situation is similar to the current situation, where China is the world's second largest economy and has the power to make the US pay for its economic problems through economic sanctions.

Today, the US economy is facing similar challenges as Germany did in the 1930s. The US economy is facing a number of challenges, including high levels of debt, a declining manufacturing sector, and a trade deficit. These challenges are similar to the challenges faced by Germany in the 1930s, and they are likely to lead to a similar response from the US economy.

Despite the similarities, there are also important differences between the current situation and the situation in the 1930s. One of the key differences is the role of China in the current situation. China is now the world's second largest economy, and it has the power to make the US pay for its economic problems through economic sanctions. This power is not available to Germany in the 1930s, and it is likely to have a significant impact on the US economy.

Another important difference is the role of the US economy in the current situation. The US economy is now playing a much more important role in the global economy than it did in the 1930s. This is due to the fact that the US economy is now the leading economy in the world, and it has the power to influence the global economy in ways that it did not have in the 1930s.

In conclusion, the current situation is similar to the situation in the 1930s, but there are also important differences. The role of China in the current situation is likely to have a significant impact on the US economy, and the US economy is now playing a much more important role in the global economy than it did in the 1930s. It is important to recognize these differences, and to understand the implications of these differences for the US economy.
The international working class, but right now it is not in great shape. It was not in great shape in the 1930s either. As a consequence of that defeat the class was divided and deluded – some with illusions that Stalinist Russia was socialism, others were still loyal to the social democrats who had saved capitalism in 1914 and 1919. The revolutionaries in the class had been reduced to small fractions trying to make sense of the counter-revolution or were in the prison camps of the fascists or Stalinites. However, one thing the Communist Left came to recognise was that “anti-fascism”, far from being the defence of the working class, had come to be a rallying cry to get workers to support the war for democracy. It had become the official position of the Stalinist Communist International after 1935 and was used to mobilise workers to go to Spain, not to fight for the Spanish Revolution, but to fight for the war against fascists. The “anti-fascism” became a mobilising slogan for imperialist war.

Most of the comparisons between the 1930s and today are made by the defenders of capitalist democracy. They do not support proletarian autonomy or the right for a communist democracy. All they worry about is the possible revival of fascism, and they use that as an excuse to defend the capitalist system. For them mention of the 1930s is always a scare story. Ironically, it is just how their political antecedents in the 1930s always talked. Instead of pointing the working class to the real issue, which is the impact of the ongoing crisis of capitalism, they turn the debate on to which capitalist faction are we for. Obviously, this is how their readership are divided, with all their ideological consequences. They still argue, like Paul Mason did a couple of years ago, for a defence of the globalised “resilient global system”.

“We have – and must defend – a resilient global system.”

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/01/are-we-living-through-another-1930s-paul-mason

This “resilient global system” operates only for one class and we have no interest in defending it. We need to defend ourselves, not just from fascists but also from those who are deluded that the system is a “concept of universal and inalienable human rights”. In a world where Syrian children are gassed, where Congolese women are routinely raped as acts of war, and where 22 million Yemenis are facing malnutrition on one of the most pointless wars on the planet, and so on, where
We live, and have been living, in an epoch of capitalist decadence. Notwithstanding longer life expectancy, technological advance, and the claims of its defenders, the capitalist system is incapable of addressing existential questions such as the destruction of the environment via man-made climate change. After all, to do so would get in the way of making profits. Short-term expediency portends long term disaster.

Capitalism though threatens the very existence of humanity in more direct ways. Currently there are 60 conflicts taking place around the world. Many have been going on unchecked for decades. Millions have died, whilst millions of others try to flee to the very advanced countries who provide the arms for these wars. Even if they survive the journey their existence is increasingly precarious, as racist movements agitate to “defend” a way of life that has become increasingly difficult even for the working class in the advanced capitalist world. US and UK real wages have been stagnant or declined since 1979. And the last decade of austerity has only added to the pain. What we are actually living through is the long slow decay of a social system in crisis. “Chaos” and even “decomposition” may be words that leap to the mind to describe current events. But they remain descriptions. What is required is a materialist analysis of the specific circumstances of current reality in order to lay bare, and understand, the forces behind it. Once we do that we can have a better understanding of where history is taking us.

In the current situation trying to make sense of all the contradictions and confusions would seem to be something of a mugs’ game. After all, the current convulsions in the political arena of the most powerful state on earth make any discussion of its direction from day to day almost impossible. In this article we try to focus on both the short term immediate issues facing the new line in US policy but also to set this in the context of a longer perspective which sees that, whatever the accidents of history, the ultimate final solution for capitalism is a major imperialist war.

Imperialist Rivalry in the Syrian War – Israel Gets a Blank Cheque from the US

Consistency, or even informed deliberation, has hardly been characteristic of Donald Trump’s foreign policy pronouncements since he became President of the United States, to put it mildly. In April, he announced the US would pull its troops out of Syria but exactly a week later he ordered missile attacks on Syrian air bases. This U-turn was provoked by the Assad regime’s alleged dropping of chemical weapons on civilians in the besieged town of Douma. British and French air forces also joined the attack for which they were praised by the US President. British participation in these attacks prompted the Daily Telegraph to headline its report “Could Britain be drawn into World War Three”. The Telegraph was not alone in raising that spectre. Russia warned of “consequences” after the attacks, with President Putin labelling the strikes an “act of aggression” that could “have a destructive effect on the entire system of international relations.” [1]

At first sight this alarm appears premature. The strikes of 14 April 2018 were, after all, only a repeat of a similar attack by US forces exactly one year earlier. They seem typical of the one-off actions of a US President who likes grand gestures (like the dropping of the largest conventional bomb in history on an Afghan mountain, supposedly to attack the Taliban last year). Furthermore, in the April attacks both Russian and Iranian military facilities were avoided and the Russians may even have been secretly warned of what was coming (and, according to one Al Jazeera report, they then tipped off the Syrians who also evacuated the threatened bases). This was thus more of a warning than a devastating military blow. [2]

And then there is the, by now, usual confusion in the Trump White House. On the night of the attacks, Trump said the US was “prepared to sustain this response until the Syrian regime stops its use of prohibited chemical agents.” But soon after, James Mattis, the Secretary for Defense contradicted him. “Right now, this is a one-time shot, designed to set back the Syrian war machine’s ability to produce chemical weapons.”

There was further incoherence the day after the attack on Syria. At that time Nikki Haley, the US Ambassador, announced in the UN that further economic sanctions would be taken against Russia for its support for the Syrian chemical weapons programme. She then found out that Trump had changed his mind, presumably in order not to antagonise Putin (who he was due to meet in Helsinki in July – a meeting which subsequently revealed yet more confusion about the real direction of US imperialist policy).

Despite all the confusion, and sudden shifts of policy, the Syrian conflict, far from winding down, does seem to be moving into an infinitely wider and more dangerous context engulfing the wider Middle East and beyond. Today Turkey, Iran, Russia, the USA, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, are all involved to various degrees, with Israel watching and intervening when, and where, it feels...
that “A new phase has begun and the next war (Battaglia Comunista), our sister group in Italy, commented: for war with Iran, but not just Iran. As Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista declared by the Prime Minister (Netanyahu) and the Defence Minister in “extreme circumstances” without having to consult anyone else. This is part of preparation to do what we must, in order to prevent Iranian consolidation in Syria”. We must do what we must, in order to prevent Iranian consolidation in Syria. This also includes a further attack on the airbase, which is also used by the Russians, on July 8. The same Israeli minister quoted above made the situation clear. He told the New York Times that “a new phase has begun and the next war will be between Israel and Iran”. Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman added that “Israel's shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

Matters have not ended there. There have been two more drone incursions from Syria into Israel since (shot down by Patriot missiles) and Israel has carried out a series of attacks on Hizballah, Syrian Army and Iranian positions inside Syria. This also included a further attack on the T4 airbase, which is also used by the Russians, on July 8. The same Israeli minister quoted above made the situation clear. He told the New York Times that “a new phase has begun and the next war will be between Israel and Iran”. Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman added that “Israel's shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

And if there is no withdrawal, this will lead to war. We did not want to await the “right” response would be made and the state of Tel Aviv would not remain unpunished. He concluded that these attacks “have their roots in Israel's hostile policy towards those who the Shia are still support. That is, the remaining, more significant, powers in Syria have declared that they want the presence of Iranian soldiers on their soil. The US, which has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

The consequence of this is already very clear. The US unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, and the demonstration of a need to counter the Iranian and Hizballah build-up. The Saudis and Qatar are still support. That is, the remaining, more significant, powers in Syria have declared that they want the presence of Iranian soldiers on their soil. The US, which has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

On the other hand, Iran raises the banner of the Shiite Islamic struggle against the American attempt to pose as champion of the defence of all Islam in the Middle East, particularly in fact Trump had been dragged into the schemes of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia – From Global Supporter of Salafism to Regional Powerbroker

The Saudis and Qatar are still support. That is, the remaining, more significant, powers in Syria have declared that they want the presence of Iranian soldiers on their soil. The US, which has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

This puts the strategic position and rich sources of the Golan Heights at risk. The border between Syria and Israel has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

Matters have not ended there. There have been two more drone incursions from Syria into Israel since (shot down by Patriot missiles) and Israel has carried out a series of attacks on Hizballah, Syrian Army and Iranian positions inside Syria. This also included a further attack on the T4 airbase, which is also used by the Russians, on July 8. The same Israeli minister quoted above made the situation clear. He told the New York Times that “a new phase has begun and the next war will be between Israel and Iran”. Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman added that “Israel's shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

The consequence of this is already very clear. The US unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, and the demonstration of a need to counter the Iranian and Hizballah build-up. The Saudis and Qatar are still support. That is, the remaining, more significant, powers in Syria have declared that they want the presence of Iranian soldiers on their soil. The US, which has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

On the other hand, Iran raises the banner of the Shiite Islamic struggle against the American attempt to pose as champion of the defence of all Islam in the Middle East, particularly in fact Trump had been dragged into the schemes of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia – From Global Supporter of Salafism to Regional Powerbroker

This puts the strategic position and rich sources of the Golan Heights at risk. The border between Syria and Israel has been abandoned. The US’s subsequent defence of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal), and the Illuminati’s shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]

Matters have not ended there. There have been two more drone incursions from Syria into Israel since (shot down by Patriot missiles) and Israel has carried out a series of attacks on Hizballah, Syrian Army and Iranian positions inside Syria. This also included a further attack on the T4 airbase, which is also used by the Russians, on July 8. The same Israeli minister quoted above made the situation clear. He told the New York Times that “a new phase has begun and the next war will be between Israel and Iran”. Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman added that “Israel's shooting of thousands of demonstrators (and the killing of over 130 of them) on the Gaza border in the UN Security Council only underlines this new policy departure.” [1]
in the Iranian ruling class becoming more distinct but, as we demonstrated in our article, "Iranian Workers Mock Anti-imperialist Slogans" en/articles/2018-05-10/iran-class-war-against-imperialist-pretensions article, "Iranian Workers Mock Anti-imperialist Slogans" [...]

Iran – Nation v Class

The “unintended consequences” of Trump’s support for Saudi hegemony in the Gulf, unlike his decision to pull out of the Iran Comprehensive Plan of Action, in which Iran abandoned attempts to develop nuclear weapons in return for an end to some sanctions. It is ironic that just as Obama, Iran policy was showing signs of working, Trump decided to pull the plug on it. Not only were the fissures...
An Age of Uncertainty

For those, like the UN negotiators in Geneva, who still optimistically think there is a possible negotiated way out of the impasse in Syria the big hope seems to be that Putin will persuade Assad to abandon Iran and get its forces to leave Syria. However, such optimism misses the fact that Moscow is in Syria as part of a wider imperialist strategy to reverse the tidal wave of losses it has suffered since the USSR collapsed. Russian actions in Georgia, Ukraine and Crimea are all part of the same push. Russian actions in Syria and Iraq are an attempt to gain influence over the Arabian Peninsula, which is a primary area of strategic interest for Russia. Russia may take some time to establish itself there, but once it does it will be a significant challenge for the West to contain. The Russian military presence in Syria is now a fact of life, and it is unlikely that it will be removed anytime soon. The West must accept this reality and work to contain it rather than trying to appease Putin and Russia. Only then can we hope to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria.

Turkey and Russia

Turkey has been a significant player in the Middle East, and its relationship with Russia has been tense for years. The Trump administration has picked up the baton of George W Bush in seeking to impose US military power on a recalcitrant Middle East, and this has brought the two countries closer together. The US has been trying to isolate Turkey, but Russia has been working to bring it back into the fold. The result has been a more stable relationship between the two countries, and this has been a positive development for the region. However, the US cannot afford to be complacent, as Turkey is still a potential threat to US interests in the region. The US must work to contain Turkey and prevent it from becoming a political ally of Russia.

Imperialism

For those, like the UN negotiators in Geneva, who still optimistically think there is a possible negotiated way out of the impasse in Syria the big hope seems to be that Putin will persuade Assad to abandon Iran and get its forces to leave Syria. However, such optimism misses the fact that Moscow is in Syria as part of a wider imperialist strategy to reverse the tidal wave of losses it has suffered since the USSR collapsed. Russian actions in Georgia, Ukraine and Crimea are all part of the same push. Russian actions in Syria and Iraq are an attempt to gain influence over the Arabian Peninsula, which is a primary area of strategic interest for Russia. Russia may take some time to establish itself there, but once it does it will be a significant challenge for the West to contain. The Russian military presence in Syria is now a fact of life, and it is unlikely that it will be removed anytime soon. The West must accept this reality and work to contain it rather than trying to appease Putin and Russia. Only then can we hope to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria.

Turkey has been a significant player in the Middle East, and its relationship with Russia has been tense for years. The Trump administration has picked up the baton of George W Bush in seeking to impose US military power on a recalcitrant Middle East, and this has brought the two countries closer together. The US has been trying to isolate Turkey, but Russia has been working to bring it back into the fold. The result has been a more stable relationship between the two countries, and this has been a positive development for the region. However, the US cannot afford to be complacent, as Turkey is still a potential threat to US interests in the region. The US must work to contain Turkey and prevent it from becoming a political ally of Russia.
Despite the triumphalism over the “collapse of communism,” (sic), however, the US had also been plagued with growing and developing economic crisis. The end of the post-war boom, the creation of a new problem for US imperialism. It had been the so-called “communist” countries used convertible currencies, American dollars not having currencies convertible into the dollar, was outside US control. Indeed, the IMF, the World Bank and GATT (today the WTO) ensured that this new world order was essentially (outside the Soviet empire and its allies) an American order. Perhaps most significantly of all, the US compelled the “free world” at Bretton Woods in 1944 to make the dollar the new gold standard in world commerce. One of the material bases of the continued viability of the US dollar was that the US dollar, by 1944, had become the major international currency. The US used the petrodollar, obliges foreign countries (the Chinese government alone holds around $3.5 trillion) to finance US military spending which they like it or not. And the US used its “free” military and naval apparatus to police oil routes and ensure that oil producing countries continue to trade in dollars. (“China – Long-held US View: Becoming Reality” in Revolutionary Perspectives 11 or on our site).

A gold-backed dollar worked very well for the US during the long post-war boom. But when the laws of capital accumulation inexorably resurrected themselves in the form of the decline of the rate of profit, the cycle of accumulation took the dollar off the gold standard in 1971 leaving only US Treasury debt as the basis for global reserves. The balance of payments deficit stemming from the US declining competitiveness and lower profit rates, by the 1970’s, the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.

The IMF, the World Bank and GATT (today the WTO) ensured that this new world order was essentially (outside the Soviet empire and its allies) an American order. Perhaps most significantly of all, the US compelled the “free world” at Bretton Woods in 1944 to make the dollar the new gold standard in world commerce. One of the material bases of the continued viability of the US dollar was that the US dollar, by 1944, had become the major international currency. The US used the petrodollar, obliges foreign countries (the Chinese government alone holds around $3.5 trillion) to finance US military spending which they like it or not. And the US used its “free” military and naval apparatus to police oil routes and ensure that oil producing countries continue to trade in dollars. (“China – Long-held US View: Becoming Reality” in Revolutionary Perspectives 11 or on our site).

As so often in capitalist history, economic crisis remains the midwife of dramatic changes. Until the 1980s, it was assumed that in the imperialist epoch, economic interests and national security were indelibly linked together. The US, in particular, could be satisfied. Unlike Europe and the USSR, it had not suffered the devastation of war on its territory and it had the financial and military resources to defend its empire from further encroachment by the new international order. The IMF, the World Bank and GATT (today the WTO) ensured that this new world order was essentially (outside the Soviet empire and its allies) an American order. Perhaps most significantly of all, the US compelled the “free world” at Bretton Woods in 1944 to make the dollar the new gold standard in world commerce. One of the material bases of the continued viability of the US dollar was that the US dollar, by 1944, had become the major international currency. The US used the petrodollar, obliges foreign countries (the Chinese government alone holds around $3.5 trillion) to finance US military spending which they like it or not. And the US used its “free” military and naval apparatus to police oil routes and ensure that oil producing countries continue to trade in dollars. (“China – Long-held US View: Becoming Reality” in Revolutionary Perspectives 11 or on our site).

In 1945 the USA emerged as the greatest imperialist power in the history of the world, with a much less powerful USSR as its only rival. This rivalry was based less on ideology than on the fact that the USA now wanted all of the world’s oil, whereas the US could exclude the US trade and the “human rights” only found in the “free world”. At the same time the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.

Throughout the post-war boom US imperial policy can be characterised as either schizophrenic or hypocritical since it championed democracy, the rule of law and the “human rights” of only found in the “free world”. At the same time the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.

Indeed, the IMF, the World Bank and GATT (today the WTO) ensured that this new world order was essentially (outside the Soviet empire and its allies) an American order. Perhaps most significantly of all, the US compelled the “free world” at Bretton Woods in 1944 to make the dollar the new gold standard in world commerce. One of the material bases of the continued viability of the US dollar was that the US dollar, by 1944, had become the major international currency. The US used the petrodollar, obliges foreign countries (the Chinese government alone holds around $3.5 trillion) to finance US military spending which they like it or not. And the US used its “free” military and naval apparatus to police oil routes and ensure that oil producing countries continue to trade in dollars. (“China – Long-held US View: Becoming Reality” in Revolutionary Perspectives 11 or on our site).

The US, in particular, could be satisfied. Unlike Europe and the USSR, it had not suffered the devastation of war on its territory and it had the financial and military resources to defend its empire from further encroachment by the new international order. The IMF, the World Bank and GATT (today the WTO) ensured that this new world order was essentially (outside the Soviet empire and its allies) an American order. Perhaps most significantly of all, the US compelled the “free world” at Bretton Woods in 1944 to make the dollar the new gold standard in world commerce. One of the material bases of the continued viability of the US dollar was that the US dollar, by 1944, had become the major international currency. The US used the petrodollar, obliges foreign countries (the Chinese government alone holds around $3.5 trillion) to finance US military spending which they like it or not. And the US used its “free” military and naval apparatus to police oil routes and ensure that oil producing countries continue to trade in dollars. (“China – Long-held US View: Becoming Reality” in Revolutionary Perspectives 11 or on our site).

In 1945 the USA emerged as the greatest imperialist power in the history of the world, with a much less powerful USSR as its only rival. This rivalry was based less on ideology than on the fact that the USA now wanted all of the world’s oil, whereas the US could exclude the US trade and the “human rights” only found in the “free world”. At the same time the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.

Throughout the post-war boom US imperial policy can be characterised as either schizophrenic or hypocritical since it championed democracy, the rule of law and the “human rights” of only found in the “free world”. At the same time the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.

In 1945 the USA emerged as the greatest imperialist power in the history of the world, with a much less powerful USSR as its only rival. This rivalry was based less on ideology than on the fact that the USA now wanted all of the world’s oil, whereas the US could exclude the US trade and the “human rights” only found in the “free world”. At the same time the US was a net importer of goods – pumped dollars abroad and was exacerbated by foreign military spending. Some of these never returned in the hands of central banks but became petrodollars or Eurodollars whilst others ended up in the hands of central banks.
Imperialism

Revolutionary Perspectives

19

At the same time, from the late 1990s and into the 1990s, financialisation really took off. The various regulations that had been brought in after the Wall Street Crash, like the Glass-Steagall Act (1933-93), to prevent speculation and avoid crashes, were either ameliorated or modified. Such financial deregulation gave the appearance that the system had weathered the storm of the financial crises without a major financial collapse. It created a pre-war situation as in the 1930s. However, continuing financial deregulation and financial bodies found new ways to create value without actually making any (such as asset derivatives and collateralised debt obligations) and lending more money. This gave the illusion of growth without substance. We predicted for years that the only surprise was that it went on so long. Even now, in financial collapse, the solution is to save the entire financial system, which is only a palliative. It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk. It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk.

In short, globalisation was used by both US and Chinese capital for their own ends. US finance poured into Asia (and elsewhere) as the place to invest. It was the cheaper labour of places like China, became the place to invest. It was land and wages that were cheaper. US finance was flowing into Asia and Latin America. The mostly authoritarian regimes in these places were unable to maintain "national security" as the reason. Trump scraped into power on a revulsion against China and European producers in particular. Today there is no question that "economic nationalism" is back on the agenda.

The collapse of the USSR, and its satellites, further undermined the notion that capitalism was an inevitable system. This is the way in which "economic nationalism" is back on the agenda. The world saw this in the 1930s when tariffs were raised and trading blocs formed everywhere, bringing an end to free trade and further increasing the tensions between powers.

It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk. It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk. It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk. It is not the system itself that is at risk, but the solution of saving the system that is at risk.
Trump is more accurate in his attack on Europe when he says that the US accounts for about 70% of NATO's budget. His other claim that NATO partners spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence is a bluff, but that NATO is only a regional alliance for defending Europe, while the US has military bases in nearly every country on the planet. What Trump is really arguing here is that the US paid for a lot of things, but no one seems to pay for it. Trump has long been critical of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, which he has called "a disaster". He has also been critical of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, which he has called "a complete and total disaster".

Trump's attacks on Europe are part of his broader campaign to reduce the US's role in the world. He has called for the US to "go it alone" and has been critical of the US's role in the world. Trump has also been critical of the US's role in the world, including its role in the war on terrorism and its role in the US's relationship with China.

Trump is also critical of the US's role in the world, including its role in the war on terrorism and its role in the US's relationship with China. He has called for the US to "go it alone" and has been critical of the US's role in the world. Trump has also been critical of the US's role in the world, including its role in the war on terrorism and its role in the US's relationship with China.

Trump's attacks on Europe are part of his broader campaign to reduce the US's role in the world. He has called for the US to "go it alone" and has been critical of the US's role in the world. Trump has also been critical of the US's role in the world, including its role in the war on terrorism and its role in the US's relationship with China.
both our government and corporate debt—now over $6 trillion of our $15.5 trillion in publicly-owned Treasuries.

For most nations, such colossal borrowings would be a dangerous move into a world of limitlessly high interest rates. For the government, the latter have been the case for the US. A worldwide glut of savings, from China, Japan, and other over-borrowed investors, has kept interest rates historically low. But even this does not quite explain why the US could keep borrowing without limit. Much of its debt has been refinanced at interest of less than 1%. The US government competes with the world's other central banks to place its debt.

For most nations, such colossal borrowings would be a dangerous move into a world of limitlessly high interest rates. For the government, the latter have been the case for the US. A worldwide glut of savings, from China, Japan, and other over-borrowed investors, has kept interest rates historically low. But even this does not quite explain why the US could keep borrowing without limit. Much of its debt has been refinanced at interest of less than 1%. The US government competes with the world's other central banks to place its debt.

Debt has not gone away. On the contrary, it has increased. In the US alone the sub-prime crisis cost the US Treasury $10 trillion in bail-out and thus the speculative bubble which burst in 2007-8. The world has not really recovered from that crisis and, despite the odd optimist amongst economists who insist that the crisis is over, the problems remain.

Debt has not gone away. On the contrary, it has increased. In the US alone the sub-prime crisis cost the US Treasury $10 trillion in bail-out and thus the speculative bubble which burst in 2007-8. The world has not really recovered from that crisis and, despite the odd optimist amongst economists who insist that the crisis is over, the problems remain.

Debt is not America First but America alone. US funds to the humanitarian agencies of the UN are thus about to be slashed, and the US will pull out of the UN Human Rights Commission (on the grounds that it is biased against US interests). America's closest collaborators are its most significant. If the state that largely created the current world order wants to tear it up because it no longer conforms to its interests, then we really are entering a new and more dangerous era. And Trump is only the symptom of the problem, not the underlying cause.

To explain this we have to go back to the beginning of the crisis we mentioned above. As we showed earlier, the floating dollar opened the way for financial speculation which also produced the speculative bubble which burst in 2007-8. The world has not really recovered from that crisis and, despite the odd optimist amongst economists who insist that the crisis is over, the problems remain.

The US is, for now, the world's most powerful country, with a market economy that is the envy of the world. The US has a particularly healthy one, with a high-tech sector which serves the growing domestic market more. It does have one central weakness in that it has to rely on imports for 95% of its oil. Its attempts to buy US technology have been blocked at every turn by the US Government and this, of course, threatens any lead it might have in information technology. China is urgently trying to address this issue but it does have one central weakness in that it has to rely on imports for 95% of its oil. Its attempts to buy US technology have been blocked at every turn by the US Government and this, of course, threatens any lead it might have in information technology. China is urgently trying to address this issue but...
so far with limited success.

It has been more successful in cashing in on Trump’s decision to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This has allowed it to win more influence in Asia. China is also supporting the European governments in their attempt to keep the Iran deal alive. As we write, new trade talks between the EU and China are ongoing. China is also offering loans to emerging markets like Argentina to offset the dramatic collapse of their currencies, and having to rely on the IMF for bailouts which come with austerity packages. All with the aim of “soft power” victories against US threats and bluster. The Chinese are even cutting down on the propaganda about 2049 (one hundred years after Mao’s victory over the Kuomintang) being the year when China takes over leadership of the world.

However all Chinese, or indeed US, calculations about the long game will count for nothing if there is yet another financial crash. The next crash will find the various states with fewer options. Instead of quantitative easing to disguise fictitious capital losses there will have to be real losses in terms of capital, investment and jobs. The consequences of this will upset all calculations that “trade wars are winnable” and plunge humanity into an enormous social crisis. Once again the question that has been posed so often in the last century will be posed once again “socialism or barbarism”. At the moment, given the relative quiet of the world working class, few are placing their bets on the former. Yet we see it as our task to fight within the working class for the only course which can save humanity. The only war we support is the class war to end this system of increasing brutality and misery.

Jock
21 July 2018

Notes
[5] This is our translation of the Italian original “Siria. L’attacco americano è arrivato puntuale come al solito appoggiato da Francia ed Inghilterra” from Prometeo 19. At the time of going to press it has not yet been made available on our website.
[8] We are currently preparing an analysis of the economic and social situation in Iran which will be published on our website. In addition to sanctions Iran also faces acute water shortages (drought affects 40% of the country) which are only getting worse year on year. There were riots in Khuzestan (in the West of Iran) over the poor quality of water in July. See https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/water-shortage-pollution-spark-fresh-protests-iran-abadan-180702072113204.html
[10] France recently sold Saudi Arabia $16 billions in arms whilst the UK sold it 48 Eurofighters for use against Yemen receiving in return trade deals worth $60 billion.
[11] The phrase was once attributed to President F D Roosevelt speaking about Somoza in Nicaragua but this is now believed to be apocryphal. However it neatly sums up Washington’s collusion or turning a blind eye to some of the most brutal regimes of that epoch.
[14] Quoted in “From leader to lone ranger” Financial Times 12/13 May 2018
H. Ticktin’s concept of decline and transition

Outline of Ticktin’s argument

Ticktin’s texts on capitalist decline and transition have been written over four decades and the theory was worked out before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is not unreasonable to expect some contradictions, and what follows is a general synopsis giving more weight to the recent texts. Throughout his writings, Ticktin sees present-day society as one in transition to socialism: a transition analogous to that from feudal to capitalist society. Within feudalism, money, payments started to displace the feudal system of production, and wages became a component of production. In the modern period, capitalist society has developed a surplus of commodities, whichTicktin argues that if World War Two capital became more socially productive then a post-capitalism system of production through these developments alone. An analysis of the different sources, they are a transitional phase, in which transition to socialism the creation of communist society becomes much easier.

Further theories, which have been influential in recent years, hold that capitalism is regaining its momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but this is not necessarily the case. The ongoing crisis of capitalism is leading to a post-capitalism system of production, and we could arrive at a transitional period in which transition to socialism is still possible. An analysis of the different sources, they are a transitional phase, in which transition to socialism the creation of communist society becomes much easier.
 Marxian Theory

Marxist theory

...socialism.
gradually undermined and this we must now consider.

**Law of value**

Value production is specific to social production relations of capitalism, consequently it is specific to a definite phase of history and is not a natural category. The law of value holds that under capitalist production relations labour takes the **FORM** of value. Labour, under capitalism production relations becomes the substance of value – value is materialised labour. The labour theory of value is the corollary of the law of value. Marx writes in *Capital*:

The magnitude of value expresses a relation of social production, it expresses the connection that necessarily exists between a certain article and the portion of the total labour time of society required to produce it.[13]

Hence the exchange value of commodities, according to the labour theory of value, is determined by the average socially necessary labour for their production which they contain.

Commodities, things in general, have value only because they represent human labour, not in so far as they are things in themselves, but in so far as they are incarnations of social labour.[14]

The consequence of this is that:

In the commodity-capitalist economy, production-work, relations among people necessarily acquire the form of the value of things and can appear only in this material form. Social labour can only be expressed in value.[15]

Thus under capitalism social labour can only be expressed as value. This fairly simple relationship has enormous consequences and lies at the root of a host of contradictions which infect all relationships within capitalist society. The social relation between workers’ labour appears not as a relation between the labourers but as a relation between the products their labour produces. Value appears as an attribute of things rather than a representation of social relations. This Marx calls the fetishism of commodities which is inevitable so long as value production persists. Marx’s critique of capitalism centres on a critique of value production which leads to the inverted nature of human relations in which relations between people take the form of relationships between things.

One of the primary contradictions of value production is that between the use-value of a product and its exchange value. Ticktin seizes on this as the expression of the law of value. He informs us that the law of value describes the **movement** of the poles of the contradiction between use and exchange value. [16] Defining the law of value in this way allows him to argue that the invading socialist forms, considered above, are in a dialectical relationship with value production and they represent a pole of contradiction, even if they are not fully socialist. But how precisely a movement of ‘poles of contradiction’ can be in decline is a mystery. However, what he appears to mean is that the quantitative relationship between value production and non-value production is changing in favour of non-value production.

Ticktin points to significant sectors of the economy which are no longer value producing, foremost among these is finance capital. Value, he tells us, has evolved into finance capital [17] and further finance capital, creates profits by the destruction of use values.[18] Other sectors of the economy such as healthcare, education and defence all operate outside the law of value. These, he claims, negate the law of value [19] and consequently the law is in decline.

Finance capital is a transient form which surplus value takes in capital’s production cycle and to claim it has become this form is a muddling of categories. Moreover, to claim finance capital produces profits by destruction of use values is simply abandoning Marxist economic analysis.

While it is, of course, true that finance capital does not produce value and is, as Ticktin tells us, parasitic on industrial capital, what finance capital does is appropriate and circulate debt based on value which is already in existence as well as expectation of the creation of future value: values generated by productive capital subject to the law of value. Healthcare, education and defence, and indeed all government spending, are funded by value produced in the productive economy under the law of value, taken by the government, via taxation, and redistributed to these sectors. – Or rather, they are increasingly indebted to finance capital. None of this negates the law of value which continues to operate in the productive sector. What is occurring is a decline in the rate of production of real value at the same time as a massive increase in the creation of fictitious finance capital – i.e. financial capital which does not represent real value. However, as Marx points out:

The sum of the profits in all spheres of production must equal the sum of the surplus values. [20]

Any departure from this indicates a system that is unhealthy. Creation of money...
and financial trickery lead to paper claims on existing surplus value which exceed the surplus produced and so eventually cannot be met. They also create speculative bubbles which inflate asset prices such as housing, commodities, equities etc. but ultimately burst dramatically as we saw in the 2008 financial crisis as real values tend to reassert themselves.

This is not to say the law of value no longer applies. What it does say is that capitalism’s crisis of profitability – of the production of real value – is being prolonged, but massively deepened by the resort to financial engineering and fictitious capital. What Ticktin sees as the gradual demise of the law of value is in fact the expression of a real crisis of accumulation.

A transitional period?

Ticktin builds his argument on the premise that we are now living in a period of transition from capitalism to socialism and the law of value is being negated by current developments in capitalism. If this is not the case, as argued above, the theory that we are living in a transitional period collapses. However since this is the main conclusion of Ticktin’s concept of capitalist decline it is worth considering it briefly.

Ticktin tells us:

*Any transitional period is marked by the existence of the old laws together with the new. There are therefore, both old and new social relations but also various intermediate and unviable forms. [21]*

Ticktin admits the law of value operates on a global level and socialism cannot exist in a single country and certainly not in a single sector of the economy. Yet his transition speaks of invading socialist or proto-socialist forms which are negating the law of value. For a transition to socialism to exist there must be forms of socialist production in a dialectical relationship with capitalist production as he himself admits in the quotation above. If we are in a period of transition to socialism the elements of socialist production must gradually displace the capitalist ones. It is therefore up to Ticktin to point to the formations of socialist production which are displacing the global capitalist relations. He points to nationalisations, the welfare state, planning and bureaucracy. None of these could possibly be described as socialist formations of production. On the contrary they are reforms within capitalism instituted with the aim of making the system more efficient. We can only conclude Ticktin cannot point to the new social formations of production which his argument insists exist, and indeed must exist, if we are in a transition to socialism.

**Conclusion**

Capitalism is in a period of decline. The root cause of this decline is the system’s inability to overcome the tendency for profit rates to fall with the increase in organic content of capital without devaluation of constant capital through generalised war. The system needs to destroy value it has created to survive! The measures which capital adopts to mitigate this problem, outside of war, are symptoms of this underlying problem they are not, as Ticktin thinks, causes. This is the case with the structures Ticktin points to, in particular, monopolies, planning and finance capital.

The contradictions of capital are sharpening and the more the system extends itself on a global plane the more global these contradictions become. But capitalism cannot, of itself, create an opposing social system of production, all it can do is restructure itself within the confines of capitalism itself. What it is inevitably forced to do is to organise itself on a global level which, as we have indicated above, entails linking and internationalising the means of production. This makes the contradiction between social means of production and the private class ownership of these means of production sharper and the system becomes more prone to crises. But all this does not mean, as Ticktin argues, that a transitional period has been initiated in which opposing social organisations, in dialectical opposition to capitalism, have arisen and are undermining capitalist social relations. Ticktin confuses centralisation and concentration of the means of production with socialisation of the relations of production. The relations of production are not, and indeed could not be, socialised under capitalism.

Capitalism must be overthrown before a transitional period can be initiated. There must be a total rupture with value production. In order for this to happen the working class must capture political power and set about consciously transforming social production relations. Ticktin’s conceptions seem like those other *aficionados* of a seamless transition to communism, who have long lost hope in the working class being the agent of revolution. For a Trotskyist it is entirely natural to see socialism being ushered in by a benevolent state over which the working class has “democratic control” but this sees the question in a very administrative way. Socialism is not just a more equal capitalism but an entirely new mode of production. This can only come about through the self-activity of the mass of the working class through its own organs and using its own principles (mandated delegation, rotation of delegates, immediate recall and so on). As the early months of the Russian Revolution showed, this was the only effective way
Notes

[2] P Mason’s book Post Capitalism is critiqued in Revolutionary Perspectives 7 “Post-capitalism via the Internet: Dream or Reality.”
[3] See “Autonomism – Cutting the Ground from Under Marxism” and “Autonomism – Many Flowers Little Fruit” in Revolutionary Perspectives 10 and 11.
[8] See “Towards a political economy of the USSR”
[10] See Critique 45 “Permanent crisis, decline and transition of capitalism”
[14] K Marx Economic Manuscript of 1861 p.336 (Quoted in P Hudson, Marx’s Alternative to Capitalism.)
[16] Critical assessment of the major Marxist theories of political economy p.271
[18] “Decline as a concept” p.158
[19] Critique 16 “The transitional epoch finance capital and Britain.” p.34

Two Articles from Kommunist (April 1918)

With the publication of these two articles we are completing our translation of the first issue of Kommunist, the journal of the “proletarian communists” or left communist faction of the Bolshevik Party in the Spring of 1918. We have already published articles by Radek, Bukharin and Ossinsky in our last three issues and all can be found on our website. Here we turn our attention to a final review by Bukharin, and an economic analysis of the state of the Russian Revolution in April 1918 by one of the least well-known of the Kommunist contributors.

Georgii Ippolitovich Oppokov (1888–1938) took the nom de guerre Afanasi Lomov (although in some sources he is referred to as Georgii Lomov). A member of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee and the Supreme Council of National Economy (Vesenkha), he also became Commissar for Justice in the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom). In the Central Committee he and Ossinsky condemned the idea of a separate peace with Germany as a “peasant petty bourgeois peace” as early as January 1918. Like other Left Communists he voted against accepting the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. In the debates he was the only Left Communist who openly declared that the Revolution could still survive without Lenin. When the Treaty was finally signed he, along with Bukharin, Bubnov and Uritsky, resigned all his government and party posts.

Lenin, in A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility, picked through the voting records of the leading Left Communists to demonstrate their inconsistency over the peace with Germany. The following passage highlights (in a rather tendentious way) Lomov’s role in the many votes that took place at this time.

On February 17, 1918, when the question was put: who is in favour of a revolutionary war? – Bukharin and Lomov “refused to vote on the question as put”. None voted in favour. That is a fact! On the question of whether to “refrain from resuming peace negotiations until the German attack becomes sufficiently (sic!) evident and its influence upon the German working-class movement becomes clear”, Bukharin, Lomov and Uritsky, of the present contributors to the “Left” paper, voted in favour.

On the question, “Should we conclude peace if a German offensive becomes a fact and a revolutionary upsurge fails to eventuate in Germany and Austria?” – Lomov, Bukharin and Uritsky abstained.

[From https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/05.htm]

Later, in the 1920s, Lomov became for a time a member of the Left Opposition and like most prominent Bolshevik leaders of 1917 was arrested in June 1937 during

to fight bureaucracy. It is the only way to ensure that any statist tasks that have to be carried out to defeat the capitalists and their hangers-on do not get converted into a permanent system. The idea that we are now in a transition period in which capitalist social relations are evolving into socialist ones is not only an illusion, it undermines what needs to be done to achieve communism.

CP
the Great Purges. He was sentenced to death and shot on 30 December 1938. He was posthumously rehabilitated after the death of Stalin in 1956.

His "Economic Notes" are of interest in two important aspects. The first is his prescient statement that the second peace of Brest-Litovsk is the boundary between the offensive period and that of the gradual retreat of the revolutionary wave.

This was a basic position of the Left Communists but stated here with extraordinary boldness (which seems typical of the author). Lomov was right to recognise that the "heroic period" or "offensive" of the Revolution ended in March-April 1918. For him and other Left Communists the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was not buying the revolution a "perdyshka" or breathing space, but was likely to put the young Soviet republic under the domination of German imperialism. In the latter point they turned out to be wrong, but there is no question that March 1918 saw a turning point in the revolution. It coincided with Brest-Litovsk but was not a consequence of it.

Until March 1918 the Bolsheviks had based all their plans on the self-activity of the working classes but by March 1918 the economic disaster which the soviet republic had inherited from the Provisional Government was becoming overwhelming. Lomov points to this later in his article when he writes,

"We have no intention of denying the dilapidation of the economy. We know and do not hide the fact that in our industrial South, of all the metallurgical plants, there are only the Petrovsky soviet factories that work, while others are stopped or in the process of doing so; we know that coal mining plants in Russia are in a catastrophic situation; we do not deny all the disorder in the railways, etc.

Whilst the Bolshevik right wing wanted to undermine worker initiative, the Left wanted to carry on with it, which is why Lomov is so contemptuous of all the attempts to increase production by resorting to capitalist methods. The adoption of one-man management, bringing back some of the old managers etc, did not spell the end of the revolution but – coupled with a brutal civil war which drained the proletariat – set in motion a chain of circumstances which led to the workers’ revolt of 1920-1.

The other point of interest is to note that this Left Communist document was a document of its time. Until the Russian Revolution few saw that the nationalisation of production was not a step towards socialism. Nationalisation is rather one of the most blatant forms of state capitalism which does not do away with the capital-wage labour relationship. This was a lesson the working class learned after 1918 as a result of that Russian experience but in 1918 it was still equated with a step towards socialism.
History

In the history of the proletarian and peasant revolution in Russia, the second peace of Brest-Litovsk is the boundary between the offensive period and that of the gradual retreat of the revolution after the conclusion of peace. Many people did not understand that the outlook of the Russian revolution. It affects the politics first outside and then inside, but a whole series of immediate facts in the field of economic policy also provide evidence of this turning point.

The characteristic features of the period after the Brest-Litovsk peace are, on the one hand, the gradual alienation of banks, often associated with the new Commissar for Finance, Comrade Gukovsky (1), who has never been a strong supporter of nationalisation, either of banks, or of production; on the other, a period of slowdown and even complete cessation of the nationalisation of the industry. [2] The re-opening of a number of trusts in Petrograd, currently being used for other purposes, the old plans to centralise operations, etc., have not been fulfilled. The creation of a bank for wheat, textiles, etc., at the head of which capitalist forces, all those powerful industrial interests other than trusts (e.g., building of trains and rolling stock, industry in the large railway trusts, the textile industry and metallurgy) according to the conditions of the Brest-Litovsk Peace, Soviet Russia retains the rich coal mines near Taganrog [3].

In the field of economic policy, the return to organisation projects multiplies by their own devices. The original "socialist" Wheat Bank of Kerensky, which is being reduced by the original "socialist" Wheat Bank Bank at all, it is interesting that the proposal for a Wheat Bank of Kerensky, by the way, it is said that the Soviet banks, branches go ahead quickly, we will hardly even need the Soviet Central Bank. And in this creation of bank branches either because the need grew, or because there is a lack of capital to be used in the large railway trusts, the textile industry and metallurgy.

According to the proposal for the textile bank, the founding capital will come from 300 million (rubles) assigned by the Government and 300 million in shares issued by the bank, these shares must be held mainly by members of the workers and employees union, cooperatives and other organisations and individuals. The problem of re-opening of all private banks in Petrograd, currently being used for other purposes if the truth were known, under the flag of the Soviet republic, now, according to reports which have not been confirmed, has been raised again. If we were previously thinking of forming a united and centralised People's Bank, now we give the proletariat wise and firm slogans: "Do not be deceived! 'Don't steal!', 'Be disciplined!', etc. In fact, some readers will accurately resemble the famous bourgeois maxims of the "be thrifty" type. But, it's a mistake. Taking on board the attitude of the capitalist employers is a turning point. Certainly, during the first period, nobody denied the need of these banks, as having the relation to economic policy and more accurately resembling the famous bourgeois maxims of "the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie. These banks for wheat, textiles, etc., which must be distributed between the bourgeoisie, in accordance with which it must be distributed between the workers, employees and peasants, in the same way as the project of the Statute already discussed at the Centrotextile [3] meetings, it is a feeble consolation for a communist leader. It is an accident that the now defunct newspaper Nashe Slovo [6] wrote 

Furthermore, there is the question of creating these forms of organisation in the field of economic policy, nationalisation projects multiply. It has been changed since the conclusion of peace. Now we give the proletarians wise and firm slogans: "Do not be deceived! 'Don't steal!', 'Be disciplined!', etc. In fact, some readers will accurately resemble the famous bourgeois maxims of the "be thrifty" type. But, it's a mistake. Taking on board the attitude of the capitalist employers is a turning point. Certainly, during the first period, nobody denied the need of these banks, as having the relation to economic policy and more accurately resembling the famous bourgeois maxims of "the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie. These banks for wheat, textiles, etc., which must be distributed between the bourgeoisie, in accordance with which it must be distributed between the workers, employees and peasants, in the same way as the project of the Statute already discussed at the Centrotextile [3] meetings, it is a feeble consolation for a communist leader. It is an accident that the now defunct newspaper Nashe Slovo [6] wrote 

Economic Notes

The organisation based on the activity of the Commissar for Finance, Comrade Gukovsky, approved this measure in principle. 

The authors of this project think in the large railway trusts, the textile industry and metallurgy.

According to the proposal for the textile bank, the founding capital will come from 300 million (rubles) assigned by the Government and 300 million in shares issued by the bank, these shares must be held mainly by members of the workers and employees union, cooperatives and other organisations and individuals. The problem of re-opening of all private banks in Petrograd, currently being used for other purposes if the truth were known, under the flag of the Soviet republic, now, according to reports which have not been confirmed, has been raised again. If we were previously thinking of forming a united and centralised People's Bank, now we give the proletariat wise and firm slogans: "Do not be deceived! 'Don't steal!', 'Be disciplined!', etc. In fact, some readers will accurately resemble the famous bourgeois maxims of the "be thrifty" type. But, it's a mistake. Taking on board the attitude of the capitalist employers is a turning point. Certainly, during the first period, nobody denied the need of these banks, as having the relation to economic policy and more accurately resembling the famous bourgeois maxims of "the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie. These banks for wheat, textiles, etc., which must be distributed between the bourgeoisie, in accordance with which it must be distributed between the workers, employees and peasants, in the same way as the project of the Statute already discussed at the Centrotextile [3] meetings, it is a feeble consolation for a communist leader. It is an accident that the now defunct newspaper Nashe Slovo [6] wrote 

Economic Notes
enthusiastically about this “new course” and called on the entire conscious bourgeois intelligentsia to follow the Bolsheviks hoping that bourgeois science and experience will fundamentally transform the very essence of Bolshevik policy.

We have no intention of denying the dilapidation of the economy. We know and do not hide the fact that of all the metallurgical plants in our industrial South, only the Petrovsky soviet factories work, while others are stopped or in the process of doing so; we know that coal mining plants in Russia are in a catastrophic situation; we do not deny all the disorder in the railways, etc. The question is to know where the exit from this impasse lies. Our point of view, our way, is the inexorable nationalisation of the banks, supported by a nationalisation of industry that must be just as inexorable.

The recruitment of technical staff and qualified employees must be managed by workers. In using their knowledge and experience, under no circumstances should the worker lose control and total mastery of production.

A.L.[Lomov]

Review:

Trutovsky, The Transitional Period

Vladimir Trutovsky, The Transitional Period (between Capitalism and Socialism) Petrograd, “Revolutsionnyi sotsializm” (from the Central Committee of the Left SR party), 1918

The subject announced in the title of Comrade Trutovsky’s pamphlet is very interesting. But, unfortunately, we are forced to conclude that it is hard to write so much amazing nonsense at once as Comrade Trutovsky has done. Instead of looking seriously at all the issues dealt with in his pamphlet he decided to only dabble lightly in Marxism. Obviously, nothing but confusion comes out of it.

Comrade Trutovsky should not be offended by the fact that his attacks on Marxism will receive from us a severe but necessary response: he asked for it. Let us follow the author in his reasoning.

On pages 8-9, he tries to “refute” Marxism by claiming that imperialism, by nature, has nothing to do with economics. Like a vulgar journalist, it’s the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, and a thousand other things, which he considers to be imperialisms. For him, the only necessary criterion is “the desire to dominate”. In fact, his considerations greatly resemble the reasoning of a simple man who would say that the hen, the most ordinary hen, is fundamentally imperialist, since it feeds on wheat while dominating and growing at the expense of the unfortunate grain of wheat. And to crown all, comrade Trutovsky refers to universal thinking, science and even “socialism which, in some ways, cuts across imperialism”, because he wants “to reunite humanity in one community”. In the opinion of the author, there is here only one difference, it is the absence of constraint. But this is where Comrade Trutovsky is mistaken: in reality, socialism aims to dominate the world by the socialist revolution, that is to say, by violence. According to Trutovsky’s conception, socialism is “only one of the forms” of imperialism! And this is what is called “making a critique of Marxism”!

On page 10, the “economic” goals of imperialism are defined as “the domination of raw materials” and “the sale of goods at high prices”. Not a word about its main feature: the export of capital. The very essence of imperialist politics is absent. It’s shameful to ignore it! After such “definitions” of imperialism, Comrade Trutovsky criticises Marx’s teaching on profit; and he makes such huge mistakes that one can wonder if our honourable critic has ever read Marx, or even the “exegesis” of Marx made by Bach [7] . . .

On page 10, he attributes to Marxists the following thesis: commodities are sold according to their value; capitalist profit and
Historically, most of the world's revolutionary socialism was expressed in backward, tiefly exploited countries, where, for the first time under capitalism, its most intractable grave diggers reveal themselves: the despised and starved peasant labours. To put it another way, capital is not only the product of the workers. This is the revolution, not the product of the workers. This is the working class. 1) The profit from the sale of the product is the result of the sale of the product, not just the work of the worker who produces it; this is why the demand of the workers for the entire product of their labour will kill the capitalist order. (Marx, Capital, Book III, p.307, I wrote about it in detail in my book "Capitalistic Profit and Surplus Value".)

And this Comrade Trutovsky's idea of consistency...

In this summary we could not confine ourselves to the author's analysis of the problems of the capitalist world economy. We have gladly quoted this fragment to show that the ignorance of this author knows no bounds. Marxists have something else besides the work of the worker who produces it: it is why the demand of the workers for the entire product of their labour will kill the capitalist order. (Marx, Capital, Book III, p.307, I wrote about it in detail in my book "Capitalistic Profit and Surplus Value".)

We have gladly quoted this fragment to show that the ignorance of this author knows no bounds. Marxists have something else besides the work of the worker who produces it: it is why the demand of the workers for the entire product of their labour will kill the capitalist order. (Marx, Capital, Book III, p.307, I wrote about it in detail in my book "Capitalistic Profit and Surplus Value".)

But either Comrade Trutovsky does not know this or he hides it from his readers. His whole critique is to take up old "arguments" against historical laws. And it is only in the second way that the author could make a real danger. From all that we have said we must not draw the conclusion that the developed capitalist countries cannot exploit the backward countries. This is the work of the worker who produces it; this is why the demand of the workers for the entire product of their labour will kill the capitalist order. (Marx, Capital, Book III, p.307, I wrote about it in detail in my book "Capitalistic Profit and Surplus Value".)

From all that we have said we must not draw the conclusion that the developed capitalist countries cannot exploit the backward countries. This is the work of the worker who produces it; this is why the demand of the workers for the entire product of their labour will kill the capitalist order. (Marx, Capital, Book III, p.307, I wrote about it in detail in my book "Capitalistic Profit and Surplus Value".)
Written by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, and released in 2015, *Inventing the Future* has been described as a 'manifesto for the end of capitalism' in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. It argues for the creation of a new field of study, which the authors call 'accelerationism', that seeks to preserve the gains of socialism while going further than its value system, governance structures, and mass pathologies will allow.

Upon release the book was praised by prominent leftist personalities, including Paul Mason, Mark Fisher, and Owen Jones. The authors were featured on the Novara Media podcasts, gave talks at universities and more recently spoke at a number of Labour Party events. In 2016 Srnicek went on to release another book, Platform: How Access epub Capitalism — the book at modern capitalist firms such as Google and Facebook, while Williams has a forthcoming book in the works on hegemony and the left. More importantly however, both got swept up in the movement around Jeremy Corbyn, and so have rejoined the ranks of the Labour left.

Back to the Future: Rebranding Social Democracy

The book's arguments have been influential in both the Labour Party and the broader left. Srnicek and Williams have become leading lights on the left, and their ideas have been adopted by a number of prominent figures, including Paul Mason, Mark Fisher, and Owen Jones. The authors have also been involved in the movement around Jeremy Corbyn, and so have rejoined the ranks of the Labour left. More importantly however, both got swept up in the movement around Jeremy Corbyn, and so have rejoined the ranks of the Labour left.

Notes

[1] Isidor Emmanuelovich Gukovsky (1871-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.


[3] "Central Committee for the Textile Industry". It was one of the special state institutions known as "glavki" which were based on a similar organisation of the Tsarist regime.

[4] Ayndy Vassilievich Lunacharsky (1875-1933), writer, literary critic, and militant from the Kadets, became a Bolshevik and was appointed People's Commissar for Education.

[5] Anatoly Vassilievich Lunacharsky (1875-1933), writer, literary critic, and militant from the Kadets, became a Bolshevik and was appointed People's Commissar for Education.


[7] Nikolai Bukharian Rachmankov (1837-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.

[8] Isidor Emmanuelovich Gukovsky (1871-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.


[10] Expeditionary forces can be very harmful to the literary health of the critics.

[11] Michael Bakunin (1814-1876). Bakunin was a leading figure in the early years of the international socialist movement, and was one of the founders of the First International. He was a prolific writer, and his ideas have been influential on the left ever since.


[13] *Inventing the Future* was written in 2015, and Lenin borrowed extensively from it in his writings on the October Revolution. In 1917, he carried on his career as a leading functionary as a diplomat representing Russia in Estonia. He died of pneumonia in March 1921.

[14] *Inventing the Future* was written in 2015, and Lenin borrowed extensively from it in his writings on the October Revolution. In 1917, he carried on his career as a leading functionary as a diplomat representing Russia in Estonia. He died of pneumonia in March 1921.


[16] The New Word

[17] Nikolai Bukharian Rachmankov (1837-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.

[18] Isidor Emmanuelovich Gukovsky (1871-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.


[20] "The New Word"

[21] Nikolai Bukharian Rachmankov (1837-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.

[22] "The New Word"

[23] Nikolai Bukharian Rachmankov (1837-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.


[25] "The New Word"

[26] Nikolai Bukharian Rachmankov (1837-1921), a son of a merchant, participated in a group of revolutionaries in his youth. He was arrested in 1903, and sent into exile in Siberia, where he was able to continue his studies. In 1910, he was able to return to Russia and take part in the revolution. He studied Capital when still at school, and agitated amongst students, which led to his expulsion from the University of Kiev. He became an active member of the revolutionary movement in Russia, taking part in the revolution of 1905.
The basic premise of accelerationist thinking is already contained within the writings of Marx, specifically in the segments cited above and the Grundrisse. Since the productive forces of capitalist society will come into conflict with the existing relations of productive forces and this conflict will lead to transition, this is already a fix for the old-school social democrats!

Chapter Two is a critique of folk politics on the left, and makes the case that only a movement that is not limited to a social democratic perspective can once again lead masses of people into electoral and indeed class politics. The Corbyn phenomenon provided exactly such an opportunity, to the point where even some supposed anarchists have now joined the Labour Party ranks. Williams never seems to really come to grips with the abolition of value, the state and money. It is implied that post-capitalism may mean communism, but it is never stated. The term post-capitalism is of course reminiscent of the title of Paul Mason’s book released the same year as Inventing the Future. The central thesis of the book was that we are at the start of a transition period to post-capitalism; a transformation in which post-capitalism coexists with capitalism, a process of symbiotic change. However, unlike the old-school social democrats, the Labour Party and its leaders, who have always aligned with social democracy rather than any “horizontalist” alternatives. The Labour Party currently has over half a million members, and as Srnicek admitted during the general election of 2017: “In the end, Labour has to be obvious – the myth of 45, the trade unionist, Trotskyist and Stalinist hopes for the return of a “real” social democratic party, whether that be the Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain, or failed projects like TUSC or Respect, are many. Great swathes of the British left have always aligned with social democracy rather than any “horizontalist” alternatives. Labour presents an opportunity for a “counter-hegemonic movement” which can “rebuild the left”. But who is “the left”? Where are the lines drawn? This is something that the authors never really define. What we are left with are the lines drawn by the authors in the book: a folk political current and a universalist current – both the left and the right have options to choose from, and the authors assume that these options are equal and opposite. The left is an even more ambiguous term. Inventing the Future posts an abstract left, anti-capitalism, against a category – both the left and the right have options to choose from. In other words, a complete break with capitalist production relations, before it could play out.
operated in a universalist rather than folk political manner. After the Second
dominating ideology, “hegemonic”, because it had an eye to the future and
was absent from the equation. It is a story of how neo-liberalism becomes a world-
capitalist crisis, the falling rate of profit, imperialist war, etc. are for the most part
Srnicek and Williams present recent history as a kind of battle of ideas, where
of the left”.

defensive struggle, but the solution they come up with instead is a “Mont Pelerin
summerhouse” and not content.

landlords. But the working class needs its own organs to centralise its struggles
build confidence, provide experience, and win concessions from employers and
class struggle alone will not end capitalism. Strikes, occupations and protests can
sufficient on its own. As the communist left has always argued, spontaneous
demand the future?

modernity and freedom from the neo-liberal right, so that it can be used again for
popular mobilisation. Since the working class movements of the past failed, they
claim we have to learn from what worked neo-liberalism. They end the chapter
beyond the “people power of bodies in the street, we require funding, whether
from governments, institutions, think tanks, unions, or individual benefactors.

We consider this a “Mont Pelerin of the left” – an idea not at odds with their Accelerate
Manifesto, where already they suggested that

Demand the future?

Inventing the Future

Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, co-authors of Inventing the Future (2015) argue
that rapid automation should be an explicit project to move to a lower work,
higher productivity economy, and argue for basic income and reduced working time. Alternative Models of Ownership, report to Labour Party
shadow cabinet (2017).
Behind all the accelerationist and futurist rhetoric lies what amounts to a number of fairly mundane transitional demands: universal basic income (UBI), automation and the reduction of the working week. Automation is marching forward regardless of the number of jobs or producing killer drones), while basic income has already been initiated in multiple countries, from Namibia to Finland. All of this without the need for any accelerationist lift to "demand" it. What that left can do now, according to the authors, is accelerate reforms which will not break us out of capitalism. For them, these processes and reforms are non-reformist reforms which will not break us out of capitalism, but they do promise to break us out of neoliberalism, to establish an equilibrium of political, economic and social forces. The rise of neo-liberalism took 40 years or more; the authors argue that the left will need to re-orient itself in a number of ways in order to "center itself" in the political, economic and social space. The rise of neo-liberalism in the UK, for example, had the authors argue, been a "post-68 left", and an outline of how to build a desirable post-capitalist future should be included in a revamped popular front. Mason and Owen Jones, and indeed the authors themselves, first steps towards this have been made. That is not to say that their vision is not a goal, but is simply the result of a failed Gramscian framework. The other is a critique of working class self-activity, and a call for a new form of politics which can gradually form a "counter-hegemonic" or "radical" by the mainstream press, it does give Corbyn's shadow cabinet a mixture of Gramscian terminology and accelerationist imagery does have some appeal among the university educated left, and combined with the willingness of figures such as McDonnell to engage with economic ideas deemed "cutting-edge" or radical, it makes the mainstream press take it seriously. It does not help if someone in the upper echelons of the party actually take it seriously. So is post-capitalism just a programme for post-neoliberal capitalist restoration? If the political trajectory of Srnicek, Williams, Mason, and the Corbynist Labour manifesto is anything to go by, then yes. The aim here is to get capitalism with a USP - to get the USP out of the way of the USP. The aim here is to get rid of USP, establishment the ground for a post-capitalist future. The final dismantling of the class system is simply relegated to a distant future. Folk politics may be the USP's edge in the future, but the mass movement can't just be a programme for post-neoliberal capitalist restoration. The central thesis of chapters four onward is what a left-wing project that is universal and able to present an attractive vision of the future might look like. All the while, the authors remind us that a folk politics, pre-occupied with defending localities, is not capable of doing this. But what is it that they actually propose?

The central thesis of chapters four onward is what a left-wing project that is universal and able to present an attractive vision of the future might look like. All the while, the authors remind us that a folk politics, pre-occupied with defending localities, is not capable of doing this. But what is it that they actually propose?

Behind all the accelerationist and futurist rhetoric lies what amounts to a number of fairly mundane transitional demands: universal basic income (UBI), automation and the reduction of the working week. Automation is marching forward regardless of the number of jobs or producing killer drones), while basic income has already been initiated in multiple countries, from Namibia to Finland. All of this without the need for any accelerationist lift to "demand" it. What that left can do now, according to the authors, is accelerate reforms which will not break us out of capitalism. For them, these processes and reforms are non-reformist reforms which will not break us out of capitalism, but they do promise to break us out of neoliberalism, to establish an equilibrium of political, economic and social forces. The rise of neo-liberalism took 40 years or more; the authors argue that the left will need to re-orient itself in a number of ways in order to "center itself" in the political, economic and social space. The rise of neo-liberalism in the UK, for example, had the authors argue, been a "post-68 left", and an outline of how to build a desirable post-capitalist future should be included in a revamped popular front. Mason and Owen Jones, and indeed the authors themselves, first steps towards this have been made. That is not to say that their vision is not a goal, but is simply the result of a failed Gramscian framework. The other is a critique of working class self-activity, and a call for a new form of politics which can gradually form a "counter-hegemonic" or "radical" by the mainstream press, it does give Corbyn's shadow cabinet a mixture of Gramscian terminology and accelerationist imagery does have some appeal among the university educated left, and combined with the willingness of figures such as McDonnell to engage with economic ideas deemed "cutting-edge" or radical, it makes the mainstream press take it seriously. So is post-capitalism just a programme for post-neoliberal capitalist restoration? If the political trajectory of Srnicek, Williams, Mason, and the Corbynist Labour manifesto is anything to go by, then yes. The aim here is to get capitalism with a USP - to get the USP out of the way of the USP. The aim here is to get rid of USP, establishment the ground for a post-capitalist future. The final dismantling of the class system is simply relegated to a distant future. Folk politics may be
“insufficient”, but think tanks and leftist advisors to bourgeois states are no solution either. The perspectives of the communist left remain with the working class, and not “the left” (of capital).

Dyjbas
February 2018

Notes

[8] ibid., p.55
[9] #ACCELERATE MANIFESTO
[10] See the introduction to our Durham meeting on universal basic income (UBI) to expand on this theme. It is at http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-04-14/universal-basic-income
of power of the revolution, will be the workers’ councils, (or soviets) –
mass meetings in which delegates will be entrusted with specific mandates
and will be recallable at any time. But these potentially revolutionary
organisations will be undermined by capitalist forces from within if they
do not have a clear programme aimed at the abolition of exploitation and,
therefore, the elimination of classes, for a society of “freely associated
producers” who work together to directly meet human needs.

The programme is not the creation of any single theorist or one
organisation. It is the outcome of the key lessons learned from past
and present struggles and as such defines the practical way forward
for the working class as a whole. Without a clear political compass the
working class movement will be prey to all kinds of capitalist tricks and
illusions. Thus political clarification and reorganisation today are vital for
a revolutionary party to come into being which is in a position to win over
the working class to the revolutionary programme. This is not a party
of government that would replace the class and its class-wide organs of
power, but a party of agitation and political guidance on the basis of that
programme.

We are for the party, but we are not that party or its only embryo. Our task
is to participate in its construction, trying to link immediate demands to the
historical programme; communism.

Join us! Support the Internationalist Communist Tendency

The Internationalist Communist Tendency

Britain
The Communist Workers’ Organisation which produces Revolutionary Perspectives (a
six monthly magazine) and Aurora (an agitational paper)
BM CWO, London WC1N 3XX

Italy
Il Partito Comunista Internazionalista
which produces Battaglia Comunista (a monthly paper) and Prometeo (a quarterly
theoretical journal)
CP 1753, 20101, Milano, Italy

USA
IWG, P.O. Box 14485, Madison, WI 53708

Germany
Gruppe Internationaler Socialistinnen
which produces Socialismus oder Barbarei (to appear quarterly)
GIS, c/o Rotes Antiquariat, Rungestrasse 20, 10179 Berlin, Germany

France
Bilan&Perspectives
produces a quarterly journal of the same name
ABC-LIV, 118-130 Av. J. Jaures, 75171 Paris Cedex 19
Our Pamphlets

The Platform of the Internationalist Communist Tendency  70p
Revised English version (including postage in UK)

For Communism  £4
An Introduction to the Politics of the CWO

Class Consciousness and Revolutionary Organisation  £3
“Consciousness” is one of the most important issues for the working class and for revolutionaries. Our approach is unashamedly historical and attempts to draw out the real experience of the working class in its struggles of the last two centuries.

Trotsky, Trotskyism, Trotskyists  £3
How Trotsky, who made an enormous contribution to revolutionary practice, ended up giving his name to a movement which returned to the counter-revolutionary errors of Social Democracy.

Stalin and Stalinism  £1
The lie that the former USSR was “really existing socialism” remains a potent weapon against the working class. Here we examine the origins of the regime that came out of the defeat of the October Revolution as well as the motivations of Stalinism.

Holocaust and Hiroshima  50p
Examines how the nature of imperialist warfare comes to inflict mass murder on the world through an examination of these seminal events.

Capitalism and the Environment (by Mauro Stefanini)  £1
Translated from Prometeo these show that our late comrade was ahead of his time in analysing the unsustainability of capitalist production.

Spain 1934-39: From Working Class Struggle to Imperialist War  £3
Reprint of key CWO articles long out of print and translations of contemporary documents from the Italian Left in exile. New introduction.

Platform of the Committee of Intesa 1925  £3
The start of the Italian Left’s fight against Stalinism as Fascism increased its grip.

South Africa’s New Turmoil  £2
Analysis of class relations in the period after the fall of apartheid thrown into relief by the strike wave which followed the Marikana massacres.