

# Onwards, Barbarians!

PERIODICAL OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

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A periodical on technology and politics. A communist publication that goes against the petty-bourgeois trends and liberal-democratic waffle. We fight for the union of the entire working class, independent of nation and cultural background.

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## Behind every CAPTCHA autosolver: A slave!

On the backend of many captcha-solving APIs, resides not a program, but workers, and sometimes, slaves. Low-wage workers in underdeveloped countries are often exploited by companies looking to outsource their labour in order to cut costs and increase profits. Such workers are paid below a living wage: In fact, research done by F5 Labs suggests that solvers earn only 2 USD for an 11-hour workday! This in itself could be already considered a true "slave wage", however, there is enough evidence to suggest that there may be a link between the captcha-solving industry and the rings that deal in "cyber-slavery".

Cambodia, for example, is notorious for forced labour in virtual sweatshops, which are essentially gigantic call-centre-like buildings, where slaves are forced to work long hours and face abuse such as beatings and humiliation. Such labour involves falsifying forms, running phone scams, and participating in "crowdsourcing" services, which are essentially online platforms used for mass task-completion, where workers earn an average of 10 cents per task. One service, Amazon Mechanical Turk, even provides a public API that makes exploiting workers in some forgotten corner of the world as easy as writing a form in XML and putting it into a Python script.

While CAPTCHA resolution is technically against the Amazon Terms of Service, some crafty individuals have managed to pass through the restrictions by creating tasks that are



A group of Thai slaves rescued. Over 40 chinese bosses leading the operation were apprehended.

technically something else, such as making workers get to a page on the taskmaker's own website, with an "unrelated" CAPTCHA then being put in the way of the page, which workers must solve to complete the main task. Communists must immediately begin studying ways to sabotage the slave rings around the system and mount unionisation efforts around such platforms. We give particular priority to the slave rings. A particular method that could be used is creating fake tasks that allow victims to send over a help message and their current location. An effective form of sabotage on the part of the workers could also involve deliberately inserting misleading or wrong information into forms: as long as most of the active workforce is actively working against the platform, Amazon won't dare to issue mass bans and have a labour shortage - instead, they may raise the pay cap on services.

**When it comes to anti-trans legislation...**

**Form communist leagues!**

As of late, reaction in the United States has focused its efforts predominantly on curtailing the very existence of transgender people. Legislators attempt to pass every law they can with the clear end-goal being re-institutionalising the marginal status of trans individuals as it existed in the 1980s. They seek to render it illegal for trans people to exist in public at all. A particular piece of legislation proposed this January in West Virginia, SB 252, de-facto bans transgender individuals from going out during daylight by forbidding "transgender exposure" to children - being trans will now be considered an obscenity throughout the whole state, and transgender people will be forbidden from

coming within 762 metres of a school.

The reasons behind this surge in persecution are clear: the wave against trans people is concurrent with a broader reaction targeting all women and sexual minorities, made clear through the repealing of Roe v. Wade, but also through bills targeting all gender, sexual and romantic minorities, and through the organisation and resurgence of reactionary figures.

Capitalism has a continuous necessity: that of replacing an ageing population of labourers and soldiers at its service. The United States is growing

particularly desperate, as birth rates in the country have been declining ever since the 80s, and with every recession, they go even lower. In light of such a situation, fractions of the bourgeoisie become anxious to enforce the nuclear family and the sex-slavery of women. And in turn, parts of the population which cannot reproduce (or whose reproduction will not result in ideal workers) become the "useless eaters" of capital.

Transgender people are a group with a relative inability to procreate, as hormone replacement therapy tends to make those who take it sterile. Combine this with the general disgust bourgeois society already has for them (as they are already seen as outcasts of the nuclear family), and you get an easy target.

Over the past few years, the attacks on the existence of the transgender community have shifted from general disgust into an organised doctrine, which takes advantage of pre-existing prejudice and social backwardness by framing itself as opposing "sterilisation" and "castration". Of course, as with most reactionary whining, these glorified hangmen cry about the "poor children", wailing about how medical treatment will make them lose their fertility, all the while calling the adults that oppose their insanity "paedophiles". Of course, when those trans children turn into trans adults, everything possible is done to push them into suicide or to push others to kill them, lest capital have to withstand the weight of another "useless eater".

The organised reactionary media blitz also serves the purpose of distraction; the bourgeoisie selects a marginalised group to which they can redirect attention to, in order to diverge the attention of the majority from the harm which they have inflicted upon the proletariat at a time in which it becomes most glaringly obvious. Simultaneously, directing this attack on queer people in general, and trans people in particular, also serves to reinforce



Leslie Feinberg. Author of *Stone Butch Blues*, communist, and one of the first minds behind trans liberation.

the division of labour between men and women, and thus to preserve the patriarchal dominance of capitalist society. Thus, the attack on trans and other queer people directly serves as an attack upon the nascent class consciousness of the proletariat through its misdirection of hatred away from the bourgeoisie and towards one of the most marginalised groups in society.

The opposition to this calamity has not surpassed disorganised backlash. Over the years, the voices of "opposition" to reaction have been mostly passive, adhering to the delusions of social-democracy (and on its fringes, adhering to the equivalent positions of leftists/non-communists) that dominate the so-called "political left" within the United States (and all over the world). Those delusions depart from a central thesis: the belief that a struggle must be fought for "getting voices heard", and that by merely bringing attention to trans issues and garnering the "allyship" of atomized individuals, the transgender movement will be able to conciliate with the most rotten of bourgeois legislators.

Even if this useless manifestation of leftism earns a political victory, which is unlikely, what will their victory consist of? Well, there's a simple answer: their "freedoms" will merely consist of legalistic drivel vomited onto a paper.

Trans people will go from being denied healthcare to being charged outrageous prices for life-saving medicine, they will go from being killed for their gender presentation to being killed for being in misery. Finally - trans women will have the "freedom" to not only be exploited like the common worker, but also have their pay inequality be the same as the one of a cis woman! Needless to say, the ideal scenario for the leftists in the US is a scenario where trans people die from a different, more insidious form of violence.

This political scenario that now reeks of rotten carcasses has only one solution. We must unite the whole of the working class into communist leagues, and then into the Communist Party. History has shown that social progress walks in step with the level of political maturity of the working class: when the class realises it has a common enemy, space is created to educate and inform others without hatred. Furthermore, communism is against the infantile idea of the "dictatorship of the majority" posed by other petty-bourgeois socialisms, which means that communism can, through scientific observation, arrive at an ultimately correct and binding conclusion. We must realise that a bourgeois-populist perspective has done us no good.

The experiment of the Black Panther Party taught us that the first task of a revolutionary communist league composed by a minority demographic is to act in self-defence. "Self-defence" does not mean idly sitting by waiting for another person to be the victim of violence, instead, it is about building up an apparatus that can conduct many forms of struggle - propaganda, relief, intelligence gathering and boots-on-the-ground militancy - and make use of that apparatus to crush the most reactionary fractions of capital. It's "defence" because the bourgeois-democratic apparatus isn't being directly attacked, since we can only attack the heart of the issue with the organisational discipline of the

Communist Party.

So, our end proposal is: create communist leagues and organise into the Communist Party, abandon the illusions of the liberal-democratic methods.

**THE HISTORICAL PARTY**  
**V.I Lenin**

## **The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism**

Throughout the civilised world the teachings of Marx evoke the utmost hostility and hatred of all bourgeois science (both official and liberal), which regards Marxism as a kind of "pernicious sect". And no other attitude is to be expected, for there can be no "impartial" social science in a society based on class struggle. In one way or another, all official and liberal science defends wage-slavery, whereas Marxism has declared relentless war on that slavery. To expect science to be impartial in a wage-slave society is as foolishly naïve as to expect impartiality from manufacturers on the question of whether workers' wages ought not to be increased by decreasing the profits of capital.

But this is not all. The history of philosophy and the history of social science show with perfect clarity that there is nothing resembling "sectarianism" in Marxism, in the sense of its being a hidebound, petrified doctrine, a

doctrine which arose away from the high road of the development of world civilisation. On the contrary, the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind. His doctrine emerged as the direct and immediate continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives of philosophy, political economy and socialism.

The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defence of bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.

It is these three sources of Marxism, which are also its component parts that we shall outline in brief.

**1.** The philosophy of Marxism is materialism. Throughout the modern history of Europe, and especially at the end of the eighteenth century in France, where a resolute struggle was conducted against every kind of medieval rubbish, against serfdom in institutions and ideas, materialism has proved to be the only philosophy that is consistent, true to all the teachings of natural science and hostile to superstition, cant and so forth. The enemies of democracy have, therefore, always exerted all their efforts to "refute", under mine and defame materialism, and have advocated various forms of philosophical idealism, which always, in one way or another, amounts to the defence or support of religion.

Marx and Engels defended philosophical materialism in the most determined manner and repeatedly explained how profoundly erroneous is every deviation from this basis. Their views are most clearly and fully expounded in the works of Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and Anti-Dühring, which, like the Communist Manifesto,

are handbooks for every class-conscious worker.

But Marx did not stop at eighteenth-century materialism: he developed philosophy to a higher level, he enriched it with the achievements of German classical philosophy, especially of Hegel's system, which in its turn had led to the materialism of Feuerbach. The main achievement was dialectics, i.e., the doctrine of development in its fullest, deepest and most comprehensive form, the doctrine of the relativity of the human knowledge that provides us with a reflection of eternally developing matter. The latest discoveries of natural science—radium, electrons, the transmutation of elements—have been a remarkable confirmation of Marx's dialectical materialism despite the teachings of the bourgeois philosophers with their "new" reversions to old and decadent idealism.

Marx deepened and developed philosophical materialism to the full, and extended the cognition of nature to include the cognition of human society. His historical materialism was a great achievement in scientific thinking. The chaos and arbitrariness that had previously reigned in views on history and politics were replaced by a strikingly integral and harmonious scientific theory, which shows how, in consequence of the growth of productive forces, out of one system of social life another and higher system develops—how capitalism, for instance, grows out of feudalism.

Just as man's knowledge reflects nature (i.e., developing matter), which exists independently of him, so man's social knowledge (i.e., his various views and doctrines—philosophical, religious, political and so forth) reflects the economic system of society. Political institutions are a superstructure on the economic foundation. We see, for example, that the various political forms of the modern European states serve to strengthen the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat.

**2.** Having recognised that the economic system is the foundation on which the political superstructure is erected, Marx devoted his greatest attention to the study of this economic system. Marx's principal work, *Capital*, is devoted to a study of the economic system of modern, i.e., capitalist, society.

Classical political economy, before Marx, evolved in England, the most developed of the capitalist countries. Adam Smith and David Ricardo, by their investigations of the economic system, laid the foundations of the labour theory of value. Marx continued their work; he provided a proof of the theory and developed it consistently. He showed that the value of every commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labour time spent on its production.

Where the bourgeois economists saw a relation between things (the exchange of one commodity for another) Marx revealed a relation between people. The exchange of commodities expresses the connection between individual producers through the market. Money signifies that the connection is becoming closer and closer, inseparably uniting the entire economic life of the individual producers into one whole. Capital signifies a further development of this connection: man's labour-power becomes a commodity. The wage-worker sells his labour-power to the owner of land, factories and instruments of labour. The worker spends one part of the day covering the cost of maintaining himself and his family (wages), while the other part of the day he works without remuneration, creating for the capitalist surplus-value, the source of profit, the source of the wealth of the capitalist class.

The doctrine of surplus-value is the corner-stone of Marx's economic theory.

Capital, created by the labour of the worker, crushes the worker, ruining small proprietors and creating an army of unemployed. In industry,

the victory of large-scale production is immediately apparent, but the same phenomenon is also to be observed in agriculture, where the superiority of large-scale capitalist agriculture is enhanced, the use of machinery increases and the peasant economy, trapped by money-capital, declines and falls into ruin under the burden of its backward technique. The decline of small-scale production assumes different forms in agriculture, but the decline itself is an indisputable fact.

By destroying small-scale production, capital leads to an increase in productivity of labour and to the creation of a monopoly position for the associations of big capitalists. Production itself becomes more and more social—hundreds of thousands and millions of workers become bound together in a regular economic organism—but the product of this collective labour is appropriated by a handful of capitalists. Anarchy of production, crises, the furious chase after markets and the insecurity of existence of the mass of the population are intensified.

By increasing the dependence of the workers on capital, the capitalist system creates the great power of united labour.

Marx traced the development of capitalism from

embryonic commodity economy, from simple exchange, to its highest forms, to large-scale production.

And the experience of all capitalist countries, old and new, year by year demonstrates clearly the truth of this Marxian doctrine to increasing numbers of workers.

Capitalism has triumphed all over the world, but this triumph is only the prelude to the triumph of labour over capital.

**3.** When feudalism was overthrown and “free” capitalist society appeared in the world, it at once became apparent that this freedom meant a new system of oppression and exploitation of the working people. Various socialist doctrines immediately emerged as a reflection of and protest against this oppression. Early socialism, however, was utopian socialism. It criticised capitalist society, it condemned and damned it, it dreamed of its destruction, it had visions of a better order and endeavoured to convince the rich of the immorality of exploitation.

But utopian socialism could not indicate the real solution. It could not explain the real nature of wage-slavery under capitalism, it could not reveal the laws of capitalist development, or show what social force is capable of becoming the creator of a new society.

Meanwhile, the stormy revolutions which everywhere in Europe, and especially in France, accompanied the fall of feudalism, of serfdom, more and more clearly revealed the struggle of classes as the basis and the driving force of all development.

Not a single victory of political freedom over the feudal class was won except against desperate resistance. Not a single capitalist country evolved on a more or less free and democratic basis except by a life-and-death struggle between the various classes of capitalist society.

The genius of Marx lies in his having been the first to deduce from this the lesson world history teaches

People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. Champions of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realise that every old institution, how ever barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes. And there is only one way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society which surrounds us, the forces which can—and, owing to their social position, must—constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organise those forces for the struggle.

Marx’s philosophical materialism alone has shown the proletariat the way out of the spiritual slavery in which all oppressed classes have hitherto languished. Marx’s economic theory alone has explained the true position of the proletariat in the general system of capitalism. Independent organisations of the proletariat are multi plying all over the world, from America to Japan and from Sweden to South Africa. The proletariat is becoming enlightened and educated by waging its class struggle; it is ridding itself of the prejudices of bourgeois society; it is rallying its ranks ever more closely and is learning to gauge the measure of its successes; it is steeling its forces and is growing irresistibly.

**Translation from the Marxists Internet Archive. Published in Prosveshcheniye No 3., March 1913**



## **HOT NEWS** **Mass tech layoffs** **signal expansion of** **the reserve army of** **labour.**

Most people in tune with tech news are aware that layoffs have recently hit the tech industry hard. What most are not aware of, however, is that such layoffs are a pre-planned measure between hedge fund managers and companies to increase their profit margins. Recently, some have been made aware of a letter sent by Christopher Hohn, of TCI Fund Management, to Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google. The letter, in a few paragraphs, outlines that the plan is to “reduce headcount” and “address excessive employee compensation”. As many of the layoffs will affect fields of importance, the endgame is clear: fire many, to hire a few again at a lower price, thus, reducing the overall pay-grade.

This manoeuvre is a classic one, and, to marxist economic theory, is understood as the concept of the reserve army of labour, which refers to the pool of unemployed workers who can be called upon during periods of increased demand, thereby allowing for a flexible and exploitable workforce which directly reflects market fluctuation.

In the case of skilled fields, the initial steps to such measures are enacted in the form of specialised education, such as boot camps and courses, that, in our specific field, creates qualified “code monkeys” that stitch existing infrastructure together. Those then form the initial reserve army of labour, that is then brought in with small waves of layoffs, and are given salaries way below the pay grade of the previous worker who took their place. This initial stage, which doesn’t create much unrest in the workforce (as the new workers who come in are seen as deserving the lower pay), serves as the foundation for subsequent layoffs and replacements, up until the point

where the median pay has fallen significantly.

One of the major reasons such layoffs are possible in the first place is because of the lack of penetration of the workers’ movement in the tech field. In many parts of the industry, there’s simply no concept of a union, and where those exist, there’s no concept of a revolutionary class union front, collaborating with the rest of the class. The penetration of petty-bourgeois individualism has been more thorough in the technology field than it has been in other fields, and it shows. Tech workers think of themselves as separate from the rest of the working class, seeing themselves as the “forefront of progress” (for who?) and looking down upon all other fields of endeavour which they see as lowly and unproductive. On the factory floor, there will always be hostility between the technician and the machine operator because the technician sees the operator as an obstacle to what they perceive to be their own class interest.

Companies don’t have to worry about union-busting, because loyal snitches will already do it for them. This, combined with the previously-mentioned hostility, makes building the working-class movement in the tech field a nigh-impossible task within the current historical scenario. However, this





A picture taken inside Twitter headquarters: many H1-B visa-holding workers, who had to find a new job in 60 days after the layoffs, or get out of the US.

doesn't mean we should stop trying, because the only way to salvage the situation of the tech workers is via the spreading of class consciousness.

Furthermore, we believe that, in the path towards socialism, as the division between physical and mental labour is abolished and there is broad collaboration between all fields (along with the abolition of all mechanisms for commodity capital accumulation, e.g so-called "personal rights" over research and code), there will be a general baseline of education in computer programming. Yes, webdevs, this means everyone will have to know pointer arithmetic.

## PART 1/5 - "INTRODUCTION" History of Free and Open-Source Software

### Brief note on the periodical version

In this text, the Revolutionary Technical Committee organizes a historical overview of the Free Software movement and of where it stands today. This is a straight copy from one of our booklets, separated in 5 parts, which will all be published throughout 5 of our periodicals. Adjustments may be made to fix incorrect affirmations in the previous booklet version.

### Part 1 - "Introduction"

We find it of extreme importance to catalog the overall history of the Free and Open-Source movement in one document, while, at the same time, pointing out the fundamental mistakes that led to its failure. The fact that our

organization is a marxist one certainly does not prevent it from engaging in the same mistakes of previous organizations.

To see how self-denominated "communist" movements fell over to the flaws of those before them, someone just has to look at how the "Telekommunisten" collective engaged in the delusion that peer-to-peer models would save the proletariat in the internet age, and that they were diametrically opposed to the "centralized" interests of capital - only for history to later show that italian writer Amadeo Bordiga was right on one count:

*"The hell of capitalism is the firm, not the fact that the firm has a boss"*

We, the communists, have always fought a battle in the realm of information: to divulge the truth and spread class consciousness. Computer programs are also information, though materialized in a medium that allows for explicit rather than implicit control. The way we will fight the next battles in this realm is not by handing over the task of creating class consciousness to disorganized masses of small firms, that are embodied by the technicians' co-operatives. We must follow the example of the bolsheviks and speak with one voice, while utilizing the advantages that new technologies have brought us to prepare for every possibility. We must unite all those who create in this new era of information and have them create for the interests of the oppressed - for the interests of the class and those inside it who are marginalized.

We must also not fall for the fallacy that FOSS activists fell for: the fallacy of legalism, which has manifested itself as a liberal cancer in our space. The activists thought they would be able to secure a software utopia by making the capitalists "play fair" to the terms of extremely long-winded license agreements, and eventually, they were destroyed,

because they did not know to separate their legal methods inside bourgeois law from their methods of action outside of it.

FOSS never even came close to "winning", in their own terms. It stopped posing a real threat when companies quickly realized that they could just have the "open-source" part, and that making development more accessible would, in fact, make them way more money. Once they could directly translate the accessibility of free compilers and SDKs into contributions and easy deployments of the software they use in their own infrastructure, the small loss they had was quickly dwarfed by the profits they made from shortening development time.

The elitist character of skilled workmanship in programming has blinded those in the field for a very long time. FOSS and the peer-to-peer obsessions were both "solutions" that had to contend with the mystical quality of the "individual programmer", which via the careful honing of their own craft can produce a work that is functionally indistinguishable from magic to the average observer. Now, programmers are being proletarianized, and the newcomers to the field are, sometimes, placed in conditions analogous to slavery. Those new programmers do not suffer from the delusions of the last generation. They do not view their own work in such high individual regard specifically because everything outside their strict area of competency is now outsourced to other workers.

Despite their below-average scientific education, they are no longer as alienated and know the high level of abstraction they are dealing with.

Those programmers don't need a magical license agreement that will "save their code", and they don't need a small firm to exploit them either. They already know what both actually look like! What they need is collective bargaining power, what they need are worker's organizations, what they need is to understand how much control they actually have, as a collective. Only then can they be an effective tool in building a class union front.

So, workers in computer science, contributors to bigger projects, and students: When you read this small historiography, understand that there is a possibility to bargain, not just by creating a small union that will get easily crushed, but by understanding how building up the power of your field strengthens the class in a revolutionary struggle.

## Join the Revolutionary Technical Committee

We are in need of people to act inside our organization, from writers, to artists, to all kinds of developers. The fight against petty-bourgeois doctrine inside the software space is a constant one. We are still small, and this periodical is but a sample of our thought and our programme.

[revteccom.tk/join.html](http://revteccom.tk/join.html)

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We have no central publishing house, so we ask you to print out and distribute versions of our periodical yourself. Put them inside folders, plaster all the pages on walls, or even go around handing out copies (make sure you're accompanied by at least one person), we depend on the willingness of our readership to go and distribute our work in the appropriate spaces.

You are allowed to charge a small markup for the periodical, at least 20% of the total price of printing, so, if an edition cost 1\$ to print, you can charge 1.20\$ and make a profit of 20 cents.

We also ask you to sign your periodicals (there's a spot for it on the front page). It doesn't have (and we don't recommend it) to be signed with your real signature, but please keep it consistent throughout all copies you print so every unique publisher can be identified.

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