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Political decision

On the international and national developments, the work of the NCPN in the labour movement, and the tasks of the NCPN until the 8th Congress

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1. Developments in the international imperialist system

1.1 Trends in the international economy and sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism

The most fundamental contemporary development, which determines the most important general trends in the economy and society worldwide, is the sharpening of the basic contradiction of capitalism: the contradiction between the socialisation of production on the one hand, and the private appropriation of its results on the other. That is to say, with their joint (social) labour, working people create ever more capacity to satisfy social needs, thanks to the development of science, technology and productive forces. But because the means of production are privately owned, this wealth is appropriated by the capitalists, while the working class - which produces the wealth - finds it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Thus, the gap between how people could live based on today's possibilities provided by science and technology and the actual living standards of the population is constantly growing. The degree of exploitation of the working class is increasing, as is its relative and absolute impoverishment.

This is the basis on which the other problems and contradictions created by capitalism are also intensifying, such as the warmongering caused by the increasing contradictions between competing imperialist powers, reactionary tendencies in politics, ecological problems, etc.

The increasing contradictions between imperialist powers has recently manifested itself, among other things, in the escalation of the imperialist war in Eastern Europe, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which the NCPN condemned directly when it began. The lives of millions of people are being destroyed and peoples who lived peacefully together for decades under socialism are being set against each other, in a struggle between Russia and its allies on the one hand, and NATO, the USA and the EU on the other, as well as between various sections of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. It is a struggle for the redistribution of markets, industries, transport routes and spheres of influence, in order to secure the profits of big capital. The invasion is an escalation of contradictions in the region that have been increasing for years, which have manifested themselves in recent years, among others things, in the reactionary coup in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, as well as the use of paramilitary fascist forces such as Azov and Right Sector by the Ukrainian government as shock troops in the Donbas region, forces that took leading the lead in discriminating against Russian-speaking people, as well as the persecution of Ukrainian communists.

The recent period has also been marked by the coronavirus pandemic and the inability of bourgeois governments to combat it effectively, with enormous consequences for public health and society.

In 2020, a new capitalist economic crisis broke out. Bourgeois analyses propagate that the pandemic and the measures taken against it are the cause of this economic crisis. In essence, however, it is a capitalist economic crisis, the deeper cause of which lies in the over-accumulation of capital, meaning that the accumulated capital can no longer be profitably invested in production. The outbreak of the coronavirus and the measures taken did have a catalysing role, as trade and consumption suddenly slowed down worldwide. The pandemic therefore influenced the moment when the economic crisis broke out and the intensity of the crisis. But it is not the underlying cause.

This crisis was already coming. Even before the outbreak of the coronavirus, it was clear that it was becoming difficult to reinvest accumulated capital. Economic growth had already stagnated in most major economies since 2017 and especially in the second half of 2019. Global industrial production already experienced moments of contraction in 2019. All kinds of sectors were struggling, such as markets that were saturated (e.g. aviation), banks suffering from 'bad loans' (loans that no longer generate income for banks or cannot even be repaid), large economic 'bubbles' (such as in the German construction sector) etc.

Economists and financial institutions (IMF, OECD, World Bank, ECB etc.) already foresaw that a severe recession was coming. The pandemic and the measures taken against it have only accelerated and intensified the outbreak of this crisis.

For the working class it is important to understand that it is a crisis of over-accumulation of capital and why such crises are an inevitable consequence of the contradictions of the capitalist system itself.

Capital is understood in bourgeois economics as a synonym for money or means of production. In reality, however, capital is a social relationship, more specifically an exploitative relationship, between the owner of the means of production (capitalist) on the one hand and the wage labourers who are exploited on the other, with the capitalist appropriating the surplus value produced by the wage labourers. Money is capital only when it is used for capitalist production. For example, when it is invested in a producing factory with machinery or an office, in the wages of labourers, in commodities which are processed or traded, or in loans to another capitalist who invests the money. Money or means of production are thus only different forms of manifestations that capital can take at different stages in the circuit of capital.

The aim of production in capitalism is not to satisfy people's needs, but to create surplus value, i.e. profit. Most of that profit does not stay in the capitalists' account, but becomes capital. That means it must be reinvested in more workers, more machines, more commodities, so that the capitalist can make more profit. Capitalist enterprises thus constantly seek to expand production, to create ever more surplus value and profit that can be converted into more capital (capital accumulation).

The expansion of capitalist production, however, comes up against the limited purchasing power of the working masses. Every capitalist enterprise tries to keep labour costs as low as possible in order to be profitable and competitive. Capitalism therefore tends to limit the purchasing power of the working masses. The accumulation of capital thus inevitably results in overproduction: society can no longer buy and consume the products that have been created (because there is a lack of purchasing power, not because all people's needs have been met). This contradiction is exacerbated by the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.¹ It becomes increasingly difficult for the capitalists to find profitable investments. Capital then starts to pile up and can no longer be reactivated in production. So there is over-accumulation of capital. This results in an economic crisis, which can only be solved by the devaluation of capital, i.e. by destroying capital on a large scale. This destruction of capital translates into unemployment, further impoverishment of the working class, bankruptcy of companies and destruction of stocks and productive forces.

So the crisis is a consequence of capitalism itself; of the basic contradiction of capitalism. Because the means of production are in the hands of the capitalists, social production does not exist to satisfy social needs, but to generate capital and profit. But it is precisely because of the hunger for profit of capital that the expansion of the productive forces clashes with limited purchasing power. "The true barrier to capitalist production is capital itself," as Marx wrote.

So, contrary to how bourgeois economists present it, the crisis is not a deviation from economic development under capitalism. On the contrary. In capitalism, economic development inevitably results in crisis. The capitalist economic crisis therefore occurs periodically since capitalist relations of production have become dominant.

¹ The value of capital spent on means of production does not change in the production process. It is therefore called *constant capital*. The value of the capital that is spent on labour does change: it increases, because the labour power creates surplus value. This part is therefore called *variable capital*. The ratio of constant to variable capital is the *organic composition of capital*. As science and technology develop, the proportion of constant capital increases, and the proportion of variable capital decreases. Thus, the accumulation of capital is accompanied by an increase in the organic composition of capital. The rate of profit is the ratio of surplus value to total capital. Since only variable capital generates surplus value, the increase in the organic composition of capital means that the rate of profit falls. This development is called the *law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall*. As a reaction, the capitalists try to expand production and increase the rate of exploitation, thus promoting the over-accumulation of capital.

The bourgeois governments' responded to the capitalist economic crisis this time predominantly with Keynesian policies. These policies are oriented on large-scale state intervention in the economy, expansionary fiscal policies and loose monetary policies. In other words, huge amounts of money are being pumped into the economy with the aim of boosting investment and consumption.² Many of these investments are currently being made under the cloak of 'sustainability' and so-called 'green' policies.

However, this policy cannot solve the problem. The low profitability of investments is only temporarily concealed by public money, which can at best postpone the crisis. But the ability of bourgeois governments to conduct expansionary fiscal policies is limited. In essence, it only increases the amount of accumulated capital and thus the capital that must be destroyed when the (next) crisis hits. The problem of overaccumulation of capital is thus exacerbated, and so are the contradictions of capitalism, as well as the competition between imperialist powers. Moreover, large budget deficits will sooner or later lead to austerity measures.

In 2021, the capitalist recovery of the economy seems to have begun, but the recovery is weak, fragile and temporary. Bourgeois economists and financial institutions are already expressing their concerns about the recovery. They see all kinds of problems in the economy and great uncertainty (e.g. supply problems, delivery problems, high inflation, economic 'bubbles' etc.). However, these problems are only expressions of the fact that the cause of the capitalist economic crisis, the over-accumulation of capital, is still present.

The capitalist economic crisis and the policies of the bourgeois governments have negative consequences for the working class and other oppressed strata of the population. The capitalist economic recovery is not benefiting the working class, but is further worsening its position. Regardless of the political colour of the government, it can be seen in all capitalist countries that capital receives generous support, both during the crisis and during the recovery, while the bill is passed on to the working class. During the capitalist economic crisis, many people lost their jobs. Moreover, it is the working class that will have to pay the cost of the expansionary fiscal policy and future repayment of the national debt, through taxes and austerity measures. In addition, working people's incomes are being slashed by inflation, further fuelled by the war in Ukraine. The limited measures that provide some income for working people that have been taken to maintain consumption are temporary and will have to be paid for by the working class itself.

² Keynesian policy is named after the English economist J. M. Keynes (1883-1946). He did not see crises as inherent to capitalism, but as a result of all kinds of contingent factors that cause confidence in the economy to fall, resulting in decreasing consumption and investment. The crisis was thus seen as a problem of under-consumption. Keynes was unable to grasp that this is only the surface; that the deeper cause lies in the sphere of production and not consumption. Keynesian policies focus on public investment and lowering interest rates. The idea is that this will stimulate investment, reduce unemployment and increase purchasing power, so that under-consumption is remedied, profits rise again and capitalism can continue.

This policy was widely applied as a response to the crisis in the 1930s. In the US, this happened with the 'New Deal' under President Roosevelt. Similar economic policies were pursued in Germany by the Nazis (which went hand in hand with large-scale privatisations). In this period, these policies were closely intertwined with preparations for the imperialist war. Keynesian policies could not prevent the crisis of 1937 and created a huge national debt that the working class had to pay. Ultimately, the enormous destruction of capital in the Second World War created the conditions for a new period of economic growth. After the war in Europe, it was mainly the social democracy that was the figurehead for Keynesian policy proposals. Practice shows that this policy is only a stopgap measure, which cannot remove the real cause of crises. On the contrary, it actually increases the problem of over-accumulation. At best, the crisis is postponed, but only to prepare the next, even more intense crisis. Today, Keynesian policy proposals are being made through the 'Green New Deal' in the US and the 'European Green Deal' of the EU.

1.2 Rearrangement of the international balance of power, and sharpening of the international contradictions

The capitalist crisis that unfolded in 2020 has further sharpened the inter-imperialist contradictions. Various countries, depending on their place in the international imperialist system, have or haven't been able to respond to the crisis with various measures to benefit their own capital.

In a concrete sense we have seen in the past decades that China has strengthened its position in relation to the US, EU, and Japan. The bourgeoisie in places such as the US and EU have increased the amount of protectionist measures in reaction to their decreased competitiveness, especially of their industrial capital, to benefit their domestic economies.

There are growing contradictions between the US and China, but also between Russia, the EU, the United Kingdom, and other power blocs. These contradictions, as example, manifest themselves in the forms of blockades on goods from China in the US and vice versa, where high import duties are wielded as protectionist measures. We also see trade wars, (financial) sanctions and restrictions on various monopolies between countries such as the Chinese telecom monopoly Huawei in the US and the EU (locking out the Chinese monopoly Huawei of providing 5G technologies), scandals around various companies, increased back and forth accusations of espionage and attempts to control information services and to block or oppose information from other power blocs deemed inconvenient, as expressions of these increasing contradictions. Various contradictions are settled by treaties between imperialist power blocs, which under imperialism will always have a temporary character. Internally there are disagreements with the bourgeoisie of each country on how they handle these contradictions, where various parts can focus on alliances with other imperialist blocs that better serve their interests.

The contradictions also express themselves in increasing armament and threat of war. The US, EU, and NATO are pushing for encirclement of Russia and China, for instance through establishing military bases and navy fleets near those countries. The general line of NATO and the US is that the focus for the armed forces is shifting to the Pacific Ocean due to China being perceived as the greatest threat. The US military retreat from Afghanistan, where an agreement was made with the Taliban, is also understood in this context. Partly in response to these developments, China is in the process of a large-scale expansion and modernisation of its armed forces, and with increasing its military presence abroad. At the same time the US, NATO and the EU is also encircling Russia. In the past few decades NATO has expanded with fourteen Eastern European countries. Military bases are being established and large-scale military exercises are being held near the Russian border in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

Contradictions are also expressed in imperialist interventions and wars, in places such as the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Where we see the governments of various imperialist powers attempt to secure the interests of their monopolies. This manifests itself in ruinous wars such as in Syria and Ukraine, which exemplify the danger and threat of escalation into larger imperialist (world) wars. An important consequence of the inter-imperialist contradictions, especially imperialist interventions, is the birth of massive migration flows from various countries. The NCPN stands in solidarity with all refugees who are victim of imperialist interventions, which only serve to secure the control over markets, resources and trade routes for the monopolies of various imperialist blocs.

1.3 Developments in the European Union

The cohesion and relations inside the EU develop through countless contradictions. The steps towards a more unified economic policy are constantly at odds with the conflicting interests of the ruling class in the various member states.

The European Union is an imperialist union. That is to say the partnership is one of capitalist states, which through the EU want to develop the interests of their big capital. **The common goal of the capitalist member states to increase competitiveness, is the basis on which subsequent steps to strengthen and unify the EU are taken, with disastrous consequences for the working class.** Aside from the treaties, where the general goals are outlined, EU policy is also pushed through guidelines and regulations which the EU sets and which are binding for all member states. Key aspects of EU policy are as follows.

- **Increasing flexibility of labour relations.** Flexible contracts, uncertainty, and the lack of dismissal protections have become the norm. Many people are plagued with unemployment. Especially people with flexible contracts end up out of work come economic downturn. The curtailing of labour rights goes hand in hand with the curtailing of union freedoms.
- **Dismantling of social achievements.** The public nature of the social security system, the healthcare and the pension system continue to be dismantled step by step. The contributions of the capitalists and the state towards these services keeps shrinking. Workers are made to carry all the costs. Publicly organized social security keeps making way for individualized insurance that workers must get through private insurance companies. Meanwhile the privatization in healthcare continues. Not the wellbeing of the people, but the 'cost efficiency' and 'competitiveness' are the benchmarks of the EU. The result of this increasing flexibility and social service decay is that 22% of the population and a quarter of all kids in EU live in poverty.³
- **Reforming higher education to the needs of capital.** The reforms have had a serious negative impact on the accessibility and the quality of higher education. The main goal of the so-called 'Bologna Process', that the EU initiated in 1999, is to provide a common framework for EU member states for a more flexible education system, which can be more tightly and effectively integrated with the interests of big capital. The changes are made partially to serve the interests of capital following changes in the production process (such as the internationalization of production, increased flexibility of labour relations, technological developments of the productive forces, etc.). The consequences of this EU policy are among others the fragmentation and individualization of higher education, closer ties between universities and private business, increased importance of private financing, and the way universities and colleges increasingly function more and more like capitalist businesses.
- **Strengthening of the international role, and militarization of the EU.** The goal of which is securing the interests of European capital also outside of EU borders and defending these interests against other imperialist blocs. The EU has executed various military missions in the past few years in Africa, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. 'Protecting the peace' and 'international security' are used as covers for advancing certain economic and geopolitical goals of capital in those regions. The structural and binding military collaboration in the EU was given form in 2017 through the founding of PESCO. This way EU and its member states reduce their dependence on NATO and the US, even if collaboration between the EU and NATO is also increased. Some influences argue in favour of further militarization of the EU and suggest creation of an 'EU army'.
- **Increased closing of EU borders for refugees and migrants,** who are victim of imperialist wars, exploitation, and poverty. The policy is increasingly geared towards selecting who is allowed in at the point of origin. The refugee policy and right to asylum and production, are increasingly making way for an inhuman policy where only the economic necessity of the migrant to capital is evaluated. At the borders of the EU tens of thousands of migrants, who survived the difficult journey, get stuffed into concentration camps under squalid conditions. There is no organization to provide a safe route of passage to escape war. It is notable that in a very short amount of time millions of Ukrainian refugees were taken in, while in foregoing years the EU has heavily resisted taking refugees from Syria and other (war) areas, which shows that not humanitarian considerations and solidarity, but geopolitical interests are the deciding factor.

At the same time contradictions within the EU are also increasing, that jeopardize the future of the EU in the long term. The steps taken towards unifying (economic) policy and the forming of a unified bloc against

³ The numbers predate the economic crisis.

the other imperialist blocs, are constantly in conflict with the divergent interests and unequal development of the member states. The capitalists of member states have different interests regarding fiscal policy and subsidies of various sectors, monetary policy, credit policy, foreign policy of the EU etc. Capital groups struggle against each other on which policy must be executed, and for access to markets and subsidies. All want the biggest piece of the pie possible.

The cohesion of the EU is inevitably being undermined by the law of unequal development, which is inherent in capitalism and exacerbates the inter-imperialist contradictions. Because countries develop at different rates and because one capitalist country rises out of an economic crisis faster than the other, power balances within imperialist alliances such as the EU shift over time. Germany exited the last economic crisis in a relatively stronger position (which also goes for the Netherlands), while the positions of Italy, France, and Spain's within the EU were weakened.

Recently contradictions explicitly came forward surrounding measures to tackle the capitalist economic crisis, where many billions were made available to capital. The main issue the bourgeois governments of the member states fight over is which parts of capital the money will go to, and how.

An important expression of contradictions within the EU is Brexit. Brexit shows that imperialist alliances and unions are fragile, that the EU is not set in stone. Even though Brexit draws from the dissatisfaction among the working class in regard to the EU, there must be no illusions about the character of Brexit. It is an expression of the contradictions in imperialism, where parts of British big capital prefer a stricter protectionist line in opposition to the EU.

The contradictions within the EU feed bourgeois Euroscepticism. Euroscepticism lends a way for certain parts of capital that stand to gain from less integration or even an exit from the eurozone or the EU, to express themselves. For instance, because they are oriented towards a different policy (such as more protectionism towards other EU countries) or towards alliances with different imperialist blocs. Bourgeois Euroscepticism is not a unified political stream, but a tendency which gives voice to multiple diverging bourgeois interests and can be found in many divergent political streams (from fascistic, to social democratic parties). Especially dangerous is the fascistoid variant of Euroscepticism, as is expressed in the Netherlands by parties such as the FvD and PVV, because it is paired with nationalism, racism, opposition to refugees, and other fascistoid views. Some bourgeois Eurosceptic elements attempt to create confusion by positing the EU as 'socialist' or drawing comparisons with the Soviet Union.

The nature of the EU is warped by reformist parties. The EU policy of dismantling public services they write off as product of a 'neoliberal policy', the political choices of 'right-wing politicians', or due to a 'lack of democracy and transparency' within the EU. Through electing so-called 'left-wing parties' and with a few tweaks to treaties and the structure, they believe it possible to reform and democratize the EU, so it no longer serves the interests of big business and instead serves the people. In our country such ideas are especially spread by the SP (with slogans such as "break the might of Brussels – for a just EU") and BIJ1 (who want a "radical democratization of the EU"). But also the PvdD, GroenLinks, and PvdA echo the same sentiments in a milder tone, despite the use of different slogans, where one posits themselves as more positive towards the EU, and the other as more sceptic. All spread the illusion that the current EU is too 'neo-liberal' or 'right wing', but that the EU could be reformed to a social, just, democratic, green, and peaceful EU.

The dismantling policy of the EU is not to blame on wrong political choices, lack of democracy, or treaties. The blame falls upon the nature of the EU as an imperialist union, as a union of capitalist states. The capitalist system can't do anything other than dismantle the gained social achievements and incomes of the working class, to secure the profitability and competitiveness of capital relative to other imperialist blocs. As such it is not a coincidence that the policy of dismantling is applied by governments of every political leaning: conservative, social democratic, green, and so-called (radical) 'left wing' governments.

The NCPN struggles for withdrawal from all imperialistic unions such as the EU and NATO by the Netherlands. This demand is connected with the struggle for a different organisation of the economy and society. Withdrawal from the EU must be paired with abolition of capitalist property, socialization of the means of production, and build up of socialism. Withdrawal from the eurozone or EU while capitalism is kept standing, will not mean that the dismantling of social rights and achievements stops. Neither will it result in a real improvement and reduction in exploitation of the workers. Withdrawal from the EU is not a goal in itself, and the working class should not be fooled by false contradictions, such as whether they'd rather be exploited in euros or in guilders.

1.4 The position of the Netherlands in the international imperialist system and the EU

The Dutch bourgeoisie attempts to improve their international position and influence within the imperialist alliances of which it is a part (the EU and NATO). The economic position of Dutch capital has increased the past few years relative to the surrounding countries. Also during the capitalist economic crisis did the Netherlands face less economic shrinking than surrounding nations (The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium) and the EU average.

For now, the Dutch bourgeoisie sees that her interests are served best by participating in the EU and NATO. There are however differing interests within the bourgeoisie in regard to the level of EU integration. The Dutch bourgeoisie attempts to expand her role and influence within these imperial alliances.

The Netherlands is increasingly involved in military interventions, often in relation to NATO or the EU, with as goal securing the interests of Dutch big capital beyond its borders and expanding her influence. The Netherlands attempts to do this through a focus on logistics. In a concrete sense the Netherlands is involved in military operations in Iraq, Mali, and, until recently, Afghanistan. In the Gulf of Aden a Dutch navy presence protects the trade routes of Dutch and European capital. On top of this the Dutch military is present in Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon, where the Netherlands backs the Israeli state with its criminal repression of the Palestinian people. Several hundreds of Dutch military personnel have been present in Lithuania in the context of increasing NATO's military threat towards Russia. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine the Netherlands—as part of NATO—has sent F-16's and F-35's to Eastern Europe, as it also sends hundreds of military personnel to Romania, surface-to-air missiles to Slovakia, navy ships with helicopters and landing crafts to Scandinavia, and tens of millions of euros in military equipment to Ukraine.

The Dutch state also intervenes in other countries by non-military means to secure the interests of the Dutch bourgeoisie or to do allies a favour. For example, Dutch banks are notorious for the sharpness with which they implement European and American financial sanctions against socialist Cuba or countries that do not adjust their policies to the interests of Dutch capital and its European and American allies, such as Syria and Iran.

The Dutch state extensively interferes in the Caribbean, where Dutch colonies still exist as remnants of the colonial system. Also the Dutch military is present in the Caribbean. This presence is an important example of the use of Dutch forces to control trade routes and as threat to countries in the region that wish to implement policies that conflicts with the interests of Dutch and European capital. Seaports and airports in the Caribbean are also made available for use by the US military, which uses Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire's strategic proximity to the shores of Venezuela and Colombia to further the interests of US imperialism in the region.

There are internal divisions within Dutch big capital in relation to its position towards the US, Russia, and China, depending on the interests of various sectors which are more or less dependent on these countries for import or export.

The imperialist aggression goes hand in hand with racism at home. Racism is an important tool of big capital to on one hand prepare the population for accepting imperialist interventions and wars, and on the other hand to undermine international solidarity. The fear of Islamic terrorism—of organizations such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda, who often have been supported, funded, and trained by American and European imperialist powers—is being fueled and is paired with racism towards Muslims, people of Arabic and African descent, etc. This is also reflected in the national policy. A typical example is the law banning clothing that covers the face (such as a Niqab or Burqa) in public buildings and transport from 2019.⁴ Another example is the racism seen against East-Asian peoples, which has been escalating as the international contradictions between the US and EU on one side, and China on other, heighten. But also the fear of Russia as a threat to the safety of Europe is constantly fueled. This has been exacerbated since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and comes paired with discrimination against innocent people of a Russian background and the rejection of Russian art and sports.

1.5 Damage to the environment and ecological disasters

The capitalist system is leading to huge ecological problems of an increasingly severe nature. Climate change, desertification, salinisation, floods and forest fires are on the increase. Entire ecosystems are being undermined and destroyed with far-reaching consequences for biodiversity, including animal and plant species.

These environmental problems are largely the result of the capitalist method of production, which puts profit above all else and spares nothing. For capital, the environment is either a dumping ground, where all the pollution and waste from production can easily be disposed of, or a commodity which capital can use as a source of raw materials or as a basis for tourism and other profitable activities. The efficient use of raw materials and the protection of the environment from the negative effects of the production process are seen by capital as mere costs that stand in the way of profit. Imperialist wars, too, in which whole areas become unlivable because of bombs and pollution, lead to enormous destruction of nature. The army and arms industry are amongst the biggest polluters worldwide.

For the working class and other oppressed strata of the population, the consequences of environmental degradation, including climate change and ecological disasters, are enormous. They are the ones who lose their homes in devastating forest fires and floods. Their habitats are also many times more polluted and threatened by ecological disasters, often with negative consequences for their health. Small farmers and fishermen also see their living and working areas destroyed by, among other things, the disappearance of ecosystems (including many fish species) and the desertification of the land.

The bourgeois governments use climate change as a pretext for billions in subsidies to big capital, for example in the US with the 'Green New Deal' and in the EU with the 'European Green Deal'. The aim of this policy is, on the one hand, the large-scale devaluation of capital, by writing off polluting cars, energy production and other industry. On the other hand, consumption and investment are boosted by huge

⁴ This ban caused a lot of discussion in bourgeois politics regarding racism and women's rights. It speaks for itself that it concerns clothes that are rooted in cultural and religious traditions based in reactionary views on women. But emancipation and integration are not furthered by a simple ban that isolates and turns away these women from public spaces. It is a measure that has nothing to do with women's emancipation, and everything to do with creating a xenophobic and racist climate, which is beneficial to parts of the bourgeoisie in relation to imperialist interventions and the refugee question.

The ban was supported by reactionary political parties with openly racist lines of argumentation. This racism was supported by liberal and social democratic parties that endorsed the ban, under the mum of it being a symbol of women's oppression. On the other side of the coin there were also political parties that contested the ban out of bourgeois anti-racist and feminist lines of thought. Through arguments revolving around 'diversity', 'individual agency', and 'the right to wear what you want' these reactionary traditions which are based on the unequal position of women were defended as a 'right' and a 'choice'.

subsidies and state aid to the capitalists, which are paid for dearly by the tax-paying working class. 'Green capitalism' is a highly profitable business for the capitalists, presented as a solution to climate change. In the current situation, where capitalist growth is slowing down, the 'green economy', including the production of electric cars, solar panels and wind turbines, offers the so-called 'green' capitalist huge profits, without solving the real climate problems. In fact, because the 'green transition' is at the mercy of the laws of capitalism, it often leads to new environmental problems. For example, there are already many examples of deforestation and destruction of natural areas for the uncontrolled installation of huge wind farms and solar farms by companies that are only interested in subsidies and profit. The extraction of lithium, needed for electric cars among other things, is another example of a source of pollution and environmental degradation, with consequences for local populations and indigenous communities, while it is accompanied by inter-imperialist conflicts and the cruel exploitation of miners.

Opposite to the 'green' capitalists, stand the monopolies that defend and produce fossil fuels (oil and gas industry) as well as branches of industry that cannot easily be greened. Misinformation such as the denial of climate change and other environmental problems is spread from there. Competition is growing between these monopolies and those that have interests in green policies, as well as between various imperialist blocs. This conflict also has the character of an inter-imperialist conflict, with one imperialist block trying to maintain or gain the upper hand in its conflict with another block – in the Netherlands and other countries of the imperialist EU this is expressed, for example, in a conflict with Russia over gas supplies.

The deterioration of the environment, and in particular climate change, which still requires a lot of research, is causing concern in different sections of the population. Large demonstrations and actions are being organised by various groups all over the world. At present, many of these movements, especially in the Netherlands and Europe, are led by those sections of the bourgeoisie that advocate a 'green' capitalist economy. Characteristic of many movements is that the complex issue of environmental degradation is reduced to climate change alone. Partly because of this, the movement is easily disoriented by the false solutions put forward by the 'green capitalists'. The influence of bourgeois ideology and opportunism on many environmental movements is strong at present. This is logical because every social movement originates from a bourgeois society in which bourgeois ideology is dominant, so it more or less spontaneously adopts a bourgeois ideological base. This bourgeois ideology is also further elaborated and propagated by the bourgeoisie and brought into the movement. These bourgeois and opportunistic approaches argue that capitalism can be reformed and made 'green', and that it is possible to do so with a 'just transition' that spares the working class, while promoting all sorts of measures that make food, transport and other things that the working class needs more expensive under the guise of sustainability.

Due to the weakness of the workers' movement and the crisis in which the communist movement finds itself, it has not been able so far to have a sufficiently thorough intervene to put the environmental movement on a class-oriented course. The communist movement will have to strengthen its intervention in order to take the environmental movement out of the hands of the bourgeoisie.

After all, it is only possible to deal with the environmental problems and all the challenges that come with them under a socialist system. A system in which economic development is not determined by the capitalists' hunger for profit, but in which companies are owned by society. Production will then be centrally and scientifically planned on the basis of the needs of the people and not on the basis of profit. As a result, scientific studies of the effects of production on the environment will actually become part of the decision-making process for the development of the economy. In this way, the working class can lead the way in shaping production so that it is in harmony with nature. Socialism does not automatically solve environmental problems, but it is a prerequisite for solving these problems with conscious effort on the part of the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party.

1.6 Theoretical issues concerning imperialism and contemporary international relations

An important task for the NCPN is to form a better understanding of imperialism and international relations today. Central to this is that imperialism is understood in a Leninist way. Capitalism has been in its highest phase, imperialism, since the beginning of the 20th century. Lenin defined imperialism as monopoly capitalism and also as the last stage of capitalism before the transition to socialism. The Leninist theory of imperialism states that with the development of capitalism, a handful of giant monopolies dominate and exploit the entire world. The gigantic concentration of the means of production and of the working class under a few monopolies is an expression of the socialisation of production. Imperialism is therefore accompanied by the intensification of the main contradiction of capitalism, namely between the socialisation of production and the private appropriation of this production by the capitalists.

It is important to elaborate because there are many bourgeois and opportunistic theories circulating that disorient the anti-imperialist movement. Like Kautsky's reactionary idea of 'ultra-imperialism', for example, theories are emerging today which argue that imperialism is either over or in a new 'hyper-' or 'post-imperialist' phase. This is often based on a misinterpretation of the meaning of certain trends such as the internationalisation of production ('globalisation') or the role of the financial sector. These (petty) bourgeois theories are essentially the same as Kautsky's glorification of pre-imperialist and thus pre-monopoly capitalism, and by detour they often end up justifying the imperialist system itself and imperialist alliances such as the EU. Imperialism can be nothing other than the last, rotten stage of capitalism before it is overthrown by the working class, the last stage before socialism-communism.

In addition, imperialism is misunderstood or distorted by opportunistic forces as merely the aggressive foreign policy of the US and some Western countries. This is a simplistic approach, which ignores the economic basis (monopoly capitalism) and other important aspects. As a result of this approach, countries with interests opposed to those of the US are labelled as 'anti-imperialist'. Even strong imperialist countries that promote the interests of their monopolies internationally, such as Russia.

International relations between capitalist countries, especially in the era of imperialism, are characterised by unequal relations and complex dependency relationships. Some countries have a more favoured position in the imperialist 'pyramid', others a weaker one. The uneven development and unequal relations between different capitalist countries is a law under imperialism, which does not, however, refute the fact that the bourgeois governments of relatively weaker countries also represent the interests of their own monopolies and are at the stage of imperialism. A constant competitive struggle takes place in which the bourgeoisie of each country tries to strengthen its position internationally. The working class has to study the contradictions between different imperialist countries and use them to its advantage, without falling into the camp of one or other imperialist power.

There are remnants of colonialism, such as Dutch colonies in the Caribbean. The NCPN fights for such remnants of colonialism to be overcome and for the population of these islands to be able to choose an independent development without outside interference. It is important to realise that the colonial system, as it characterised international relations in the last century and was based on the continuation of pre-capitalist relations in the colonies, has broken down. This is the result of the heroic national liberation struggle of the oppressed peoples, with the support of the socialist countries. Today, most ex-colonies are capitalist countries, in which pre-capitalist relations of production have been almost completely dismantled and the bourgeoisie no longer has a progressive role to play. Contemporary remnants of colonialism often serve as military outposts to control important trade routes.

However, there are various approaches from bourgeois or opportunistic quarters that take a one-sided view of these issues. Sometimes, almost all countries in Africa, Asia, South America and Southern Europe are

labelled as 'dependent countries' or 'neo-colonies'. The international opposition between the 'West' or the 'centre' on the one hand and the 'global South' or the 'periphery' on the other is elevated to the central opposition. This is in place of the basic contradiction within a country, which is determined by the relations of production. Certain aspects of imperialism, such as dependency relations, are magnified, and the development of capitalism in certain parts of the world is underestimated, in order to argue that socialist revolution is irrelevant, and that the national liberation struggle or some other type of bourgeois revolution must first be completed. From this point of view, cooperation is sought with sections of the bourgeoisie and government participation within capitalism is justified. These approaches are thus also at the basis of reformist theories such as Eurocommunism and '21st-century socialism', which attempt to conceal the character of imperialism and to postpone and ultimately cancel the socialist revolution. Certain bourgeois approaches (e.g. so-called post-colonialism) are also based on such misconceptions. For the bourgeoisie, such views are useful, since they enable it to harness the anti-imperialist movement in its struggle to strengthen its own position in the imperialist system.

Another issue that requires attention is the fact that China, led by the Communist Party of China, is playing an increasingly important role on the world stage. First of all, The NCPN fights the dangerous anti-Chinese warmongering by the US, NATO and the EU. Nevertheless, the character of China must be studied. In China, capitalist relations of production have re-emerged since the end of the 1970s, decollectivising agriculture, abolishing central planning in favour of commodity production (market), largely privatising industry, and making labour power a commodity again. These capitalist relations now prevail in the Chinese economy. We reject the theory that socialism is a form of commodity production, because it essentially presents capitalist relations as communist. Further research is needed into the character and role of the Chinese state and China's role in international relations under imperialism.

2. The international communist movement and the international work of the NCPN

2.1 The situation in the international communist movement and the contribution of the NCPN

The international communist movement is still in a very difficult period. The decline in the movement that occurred at the end of the last century has not yet been overcome. There is a lot of confusion and there are major political-ideological contradictions between (and often within) communist parties. Many parties are relatively weak. Not only organisationally and in terms of influence in the movement, but also politico-ideologically many parties are still searching for the right starting points. Unity in the international communist movement is scarce and often fragile. Opportunistic views of any kind (mainly reformism, sometimes sectarianism, radicalism, etc.) remain a major problem.

The counter-revolutions that took place at the end of the last century in the USSR and other countries that had built up socialism were a major cause of the crisis in the international communist movement. However, the decline had already begun earlier. The deeper cause lies in opportunistic views and practices that prevailed in the international communist movement, which expressed itself in Europe in the current of Eurocommunism. The decline was far-reaching, but has a temporary nature, as the contradictions of capitalism keep creating the possibility and necessity of socialism.

Although the general picture of the international communist movement is that the decline has not yet been overcome, there is also a trend of positive developments. Several communist parties manage to take important steps in overcoming reformist and other erroneous positions and ways of working, and to strengthen themselves organisationally, politically and ideologically.

The NCPN participates annually in the International Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP) and the European Communist Meeting, as well as the Tripartite Conference with the German Communist Party (DKP) and Communist Party of Luxembourg (KPL). Within these international collaborations, there are many political contradictions and differences in understanding.

Within Europe, the Party of the European Left (PEL) plays a very negative role. It is an opportunistic pole of essentially social democratic parties, including former communist parties that have essentially developed a social democratic line. A series of parties that are members of the PEL have in recent decades participated in bourgeois governments that implemented policies of dismantling social rights and achievements. The PEL often uses anti-capitalist terms and claims to fight for socialism, but in practice defends the capitalist system and promotes the illusion that with some reforms and adjustments in the institutions and treaties, the EU can turn into an EU that serves the interests of the people. The PEL is also obliged to accept the principles of the EU, which is a condition for being recognised by the EU as a European party and for funding (almost 80% of the PEL's income consists of EU subsidies). Moreover, the PEL participates in the anti-communist falsification of the history of socialist construction in the 20th century. The PEL disorientates the movement and promotes reformist positions.

Relations are more complex in GUE-NGL, which includes both parties affiliated to the PEL and communist parties. GUE-NGL is confederal in character, with each party formally deciding for itself what its positions are and how it votes in the European Parliament, but the PEL line clearly prevails.

The NCPN is orientating itself towards international forms of cooperation of communist parties, where, on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, information, experiences, insights and positions can be exchanged. Within these associations, comradely and open discussions can be held to overcome confusion and misconceptions and to wage the ideological struggle against opportunism, with understanding for the significant differences in the complex national conditions and in the historical background of each party. This international cooperation is indispensable for taking steps forward – this is true for the NCPN and for every communist party. Therefore, on that basis, the NCPN will continue to focus on strengthening bilateral relations and international associations of communist parties. In this context the NCPN is also orientating itself towards the European Communist Initiative, as an alliance of communist parties in Europe.

The NCPN does not orientate itself towards alliances of communist with opportunist or social-democratic parties, which perpetuate confusion in the movement and impede the overcoming of erroneous positions and practices.

The NCPN will continue to guide and support the CJB in its development of bilateral relations and its contribution to the Meeting of European Communist Youth Organisations (MECYO) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY).

There are many communist parties and youth organisations that face persecution by the bourgeois state. This happens, for example, with many sister organisations in countries of the EU, that has anti-communism as one of its core values. As the NCPN, we are always in solidarity and stand side by side with our sister organisations around the world against anti-communism.

2.2 Proletarian internationalism and the struggle for peace

Millions of people around the whole world are victims of imperialism every year. Hundreds of thousands are killed each year or are being forced to leave their homes and loved ones behind and flee, as a result of the cruel imperialist interventions and wars. But also as a result of the cruel exploitation by the monopolies, oppression by reactionary regimes or the destruction of the environment on which people depend through pollution or war.

In word and deed, we stand in solidarity with all the peoples who are oppressed and suffering under imperialism.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with **socialist Cuba**, which for over 60 years has been ravaged by the imperialist blockade of the US and which is opposed in many other ways, because international big capital resents the fact that the Cuban people are trying to build a different system, without exploitation.

We also express in particular our solidarity with the **people of Palestine**, who for decades have been suffering under the criminal occupation and aggression of the Israeli state, which the Dutch state and the EU consider to be an ally.

The NCPN is committed to proletarian internationalism and international solidarity. We therefore consistently contribute to initiatives and actions for international solidarity and peace, against imperialist wars and interventions. In the coming years, we will increase our commitment to support initiatives and actions in this direction. We will take the lead in taking steps towards an organised peace movement in the Netherlands with an anti-imperialist character, which is currently lacking in the Netherlands but it is highly necessary.

Within this framework, we are struggle against any involvement of the Dutch state in the plans of the imperialists. Dutch soldiers have no business outside Dutch borders. We are fighting against militarisation and armament. Against the presence of the Dutch armed forces in the Caribbean. Against the imperialist alliances to which the Dutch state is affiliated in order to promote the interests of the Dutch bourgeoisie, such as NATO and the EU. Against the warmongering towards Russia or China. Against the racist and fascist views that are being spread in order to prepare the population for imperialist interventions.

3. Developments in the Dutch economy

3.1 The new capitalist economic crisis and the Dutch economy

The advent of a capitalist economic crisis was also visible in the Dutch economy even before the outbreak of the coronavirus. This was indicated by the stagnation and low growth that the economy was facing in recent years and in 2019 in particular (1.7%), as well as the decline in industrial production that had already started in December 2018 and continued in 2019. With the outbreak of the capitalist economic crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic and the measures taken against it, the economy shrank by 3.7% in 2020. This is comparable to the economic contraction of the previous crisis in 2009.

The decline in private investment and consumption led to an adjustment of the economic policy of the bourgeois state, with the aim of promoting investment and consumption. In contrast to the previous period, a Keynesian approach was chosen. Surpluses in public finances, which had been dearly paid for by the working class in previous years through austerity and dismantling of social services, now offered space for unprecedented state support to capital.

Among other things, a large portion of the wage costs of companies was taken over by the government. This helped capital in various ways, not only because the state covered part of the costs, but also because an uncontrolled rise in unemployment and the accompanying slowdown in consumption were averted. Companies used the crisis as an opportunity to implement austerity plans, which were often already waiting to be implemented. These austerity plans have not only led to an intensification of labour and increased rate of exploitation, but have also put tens of thousands of workers out of work, including many with flexible contracts and self-employed. The government also took measures for the petit bourgeoisie (many of them temporary, such as deferring tax payments) to prevent a wave of bankruptcies. Nevertheless, part of the petit bourgeoisie was hit hard and partially proletarianised. Various measures were also aimed at protecting the liquidity of the banks and preventing more bad loans, which loom over the economy like a dark cloud.

Large-scale state intervention has to some extent curbed the depth of the crisis. But the possibilities for state intervention are limited by the internal contradictions of the system and competition between the capitalist countries. They will lead in time to new rounds of austerity measures, with the people having to cough up the tens of billions now being given to capital. The underlying cause of the capitalist economic crisis cannot be remedied within capitalism.

The capitalist recovery of the economy is accompanied by high inflation, especially for housing and energy costs, but also for food and other everyday necessities. With inflation, the real income of the working class decreases, and the impoverishment of the proletariat increases.

3.2 General developments in the sectors of the Dutch economy

The Netherlands has a highly developed industry, the size and importance of which for the economy is often underestimated in bourgeois and also opportunistic literature. Approximately 800,000 people work in basic industry and manufacturing, which accounts for 12% of the economy.⁵ A significant proportion of them are well-educated, mostly in secondary vocational education (mbo) or higher vocational education (hbo). Some of them are educated at university and belong to the scientifically educated proletariat. The most important branches are the food and beverage industry, the machine industry, the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, the metal products industry and the electro-technical industry. Important related sectors are construction, transport and storage, and information and communication, which each account for about 5% of the economy and employ about 520,000, 400,000, and 330,000 people respectively. Energy, water and waste management employ another 70,000.

Approximately 200,000 people are employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The contribution to the economy has been around 2% for years. However, the actual contribution of these sectors to the economy is higher, because part of the economic activity of agriculture is counted as trade or industry in bourgeois statistics. Increasing scale and mechanisation have meant that far fewer workers are needed than in the past, although the number of people working in agriculture is still higher than official statistics indicate due to the high rate of illegal work. A characteristic feature of agriculture is the high concentration of land, following a radical process of proletarianisation and urbanisation that started after World War II. Dutch agriculture and fisheries have a relatively high productivity.

Wholesale and retail trade is an important sector employing approximately 1.5 million people. The Netherlands is an important hub in international trade, in which the port of Rotterdam, in particular, plays a significant role. Hospitality industry and business services are also important sectors.

The financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies, and pension funds, employs approximately 215,000 people. The Netherlands has one of the largest banking sectors in Europe. The banking sector is marked by a high degree of concentration, with 82% of the market being held by ING, Rabobank and ABN AMRO, and another 10% by the two public sector banks (BNG and NWB). Since 2008, many reforms have been implemented in the banking sector, largely driven by the EU, which are amongst other things aimed at digitalisation and structural reduction of the workforce.

⁵ The figures are based on statistics from Central Agency for Statistics (CBS) for 2020. The figures only give an indication. It is good to keep in mind that bourgeois statistics uses definitions and categorisations that make it difficult to use figures directly in an analysis based on Marxist political economy. To give an example, there are 633,000 temporary agency workers in the Netherlands, the vast majority of whom work in industry, transport and storage, and construction. But this group of workers, along with other categories, is included in business services, which is said to account for 15% of the economy. Such problems sometimes create a distorted picture. Further research by the Party is needed to create a correct picture of the present state of and developments in the Dutch economy, the composition of capital and of the working class, etc.

Almost 2.6 million people are employed by the government (police, army, civil service), health and welfare services and education. Typically, all parts of the government in the broadest sense (from the army to education) have increasingly close ties to private companies. To a large extent, government tasks have been handed over to private companies and institutions, for example in health care, education, public transport, and security.

An important task for the CC until the next Congress is to follow the developments in the economy, study them and make them collective. Education is also important, because there is still a lot of confusion, promoted by bourgeois forces. For example, that the Netherlands has hardly any industry, that the working class hardly does any productive (value-creating) work, that the Dutch economy is completely dependent on foreign countries etc.

3.3 Development of the labour market

The past decades have seen a widespread flexibilisation of the labour market, accompanied by the deterioration of wages and labour rights, the intensification of work (higher work pressure) and increased insecurity for the working class.

Over 30% of all employed people (almost 3 million) now have a flexible contract or work as self-employed. Temporary work agencies, self-employed workers and countless other flex constructions turn a large part of the working class into disguised rightless day labourers and undermine collective labour agreements. Moreover, in recent decades there have been more and more part-time jobs. Since 2007, there have even been more part-time jobs than full-time jobs.

Because of the flexibilisation, workers are paid less. More than half a million workers have to work several jobs in order to make ends meet. People live in increasing uncertainty. Protection against dismissal is being dismantled and it is becoming easier for capitalists to carry out (mass) layoffs. Workers have to change jobs more often (in 2019 alone, more than one million people changed professions).

In addition, the 8-hour working day and weekend rest are increasingly being abolished, blurring the line between private and working time. Many workers work overtime, which is often not paid out. More than 65% of the employed indicate that they regularly work outside office hours (43% even systematically) and 20% of workers regularly work on Sundays. For this, workers often receive hardly any compensation, as this depends on the employment contract. These percentages are higher among flex workers, but are also increasing among people with a permanent contract.

All this goes hand in hand with an increase in the workload, resulting in a rising trend in burnouts and workplace accidents. In 2019, no less than 17% of workers experienced serious burnout symptoms. This percentage is higher among young workers and flex workers. The increase in work pressure also leads to unsafe situations. In 2019, there were 4,474 reported workplace accidents and at least 69 workers died from work accidents, mainly when working with machines or at great heights. Temporary agency workers are overrepresented in this statistic. The fact that many companies do not, or not sufficiently, assess occupational risks has been criticised for years by the inspection.

Flexibilisation is in the interest of the capitalists. It usually makes labour power cheaper, because the costs of social insurance, sickness, invalidity and pensions, among other things, are passed on to the worker. Moreover, flexibilisation makes it easier to fire and hire workers according to the needs of the market. Thus, the flexibilisation of the labour market also responds to capitalists' new needs for flexible labour due to objective developments in production. Because of automation and digitalisation, knowledge and skills of workers in many sectors have become increasingly transient, and capital needs labour forces to be able to switch more easily to other professions. Therefore, flexibilisation goes hand in hand with so-called 'lifelong learning' and retraining, which as a rule is paid out of the margin for salary increases in wage negotiations, so, on other words, it is paid for by the working class itself.

Many jobs are paid less due to flexibilisation. But even for permanent jobs, the wage increases laid down in collective labour agreements are constantly being overtaken by inflation, taxes and premiums, and the commodification of public services. As a result, real wages fall, and the impoverishment of the proletariat increases. **All these developments are part of a trend in which labour costs must fall so that the Dutch and European bourgeoisie can strengthen its competitiveness and secure its profits.**

Unemployment is officially around 3%. However, the unemployment figures are very misleading, because nowadays the number of working hours is not taken into account. As a result, even people who are registered with a temporary employment agency and have worked somewhere for a few hours are not counted as unemployed, while they are actually looking for a (real) job. **With the part-time and flex constructions the unemployment and poverty are essentially spread over more people.** Moreover, far from everyone is registered as looking for employment. Unemployed people who are temporarily ill do not count in the statistics either. How misleading the unemployment figures can be is shown by the fact that in the first quarter of 2020 more than 630,000 people were dependant on unemployment benefits and income support benefits, while according to the figures only 277,000 people were unemployed. Another indication is that of the 299,000 workers who found a job in the June-September period, only 88,000 had been counted as unemployed. The other 211,000 were from the 'non-working population', which is, according to official figures, not looking for a job. The real unemployment rate is thus much higher than bourgeois statistics would suggest.

Nevertheless, capital is concerned about the scarcity in the labour market. Capital has an interest in having a large supply of labour and a 'reserve army' of unemployed, so that enough flexible workers are available, whom capital can use and discard as disposable commodities according to the developments in the market. Moreover, a larger supply of labour has a depressing effect on wages.

Therefore, increasing labour participation is a strategic goal of capital in the Netherlands and the EU, giving rise to the term 'participation society'. To achieve this, laws are being passed (by the Dutch government but also by the EU) that are aimed at the following aspects:

- Working longer, raising the retirement age. For example, between 2009 and 2019, the share of people in their 60s with paid jobs increased from 26% to 41%.
- Getting more people to work. Women, students, disabled people or other groups with a relatively high proportion of unemployed people are considered 'untapped potential' by the EU. Labour participation among these groups is promoted under the guise of emancipation, but that is not what the bourgeois state is concerned with. The aim is limiting benefits and public services and throwing these groups into the labour market, where they are faced not only with insecure and poorly paid jobs, but also with a lack of facilities (for parents, the disabled, etc.). Benefit recipients are confronted with a 'compulsory compensation activity' and students with underpaid or even unpaid internships, which not only hinders labour participation but also has a wage-depressing effect.
- Extending the working day. It is notable in this regard that rules on working hours and rest periods are increasingly set by the EU on a weekly or monthly basis., with working days of 12 hours or more being made possible in exchange for shorter working hours on other days. Apart from the fact that this is exhausting, because humans need daily rest (that is a biological fact), this once more aims to create flexible labour forces which capital can deploy according to its needs.
- Immigration, where the EU increasingly tries to select in the country of origin which migrants and refugees are admitted as useful workers and which are not.

Capital has been able to implement the flexibilisation of labour relations and other negative developments in the labour market through the decline of the labour movement. Through the trade unions we must promote the struggle for higher wages, permanent contracts, full-time jobs with stable working hours, sufficient time off and rest in the evenings and weekends, protection against dismissal, reduced workload and other labour rights, as well as their enforcement.

3.4 Public services and the standard of living of the population

In recent decades, there has been a huge dismantling of the public services and social rights acquired by the working class in the past and especially in the post-war period through its struggles. This has affected the standard of living of the population. **It is important for the working class to understand this historical development and the causes of the dismantling of acquired social services and rights.**

Particularly in the period after the Second World War, the working class in certain countries, including the Netherlands, enforced important social rights and public services. This was the result of an interplay of different factors in those historical circumstances.

Firstly, the struggle of the labour movement. Thanks to the activity and influence of the communist parties, the class-oriented line had much more influence at that time in the trade union movement, which therefore had a more militant stance. In addition, the existence of the USSR and other socialist countries played an important role, since the working class acquired far-reaching social rights there. These factors contributed to the working class gaining improvements. These concessions were politically necessary for capital.

In addition, there were important factors that contributed to making the concessions economically possible. Firstly, the enormous devaluation of capital during the Second World War, which created the conditions for a period of economic growth. As a result, there were many sectors where capital could be invested profitably. In this context, sectors that required a lot of investment and where capital did not expect sufficient profit in the short term were left to the bourgeois state (e.g. the railways). In addition, in the post-war period, partly due to the innovations due to the war, there was a big difference in the productivity of the economically developed countries and large parts of the world that were economically disadvantaged. Capital exports and foreign trade were therefore an important source of surplus profit, which was further enhanced by colonialism (and its remnants after the abolition of the colonial system).

All these developments made it economically possible and politically necessary for the bourgeoisie to apply relatively extensive state intervention in the economy, while also making concessions to the working class in the form of public services. From the 1970s onwards, however, these conditions gradually began to disappear.

The workers' movement was less and less able to defend social achievements. The influence of Eurocommunism weakened the ability of communist parties to fulfil their role as revolutionary vanguards. Some parties were even completely co-opted and transformed into social democratic parties. In the trade unions, the influence of the reformist line of class collaboration increased. The counterrevolutions around 1990 were another big blow to the labour movement.

On the side of capital, the desirability of a relatively large public sector and the possibility of maintaining public facilities declined. On the one hand, because economic growth inevitably led to over-accumulation of capital. The system thus ran up against the limits of the growth made possible by the devaluation of capital during the Second World War. On the other hand, the differences in labour productivity between developed and developing countries reduced, which translated, among other things, into relatively less surplus profit and increased competition.⁶

These developments required adjustments in the economic policy applied by the bourgeois state. Adjustments that had to promote the competitiveness of the economy by reducing labour costs (including costs for public services) and by creating new sectors through privatisation where the accumulated capital could be employed. These adjustments went hand in hand with the dismantling of social services and rights, for it meant privatising and commercialising state-owned companies and public services, dismantling social

⁶ Differences in labour productivity diminish, but they always remain because of the law of uneven development that characterises capitalism, not only between countries, but also between sectors and between individual companies. Surplus profits also persist due to, among other things, productivity differences and monopoly positions.

security, promoting flexibilization of the labour market, and so on. The further dismantlement was increasingly planned at the level of the EU, for example in EU treaties and more recently with the 'Lisbon Strategy' and the 'Europe 2020 Strategy'. These developments accelerated with the intense capitalist economic crisis of 2008. The dismantlement has seriously affected the population's standard of living in recent decades.

For the labour movement, it is important to comprehend the causes of the dismantling of acquired social services and rights. The bourgeois and opportunistic circles are creating confusion in order to hide the fact that social dismantlement is a result of capitalism. Thus, all kinds of false factors are designated as so-called causes of social dismantlement, such as ageing or immigration. From social democratic and opportunistic quarters, the social dismantlement is presented as a choice of 'right-wing parties' applying 'neoliberal policy', in order to then propose a 'left-wing government' or Keynesian policies as a solution. Practice in other countries has shown time and again that the policy of dismantling is implemented just as well by liberal parties as by social democratic or so-called radical left parties, or parties of other political colours (green, conservative, reactionary, etc.).

In recent years, social dismantlement has continued. **The essence of the recent developments in public services is that capital is trying, on the one hand, to completely shift the burden of public services to the working class and, on the other hand, to develop new profitable sectors for investment. As a result, people are increasingly at the mercy of private insurance rather than public services.**

Healthcare is changing from a right into a commodity. The health care system is private, with partial funding by the state, and is becoming increasingly inaccessible. Under the guise that care would be unaffordable because of an ageing population and the costs of new medical techniques, health care is being made more and more expensive. Behind this lie that healthcare is unaffordable lies the reality that health insurance companies, private healthcare providers, laboratories, pharmaceutical companies and industries of medical machines and equipment make billions in profit on the backs of people who need healthcare. Hospitals, nursing homes and other care institutions are forced to close or merge due to a lack of public funding. Home care, sheltered workshops and other sectors that are insufficiently profitable are almost completely dismantled. Not the needs of the people who need care but the cost-benefit analysis of capital has become increasingly decisive for care, with the focus lying on curative rather than preventive health care.

Healthcare workers work very hard to help patients, and they certainly fought a tough battle during the pandemic. But they are 'rewarded' with enormous workloads, which is also reflected in the fact that sickness absence rates and overwork symptoms in care are very high, as are flexible contracts and low wages.

Education is becoming increasingly expensive and less accessible. In primary and secondary schools, overcrowded classes are the norm and teachers often have to deal with high workloads and (unpaid) overtime. There is a proliferation of private tutoring and exam training companies, where underpaid students fill the gaps in secondary education. Due to the large classes and the resulting lack of personal attention, more and more students are dependent on these, if the parents can afford it.

In vocational and higher education, the 'loan system' (more correctly the debt system) has increasingly placed the cost of education on the individual student. There is talk of 'abolishing' this system and reintroducing a basic grant. The reality, however, is that the proposed grant can by no means cover the study and living costs of students, so there will essentially be no abolition of the system that is driving students into debt. In line with the EU's Bologna Process, higher education is becoming increasingly fragmented and individualised, with more and more differentiation within programmes (directions, electives, minor, honours class, different follow-up studies, etc.). The focus on general and comprehensive knowledge of the subject is fading, because the central focus is not on the development of young people, evolving their skills and talents, but on the preparation of the future labour forces with the specific

knowledge and skills that capital demands in every period. It is therefore no longer taken for granted that a bachelor's degree is enough to get a corresponding job. Thus, students are condemned to a constant hunt for credits, diplomas, certificates, internships and extracurricular activities in order to have a chance of finding a job in their field. Many students also have to combine this with work. Burnouts are becoming 'normal' among students. All this goes hand in hand with ever-increasing education costs, with parents' wallets increasingly determining the options for education.

Social security is being increasingly eroded, with social rights being dismantled and people dependent on social security being put under pressure and even criminalised. The benefits scandal was not an incident or an accident, but the result of the deliberate policy pursued by successive bourgeois governments and the EU in recent decades. In the framework of the dismantling of social security, social provisions in employment conditions (health insurance, disability benefits, sick leave, pensions, etc.) are also deteriorating.

The public pension system is being completely dismantled. The core of all reforms in the recent period is that the supplementary pension to the state pension disappears as a collective labour condition and deferred wages will become an individual arrangement. Thus, pension funds will essentially function as private insurers. The next step that the bourgeoisie wants to take is to abolish the current statutory obligation to participate in a pension fund in a branch, so that pension funds will have to compete with commercial insurers. This will create the conditions for the complete privatisation of the pension system, which the EU and the bourgeois governments want to implement. While big business makes profits from investments with money that is in the pension funds and that has been built up by the workers themselves (pensions are deferred wages), the pension rights of workers are being reduced and pensioners are facing ever lower pensions because there is no indexation, while the costs of care and housing are increasing. As a result, a large proportion of the elderly in the Netherlands have difficulty making ends meet and poverty is relatively common among the elderly (more than 100,000 elderly people are below the poverty line).

More generally, **the working class is plagued by huge prices for renting or buying a home.** For most people from the working class and other oppressed sections of the population, housing costs take up a huge proportion of their income. Housing has been turned into a market where some need to make profit, instead of a human right, with the state ensuring that sufficient high-quality housing is available to meet housing needs. The liberalisation of the 'housing market' has made the construction of homes a matter for market players. Developers and speculators are now profiting from the fact that construction slowed down after the previous economic capitalist crisis of 2008, and, moreover, new construction consists largely of unaffordable housing. The homes that become available are bought en masse by investors, who then rent them out at insane prices.

Because of all these developments in the labour market and the dismantling of public services, poverty is a major problem in the Netherlands. According to the figures, more than 6% of the population is below the 'low-income threshold'. In reality, however, the percentage of people who cannot or can barely make ends meet is even higher. The poor include not only unemployed people without benefits and those entitled to benefits, but also many working people on low incomes, pensioners and students. Many of the poor depend on food banks, which even experienced shortages during the economic crisis in 2020.

In recent years, there has been a massive dismantling of facilities for culture and sport, which are increasingly becoming luxury products. In these sectors, many workers are very poorly paid and there are hardly any steady jobs. For the working class and other oppressed strata of the population, this means that healthy and creative leisure activities are becoming more inaccessible. At the same time, many people are looking for a way out of all the problems created by capitalism in alcohol, drugs, endless watching of series, gaming or gambling, which often leads to addiction. A large part of the population suffers from psychological problems.

3.5 In particular on the situation for working-class women and minorities

Over the past centuries, enormous strides have been made in the emancipation of all kinds of groups within the working class, such as women, people with a migrant background, people with a non-heterosexual orientation, transgender people, etc. The achievements are primarily due to the struggle of the labour movement and emancipation movements. The socialist construction in the 20th century, in which women and minorities were given all kinds of rights for the first time, has significantly promoted the emancipation of all kinds of groups within the working class. Objective developments in technology, the economy and society have also brought about changes in social relations.⁷

Nevertheless, several groups in the working class are particularly hard hit by all the above-mentioned conditions that determine the standard of living of the working class, and still face particular problems. These problems are not limited to discrimination in the sense that certain groups of people are disadvantaged, but also include the lack of public services and rights, which can ensure that the special needs that certain groups of people objectively require are met, so that they can fully contribute to society and develop themselves.

While bourgeois politics applauds the fact that there are more women at the top of companies and in politics, ordinary working-class women are still systematically underpaid and have insecure flexible jobs without rights. Women continue to be systematically underpaid for the same work, and work in sectors where most workers are female is relatively poorly paid. In addition, women face discrimination on account of pregnancy or maternity when applying for jobs or at work. More generally, women often face unequal treatment, sexism and sexual harassment, often in the workplace but also in other settings. Working class families are, in part due to the lack of public services, burdened with all kinds of household and child-rearing tasks, burdens that are still predominantly carried by women. This is an important aspect of the material basis for the oppression of women in capitalism. Parents pay through the nose for childcare, and mothers in particular are often even forced to stop working because childcare is so expensive. Working-class people (relatively many of whom are women) are, in addition to their jobs and families, often burdened with the task of caring for elderly parents or relatives suffering from illness or disability. This is a consequence of the dismantling of elderly care and care in general. In addition, women are faced with healthcare costs, for example for gynaecological, obstetric and maternity care – which are often only reimbursed when there is a 'medical necessity', reflecting the lack of preventive healthcare available to all. This is in addition to the costs of medical care in general. Many married women are (financially) dependent on their husbands, partly due to the nature of marriage in capitalist society. Women are still confronted with (sexual) violence on an enormous scale. There are huge deficiencies in the tackling of sexism, which already starts with the lack of information and education.

Immigrants and people with a migration background are systematically underpaid, have flexible jobs more often and are criminalised by the bourgeois state. People from other ethnic backgrounds and people of colour face racism. This is particularly fuelled by reactionary and fascist forces. But the other bourgeois parties, who are against racism in words, also often implicitly support it. For example, people with a migrant background or dark skin colour are systematically criminalised by the bourgeois state through ethnic profiling, which is legal in the Netherlands. The awful benefits scandal has brought this to light for the umpteenth time. The situation of refugees and migrants, including many women and children, who often live for long periods of time in miserable, unsafe and unhygienic conditions, also deserves special attention.

⁷ An important example of such objective developments is the emergence and development of capitalism and the working class. This has, for example, ensured that women have again become en masse involved in social production as wage labourers. Whereas in the slaveholding system and feudalism, women mainly performed work around the household, without income. Another example is that technical advances have helped to ease the burden of household tasks and have reduced the amount of time spent on them. Such objective developments have promoted women's emancipation, despite capitalism imposing all kinds of restrictions.

Migrant workers are systematically underpaid by companies, often work in an unsafe and unhealthy working environment, and often live in appalling conditions. There are tens of thousands of people in the Netherlands who do not have a valid residence permit. Their rights are violated and they are squeezed out by capitalists, landlords and human traffickers.⁸ While many multinational companies, bourgeois parties and the EU parade words like 'diversity' and 'inclusion', refugees and migrants are excluded or treated inhumanely, and racist attitudes are implicitly promoted by the same parties, with the aim of dividing the working class and preparing the population for imperialist interventions.

Many other groups also face particular problems, such as lack of accessible care and facilities, discrimination, underpayment, poor jobs and even exclusion from the labour market, i.e. exclusion from participation in social labour. For example, people with a disability, people with a non-heterosexual orientation, intersex and transgender people, etc. Their interests are primarily determined by the class to which they belong, which determines their conditions of existence and the possibilities they have to meet their special needs. Indeed, working class people who belong to a disadvantaged group face different problems from such people from the bourgeoisie. Reactionary forces poison the consciousness of the population with racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and other reactionary views.

The bourgeoisie profits from the disadvantaged position of certain groups. Not only because these groups are systematically underpaid and have poorer working conditions (such as relatively many flexible jobs). But also because this has a depressing effect on the wages and working conditions of the working class as a whole.

4. Developments in the bourgeois political system

4.1 Political developments during the pandemic

The pandemic has left its mark on recent political developments. **It first of all illuminated the serious consequences of the decades-long policy of austerity in healthcare**, including significant shortages in personnel, medical supplies, hospital beds, etc. Between 2003 and 2017 the number of hospital beds has plummeted by 20% because of endless budget cuts, privatization and its concomitant mergers and closures of hospitals.

The government failed to effectively combat the pandemic. Its policy was committed towards continuing economic activity as much as possible, and generous financial support for business. This was done not only to support enterprises that faced consequences of the lockdown, but primarily to help big capital sustain itself during the capitalistic economic crisis. Within this framework, the Dutch government followed the policy of 'controlled dispersal', i.e., letting people die in a controlled way. All the while big business could count on generous support, measures concerning public health were steadily too little, too late. On top of that, these measures were primarily focussed on restricting social contact, while health measures within large workplaces were consequently being flouted and were barely inspected. The bourgeois political system is stuck in a doomed to fail balancing act between strict health measures on the one hand and recovery of the capitalist economy on the other. Health measures, and the negative economic and societal effects of the pandemic, are thus conditioned by capitalist relations of production.

⁸ People without valid residence permits are often called 'illegal' and depicted as people who cause a nuisance, criminals or even terrorists. In reality, they are tens of thousands of refused asylum seekers, foreign women (and their children) who have been divorced before they were entitled to their own residence permits, victims of human trafficking, stateless persons, etc. Officially, they are not allowed to work, rent a house, and have no access to health care and other services. Without rights and without income they must see to survive. They are (illegally) exploited by capital as cheap and rightless workers.

This policy has resulted in many victims. Not only covid related deaths, illnesses and long-lasting effects of covid-infection. The victims of this policy also include other patients, whose medical procedures had to be put on hold because of overcrowded hospitals, and those who endured the (psychological) effects of long-term social isolation, teleworking, etc.

The government policy has been marked by all kinds of contradictions, which amplified confusion and mistrust. Furthermore, the pandemic was used as a pretext to push through legislation which was already on the agenda anyway. This includes, for example, the narrowing of political rights, and the expanding of authority of police and intelligence agencies. Another example is the expansion and normalisation of teleworking, which is often accompanied by an intensification of labour and further dilution of the border between private and working time, as well as between private and working space as people had to turn part of their homes into offices, and without the capitalists even providing the equipment necessary (e.g., an adequate monitor and office chair). Furthermore, the financial support for enterprises was coupled with capitalist reorganisations and budget cuts which business had been wanting to implement for a while. People are rightfully worried about these and other issues, like the fact that the pharmaceutical industry is privately owned, and therefore the profit motive is decisive.

Reactionary forces fuelled these concerns in a reactionary direction of unscientific conspiracy theories. This is facilitated by the contradictions in government policy and communication. Various fascistoid and other reactionary forces stir up reactionary actions against health measures (such as masks, physical distancing, vaccinations), instead of making progressive demands which target the real causes of current hardships (e.g., strengthening the public health system, abolition of patents on vaccines, nationalisation of production and distribution of vaccines, and more generally a society which concerns itself with improving the physical and mental health of the people in healthier living environments and workplaces).

The societal roots of these unscientific and reactionary ideas are based within the petite bourgeoisie, significant parts of which were hit especially hard by measures against the pandemic, and big capital, which has lost some profits because of the health measures. Parts of the working class, which rightfully worry about the consequences of the pandemic and the measures against it, are caught up in these sentiments.

The large-scale state intervention by the government in response to the capitalistic economic crisis was typical. Liberal and conservative political parties view this as a special measure, which is needed because of the economic crisis and made possible because of past austerity. Social-democratic political parties promote this kind of state intervention as a progressive trend which tackles the failures of the previous 'neoliberal' policies.

In reality it is nothing but the choice of big capital (in the Netherlands, but also in the European Union with its 'European Green Deal' already worked out before the pandemic), to guarantee its profits and survival within this new capitalist economic crisis. Big capital aims to emerge stronger from the crisis than competing capitalist states and imperialist blocs.

A part of the measures, which among other things support oppressed parts of the petite bourgeoisie, like subsidies and deferment of taxation, are of temporary character and more so serve as a means to maintain the rate of consumption. The vast majority of the measures were nothing but a huge gift, in the form of financial support and subsidies, to big capital.

4.2 General trends in national politics

Dutch national bourgeois politics of the last few years is marked by a significant fragmentation of the bourgeois political parties, that superficially seem to be very different. This is an expression of a long-term trend, in which traditional political parties find themselves unable to bind people to them like in the past. The fragmentation is not a direct expression of a weakening of the bourgeois political system itself, however,

because with the new splinter parties and with 'old wine in new bottles', capital still steadily succeeds in misleading the working class and creating illusions.

In spite of their superficial differences, all bourgeois political parties – whether they call themselves left- or right-wing, and despite sometimes claiming differently in their rhetoric – are united in their orientation on certain strategic goals of capital. And this could not be another way. Because they do not question capitalism and the bourgeois state, nor do they stand for an alternative. The current strategic goals of capital can be summarized in the following points.

1. **Safeguarding the recovery of capitalism after the economic crisis and a period of economic growth.** This means nothing but safeguarding the profits of big capital and the interests of the dominant capital groups.
2. **Strengthening the international position of Dutch capital,** with the Dutch state taking a more prominent role in military interventions, for example in the Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan, Bahrein), Africa (Mali, Uganda), and Eastern-Europe (Baltic states), and with the interests of Dutch capital being more assertively defended within the EU and NATO as well.
3. **The further dismantling of labour rights, social rights and public services and an offload of the costs of public services on the working class,** among other things through the replacement of the publicly financed social security system with a system of private insurances. This is being done because state social rights are for the capitalists and the bourgeois an expense which impedes their competitiveness. A telling example is the benefits scandal, in which recipients of social security were hounded as criminals by the bourgeois state.

This dismantling of social achievements and rights is accompanied with the promotion of the view that even institutions such as education, healthcare and social security are not social rights, but commodities. This is the case, regardless of the fact that public services or real income can temporarily be augmented by the government along the lines of the Keynesian intervention in the capitalist economic crisis or other developments (e.g., a shortage on the labour market). Such measures will be paid for by the working class itself, and will soon be reversed, unless the working-class movement regroups itself for the sake of enforcing real improvements.

4. **The strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology on the working class,** especially the youth, asserting that private ownership of the means of production and the bourgeois state are sacred. An important facet of this is the promotion of anti-communism, which bourgeois politicians regularly endorse. But the bourgeois media, education and social media also reproduce bourgeois ideology and anti-communism every day. This offensive commences on all fronts of bourgeois ideology, from racism and nationalism to postmodernism.

Especially since the fall of the USSR, the Dutch bourgeois political climate is characterized by an increasingly reactionary ideology. The system cultivates individualism, egoism and the 'one person's death is another person's bread' mentality, which dialectically connects to the capitalist policy of dismantling social rights and services, which is alternately supported by liberal, social-democratic, christian-democratic and fascistoid parties, every time with deferent pretexts. Furthermore, reactionary views concerning women and minorities are directly or indirectly fostered by these bourgeois political forces – especially the reactionary, fascistoid and fascist parties and originations. Characteristic is how the public promotion of these reactionary ideas is increasingly happening across more organized lines. For example, in the last few years new reactionary media outlets have been established like WNL, PowNed, Ongehoord Nederland, etc., some of which also provide a platform to fascistoid parties. These developments are very worrying, and illuminate the backwardness of the capitalist system.

5. **The curtailment of political and union rights and an increase in the deployment of the repression apparatus of the bourgeois state.** More and more authority is given to police and intelligence agencies, both by the Dutch government and the European Union. Community service officers are increasingly charged with tasks traditionally only enforced by the police and they are increasingly armed. Attempts

are being made to generate support among the population for this expansion and militarisation of police and intelligence agencies, by creating a general atmosphere of insecurity and fear. Social issues, caused by the further decay of the capitalist system, are seized upon to intensify repression. Fascistoid parties such as the PVV and FvD, but also other parties, are profiting from this, and represent this trend on the political level, often from a strongly racist angle. Advertising for the army and the police also contributes to this, for example in public spaces, such as schools and career fairs, or online. The latter is accompanied by a further glorification of the bourgeois state. At the same time, we see increasing attempts at censorship and control of information.

In addition, there are developments such as the passing of laws that provide for this further repression. For example, a law has been passed that provides punitive relief for police officers who use excessive violence during their work, to which practically all bourgeois parties from 'left' to right have voted in favour of. Also, the so-called trawl-law' has been implemented whereby the powers for intelligence agencies and police to monitor and spy on people are strongly augmented. The abolition of the advisory referendum and the issuing of emergency decrees can also be mentioned.

Particularly dangerous are the developments towards banning so-called anti-democratic, extremist and subversive organisations. The possibilities for judges – or even the minister without court intervention – to more quickly ban organisations when they are not consistent with the aims of the bourgeois state have been greatly expanded by this legislation. Actual terrorist and criminal organisations can of course be banned via this legislation, but historical experience shows that laws of this kind can, and will, also be used by the bourgeoisie against the communist and the labour movement. We fight this tendency by defending democratic political and trade union rights.

These objectives pursued by capital determine the general direction of policy. This does not concern choices of 'right-wing parties', but strategic goals (dictates) of Dutch big capital, which it sets to maintain capitalism and secure its profits in a period in which the contradictions of capitalism are deepening, and the inter-imperialist contradictions are rising.

This reactionary bourgeois policy often hides behind pseudo-progressive slogans and measures which (usually supposedly – sometimes also realistically) would benefit combatting climate change or emancipation of oppressed groups. For example, big capital gets enormous subsidies, the costs of which are passed on to the working class, supposedly for sustainability and for protecting the climate. Or the labour relations are made more flexible, supposedly so that parents, and especially mothers, can more easily combine a family with work. Imperialist interventions are carried out, supposedly for peace and security.

Far-reaching cooperation between the public and private sector takes place, with consultancies and other private actors that elaborate the policies of the bourgeois state. Huge sums of public money disappear into the pockets of contractors, consultancies, and other private actors. Moreover, the public sector itself increasingly operates on the basis of economic and organisational principles from the private sector.

Generally speaking, there is a balance of power for the working class, with big capital remaining firmly in a dominant position. The bourgeois state remains firmly in control. But the contradictions under capitalism are increasing. Capital is getting more and more into trouble, and more and more people are no longer satisfied with living on less and less. People are looking for an alternative, but still lack the 'compass' of class consciousness. As a result, the bourgeoisie still manages time and again to win over sections of the working class for one bourgeois politics or the other. In the years to come the NCPN will have to intensify its activity and show that socialism is the only solution to the problems of the working class.

4.3 The political forces in the Netherlands

The liberal VVD has been the largest party since 2010 and is leaving its mark on political developments. Following the policy of dismantling social achievements and rights of the previous CDA- and PvdA-led cabinets, the VVD-led governments have continued and, since the capitalist economic crisis of 2008,

intensified the policy of dismantlement. The interests of big entrepreneurs are often openly put first and the VVD takes the lead in propaganda that the interests of the bosses and the workers coincide. The VVD mainly presents itself as a cosmopolitan party, which considers the EU and issues such as emancipation to be important, but at the same time it accommodates racist and reactionary positions. Other liberal parties, which present themselves as more cosmopolitan, 'progressive' liberals, are D66, which has participated in the governments in recent years, and Volt, a relatively newer party that presents itself as a European rather than a national political party.

Within Christian Democracy, we find the CDA, which has also participated in the Rutte Cabinets in recent years. The Christian Union presents itself as a more 'social' or even 'leftist' variant of Christian Democracy, although it has repeatedly shown its willingness to support dismantling policies and even to participate in the government. The SGP, despite a superficial 'modernisation' in recent years, continues to spread reactionary views, especially regarding women, people with non-heterosexual orientation and other minorities.

With the fragmentation of the political landscape, many new political parties have emerged in recent years, including the aforementioned Volt, but also parties that focus on specific themes such as 50PLUS and the BBB, which respectively try to appeal mainly to the elderly or to farmers and other people living outside the Randstad or in rural areas. Many of the new parties are in fact not as new as they seem, since the founders and leaders of these parties mainly come from older existing bourgeois parties.

A very dangerous trend is the establishment of fascistoid parties such as the Party for Freedom (PVV), Forum for Democracy (FvD), JA21 and Interest of the Nederland, partly as a result of the racism and other reactionary attitudes reproduced by the system, which are in turn fuelled by these parties. These parties contain fascist and neo-Nazi elements and lay out the red carpet for the emergence of fascist movements should circumstances arise where the system requires them. The fight against fascism remains of great importance. These parties have nothing to offer the working class. They sow discord and hatred in the service of the bosses and prepare people ideologically for imperialist interventions.

There are a number of parties that profile themselves as left-wing, including the SP, PvdA, GroenLinks, PvdD, DENK and BIJ1. A characteristic development is the decay of social democracy in its traditional form (PvdA) and the formation of all kinds of new parties. Among them, we find a series of parties that mainly profile themselves on a specific theme, such as PvdD (animal rights and climate), DENK and BIJ1 (racism and diversity), which does not mean however that they only focus on that theme. They rely relatively much on the petty bourgeoisie, but certainly also appeal to parts of the working class that are confronted with respective problems.

Despite the fact that some of the parties that present themselves as leftist and progressive may sometimes use anti-capitalist slogans and terminology (especially the SP and BIJ1), these are parties that do not question private capitalist ownership, the bourgeois state and imperialist alliances such as the EU. In essence, they are social democratic, bourgeois parties. There is of course a distinction between the often well-intentioned supporters, who often genuinely want to fight for change, and the objective character of political parties. There should be no illusions about the latter. They are parties that, when the moment of truth arrives, are entirely in the service of capitalism and the bourgeois state.

There are a series of extra-parliamentary opportunist forces that are mainly active in the trade union and emancipation movements. They share the denial of the necessity of building a communist party, as well as the aversion to democratic centralism and to socialist construction in the 20th century. They focus on the 'unity of the left', whereas the NCPN focuses on uniting the working class on the basis of its material

interests and class consciousness. As a result, our ideas about the forms of organisation and struggle often clash with the forms that opportunist forces try to bring about.⁹

With their anti-capitalist slogans, various (parliamentary and extra-parliamentary) parties that pretend to be 'left' parties are distracting people from the real revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism and build socialism. They attract militant working-class people to channel them into a struggle that ultimately does not harm the system. As people look for a way out and the labour movement tries to recover, new opportunist parties may also emerge, even with a Marxist 'facade'. The system is constantly creating such 'barriers' as a continuous attempt to get in the way of the communist party.

Any bourgeois party, whether it calls itself left or right, will implement the aforementioned dictates of capital when it enters a government, even those that now present themselves as a 'radical', 'progressive', 'green' or 'left-wing' opposition, because they do not question private capitalist ownership and the bourgeois state. The fragmentation of the political landscape is therefore mainly superficial. In essence, there are a few major parties with a whole range of 'appendages' that are ostensibly in opposition, but when it comes down to it, are always willing to help out the system. This is not to say that all bourgeois political parties are the same. There are differences, not only in their historical background and composition, but also in the politics they advocate. These differences mainly reflect the conflicting interests between parts of the bourgeoisie on how to manage the system, the degree of state intervention, which international alliances are most favourable, the degree of EU integration, etc.

NCPN is the only party that can consistently act for the class interests of the working class and organise that can organise the working class on the basis of her interests.

4.4 Developments in local politics and the council work of the NCPN

The so-called 'decentralisation', for which plans were accelerated after the capitalist crisis of 2008, acted as an enormous austerity measure and an attack on the social rights of the working class. Over the years, the bourgeois government transferred all kinds of tasks in the area of care, youth and work to the municipalities, with the ideological justification that the municipality is 'closer to the citizen' and to give substance to the new 'participation society'. In reality, the bourgeoisie passed on the costs of its crisis to the population. Problems caused by the capitalist system, including unemployment and poverty, were framed as individual responsibility. The unemployed, the poor and the recipients of social security were increasingly hunted as criminals.

The consequences of these developments have been disastrous for the working class. The municipalities, which did not receive a sufficient budget to take over these tasks, were and are not able to take on these tasks with care, as a result of which many care-dependent people have been and are still in a very difficult situation. On top of that, in the area of public services, all kinds of private providers have been able to make a lot of profit because of this policy. Care, especially youth care, came under severe pressure, leaving thousands of people in need of care without care.

Responsibility for the consequences of capitalist exploitation was also transferred to municipalities. Local unemployment was supposedly 'solved' by providing subsidies to capitalists to employ people. In fact, this meant sponsoring the profits of capital with public money.

Decentralisation also led to centralisation, with smaller municipalities being merged into a larger one. This has been accompanied by centralisation and the dismantling of facilities that have become more distant from the people. The municipalities have increasingly become tools for implementing the capitalist

⁹ An example is that we try to work on committees that organise people on the basis of common interests, while opportunistic organisations interpret such committees as, or try to reduce them to, a coalition of what they see as 'leftist' or 'progressive' political organisations.

dismantlement policy of the Dutch government and the EU. The limited possibilities to influence policy under bourgeois democracy have been further eroded by these developments.

The NCPN's council work in recent years has been concentrated mainly in the municipality of de Fryske Marren, where the local party branch has dealt with all the above issues. As the party grows, becomes rooted in the working class and party branches strengthen, the conditions may arise for the party to participate in local elections in new municipalities in the coming years.

Council work must always serve the class struggle and contribute to party building. The party only participates in elections in new municipalities or provinces if the party has sufficient local capacity and is sufficiently rooted to bring about the reciprocal action between municipal council work, the class struggle and party building.

The council work of the NCPN must continue to focus on assisting the local working class, bringing their demands and defending their interests against local dismantlement policies. The NCPN will not allow itself, even at the municipal level, to be encapsulated in order to implement the policies of the bourgeois state. The party always acts as a voice in the municipal council representing the interests of the working class and other oppressed strata of the population. Council work and election campaigns must be linked to class struggle and party building.

5. Developments in the labour movement and the party's intervention

5.1 The situation of the trade union movement and the struggle of the working class

In recent years, there have been significant moments with militant upsurges of the labour movement in different sectors. Characteristically, since 2017, the number of strikes and especially the number of workers participating in them have increased enormously. Most strikes take place almost every year in industry, but also in transport and storage, wholesale and retail, as well as in healthcare and education where strikes have been massive in recent years. For example, 319,000 workers went on strike in 2019, more than in the past 24 years.

Nevertheless, the general picture of the labour movement is that it is still very weak. In recent decades, there has been a clear downward trend in the degree of organisation: from over 30% in the 1970s to about 17% today. This trend can also be observed in other countries and is linked to the decline of the labour movement and the communist movement.

The flexibilisation of labour relations has made organised struggle and power building more difficult in many sectors. On the one hand, because some flex-workers change jobs (or workplaces) more often and more quickly, making it more difficult for the trade union to take root in those workplaces. But above all because of the terror of the bosses, in the form of the constant threat of dismissal or not extending the contract. Moreover, by far the majority of strikes (more than 70%) take place as a result of collective bargaining, but because of subversive constructions many workers are not covered by a collective labour agreement, for instance in the case of contracting, or they are covered by a general collective labour agreement for temporary workers.

New technologies or production methods are also used by companies to escape from collective labour agreements. A clear example of this is Picnic, a supermarket that exclusively delivers goods straight to home and is able to get out of the collective labour agreement for supermarkets through a layered structure. Various forms of platform work such as Uber, Deliveroo, Temper and Helping are also worth mentioning.

Typically, workers lose all rights because on paper they are considered self-employed entrepreneurs. It is also typical that most of these constructions, especially when it comes to false self-employment, are considered illegal by judges, without any consequences. The government watches and refuses to enforce. New technologies or production methods and false self-employment are also used by capital to convince workers that they are no longer workers and that the trade union movement is therefore outdated and redundant.

The largest and most militant trade union is the FNV. However, the FNV is dominated by the reformist line, the line of class collaboration instead of class struggle. Time after time, the FNV makes compromises with the bosses that do not improve the working and living conditions of the workers, but damage them. This was clearly demonstrated recently during the pandemic, where the FNV took the line of collaborating with capital in order to 'get out of the crisis together with the employers', with 'understanding' for the cancelled wage increases and the reorganisations carried out in response to (or rather often under the pretext of) the pandemic and the capitalist economic crisis. They were also content with the fact that only very limited measures were taken for safety in the workplace. While the interests of the capitalists were placed above public health, the importance of collective struggles was trivialised. Collective actions were widely postponed or toned down. Physical meetings were stopped, effectively excluding in particular less educated sections of the working class from the struggle under the pretext of the pandemic.

Thus, an important opportunity to increase the consciousness and organisation rate of the working class in a period of sharply increasing class antagonisms was missed. Instead of strengthening class consciousness, the reformist trade union leadership confirmed the illusion that workers and capitalists have the same interest in public health and in economic development. As a result, there were far fewer strikes in 2020 than in previous years. In the strikes that did take place, however, many workers joined in.

More generally, the FNV often aims at influencing political parties. For example, that political parties adopt the demands of the FNV in their election programmes. A clear example of this is how the For 14 campaign was shaped. The FNV often presents itself as a lobby club, instead of focusing on developing class consciousness and struggle among workers to enforce demands through organised struggle.

It is characteristic that actions and strikes on the shop floor are often limited to bargaining for collective labour agreements and wage issues. The link with overarching political themes, such as the dismantling of social rights and achievement, widening of the gap between rich and poor, trade union freedoms, emancipation issues or peace, is hardly or not sufficiently made in workplace struggles. The necessity of making broad political demands is denied by the reformist majority under the guise of 'we are not a political party'. As a result, there is often no perspective of continuing the struggle once the bargaining for the collective labour agreement has been completed.

The other trade unions, such as the CNV, tend to be even less willing to organise actions than the FNV. **Particularly harmful and pernicious is the role of yellow trade unions, or sham trade unions set up by the bosses in an attempt to sideline the FNV and encapsulate the workers.** An example is the so-called 'Alternative for Trade Union'. The fact that this 'trade union' depends for 95.3% on money coming from the capitalists in one way or another and only 2.5% on workers' contributions says it all.

On the other hand, spontaneous groups or actions sometimes arise outside the framework of the trade union movement. At the beginning of the covid pandemic, for example, we saw wildcat strikes by temporary and migrant workers, actions that often remained separate from the trade union movement. These are sometimes initiatives that respond to workers' dissatisfaction and make offensive demands, but in some cases also initiatives that have radical overtones. In these cases, we communists are concerned with supporting the demands of these movements insofar as it contributes to the development of the class struggle, but keeping them out of radicalist waters, and linking them to the trade union movement.

There is still a long way to go for the regrouping of the labour movement, in which the building up of the NCPN is crucial. The labour movement is paralysed by the line of class collaboration that prevails in the trade union leadership, by the individualisation and alienation of large parts of the population from the trade union and collective struggle, by low class consciousness, by defeatism on the part of many people who identify themselves as progressive or left-wing, with the repeated participation in government of the PvdA and the endless concessions of GroenLinks and SP playing an important role. All these factors, despite periodic upsurges of the struggle, remain present because the influence of the communist party, the NCPN, is low. The struggle for party building and the struggle for the regrouping of the labour movement are closely intertwined.

5.2 Strategy for regrouping the labour movement

It is of great importance that the forces of the NCPN are used to strengthen the class-oriented line in the trade union movement. It is important to pay attention to the right relationship between company work and trade union work. The basis is work in the company, in which we as communists take root on the work floor, are active there, talk to colleagues, raise problems, put forward demands, discuss developments, become the point of contact. Trade union work is an extension of that. It makes no sense to chase after all kinds of positions in the FNV hierarchy without this being an expression of close ties with the workers on the work floor.

Both on the work floor and within the FNV we are fighting for radicalisation of the demands to enforce improvements in terms of employment and working conditions. First and foremost are demands for permanent jobs for structural work, dignified jobs with sufficient hours, lowering the retirement age, improving unemployment benefits so that it is built up more quickly and the unemployed receive more and longer benefits, as well as shortening the working day without reducing wage. The demand for a 30-hour working week could be a useful point of struggle for the FNV against the strategic goal of big capital to expand the supply of labour by having it available 24/7 and constantly increasing the workload. On paper, the demand for a 30-hour working week is supported by the CNV, which, however, has absolutely no concrete actions to back it up. In the long term, it is also important for the NCPN and the trade union movement to work towards extending trade union rights and, in particular, the right to strike, which is very limited in the Netherlands. The courts decide which strikes are lawful and which are not, and political strikes and solidarity strikes are by definition 'unlawful' according to the law, with the union also being financially liable if an 'unlawful' strike is continued. Moreover, a strike picket is prohibited even if the decision to strike comes from the majority of workers, thus effectively establishing a right of the bosses to strikebreakers by law. Only the hiring of external staff to break strikes is formally prohibited, although in practice the burden of proof is very complicated, because in most companies have external staff already present even without strikes.

Due to the lack of class consciousness of many workers, works councils in many companies are controlled by the boss, who in many cases also composes them despite the fact that they are formally elected by the workers, especially in workplaces where the FNV is weak. Positions in the works council can be useful for developing the struggle, especially if the trade union manages to gain a majority in it. It gives access to information about the company. The works council and trade union can also support each other in the struggle. Again, however, there is no point in getting bogged down in all kinds of internal bureaucracy, and it is only useful in combination with company and trade union work at a workplace, which can best be shaped when a party cell is built up.

The platform for company work and class awareness can play a role in developing company work, making experiences collective, and contributing to practical situations and to possibilities of educating colleagues. It is important that it is about the development of company work, work in the basis, that does not get distracted too much by 'stuff' in the FNV.

The development of practical struggles for economic demands and other demands that respond to the needs of the working class must be linked to the ideological struggles in the workplace and within the movement. This ideological struggle aims at strengthening class consciousness among the working people and at reinforcing a class-oriented line in the movement. At present, the low level of class consciousness is already reflected in the fact that many people do not even consciously identify themselves as part of the working class, partly due to the influence the bourgeoisie exerts in many ways on the consciousness of the working people. It is important that our company and trade union work is not limited to fuelling the economic struggle, but is linked to the strengthening of class consciousness, the consciousness that the workers as a class have common interests, which are in opposition to the interests of the bosses, i.e. the capitalist class. In this way, we are creating the conditions to strengthen the degree of organisation, the collective struggle and the class-oriented line.

5.3 Emancipation movements

The aforementioned problems faced by various special groups within the working class **indicate the necessity and relevance of the struggle for emancipation**. This struggle concerns not only people belonging to particularly disadvantaged groups, but the whole working class. Unity and solidarity are, after all, the most important weapons the working class has. The practical experience of the class struggle and the class consciousness that it generates, promotes understanding of and solidarity for the emancipation of disadvantaged and discriminated groups. **Communists support any struggle for the emancipation of oppressed people from the working class.**

All inequalities and all forms of discrimination have their origin in objective social relations, which arose and developed in the historical development of exploitative societies – not in reactionary ideas which fell from the sky. These issues are therefore objectively inseparable from the class struggle, from the struggle for a change in the relations of production which form the basis of all social relations.

Moreover, the class struggle also pervades the emancipation movements themselves, for there are different interests within them. The emancipation of women, people with migrant backgrounds and minorities from the working class is inseparable from the demands of the labour movement, from the struggle for the abolition of capitalist exploitation. This is not the case for the respective groups in the bourgeoisie. Historically, many proletarian emancipation movements, such as the class-oriented women's movement, anti-colonial movements, anti-racist movements, and so on, have been closely linked to the labour movement and the communist movement.

In recent years, there has been a revival of various emancipation movements. We have seen massive participation in Black Lives Matter demonstrations, the Women's March, prides, etc. This is mainly due to the increasing contradictions between the working class and capital. The BLM movement in particular was not only directed against racist attitudes or the racism of the state (including the police), but was also an outburst of the accumulated discontent and anger about exploitation, the lack of public services, etc. These are issues that concern the whole working class.

In general, however, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois positions prevail in many emancipation movements. The fact that the bourgeois ideology is the prevailing ideology in capitalism, which therefore consciously and unconsciously influences many protests and movements, plays a role in this. But these positions are also consciously promoted, by political parties and organisations that try to make their mark on these movements, but also organisations financed by the EU or the state for this purpose. There is a growing influence of bourgeois approaches and theories, which under the veil of radical and progressive-sounding slogans spread a highly reactionary and unscientific way of thinking. Examples are post-modernism, post-colonialism, intersectionality (a.k.a. in Dutch as crossroads thinking), etc. These currents are elaborated by bourgeois science and propagated in the bourgeois media and education. Certain fundamental characteristics are as follows.

- **At the basis lies an idealistic approach.**

More specifically, subjective idealism, which elevates personal experience to the sole and absolute criterion of truth. The objective nature of reality and the laws of development that permeate it are denied, as is the human ability to know objective reality.¹⁰

- **Emancipation issues are approached in an undialectical, metaphysical way.**

Instead of a scientific, historical materialist approach, which uses the materialist dialectic to show the underlying causes of discrimination against specific groups and why the struggle for emancipation is in the interests of the working class as a whole, the bourgeoisie promotes a metaphysical approach, which regards emancipation issues superficially, one-sidedly and mechanically.¹¹ The underlying causes of the oppression and unequal position of different groups, which are related to the division of society into classes, private property and exploitation, are obscured in bourgeois approaches.

- **The class issue and its relation to other emancipation issues are distorted, and the decisive role of the class issue is denied.**

To begin with, class is generally defined incorrectly. The scientific definition of class concerns the objective position of people in the relations of production and the way they objectively relate to the ownership of the means of production. Instead, bourgeois approaches rely on other (sometimes purely subjective) criteria.¹²

In addition, the decisive role of the class issue is denied. Sometimes the relevance of the class aspect is explicitly rejected as something outdated and no longer relevant. Other bourgeois approaches (such as intersectionality) appear on the surface to seek connections between class struggle and discrimination against specific groups. But the essence is not that this connection is being sought. After all, such connections have been explicitly made for much longer, certainly in the class-oriented labour movement. The essence is that class is relegated to just an aspect of the struggle.

- **The struggle for emancipation is reduced to a moralistic criticism of discriminatory behaviour, symbolism and language.**

The moral rejection of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and any form of discrimination, including in behaviour, symbolism and language, is certainly necessary. But if moral criticism is not grounded in a scientific, historical-materialist approach, it is idealistic moralism. The historical-materialist approach is lacking in bourgeois theories, which makes one blind to the real causes of discrimination and oppression. False oppositions are then put forward. For example, women versus men, people of colour versus white people, young versus old, etc. As a result, people fight the wrong 'enemy', while the system, the social relations that produce discrimination and inequality, remain out of scope.

It is precisely because of the above characteristics that these approaches fail to identify the root causes of discrimination and oppression of specific groups and to comprehend the essential links between different phenomena. Thus, the notion that the emancipation of various groups within the working class is

¹⁰ Idealism is a general name for philosophical theories that assume that the spirit (also called thinking, soul or consciousness) is primary and matter or nature is secondary. History and social developments are interpreted as results of the mind or thought. Some idealistic schools of thought presuppose a spirit that exists independently of man, such as God (*objective idealism*). Others assume that objective reality does not exist or is determined by the consciousness of the individual human being (*subjective idealism*). Opposite to idealism, stands materialism. Materialism assumes that matter is primary. Thus, thinking is precisely a product of nature and society, of material (independent of consciousness) conditions. Dialectical materialism is the philosophical starting point of Marxism.

¹¹ Metaphysics is a philosophical approach, in which phenomena are approached as if they existed unchanging and isolated. Dialectics stands in contrast to metaphysics. The dialectic method approaches phenomena precisely as a process. It looks at how things come about, what interactions there are between different aspects, and it reveals the internal contradictions that cause things to constantly change.

¹² Examples are that people are allocated to 'classes' on the basis of: income differences (with arbitrarily set boundaries between different 'classes'); the sector in which a person works (whereby often the mistake is made that only workers in the manufacturing industry are included in the working class); socio-economic status; or even on the basis of a purely subjective criterion (each person belongs to the class to which they think or feel they belong, completely unrelated to a person's objective position in socio-economic relations).

inextricably linked to the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism is lost. That is also why these approaches are supported by the bourgeoisie and their elaboration in bourgeois science is financed with large sums of money. The influence of these approaches has long since ceased to be confined to universities and students, and is clearly present in emancipation movements. To a limited but increasing extent, they are even present in trade unions, where they sometimes clash with other – often equally mistaken – views and in some cases even with the lack of solidarity with discriminated groups.

Understanding the content and the harmful influence of bourgeois ideology is not a purely theoretical question, but is essential for our practice, for our work in the movement. Indeed, these approaches influence and weaken important aspects of the movement.

1. **The demands that are made.** The demands are often of a bourgeois nature (such as more women and minorities at the top of companies and the state apparatus). They are limited to adjustments in the (legal) superstructure. They are often symbolic in nature (such as more 'appreciation', the use of other words or more people from a certain group in media – demands which are not at all wrong in themselves and which we often support, but which are put forward by bourgeois and opportunistic forces as the main issues to distract from the fundamental problems). Moreover, the demands are not consistently linked to the demands of the labour movement in general, which, after all, also especially concern disadvantaged and discriminated groups.
2. **The forms of organisation.** Here we see loose organisational forms, without clear political and organisational frameworks and without any form of democracy. In the committees that prepare actions on emancipation themes, there are often few or no elected representatives of the oppressed groups from the working class, for example, representatives of trade unions from sectors where a certain group is relatively well represented, women's organisations or other mass organisations. Instead, they are usually motley assortments of political parties and organisations without popular support. These organisations are often lobby organisations that hardly rely on the discriminated people themselves, but are financed and sometimes even set up by the state, the EU and private companies. Often, involved political parties try to push their own narrative, without really looking for unity on certain demands and a certain message. We also regularly see – especially around election periods – attempts by political parties to appropriate movements.
3. **The forms of struggle.** The emphasis is on lobbying at political parties and symbolic actions on the street. There is no orientation to link the struggle on emancipation issues to work in companies and neighbourhoods.

We should emphasize that the extent to which these kinds of pernicious demands, forms of organisation and forms of struggle prevail varies greatly from one committee or movement to another. But the tendency is generally observable. **Against this influence of bourgeois and opportunistic forces, the NCPN fights for the strengthening of emancipation movements on a class-oriented line.**

The material interests of oppressed groups from the working-class are at the centre of attention. These interests are not limited to the elimination of discrimination. They are also about fulfilling the special needs of specific groups and guaranteeing the special rights that certain groups should have. Examples are:

- Raise wages and increase the minimum wage, also because many discriminated groups are over-represented in low-paid jobs.
- Abolition of precarious forms of labour contracts.
- Extend social security and abolish inhumane sanctions and degrading control mechanisms in the current social security system.
- Improving safety at work and combating all forms of discrimination at work.
- Prohibition of all forms of ethnic profiling, limiting repression by the civil state and extending political rights.
- Struggle against imperialist interventions and wars, for peace and solidarity with refugees and migrants. Refugees and migrants are not illegal. They must be provided with proper documents and all their rights must be guaranteed, including the right to work, housing, access to education and health care.

- Free and high-quality care, childcare and other public services, including the specific care and services needed by women, children, elderly, people with disabilities (physical or mental), migrants, intersex and transgender people, etc., must be provided. This also requires that more staff be trained and that working conditions in the care sector be significantly improved. But also other public facilities such as education that is exclusively public and free of charge; affordable, frequent and nationwide public transport, etc.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for all. An end to the degrading housing and living conditions of migrant workers, refugees and other groups. When housing people with disabilities, the government must provide for their special needs (such as adapted bathrooms, wide doors, etc.). End racism and other forms of discrimination in the housing market. Reversal of the privatisation of public utilities, so that energy, water and gas are affordable for everyone.

Such rights must be secured so that disadvantaged people are actually given the possibilities to develop themselves. Equality on paper (legal) alone is insufficient.

We are working on forming real broad committees. With people who come from the working class, who actually represent discriminated groups and who also (financially) rely on them. Committees that determine specific demands and a specific message through substantive discussion and democratic procedures, and that fight for these demands. On such a line, emancipation movements can offer potential, and the struggle of different groups can actually be linked to the class struggle, to the struggle for a better society.

Forging unity and promoting solidarity are important weapons for the movement. As yet, solidarity is often limited to the realisation that another group is being discriminated against. In itself that is good and important. But the potential for real ironclad unity lies in the realisation that the exploitation and oppression of the working class as a whole and the discrimination that certain groups face (such as racism) ultimately have the same cause; that they ultimately face the same opponent. Namely the capitalist system, which reproduces the causes for racism and other forms of discrimination. Only on this basis does the slogan 'their struggle, our struggle' acquire real meaning.

The ruling class fears the link between emancipation movements and the labour movement. The bourgeoisie fears a class-oriented, anti-capitalist direction in the emancipation movements. That is why it uses superficial contradictions to sow discord. It does so through racism. But it also does it through the influence of bourgeois ideology in the emancipation movements with the reactionary theories mentioned above. As described above, such bourgeois approaches obscure the social causes of discrimination and undermine solidarity by creating false oppositions, for example by targeting 'white men' in general, who are all – regardless of class position and solely on the basis of skin colour and sex – said to be 'privileged'.¹³

In the face of such attempts to undermine the unity of the labour movement, we uphold the values of proletarian solidarity and unity, and fight side by side for the elimination of all forms of inequality and discrimination, for the emancipation of oppressed groups and of the working class as a whole.

5.4 Fighting for the interests of the youth

Capitalism offers young people from the working class and other oppressed sections of the population only the prospect of exploitation, debt and severe mental pressure. Pupils and students are being put under increasing financial pressure, among other things by attacks on their standard of living by capital, such

¹³ Discrimination by white people or men is, of course, what one perceives at first: a woman oppressed by a man, a person with a dark skin colour discriminated against by a white person, etc. The historical materialist approach provides the tools to understand such phenomena and their social causes. The bourgeois approaches, on the other hand, try to conceal the essence, the underlying social causes of such phenomena, because they defend capitalist relations of exploitation. False oppositions are put forward (women against men, people of colour against white people, etc.) in order to conceal the fact that all working-class people have an interest in the abolition of all forms of discrimination, in the emancipation of every disadvantaged group and of the working class as a whole.

as the abolition of the study grant. Education is increasingly becoming a heavy financial burden for the majority of pupils and students. Tuition fees, expensive study materials and also unaffordable student housing are part of this.

From an early age, young people are put under enormous pressure and are driven to perform, pushed by their school and studies. As early as the age of 12, children are divided into different levels at secondary school. Classes are often very large, and there is little space to help pupils with problems they are encountering. As a result, young people do not develop optimally according to their own abilities and wishes. In addition, the possibilities to catch up via tutoring are only available to young people whose parents have the money to pay for these lessons. Moreover, there is also private education, sometimes with much smaller classes and more personal attention, but at a cost of tens of thousands of euros in school fees. Suitable education is only available to a limited extent and is becoming increasingly unaffordable. All these factors contribute to widening differences in educational possibilities. As communists, we fight for free, high-quality and exclusively public education for all children.

Students are forced to do all kinds of internships, extra work, extra classes (such as honours colleges) and so on in addition to their regular studies in order to get a job. The affordability and accessibility of transferring from secondary vocational education (mbo) to higher vocational education (hbo) has been seriously hampered. Also, working alongside studies is more the rule than the exception, because otherwise students cannot afford their living and study costs. Moreover, students are saddled with enormous debts. This worsens their prospects in general, especially on the labour market, but also for example on the housing market.

Working youth (especially those with practical education, but also many highly educated students who have a part-time job) are often underpaid and work in poor conditions, often with the boss breaking the law. They often feel powerless in the face of these conditions and their bosses because they have insecure flexible contracts and no protection against dismissal. Ignorance of their own rights and of the trade union and labour movement also plays a major role.

In addition, healthy, high-quality leisure activities such as culture and sport are becoming increasingly inaccessible or are disappearing altogether. Moreover, young people have less and less time for this, due to the high study load and the additional workload of the jobs they have to take to make ends meet. Many young people, partly due to a lack of prospects, end up in burnouts and struggle with (serious) psychological problems.

Many young people develop an apolitical, individualistic attitude due to the above-mentioned position and take refuge in personal entertainment such as games, endless series and gambling.¹⁴ Or they drug themselves with alcohol, as well as cannabis and all kinds of other drugs. The bourgeoisie promotes and advances the culture of drinking and drugs and even portrays it as progressive, whereas it is actually a form of escapism. With this culture of escapism, the bourgeoisie develops workers who are perfect for its purposes: isolated, aloof and alienated from social reality.

In is necessary to fight this. Young people have a world to win, if they do not try to escape from life but take it by the horns, if they are socially engaged and militant, if they fight for a better world, for socialism.

In recent years, the CJB has grown and the number of young people joining the party has also increased. As a result of the CJB's growth and performance, there are also an increasing number of middle-aged people

¹⁴ Especially through some games, children often come into contact with war violence at an early age. They are involved as players in fighting imperialist wars, the causes of which are invariably distorted, with communists (especially the Soviet Union) or powers that today compete with NATO as the enemy. The youth can thus become 'familiar' with the violence of war and with imperialism. From this point of view, it is not surprising that there are links between the game industry and the war industry (and historically also with the US Department of Defence).

coming into contact with the party. It is of utmost importance that the CJB continues to grow and be strengthened, with the NCPN as the mother party having a particularly important and leading role.

6. Socialism as an answer to contemporary problems

6.1 Study of the construction of socialism

The struggle for socialism requires us as a party to learn from the experiences of the past. The NCPN therefore studies and evaluates the history of the construction of socialism in different countries. We draw lessons from the weaknesses and mistakes, as well as the successes, to understand the causes of problems that occurred in the past and to improve our understanding of the laws of socialist construction. The party also studies the history of the workers' and communist movement in the Netherlands and internationally. In particular, we look at the causes that led to the counter-revolution in various socialist countries and the causes of the dissolution of the Communist Party of the Netherlands. Studying and critiquing the history of the workers' and communist movement will enable the party to be better armed to fight for communism in our time.

The party defends the socialist construction in the different socialist countries, in particular the Soviet Union. The NCPN rejects and fights all anti-Soviet propaganda produced by bourgeois anti-communist historiography, as well as by opportunist currents that variously state that the Soviet Union was not socialist, but 'social-imperialist' or 'state-capitalist'.

The NCPN has begun the study of the historical development of the construction and dismantlement of the socialist economy in the USSR and the development of political economy by the CPSU. The study serves as a basis for further studies on this subject and on the developments in socialist construction.

This research has already yielded valuable conclusions that strengthen our understanding of the process of socialist construction, as well as our understanding of the causes of the counter-revolution. In this respect, the 20^{ste} Congress of the CPSU in 1956 was an important turning point, because certain opportunistic views then prevailed. Based on the mistaken assumption of the validity of the law of value within the sphere of socialist relations of production, measures were taken after the 20^{ste} Congress that gradually reintroduced profit as a criterion of production.¹⁵ The measures resulted in a slackening of central planning and of the social character of property; in other words, a slackening of socialist relations in production. The developments therefore led to a weakening of the dynamics of the development of socialism. The impulses for the development of socialism, such as workers' control, socialist consciousness, and communist emulation, as well as the goal of socialist production (the needs of the people), are diametrically opposed to profit, income inequality, competition, and other capitalist elements that were gradually reintroduced.

These measures were often taken in response to real challenges that existed in the economy, but they attempted to solve the problems in the socialist economy with recipes from capitalism. In the short term this sometimes increased economic efficiency and effectiveness, but in the long term it only undermined the driving forces of the socialist economy and led to stagnation and new problems.

The assessment of the CPSU that socialism had definitively established itself, that the Soviet Union had a 'state of the whole people' and that the class struggle within the Soviet Union had ended, was wrong. As long as private property exists and trade and money relations exist, as long as capitalism-imperialism still stands in the rest of the world, the possibility of counter-revolution also exists and nothing is 'final'.

The counter-revolution in the Soviet Union was carried by social strata who, thanks to the reintroduction of trade and money relations and other capitalist elements, were able to appropriate a part of social

¹⁵ The law of value states that the value of a commodity (something produced to be exchanged or sold) is determined by the socially necessary labour time to produce the commodity.

production. They had an interest in the reintroduction of private property and capitalism. It is characteristic that the counter-revolution did not come from below, but from above, from the communist party itself. During the socialist construction, opportunist elements develop into counter-revolutionary forces. The fact that the opportunist elements were able to continue to develop within the party, that they were not overcome – despite the ideological struggles that were waged in the party – ultimately led to the party gradually losing its revolutionary character, and in the late 1980s – early 1990s brought the reintroduction of private property and capitalism.

The NCPN rejects the theory that socialism is a form of commodity production (production for the market) and that the law of value and profit have a decisive influence under socialism. Of course, in the period of the construction of socialism, trade and money relations and all kinds of other vestiges of capitalism will continue to exist. How quickly these can be overcome depends on the concrete situation. Theories of 'socialist commodity production', 'market socialism', or 'socialism with market', however, hold that socialism is a form of commodity production. This theory argues that the allocation of means of production, consumer goods and services in socialism should be done through the market rather than central planning. The market is not seen as a remnant of capitalism, but as a characteristic of socialism, something that should not be opposed but rather promoted. It is an opportunistic and revisionist theory, which is diametrically opposed to Marxism. In the (former) socialist countries it served as theoretical-ideological justification for measures that reintroduced capitalist elements into the economy on a large scale. Through Eurocommunism, among others, these positions have spread into the international communist movement, where they reinforce confusion about socialism-communism and reformist views.

In addition, the opposition and interference of imperialism had an important role in the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Every possible avenue was attempted to sabotage the construction of socialism, either through massive propaganda offensives by bourgeois media, academics, political and religious leaders against the socialist countries, or through terrorist attacks and imperialist wars. The pressure and influence of imperialism also favoured the development of opportunist currents within ruling communist parties.

It is necessary to continue the study of socialist construction collectively. This will involve continuing to study not only the historical developments in the Soviet Union, but also, in time, the socialist revolutions and construction in other countries.

6.2 Socialism is topical and necessary

International and national developments show that the contradictions of capitalism are intensifying. The working class and other oppressed strata of the population are faced with a mountain of problems that prevent them from living well, from developing themselves, from contributing to society with their talents and skills. More and more people feel the need to fight for a world without poverty, discrimination, war and exploitation.

The solution can only lie in the struggle for the abolition of capitalist exploitation, in the perspective of a society in which the economy and society are not subject to profit, in which profit is not the goal of production. A socialist society, in which the means of production are socially owned, so that production can be centrally planned, in which the needs of the population are no longer a 'cost' at the expense of the profits of capital, but in which meeting the needs of the population is the goal of production.

This will ensure that everyone has a good, secure job and suitable housing. That everyone has access to free, high-quality education, health care and public transportation. That the latest developments in technology and science are used to the best advantage of the working class and the construction of the socialist economy. That the environment is truly protected. That all provisions are made so that people with disabilities can participate in society. That imperialist wars and interference in other countries can be ended.

That the root causes of discrimination against women, against people from migrant backgrounds, against people with non-heterosexual orientation, against intersex and transgender people and against other minorities can be removed. This is the society for which the NCPN, together with the CJB, and as part of the international communist movement, is fighting.

