

Footage from the future



The years before the revolution

How would a journalist of the future describe the current situation in a number of countries, such as Greece, that seem to be on the verge of bankruptcy? We are referring to a sharp foreign journalist who is not subject to censorship and at a safe distance from the facts.

After all, “In judging the events and series of events of day-to-day history, it will never be possible for anyone to go right back to the final economic causes. Even today, when the specialized technical press provides such rich materials, in England itself it still remains impossible to follow day by day the movement of industry and trade in the world market and the changes which take place in the methods of production, in such a way as to be able to draw the general conclusion, at any point of time, from these very complicated and ever changing factors; of these factors, the most important, into the bargain, generally operate a long time in secret before they suddenly and violently make themselves felt on the surface. A clear survey of the economic history of a given period is never contemporaneous; it can only be gained subsequently, after collecting and sifting of the material has taken place.”¹

The year is 2050, on the 35th anniversary of the Greek Referendum of the 5th of July: the French journal *Libération* decides to release an article on Greece in the years before the burst of the revolution. They commission a young journalist by the name of Marx. Note that when the article says “July Monarchy” it refers to the [“No into Yes”](#) of the Greek state and the government of Syriza/ANEL.

The draft that was sent to the editor of the newspaper is the following.

Owing to its financial straits, the July Monarchy was dependent from the beginning on the big bourgeoisie, and its dependence on the big bourgeoisie was the inexhaustible source of increasing financial straits. It was impossible to subordinate the administration of the state to the interests of national production without balancing the budget, without establishing a balance between state expenditures and revenues. And how was this balance to be established without limiting state expenditures – that is, without encroaching on interests which were so many props of the ruling system – and without redistributing taxes – that is, without shifting a considerable share of the burden of taxation onto the shoulders of the big bourgeoisie itself?

On the contrary, the faction of the bourgeoisie that ruled and legislated through the Chambers had a direct interest in the indebtedness of the state. The state deficit was really the main object of its speculation and the chief source of its enrichment. At the end of each year a new deficit. After the lapse of four or five years a new loan. And every new loan offered new opportunities to the finance aristocracy for defrauding the state, which was kept artificially on the verge of bankruptcy – it had to negotiate with the bankers under the most unfavorable conditions. Each new loan gave a further opportunity, that of plundering the public which invested its capital in state bonds by means of stock-exchange manipulations, the secrets of which the government and the majority in the Chambers were privy to. In general, the instability of state credit and the possession of state secrets gave the bankers and their associates in the Chambers and on the throne the possibility of evoking sudden, extraordinary fluctuations in the quotations of government securities, the result of which was always bound to be the ruin of a mass of smaller capitalists and the fabulously rapid enrichment of the big gamblers. [...]

The enormous sums which in this way flowed through the hands of the state facilitated, moreover, swindling contracts for deliveries, bribery, defalcations, and all kinds of roguery.²

Alas, the poor journalist had bad luck because the newspaper's editor is a man of knowledge. As soon as he reads the draft and without saying a word, he runs to the library standing behind him; he climbs a small chair and grabs a book; he runs through the pages and reads various passages eagerly, almost furiously; he finds the page, the paragraph, the quote – plagiarism! The text had been written 200 years before without any safe distance from the facts.

And since we're looking at a text of 1850 that looks like it is coming from the future, let us reproduce one of its conclusions:

the world trade crisis of 1847 had been the true mother of the February and March Revolutions and ... the industrial prosperity which had been returning gradually since the middle of 1848, and which attained full bloom in 1849 and 1850, was the revivifying force of the newly strengthened European reaction. That was decisive.[...]

"A new revolution is only possible as a result of a new crisis. It is just as certain, however, as this."³

(For the fiction and the editing: George Labrinidis, Duncan Lindo)

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¹ F. Engles, Introduction to the 1895 edition of *The class struggles in France, 1848-1850* by K. Marx

² K. Marx, 1969 [1850] *The class struggles in France, 1848-1850*, Selected Works, Volume 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Part I (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/ch01.htm>)

³ F. Engles, Introduction to the 1895 edition of *The class struggles in France, 1848-1850* by K. Marx