

Class Warrior

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Reclaiming Marx

Part 1 of 3

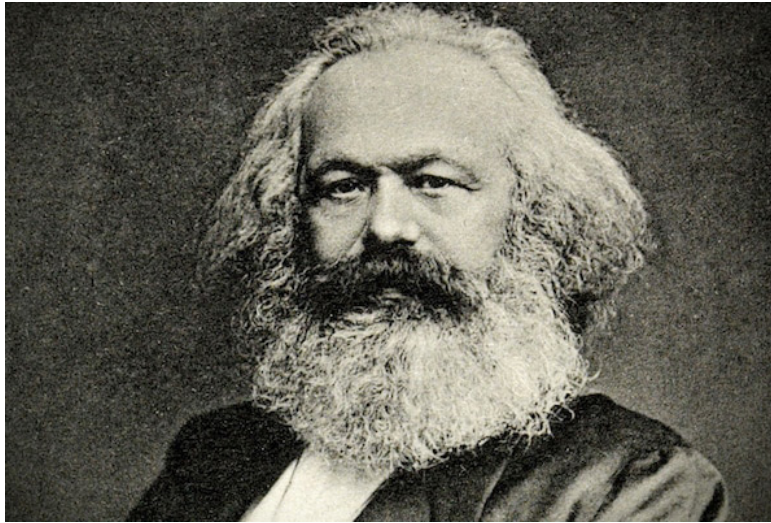
“I am not a Marxist”

A famous dead white man indulges us by coming back from the grave on his 200th birthday for a bit of celebrity haunting. Why? Should we be impressed when the interest in Marx is on the rise among academics, students and journalists? Not only in the liberal bourgeois press such as the [Guardian](#), or [The Daily Blog](#), in myriad ‘left’ journals, like [Jacobin](#), but also in the US colleges where [The Communist Manifesto](#) is the most read book in college libraries. Not only that the ruling Chinese Communist Party has held an official celebration and funded a statue of Marx erected in Trier, Germany, his home town, upsetting some of the locals.

Yet if Marx was alive today I don’t doubt that he would react much as he did shortly before his death in 1883. “Just as Marx used to say, commenting on the French “Marxists” of the late [18]70s: “[All I know is that I am not a Marxist](#).” This rebuff was the last of many times that Marx castigated various “self-proclaimed” Marxists for misrepresenting his ideas in their attempts to ‘improve’ or ‘update’ them. Let’s see why Marx found this necessary. But to do that we have to reclaim Marx from the grave robbers.

Any evaluation of Marx cannot be left to the superficial idea that “Marx was right” without setting out what it means to be “right”. It means knowing how he used the scientific method to understand capitalism and how he applied this knowledge in a program for revolutionary communism. His dispute with the French ‘Marxists’ in 1883 was over their practical demand for wage increases, without making it clear that the struggle for higher wages must lead to the overthrow of the wage-system itself. Class struggle was not about adjusting to capitalist exploitation but developing the class consciousness needed to overthrow capitalism and arrive at communism. But how do we decide who was right on this and other questions?

To know who was, and is right today, the evaluation of Marx 200 years after his birth needs to be based on how well his ideas have been tested in practice and proven correct or not, rather than the ideas of ‘self-proclaimed’ Marxists, no matter how well intentioned. Here I am not dealing with anti-communists,



hostile to Marxism. We can leave the aversion to Marx of people like [Ana Stankovic](#) to stew in its own juice.

We should also make passing reference to life President [Xi Jinping](#) whose celebration of Marx is grotesquely contradicted by ‘socialist’ China’s restoration of capitalism and rapid rise as the world’s second biggest economy and chief rival of US imperialism. Such blatant caricatures of Marxism are so grotesque

as to be already headed for the dustbin of history.

More dangerous is the social/liberal left that pays its respects to Marx’s life work only to disarm him and inoculate workers against his revolutionary message. But most dangerous are the self-proclaimed Marxists of all shades, Stalinist, Maoist and fake Trotskyist, who drag his name in the mud rendering him a common liberal. How do we decide between Marx and anti-Marx? One example: the *Anti-Capitalist* blog does a good job deconstructing [Yanis Varoufakis](#) Introduction to a new issue of the *Communist Manifesto* which covers Marx with faint praise while trying to bury him -Yanis to Karl, with love.

Marxism vs pseudo Marxism

Marx considered himself to be a scientist whose critical ideas had to be put into practice by the class struggle to test and develop them. It was the class struggle that would prove his, rather than his political rivals and opponents, right or wrong. Remember the 11th thesis of the [Theses on Feuerbach](#): “The philosophers have only interpreted the world... the point, however, is to change it.”

Marx’s critical [theory of capitalism](#) was of an historically limited form of society based on the exploitation of labour that must sooner or later exhaust its potential to develop the *forces of production* (using labour to increase productivity) as they were in contradiction with the *social relations of production* (capitalist ownership of the means of production). This would ultimately destroy the forces of production including throwing living labour out of work and necessitating a proletarian revolution to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism.

To activate his theory a program of action was necessary to

represent and advance the interests of the proletariat. The *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 was the result. Here Marx and Engels described the overthrow of bourgeois rule by the revolutionary proletariat which would open the road to communism. Marx and Engels saw the Communist Party not as substituting for the proletariat, but as part of the proletariat, embodying the program and separated from other workers' parties only by its program advancing the historical and international interests of the proletariat.

The first major [test of Marx's program](#) came in 1871 with the Paris Commune when the working people of Paris rose up against the bourgeois government after the defeat of the Emperor Louis Bonaparte (Napoleon's great-nephew) by the Prussians. Already by that time Marx was convinced that the proletariat has succeeded the bourgeoisie as the revolutionary class. The failure of the 1848 attempts by European bourgeois classes to make their "French" revolution against their 'ancient regimes' collapsed in embarrassing deals with the feudal ruling classes.

This default on the part of the European bourgeoisie left the proletariat with the responsibility for completing the task of developing the forces of production in the name of socialism. For the first time Marx spoke of 'the permanent revolution' signifying that the proletariat had to step onto the stage of history and take over the task of the reactionary bourgeoisie of completing the bourgeois revolution and creating the conditions for socialism. But how to do this: reform or revolution? It was the [Paris Commune of 1871](#) that put the Marxist program and the various reformist programs to the test with a bloody ruling class vengeance.

The lessons of the Commune were clear. First, disproving the reformists it was proof that the bourgeois state had to be overthrown by proletarian armed force or it would physically wipe out all working-class opposition. Second, disproving the anarchists, the overthrow of the bourgeois state had to be replaced by an armed workers' state to defend the revolution. The Marxist program was amended in the light of these lessons but the defeat of the Commune ushered in a period of capitalist reaction. The First International collapsed after bitter in-fighting with Bukharin and the anarchists. And Marx had to fight the retreat of 'Marxists' back to reformism, most notably at Gotha in Germany in 1875.

Marx's "[Critique of the Gotha Program](#)" was an angry attack on those who followed Lassalle's "falsification" of the Communist Manifesto. But it was largely futile and the Marxist party was only revived when the Second International was founded in 1889. Engels carried forward the defence of the program until his death in 1895. Then the task of defending and developing the program became that of the next generation of Marxists – in particular, Kautsky, [Lenin](#), Luxemburg and Trotsky to name the most important. We can judge whether Marx would have disavowed or accepted these new leaders as worthy of real Marxism starting with their position on the lessons of the Commune, and then what they did to apply the theory and practice of Marxism in the 20th century.

Part 2 of 3

Marxism after Marx

For Marx, even the best theory, without the Party testing it in the class struggle, was worthless dogma. The fusing of theory and practice demands a program that is tested by the Communist Party in the class struggle. In his lifetime, the revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871 were the most important practical tests that produced lessons requiring revisions of the program. By 1850, the proletariat had succeeded the now reactionary bourgeoisie as the revolutionary class. The bourgeois revolution could be advanced only by the proletarian revolution – *the permanent revolution*.

The Commune put this to the test. Its defeat strengthened the bourgeois counter-revolution and the impact of reformism on the workers' movement. It proved that the bourgeois state had to be smashed and replaced by a workers' state. Failure to learn these lessons frustrated Marx and his *Critique of the Gotha Program* in 1875 was a declaration of his Marxism against those who revised it by succumbing to bourgeois reforms.

His statement made a few months before his death in 1883, that if the reformists called themselves Marxist then he "was not a Marxist", leaves no doubt as to what his Marxism was right up to the end. His friend and political collaborator, Engels, continued the fight to defend Marx's Marxism from all sides in the struggle to keep it alive in the face of the opportunist, reformist tendencies in the Second International.

Engels, friend and collaborator

After Marx's death, Engels, his lifelong collaborator continued the fight to resolve this crisis. He was faithful to Marx's Marxism, completing and publishing three of the unfinished volumes of *Capital* (Vols 2, 3 and *Theories of Surplus Value*), in which Marx had fleshed out the foundations of his scientific theory so they could be understood and applied in practice to developing the Communist program. The importance of publishing these 3 volumes were that they demonstrated [Marx's method](#) of moving from the abstract to the concrete.

Moving from the Vol 1. analysis of value which was 'abstracted' from the struggle over wages, prices and profits etc., Marx in Vol 2, showed how the production of value underlay the struggle over the distribution of value between Labour and Capital; and on to Vol 3 to show how crises that appeared on the surface of capitalist society as unstable 'chaos', were determined by the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall ([LTPRF](#)). Engel's major contribution was therefore to show how falling profits and not falling wages explained the 'chaos' of capitalism. Not only did this show that workers wage demands did not cause crises, rather it exposed the fact that capital could not exploit workers sufficiently to prevent recurring crises.

Therefore, workers had to understand Marx to recognize that capitalist crises could not be overcome; capitalism itself had to be overthrown. His determination to make Marxism comprehensible to ordinary workers, has seen him belittled as a '[populaiser](#)' of Marx. Yet Marx himself would have done much the

same had he lived, as shown by his pride in the reception of the serialized *Volume 1* in the French Edition making it accessible to workers.

To illustrate this point, after their critique of the Gotha Program, Marx and Engels intervened in the debate against Herr Duhring, a minor academic who launched a reformist socialist program, attacking Marx among others. Engels' book *Anti-Duhring*, serialized in 1877/78, was as a response to this attack. It explodes Duhring's "bumptious pseudo-science" as "sublime nonsense". Marx contributed the chapter "From the *Critical History*" in which he takes his opponent apart as an "ignorant plagiarist".

Engels' pamphlet *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, published in 1880 was a re-write of some sections of *Anti-Duhring* "suitable for immediate popular propaganda". Marx clearly approved of these joint efforts since he wrote the *Introduction* to the French Edition praising it as "...an introduction to scientific socialism". It proved very popular, selling 20,000 of the four German editions despite being banned under the Anti-Socialist Law, and was translated into 10 languages.

After Marx's death Engels continued to intervene as the authority on Marx's work in the debates that took place in the Second International. First, his *Postscript* to a new edition of Marx's *The Civil War in France* (1891) restated the lessons of the Commune. Second, his '*Foreword*' to the first publication of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, (1891) aimed at the German Social Democratic Party leadership which tried to suppress the publication of Marx's *Critique* because it exposed their break from Marxism. Third, Engels' work popularised and *defended* *Capital* Vol 3 to explain crises, imperialism, colonialism, 'bourgeois workers', and the material roots of 'social chauvinism' in the Second International.

When Engels published *Capital* Vol 3 in 1894 it was clear that the imperialism in the 1880s was the result of crises caused by the LTRPF forcing the *export of capital* to restore profits. This accounted for super-profits extracted from the colonies that raised living standards for the working class, creating a privileged *labour aristocracy* made up of "bourgeois workers" as Engels called them.

Colonial super-profits explained the material roots of the *labour bureaucracy* and *social democracy* – the political expression of a layer relatively privileged worker-officials in the trade unions and in parliament. Lenin labelled the *labour aristocracy* as "social chauvinist" and "social imperialist", promoting "parliamentary socialism at home and imperialism abroad". Clearly, it was colonial super-profits that paid for 'democracy' in the

imperialist countries.

These interventions were to lay the foundations for the next generation of Marxists whose task was to in effect to write Marx's *last three planned volumes* – on *The State, Foreign Trade*, and the *World Market and Crises* – which accounted for the uneven and crisis-ridden expansion of world capitalism. They explain why the 2nd International degenerated into op-

portunism after Gotha and evolved into a reformist party with a bourgeois program. This opportunism was to lay the ground for what was to be the second crisis of Marxism, the betrayal of the proletariat by the majority of the Second International leadership on August 4, 1914.

Love Marxism, Love Leninism

After the death of Engels in 1895, the task of keeping Marxism alive fell to the next generation born in the late 19th century – notably Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg. To do that they had to develop Marxist theory as a guide to the class struggle in the new epoch of imperialism recognized at its outset by Marx and Engels. Marxism can only live when it is tested as a program of action by a Marxist party immersed in the struggles of the day. So, those who took over the leadership of the movement from Marx and Engels have to be evaluated as leaders who were capable of this task.

As mentioned above, we first need to assess their agreement with Marx and Engels on the major challenges to Marxism in their time – the Commune, and the Gotha Program. Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg took a Marxist stand on these questions, and condemned the *anti-Marxist position of Kautsky* and others who opposed the Communards' taking up arms to overthrow of the French regime, in favour of parliamentary compromises. However, it is notable that their critique of Kautsky did not become urgent until the shock betrayal of the 2nd International in 1914.

This betrayal proved beyond doubt that even the most revolutionary Marxists were taken by surprise by the power of the *labour bureaucracy* in the imperialist countries that sided with its own ruling classes calling on workers to pay for the war and give their lives fighting worker against worker. In their defence, the three leaders were in exile in Europe, in the US, or in jail, and isolated from the European sections of the International.

The death of Marx had created the first crisis in Marxism; the betrayal of the 2nd International was a second crisis that nearly claimed the life of Marxism itself. Joining with the exploiting class to kill one's fellow workers was a total rejection of Marxism. It was putting bourgeois national chauvinism ahead of international working-class solidarity. It was junking every lesson learned in the history of class struggles, that declare to



Friedrich Engels defended Marxism after Marx' death against the burgeoning reformism of the 2nd International.

the world that the proletariat and bourgeoisie have nothing in common. There could be no argument to justify going to war in the interests of the bourgeoisie. There was only one course open to save Marxism and that was to declare the 2nd International dead and begin the task of building a new one.

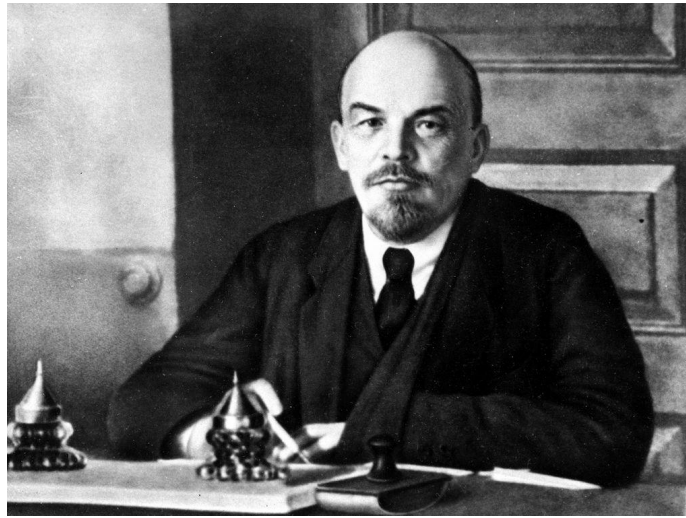
Zimmerwald Left

Those on the anti-war left of the International met at [Zimmerwald](#). The majority opposed the war but took a subjective, pacifist line in voting against the evils of war while voting to pay for it, in the Reichstag. They were now reformists having succumbed to *social imperialism* – the view that imperialism abroad could be reformed by parliamentary socialism at home. The minority, the Zimmerwald Left, around Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, argued to turn imperialist war into class war in which workers would refuse to fight one another and turn their guns on their own ruling class. The 2nd International was pronounced dead and a commitment to building a [new, third, international](#) made by Russia emigres of the RSDWP. They all agreed that the betrayal of Social Democracy resulted from the creation of *labour aristocracies* (Engels' 'bourgeois workers') bought off by colonial super-profits to promote social chauvinism at home in support of imperialist war. [What to do?](#)

The "three L's" called for workers to mutiny and organise [armed uprisings](#) against the ruling classes in every imperialist country. Trotsky did not think that workers were ready for armed insurrection and called for workers to refuse to fight for their ruling classes. They disagreed on other aspects of Marxism too. Luxemburg and Trotsky, from right and left positions, rejected the Bolshevik Party as substituting for the proletariat.

Trotsky on the right saw the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as unnecessary. He was known as a 'conciliationist' for advocating a united party. Yet at the same time Trotsky agreed with Lenin in rejecting the Menshevik two-stage theory – that the bourgeois revolution had to be completed by a class alliance with the bourgeoisie, before the socialist revolution was possible in Russia. They both agreed with Marx, that since 1850 the bourgeoisie was now a reactionary class. Therefore, the bourgeois revolution against the Tsar would have to be led by the proletariat as the revolutionary class, drawing in all other oppressed classes (poor peasants etc), and completed as the socialist revolution i.e., the *uninterrupted, or permanent revolution*.

Luxemburg from the left objected to Bolshevik *democratic centralism* as substituting for the spontaneous revolutionary consciousness of the masses. But from the right, however, her underconsumptionist theory of capitalist crisis ignored Marx's



It was Lenin who led the fight for a revolutionary 3rd International in the face of the betrayal of the 2nd International whose leaders supported their own ruling bourgeoisie at the outbreak of interimperialist World War I.

law of "the tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall" (LTRPF) in *Capital* Vol 3. Since for her, falling profits was caused by underconsumption due to low wages, the spontaneous struggle for higher wages would bring about revolutionary class consciousness and the overthrow of capitalism.

Therefore, on the central question of the Party, both in their own way took one-sided views of *democratic centralism* against Lenin's dialectical position which saw the party as the revolutionary vanguard leading the revolution. For him the Party was the *subjective class conscious* factor in the revolution, not spontaneous "trade union"

consciousness – a barrier to revolutionary consciousness that must be overcome by the Party. Nor can the Party be united around a broad program that represents an *objective*, inevitable march from reform to revolution, without the subjective vanguard party intervening to signal the advances and retreats.

Not until the Russian revolution proved them wrong did Trotsky and Luxemburg come around to Lenin's position. Trotsky joined Lenin in July 1917 and became one of the main leaders of the Russian revolution. Luxemburg withdrew her objection to the Bolshevik type party and belatedly formed the German Communist Party (KPD), but was betrayed by Social Democracy in 1919 and assassinated by fascist thugs, cutting short the life of a true revolutionary, and contributing to the defeat of the German Revolution.

The October Revolutions in Russia and Germany

Lenin, as the leading revolutionary Marxist, advanced Marxism, against all backsliding comrades (Trotsky as conciliator; Luxemburg as spontaneist and underconsumptionist) and hostile class enemies (Social Democracy), by re-asserting its premises, re-reading Hegel, re-affirming the dialectical method, and applying the theory of *Capital* Vol 2 and 3 to analyse the 'concrete' conditions in Russia (he read Marx on Sismondi to expose the petty bourgeois program of the Narodniks). He developed the theory of crisis in Vol 3 to explain the state of the world economy embedded in imperialism and war ([Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism](#)); the reactionary role of Social Democracy and Kautsky's vacillating centrism ([Renege Kautsky](#) etc); the class character of the State ([State and Revolution](#)); and applied it to a transitional program put into practice by the democratic centralist Bolshevik Party.

Lenin embodied Marx in fusing theory and practice in the democratic centralist party in which objective and subjective reality was united in practice. He used Marx's dialectic method to defeat the *objectivists* and *subjectivists* whose role was to rely on old idealist formulae instead of the 'art' of revolution. He rout-

ed the *objectivists* who treated the proletariat as a passive rather than active participant in revolution. Naturally, petty bourgeois upstarts substituted for the 'backward' proletariat in deciding when the workers would be ready for revolution. Lenin also denounced the *sub-jektivists* (anarchists and left communists) who argued that spontaneous proletarian class consciousness was sufficient to make the revolution, and that *democratic centralism* must necessarily lead to the Party substituting itself for workers democracy and opening the road to counter-revolution.



It was the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the first successful workers revolution and established the Soviet Union. Trotsky's left Opposition carried the revolutionary banner of Marxism after Lenin's death against the Soviet Thermidoran bureaucracy and the betrayals of Stalinism.

It follows that without Lenin in the leadership of a democratic centralist party there would have been no socialist revolution in Russia. It would have collapsed into objectivism or subjectivism; nor would Marxism have survived as a living political force on the powerful legacy of the Russian Revolution. In February 1917, the Bolshevik leadership was tied to the old dogma of Plekhanov etc., that Russia must have a bourgeois revolution to prepare the conditions for socialism. This was based on a doctrinaire application of Marx's slogan that capitalism cannot be overthrown until it has completed its historic task and is no longer capable of developing the forces of production. Yet after 1850 Marx said that the bourgeoisie was no longer the historically revolutionary class and had to be overthrown by the proletariat as the new revolutionary class. So, if the pre-conditions for socialism still had to be created, that could only be done by the proletariat!

When it came to the concrete conditions in Russia this dogma was clearly out of touch with reality. The bourgeoisie was not strong enough to overthrow the Tsar and complete the bourgeois revolution. It was women textile workers that began the strikes in February that led to the overthrow of the Tsar. Only the industrial workers, combined with the poor peasants and soldiers could advance the revolution by overthrowing capitalism. Lenin challenged the doctrinaire leadership by going to the Bolshevik masses and convincing them that a socialist revolution was necessary to complete the bourgeois revolution especially in backward Russia now subordinated to French and British imperialism and fighting a war against German imperialism. In Russia 1917, the same mistake that saw the German bourgeoisie join forces with the feudal Junkers in 1848, had to be avoided at all costs. *So like Marx in 1850, Lenin was affirming the validity of permanent revolution as the only way to take the bourgeois revolution forward to socialism in one continuous movement.*

Permanent revolution was also put to the test by the failure of the German revolution. The first uprising in 1919 failed because of the Menshevik SPD formed a government with the 'democratic', 'progressive', but still warmongering, bourgeois-

sie. Then in 1921 the Communist Party (KPD) took part in a premature putsch that was easily suppressed. By 1923 a revolutionary situation had returned. The KPD was better prepared, but its leadership vacillated and failed to grasp the situation and prepare for insurrection on time, so the moment was lost. Having failed to make the revolution, the responsibility for the rise of fascism in Germany then became that of the KPD leadership, mainly because it had not learned the lessons of the Bolshevik revolution and built a strong, democratic-centralist party in time.

Left Opposition and Fourth International

With the failure of the German revolution, the most important condition for the success of the Russian revolution disappeared. The industrialization of the Soviet Union was setback by the backwardness and war devastation of both industry and agriculture. The Bolsheviks were forced to keep the revolution alive in an isolated, under-developed country without international support. The only way out was to fight for a democratic-centralized plan for industry and agriculture to develop the forces of production and survive until revolutions succeeded in Europe or Asia. For the Bolsheviks there was never the possibility of socialism being built in one country surrounded by global capitalism.

After the death of Lenin in 1924, the battle to claim his legacy was the key to the life and death struggle between the growing bureaucratization of the party and state apparatus under Stalin that appealed to the petty bourgeoisie and surviving bourgeoisie, and the *Left Opposition* led by Trotsky, which insisted that workers' democratic control of the soviets and of the Party regime were pre-conditions for planning production in industry and agriculture, allowing the forces of production to grow, reducing necessary labour-time, and making the building of socialism possible.

The record of the Bolshevik-Leninists from 1923 to 1933 was of a life and death struggle to challenge the Stalinists regimes break from 'Leninism' as it subordinated world revolution to popular fronts with the bourgeoisie around a Menshevik program for 'national roads' to socialism in defence of 'socialism in one country.' From the final betrayal of the German Revolution in 1923, to the Chinese Revolution, 1924/1927, the challenge of the LO was met with mounting repression, exile and execution of its militants. Among them was Trotsky expelled and exiled in 1927 until his assassination by Stalin's agent in 1940.

The Left Opposition became an International Left Opposition (ILO) as an internal opposition inside the Comintern. It fought

to restore workers democracy against the bureaucratic regime until 1933 when Stalin's policy to appease fascism in Germany helped the Nazi's come to power. This [betrayal](#) of the international communism was of the same order as the 4th of August 1914 had been for the 2nd International and forced the ILO to declare the Comintern dead, and call for the building of a new, Fourth, International.

From 1933 the ILO became the Bolshevik-Leninist tendency committed to building a new revolutionary international to take the leadership of the world revolution, fighting for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, and for socialist revolutions based on workers' and peasants' soviet governments everywhere. The Fourth International was formed in 1938 based upon a [Transitional Program](#) keeping the legacy of Marxism and Leninism alive, and dedicated to the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union, the political revolution and the international revolution.

Conclusion: The Short 20th Century

For Marxism after Marx, it is the onset of the epoch of imperialism that explains the inevitability of recurring crises, revolutions, counter-revolutions and wars. Arising out of WW1 the rise and fall of the Russian revolution became the ultimate test of the power of revolutionary Marxism. The British historian Eric Hobsbawm, talks of the "Short 20th Century" from the Russian revolution of 1917 to the restoration of capitalism in 1991, as shaping the fate of the modern world. Indeed, there is some truth in this. The October revolution proved that Marxism could keep the 19th century theory of Marx alive in the form of a revolution led by a Marxist party. Its success proved that a dying capitalism could be replaced by a socialist revolution. But was the rise of Stalinism to power the end of the road for Marxism?

No. The degeneration of the revolution also vindicated the living Marxism of the ILO. Neither the revolution nor the counter-revolution can be understood except as a partial and incomplete advance of the permanent revolution Marx spoke of in 1850. The proletariat made the revolution along with the poor peasants, against the counter-revolution of world capitalism and the united exploiting classes. While we can talk about the Russian revolution succumbing to counter-revolution as the culmination of the Short 20th century, it is only part of the larger historic dynamic of permanent revolution from the mid-19th century to today, and beyond.

For Marx permanent revolution did not mean *only* that the working class must lead the exploited and oppressed classes to the revolution against all the exploiting and oppressing classes. It meant that the revolution could not be realized fully without the victory of the international revolution, and finally without the victory of world socialism and the prospect of a future communist, classless, and stateless, society. Not until then, will the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and permanent revolution end up in the museum of class struggle. Until then, it is the task of Marxists to continue the fight for permanent revolution.

Part 3 of 3

Marx Today

Has Marxism survived Marx's death and those who followed him claiming to be Marxists? Part one showed that Marx took exception to the term "Marxism" as not representing his views. Part Two argued that Lenin took responsibility for defending and developing Marxism within the second generation of Marxists. In the concluding part we ask: who would Marx recognise as Marxists today? To answer this question, it is necessary first to reprise the essentials of Marx and Lenin's thinking as the litmus test of those who claim to be a Marxist today.

The legacy of Marx and Lenin

Marx's method was to abstract from the surface appearances of capital as commodity exchange, to the essence of the commodity. In Vol 1 he dealt with the production of value as commodities, and in Vol 2, the circulation of commodities between production and consumption. By Vol 3 he was actually constructing a working model by introducing competition between capitalists to advance labour productivity which led in turn to the relative rise of constant capital, the LTRPT and recurring crises. Of course, Marx planned to write three further volumes on the State, Foreign Trade and World Market, to reconstitute the 'concrete' reality of 'everyday life'. He was not fussed about failing to draft these volumes as others could apply the method and theory, complete the analysis, and explain the 'many determinations' of surface appearances as 'actual', and the basis for revolutionary practice.

Not only that, while he was producing *Capital*, he wrote many articles on the contemporary class struggle, notably India, the US, and the Civil War in France, in which class relations were exposed in their 'many determinations' e.g. the Commune, testing and requiring changes in the Communist program (e.g. smash the state). In that sense *Capital* was clearly a C19th work of social science where Marx not only developed his theory but saw it tested in practice. The logic was: method (dialectics) > theory/program (Marxism) > practice (the Communist Party). It is clear that the objective of Marxism is to form an international communist party, grounded in democratic centralism, that develops the theory by applying it as a program to lead the organized class struggle to overthrow capitalism and impose the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'.

Entering the C20th Lenin was the main continuator of Marx's project. He studied Hegel to fully understand Marx's dialectical method. He needed to explain the rise of imperialist nations and the implications for Marxist theory. Nor did he have to start from scratch to develop Marx's theory. For example, he was not the first to argue that capitalism had made a transition from its *competitive stage* to one of *state monopoly capitalism* in the late C19th. Marx and Engels had laid the foundations.

Capitalism as an historic mode of production was progressive only so long as it developed the forces of production. The Vol 3 theory of crisis as one of falling profits explained why the export of capital was necessary to restore profits and why rival national capitals would be driven to the partition the world

economy leading to the destruction of the forces of production.

Lenin took Marx's theory in Vol 3 and condensed the contents of the unwritten volumes in his theory of *Imperialism – the highest stage of capitalism*. Only socialism could develop the forces of production beyond capitalism in its decline. In particular, Lenin applied Marx's theory of rent to the concrete political task of explaining how state-backed monopolies could extract super profits, manipulating the market and partially suppressing competition by diplomatic, political and military means. It was the theory of imperialism that allowed the main features of the highest stage of monopoly capital in the early C20th to be understood as the basis for the program of the Russian communists drawn into a major imperialist crisis and war.

So, we have the legacy of Marx in the C19th and that of his successor Lenin in the C20th to lay the foundations for C21st Marxism facing the terminal crises of the economy and climate change. Let's see what Marxism today looks like. Again, we use the criteria of the continuation and development of the fundamental lessons of Marx and C20th Marxists as the basis for judging who stands for Marx today. Let's evaluate these developments on the basis of fulfilling the demands of *Marxist method, theory and practice*.

On Dialectical Method

Marx took Hegel's dialectical method and stood it on its feet. Instead of historical development enacting the will of God (idealism) it was the result of class struggle "the motor of history" (materialism). Here we have the *unity of opposites*, capital as a social relation between labour and capital, causing the *contradiction* between the social relations and the forces of production. In turn this contradiction drove the proletariat as the revolutionary subject to *transcend that contradiction by means of social revolution*. In place of Hegel's idealist worship of God as the 'subject' of history, *dialectics grounded in material life* was the method of the revolutionary subject, the *proletariat*. Hence the term dialectical materialism.

In 1908, Lenin in [Materialism and Empirio-Criticism](#), defended Marx's materialism against a current of Russian Marxism influenced by Machism, that rejected Marx' premise that there existed a material reality independent of thought. Bogdanov and others retreated back toward Kant claiming that the premise of a material world was about an 'unknown nothingness' and was therefore 'metaphysical' or idealist. Lenin rubbished this, labelling it 'empirio-criticism' and a break from the 'historical materialism' of Marx and Engels. He argued that 'being' is not the product of 'consciousness' but the reverse.

"Materialism in general recognises objectively real being (matter) as independent of the consciousness, sensation, experience etc., of humanity. Historical materialism recognises social being as independent of the social consciousness of humanity. In both cases consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best an approximately true (adequate, perfectly exact) reflection of it. From this Marxist philosophy, which is cast from a single piece of steel, you cannot eliminate one basic premise, one essential part, without departing from the objective truth,

without falling a prey to bourgeois-reactionary falsehood. (M&EC, Chapter 6, p 326).

Lenin concludes his polemic against empirio-criticism:

"The genius of Marx and Engels lies precisely in the fact that during a very long period nearly half a century, they developed materialism, further advanced one fundamental trend in philosophy, did not rest content with repeating epistemological problems that had already been solved, but consistently applied – and showed *how* to apply – *this same* materialism in the sphere of the social sciences, mercilessly brushing aside as rubbish all nonsense, pretentious hotchpotch, the innumerable attempts to 'discover' a 'new' line in philosophy, to invent a 'new' trend and so forth. The verbal nature of such attempts, the scholastic play with the new philosophical 'isms', the clogging of the issue by pretentious devices, the inability to comprehend and clearly present the struggle between the two fundamental epistemological trends – this is what Marx and Engels persistently tracked down and fought against throughout their activity." (M&E-C, 336)

Lenin's philosophical critique of empirio-criticism established a firm dialectical materialist foundation for Russian Marxism and the method of the program of the Bolshevik party. However, it was the betrayal of the 2nd International in August 1914 that drove Lenin to an intensive study of Hegel to understand the philosophical basis of the opportunism of the international's historical betrayal and provide the grounding for a new revolutionary international. The results were his '[Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic](#)', included in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, written between mid- 1914 and 1916.

He summarised dialectics as follows:

"*Dialectics* is the teaching which shows how opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical – under what conditions they are *identical*, becoming transformed into one another, – why the human mind should grasp these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, becoming transformed into one another." (Bk 1, 109)

"(1) Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the **transition** from one to the other, *this however is the most important*.

(2) Intelligence and understanding. Intelligence grasps contradiction, *enunciates* it, brings things into relation with one another, allows the "concept to show through the contradiction," but does not *express* the concept of things and their relations.

(3) Thinking reason (understanding) sharpens the blunt difference of variety, the mere manifold of imagination, into *essential* difference, into *opposition*. Only when raised to the peak of contradiction, do the manifold entities become active and lively in relation to one another – they receive/acquire that negativity which is the inherent pulsation of self-movement and vitality." (Bk 2, 143)

“If I am not mistaken, there is much mysticism and empty pedantry in these conclusions of Hegel, but the basic idea is one of genius: that of the universal, all-sided **vital** connection of everything with everything and the reflection of this connection – Hegel materialistically turned upside down – human concepts, which must likewise be hewn, treated, flexible, mobile, relative, mutually connected, united in opposites, in order to embrace the world. Continuation of the work of Hegel and Marx must consist in the *dialectical* elaboration of the history of human thought, science and technique.” (Bk 2, 146)

Lenin took this “dialectical elaboration” to new heights. The retreat from Marxism to empiricism in the 2nd International was explained at the level of method. Empiricism took surface appearances as reality and suppressed the contradictions that drove the class struggle. ‘Evolutionary socialism’, or Menshevism, was the result. Workers must collaborate with the bourgeoisie and use the state to legislate for socialism. Against this attack on Marxism, Lenin’s critique of Plekhanov, Kautsky, the role of the state, of the Mensheviks, and so on, ‘elaborated’ the theory/practice of the Bolshevik Party.

Therefore, there can be no question that Lenin and Marx were in complete agreement in their conception of the revolutionary party as the ‘vanguard’ developing class ‘consciousness’ in understanding and embracing the world as a contradictory ‘unity of opposites’. Armed with this Marxist program and practice, Bolshevism and the 3rd International until Lenin’s death in 1924 represented the highest expression of Marxism. Dialectical materialism enabled the party to create a program that was tested in practice culminating in a successful revolution.

Bolshevism vs Menshevism

Only correct method can lead to correct program and practice. Who can claim to follow Marx and Lenin on dialectics? Very few, including self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninists and Trotskyists. First among equals, Trotsky was critical in defending this continuity. The [Lessons of October](#) and the [History of the Russian Revolution](#), condenses Bolshevism as living Marxism. After the death of Lenin and with the revival of Menshevism in the bureaucratic dictatorship of Stalin, the struggle of Trotsky and the Left Opposition kept dialectics alive until its defeat with the exile of Trotsky in 1927 and the death of other leading communists. From that point on the International Left Opposition survived as ‘Bolshevik-Leninists’ fighting the degenerating 3rd International under Stalin.

But method and theory do not amount to more than ideas unless united with revolutionary practice in a healthy communist international. Trotsky’s Bolshevik/Leninists fought to restore workers democracy in the USSR and in the Comintern until 1933 when Stalin’s policy of voting with the Nazi’s against the ‘social fascists’ (social democracy) in Germany helped bring Hitler to power.

For the Bolshevik/Leninists this amounted to a clear betrayal of the international proletariat as complete as August 1914. Trotsky immediately broke with the Comintern and [called for](#)

[a new revolutionary international](#) which led to the foundation of the 4th International in 1938. Its Transitional Program is the most developed expression of Bolshevik/Leninism that survived Trotsky’s assassination by Stalin in 1940. Embodying dialectics, the transitional method of raising demands mobilised workers to fight for what they need immediately, so that they learned from their experience that class struggle must go all the way to socialist revolution to transcend the contradiction between labour and capital.

But the 4th International failed to materialize into a revolutionary international after the war capable of advancing the interests of the revolutionary proletariat – backsliding into ‘[Pabloism](#)’ under a petty bourgeois leadership adapting to Stalinism as a modern form of the old one-sided evolutionary Menshevism. Maoism was another expression of modern Menshevism as it was based on Stalin’s theory of ‘bloc of four classes’ – the popular front of workers, peasants, ‘progressive’ bourgeois and petty bourgeois, to strangle the proletariat.

Meanwhile most ‘[Western Marxists](#)’ in the C20th judged Bolshevism as an aberration if not abomination. And of course, they junked dialectics. Why? Because dialectics is the method of the revolutionary proletariat that requires an organized vanguard party to advance its class interests in socialist revolution. Against dialectics the method of Mensheviks is that of bourgeois logic – idealism, and its twin, empiricism. This creates a reactionary theory/program and the anti-Marxist substitution of the petty bourgeois for the proletariat as the historical agency of socialist revolution.

Menshevism and Western Marxism

Most of what passes for Marxism today is one or other form of Menshevism that goes back to the Paris Commune of 1871 and Gotha 1875. The subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie in the name of the evolutionary socialism that led to the successive betrayals of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Internationals. Kautsky was a left-Menshevik, as was the majority of the ‘old’ Bolshevik leadership. Lenin split the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (RSDWP) party to combat Menshevism and those who compromised with it (e.g. Trotsky for a period).

The split was necessary because Menshevism replaced the proletarian party with the petty bourgeois intelligentsia as the agent of revolutionary change (Marx’s ‘petty bourgeois socialism’). Mensheviks were against the October Revolution. They conspired with imperialism to defeat the Revolution. Western, or Euro-Marxism is the direct descendant of Menshevism committed to the ‘failure’ of Bolshevism, and the retreat to the ‘half-way’ house of parliamentary socialism

C20th ‘Western Marxism’ is enlisted to the counter-revolution by suppressing dialectics and reviving evolutionary socialism. Lukacs defended Lenin and the revolution only to succumb to Stalin and the bureaucratization of the revolution. Gramsci defended Stalinism and the ‘long march through the institutions’ of the ‘Eurocommunist’ batch of Mensheviks. The Frankfurters from Adorno to Marcuse abandoned the proletariat for ‘revolutionary’ petty bourgeois intellectuals i.e. students. Why? because they substituted the contradiction between labour and

capital as a living class struggle for the ‘contradiction’ between an abstract ‘nature’ and capitalist society. Sartre found the young ‘humanist’ Marx and ignored the late ‘determinist’ Marx. Althusser rejected the ‘humanist’ young Marx for the Marx of *Capital*, and the class struggle for ‘theoretical’ struggle. All broke with dialectics to end up in the camp of the Mensheviks.

So, what are we left with? Who is Marx, and what is Marxism, 200 years on? Our objective is to reclaim Marx at 200. What do we keep, what do we junk?

Academic and Post-Marxism

If we look at the self-proclaimed Marxists today what do they stand for, Marxism, or Post-Marxism? Post-Marxists invariably revert to pre-Marxist doctrines to ‘improve’ on Marx. Remember Marx’s critique of the Gotha Program – ‘why revert?’ he demanded. Academic Marxists reply ‘why not’. As a result, they revive the idealist reactions to Marxism of Marx and Lenin’s time for consumption today. Take Zizek’s return to the great ‘master’ (Lenin) to serve the Menshevik project. “To repeat Lenin is to repeat not what Lenin DID, but what he FAILED TO DO, his MISSED opportunities.” Zizek writes off the Party as made up of political elitists ‘outside’ the class struggle. And Lenin, repeated, ‘channels’ Zizek and becomes the substitute for the Party deciding what the revolutionary masses should do or not do.

Add the hybrids like Derrida who ‘repeat’ social democracy out of strange liaisons with post-structuralism and Marxism where social determination is outlawed. This born-again ‘Marxism’ rejects the proletariat as the historic gravedigger of capitalism for the idealist re-construction of the idealist ‘great leader’, the Young Marx, or the messianic Lenin who can inspire the masses to spontaneous world-historic events.

Academic Marxism is the factory that produces and reproduces modern Menshevism, cutting and pasting Marx and Lenin accordingly. For example, [David Harvey](#) has a reputation for reproducing *Capital* faithfully, yet rejects Marx’s theory of crisis for a surreptitious Keynesian underconsumption theory that can be corrected by parliamentary socialism. Even [Michael Roberts](#) who staunchly defends Marx crisis theory based on *Capital 3* against Harvey, cannot in practice apply value theory to the real world when he fails to grasp the significance of the law of value in restoring state capitalism/imperialism in [China](#) for the global class struggle.

However, beyond the academy where Marxism is mostly far removed from the everyday politics, some celebrity ‘Marxists’ are attempting to bridge that gap with a call to return to



Trotskyists founded the Fourth International just prior to the devastation of the second imperialist WW II. In the face of climate catastrophe and the drive towards a new inter-imperialist third world war, it is ever more urgent that a new revolutionary workers international based on Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Program be built.

communism as a real social movement. Let's take the French Maoist [Alain Badiou](#) who argues that today the Marxism we must build is a ‘communist movement’ as if that is distinct from the ‘Communist Party’. In his [view](#), the ‘party-state’ has proven to be a barrier to communism, and is part of the failure of socialist revolutions. Therefore, the ‘communist movement’ must act to check the ‘communist party’ degenerating into the party-state. But is the ‘communist movement’ outside the Party capable of ‘checking’ and ‘correcting’ the democratic centralism of the ‘communist party’?

Is this the “[new beginning for Marxism](#)”? No! Revolution is not possible without democratic centralism that unites all communists in the vanguard party. The problem of the failure of key 20th century revolutions in Russia and China to build socialism, let alone communism, cannot be overcome today by a ‘communist movement’ separate from the ‘communist party’. Why? Because since 1850 any proletarian political ‘movement’ itself is only possible as the result of the vanguard party fusing theory and practice in the proletarian dictatorship of the workers’ state. Only this realisation can spark a “new beginning for Marxism”.

In sum, Western Marxism (and its Eastern Maoist analogue) is counter-revolutionary along with all other Menshevik and fake Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyist tendencies claiming to be followers of Marx. There is a failure of revolutionary leadership when the masses wallow in the swamp of social-imperialism, social democracy, crypto-Stalinism and ‘red-brown’ politics. The counter-revolution is not confined to the ‘West’ – the euphemism for imperialism – as the permanent counter-revolution to the international permanent revolution. The short C20th is a retreat from Marx that parallels and conspires with counter-revolution. The early C21st is a retreat from the 20th in toto and marks its lowest point yet – the bitter fruit of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and before long the DPRK.

The ‘crisis of leadership’ that Trotsky spoke of in the 1930s persists today and until such time as new generations of Marxists take up the true legacy of Marx and Lenin and build a new Communist International capable of leading the workers of the world to socialist revolution to end capitalist destruction and climate collapse, and to build a future communist society.

The following is reprinted from the [Communist Workers' Group of Aotearoa/New Zealand](#), *Class Struggle* #127, December/January 2019:

Capitalism and Extinction

Review of IPCC Report on Climate Change

Since 2009 *Class Struggle* has responded to the threats to the planetary ecosystems with the slogan: '[For the Planet to Live, Capitalism must Die!](#)'

The IPCC Report on Climate Change recently released by the UN backs up this call with hard science. The report warns that because of the woeful inadequacy of governments in backing their commitments to reduce carbon emissions the Earth has now only decades to prevent planetary mean temperature rise of the 2 deg C above which catastrophic runaway warming is predicted.

The only optimistic note is that the technological means to sufficiently curb emissions is now available and the task therefore achievable. What is needed, the report says, is the level of commitment shown by governments in the 20th Century when mobilising social resources to win world wars.

Since that report was released, we have been informed that carbon emissions have increased again since the economic upturn following the GFC. It took nearly a decade of depression to create an illusion of progress in limiting carbon emissions.

Meanwhile in Aotearoa/NZ the new government's commendable moratorium on deep-sea drilling has been attacked by the usual suspects in the columns of NZ's leading newspaper. In one column, the policy was condemned by Mike Hosking, a rightwing talkback shock-jock, who accuses the government of "economic sabotage", insisting that the "economic engine will seize up under an oil ban."

A brain that is incapable of conceiving that runaway global warming is more than capable of ruining not just the economy but Hosking and all his descendants with it can hardly be expected to entertain any alternatives to the political economy that renders a global holocaust inevitable.

To quote the '[science direct](#)' website:

"Scientists have argued that no more than 27 GtC (IPCC, 2013) of the world's reserves of fossil fuels of 746 GtC can be produced in this century if the world is to restrict anthropogenic climate change to ≤ 2 C ... While any reserve analysis is subject to uncertainty, we demonstrate that production of these reported reserves will result in emissions of 440 GtC of carbon dioxide, or 160% of the remaining 275 GtC carbon budget."

The other critic, who was described as a financial consultant, advanced reasons why the policy was doomed to unintentionally result in effects opposite to those its authors aimed at. Those reasons have nothing to do with the physics of the biosphere or the technology of manufacture but everything to do with the social relations of production and property tenure in the current

capitalist order.

What he was predicting is that investors who stood to lose by a ban on their investment in drilling would actually order an increase in production to maintain their market share against competitors (His explanation as to why they would do that eludes me, but let's accept it for the sake of argument.)

Both of these writers, whose careers have been built on serving the capitalist system, implicitly agree that the planet can go to hell in order to save the capitalist class and its investments. Class Struggle argues the reverse.

Where does the Green Party stand on this? A little more than a decade ago, the Party banned use of the word 'capitalism' in its forums, proving that it put greater faith in business than in some of its veteran activists, and provoking them to resign in disgust. Before you could say 'Jack Robinson' the Global Financial Crisis struck, proving that their starry-eyed faith in capitalism was totally unwarranted.

The following is reprinted from the [Communist Workers' Group of Aotearoa/New Zealand](#), November 27, 2016:

Climate Crash:

The case for Survival Socialism.

Climate is crashing

The recent news about the lack of ice in the Arctic has "shocked" mainstream climate scientists even if a few have been predicting such abrupt changes for years. Paul Beckwith is one of the latter. His work focuses mainly on the Arctic only because the changes there are critical to whether we can stop a climate death spiral or not. As he says "What happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic, unlike Las Vegas."

So, we face a climate change emergency that could end the existence of the human species. Why is it an emergency, and why is Beckwith's Three-Legged Barstool strategy a logical response? Will it work? Who can say until it is tried. But it won't be tried until we have overthrown capitalism and created a new society based on restoring a harmonious relationship with nature.

Now that climate science is catching up with events, it is time to look more closely at Beckwith's proposals on how to stop it. It becomes clear that even to try to implement his geoengineering solutions, we have to overthrow the capitalist system which has no interest in spending the billions needed to try out these solutions. So, let's assume that everyone now agrees that abrupt climate change is upon us and we are about to "fall off the cliff".

We should all know by now why the Arctic ice is critical to climate change. If not watch Beckwith's [video](#). Beckwith "builds the scientific case for being in a climate change emergency." The build-up of CO2 and Methane in the atmosphere and oceans is occurring at an increasing exponential rate". The consequences are the slowing of the jet streams that allow warm

air to reach the pole in winter which melts the ice and creates a positive feedback system that creates more global warming. He predicts the end of Arctic ice by 2020. The resulting breakup of climate patterns around the globe is what is causing the dramatic increase in extreme weather events.

Can we stop it?

Responses to the threat of climate change are now less about whether it is happening, and how fast, but what to do about it. These responses fall into three broad categories:

(1) The dominant capitalist discourse, of leave it to the market. A good example is the shift from coal to Natural Gas (methane). Far from a 'clean' alternative Methane is several times worse than coal in rapidly raising global warming. Under market rule, not until the costs of climate change threaten already weak profits will any significant shift from burning carbon take place. China is a case in point. Now a global capitalist power competing on with other imperialist powers, China has moved to cut coal burning. But this is far short of what is needed to stop rising CO2 in time.

(2) The second response is to recognise that climate change is abrupt (posing the possibility of human extinction with decades), and that short of a total collapse of industrial/capitalist society, cannot be stopped. Those who take this view divide into those who pin their hopes on such a collapse and those who hold no such hope. [Guy McPherson](#) (currently touring NZ) is an example of a 'maverick' early-warning scientist who thought that the GFC of 2008 might bring about a collapse of industrial society. When the banks were bailed out he gave up that hope and now argues that there is nothing we can do to stop human extinction, so it is best to prepare ourselves for the inevitable 'going dark'.

(3) The third response is that abrupt climate change can be stopped by emergency geoengineering techniques that slow down and reverse global warming before it is too late. Of those who think this is possible there are those who look to capitalist society to leap into action to implement urgent solutions, and those who think that capitalism is part of the problem and will have to be removed before any solutions are tried. Beckwith falls into the first category but has doubts about how capitalism can respond in time. Let's look at his 'Three-Legged Barstool' metaphor for a geo-engineering strategy to see if his pessimism is justified. For Beckwith, the three legs of the stool each stand for a major intervention to (a) stop carbon/methane emissions; (b) restore Arctic (and Antarctic) ice in winter; (c) reclaim carbon from the atmosphere and oceans. If you want to know what these interventions involve, check Beckwith's explanation [here](#).

Reform or Revolution to fix the climate?

Like Beckwith there are those who share his optimism that such interventions could work, and that they would require a major transfer of GDP from military and other budget items into emergency climate rectification programs. They also share his pessimism about whether they can be funded in time by the existing capitalist economies. Marxists understand that the capitalist market does not produce commodities unless it can make

a profit. The market cannot respond to a global climate emergency, nor can capitalist governments which serve the capitalist ruling class act collectively for humanity when its own class interests are paramount.

Beckwith argues we need a new [Manhattan program](#) or Marshall plan to mobilise the resources. But war is not a good analogy because of its proclaimed defence of national interests from which the arms industry profits. So, it is not a question of fatalism of the 'doomers' or the pessimism of climate activists like Beckwith that is critical. The question becomes, if not capitalism, what social system can be created in time to act against climate collapse?

Let's see what would have to happen to stop climate change in time. The capitalist ruling class will not allow their profits confiscated to fund climate action. Its motivation is to protect and increase its historic accumulation of capital. So not only are capitalists living off centuries of stolen wealth, they will risk the destruction not only of the climate, but the habitability of the planet necessary for the working class to survive to create the surplus-value needed to maintain and increase their wealth.

Would a social-democratic majority government make any difference compared with those of right wing deniers like Trump? No. The political program of social democracy is to nationalise the private property of capitalists only as a subsidy to all capitalists. What social-democratic government would implement taxes against the rich or against polluters to raise the billions necessary for emergency climate action? Even if such a government was elected it would be on the basis of defending a threat to private property posed by a rising mass workers' mobilisation to take power.

Survival Socialism

This is why more and more [Marxists](#), and leftists in general, see socialism as the only road to human survival. First, to stop abrupt climate change bringing a destruction of nature and society and with it human extinction within decades, it will be necessary to expropriate the wealth of the ruling class, in particular the big banks and corporations, to pay for climate correction.

Second, since the ruling class will not agree to expropriation by legislating higher taxes etc., and will stage coups to remove leftist governments, it is necessary for the vast majority of workers to mobilise as an organised movement to take power; removing the capitalist ruling class and creating a workers' state. A workers' state that is based on the democratic will of the working people would immediately use the expropriated wealth to fund the massive geo-engineering interventions that are necessary.

Even if these desperate measures do not work in time, or only mitigate climate change partially, a socialist society is the only way to prepare for meeting the challenges of living in a post-capitalist world by prioritising what is necessary to ensure the conditions for human survival over the interests of warring nations and gangs of mercenaries, collapsing economies and social destruction. Better Red than Dead!

What we Fight For

We fight to overthrow Capitalism

Historically, capitalism expanded world-wide to free much of humanity from the bonds of feudal or tribal society, and developed the economy, society and culture to a new higher level. But it could only do this by exploiting the labour of the productive classes to make its profits. To survive, capitalism became increasingly destructive of “nature” and humanity. In the early 20th century it entered the epoch of imperialism in which successive crises unleashed wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. Today we fight to end capitalism’s wars, famine, oppression and injustice, by mobilising workers to overthrow their own ruling classes and bring to an end the rotten, exploitative and oppressive society that has exceeded its use-by date.

We fight for Socialism

By the 20th century, capitalism had created the pre-conditions for socialism – a world-wide working class and modern industry capable of meeting all our basic needs. The potential to eliminate poverty, starvation, disease and war has long existed. The October Revolution proved this to be true, bringing peace, bread and land to millions. But it became the victim of the combined assault of imperialism and Stalinism. After 1924 the USSR, along with its deformed offspring in Europe, degenerated back towards capitalism. In the absence of a workers political revolution, capitalism was restored between 1990 and 1992. Vietnam and China then followed. In the 21st century only North Korea survives as a degenerated workers state. We unconditionally defend the DPRK against capitalism and fight for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy as part of a world socialist revolution.

We fight to defend Marxism

While the economic conditions for socialism exist today, standing between the working class and socialism are political, social and cultural barriers. They are the capitalist state and bourgeois ideology and its agents. These agents claim that Marxism is dead and capitalism need not be exploitative. We say that Marxism is a living science that explains both capitalism’s continued exploitation and its attempts to hide class exploitation behind the appearance of individual “freedom” and “equality”. It reveals how and why the reformist, Stalinist and centrist misleaders of the working class tie workers to bourgeois ideas of nationalism, racism, sexism and equality. Such false beliefs will be exploded when the struggle against the inequality, injustice, anarchy and barbarism of capitalism in crisis, led by a revolutionary Marxist party, produces a revolutionary class-consciousness.

We fight for a Revolutionary Party

The bourgeoisie and its agents condemn the Marxist party as totalitarian. We say that without a democratic and a centrally organised party there can be no revolution. We base our beliefs on the revolutionary tradition of Bolshevism and Trotskyism. Such a party, armed with a transitional program, forms a bridge that joins the daily fight to defend all the past and present gains won from capitalism to the victorious socialist revolution. Defensive struggles for bourgeois rights and freedoms, for decent wages and conditions, will link up the struggles of workers of all nationalities, genders, ethnicities and sexual orientations, bringing about movements for workers control, political strikes and the arming of the working class, as necessary steps to workers’ power and the smashing of the bourgeois state. Along the way, workers will learn that each new step is one of many in a long march to revolutionize every barrier put in the path to their victorious revolution.

We fight for Communism

Communism stands for the creation of a classless, stateless society beyond socialism that is capable of meeting all human needs. Against the ruling class lies that capitalism can be made “fair” for all, that nature can be “conserved”, that socialism and communism are “dead”, we raise the red flag of communism to keep alive the revolutionary tradition of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, the Third Communist International until 1924, and the revolutionary Fourth International up to its collapse into centrism, with the closing of the International Center. We fight to build a new Communist International, as a world party of socialism capable of leading workers to a victorious struggle for socialism.

Join us: Where overthrowing capitalism is all in a days work !!!

For a New Revolutionary Workers International!

“All talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet “ripened” for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only “ripened”; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.”

- Leon Trotsky, [The Transitional Program](#), 1938

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