

Centralization of the Means of Production, Social relations, and State control to Save Capital as the Goal of Pandemic Management

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Dear comrades,

First of all, I want to express my satisfaction at participating in this confrontation and having the opportunity to get to know a network of militants who have made a clear field choice against the leap forward that the international capitalist system of exploitation has put in place with the Pandemic Management.

This was not a contingent campaign dictated by objective and natural emergencies to which capitalism was unable to respond due to its contradictions and anarchism. Lockdowns, vaccination campaigns, and the development of a system of control and social discipline were the result of a historical necessity of an exploitative system in crisis that is forced to impose, even here in the West countries, instruments of maximum centralisation of the resources of production, social relations, and state political management in the service of profit and the survival of capital.

Let me therefore preface this by saying how the small network of militants that has sprung up over the last two years and fought against the 'authoritarian management of the pandemic' came into being and operated. Since its birth originated not from the maturation of a theoretical project developed in political and organisational circles, but from spontaneous participation in the movements against pandemic management, lockdowns and the subsequent vaccination campaign. In the heterogeneous movement that occupied the squares for many months, especially in northern Italy, everyone instinctively saw a reaction to a project of social reorganisation whose boundaries did not stop at the contingent 'emergency', let alone health, but at the entire life of the classes involved.

I don't want to dwell here on the development of government and movement policies in Italy, in the course of the discussion other comrades of the Militant Assembly will elaborate on these important aspects for comparison. What I do want to emphasise is that if it has been possible for militants from completely different political experiences of radical antagonism to capitalism (from the Italian class left to anarchism and class trade unionism) to converge on common battles, it has been due to the social energy that, albeit contradictorily, has been set in motion, and for having identified it as a fault line and contradiction with the capitalist system of exploitation without trashing it for its limitations and the sovereignist and citizenship tendencies that animated it. Hence our network was born.

This ensured that questions about the content of the attack, the relationship between this and the functioning and crisis of the system did not get bogged down in the dispute over matured certainties and the few square centimetres of truth that came from past experience. Therefore, a confrontation was sought by attempting to use and renew these past instruments in response to the political

problems we were facing and the questions that this new phase of capitalism and class clash is posing.

However, the same network that initially worked as a co-ordination of militants trying to bring together local experiences of struggle was confronted with the general issues they raised.

As some of you may have read we titled our first document 'For a class opposition to the authoritarian management of the Pandemic'. With this we wanted to establish an initial concept, namely that it was possible to counter the ongoing attack from the point of view of the working class and exploited, and in particular from the perspective of a radical questioning of the system of global and total exploitation of which the pandemic emergency was an instrument. This is why we have identified the points of analysis and our vision of the pandemic attack.

- The pandemic was not an uncontrollable natural event, as has since been amply demonstrated both by the mortality rates of the pandemic and by the ample possibility of counteracting its effects for the more fragile population with the timely use of traditional medicines, practised by general practitioners and some states under pressure from the population.
- The deliberate desire to impose a state of emergency, imposed by international bodies such as the WHO, acted in the opposite direction to the pursuit of so-called public health protection. In particular, with the policy of 'watchful waiting', it renounced treatment of the sick a priori and ordered social isolation measures that had nothing to do with combating the disease.
- This first objective of social control and outright militarisation of life has prepared people, through the widespread use of media terror, to accept the total delegation of their existence to the state and so-called international technical and scientific bodies, and to suffer unprecedented deprivations of civil, political and trade union freedoms.
- This proxy was used to impose a mass vaccination campaign never before seen in history with untested biotechnological serums and to impose compulsory administration measures in workplaces and persecution of vaccine refusers.
- At the same time, using a veritable mass filing system, a digital control system, the Green Pass, was set up, through which the population's data was collected, setting up a system of individual control, initially for health, but extendable to all aspects of social and administrative life up to the creation of a Digital Identity.
- This pandemic disciplining was managed and implemented, therefore, as the beginning of a season in which even in the liberal West, forms of social

mediation and concessions to trade union and individual freedoms had to bow to the higher demands of the national and international community in the direct form of subjugation to the state and its ends. The very life and possibility of existence must involve voluntary subjugation, a goal to be earned through consensus and points acquired in compliance with the imposed agenda and emergencies, on pain of social marginalisation.

- This authoritarian 'turn' inaugurated by states with the Pandemic Management was and is perfectly in tune with the needs of the international system of capitalist exploitation and attempts to counteract its global economic and financial crisis.
- In particular, the same pandemic management was used for:
 - implement techno-medicine and the clearance of biotechnological production.
 - The transformation of healthcare and its gradual dismantling in favour of tele-medicine.
 - The promotion and implementation of the use of information technology and digitisation by extending it to new areas of activity such as public administration, consumer and labour sectors to which it had not yet come...
 - Further development and integration of the data management network and the tools to support it for both predictive control of consumption and its governability.
 - A further push towards the digitisation of individual and financial economic transactions should be completed by the extension of the digital Id, which is also functional to the launch of digital money.
- These objectives were and still are intended to contribute to the more general restructuring that international capital has put in place to counter the crisis of valorisation that manifested itself with the financial crisis of 2008 and the incipient recession forecast for 2019.
- A restructuring that seeks to fuel a further leap in the intensification of productivity and the use of robotics in the sectors of production, the further centralisation through the impetus of cybernetics and information technology of the sectors that contribute to the distribution and realisation of profit. The consequences of this overall process of social restructuring, therefore, are to further subjugate all productive and social activities to the life of concentrated capital in its desperate search for valorisation. They involve the dissolution of small capital and forms of intermediation with the consequent drastic reduction of the middle classes, a further surplus of the labour force even in the West, accompanied by the intensification of exploitation, the lowering of wages below the limits of the reproduction of life, and the extreme precarisation of labour.
- With this proving that technological leaps, while experiencing all the extreme forces of productivity intensification to the limits of

transhumanism and the subjugation of the human to algorithms cannot promise a 'virtuous' restart of the cycle of extended accumulation, but rather: a prospect of reduced consumption, a generalised impoverishment of the vast majority of the population as a function of the survival of capital, the need to manage/eliminate the human surplus.

- Marx's prediction in the *Gundrisse* about the socialisation of all sciences and human capacities into a kind of general intellect at the service of the valorisation of capital is increasingly finding practical application today. Not surprisingly, it is expressed through the tools of Artificial Intelligence and transhumanism. In short, through the total domination and subordination of humanity and living bodies to capital.
- For these reasons, we saw the measures of the pandemic attack as consequent to these needs and not as events dictated by an impromptu despotic conspiracy imposed by the Dr. Strangelove version of capital's think tanks.
- The programming of the various agendas of capital, explicitly expressed by the headquarters of the large financial institutions and the multinational IT corporations, respond to the monstrous and inhuman form that capital and the world market has taken in its overripe stage. They are also the result of a historical crisis of accumulation that is responded to through solutions that generate further contradictions and thus require social disciplining under the dystopian forms that we are fighting. On the other hand, it would be dystopian to deny that capital (and the organisms that manage it) plan and work to impose its projects of social and political normalisation with the argument that capital is anarchic and cannot plan anything. The real madness is that of the so-called antagonist left, who accused us of conspiracy for denouncing these plans by accusing us of having a non-materialist view of capitalism. In the end, their materialism resolved itself in accepting the plans and needs of capital as the result of imponderable and external elements, in justifying in substance social disciplining, in extolling the supposed neutrality of science.
- What makes the current crisis and the responses capitalism produces even more ferocious is the further contradiction generated by the gigantic mass of capital existing in the form of financial capital, bonds and securities on future returns. The mass of 'fictitious capital', i.e. capital that has long had to be nurtured and safeguarded because it is unable to be valorised by the real economy (the real cycle of valorisation that passes through the exploitation of living labour). The explosions of financial bubbles loom and follow those of 2008. That is, there is a need to prevent a traumatic devaluation that if implemented would literally explode the world economy. But to sustain this mass of capital, the amount of socially produced value must be further drained through the issuance of money, i.e. the purchase of state debt in exchange for money on which private

capital profits, and the same mass of capital earmarked for productive investment is reduced, requiring a further squeeze on social welfare.

- Among the reasons why the pandemic was managed by means of lockdowns and a real production blockade was the fact that the economy was again on the brink of an economic recession (all the economic indicators at the time showed this). It was necessary on the one hand to prevent this from turning into an uncontrolled inflationary crisis, and on the other hand to disguise with a pandemic emergency the umpteenth issuance of money by the central banks to support the financial market, which happened on time. It was also necessary for the social consequences of this operation to be backed up by all the instruments needed to control revolts and rebellions. Of course, while this was successful in avoiding a collapse and helped to support the objectives of the restructuring I mentioned earlier, it did not resolve all the contradictions that were not slow to appear. Consequently new emergencies followed, first and foremost the war in Ukraine, the resurgence of inflation, the shadow of an uncontrolled recession, the so-called energy emergency and the cost of raw materials.
- We have seen in the struggles against pandemic disciplining worldwide as a real rift between these intentions and a part of the exploited classes. As always, crises and their courses develop by producing social and class contradictions that condition their events and directions. In subsequent interventions we will try to go into the merits of these worldwide resistances. Here I will limit myself to emphasising how these resistances have been a real element in the clash with the projects of capitalism. The illusions about the possibility of a return to a national capitalism (sovereignism) and a more humane capitalism that animated the squares and battles against the pandemic measures did not in any way invalidate their objectively anti-capitalist character. Even on this level, the response of the so-called antagonist left has been to brand these movements as sovereignists and fascists. Once again failing to understand how this sovereignism was not a regurgitation of petty-bourgeois and pro-capitalist classes against a proletarian insurgency. But a rebellion against the technological and total fascism of modern, concentrated capitalism. It certainly poses the problem of directing this protest towards a perspective of radical critique of capitalism itself, but the basis that generates it goes in the direction of breaking with the social order that is being imposed. On the contrary, the reluctance to participate in these movements in favour of a supposedly purer 'traditional' trade union and bargaining confrontation simply ends up by lying down on reformist illusions that no longer have any reason to exist.
- What are the future developments of this clash? Certainly the objectives underlying the pandemic disciplining, social control systems remain and can at any time be restored even with the health justification of further variants or new epidemics. The elements to complete the social control mechanism, the digital Id and all related instrumentation remain at the

disposal of states. The technological and technical-administrative infrastructure that created the basis for implementing it remains in place for the next steps, among which is certainly the digital currency that is increasingly necessary for the governance of individuals and the financial market.

- So we are not facing a 'post-pandemic' that prefigures a restart of a normal accumulation cycle, but the repetition of the crisis and capital's increasingly despotic mechanisms to counter it. The new emergencies are being fuelled at the same time to consolidate social compacting towards an external enemy (first the virus, now Putin), to fuel the transfer of state resources towards military financing and a further drugging of public debt in favour of the technological, military and financial apparatus, but above all to support an offensive by western capital towards control of raw materials and labour power in the east and countries that have tried to latch onto international value chains to carve out their own space in the world market.
- The economy of war, the contingency of resources and energy supplies, the habit of thrifty consumption become new propagandistic and de facto instruments to justify the social immiseration that is on the horizon and re-propose the scheme of emergence and technocratic control that comes with it, without renouncing the demand that this subjugation be done in the name of common interests to which we must adhere.

This in general terms I believe is the view that has matured in our discussions, however the events have proposed new questions on issues that are fundamental to understanding the developments of the crisis and the international class clash. First and foremost is the question of the characteristics of the global capital market, the extreme centralisation and socialisation of value produced on an international scale, the relationship between the circus of finance (and its need to survive and keep alive through perennial drugging and monetary issuance) with the so-called 'real economy'. And last but not least, the ways in which modern imperialism (which concentrates most of the world's capital in a handful of US-led western states) manifests itself.

Far from wanting to close the circle of a discussion that is still open between us and to which new contradictions pose new questions, I briefly try to say a few things from my point of view, hopefully consistent with what has been said so far.

Underlying the workings of capital and its crises remains the permanent contradiction between the attempt to increase value through living labour (the extraction of surplus value), and the disproportionate growth of its dead part resulting in ever greater difficulties in increasing the surplus value ratio. But this contradiction has led to an inherent metamorphosis in the course of time and the development of capitalism. Not only did the intensification of productivity (relative surplus-value) in one capitalist sector tend to extend to all sectors, but more and more the mass of value produced became concentrated first in

commercial monopolies and then in financial monopolies, precisely as a result of competition and the pursuit of productive intensification. Nothing contradictory therefore with the laws of capital reproduction (and with what Lenin said).

The immense disproportion between the mass of capital to be valorised and the source of surplus-value production (the commodity labour-power), the only one capable of increasing the value produced, made it increasingly necessary to support the restructuring and obsolescence of fixed capital through the anticipation of profit realisation by means of credit, of finance. An ever-increasing mass of capital was not only concentrated but became securities, futures, traded on the stock exchange, i.e. the way to account for valuation through the anticipation of its realisation. This speculative aspect of mature capital was widely anticipated by Marx and theorists like Bordiga of the Italian communist left. The principle of making money with money is not just an illusory motto sold to the people, but manifests itself concretely in social life and with devastating effects. Of course, for neither Marx nor Bordiga did this mean that capital could skip the production process, but that accumulated social capital found new forms of existence through:

- The ability of finance to drain the social value produced and secure its ownership, making itself instrumental in fuelling productive investments through credit.
- The possibility of postponing the moment when the value of securities does not correspond to the real production of value, also counting on its predominance in the management of capital and requiring the central banks to issue money.

Of course, this has not resolved the contradictions. Some comrades rightly remind us that monetary policy itself cannot create value. The point is that this financial 'dominance' and the need to keep it alive at all costs contributes to making the contradictions of capital even more acute. The existence of the mass of accumulated capital living in the form of speculative or fictitious capital continues to claim its share of the appropriation of social wealth to be taken always from the surplus value produced on a global scale. Financial capital is now so closely linked to productive capital that it cannot be significantly reduced without dramatic consequences for the entire system. This was further demonstrated, as I mentioned earlier, by the 2008 crisis where precisely in order to avoid such a risk, the financial and speculative sector was the one that actually benefited from the economic support of domestic and international institutional apparatuses. This support, instead of nourishing the productive sectors in terms of credit to foster economic recovery, was entirely absorbed by the speculative sector, not only because of the proterity of finance, but also because the difficulties of accumulation were so great that despite the low interest rate of credit, no one had any interest in resorting to it to revive a production that was now asphyxiated.

However, these contradictions have relaunched the desperate search for instruments to feed the accumulated capital on the one hand, and to extort from the social body every drop of blood useful for its valorisation on the other.

Capital therefore increasingly presents itself as a concentrated entity that dominates all social life and to which all social life must be directed. This totalitarian essence demands the social disciplining and further dehumanisation of life that I have mentioned.

It is not, however, a super-capitalism that manages to evade its own contradictions. Its problem is the historical one of eliminating the mass of value that fails to devalue. In other eras, the necessary devaluation took place through cyclical crises that, after a period of economic depression, eliminated surplus commodities and capital to begin a new cycle of accumulation.

Generalised war was then the instrument for a radical destruction of capital, productive forces and men. The long cycle of expanded accumulation that began after World War II has come to an end, and not even the phase of liberalist globalisation, which has perfected the control of capital on a global scale and demolished the social compromise between capital and labour, has resolved the issue. On the contrary, it has raised movements and resistance, not least those defined as neo-populist (such as the struggle of the *jilet jau*) against which the launching of a project of social control on a global scale has become even more necessary. The same intensive exploitation of Chinese labour that was an important element in transferring surplus-value to western capital has inevitably set the pace. Both because the extraction of absolute surplus value, obtained through longer working days, beastly labour intensity and starvation wages in western investment sectors, had to be reckoned with as these sectors shifted to intensive productivity by means of machines and technology. And above all because the Chinese proletariat was no longer willing to foot the bill for the transfer of surplus value to international capital.

This is another reason why Western imperialism, where most of the world's accumulated capital is concentrated, has had to increase both its internal exploitation and its offensive against countries that are not part of the small circle of coupon-cutting states headed by the US, ushering in the new parameters of the control of life and human relations that we are talking about and of which Pandemic Management was a precursor.

The military and financial encirclement of Russia and China is part of this necessity. Of course, contradictions also run through the Western bloc and elements of confrontation exist within it, just as there is the possibility that the future may see a redefinition of the alliances of the imperialist bloc of the enlarged NATO. But at present this is united in the common goal of preventing the states that aspire to climb the international value chains from coming out of their shells, working to force them back into the role of suppliers of raw materials and cheap labour, preventing their capitalisms from fully developing their domestic and international markets, and above all attempting to force their proletarians back into misery and unconditional surrender to imperialism.

The crisis of capital, and thus of its most concentrated part that refers to imperialism and the western states, does not lead to its dissolution in favour of competitors able to counter its financial dominance in the world. The decline of the American empire relaunches its offensive on an international scale.

Welcome, then, are the responses that both Russia and China necessarily bring to bear politically and militarily to counter it. Their opposition stems not from their willingness to challenge the world capitalist system but from the latter's ruthless desire to keep them out of it. It is a wholly bourgeois response but one that has to reckon with a local proletariat that claims the fruits of its own efforts over the past decades. A capitalism, especially Chinese capitalism, that extends its areas of influence on the terrain of expanding infrastructure and local markets in contrast to the financial and destructive plunder of western imperialism. It is no coincidence that in the course of the declared war being waged against Russia and China, the front that does not obey Western diktats has expanded to other intermediate countries. Will the expanded Brics front be a precondition for a new Bandung? Most probably not, precisely because their state resistance clashes with their bourgeois horizons that are unable to counter Western imperialism. Even if they were to develop the means to displace their own markets and currencies, they could not nurture their own indigenous market capable of surviving in competition with western imperialism. Firstly because this would not and does not allow them to do so. What we hope for is that the proletariat and the exploited in these states can take in hand from their own interests a real and radical opposition to international capitalism, overcoming the limits of their own bourgeoisies...

But this can never happen unless we in the West recognise where the attack is coming from **and express radical opposition to the aims and expansion of our imperialism.**

To conclude. Faced with these scenarios, we concluded our first document by saying that the proletariat/bourgeoisie clash is increasingly turning into a capitalism/communism clash. By this we meant to emphasise that while on the one hand capital is increasingly assuming a totalitarian and invasive form, generating impersonal control over all social life, on the other hand resistance to it becomes more and more necessarily an opposition to its entire mechanism of operation. This is not to say that there are no longer opposing social classes and interests between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but that the old way in which they experienced their opposition to capital, relying on their ability to oppose it and acquire power within its development, has now waned. Increasingly, the proletariat itself, in order to be able to fight for its own interests, is forced to take charge of an overall social transformation: that is, to fight as Marx said for the liberation of all humanity. The need to eliminate the relationship between men based on exchange value, wage labour, production for production's sake, in order to move towards a social cooperation and a relationship with nature based on the use benefit of social production and reproduction, becomes more and more a possible, necessary alternative that cannot be delegated to future phases of social management. Given this

consideration, we know that the road to this involves phases of confrontation and tormented experiences. In my opinion, what we are looking at from this conviction is the actual process that is beginning to unravel. As a small network of militants, we can neither provoke the explosion of the necessary social energy, nor the manner in which it will be organised, but we can try to be in tune with it, participate in the unfolding of the struggles and work so that a tendency may mature at the international level as well, capable of understanding its developments and relaunching within them the prospect of the liberation of the whole society from capitalist oppression.