

Introduction

The reorganization of international production since the 1990s ushered in a new historical period of transformation from capitalism to socialism. From 2008 to 2014, the hitherto deepest and most comprehensive world economic and financial crisis in the history of capitalism raged. It plunged the entire imperialist world system together with internationalized production and global trade into a deep and all-encompassing crisis. This gave rise to *tremendous changes in the superstructure of the imperialist world system*, both in politics and in ideology.

Economic, political and ecological crises shake the confidence of more and more of the world's people in the prevailing social system. They must bear the brunt of the crisis-proneness of the imperialist countries and witness the pathetic inability of those in power to solve the problems. Doubts are growing that conditions will ever become better unless decisive changes occur. The struggle has broken out over the understanding of the causes of the worsening conditions and over the alternatives that are possible and should be strived for. More and more people wish for societal alternatives; however, many are not yet certain about the goal and the means to achieve it.

The intensified pressure of imperialist competition fuels everywhere the *tendency toward open dictatorship and aggressive, open reaction* on the part of solely ruling international finance capital, *internally and externally*. A *general rightward development of governments, of bourgeois parties, of the media, of culture, and among a part of the masses* has emerged and is developing.

In many countries, ultrareactionary, protofascist or neofascist, racist, nationalist and chauvinist governments took the helm or changed their method of rule: Trump in the USA, Erdoğan in Turkey, Putin in Russia, Modi in India, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Orbán in Hungary, Kaczyński in Poland or Johnson in the UK.

As special characteristic, these governments more or less *flout the international rules that have been the consensus* between the monopolies and the imperialist states, and ignore accepted bourgeois-democratic laws and practices. They pursue a *strict orientation to national interests* and *call in question important pillars of bourgeois democracy*.

They dismantle democratic rights and freedoms and speed up the fascistization of the state apparatuses and the militarization of society. For this purpose they promote *völkisch*¹ (ethno-nationalist) and fascist organizations and their propaganda. Step by step they eliminate the still existing protection of minorities and abolish the right to flee and the right of asylum. They restrict the relative independence of the courts, spread fake news and attack the bourgeois-liberal press. Parliaments and institutions of bourgeois democracy are more or less ignored. They massively increase military armament, attack hard-won women's rights, and accelerate the destruction of the natural foundations of life. During the corona pandemic they play down the new SARS-CoV-2 virus, thus undermining the necessary health protection in an inhuman way. They jeopardize the health of the population and are responsible for thousands of avoidable corona deaths. Their central guideline is to avoid, if possible, all serious burdens on economic life, especially on the maximum profit creating industrial production of the international monopolies.

New-imperialist China still pretends to the world that it is a socialist country. In the wake of China's breathtaking campaign of conquest on the world market, a growing section of international finance capital discovered that China's *highly restrictive bourgeois democracy* has many competitive advantages over liberal bourgeois-parliamentary democracy. The monopolies flirt with the idea of having more direct, faster access to all the resources of the state apparatus, production and the mass media, while having to pay little

¹ Fascist ideological concept. Refers to the racist, anticommunist, anti-Semitic view of the German people as a community bound together by blood ties.

consideration to democratic rules, rights and freedoms of the masses, to constraining laws or criticism from the mass media.

The general rightward development was strengthened by the *international crisis of the refugee policy* of the imperialist countries, which rapidly intensified in 2015 and threw the EU into an overt crisis.

Transnational or global organizations like the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UNO), the military North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Trade Organization (WTO) *slid into open crises*. The questioning or canceling of global rules and UN resolutions, starting from the USA, thrust imperialist and new-imperialist countries into economic and political crises. Examples are the open trade war between the USA and China, the termination of the nuclear arms agreement with Iran, the withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Paris Climate Agreement, or the abrogation of UN resolutions protecting the Palestinians.

On the basis of the chronic overaccumulation of capital, this policy touched off a *new world economic and financial crisis* in mid-2018. The crisis unfolded with full force in interaction with the corona pandemic at the beginning of 2020 and accelerated a drastic downswing of unprecedented scale and breadth in the entire capitalist world.

Further *new hotbeds of inter-imperialist contradictions emerged* in the quest for hegemony in the South China Sea, in the Caribbean, in the Middle East, in North and Central Africa, in former Soviet republics or in the Eastern Mediterranean. The imperialist great powers were at risk of clashing directly, which caused the *general danger of a Third World War* to grow tremendously.

The *global environmental crisis is becoming increasingly severe*. New findings and observations especially concerning the dramatic global warming and new manifestations of destruction in the biosphere led *worldwide* to a *general awakening of the environmental consciousness of the masses*. This is also a reaction to the open abandonment of environmental protection by former US President Trump. Among the young a *millions-strong internationally coordinated resistance movement to save the world climate* emerged. The ruling international monopolies increasingly became the focus of the fight to save the environment from a global catastrophe.

The increased crisis-proneness of the imperialist world system is reflected in the *consciousness of the masses* as an *exacerbated polarization* between a *reactionary, chauvinist or protofascist tendency* and a *progressive change of mood*. The mass base of most traditional bourgeois parties is eroding away. The forming of governments in the individual countries is becoming more and more complicated.

The *progressive change of mood* among the masses is expressed in spontaneous protests, demonstrations, strikes, uprisings and uprising-like mass protests at changing hotspots in the world. The spontaneous revolt of the masses against the dictatorship of international finance capital takes place more and more under the influence of revolutionary forces.

With the bankruptcy of the Schröder/Fischer government in 2005, Social Democracy, in particular, fell into a deep, persisting crisis which seriously weakens the reformism which emanates from it. On the one hand, this promotes, above all in the working-class movement, the path of the working-class offensive and conduces to a growing influence of scientific socialism. On the other hand, nationalist, ultrareactionary, fascist or protofascist parties increasingly gain ground with the support of openly reactionary parts of the bourgeois mass media: AfD (“Alternative for Germany”) in Germany, Rassemblement National in France, AKP in Turkey, the Freedom Party of Austria, the Republicans under Trump in the USA, or Lega in Italy.

In addition to modern anticommunism, openly reactionary anticommunism to an increasing extent now enters the political arena again. The struggle between

anticommunism and scientific socialism gains in intensity in all areas of society. *Coping successfully with anticommunism* in its various shades meanwhile has become the *key to consciousness building among the masses* against the backdrop of the deep crises of reformism and modern revisionism.

The intensified crisis-proneness of the imperialist world system more and more often makes the latent *crisis of bourgeois ideology become manifest*. Since the 1990s, i.e., the beginning of the reorganization of international production, the *social system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking* has become the dominant form of bourgeois ideology in the capitalist countries. It aims at steering the growing dissatisfaction of the masses toward paths that are in conformity with the system.

The petty-bourgeois mode of thinking seemingly embraces views, demands, traditions, feelings and behaviors of the working class and the broad masses that express solidarity and are critical of society.

The system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking still constitutes the principal aspect of the method of government in Germany, because those in power want to avoid intensifying the class struggle if possible. However, it has lost much of its effect due to the crisis-proneness of the imperialist world system and the processing of this experience by the masses.

That also is true of the *established basic fictions of state-monopoly capitalism*, contrived with great effort by those in power after the Second World War to counter the expanded socialist camp. Among the masses, the clichés of the “social market economy,” the “social state,” “peaceful foreign policy,” the “free, democratic state based on the rule of law,” “equality of men and women” or the “compatibility of ecology and economy” increasingly are frowned upon because they have little or nothing to do with social reality. The *capitalist social system clearly is losing its binding force*.

Core of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking is the *petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking* as barrier to scientific socialism. It is nourished by modern anticommunism.

Modern anticommunism is seemingly critical of capitalism, but at the same time defames the struggle for a socialist society and for the ideals of communism as “Stalinist” or “Maoist terror” or makes this struggle appear hopeless. It demagogically exploits the negative experience of the masses with the betrayal of socialism and the restored bureaucratic capitalism in formerly socialist countries and with the failed revisionist project of a “21st Century Socialism” in Latin America. It is succored by the various shades of revisionism.

The reactionary answer to the crisis of the system of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking is the *renaissance of reactionary variants of bourgeois ideology* and their modification to suit the present.

The ideological struggle breaks out today both between solely ruling international monopoly capital and the international proletariat, as well as within the bourgeoisie between the forces pretending to be liberal-democratic and the openly reactionary section of monopoly capital. This *ideological confusion greatly complicates the situation* and, to an exceptional degree, fuels the struggle between proletarian and petty-bourgeois mode of thinking among the masses.

The consciousness of the working-class, people’s, women’s and youth movements generally does not yet keep pace with the growing complexity of the social conditions of imperialism. They still lack an independent orientation and a *seminal socialist worldview that points the way forward*. That makes them susceptible to all kinds of opportunist, reformist, revisionist, anarchist or also social-chauvinist influences. However, the strongest influence currently is exerted by the *petty-bourgeois anticommunist mode of thinking*.

The failure of the crisis management during the world economic and financial crisis, which interacts with the corona pandemic, gave rise in mid-2020 to an *accelerated*

tendency toward the development of a general societal crisis of the imperialist world system. For the first time in many decades, on this basis a revolutionary crisis on an international scale can emerge. Under all circumstances the solely ruling international monopolies want to prevent such a development.

The crisis programs of the imperialist governments radically shift the burdens of the crisis onto the working class and the broad masses. At the same time, crisis-damping concessions like tide-over allowances for petty-bourgeois business owners or short-time working compensation are granted.

Ultimately, those in power are willing to put down revolutionary movements by force. They underscore this with their internationally proclaimed and coordinated fight against "terrorism." Fascistization of their state apparatuses is the *practical preparation for counterrevolution.*

Digitization and the *Internet* mark a historic advance in the development of the productive forces. They drive the material preparation of socialism forward. The Internet facilitates the cross-border communication of the masses, their access to science, education and technical know-how as well as cultural exchange, and also provides important facilities for organizational work.

Meanwhile, however, the ruling monopolies have almost completely subjugated the Internet as effective new method of influencing the masses. Through the "social media" they directly reach the hearts and minds of the broad masses, especially the youth. The new fascist, *völkisch* and reactionary movements and parties have managed mainly through the Internet to gain a foothold in society and strengthen their influence among a growing section of the masses.

It is one of the *modern big lies* of the state-monopoly exertion of power that the *Internet particularly promotes independent democratic opinion formation and decision making.* The Internet conveys an abundance of information, *mixing bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and proletarian views and methods such that people hardly can see through this spontaneously.* The way the social media work and the flood of superficial, simplifying information disaccustom people from careful reflection and the reading of books and magazines. Intellectual short-windedness, superficiality and mainly emotionally motivated thinking and acting thus are promoted. The increased tendency to arrange meetings via Internet, to network or, when organizing action, to make oneself totally dependent on the Internet, carelessly exposes all participants to observation and intervention by the state apparatus and its secret services.

Without a firm proletarian class viewpoint and a dialectical-materialist approach to the complicated reality of society, independent orientation by the masses is possible only to a limited extent.

Despite all the harm that bourgeois and petty-bourgeois currents cause in the thinking, feeling and acting of the masses – they are not all-powerful! They are unable to lastingly bind the masses to capitalism and destroy esteem for socialism. Ultimately, the practical experience of growing exploitation and poverty, of the progressive ruination of the livelihood of small farmers and petty bourgeois, of dramatic environmental destruction, of growing injustice, of war and the danger of war, and their conscious processing in the context of the societal polarization, weigh much heavier.

Those in power cannot at will suspend the operation of objective laws of capitalist society. They are thwarted again and again by the class struggle of the workers, the active resistance of the masses, and the rebellion of the youth. As a result, reactionary presidents or governments in Argentina, Spain, Italy, Austria, Ireland and Ukraine were voted out of office, the same as in the USA. The inhuman crisis management of Trump in the USA or Bolsonaro in Brazil during the world economic and financial crisis and in the corona pandemic has severely eroded the mass base of these fascist rulers and stimulated the

struggle of the working-class, people's and youth movements. The progressive change of mood among the masses is changing in tendency into an *anticapitalist mood*.

A substantial part of the broad masses still see the political alternative in Social-Democratic, petty-bourgeois environmentalist, revisionist or Left-reformist parties and concepts. The basis for this is a still strongly effective petty-bourgeois mode of thinking.

Within the progressive change of mood a lively struggle thus unfolds between different variants of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking and the proletarian mode of thinking, between scientific socialism and bourgeois ideology with anticommunism as kernel.

Those in power respond to the trend to the left among the masses from a defensive position with a *new offensive of anticommunism* and increased repression of revolutionary theory and practice. Government and secret services in Germany could not, however, prevent the MLPD from growing into a new role in society at large and effectively overcoming its relative isolation at the hands of the bourgeoisie. This reveals the general inability of those in power to cope with the growing Marxist-Leninist influence on the masses.

The *state religion of anticommunism* is itself *in a crisis*. The malicious equation of Left and Right, of fascism and communism, for decades was regarded as self-evident consensus of bourgeois society. It increasingly comes under criticism and is now questioned by a growing part of the population.

The Marxist-Leninists must respond to the present societal culmination with an *ideological offensive of scientific socialism*. They must wage the struggle against anticommunism among a constantly growing mass of people and jointly with them. This struggle of world outlooks is an *indispensable preliminary battle* to the *international socialist revolution*.

The doctrine of the mode of thinking is a dependable navigator through this full-blown societal struggle over the mode of thinking. Its ideological starting point is Lenin's work, *Materialism und Empirio-criticism*. In it Lenin set the integral Marxist-Leninist theory and dialectical-materialist method of scientific socialism against the fallacious assertion of petty-bourgeois theoreticians of that period that materialism and idealism could be combined.

Since the start of the 1990s it has been the usual method and practice of the governments and all bourgeois parties, including The Greens and the party *DIE LINKE* (The Left), to justify the crisis-battered imperialist world system as "without alternative," "reformable" and "still the best of all systems." All sorts of terms were invented or modified for the purpose of glossing over the class character of society and the forces operating in it, as well as its general crisis-prone nature. The terrible ideological confusion spread in the working class and among the masses by those in power must be unraveled. The working class can successfully follow its path of struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression in a socialist society only if it overcomes the various facets of the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking and all variants of anticommunism, only if it achieves the ideological victory of scientific socialism over bourgeois ideology.

This is possible above all with the method of *scientific polemics* in conjunction with the systematic rank-and-file work of the Marxist-Leninists and personal experience in the struggle. Scientific polemics reveals the real antagonism between capitalism and socialism, between working class and monopoly capital, between bourgeois and proletarian ideology, between petty-bourgeois and proletarian mode of thinking. It names names, reveals the existing disagreements in depth and unvarnished, and argues them out until they are decided. It is based on a concrete analysis of the struggle over the mode of thinking. At the same time it is creative and always is characterized by the achievement of an advance in knowledge for scientific socialism. Particularly in times of a social culmination and revolutionary ferment it is needed more than ever.

The *international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement* doubtless has *passed its low point following the revisionist betrayal of socialism*. It is now going through a phase of rebuilding, of strengthening, of cross-border cooperation, coordination and unification of its forces.

As significant as this progress is, the revolutionary parties and organizations are *still decidedly too weak*, however. As a result, the confusion among the masses which those in power as yet can cause is too great.

The social significance of the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement today lies mainly in its *revolutionary potential*. On the basis of the general crisis-proneness of imperialism and consciousness-building among the working class and the broad masses, this potential can and will develop toward a revolutionary crisis.

With the books, *Götterdämmerung Over the "New World Order," Dawn of the International Socialist Revolution*, and *Catastrophe Alert! What Is to Be Done Against the Willful Destruction of the Unity of Humanity and Nature?* the MLPD has laid important *foundations for this offensive of world outlook*. They contain the analysis of the reorganization of international capitalist production as new phase of imperialism and of the material preparation of socialism, along with conclusions for the strategy and tactics of the international socialist revolution.

This ideological-political processing both of the new manifestations and essential changes in the imperialist world system as well as of their revolutionary surmounting now must be *completed from the ideological side*. This purpose is served by the four volumes of the work, *The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology*, and *the Doctrine of the Mode of Thinking*, in Nos. 36 to 39 of the *Revolutionärer Weg* series.

The successive publication of the first volume, No. 36, *The Crisis of Bourgeois Ideology and of Anticommunism*, and then as close in time as possible of the next three volumes, is due to the scope of the analysis and is based on the consideration that this will make assimilation and dissemination easier.

Many collaborators are needed to process the comprehensive material within a reasonable period of time and in the necessary quality. The editorial team thanks all collaborators, in particular Monika Gärtner-Engel and Gabi Fechtner, who played a major part in completing the manuscript.

The comprehensive theoretical analysis of the current class struggle in the field of world outlook poses a great challenge to the collective wisdom of the MLPD. It can be handled with a positive outcome only in close interaction with practical participation in the class struggle, assimilation of the experience of the international Marxist-Leninist and working-class movement, and through *conscious application of the dialectical method on the basis of the doctrine of the mode of thinking and of systemic thinking*.

Stefan Engel, April 2021