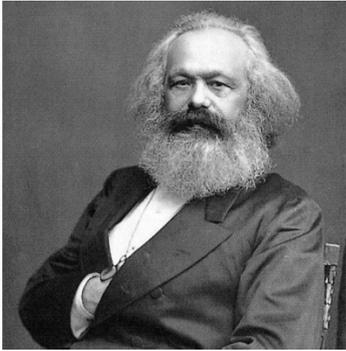
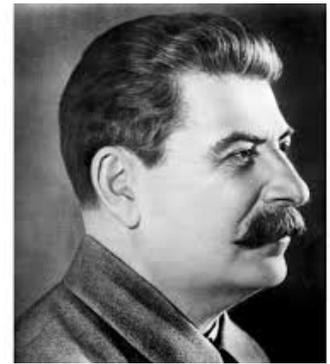


Towards Marxist-Leninist Unity



A Journal of Discussion and Debate



Vol. 3, No. 4

December, 2021

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To see the reasoning behind publication of TMLU, please see the article “Why ‘Towards Marxist-Leninist Unity’” in the first issue on the web-site below. Though we believe that a Party must have ideological unity, we include progressive articles from groups with varying views.

Please note that we have now included the portraits of the four classic leaders of Marxism-Leninism on the cover. We had previously included only Marx and Lenin to try to include contributions from people who might be turned off by a portrait of Stalin. We realize that this was an opportunist error.

Note that we reprint many articles without our asking for permission. Clearly the authors are in no way responsible for other views in this publication.

Comments, criticisms and articles are welcome. The next issue of TMLU should appear in February, 2022. Material should be sent in by the end of January.

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No to Vaccine Mandates!

George Gruenthal

New York City's lame duck mayor, Bill de Blasio, gave a final Christmas present to New Yorkers. All businesses, regardless of their size, must ensure that their employees are vaccinated by December 27. This is even worse than President Biden's mandate that all businesses with over 100 people must ensure that their employees are vaccinated.

In other countries, the mandates are even worse. Austria has mandated that everyone in the country be vaccinated by February 2022. In Australia, ~~concentration~~ camps, I mean, quarantine camps, have been set up for those who are not vaccinated. And it is important to note that special camps are being set up for aboriginal Australians.¹ One should also note that one of the Nazi lies was that Jews cause typhus, while today the government is saying that the unvaccinated are a threat to everyone's health.

Besides mandates, there are other restrictions that can easily cause more deaths, not due to Covid but to the restrictions imposed supposedly due to Covid. New York Governor Hochul recently declared that the "Department of Health Will Be Permitted to Limit Non-Essential, Non-Urgent Scheduled Hospital Procedures If Necessary to Ensure Capacity."² However, how will one be able to tell whether procedures are "non-urgent" if one cannot go to a hospital to have one's condition checked. And the fear of Covid already led many people to refuse to see a doctor, some of whom died due to lack of medical attention. This is one reason why one cannot measure the deaths from Covid by the number of "excess deaths," as some of them are not due to Covid at all.



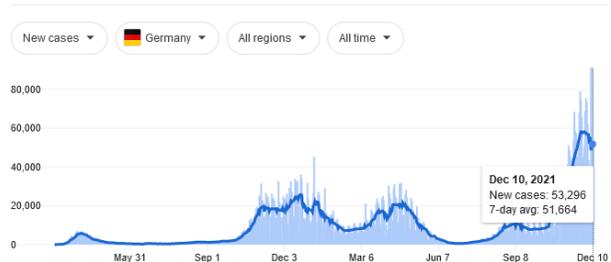
First, the number of deaths as reported to the CDC is now 9,136, and the number of serious injuries is 58,977 (see the CDC site <https://wonder.cdc.gov/vaers.html>). This is hardly what one would call safe.

In many countries where the great majority of the population is vaccinated, such as Germany (over 80% vaccinated), there are a large number of new Covid cases.³

Statistics

~ New cases and deaths

From JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data · Last updated: 2 days ago



¹ See <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-23/regional-quarantine-camps-south-australia-indigenous-covid/100644212>. For more on the racist nature of such camps, see also <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/20/world/australia/howard-springs-quarantine.html>. The writer also notes: "Two more camps, each with a capacity of about 2,000 people, are being built outside Brisbane and Melbourne, and Sydney and Perth may not be far behind."

² <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-urgent-action-boost-hospital-capacity-and-address-staffing-shortages>

³ This chart did not have a url, but it can be found by doing a Google search for "new confirmed cases of covid-19 in Germany" (with quotes). The source is John's Hopkins University (JHU). The % of population vaccinated can be found at <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/germany/>.

In south Korea, where again over 80% of the population is vaccinated⁴, there have also been a large number of Covid deaths, so one cannot say that at least the mortality rate from the vaccine has declined. This is not what would one call effective.

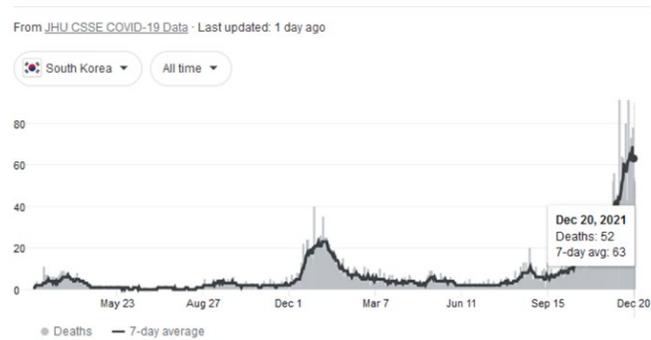
On the other hand, some areas of the world have a very small number of people vaccinated but also very few covid cases. “Fewer than 6% of people in Africa are vaccinated. For months, the WHO has described Africa as ‘one of the least affected regions in the world’ in its weekly pandemic reports.”⁵

And although one does not have to pay for the vaccine, the billions of dollars that the government pays the pharmaceutical companies for the vaccines come out of our tax dollars, so they are not free.

One should note that, again according to the CDC, only about 5% of deaths from Covid are among healthy people. The rest have an average of about four co-morbidities (such as heart conditions, breathing disorders, etc.).⁶

The forced vaccination campaigns are not mainly for our health. Partly they are to cover up the fact that we are still in Great Depression 2. Also, forcing people out of jobs because they refuse to be vaccinated leads to fewer workers producing the same number of commodities (although this leads to a falling rate of profit (see article in this issue on the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall). It also is a form of inducing fear and control over the labor force, making it harder for workers to organize. (In Canada, it is impossible to have meetings or even rallies outside because of Covid restrictions.)

Let us continue the struggle against imperialism and for socialism, regardless of the fears of Covid! We did this in the fight against police brutality after the murder of George Floyd. Keep up the fight!



Two important works available from Red Star Publishers

When and Why Socialism in the USSR Failed, at www.redstarpublishers.org/BookEnglishwCRbook.pdf

Unity & Struggle #43, at www.redstarpublishers.org/U&S43.pdf

These are available in both print and pdf

También disponible en español

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/highly-vaccinated-south-korea-cant-slow-down-covid-19-11639652626>

⁵ <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/scientists-mystified-wary-africa-avoids-covid-disaster-81271647>

⁶ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid_weekly/index.htm?fbclid=IwAR3-wrg3tTKK5-9tOHP-GAHWFVO3DfslkJKsDEPQpWmPbKtp6EsoVV2Qs1Q.

See the paragraph below “Comorbidities and other conditions.”

New York Rally in Support of Striking Alabama Miners

Some 1,100 miners, members of the UMWA, have been on strike against Warrior Met Coal since April 1 of this year. The workers had previously made many concessions to the company as it emerged from bankruptcy proceedings under another name. They are now on strike for better pay, benefits and working conditions. The company claims that the strike has already cost them \$6.9 million in the third quarter.

In October, a Tuscaloosa County judge ordered miners to cease picketing in front of locations owned by the company, showing once again how the capitalist state apparatus always takes the side of the bosses.

On Thursday, November 4, hundreds of striking miners and their supporters, mostly miners from other parts of the country, picketed the headquarters of BlackRock Financial in New York. BlackRock is the world's largest asset manager and the largest investor in Warrior Met. During the protest, several workers were arrested. The miners are still standing strong!



Many of the demonstrators came from West Virginia, which is why the majority were white. (Also note that almost none of them were wearing masks.)

<https://theredphoenixapl.org/2021/11/22/apl-statement-on-the-rittenhouse-ruling-enough-is-enough%ef%bf%bc/>

APL Statement on the Rittenhouse Ruling: Enough is Enough

By Editor on November 22, 2021



Protesters with the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, November 21st, 2021

The American Party of Labor, alongside all progressive forces in the United States, condemns the outrageous acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse for the murder of two people and the wounding of another fighting for justice in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The entire nation saw the open miscarriage of justice conducted by the Wisconsin courts, and the obvious bias of judge Bruce Schroeder, the face of calcified racist American “justice.” The nationally broadcast bias was even picked up and discussed by the mainstream media, which for decades has been propagating the troubled, scared, and innocent white male killer mythology upon which Rittenhouse’s defense rested.

Our response to the right-wing menace we face in the streets, now with legal backing, must, in turn, be more robust than petitions and marches in urban centers. Even the conviction of one fascist thug will not

excise the rot of the capitalist system, the entire machine must be scrapped. To that end, we must assert popular demands to dissolve the corrupt judicial and legislative apparatus, resist the lure of ineffective half-measures, and build independent bodies of and by working people.

It is only through the united, organized action of working, oppressed, and revolutionary-minded people that the fascist offensive can be reversed, contained, and destroyed.

We support the right of all working class and oppressed people to train and defend themselves against fascist violence.

We demand the immediate disarming and banning of all fascist, racist, and white-nationalist organizations!

Fascists out!

¡Fuera fascistas!

There is no fascism without capitalism! Abolish the system that enables fascist vigilantism!

Oppose the Extradition of Julian Assange!

On December 10, the British High Court decided to send Assange to the U.S., where he will face trial for conspiring to hack into U.S. databases. He could be sentenced to 175 years in prison. All Assange did was to expose crimes of U.S. imperialism (and of other reactionary capitalist countries). He is guilty of nothing but telling the truth!

Assange has spent the last 10 years on the run from his U.S. persecutors. He spent 7 years in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, and when a new government in Ecuador turned him over to the British authorities, he spent the last 3 years in a British jail. This has amounted to torture which has taken a toll on his physical and mental health.

We have no faith that Assange will face a “fair trial” in the U.S. The only way he can regain his freedom is if there is a large enough mass movement, in the U.S. and around the world, that can force the U.S. to set him free!

There is a Christmas Eve Vigil for Assange at noon on Dec. 24, in front of MSNBC, 49th St. between 5th and 6th Avenues, NYC. If you are in the New York area, please try to make it!



We reprint the article below because it correctly focuses on the reactionary measures by U.S. imperialism and its allies to try to regain control over the region of eastern Ukraine. At the same time we must point out that Russia is one of the chief rivals of U.S. imperialism, whose aim is not to support the progressive struggles of the people of Ukraine, but to also control the region, particularly by trying to undermine the progressive forces of the People's Republics in the Donbass.

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ALERT!

100,000 U.S.-armed Ukraine Nazi regime troopers amassed on border of Donbass Region to massacre the antifascist resistance and line up at the Russian border



Blame will be put on Russia escalating chance of larger war

U.S. workers will pay the price as war profiteers further loot the budget

The U.S. is setting the stage for its Nazi puppets in the Ukraine to commit a massacre as they push their troops closer and closer to Russia. Yet again, the American people are being told the lie that Russia is the aggressor.

100,000 U.S. armed and funded Ukrainian troops are amassed on the border of the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine. The fascist Ukrainian government is threatening to massacre the residents of the self-determined People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk which, along with the Republic of Crimea, declared independence from Ukraine in 2014 after a violent coup installed a U.S. puppet government in the capital of Kiev. Biden was a key player in the 2014 attack on Ukrainian sovereignty which he now falsely claims to be defending.

The heroic people of the independent republics of the Donbass are resistance fighters facing down a military with outright Nazis like the Azov battalion in its ranks. They don't want to live in a fascist Ukraine, which since the 2014 coup has become the poorest country in Europe with its second largest military. They have faced waves of deadly attacks by fascists connected to the Ukrainian military and are shelled almost daily.

Russia shares several hundred miles of border with the Donbass region. Any military advance on its border—much less one by an army flying Nazi swastikas—is a serious matter of national defense. Anticipating some response by the Russian armed forces, the U.S. and its war propagandists in the capitalist media are hyping made-up intelligence 'leaks' of an imminent Russian invasion. The same news outlets fail to report that the U.S. has been flying nuclear-capable bombers on the edge of Russian airspace.

Already costing 14,000 lives, the U.S. backed Ukrainian war to regain the Donbass is not about defending Ukraine from "Russian aggression." It's about recapturing the industries of the region and crushing any resistance to the fascist dictates of Kiev which have driven the country into the dust. For the U.S., it's also about maintaining a neocolonial government willing to sell out its country to U.S. and E.U. banks and corporations as has been done in Poland and Hungary.

The U.S. wants to use the Ukrainian military as the tip of its spear aimed eastward at neighboring Russia. Seeking out fresh sources of profit, the capitalists in control of the U.S. and the other major NATO powers want to bring Russia under their heel as they've done with other eastern Europe countries like the former Yugoslavia on whom they dropped 80,000 tons of bombs in 1999. We in the U.S. have nothing to gain by supporting these murderous wars for profit.

End all U.S. funding of the fascist Ukrainian government. Stop the U.S./NATO drive to war with Russia!

People of the Sahel oppose imperialism

By G. Dunkel posted on December 10, 2021

After two weeks of struggle — burning barricades, smashed windows and mirrors, Molotov cocktails, masses of people on the road, attempts to seize the trucks — the logistics convoy that the French army had organized at the port of Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), in the middle of November finally reached Gao, Mali, at the end of November.

Near Tera in western Niger, the progress of a French military convoy was blocked by demonstrators protesting against the presence of France in the Sahel. (Credit: Abidjan TV)

The 1,100-mile trip took much longer to complete than usual because of “unexpected” resistance, according to Captain François Xavier, in command of the convoy. (France24 video)

An eight-minute video, filmed in western Niger, shows bands of youth smashing windows and mirrors on a military truck, masses of people blocking the road, armored personnel carriers firing a missile at a house, hundreds of protesters scattered across barren fields throwing rocks and cops from Niger firing tear gas on the crowd. Three protesters died in Niger, and a number were seriously wounded.

According to France 24 news channel, this was the 32nd convoy bound from Abidjan to Gao since the French military Operation Barkhane began in August 2014. This convoy comprised between 60 and 100 vehicles. Some of the vehicles are military; others are heavy trucks, buses and construction equipment.

The intensified hostile reception to the convoy along the way has caused the French army and the French government to question how to maintain the presence of the French army in this area in western Africa, which is part of the region known as the Sahel.

The United States, the world’s leading imperialist power, has formally agreed to let France take the lead in military presence in the western Sahel. (Department of Defense press release, Oct. 21) But the U.S. is spending over a quarter of a billion dollars on a CIA drone base currently being built in central Niger. The U.S. has placed sanctions on some of the major business leaders in Mali. But these actions have not restrained the hostile mood of the masses.

For one week of this trip, the convoy made its way with great difficulty through Burkina Faso, lying between the Côte d’Ivoire and Niger. For years after Blaise Compaoré led a coup against Thomas Sankara, Africa’s Che Guevara, in 1987, Burkina was a reliable puppet “ally” of French imperialism.



The resistance to the passage of the convoy, along with the recent ongoing trial of the army officers who assassinated Sankara, shows that these ties are being dramatically challenged.

The protests in Burkina Faso were organized by militants, who communicated by using the internet over mobile phones. This tactic was so effective that the Burkinabe authorities shut the mobile internet down for four days until local businesses, which rely on that communication for sales, registered protest. The Burkina Faso government tried closing schools, but that resulted in more students taking to the streets.

Besides the neocolonialist presence of the French army and its convoy, one of the main issues raised by the Burkina Faso protesters was the failure of their government to defend local communities from attacks by reactionary Islamic forces. These attacks have produced tens of thousands of internally displaced refugees.

The attacks of reactionary Islamicist forces in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have been a major propaganda point used by France and its U.S. ally to justify their military presence. A very persistent rumor among those protesting is that the convoys carry arms to some Islamicist groups that the French want to support.

Though the French have been quick to deny and to discredit these allegations, political analysts who followed the U.S. war in Afghanistan remember well that the U.S. armed some reactionary Islamicist groups there in order to attack and destabilize pro-socialist and left-democratic governments.

Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are among the poorest countries in the world, landlocked, with roads that even if paved are in extremely poor condition, and with the barest minimum of internet communication systems.

But progressive forces in these three countries are currently mounting a militant struggle against imperialism. Progressive forces worldwide should be alert for ways to send meaningful solidarity.



Condemn US President Biden's Sham 'Summit for Democracy'

The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) strongly denounces US President Joe Biden's 'Summit for Democracy' as sham and farcical. Far from a summit that will promote democracy, the summit can only be a mockery of democracy.

The two-day virtual gathering on December 9 to 10 of over 100 governments, business sector and NGOs include dictators and authoritarian rulers in autocratic states with the worst record of human rights violations such as India, Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, Philippines and Brazil. The US itself has a record of 1,0000 killed by the police yearly most of whom are blacks and Hispanics.

Devoid of any moral and historical claim to the promotion of genuine democracy, the US has branched 'democracy' as a pretext to wage wars of aggression and proxy wars, support authoritarian regimes, intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states and promote economic and political instability in colonies, semi-colonies and independent states.

The US imperialist war export in the name of 'democracy' is seen in its military operations since 2001 in more than 85 countries - killing millions of people including civilians, and creating millions of refugees in their own sovereign soil. It has continued to build military bases and has repositioned high-tech military equipment and troops in strategic locations worldwide ready to wage wars of intervention to advance its imperialist agenda.

The summit is a move to reassert US global leadership to pursue its economic, political and military interests in the context of intensifying contradictions among imperialist powers in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The US hopes to wield global influence against imperialist rivals China and Russia.

History has proven that real democracy is advanced and fought for by the people's struggle for economic, political, socio-cultural and collective rights. As we commemorate the International Human Rights Day this December 10, we are reminded of this long-time, painstaking battle of asserting, gaining and defending the rights we enjoy today. In the face of the worsening crisis of the world capitalist system and the rise of autocratic regimes, the people are left with no other option but to build and broaden the struggle against fascism, imperialism and all reaction to achieve genuine democracy, sovereignty and social liberation. ###

Signed: Len Cooper

10 December 2021

We are reprinting this article because it has a generally good exposure of the role of the major imperialist countries in their hypocritical “opposition” to climate change. At the same time, we support the Marxist-Leninist position for socialist revolution as a transitional society to communism, not “communist revolution.” Nor do we think that PLP will be the one to lead this revolution.

<http://www.plp.org/challenge/2021/11/20/cop26-conference-capitalists-dont-cop-to-climate-corruption.html>

COP26 conference: Capitalists don’t cop to climate corruption

Challenge Editorial, December 1, 2021

Over the 12 days of the climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, fossil fuel companies extracted a billion barrels of oil from the ground. As diplomats tap-danced around the climate crisis, capitalists guaranteed that even more Earth-warming carbon would clog the atmosphere. Beneath their fake show of unity and pathetically inadequate (and unenforceable) pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the bosses did what bosses do. The COP26 conference was driven by the capitalist law of maximum profit and by the inter-imperialist rivalry heading toward global war. The only thing that unites the world’s ruling classes is their need to build racism, sexism, nationalism, and fascism to prepare for that war. Only communist revolution, led by Progressive Labor Party (PLP), can save a habitable planet by putting science and workers’ needs first.

Climate change and racist inequality

Though all workers are hurt by climate change, poor Black, Latin and Asian working-class areas suffer the most. An unprecedented drought in Madagascar has left more than one million people at risk of famine (U.N., 10/21). Rising sea levels in the Indian Ocean could erase the Maldives within three generations (express.co.uk, 11/15/17). In the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil, dried-out rivers are wiping out crops, drinking water, and farmers’ jobs (Yale Environment 360, 11/10). In September, Hurricane Ida swept through New York City and killed 11 workers trapped in illegal basement apartments in working-class Asian neighborhoods—victims of both climate change and their landlords’ greed. And let’s not forget Hurricane Katrina, which in 2005 killed nearly 2,000 workers in New Orleans, 52 percent of them Black.

By far the worst is yet to come. By 2050, more than a billion workers could become climate refugees (theguardian.com, 9/9/20).

As the world burns, bosses jockey for profit

U.S. bosses are locked in a battle for markets and resources with their main imperialist rivals, China and Russia. There are trillions in potential profits in the shift to electric vehicles and clean energy sources like solar and wind. But there is also big money to be made today from dirty energy: coal, oil, and natural gas. From China and the U.S., the two worst emitters, to still-developing countries like India and Brazil, the capitalist rulers are slow-walking the transition to have it both ways. As a result, the 2030 pledges made in Glasgow would warm the globe by 2.7 degrees Celsius (or 3.7 degrees Fahrenheit)—far beyond the 1.5° limit set in Paris six years ago. It’s a formula for even more powerful and frequent hurricanes, more deadly floods, more lethal heat waves and wildfires—for runaway climate disaster.

The emissions reduction goals set in Glasgow, said an official with the United Nations Environment Program chair, were “generally vague and untransparent; they are hard to calculate and hold to account; many kick the can beyond 2030, when we know that we need to halve our emissions between now and 2030 to be on track to limit warming to 1.5 C.” Or as one climate policy analyst put it, COP26 “has a very big credibility gap” (Carbon Brief, 11/10).

Even as U.S. Hypocrite-in-Chief Joe Biden was pushing Saudi Arabia and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to ease gas prices by pumping even more oil out of the ground (NPR,

10/31), he called out his imperialist counterparts, Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping, for failing to show up in Glasgow (BBC, 11/2). Workers should see Biden's Russia- and China-bashing for what it is, a blatant attempt to build patriotic fervor for World War III—in other words, a deadly trap!

Big Fascists, big problems

According to a recent poll, 71 percent of young adults in the U.S. believe that climate change will harm them personally (Pew Research, September). The dominant finance capital wing of the U.S. ruling class is cynically trying to use the climate crisis to win support from workers who are desperate for real action. These liberal Big Fascists also know that fossil fuels are linked to extreme weather, massive crop damage, and the premature deaths and disability of millions of workers from heart and lung disease—all big hits to the bosses' bottom line. Hence the \$1 trillion Biden bill and the proposed \$555 billion climate package in his embattled Build Back Better plan.

The Big Fascists' problem is the disunity and lack of discipline within their own class. Small Fascist bosses like the Koch family, whose fortune was built on domestic oil, have led the charge to deny climate science and push back against regulations to limit carbon emissions. Mobilized by Donald Trump, the Small Fascists have hijacked the Republican Party, which stands unanimously opposed to Build Back Better, a mix of climate funding and some crumbs for social services. They have a staunch ally in Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a coal baron who has already gutted Biden's proposal to clean up the electric power sector and is now threatening to torpedo Build Back Better altogether (MSNBC, 10/19).

The Big Fascists also have deep problems within their own camp. ExxonMobil, the multinational oil company and finance capital kingpin, has been exposed for mounting a climate disinformation campaign on Facebook—and then lying about it to a Congressional committee (msn.com, 11/3). “Did we aggressively fight against some of the science?” a company lobbyist admitted in an interview covertly filmed by Greenpeace. “Yes. We were looking out for our investments. We were looking out for our shareholders” (CNN, 7/21).

For the liberal U.S. bosses, from Biden to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her Green New Deal, the biggest lie of all is their shameless pose as protectors of the environment and humanity. This is the same crew that's planning a global war that will poison the atmosphere and slaughter untold millions of workers. Talk about toxic gases!

Only communist revolution can solve climate crisis

The hundred thousand protestors on the streets of Glasgow last week made it clear that the international working class sees through the bosses' empty words and phony shows of compassion. Most workers know instinctively that profit-driven capitalists can never solve the climate crisis. What they are missing is communist leadership and an analysis to turn the fight against carbon emissions into a fight for a world without money or racism or sexism or imperialist war. PLP works every day—on the job, in the schools, in our communities—to build a vision of a society run by and for the working class. Join us! Save the planet by smashing capitalism!

December 1-7, 2021

Central Organ of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador



Problems of the world economy (Part I)

The emergence of a new wave of Covid 19 infections, particularly in Europe, is causing nervousness, not only because of the health implications but also because of the effect it could have on the world economy. Along with this resurgence, there are other problems, such as the supply crisis, the high inflation rates, problems with the provision and costs of energy, among other aspects, which call into question the forecasts of economic growth by several specialized international institutions.

To date, they are projecting that the world economy will grow by about 5.9% for this year and 4.9% in 2022. The highest rates will be concentrated in the most developed capitalist economies (5.2%) and in the so-called emerging and developing economies (6.4%), while the poorest countries will have a low growth (less than 4%). The forecasts for India (9.5%), China (8.1%), the United States (6.0%) and the United Kingdom (7.0%) stand out. All this indicates that the differences between poor and rich countries, between the great capitalist powers and the dependent countries, will deepen.

As part of this process, last October, the World Trade Organization announced that there will be an increase in the volume of world commodity trade for 2021 and 2022 of 10.8% and 4.7% respectively.

Six months earlier, it predicted that this year's growth would reach 8.0%.

to grow by 12.6% in North America, 19.9% in South America, 9.1% in Europe, 13.1% in the CIS, 11.3% in Africa, 9.3% in the Middle East and 10.7% in Asia. Exports and imports of LDCs [least developed countries] will increase by an estimated 5.3% and 5.5%, respectively, in 2021,” says the WTO.[1] We must not lose sight of the fact that these figures are largely related to the decline suffered in 2020; if one looks at the cumulative growth over the two years between 2019 and 2021, “if the second half of this year turns out as expected, world merchandise trade will be up by 4.9% compared to 2019.”[2]

Supply crisis

However, amid this optimism, there is concern is due to the phenomenon known as the "supply chain crisis". World consumption, strongly depressed especially during the months in which harsh measures of restriction of the population were instituted, is now experiencing a rebound. But companies that stopped or decreased production are now struggling to meet global demand, the transportation capacity of the shipping companies have been overwhelmed, as have seaports for loading and unloading commodities. Maritime trade makes up 90% of the logistics chains, many companies are considering overcoming this crisis by bringing supply chains closer to Europe and relocating their production to reduce dependence on Asia. "Eight of the ten most important ports in the world are located in China. And during 2020, the US concentrated the orders there that it had previously made to other Asian countries, which were more affected by the lockdowns." [3]

The phenomenon is causing freight prices to increase by up to 500%, which means enormous profits for the few shipping companies that dominate this transportation sector and increases the prices of products on the market. "The world's largest shipping company, the Danish Maersk, has shown spectacular results. The company increased operating profit fivefold to \$5.9 billion and posted its best quarter in profits since 2014 and the most profitable in its more than 100-year history." [4]

The situation is more complex than was initially said of the "ship jam"; it has various implications. It is not only about problems of moving products from one place in the world to another: industries do not have the capacity to cover the supply, after having cut the purchase of raw materials – due to the decrease in consumption – now these do not arrive on time. Commodity prices are rising, increasing an already worrying inflation worldwide, explained earlier as a transitory phenomenon. The shortage of chips and metals such as steel, aluminum and copper affects the production of various industrial sectors, such as computers, automotive and toys. The expected growth rates of the world economy are called into question and could lower the prices of the shares and properties of many companies. (Amazon said its entire fourth-quarter profit could be wiped and Apple said it lost \$6 billion in sales because of inability to meet demand, and could lose more next quarter.)[5]

How long will this situation last? Some analysts argue that it could begin to ease as early as February 2022, but the problem as such will not be solved this whole year.

1 https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres21_e/pr889_e.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 <https://www.elindependiente.com/economia/2021/11/07/la-tesis-de-suministros-pone-el-mundo-en-jaque-hasta-2023/>

4 Ibid.

5 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-11-02/supply-chain-crisis-has-central-banks-facing-stagflation-lite>



Problems in the world economy (Part II)

Introducing the analysis of some characteristic elements in the world economy, in the previous edition of *En Marcha* we pointed out that the projections of economic growth formulated by international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank are in question, due to the presence of several phenomena such as the so-called supply crisis, the high inflation rate, the problems in the production and price of energy and the emergence of a new wave of the pandemic. We will now turn to rising energy prices and inflation.

Rising energy prices

This phenomenon is intertwined with other problems related to energy production and the increase in its prices, which once again set off alarm bells regarding the growth of the economy and the impact on the living conditions of workers and peoples.

Similar phenomena will weigh on the European economy and will have an impact on inflationary indices.

The rise in the price of oil in the international market (so far this year it has risen by 69%), natural gas and the decrease in carbon production, are factors that act to make this happen. To cope with the increase in the price of oil, the United States, China, India, Japan appealed to the use of their reserves, amid a bid between the most industrialized powers and OPEC plus.

Dangerous indices in inflation

The increase in inflation is another of the characteristic elements of today's world: the price of energy, consumer goods, food is growing; the living conditions of workers and peoples are affected. Price growth would lead to curbs in consumption, with its well-known effects on trade and production.

Latin America will be the region with the highest inflation on the planet in 2021, it occurs in a context of high liquidity, the supply crisis, increase in the price of raw materials (food and energy), depreciation of Latin American currencies and a strong recovery in consumption. In October, the cost of living soared to 53% in Argentina, while in Brazil it rose 11.1%, in Mexico by 6.2%, in Chile by 6% compared to the previous month. They are the highest rates in several years. Venezuela is a separate case, with chronic annualized hyperinflation of nearly 2,000%, according to the Central Bank of Venezuela, and with a projection of 2,700% by 2021, according to the IMF.

The largest economies in the region are trying to control the price escalation by raising interest rates, but the effect of these measures is negative, as they cause the economic slowdown.

In the US, in the same month, inflation reached 6.2%, the highest figure recorded there in the last 30 years. The Federal Reserve's response boils down to one word: patience. When it comes to predicting the end of this phenomenon, both the Treasury and the Joe Biden administration have been wrong. They said inflation would return to its normal causes by the end of 2021; now they recognize it will be a year later.

October set another record in the cost of products made in China, and its impact is global. The producer price index rose 13.5 percent from a year ago, up from 10.7 percent in September, according to information from China's National Bureau of Statistics. This phenomenon causes concern around the world, due to the impact and importance that "the factory of the world" has on the global supply chain. China is growing at the slowest pace in a year, as energy problems, disruptions in shipping and worsening housing crisis take their toll.

The ministers of Economy and Finance of the euro area had to recognize, at the beginning of November 2021, that inflation is "more persistent than anticipated", and they expect the phenomenon to decrease throughout 2022 and in 2023. A preliminary Eurostat estimate found that inflation reached 4.1% during October, levels not known in the last 13 years.

The highest prices in 10 years

The price of food has reached its highest level in the last 10 years in the world. In September, the price of the most consumed food on the planet climbed by 1.2% compared to August and almost 33% compared to the same month last year. Those affected – in general – are the workers and the peoples, but if we are more specific, it directly affects the poorest countries and the lower income strata of the population of the countries of advanced economies.

The world capitalist economy — once again — is a victim

Karl Marx' Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall, Quantified

Marx speaks of the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall (LTRPF.) By this is meant, roughly, that as the forces of production develop—i.e., machinery, support services, efficiency and coordination of production improve, technological levels improve—the time of exertion of labor-power required for production of a given quantity of goods drops. And, with that, the rate of profit drops.

Marx says this is "the most important law of modern political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations."¹ His full exposition and proof of the law is found in *Capital*, Volume 3, chapters 13-15.

The effect is familiar. It is widely noticed that over time the prices of equivalent manufactured goods tend to drop. A TV set that once cost \$300 now costs \$100 and is a better TV set. Automobiles today, prices adjusted, cost about the same as automobiles in 1949. But they are greatly superior vehicles in all respects, more automobile for the money.

It is sometimes disputed as to whether or not Marx' treatment of the LTRPF is valid, whether or not he has proved his case, etc. It is also sometimes said that applicable statistics are missing. This last is mistaken. Once full statistical description is found and applied, the scientific character standing and correctness of Marx' analysis can no longer be challenged. It is essential to the understanding of the objective historical part played by the development of the forces of production.

As far as the United States is concerned, excellent statistics are available from a number of sources. The Bureau of Economic Analysis is the statistical agency of the United States Department of Commerce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is under the Department of Labor. The Bureau of Census offers many demographic statistics. Authoritative financial statistics are available from the Federal Reserve System.

The North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) is utilized by all of these agencies. It fits Marx like a glove. That is not too surprising. The conventional capitalist-oriented political economy at its best describes things very well. It falls to Marx to explain them.

NAICS defines twenty economic sectors. The first five are the goods-producing industries, often called the real economy. These are agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, and utilities.

To proceed: Marx analyzes the internal conflicts, i.e., contradictions, inherent to capitalist production.

He argues that as the forces of production develop the contradictions are not resolved. They get worse. This paper will present statistical measures of the goods-producing industries of the United States as they apply to Marx' investigations.

Two fundamental laws of the Marxist political economy will be emphasized.

First, the Labor Theory of Value: the measure of value is the socially average time of expenditure of labor-power in a given quantity of production. If for example a Cadillac SUV is priced at four times the cost of a Ford subcompact it is because four times as much socially average labor-power is required in the manufacture of the Cadillac.

Secondly, Marx proves that surplus-value, or new capital, is created at the point of production and nowhere else. Surplus-value can be understood as gross margin—the difference between the market value of goods produced over a period of time minus the capital required for production.

These laws are proven in *Capital*, Volume I, chapters 1 through 7.

Marx shows that surplus-value, i.e., new capital, new wealth, economic expansion, springs from the hand of productive labor. For example, during a working day of eight hours a worker is paid wages of \$200. However, the value created by the worker in that time is \$320. The additional value of \$120, i.e., surplus-value, is new capital. It belongs to the capitalist. The theory of surplus-value is the cornerstone of the Marxist/proletarian political economy.

The ratio of surplus-value to wages is called the rate of exploitation. In the example above it is $\$120/\$200 = 60\%$.

Marx focuses his analysis on manufacturing. The development of the forces of production since his time has brought the other four goods-producing industries within scope of his investigations. Therefore all statistical measures in this study are summed over the five goods-producing industries in the United States, except when otherwise noted.

In the context of the LTRPF Marx takes profit to mean surplus-value. He explains that, in its previous attempts to formulate the relations between the development of the forces of production and the rate of profit, political economy had failed. It had "never even considered profit in its pure form [i.e., surplus-value] as distinct from its different, independent components, such as industrial profit, commercial profit, interest, and ground-rent."

Marx designates gross output as M' . In his terms, we have:

$M' = \text{Wear and tear on the means of production} + \text{Constant capital} + \text{Variable Capital} + \text{Surplus-value.}$

Marx uses letters to designate these branches of capital. He uses the term variable capital in reference to wages and salaries because the created value differs from the cost. Thus, $M' = f + c + v + s$.

Marx's terms and the present-day usages correspond exactly. In present-day terms:

Gross Output = Fixed Asset Depreciation + Intermediate Inputs + Wages and Salaries + Gross Margin

Intermediate inputs are defined as the cost of all goods and services purchased by a given sector of the economy in pursuit of its business. The first three terms in total are the input costs of production; the last term is the gross margin of final market value minus costs of production.

The files giving statistics for each are given below. They are available on download from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) at <https://www.bea.gov>².

M' = Gross Output; GDPbyInd_GO_1947-2017.xlsx

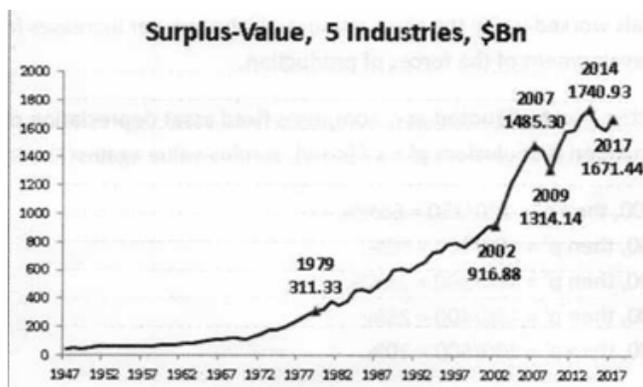
f = fixed asset depreciation; Table 3.4ESI

c = intermediate inputs; GDPbyInd_II_1947-2017.xlsx

v = wages and salaries, or, variable capital; Tables 2.2A, 2.2B

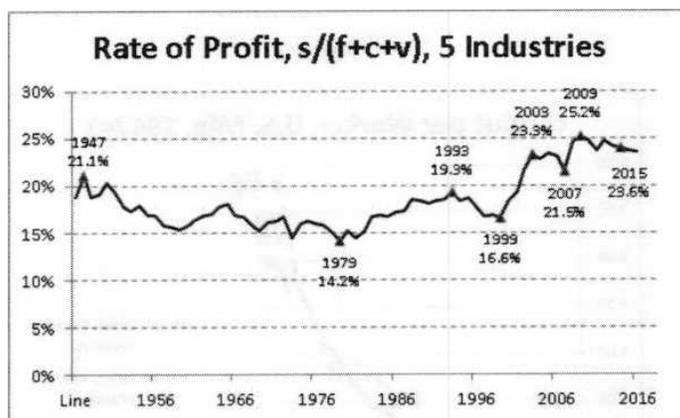
The BEA does not give statistics for surplus-value. They easily found: $s = M' - f - c - v$.

Figure 1, Current Dollars



Now we can calculate the rate of profit, $s / (f + c + v)$.

Figure 2



The pattern does indeed present a task of understanding of the most difficult relations!

Capital. Vol. III. Ch. 13: The Law As Such

Marx gives a table of illustrative numbers in Chapter 13. The cost of labor-power is held at 100. The rate of exploitation, s/v , is likewise held constant at 100%, hence $v=s$.

The cost of materials worked up by the given amount of labor-power increases from 50 to 400, in reflection of the development of the forces of production.

The cost of productive inputs, denoted as c , comprises fixed asset depreciation plus intermediate inputs. Since $v = s$ the calculation is equivalent $p' = s / (c + v)$, surplus-value against the total costs of production.

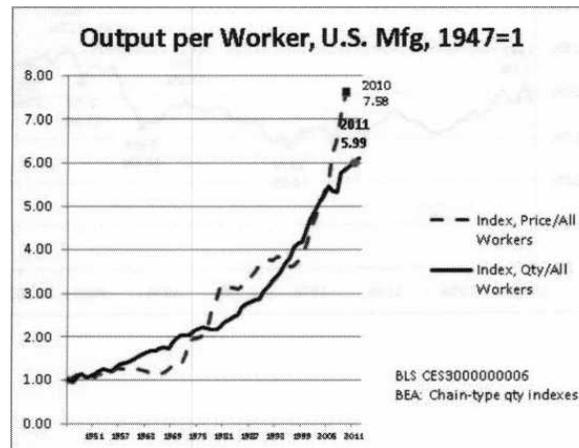
If $c = 50$, and $v = 100$, then $p' = 100/150 = 66\%$;

$c = 100$, and $v = 100$, then $p' = 100/200 = 50\%$;
 $c = 200$, and $v = 100$, then $p' = 100/300 = 33\% \%$;
 $c = 300$, and $v = 100$, then $p' = 100/400 = 25\%$;
 $c = 400$, and $v = 100$, then $p' = 100/500 = 20\%$.

The illustration posits that, as the forces of production develop, the contribution of living labor falls in proportion to the total value produced.

To verify Marx it suffices to look at manufacturing. The quantity index below is a measure how much stuff is produced, independent of price changes. We will look at the quantity index since that is closer to Marx's method.

Figure 3



In manufacturing all employees are engaged in production: the non-supervisory production workers, management, accounting, etc. All are required for the overall process to function. Hence calculations are based on total persons employed.

Let us say that in 1947 one hour of manufacturing labor-power created one copper teapot. By 2011 the same hour created six copper teapots. Therefore the new value created by one hour of labor-power of 1947 was spread out over six copper teapots in 2011. That is because machinery improved, overall coordination improved, and great strides were made in efficiency, etc.

In Marx' terms, application of the U.S. government's own statistics show:

In 1947, $c=50$ and $v=100$, and $p'=662/3\%$

In 2011, $c=300$ and $v=100$, and $p'=25\%$

Thus, the actual numbers found correspond to Marx' analysis.

As usual, a few caveats remain. The teapot is a finished product. Therefore its value represents the full production process going back to nature with the extraction of ore, whereas we have looked only at manufacturing. Mining only amounts on the average to about one sixteenth of manufacturing in value. Its inclusion would be too small to affect the conclusions.

Also, a significant amount of surplus-value goes into upper management salaries. It is shifted from s into v . That affects the numerator of the rate of profit. Thus the reported rate of profit would be lower than the real rate. Yet, the lowered rate still corresponds to Marx.

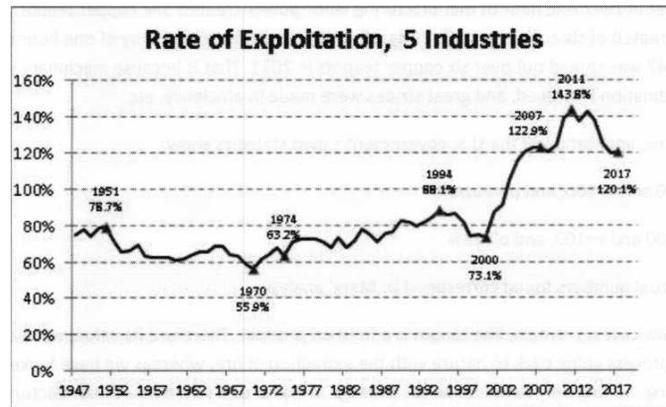
Capital. Vol. III. Ch. 14: Counteracting Influences

Marx says: "The rise in the rate of surplus-value is a factor which determines the mass of surplus-value, and hence also the rate of profit, for it takes place especially under conditions, in which, as we have previously seen, the constant capital is either not increased at all, or not proportionately increased, in relation to the variable capital. This factor does not abolish the general law. But it causes that law to act rather as a tendency, *i.e.*, as a law whose absolute action is checked, retarded, and weakened, by counteracting circumstances."

In order to raise the amount of surplus-value obtained from the same constant capital, the capitalist can do things like lengthen the day, or speed the labor process up, or employ female and child labor, thus to make the whole family work for its necessary money. Under some circumstances the capitalist can decrease wages below their value, and leverage the excess of population over those needed for production to decrease wages. The object is always to gain more surplus-value for the same wages, that is to say, raise the rate of exploitation, s/v .

For all of these reasons the pattern of Figure 4 is very similar to Figure 2, the rate of profit. By raising the rate of exploitation the mass of profit can be raised. In this way the fall of the rate of profit is made to act, just as Marx understood, as a tendency.

Figure 4



As to how the rate of exploitation was raised, the author is indebted to Bennet Zurofsky, an attorney and labor advocate in New Jersey. His knowledge is based on decades of experience. He offers the following views.

"Legal actions taken to restrict the power of organized labor were undertaken in the Cold War period. One of the most damaging was the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. Among the practices prohibited by the act are jurisdictional strikes, wildcat strikes, solidarity or political strikes, secondary boycotts, secondary and mass picketing, closed shops, and monetary donations by unions to federal political campaigns. It also allowed states to pass 'right-to-work' laws, a euphemism for banning union shops. The law also required union officers to sign non-communist affidavits with the government.

"The Reagan Presidency was a further watershed moment. His presidency exalted and successfully sold the idea that the USA is a nation of rugged individualism (code for Social Darwinism), rather than a community striving together for the common good (socialism, or the social contract.) When he not only broke the air traffic controller's strike but black-listed all of the controllers, and there was no militant response from American Labor as a group, it became clear the Labor Movement had lost its fighting spirit and was not prepared to take on corporate power in any serious way.

"The Democratic Party has taken Labor's support for granted ever since, so there was no political power fighting for labor's cause in a meaningful way. Jimmy Carter was the last president (1976-80) who made any effort at all to pass a bill that would strengthen the rights of unions. However, the effort was sidelined by the FBI's Abscam sting operation. The rights of unions have since disappeared as an issue that the Democratic Party would fight for. Bill Clinton and the New Democrats are particular villains in this piece. They embraced a wealthy corporate elite with socially liberal values as the center of their political positions, but never seemed to display the least interest in or understanding of organized labor, unionism, or the working class. Obama was no better.

"Economic rights for working people were more and more defined as individual rights rather than collective, or class-based, rights. Hence the focus was put on individual discriminators or victims of particular 'bad actors' rather than systemic discrimination. Statistical proof of discrimination became almost worthless in courts and legislatures. Retirement rights were individualized, defined benefit plans have all but disappeared in favor of Investment Retirement Accounts (IRA's), which each individual is expected to manage for themselves.

"Defined Benefit Plans must invest their assets under fiduciary standards that prize the return on capital above all else. Investment for the greater good of the beneficiary class is excluded, let alone that of the working class. The plans can be sued by disgruntled individuals.

"Corporations have been doing all that they can to shed employees and have individual contractors, or, failing that, leased labor. Healthcare continues to be tied to work, greatly limiting individuals' ability to leave for a new job or to risk striking. Moreover, corporate restrictive covenants have grown in acceptance by the courts further limiting individual freedom.

"The overwhelming value promoted by all economic policy has become increasing the return on Capital rather than improving the lot of ordinary people. Concentration of wealth is celebrated rather than consistently condemned as immoral. Basically, Reagan won the propaganda war as to the Nation's values.

"Unions and their members got too fat. Because their members were doing well, they became business unionists unwilling to risk what they had in the struggle to get more, especially if that more was for the working class more

generally rather than just for their members. But even for members, there is a great reluctance to strike because of the lost pay while people were out and the members were comfortable enough to gripe about the failures of the union to do better for them rather than encourage their leaders to actually fight the bosses. Organizing the unorganized disappeared even as a value, except for a few unions like the Service Employees International Union, for the same reasons.

"In the absence of good political leadership, many bad trends affected the working class. Free Trade prevailed not only as a vehicle to escape employment of higher-paid domestic workers, and also to escape all environmental and socially oriented regulation, taxation, etc. Return on Capital uber alles. Most American workers (encouraged in their selfishness) were unwilling to fight against it unless it directly affected them. Then, as in Pastor Niemoller's famous quote, there was no one left to help them. They were too weak, and lacking in allies.

"It's a sad tale all around. The law reflected the political power of capital rather than the people. The law also reflected labor's lack of political power and its unwillingness to fight."

This author has a reservation. The loss of worker solidarity is fully the responsibility of a union leadership that tied itself far too closely to the Democratic Party and got nothing for the workers in return. A change to a class-struggle leadership has become a real possibility in the face of today's crises. But note how close a parallel to Marx' analysis is found in the sentence, "The overwhelming value promoted by all economic policy has become increasing the return on Capital rather than improving the lot of ordinary people."

Capital, Vol. III, Chapter 15, "Exposition of the Internal Contradictions of the Law"

Here we find the full analysis of Marx' concept of capitalist overproduction. Perhaps the most famous passage of the Communist Manifesto speaks of the crisis of overproduction: "Industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce."

How can there be too much of these things? In this chapter Marx answers, says that the fall of the rate of profit "breeds over-production, crises, and surplus-capital alongside surplus-population."

First let us see how surplus capital comes into being. Recall that the only place where capital expands is the point of production. The amounts are the sums over the five goods-producing industries. The unit of measure is millions of dollars.

The gross output can be treated as the money in the bank realized in production at the end of the year. We focus on 2008, the year of the great financial collapse. In 2008 total revenues came to \$8.18 Tn; only (!) \$5.35 Tn was required for production in the following year. A staggering \$2.83 Tn was left with no place to find profit without creation of new value. It is excess capital.

That amount is the sum of two terms: the \$1.45 Tn of surplus-value created in 2008, none of which could be reinvested in production because of contraction; and the \$1.38 Tn drop in productive investment. In non-crisis years investment increases year over year but never enough to absorb the surplus-value created in the prior year. Usually only about 20% of surplus-value is required for the expansion of production.

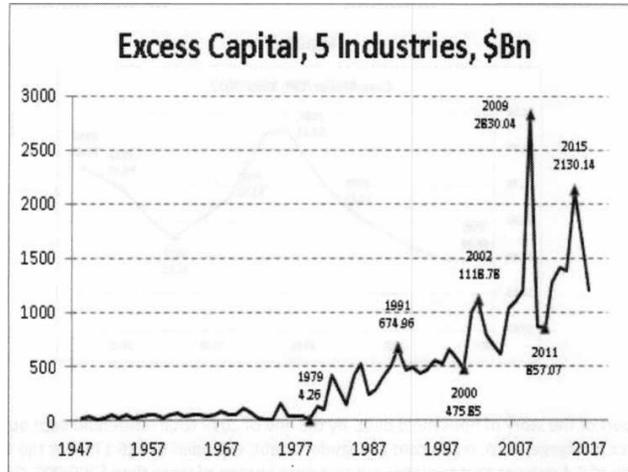
The stupendous quantity of excess capital takes on a life of its own. It demands that it be used to find profit without creation of new value. That is the common economic driver of the incurable housing bubble, the trillion-plus overpricing of healthcare, and the massive bloat of the unaudited military budget—among other things.

Figure 5

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
GO=f+c+v+s	7,940,417	8,187,162	6,671,266	7,260,337
T.I.P.=f+c+v		6,738,283	5,357,125	5,798,017
Excess Capital		1,202,134	2,830,037	873,249

Figure 6 displays the total excess capital generated on the U.S. economy from 1947 to 2017. Note the much higher rate after 1979, the year of maximum employment in manufacturing.

Figure 6



We now turn to examination of the effects of excess capital, e.g., the consequences of finding profit on a huge scale without creation of new value.

a.) The Housing Bubble

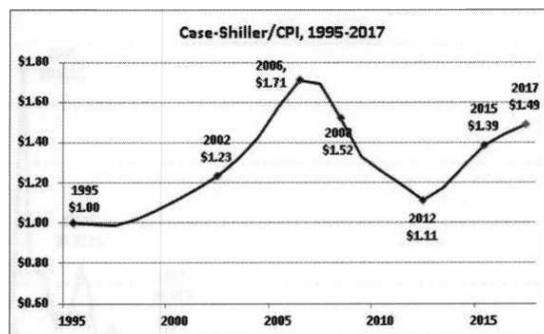
Lending standards for mortgages are lowered, i.e., people are lent more than they can safely be able to repay. Home prices are also jacked up through practices like overvaluation of sale assessments. That is how the housing bubble of 1996-2006 was created. By 2006 mortgage defaults caused the bubble to collapse, leading further to the general financial collapse of 2008.

Apparently the bankers have not learned their lesson. Figure 7 shows the ratio of Standard and Poors Case-Shiller Housing Price Index³ to the Consumer Price Index⁴, normalized to 1995. The Department of Labor calculates the housing component of the CPI on a rental-equivalent basis. Thus the CPI is insulated from the contortions of the mortgage market.

The value for 1995 means that in a homeowner got a dollar's worth of house for a dollar paid. That will be taken as the standard of parity. As the housing bubble took off in the 2000s, the market became overpriced due to manipulation by lenders. By 2006 the buyer had to pay \$1.71 for a dollar's worth of house. At that time total home mortgage debt outstanding had grown to \$10.6 Tn. it was simply too much for Defaults grew to such a scale that dominos in the financial system fell all over, and in 2008 the entire financial system suffered the worst collapse since the Great Depression.

Even so the home market never returned to parity. By 2017 the buyer had to pay \$1.49 for a dollar's worth of house. The bubble was back in full force.

Figure 7



That is only part of the story of household debt. By the end of 2019 total household debt outstanding, which includes mortgage, auto, credit card and student debt, exploded to \$16.1 Tn. For the statistical average family of 4.4 persons that averages out to a debt burden of more than \$200,000. Given the average annual family income of \$61,000, that is completely insupportable.⁵

b). Overpricing of Healthcare

Healthcare is an even larger area of overpricing, in fact the largest. The United States has no comprehensive national health service, which could impose price discipline. In its absence costs run wild, driven by the need of excess capital to find profit in the absence of creation of new value.

The U.S. Center for Disease Prevention and Control gives the following statistics for 2017:

Per capita national health expenditures: \$10,739

Total national health expenditures: \$3.5 trillion

Total national health expenditures as a percent of Gross Domestic Product: 17.9%⁶

By contrast, Italy has one of the best national healthcare systems in the world. In 2017 its per capita expenditure was 2522.5 euros, about \$2900, or 27% of that of the U.S. By this comparison with Italy, healthcare in the United States is overpriced by 73% of \$3.5 Tn, a tidy \$2.55 Tn or so.⁷

As to where it all goes, the healthcare insurance business is a prime culprit. It is colossal. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners reports \$707 Bn in net premiums for 2018.

Excessive overhead in billings leads to enormous waste is excessive overhead in billings: "Each year, health care payers and providers in the United States spend about \$496 billion on billing and insurance-related (BIR) costs, according to Center for American Progress estimates presented in this issue brief... A 2010 report by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) estimated that the United States spends about twice as much as necessary on BIR costs. That administrative excess currently amounts to \$248 billion annually, according to CAP's calculations."⁸

The experience of countries that have government-administered universal health services shows that the great bulk of this overhead would be eliminated.

A further source of waste is that the insurance system leads to hospital "charge sheet" business practices, in which every last detail of service is noted and overpriced.⁹

The Huffington Post reports that, "According to data from the national, independent, nonprofit organization FAIR Health, the national average charge for a vaginal delivery is \$12,290, and the national average charge for a C-section is \$16,907... To put this birth cost in perspective, France, Switzerland, Britain, Chile, Netherlands, and South Africa all pay less than \$5000 for vaginal deliveries in hospital and \$7000 for c-sections (in some cases much less). These countries do not, however, have poorer maternity care or infant and mother health outcomes... Midwifery care, on the other hand, puts birth cost at about \$2000-\$4000 depending on where you live."¹⁰

Further, Individual/family policies are cost-ineffective. They are very expensive, hundreds of dollars per month per person covered. They are notoriously unreliable since the insured have little recourse if payment for an expense is denied, which is very common. The insurance system does not even cover the whole population. The percentage of people without health insurance coverage for the entire 2017 calendar year was 8.8 percent, or 28.5 million. Another negative result of the health insurance system is that uncovered medical costs are the largest single cause of personal bankruptcies in the United States.¹¹

The fee-for-service system is another source of waste. Healthcare providers and physicians are reimbursed on the basis of the number of services they provide or procedures they conduct. Patients find themselves undergoing the same examinations, the same tests, the same procedures with no relation to outcomes.

The prescription drug business is riddled with problems. In 2016 \$329 billion was spent in this area. A particularly objectionable practice is media advertisement of prescription drugs. The mantra is "ask your doctor," while failing to mention of alternatives or side effects.¹²

In 2015, per capita prescription drug spending in the United States came to \$1011. In Sweden it came to \$351. By this measure the overpricing is 65%, about \$214 Bn.¹³

We could go on listing costs incurred for no value or benefit received practically forever.

Efforts at healthcare reform during the Clinton Administration in the 1990s came to nothing. The next attempt at reform was the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, known as "Obamacare."

It was written by healthcare corporations. It offered cheaper plans and reduced the number of uninsured people.

In reality it did very little good because the cheaper plans that lower-income people could afford have very high deductibles. For instance, a \$15,000 deductible against a \$20,000 cost means the coverage is only \$5000. The patient must still pay the \$15,000 balance.

What do we get for \$3.5 Tn per year in healthcare expenditures?

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides the following figures in USD equivalents for 2019.

The country with the highest life expectancy at birth is Japan, at 82.7 years. The United is 28th at 79.3 years, 4.4 years less than Japan.¹⁴

Healthcare expenditures for 2019 in USD equivalents are: U.S.: 11,072; Japan: 4064

By this comparison U.S. healthcare is overpriced by 63%, even without consideration of life expectancy.¹⁵

Public health suffers. Overweight and obesity in the U.S. are the highest in the world. "Charity" care and unpaid bills, neither of which exists in countries with national healthcare systems, also reduce the real discrepancies.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis the United States pays some hundreds of billions of dollars per year more than any real market value for services delivered. That we get seventy cents of services for each dollar paid is a generous estimate.

Setting moral indignation aside, and even assuming seventy cents of services for a dollar paid, the resultant \$1.05 Tn shortfall of value in the healthcare market is by itself a crippling burden on the entire consumer economy. People can't take that vacation trip, they can't buy a new home, they make do with old clothes.

That \$1.05 Tn or so goes for nothing received can only be explained by the presence of \$1.05 Tn on hand with nowhere else to go, that is, \$1.05 Tn in excess capital. We have already seen that the United States goods-producing industries do indeed create excess capital on that scale.

Thus an intense economic conflict interests arises between the financially-based sectors of the ruling class and those based in the productive-consumer sectors.

Auto Loans - overproduction of goods

MarkerWatch reports that, "Some \$66 billion, or 5% of the outstanding loans, are over 90 days delinquent, up from \$57 billion for the same period last year and \$35 billion a decade ago."¹⁶ Unlike the home mortgage market or healthcare, the auto market remains highly competitive. It cannot be overvalued. Given that it should not be subject to the woes of the other two areas. What is going on?

All three rackets are driven by overproduction of capital. The auto loan market is also driven by overproduction of goods. In fact tens of thousands of newly produced vehicles are destroyed because they cannot be sold. This is an effect of the best-known aspect of Marx' theory of overproduction: the workers are not paid enough to buy back everything they produce. Given the presence of excess capital, the capitalists find the "perfect" solution: "Aha! We will loan the workers enough to buy back all the stuff!"

Hence such phenomena as the "sign and drive" contract: sign right here and drive that nice \$45,000 SUV out of the lot with no money down and no credit check.

It makes more sense than destroying tens of thousands of unused vehicles. Driving the craziness is the need to produce more and more goods while paying the workers proportionately less. That means increase of the rate of exploitation, the ratio s/v .

Once again the actual figures for gross output of goods and the rate of exploitation confirm Marx' analysis of the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall. The conflict of economic interests once more arises between the financial and productive-consumptive sectors of the ruling class.

Student Debt: A Rapidly Growing Sector

Student debt is the fastest-growing area of household debt, exploding from \$114 Bn in 2006 to \$1.2 Tn in 2018. Education is one of the most important sectors economically. It accounts for at least 5% of GDP. It includes kindergarten through post-graduate levels, both privately and publicly funded. The problem has grown so bad that young people graduating from college find themselves \$50,000 to \$60,000 in debt. Those who go on to careers in medicine often find themselves owing more than \$200,000 in debt by the time they obtain certification. The terms of repayment are particularly onerous. Millions of young people have had their economic prospects crippled from the outset by debts incurred for education. It was not always so.¹⁷

In no year did student debt grow by more than \$20 Bn or so until 2008, the year of the great financial collapse, when it increased by \$52 Bn. After that annual growth exploded, reaching \$153 Bn in 2010. It remained very high after that, standing at \$92.5 Bn in 2017.

Fig. 8 strongly indicates a connection between excess capital and student debt.

Figure 8

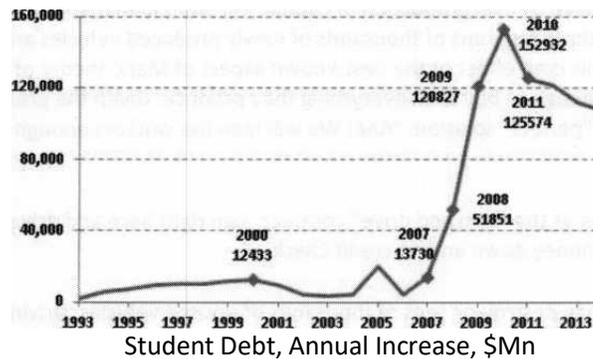


Figure 9 is very similar. In 2010 it soaked up an amount exceeding one fifth of excess capital. The ratio of student debt to excess capital remained high in succeeding years.

Figure 9

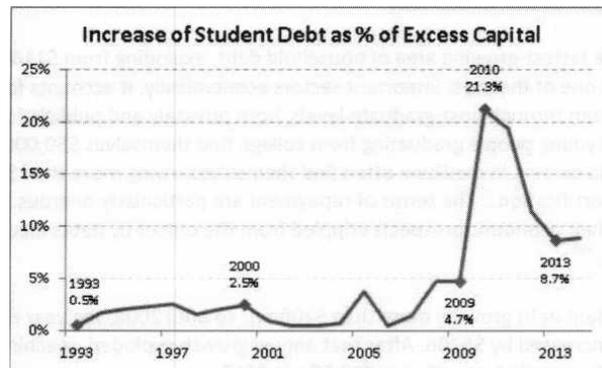


Figure 8 and Figure 9 both point to the same conclusion: a large part of the \$2.8 Tn of excess capital left in the wake of 2008 was forced into student debt, thus to destroy the economic prospects of an entire generation.

The U.S. Military Budget

Now we will turn to another vast cesspool of corruption that is hidden in plain sight: the U.S. military budget. It stands at \$732 Bn for 2020, in a country where 50 million people live in poverty.

The way corruption traces back to excess capital lacks some detail because the military budget has never adequately been investigated. Nonetheless a great deal can be inferred.

The military budget was never audited until an attempt was made in 2018. Writing in "The Nation," Dave Lindorff reports that before that the Department of Defense (DoD) had been able to defy Congress about opening the books. On November 15 of that year the auditors announced that they could not complete the job. They found that DoD's financial records "were riddled with so many bookkeeping deficiencies, irregularities, and errors that a reliable audit was simply impossible."

To make things worse, the auditors said that "DoD has literally been making up numbers in its annual financial reports to Congress—representing trillions of dollars' worth of seemingly nonexistent transactions."¹⁸

Corruption and secrecy continue as before in spite of this and other widely noticed exposures, and in the face of the anger of the public. Only one conclusion seems possible: every year the corruption of the military budget serves to dispose hundreds of billions of dollars of excess capital.

Conclusion

Quantification of Marx' investigation of the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit, using statistics from bourgeois sources, removes all challenges to the scientific standing of the Marxist method. It addresses the practical economic struggles of the working class in ways that immediately answer the question, "what does theory have to do with me."

Actual numbers prove that over-production of capital has destabilized the domestic economy of the United States. The forces of production have become more powerful than the relations of production can bear. The same is true for any industrialized country—Germany, France, Japan, Czechoslovakia, whatever. Conditions vary considerably from one country to another but the problem is one of basis. That is the same for all.

The result is the worldwide outbreak of Great Depression II. It is a historical crisis of capitalism. The severity of the crisis is shown by the artificial hysteria over covid-19. It is an attempt to prevent people from thinking about capitalism at a time when all of its "eternal verities" have proven wrong.

We also see the emergence of dangers like a digital currency and an all-pervading digital surveillance. They threaten to wipe out every aspect of individual existence except for the super-rich few. These efforts only testify to the desperation of the capitalist class in every country at the prospects they face. They will fail.

Great struggles lie ahead. But the people are the real makers of history. They will find means to defeat every effort to impose high-tech slavery. They will reach the era of the new, higher and better society, the classless society of communism, in which "the truly human era of human history can at last begin."

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1. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch15.htm>
2. <https://www.bea.gov>
3. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CSUSHPISA>
4. <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/data.htm>
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14. <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/47570143.pdf>
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16. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/outstanding-auto-loan-balances-just-hit-a-new-record-and-delinquencies-are-on-the-rise-and-what-to-make-of-morgan-stanleys-acquisition-of-e-trade-2020-02-21>
17. www.bls.gov. Student debt file reference FGCCSAQ027S
18. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/pentagon-audit-budget-fraud/>

Estamos reimprimiendo este artículo porque tiene una buena exposición general del papel de los principales países imperialistas en su hipócrita "oposición" al cambio climático. Al mismo tiempo, apoyamos la posición marxista-leninista de la revolución socialista como una sociedad de transición al comunismo, no como "revolución comunista". Tampoco creemos que el PLP sea quien lidere esta revolución.

www.plp.org, Desafío, Pág. 2

Conferencia COP26

Los capitalistas no admiten a la corrupción climática

Durante los 12 días de la cumbre climática en Glasgow, Escocia, las compañías de combustibles fósiles extrajeron mil millones de barriles de petróleo. Mientras los diplomáticos hacían como que se preocupaban por la crisis climática, los capitalistas garantizaban que más emisiones de carbono llegaran a la atmósfera. Bajo su falsa fachada de unidad y su patética e inadecuada, mucho menos aplicable, promesa de recortar las emisiones de efecto invernadero, los patrones hicieron lo que los patrones siempre hacen. La conferencia COP26 (Conferencia de los Partidos 26) estaba guiada por la ley capitalista de maximización de ganancias y la rivalidad inter imperialista que está llevando a una guerra mundial. Lo único que une a las clases dominantes del mundo es su necesidad de crear racismo, sexismo, nacionalismo, y fascismo para prepararse para la guerra. Solo la revolución comunista, dirigida por el Partido Laboral Progresista, puede salvar un planeta habitable poniendo las necesidades de los trabajadores y la ciencia al frente.

Cambio climático y desigualdad racista

Aunque a todos los trabajadores les afecta el cambio climático, las áreas en donde vive la clase trabajadora no blanca es la más afectada. En Madagascar, inundaciones sin precedentes dejan a más de un millón de personas al borde de la hambruna (UN, 10/21). Las Islas Maldivas podrían desaparecer en las próximas tres generaciones debido a la elevación de los niveles del Océano Índico (express.co.uk, 15/11/17). En el estado de Bahía en Brasil, las cosechas se están perdiendo, falta el agua potable y para colmo los trabajadores del campo se quedan sin empleo por la sequía de los ríos (Yale Environment 360, 11/10). En septiembre, el huracán Ida barrió a la ciudad de Nueva York, 11 trabajadores murieron atrapados en apartamentos ilegales en barrios pobres asiáticos – fueron víctimas no solo del cambio climático sino de la avaricia de sus caseros. Y no olvidemos el huracán Katrina en el 2005 casi 2,000 trabajadores murieron en Nueva Orleans, más de la mitad fueron personas negras.

Y lo peor está por venir. Para 2050, más de mil millones de trabajadores podrían convertirse en refugiados climáticos (theguardian.com, 9/9/20).

Mientras el mundo se quema, los patrones jinetean para lucrar

Los patrones estadounidenses y sus principales rivales imperialistas; China y Rusia, están enfrascados en una batalla por recursos y mercados. Existe un billón de posibles ganancias en el cambio a vehículos eléctricos y recursos de energía limpia, como la solar y eólica. Pero también hay mucho dinero por hacer con la energía sucia: carbón, petróleo, y gas natural. Los capitalistas gobernantes y peores emisores, China y EE.UU. caminan lento hacia la transición, lucrando con ambas, también los países en desarrollo como India y Brasil. Lo que resultara que sus promesas para 2030 en Glasgow calentaran el mundo en 2.7 grados más – mucho más del 1.5 grados de límite puesto en París seis años atrás. La receta perfecta para más poderosos y frecuentes huracanes, más inundaciones letales, y más olas de calor e incendios forestales letales, un desastre climático en potencia.

Un oficial con el programa de ambiente de las naciones unidas dijo que las metas de reducción de emisiones que se acordaron en Glasgow, eran “generalmente vagas y ultra transparentes; son difíciles de calcular o verificar; muchas perecen después de 2030, cuando sabemos que necesitamos disminuir a la mitad nuestras emisiones desde ahora hasta 2030 para poder estar en vía a limitar el calentamiento a 1.5° C”. O como dice uno de los analistas de la política climática, COP26 “tiene una gran brecha de credibilidad” (Carbon Brief, 10/11).

Mientras el Hipócrita-en-Jefe estadounidense Joe Biden presionaba para que Arabia Saudita y la OPEP bajen los precios de gas sacando más petróleo de la tierra (NPR, 31/10) señaló a sus contrapartes imperialistas Vladimir Putin de Rusia y Xi Jinping de China, por no presentarse en Glasgow (BBC, 2/11). Los trabajadores debemos ver estos ataques de Biden a Rusia y China como lo que son; un descarado intento de construir fervor patriótico para la tercera guerra mundial – en otras palabras, una trampa letal.

Grandes fascistas, grandes problemas

Según una reciente encuesta, el 71% de los adultos jóvenes en EE.UU. creen que el cambio climático es un peligro para ellos personalmente (Pew Research, septiembre). El ala financiera dominante dentro de la clase gobernante estadounidense, cínicamente, tratan de usar la crisis climática para ganar apoyo de los trabajadores que están desesperados por ver acciones reales. Estos grandes fascistas liberales también saben que los combustibles fósiles están relacionados al clima extremo, daño a los cultivos, las muertes prematuras y a la discapacidad de millones de trabajadores por enfermedades del corazón y pulmón – todos puntos fundamentales para los patrones. Ya que, el proyecto de ley de Biden de un billón propone un paquete climático de \$555 dentro de su plan “Build Back Better”.

El problema de los grandes fascistas es la desunión y falta de disciplina dentro de su propia clase. Los pequeños fascistas como la familia Koch, cuya fortuna fue creada con petróleo doméstico, han sido quienes dirigen la arremetida de negación de la ciencia climática y rechazan las regulaciones que limiten sus emisiones de carbón. Movilizados por Donald Trump, los pequeños fascistas se han apoderado del partido republicano, el cual está unánimemente opuesto a la ley Build Back Better, una mezcla de financiamiento climático y unas cuantas bonos para servicios sociales. Ellos tienen un ferviente aliado en el Senador Joe Manchin de West Virginia, un barón del carbón, quien ya ha eviscerado la propuesta de Biden para limpiar el sector eléctrico y ahora amenaza con impedir Build Back Better (MSNBC, 19/10).

Los grandes fascistas también tienen grandes problemas dentro de su campo. ExxonMobil, la petrolera multinacional y pivote del capital financiero, ha sido descubierto creando desinformación del clima en Facebook – y después mintiéndole al Comité del Congreso sobre eso (msn.com, 3/11). Un cabildero de la compañía admitió “¿Hemos luchado agresivamente contra la ciencia? Si, estábamos cuidando nuestras inversiones. Buscábamos proteger a nuestros accionistas” (CNN, 21/7)

La mentira más grande de los patrones liberales estadounidenses, desde Biden a Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez y su gran mentira el Green New Deal (Nuevo Acuerdo Verde), es su desvergonzada pose como protectores del ambiente y la humanidad. Estos son los mismos que planean una guerra mundial que envenenara la atmosfera y masacraría millones de trabajadores. ¡¿Quién emite los gases más tóxicos?!

Solo la revolución comunista puede resolver la crisis climática

La semana pasada, los cientos de miles de manifestantes en las calles de Glasgow, mostraron claramente que la clase trabajadora internacional puede ver a través de las palabras vacías de los patrones y de sus falsas muestras de compasión. La mayoría de los trabajadores saben, instintivamente, que los capitalistas avariciosos nunca podrán resolver la crisis climática. Lo que necesitan es el liderato comunista y un análisis de como convertir esta lucha contra las emisiones de carbón en una lucha por un mundo sin dinero, o racismo, o sexismo, o guerra imperialista. El PLP trabaja todos los días – en las escuelas, en el trabajo, en nuestras comunidades – para construir una visión de una sociedad dirigida por y para la clase trabajadora. ¡Únetenos! ¡Salvemos el planeta acabando con el capitalismo!



Problemas en la economía mundial (Parte I)

El surgimiento de una nueva ola de contagios del Covid 19, particularmente en Europa, provoca nerviosismo, no solo por las implicaciones sanitarias sino, además, por el efecto que podría tener en la economía mundial. Es que, junto a este rebrote hay otros problemas, como la crisis de los suministros, los altos índices de inflación, los problemas con la provisión y costos de la energía, entre otros aspectos, que ponen en cuestionamiento las previsiones de crecimiento económico, establecidas por varias instituciones internacionales especializadas.

Hasta hoy, proyectan que la economía mundial tendrá una expansión que gira en torno del 5,9 % para este año y del 4,9% en el 2022. Los índices más altos se concentrarán en las economías capitalistas más desarrolladas (5,2%) y en las denominadas economías emergentes y en desarrollo (6,4 %), mientras los países más pobres tendrán un crecimiento bajo (inferior al 4%). Destacan las previsiones respecto de India (9,5%), China (8,1%), Estados Unidos (6,0 %), Reino Unido (7,0%). Todo eso indica que se profundizarán las diferencias entre países pobres y ricos, entre las grandes potencias capitalistas y los países dependientes.

Como parte de ese proceso, en el reciente mes de octubre, la Organización Mundial de Comercio anunció que se producirá un incremento del volumen del comercio mundial de mercancías para 2021 y 2022: el 10,8 % y el 4,7 % respectivamente.

Seis meses antes, pronosticó que el crecimiento de este año llegaría al 8,0%.

En este ámbito, también, las economías capitalistas más fuertes tendrán los mejores resultados, sin embargo, hay regiones que estarán muy por debajo del promedio mundial. En «Oriente Medio, América del Sur y África, parece que la recuperación de las exportaciones será más débil, mientras que, en Oriente

Medio, la Comunidad de Estados Independientes y África, las importaciones se recuperen lentamente. [...] Según las previsiones, el crecimiento del volumen de las exportaciones en 2021 será del 8,7% en América del Norte, el 7,2% en América del Sur, el 9,7% en Europa, el 0,6% en la CEI, el 7,0% en África, el 5,0% en Oriente Medio y el 14,4% en Asia. Está previsto que el crecimiento de las importaciones, en ese mismo año, sea del 12,6% en América del Norte, el 19,9% en América del Sur, el 9,1% en Europa, el 13,1% en la CEI, el 11,3% en África, el 9,3% en Oriente Medio y el 10,7% en Asia. Según las estimaciones, en 2021 las exportaciones e importaciones de los PMA (países menos adelantados) aumentarán un 5,3% y un 5,5%, respectivamente» dice la OMC.[1] No hay que perder de vista que estas cifras están en relación —en gran medida— con el descenso sufrido en el año 2020; si se mira el crecimiento acumulado durante los dos años comprendidos entre 2019 y 2021 (a condición de cumplirse las previsiones de crecimiento en el segundo semestre de este año), el crecimiento mundial de mercancías aumentará un 4,9% en comparación con 2019.[2]

Crisis de suministros

Sin embargo, en medio de ese optimismo, se abre paso la preocupación debido al fenómeno conocido como la «crisis de la cadena de suministros». El consumo mundial, fuertemente deprimido sobre todo durante los meses en los que se establecieron duras medidas de restricción a la población, ahora experimenta un efecto rebote. Pero las empresas que pararon o disminuyeron la producción ahora tienen dificultades para cubrir la demanda mundial, las compañías navieras se han visto sobrepasadas en su capacidad de transportación, al igual que los puertos marítimos para el embarco y desembarco de mercancías. El comercio marítimo está presente en el 90% de las cadenas logísticas, muchas compañías se plantean superar esta crisis acercando las cadenas de suministros a puntos más próximos a Europa y relocalizar su producción para reducir la dependencia de Asia. «En China están localizados ocho de los diez puertos más importantes del mundo. Y durante 2020, EEUU concentró allí los pedidos que antes realizaba a otros países asiáticos, que se encontraban más afectados por los confinamientos».[3]

El fenómeno está provocando el encarecimiento de los fletes hasta un 500 %, lo que implica enormes utilidades para las pocas empresas navieras que dominan ese transporte y encarecimiento de los productos en el mercado. «La naviera más grande del mundo, la danesa Maersk, ha presentado unos resultados espectaculares. La compañía multiplicó por cinco las ganancias operativas hasta los 5.900 millones de dólares y ha registrado su mejor trimestre en beneficio desde 2014 y el más rentable de sus más de 100 años de historia».[4]

La situación es más compleja de lo que inicialmente se dijo del «atasco de buques», tiene implicaciones diversas, no solo se trata de problemas al mover productos de un lugar del mundo hacia otro: las industrias no tienen capacidad de cubrir la oferta, luego de haber recortado la compra de materias primas —por la disminución del consumo— ahora estas no llegan a tiempo; los precios de las mercancías suben, presionando hacia arriba una inflación ya preocupante a nivel mundial, explicada antes como un fenómeno transitorio; la escasez de chips y metales como acero, aluminio y cobre afecta la producción de varios sectores industriales, como la informática, automotriz, juguetería. Se pone en entredicho los índices previstos de crecimiento de la economía mundial y podrían bajar los precios de las acciones y propiedades de muchas empresas. (Amazon advirtió que sus ganancias del cuarto trimestre podrían desaparecer y Apple dijo que perdió seis mil millones en ventas, debido a la incapacidad de satisfacer la demanda y que podría perder más en el último trimestre[5]).

¿Hasta cuándo durará esta situación? Algunos analistas sostienen que podría empezar a aliviarse desde febrero del 2022, pero el problema como tal no se solucionará en todo este año.

1 https://www.wto.org/spanish/news_s/pres21_s/pr889_s.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 <https://www.elindependiente.com/economia/2021/11/07/la-crisis-de-suministros-pone-el-mundo-en-jaque-hasta-2023/>

4 Ibid.

5 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-11-02/supply-chain-crisis-has-central-banks-facing-stagflation-lite>

En Marcha #1982 del 8 al 15 de diciembre de 2021



Problemas en la economía mundial (Parte II)

Al introducir el análisis de algunos elementos característicos en la economía mundial, en la edición anterior de *En Marcha* señalamos que las proyecciones de crecimiento económico formuladas por organismos internacionales como el Fondo Monetario Internacional o el Banco Mundial se encuentran en entredicho, debido a la presencia de varios fenómenos como la denominada crisis de suministros, el alto índice inflacionario, los problemas en la producción y precio de la energía y el surgimiento de una nueva ola de la pandemia. Ahora nos referiremos al encarecimiento de la energía y a la inflación.

Encarecimiento de la energía

Este fenómeno se entrelaza con otros problemas relacionados con la producción energética y el incremento de sus precios, que una vez más prenden las alarmas respecto del crecimiento de la economía y la afectación a las condiciones de vida de los trabajadores y los pueblos

En septiembre de este año, los precios de la energía se dispararon en Europa, pero tres meses antes ya se advertía que en los 38 países integrantes de la OCDE se pagaban, en promedio, 18,6% más, esto es el

ritmo más alto desde septiembre de 2008. El costo del gas natural por mayor alcanzó los máximos históricos en Reino Unido, Francia, España, Alemania e Italia; las facturas que pagan los hogares y las empresas también se dispararon. Las industrias ven cómo se elevan los costes de producción: algunos fabricantes de acero británicos suspendieron sus operaciones, según el grupo comercial UK Steel; siete pequeños proveedores de energía de Reino Unido -entre ellos Avro Energy, que abastecía a unos 580.000 clientes- quebraron porque sus costes se han disparado, otras decenas están al borde de la quiebra; la empresa noruega de fertilizantes recortó la producción de amoníaco en Europa en torno a un 40% debido al precio récord del gas natural, para abastecer el mercado recurrirá a plantas de otras partes del mundo. Fenómenos similares pesarán en la economía europea e incidirán en los índices inflacionarios.

La elevación del precio del petróleo en el mercado internacional (en lo que va del año ha subido el 69%), del gas natural y la disminución en la producción del carbono, son factores que actúan para que esto ocurra. Para hacer frente al incremento del precio del petróleo, Estados Unidos, China, India, Japón apelaron al uso de sus reservas, en medio de una puja entre las potencias más industrializadas y la OPEP plus.

Peligrosos índices en la inflación

El incremento de la inflación es otro de los elementos característicos del mundo actual: crece el precio de la energía, de los bienes de consumo, de los alimentos; se afecta las condiciones de vida de los trabajadores y los pueblos. El crecimiento de los precios llevaría a frenar el consumo, con sus conocidos efectos en el comercio y la producción.

Latinoamérica será la región con la inflación más alta del planeta en el 2021, se produce en un contexto de mucha liquidez, la crisis de suministros, aumento en el precio de las materias primas (alimentos y energía), depreciación de las monedas latinoamericanas y una fuerte recuperación del consumo. En octubre, el costo de la vida se disparó a un 53% en Argentina, mientras que en Brasil se alzó el 11,1%, en México un 6,2%, en Chile un 6% en relación con el mes anterior. Son los índices más altos en varios años. Venezuela es un caso aparte, con una hiperinflación crónica anualizada de casi 2.000%, según el Banco Central de Venezuela, y con una proyección de 2.700% para 2021, según el FMI.

Las economías más grandes de la región intentan controlar la escalada de precios subiendo las tasas de interés, pero el efecto de esas medidas resulta negativo, pues, provocan la desaceleración económica.

En los EEUU, en el mismo mes, la inflación llegó a un 6,2%, la mayor cifra registrada allí en los últimos 30 años. La respuesta de la Reserva Federal se reduce a una palabra: paciencia. A la hora de predecir el final de este fenómeno, tanto el Tesoro como el Gobierno de Joe Biden se han equivocado. Dijeron que la inflación volvería a su causas normales a finales de 2021; ahora reconocen será un año más tarde.

Octubre marcó otro récord en el costo de los productos elaborados en China, y su impacto es mundial. El índice de precios al productor aumentó un 13,5% con respecto a hace un año, trepando desde el 10,7% de septiembre, según informaciones de la Oficina Nacional de Estadística de China. Este fenómeno provoca preocupación en todo el mundo, por el impacto e importancia que «la fábrica del mundo» tiene en la cadena de suministro mundial. China está creciendo al ritmo más lento en un año, a medida que los problemas energéticos, las interrupciones en el transporte marítimo y el agravamiento de la crisis inmobiliaria hacen mella.

Los ministros de Economía y Finanzas de la eurozona debieron reconocer, a inicios de noviembre de 2021, que la inflación se presenta «más persistente de lo anticipado», y esperan que el fenómeno disminuya a lo largo de 2022 y en 2023. Una estimación preliminar de Eurostat estableció que la inflación llegó al 4,1% durante octubre, niveles no conocidos en los últimos 13 años.

Los precios más altos en 10 años

El precio de los alimentos ha llegado a su nivel más alto en los últimos 10 años en el mundo. En septiembre, la cotización de los alimentos más consumidos en el planeta escaló un 1,2% respecto a agosto y casi un 33% respecto al mismo mes del año pasado. Los afectados —en general— son los trabajadores y los pueblos, pero si somos más específicos, afecta directamente a los países más pobres y a las capas de la población con menores ingresos de los países de economías avanzadas.

La economía capitalista mundial —una vez más— es víctima de sus propias contradicciones.

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