

May  
2018

# Controversies

Forum for an internationalist communist Left

## 2018 : Actuality of the crisis of capitalism

- Crisis – Conflicts – Classes Struggle – Populism
- The crypto-currencies

## 1968 : Fiftieth anniversary of May-June 68

- The significance of the struggles 1966-72 (1<sup>st</sup> part)
- White helmets and black shields
- ‘Voyage en outre-gauche’ Lola Miesseroff

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- The Workers’ Concils in Germany 1918-1923
- Hotel Eden in the mists of time
- Theatrical fiction and historical reality

## 1818 : Bicentenary of the birth of Marx

- Do societies become more complex ?

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The emancipation of the working classes must be  
conquered by the working classes themselves

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n°5

Two issues a year

5 €

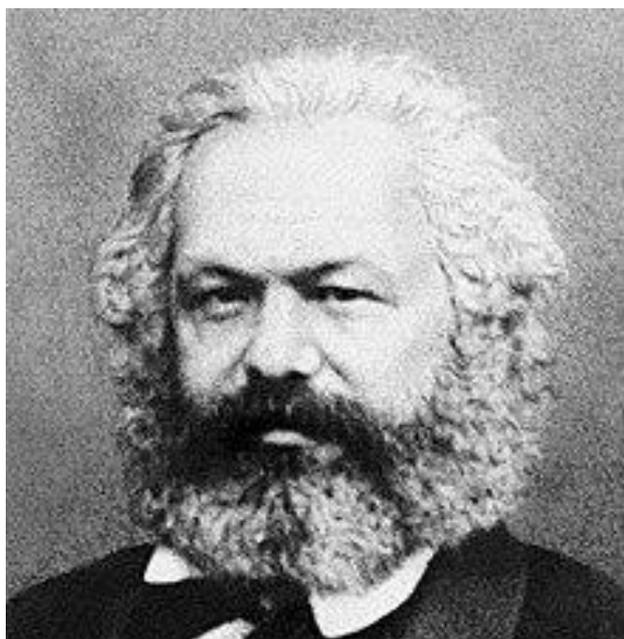


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# N°5 of *Controversies* : Presentation

## 1818 – 1918 – 1968 – 2018

### 1818 : Bicentenary of the birth of Marx



As the son of a lawyer in a liberal and democratic family of Trier, nothing predestined Marx to become the theoretician and communist revolutionary he was. In contact with the class conflicts of his time and with the first socialist writings he gradually evolved towards communism, of which he would develop the main foundations. He thereby provided the working class with the theoretical and organizational tools for its emancipation. But beyond his analyses, some of which are inevitably outdated, it is above all a method he has left us: “...the whole way of apprehension with Marx is not a doctrine, but a method. It does not give ready-made dogmas but points of reference for further research and the method for this research” (Engels to Sombart, Letter of March 11, 1895). Precisely this heritage that has been debased, then stained, first by social democracy and subsequently by Stalinism, must be revived in order to reconnect with the necessary deepening of Marxist theory in all domains. This is the best tribute we can pay to Marx. In this spirit we have written an article devoted to a rarely treated implication of historical materialism: *Do societies become more complex in the course of time?*

### 1918 : Centenary of the German revolution



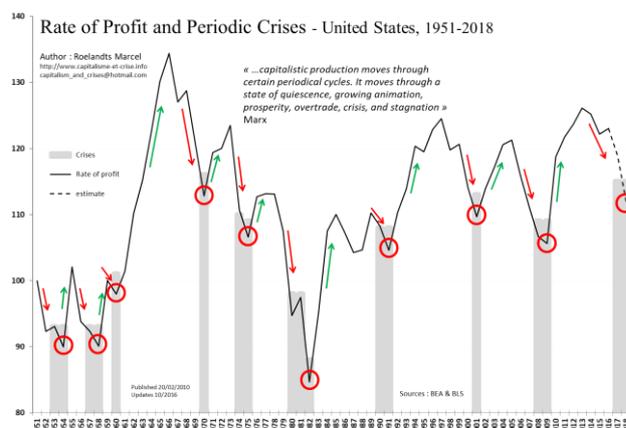
At the beginning of the 20th century, Germany had become the first continental power and had the most concentrated, organized and educated proletariat in Europe. The latter's uprising, since the year 1917, put an end to the war and gave hope to the young victorious revolutions of Russia and Hungary. But this was without taking into account the counterrevolutionary role played by social democracy and the chauvinistic trades union who had already weakened the proletariat by dragging it into [this] first imperialist butchery and who definitively crushed it in blood as it wanted to oppose it by overthrowing the capitalist regime. These low works would open the road toward fascism, as Sebastian Haffner has explained very well in his recently republished work 'Germany 1918 - a betrayed revolution': "*The murder of 15 January 1919 [of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht] was an upbeat – the upbeat to the thousands of murders in the following months of the Noske era, to the millions of murders in the following decades of the Hitler era. It was the start signal for all the other ones.*" The article on *The Workers' Councils in Germany 1918-1923*, proposes a summary of all these events and their political stakes, while the dramatic episode of the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht is developed in what will soon become a play called *L'hôtel Eden dans la nuit des temps* ("Hotel Eden in the mists of time"). The article *Fiction théâtrale et réalité historique* ("Theatrical fiction and historical reality") comments on a recent artistic performance about Rosa Luxemburg.

## 1968 : Fiftieth anniversary of the struggles of May-June '68



The struggles of May-June 68 in France are part of a general wave of labor disputes and protests of various kinds (student claims, protests against the multiple wars in the world, a search for different values and ways of life...) that flourished from the second half of the 1960s until the beginning of the 1970s. All these conflicts expressed the accumulated tensions in society after two decades of very vigorous growth that jostled all the ideas and structures in place. They manifested to the highest degree the contradictions between the rapid development of the productive forces and the obsolete nature of the superstructures that coordinated them : economic, political, ideological, legal, family, cultural, moral superstructures, etc. These blatant inadequacies are at the basis of the explosion and the radical character of all these movements, not in the sense of an exit from capitalism – a perspective that was shared only by a very small minority at that time – but in the sense of challenging old structures that are not adapted to the new realities of the post-war period. The article *The significance of the struggles from 1966 to 1972* tries to draw up its tableau. Its first part is devoted, on the one hand, to the critical discussion of explanations commonly put forward to understand these events and, on the other hand, to lay the foundations of a coherent alternative explanation. We accompany it by the review of the work of Lola Miesseroff *Voyage en outre-gauche* (“Voyage to the outer Left”) that camps on the slope of this minority which, at the time, had a hope for and a perspective of overcoming capitalism, and still has at present. An original work, both in its form and foundation, since it largely gives the floor to the actors of this revolutionary movement, and one that presumes that capitalism is not this insurmountable horizon so commonly hammered on by dominant ideology. We have also added a poem that May 68 had inspired on a militant of the Italian Left : *Casques blancs et boucliers noirs* (“White helmets and black shields”).

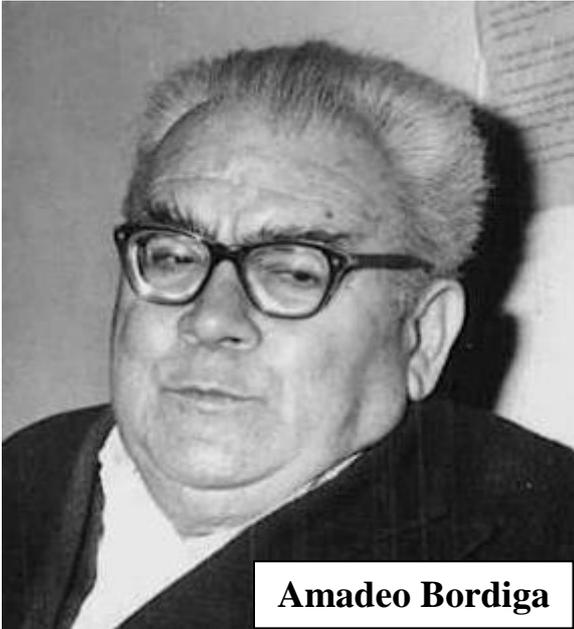
## 2018 : Actuality of the crisis of capitalism



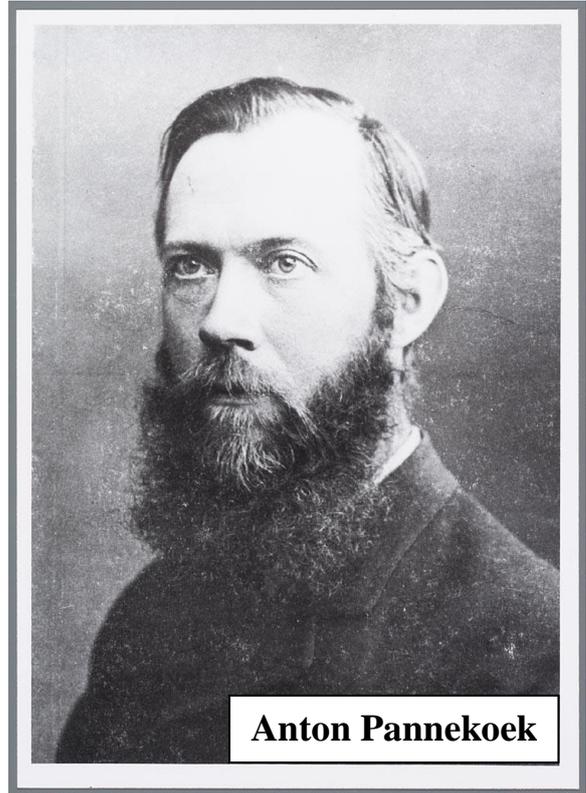
In its two centuries of existence, capitalism has experienced twenty-four economic crises of magnitude <sup>1</sup>, which gives us an average cycle of eight years between two crises. As the last one dates back to 2008-2009, we are right in the time zone where the bursting of a new economic recession is almost certain (see **the chart**). At a time when it is fashionable in the mainstream media to ridicule the legacy of Marx, it turns out that the body of his theoretical work allows us to clearly understand the trajectory of capitalism : its economic crises, its war stirrings, the class struggle that wells up in its entrails and the rise of populisms resulting from the conjunction of the three previous dynamics. The series of articles *Crisis - Conflicts - Class Struggle - Populism*, the first part of which we publish here, attempts to draw up their tableau. It is accompanied by a contribution that proposes the attempt of a Marxist explanation of the emergence of a new technology in the monetary domain, namely *crypto-currencies*. A subject rarely discussed in the communist Left (with the exception of the *Cercle de Paris* and the contributions by **Raoul Victor**) the development of new technologies nevertheless implies many consequences for the possible advent (or not) of a revolution and a communist society. As a result, this article is the first in a series that will focus on this topic and its various implications at different levels: economic, emergence or not of new social relationships, positive and/or negative consequences for class combats and class consciousness, etc.

Translated by HC May 16, 2018 - **A Free Retriever**

<sup>1</sup> If we take 1825 as the first generalized crisis of capitalism : “...only with the crisis of 1825 [big industry] opens the periodical cycle of its modern life.” (Marx, post-face to the 2nd edition of ‘Capital’, January 24, 1873), then, the twenty-four crises are as follows : 1825, 1836-39, 1847-48, 1857, 1864-66, 1873, 1882-84, 1890-93, 1900-03, 1907, 1911-13, 1918-21 (23 en All), 1929-32, 1937-38, 1948-49, 1952-54, 1957-58, 1966-67, 1970-71, 1974-75, 1980-82, 1990-91, 2001, 2008-09.



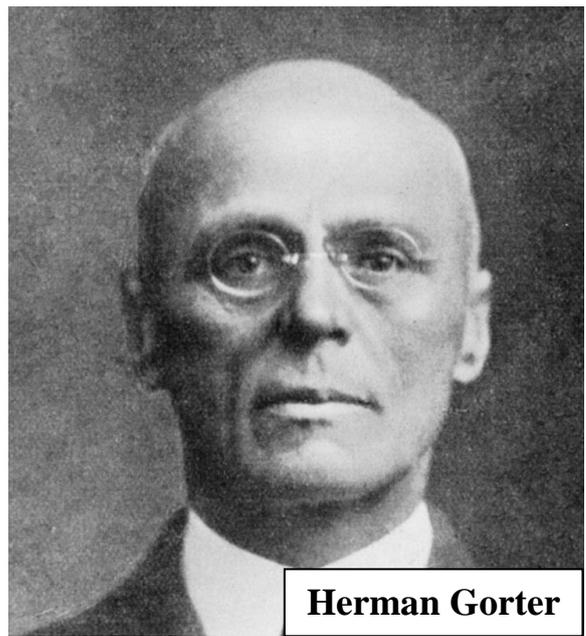
**Amadeo Bordiga**



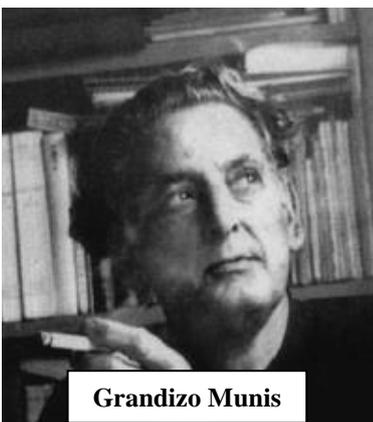
**Anton Pannekoek**



**Paul Mattick**



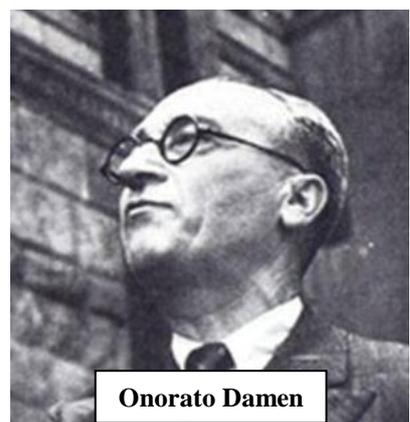
**Herman Gorter**



**Grandizo Munis**



**Ottorino Perrone**



**Onorato Damen**