

A Free Retriever's Digest

An interested Selection of Articles & News Feeds

Try-out Issue #3

June 15, 2017

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The Support for Anti-fascism by a Group laying claim to Council Communism

From the Editor

Friday, June 16, 2017

L.S.

With the third try-out issue of this Digest, this project takes a somewhat more concrete shape.

Following a large selection of publications over the past month, it presents **an invitation to a debate** on the lessons of the October revolution 1917: *Does Marxism lead to State Terror against the Working Class?* and a related contribution from the historical German-dutch communist left on the **topic** *Marx and the Question of the State*.

Two new pamphlets from very different groups in the German language area: one from the 'Group of International Socialists' (G.I.S.) and one from the group 'Social Liberation' (Soziale Befreiung) respectively, are presented in the **Express** section. The first deals with the lessons from the revolutionary wave of 1917 - 1923, the second with the class struggles in Germany in the post-war period from 1945 to the explosion of the East bloc in 1989.

Two texts adopted in the **Quoted** section: the latest *Aurora* broadsheet of the I.C.T. and a position paper from a *proletarian group in Venezuela* - albeit treating different subjects - both highlight the actuality of deciding between proletarian internationalism or nationalism, and notably the latter's 'left' varieties.

Finally, a last-minute contribution has been included on the strange appearance of a group who claims adherence to council communism, yet in practice calls for an anti-fascist popular front.

As I hope, this issue provides both useful and interesting reading.

The *Free Retriever* hopes to be back with a new release by mid-August.

Looking forward to receiving your appreciations and contributions;

Internationalist greetings,

Henry Cinnamon

A Free Retriever's Digest aims at presenting publications that are relevant for discussions within the internationalist milieu in general, and among the groups and circles who claim adherence to the international communist left(s) in particular. It intends to provide comments and offering a space for discussion as well.

Readers are invited to send in *notifications* of publications by e-mail, *abstracts and reviews* of relevant books, articles or texts, and *presentations* at discussion meetings. Contributions should be written in English and may not exceed 2000 words. Included bibliographical references and internet links should be exact.

Articles and contributions express the views of their authors. Publication is at the discretion of the editor. They may be freely adopted if correctly quoted with source reference. A notification thereof is highly appreciated.

The editor's e-mail address: afreeretriever@gmail.com.

Selected Articles & News Feeds

May 15 – June 11, 2017 (week no.'s 20 – 23)

May 2017, week no. 20 - 22 (15/05 - 31/05)

1 Title: **ROJAVA: L'IMPOSTURE D'UNE RÉVOLUTION SOCIALE INEXISTANTE QUI MASQUE LE NATIONALISME KURDE SOLUBLE DANS LE RÉGIME ASSASSIN D'ASSAD**
 Language: French
 Published on: May 15, 2017
 Author(s): Mouvement Communiste/Kolektivně proti Kapitálu
 Web link: <http://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Letters/LTMC1744%20FRvF.pdf>
 Subject: War in Syria-Iraq; Imperialist conflicts and alliances; the 'Kurdish question'
 Categories: Analysis; Letter No. 44, May 2017, 12 pp.
 Length (words): 8,105
 Remarks:

2 Title: **Revolution und Gegenrevolution**
 Language: German
 Published on: May 17, 2017
 Author(s): Detlef Hartmann
 Web link: <https://kosmoprolet.org/de/revolution-und-gegenrevolution>
 Subject: October Revolution, Russia 1917, the 'Agrarian question'
 Categories: Article, Introduction to a forthcoming work by the author, The '[Materialien für einen neuen Antiimperialismus](#)' project.
 Length (words): 3,054
 Remarks: Related to '[Beyond the Agrarian Question](#)' by P. Jonas. Deserves translation

3 Title: **"¿Comunismo de consejos o consejismo?. El período de transición"**
 Language: Spanish
 Published on: May 17, 2017
 Author(s): Inter-rev Forum
 Web link: <http://inter-rev.foroactivo.com/f7-posicionamientos-criticas-revolucionarias-debates>
 Subject: Book Review by F. Corvo of Ph. Bourrinet: "The Dutch and German Communist Left (1900-68)" - Council communism or 'councilism'? (02/23/17)
 Categories: German-Dutch Communist Left; Book review; Economics of the period of transition;
 Length (words): 6,885
 Remarks: Translation

4 Title: **La critique marxiste de l'aliénation (1)**
 Language: French
 Published on: May 18, 2017
 Author(s): Robin Good-Fellow (RGF)
 Web link: <https://defensedumarxisme.wordpress.com/2017/05/18/la-critique-marxiste-de-lalienation-1/>
 Subject: Alienation; its critique by Marx and by 'Marxists'; Actuality of Marx
 Categories: First part of an article series.
 Length (words): 687
 Remarks: A reader is freely available for download (29 pp. A4)

5	Title:	Que caiam as reformas
	Language:	Portuguese
	Published on:	May 18, 2017
	Author(s):	Passa Palavra
	Web link:	http://passapalavra.info/2017/05/111812
	Subject:	Brazil; class struggle or anti-corruption movement?
	Categories:	Communiqué
	Length (words):	1,401
	Remarks:	Translation needed.
6	Title:	Neue Broschüre: Klassenkämpfe in der BRD 1. Teil: 1945-1989
	Language:	German
	Published on:	May 20, 2017
	Author(s):	Nelke/Gruppe Soziale Befreiung
	Web link:	http://swiderstand.blogspot.de/2017/05/20/neue-broschuere-klassenkaempfe-in-der-brd-1-teil-1945-1989/
	Subject:	Class struggles in West-Germany (part 1); 1945 - 1989
	Categories:	Pamphlet Announcement; TOC and a Proofreading paragraph.
	Length (words):	5,361
	Remarks:	Proofreading: 'The wildcat strike wave of 1973'. Presentation on Page 9
7	Title:	Oktoberrevolutie 1917: leidt Marxisme tot staatsterreur over de arbeidersklasse?
	Language:	Dutch
	Published on:	May 23, 2017
	Author(s):	Fredo Corvo/Arbeidersstemmen
	Web link:	https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2017/05/23/oktoberrevolutie-1917-leidt-marxisme-tot-staatsterreur-over-de-arbeidersklasse/
	Subject:	Marx, Marxisms and the State
	Categories:	Blog article; An invitation to a debate
	Length (words):	793
	Remarks:	Translation in 'An Invitation to a Debate' on Page 8
8	Title:	Manchester Arena Atrocity: An Initial Response
	Language:	English
	Published on:	May 23, 2017
	Author(s):	CWD/Revolutionary Perspectives
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-05-23/manchester-arena-atrocity-an-initial-response
	Subject:	UK: Manchester Arena carnage; Terrorism vs. Anti-terrorism
	Categories:	Communiqué
	Length (words):	1,072
	Remarks:	
9	Title:	Bloeden wij voor luie Grieken die op hun 50-ste met pensioen gaan?
	Language:	Dutch
	Published on:	May 24, 2017
	Author(s):	Fredo Corvo
	Web link:	https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2017/05/24/bloeden-wij-voor-luie-grieken-die-op-hun-50ste-met-pensioen-gaan/
	Subject:	EU; Greece; Attacks on the proletariat and the social situation in Greece; refutation of the nationalist "spoiled Greeks" campaign
	Categories:	Blog article;
	Length (words):	4,322
	Remarks:	Integrates contributions by TPTG , dNdf , MHI

10 Title: **Manchester: un massacre cyniquement utilisé pour renforcer l'«union sa-
crée» entre prolétariat et bourgeoisie**

Language: French

Published on: May 25, 2017

Author(s): PCInt/Le Prolétaire

Web link: <http://www.pcint.org/>

Subject: UK: Manchester Arena carnage; Terrorism vs. Anti-terrorism

Categories: Communiqué

Length (words): 2,255

Remarks:

11 Title: **Brazilië: arbeiders klem tussen neo-liberale aanvallen door corrupte rege-
ring en machtsstrijd burgerlijke politiek**

Language: Dutch

Published on: May 26, 2017

Author(s): Fredo Corvo

Web link: <https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2017/05/26/brazilie-arbeiders-klem-tussen-neo-liberale-aanvallen-door-corrupte-regering-en-machtsstrijd-burgerlijke-politiek/>

Subject: Brazil; class struggle or anti-corruption movement?

Categories: Blog article

Length (words): 2,063

Remarks: Apropos the communiqué of Passa Palavra of May 18. English translation needed.

12 Title: **Débat: L'actualité de Marx (parts 1&2)**

Language: French

Published on: May 26, 2017

Author(s): Claudio Katz, translated by Michel Husson for „A l'encontre“

Web link: <http://alencontre.org/laune/debat-lactualite-de-marx-i.html>

Subject: Economic theory of Marx; Actuality of Marx

Categories:

Length (words): 8,707

Remarks:

13 Title: **Neue Broschüre: 1921: Beginn der Konterrevolution**

Language: German

Published on: May 27, 2017

Author(s): GIS (editor)/ICT

Web link: <http://gis.blogspot.de/2017/05/27/440/>

Subject: The Kronstadt uprising in 1921

Categories: Pamphlet Announcement; Article collection

Length (words): 532

Remarks: Presentation and TOC in the 'Express' section on page 9

14 Title: **Nation or Class?**

Language: English

Published on: May 29, 2017

Author(s): ICT/Aurora 41

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-05-29/nation-or-class>

Subject: A choice for the proletariat faced with the historical situation

Categories: Broadsheet statement

Length (words): 1,295

Remarks: This statement can be read in the 'Quoted' section on page 14

15 Title: **Manchester Bombing: Terrorism shows the putrefaction of capitalism**
 Language: English
 Published on: May 31, 2017
 Author(s): MX, 29 May 2017 / ICC Online
 Web link: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201705/14325/manchester-bombing-terrorism-shows-putrefaction-capitalism>
 Subject: UK: Manchester Arena carnage; Terrorism vs. Anti-terrorism
 Categories: Communiqué
 Length (words): 1,832
 Remarks:

June 2017, week no's 22 - 23 (01/06 - 11/06)

16 Title: **Dutch Treat: The General Election of March 2017 and the Populist Vote**
 Language: English
 Published on: June 1, 2017
 Author(s): Nick Vos / Brooklyn Rail Field Notes
 Web link: <http://brooklynrail.org/2017/06/field-notes/Dutch-Treat-The-General-Election-of-March-2017-and-the-Populist-Vote>
 Subject: The March 2017 National Elections in the Netherlands
 Categories: Analysis: Populism; Electoralism; The Netherlands; Political divisions and campaigns
 Length (words): 2,426

17 Title: **Notes on a bad photo of a sick society, or, What does democracy looks like?**
 Language: English
 Published on: June 1, 2017
 Author(s): Charles Reeve, May 15, 2017 / Brooklyn Rail Field Notes
 Web link: <http://brooklynrail.org/2017/06/field-notes/Notes-on-a-bad-photo-of-a-sick-society-or-What-does-democracy-looks-like>
 Subject: The May 2017 Presidential elections in France
 Categories: Analysis: Populism; Electoralism; 'France Insoumise' vs. 'Front National' - Collapse of the old parties; 'Macron' en marche; Abstentions and J.-L. Melenchon
 Length (words): 2,854

18 Title: **La répression anti-ouvrière et anti-populaire...en marche!**
 Language: French
 Published on: June 5, 2017
 Author(s): Robert Paris/La Voix des Travailleurs
 Web link: <http://www.matierevolution.org/spip.php?article5559>
 Subject: On an international agenda of repression against the working class
 Categories: Editorial of La Voix des Travailleurs
 Length (words): 2,204

19 Title: **Venezuela: Capitalisme et Lutte de classes**
 Language: French
 Published on: June 6, 2017
 Author(s): Tridni Valka (Class War) / Proletarios Internacionalistas
 Web link: <http://www.matierevolution.org/spip.php?article5566>
 Subject: South-America, Venezuela; Chavism, State crisis and bourgeois factional struggles; Attacks and responses; the role of the left and social-democracy
 Categories: Communiqué, Analysis, class frontiers
 Length (words): 6,868
 Remarks: Includes the communiqué listed hereafter. Not on the 'Tridni Valka' web site

20 Title: **POUVOIR POPULAIRE ET SOCIALISME AU XXI. SIÈCLE - LES HABITS MODERNES DE LA SOCIAL-DÉMOCRATIE**

Language: French

Published on: June 6, 2017

Author(s): Proletarios Internacionalistas

Web link: <http://www.matierevolution.org/spip.php?article5566>

Subject: South-America, Venezuela; Chavism, State crisis and bourgeois factional struggles; Attacks and responses; the role of the left and social-democracy

Categories: Communiqué, Analysis, Class frontiers, Proletarian internationalism

Length (words): 1,458

Remarks: An English translation can be read in the "Quoted" section, on page 16

21 Title: **Venezuela: The dead-end of the "Bolivarian Road to Socialism"**

Language: English

Published on: June 8, 2017

Author(s): CW0 / Battaglia Comunista (06/02/2017)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-06-08/venezuela-the-dead-end-of-the-bolivarian-road-to-socialism>

Subject: South-America, Venezuela, Chavism, Government crisis, Attacks and responses

Categories: Communiqué, Analysis, class frontiers

Length (words): 2,803

Remarks: Includes a section of an article on the French web site "A l'encontre": [Venezuela. Faim et «progressisme»](#)

22 Title: **Presidential election in France: it's always the bourgeoisie that wins elections**

Language: English

Published on: June 10, 2017

Author(s): Philippe / ICC (05/19/2017)

Web link: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201706/14329/presidential-election-france-it-s-always-bourgeoisie-wins-elections>

Subject: The May 2017 Presidential elections in France

Categories: Communiqué

Length (words): 2,309

Remarks: Translation from French

23 Title: **Hard times bring increased illusions in Labour Party**

Language: English

Published on: June 12, 2017

Author(s): Car / ICC (06/11/2017)

Web link: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201706/14333/hard-times-bring-increased-illusions-labour-party>

Subject: UK; The early national elections of June 2017; Electoralism

Categories: Communiqué

Length (words): 1,091

Remarks:

An Invitation to a Debate

October Revolution 1917: Does Marxism lead to State Terror against the Working Class?

Title:	Oktoberrevolutie 1917: leidt Marxisme tot staatsterreur over de arbeidersklasse?
Language:	Dutch
Published on:	May 23, 2017
Author(s):	Fredo Corvo
Web link:	https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2017/05/23/oktoberrevolutie-1917-leidt-marxisme-tot-staatsterreur-over-de-arbeidersklasse/
Subject:	The 'Russian' experience: Marx and Engels versus Lenin's 'State and Revolution'
Categories:	Blog article; An invitation to a debate

This year the Russian Revolution of 1917 is 'memorized' in articles and documentaries. With the February Revolution the workers and soldiers wanted to put an end to Russia's participation in World War I. But they only succeeded in putting an end to Tsarism. Because the Provisional Government continued participation in the World War, the workers' councils seized political power in the October revolution and the Soviet Union came into existence.

Several generations of workers all over the world have engraved in their memory that the Soviet Union was the result of a successful workers' insurrection. Meanwhile it is broadly acknowledged among workers that the state in the Soviet Union exercised a merciless terror against the population, the workers included. This insight is being used by all bourgeois currents to throw discredit on Marxism as a **state ideology** (or to cheer it, like the Stalinists and Maoists do) that, in practice, inevitably leads to ever stronger state terrorism, as was shown by the Soviet Union.

It is certainly correct to say that the Russian Communist Party, Lenin in the first place, laid claim to Marx and Engels. But what actually was the position of **Marx and Engels about the State**? Has the development of the Soviet Union shown that, after all, anarchists like Bakunin were right in claiming that Marx adhered to an authoritarian conception of the State? We cannot go into details on this question in this place, but refer to the article "*Karl Marx and the State*" ⁽¹⁾ by David Adam (MHI, 2010). In it, Adam shows that, from his early writings to

the struggle with Bakunin at the end of his life, Marx has always rejected the state as a means for the liberation of the working class.

But what about Lenin? The German revolutionary Jan Appel already demonstrated in 1927, in a largely unknown text, that Lenin deviates from the positions of Marx and Engels in his "*State and Revolution*", ⁽²⁾ in which he adopts the reformist idea that nationalization: **the transfer of enterprise ownership into the hands of the state**, means 'socialization'. In this way, Appel argues, the state cannot 'with away', as Marx and Engels aimed at but, on the contrary, has to "*grow to become the biggest instrument for oppression society has ever seen.*" Jan Appel subsequently sketches how, after breaking down the bourgeois state, **all power can remain in the hands of the workers' councils** in economic respect as well. We refer the interested reader to Jan Appel/the G.I.C.: "*Marxism and State Communism. The Withering Away of the State*". ⁽³⁾ (Translation: H.C.)

1 <http://www.marxisthumanistinitiative.org/alternatives-to-capital/karl-marx-the-state.html>

2 https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/state_rev/index.htm

3 <http://www.aaap.be/Pages/Transition-en-Marxism-And-State-Communism-1932.html>

Editor's Note: A summary of Appel's preliminary article from 1927 can be found on page 11.

Express: New Pamphlets

G.I.S. (Editor)	1921: Beginn der Konterrevolution
	GIS (editor)/ICT , Spring 2017 (German)
	Pamphlet, 50 pp.; €5,-. Orders via de@leftcom.org (Payment in advance, incl. Postal charges)
Soziale Befreiung	Klassenkämpfe in der BRD 1. Teil: 1945-1989
	Nelke, Gruppe Soziale Befreiung , Spring 2017 (German)
	Proofreading: 'The wildcat strike wave of 1973'
	Pamphlet, 120 pp. A5; €5,- (incl. Postal charges). Orders via booklooker.de

G.I.S.: 1921 – The Start of the Counter-revolution

"Today we are the witnesses of a tragedy of a social revolution being contained within national frontiers, as a result of the passivity of the peoples of Europe faced with intelligent and well-armed reactionary forces. It is thus stifled and reduced to playing for time with the enemy within and without. We have seen many mistakes made, many errors revealed and from the libertarian point of view many precious truths have been confirmed."

This was written by Victor Serge in his essay "The Anarchists and the Experiences of the Russian Revolution" in March 1921, shortly before the revolt in Kronstadt, which once again brought to light the whole drama of developments in Russia. How could it happen that a social revolution, which inspired the struggles of the international proletariat worldwide, became isolated and ultimately ended in party dictatorship and state capitalism? Our pamphlet focuses on this and other questions. It analyzes the development of counterrevolution in the international context, presents the formation and political positions of the left-communist opposition groups within and outside the Bolshevik party, and discusses the common scientific interpretations of the events in Russia. (G.I.S.)

Table of Contents

- 1921: Beginning of the Counterrevolution
- The Bolshevik Left and Workers' Power
- Learning from the German Revolution 1918/1919

- The First Year of Soviet Power
- Learning from the Revolutionary Experience in Russia

Nelke: Class Struggles in the B.R.D. (1945 – 1989) Presentation of Volume I.

In this first volume we describe the conflicts between bourgeoisie and proletariat in the years from 1945 to 1989. The first part describes how the West-German bourgeoisie succeeded, with the help of the occupying forces - including the state capitalist Soviet Union - and the leading organizations of the institutionalized workers' movement (SPD, "K"PD and DGB) to restore private capitalism. The harsh working and living conditions of the proletariat after the Second World War are analyzed as well. These led to harsh class confrontations, the description of which ends this part.

The second part describes the class struggles during the accelerated growth of Capital, following a fundamental analysis of the period of Federal Germany's post-war boom and the Cold War between 1950 and 1973. We make it clear that West German national capital has grown to the expense of the bones, nerves and emotions of the proletariat, and that there is not the slightest reason to look for a nostalgically transfigured retrospective on these years. Nevertheless they have also been characterized by a strong rise of class struggle, in particular the years from 1969 to 1973, the so-called "proletarian 1968". This is described and analyzed in this part, with special reference to the wild cat strikes that expressed proletarian class combative self organization without and against the trade union bu-

reaucracy. But, as our exposition shows as well, in the class confrontations that were officially led by the trade unions' apparatuses, the bonzes were sometimes pretty much put under pressure by the combative basis. The "political" strikes and the apprentices' movement are investigated as well.

But in Germany, like elsewhere, a creeping structural crisis of profit production developed already in the course of the capitalist post-war boom, through the increased cost of the means of production due to technological progress, which was only exacerbated by the proletarian class struggle. This structural crisis of profit production became acute in the world wide economic crisis of 1974/75. It brought a chronic mass unemployment which hindered the proletarian class struggle also in Germany. This is described in the third part of our pamphlet.

In the second volume of "class struggles in the B.R.D. we will describe the confrontations between Capital and wage labor from 1990 to 2017.

(Soziale Befreiung)

Venezuela: Popular Power and Socialism in the 21st Century – The Modern Clothes of Social Democracy. (→ Continued from Page 17)

The criticisms of these tendencies are as old as the confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution. Even though it presents itself as a novelty of the 21st Century, it is nothing but the old reformism with a new face that is defended in the name of "revolution", while denying its necessity. But reform is always and in every case the weapon of the enemies, of the exploiters and oppressors against the human needs. Revolution, the imposition and generalization of these needs, cannot realize itself by reforming this society based on exploitation, sacrifice, brutal negation of life to the profit of the valorization of Capital, but only and exclusively by its violent destruction.

The reforms and constructions that the popular power proposes are neither incomplete nor stopped halfway, they go in a quite different direction! They are part of the politics of

the bourgeoisie to channel and negate the revolutionary force of the proletariat and to transform it into a productive force of Capital.

Any defense of the national economy, whether it paints itself in socialist colors or not, is the defense of our exploitation.

Against the alternatives of bourgeois management, let us oppose the organization and the centralization of proletarian struggles.

Faced with the capitalist catastrophe, there is only one road for life: the revolutionary destruction of wage labor and commodity.

Proletarios Internacionalistas

(Internationalist Proletarians) «

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Translation and emphasis by the editor.

Source: Adoption on the "*Matière et Révolution*" web site of the article [Venezuela: Capitalisme et Lutte de classes](#) ('Tridni Valka' - 'Class War')

Topic: Marx and the Question of the State

Max Hempel (1927) or: Marx and Engels versus Lenin's 'State and Revolution'

Title:	Marx-Engels und Lenin - Die Rolle des Staates in der proletarischen Revolution ('Proletarier', 1927)
Language:	German, Dutch
Announcement:	Re-editions of a 1927 article (June 2017)
Author(s):	Max Hempel (Jan Appel) / K.A.P.D. / G.I.C.
Web link:	http://www.left-dis.nl/
Subject:	A council communist critique of the Russian experience and Lenin's 'State and Revolution'.
Categories:	Annotated re-editions, Pamphlets, 20 pp.(A4), pdf (free download).

Jan Appel's critique from 1927 of the 'Bolshevik' regime in Russia and Lenin's 'State and Revolution' has been republished in an annotated edition in German on the web site "Left Wing" *Communism - an infantile Disorder?* Likewise a re-edition of its adoption by the G.I.C. from 1932 has seen the light of day in Dutch. These documents refute the myth that the historical German-Dutch communist left was virtually bereft of a realist appreciation of the question of the state, as propelled by quite some partisans of 'the party' and others in the internationalist milieu. In the following we present a broad outline of this important contribution by the council communist current to solve the 'Russian enigma', which can be conceived of as a preliminary work to the G.I.C.'s 'Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution' (1930 - 1935).

"As soon as the rule of the working class has become a fact in an industrialized country, the proletariat is confronted with the task of carrying through the conversion of the economy according to new, common (communist) principles. The abolition of private property is easily pronounced, it will be the first measure of the political rule by the working class. But that is only a juridical act which aims at providing the legal foundation for the real economic proceedings. The real transformation and the actual revolutionary work then only begins.

To the extent that this problem is dealt with by the officious Marxists, it is considered a foregone conclusion that the state has to accomplish this task. Since the 1917 revolution the Russian Bolshevik Party has consistently implemented the idea of putting the means of production in the hands of the State. In this the bourgeoisified social-democracy goes so far as to wanting to already envisage the

transformation of the capitalist economy into socialism by the bourgeois state (which the workers should conquer for themselves by means of universal suffrage). It should be noted: this is said in theory, the practice is a different one.

But as [the same] social-democracy in 1918 - 1919 found itself at the helm of the state in Germany (not by universal suffrage), it could not decide whether [the industry] and which industries would be "mature" for statification. In the end it chose private capitalism as the best economic form. Thereby social-democratic "Marxism" has practically dropped the problem of the construction of socialism. It can therefore no longer be taken seriously. Things are different with the Muscovite social-democrats, the Bolshevik Party of Russia. The latter has realized the idea of the statification of the means of production in a consistent way in the course of the Russian revolution since 1917. That this has only suc-

ceeded to a limited extent is due to the backward state of social production in Russia; in a sense this is a natural barrier imposed upon the statification of the means of production. Therefore, the question is not whether and to what extent statification of the means of production by the victorious working class is feasible, but rather whether the latter, in the way it manifests itself in Bolshevik theory and practice, is the way leading to communism."

The aforementioned quotation constitutes the opening section of the article '*Marx-Engels and Lenin - The Role of the State in the proletarian Revolution*', which appeared in 1927 in the German revue '*Proletarier*', a monthly publication of the K.A.P.D.'s Berlin Tendency. (1) It deals with the experience of the working class after the seizure of power by the Soviets in October 1917 in Russia, and with the conception elaborated by Lenin in '*State and Revolution*' (1917) in comparison with the lessons drawn by Marx and Engels from the 1871 Paris Commune regarding the character and role of the state in the period of transition towards communism. A short biographical note on its author (Jan Appel, 1890-1985) has been included after this piece. (2)

The article formulates key question from the outset: whether "*the statification of the means of production by the victorious working class, in the way it manifests itself in Bolshevik theory and practice, is the way leading to communism.*" It replies to this in the negative by qualifying society in 'Bolshevik' Russia as "*state communist*", as a society in which the fundamental relation of production of capitalism: *wage labor*, persists, whereas private ownership of the means of production is tendentially transferred into state ownership through 'nationalizations'. Instead of setting out for the dismantling of the state in view of the dissolution of social classes, ultimately rendering its existence obsolete, these 'nationalizations' have only solidified and strengthened the state and perpetuated the existence of these classes.

The article decidedly rejects the view that soviet 'democracy' could constitute a means for the working class to steer towards the 'withering away of the state' by engaging in party and syndicalist activity. It demonstrates that for the proletariat this has resulted in something quite the opposite in Russia: as their participation in 'soviet democracy' resulted in the workers obtaining a "*right to co-management*" (as demanded by social-democracy in a capitalist order as well), it became the "*fig leaf*" (similar to bourgeois society) meant to hide "*the renewed domination over the workers*" by "*a ruling bureaucracy*" that was using "*a new, self solidifying state*", through its "*central organizational leadership and management (...)* of the means of production" this state was taking possession of, as "*an instrument of oppression*" ... against the same class in the name of which it pretended to exercise a transitory dictatorship.

Faced with the ghastly rift between the pretense of having engaged upon a 'transition towards socialism' and the practice of a "*management apparatus in the hands of a small party that also disposes of the political power*", which soon revealed itself in 'soviet' Russia, Appel's criticism proceeds by looking for contradictions in the conception of the state and its role that has been elaborated by Lenin, as one of the most outspoken practical and theoretical protagonists of 'state communism'.

Confronting the latter's '*State and Revolution*' with the conception of Marx and Engels in '*Anti-Dühring*' (1878; 1894), and in particular with that of Marx in '*The Civil war in France*' (1871; 1891), he demonstrates that Lenin's writing advocates *both* the statist, reformist conception of a "*mechanism of public management according to the type of a state capitalist monopoly*" (3) and the anti-statist conception defended by Marx and Engels of "*an association of free and equal producers*", (4) and that Lenin does not resolve the problem how a solidifying of the state that emerges from a successful proletarian seizure of political power can

1 The quotations in this piece have been translated from a photocopy of the 1927 article in German. Insertions in square brackets are from the editor.

2 For a somewhat more expanded description of Appel's political stances and trajectory see (in German): <http://www.left-dis.nl/d/JanAppel.pdf>.

3 For Lenin, the centralized management of the postal services, led by the imperial German state, respectively that of a 'trust', served as a model for the 'socialist enterprise'.

4 ... this 'association' transforms the means of production into "*social ownership*"; it "*snatch[es] the justified functions from a power that claimed to stand above society, and give[s] them back to the responsible servants of society*" - i.e. the elected, and directly and immediately revocable, functionaries of the communes.

ever result in its "withering away" or "falling asleep", to use an expression of Engels.

More specifically the article demonstrates from what point in its development Lenin's conception of the character and role of the state "deviates questionably" from that of Marx and Engels with regards to the self-emancipation of the proletariat and their conception of a 'half-state' of the 'commune type' in the transitional period.

For Appel the task of the dictatorship of the proletariat - exercised by the workers' councils - is to create the *conditions* for the transfer of state power to **the elected communes**, its goal is to be

substituted itself by the "voluntary centralism" of the latter. He concludes by emphasizing that the reformist conception of a statified "mechanism of public management", on the one hand, and that of Marx and Engels of the "association of the free and equal producers", on the other, constitute two distinct systems, expressing among themselves "**a contradiction that cannot be imagined more glaring**" - whereas Lenin and the whole of "the workers' organizations that [were] part of the 3rd International" have always maintained that both conceptions can be unified.

H.C.

Biographical Note: Jan Appel (1890 – May 4, 1985)

Born somewhere in Mecklenburg in Germany in 1890, Jan Appel was drafted in the army from 1911 to 1913 and mobilized during the First World War; in 1917-1918 he was a revolutionary worker in Hamburg, participating in strikes to make an end to a war considered lost.

He participated in the foundation of the **K.A.P.D.** in April 1920. With Franz Jung he represented the K.A.P.D. in August 1920 on the Second Congress of the **Comintern**. In order to get to Russia, in 1920 they hijacked a boat. In June-July 1921 and he was also present on the Third Congress, with Herman Gorter, Karl Schröder, Otto Rühle and Fritz Rasch. Within the K.A.P.D. he confronted both the Hamburg "*National Bolsheviks*" (Wolfheim and Laufenberg) and Otto Rühle's *unionist anti-party-position*. Jan Appel was arrested in 1923 and imprisoned until Christmas 1925.

In prison he studied Marx' Capital. In April 1926 he got to the Netherlands with first notes and ideas for *The Fundamental principles of Communist Production and Distribution*, which was discussed within the **Groups of Internationalist Communists** - founded in 1928 by Piet Coerman, Henk Canne Meijer and Jan Appel - and after ample discussion and editing by Henk Canne Meijer and Herman de Beer it was published in 1930 in German and Dutch.

In 1933, when the German authorities got interested in him again in relation to the 'Reichstagsbrand', he was declared [an] 'unwanted foreigner' in the Netherlands and had to go into hiding in Amsterdam until 1948.

During the Second World War he joined the **League of Communists Spartacus**. Arrested by the Dutch police in 1948 after a [serious traffic accident] in Amsterdam, he was finally allowed to stay in the Netherlands on the condition that he would stay out of politics. He remained in contact however with many people, old and young, and was present at the founding Congress of the *International Communist Current* in Paris in [1976]. (1)

Source: Antonie Pannekoek Archives, [Jan Appel \(1890-1985\) - Introduction](#) (The collection includes more detailed biographical documents)

1 Datum according to the obituary "[Jan Appel: A Revolutionary Has Died](#)" in the ICC's International Revue N°42, 3rd quarter 1985.

Quoted: Nation or Class?

'Aurora' (I.C.T.) on a choice the historical situation imposes upon the proletariat

» These are dangerous and unpredictable times. Ten years after the global financial meltdown the world economy still isn't fixed. After decades of promoting globalization, which has produced only fortunes for the few and misery for the many, our rulers are beginning to lose their grip. A growing number are turning to so-called nationalist "populism". Now a new aggression dominates the relations between leading world powers. If they are not fomenting wars or supporting one side or another in conflicts across the planet, they are calling for trade wars (via more tariffs and subsidies), an end to migration and competitive currency devaluations in defence of the national capital. This is the sign of a system which lacks real solutions.

Imperialist rivalry and war

Wherever you look the "patriot" card is being played more often. Whether it is in the brash version of Trump's "America First", or the authoritarian menace of Erdogan and Putin, the game is essentially the same. The aim is to divert attention from the real crisis onto the "other", the foreigner. The politics of prejudice have always been part of the capitalist game but now the situation is more desperate. Finding a scapegoat is a lot easier than solving the real economic problem.

When the USSR collapsed US politicians were euphoric, declaring that a new age of peace and prosperity was at hand. But behind the rhetoric the imperialist determination to defend US interests (and the dollar as the currency of world trade) has brought death and destruction to so many countries across the planet from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Yemen.

On the opposite side Putin is trying to throw back the Eastern advance of NATO to Russia's borders (Ukraine) and hold on to Russia's one remaining base in the Middle East in Syria. China's steady build up of its military power has not gone unanswered either. Not content with the 400 bases it already has in the Pacific theatre, the US has used North Korea's nuclear ambitions as an excuse to deploy the THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea. This won't save South Korea or Japan from an attack from the North but it will deter a Chinese attack on the USA.

The victims of these wars and rivalries are civilians, workers and the dispossessed. They pay the price for all this by being starved and impoverished, gassed and bombed, tortured and raped. Little wonder millions are forced to abandon their homes to seek a precarious refuge where they are not wanted - if they can survive the journey.

The "war on terror"

Imperialist aggression abroad means increased racism at home. The Brexit vote, like the victory of the AK party in the Turkish referendum, or Trump becoming President, have given the green light for bigots and racists everywhere. Attacks on people perceived to be outsiders have escalated dramatically. Some of this has been orchestrated by the state. Under the umbrella of "the war on terror" regimes around the world have a perfect excuse to lock up and murder anyone whose very existence might spoil the official picture of 'the nation'.

It's not only would-be sultans and tsars who play on the terrorist threat to clamp down on any whiff of dissent. In Britain the tabloid press is notorious for fanning the flames of racist hatred. However, the recent *Counter-terrorism and Security Act (2015)*, announced under a fanfare of the need to "defend British values", is an altogether more menacing move. This is the latest step in the state's Prevent programme, begun in 2003 following the invasion of Iraq. Under the aim of stopping people from 'being drawn into terrorism', the British state now explicitly sanctions spying-on and hounding

of anyone deemed to be different. Teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers and any other professional people are legally bound to actively monitor and report any child they suspect might be "radicalised" in the future. **Under Operation Prevent, around sixty children a week (nearly all from Muslim families) are sent on so-called "Channel" courses for re-education:** not for any particular crime, but according to someone's personal impressions. For instance, nursery teachers reported a Syrian refugee child (with almost no English) to the police for constantly drawing planes dropping bombs. Instead of getting trauma counselling for the child the whole family was split up and harshly interrogated by the local police.¹ This is encouraging the idea that all Muslims are budding terrorists and stoking the nationalist agenda. In a wider sense it puts the British parliamentary state on a par with any other autocratic regime which rides roughshod over 'human rights' to preserve its own security.

But our task is not to call for a clean-up of the democratic state or the defence of individual human rights. Our job is to undermine racism by stressing the fact that wage workers throughout the globe are in the same boat. We all share the same interest of getting rid of capitalism, the real cause of mounting insecurity and impoverishment.

The working class is a class of migrants and has been throughout capitalist history. Let's not fall for "nationalist" claptrap or defence of any country. When capitalists call on us to "defend the country" they are really calling on workers to die in defence of their property. "Workers have no country" as Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*. Whatever other differences we have, we are united as a class by the fact that we are all the exploited victims of capitalism. This makes the working class the international and internationalist class. Collectively it is the only force capable of putting an end to the infernal cycle of crisis and war. **Today it's not so much that we have a world to win - we have a world to save from**

a system which offers only social and environmental devastation. «

* * *

'Aurora' is the broadsheet of the [Internationalist Communist Tendency](#) (I.C.T.). It is published and distributed in several countries and languages. So far it has been distributed in UK, France, Italy, Canada, USA, Colombia.

¹ This short piece was written two weeks before the Manchester Arena atrocity (see leftcom.org) and appeared in our bulletin *Aurora 41* (still available). For more on how *Operation Prevent* functions see "Don't Go to the Doctor", *London Review of Books*, May 18, 2017 for more.

Quoted: 'Proletarios Internacionalistas'

Venezuela: Popular Power and Socialism in the 21st Century – The Modern Clothes of Social Democracy

The following article treats the situation in South-America, and particularly the acutely worsened crisis and inter-bourgeois factional struggle in *Venezuela*, resolutely denouncing the bourgeois-leftist myth of 'Chavism' as the so-called "socialism of the 21st Century". It has been published on the trotzkysant web site in French language '*Matière et Révolution*' as part of its adoption of a longer article on Venezuela by the group '*Tridni Valka*' ('Class War'). The latter has so far not published it on [its web site](#). The article apparently originates from a proletarian internationalist group in Venezuela, who goes against the current with a remarkable degree of political clarity.

» The famous "**Socialism of the 21st century**" is nothing else than the **Popular Front** of the 20th century. The old Social-Democratic soup is served again at the table of the proletariat in order to encourage it to fight against 'the right', 'neo-liberalism', 'imperialism', 'the fascists', 'Yankees' or whoever would be politically indicated as the new enemy at the next social forum, counter-forum or cultural meeting. And so try to prevent a complete confrontation with our class enemy: the world bourgeoisie, here or elsewhere, left or right, which always represents Capital.

Therefore today, particularly in Latin America, the progressist governments idealize strategically certain sectors of the bourgeoisie, singing the praises of some and spitting on others. The same strategy that, all proportions taken into account, worked in the thirties of the last Century, liquidating the most combative sectors of the international proletariat, particularly in the Iberian region where revolutionaries from all over the world had joined, and which was crowned by massacring the proletariat in the course of World War II.¹ The creation of pseudo-antagonisms such as fascism versus anti-fascism works to the advantage of the world bourgeoisie. To evade class antagonism by calling for a struggle against this or that sector of the dominant class is indeed not a novelty.

Those who call upon us to *support* the progressist forces of the national bourgeoisie, anti-imperialists, bourgeois industrialists

"against backwardness in the countryside", are the same who, at other occasions, call upon us to fight *against* this same forces. They will call it strategy, they will call it politics... It is the progress of Capital and they are its agents. The maintaining of the capitalist order, with its peace and its war, is based on this disorientation, on the channeling of the proletariat in bourgeois projects dressed up as revolutionary. The call to construct a "*popular power*" is one of these. If all supporters of "popular power" are not supporters of the "*socialism of the 21st century*", sometimes to the point of having big disputes amongst themselves, these two concepts share the same ideological trunk. We do not pretend to interfere in terminological politician's trifles, but want to mark their main characteristics.

The calls to construct a popular power, raised by alleged communists or anarchists, up to and including Chavistas (supporter of Chavez), are characterized in their main lines by an insistence on a non-class based *Populism* and a *fuzziness* - specific to the need to pick up the largest quantity of possible sectors - which bets on terminological tricks, be it to define the term "popular" or to define "power", in its manifold declinations like "being able to do", "counter-power", "dual power", "the taking of institutional power", "not taking the institutional power", "the struggle outside of the institutions", "critical support for the government", etc. *Popular power* can signify demanding either the political power for the people, or an increase in the number of the popular organizations that

1 "...la dite seconde guerre mondiale". "dite" = so-called? (note of the translator)

engage themselves in the struggle for reforms, to the point of gaining sufficient force to make the electoral step; it can moreover signify the power to create popular schools, cooperatives, self-managed health, communication or food enterprises, etc., that, in the majority of cases, are propelled by the State or that do not succeed to maintain themselves in its margins. In the most "radical" cases they are only in appearance completely independent from the State but, far from perturbing the capitalist order, they do nothing else than managing it. In this sense they are also part of the State. In Venezuela the suffix of "Popular Power" has even been added to the name of every Ministry and, when Chavez passed away, the bourgeoisie, up to and including libertarians known for their "critical support", have mourned him. But 'Chavism' and its bourgeois opposition are nothing but two forms of capitalist management, two alternatives supporting the march of Capital.

We are not interesting in describing their proposals but [we want to] affirm that their projects, by profiting from our current weaknesses as a class, negate the social revolution, conceived as a complete break, in order to convert it into a process of absorption or political reforms, where the institutions and their functions will begin being "of the people", to deny the proletarian character of the revolution, to deny that it is the bourgeoisie that holds the power. For us the stakes are to destroy its power, to negate it, to impose total revolution on it, to understand that the necessity of revolution does not derive from an abstract idea, but from the generalization of all our human needs and desires, and not from an amorphous and stage-ist [gradualist] unity of demands converted into separated reforms, classified as political, economic, cultural, ecological, gender, immediate or historical.

These tendencies are so reformist that in most cases they do not even speak about revolution anymore but about social change, about a process of change. This reformism that separates everything, engenders in its turn "new subjects of change", assigned to this or that "popular sector" - sociological classifications assigned by academicians and politicians who always use them to divide, to isolate the proletariat and to force it to submit itself

to the bourgeoisie and to maintain exploitation.

They speak to us about indigenous people, students, women, peasants, workers or unemployed, about the precarious, professionals, middle class, intellectuals, about people... and finally of *citizens*. And if there they look for a "subject of change", it is because they do not want to change anything at all, and least of all they want a proletarian revolution. On the contrary, *they are looking for the destruction of the proletariat and its program, by maintaining the State, democracy and its rights, wage labor and private property*. The rare who dare to speak about the laboring, working or exploited class, do so in an apologetic way, in order to continue defending wage labor and conceive of the class as the sum of all these subjects or popular sectors, who should unite behind one or other political project that will give answers to every sector in particular. Once again, it is about nothing else than **the social-democratic notion of revolution as a simple accumulation of reforms!** The bourgeois character of these projects becomes more obvious where they try to channel the proletariat into **Latin Americanism**, which is nothing else than an addition of *nationalisms*, than the defense of the interests of a specific group of bourgeois through a groups of states. Every state is imperialist, however weak its national economy or however backward its industry. In the wars of Capital, as in the markets, only the bourgeois-imperialist interests are at stake [?] and never the interests of the proletariat. The ideological separation between the *First world*, the *Third World* or "*developed countries*" and "*countries in development*" opposes the proletarians between themselves, blurring and impeding the revolutionary tasks. According to the stage-ist [gradualist] conception of the revolution, in Latin America, it is necessary to accomplish the bourgeois-democratic tasks by developing national industry, by strengthening democracy. Once more [it's] **the farce of national liberation**, but this time more by the ballot boxes than by arms.

(→ Continued on Page 10)

Indigestible: Vinegar sold as Wine

The Support for Anti-fascism by a Group laying claim to Council Communism



The banner says: "General strike against Fascism - Should a government be constituted with or by the AfD, stop work!"

In the course of this Spring a group who calls itself "*Council Communist Workers' League*" ('Rätekommunistischer ArbeiterInnenbund', RKAB) has manifested itself with a new blog on the internet. ⁽¹⁾ Located in the North-East part of Germany (Rostock) this *league's* presentation refers to the IWW ('wobblies') in the USA and the *Unionen* movement in Germany as a model for an 'economic' mass organization of the proletariat. It conceives of itself as the necessary counter-part to such a mass organization in "*the struggle for the council republic and communism*", a "*fighting organization at the social-political level*". In this sense it intends to work for the constitution of a "*communist workers' party*".

The league's conceptions, or rather misconceptions, of the mass organization(s) of the proletariat and of the political minorities in the present period undoubtedly deserve more critical attention than a brief notification can possibly achieve.

Having said this, its stance apropos the rise of right-wing populism, and phenomena of more or less openly dictatorial tendencies within the bourgeoisie, appears to be a surprisingly negative one, in the sense that it is profoundly marked by the bourgeois ideology of "anti-fascism", which always pretends to see an imminent danger of "fascism" as the main threat to society in general and the proletariat in particular.

Thus, regarding the national parliamentary elections scheduled for next September in Germany, we have the right to read in the RKAB's appeal of May 18, "*General strike against fascism!*" the following **call for an anti-fascist popular front**: "... That is why we have to be correctly positioned on a take-over of political power by Fascism! (...) We have (...) the responsibility to resist, in case of a fascist take-over of power, and engage ourselves for a new society in which these forces of extreme nationalists no longer have a chance! That is why we cry out to all progressive workers and to all democratic forces as well: Resist the fascist danger! We call upon everyone, in case of a formation of a government by or with the AfD, to gather in the streets and go into the general strike, until the reign of fascism has been shaken off again!"

The *Free Retriever* is to no small degree surprised that a group who positions itself so **correctly in the defense of bourgeois democracy** insist in claiming to be an expression of ... council communism.

The next release of *A Free Retriever's Digest* is envisaged for mid-August 2017. Please send eventual notifications and propositions for contributions before Saturday 12 August.

1 "*Der RKAB geht an die Öffentlichkeit!*" ("The RKAB expresses itself in public!"), April 18, 2017.