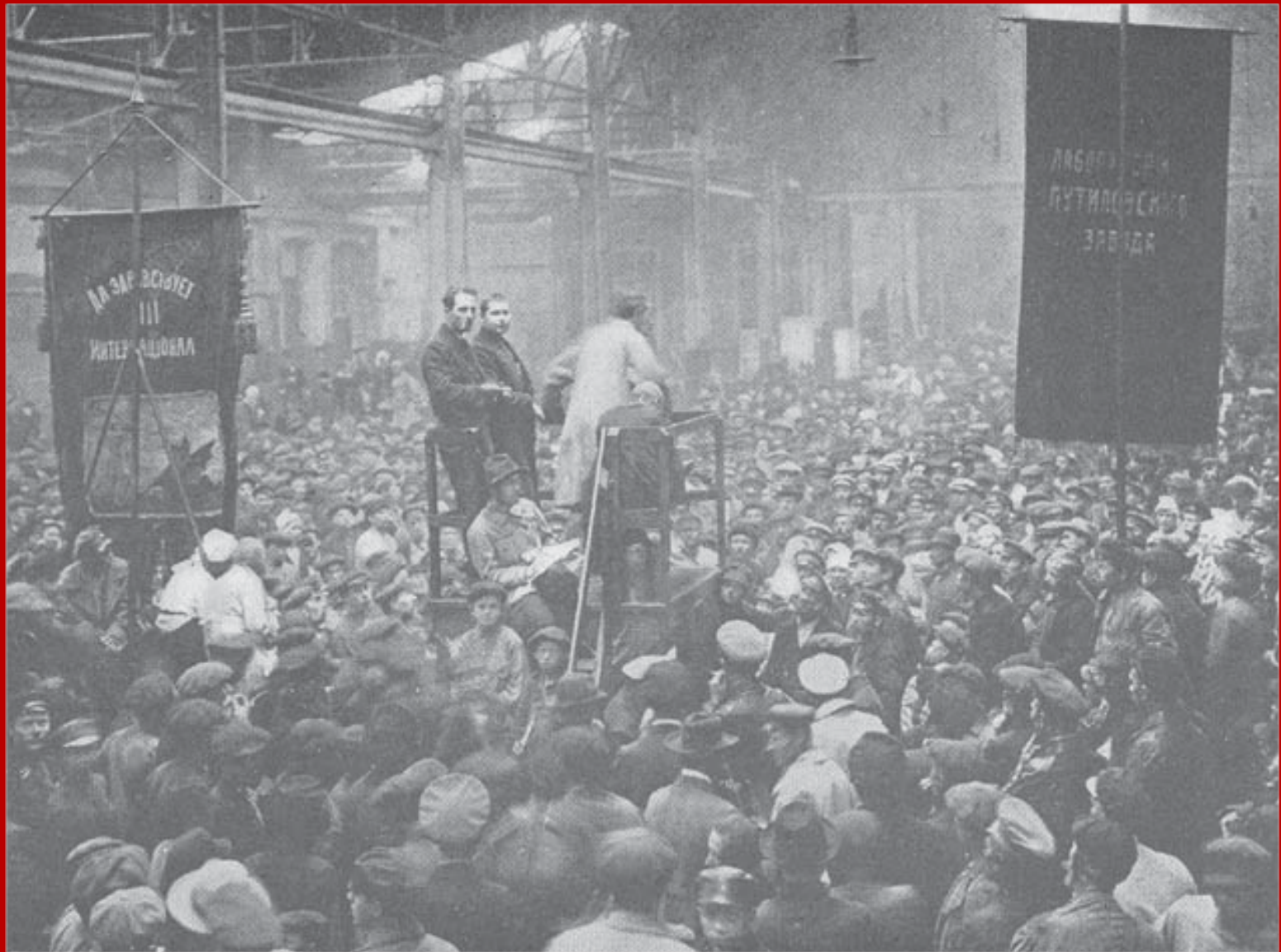




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The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today (Part 1)

On the Application of the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period

By Michael Pröbsting, *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*, May 2016

The following document is intended to provide an explanatory background to the *Theses on the United Front Tactic* which the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) recently adopted at an international leadership meeting.¹ We therefore suggest that when readers study these *Theses* they do so in conjunction with the present document.

The purpose of this document is both to summarize the main ideas of the Marxist united front tactic while explaining the development and modification of this tactic which we have elaborated in the *Theses*.

As we have stated in the preface to the earlier document, the theses we present there are based on similar ones put forth by the RCIT's predecessor organization – the *League for a Revolutionary Communist International* – which we adopted in January 1994. However, the class struggle and the political formations of the working class and the oppressed have seen important changes and developments in the last two decades. Furthermore, our experience has also shown that the theses adopted then, irrespective of their general correctness and principled character contained some weaknesses which needed to be corrected in order to apply the united front tactic in an authentically

communistic way.

Consequently, the RCIT has substantially reworked the old theses so that the *Theses* and the present explanatory document can be characterized as new.

In the following chapters we will first briefly summarize the main characteristics of the united front tactic and elaborate the approach of the Marxist classics on this issue.² We will then outline important social developments in the working class and the popular masses as well as in their political formations in the past decades. We will then proceed to discuss how the united front tactic should be applied in light of a number of new developments (the rise of petty-bourgeois populist parties, the decline of the classic reformist parties, the role of national minorities and migrants in imperialist countries, etc.)

Finally, we note that when speaking about the revolutionary party, what is written applies equally to smaller pre-party formations, i.e., the state in which revolutionaries currently find themselves.

We wish to express our special thanks to comrade Gerard Stephens who performed the English-language editing for this book.

I. Summary of the Nature of the United Front Tactic

The goal of the united front tactic is to assist communists in deepening their relations and influence among the working class and the oppressed. The Communist International summarized this goal at its Third World Congress in 1921 in the slogan "*Towards the Masses*." In order to achieve this, communists must be able to work together as closely as possible with workers who, for now at least, do not share their opinions. This is in order to establish the greatest possible unity with all workers and oppressed in our common struggle against the ruling class and imperialism.

At the same time, communists must use this joint experience of fighting side by side with non-revolutionary workers and oppressed in order to raise political consciousness of the latter since – as the father of Russian Marxism, Georgi Plekhanov, so poignantly formulated – "*the sole purpose and the direct and sacred duty of the Socialists is the promotion of the growth of the class consciousness of the proletariat*." Using the own experiences of the workers and oppressed, communists must help them to better understand the failure and betrayal of their traditional leaders, and convince

them of the superiority of the revolutionary party.

The principles of the united front tactic can be summarized in the military metaphor "*march separately, strike together*." This means that revolutionaries join forces with other non-revolutionary organizations in order to organize practical, common actions for specific goals against a specific enemy. However, while doing so, communists retain their full political and organizational independence. In other words, the revolutionary organization disseminates its own propaganda and agitation, which may differ significantly from the respective points of views of the various forces with whom they are allied in the united front. Such propaganda and agitation may, under dire situations, even include important warnings about, or criticism or denunciations of these same allies, for example when the latter are about to betray the struggle for the jointly agreed-upon goals. In short, communists should use the united front tactic to achieve unity of action against a common enemy with other forces, while always maintaining their own political and organizational independence. For this reason, communists should not undertake the produc-

tion of joint *propaganda* with non-revolutionary forces with whom they are allied in a united front. The only common publications which communists can contribute to must specifically be associated with the united front activities (e.g., strike committee bulletins, preparing leaflets to announce demonstrations, etc.), and these should only focus on agitating for the united front demands and objectives.

At the same time, unlimited freedom of propaganda for revolutionaries (as well as for all forces participating in the united front) must be agreed upon in advance. As implied in what we wrote above, this freedom must include the right to criticize, if necessary, reformist and populist leaders participating in the common action.

The united front should be based on concrete and precise demands. Revolutionaries oppose self-indulgent political declarations or joint propaganda for long-term goals. The latter only serve to obscure the real purpose of the united front and can readily create the mistaken impression that revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries are in agreement about a common, long-range political agenda.

In general, as the first priority communists direct the united front tactic to mass organizations which have a base inside the working class; but they also approach groups with roots among other oppressed layers and classes (e.g., the peasantry, the urban poor, oppressed nations, migrants). Usually these are reformist (social democratic or Stalinist) or petty-bourgeois-populist forces (e.g., Castro-Chavista organizations in Latin America, various Islamist-populist organizations in the Middle East and Asia, petty-bourgeois nationalists of oppressed nations, etc.) which are at times objectively clashing with or confronting reactionary forces (e.g., ruling class, imperialist powers, racist or fascist forces). Naturally, the role of petty-bourgeois populist forces in the class struggle among oppressed classes and layers is much more important in the semi-colonial world than in the imperialist countries. (More on this issue below.)

Under exceptional circumstances the united front tactic can also be directed towards bourgeois forces in the semi-colonial world – e.g., when the latter is fighting against an imperialist invasion in a semi-colonial country.

In this context it is important to emphasize that the difference between a legitimate united front and an illegitimate popular front is not in itself the open participation of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois forces, but rather the political subordination by the proletariat to the platform of the bourgeoisie. In other words, an illegitimate popular front is a bloc between bourgeois forces and workers organizations in which the latter accept programs that restrict the workers within the limits set by private property and which protect the bourgeois state.

History has demonstrated numerous times that such a popular front is a death trap for the working class and the oppressed. It results in the official reformist or populist leaderships' defense of the capitalist social system and thereby only strengthens the bourgeoisie, not the working class. The political subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie weakens the former and allows the ruling class or even fascist forces to crush the resistance of the working class and the oppressed. Spain in 1936, Chile in 1973, and Greece in 2015 are just a few examples of the devastating consequences of the popular front strategy for the proletariat.

The united front tactic should be applied in numerous fields and to all issues related to the class struggle. It should direct the work of revolutionaries with and inside trade unions, other mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed, as well as towards parties (including "entry work" within such parties). It is a crucial tactic in the daily struggle for economic demands, for democratic demands, against imperialist or national oppressions, etc. These various issues give rise to the different forms of the united front (workers' united fronts, democratic or anti-imperialist united fronts). However, all these forms are basically subject to the same principles of the general united front tactic.

The united front tactic can, under specific circumstances, also be extended to the electoral field. Communists should utilize election periods – which usually are periods of heightened political interest among the popular masses – in order to address those class-conscious workers and oppressed who still have illusions in reformist workers' parties or populist parties. In contrast to the claims of sectarians, these sectors of the working class are usually much larger than the numbers of the workers and oppressed who have already overcome such illusions and have moved on to a higher, more left-wing class consciousness. When revolutionaries are too weak to put forth candidates of their own, they should deploy the Leninist tactic of critical electoral support for reformist workers' parties (usually these are social democratic or Stalinist parties). Revolutionaries can even legitimately apply critical electoral support to petty-bourgeois populist parties with a strong base among militant workers and oppressed when social democratic or Stalinist parties do not exist at all, they merely constitute a numerically insignificant phenomena, or where they have already been thoroughly bourgeoisified.

Naturally, there are important exceptions or limitations to the application of critical electoral support. As we stated in the Theses: "*In situations, when a bourgeois workers party (usually as a governmental party) acts as whip or executioner of serious attacks on the working class – austerity programs, imperialist wars, racist hatred, attack on democratic rights, etc. – it is necessary that revolutionaries do not call for electoral support for such a party in order to help the vanguard workers to break with it.*"

The united front tactic was also extended by Lenin and Trotsky to the adoption of slogans about the government to be called for. Where large sectors of class-conscious workers and militant oppressed layers still have illusions in the "*parties of petty bourgeois democracy*" (Trotsky) – i.e., social democrats, Stalinists, petty-bourgeois populists – communists should call on them to break with the bourgeoisie and respectively struggle for "a workers' and peasants' government" (in a semi-colonial country) or a workers' government (in most imperialist countries). Furthermore, the adopted slogans should demand that such governments take decisive actions to expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie, to nationalize the key sectors of the economy under workers' control, to expropriate the big landowners and give the land to the poor peasants, etc. Such a government is an authentic workers' government allied with poor peasants and the urban poor if it is based on workers' and popular councils and militias and if it implements a program that opens the road to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Otherwise,

it is merely a reformist, and in the final analysis, bourgeois "workers' and peasants'" government which will invariably constitute an objective obstacle for the working class struggle, and which will ultimately defend the capitalist system.

Finally, under certain circumstances revolutionaries will also have to apply the united front tactic to the field of party building. Naturally, the central goal of communists is the construction of a *World Party of Socialist Revolution* with national sections in each country. However, in light of the numerical weakness of revolutionaries, and given the fact that in many countries even bourgeois workers' parties do not exist (and in those countries where they do exist they are often thoroughly bourgeoisified), revolutionaries

have to apply the united front tactic in the way that they call upon the trade unions and other mass organizations of the working class to build a *New Workers Party (or Labor Party)*. Such parties would, in the beginning, involve not only revolutionary workers and oppressed but also many non-revolutionaries. In fact, revolutionaries would most likely constitute only a small minority of the party when first founded. However, they would openly argue for their program, i.e., a revolutionary and not a reformist program. But they would not necessarily leave such a new workers' party if they fail to win a majority of the members for their point of view, but would continue to fight for a revolutionary program from within.

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II. The United Front Tactic in the History of the Revolutionary Workers Movement

These principles of the united front tactic have been born out and tested in the class struggle and have been part of the arsenal of Marxism from the very start, when Marx and Engels first developed them shortly before the 1848 revolution. On the basis of their experience and that subsequently gained by the Bolsheviks, the Communist International codified these lessons in the early 1920s. After its degeneration by the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky and the forces of the future Fourth International further developed this tactic based on the rich lessons of intense class struggles during the 1920s and 1930s.

Marx and Engels on the United Front

Friedrich Engels, first in his *Principles of Communism* and later together with Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*, laid down the fundamental ideas of the united front tactic. In these documents they explained the necessity of undertaking joint actions with reformist workers' organizations, with radical petty-bourgeois groups and, in situations in which the bourgeoisie has still not become the ruling class, even with the latter.

"The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement. In France, the Communists ally with the Social-Democrats against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution. In Switzerland, they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois. In Poland, they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846. In Germany, they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie. But they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin. (...) In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements, they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time. Finally, they labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties

*of all countries. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."*³

These tactical guidelines were also put into action by Marx and Engels and their supporters. In Cologne and other German cities, the members of the *Communist League* led by Marx and Engels collaborated with radical democrats while advancing the communist program.⁴

Elaborating the lessons of the revolutionary struggles and their defeats in the 1848-49 revolution in Europe, Marx and Engels warned communists to take care not to blur their slogans with those of the petty-bourgeois democrats, since the betrayal of the latter was inevitable. In their famous *"Address of the Central Authority to the League"* of March 1850, the founders of the communist movement emphasized the necessity of organizational and political independence, while at the same time being prepared for joint action with such petty-bourgeois forces.

"Consequently, while the democratic party, the party of the petty bourgeoisie, organised itself more and more in Germany, the workers' party lost its only firm foothold, remained organised at the most in separate localities for local purposes and in the general movement thus came completely under the domination and leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats. An end must be put to this state of affairs, the independence of the workers must be restored. (...) The relation of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty-bourgeois democrats is this: it marches together with them against the faction which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes them in everything by which they seek to consolidate their position in their own interests. (...) The petty-bourgeois democratic party in Germany is very powerful; it comprises not only the great majority of the burgher inhabitants of the towns, the small people in industry and trade and the master craftsmen; it numbers among its followers also the peasants and the rural proletariat, insofar as the latter has not yet found a support in the independent urban proletariat. The relation of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty-bourgeois democrats is this: it marches together with them against the faction which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes them in everything by which they seek to consolidate their position in their own interests. (...) At the present moment, when the democratic petty bourgeois are everywhere oppressed, they preach in general unity and reconciliation to the proletariat, they offer it their hand and strive for the establishment of a large opposition party which will embrace all shades of opinion in the democratic party, that is, they strive to entangle the workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases predominate, and serve to conceal their special interests, and in which the definite demands of the proletariat must not be brought forward for the sake of beloved peace. Such a union would turn out solely to their advantage and altogether to the disadvantage of the proletariat. The proletariat would lose its whole independent, laboriously achieved position and once more be reduced to an appendage of official

*bourgeois democracy. This union must, therefore, be most decisively rejected. Instead of once again stooping to serve as the applauding chorus of the bourgeois democrats, the workers, and above all the League, must exert themselves to establish an independent secret and public organisation of the workers' party alongside the official democrats and make each community the central point and nucleus of workers' associations in which the attitude and interests of the proletariat will be discussed independently of bourgeois influences. (...) In the case of a struggle against a common adversary no special union is required. As soon as such an adversary has to be fought directly, the interests of both parties, for the moment, coincide, and, as previously so also in the future, this alliance, calculated to last only for the moment, will come about of itself."*⁵

Marx and Engels would later apply the united front tactic to many other situations, including when they founded the First International in 1864. David Riazanov, a Russian Marxist and the best expert of Marx and Engels during his time before his arrest and execution by Stalin in 1938, describes in his book on the history of the political life of Marx and Engels how they had to carefully fight against the politics of the French Proudhonists, the English trade unionists, the anarchist supporters of Bakunin and others. At the same time they tried to avoid premature splits and win over the rank and file supporters of their opponents.

Application of the United Front Tactic by Lenin and the Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks later applied the same tactic in the struggle against Tsarism. They concluded numerous practical agreements (concerning demonstrations, strikes, armed resistance, practical issues of underground work, etc.) with other organizations of the workers, peasants – like the Mensheviks, the Jewish Bund, the *Socialist-Revolutionaries* [S.R.], the Trudoviki, the S.R. Maximalists, various nationalists, etc. – and students and even bourgeois liberals in the struggle against the Tsarist autocracy. This tactic included not only practical collaboration but also, at times, even the creation of a formal joint party with the Mensheviks. Under the pressure of the workers' vanguard, the Bolsheviks were even prepared to formally unite with the Mensheviks between 1905 and 1912, even though they continued to wage a difficult factional struggle against them, and in reality most of the time acted as an independent force. The Bolsheviks also repeatedly concluded practical agreements with petty-bourgeois democratic peasant forces (the Trudoviki and the S.R.) and, at the beginning of the Russian Revolution of 1905, Lenin even tried to collaborate with the Russian Orthodox priest Georgy Gapon. The Bolsheviks also conducted tactical agreements with the Trudoviki and the S.R.'s in the Duma elections of 1907 and 1912.⁶

During the revolutionary process between February and October 1917, the Bolsheviks applied the united front tactic and demanded from the largest reformist parties representing the workers and peasants at the time – the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s – to break with the bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. After the Bolsheviks successfully took power in October, they formed a coalition with the left-wing of the S.R.'s. During all these periods in which they applied the united front tactic, despite these combined practical activities, the Bolsheviks retained their

independent propaganda and sharply criticized the other organizations participating in the front.

In his book *'Left-Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder* written in 1920, Lenin explained that the Russian revolutionaries had to apply the united front tactic many times and under various conditions:

*"After all, the German Lefts cannot but know that the entire history of Bolshevism, both before and after the October Revolution, is full of instances of changes of tack, conciliatory tactics and compromises with other parties, including bourgeois parties! (...) Prior to the downfall of tsarism, the Russian revolutionary Social-Democrats made repeated use of the services of the bourgeois liberals, i.e., they concluded numerous practical compromises with the latter. In 1901-02, even prior to the appearance of Bolshevism, the old editorial board of Iskra (consisting of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, Martov, Potresov and myself) concluded (not for long, it is true) a formal political alliance with Struve, the political leader of bourgeois liberalism, while at the same time being able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestations of its influence in the working-class movement. The Bolsheviks have always adhered to this policy. Since 1905 they have systematically advocated an alliance between the working class and the peasantry, against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism, never, however, refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instance, during second rounds of elections, or during second ballots) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the bourgeois-revolutionary peasant party, exposing them as petty-bourgeois democrats who have falsely described themselves as socialists. During the Duma elections of 1907, the Bolsheviks entered briefly into a formal political bloc with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Between 1903 and 1912, there were periods of several years in which we were formally united with the Mensheviks in a single Social-Democratic Party, but we never stopped our ideological and political struggle against them as opportunists and vehicles of bourgeois influence on the proletariat. During the war, we concluded certain compromises with the Kautskyites, with the Left Mensheviks (Martov), and with a section of the Socialist-Revolutionaries (Chernov and Natanson); we were together with them at Zimmerwald and Kienthal, and issued joint manifestos. However, we never ceased and never relaxed our ideological and political struggle against the Kautskyites, Martov and Chernov (when Natanson died in 1919, a "Revolutionary-Communist" Narodnik, he was very close to and almost in agreement with us). At the very moment of the October Revolution, we entered into an informal but very important (and very successful) political bloc with the petty-bourgeois peasantry by adopting the Socialist-Revolutionary agrarian programme in its entirety, without a single alteration – i.e., we effected an undeniable compromise in order to prove to the peasants that we wanted, not to "steam-roller" them but to reach agreement with them. At the same time we proposed (and soon after effected) a formal political bloc, including participation in the government, with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who dissolved this bloc after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and then, in July 1918, went to the length of armed rebellion, and subsequently of an armed struggle, against us."*⁷

As is well known, the Bolsheviks were strengthened by these various applications of the united front tactic. However, these temporary alliances and maneuvers did not at all diminish their ideological and political struggle. Only

the combination of these two elements – organizational and political independence on the one hand, together with joint actions on the other – allowed the Bolsheviks to grow and strengthen themselves as a party.

Codification of the United Front Tactic by the Communist International

The Communist International (Comintern), founded at the initiative of the Bolsheviks in March 1919, attempted to generalize the lessons of the past, that of the Russian revolutionaries having naturally played a particularly significant role. This was not an easy task, and Lenin and Trotsky faced enormous obstacles in their attempts to win the Comintern to their points of view. On the one hand, they had to contend with remnants of the opportunistic past of social democracy, while on the other they were faced with various shades of ultra-left adventurism based on the inexperience of many earlier communist parties.

However, eventually Lenin and Trotsky succeeded to win the Comintern over to the principles of the united front tactic, and the Third (1921) and Fourth congresses (1922) codified them. The following extensive passage summarizes the lessons which were agreed upon by the Comintern in its Fourth Congress:

“There is consequently an obvious need for the united front tactic. The slogan of the Third Congress, ‘To the masses’, is now more relevant than ever. The struggle to establish a proletarian united front in a whole series of countries is only just beginning. (...) The Communist International requires that all Communist Parties and groups adhere strictly to the united front tactic, because in the present period it is the only way of guiding Communists in the right direction, towards winning the majority of workers. At present the reformists need a split, while the Communists are interested in uniting all the forces of the working class against capital. Using the united front tactic means that the Communist vanguard is at the forefront of the day to day struggle of the broad masses for their most vital interests. For the sake of this struggle Communists are even prepared to negotiate with the scab leaders of the social democrats and the Amsterdam International. Any attempt by the Second International to interpret the united front as an organisational fusion of all the ‘workers’ parties’ must of course be categorically repudiated. (...)

The existence of independent Communist Parties and their complete freedom of action in relation to the bourgeoisie and counter-revolutionary social democracy is the most important historical achievement of the proletariat, and one which the Communists will in no circumstances renounce. Only the Communist Parties stand for the overall interests of the whole proletariat. In the same way the united front tactic has nothing to do with the so-called ‘electoral combinations’ of leaders in pursuit of one or another parliamentary aim. The united front tactic is simply an initiative whereby the Communists propose to join with all workers belonging to other parties and groups and all unaligned workers in a common struggle to defend the immediate, basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie. Every action, for even the most trivial everyday demand, can lead to revolutionary awareness and revolutionary education; it is the experience of struggle that will convince workers of the inevitability of revolution and the historic importance of Communism. It is particularly important when using the united front tactic to achieve not just agitational but also organisational

results. Every opportunity must be used to establish organisational footholds among the working masses themselves (factory committees, supervisory commissions made up of workers from all the different parties and unaligned workers, action committees, etc.). The main aim of the united front tactic is to unify the working masses through agitation and organisation. The real success of the united front tactic depends on a movement ‘from below’, from the rank-and-file of the working masses. Nevertheless, there are circumstances in which Communists must not refuse to have talks with the leaders of the hostile workers’ parties, providing the masses are always kept fully informed of the course of these talks. During negotiations with these leaders the independence of the Communist Party and its agitation must not be circumscribed.”⁸

The Comintern required its sections to follow the same principles in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, while adapting there to a different set of concrete circumstances. The same resolution stated:

“In the colonial and semi-colonial countries the Comintern has a dual task: (1) to create a core of communist parties which represent the interests of the proletariat as a whole, and (2) to support to the utmost the national revolutionary movement which is directed against imperialism, to become the vanguard of this movement, and to emphasize and expand the social movement within the national movement.”⁹

The Comintern went into more detail on the anti-imperialist united front in a special resolution which was discussed and adopted at the same congress. This resolution explained the importance for revolutionaries to join the struggle for democratic tasks, for national independence, against imperialist domination, etc.

“The chief task which is common to all national revolutionary movements is to bring about national unity and achieve political independence. The real and logically consistent solution of this question depends on the extent to which such a national movement is able to break with the reactionary feudal elements and to win over the broad working masses to its cause, and in its programme to give expression to the social demands of these masses. Taking full cognizance of the fact that those who represent the national will to state independence may, because of the variety of historical circumstances, be themselves of the most varied kind, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism. At the same time it does not forget that only a consistent revolutionary policy, designed to draw the broadest masses into active struggle, and a complete break with all adherents of reconciliation with imperialism for the sake of their own class domination, can lead the oppressed masses to victory.”¹⁰

At the same time the resolution emphasized the necessity for communists to keep their organizational and programmatic independence given the vacillating character of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders of the anti-imperialist struggles.

“The expediency of this slogan follows from the prospect of a prolonged and protracted struggle with world imperialism which demands the mobilization of all revolutionary elements. This mobilization is the more necessary as the indigenous ruling classes are inclined to effect compromises with foreign capital directed against the vital interests of the masses of the people. And just as in the West the slogan of the proletarian united front has helped and is still helping to expose social-democratic betrayal of proletarian interests, so the slogan of the anti-imperialist united front will help to expose the vacillation of various bourgeois-

*nationalist groups. This slogan will also promote the development of the revolutionary will and the clarification of the class consciousness of the working masses and put them in the front ranks of those who are fighting not only against imperialism, but also against the survivals of feudalism.”*¹¹

The communists put these principles into practice in numerous ways. One of the first applications was an initiative of German metalworkers in the Stuttgart local of the trade union federation ADGB in December 1920. Here the Communist Party (KPD) had important influence and they got the local to adopt a resolution calling on the leadership of their union, and of all unions, to launch a joint struggle for immediate demands to improve workers' conditions. (Reduction of food prices; increase of unemployment benefits; reduction of taxes paid by workers and an increase in taxes on great private fortunes; establishment of workers' control of supply and distribution of raw materials and foodstuffs; disarmament of reactionary gangs and arming of the workers.)

While the trade union leadership first ignored this campaign, it soon received support from many other union locals. As a result the KPD leadership, mainly Paul Levi and Karl Radek, drafted an *Open Letter* which was based was an extended version of the Stuttgart initiative. This letter was directed both at the reformist workers parties (SPD, USPD; and also the small ultra-left KAPD) as well as to all trade unions. While the labor bureaucracy did not agree to joint actions with the communists, this campaign increased the influence of the communists in the working class and in particularly in the trade unions.¹²

The Comintern extended the united front tactic also to the field of governmental slogans and developed respective slogans for a “workers' government” a “workers' and peasants' government.” The Comintern stated: “The parties of the Second International are trying to ‘save’ the situation in these countries by advocating and forming a coalition government of bourgeois and social-democratic parties. (...) To this open or concealed bourgeois-socialdemocratic coalition the communists oppose the united front of all workers and a coalition of all workers' parties in the economic and the political field for the fight against the bourgeois power and its eventual overthrow. In the united struggle of all workers against the bourgeoisie the entire State apparatus must be taken over by the workers' government, and thus the working class's positions of power strengthened.”¹³

Lenin similarly explained the need for communists to deploy the united front tactic in election campaigns. Taking the example of Britain, where the Communist Party was small and the reformist Labour Party dominated the workers' movement, Lenin advocated that the communists give critical electoral support to the reformists.

“The Communist Party should propose the following “compromise” election agreement to the Hendersons and Snowdens: let us jointly fight against the alliance between Lloyd George and the Conservatives; let us share parliamentary seats in proportion to the number of workers' votes polled for the Labour Party and for the Communist Party (not in elections, but in a special ballot), and let us retain complete freedom of agitation, propaganda and political activity. Of course, without this latter condition, we cannot agree to a bloc, for that would be treachery; the British Communists must demand and get complete freedom to expose the Hendersons and the Snowdens in the same way as (for fifteen years – 1903-17) the Russian Bolsheviks demanded and got it in respect of the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens, i.e., the

Mensheviks. If the Hendersons and the Snowdens accept a bloc on these terms, we shall be the gainers, because the number of parliamentary seats is of no importance to us; we are not out for seats. We shall yield on this point (...). We shall be the gainers, because we shall carry our agitation among the masses at a time when Lloyd George himself has “incensed” them, and we shall not only be helping the Labour Party to establish its government sooner, but shall also be helping the masses sooner to understand the communist propaganda that we shall carry on against the Hendersons, without any reticence or omission.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject a bloc with us on these terms, we shall gain still more, for we shall at once have shown the masses (...) that the Hendersons prefer their close relations with the capitalists to the unity of all the workers. (...). We shall gain immediately, because we shall have demonstrated to the masses that the Hendersons and the Snowdens are afraid to beat Lloyd George, afraid to assume power alone, and are striving to secure the secret support of Lloyd George, who is openly extending a hand to the Conservatives, against the Labour Party. It should be noted that in Russia, after the revolution of February 27, 1917 (old style), the Bolsheviks' propaganda against the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (i.e., the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens) derived benefit precisely from a circumstance of this kind. We said to the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries: assume full power without the bourgeoisie, because you have a majority in the Soviets (at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, in June 1917, the Bolsheviks had only 13 per cent of the votes). But the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens were afraid to assume power without the bourgeoisie, and when the bourgeoisie held up the elections to the Constituent Assembly, knowing full well that the elections would give a majority to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks (who formed a close political bloc and in fact represented only petty-bourgeois democracy), the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were unable energetically and consistently to oppose these delays. If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject a bloc with the Communists, the latter will immediately gain by winning the sympathy of the masses and discrediting the Hendersons and Snowdens; if, as a result, we do lose a few parliamentary seats, it is a matter of no significance to us. We would put up our candidates in a very few but absolutely safe constituencies, namely, constituencies where our candidates would not give any seats to the Liberals at the expense of the Labour candidates. We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets agitating for communism, and, in all constituencies where we have no candidates, we would urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidate and against the bourgeois candidate. (...)

*At present, British Communists very often find it hard even to approach the masses, and even to get a hearing from them. If I come out as a Communist and call upon them to vote for Henderson and against Lloyd George, they will certainly give me a hearing. And I shall be able to explain in a popular manner, not only why the Soviets are better than a parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (...), but also that, with my vote, I want to support Henderson in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man—that the impending establishment of a government of the Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdens just as was the case with their kindred spirits in Russia and Germany.”*¹⁴

Later, at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920,

Lenin also advocated the entry of the British Communist Party into the Labour Party in order to better influence the rank and file workers.

As Lenin explained, all these tactics had nothing in common with softness on reformism, but were an application of the urgent desire of communists to build closer ties with the still non-revolutionary masses as well as the urgent need to discredit the reformist leaders before their own supporters; this by demonstrating to them in practice that these leaders are unwilling and incapable of consistently fighting for the interests of the working class.

Similarly, the communists applied the anti-imperialist united front tactic in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. In China, they supported the struggle of Sun Yat-sen against the reactionary war lords who acted as agents of foreign imperialist powers. In autumn 1922 the communists, at the suggestion of Henk Sneevliet (a Dutchman who later joined the Fourth International for some time), even entered the Sun Yat-sen's party – the *Kuomintang*. This tactic offered the communists, who initially were only a small group of intellectual without roots among the working class, the possibility of overcoming their isolation and becoming a mass party. Unfortunately the Stalinists later transformed this successful tactic into an opportunistic capitulation to the Chiang Kai-shek, the new leader of the *Kuomintang* after Sun Yat-sen's death – instead of auspiciously splitting with this petty-bourgeois populist party when it became an obstacle for the class struggle. This resulted in the infamous massacre of tens of thousands communists in 1927 at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's army.

Even earlier, Sneevliet has played a crucial role in building a revolutionary organization in Indonesia (a Dutch colony at that time) – the *Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging* (ISDV). This organization engaged in anti-imperialist activities and would later join an Islamist mass organization which was active against the colonial administration – the *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Union). When the conservative leadership of the Islamist organization finally expelled the revolutionaries in 1921, the communists had already won over many workers and peasants. They would go on to found the first Asian section of the Comintern – *Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia* (PKH; Communist Union of the Indies).¹⁵

Likewise the Soviet Union supported the struggle of Turkey led by the bourgeois nationalist Kemal Pasha against British imperialism and its Greek allies.

Trotsky and the Fourth International on the United Front Tactic

Leon Trotsky, continuing the struggle for the revolutionary banner of the working class struggle after the Stalinist bureaucracy had taken power in 1924, upheld the Marxist method of the united front tactic as it had been developed by Lenin and the Comintern. In fact, he was – besides Lenin – the main advocate of the united front tactic when it was adopted by the Comintern at its Third Congress.

Against the Stalinists opportunist maneuvers with the British trade union bureaucracy in the mid-1920s Trotsky defended the fundamental principles of the united front tactic: “The tactic of the united front still retains all its power as the most important method in the struggle for the masses. A ba-

sic principle of this tactic is: “With the masses – always; with the vacillating leaders – sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses.” It is necessary to make use of vacillating leaders while the masses are pushing them ahead, without for a moment abandoning criticism of these leaders. And it is necessary to break with them at the right time when they turn from vacillation to hostile action and betrayal. It is necessary to use the occasion of the break to expose the traitorous leaders and to contrast their position to that of the masses. It is precisely in this that the revolutionary essence of the united front policy consists. Without this, the struggle for the masses always threatens to turn into an opportunist kowtowing ...”¹⁶

Later the Stalinists distorted the united front tactic and replaced it with their theory of “social fascism” according to which social democracy was only the “twin” of Hitler's fascism. Consequently, the Stalinists rejected any united front with the social democrats, a stance which helped the reformist leaders to justify their betrayal and which allowed them to support several right-wing Bonapartist governments along with taking no action against the rise of the NSDAP before 1933.

Trotsky similarly defended the application of the united front tactic in anti-imperialist and democratic struggles. For example he called for critical but unconditional support of Chiang Kai-shek's struggle against the Japanese invaders in the late 1920s and 1930s (despite the fact that the latter murdered tens of thousands of communists in 1927!): “Quite so: as against imperialism it is obligatory to help even the hangmen of Chiang Kai-shek.”¹⁷

Trotsky strongly rejected the criticism of those Ultra-leftists who refused to join an anti-imperialist struggle under a bourgeois leadership on the grounds that this would constitute a form of popular-frontism. He called revolutionaries in 1937 to participate and support the military struggle against Japan under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek as long as they are not strong enough to replace him. He compared the necessary tactic for revolutionaries with those during a workers' strike under the leadership of treacherous reformist bureaucrats. It would be the duty of every class-conscious worker to join such a strike without giving any political support to the bureaucrats. Trotsky's attitude becomes clear from a document he wrote on the Chinese war against Japan in 1937 from which we shall quote extensively:

“But Chiang Kai-shek? We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China, just as Marx and Engels had no illusions about the ruling classes of Ireland and Poland. Chiang Kai-shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle.

Let us use the example of a strike to clarify the question. We do not support all strikes. If, for example, a strike is called for the exclusion of Negro, Chinese, or Japanese workers from a factory, we are opposed to that strike. But if a strike aims at bettering – insofar as it can – the conditions of the workers, we are the first to participate in it, whatever the leadership. In the vast majority of strikes, the leaders are reformists, traitors by profession, agents of capital. They oppose every strike. But from time to time the pressure of the masses or of the objective situation

forces them into the path of struggle.

Let us imagine, for an instant, a worker saying to himself: "I do not want to participate in the strike because the leaders are agents of capital." This doctrine of this ultraleft imbecile would serve to brand him by his real name: a strikebreaker. The case of the Sino-Japanese War, is from this point of view, entirely analogous. If Japan is an imperialist country and if China is the victim of imperialism, we favor China. Japanese patriotism is the hideous mask of worldwide robbery. Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive. To place the two on the same plane and to speak of "social patriotism" can be done only by those who have read nothing of Lenin, who have understood nothing of the attitude of the Bolsheviks during the imperialist war, and who can but compromise and prostitute the teachings of Marxism. (...) But Japan and China are not on the same historical plane. The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China.

But can Chiang Kai-shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle. It is necessary, however, to know when and how to transform political opposition into armed insurrection.

During the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 we attacked the policies of the Comintern. Why? It is necessary to understand well the reasons. The Eiffelites claim that we have changed our attitude on the Chinese question. That is because the poor fellows have understood nothing of our attitude in 1925-27. We never denied that it was the duty of the Communist Party to participate in the war of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of the South against the generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. We never denied the necessity of a military bloc between the CP and the Kuomintang. On the contrary, we were the first to propose it. We demanded, however, that the CP maintain its entire political and organizational independence, that is, that during the civil war against the internal agents of imperialism, as in the national war against foreign imperialism, the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. We hold the same policies in the present war. We have not changed our attitude one iota. The Oehlerites and the Eiffelites, on the other hand, have not understood a single bit of our policies, neither those of 1925-27, nor those of today.

In my declaration to the bourgeois press at the beginning of the recent conflict between Tokyo and Nanking, I stressed above all the necessity of the active participation of revolutionary workers in the war against the imperialist oppressors. Why did I do it? Because first of all it is correct from the Marxist point of view; because, secondly, it was necessary from the point of view of the welfare of our friends in China. Tomorrow the GPU, which is in alliance with the Kuomintang (as with Negrin in Spain), will

represent our Chinese friends as being "defeatists" and agents of Japan. The best of them, with Chten Tu-hsiu at the head, can be nationally and internationally compromised and killed. It was necessary to stress, energetically, that the Fourth International was on the side of China as against Japan. And I added at the same time: without abandoning either their program or their independence.

The Eiffelite imbeciles try to jest about this "reservation." "The Trotskyists," they say, "want to serve Chiang Kai-shek in action and the proletariat in words." To participate actively and consciously in the war does not mean "to serve Chiang Kai-shek" but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence—to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek . . . that is the only revolutionary policy. The Eiffelites counterpose the policy of "class struggle" to this "nationalist and social patriotic" policy. Lenin fought this abstract and sterile opposition all his life. To him, the interests of the world proletariat dictated the duty of aiding oppressed peoples in their national and patriotic struggle against imperialism. Those who have not yet understood that, almost a quarter of a century after the World War and twenty years after the October revolution, must be pitilessly rejected as the worst enemies on the inside by the revolutionary vanguard. This is exactly the case with Eiffel and his kind!"¹⁸

In the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International written in 1938, Trotsky once again attempted to generalize the experience of the Bolsheviks and show how important it is for communists to put forth demands at reformist and petty bourgeois mass parties of the workers and the oppressed in order to reach out to their rank and file.

"This formula, "workers' and farmers' government," first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat. The significance of this designation comes mainly from the fact that it underscored the idea of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry upon which the Soviet power rests.

When the Comintern of the epigones tried to revive the formula buried by history of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," it gave to the formula of the "workers' and peasants' government" a completely different, purely "democratic," i.e., bourgeois content, counterposing it to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Bolshevik-Leninists resolutely rejected the slogan of the "workers' and peasants' government" in the bourgeois-democratic version. They affirmed then and affirm now that, when the party of the proletariat refuses to step beyond bourgeois democratic limits, its alliance with the peasantry is simply turned into a support for capital, as was the ease with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in 1917, with the Chinese Communist Party in 1925-27, and as is now the ease with the "People's Front" in Spain, France and other countries.

From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the S.R.s and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. Under this provision the Bolshevik Party promised the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, as the petty bourgeois representatives of the worker and peasants, its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie categorically refusing, how-

ever, either to enter into the government of the Mensheviks and S.R.s or to carry political responsibility for it. If the Mensheviks and S.R.s had actually broke with the Cadets (liberals) and with foreign imperialism, then the "workers' and peasants' government" created by them could only have hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was exactly because of this that the leadership of petty bourgeois democracy resisted with all possible strength the establishment of its own government. The experience of Russia demonstrated, and the experience of Spain and France once again confirms, that even under very favorable conditions the parties of petty bourgeois democracy (S.R.s, Social Democrats, Stalinists, Anarchists) are incapable of creating a government of workers and peasants, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and the S.R.s: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!" had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and S.R.s to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days, definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks.

The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organizations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!" is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organizations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals. The slogan, "workers' and farmers' government," is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan. But in no case in that "democratic" sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to Socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path.

Of all parties and organizations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the program of the "workers' and farmers' government."

Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is, to say the least, highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, there is no need to indulge in guesswork. The agitation around the slogan of a workers'-farmers' government

preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalized slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch (the bankruptcy and decomposition of the old bourgeois parties, the downfall of democracy, the growth of fascism, the accelerated drive of the workers toward more active and aggressive politics). Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power."¹⁹

Thus we see the significance which Trotsky gave to the issue of the united front tactic as a tool to strengthen and unite the class struggle of the workers and oppressed, as well as to increase the influence of the revolutionary party among the working class and popular masses, and to undermine the hegemony of the "parties of petty-bourgeois democracy." In addition, Trotsky considered the united front tactic as a crucial tool for revolutionaries not only in relation to bourgeois (Menshevik-type) workers' parties, but also towards petty-bourgeois populist (S.R.-type) forces which have a mass following among the non-proletarian oppressed classes and layers.

III. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony under Present Day Conditions: Social and Economic Changes

In the previous two chapters we have outlined the principles of the united front tactic and have shown how the Marxist classics developed their understanding of it. Before we discuss some specific questions of the application of the united front tactic today, we need to take into account important changes which have taken place since the times of Lenin and Trotsky. We shall start with a summary of the economic and social developments.

In our book *The Great Robbery of the South* we have analyzed important changes in the composition of the world proletariat.²⁰ Let us summarize here the most important conclusions combined with actual data.

The Shift to the South of Today's World Proletariat

The RCIT has always stressed that the focus of global capitalist production, and therefore of the international proletariat, has shifted during the past half century from the old imperialist metropolises (i.e., North America, Western Europe and Japan) to the South (i.e., the semi-colonial world plus new imperialist powers, in particular China). The basis for this shift has been a process of massive industrialization in the countries of the global South. This was caused on the one hand by the general economic upswing during the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s (accompanied

by a rise in productivity in agriculture, accelerated urbanization, etc.) and by the massive shift of capital export of the imperialist monopolies to the South, in their desire to increase their profits by intensifying super-exploitation.²¹ For part of this time, the industrialization of the Stalinist degenerated workers' states in Eastern Europe, East Asia and Cuba also contributed to this development.

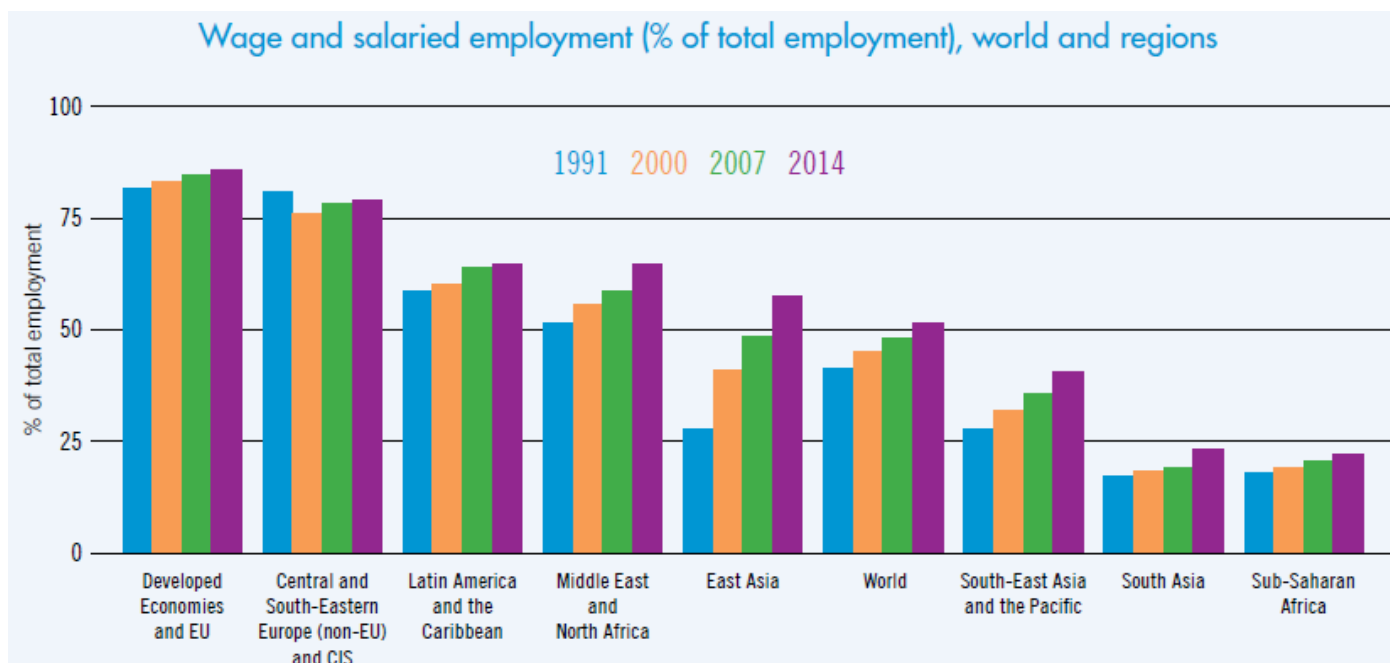
The massive growth of the global labor force during the past decades took place mainly in the semi-colonial world. In 2014, 51.5% of the global labor force was engaged in wage labor out of total of three billion working people²² (See Figure 1). As shown in this graph, since 1991 the share of wage laborers has increased on all continents.²³

Such proletarianization has also taken place among women. Today 46% of all working women are wage laborers.²⁵

Table 1 expresses the growth of the working class in the world's regions by percentages since just before the turn of the millenium.

The process of industrialization has necessarily led to a massive shift in weight of the proletariat from the imperialist metropolises towards the poorer countries and in particular to Asia (where 60% of the global industrial workforce lives today). A hundred years ago – at the time of Lenin and Trotsky – the proletariat in the colonial and semi-colonial world was still quite small. Capitalist indus-

Figure 1: Wage and Salaried Employment (% of total employment), World and Regions, 1991-2014 24



trialization outside of Europe, North America and Japan had taken place only to a relatively small degree.

Since then the growth of the working class in the South has accelerated. As a result, the huge majority of the world working class today lives outside the old imperialist metropolises. This is clearly demonstrated by the following tables and figures. Table 2 shows the increase of the wage laborers living in the so-called “developing countries” from 65.9% (1995) to 72.4% (2008/09). If one excludes the semi-colonial EU states the figure for 2008/09 is even higher (75%). In other words, three quarters of today’s wage laborers live and work in the semi-colonial and emerging imperialist countries.

This shift is also visible if we examine the core sector of the working class – the industrial workers. In Table 3 we

see that in 2013, 85.3% – or more than 617 million – of all industrial employees (the overwhelming majority of them workers) lived outside the old imperialist metropolises, where “only” 14.7% – or 106.8 million – of all those employed in industry were living. At the same time, nearly two third (62.5%) of all industrial workers were living in Asia (except Russia and the ex-USSR republics).

Figures 2 and 3 confirm this tremendous shift by showing the increase in the proportion of manufacturing workers living in the South from about 50% (1980) to about 73% (2008). Bear in mind that in 1950 only 34% of industrial workers around the world were living in the South.²⁹ Note, however, that the numbers for employment in manufacturing and industrial employment in the statistics provided here are not synonymous, since manufacturing

Table 1: Wage Laborers as a Share of Total Employment, 1999 and 2013 ²⁶

<i>Region</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2013</i>
Africa	24.6%	26.2%
Asia	30.7%	40.2%
Latin America and the Caribbean	59.0%	62.8%
Middle East	71.9%	80.3%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	74.9%	78.3%
Developed economies	84.1%	86.4%

Table 2: Distribution of Wage Laborers in Different Regions, 1995 and 2008/09 ²⁷

	Wage earners (in percent)	
	1995	2008/09
World	100%	100%
Countries with low and middle income	65.9%	72.4%
Countries with high income	34.1%	27.6%
Countries with high income (without semi-colonial EU-States)	-	25%
Countries with low and middle income (including semi-colonial EU-States)	-	75%

Table 3: Distribution of Labor Force in Industry in different Regions, 2013 ²⁸

	Labor force in Industry (in Millions)	Distribution of industrial Labor force
World	724.4	100%
Developed economies	106.8	14.7%
Eastern Europe & ex-USSR	44.8	6.2%
East Asia	250.1	34.5%
South-East Asia	59.0	8.1%
South Asia	144.3	19.9%
Latin America	58.3	8.0%
Middle East	18.7	2.6%
North Africa	13.0	1.8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	29.3	4.0%

Figure 2: Developing Countries' Share in World Manufacturing Employment, 1980–2008 ³⁰

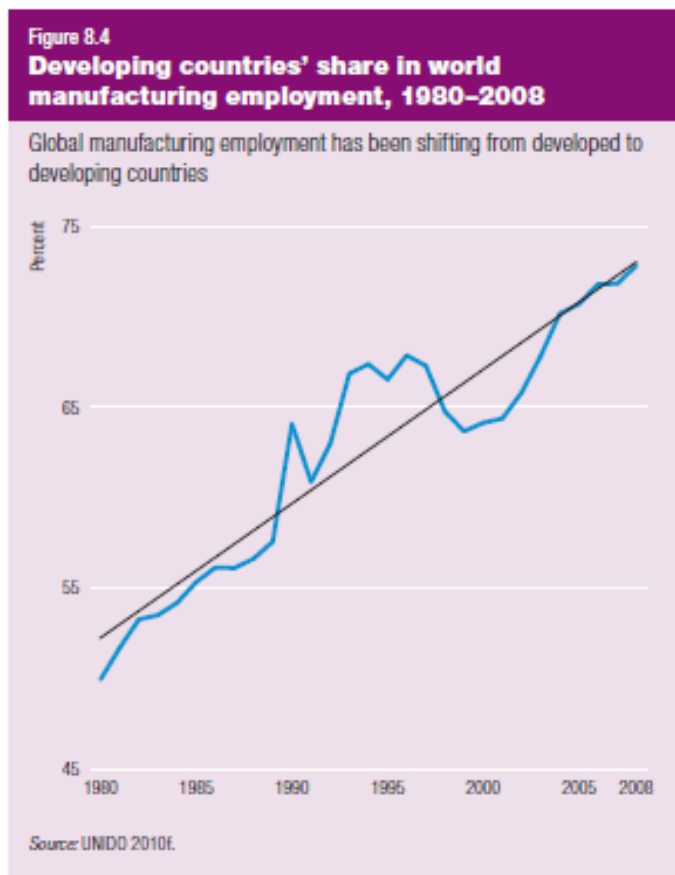
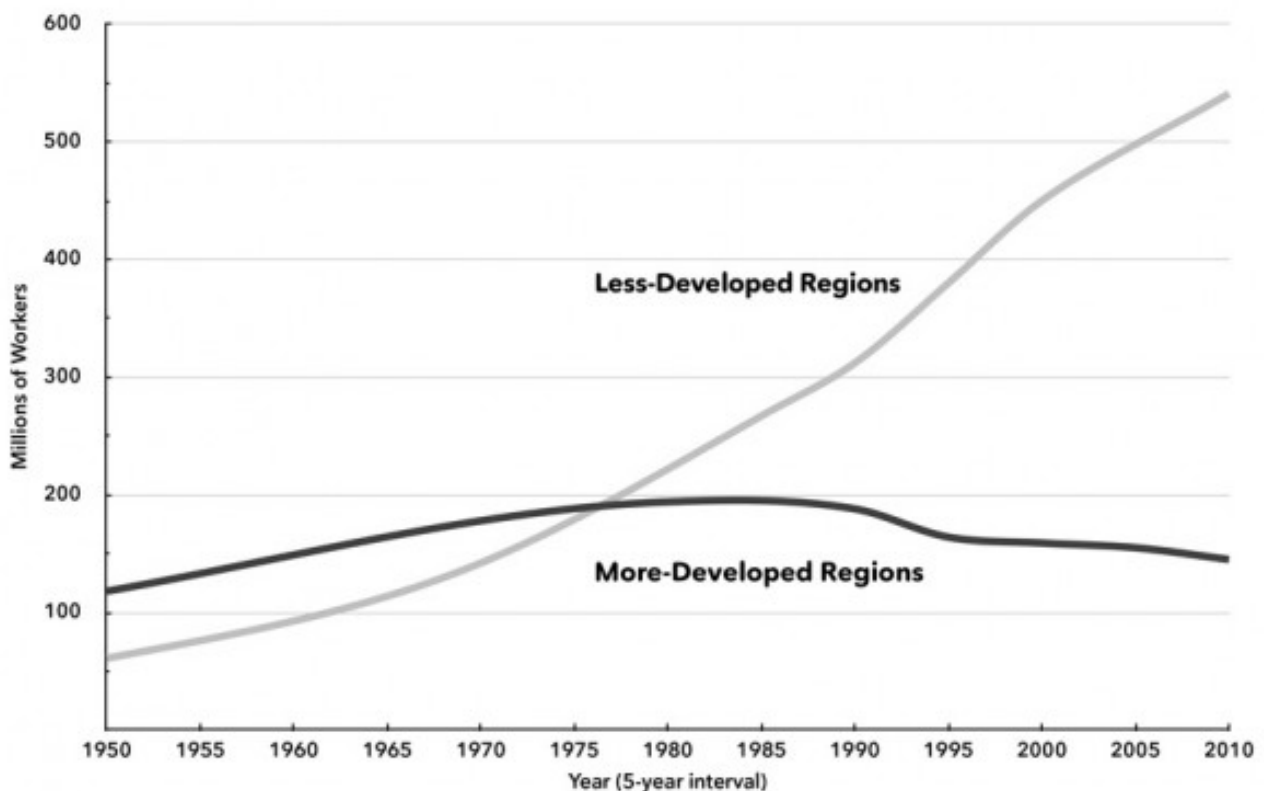


Figure 3: Global Industrial Labor Force in Developed and Developing Countries, 1950–2010 ³¹



includes all industrial labor force but, in contrast to industrial employment, excludes those employed in the mining and the building sectors.

The RCIT has repeatedly pointed out that, in fact, the actual shift of the proletariat towards the semi-colonial and emerging imperialist countries is even bigger than official statistics indicate. Why? Because, as noted above, the bourgeois category “wage earners” includes not only workers. Generally speaking, one can say that in the rich imperialist countries, a considerable minority of wage earners are not part of the working class, but are part of the salaried middle class (supervisory personnel, police, lower-grade manager etc.).³² In an extensive analysis of the class’s structure, we have estimated that, in the imperialist countries, the number of wage earners – making up to 90% of the total working population – can be divided into two, with approximately 2/3 working class while 1/3 are middle layer.³³ In the poorer countries, the salaried middle classes are much smaller.

Furthermore, we also need to take into account the labor aristocracy, the uppermost part of the working class (e.g., certain sectors of the highly-paid skilled workers, etc.). It is the sector of the proletariat which is literally bribed by the bourgeoisie with various privileges. In the imperialist countries, this layer constitutes a much larger proportion of the working class than it does among the semi-colonial proletariat. The financial sources to pay off the labor aristocracy in the imperialist countries, and thereby undermine its working class solidarity, are derived precisely from the extra profits which the monopoly capitalists so readily obtain by super-exploiting the semi-colonial countries as well as migrants in the imperialist metropolises. Without any smoke or mirrors, monopoly capital uses part of these extra profits to gain the support of sectors of the working class in the imperialist countries, for it is at home that the capitalists need stability first and foremost. Thus, the “bought off” labor aristocracy can be a much smaller sector of the proletariat in the semi-colonial world.

Together with this, the labor aristocracy – along with its twin, the labor bureaucracy – plays a dominating role inside the trade unions and the reformist parties in the imperialist countries.

At the same time, as we have elaborated elsewhere,³⁴ the lower strata of the working class – and in particular migrants – have significantly gained in their relative numbers inside the imperialist countries. In the USA, for example, the share of migrants among the overall population rose from 5.2% (1960) to 12.3% (2000) to more than 14% (2010). In Western Europe, the migrants’ share of the population grew from about 4.6% (1960) to nearly 10% (2010).³⁵ According to latest data from the United Nations, 172.6 million migrants are officially living in the old imperialist countries (“high-income countries”), representing 13% of the total population.³⁶ As we have repeatedly pointed out, such official statistics invariably underestimate the number of migrants, as they do not include migrants with no legal status as well as migrants of the second or third generation.

The comparable proportion of foreign migrants in “middle-income” and “low-income countries,” i.e., the semi-colonial countries and the emerging imperialist China, is only 1%.³⁷

In particular, migrants constitute a crucial sector of the

proletariat in the urban centers of the imperialist metropolises. For example, in the early 2000s half of all resident workers in New York were black, Latino, or belonged to other national minorities. In inner and outer London, respectively 29% and 22% of residents were classified as ethnic minorities in 2000.³⁸ In our study on racism and migrants, we showed that in Vienna (the capital of Austria) migrants represent 44% of the population. Two thirds of them come from the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, or the Eastern European EU States.³⁹

It is also important to realize that low and medium-skilled laborers constitute the vast majority of wage earning workers and oppressed, while highly-skilled employees constitute only a minority (even in the old imperialist countries). While the figures displayed in Tables 4 and 5, below, are not exclusively for the working class, and while the level of skill is not directly parallel to being positioned in the lower or middle strata vs. the upper and aristocratic strata of the working class, these figures still provide a useful approximation of the relative proportions composing the proletariat – both globally and by specific region.

These actual data from the UN’s *International Labour Office* demonstrate that low- and medium-skilled workers represent 82% of the global labor force, 61.7% in the old imperialist countries and 85.8% in the semi-colonial world and the emerging imperialists, namely China and Russia. Their share is even bigger than the figures shown in these tables suggest because – as we have said before – a minority of the wage earners are not part of the working class at all, but rather belong to the middle class. Naturally, the share of high-skilled laborers is much greater among the middle layers than among the working class. In short, these data support our theses concerning the composition of the working class as we outlined it in the RCIT’s *Manifesto* as well as we have described in greater detail in our book, *The Great Robbery*.

In addition, the proletariat in the poorer countries is larger in size than the numbers in these official statistics would appear to indicate. A considerable proportion of the workers in these countries are formally counted not as wage laborers, but as formally self-employed, due to the large informal sector. However, in fact, they are part of the working class.⁴²

In general, the growing working class and other oppressed layers are very heterogeneous in terms of their employment status. The recently published ILO data for the employment status of the working population as a whole (i.e. including workers, peasants, self-employed, unpaid family workers, employers [albeit the later are insignificant in terms of numbers]) are extremely interesting. According to them, only around 26.4% of laborers are employed on a permanent contract, with around 13% on a temporary or fixed-term contracts and the significant majority (60.7%) work without any contract. Naturally, here too, there are huge differences between the situation for laborers in the old imperialist countries and those in the South. In the old imperialist countries (“high-income economies”), more than three-quarters of laborers are on a permanent contract (of which less than two-thirds are full-time), a further 9.3% are hired by temporary contracts, and only 14% work without a contract. Among advanced semi-colonies and emerging imperialist countries (“middle-income countries”), nearly 72% of all laborers are em-

Table 4: Numbers and Share of Employment by Broad Occupation (Skill), World and Regions, 2013 (in thousands) ⁴⁰

<i>World region</i>	<i>Low-Skilled</i>	<i>Medium-Skilled</i>	<i>High-Skilled</i>
World	502,153 100%	2,077,789 100%	566,584 100%
Developed Economies	46,668 9.3%	241,654 11.6%	186,693 32.4%
Developing Economies	455,485 91.7%%	1,836,135 88.4%	379,891 67.6%

Table 5: Share of Employment by Broad Occupation (Skill), World and Regions, 2013 ⁴¹

<i>World region</i>	<i>Low-Skilled</i>	<i>Medium-Skilled</i>	<i>High-Skilled</i>
World total	16.0%	66.0%	18.0%
Developed Economies	9.8%	50.9%	39.3%
Central & South Eastern Europe	14.1%	52.4%	33.5%
East Asia	8.2%	79.7%	12.1%
South East Asia and the Pacific	22.0%	65.6%	12.4%
South Asia	27.7%	58.5%	13.8%
Latin America and the Caribbean	19.0%	61.3%	19.8%
Middle East and North Africa	12.0%	65.7%	22.4%
Sub Saharan Africa	16.2%	79.2%	4.6%

Table 6: Distribution of Contract Type of Wage Laborers (%) ⁴⁴

	<i>Permanent</i>	<i>Temporary</i>	<i>No Contract</i>
All Countries	51.2%	25.0%	23.8%
High-Income Countries	88.1%	10.7%	1.3%
Middle-Income Countries	30.7%	32.3%	37.0%
Low-Income Countries	32.4%	42.6%	24.8%

Table 7: Shares of Status in Total Employment, World and Regions, 2013 (%) ⁴⁸

	<i>Wage Laborers</i>	<i>Employers</i>	<i>Own Account Laborers</i>	<i>Contributing Family</i>
Advanced Economies	86.3%	3.6%	9.0%	1.0%
Developing Countries	42.6%	2.0%	40.5%	14.9%
Least Developed Countries	18.0%	1.2%	53.2%	27.6%
Lower Middle Income Countries	31.7%	2.1%	50.5%	15.7%
Emerging Economies	58.2%	2.2%	29.0%	10.6%

ployed without a contract, while only 13.7% work under a permanent contract. Across the less developed semi-colonial countries, only 5.7% of laborers are employed with a permanent contract, while nearly 87% of laborers having no contract at all; the majority of these are working either as own-account workers or contributing family workers.⁴³

If we calculate the existing ILO data for the wage laborers, we reach the conclusion that only 51.2% of all wage laborers have a permanent contract while the rest are only employed under temporary contracts or with no contract at all (see Table 6). Here again, there are extreme differences between the old imperialist countries on one hand and the semi-colonial countries and the emerging imperialist powers on the other. In the former, those designated by the ILO as “high-income economies,” the share of wage laborers with a permanent contract is 88.1%. However, this share is much lower in the countries of the global South (30.7% resp. 32.4%).

Wage laborers with a permanent contract should again be divided, comparing those employed full-time and those who work only part-time. Unfortunately, for this issue the ILO provides data only for the imperialist countries where only 73.7% of all full-time workers have a permanent contract (but among women the share is even lower at 64.5%).

Furthermore, one has to take into account the rising number of unemployed workers. The latest ILO report gives the official figure of 201.3 million workers without a job in 2014. Or in other words, 5.9% globally.⁴⁵

Let us now summarize our brief overview of the world proletariat today. We have shown that the international working class has shifted its focus to the South where about three-quarters of the wage laborers are located. Given the higher share of salaried middle class in the old imperialist countries (compared to the South), the proportion of the proletariat in semi-colonial and the emerging imperialist countries throughout the world could be as high as 80%. This being the case, we can conclude that today the heart of the world proletariat is in the South and in particular in Asia.

That does not mean that the proletariat in the old imperialist metropolises (i.e., the relatively rich countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan) has become irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. The proletariat of Western Europe, North America and Japan continues to play a central role in the international class struggle. But it is vital for revolutionary communists to recognize the increased importance of the semi-colonial countries in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, as well as of the emerging imperialists, China (and Russia). In other words, the process of the World Revolution is not one in which the front is located in and the entire issue will be decided upon in the old imperialist countries. Rather the proletariat in the semi-colonial world and the emerging imperialist China will play a decisive role. The Arab Revolution reinforced this thesis of the increasing importance of the semi-colonial proletariat.

We have summarized the ramifications of these important changes in the composition of the world working class in our program “*The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*.” International workers’ organizations must pay particular attention to the South. The huge weight of the Southern proletariat must be reflected not only in their massive participation in international workers’ organizations, but

also in the leaderships of these forces. And questions of particular importance for the Southern working class – their super-exploitation, their national liberation struggles against imperialism, etc. – must play a central role in the organizations’ propagandistic and practical work.⁴⁶

The Misery of the Poor Peasantry and the Urban Poor

Irrespective of the growth of the global proletariat, Marxists must not ignore the fact nearly half of the global working population – and a clear majority in the semi-colonial world – still belong to the poor peasantry or the urban petty bourgeoisie. The figures in Table 6 give an indication about the general social composition of the working population. However, here too we repeat that, for reasons outlined above, the ILO category *Wage Laborers* is not synonymous with the Marxist concept of the working class. This reservation is also applicable for the ILO’s *Own Account Laborers* category which is also not equivalent to the Marxist category of the non-exploiting peasantry and urban petty-bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the figures given below are useful approximations.

If we leave aside the very small number of capitalists (employers), which are most numerous in the imperialist countries, we see that peasants and self-employed (and their contributing family members) represent 55.4% of the working population in the countries of the South. However, even here there are important distinctions to be made. For example, while in the emerging imperialist China the share of wage laborers is 56% of the working population and the self-employed and their contributing family members “only” 42.4%,⁴⁷ the self-employed and their contributing family members constitute 80.8% (!) of all working people in the less developed semi-colonial countries. (See Table 7)

Capitalism means misery not just for the working class but also for the rural population and the urban poor. In order to understand this, we now provide some data about inequality and poverty among the world’s peasantry. According to data summarized by the ETC Group (AGETC), of the 450 million farms in today’s world, 382 million (85%) are worked by small peasants and have a size of 2 hectares or less. Nearly all of these (close to 380 million) are situated in the global South. Again, the overwhelming majority of them (370 million) are worked by indigenous peasants. In total, peasants work approximately half of the world’s cropland. It is estimated that, of the 1.56 billion arable hectares under permanent cultivation globally, 764 million hectares are worked by peasants; no less than 225 million hectares are cultivated by big farmers; and mid-size farmers would consequently hold approximately 571 million hectares.

An estimated 640 million peasant farmers and an additional 190 million pastoralists raise livestock for their own consumption and local markets. Furthermore, there are about 30–35 million full-time fishermen, but probably more than 100 million peasants are involved to some extent or another in fishing and the processing and distribution of the yield of this activity as food.

There are also an estimated 800 million peasants who are involved in urban farming. Of these, 200 million produce food primarily for urban markets, and this activity provides full-time employment for about 150 million family members. On average, the world’s cities produce about

one-third of their own food consumption. Finally, there are at least 410 million people who live in – or adjacent to – forests and derive much of their food and livelihood from them.⁴⁹

Brazil provides an important example of the unequal distribution of land globally and the dire situation of poor and landless peasants in the age of decaying capitalism. About 26,000 Brazilian landowners possess 50% of all agricultural lands, large parts of which are either being poorly utilized for agriculture or are not being cultivated at all. At the same time, in Brazil there are 12 million landless peasants.

The urban poor are another, increasingly important layer of world's population. They have no fixed class position, but rather include various and transitional elements. Most slum dwellers have no permanent job, but are unemployed, informally employed, or self-employed. Thus, they mostly belong to the lower strata of the working class, and either constitute semi-proletarian elements who are often involved in urban agriculture, are among the poor petty-bourgeoisie, or belong to the lumpenproletariat. Their extremely precarious position in the workplace

increases the relative importance of their particular living and housing conditions. For these reasons we can speak of the urban poor as a specific layer.

It is estimated that about a third of the global urban population (32.7%) live in slums in the big cities, especially in the semi-colonial world. The proportion of people living in slum conditions in urban areas is particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa (61.7%). However, slum dwellers also constitute an important share of the urban population in Southern Asia (35%), in Southeastern Asia (31.0%), in Eastern Asia (28.2%), in Western Asia (24.6%), in Latin America and the Caribbean (23.5%), and in North Africa (13%).⁵⁰

In short, we see that the poor peasantry and the urban poor constitute huge and important classes and layers. They too suffer daily, throughout their precarious lives, from the devastating consequences of capitalism in decay. It is a crucial task of the working class, and this means the vanguard of this class – the revolutionary party – to be in the front line to win these oppressed layers over as allies for the struggle against capitalist rule.

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IV. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony under Present Day Conditions: Political Changes

After having outlined some crucial social and economic developments that have transpired in recent decades, we shall now move on to examine the field of politics. We will outline in summary the most important changes that have taken place among the parties which claim to represent the interests of the workers and oppressed.

The Crisis of Bourgeois Workers' Parties

One of the most important developments in the past two or three decades has been the extraordinary bourgeoisification of the traditional reformist parties of the social democratic and Stalinist hue. At the same time, we have witnessed a surge of new left-wing reformist or petty-bourgeois populist forces. These changes constitute the crucial backdrop for the development and the application of the Marxist tactic of the united front during the present period.

Let us examine these developments and changes in more detail. The most important factor in the world situation – and this is even truer today than at the time of Trotsky in the 1930s – is the complete lack of a strong revolutionary world party. Trotsky's words – „Without the slightest exaggeration it may be said: the whole world situation is determined by the crisis of the proletarian leadership“⁵¹ – are even more relevant today, more than half a century after the political and organizational collapse of the Fourth International, when the numbers of authentic revolutionary forces are so abysmally small compared with the historic task ahead of us.⁵² This absence of a world party for socialist revolution is the main reason why so many class struggle eruptions leading to pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations are ultimately defeated. And it is precisely for the same reason that the right-wing shift of traditional reformism resulted in the surge of new left-wing reformist and populist political formations.

The historic crisis of social democracy and Stalinism expresses itself in a dramatic political shift to the right, a bourgeoisification of its composition and leadership, and its precipitous decline in membership and electoral strength. Let us examine some examples.

The German SPD led Germany – in a governmental coalition with the Green Party – to the country's first war abroad when NATO attacked Serbia in 1999. They did the same in Afghanistan in 2001 and during the imperialist occupation afterwards. The SPD imposed the draconian Hartz IV reforms which led to substantial cuts in unemployment benefits and social subsidies. Since then this party has been the junior partner in pro-austerity coalitions with the CDU, the conservative party of Angela Merkel, in the years 2005-09 and once again since 2013.

It is hardly surprising that this neoliberalization of the SPD had dramatic effects on its support and membership. Its electoral support has declined from 40.9% (1998) to 23.0% (2009) and 25.7% (2013). The number its members

has more than halved between 1990 and 2014 (the latest available data). While the party had 943,402 members in 1990, this figure has dropped to 459,902 by the end of 2012.⁵³ 50% of these members are aged 60 years and above and only 16% are below the age of 40! The social composition of the party is particularly revealing: pensioners constitute the largest group (34%), followed by "Beamte" (a German word for privileged employees in the public sector, 23%), white-collar employees (15%), blue-collar workers (8%) and unemployed (5%). The remaining 15% are housewives, students, self-employed, etc.⁵⁴

True, none of this means that the SPD has ceased to be a bourgeois workers' party, given its close connections with the trade union federation and other workers' organizations. Furthermore, many pensioner members were previously workers. But it is clear that the party has substantially weakened its links with the working class and barely represents the working class in its composition, but rather the oldest and most-privileged (Beamte!) sectors of the working class as well as a sector of the lower middle class.

The situation is similar to that of the Spanish PSOE. The party has moved dramatically to the right and has for decades adhered to the neoliberal agenda. Its electoral support has halved since the beginning of the new historic period which began with the start of the Great Recession – dropping from 43.9% (2008) to 22.0% (2015) of the votes cast. The party's constituency is dominated by "inactive" people (i.e., pensioners) who constitute 41.4% of its entire membership⁵⁵ (see Figure 4).

However, despite this decline and the progressive aging of its membership, a majority of them are from the working class. Also, the PSOE still maintains close relations with the UGT, one of the two major trade union federations in Spain. However, this close relationship helped bring the UGT leadership (together with the Stalinist-led CCOO union), to sign a "social pact" with the then PSOE-led government. This pact is more appropriately termed an "anti-social pact," and included increasing the official retirement age from 65 to 67.

The French Socialist Party, too, is deeply in crisis, having been transformed into a neoliberal party long ago. This crisis has accelerated since President Hollande's ascension to power in 2012. Under his leadership, the PSF has waged unprecedented attacks on democratic rights (an indefinite "state of emergency," since November 2015; anti-democratic amendments to the constitution; thousands of raids against Muslim migrants, etc.). Furthermore, Hollande's government has engaged in a series of imperialist wars in Mali, the Central African Republic, Iraq and Syria.

Unsurprisingly, these developments go hand in hand with the decline of the party. While it officially had a membership of 203,000 in 2009, this figure declined to about 120,000 in 2015. Since Hollande took power, 40,000 of the PSF's members have left the party.⁵⁷

No less important is the traditionally petty-bourgeois social composition of the PSF – a characteristic which doubt-

less has exacerbated in the last few years. According to the French political scientists Laurent Bouvet, only 16% of PSF members are workers and low-ranking wage earners as opposed to 35% who belong to higher management and the professions. The party's membership is also strongly dominated by the relatively privileged public sector employees (58% of all members). Like all other social democratic parties, PSF members has a high average age (67% being above 50 years old). Furthermore, Bouvet reports: "It [the PSF's electorate, Ed.] comprises mainly voters from the middle and upper strata and few from the working classes (especially from the social and occupational groups »employees« and »workers,« who represent more than 50 percent of the active population in France). Furthermore, the proportion of voters from the public sector is particularly significant in relation to their weight in the active population."⁵⁸

Furthermore, nearly one quarter of all party members are elected representatives in municipal, regional, or national parliaments, governmental authorities, etc.⁵⁹

The British Labour Party underwent a very similar development until the summer of last year (2015). When the Blair government took power in 1997, it abolished the party's close links with the trade unions (albeit these links still do exist) and deleted the party program's famous Clause 4 which declared the goal of nationalizing key sectors of British industry. Blair's government implemented a neo-liberal agenda and was a driving force in the imperialist war offensive in the Middle East. In fact, the "social democrat" Blair was the closest collaborator of US-President Bush and his militaristic, neo-conservative administration. Likewise the Labour Party has proven to be a loyal supporter of Israel and the latter's colonial wars against the Palestinian people. Recently, despite the new left-reformist leadership of Corbyn, the party has started to expel Anti-Zionist members.⁶⁰

Like in other countries, the Labour Party's membership figures declined from about 400,000 individual members in 1997 to about 200,000 in 2015. However, with the successful campaign of the left-reformist Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn in summer 2015, this decline has been turned around. Despite open hostility by the pro-Blairite party establishment, Corbyn's campaign was based on an anti-austerity and anti-militaristic platform which created huge enthusiasm among young people. In the space of a few months, the Labour Party's "membership jumped from 201,293 on 6 May 2015, the day before the general election, to 388,407 on 10 January 2016."⁶¹

This development is an important indicator that bourgeois workers' parties, even after a long period of decline, can revive and be rejuvenated if newly-radicalized youth and workers see no alternative to them to politically express their desire for change. Labour's membership comeback also demonstrates how wrong numerous centrists (like, for example, the CWI) were when they declared in the early 1990s that the Labour Party (and social democratic parties in general) are no longer bourgeois workers' parties. We authentic Marxists have always rejected this assumption while, at the same time, having also consistently denounced the opportunistic adaption to Labourism and never-ending entryism as practiced by the CWI's former comrades, the IMT of Ted Grant and Alan Woods.

While we are not aware of a concrete study of the party's social composition, an internal report which was recently published contains some interesting conclusions. The British newspaper *The Guardian* reported about the findings of this report: "The report portrays a party in transition, attracting a higher proportion of new members from wealthy inner-city areas. While there has been a dramatic rise in members across the entire party, Labour's traditional supporters from poorer parts of society are now a smaller proportion of the total member-

Figure 4: Distribution of Supporters of Political Parties in Spain, 2015⁵⁶

Parties of retirees, parties of workers

Distribution of party supporters depending on labour market position (July 2015)

	PSOE	PP	IU	Podemos	C's	Avg
Inactive	41.4%	46.4%	21.7%	16.8%	16.0%	31.3%
Student	3.8%	1.8%	6.5%	5.9%	7.4%	4.1%
Unemployed	21.2%	10.9%	21.7%	24.1%	18.6%	19.1%
Fixed-term	6.3%	5.5%	12.0%	10.6%	7.4%	8.3%
Open-ended	20.0%	17.3%	30.4%	31.9%	33.0%	24.5%
Self-employed	3.8%	8.5%	5.4%	6.7%	6.1%	6.6%
Manager, employer	3.8%	8.8%	2.2%	3.1%	11.3%	5.4%

ship. (...) But the report's summary warns: 'Groups which are over-represented as Labour party members tend to be long-term homeowners from urban areas (particularly inner city area) who have high levels of disposable income.' 'Those who are under-represented tend to be either young singles/families who rent properties on a short-term basis and require financial assistance or those who live in rural communities.' (...) It points out that 'high-status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards are highly over-represented.' 'As a group they make up 4% of the general population in contrast to 11.2% of party membership,' it says."⁶²

Similar developments can be observed in the Austrian social democratic party and even more in the Irish Labour Party. The latter suffered an historic defeat in the 2016 elections after having participated in an aggressive pro-austerity government since 2011. It lost two third of its voters (dropping from 19.5% to 6.6% of the votes cast) and most of its parliamentary seats (from 37 to 7).

Finally, one should not forget the sad fate of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party in Italy. Both the PSI as well as the PCI simply dissolved themselves and fused with openly bourgeois parties.

The Stalinist and ex-Stalinist parties have faced a somewhat different fate, but they too are in crisis. With important exceptions, they have not participated in government coalitions and thus have avoided the same sharp decline in membership that the neoliberalized social democratic parties have experienced, because they could still present themselves as anti-austerity opposition parties which enabled them, to a certain degree, to attract workers and youth who were disgusted by social democracy. This, for example, was evinced with electoral rise of the Italian *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* which split from the PCI when the latter dissolved. A similar manifestation occurred in Germany with the founding of LINKE after the ex-Stalinist PDS in Eastern Germany fused with the West German WASG, which had previously split off from the SPD. And in France, the *Front de Gauche* (FdG) – a fusion of the ex-Stalinist PCF and the *Parti de Gauche*, the latter having split from the PSF – experienced some electoral successes, as did the Spanish *Izquierda Unida* (which was initiated by the Stalinist PCE).

However, the respective successes of these ex-Stalinist parties – most of which are united in the *Party of the European Left* (PEL) – was not sustainable. In France, the PCF participated in the neoliberal PSF-led government of Lionel Jospin in 1997-2002 which implemented many privatization programs and took part in the NATO wars against Serbia and Afghanistan. The PCF was severely punished for this betrayal during the 2002 presidential election when its general secretary, Robert Hue, received only 3.37% of the vote, less than the centrist-Trotskyist candidates Arlette Laguiller (5.72%) and Olivier Besancenot (4.25%). Later, after the creation of the FdG, the PCF revived. But in the last several years, the FdG has been plagued by internal tensions and PdG leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon – the FdG's candidate in the 2012 presidential elections who received 11.1% of the vote – is currently preparing a separate project.

In Germany, LINKE has continually been moving to the right. In the first decade of the new millennium, this party participated in a regional coalition government in Berlin with the SPD and was responsible for implement-

ing various privatization programs. Some of its leaders openly supported Israel's wars against Gaza in 2008/09 and subsequently. The party officially forbids its members to support solidarity activities with the Palestinian people in Gaza (like participating in the Freedom Flotilla) or supporting the boycott campaign against the apartheid State of Israel.⁶³ Locally, Sahra Wagenknecht, the chairwomen of the LINKE parliamentary group, recently stated that refugees in Germany are only "guests" and if they do not behave like "guests" and respect the German law, they should be expelled from the country!⁶⁴ LINKE's obvious pandering to the ruling class in order to be accepted as a coalition partner is both embarrassing and disgraceful.

In passing, we note that the same pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist policy has been practiced for years by the LINKE's sister party in Austria – the *Communist Party of Austria* (KPÖ). As we have reported elsewhere, leading officials of the PEL and the KPÖ (as well as their Zionist pro-war allies) have for more than a decade repeatedly made public accusations against the RCIT – including in the bourgeois press – claiming that we espouse "Anti-Semitism," "revolutionary insanity," etc.⁶⁵

Despite all their opportunism, or rather because of it, LINKE continues to lose members – dropping from 78,046 (2009) to 60,547 (2014).⁶⁶ In contrast to right-wing parties, it has proven itself completely incapable of profiting from the decline of social democracy and increasing unrest among the working class and youth.

The same is true for the Spanish IU. After some electoral successes, it suffered several defeats and has been overshadowed by the rise of the left-wing populist *Podemos* party. During the most recent, December 2015 elections, IU received only 3.7% of the vote. In addition to its working class base, IU somehow remarkably still counts among its supporters a significant sector of very professional, well-paid middle class individuals – the *gauche divine*, as the Spanish sociologist Jorge Galindo calls them.⁶⁷

In Italy, Fausto Bertinotti's PRC collapsed after it twice entered neoliberal governments and supported austerity attacks as well as the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. Since its collapse, the PRC has been unable to garner sufficient votes to pass the electoral threshold and thus currently has no seats in parliament.

Other Stalinist parties who remained outside of the PEL also face stagnation. Despite years of general strikes and political upheavals in Greece, the KKE has been unable to make any electoral advances, and draws an unimpressive 4-6% of the vote. Similarly, in Portugal the PCP, which runs together with the Green Party, has steadily maintained only 7-8.8% of the vote in all elections since 1991. None of these traditional reformist parties has proven itself capable of gaining in strength despite repeated waves of radicalization among the youth and workers, who instead have more readily been able to identify with newer formations (like SYRIZA or the Portuguese *Bloco de Esquerda*).

The decline of the traditional reformist parties has gone hand in hand with a substantial weakening of the trade unions. While an extensive study of the trade union movement is beyond the scope of this present document, we must nevertheless point to the fact that in the old imperialist countries (North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia), on the average trade unions have lost

about half of their members since the 1980s. Trade union density in the OECD countries has decreased from 34% (1978) to 17.0% (2010). In France, the decline has been even more severe during the same period, membership having shrunk from 20.5% to 7.7%. In Germany, membership approximately halved from 35.5% to 18.1%, in Britain the drop was similar, from 48.8% to 25.8%, and in Italy, while the negative trend has been less precipitous, the reduction in trade union membership has gone from 50.4% to 37.3% (see Table 8).

The bourgeoisification and decline of the reformist parties has not been confined to Europe alone, but has been witnessed in a number of important semi-colonial countries. In South Africa, the Stalinist SACP has undergone intense bourgeoisification. As part of the ANC, the SACP has been part of the government for more than two decades (1994). Today the party has five ministers and three deputy ministers in the coalition cabinet. Its thoroughly reactionary nature was shockingly revealed during the Marikana massacre of 2012 when the SACP leadership supported the killing of miners on strike. Later they sided with the collaborationist pro-government COSATU leadership against the more militant unions which coalesced around NUMSA. The SACP is a prime example of a party which formally adheres to the principles of "Marxism-Leninism" while in practice acts as a spearhead of capitalist counterrevolution.⁶⁹

A similar example is the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) in Brazil. The PT emerged in the 1980s as a militant left-reformist workers' party closely related with the radical trade union movement. However, it subsequently formed a popular-front coalition with bourgeois forces (like the PMDB) and has been in power since 2002. (This, of course, is liable to change in the upcoming weeks and months with the coup d'état engineered by right-wing forces – at this stage manifesting itself in the senate trial of the impeached president Dilma Rousseff). As a result of its bourgeoisification, PT increasingly acquiesced to neoliberal demands by pursuing austerity programs. The party is intimately connected with various prominent capitalist tycoons, and thus has unsurprisingly been involved in various corruption scandals.⁷⁰

In India too, we have a good example of the bourgeoisification and decline of a reformist parties in the evolution of the Indian CPI(M). This party ruled West-Bengal, the fourth most populous states in the country, for 34 con-

secutive years (1977-2011). During this period, the party not only suppressed peasant rebellions but increasingly collaborated with imperialist monopolies. It dispossessed peasants whose land was handed over to multi-national corporations, while unleashing the police and its own party thugs against those who fought back. Unsurprisingly, on the backdrop of massive protests, the CPI(M) lost power in the elections of 2011.⁷¹

The Marxist Classics on the Labor Bureaucracy

All these developments are hardly surprising, because both the reformist parties as well as the trade unions are dominated by the conservative labor bureaucracy and their social base – the labor aristocracy, i.e., the upper strata of the working class which is extremely privileged and bribed by the bourgeoisie. Marxism characterizes the labor bureaucracy in their twin versions – in the reformist party as well as in the trade union – as agents of the ruling class inside the workers' movement. The labor bureaucracy is inextricably linked with the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie via countless bonds (positions in parliaments, social security institutions, other state institutions, corporations, etc.) These privileges are based on the super-exploitation of oppressed peoples by the imperialist monopolies and constitute the objective economic sources from which the labor bureaucracy and labor aristocracy are bribed, and in this way tie them to the rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Of course, since the working class forms the social base of the labor bureaucracy, the latter can come under pressure from below in periods of heightened class struggle. In such periods it can even be positioned at the top of a strike movement – or better, be dragged there – and half-heartedly implement reforms as a governmental party. However, it will always act with the purpose of undermining all forms of independent proletarian activity and liquidate any radical movement which could endanger the capitalist system.

The following quotes from Lenin and Trotsky demonstrate that this was the view of the Marxist classics. Hence, the leader of the Bolsheviks stated in 1916: "... objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty bourgeoisie and of a certain strata of the working class who have been bribed out of imperialist superprofits and converted to watchdogs of capitalism and corruptors of the labour movement."⁷²

Table 8: Trade Union Density (%) in Selected OECD Countries, 1978-2013⁶⁸

	1978	2013
Australia	49.7%	17.0%
France	20.5%	7.7%
Germany	35.5%	18.1%
Italy	50.4%	37.3%
Japan	32.6%	17.8%
Britain	48.8%	25.8%
USA	34.0%	10.8%
OECD	34.0%	18.1%

In a preface for his book on imperialism, written in 1920, Lenin explained the economic basis of reformism and the role of its leaders:

*“Obviously, out of such enormous superprofits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their “own” country) it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And that is just what the capitalists of the “advanced” countries are doing: they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert. This stratum of workers-turned-bourgeois, or the labour aristocracy, who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and in our days, the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the “Versaillaise” against the “Communards”. Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problem of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution.”*⁷³

And in another document Lenin stated: *„Opportunism, or reformism, inevitably had to grow into a phenomenon of world-wide importance, socialist-imperialism, or social-chauvinism, because imperialism brought to the fore a handful of very rich, advanced nations, engaged in plundering the whole world, and thereby enabled the bourgeoisie of those countries, out of their monopolist superprofits (imperialism is monopoly capitalism), to bribe the upper strata of the working class.”*⁷⁴

After Lenin’s death, Trotsky and his co-fighters continued the struggle for revolutionary Marxism. Based on the experience of reformism, and in particular its English version, Trotsky wrote:

„The question of the source of this bureaucratic danger is no less important. (...) In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucratism are to be observed precisely in the trade unions. It is enough to look at America, England and Germany. Amsterdam is the most powerful international organisation of the trade union bureaucracy. It is thanks to it that the whole structure of capitalism now stands upright above all in Europe and especially in England. If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian masses as nothing but pitiful and ridiculous playthings. The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt, and in the other colonies. One would have to be completely blind to say to the English workers: “Be on guard against the conquest of power and always remember that your trade unions are the antidote to the dangers of the state.” The Marxist will say to the English workers: “The trade union bureaucracy is the chief Instrument, for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown.” Parenthetically, it is especially for this reason that the bloc of Stalin with the strikebreakers was so criminal.

From the example of England, one sees very clearly how absurd it is to counterpose, as if it were a question of two different principles, the trade union organisation and the state organisation.

In England, more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population of the country. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the state indirectly, through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy.

*Up to now, we have not mentioned the Labour Party, which in England, the classic country of trade unions, is only a political transposition of the same trade union bureaucracy. The same leaders guide the trade unions, betray the general strike, lead the electoral campaign and later on sit in the ministries. The Labour Party and the trade unions – these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labour. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Labourite bureaucracy. And that cannot be attained by counterposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but only by the active opposition of the Communist Party to the Labourite bureaucracy in all fields of social life: in the trade unions, in strikes, in the electoral campaign, in parliament, and in power.”*⁷⁵

These conclusions have not lost their relevance. Quite the contrary, given the crisis of revolutionary leadership and the massive expansion of resources to bribe the labor bureaucracy and aristocracy through the intensification of the imperialist super-exploitation of oppressed peoples, these features have even substantially increased. We drew attention to this development already in the RCIT Program where we stated: *“In this deep crisis of leadership - combined with the possibilities of the imperialist bourgeoisie for the systematic bribery of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy - the ultimate cause can be found in the extraordinary bourgeoisification of the labour movement and the De-revolutionisation of Marxism, as is has been distorted by left reformism, centrism and the left-wing academics in recent decades.”*⁷⁶

Furthermore, as we have repeatedly emphasized, the deepening of the capitalist crisis in the age of globalization and in particular in the present historic period of capitalist decay which commenced in 2008, have only accelerated this development. The capitalist crisis forces all governments to intensify the attacks on the working class and oppressed people and to accelerate the rivalry against other capitalist states. The ruling classes are forced to implement bigger and bigger austerity packages, to attack more and more democratic rights at home, to wage more and more colonial wars in the South, and to whip up chauvinism against imperialist rivals. As we stated above, the entire *raison d’être* of the labor bureaucracy is to be admitted by the bourgeoisie into the government and other areas of the state apparatus. For this reason, the reformists are forced (not too much against their will) to adapt to the policy of the ruling class which again is adapted to the objective needs of imperialist capitalism. Therefore it is unavoidable that social democracy and Stalinism become more and more bourgeois and reactionary.

Of course, this is not a unilateral process. Since reformism is a contradictory phenomenon – with the labor bureaucracy constituting a petty-bourgeois stratum serving the bourgeoisie but based on the upper strata of the working class – the class contradictions in the society leave their mark on reformism too. Hence under specific circumstances, reformism can again temporarily swing to the left, albeit mainly in words but hardly in deeds (as we currently observe in Corbyn’s Labour Party).

However, in such a period the possibilities substantially increase that the accelerated contradictions between the classes and the radicalization of the working class and the youth lead to either splits in the reformist parties and / or the emergence of new reformist or petty-bourgeois left-wing populist formations. This is exactly what we have seen in the recent years.

The Rise of New Reformist Parties and Petty-Bourgeois Populism

Latin America clearly was the most important region in which petty-bourgeois populist formations dramatically grew during recent years. This rise took place after two decades of unchecked neoliberal offensives by the imperialist monopolies and their local bourgeois governments, with devastating consequences for the workers, peasants and urban poor.⁷⁷

As a result this has led to a substantial weakening of the trade unions, with the important exception of Brazil, in the 1980s and 1990s as we see in Table 9.

However, with the turn of the millennium, Latin America experienced a sharp upswing in class struggle. At the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002, the popular masses in Argentina rose up in a spontaneous rebellion against the neoliberal government of Fernando de la Rúa. These “*revolutionary days*” or “*Argentinazo*” resulted in the overthrow of four presidents in only one week! Furthermore popular assemblies were created in Buenos Aires and other cities, and a number of factories abandoned by capitalists were occupied and run by workers.⁷⁹

Likewise, the workers and poor in Bolivia heroically rebelled against reactionary liberal governments resulting in a series of strikes and uprisings in 2003-05.⁸⁰

Venezuela already witnessed the heroic popular uprising against the IMF-dictated austerity program in February

and March 1989 which resulted in a brutal crackdown by the government in which about 2,000 people killed (“*Caracazo*”).

Given the lack of revolutionary leadership these mass protests resulted in the strengthening of existing left-reformist or populist formations.

In 1998, Hugo Chavez won the presidential election after he transformed his underground organization MBR-200 into an open political party (*Movimiento V [Quinta] República, MVR*). Chavez successfully built the MVR as a mass party rooted among the urban poor. For this he utilized the so-called *Circulos Bolivarianos* which spontaneously emerged in 2000 and which were a kind of community groups which addressed issues such as health and education. Each circle had 7-11 members. After some time the party officially had 200,000 circles (as the branches were called) and 2.2 million members (in a country of 30 million people!). These figures may have been inflated, but beyond doubt the MVR had built a significant social base among the popular masses. However, the populist leadership under Chavez never actually wanted that these *Circulos* become real organs of power (like the soviets in Russia 1917), but rather that they should remain pressure-groups to increase the influence of the party among the masses and fight back against the counter-revolutionary mobilizations of the right-wing opposition. They proved particularly valuable during the mass demonstrations against the failed reactionary coup d’état in April 2002.⁸¹

In Bolivia, Evo Morales built a party which was later named *Movimiento al Socialismo–Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos* (Movement for Socialism–Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples, MAS-IPSP). This was a radical petty-bourgeois populist party based strongly on the coca growing peasants and the indigenous people. Among its founding member organizations were the largest peasant federation – the *Confederación Sindical*

Table 9: Trade Union Density in Latin America⁷⁸

<i>Country</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Argentina	42	22	–20	–47
Bolivia	25	9	–16	–65
Peru	21	6	–15	–73
Venezuela	26	14	–12	–47
Uruguay	21	12	–9	–43
Colombia	9	6	–3	–36
Mexico	25	22	–3	–11
Honduras	8	6	–2	–30
Ecuador	11	9	–2	–21
Costa Rica	13	12	–1	–9
Chile	12	13	1	8
El Salvador	4	5	1	28
Dominican Republic	12	14	2	19
Brazil	15	24	9	57

Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) – as well as another peasant union (the *Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia*). The party also created close links with the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*, a mass movement representing the indigenous peoples. (The indigenous peoples together constitute 59% of the Bolivian population and, historically, have been severely discriminated against by the white minority.)

Later the MAS-IPSP also succeeded in getting the support of important workers' and popular organizations like the *Regional Workers Centre* (COR) from El Alto, the rural teachers federation and *Fencomin* which represents the mining cooperatives (founded by former miners who played a crucial role in all revolutionary events in Bolivia since the 1940s, but which were crushed after an heroic uprising in 1985).

In Brazil, as already stated above, the PT could tremendously strengthen itself. From 1988 onwards it won a number of local and regional elections. In 2002 its leader, Lula da Silva, won the presidential elections and formed a popular-front government.

Similar developments took place in other Latin American countries. In Argentina, a progressive, bourgeois-populist force which emerged out of the Peronist movement coalesced around the Néstor and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. First Néstor and later Cristina Fernández de Kirchner headed the country as president from 2003 until 2015. Kirchnerism succeeded in incorporating numerous popular organizations which had emerged during the *Argentinazo* in 2001/02.

Likewise, in Ecuador we saw the *Alianza Patria Altiva y Soberana* (PAIS, Proud and Sovereign Fatherland) led by Rafael Correa who became president of the country in 2007. This alliance combines a nationalist program with socialist rhetoric and social reforms. PAIS has an official membership of 1.5 million people (in a country of 16 million people!)

In their first phase, most of these political movements can be characterized as progressive petty-bourgeois populist forces. (Exceptions are Kirchnerism in Argentina, given the decades-long bourgeois-populist character of the Peronist movement which spawned it, and the Brazilian PT which was founded as a workers' party.) These progressive populist forces formations were not workers' organizations, since their main base was not in mass working class organizations (like the trade unions, etc., or key parties like the Stalinists); neither were they bourgeois parties, as they emerged out of radical mass mobilizations and struggles against the bourgeoisie. Rather they were dominated by petty-bourgeois forces (poor peasants, the lower urban middle class, etc.) which were dramatically affected by the devastating consequences of capitalist globalization. Furthermore, in many cases they succeeded in gaining the support of important sectors of the working class including trade unions. For all these reasons we characterize these parties, in their first phase, as progressive petty-bourgeois populist forces which had strong roots among the popular masses.

However, as Marxists know, in the long run petty-bourgeois parties cannot play an independent role. They have to follow either the working class – represented by a revolutionary mass party – or the bourgeoisie. The temporary coalition government of the Bolsheviks with the Left S.R.

from October 1917 until the summer of 1918 is an example of the first case. However, if there is no Bolshevik-like party, sooner or later the petty-bourgeois parties align themselves with sectors of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Trotsky summarized this historic lesson in his book on the permanent revolution:

*"[N]o matter how great the revolutionary role of the peasantry may be, it nevertheless cannot be an independent role and even less a leading one. The peasant follows either the worker or the bourgeois. (...) A democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, as a regime that is distinguished from the dictatorship of the proletariat by its class content, might be realized only in a case where an independent revolutionary party could be constituted, expressing the interests of the peasants and in general of petty bourgeois democracy – a party capable of conquering power with this or that degree of aid from the proletariat, and of determining its revolutionary programme. As all modern history attests – especially the Russian experience of the last twenty-five years – an insurmountable obstacle on the road to the creation of a peasants' party is the petty-bourgeoisie's lack of economic and political independence and its deep internal differentiation. By reason of this the upper sections of the petty-bourgeoisie (of the peasantry) go along with the big bourgeoisie in all decisive cases, especially in war and in revolution; the lower sections go along with the proletariat; the intermediate section being thus compelled to choose between the two extreme poles. Between Krenskyism and the Bolshevik power, between the Kuomintang and the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is not and cannot be any intermediate stage, that is, no democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants."*⁸²

Indeed, in Russia we could see that first the Mensheviks and the right wing of the S.R. aligned themselves with the White counterrevolutions after the October uprising. Later, they were joined by the left S.R. after the latter broke with the Bolsheviks in the summer of 1918.

This experience has been repeated numerous times. For example, with the end of the 1911-1917 civil war which broke out following the Mexican Revolution, the new regime kept the capitalist relations of production and consolidated the power of the bourgeoisie (albeit with some reforms and a different political regime).⁸³

A similar development took place in Bolivia after the revolution of 1952 brought the MNR to power with the help of the working class – in particular the miners. While many mines were nationalized and some land reforms took place, the bourgeoisie could again consolidate its power under the regime of the MNR which ruled until 1964.⁸⁴

It is crucial to understand that, once they take power, petty-bourgeois populist parties are invariably forced to transform their character since they must find a stable social base from which they can consolidate their power. In other words, they have to align themselves with one of the main social classes in society, i.e. the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Under the conditions of capitalism, taking power usually mean that a radical petty-bourgeois populist party has to create close bonds with sectors of the bourgeoisie. Since the party does not aim to abolish capitalism, the bourgeoisie invariably retain their economic and social power as the ruling class. Furthermore, the capitalist state apparatus – i.e., the bureaucracy of the army, police, legal authority, public administration, etc. – is kept in place, which also plays an important factor in integrating and bourgeoisifying a populist party which recently

took power. In short, all petty-bourgeois populist parties which take over the government in a capitalist system eventually build links with sectors of the bourgeoisie and one imperialist power or another. In this way they become popular-front bourgeois parties.

Of course, we cannot exclude here the possibility for exceptions. One important such exception was Castro's *Movimiento 26 de Julio* which took power in Cuba in January 1959 and which was later forced – under the pressure both of US imperialism and the revolutionary upheaval of the workers and peasants – to go much farther than it initially planned. As we have elaborated elsewhere,⁸⁵ as a result of these developments, the Castroites established a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government in the summer of 1960, which in turn led to the creation of a degenerated workers' state in Cuba. But here again, while the Castroites expropriated the bourgeoisie in the economic field, the also expropriated the working class in the political field.

Such an exception was already foreseen by Trotsky himself as he wrote in the *Transitional Program*:

*"Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is, to say the least, highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."*⁸⁶

However, as we have already said, usually the petty-bourgeois populist party in power eventually becomes a bourgeois populist party, as it fuses with the bourgeois state apparatus and with a sector of the capitalist class. In cases where it undertakes substantial nationalizations, it may also create a new sector of the capitalist class – a class of state-capitalist managers and associated businessmen. This has been the case in countries like Mexico, Iran or, more recently, Venezuela.

Through such a process, such a party becomes a popular front because it combines sectors of both the capitalist class as well as of the popular masses. Likewise, in power such a populist party will establish relations with one imperialist power or another. For example, the Mexican predecessor organizations of the PRI under Plutarco Calles and Lázaro Cárdenas tried to get the support of US imperialism against the British. So did the Peruvian APRA. Another example is the attempt of Indian nationalists under Subhas Chandra Bose who, while not in power, aligned with the German and Japanese imperialists in order to liberate India from the British.

A similar process took place in Latin America during the past decade. The petty-bourgeois populists – also dubbed "*Castro-Chavistas*" – defended capitalist property relations after coming to power. While they introduced several political, economic and social reforms under the massive pressure of the popular masses (including nationalization or reform of some key enterprises like the oil industry), they didn't touch the economic base of the capitalist class

as such – their private property in the industrial, service and financial sectors. Nor did the Castro-Chavistas fundamentally change the apparatus of the state. Of course they replaced a number of key figures, but the bureaucratic caste as a whole with its tens of thousands of state officials, remained in place.

This meant that the old ruling class, while allowing the new populist forces to take over the government, could essentially keep its wealth and its economic base. Consequently, when the populists in power lose much of their popular support, the old ruling class is still in possession of all the resources they need to easily remove them from power.

Furthermore, the Castro-Chavistas channeled the revolutionary energy of the popular masses towards *passive* support in elections or – in emergency situations – used them for temporary and controlled mass mobilizations against the counter-revolutionary forces (as, for example, happened in Venezuela in April 2002 when there was an attempted coup against the regime of Chavez).

In fact, Chavez, Morales, Correa, etc. have altered the concrete configuration of the capitalist system by expanding the state-capitalist sector (similar to a number of Western European capitalist countries after World War II). In this way they formed close relations with the *Boliburguesía*, as the Bolivarian capitalists are called in Venezuela.⁸⁷

The stint of the Castro-Chavistas in power also enabled them to expand social benefits for the popular masses (like the *Misiones Bolivarianas* in Venezuela or the *Bolsa Familia* in Brazil). This was, however, only possible because of exceptional and temporary circumstances. During the first decade of the new millennium, various Latin American countries reaped tremendous economic gains from the global rise of prices of raw materials – in particular oil and gas, but also soya in the case of Argentina and lithium in the case of Bolivia.

In addition, the rise of China as a new great power rivaling US imperialism – which traditionally dominated Latin America – granted the Castro-Chavista governments some room to maneuver and withstand the pressure of US imperialism and the IMF. As a result, China has become one of the largest trading partners of and investors in Latin America.⁸⁸

However, the decline of the world economy has led to a fall in export commodity prices – in particular for oil and soya (see Figure 5) – with disastrous effects on the liquidity of the *Castro-Chavista* governments and their ability to fund the social benefits they previously instituted.

It is precisely on this backdrop that we have witnessed the exacerbating crisis and decline of the various populist or popular front governments in Latin America since 2015. These circumstances have already resulted in the Macri victory in Argentina, the impeachment process against Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, and the MUD victory at the last elections in Venezuela.⁹⁰

In Cuba, the Stalinist Castro leadership has opening led the country towards capitalism, with massive layoffs of workers in state industries and the opening of its economy to Chinese, US and other foreign corporations.⁹¹

This is hardly a surprising development, as the Castro-Chavistas never even attempted to expropriate the capitalist class. As a result, they were invariably unable to overcome the fundamental causes of poverty and unem-

ployment. They were able to temporarily mitigate the consequences of the fundamental economic contradictions in their countries by taking advantage of the raw material price boom. But when this boom ended, the social reforms had to stop and the Castro-Chavistas, having already demoralized their supporters during many years of bureaucratically-imposed political passivity, have now themselves started to implement austerity policies.

Historically, the ideological origins of Bolivarian populism can be traced back to the Russian S.R. party which similarly sought to define a theoretical hodgepodge composed of the working class, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia as a single unity they called the “revolutionary people.” The S.R., and Bolivarian populism in its wake, rejected the strict division of these social forces into distinct classes, with the working class being the only consistently revolutionary force and the other social layers constituting its allies.⁹²

However, despite the current crisis of the Castro-Chavista regimes, it is important to indicate that these petty-bourgeois populist parties both still exist and continue to exert massive influence on the workers and oppressed. Secondly, as long as there is no mass-based revolutionary party as an alternative, a revival of these petty-bourgeois populist parties can by no means be precluded, let alone the emergence of some new influential petty-bourgeois populist parties.

As we have stated in our *Theses on the United Front Tactic* and in various other documents, the emergence of petty-bourgeois populist forces is by no means limited to Latin America. We need only cite Julius Malema’s *EFF* in South Africa; various Islamist-type petty-bourgeois populist forces like Hamas, Dr. al-Qadri’s *Pakistan Awami Tehreek* (PAT, Pakistan People’s Movement), and the Houthis in Yemen; and various democratic nationalist or Islamist rebel organizations in Syria, Libya, and Egypt.

Similarly, various petty-bourgeois populist forces of the nationalist-type have played leading roles in the national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples in the semi-colonial world as well as in some imperialist countries. Until its defeat and demise in 2009, the LTTE (“*Tamil Tigers*”) in Sri Lanka was a prominent example of this, as were various petty-bourgeois nationalist forces in Kashmir and Balochistan (Pakistan). The *Sinn Fein/IRA* in Northern Ireland, before its 1998 capitulation, is another example. *Herrri Batasuna* in the Basque Country and *Candidatura d’Unitat Popular* in Catalonia are also important progressive petty-bourgeois nationalist forces active within the Spanish state.

Recently *Sinn Fein*, which has for a long time been an opposition party in the Republic of Ireland, has significantly increased its influence by playing a leading role in the *Right2Water* campaign, which has become the largest social movement in Ireland for decades in its struggle against the imposing of water fees by the government as part of its austerity program to make ordinary citizen pay for the crisis of the banks. In the latest election (2016), *Sinn Fein* received 13.8% of the votes cast becoming the third-biggest party in Ireland’s parliament.

Yet another example of a specific type of petty-bourgeois populist party in an imperialist country is the *Respect Party* in Britain. Its most prominent leader is George Galloway, a long time MP from the left wing of the Labour Party. Gal-

loway has been playing a prominent role in the movement against the imperialist wars in the Middle East and in solidarity with the Palestinian people. (However, he has also taken reactionary positions as, for example, his support for the Assad dictatorship against the Syrian Revolution and his collaboration with the right-wing racist UKIP party in the campaign for Britain to leave the EU). After Galloway’s 2003 expulsion from the Blairite Labour Party for his opposition to the imperialist war in Iraq, he founded *Respect* together with the centrist SWP and with the support of a number of Muslim migrant organizations. This amalgamation was the result of the anti-war movement in which Muslim migrant organizations played a major role. While *Respect* never succeeded in building a stable organized mass constituency, it has nevertheless been able to achieve some electoral successes, most prominently Galloway’s two elections to parliament (first in Bethnal Green and Bow 2005–10 and later in Bradford West 2012–15). These two successes were almost entirely based on the support of Muslim migrant communities who had previously supported the Labour Party, but who had broken with it given Labour’s submissive support for British participation in the imperialist wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, and the rise of Islamophobic racism in Britain itself. There is no question that these Muslim migrant communities were politically dominated by a small, petty-bourgeois layer of small businessmen, doctors, religious leaders, etc. However, this does not change the fact that *Respect* has for some time become a political expression of the anti-imperialist and anti-racist protest of migrants.

There are also numerous petty-bourgeois populist organizations of migrants in other imperialist countries, as well as among the oppressed black and Latino minorities in the USA.

Of particular importance for revolutionaries are those developments in the working class which led to the formation of new workers’ parties. Naturally, revolutionaries advocate such a process, because it helps the workers’ vanguard to become politically independent both of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties on the one side or of rotten bureaucraticised bourgeois workers’ parties on the other. The most spectacular examples of new parties emerging from the workers’ movement in recent years have been the foundation of the *Democratic Labor Party* in South Korea, the *Partido de los Trabajadores* in Bolivia, SYRIZA in Greece and the *Bloco de Esquerda* (B.E.) in Portugal.

In Korea, the *Democratic Labor Party* is strongly tied to the KCTU, South Korea’s militant trade union federation. Founded in 2000, the DLP won 10 seats in the 2004 parliamentary election. However, the party later split and ultimately merged with other petty-bourgeois populist forces to constitute the *Unified Progressive Party*. The latter became the third largest party in parliament but was recently outlawed by the South Korean state because of its anti-imperialist position against US aggression towards North Korea.

The Bolivian *Partido de los Trabajadores* was created in 2013 with the support of the COB union federation, in particular that of the national miners union FSTMB. This development was a result of the disillusionment of many workers with Morales’ MAS government.

Another example, which has still not matured into a party, is the so-called *United Front* in South Africa. This is a

political alliance which was initiated by the metal workers union NUMSA, the largest union in the COSATU federation until its split with the latter's leadership. Unfortunately, the COSATU leadership is determined to follow the trodden path of the reformist *Freedom Charter*, the old ANC program from 1955, and could not bring itself to form a political party which would stand for election against the main government party, the ANC.

SYRIZA in Greece has been a somewhat different phenomenon since its emergence in 2004 as a coalition of *Synaspismós* (a "Eurocommunist" split from the Stalinist KKE) and several smaller left-reformist and centrist organizations. While for a number of years it remained a party with meager support, it experienced an electoral breakthrough in 2012, becoming the second largest party in parliament after garnering more than 16% of the vote. In the next elections (January 2015), SYRIZA was victorious winning 36.3% of the vote. It gained such mass support because of its anti-austerity program and its denunciation of the corrupt "old political class." However, once in power it completely betrayed the interests of the workers and poor. It organized a popular referendum on the Memorandum of the EU Troika in July 2015 which ended with a resounding victory for "OXI" – "No" to the EU austerity programs. However, only weeks later the SYRIZA government signed the EU memorandum!⁹³

The Portuguese *Bloco de Esquerda*, founded in 1999, is also a coalition of several centrist organizations of Trotskyist and Maoist origin. Like SYRIZA, it has gained popularity as a representative of the struggle against austerity. It soon entered parliament and in the most recent elections (October 2015) received 10.2% of the vote.

While both SYRIZA and B.E. were formed by organiza-

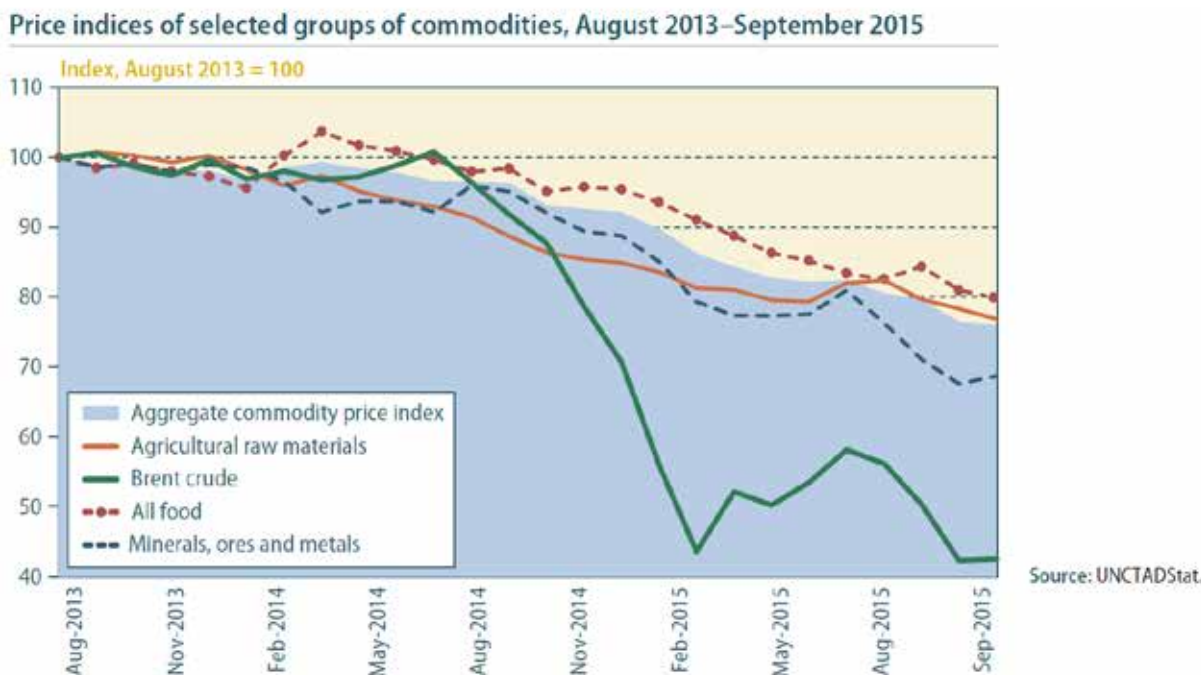
tions of the workers' movement, initially neither had any significant organized mass base in the working class (B.E. still doesn't have on). However, since their political reputation had remained unimpaired by participation in previous governments and the corrupt political establishment, they were able to become an expression of the political radicalization of sectors of the working class and the youth.

A somewhat different phenomenon is the *Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores* (FIT) in Argentina which is not a party but only an electoral alliance of three centrist Trotskyist organizations (PO, PTS and IS). However, its candidates gained 812,530 votes or 3.23% of the ballots cast in the presidential elections of November 2015.

Finally, there is *Podemos* in Spain which was founded in 2014 after years of mass protests and social polarization in the country. In 2011, Spain experienced a mass democratic movement ("*Indignados*") and in the following years witnessed a number of protests against the harsh austerity programs of the conservative PP government and rising unemployment (half of Spain's youth are without jobs). *Podemos* organized a mass demonstration in January 2015 in which more than 100,000 participated. Despite its brief existence, it has already become the second largest political party in Spain in terms of membership with nearly 400,000 members. It focuses its protests against the government's austerity program, the monarchy, and the corrupt political system, and defends the right of national self-determination for the Basque region, Catalonia, etc.

Podemos is a progressive, petty-bourgeois populist party with a leadership strongly orientated towards the program and organization of the Chavista model.⁹⁴ Its social base is dominated by the youth of the impoverished low-

Figure 5: Price Indices of Selected Groups of Commodities, August 2013–September 2015⁸⁹



er middle strata.⁹⁵ However, there are also a number of workers among its supporters, as attested to by a number of *circulos* (local party branches) in working class districts in large cities. As can be seen in Figure 4 (above), 35% of *Podemos* supporters are either unemployed or have only a fixed-term contract.

Furthermore, *Podemos* has close relations with various grassroots organizations of workers and the lower middle class like committees of nurses, of victims of evictions from their apartments or houses because of the debt crisis.⁹⁶

In summary, *Podemos* is yet another important example illustrating how, despite the lack of authentic revolutionary leadership, in the context of the historic crisis of capitalism, the coupling of traditional reformist parties and the radicalization of sectors of the working class and youth can, in the short run at least, successfully find expression in a non-revolutionary organizations.

As we have seen in the examples given above, circumstances can lead to one of three possible scenarios:

i) They can provoke the creation of new reformist workers' parties or tremendously strengthen ones that were previously small (e.g., the PT in Bolivia, DLP in South Korea, SYRIZA in Greece, B.E. in Portugal).

ii) They can result in the formation of new (or very much strengthened) petty-bourgeois populist parties, not only in semi-colonial countries, but even in the imperialist countries (e.g., Castro-Chavismo in Latin America, PAT in Pakistan, Sinn Fein in Ireland, CUP, HB and *Podemos* in the Spanish State, Respect in Britain).

iii) They can also lead to the transformation of an old reformist party, through the mass influx of new and radical supporters, thereby transforming it into a left-reformist party (e.g., the Labour Party in Britain under Corbyn).

However, given the greatly volatile, revolutionary nature of the present historic period, it is hardly surprising that all these new reformist and populist formations are very instable. They can grow rapidly but, given their petty-bourgeois adaption to capitalism and their lack of a clear program and perspective, they fail to build a stable working class cadre. This, in short, explains the extremely instable nature of these parties.

The Marxist Classics on the Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement

The united front tactic constitutes a crucial element in the revolutionary struggle for *proletarian hegemony* in several ways. First, by definition, the struggle for proletarian hegemony implies breaking the current petty-bourgeois or bourgeois hegemony of the liberation movement. In other words, the revolutionary party must strive to replace the current leadership position of the Castro-Chavista, Islamist-populist, left reformist, and other non-revolutionary forces. These leaderships – through their conciliations to the ruling class, their pacification of the revolutionary energy of the masses, through absorbing (or isolating) the best elements into the bourgeois state apparatus once they take power, etc. – obstruct the maturing and further development of the proletarian liberation movement. In this way they don't serve the interests of the working class but rather those of the ruling class. Hence, only their replacement with a revolutionary leadership can ensure that the working class and the oppressed can successfully over-

throw capitalism. This is the first and foremost task of the struggle for proletarian hegemony.

Secondly, and related to the first, revolutionaries must strive to overcome the petty-bourgeois dominance in the parties and organizations which stand at the head of the working class and oppressed. These parties are often dominated by a petty-bourgeois bureaucracy which obstructs the activity of the rank and file workers. Furthermore, there is often a disproportionately high influence of the petty-bourgeoisie (academics, lawyers, small businessmen, affluent community leaders, etc.) in the upper echelons of such parties.

Many times Lenin emphasized that it is crucial for revolutionaries to be aware of the internal social stratification of both the working class as well as of the poor petty-bourgeoisie. This, he argued, makes the united front tactic even more urgent.

„Capitalism would not be capitalism if the proletariat pur sang were not surrounded by a large number of exceedingly motley types intermediate between the proletarian and the semi-proletarian (who earns his livelihood in part by the sale of his labour-power), between the semi-proletarian and the small peasant (and petty artisan, handicraft worker and small master in general), between the small peasant and the middle peasant, and so on, and if the proletariat itself were not divided into more developed and less developed strata, if it were not divided according to territorial origin, trade, sometimes according to religion, and so on. From all this follows the necessity, the absolute necessity, for the Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, its class-conscious section, to resort to changes of tack, to conciliation and compromises with the various groups of proletarians, with the various parties of the workers and small masters. It is entirely a matter of knowing how to apply these tactics in order to raise – not lower – the general level of proletarian class-consciousness, revolutionary spirit, and ability to fight and win.“⁹⁷

Finally, the popular front is the highest (or, more properly put, lowest), form of political subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. As we have mentioned above, this is a political alliance of parties of the proletariat and the peasantry with openly bourgeois forces. Such popular fronts constitute the biggest danger for the working class, since they inherently involve the workers' political and organizational subordination to the bourgeoisie, lulling the former into a rosy program of pacifist and reformist illusions. Such subordination only weakens the working class and makes it incapable of struggling against future severe attacks by the ruling class. Hence Trotsky characterized the issue of the popular front as the *“main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch.”* Faced with the experience of the popular front in France and Spain in 1936, Trotsky wrote in a document adopted by a conference of the *Movement for the Fourth International* at that time:

“The July days [in Spain, Ed.] deepen and supplement the lessons of the June days in France with exceptional force. For the second time in five years the coalition of the labor parties with the Radical bourgeoisie has brought the revolution to the edge of the abyss. Incapable of solving a single one of the tasks posed by the revolution – since all these tasks boil down to one, namely, the crushing of the bourgeoisie – the People's Front renders the existence of the bourgeois regime impossible and thereby provokes the fascist coup d'etat. By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralyzing their will to struggle, the People's Front creates favorable conditions for the

victory of fascism. The policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie must be paid for by the proletariat with years of new torments and sacrifice, if not by decades of fascist terror.”⁹⁸

Hence, the central task of united front tactic is to help the proletariat to overcome all these forms of subordination and to establish its hegemony within the liberation movement, i.e., to free itself from any bourgeois influence and to lead its allies – the poor peasantry, the urban poor, the impoverished lower middle strata, etc. – into the revolutionary liberation struggle against the capitalist system.

Lenin emphasized this issue many times.

“What must the policy of the Social-Democrats be? Either abstain, and, as socialists, stand aside from the liberals, who betray liberty and exploit the people, or give the lead to the democratic petty bourgeoisie that is capable of struggle, both against the Black Hundreds and against the liberals. (...) The latter policy is obligatory when the conditions of a bourgeois-democratic revolution obtain, when, in addition to the working class, there are certain bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata capable of struggle for the democracy that is essential to the proletariat. In present-day Russia the second policy is obligatory. Without ever forgetting their socialist agitation and propaganda, and the organisation of the proletarians into a class, Social-Democrats must, jointly with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, crush both the Black Hundreds and the liberals, as the situation may demand.”⁹⁹

Explaining a key difference between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, he wrote in another article: “The struggle between Bolshevism and Menshevism is inseparably bound up with that history, being a struggle over the question whether to support the liberals or to overthrow the hegemony of the liberals over the peasantry.”¹⁰⁰

In another article, he explained: “The hegemony of liberalism in the Russian movement for emancipation inevitably implies the weakness of this movement and the impregnability of the dominance of the die-hard landlords. Only the brushing aside of the liberals by the proletariat and the hegemony of the latter have afforded victories for the revolution and can give more of them in the future.”¹⁰¹

In the years following Lenin’s death, the Stalinists accused Trotsky of “neglecting” the necessity of the working class to seek an alliance with the poor peasantry. This was utter nonsense and only served the Stalinists to cover their own strategy of subordinating the interests of the working class to the political leaders of the petty bourgeoisie and the labor bureaucracy (e.g., the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee in 1925-27, Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang, etc.).

Against these accusations, Trotsky replied that the alliance of the working class with the poor peasantry is crucial element of the Bolshevik strategy. However, such an alliance can be established on firm and stable ground *only* if it is *not* achieved by subordinating the proletariat to the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie (whose desire is rather to become part of the bourgeoisie), but rather in an alliance under the leadership of the working class. In fact, this is an indispensable part of his theory of permanent revolution.

In his book on permanent revolution, Trotsky explained: „Then wherein lies the distinction between the advanced and the backward countries? The distinction is great, but it still remains within the limits of the domination of capitalist relationships. The forms and methods of the rule of the bourgeoisie differ greatly in different countries. At one pole, the domination bears a stark and absolute character: The United States. At the other

pole finance capital adapts itself to the outlived institutions of Asiatic mediaevalism by subjecting them to itself and imposing its own methods upon them: India. But the bourgeoisie rules in both places. From this it follows that the dictatorship of the proletariat also will have a highly varied character in terms of the social basis, the political forms, the immediate tasks and the tempo of work in the various capitalist countries. But to lead the masses of the people to victory over the bloc of the imperialists, the feudalists and the national bourgeoisie – this can be done only under the revolutionary hegemony of the proletariat, which transforms itself after the seizure of power into the dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹⁰²

In summary, the struggle for proletarian hegemony and the united front tactic are inseparably linked one with the other. Without the united front tactic, the struggle for proletarian hegemony takes place in a vacuum, because it is only in direct practical collaboration and political confrontation with the reformist and populist forces that revolutionaries can remove them from their positions of leadership. Without the struggle for proletarian hegemony the united front tactic degenerates into opportunistic maneuvering with the petty-bourgeois leaders and hence does not advance the revolutionary class struggle but rather helps the ruling class.

Endnotes

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3 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), in: MECW Vol. 6, pp. 518-519; see also Friedrich Engels: Principles of Communism, in: MECW Vol. 6, pp. 356-357. As a side note we want to point out that the English translation of this quotation is misleading regarding one issue. At the end of the first paragraph is stated that communists fight "against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie." However, in the German original Marx and Engels do not use the phrase "petty bourgeoisie" (Kleinbürgertum) but rather use the words "Kleinbürgerei" which means petty bourgeois ideologies and attitudes. Obviously, the wrong translation changes the significance. While Marx and Engels proclaimed the struggle against the monarchy, the feudal class and petty bourgeois ideologies, the English translation gives the wrong impression that they also intended to fight against the petty-bourgeoisie as a class.

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7 V.I. Lenin: 'Left-Wing' Communism - An Infantile Disorder, in: *Lenin Collected Works (LCW)*, Vol. 31, pp. 70-72. The Fourth Edition of the *Lenin Collected Works* was published by Progress Publishers, Moscow (1977-1980).

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9 Communist International: Theses on Comintern Tactics (1922), p. 424

10 Communist International: Theses on the Eastern Question, 5 December 1922, Fourth Congress of the Communist International, in: Jane Degras: *The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents Volume I 1919-1922*, pp. 385-386. Concerning the Marxist understanding of the anti-imperialist united front tactic we refer readers to chapter 12 and 13 of our book Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*. Vienna 2013,

published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (The book can be downloaded for free at www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net.)

11 Communist International: Theses on the Eastern Question, p. 390

12 On this see Dirk Hemje-Oltmanns: *Arbeiterbewegung und Einheitsfront. Zur Diskussion der Einheitsfronttaktik in der KPD 1920/21*, Verlag für das Studium der Arbeiterbewegung GmbH, Westberlin 1973; Arnold Reisberg: *An den Quellen der Einheitsfrontpolitik*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1971, Vol. 1 and 2, John Riddell: *The Comintern in 1922. The Periphery Pushes Back*, in: *Historical Materialism 22.3-4* (2014), pp. 52-103; Larry Peterson: *German Communism, Workers' Protest, and Labor Unions. The Politics of the United Front in Rhineland - Westphalia 1920-1924*, Springer Science+Business Media, B.V. 1993

13 Communist International: Theses on Comintern Tactics (1922), p. 425-426

14 V.I. Lenin: 'Left-Wing' Communism - An Infantile Disorder, in: *LCW Vol. 31*, pp. 86-88

15 For sources on these interesting developments in Indonesia and China see below in chapter V where we discuss this experience again.

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19 Leon Trotsky: *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Mobilization of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power (The Transitional Program)*; in: *Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years (1933-40)*, New York 1973, pp. 201-203

20 See Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South*, e.g. pp. 69-80, pp. 179-188, pp. 228-240

21 See on this: *The Great Robbery of the South*, e.g. pp. 57-62

22 The category "labor force" includes all persons involved in economic activity, i.e., workers, peasants, self-employed, salaried middle class employees and capitalists.

23 We briefly remark here that the bourgeois category "wage earners" includes not only workers but also the salaried middle class. However, the bourgeois statistics of the ILO and similar institutions naturally don't differentiate between these two sectors. Nevertheless, these figures are nevertheless a useful approximation for the growth of the global proletariat.

24 International Labour Office: *World Employment and Social Outlook 2015. The changing nature of jobs*, p. 29

25 International Labour Office: *World Social Security Report 2010/11. Providing coverage in times of crisis and beyond* (2010), p. 28

26 International Labour Office: *Global Wage Report 2014/15. Wages and income inequality*, p. 14 and Supporting Data

27 World Bank: *World Development Report 1995*, p. 9; Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs of the European Commission: *Labour market and wage developments in 2009*; in: *EUROPEAN ECONOMY Nr. 5/2010*, pp. 188-190 and our own calculations. The category "Developed economies" excludes Eastern and South-Eastern European states and Malta and Cyprus.

28 Sources: International Labour Office: *Global Employment Trends 2014. Risk of a jobless recovery?*, p. 97 and our own calculations

29 John Smith: *Offshoring, Outsourcing & the 'Global Labour Arbitrage'* (2008), Paper to IIPPE 2008 – Procida, Italy 9-11 September 2008, p. 5

30 UNIDO: *Industrial Development Report 2011*, p. 150

31 John Smith: *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century*,

Monthly Review 2015 Volume 67, Issue 03 (July-August), <http://monthlyreview.org/2015/07/01/imperialism-in-the-twenty-first-century/>.

32 In contrast to the revisionist theories of the CWI, IMT as well as the Morenoites (LIT-CI and UIT-CI), Marxists do not regard members of the repressive state apparatus as parts of the working class. Trotsky was very clear on this issue: „*The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker. Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain.*“ (Leo Trotzki: Was nun? Schicksalsfragen des deutschen Proletariats (1932) in: Schriften über Deutschland, Band 1, p. 186; in English: Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat (January 1932), <http://marxists.architecture.net/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next01.htm#s1>)

33 Markus Lehner: Arbeiterklasse und Revolution. Thesen zum marxistischen Klassenbegriff, in: Revolutionärer Marxismus Nr. 28 (1999)

34 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, e.g. pp. 179-188, pp. 228-240, pp. 385-386; Michael Pröbsting: Migration and Super-exploitation: Marxist Theory and the Role of Migration in the present Period, in: Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory, Vol. 43, Issue 3-4, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03017605.2015.1099846>; Michael Pröbsting: Marxismus, Migration und revolutionäre Integration (2010); in: Revolutionärer Kommunismus, Nr. 7, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-7>. A summary of this study in English-language: Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 1 (English-language Journal of the RCIT), <http://www.thecommunists.net/oppressed/revolutionary-integration/>

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38 See Peter Dicken: Global Shift. Mapping the Changing Contours of the World Economy (Sixth Edition), The Guilford Press, New York 2011, p. 496

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44 International Labour Office: World Employment and Social Outlook 2015. The changing nature of jobs, p. 31 (our own calculation)

45 International Labour Office: World Employment and Social

Outlook – Trends 2016, p 72

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