

# Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

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## The Tenth Newsletter (2018): Marx and His Old Mole

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Dear Friends,

On May 5, Marx would have been 200. It has long been the dream of his adversaries that Marx's project be hastily buried and forgotten. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire*, he wrote of the revolutionary process of mid-19th century Europe, with a focus on France. Revolutionary forces, Marx wrote, would first overthrow the monarchy, then constitute parliamentary power. The establishment of a parliament would deepen the demands of the people, who would set aside the owners of property and take charge of society. At which point, Marx wrote, 'Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: Well grubbed, old mole!' This is a wink to *Hamlet*. Marx loved Shakespeare. The revolution, for Marx, is the old mole that burrows deep into the soil of history and on occasion pops its head out. It is the fantasy of those who rule that nothing will change. But then, the old mole appears when least expected.

I write to you from Paris, where there is a commemoration of the events of 1968. On the wall, where a discussion took place on revolutions, is written the slogan - 'Don't Mourn 68. Organise 2018'. The students have occupied buildings across the city. They had been in a pitched battle against the government of Macron. This is not a revolutionary situation by any means. But it is a cry in the dark against the suffocation of society. That the French rail workers are on strike at the same time suggests the undercurrents. Marx's mole is not fully asleep.

Certainly not in India, where the farmers' movements have been powerful. In Maharashtra, as I had previously written, tens of thousands of farmers marched almost 200 kilometres to Mumbai, India's commercial capital, where they forced the right-wing state government to accede to their demands. This Kisan Long March is a monumental event. At **LeftWord Books**, we produced a very short (64-page) illustrated book with essays by the president of the All-India Kisan Sabha Ashok Dhawale and my colleague at LeftWord Books Sudhanva Deshpande as well as a foreword by P. Sainath (founder of the People's Archive of Rural India and a Senior Fellow at Tricontinental). The book is available in a print form for a very reasonable cost. It can be freely downloaded [here](#).

The Kisan Long March was organised by the All-India Kisan Sabha and by other organisations. The Kisan Sabha is mass front of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which held its 22nd Party Congress in Hyderabad recently. The debates in Hyderabad were strong and pointed. They showed the seriousness of purpose of the communists to fight against the ruthless government of Narendra Modi. The CPI (M) is one of the organised groups around the world that nudges along the Old Mole, fighting on the ground to improve conditions and raise consciousness for a better world. At *Newslick*, I have a short report on the 22nd Party Congress and on the need to build platforms such as the CPI (M) with its commitment to people and to the creation of a society where the 'free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' (Communist Manifesto). You can read it [here](#).



Across the Indian Ocean, in Zambia, the Socialist Party continues to struggle against fierce odds. They now have a website, which you can see [here](#) (I had written about the conditions in Zambia, [here](#), which provide a window into why the Socialist Party is necessary for the country).

North of Zambia, in Morocco, popular struggles continue against enormous odds. At the *Dawn*, there is an interview with Abdallah El Harif, one of the leaders of Democratic Way (pictured above in the red cap). I had the pleasure of meeting Abdallah El Harif a few months ago. He told me of his time in the dungeons of Morocco, where he was held in darkness. Nonetheless, Abdallah El Harif remains a humane and wonderful man with a great hope for the future. Prison did not break him. It strengthened his resolve. Please read his interview [here](#). Sadly, the interview does not tell us about his own life, which is an inspiration for us. It is commonplace for people of the Left to speak of the struggles around us rather than themselves. He refers in the interview to the events in Jerada, where the townspeople have struggled with great fortitude against the condition of the mines and the neglect by the state of their lives (I had written about that [here](#)).

Morocco has recently broken ties with Iran under pressure from Saudi Arabia and the United States. It is part of the attempt to isolate Iran. Across the Atlantic Ocean, the United States and its allies have also pushed various South American and Central American countries to break ties with Venezuela. This is textbook interference by the United States - to force weaker states to break with adversaries of the United States and to threaten to overthrow these isolated governments. So much for Russian interference in elections.



But an alternative is proposed by the Koreans, as I suggested last week. The handshake across the boundary that divides the Koreas projects the possibility for another road than war. It should alert the people of India and Pakistan to what is possible if old animosities are set aside and if the game of geopolitics does not define the hunger of people for peace. But there are very complex matters still unresolved. North Korea's Kim will meet with the United States' Trump. What will come of that summit? It is unlikely that the US will downsize its military presence in North-East Asia.

But it needs to be said that the United States is no longer the solitary power that defines international relations. Before Kim made his gesture to South Korea, he visited Beijing. China has helped shape some of the context for this peace deal. It is important to recognise that what is happening in the Koreas is not at all like what happened in the Germanys. North Korea's diplomats are aware of the various scenarios before them - the German scenario, the Libyan-Iraqi scenario and the Iran scenario. They are not naïve about their position. But, as I note this week at *Alternet*, the terms of the global order have altered since the 1990s and 2000s. No longer do we live in a fully uni-polar world. China and Russia have been exerting themselves in different ways. This is what gives Kim the confidence to move a peace deal which he knows is not equivalent to surrender. You can read my assessment [here](#). (There is useful background information on the crisis in the Korean peninsula in the first **dossier** from Tricontinental).



Finally, the smell of tear gas lingered on May Day in Paris. Student and worker protests were met with police repression. There was no room on the avenues for the faux liberalism of Macron. The smiles for television do not arrive on the streets. The same is in Puerto Rico, an island in deep distress. Last year's hurricanes devastated the island - a colony effectively of the United States. Relief and reconstruction has been weak ([here](#) is my *Frontline* report from last October that compares reconstruction in Puerto Rico with Cuba). Austerity measures continue to be inflicted on the population. On May Day, the people took to the streets and were met with terrible repression. The picture above, taken by Edwin Morales Laboy, provides a sense of the divide - a police force that looks like the military firing chemicals into the face of an unarmed protestor.

So much for democracy. The Old Mole is getting fidgety.

Warmly,

Vijay.

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