

# Platform

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The World Anti-imperialist Platform

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, holding a large, dark red flag aloft with her right arm. The background is a solid red color. The illustration is rendered in a flat, graphic style with some shading to suggest form.





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# Theses On The Present Political Situation

V.I. Lenin

May 1918

The extreme instability of the international situation of the Soviet Republic, surrounded as it is by imperialist powers, has been frequently pointed out in the Bolshevik press and has been admitted in the resolutions of the higher organs of Soviet power.

During the past few days, i.e., the first ten days of May 1918, the political situation has become extremely critical owing to both external and internal causes:

First, the direct offensive of the counter-revolutionary forces (Semyonov and others) with the aid of the Japanese in the Far East has been stepped up, and in connection with it there are a number of signs indicating the possibility of the entire anti-German imperialist coalition coming to an agreement on the presentation of an ultimatum to Russia either fight against Germany, or there will be a Japanese invasion aided by us.

Secondly, since Brest the war party has gained the upper hand in German politics in general, and this party could now, at any moment, gain the upper hand on the question of an immediate general offensive against Russia, i.e., it could completely overcome the other policy of German bourgeois-imperialist circles that strive for fresh annexations in Russia but for the time being want peace with her and not a general offensive against her.

Thirdly, the restoration of bourgeois-landowner monarchism in the Ukraine with the support of the Constitutional-Democratic and Octobrist elements of the bourgeoisie of all Russia and with the aid of the German troops was bound to make the struggle against the counter-revolution in Russia more intense., was bound to encourage the plans and raise the spirit of our counter-revolutionaries.

Fourthly, the disorganised food situation has become extremely acute and in many places has led to real hunger because we were cut off from Rostov-on-Don

and because of the efforts of the petty bourgeoisie and the capitalists in general to sabotage the grain monopoly, accompanied by insufficiently firm, disciplined and ruthless opposition on the part of the ruling class, i.e., the proletariat, to those strivings, efforts and attempts.

## II

The foreign policy of Soviet power must not be changed in any way. Our military preparations are not yet complete, and our general slogan. therefore, will remain as before—manoeuvre, withdraw, bide our time, and continue our preparations with all our might.

Although we do not in general reject military agreements with one of the imperialist coalitions against the other in those cases in which such an agreement could, without undermining the basis of Soviet power, strengthen its position and paralyze the attacks of any imperialist power, we cannot at the present moment enter into a military agreement with the Anglo-French coalition. For them, the importance of such an agreement would be the diversion of German troops from the West, i.e., by means of the advance of many Japanese army corps into the interior of European Russia, which is an unacceptable condition since it would mean the complete collapse of Soviet power. If the Anglo-French coalition were to present us with an ultimatum of this kind we should reject it, because the danger of the Japanese advance can more easily be paralysed (or can be delayed for a longer time) than the threat of the Germans occupying Petrograd, Moscow and a large part of European Russia.

## III

In considering the tasks of the foreign policy of Soviet power at the present moment, the greatest

caution, discretion and restraint must be observed in order not to help the extreme elements in the war parties of Japan and Germany by any ill-considered or hasty step.

The fact of the matter is that the extreme elements in the war parties of both these countries favour an immediate general offensive against Russia for the purpose of occupying all her territory and overthrowing Soviet power. At any moment these extreme elements may gain the upper hand.

On the other hand, however, it is an undoubted fact that the majority of the imperialist bourgeoisie in Germany are against such a policy and at the present moment prefer the annexationist peace with Russia to a continuation of the war for the simple reason that war would divert forces from the West and increase the instability of the internal situation in Germany that is already making itself felt; it would also make it difficult to obtain raw materials from places involved in insurrection or that are suffering from damage to railways, from failure to plant sufficient crops, etc., etc.

The Japanese urge to attack Russia is being held back, first, by the danger of the movement and of revolts in China, and secondly, there is a certain antagonism on the part of America, the latter fearing the strengthening of Japan and hoping to obtain raw materials from Russia more easily under peaceful conditions.

It goes without saying that it is quite possible for the extreme elements of the war parties in both Germany and Japan to gain the upper hand at any moment. There can be no guarantee against this until the revolution breaks out in Germany. The American bourgeoisie may plot together with the Japanese bourgeoisie, or the Japanese with the German. It is, therefore, our imperative duty to make the most energetic preparations for war.

As long as there remains even a slight chance of preserving peace or of concluding peace with Finland, the Ukraine and Turkey, at the cost of certain new annexations or losses, we must not take a single step that might aid the extreme elements in the war parties of the imperialist powers.

#### IV

The primary task in undertaking more energetic military training, as in the question of combating famine, is that of organisation.

There cannot be any really serious preparation for war unless the food difficulties are overcome, unless the population is properly supplied with bread, unless the strictest order is introduced on the railways, unless truly iron discipline is established among the masses of the working people (and not only at the top). It is in this field that we are most backward.

Guiltiest of all of a complete lack of understanding of this truth are the Left Socialist-Revolutionary and anarchist elements with their screaming about "insurrectionary committees" and their howls of "to arms", etc. Such screams and howls are the quintessence of stupidity and are nothing but pitiful, despicable and disgusting phrase-making; it is ridiculous to talk about "insurrection" and "insurrectionary committees" when Soviet central power is doing its utmost to persuade the people to start military training and arm themselves, when we have more weapons than we can count and distribute, when it is precisely the economic ruin and the lack of discipline that prevent us from using the weapons available and compel us to lose valuable time that could be used for training.

Intensified military training for a serious war cannot be done by means of a sudden impulse, a battle-cry, a militant slogan; it requires lengthy, intense, persistent and disciplined work on a mass scale. We must deal ruthlessly with the Left Socialist-Revolutionary and anarchist elements that do not wish to understand this, and must not give them an opportunity to infect certain elements of our proletarian Communist Party with their hysteria.

#### V

It is essential to wage a ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie, which on account of the above circumstances has raised its head during the past few days, and to declare a state of emergency, close

newspapers, arrest the leaders and so on. These measures are as necessary as the military campaign against the rural bourgeoisie, who are holding back grain surpluses and infringing the grain monopoly. There will be no salvation either from the counter-revolution or from famine without iron discipline on the part of the proletariat.

In particular it must be borne in mind that during the past few days the bourgeoisie have been making extremely skilful and cunning use of panic-spreading as a weapon against proletarian power. Some of our comrades, especially those who are less resolute in their attitude to the Left Socialist-Revolutionary and anarchist revolutionary phrases, have allowed themselves to be diverted, have got into a panic or have failed to observe the line that divides legitimate and necessary warning of the coming danger from the spreading of panic.

The basic specific features of the entire present economic and political situation in Russia must be kept firmly in mind; because of these features our cause cannot be helped by outbursts. We must become firmly convinced ourselves and try to convince all workers of the truth that only restraint and patient creative work to establish iron proletarian discipline, including ruthless measures against hooligans, kulaks and disorganising elements, can protect Soviet power at this moment, one of the most difficult and dangerous periods of transition, unavoidable owing to the delay of the revolution in the West.

# The Dialectics of the Historical Process and the Methodology of Its Research<sup>[1]</sup>

Victor Alexeyevich Vaziulin

## Contents

1. Introduction. Posing the Problem
2. The Methodology of Researching the Development of Society
3. Society as an “Organic” Whole
4. The Process of Historical Development of Society
5. In Place of a Conclusion

### 1. Introduction. Posing the Problem

Our time is a time of great social transformations. Tasks such as the revolutionary transition of various countries from capitalism to socialism, the ongoing scientific and technological revolution, the urgent need to protect the environment, etc. demand an increasingly more accurate and deeper foresight into the development of social life, and the further development of Marxist-Leninist theory. “Marxism-Leninism is the only reliable basis for developing the correct strategy and tactics. It provides us with an understanding of the historical perspective, helps determine the direction of socio-economic and political development for many years to come, and gives us a correct orientation in international events. The strength of Marxism-Leninism lies in its constant creative development”.

Historical materialism provides general methodological guidelines for the activity of working people as conscious creators of history. Within the framework of historical materialism, there are two extremely important aspects in studying the process of social development.<sup>[2]</sup>

Which aspects are we talking about?

In Marxism-Leninism, the life of society is viewed through the prism of the theory of socio-economic

formations. This is one aspect. Many works of Soviet researchers, including those published in recent years, are devoted to problems of socio-economic formations.<sup>[3]</sup>

Significantly less attention has been paid to the study of the methodology of the types of social development. This is the second aspect. This second aspect primarily includes the division of human history by the classics of Marxism-Leninism into prehistory and actual history, beginning with the Great October Socialist Revolution. With such a division, communism appears not only as a particular socio-economic formation but as actual history, a new type of historical development of humanity compared to all previous history.

Why were the main efforts directed to the development of the theory of socio-economic formations, while the issue of the types of social development was and still is pushed to the background?

The very content of the modern era has forced and continues to force the issue of socio-economic formations to the foreground.

At the same time, in the future, historical development will bring to the forefront the issue of the types of social development, their sequence, interconnections, internal structure, etc. However, the issue of the types of social development is also of great importance for understanding the present, both because it relies on a certain tendency of contemporary development and because the assessment of future prospects influences the understanding and practice of current events.

Why is it that the main content of the modern era currently demands undivided attention to the issue of socio-economic formations, and why is prioritising

the issue of the types of socio-economic development important for understanding the future?

“The modern era, the main content of which is the transition from capitalism to socialism, is an era of struggle between two opposing social systems, an era of socialist and national liberation revolutions, an era of the collapse of imperialism, the liquidation of the colonial system, an era of transition to the socialist path by more and more nations, the triumph of socialism and communism on a global scale”.<sup>[4]</sup> Consequently, the main content of our era is the revolutionary struggle of socialism against capitalism. Capitalism, however, is a particular socio-economic formation. From this perspective, the transition from capitalism to a new society appears primarily as a transition from one formation to another. This is of significant importance for the theory of social development.

When the task of building communism (first its initial phase—socialism) comes to the forefront on a global scale, it will become practically essential to understand that communism is the actual history of humanity in relation to all previous history, i.e., the issue of the types of social development.

The transition to communism means not only the abolition of capitalism, not only the eradication of the features inherent in capitalism as a particular socio-economic formation, but also a fundamental transformation of all social relations that emerged before communism. The transition to communism is a process deeper than just the abolition of capitalism. When the transition to communism is put into practice, social transformations appear much deeper, more significant than when the task of abolishing, negating capitalism is in the foreground.

Consequently, the realisation on a global scale of the transition from socialism to communism will and already does necessitate the further development of the theory and history of society, as well as increases the need for a deeper understanding of the historical process by the broad masses of working people—

actively fighting for the new society.

One of the most important methodological issues is the understanding of society as a system.

The development of large-scale industry within the framework of capitalism already necessitates a holistic approach to the research of society. For large-scale industry “... produced world history for the first time, insofar as it made all civilised nations and every individual member of them dependent for the satisfaction of their wants on the whole world, thus destroying the former natural exclusiveness of separate nations.”<sup>[5]</sup> The formation of the world economic system and the entirety of history as a whole takes place under capitalism as the struggle of opposing tendencies: the tendency towards the formation of a unified world economy, stemming from the social character of production, and the tendency towards the isolation of various countries, various parts, spheres, etc., of the world economy, a tendency rooted in the existence of private ownership of the means of production.

With the establishment of public ownership of the means of production, even in one or several countries, the economy and the whole of society as a specific system rise to a qualitatively higher level. Only in the new, socialist and communist society does it become possible for the first time to plan the development of society as a whole. But the conscious development of society, the management of this development, requires knowledge of all aspects, all spheres of social life and their interconnections, interactions, i.e., knowledge of society as a unified system.

The need for a deeper understanding of the entire history of humanity also sharply increases. Communism is the result of the development of all past history. The result can only be fully understood in connection with the process that led to it. In building communism, the further study of human history is both theoretically and practically important, as the construction of communism presupposes a complete restructuring not only of what had its



roots in capitalist society but also of those relations, traditions, habits, etc., that trace their lineage back to pre-capitalist societies.

Thus, when the tasks of building a new society come to the forefront in global social development, the theoretical focus shifts to the study of communism as the true history of humanity in relation to all past history, to the research of the types of social development, to the study of society as a whole, as a system. Moreover, the issue of society as a system and the issue of the types of social development are internally interconnected. For in the first case, it is primarily about the functioning of society in the unity of all its aspects, spheres, etc., while in the second case, it is about the historical development of society as a system, as a whole.

The research of social development as a system is impossible without the use of the methodological heritage of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, primarily without the use of the method of “Capital” by K. Marx.

In “Capital” by K. Marx, for the first time in history, the subject of an entire science (political economy of capitalism) was researched and presented as a developing system through the application of the dialectical-materialist method. Marx’s political-economic research remains an unsurpassed example of a consistent, holistic, and detailed representation of the subject as a developing system. Therefore, the use of the method of “Capital” by K. Marx on the theory and history of society is of exceptional importance.

The method applied by K. Marx in “Capital” is the only possible scientific method for a holistic representation of social development.

But the method, the logic of “Capital,” does not lie on the surface. Dedicated research is necessary to separate it from the politico-economic material and present it specifically. The task of isolating the Logic of “Capital” (Logic with a capital L, i.e., logic in its universal form) was set by V. I. Lenin. Soviet

researchers have done significant and fruitful work in fulfilling this testament of V. I. Lenin.

In what follows, we will try to present the results of these efforts and how they can be applied to the research of the theory and history of society.

*The next piece of content will be published in future issues.*

## Notes

- [1] Moscow, “Znaniye” Publishing House, 1978 – 2nd edition, 2007. Translated from the second edition.
- [2] Materials of the XXV Congress of the CPSU. M., 1976, p. 72.
- [3] See, for example, the works of I. L. Andreev, Yu. M. Boroday, V. Zh. Kelle, E. G. Plimak, E. N. Zhukov, E. N. Lysmankin, and others.
- [4] Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. M., 1976, p. 5.
- [5] Karl Marx, The German Ideology, Part I: Feuerbach.

# Multipolarism and socialist revolution

## Party of Committees to Support Resistance—for Communism (Italy)

*Great and growing upheavals are shaking the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie in individual countries and in the system of international relations, upheavals that are both context and expression of the clash, which characterizes the imperialist epoch, between proletarian revolution (for Socialism and new democracy) and the decadence of the capitalist system.*

“Who do you think you are to criticize the theory of the multipolar world, defended and propagated by a Communist party like the Communist Party of China (CPC), compared to which you are a nobody?” is the question that some proponents of multipolarism ask us.

We do not say that the CPC and the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are wrong in advocating and enforcing the line of multipolarism, i.e., peaceful coexistence among countries regardless of their current social system. We criticize the Communist parties, groups and individuals in imperialist countries who advocate the line of multipolarism, because it leads them to neglect the struggle for the establishment of Socialism in their own countries, that is, the very work that the summation of the experience of the first wave of the proletarian revolution confirmed to be decisive in reaching a world of peace, progress and cooperation between countries. For them, multipolarism means focusing not on the development of class struggle inside imperialist countries, but on the action of the States that oppose the U.S. imperialists and the International Community dominated by them: some put their trust in the PRC, others more in the Russian Federation (RF), and some others in a combination of both.

Promoted by the PRC government, the multipolarism line serves to denounce the U.S. imperialists’ policy of aggression (war missions, sanctions, destabilization attempts, subversive operations such as “colour revolutions,” NATO enlargement and its rearmament race) against any country that does not bend to their will opening its borders to their trafficking, business, and oppression, and to coalesce countries whose authorities want to free themselves from the political-military and economic-financial domination of the U.S. imperialists (the so-called “rogue states,” the BRICS and others). It is a broad camp that includes very different countries, from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Cuba and other countries that preserve achievements and institutions of the first wave of the proletarian revolution such as the RF and Belarus, from Serbia to Venezuela and other Latin American countries, from Iran to Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and other African countries. There are also some former Soviet countries in the Caucasus and Asia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan), where the U.S., Zionist and European imperialist groups are trying to expand their influence, but the path that the oligarchs who run these countries will take is still open to opposing developments. Finally, we must consider the new monopolist groups that capital export has brought into being in some countries that are now wavering between accepting U.S. domination or competing independently at the global level: India and Turkey are cases in point. To strengthen the opposition to the domination of the U.S. imperialists in the bourgeois authorities of these countries, the PRC government cannot point to the line of “establishing Socialism”: it points to and promotes the path of multipolarity. It is to be

seen what kind of action the CPC takes at the same time towards the Communist parties in each of these countries and, especially, the imperialist countries. The Soviet government and the CPSU, as long as it was headed by Stalin, advocated and applied the line of “peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems,” which was mainly directed toward mobilizing the popular masses of the imperialist countries against the aggression of the USSR by the imperialist powers, and was combined with mobilizing in each imperialist State the popular masses to establish Socialism in their own country. Through the Communist International, the USSR assumed the role of the world red base of the proletarian revolution (for Socialism and new democracy), promoted the formation of Communist parties in every corner of the world and promoted the transformation (“Bolshevization”) of Communist parties inside imperialist countries and supported the first world wave of the proletarian revolution (1917-1976). Today, the PRC does not play a similar role to that played by the USSR as the world red base of the proletarian revolution; however, the CPC systematically participates in Solidnet (the world largest aggregation of Communist bodies) and is increasingly active in researching and promoting bilateral meetings, seminars and visits to the PRC by delegations of Communist and progressive parties and entities with related publications. The CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) Academy of Marxism systematically organizes international conferences to foster knowledge and dialogue among intellectuals, researchers, and representatives of Communist and leftist parties and organizations from around the world. Since 2012 (thus since the 18th CPC Congress and the election of Xi Jinping), the Academy of Marxism, together with other centers and institutes of the CASS, has intensified its work to study the world’s Communist and workers’ movements, and in 2018 established a research group dedicated specifically to this, which

publishes an annual report on the development of International Communist Movements. We are not aware whether the CPC promotes the knowledge, study and application of Maoism, the developments that Mao Tse-tung brought to Communist science resulting from the summation of the experience of the Chinese revolution and more generally the first wave of the proletarian revolution. They do promote the achievements of the Xi Jinping-led CPC in developing the country’s productive forces, modernizing agriculture and rural areas, protecting the environment, education, fighting corruption, fighting poverty, etc. This in some ways is consistent with the line of multipolarism and probably also stems from the lack of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of Communist parties within imperialist countries.

We certainly have to learn from Chinese Communists, we need to know more and spread knowledge about PRC and the CPC: not because we hope they will “pull our chestnuts out of the fire” but to learn how to promote and direct the Socialist revolution by which we will establish Socialism in our country.

We, communists, are for a world order of peace and cooperation among countries, but for that very reason we must organize, educate and mobilize the popular masses to fight and win the war that pits them against the imperialist bourgeoisie. To expect to succeed not through a series of victorious socialist revolutions that will oust the ruling classes in the imperialist countries from power, but because the PRC and the RF will make a common front with “rogue states” and induce imperialist U.S. and associates to desist from their aggression, is to hope... but “those who live in hope, die in despair”. While proclaiming themselves Marxists, Leninists and Maoists, Communists in imperialist countries who point to multipolarism as the way out of the war, not only throw overboard the foundations of Communist science (“the history of every society that has existed up to this moment, is the history of class struggles”), but also do not

draw lessons from the experience of the first wave of the proletarian revolution (1917-1976) and what followed. “If socialism is not victorious, peace between the capitalist States will be only a truce, an interlude, a time of preparation for a fresh slaughter of the peoples” (For Bread and Peace, Dec. 27, 1917, in Complete Works, vol. 26), Lenin wrote in December 1917, two months after the victory of the Russian Revolution: all subsequent history up to the present has confirmed this. Socialism won, but only in the Tsarist empire, a weak link in the imperialist chain, and the single victorious Socialist revolution in Russia initiated the first world wave of proletarian revolution (a combination of socialist revolutions and revolutions of new democracy). The subsequent world war, a combination of the third aggression of all imperialist groups (including the Vatican) against the Soviet Union and war between imperialist powers and groups, paved the way for the creation of new socialist countries (PRC, DPRK, Eastern European People’s Democracies) and the upheaval of the old colonial system (Vietnam and Indochina, India, Indonesia and Malaysia, the Middle East, Africa), but the bourgeoisie again managed, albeit with difficulty, to maintain its power in the imperialist countries. Instead of hoping for a multi-polar world, Communists in the imperialist countries must ask themselves and understand why the revolution did not win in imperialist countries and draw and implement a line to get to establish Socialism.

One current of the “multipolarists” inside imperialist countries, combining or converging with nostalgics of USSR, sympathizers with the Donbass Republics, anti-fascists and anti-imperialists, are those who count and hope that the military operation initiated by RF will be successful, that the RF will defeat the armed formations of Zelensky’s puppet government and thus hinder NATO plans. We do not know whether the RF will succeed in preventing the extension of the network of NATO military bases and agencies with which the U.S. imperialist groups

seek to contain their economic and financial decline: surely that would be the most beneficial outcome for the popular masses not only in the RF and Ukraine, but throughout Europe and the world.

But how do we Italian Communists work toward this outcome, so as to advance the Socialist revolution in our country? Certainly, it is useful and necessary to publicize the heroic resistance of the people of the Donbass republics against the Azov battalion and other neo-Nazi formations armed by the Kiev regime, to denounce the crimes of the Zelensky government against those republics and against Ukrainian popular masses, to promote solidarity with persecuted Ukrainian Communist Party members along with other political opponents, labor organizations and anti-fascist committees, to denounce the reevaluation of Stepan Bandera and other Ukrainians who collaborated with Hitler’s Nazis. But first of all, we must mobilize every sector of the population, each one with specific operations, to put an end to our country’s participation in the U.S.-NATO war against the RF, leveraging the fact that Italy’s participation in the war is contrary to the immediate interests of the vast majority of the Italian popular masses, and putting an end to it is, at the same time, a struggle to free our country from the U.S. protectorate established since 1948.

We too hope that the government in Kiev—a puppet of the U.S. and NATO and largely composed of Nazi apes—will be swept away. But to this end we must not rely primarily on Putin and the group of oligarchs he heads. At the turn of the century, they rescued the RF from the immediate U.S. colonization on which it had been routed on by Yeltsin and his associated, but no more: it is no coincidence that they waited until 2022 before openly intervening against the pro-Nazi puppet government installed in Kiev in 2014 that was massacring Russian and Ukrainian people. We must rely mainly on Russian proletarians with Communists at their head regaining power in Russia, that is, on the development of class struggle

and the struggle between the two paths (restoration of capitalism or resumption of the transition to communism) in the RF. The same applies to Ukraine. We must keep in mind the role of Ukrainian Communists and consider that in Ukraine the U.S. imperialists have not succeeded in doing what they managed to do in the Baltic republics and Eastern Europe (and had begun to do in the RF with Yeltsin as well): even among the Ukrainian oligarchs there are contrasts, they are not all for submitting to the U.S. imperialists, those who are not in favor of opening up to the U.S. are partly imprisoned, partly abroad and partly standing by to see how the situation will develop. Especially since it is becoming increasingly evident to the Ukrainian popular masses (but also to the oligarchs) that Zelensky and the Kiev authorities have put themselves in the hands of people who are only interested in using the Ukrainian population as cannon fodder against the RF and getting their own hands on the country's resources (rare earths, etc.).

Even among those who call themselves Communists, there are many today who have more faith in the pacification of relations between the U.S. imperialists and the RF thanks to Trump or others, rather than in a new wave of proletarian revolutions. With the ongoing war in Europe, the International Community of the U.S., Zionist and EU imperialist groups aims to extend NATO to Ukraine and the other States that arose in 1991 from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Their war in Europe is combined with their war against the PRC and the DPRK, and the creation of the equivalent of NATO in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean riparian States. On the other hand, going ahead with the war in Ukraine is backfiring on them in various ways and is increasing their internal divisions. It is coalescing countries that oppose their claims (through de-dollarization, BRICS enlargement, etc.). Sanctions against the RF hamper the trade of a part of them, have failed in undermining Putin and his group, and have fed speculators whose cravings have resulted in the widespread increase in

prices of consumer goods, fuels, electricity and gas rates. Inflation, and the measures (raising interest rates) imposed by the FED and ECB to cure it, have combined with anti-popular measures and raised people's outrage and protest. The risk that the current war will lead to the use of tactical if not strategic nuclear weapons increases alarm and opposition to the war. So, it is possible that the U.S. imperialists will conclude that they must cede to the RF the areas it claims and make Zelensky a wealthy exile in the U.S. (or eliminate him). But even then, as Lenin put it, until Socialism wins this will be an armistice, a truce, a preparation for a new massacre of peoples, because for the U.S., Zionist and European imperialist groups and their satellites war is indispensable to maintain their domination over humanity (moreover, with military production, some of them accumulate enormous profits): they cannot do otherwise.

Trump's inauguration and early measures, along with the truce in Gaza, confirm that the contradictions between imperialist groups are sharpening and their power is diminishing. Communists can make use of the opposition of the PRC, the RF and other countries to the world domination of the U.S. imperialists and the contradictions between imperialist groups as long as they work with science and determination for the development of Socialist revolution in their own countries.

The first imperialist country that will break the chains of the International Community of the U.S., Zionist and European imperialist groups, will start the fire that will stop the extension of World War III and liberate the world from the imperialist system. The rebirth of the conscious and organized Communist movement in the imperialist countries is the decisive factor in the future of humanity.

# “Reflection on revolutionary and counterrevolutionary processes in the 20th and 21st centuries” – Case studies Yugoslavia

Aleksandar Đenić | New Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

*This article was published in Cuba at the request of the Cuban comrades and will be posted on ‘the Platform’ in several parts.*

## Introduction

This essay aims to analyze the objective historical circumstances that led to the development of the revolutionary movement in Yugoslavia during the 20th century, as well as the counterrevolutionary processes and their consequences in the former Yugoslavia at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. It is important for all progressive and revolutionary movements to study the history of both revolutions and counterrevolutions, in order to reflect positive and negative experiences. Although understanding the historical context and current material conditions is crucial—since revolution is not a static, but a dynamic process that does not follow universal patterns—certain experiences are significant in building a more just and better world in the future. The topic “Reflections on Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Processes in the 20th and 21st Century—Case Studies of Yugoslavia” could be addressed in volumes of books, but in the following pages, the most important phenomena (and their contradictions) and examples considered key for understanding the processes of revolution and counterrevolution in Yugoslavia will be highlighted.

## Formation of the Serbian State and Political Contradictions during the 19th and 20th Centuries

During the 19th century, a period of national revolutions, the process of creating the Serbian

state began. The medieval Serbian state, which had disappeared during the 15th century, was under the occupation of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. The first Serbian uprising, which broke out in 1804 against the Ottoman Empire, became a key moment in the struggle for the restoration of Serbian statehood. This uprising had a dual character: on the one hand, it was class-based, and on the other, it was national-liberation oriented.

In the 19th century, Serbia was in constant struggle against Ottoman rule and sought to establish functional state institutions. The Principality of Serbia adopted its first constitution in 1835, while at the Berlin Congress in 1878, with international recognition, Serbia became an independent state (it became kingdom in 1882).

## Social Changes and the Emergence of Capitalist Relations

During this period, Serbia was an agrarian and underdeveloped country, where many families lived in extended family households (primitive collective forms of property owned by families that enabled members to survive), and patriarchal forms of society and customary law dominated. By the late 1870s, the first capitalist relations began to develop, with the emergence of manufacturing, trade, and small entrepreneurship, leading to the collapse of traditional family households. At the same time, the first socialist associations began to emerge in Serbia, and one of the pioneers of this movement was Svetozar Marković. He corresponded with Karl Marx and advocated the idea that Serbia could bypass capitalism and directly transition to a socialist form

of social organization based on rural cooperatives.

#### Political and Social Contradictions

The formation of the Serbian state was marked by numerous contradictions. On one hand, great imperialist powers such as Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Germany exerted pressure on Serbia, while Russia and Great Britain had their own political interests in the region. Additional complications arose from the tensions between the newly formed Balkan states: Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and later Albania.

The Serbian bourgeoisie, which was emerging during this period, faced the problem of primitive accumulation of capital, as, unlike the large empires, Serbia did not have colonies. Additionally, political instability caused by the conflict between the Karadžević and Obrenović dynasties, as well as the desire of military circles to control the state, led to numerous internal conflicts.

#### Absolutism and Political Instability

The end of the 19th century was marked by the absolutist rule of King Alexander Obrenović, who suspended the constitution and brutally suppressed workers' uprisings. During the reign of his father, King Milan, Serbia was under the influence of Austria-Hungary. However, in 1903, after the assassination of King Alexander, the Karadžević dynasty took power.

#### Crises in the Balkans and the Collapse of the Balkan League

The early 20th century was marked by a series of international crises. Austria-Hungary imposed sanctions on Serbian trade in 1906, and between 1908 and 1909, a conflict broke out over Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This conflict, known as the Annexation Crisis, involved many European powers and was resolved by the Berlin Agreement of 1909.

The Balkan League, formed in 1912, consisted of Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece. The goal of the alliance was to liberate the Balkans from the Ottoman Empire, which was achieved during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). However, due to disputes over Macedonia, in 1913, a war broke out between Serbia, Greece, and the involvement of Montenegro, Romania, and Turkey against Bulgaria, leading to the collapse of the alliance.

#### Dimitrije Tucović and the Workers' Movement

During this period, Dimitrije Tucović emerged as a leading figure in the workers' movement in Serbia. The Serbian Social Democratic Party became a member of the Second International, and Tucović collaborated with prominent leaders of the international workers' movement, such as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and others. As a prolific theorist, consistent internationalist, and fighter for socialist ideals, Tucović made significant contributions to organizing the workers' movement in Serbia and the Balkans. He advocated for the creation of a Balkan Federation, believing that this would be the most effective form of political and economic organization for the region.

Tucović participated as a soldier in the Balkan Wars, and later in World War I, where he was killed in 1914. He believed that the Balkan region would benefit most from being organized as a federation of independent and autonomous states, based on the principles of equality, solidarity, and a common struggle against imperialism and nationalism. He was a harsh critic of the nationalist policies that dominated the Balkans, believing that the Balkan peoples should unite through a shared struggle for socialist revolution, which would bring political and economic stability to the region.

Tucović advocated for a united fight against external domination and the national divisions that burdened the Balkans. He and the Serbian Social Democratic Party adopted the 19th-century slogan: "The Balkans



belong to the peoples of Balkans,” which still reflects the views of all progressive forces in the Balkan today.

Dimitrije Tucović and the Serbian Social Democratic Party remained consistent with their internationalist principles, even with the outbreak of World War I. At the invitation of Lenin and the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party, they were the only ones, together with the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, to vote against war credits in the National Assembly before the war in 1914. All three parties considered the war imperialistic and believed that social democrats should oppose such wars, in which the working class and peasants become “cannon fodder” for the imperialists. Tucović emphasized that “The rich sent oxen to war, while the poor sent their sons; the capitalist separated a heifer, while the poor mother sent her only son.”

### **World War I and the Establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia**

After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia, which served as the trigger for the outbreak of World War I in 1914. During the early years of the war, Serbia conducted a defensive war (as Lenin emphasized), and after a heroic struggle, the Serbian army was forced to retreat to Greece in 1915. Although it suffered enormous human losses (losing a third of its population), Serbia emerged victorious from the war, presenting itself as the Piedmont of Yugoslavia.

At the end of 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was formed, later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The new state included Southern Slavs who were under Austria-Hungary, as well as independent states such as Serbia and Montenegro. Many Southern Slavs mobilized on the side of Austria-Hungary during the war on the Eastern Front, and took the opportunity to join the Bolsheviks, including Josip Broz Tito.

### **The Situation in Yugoslavia Before World War II**

A large number of White immigrants (opponents of the Russian Revolution) from Russia arrived in Yugoslavia, which only recognized the Soviet Union in 1940. During this period, Yugoslavia was affected by major social problems. In the 1920s, child labor was widespread, and children worked up to 12 hours a day. The average life expectancy was just 45 years, and over 80% of the population lived in extreme poverty. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, illiteracy was high: in Serbia, over 50% of people were illiterate in the 1930s, in Montenegro over 70%, in Macedonia over 80%, in Croatia over 40%, in Slovenia over 20%, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina over 60%.

The health situation was also poor, as the country was affected by malaria and tuberculosis. In Belgrade, between 10-15% of the population was infected with tuberculosis, and the mortality rate was high. Additionally, the number of stillbirths in Yugoslavia ranged from 100 to 150 per 1,000 live births.

### **Agriculture and Economy Before World War II**

Before the outbreak of World War II, Yugoslavia was predominantly an agrarian country. Three-quarters of the working population was engaged in agriculture, while only 10% worked in industry and crafts. The population was mostly rural, and the majority owned small farms. More than 67% of farmers owned less than 5 hectares of land, which hindered productivity. Properties larger than 10 hectares, which accounted for only 12.1%, were able to produce surpluses for the market. One-third of the rural population used wooden plows, which date back to the Neolithic era, as the primary tool for land cultivation. At the pace of changes in agriculture in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the wooden plow would be eradicated in the former Yugoslavia by 2021, thanks to socialist industry during the 1950s.

Yugoslavia’s industry was under the control of foreign capital, and the country served as a source of raw materials for developed capitalist nations. Foreign companies made large profits due to cheap



labor. The oil fields in Yugoslavia were owned by Shell and Standard Oil, which did not exploit them but kept them empty to prevent the development of domestic industry. Bauxite, which Yugoslavia intensively produced, was entirely controlled by foreign companies, and all exports went to Germany. The prices of consumer goods in Yugoslavia were significantly higher than in developed capitalist countries.

### **Revolutionary Movements and the Communist Movement**

The victory of the Great October Revolution in 1917 had a significant impact on the spread of revolutionary ideas in Yugoslavia. In 1918, the Yugoslav Communist Group was formed within the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and the same year, the Communist Party of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established in Russia. Influenced by returnees from the October Revolution and the Hungarian Revolution of 1919, the revolutionary awakening in Yugoslavia grew rapidly.

The 1919 Congress for the Unification of Social Democratic Parties in Belgrade led to the formation of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communists), which adopted the program of the dictatorship of the proletariat and joining the Communist International. At the same time, the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) was formed. At the Second Congress in 1920, the party's first program was adopted, setting the ideological and political foundations and goals of the revolutionary struggle, and the name was changed to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ).

### **Rise and Ban of the KPJ**

In the municipal elections of March and August 1920, the KPJ achieved significant successes, winning many cities, including Belgrade, Zagreb, Osijek, Skopje, and Niš. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly in November of the same year, the KPJ

won 59 seats, becoming the third-largest party by number of representatives. The greatest success was recorded in Montenegro, where the party won 38% of the votes, while in Serbia it won 15%. In Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia, its results were less than 10%. By the summer of 1920, the KPJ had over 65,000 members, while the United Unions under its control had 210,000 members.

The party took power in Belgrade, but the king prohibited the formation of the city government. King Alexander, considering the KPJ a serious threat, accused the party of preparing a coup d'état, using conflicts in miner strikes in Bosnia and Slovenia as a pretext to issue the "Obznana" (Announcement), which banned all communist and union activities. After the adoption of the new constitution on August 2, 1921, the Assembly passed the "Law on the Protection of the State," declaring communist activity a criminal offense, thus effectively banning the KPJ and the unions.

In the summer of 1921, the arrest of KPJ members seriously weakened the party. At that time, the KPJ had three leaderships: one was in prison, another in hiding, and the third in Vienna. Friction emerged between the left and right factions, particularly regarding the national question and the state organization. At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, the KPJ's policy of neglecting class struggle in favor of elections was criticized. Belgrade was the center of the right faction, while Zagreb was the center of the left.

In 1923, the KPJ founded the Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (NRPJ), aiming for legal activity. The NRPJ laid down its basic positions regarding the national question and, at the Third National Conference, criticized Serbian hegemony in the Kingdom of SHS. In January 1924, the KPJ adopted a left-wing stance, despite divisions within its leadership. In July 1924, the NRPJ supported the right to self-determination of the nations of Yugoslavia, alongside a fight against Serbian chauvinism. The

KPJ believed that the proper response was the creation of a Balkan Federation. Due to increased activity, the NRPJ was soon banned.

Thanks to Moscow, a brief reconciliation within the party occurred in 1926. However, conflicts continued. After a new conflict over the national question in 1927, the Comintern attempted to form a parallel center for the KPJ in Moscow.

Georgi Dimitrov, an official of the Comintern, regarding the factional struggle within the KPJ, noted that “the leadership apparatus of the party was practically divided into two parts, based on two points – cities X and Z (Belgrade and Zagreb), which were in mutual conflict.” Another prominent Comintern official, Heinrich Hemele, commented: “At the top of the factional struggles are intellectuals who passionately and fanatically fight each other, disregarding the interests of the party and the working class, considering the communist movement solely as a means to achieve their personal positions. It is precisely these intellectual convictions about the essence of the ‘party leader’ that are the cause of the factional struggles.” Palmiro Togliatti, the head of the Italian Communists and a Comintern delegate, speaking at the Fourth Congress of the KPJ in Dresden against the views of the right-wing faction, stated: “Factionalism has much deeper roots, much deeper causes. Like opportunism, it implies the influence of the ruling class within our ranks.”

### **Fractional Struggles and Tito’s Resolution**

The Eighth Party Conference in Zagreb, 1928, was crucial for overcoming factionalism within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ). Tito’s resolution was adopted, condemning both factions and calling for the restoration of discipline, which received widespread support, and the Comintern confirmed its significance. During the same period, instructors were sent to Yugoslavia to assist in implementing the new directives. The Fourth Congress of the KPJ, held in November 1928 in

Dresden, condemned the factions and emphasized the possibility of revolutionary changes in Yugoslavia, advocating for its dissolution and considering Yugoslavia as a prison of nations, with the possibility of its voluntary unification. The Comintern regarded Yugoslavia as an artificial creation of imperialists, and at that time, it was one of the largest anti-Soviet countries in Europe with a hostile policy towards the first socialist state. The number of Party members decreased from 60,000 to fewer than 1,000 active members.

### **Dictatorship and Armed Resistance in Yugoslavia (1929-1940)**

The political crisis following the assassination in the Parliament in 1929 allowed King Alexander to carry out a coup, abolish the 1921 Constitution, and establish a dictatorship. This move triggered repression against left-wing movements, and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) called for armed resistance.

In the first half of 1929, communists clashed with the police, attempting to incite an uprising through small armed struggles. However, these actions met with brutal retaliation, during which many KPJ leaders were killed or arrested. Due to the repression, the number of KPJ members drastically declined, and serious disagreements broke out within the Party. Criticism was directed at the leaders, leading to changes in the leadership, and the Comintern took the initiative in an attempt to rebuild the organization. Despite all the difficulties, the KPJ transformed into a small but disciplined underground organization, based on a strong code of sacrifice and mutual solidarity.

### **Support for National Revolutionaries and the Struggle Against Fascism**

In July 1932, the Comintern instructed Yugoslav communists to support the “national revolutionaries” in Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

During this period, Hitler's rise became the greatest threat to the communist movement, prompting the Comintern to halt its struggle against social democracy and focus on fighting fascism.

At the Fourth National Conference in 1934, the KPJ adopted a Resolution on the National Question, calling for the peaceful reorganization of Yugoslavia based on national equality. By mid-1935, the Party had about 3,000 members. However, the regime intensified its persecution, and by March 1936, as a result of a police crackdown, 950 KPJ members, including part of the leadership, were arrested. During these years, the KPJ succeeded in organizing a large number of student demonstrations for better material conditions and against fascism, thereby attracting progressive youth. It also managed to organize numerous workers' strikes during this period through its cadres in the unions.

The KPJ adopted the policy of the popular front and condemned fascism as the greatest threat, while the Ustase (Croatian fascists), under the influence of Italy and Germany, developed an anti-communist ideology. In 1937, the KPJ condemned fascist attempts to create an independent Croatia, warning that it would lead to a new occupation under Rome and Berlin. During this period, the KPJ changed its policy towards Yugoslavia, as its unity was seen as important for the fight against Nazism, which had become the greatest threat to the USSR, communists, and progressive humanity.

### **Support for the Spanish Republic and the Purge in the Soviet Union**

The struggle of the Spanish people became crucial not only for democracy in Spain but also for the global conflict between fascism and humanity. The KPJ actively supported the Republican Spain in its fight against fascists. Following a call from the Comintern, a significant number of KPJ members joined the fight, with Paris becoming the main center for recruitment. In Spain, 1,700 Yugoslav fighters

participated, of whom 700 were killed, and most of the others fled to France after Franco's army victory. The Spanish conflicts of 1936 and 1937 became a central issue for the KPJ, with Yugoslav anti-fascist volunteers illegally going to Spain, often facing obstruction from the Yugoslav government.

At the same time, during the Great Purge in the Soviet Union in 1937, between 600 and 700 KPJ members were killed, including many founders and almost the entire previous leadership. Former general secretaries Filip Filipović, Sima Marković, Đuro Cvijić, Jovan Mališić, and Milan Gorkić were shot in Moscow. Among the victims were numerous members of the Central Committee and the Politburo.

### **Tito at the Helm of the KPJ**

After the elimination of the previous leadership, Josip Broz Tito was appointed by the Comintern as General Secretary of the KPJ in 1937. In October 1940, the Fifth National Conference of the KPJ was held, confirming the new leadership with Tito at the helm. Under his leadership, the membership of the KPJ grew from 1,500 in 1937 to 7,000 by the end of 1940. The communists, during their illegal activities, sought ways to legalize themselves and participate in elections, while fascist groups, though marginal, were allowed to participate in elections.

### **Yugoslav Role in the Context of Surrendering Europe to Hitler**

#### **1) Industrial Strength of the Soviet Union**

After World War I and the introduction of five-year plans in the USSR, the Soviet Union became dominant in heavy industry in Europe. By 1935, the USSR had taken second place in global industry, which posed a threat to the British and French colonial system, as the USSR supported decolonization. During this period, Soviet industrialization became a key point of conflict with imperialist powers, primarily Great Britain and France.

#### **2) British and French Policies Towards Germany**

In the mid-1930s, as the potential of the USSR grew, a policy emerged in Britain and France that allowed Nazi Germany to remilitarize. For France and Britain, which controlled vast colonial territories, the threat posed by Soviet industrialization was considered much greater than the potential danger from Nazi Germany. The Versailles system, as an imperialist order, was becoming increasingly dysfunctional, and the radical shift in policy led to indirect approval of German rearmament, which became a crucial factor in the later conflict.

### **3) Assassinations of Barthou and King Alexander**

The assassination of French politician Louis Barthou and Yugoslav King Alexander in Marseille in 1934 laid the groundwork for dramatic changes in foreign policy directions. Louis Barthou had been a key proponent of the French-Soviet pact, so his murder paved the way for political changes in France. In Yugoslavia, following the assassination, there was a change of government, with Prince Paul and Milan Stojadinović taking power, steering the country's policy towards Nazi Germany and Italy, while the collapse of the Little Entente seemed inevitable. In the context of manipulation, at the moment when the People's Front took power in Spain, an aircraft from Great Britain arrived, which transferred Franco to Africa to command African units against the People's Front government. In Yugoslavia, although Bogoljub Jevtić won the elections, the British (Neville Henderson) brought Stojadinović to power, and in Romania, the regime of Titulescu fell.

### **4) Remilitarization of Germany**

The remilitarization of Germany was no secret operation. Under the 1935 agreement with Great Britain, Germany was allowed to rebuild its navy, and France and Great Britain tacitly allowed Germany to reinstate general military conscription. Germany had 100,000 soldiers and could mobilize 300,000 people under arms, whereas France could mobilize 4 million. Therefore, those who claim that Hitler deceived anyone by introducing general conscription

(which cannot be hidden) or secretly rearmed are insulting intelligence. By 1935, Germany, with the consent of France and Great Britain, began to rebuild its army and navy, violating the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. Although French and British officials were aware of this, they did not act. Given the weakness of the Versailles system, it was clear that European imperialists, in their fear of the growth of the USSR, increasingly tolerated the strengthening of Nazi Germany.

### **5) The USSR and Joining the League of Nations**

The Soviet Union joined the League of Nations with the aim of ensuring the status quo and utilizing its industrial advantage, as no neighboring country (such as Poland, the Baltic States, or Japan) could threaten the USSR. Although the Soviets sought stability and to protect their borders, the Western powers were reluctant to form alliances with them due to their imperialistic nature.

### **6) Assistance of Great Britain and France to Nazi Germany**

France, with the consent of Great Britain, tacitly approved the remilitarization of the Rhineland, which was crucial for Hitler's broader political strategy. During this period, Germany increasingly relied on diplomatic negotiations with elites in France and Britain, which allowed the Nazi regime to expand without significant obstacles.

### **7) Annexation of Austria**

The annexation of Austria in 1938 met little resistance from Great Britain and France, despite the fact that half of the Austrian population was opposed to Hitler. This move allowed Germany to seize significant resources and lay the foundation for expansion to the East.

### **8) Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia**

Czechoslovakia, with an army of a million soldiers and strong fortifications, was capable of resisting Nazi Germany. However, in 1938, at the Munich Conference, Britain and France decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia, not to preserve peace in Europe,

but to direct Nazi Germany towards the East. At that moment, the only ally was the USSR, while other European countries aligned with Hitler allowed his expansion eastward. Nazi Germany directly fought against Czechoslovakia, and indirectly, Italy, France, Britain, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia were involved. The Munich Agreement, signed between Britain, France, and Nazi Germany, led to the collapse of the collective security system. This capitulation opened the way for Hitler to the East.

#### **9) The Role of Yugoslavia in the Fall of Czechoslovakia**

Since 1936, the authorities in Yugoslavia had been pursuing a pro-fascist foreign policy. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was not neutral; it was decisively positioned against Titulescu's initiative to create a Soviet corridor to aid Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack in 1936, thus aligning itself with Germany. This was not done to avoid war, as no war was near Yugoslav borders in 1936. With the fall of Titulescu, fascists came to power in Romania, followed by Antonescu. The Polish authorities, in cooperation with Hitler, insisted on the partition of Czechoslovakia, while Britain and France threatened Edvard Beneš in Czechoslovakia with war if he accepted aid from the USSR. The calculation during this period was simple: a) If Europe, or at least part of it, stood by Czechoslovakia, Hitler would be stopped, and no one could attack the Soviets, as they would become a superpower and begin decolonization; b) Force Czechoslovakia to capitulate and open the way for Hitler to the East, as he would take over their weapons industry. Unfortunately, under these pressures, Czechoslovakia capitulated. If Czechoslovakia had resisted for another month, the situation in Europe would have been completely different.

It is important to note that Regent Prince Paul Karađorđević, along with the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Stojadinović, was strongly pro-German and pro-Italian at that time, in line with British

policy. Their rise to power was a result of British support, particularly from Neville Henderson, but this fact is deliberately suppressed in contemporary Serbian historiography. Yugoslavia, through the Little Entente (Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia) and the Balkan Pact, expanded its influence over a large territory of Europe, while Nazi Germany used Yugoslavia to destroy the Little Entente. These instructions were set as early as 1926, during the Weimar Republic. During the crisis in the Sudetenland, 100,000 volunteers in Yugoslavia offered to help Czechoslovakia, and mass demonstrations were organized, which Prince Paul and Milan Stojadinović brutally suppressed.

#### **10) Poland and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact**

The Polish government did not believe that it would be abandoned by Britain and France. They thought that, with the help of the Allies, they could resist Hitler with 110 divisions. Generals Westphal and Jodl, in their memoirs, state that, with an Allied attack consisting of 110 divisions and 4,000 tanks, against 23 German divisions without tanks, the Nazis would have been defeated in Poland.

European governments were not anti-fascist, as most European countries sided with Hitler, while the only ally of Czechoslovakia remained the Soviet Union. However, during the Munich Agreement of 1938, the formal alliance between France and the USSR dissolved, as it became evident that no European country, except the Soviet Union, supported Czechoslovakia. France and Britain were not willing to form an anti-Hitler coalition with the USSR. Before the Nazis attacked the Sudetenland, the Soviet Union asked Poland to allow the passage of the Red Army to prevent the attack, but Poland refused.

In July 1939, the Soviets made one last attempt to form an alliance with Britain and France against Nazi Germany, but they sent a lower-ranking delegation to Moscow. Faced with this development, the Soviet leadership replaced Litvinov, who was unsuitable for an agreement with Nazi Germany due to his Jewish

background, and appointed Molotov in his place. Soviet plans were not final, as they depended on further developments on the ground. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact allowed the Soviets to regain territories lost in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of 1918 and delayed the war by 1.5 days (although the Soviets initially intended to delay the war by six months).

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, the USSR did not intervene immediately. They waited to see the outcome. Poland expected that Britain and France would enter the war and attack Germany, which would lead to Hitler's capitulation. However, the Soviets knew that the Western powers would sacrifice Poland to secure a common border between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the USSR only intervened on September 17, when two-thirds of the Polish army had already been destroyed and the Polish leadership had fled. Had the USSR not reacted, the border with Nazi Germany would have been even farther east. The Allies, despite their superiority, took almost no action.

### **11) Germany's Resource Shortages**

In 1939, Hitler was resource-wise far weaker than the USSR. At the periphery, during the war with Poland, the Luftwaffe lost 25-30% of its aviation, and the tank units lost 650 out of 2,800 tanks (because most of them were light tanks, barely stronger than tankettes), which was a significant loss in just three weeks of active warfare. Of course, a lightning victory was achieved, but it clearly highlights the overall potential of the German military at that time.

### **12) France and Czechoslovakia's Mechanization on the Eastern Front**

The vast majority of Germany's motor pool was based on technologies that were borrowed from France and Czechoslovakia. In fact, 80% of the German motor pool during Operation Barbarossa was of French and Czech origin. The way France was betrayed (surrendered) and how the Maginot Line was breached goes beyond the scope of this

discussion for now.

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) during the War 1941 – 1945

Yugoslavia's Accession to the Axis Pact and the Military Coup

On March 25, 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia joined the Axis Pact, which sparked outrage among the citizens, leading to mass demonstrations. In response, on March 27, 1941, a military coup was carried out by pro-British officers of the Yugoslav Army, led by General Borivoje Mirković. The coup plotters overthrew the three-member royal regency and the Cvetković-Maček government. The Serbian Orthodox Church and other organizations played a key role in supporting the coup. The KPJ also participated in the demonstrations and had a significant role. These events clearly showed the public's unwillingness to ally with the Nazis and fascists.

After the coup, power shifted to the hands of the minor King Peter II, and a new government was formed under General Dušan Simović. The decision to withdraw from the Axis Pact delayed the German invasion of the Soviet Union by 38 days, shifting it from May 15 to June 22, 1941. This event is pivotal in the history of Yugoslavia and Serbia, as it is considered the beginning of the resistance to fascism in World War II.

# Marking Three Years of War in Ukraine

**Dimitrios Patelis** | Revolutionary Unification (Greece)

It is now three years since the start of Russia's "Special Military Operation" (SMO) in Ukraine.

On the Russian side, the operation was preceded by the dispatch and publication of two draft agreements on 17 December 2021: a bilateral one with the US and a collective one with NATO. With these ultimatums, the Russian leadership categorically demanded the signing of agreements on mutual security guarantees in Europe in the form of legally binding texts. They drew a "red line" beyond which they stated they had no intention of retreating.

The ultimatums concerned the non-expansion of NATO eastwards, the non-inclusion of post-Soviet countries in NATO, and the non-signing of military cooperation agreements with them, the cessation of exercises near the Russian border involving scenarios of nuclear strikes and of the involvement of forces larger than a brigade, the non-deployment and withdrawal of medium and long-range missiles and launchers from countries close to Russia, as well as the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons deployed in NATO countries (e.g. in Turkey and Germany).

The publication of these ultimatums was indicative of the rising escalation, the climate of open mistrust towards the Euro-Atlantic axis led by the USA on the Russian side.

It was a move aimed at compelling the "collective West" to participate in an international public dialogue on the pivotal issues of global collective security, beyond the well-trodden path of the arrogant unilateral decision-making by the power claiming to be a planetary hegemon (with subservient instruments like the government of Greece) and the creation of *faits accomplis* against Russia and other countries.

Following the counter-revolution and the dissolution

of the USSR and the European countries of early socialism, the USA, NATO, and the EU pursued an openly aggressive policy of dissolution, subjugation, and total control of all these countries. A policy of hostile encirclement of the largest and richest state formation in the post-Soviet space, with the declared intention of complete subjugation and fragmentation of Russia itself.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Western leaders, intoxicated by their bloodless victory in the Cold War, treated—and in many cases still treat—the post-Soviet space and its people as prey, considering it "normal" to deceive the USSR under Gorbachev and go back on their commitment not to expand NATO. They have proceeded to systematically humiliate the peoples (especially the Russian people under the presidency of the wretched drunkard/clown Yeltsin), carry out successive coup/regime change attempts, plunder their national wealth, etc.

Since then, there have been tectonic shifts in the international balance of power, with the capitalist West in a process of rather irreversible decay and retreat. The disorderly and shameful flight of the USA and its allies from Afghanistan, the failure to impose regime change in Belarus and Kazakhstan, against the background of the steady transformation of the People's Republic of China into a global superpower and the rapid progress of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in defence technology, were now indicative elements of these changes.

The *de facto* alliance between the People's Republic of China and Russia, with the latter having developed technologically new weapons systems of "asymmetric" superiority based on the inherited Soviet military-industrial complex, led the Russian leadership to declare "so far and no further". Then

the weapons would do the talking.

These were ultimatums that the Russian leadership effectively also set for themselves: any retreat from the “red line” would mean another catastrophic self-humiliation with international consequences. The Russian leadership showed that 32 years after the counterrevolution/capitalist restoration in the USSR, they were for the first time publicly and imperatively setting terms for guarantees and collective security that did not concern only themselves as a sovereign state entity. They concerned Europe and the planet, the very preservation of life on earth.

At the end of January 2022, the US sent a reply to the ultimatums, asking the Russians not to publish it. American “leaks” revealed that they rejected Russian demands for no further NATO eastward expansion and security guarantees, while proposing some abstract “measures of mutual arms monitoring and consultation” for discussion. They reiterated their insistence on the “open door policy” for further NATO expansion, considering it “the sovereign right of Ukraine and any country to join NATO”...

The US had over 800 military bases in over 80 countries (about 600 around the People’s Republic of China, Russia, Iran) and over 175,000 military personnel (over 60,000 in Europe). Since World War II, they have fought in more than 84 wars and military interventions, instigated hundreds of coups and “regime change” operations. However, they have orchestrated a propagandistic hysteria about the “aggressiveness of authoritarian Russia” which would attack the poor “democratic Ukraine”, i.e. the fascist junta in Kiev and elsewhere.

Since 1 March 2018, Putin announced the production of superweapons based on new technologies, such as the Burevestnik nuclear powered missile, the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, the Kinzhal hypersonic missile, the Peresvet laser weapon and the new Poseidon unmanned underwater vehicle, carrier of nuclear warheads. From the end of 2021,

successful test launches of Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles (ten times the speed of sound) from surface ships and submarines were carried out. These missiles do not reach the hypersonic speeds of ballistic missiles as they descend from the stratosphere, but follow a variable course at low altitude, making them undetectable to radiolocation.

These weapons systems, which are essentially a continuation of the plans, infrastructure and programmes of the Soviet Union, can hit almost any point on the planet, bypassing the US-NATO missile defence shield.

The dense network of military bases and installations around the world and the floating power projection platforms based on aircraft carriers suddenly become easy targets for technologically superior and unstoppable superweapons! The same applies to their headquarters, decision-making and coordination centres, even on their own soil. All this, provided that automated systems of mass retaliatory nuclear strikes are not activated on both sides.

Similar programmes, some in cooperation with Russia, are being developed by the People’s Republic of China, whose navy is now clearly superior in quantity and quality to that of the US. Hypersonic missile systems and similar weapons are also being developed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iran and India.

An alternative pole to the Euro-Atlantic axis is rising steadily, led by the two great countries whose current form was shaped by the two greatest early socialist revolutions of the 20th century: Russia and China. The former, now capitalist, thanks to the heritage of the USSR and acquired speed, has the military power of a superpower capable of obliterating the planet. The latter, under the central scientific planning of its unique form of early socialism, has a complex and extroverted mixed economic system that is steadily transforming its economic-political superiority into military superiority.

The Xi-Putin Joint Declaration (a long-developed



text published in early 2022) attempts to define the principles of a post-Euro-Atlantic, alternative pole with global claims.

On 22 February 2022, V. Putin recognised the independence of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk (Donbass region), born out of the armed popular uprising against the Kiev junta imposed on 22 February 2014 using fascist nationalists as a strike force, with the full support and guidance of the USA-NATO-EU.

The Kiev junta declared the Nazi collaborators as “national heroes/liberators”, the Soviet period as “Russian occupation” and proceeded with the violent “Ukrainisation” of the multinational population of the country, with the “decommunisation and de-Sovietisation” of society, with systemic anti-Russianism, with the prohibition of any other language (Russian, Hungarian, Greek, etc., since 65% of the population of the country is Russian-speaking) and ideology.

Uprising was the only way for those who did not want to embrace fascism, to renounce their language, culture and history for the sake of the fascist imposition of “belonging to the West”.

The rebels of the Donbass region formed armed partisan militias while raising slogans and demands of anti-fascist to socialist content against the brutal foreign imperialist intervention of the USA-NATO-EU and the predatory oligarchy of capital that established its parasitic action after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This popular army wrote brilliant pages of heroism, seized the initiative on the battlefields and advanced victoriously towards the strategic port of Mariupol and other directions. The advance was halted by the Russian leadership, which was deeply concerned about an armed workers' uprising of their compatriots with a socialist orientation and dragged them into the infamous Minsk-2 agreement.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Kremlin leadership, fearing a Soviet-inspired armed uprising on its doorstep, rushed to trap

the People's Republics in the wretched “Minsk Agreements”, condemning them to eight years of slow death and ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Nazis and the Ukrainian army, newly reorganised by the USA, NATO and the EU.

The “Minsk Agreements”, by the admission of A. Merkel and other EU leaders, were made to give the USA-NATO-EU axis time to arm and prepare the Nazi regime in Kiev for the total extermination of the Donbass people and a blow against Russia. For 8 years, these People's Republics, with a population of about 4,000,000 (800,000 Russian citizens), despite having decided by referendum with an overwhelming majority to join the Russian Federation like Crimea, have been left in isolation, guarding about 1/3 of their territory, exposed to the bloody blows of fascist death battalions, mercenaries, and the Ukrainian army, while the most radical rebel leaders have been mysteriously eliminated. For 8 years, while the people of Donbass were exposed to genocide, the Russian authorities called the rebels “self-proclaimed” republics...

Their recognition came late and was done in a calculated way, at a moment of escalation of the turmoil caused by the Russian ultimatums (on security architecture), as the first practical, political, and military step of decisive enforcement.

It was preceded by the recognition of the Republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, after the war with the US-backed government of Georgia (8 August 2008).

However, in the relevant speech, Putin, in a crescendo of extreme anti-Sovietism/anti-communism, promised among other things “to show Ukraine what real decommunisation means,” implying a clear intention to cancel, suppress, and eliminate any trace of revolutionary content in these republics, and in Russia.

On the orders of President Putin, the SMO began in Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

The West, in its effort to avoid the major issue of the global security architecture raised by Russia

with the ultimatums of 15 December 2021, with a propaganda campaign of unprecedented scale and intensity, accompanied by provocations (bombing of the two People's Republics by the Ukrainian army), dragged Russia—as the protector of its compatriots there—into a military operation on the smaller scale in Ukraine, certain that Russia would be defeated, or at least beaten to such an extent that it would lead to internal turmoil and regime change.

The Russian leadership was forced to engage in this escalation because they understood that:

1. they would soon face the fate of Saddam and Gaddafi if they continued giving in
2. the retreat of the Euro-Atlantic axis under the USA in the global balance of power is clear, and
3. the massive rise of a new pole, led by the People's Republic of China, whose economic power has not yet been matched by corresponding political-military assets (apart from the clear superiority of its navy, etc.).
4. today's Russia, using the inherited Soviet military arsenal, has for the time being achieved a clear asymmetric superiority in certain super-weapons, while
5. the crude policy of US-Euro-Atlanticism has pushed it into the arms of the People's Republic of China, giving impetus to the formation of a de facto anti-imperialist pole.

The Russian leadership proceeded with the SMO, with rapid and bold initial deep operations: on the northern front towards Kiev, on the northeastern front towards Chernigov, on the southeastern front towards the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and on the southern front, from the Crimea.

On 25 February, Russian military units reached the greater Kiev area and captured the strategic Gostomel (or Antonov) airport just outside Kiev.

Within a short time, however, the Russian leadership made it clear that they were not conducting operations with a clear strategic plan, but with other priorities, openly declaring their readiness

for contacts, negotiations and compromise with the West. Official negotiations began immediately, on 28 February in Belarus! They escalated in Istanbul on 29 March 2022, with the Russian delegation headed by the former Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky and with the provocative presence of the well-known capitalist oligarch Roman Abramovich!

Despite reaching a framework of compromise (“Basic Provisions of the Treaty on Security Guarantees for Ukraine”) which was initialled by the two delegations, on the orders of the then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the Ukrainian side refused to negotiate and was ordered to fight to the end!

The war continues with unabated intensity and hundreds of thousands of deaths. The details of the military operations require special research.

This war is radically different from the First and Second World Wars. In the World Anti-imperialist Platform, we have highlighted its socio-economic and ideological-political content and stakes.

Special research is also required at the purely operational, technological and organisational level of the war. It is the most network-centric war in history, with the use of artificial intelligence, telematics, satellite support, elements of electronic warfare, radar and remote-controlled or autonomous robotic applications (airborne, swarm, land, sea and underwater), fibre optics, etc., to an extent that radically changes both the conduct of conventional war and the degree and level of international cooperation of the belligerents.

On the imperialist side, the Ukrainian armed forces have been transformed into the most capable Euro-Atlantic war machine, formally outside NATO. On the other side, there is an unprecedented direct or indirect international cooperation (with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, the People's Republic of China, etc.).

It is a fact that since the beginning of the SMO there have been many changes in the global balance of power, not only in the Ukrainian theatre of

operations. There has been a series of attacks, counterattacks and retreats.

None of this was a game on paper. They cost tens of thousands of lives. After each retreat of the Russian forces, the USA-NATO-EU fascist forces in Ukraine carried out mass killings of the local population, accusing them of “collaborating with the occupier/invader”, organised provocative actions with the display of transported corpses (as in Bucha), etc.

On 6 August 2024, the Ukrainian armed forces invaded the Kursk region of Russia, part of which they still occupy, and committed atrocities.

In a recent interview, Putin stated that in March 2022 he withdrew the armed forces of the Russian Federation that were outside Kiev, in Kharkov, etc., because the Western partners told him that “Ukraine cannot sign a peace agreement with a gun to its head”! Circles of the political leadership of the newly formed bourgeoisie in Russia seem to be preparing new secret deals with Trump, who, according to Putin in the same interview, “will put things in order”!

As many military analysts have noted, the political leadership of the capitalist class in Russia are dragging themselves into a long war of attrition/genocide for all but operational reasons. What it seems to be prioritising is the acquisition of some new “bargaining chip”...

It is clear that circles of the Russian leadership always have in mind the quickest restoration of the “order of things” inscribed in their DNA: that of the comprador mediator selling off everything that the Soviet people achieved with sweat and blood. In the same interview, Putin declared: “We are not against the use of the dollar in our transactions”!

Meanwhile, the propaganda mechanisms in Moscow are singing new praises to Trump, Orban, the AfD and the entire far right international, spreading illusions that this clique will “find common ground with Russia and put things in order”...

The change of leadership in the USA marks a shift in the priorities of the American financial oligarchy

for the further escalation of WWII. The basic slogan of the “new” leadership “Make America Great Again” does not accidentally resemble Hitler’s “Germany above all!”.

WWII did not start yesterday and will not end tomorrow. As we have shown through our analyses in the World Anti-Imperialist Platform, the unresolved contradictions that led to its escalation have been left open, while new deeper ones are coming to the surface.

The actors of the axis of aggression, based on their interests and propaganda objectives, want to impose the view that the Great War allegedly started on 24 February 2022 “due to Russian aggression and the invasion of Ukraine”. Others believe that the war in Ukraine started with the events of the 2014 armed imperialist coup in Kiev.

I believe that a more thorough and comprehensive approach makes it clear that the Third Hot World War began with the end of the “Cold War,” with the escalation of bourgeois counterrevolution and capitalist restoration in the USSR and the countries of early socialism in Europe, with the infamous “1st Gulf War,” the imperialist armed campaign of 1990-1991 waged by a military coalition of 39 countries in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It escalated with the imperialist wars for the dissolution of Yugoslavia, with the “War on Terror” & the “2nd Gulf War”, with the USA-NATO-EU invasion of Afghanistan, with the “Arab Springs”, etc. The Russian SMO, the genocide in Palestine, the conquest of Syria “by proxy” by instruments of the USA-NATO-EU, Turkey and Israel, the attack on Hezbollah, Lebanon and Yemen, the strengthening of the positions of the imperialist axis (through Turkey and Israel) in Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Armenia), the preparations for an attack and regime change in Iran, the escalation of tensions in the Korean peninsula and Taiwan, the expulsion of the imperialist military presence from the “Sahel zone” in Africa, etc., are elements of the escalation and not

of the de-escalation of the war.

The “Trump initiatives” and the consequent strengthening of the “far right international”, despite the illusions, do not aim at peace, but at the escalation of the war for the restoration and imposition of the dominance of the imperialist axis led by the USA. The return of Trump does not signify a “revolution against the deep state”, but a complete authoritarian restructuring/re-establishment of all state, transnational and deep state institutions, that have proved to be too corrupt and ineffective to further escalate WWII at the behest and need of the oligarchy. If, for example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is vilified and exposed, this is not to punish its contribution to coups, regime changes, takeovers of parties, politicians, the media, etc., but on the contrary, because it has proved ineffective in this position and role during the new phase of WWII.

The real reason for this purge and restructuring concerns the violent achievement of an effective state, deep state and transnational machine of the axis led by the USA in WWII! The bureaucratized machine of this system has dead weights, holdover practices from the “Cold War” era, which make it highly inadequate & ineffective at the new level of escalation of the Axis’ aggressiveness. In other words, what the most aggressive circles of the US axis financial oligarchy need is a truly lethally effective, ruthless mechanism of transnational monopoly imposition, operationally capable of instant initiatives and asymmetric, unpredictable blows!

In general, it seems that the possibilities of waging war mainly “by proxy” have been exhausted. It has also become clear to the Trump leadership that the initial ambitions to defeat and disintegrate Russia have proved fruitless. Thus, the tactic of temptation, bribery and general co-opting of the Russian leadership is coming back to the fore, with the ultimate objective of undermining and dissolving the pole of the forces of socialism and anti-imperialism.

At the heart of this approach is a direct attack on the People’s Republic of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Iran.

This option is also supported by the escalation of the economic war, the weakening of the dollar as the international reserve currency, the pursuit of the re-industrialisation of the USA with the cannibalistic de-industrialisation of the EU, the shrinking of the possibilities of parasitism, manipulation and super-exploitation through the dominance of virtual capital.

The state of emergency of the axis led by the USA is also exacerbated by the now evident superiority of the People’s Republic of China in the pioneering fields of scientific research and technology: artificial intelligence, microelectronics, aerospace, robotics, nuclear energy, nuclear fusion, computer architecture, nanotechnology, etc. These trends, which arise as a result of the advantages of socialist scientific planning, undermine the strategic planning on which imperialism is structured and operates to this day: the extraction of surplus value through neo-colonial forms of super-profits based on the combination of the dominance of the financial oligarchy over virtual capital with exclusive rights to strategic technology/knowledge (“technological rent”), the projection and imposition of political and military power, etc.

This progress of early socialism, together with the results of the escalation of WWII, creates the conditions for accelerating the development of humanity in the direction of anti-imperialism and socialist revolution, bringing closer the possibility and necessity of completing the cycle of the early socialist revolutions and the transition to the late socialist revolutions, to the extent that imperialism will continue to weaken and suffer defeat.

Hence the regressive trend towards annexations (Canada, Greenland, Mexico, Panama, etc.) and direct control of strategic natural resources and arteries.

WWII makes it increasingly clear that—within

the imperialist axis led by the USA—the EU, as the “economic & political limb of NATO Europe”, is breathing its last. Fascisation and a total police/military state is becoming the only way forward for its financial oligarchy, always in a position of subservience to the USA. The EU’s ambitions for autonomous military power are rather unattainable in the near future. Many subordinates of the axis will promote this fascisation as an “existential imperative to transform the EU into the UNITED STATES OF EUROPE”! This is a highly reactionary utopia, as Lenin showed.

It is clear that an escalation and qualitative upgrade of WWII in scope, depth and intensity is imminent. The war will last long, and the battles will be hard. The tasks of the progressive forces with the communists at the vanguard are of vital importance for humanity.

The position and role of the World Anti-imperialist Platform is irreplaceable in the struggle for:

- the coordination and development of the frontal anti-imperialist movement,
- the dismantling of distracting and disorienting ideologies and practices, and
- the reorganisation and development of the communist forces.

## Notes

[1] As evident through the 21 June 2022 briefing of the Helsinki commission, the Forum of the Free Peoples of Russia in 22-24 July 2022 in Prague, and the “Free Nations of PostRussia Forum’s “Declaration for the Decolonization of the so-called Russian Federation.”, stating that Russia is a terrorist country!

[2] See also: 10 years since the heroic Donbass uprising. D. Patelis. Platform № 13, June 2024, p. 3-10

# Obituary: Harpal Singh Brar, 1939-2025

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

*Harpal Singh Brar (5 October 1939-25 January 2025). Leading British and Indian communist, historian, revolutionary teacher and Marxist-Leninist theoretician. Founding chairman of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist).*

Harpal Singh Brar died at 10.10am Indian time (4.40am UK time) on 25 January 2025, at 85 years of age. He was at the home of his nephew Manpreet Singh Badal, in Chandigarh, India. His close comrade and leader of the CPGB-ML Ella Rule, as well as his daughter Joti, and sons Ranjeet and Carlos were with him. He leaves us bowed in grief. But we are grateful to have been part of his deeply meaningful life and work. Truly we can say that he shed light on our path. And that the struggle to which he dedicated his life will continue.

Harpal was cremated the same evening, in his ancestral village and the place of his birth, Fattanwala, near the town of Muktsar, in the state of Punjab. The entire village and many people from surrounding villages and towns attended, as did many members of Harpal's Punjabi family and contacts from his original life. It is hard to think of him as a horse-riding, crop-raising Punjabi farmer, but those were his roots before he journeyed to the metropolis to study for a master's degree in law at University College London, where he would meet and marry his wife, Maysel Kathleen Sharp, become a communist, find his lifelong friends and comrades and discover his true calling—to work for the liberation of mankind.

Harpal was a beautiful human being, loved by those who knew him and particularly by all who shared his struggle and his cause. He was a passionate, charming and charismatic man, full of generosity, humour and

joy, with great loyalty and affection for his comrades, friends and family, and a deep love for the working masses. Harpal was a fiery and powerful orator, who both educated and raised the temper of his audience, and hundreds of workers and revolutionaries were drawn to his leadership.

His uncompromising and principled positions, his loyalty to the cause of the working and oppressed masses, won him firm friends and comrades. By the same token, these very attributes aroused the hostility of the oppressing class and the reactionary political and academic cheerleaders of empire colonialism and imperialism, as well as their political representatives in the working-class movement. Harpal was fearless in speaking out against the Labour party social democrats and reformists, opportunists and Trotskyites, pacifists, anarchists, bourgeois nationalists (including sikh Punjabi 'nationalists' of the 'Khalistani' movement) and black separatists, whose political ideas he criticised and organisations he exposed as being vehicles for misleading the workers.

Following Lenin, Harpal believed and taught us that a revolutionary must be firm in principle, flexible in tactics, and strong enough to swim against the current of 'accepted', 'allowable' and 'fashionable' opinion, set by the bourgeoisie and its spokesmen. All who stand for the interests of the working class against the powerful apparatus of imperialism must be able to "hear the sound of approbation, not in the dulcet sound of praise, but in the roar of irritation!"

Harpal was self-deprecating about his intellectual abilities and achievements, putting down his great erudition to steady and continual "hum-drum, everyday" study and work, but he was undoubtedly exceptionally able and bright, and his journey from

rural Punjab to London, the city at the centre of the British empire, where he threw in his lot with the struggle of the revolutionary proletariat, is a remarkable one.

## **Fattanwala**

Harpal was born and raised in colonial India, into a Sikh family whose parents were of the landed peasantry. Indeed, he was a direct descendant of Fattan Singh, the village founder, and his ancestors were horse traders and farmers. The India of his birth was ruled by the British Raj, which had systematically “bled” (in the words of Lord Salisbury) the peoples of the subcontinent to amass great wealth in England, and the English colonists lived in great opulence and parasitic splendour in the decaying days of empire, behind the ‘civil lines’ and in their racially exclusive clubs.

The British had raised millions of pounds to fund the world war through taxation of the impoverished Indian masses and levied some 1.3 million soldiers from India (over a million of them from Punjab) to fight for the ‘motherland’ in WW1 and 2.5 million in WW2. Harpal never had any direct contact with the colonial rulers, yet their policy would rend his world. Fattanwala village was at the centre of pre-Partition Punjab, close to Lahore and now just south of the India-Pakistan border.

There was no systematic schooling of the Indian masses at the time of his birth. The British colonial regime had suppressed pre-existing Punjabi-medium schooling, which had been highly advanced in Ranjit Singh’s independent and religiously pluralistic Punjabi kingdom, and had not replaced it with any widespread substitute. Being a majority muslim village, the local primary education was in the madrassa, supervised by the village maulvi—the local muslim religious scholar and teacher—and it was here that Harpal had his first education, and learned to pen his name in the Punjabi language written in

the Arabic script.

In 1947, a young Harpal witnessed the cataclysmic partition of India, with its accompanying communal riots and pogroms. At seven years of age, he had not yet learned or understood that this was a plan of the imperial British ruling class, in its decline and upon quitting India, to engender animosity, weakness and lasting division among the peoples of the subcontinent. He had not learned of the role of Shaheed Bhagat Singh in raising a revolutionary movement for hindu-muslim brotherhood, independence and socialism in India—though as an adult he would rediscover this history and write his beautiful work *Inquilab Zindabad!*, documenting India’s freedom struggle.

Yet that great historical tragedy that he witnessed had a lasting impact upon him. Perhaps about Harpal, too, we can say, with Marx and Engels, that what the bourgeoisie produces above all else are its own gravediggers.<sup>[1]</sup>

Harpal’s father Harchand Singh Brar, and his grandfather spent many nights patrolling on horseback with guns in hand, to protect their Muslim friends and neighbours from the communal violence that accompanied Partition. They honoured their commitment to locate and communicate with their divided friends and where possible to send resources across the ‘Radcliffe Line’—the new border, brought into being by Lord Mountbatten under the orders of the postwar Labour government of Clement Attlee.

Prior to Partition, his best friend had been a muslim boy, from whom he was separated, and the character of his village and life was changed forever. Harpal always considered that the people of India and Pakistan were one people and were better off united. Indeed, he came to understand that the workers of all countries must unite if we are to rid society of its many injustices, national and religious prejudices.

It takes a village to raise a child. And while in the village as a boy, Harpal would play from sunup to sundown, in the fields, streets and houses of friends

and relatives, eating and laying his head in whichever home he happened to find himself. Being a sociable and inquisitive boy, with an incredible memory for detail, Harpal had many stories from his youth, whether witnessing the fights over blood feuds and land disputes fought among the Punjabi peasantry (even as a child he realised their futility and stupidity), of riding to the local towns on horseback with his grandfather, taming stallions, or running up hills taking friends to Muktsar's dhabas (tea shops)—to his father's great annoyance! As a school for an orator, the village was hard to beat, and he derived lifelong strength from the peasantry—its folklore, sayings, jokes and rustic optimism.

He was among the first to see a tractor brought to his village and witness the scepticism of the peasantry turn to amazement and joy as it ploughed more acreage in a day than a team of oxen could previously have ploughed in a week. He witnessed the introduction and motorisation of tube wells and the greening and reclamation of semi-arid land. The impact of mechanisation and application of technology to agriculture were a matter of practical and lasting significance for him—and for us all.

Harpal's connection to the peasantry, and his childhood experience stayed with him when he would later consider the agricultural revolution in the USSR and learn about collectivisation and the socialist solution of the peasant question—holding the key not only to the successful revolutionary struggle of the masses, but to raising productivity, feeding the growing towns and cities, and deliverance from poverty and ignorance of the mass of humanity.

## **Muktsar**

Harpal was sent to board at the Khalsa (sikh religious) school in the local town of Muktsar (founded where the tenth sikh guru, Gobind Singh, had fought his last great battle), and there, despite the odds—and once burning down the dormitory in a game of 'pistols',

in which the boys fired phosphorous-tipped matches at each other!—he learned Hindi and English, and gained a love for the humanities and current affairs.

It was the fashion among his peers not to study, but to sleep late, wake late and do the minimum. But gaining a genuine interest and thirst for knowledge that would last throughout his life, Harpal would wake early, and go to the fields with his books and the newspapers, and study before his friends awoke. When his exam results came, and he had excelled in them all, he simply claimed that there must have been a mix-up with the exam papers!

After secondary school examinations, he gained entry to university in Chandigarh, where he studied English, Punjabi and History, and after gaining his Bachelor of Arts degree, he accepted a place at Delhi University to study for a bachelor's degree in law.

## **Delhi**

It was while studying in Delhi that Harpal attended his first political demonstrations, held to protest the assassination (by the colonial powers of Belgium, France and the USA) of Patrice Lumumba, newly independent Congo's heroic anti-imperialist leader, and in support of the great anti-imperialist struggle of the Vietnamese people and of their leader Ho Chi Minh, who would famously write that "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom!"

These would be the first of hundreds of demonstrations, meetings and actions that Harpal would participate in, speak at and lead.

## **England**

Drawn by his enquiring mind and driven by his energetic spirit, Harpal decided that he would travel to England to study for a master's degree in law. He gained entry to London's University College and arrived in the summer of 1962, just prior to the enactment of the UK's first anti-immigration



legislation that affected Commonwealth citizens. Harpal always remembered that his first actions were to buy a coat—he found it incredibly cold—and to cut his hair, an act symbolic of moving from a culturally religious upbringing to the materialist outlook of his conscious maturity.

In later life, Harpal would never shy away from the discussion of religion with anyone who professed faith, saying that he had seen the most heinous acts carried out in the name of religion—referring to the communalism that the British and the postcolonial ruling classes of the subcontinent used to keep the masses of India and Pakistan in subjection, and against which Harpal was a lifelong campaigner. He recommended Bhagat Singh's 'Why I am an atheist', as well as the dialectical materialist teachings of Marx and his followers.

London was a hard city to acclimatise to, climactically and culturally, and at first it was more his pride than any love for the strange and unwelcoming environment that kept him there. Yet little by little, he was absorbed into its life, and, despite the fact that (as he often said in speeches) "immigrants don't come here for the warm reception, the warm weather or the great food!", he was to make his closest personal friends, and his most loyal and faithful comrades, amongst the British working class.

While a student, two things happened to Harpal that changed his life forever, to the consternation of his father (who had wanted him to return to India and marry into a wealthy Punjabi family), but to his and our great benefit.

First: he found Lenin in a Luton library.

Harpal used to tell us that soon after arriving from India, before starting his course and while searching for work, he picked up a book and read, by chance, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin's words. The volume he selected contained Lenin's appeal to a party tribunal, before which he had been arraigned by the Mensheviks for issuing a pamphlet against their factional activities and compromises with the

reactionaries on the eve of the elections to the second Duma.<sup>[2]</sup>

Harpal was riveted by the power and incisive logic of Lenin's arguments. So captivating were Lenin's words and thought, so vividly did they imprint themselves upon Harpal with the justice of the Bolshevik cause, that he was compelled to read more.

There started a lifelong relationship that led Harpal to embrace revolutionary Marxism-Leninism as the solution to the problems faced by humanity. He would go on to read every word of Lenin's writings and become a firm Leninist and Marxist. It is not without reason that Lenin's writings are no longer stocked in Britain's public libraries!

Second: he fell in love with and married a fellow student, studying for her bachelor's degree in law, Maysel Kathleen Sharp.

Together they became increasingly involved in the anti-imperialist, working-class and communist movement. They studied and discussed the revolutions of Russia and China, the economics of capitalism and socialism, the works of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh.

In the wake of the Cuban revolution and the 'Cuban missile crisis', when masses of workers had been shaken by the possibility of nuclear war, yet the triumphant march of humanity toward socialism seemed not only inevitable but immanent, they immersed themselves in the revolutionary and anti-capitalist struggles among Britain's students and workers.

## **Great October Socialist Revolution**

Harpal visited the USSR in 1963 and was greatly impressed with the fruits of Soviet democracy and socialist society. He became a passionate advocate of the Russian and Chinese socialist revolutions and peoples, and the anticolonial struggles of the Vietnamese people, the South African and

Zimbabwean people, the Korean and Palestinian people, and a host of other liberation and anticolonial movements struggling against British, US, French, Belgian and European imperialism.

The struggle of the colonies and neocolonies for their freedom were inextricably linked with the struggle of the working class for socialism. “Workers of all countries, unite!” was the slogan, that he accepted and adopted from Marx and Engels’ epoch-making work *The Communist Manifesto*, and that guided his activity.

Harpal became a staunch internationalist, realising that just as accumulated capital had transcended and overflowed national limits, scouring the globe for workers, resources and markets to exploit; just as peoples of all corners of the globe had been displaced from their native soil by impoverishment, upheaval and colonial war, and drawn to seek their living in the imperialist nations, so the workers must learn to put aside national differences and cooperate together in their common struggle against capitalism.

Harpal was inspired by Lenin’s words at the Second Congress of the Communist International: “Communist parties and groups in the east, in the colonial and backward countries, which are so brutally robbed, oppressed and enslaved by the ‘civilised’ league of predatory nations, were likewise represented at the congress. The revolutionary movement in the advanced countries would in fact be nothing but a sheer fraud if, in their struggle against capital, the workers of Europe and America were not closely and completely united with the hundreds upon hundreds of millions of ‘colonial’ slaves, who are oppressed by that capital.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Capitalism could not be reformed, he realised. It must be overthrown. Society could only move forward on the basis of a new and higher democracy; a Soviet democracy, that would put the socially-operated productive forces (currently individually owned by the billionaire elite) on a firm basis of social ownership, eliminating exploitation and all

its accompanying ills. Together, Harpal and Maysel resolved to dedicate their lives to the cause of communism.

### **The ‘fissiparous’ communist movement in the aftermath of Khrushchev and the Sino-Soviet split**

Encountering ‘opposition’ movements within the students’, women’s and communist circles, and growing denunciations of Stalin amongst the Trotskyites in particular, Harpal and Maysel turned to study these questions for themselves, reading both Stalin and Trotsky, studying the disputed issues and adjudicating firmly in favour of the revolutionary line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and Comintern under the leadership of Josef Vissarionovich Stalin.

Harpal and Maysel were active in the anti-imperialist movement in the Britain Vietnam Solidarity Front, and became ever more determined to forge an organisation dedicated to freeing humanity of its historical burden of exploitation. Harpal spent an increasing amount of his energy studying the reality of the social, economic and political conditions in Britain, and organising to change them for the better. They joined the Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist League (RMLL) led by Abhimanyu Manchanda, a prominent anti-revisionist communist who had been the partner of legendary West Indian, American and British communist leader Claudia Jones—the founder of the Notting Hill Carnival and the *West Indian Gazette*, among other achievements.

Harpal and his comrades played a major role in the British anti-Vietnam war movement, and led demonstrations in 1968, leading the protestors to the US embassy in Grosvenor Square, while the Trotskyites of the International Marxist Group (led by Tariq Ali, in fact) tried to lead the protest to disperse harmlessly in Hyde Park. Harpal led the demonstrators to go beyond the pacifist slogan

of 'peace', to call for the victory of the Vietnamese people who were led in the US-occupied south by the National Liberation Front, and in the north by such legends as Vo Nguyen Giap and Ho Chi Minh! Harpal was marked by the police as a "charismatic, persuasive and dangerous speaker, capable of leading the crowd" from that day forward, but never did it stop him organising and living his life to the full. He was never impressed or intimidated by petty police spies, or by the threats and intimidation of his class enemies.

Inspired by the triumphant Chinese people's revolution led by Mao Zedong, and by the strides it was taking to build socialism and combat revisionism (that is, the economic reintroduction of capitalist economics within the USSR that was already well underway by the early 1960s), Harpal and Maysel took a 'Maoist' anti-revisionist line, and adopted many key positions that Harpal would later expand upon and defend. This experience also reinforced the idea that there could be no revolutionary movement without a revolutionary theory; that study of revolutionary theory was essential to guide the movement, and that without serious ideological leadership, the cause of the liberation of the working class would flounder.<sup>[4]</sup>

We only recently learned that Harpal and Manchanda briefly joined the CPBML (which exists in much diminished form today) and were on its central committee alongside its leader Reg Birch, before deciding that its economism and narrow nationalism were leading it toward oblivion.

Falling foul of Manchanda's notorious sectarianism, he and Maysel were expelled from the RMLL. However, before Manchanda died in 1985, he and Harpal were reconciled and became good friends.

Although he agreed with the Communist Party of China's critique of Khrushchevite revisionism, Harpal came to realise that the Chinese line which denounced the Soviet Union as "social imperialist" was wrong and harmful, despite the incorrect capitalist-roading policies of the USSR.

## **Association of Communist Workers**

Harpal and Maysel met their lifelong companions, friends and comrades Iris Sloley and her partner and later husband Godfrey Cremer at a national meeting of the women's liberation movement in 1970, and soon afterwards they met Ella Rule, now chair of the CPGB-ML. These comrades were to become the core of the anti-revisionist Association of Communist Workers (ACW).

They were active in the movement, arguing against bourgeois feminism and for a revolutionary programme of equality for women as part of the working class's movement for socialism. They formed the Union of Women for Liberation, vociferously fought the pernicious ideas of Germaine Greer, of Selma James's 'Wages for Housework', and their ilk, and the ideas that 'bra burning' or 'kicking the oppressor (men) out of your bed' would somehow equate to equality. Their work together forged a bond of loyal comradeship that lasted a lifetime and would form the basis of the work Marxism and the Emancipation of Women.

They concluded early in the course of their study and activity that the Labour party was a party of imperialism. A social-democratic party: socialist in words (more so then than now), but chauvinist, imperialist, capitalist in its programme and deeds, whether in power or acting as a loyal parliamentary opposition.

Because the disintegrating Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Britain's original Communist party established in 1920, was now, under the influence of Khrushchevism, firmly 'revisionist', having turned its back on the need for workers to overthrow the capitalist ruling class's state machine (as taught by Marx) in favour of a 'parliamentary road to socialism, wedded to a policy of supporting the imperialist Labour Party, these comrades could not join it. In Harpal's own words: "What would be the point of joining such a party, only to be expelled

from it?" The CPGB slid all the way to the bottom of this revisionist slope and, in 1991 when the USSR collapsed, its Eurocommunist leadership simply declared that "The October Revolution was a mistake of historic proportions" and, to the disgust of its remaining proletarian members, dissolved itself.

Former members of the CPGB had formed the Communist Party of Britain in 1988 as the CPGB leadership was moving too far to the right. The New Communist Party had earlier split from the CPGB when the latter adopted Eurocommunism criticising the Soviet Union from the right, denouncing its intervention in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the 1968 Prague Spring. Nevertheless, both the CPB and NCP parties essentially adopted and maintain to this day the CPGB's revisionist programme of the parliamentary road, which has left them tailing Labour to irrelevance.

The ACW campaigned to persuade the leadership of these parties to give up their position of support for the imperialist Labour party—but both proved incapable of doing so, and could not therefore take the communist movement forward.

### **Hemel Hempstead, Harrow and Southall**

Passing the Bar exam to become a barrister, Harpal did not choose to practise, but instead taught law, first at Dacorum College in Hemel Hempstead, where he settled with Maysel, and then at Harrow College of Further and Higher Education, which later became part of the University of Westminster. Teaching was merely a means to an end, however, and Harpal's real passion and unflagging energy were reserved for his political work.

Harpal demonstrated a clarity of thought and analysis that helped him to guide his comrades, and by degree he became a socialist and communist teacher, a writer, a political theorist and a practical working-class political leader and organiser.

It is a little-known footnote to the history of

Hemel Hempstead that Harpal and Maysel were visited by many revolutionaries and communists in their home, among them Robert and Sally Mugabe in the summer of 1974, then the leaders in exile of the Zimbabwean national-liberation struggle against the British colonialists and the Ian Smith (Rhodesian) apartheid regime. Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) was the political leadership of the armed struggle of the black masses for their freedom, and Harpal edited a solidarity journal entitled *Revolutionary Zimbabwe* for the British anti-apartheid movement (*Zimbabwe Solidarity Front*) that was distributed to and read by the activists and soldiers of Zanu and Zanla (*Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army*).

Harpal would later interview Robert Mugabe at several crucial junctures in his negotiations with the British for independence, and when apartheid was overthrown and elections were held after the Lancaster House agreement, Harpal was invited to attend the independence celebrations in Harare, by President Robert Mugabe. Harpal had no money for the plane ticket, but his comrades insisted he attend and raised the money to send him.

Reaching the airport with his invitation and no directions, he hitched a ride on the back of a worker's pickup truck to the presidential palace, and approached the armed guards at the gate, unsure of gaining admission. Diplomatic cars and the great and the good were passing into the compound, through the security cordon. When challenged, Harpal presented his invitation, whereupon the armed Zanla soldier of the presidential guard took off his machine-gun, placed it on the ground and embraced him as a brother, saying: "Comrade Brar! Welcome!"

Standing in line to be welcomed by the president, he was met with warm comradely enthusiasm. Sally turned to Robert and said "Robert, you should hear him speak! He is pure fire!" To which Mugabe replied: "I know, I have heard him!" A great music concert was held that evening, at which Bob Marley sang his

anthem dedicated to the liberation struggle, simply entitled 'Zimbabwe'.

Their mass work among British and Indian workers was guided by deep study and writing. Harpal found in Ella, Iris, Godfrey and Maysel great comrades and companions, and Comrade Ella became his closest intellectual collaborator. In many ways, Harpal's work was also Ella's, and vice versa. It was Ella, Godfrey and Iris who would give him feedback—and who typed the articles that Harpal would always write longhand, with paper and pen. Harpal in turn was a constant source of support, advice and knowledge for them.

### **Indian Workers Association and Lalkar**

Harpal and his comrades of the ACW became actively involved with the Indian Workers Association (GB), which struggled for the civil rights of Indians and all immigrant workers in Britain. The organisation was a leading voice in the fight against racism, which Harpal rightly perceived to be the Achilles' heel of the British working-class movement—a mechanism for dividing, weakening and therefore controlling white as well as black workers.

Becoming one of the IWA's leading organisers in Southall, the home of the Punjabi community in Britain, he was also the editor of the IWA's newspaper Lalkar, which he refounded and edited from its first issue in 1979 until his death.

Lalkar is a Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi word meaning 'militant challenge', and it also contains the roots of the words lal meaning red and kar meaning work. Though the paper was separated from the IWA as the latter itself wound down its activity, it remains a great source of revolutionary analysis and Marxist teaching, and it continued to appear as an independent anti-imperialist theoretical journal throughout Harpal's life. Under his editorial leadership, Lalkar was a beacon of clarity not only for Indian workers in Britain but for the entire progressive British and

international working class. Indeed, for the January 2025 issue, Harpal wrote four articles and put the paper to the printers, before succumbing to his final illness.

In the job of writing for, producing and distributing Lalkar, his comrades from the ACW were close collaborators. In a very real sense, they were at the political heart of the Indian Workers' Association, and lived and struggled closely with the Indian workers of Britain. His comrades are committed to continuing and augmenting that great legacy.

The Indian Workers' Association, under Harpal, Jagmohan Joshi, Teja Sahota, Hardev Dhillon and Avtar Johal's leadership in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, tirelessly and resolutely championed the cause of equality for workers of all national, racial and religious origins.

The IWA campaigned both against racist laws and against the socially debilitating racism experienced by the black population of Britain on the streets every day—taking direct action to combat the racist violence they encountered where necessary.

Struggling against capitalist imperialism, racism, colonialism and apartheid, and for the civil and employment rights of the Indian and British working class, Harpal and his comrades, and the growing group of communists and workers who were drawn to his leadership, tested their ideas and grew in strength and stature.

Harpal's anticolonial and anti-apartheid work led him to work with the South African and Zimbabwean (Rhodesian) liberation fighters of the ANC, PAC, uMkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation), Zanu and Zanla, and he met and spoke with great leaders including Chris Hani and Robert Mugabe, and later our South African communist comrade Khwezi Kadalie, whose grandfather had founded the first 'native' African union, and whose mother was a communist from the DDR (socialist east Germany).

## **Great miners' strike of 1984-5**

In 1984-5, Harpal led the IWA in a national programme of mass solidarity with the heroic miners' strike. Indian communities across the country took food to the pickets and the miners' halls, raised money for the striking miners and their families, and collected toys for their children at Christmas. Harpal spoke at mass meetings of political solidarity with miners' leaders including Arthur Scargill and Malcolm Pitt, and documented the course of that struggle in Lalkar. This concrete solidarity did much to break down the prevailing racism of British society at the time, used then as now to socially control the British working class.

The miners had long been considered the militant backbone of the British working class, living in isolated but vital and staunchly working-class pit villages across the country, particularly in South Wales, Yorkshire, Kent, Durham and the north-east, and Scotland. The then Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher was determined to break the miners, in order to break the unions, casualise labour, close down 'antiquated' factories and heavy industry, ship building and car manufacture, to facilitate the export of capital and the exploitation of cheaper labour abroad. Her ideas coincided with those of Reaganism and Milton Friedman's free-market fundamentalism, recently practised on the Chilean people.

The miners found themselves facing a well-armed and prepared state machine that was ruthless in the suppression of their resistance. Under Arthur Scargill's leadership they came close, so close, to victory, but the strike was ultimately sabotaged by a 'united imperialist front' that extended from Labour and the TUC to the Tory government and the entire British state machine, with the fervent propaganda and financial backing of the capitalist press and the City of London financiers.

Despite their ultimate defeat, the genuine, heartfelt

and spontaneous solidarity of the Indian working-class community, as well as Harpal's leading role in promoting it, had a profound and lasting impact on the entire British working class.

Harpal, the IWA and our comrades together supported many landmark strikes of organised labour, from Fleet Street (Wapping) to Grunwick and the Hillingdon Hospital workers.

## **Antiracist struggle**

Postwar Britain from the 1950s into the 2000s was a deeply racist society, based on the colonial ideology upon which the British empire had been built. The IWA struggled for workers' equality, for the civil rights of immigrant and black workers, and against racism in all its forms.

As such, Harpal, Godfrey, Ella and Iris were also leading lights of the Campaign Against Racist Laws (Carl), and leading participants in the mass antiracist movement, campaigning and organising meetings and demonstrations across the country.

## **Collaboration of the National Front, Labour and the SPG in Blair Peach's murder**

In 1979, Labour prime minister James Callaghan sent police to protect the fascist and white-supremacist National Front (NF), which provocatively used the excuse of a general election (that brought Thatcher to power) to hold a racist rally among the Indian workers of Southall. Harpal and the IWA organised a mass antiracist march to protest, and kick the fascists out.

Thousands of police, including members of the notorious Special Patrol Group (SPG), were sent by the Labour government to beat the antiracist and Indian protestors off the streets. Scores were arrested that day, including Harpal.

A young New Zealand-born teacher, Blair Peach, was beaten to death by the SPG. It later transpired

that the SPG thugs had doctored their truncheons illegally, boring them out and filling them with lead to make them lethal. The cracking of Blair Peach's skull was therefore an act of premeditated murder. The SPG was wound up, only to be replaced by the similarly thuggish and brutal Territorial Support Group (TSG). And predictably no police assassin was held accountable for his crimes.

### **Stephen Lawrence**

Nearly 15 years later, the IWA jointly organised a huge antifascist, anti-BNP march in Welling in 1993, after a string of racist murders had taken place in the area. These included that of Stephen Lawrence, a young black teenage boy, by a group of four fascist-minded youths with links to the fascist National Front and British National Party. An enormous police presence was again put onto the streets to protect the fascists' 'book shop' from which the local racists coordinated their activities.

In a predictable pattern, the Metropolitan police violently attacked the protestors, while the press made national propaganda that turned truth upside down, depicting the police as innocent victims of the aggression of the antiracist demonstrators. Harpal addressed the crowd that day, on behalf of the IWA, giving the marchers their slogan: "We are black, we are white; together we are dynamite!"

In 1962, IWA chairman Avtar Johal, a foundry worker, union leader who would become a close comrade of Harpal's, invited Malcolm X to visit Birmingham, the scene of racial violence. Smethwick was a site of both East Indian and West Indian immigration after WW2. As with other immigrant communities, including Southall, migration was encouraged and initiated by local industry, which was in need of labour, and brought workers and after them their families from Britain's former colonies.

The workers of Smethwick, as elsewhere in Britain, had long been subject to the racist imperial

propaganda pushed by the British empire. Local Labour MP and later British Union of Fascists leader and MP Oswald Mosely had been replaced by the equally racist and repugnant Conservative MP Peter Griffiths, whose election slogan had infamously been: "If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour." Griffiths supported a programme of social segregation in Britain, under which the Smethwick Conservative council bought up houses and offered them for rental to "whites only".

"Racial prejudice was a constant blight," said Comrade Avtar, and the IWA "devoted its energies to demonstrating that racism is a product of capitalism, and that the workers, no matter where they came from, shared common interests".<sup>[6]</sup>

The IWA campaigned against casteism, communalism and separatism, for women's equality and against dowry and arranged marriage, and it particularly took up the anti-colonial and antiracist struggle of the South African masses struggling against the settler-colonial apartheid regime, as well as the equally vital cause of the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people, fighting to rid themselves of the yoke of the settler-colonial apartheid regime of Israeli zionism. Both regimes were, of course, backed to the hilt by their 'motherland', by British Imperialism.

Fighting the corruption of the local Labour party in Southall led Harpal to contest local elections, in which he was narrowly defeated owing to the combined forces of Labour and its hangers-on.

Harpal and his comrades organised, and he spoke at, huge anti-apartheid and pro-Palestine rallies throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It was in this connection that Harpal made national speaking tours with Gora Ibrahim of the South African PAC (Pan African Congress) and met Chris Hani, South African communist and ANC youth leader, shortly before his assassination. He also journeyed to meet the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat in Tunisia in 1986.

Among Harpal's many writings were *Zionism, a Racist, Reactionary and Antisemitic Tool of Imperialism and Imperialism in the Middle East* (co-authored with Ella Rule), which summarise the historical origins of Zionism as a British settler-colonial project to rule the middle-eastern colonies acquired by Britain by dint of World War One and the Sykes-Picot agreement (the secret treaties published by Lenin and the Bolsheviks after the 1917 October Revolution in Russia). The former book has since acquired a political life of its own. Both deserve to be read and studied today, in the aftermath of the Israeli genocide of 2023-25, which constitutes both a second Nakba, and a heroic continuation of the liberation struggle of the peoples of the middle east.

### **Irish liberation**

Throughout the period of the armed struggle in the occupied six counties of northern Ireland, Harpal and the IWA organised regularly in solidarity with the national-liberation struggle of the Irish people, and hosted meetings with Gerry Adams and other Republican leaders at a time when it was illegal for them to speak, or for their voices to be heard on terrestrial television across Britain.

Marx famously wrote that "No nation that enslaves another can itself be free." This has been especially true of the relationship between British and Irish workers, and Harpal and his comrades were firm supporters of a united Ireland consisting of all of its 32 counties.

Marx observed in 1870 that: "Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland,

thus strengthening their domination over himself.

"He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the negroes in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland.

"This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this."<sup>[6]</sup>

With Elon Musk's grotesque tweets about immigration, "Pakistani grooming gangs", "white genocide", etc, and with the entire government and parliamentary opposition (Labour, Tory, Liberal and Reform) and the entire capitalist press following his lead, we can see that these issues are far from finished with. As the capitalist crisis grows, racism and religious prejudice remain the principal ugly devices used by the British ruling class to stoke division and perpetuate their senile rule.

The oppression of Ireland by the British predated but mirrored India's experience of the brutal and racist regime of the Raj, and their liberation struggles had long looked to and nurtured one other. The IWA, in fact, had claimed Shaheed Udham Singh as an early member, and he had become a staunch revolutionary with links to the Comintern, the Republican movement and the IRA.

Irish leader Gerry Adams came to speak to meetings of Indian workers in Southall during the time of the Troubles. Under Harpal's guidance, Indian and British workers discarded the chauvinist propaganda then omnipresent in the British press and in society and made common cause with their Irish brothers



and sisters. This solidarity was a welcome breath of fresh air for our Irish comrades at a time when the words of Adams were routinely suppressed, and his voice was dubbed and censored in British radio and television news bulletins.

Before the advent of cable TV and the later ubiquitous Zee TV and Sunrise Radio, when there was no easy access to Indian language, news or culture in Britain, and when the first generations were struggling to build their lives here, the IWA was a genuine mass community and cultural organisation, which also politicised a generation of Indian workers to play a positive and progressive role in British working-class life.

### **Saklatvala Hall**

As a national leader of the Indian Workers association (GB) and a leading member of the working-class and Indian community, Harpal was a universally known leader and personality in Southall. It was for this reason that he and his comrades of the ACW built a community centre and now the CPGB-ML's headquarters, Saklatvala Hall, in Southall.

Named after the great communist and MP for Battersea Shapurji Saklatvala, the hall was inaugurated with a meeting in December 1999 attended by Saklatvala's daughter Sehri, and presided over by Harpal, with the other principal guest speaker being Arthur Scargill.<sup>[7]</sup>

### **The great test. 1990-91: the fall of the USSR, "An era of the blackest reaction"**

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was a beacon of hope for the workers of all countries. Lenin wrote that: "The workers of the whole world, no matter in what country they live, greet us, sympathise with us, applaud us for breaking the iron ring of imperialist ties, of sordid imperialist treaties, of imperialist chains—for breaking through to freedom,

and making the heaviest sacrifices in doing so—for, as a socialist republic, although torn and plundered by the imperialists, keeping out of the imperialist war and raising the banner of peace, the banner of socialism for the whole world to see."<sup>[8]</sup>

The USSR, and Comrade Stalin, in defeating the Nazi German imperialists and bringing communism from the realms of theory to the world of practical realities, had made the workers of the world a power. Harpal wrote extensively of the significance of the victories of the USSR and to the impetus it gave to the freedom and anticolonial struggles of the world's peoples.

Harpal noted that Stalin had echoed Lenin's sentiments and, in opposition to Trotsky, who continually campaigned against the building of socialism in the USSR, had defended it as being at the centre of the world revolution:

"What would happen if capital succeeded in smashing the Republic of Soviets? There would set in an era of the blackest reaction in all the capitalist and colonial countries, the working class and the oppressed peoples would be seized by the throat, the positions of international communism would be lost."<sup>[9]</sup>

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, when renegacy became the fashion, Stalin's words were most tragically borne out. Guided by his deep study and understanding of Marxism-Leninism, Harpal stayed true to his principles: to the conviction that the working class is the ruling class in waiting, and that a socialist and communist society can be built in Britain and the world, for the greatest benefit, indeed the salvation of mankind.

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."<sup>[10]</sup>

It was Harpal's great misfortune to live at a time of

great reverses for the communist movement. But it was to our great benefit that we had Harpal to take up the difficult cause of defending the liberation ideology of the working masses at such a dark time.

To navigate the rapids of revolution and the reverses of counter-revolution, to see the course of working-class liberation “despite the zigzags of history”, when so many others were shaken by these reverses, Harpal turned once more to a deep political and theoretical study and analysis.

“It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when revolution has already broken out and is in spate, when all people are joining the revolution just because they are carried away, because it is the vogue, and sometimes even from careerist motives. After its victory, the proletariat has to make most strenuous efforts, even the most painful, so as to ‘liberate’ itself from such pseudo-revolutionaries. It is far more difficult—and far more precious—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle do not yet exist, to be able to champion the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organisation) in non-revolutionary bodies, and quite often in downright reactionary bodies, in a non-revolutionary situation, among the masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. To be able to seek, find and correctly determine the specific path or the particular turn of events that will lead the masses to the real, decisive and final revolutionary struggle—such is the main objective of communism in western Europe and in America today.”<sup>[11]</sup>

## **Perestroika**

It was in these circumstances that Harpal published his first book, *Perestroika, the Complete Collapse of Revisionism*. The profound analysis of an epoch-shaping event, which Harpal assumed that, like him, ‘everyone understood’, was written at the insistence

of his comrades, as a series of Lalkar articles in 1990.

Having studied the evolving restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, the splits that resulted from this revisionism, the secret speech that Khrushchev made to the 20th party congress of the CPSU(B) in 1956, the economic debates within the USSR, and of course Stalin’s last great work *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Harpal understood the restoration of capitalism as it was happening. Many others did not, and were stunned at the apparent ‘defeat’ of communism, loudly proclaimed to be “the end of history” by the triumphant imperialist bourgeoisie and their ideologues—notably Francis Fukuyama.

Harpal explained to the IWA and the wider socialist movement, in this short but brilliant work, the economic and ideological causes of the dissolution of Soviet socialism—and therefore the lessons to be learned from this historical calamity. Many other movements and parties have failed to learn this historical lesson till this day. And many are, therefore, unable to move on with the work of building a revolutionary movement.

Harpal remained to the last a firm adherent of Marx and Engels, of Lenin and of Stalin.

## **Stalin Society**

It was in these conditions that Harpal brought together the leading British antirevisionist communists such as Bill Bland, Kemal Majid, Ivor Kenna and Wilf Dixon who wished to keep alive the communist movement and work towards the foundation of a genuinely revolutionary communist party in Britain, under the banner of the Stalin Society—which did not escape the attention nor the derision of the bourgeois press, but he nonetheless carried this vital mission forward.

The society was formed in 1991 to defend Stalin and his work on the basis of fact and to refute the capitalist, revisionist, opportunist and Trotskyist

propaganda directed against him.

Stalin's name is synonymous with communism, the October Revolution, and the overthrow of capitalist exploitation and imperialist tyranny. For this reason, the international bourgeoisie have spearheaded their attacks on working and oppressed peoples by slandering Stalin and the Soviet Union.

They have employed a variety of tactics to this end over the last century, but have been guided to a large extent by dissidents who betrayed the Soviet people, most notably Leon Trotsky. The powerful US-based Hearst press, sympathetic to Hitler, was a pioneer in these methods, but the rest of the capitalist world's media and political elites have not lagged behind.

The activity of the Stalin Society included: the study of and research upon Stalin's writings and actions; the translation of material into and from other languages; the publication of material relating to such study and research; the celebration and commemoration of important occasions in Stalin's life; the establishment of contact with other groups and individuals with a view to taking a common stand on issues and the joint organisation of future activities; and the establishment of contact with similar societies and groups abroad with a view to mutual benefit from experience and collaboration.

The brilliant output of the Stalin Society over a 30-year period did much to cement and preserve the revolutionary teachings of Marxism-Leninism and give a firm theoretical grounding to the core workers of both the Socialist Labour party after it was formed in 1996 and the CPGB-ML from 2004 onwards.

During this time, Harpal published his seminal works on Trotskyism or Leninism, on imperialism and on Labour party social democracy, and he brought together work on the women's movement, the anti-imperialist struggles of the Indian, Palestinian and Zimbabwean peoples, and a criticism of imperialism's many postcolonial, and post-Soviet wars.

## **Socialist Labour Party, 1997-2004**

As Tony Blair was coming to power, he led the Labour party in abolishing Clause IV of the Party's constitution, which had promised (falsely) to bring about "nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange" in Britain. When the miners' leader Arthur Scargill formed the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in 1996, as a response to this "betrayal", Harpal greeted its foundation as a break between the working class of Britain and social democracy—the Labour party—which he saw as the chief social prop of the British capitalists amongst the working class. He understood that Clause IV was never intended to be implemented, and that the Labour party was always and everywhere a false friend to the British workers—'the enemy within'. It was his firm view that British workers could make no progress without combatting and destroying the Labour party's hold over the socialist and trade union movement and wider working class.

In 1997, Scargill invited Harpal and his comrades to join his newly formed party and asked Harpal to stand as a candidate in the general election. The ACW (which had recently merged with the Association of Indian Communists to become the short-lived Association of Communists GB (ACGB), decided to throw in its lot with the SLP and dissolved itself, and Harpal went on to become one of the party's key leaders, standing for election in Southall in 1997 and again in 2003.

Harpal dedicated himself to fighting to build the SLP into a militant working-class party with a Marxist understanding and political vision, and he used his position as Education Secretary to set up party schools and try to win over as many members as possible to his ideas. Notably, he persuaded the December 1997 congress to abandon the party's 'Black section', championed by the SLP's Trotskyite faction, as being divisive and insulting to black workers.

Harpal was among the first to recognise the poison of black nationalism and separatism within the working-class movement, and as a leader of the IWA had written and campaigned against it consistently. His numerous articles on the subject were collected into the book *Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?*, which was an early contribution to the struggle against the emerging, anti-Marxist ‘politics of identity’. Harpal always held that it was not the sole concern of the black workers to fight racism, since racism was an Achilles’ heel affecting the whole of the working-class movement—the secret by which the capitalist ruling class holds sway over a considerable section of the white working class. As such, it was the job of all workers to fight it. “I am not a black communist,” he said. “I am a communist, who also happens to be black.”

When it became clear that, despite the best efforts of Harpal and his supporters, the SLP could not move beyond Arthur’s vision of ‘old Labour’ and a ‘reformed’ capitalism, Harpal and his comrades were forced to leave that project—as the mass expulsion of the Yorkshire section of the party and half of the leadership NEC on spurious grounds made clear. Matters came to a head when the SLP congress in 2003 passed a resolution, opposed by Arthur Scargill, defending the right of the DPRK to have a nuclear deterrent, the arguments in favour of the motion having been put by Harpal and his comrades who had been working in support of the DPRK for very many years. Very shortly afterwards Arthur organised the expulsions.

But the time spent with comrades of the SLP had not been in vain. This was the organisational impetus necessary for the founding of Britain’s first truly revolutionary party since 1951, the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist).

### **Antiwar and anti-imperialist campaigning: ‘Stop the War’**

While inside the SLP, Harpal and his comrades played a leading role in opposing the new wave of post-Soviet colonial wars, starting with Nato’s brutal bombardment and dismemberment of Yugoslavia in 1999, and the illegal imprisonment, trial and custodial torture and extra-judicial murder of its leader, Slobodan Milosovic. Comrades took part in the colossal two-million man march against the second Iraq war in February 2003, and were an integral part of the Stop the War campaign.

After the formation of the CPGB-ML, the new party affiliated to Stop The War. Of course, it was never invited to join StW’s leadership body or to send a speaker to any of its platforms, such was the hostile sectarianism of the revisionists and Trotskyites who ‘led’ the antiwar movement into the lap of the Labour party—the very party that in or out of office never lagged behind the Conservatives in promoting, supporting and financing the wars.

Despite this, the party persuaded the delegates at StW’s national conference in 2009 to adopt its resolution on non-cooperation with imperialist war crimes, but was unable to get StW to act upon this resolution, which is leaders quietly pigeonholed. The coalition, badly misled by such left-Labour luminaries as Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn et al, tolerated the CPGB-ML’s presence in their ranks until they found an excuse to expel it, in 2011, over the issue of Libya.

As that war was in preparation, and the bourgeois media were ramping up their hysterical propaganda against Libya’s revolutionary leader Colonel Muamar Gaddafi, the StW leadership of John Rees, Lindsay German, Chris Nineham, Andrew Murray, et al went so far as to organise a demonstration outside the Libyan embassy in London, denouncing Colonel Gaddafi as a dictator. They were joined by the wahhabist foot-soldiers of imperialism in a disgusting display of pro-Nato, pro-imperialist servility to the ruling class. The CPGB-ML denounced this pro-war activity and line of the ‘Stop the War’ Trotskyites and revisionists—and was promptly

and unconstitutionally expelled for ‘criticising its leadership’.

When the party tried to appeal to the next annual conference against this disgusting act, its comrades were refused permission to speak, shouted down and ejected by none other than that ‘great white hope’ of the fake-left, Jeremy Corbyn. The party, of course, continued its antiwar work outside that bankrupt organisation.

It is an enduring credit both to Harpal’s proletarian internationalism, his anti-imperialism and his personal courage that he journeyed both to Iraq ahead of the Labour onslaught in 2003, and to Libya in 2011. Together with Ella Rule and his Somali and Belgian comrade Mohammed Hassan, then in the PTB (Workers Party of Belgium), he went to Tripoli to deliver a message of solidarity to the Libyan people—even as the destruction of that proud independent and developed north African country was under way by the neo-Nazi Nato Luftwaffe’s cowardly aerial bombardment.

These actions earned him the derision of the left-imperialists in our Stop the War and Trotskyite movement, eager as ever to prove themselves useful tools to the Labour party and the British ruling class. But his proud and courageous solidarity has stood the test of time, and we are grateful for his leadership and loyalty to the cause of the oppressed.

Without adopting this approach, the British workers will never see socialism.

## **China**

Harpal and his comrades responded to the many attacks on communist China with solidarity and support. In particular, they founded the ‘Hands off China’ campaign when the attacks crescendoed in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

When the CPGB-ML’s seventh party congress charged Harpal to write a book on China, explaining ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’, Harpal once

more took up a serious study of China’s economic and political conditions and wrote a definitive analysis that remains obligatory reading for communists.

## **Revolutionary seizure of the land in Zimbabwe, 2000**

In 2000, Labour ‘minister of state development’ (in effect the colonial secretary of British imperialism) Clare Short finally and officially reneged on the UK’s commitment to finance the buy-back of Zimbabwe’s colonial lands, seized by their colonists from the indigenous black population. A second wave of struggle arose in Zimbabwe, with the veterans of the armed struggle moving to seize lands without compensation, and after some hesitation, this was formally legalised by Robert Mugabe’s Zanu-PF government.

The howls of US and British imperialism were loud, and the sanctions pressure from global capital and propaganda war from global media (BBC foremost among them) were intense. The threat to their property rights and ongoing exploitation of the African masses and natural resources were clear.

In 2004, while a leader of the SLP, Harpal brought his work on Zimbabwe together into his book *Zimbabwe Chimurenga!*—from the Shona slogan *Pamberi na chimurenga!*, meaning ‘Victory to the liberation struggle!’ It was a tribute to the heroic and victorious struggle of the Zimbabwean masses under the leadership of Zanu-PF, and also a powerful polemic in justification of the confiscation of the land without compensation and its division among the peasantry.

In 2005, Harpal was invited to attend and speak at the ZANU-PF congress to celebrate the 25th anniversary Zimbabwe’s liberation, and he gladly returned to the warm embrace of the Zimbabwean comrades who, when they struggled together in the 1970s, would weave Harpal and his comrades’ names into their Shona liberation songs.

Harpal spoke to the full plenary session, shortly after meeting and greeting Robert Mugabe after a 25-year hiatus that had seen them step on such very different paths—one as a national leader, the other as an ongoing revolutionary foot soldier in the belly of the imperialist beast.

Harpal's contribution electrified the audience. In a speech that was televised nationally. Harpal recalled that the people of Zimbabwe had won their independence with guns in hand, after a fierce and protracted struggle in which they had made great sacrifices and that they had not done so to remain servants in their own land!

They had done so to gain control of the natural mineral resources and the land of their country. Britain had not kept its side of the bargain and the only way to settle the historical injustices of colonial robbery and bloodshed, and of apartheid racism, in the absence of these promised reparations of £1bn from Britain, was the revolutionary seizure of the land! Be it noted in passing that it is typical that a 'Labour' government would be at the heart of a policy more dishonourable and reactionary than the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher!

The seizure of Zimbabwe's land from the white farmers, without compensation and its division among the peasantry was, moreover, the greatest revolutionary democratic act since the seizure of the feudal estates of France by the great French Revolution of 1789!

Britain and the USA were not only worried about Zimbabwe—they were then, as they are now, anxious to preserve the iniquitous monopolisation of the land throughout Africa and their former colonial, now neo-colonial, possessions! In particular, they worried about the example set by the Zimbabwean masses and ZANU-PF to the South African masses and the ANC! They were also outraged by the arrest of Mark Thatcher for his colonial escapades in Equatorial Guinea and for flouting the laws of Zimbabwe. They were further angered by the revolutionary

assistance offered to the Democratic Republic of Congo's independent government of Laurent Kabila. With these steps, Africa had moved away from the era of colonial domination and humiliation, and had taken a giant step in the direction of true and lasting economic and political liberation and dignity! Pamberi Na chimurenga! A luta continua!

Once he started speaking, Harpal pleaded with the assembled delegates that he should not be interrupted by the loud and stormy applause he was receiving, as he only had 15 minutes to speak—whereupon Comrade Mugabe stood and insisted that "There is no time limit for Comrade Harpal!" and when Harpal had finished speaking, amid thunderous applause, Mugabe held aloft the copy of the book Zimbabwe Chimurenga! that Harpal had gifted him, and he had been thumbing, and said: "I know Comrade Harpal. We worked together during the liberation struggle but lost contact; it is good to be back in touch! We have not written the history of our own liberation struggle, but this book contains that history. You must all get a copy and read it!"

### **The Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)**

It had always been Harpal and his comrades' wish to re-found the communist movement of Britain on a solid Marxist and Leninist basis, for without organisation and revolutionary leadership, as their entire life struggle and work had shown, the working-class has nothing.

"In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery, and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity

of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class.” (VI Lenin, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, 1904)

The details and reasons for formation were well documented at the time of the party’s first congress, held on Saturday 3 July 2004 in Saklatvala Hall, Southall.<sup>[12]</sup> The party’s programme and rules were written by Harpal and adopted unanimously, enshrining the key lessons both of the struggle to build the SLP and of the great teaching of Leninism, as adapted to suit the conditions of Britain.

In the 20 years of its history, Harpal was the guiding force of the CPGB-ML, guiding and teaching the membership, initially as founding party chairman (until its eighth congress when he stepped down because of his advanced years). However, he remained a highly active member of the central committee for the rest of his life and died a proud Communist party member.

Harpal was undoubtedly a great disciple of Marx and Lenin, recognising that the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia was a watershed of cultural enlightenment and freedom for humanity. Harpal’s critique of Trotskyism, his defence of the revolutionary teaching and leadership of Josef Stalin, and his critique of Khrushchevism and revisionism that caused the downfall of Soviet socialism are among the lasting theoretical contributions he bequeathed to the communist movement.

The long, tumultuous and at times arduous struggle of the CPGB-ML aims to carve out a place in the political life of Britain, to reclaim a revolutionary tradition and trajectory for the British working class, to reclaim the birthright of the proletariat as the ruling class in waiting and end the shameful period of its abject servitude and forced wage-slavery for capital.

Fully supported by Lalkar and Harpal Brar, the party has had to deal with all the questions that dog the British and world proletariat, all the subtle and crass means by which the proletariat is held in subjection

as a class. Its congress resolutions and the output of its paper Proletarian, its website, meetings, video-communications and publication house, its leaflets, pamphlets and books have reflected this journey, and Harpal’s immortal contribution is reflected across all of these great and enduring gifts to the proletariat, and to mankind.

Lalkar and the CPGB-ML have dealt with the correct approaches to immigration and racism; Scottish nationalism and independence; identity politics and black separatism vs proletarian internationalism and working-class solidarity. They have dealt with the issues of bourgeois feminism vs women’s liberation as a part of the struggle for socialism. They have considered the impact of the latest transgender trend and the divisive influence of identity politics.

They have tirelessly campaigned to expose the Labour party and reduce its hold on the British working class. They have analysed and exposed British imperialism and the effect that this has on the British working-class movement. They have campaigned ceaselessly for the support and victory of the Palestinian liberation struggle, and the ejection of Anglo-American and EU imperialism from the whole of the middle east. They have campaigned for the defeat of Britain’s imperialist Tory and Labour governments and parties and exposed their dirty colonial wars in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, etc. They have brought solidarity to the peoples of the socialist world, forging close links with the Cuban people and the Communist Party of Cuba, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and its leadership in the Workers Party of Korea.

## **Internationalism**

While Harpal was born in India, he was a true Briton and a great leader of the British working class. Throughout all of his work and struggle among the British workers, he never forgot that proletarian

internationalism was the only weapon that can secure lasting victory over capital, and he took a keen interest in fostering links with the the communist movement in all countries.

For many years the Belgian Workers Party (PTB) under the leadership of Ludo Martens was a close fraternal organisation. It was Harpal who encouraged Ludo to give up the self-applied label of ‘Maoist’, and rather consider himself a Marxist-Leninist.

Reading Ludo’s books on Another View of Stalin and The Velvet Counter-Revolution, Harpal appreciated Ludo’s intellect and contribution—while being able to give gentle criticism of the points where Ludo had made undue concessions to the narrative of the imperialists, particularly in regard to the trope that Stalin made ‘mistakes’—mistakes that are never specified, ensuring there is no possibility of ascertaining whether it is Stalin or his ‘critics’ who are mistaken. Ludo accepted the criticism.

Ludo had enormous respect for Harpal, and they had a close friendship until his dying day. Ludo felt keenly his responsibility toward the liberation struggle in the Congo, and the PTB suffered badly when he relocated to Kinshasa. When he returned, he suffered a stroke and Harpal, Ella and Ranjeet visited him in Belgium, just prior to his death. Despite his ill-health, he was able to express regret for the turn his party had taken towards social democracy and away from Marxism-Leninism.

For a time, the PTB’s annual 1 May event, and the international seminar the PTB organised in Brussels at the same time, was a focus of the revolutionary communist movement, struggling to come to terms with the fall of the USSR and the collapse of the eastern European people’s democracies. From this forum, Harpal made contacts with revolutionary communist groups and parties from across Europe, the Americas and further afield, including the reformed communist parties within the USSR.

He frequently gave presentations regarding the USSR, imperialism and many aspects of current

revolutionary work and struggle. Many of Harpal’s papers, speeches, articles, books and pamphlets have been translated by these comrades and parties into diverse languages, including French, Flemish, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, as well as Korean, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Russian, Hungarian, Czech and more. Indeed, while writing this obituary, we have heard news that our comrades in Union Proletaria (Spain) are finishing their work of translating and producing Harpal’s now famous pamphlet on Zionism, a Racist, Reactionary and Antisemitic Tool of Imperialism!

The recent founding of the World Anti-imperialist Platform declares its ideological debt to Harpal’s work and teaching. His daughter, Joti, has been central to much of its work, together with many international comrades.

Harpal went to lay flowers on Stalin’s grave on the anniversary of the Great October Revolution and spoke in Red Square, at the wall of the Kremlin, to a great demonstration on 7 November 1997. He noted that many Red Army men listened attentively to the translation of his speech, which concluded with the words, that in the great land of Lenin: “Socialism will come, if not in my lifetime, then in yours. The USSR will undoubtedly be born again and in the words of the great Russian playwright Chernachevsky ‘There will be joy and laughter in our streets.’”

Harpal has preserved and applied the great teachings and liberation ideology of Marxism to the communist movement and the modern conditions of Britain. He has lived a remarkable and productive life. His legacy lives on in his work, his books and articles, his extensive collection of recorded speeches and presentations, and by the new generations of British communist workers who are swelling the ranks of the CPGB-ML and the progressive movement.

If Harpal could say one thing to us it would be to: “Guard the party as you guard the apple of your eye.” He struggled to found and build it in the most difficult conjunction of circumstances, after the



fall of the once mighty USSR. It is his life's work, and he gave to it his whole being. It is a great gift that he leaves us: the best of Britain. His work is relevant to communists worldwide for shedding light on the situations of India, of the Soviet Union and China, and of the working-class revolutionary culture of all nations. Harpal was a true proletarian internationalist.

Harpal thought creatively about how to solve the problem of uniting revolutionary politics with the mass of the British workers. To that end he worked with, met, discussed and collaborated with the greatest revolutionaries and British working-class leaders of his time, among them Manchanda, Ludo Martins, Robert Mugabe, our Cuban, Korean and Chinese comrades, Avtar Johal, Jagmohan Joshi, Arthur Scargill, Frank Cave and Bob Crow.

But the greatest and most self-sacrificing comrades and his true friends and comrades were always those unsung heroes: Maysel (known as Kathy Sharp in political circles), Godfrey Cremer, Iris Sloley, Ella Rule, Deborah Lavin, Isabel Crook, Jack Shapiro and many others.

With Lenin, Harpal realised that “without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.” That was the slogan he inscribed on the banner of Lalkar. And it's Lenin's insightful way of paraphrasing Marx: “There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.”

For Harpal, study was a practical part of politics. Without it, no party can ever succeed in effectively leading the working people to bring an end to their current state of servitude—their wage slavery. This was an early realisation of Harpal's, and his work— together with that of the CPGB-ML of which he was the greatest founding member—is the enduring legacy that he leaves us.

A luta continua!

## NOTES

- [1] K Marx and F Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.
- [2] VI Lenin, ‘Report to the fifth congress of the RSDLP on the St Petersburg split and the institution of the party tribunal ensuing therefrom’, 1907.
- [3] VI Lenin, ‘The second congress of the Communist International’, 1920.
- [4] VI Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, 1901.
- [5] Aina Khan, ‘When Malcolm X visited Smethwick after racist election’, Al Jazeera, 21 February 2018.
- [6] K Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt in New York, 9 April 1870.
- [7] ‘Saklatvala Hall opened’, Lalkar, January 2000.
- [8] Lenin, ‘Letter to American Workers’, August 1918.
- [9] Seventh enlarged plenum of the ECCI, December 1926.
- [10] K Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852.
- [11] VI Lenin, ‘*Left-Wing*’ *Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, 1920.
- [12] ‘Formation of the CPGB-ML’, *Proletarian*, August 2004.

# Interview on the situation in the “Republic of Korea”

Stephen Cho | Coordinator of the Korean International Forum

February 21, 2025

*This article is in response to an interview requested by the comrades of the Café Marxiste.*

**Q1: On December 3 last year, President Yoon Suk-Yeol attempted a coup d'état with his attempt to introduce martial law in the country (a first since 1980). Fortunately, martial law was lifted just a few hours later. Why and how did the president of the “Republic of Korea (ROK)” (South Korea) try to impose martial law?**

The imposition of martial law on December 3, 2024, was a pro-American self-coup. The direct reason for this was the “Myeong Tae-kyun Gate” affair, whereby Yoon was threatened with impeachment proceedings and his wife Kim Keon-hee could be imprisoned for fraud and various corruption cases during the last presidential elections. In reality, this was US imperialism’s preparation for the war in the “ROK”, for which a preliminary stage of fascization and the establishment of “anti-communist advanced base” were necessary. Martial law was prepared for over a year: in particular, during the joint US-“ROK” military exercises to invade the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) (North Korea) “Freedom Shield” in March 2024, Yoon’s clique intensively prepared martial law exercises, Operation “Loyalty 8000”. Had the drone attack on Pyongyang in October 2024 not failed, martial law would have been declared and justified under the pretext of a “local war against the DPRK”.

**Q2: We know that the “ROK” is something of a US colony. The “ROK” is home to the**

**largest US base outside its territory, as well as a contingent of almost 30,000 US troops. What role did the United States play in this coup attempt?**

The “ROK” is a colony in its own right, totally subordinate to US imperialism in military, political, economic and cultural terms. The US military base in Pyeongtaek is the world’s largest US military base, and is fully funded by the “ROK”. The 28,500 US troops stationed in the “ROK” exercise operational control not only in wartime, but also in normal times. In 1945, the US army entered Korea and declared itself an “occupying force” in its “Proclamation No. 1: To the People of Korea”. The previous 16 coups in the “ROK” were all orchestrated by the US military. I would point out that preparations for the 17th coup intensified during the US army’s war exercises against the DPRK. In particular, they were closely linked to the war preparations between September and November 2024, including the drone attack on Pyongyang in October. The fact that the US knew about the coup in advance was confirmed in an interview by US Representative Brad Sherman with a media outlet in the “ROK”. Brad Sherman revealed that the “ROK” army was preparing for a false-flag operation against the US army. This was evidenced by testimony that the Headquarters Intelligence Department (HID), a unit specializing in infiltration operations in the DPRK under Defense Intelligence Command of the “ROK” Army, was preparing an operation to bomb US military bases and then attempt to blame the DPRK for the attack.

**Q3: Can you give us an historical reminder of**

## **US imperialism's use of fascism and military juntas to maintain its imperialist domination of the "ROK"?**

**(Rhee Syngman during the Korean War, Park Chung-hee's coup in 1961, Chun Doo-hwan's crushing of the Gwangju Commune in 1980, etc.).**

Unlike the history of fascism in Germany or Italy, fascists in the "ROK" are opposed to nationalism and are pro-Japanese, pro-American and are traitors to the fatherland. This is because they emerged as a tool of imperialist colonialism, not of national monopoly capital. From pro-Japanese collaborators, a puppet of Japan during the 36 years of Japanese occupation, they became a puppet of the USA, which invaded Korea as an occupying force after Japan's defeat in 1945. These pro-Japanese, pro-US forces were at the origin of Rhee Syngman's fascist group and became the stormtroopers of the Korean War in 1950, then the backbone of the fascist military regime for some thirty years, marked by the military coups of Park Chung-hee in 1961 and Chun Doo-hwan in 1980. The "ROK" has always been under fascist rule, as shown by the fact that the main provisions of the "National Security Act" (NSA), a fascist law based on the "Peace Preservation Laws" promulgated by the Empire of Japan, which repress freedom of thought and expression, remain effectively in force. The fascist system remained unchanged even after Rhee Syngman, Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan, under civilian governments: not only socialist forces, but also democratic and progressive forces were harshly repressed, with many deaths under torture and many dubious deaths. The discovery of the "notes of a leading acolyte, Noh Sang-won" of the coup clique, published after a judicial inquiry, came as a shock. These revealed the plan drawn up by the coup forces after the introduction of martial law on December 3, 2024: they would have arrested almost 10,000 people belonging to democratic and progressive forces and murdered them by a "barracks

explosion" and "chemical poisoning" worthy of what happened at Auschwitz.

## **Q4: How did the militants of the democratic camp, and in particular the comrades of the PDP, manage, despite the repression, to mobilize the people to counter this fascist coup d'état?**

In the final analysis, all this is the fruit of a scientific conviction and discipline acquired over a long life of organization and practical struggle. As you know, there is no other way but to develop this kind of training to promote the democratic, progressive and social transformation movement. For more than 3,000 days, members of the People's Democracy Party (PDP) have been holding pickets and vigils, 24 hours a day, in front of the US and Japanese embassies in Seoul, which are symbols and bases of imperialism. I've been told that in Cuba, you have to protest for a year in front of Guantánamo before you can become a diplomat, which I completely understand. Furthermore, PDP members have long been involved in trade unions, peasant organizations and student associations. Thanks to its kinship with the masses, the party has been able to shore up its organization and mobilize the masses even in the face of prolonged and relentless fascist repression. Last December's uprising, with sometimes 2 million people mobilized, which ended martial law and suspended Yoon's presidency, was obviously not the result of a single PDP effort, but it is true that the PDP waged a major struggle, distributing 100,000 copies of its newspaper and leaflets every day. The PDP is not only the most progressive party in the "ROK", it is also the most powerful in terms of propaganda.

## **Q5: What are the consequences of this failure for the political situation in the "ROK"? Has the issue of defending peace changed as a**

## result?

The failure to impose martial law on December 3, brought about by the popular uprising, dealt a fatal blow to the fascist clique in the “ROK”. If the arrest and imprisonment of the coup leaders, the political isolation of the fascist and reactionary clique and the Constitutional Court’s confirmation of Yoon’s impeachment go well, regime change will be inevitable at the early presidential elections to be held two months later. If this happens, not only a “special investigation into the rebellion”, but also a “special investigation into Kim Keon-hee” and a “special investigation into Myeong Tae-kyun” will be launched, along with the opening of legal proceedings for corruption. If this is the case, fascist, reactionary and conservative forces in the “ROK” will suffer a political blow that will prevent them from even dreaming of seizing power for at least 30 years. In addition, the attempt to start a local war against the DPRK with the drone attack on Pyongyang in October was thwarted, as was the attempt to complete war preparations with the imposition of martial law and the coup d’état on December 3. However, the insurgent clique, the fascist and reactionary group, which is on the brink of death, is now attempting to unleash a civil war as a last resort. Although the “ROK” avoided the worst-case scenario of conflict after the introduction of martial law, the risk of war remains present due to the increasing provocations of the insurgent clique. This is because US imperialism’s determination to provoke war has not changed.

**Q6: Can it be said that the “ROK”’s regime is such that there is no hope of seeing it evolve into a truly progressive, peace-loving democracy?**

In the “ROK”’s political history, reformist forces have come to power three times, but they have all lost popular support due to their economic failure

and the collapse of people’s livelihoods. This is because the “ROK” is a full-fledged colony of US imperialism, and the reformist forces in the “ROK” are pro-American, petty-bourgeois and social-democratic. They are the right-wing equivalent of France’s Socialist Party. The most representative reformist party in the “ROK”, the Democratic Party (DP), is neoliberal and has failed, even during its three terms in power, to amend even a single clause prohibiting freedom of thought and expression in the “National Security Act”. History has shown that as long as politics in the “ROK” remains a seesaw game between pro-US, pro-imperialist fascist forces and pro-US, pro-imperialist reformist forces, true democracy, progress and peace will never be possible. The only political hope lies with the PDP, the only party in the “ROK” promoting a program opposed to the United States and imperialism, upholding people’s democracy, peace and progress. The PDP is also the only party whose program envisages the country’s reunification through a federal system, whereby the socialist DPRK and the capitalist “ROK” would transcend the differences of their respective systems to achieve reunification under the banner of independence, peace and people’s democracy. The only path to peaceful Korean reunification is the federal system. As a reminder, the “ROK”’s “National Security Act” prohibits and represses both the program for the withdrawal of US military bases (i.e. opposition to the USA and imperialism) and the federal system (i.e. peaceful reunification of the country).

**Q7: Can you tell us about the “ROK” economy’s subordination to American monopoly capital?**

**(The economy of the “ROK”, which is subordinate to imperialist monopoly capital and structurally deformed, is highly vulnerable to external shocks. Its**

**vulnerability has been compounded by the IMF crisis of 1997 and the US financial crisis of 2008, and has reached the brink of explosion with the unprecedented “COVID-19 pandemic” and the “three-peak panic” of high oil prices, high interest rates and a high dollar. It’s no coincidence that, among industrialized societies, workers in the “ROK” work in workplaces where there is endless competition and exploitation, where they work the longest hours and have the lowest wages, and where most of them are temporary workers, record the highest suicide rate in the world).**

The “Republic of Korea” is a complete colony, not only militarily, politically and culturally, but also economically. Although current economic development has been achieved through the hard work of the educated, serious and conscientious workers and people in the “ROK”, subordination, which has historically worsened since the US army entered the country as an occupying force in 1945, is integrally structured. According to the concepts and system of Marxist-Leninist political economy, every stage in the process of capital reproduction is vertically subordinated to US imperialism, and every area of industry is fragmented and deformed. The subordination of the process and the deformation of the sector assume, respectively, a colonial and a semi-capitalist character. The “ROK” society is described as colonial and semi-capitalist because it is subordinated and deformed not only militarily, politically and culturally, but above all economically. As a result, the “ROK”’s economy is always vulnerable and unstable, fluctuating wildly in response to external shocks. I repeat: this is due to the subordination of capital, raw materials, fuels, equipment, technologies and markets, as well as a disconnected, fragmented, hypertrophied and deformed heavy and light industry and agriculture. During the East Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the

global financial crisis of 2008, the “ROK” suffered a veritable “shearing of the sheep”, and US imperialism was able to perfect all the systems conducive to overexploitation, such as market opening, financial openness and the implementation of a system based on precariousness and layoffs. This is how the “ROK” is referred to as an “ATM”. In other words, compared to France, Koreans work twice as hard and are paid half as much, and there is virtually no social security system. The world’s highest suicide rate is no coincidence.

**Q8: What is the situation for workers in the “ROK”?**

**(Very long working hours (Yoon wanted to increase the working week from 52 hours to 69 hours), strikes at Samsung, very strong union and political repression).**

Half of the country’s 50 million inhabitants are part of the working population, and half of them are precarious workers. They are paid less than half the wage of regular workers and are treated very badly. Although the “ROK” is an industrialized capitalist country and a model for the “Third World” in its thirst for education and the diligence of its workers and population, the fact that they are paid less than half the wages of European workers, despite the longest working hours in the world and the absence of a social security system, is at the root of very serious social problems such as the highest suicide rate among young people, and problems linked to the pension system and social protection. Moreover, Samsung’s policy of banning unionization is known the world over. Where there is oppression, there is resistance, and at Samsung, unions have been formed and strikes have begun to develop. However, the insidious repression exercised by the Samsung group, under the protection of the state, still makes it very difficult for workers to organize. Yet workers are fighting back and forging ahead. In the “ROK”, Yoon’s

fascist government is trying to destroy the KCTU, the equivalent of the French Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), by creating fabricated incidents and repressing it. The KCTU fought hard and launched an indefinite general strike after martial law was declared on December 3.

**Q9: What are the prospects for the popular movement and the PDP, the latter being the victim of major repression? (Anti-communism and the National Security Act, etc.).**

On August 30, 2024, the DP (Democratic Party), the most right-wing party on the political spectrum of the “ROK” if we exclude the party of the fascist Yoon clique, and the PDP, the most left-wing party, were simultaneously repressed. The PDP immediately reacted by denouncing the raids on PDP offices and the home of the country’s former DP-affiliated president as a “sign of martial law”, which was effectively confirmed as martial law on December 3, 2024. Although the December 3 martial law has been officially lifted, insurgents still control state power, and far-right reactionaries are calling daily for fascist riots and attempting to provoke unrest in front of the Constitutional Court in early March, following an assault on January 19 (supporters of the deposed president entered the Seoul court, which extended his detention by 20 days). In short, the situation in Korea is evolving from civil unrest to civil war, and if a confrontation with bloodshed, riots and shootings were to occur, as the fascist and reactionary clique intends, it would be a full-scale civil war, similar to the Maidan coup in 2014. Under the control of US imperialism, the reactionary fascist clique is stepping up agitation against the DPRK and China under the guise of anti-communist ideology, pushing for civil war, local war and war in the “ROK”. Korea already experienced a civil war in 1948 with the Jeju-Yeosu incident and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950

after more than 2,600 local confrontations against the DPRK from 1949 onwards, and the current situation reproduces exactly this process. After their 30-year struggle against oppression by the fascist military dictatorship, the people in the “ROK” experienced a victorious uprising in June 1987, which led to the formation of a broad and powerful anti-fascist front. However, to transform the “ROK”’s colonial and semi-capitalist society, a democratic revolution of national liberation must be carried out, and for this an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist front is needed. The PDP is the only legal revolutionary party at the center of the political struggle to transform the anti-fascist front into an anti-imperialist, anti-fascist front. History has shown that all repressions against the PDP, including those based on anti-communist ideology and national security laws, have failed. The day is not far off when the only driving force for the transformation of the “ROK”, the PDP, and the workers’ and people’s soviets, will be united. The fascist, bellicose and extreme situation, which went from rebellion to civil war to war in the “ROK” after the martial law of December 3, has awakened the consciousness of the workers and the people, fostering a fundamental transformation. In the “ROK”, the deeper the darkness of the fascization of society, the brighter the dawn of transformation. It is a scientific fact that our workers and our people will prevail in the end.

# Platform



The World Anti-imperialist Platform