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World Perspectives 2017:

The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism (Part 1)

Introduction	p.3
I. A New Political Phase Has Opened: The Reactionary Offensive of the Ruling Class in the Era of Trumpism	p.4
<i>Intensification of the Reactionary Offensive on All Continents</i>	p.4
<i>Workers and Oppressed Fight Back Despite the Chronic Crisis of Leadership</i>	p.5
<i>Notes on the State of the World Economy</i>	p.6
II. Some Theoretical Question about the New Political Phase	p.8
III. The Great Power Rivalry and Its Consequences for World Politics	p.14
<i>The Social-Imperialist Lackeys of the Western and Eastern Great Powers</i>	p.16
<i>Centrist Confusion</i>	p.17
<i>Imperialist Wars against Oppressed Peoples</i>	p.18
<i>Reformist and Centrist Cowardice in Face of the Imperialist Aggression</i>	p.20
Footnotes	p.21

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World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism (Part 1)

Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries

Document of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, 18 December 2016

INTRODUCTION

1. The victory of Donald Trump—the arch-reactionary candidate of the right wing of the conservative Republican Party – in the US presidential election has opened a new era both for the US as well as for the world. It qualitatively accelerates the dynamics of all contradictions between the classes as well as between the Great Power. We stand before an intensified reactionary offensive of the ruling class on all continents. The rivalry between the Great Powers – in particular the US, Russia and China – is reaching a new stage. In addition, Trump, Putin and the other rulers will wage new attacks against the oppressed people of the South. These dynamics will provoke new upsurges of mass resistance, both domestically and abroad. In short, the Trump Era will deepen the fundamental instability of the capitalist world order and hasten massive political and economic explosions. History's pace is accelerating.

2. As this reality alters the world political situation, it will also have profound effects on the tasks of socialists in building a new Revolutionary World Party; just as it offers new opportunities, as well as dangers, for the

revolutionary struggle. The acceleration of history's pace also obliges us to *accelerate* the construction of a strong international revolutionary organization. Any routinism or even cynicism about “yet again” building a new International – so popular among the “radical left” – is nothing but an expression of demoralization and political bankruptcy against which the Bolshevik-Communists of the RCIT will fight with all our strength. *Now* is the time to energetically tackle the task of building the new Revolutionary World Party!

3. In presenting this analysis of the world situation, the RCIT is not only attempting to provide a political compass to all socialists in understanding the present dynamics of the global struggle between the classes and the Great Powers. We also see this document as an important contribution to the extremely urgent discussion among revolutionaries all over the world to formulate the perspectives and the foundation of a new Revolutionary World Party. In the end, our success or failure in building such a world party will determine the fate of humanity!



Vienna (Austria): Rally in Solidarity with Aleppo on 15 December 2016

I. A NEW POLITICAL PHASE HAS OPENED: THE REACTIONARY OFFENSIVE OF THE RULING CLASS IN THE ERA OF TRUMPISM

4. Trump's victory opens a new political phase. To be more precise, it does not represent a qualitative *turn* in the preceding political dynamics but rather their *acceleration*. In past documents the RCIT has repeatedly drawn attention to the reactionary offensive of the ruling class in the face of decaying capitalism. In our last *World Perspectives* document, we pointed out the reactionary offensive which began to accelerate from 2013/14 and which has, in particular, been manifested in a series of defeats: the aborted Arab Revolution; the ascent of right-wing reactionary forces in Latin America (including the coup d'état in Brazil); and increasing of Islamophobic chauvinism and militarization in Europe.

5. However, with the outcome of the US presidential election, these trends are now being massively exacerbated. Or, to formulate it in the language of Hegelian dialectics, the plethora of quantitative changes has culminated in a new qualitative change. The election of the most reactionary government in the modern history of the United States – still the most important Great Power on the planet – by definition not only has dramatic consequences for North American but for the entire world.

6. In particular, Trump's victory signifies both the official recognition of US imperialism of its loss of status as *the* hegemonic Great Power, as well as its determination to intensify its rivalry with the other Great Powers. This will have dramatic political and economic consequences. Trump's announcement of his intention to terminate US involvement in the TPP negotiations – for a “free trade” agreement between the US and a number of Asian and Latin American countries, his determination to renegotiate the NAFTA accord, his threat to scrap the Kyoto Climate Protocol, are all revealing indications of things to come. Together they herald the end of the “era of globalization” and the beginning of a period characterized by the formation of *open* rivalry between the regional imperialist blocs.

7. Furthermore, the rise of Trump and right-wing, anti-democratic reactionary forces in Latin America, Europe, Central and Eastern Asia and the Arab world reflects the terminal crisis of the capitalist regime of liberal democracy. Faced with accelerating political and social contradictions, capitalism can less and less afford to rely on a “democratic” political superstructure to suppress social unrest and political revolts. As a result, the bourgeoisie is and will continue to turn more and more toward Bonapartist and authoritarian forms of rule. The current period of *decaying liberal democracy* also results in the deep ideological crisis of present-day capitalism which, on the one hand, propagates reactionary – including fascist – forces but, on the other hand, also paves the road for the advance of revolutionary and anti-capitalist currents.

8. We can reasonably assume that the already accelerating economic, political and social contradictions of global capitalism will again be severely aggravated

by the next Great Recession. While it is not possible to make exact predictions about the concrete forms of such explosions, revolutionaries should prepare for sharp reactions by the ruling classes in all countries in order to deflect the attention of the popular masses. Such reactions can include, but are not limited to, horrible chauvinistic excesses, counterrevolutionary coups, and the escalation of economic wars between the Great Powers. However, such developments also have the potential to provoke revolutionary crises and civil wars pitting the workers and oppressed against the ruling class. In all cases, the next Great Recession will accelerate the ongoing acceleration of capitalism's contradictions.

Intensification of the Reactionary Offensive on All Continents

9. The accelerating reactionary offensives will bear tremendous dangers for the working class and oppressed. These face accelerated austerity offensives with the threat of further cuts in wages and labor rights, an increase of racism, a turn towards Bonapartist rule and dictatorships, as well as more imperialist aggression. In addition to attacks on wages and labor rights throughout the world, the reactionary offensives will in particular impact the workers and oppressed in the coming period in the following way:

i) *The ongoing onslaught of reactionary dictatorships against the popular masses in the Middle East.* This includes the reactionary advances of Assad and his foreign backers against the Syrian masses (for example the fall of Aleppo); joint efforts by Russian and US imperialism along with Iran, Turkey and others to liquidate the Syrian Revolution with the assistance of their local allies; continuing repression of the popular masses by the military dictatorship in Egypt; ongoing aggression of the reactionary Saudi coalition against the people of Yemen.

ii) *The continuing rise of the right-wing forces in Latin America.* This has already resulted in the successful coup d'état against Brazil's popular-front government headed by Dilma Rousseff, while today even more extreme right-wing forces are attempting to undermine the unstable Temer government. Similarly, we are witness to the ongoing efforts of the right-wing opposition to overthrow the Bolivarian government of Maduro in Venezuela.

iii) *Massive attacks against workers, migrants and Afro-Americans in the US.* Trump's victory will accelerate the already ongoing attacks of the bosses on wages and labor rights. His incoming administration will also increase the power of the police and other forces of repression towards the nationally oppressed masses – in particularly blacks as well as Latinos, many millions of whom will face the threat of deportation.

iv) *The ongoing ascent of right-wing racist forces and state repression in Europe.* The bourgeoisie is continuing

its efforts to implement its austerity programs – via their lackey governments which include, among the more openly neo-liberals, the “socialist” Hollande government, supported by the so called French “Communist” Party and the *FdG*, as well as the supposedly “anti-capitalist” SYRIZA government in Greece. Similarly, state repression and militarization is continuing within the EU – mostly directed against migrants and, in particular, the Muslim minority. These reactionary attacks, combined with the betrayal of the official reformist leaderships of the workers’ movement, are resulting in the ascent of extreme right-wing populist and racist forces in nearly all European countries. The victory for Brexit in Britain was a result of this trend.

v) *The continuing imperialist military offensive* – by the US, Russia, the UK, France and Germany – *in the Middle East and North Africa* against Islamist-led popular rebellions. The nominees for the key military and security positions in the new Trump administration make clear that this will be an extremely aggressive imperialist regime determined to a “*multi-generational world war against Islam.*” Related to this, we can expect another wave of *refugees* fleeing to neighboring countries as well as to Western Europe.

vi) *In Asia too, the ruling class is accelerating its anti-social and anti-democratic attacks.* India’s right-wing BJP government of Narendra Modi is robbing the workers and poor with its “*demonetization*” reform and is encouraging the ongoing brutal discrimination of Dalits, women and Muslims. In Thailand, the military dictatorship is whipping up reactionary monarchism and consolidating its regime following the appointment of the new King Rama X. In the Philippines, President Duterte is consolidating his semi-Bonapartist regime by inciting an all-out war against real and alleged drug dealers and addicts. In South Korea, the extreme conservative President Park Geun-hye attempted to impose a pro-business agenda, but has now fallen after a series of corruption scandals and mass protests.

vii) *In Africa, we are witnessing the continuing efforts of the imperialist powers to exploit the continent’s workers and natural resources with the assistance of the local governments.* Faced with increasing mass protests, various *regimes are desperately attempting to retain power.* Thus, we see the Ethiopian regime violently suppressing mass demonstrations and declaring a state of emergency. In Gabon, President Ali Bongo could only stay in power by rigging the elections in late August, despite mass protests. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, President Joseph Kabila hopes to retain power by postponing this year’s scheduled elections to April 2018. In Zimbabwe, the Mugabe government is also trying to hold onto power by suppressing demonstrations. In South Africa too, the corrupt and discredited Zuma government is waging a massive battle to fight popular dissent both on the streets as well as inside the ruling ANC party.

viii) *The aggravation of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers* – in particular of the US against Russia and China. Trump’s victory may result in the short-term closer collaboration of the US with Russia, among other things, to further their joint effort to liquidate the Syrian Revolution. However, it is clear that Trump’s chauvinist and protectionist policies will provoke a further acceleration of the already intensifying rivalry between the Great Powers (the US, EU, Japan, Russia and China),

as they will intensify economic and ultimately military warfare against one other. In addition, EU imperialism will be forced to either accelerate integration and become politically and military independent of Washington, or disintegrate.

Workers and Oppressed Fight Back Despite the Chronic Crisis of Leadership

10. On all continents, workers and the oppressed are resolutely resisting this reactionary offensive of the ruling class. The heroic struggle of the workers and poor in Aleppo – Syria’s Stalingrad; the successful resistance of the Yemeni people against the Saudi aggressors; the mass mobilizations in Morocco after the death of Mouhcine Fikri; the general strikes against the Temer government in Brazil; the mass demonstrations in several Latin American countries to stop the repulsive violence against women; the spontaneous mass demonstrations of the youth and migrants against US president-elect Donald Trump; the struggle of the workers and youth against the reactionary labor laws in France, the massive protests of the Dalit in India; the mass demonstrations against South Korea’s corrupt President Park Geun-hye; the struggles of the workers, the poor and the youth in South Africa as well as in Zimbabwe – all these are ample proof of the unbroken determination of the popular masses to fight back.

11. However, all these mass struggles suffer from a *chronic lack of a revolutionary leadership.* Instead they are led either by corrupt trade union leaderships and career-obsessed bourgeois politicians or by petty-bourgeois populist, Islamist or nationalist forces that are sincere and dedicated in their convictions but lack a strategy to organize the workers and peasants and to lead them towards victory. This is why the popular masses have suffered so many terrible defeats in the past years.

12. Therefore, the RCIT once again emphasizes that the most important task in the coming period is the overcoming of the crisis of working class leadership by advancing the formation of a revolutionary world party with national sections in all countries. This can only be achieved on the basis of agreement in the analyses of the main features of the present period of capitalism and the programmatic tasks derived from them. Hence, the RCIT calls all revolutionaries who agree on the fundamental features of our analysis and program to join us in driving forward the formation of new World Party.

13. We have stated above that history’s pace has accelerated. However, it is crucial to correctly understand the tempo and the consequential tasks. We have emphasized the reactionary offensive of the ruling class. But this is an offensive resulting from the fundamental crisis and instability of capitalism, i.e., as a result of the *weakness* and not the strength of the bourgeoisie. It is a reactionary offensive which *opens* a new phase of class struggle and not one which follows a victorious – from the perspective of the bourgeoisie – period of struggle. The new phase is – to use an historical analogy – in no way similar to Germany after Hitler’s taking of power in 1933, but rather to Western Europe in the mid-1920s. In short, the new phase is the end of the beginning of the historic period which opened in 2008, rather than being the beginning of the period’s end.

14. In summary: revolutionaries must be absolutely clear about the character of the present historic period, as well as about the nature of the phase within this period. Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, we have been living in an historic revolutionary period. This is a period characterized by the acute decay of capitalism. In this period, the clashes and struggles being waged along the three fronts of imperialism's contradictions are unavoidably exacerbated in all regions of the world: (a) the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the world proletariat; (b) the struggle of the Great Powers and monopoly capital against the oppressed people in the South; and (c) the conflicts between the imperialist rivals. These, in turn, will provoke revolutions, counterrevolutions and wars, and offer numerous opportunities (as well as dangers) for the working class to advance in its struggle for liberation. Currently we are living in a phase characterized by the reactionary offensive of the ruling class, one which has already resulted in a number of defeats for the workers and oppressed due to the chronic crisis of revolutionary leadership. However, this reactionary offensive unavoidably provokes new contradictions and new struggles. The new World Party will be forged under the blows of the reactionary offensive of the ruling class. It is towards the workers and oppressed engaged in these struggles that all revolutionary forces must orient all their efforts to build a new Revolutionary World Party.

Notes on the State of the World Economy

15. The acceleration of the reactionary offensive takes place on the backdrop of the stagnation of the capitalist world economy and the approach of the next Great Recession. Here we will not elaborate an extensive analysis of the world economy, but instead refer readers to our previous documents in which we undertook such a detailed examination.¹ Therefore, here we will limit ourselves to making a few comments. First among them is our observation that the beginning of the next Great Recession is longer in coming than we anticipated in our previous *World Perspectives* document published a year ago.

16. This is mainly the result of energetic state-capitalist efforts on the part of various imperialist governments. For example, the Chinese regime countered the downturn of its economy by a massive public investment program. According to Professor Zhu Tian from the China-Europe

International Business School, state-owned fixed-asset investments annually grew from January to June 2016 by 23.5% over the same period a year earlier, but private fixed asset investment growth had dropped to 2.8% (see Figure 1).

17. As an aside we note that the Indian government also launched a significant state-capitalist public investment program which helped to induce short-term accelerated growth in this important semi-colonial country (see Figure 2).³

18. Similarly, the European Central Bank (ECB) initiated a massive Quantitative Easing (QE) program hoping to energize the economy. From March 2015 to March 2016, the ECB printed over 700 billion Euros (which is about 5.5% percent of Eurozone's GDP)! In December 2016, the ECB decided to continue the program until the end of 2017, which involves adding at least another 540 billion Euros as stimulus to the already existing 1.74 billion (\$1.87 trillion) effort.⁵

19. However, while these state-capitalist interventions were able to delay the outbreak of the next Great Recession, naturally they cannot undo the decline of the world economy heading for another Great Recession (see Figure 3 and 4). Hence, the IMF concludes in its report for the latest G-20 meeting: *"The global outlook remains subdued, with unfavorable longer-term growth dynamics and domestic income disparities adding to the challenges faced by policymakers. Recent developments—including very low inflation, along with slowing investment growth and trade—broadly confirm the modest pace of global activity. The decline in investment, exacerbated by private sector debt overhangs and financial sector balance sheet issues in many countries, low productivity growth trends, and demographic factors weigh on long-term growth prospects, further reducing incentives for investment despite record-low interest rates. A period of low growth that has bypassed many low-income earners has raised anxiety about globalization and worsened the political climate for reform. Downside risks still dominate."*⁶

20. As we have repeatedly pointed out, this decline reflects the failure of the monopoly bourgeoisie to overcome the fundamental inner contradictions of the capitalist world economy – its over-accumulation of capital and the fall of the rate of profit. The Marxist economist Michael Roberts, among others, has demonstrated this mechanism in his works. In Figure 5 we see the downward trend of the rate of profit in the U.S. economy.

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Figure 1. China's State and Private Investment, % Change Year by Year for 2011-2016 ²

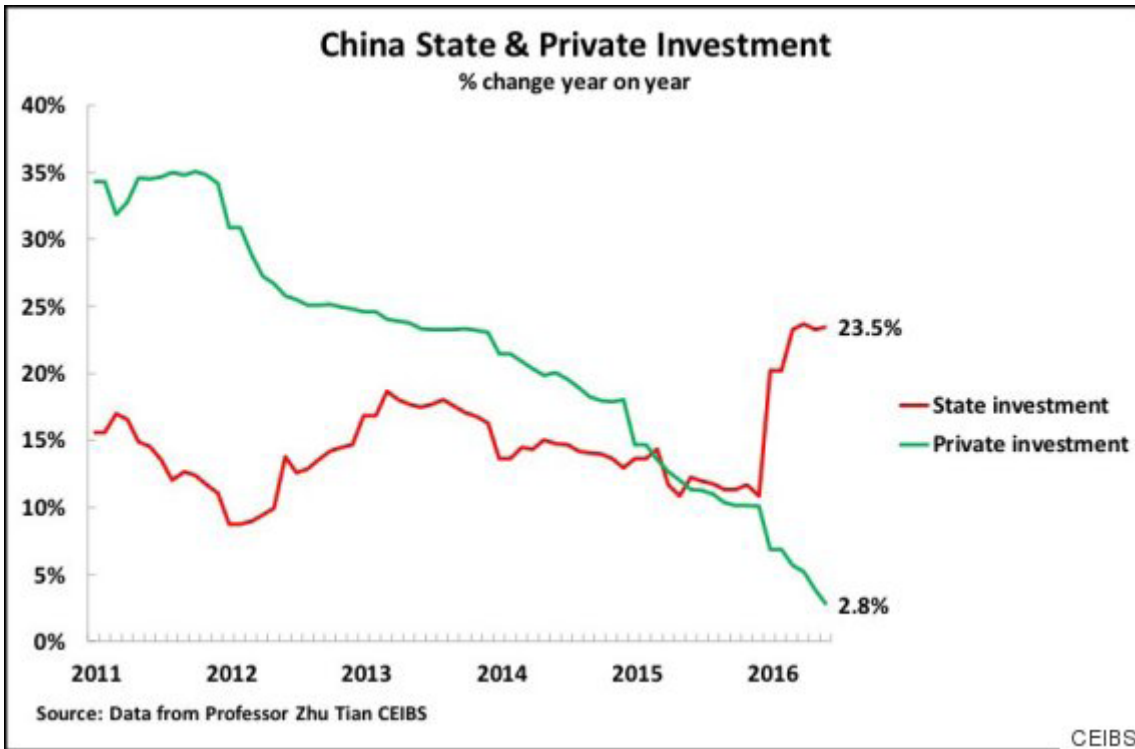
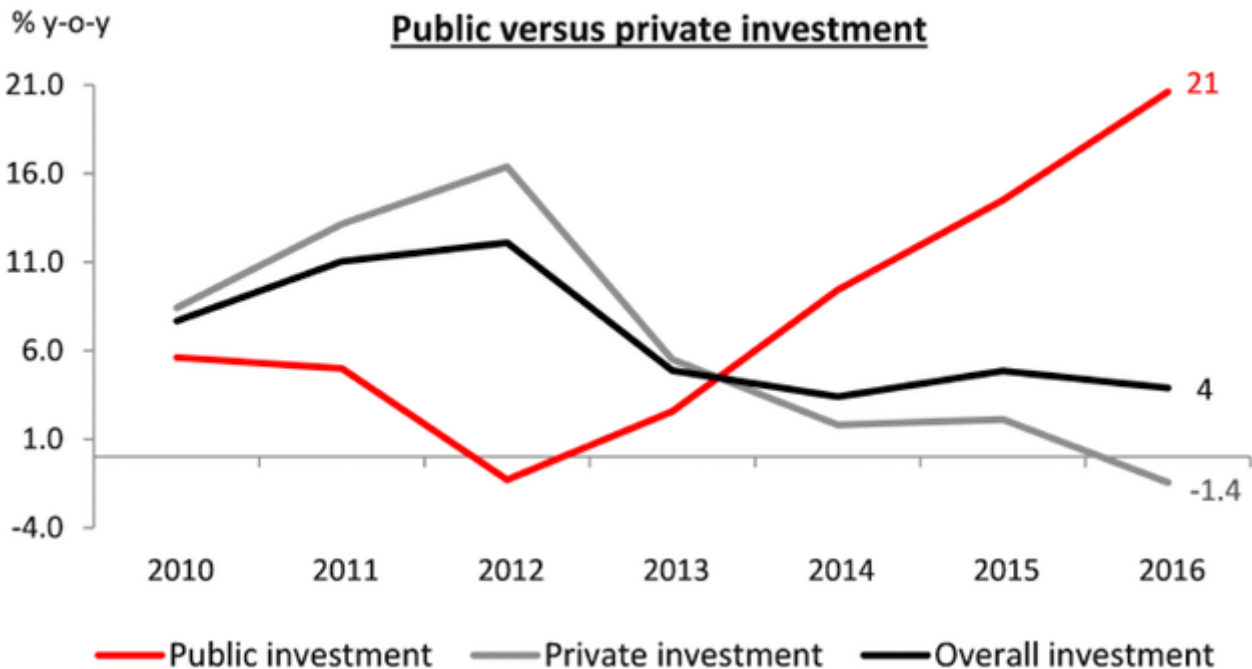


Figure 2. India's Public and Private Investment, % Change Year by Year for 2010-2016 ⁴

Chart 1: Public investment expanded and private investment contracted, both at record rates in FY16



II. SOME THEORETICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW POLITICAL PHASE

21. In our analysis of the world situation, we have emphasized the resorting of many ruling classes around the world to more authoritarian forms of rule as well as the ascent of reactionary right-wing forces. These developments raise several important questions pertinent to the perspective and tactics of revolutionaries. First, are we witnessing the creation of fascist regimes and, if not, how can these regimes be characterized? Second, how shall we characterize various right-wing movements protesting against "the establishment" or "the system"? Third, what are the consequences for the class struggle of such regimes coming to power? Fourth, what are the consequences of these developments on the slogans and tactics of revolutionaries? And fifth, are we at the end of the "age of globalization" and, if so, what are the consequences of its demise? These are not simple theoretical or even academic questions, as they have huge consequences for the program to be advanced by revolutionaries – particularly in a period like the one we are entering. This is precisely why, as Lenin repeatedly emphasized, Marxist theory is a guide to action. Naturally, such a theoretical analysis is particularly important in a period like the present one which will be replete with convulsions, explosions and abrupt turns.

Trotsky once explained: *"The vast practical importance of a correct theoretical orientation is most strikingly manifested in a period of acute social conflict of rapid political shifts, of abrupt changes in the situation. In such periods, political conceptions and generalizations are rapidly used up and require either a complete replacement (which is easier) or their concretization, precision or partial rectification (which is harder). It is in just such periods that all sorts of transitional, intermediate situations and combinations arise, as a matter of necessity, which upset the customary patterns and doubly require a sustained theoretical attention. In a word, if in the pacific and "organic" period (before the war) one could still live on the revenue from a few readymade abstractions, in our time each new event forcefully brings home the most important law of the dialectic: The truth is always concrete."*¹⁰

22. Are we witnessing the creation of fascist regimes and, if not, how can these regimes be characterized? As Marxists we have always opposed the infantile use of the term "fascism" by the various shades of Stalinism. In the early 1930s, these people called every party except themselves "fascist." For several decades various Turkish Maoists and Hoxhaists denounced every single government in their country as "fascist." Various Maoist parties in India call the Modi government "fascist." And it has also become popular amongst leftists in the US to characterize the Trump movement as "fascist." In fact, the Cliffite IST tradition has always called right-wing parties like the FPÖ in Austria, FN in France, etc. "fascists." All of this is utter nonsense. Fascism is not synonymous with simple authoritarian rule and not even when a military dictatorship is involved. What the term "fascism" does imply is the mass mobilization of the petty-bourgeois in the form of organized contingents of storm troopers

violently attacking working class organizations in the service of monopoly capital. Hence, when fascism comes to power, it represents not only the abolition of bourgeois democracy but the complete and sustained annihilation of all workers' organizations.

Trotsky once defined fascism as the following: *"Fascism may assume different aspects in different countries; it can be diversified in point of social composition, but in its essence fascism is that combat grouping of forces which is moved to the fore by threatened bourgeois society in order to repel the proletariat in a civil war. When the democratic-parliamentarian state apparatus becomes entangled in its own internal contradictions, when bourgeois legality hampers the bourgeoisie itself, the latter sets in motion the most combative elements at its disposal, freeing them from the fetters of legality, and obliging them to employ all the methods of force and terror. This is fascism. Therefore fascism is a condition of civil war on the part of the bourgeoisie, just as we have the grouping of forces and the organization for an armed uprising in the epoch of civil war on the part of the proletariat. We thereby say that fascism cannot represent a protracted and, so to speak, "normal" condition of bourgeois society, just as a condition of an armed uprising cannot be a constant, normal condition of the proletariat."*¹¹

23. For these reasons, fascism's coming to power represents a historic defeat and the liquidation of the working class struggle for a sustained period. This must not be confused with forms of authoritarian regime or even a right-wing government within the limits of parliamentary democracy. As reactionary as such forms of regimes might be, they do not represent the same devastating annihilation of all working class and even bourgeois democratic organizations as fascism does.

24. Bonapartism, on the other hand, is a broad concept and basically defines a regime based on the military and the bureaucratic state apparatus – and less, or not at all, on the bourgeois parliament – and maintaining a (more or less) unstable equilibrium between the antagonistic classes. In the words of Trotsky: *"The concept of Bonapartism, being too broad, demands concretization. During the last few years we have applied this term to those capitalist governments that, by exploiting the antagonisms between the proletarian and fascist camps and by leaning directly upon the military-police apparatus, raise themselves above parliament and democracy, as the saviors of 'national unity.'"*¹² In another document, Trotsky elaborated the following characterization of Bonapartism: *"It is true that the Doumergue government, like the Brüning-Schleicher governments in their day, appears at first glance to govern with the assent of parliament. But it is a parliament which has abdicated, a parliament which knows that in case of resistance the government would dispense with it. Thanks to the relative equilibrium between the camp of counterrevolution which attacks and the camp of the revolution which defends itself, thanks to their temporary mutual neutralization, the axis of power has been raised above the classes and above their parliamentary representation. It was necessary to seek the head of the government outside of parliament and "outside the parties." (...) The government does not appear as an executive organ of*

Figure 3. Industrial Production Volume, Annual Growth Rate 2010-2016⁷

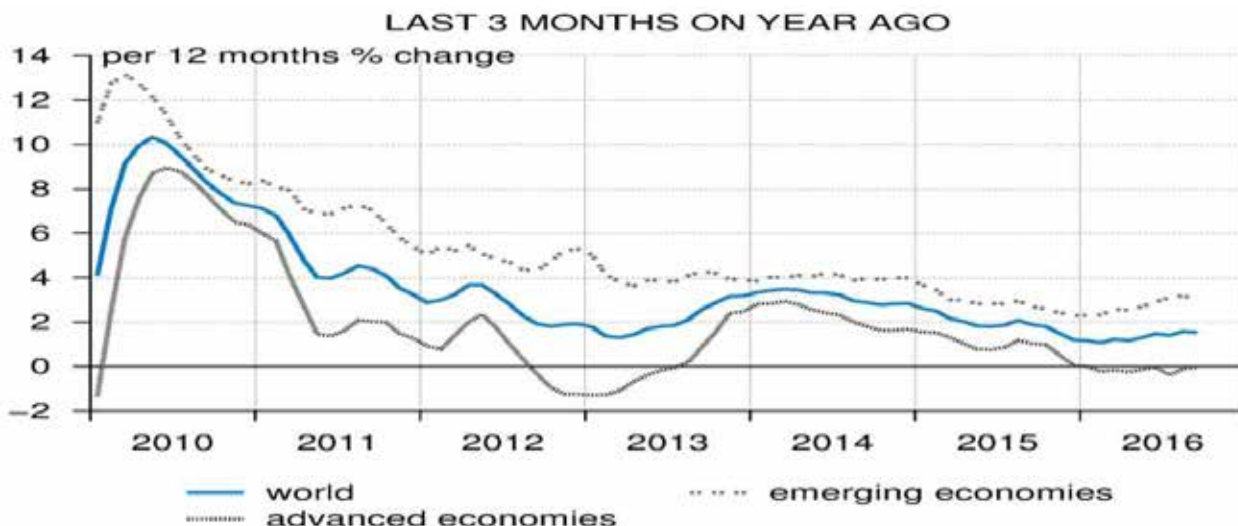


Figure 4. World Trade, Industrial Production, and Manufacturing PMI, 2010-2016⁸

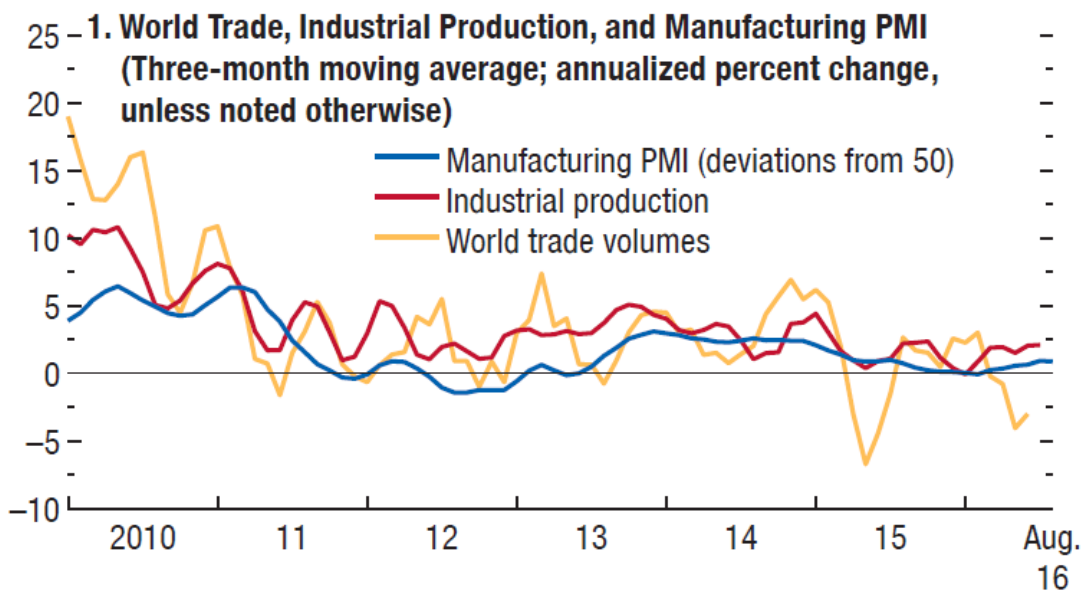
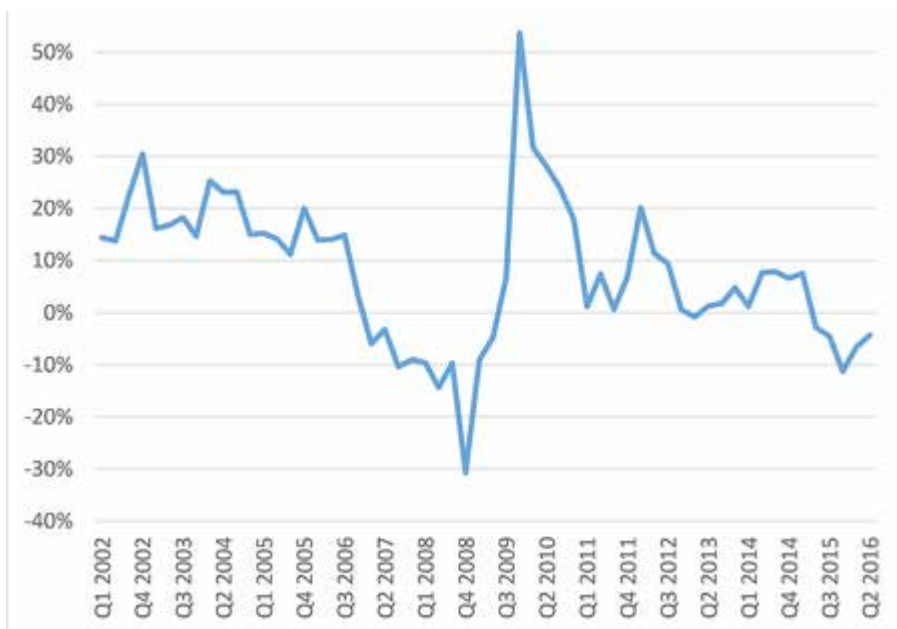


Figure 5. US Corporate Profits (Adjusted for Depreciation), % Change Year by Year⁹



the parliamentary majority, but as a judge-arbiter between two camps in struggle. A government which raises itself above the nation is not, however, suspended in air. The true axis of the present government passes through the police, the bureaucracy, the military clique. It is a military-police dictatorship with which we are confronted, barely concealed with the decorations of parliamentarism. But a government of the saber as the judge arbiter of the nation – that's just what Bonapartism is. The saber by itself has no independent program. It is the instrument of "order." It is summoned to safeguard what exists. Raising itself politically above the classes, Bonapartism, like its predecessor Caesarism, for that matter, represents in the social sense, always and at all epochs, the government of the strongest and firmest part of the exploiters; consequently, present-day Bonapartism can be nothing else than the government of finance capital which directs, inspires, and corrupts the summits of the bureaucracy, the police, the officers' caste, and the press."¹³

25. Hence, revisionists of all sorts only create confusion among the workers' vanguard when they randomly characterize all right-wing forces as "fascist." It is only natural that the Cliffites were unable to explain how it was possible that "fascism" (in the person of the FPÖ) was part of the Austrian government from 2000 to 2006, without a single left-wing group and without a single demonstration or strike being prohibited. How can the Turkish Maoists and Hoxhaists state that "fascism" is in power when anti-government demonstrations can take place and Marxist-Leninist organizations are able to meet in public and to publish their newspaper?! How can the Indian Maoists claim that "fascism" has been in power since May 2014 (or even longer), when general strikes and mass demonstrations can take place and most of their parties are allowed?!

26. If so, what in fact is the character of these regimes and governments? Naturally, all this requires a concrete analysis of each national situation. However, such a concrete analysis must be based on the following theoretical consideration: Bourgeois democracy does not and cannot exist – particularly in the epoch of imperialism – in a "pure" form. Hence, all bourgeois democratic regimes contain greater or fewer elements of Bonapartism as a kind of safety belt for monopoly capital. Often this is the person of the president who plays a more (e.g., in the US, France, Mexico or Argentina) or less central role in a given political system. Or, it can be the constitutional court or a "National Security Council" (e.g., in Turkey in recent decades). Trotsky once remarked: „Every bourgeois democracy bears the features of Bonapartism.“¹⁴

27. Nevertheless it is possible to differentiate between:

i) *Right-wing governments within parliamentary democracies* (which was the case, for example, in Austria in the years 2000-2006 and which is currently the case in India under Modi);

ii) *Pre-Bonapartist regimes* with a strong executive and a stable and loyal following in the parliament (this could be the case with Donald Trump's administration in the US);

iii) *Semi-Bonapartist regimes* which are relatively independent of the parliament (Turkey under Erdogan);

iv) *Bonapartist regimes* which exist with only a formally acting parliament or even without one, i.e., as an *openly Bonapartist dictatorship* (i.e., all sorts of military dictatorships like in Egypt, Syria, Thailand, etc.).

28. Naturally, the character of such a regime depends a great deal on the equilibrium between the classes and the level of the class struggle. Only under exceptional circumstances of an acute revolutionary crisis is the bourgeoisie forced to rely on the help of a fascist mass movement and is prepared to cede political power to it. Naturally, this is only a theoretical schema, and the reality of an antagonistic class society and the struggle between the classes produce various concrete regimes which can contain shades or combinations of this or that form.

29. From the perspective of the working class struggle, it is important to differentiate between Bonapartist regimes coming to power as a result of a decisive defeat of the popular masses and unstable pre-Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist regimes which attain power in situations where such defeats have not taken place but are rather another manifestation of an intense ongoing class struggle. In the first case, revolutionaries must advise the workers' vanguard to conduct a tactical retreat so as to evaluate what occurred and learn the appropriate lessons, regroup forces, and prepare themselves for the future struggle. In the second case, revolutionaries should rather attempt to organize the workers' vanguard for mass struggles in the near future, with a program of tactics and slogans for mass mobilizations. The first case represents a successful counter-revolution which closes a period of struggle. The second case represents the beginning of a new period of struggle, albeit under conditions of a strengthened reactionary regime. The first case represents – to use a literary phrase – the beginning of the end, while the second case marks the end of the beginning.

30. What is the nature of the various right-wing populist and racist movements which are currently on the rise in Europe, the US and in other countries? By and large, they are reactionary movements the main focus of which is not so much mass mobilizations on the streets, but rather supporting the electoral victory of a right-wing party. (The PEGIDA movement in Germany is a certain exception.) However, the agendas of such movements do involve at least the strengthening of the executive state apparatus and restrictions on bourgeois democracy. In general, we do not consider such forces as fascist, because their main *raison d'être* is *not* the violent smashing of the working class organizations and bourgeois democracy by mass mobilizations. However, it would be a serious mistake to underestimate the danger of these right-wing racist movements. First of all, while they may not be fascist in their entirety, they often contain a fascist wing within their ranks. Second, they *do* provide the ideological cover for increasing state repression of migrants and against the left. And third, while they may not be fascist today, in a period of acute crisis, they – or a sector of them – may give rise to an authentically fascist movement.

31. The danger or even the very existence of such right-wing movements or Bonapartist regimes gives real importance to the democratic slogans of the Transitional Program. However, such a democratic program must not be put forward in a reformist manner – i.e., as impotent appeals for governmental reforms – but rather as militant slogans for mass mobilizations. This includes, among other things, militant mobilizations against racist and fascist forces and the formation of self-defense groups which, at some later point, can be transformed into workers' and

popular militias.¹⁵ Trotsky pointed out the importance of democratic slogans in a document on the programmatic foundation of his movement: *“Recognition of the necessity to mobilize the masses under transitional slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under democratic slogans insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialist dictatorship (fascism, Bonapartism, etc.)”*¹⁶

32. Naturally, a prerequisite for launching such a program of democratic slogans is the ability to identify such a reactionary or Bonapartist enemy. Thus, the hailing by various centrists like the Morenoite LIT, Alan Woods’ IMT or the Cliffite IST, of the military coup in Egypt on 3 July 2013 as a “Second Revolution” is a disgrace they will never be able to wash away. Similarly, the numerous Stalinists who praise Assad’s counterrevolutionary advances in Syria as “progressive” are guilty of the same blindness. And as we pointed out in our document on Trump’s victory, various pro-Russian leftists and some “left-wing” intellectuals like the notorious Zizek even called for voters to cast their ballot for America’s synthesis of Dagobert and Donald Duck. By definition, such forces are incapable of presenting a program for the struggle, for in their own inept confusion, they misidentify the main enemy of the working class as its friend!

33. Related to the centrality of the democratic program against the reactionary offensive of the ruling class is the crucial importance of the united front tactic. As we have elaborated in various previous documents, this involves the appealing by revolutionaries to non-revolutionary (usually reformist or populist) mass organizations to undertake joint practical actions. Naturally, such joint

mobilizations must not be allowed to limit the political criticism of revolutionaries for the reformist leaders whenever the latter restrict or betray the struggle.¹⁷ Consequently, we utterly reject the contentions of various economists and sectarians who denounce democratic slogans or the united front tactic as “reformist.” It follows that, contrary to organizations like the *Fracción Trotskista-Cuarta Internacional*, the RCIT insists that such united front tactics must not be limited to trade unions and other economic mass organizations – as the ultra-left Bordigaists have incorrectly advocated – but must also include reformist and populist parties. This, indeed, was the understanding of Trotsky: *“We Bolsheviks consider that the real salvation from fascism and war lies in the revolutionary conquest of power and the establishing of the proletarian dictatorship. You socialist workers do not agree to this road. You hope not only to save what has been gained but also to move forward along the road of democracy. Good! As long as we have not convinced you and attracted you to our side, we are ready to follow this road with you to the end. But we demand that you carry on the struggle for democracy not in words but in deeds. Everybody admits – each in his own way – that in the present conditions a “strong government is necessary. Well, then, make your party open up a real struggle for a strong democratic government For this it is necessary, first of all, to sweep away all the remnants of the feudal state. It is necessary to give suffrage to all men and women who have reached the eighteenth birthday, also to the soldiers in the army. Full concentration of legislative and executive power in the hands of one chamber! Let your party open up a serious campaign under these slogans; let it arouse millions of workers; let it conquer power through the drive of the masses. This, at any rate, would be a serious attempt of struggle*

Books of the RCIT

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

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH*. The book’s subtitle is: *Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital*. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism. The book is in English-language. It has 15 chapters, 448 pages and includes 139 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the International Secretary of the RCIT.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the “Third World”) by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. The Great Robbery of the South shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin’s theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions. *The Great Robbery of the South* demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before

has such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

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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*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

against fascism and war. We Bolsheviki would retain the right to explain to the workers the inefficiency of democratic slogans; we could not take upon ourselves the political responsibility for the Social Democratic government; but we would honestly help you in the struggle for such a government together with you we would repel all attacks of bourgeois reaction. More than that, we would bind ourselves before you not to undertake any revolutionary action that go beyond the limits of democracy (real democracy) so long as the majority of the workers has not consciously placed itself on the side of revolutionary dictatorship.”¹⁸

34. Let us also briefly deal with the issue of globalization: As we have outlined in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, the process of globalization can be summarized by the formula “Globalization = Internationalization + Monopolization.” The massive amount of accumulated capital, the development of the productive forces, etc. clearly demands a world market. A retreat to autarky is impossible today. However, we have also outlined that “the same process of globalization which creates improved conditions for profits and extra-profits, also creates enormous contradictions and crisis at the same time. Furthermore, capitalism rests – and will rest as long as it exists – on national states. Without them the capitalist ruling classes can neither organize their domestic basis for exploitation nor possess a strong arm for support on the world market. However, the increasing rivalry between the Great Powers is undermining this globalization. The monopolies need a market as big as possible. But at the same time they need absolute dominance, unrestricted

access for themselves but maximum possible restriction for their competitors. As a result there will be a tendency towards forms of protectionism and regionalization. Each Great Power will try to form a regional bloc around it and restrict access for the other Powers. By definition, this must result in numerous conflicts and eventual wars.”¹⁹

35. As we have pointed out in past World Perspectives documents, this is precisely what we have witnessed in recent years since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008. A number of bourgeois economists are also increasingly drawing attention to the decline of both output as well as global trade. Below, we reprint some figures actually published by the IMF in its recent *World Economic Outlook* as well as by *The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies*. It depicts the qualitative reduced growth of output and even more so of world imports since 2008 in comparison with earlier decades (see Figure 6, 7 and 8). Likewise, we are witnessing a relative reduction of capital exports when we compare the relation of Foreign Direct Investment with global GDP in recent years (see Figure 9). These developments must certainly accelerate in the era of Trump. The president-elect’s announcement of the US’s withdrawal from the TPP negotiations reflects the already pronounced tendency to end the regime of global free trade and replace it with an array of regional blocs each of which is dominated by a single imperialist power or a camp of imperialist powers. In this case, the era of globalization is about to come to an end.

Figure 6. Growth Rate of Real Capita Gross Global Product, 1961-2015²⁰

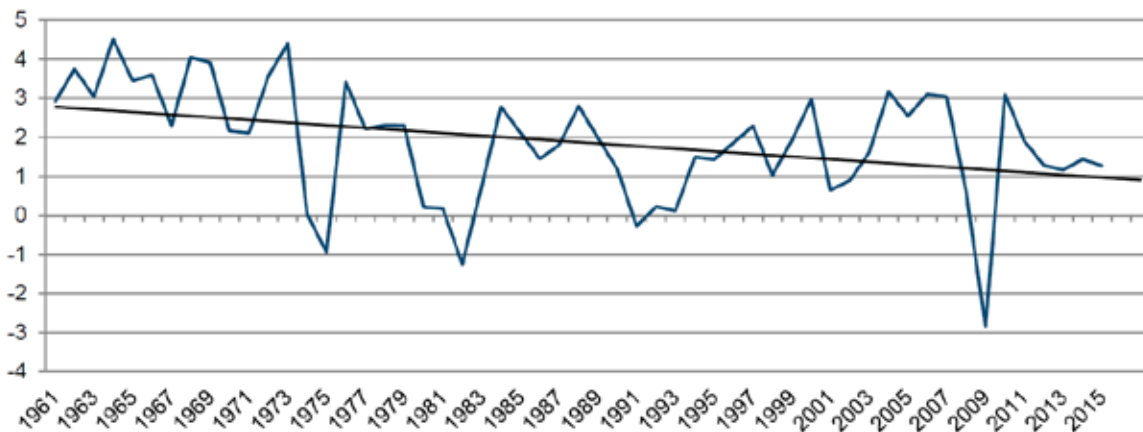


Figure 8. Share of Global Exports in Global Output, 1961-2015²²

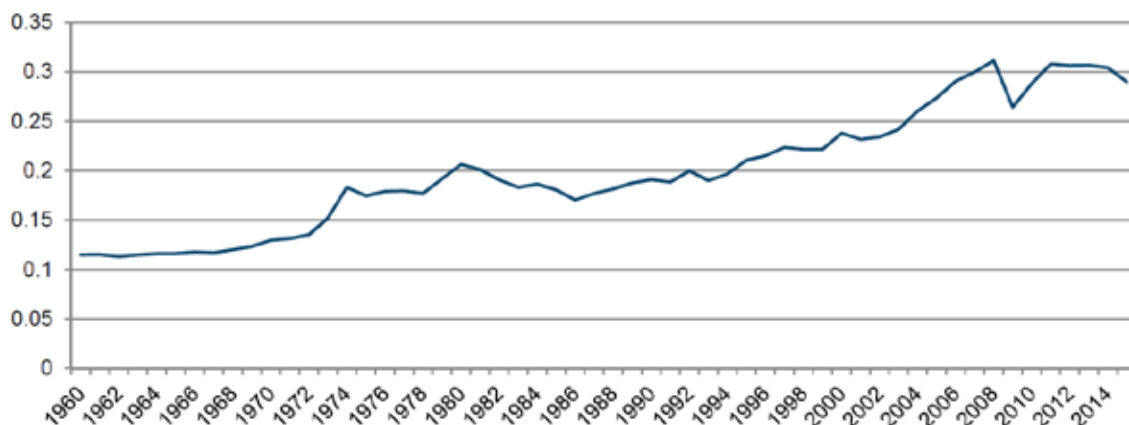


Figure 7. World Real Trade and GDP Growth in Historical Perspective 1960-2015²¹

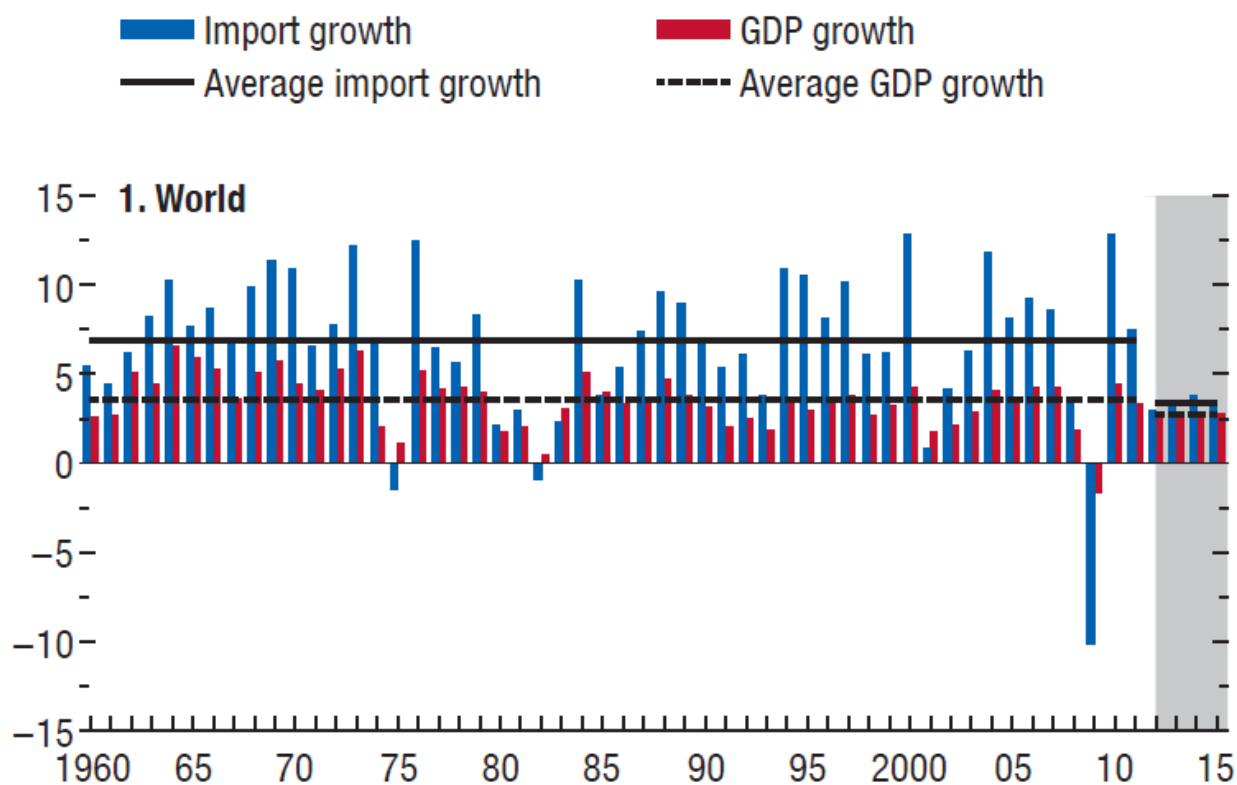
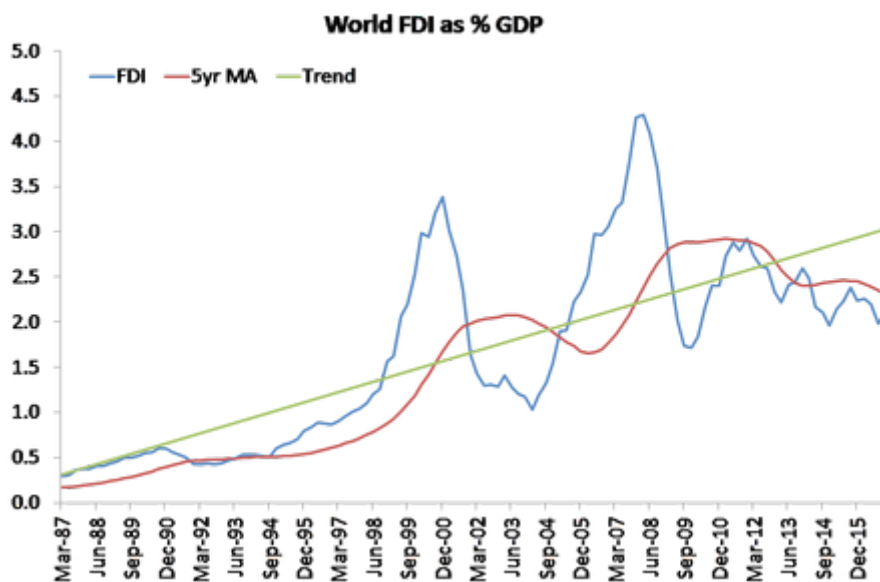


Figure 9. World FDI as Share of GDP 1987-2015²³



III. THE GREAT POWER RIVALRY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR WORLD POLITICS

36. Trump's victory also represents a watershed in the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers. As we have stated in our pamphlet on the outcome of the US presidential election, the rise of this politician with a protectionist and unilateralist platform calling for an end of "unlimited humanitarian interventions around the globe" – in contrast to Hilary Clinton who stood for a continuation of Obama's foreign policy – was an implicit recognition of the US's inability to continue its role as the "world's policeman." At the same time, Trumpism expresses the will of the ruling class to reverse this trend. Both of these factors are expressed in Trump's key campaign slogan: "Make America Great Again" (instead of "Keep America Great").

37. Trump's victory is not a development that comes out of the blue, but is only the logical result of global developments of recent years. Contrary to nearly all self-proclaimed "Marxists," the RCIT has emphasized for a number of years that one of the most important changes in world politics in recent history has been the emergence of new imperialist powers – China and Russia – in parallel to the decline of the US as the absolute hegemonic power.²⁴ Even the bourgeois-liberal ideologists who used to praise globalization as the way to integrate the world (as if it were a benefit for everyone) are increasingly forced to admit that the world is moving towards Great Power rivalry reminiscent to the period before World War I.²⁵ In our opinion, it is impossible to build the new Revolutionary World Party without a clear understanding of the imperialist nature of *all* Great Powers, and the importance of the rivalry between them as a driving force of the world political situation.

38. Let us briefly note a few key statistics which demonstrate the change in the relation of forces on the economic level. America's share of global industrial production declined rapidly in a relatively short period – from close to 30% in the early years of the 21st century to less than 20% by 2015. During the same period, China's share increased from about 10% to 28%.²⁶ Similarly, the US's share in Global Fixed Capital Investment declined from 20% (2003) to 13% (2013), while China's share grew from 16% to 31%.²⁷

39. Another reflection of the change in the relation of forces is the ranking of the largest capitalist monopolies. A comparison of the *Forbes Global 2000* list shows that, in 2003, the US was home to 776 (38.8%). But, by 2016, this share had declined by nearly one third to 540 (27%). On the other hand, China was hardly represented at all in the list for 2003. However, by 2016 China had 249 corporations on this list – more than any other imperialist power with the exception of the US.²⁸ The same dynamic appears in another list of the largest capitalist monopolies – the so-called *Fortune Global 500*. In 2001, 197 corporations among the *Fortune Global 500* had their headquarters in the US, while there were only 12 in China. However, by 2016 this

had dramatically changed: While the US was still leading the list with 134 corporations, China was already closely behind, ranking second with 103 corporations. In other words, while the US share among the world's largest monopolies had declined from 39.4% (2001) to 26.8% (2016), China's share grew during the same period from 2.4% to 20.6%! (See Table 1)

40. Another manifestation of China's rise is that last year it overtook the US as the home of the largest number of billionaires. According to the latest issue of the *Hurun Global Rich List*, out of 2,188 billionaires 568 are living in China (without Hong Kong and Macao) and "only" 535 in the US. The *Hurun Report* also announced sensationally that "Beijing Replaces New York To Become The Billionaire Capital Of The World For First Time".³⁰ The *Forbes Billionaire List* gives slightly different numbers but here, too, China ranks as a leading country, second only to the US. According to *Forbes* "the US has 540 billionaires, more than any other country in the world. It's followed by mainland China with 251 (Hong Kong has another 69) and Germany with 120. Russia has 77."³¹

41. Finally, we can also confirm China's rise as an imperialist power relative to its rivals when we examine its massive increase in capital export. As Table 2 shows, China's capital export (without the figures for Hong Kong) grew dramatically by 3,800% during the past 15 years, and has come close to reaching the volume of capital export of Japan!

42. Naturally, as we have noted many times, none of this changes the fact that China is still a new, emerging and hence backward imperialist power. And Russia, while being a strong military power, is economically much weaker than China. This is reflected, among others ways, by the substantially lower labor productivity of these two countries compared with the old imperialist powers like the US, Western Europe or Japan. However, the sheer size of the Chinese economy and Russia's political and military power enable both these states to join the club of the world's leading imperialist Great Powers. Those who refuse to characterize China and Russia as imperialistic due to their economic backwardness, ignore the concrete history of imperialism and the conclusions which Marxists drew from it. As we have elaborated in detail in other studies, it has been a constant feature in the epoch of imperialism, which started at the turn of the 20th century, that there are imperialist Great Powers of different types – from the strongest, most modern and dynamic ones (like Britain, the US or Germany) to weaker and more backward ones (like Russia, Japan, Italy or Austria-Hungary).³³ The dialectical thinking of Marxists enabled them to understand that such unevenness is a natural characteristic of the imperialist epoch and, hence, it is only logical that different types of Great Powers are fighting for their share of the loot. Thus, Lenin and Trotsky not only characterized states like Britain, the US or Germany as imperialistic, but

Table 1. US and China: Their Share among the World's 500 Largest Corporations, 2001 and 2016 (*Fortune Global 500 List*)²⁹

	USA		China	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
2001	197	39.4%	12	2.4%
2016	134	26.8%	103	20.6%

Table 2. Foreign Direct Investment Stock of Great Imperialist Powers, 1990, 2000, 2015 (Millions of \$US)³²

Country	FDI inward stock			FDI outward stock		
	1990	2000	2015	1990	2000	2015
USA	539,601	2,783,235	5,587,969	731,762	2,694,014	5,982,787
Japan	9,850	50,322	170,698	201,441	278,442	1,226,554
Britain	203,905	63,134	1,457,408	229,307	923,367	1,538,133
Germany	111,231	271,613	1,121,288	151,581	541,866	1,812,469
France	97,814	390,953	772,030	112,441	925,925	1,314,158
China	20,691	193,348	1,220,903	4,455	27,768	1,010,202
Russia	-	32,204	258,402	-	20,141	251,979

Table 3. The World's 10 Top Exporters of Weapons, 2011–15³⁴

Exporter	Global Share (%)
1. USA	33%
2. Russia	25%
3. China	5.9%
4. France	5.6%
5. Germany	4.7%
6. UK	4.5%
7. Spain	3.5%
8. Italy	2.7%
9. Ukraine	2.6%
10. Netherlands	2.0%

Table 4. World Nuclear Forces, 2015³⁵

Country	Deployed Warheads	Other Warheads	Total Inventory
USA	1,930	2,500	7,000
Russia	1,790	2,800	7,290
France	280	10	300
China	–	–	260
UK	120	–	215

also Russia, Japan, Italy and Austria-Hungary.

43. The economic changes of the past decade or two have naturally also had consequences in the political and military spheres. For example, among other things, this is reflected in China and Russia's position as leading exporters of weapons as well as nuclear powers. Here, too, the US remains No. 1, but Russia and China are ranked right behind it and in front of all other imperialist powers (with the exception of France with regard to nuclear weapons; see Tables 3 and 4)

44. While the US is still the strongest power, its political and military hegemony are declining and are being challenged more and more by China and Russia. This becomes clear with China's persistent implementation of its OBOR strategy (One Belt, One Road) which deepens the country's economic ties with the rest of Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The turning away of the Philippines from the US – a long-time ally of American imperialism in Asia – under its new President Rodrigo Duterte, and his increasing orientation towards Beijing is only the latest setback for Washington. Thus, it is only logical that tensions between China and other Great Powers like the US and Japan are increasing in East Asia as the latter try to retain their traditional hegemonic position.

45. Similarly, since 2014, we have witnessed an escalation of the conflict between the US and the EU on the one hand and Russia on the other over the Ukraine. Russia's increasing strength as an imperialist power has been clearly demonstrated in this conflict as the Western powers have failed to drive Russia out of the Crimea or out of the Donbass region, despite economic sanctions and massive diplomatic pressure by the West. Quite the opposite, a growing number of politicians both in the US as well as in the EU have called for an end to the sanctions.

46. As stated above, Trump's victory marks a certain retreat from a "globalist" agenda, as is demonstrated by his intention to withdraw from the negotiations on the *Trans-Pacific Partnership* trade deal (TPP) – Obama's main project to defend US hegemony in Asia against China.³⁶ However, at the same time, the new US administration will try to *selectively* retain and advance the influence of the American Empire. Trump's confrontational attitude towards China – even before his inauguration – is a clear indication of things to come. It's not difficult to imagine the consequences of such a policy: the provoking of a chain reaction encouraging other Great Powers to speed up the creation of trade blocks, which they themselves dominate, as a means of protection against their rivals. The result of all this will be a significant disruption of world trade and the entire global economy, and may escalate into major trade wars between the US and China.

47. While it is possible that, in the near future, Trump will advocate selective collaboration with Putin so that US and Russian imperialism can join forces in liquidating the Syrian Revolution, the naïve hopes of the pro-Putinist left that Trump may prove to be a "dove" – as opposed to the "warmonger" Hillary Clinton – are completely misplaced. Sooner or later, major confrontations between the US and its rivals will become inevitable, because the decline of the capitalist world economy and the accelerating global order will lead to clashes between the Great Powers as they all struggle to increase their share of the world's wealth at the expense of their rivals.

48. Finally, we want to draw attention to another major ideological consequence of Trump's victory and the US recognition of its failure to maintain its hegemonic position: the end of the ideological superiority of the US as the champion of "democracy" and "human rights." As we have pointed out elsewhere, until now the US – as a result of its being the strongest economic, political and military power – could play the role of global ideological leadership as a "defender of human rights" and the advocate of "democracy." With the Trump administration, such pretenses will come to an end. Nobody will see this gang of "the Bad, the Mad and the Sad" who will call the shots in Washington as the polar star of "enlightenment"! In other words, we think that the US's decline as the leading imperialist power is also reflected in its loss of ideological hegemony – something which it had a virtual monopoly on for many decades.

49. In summary, the past few years have fully confirmed the RCIT's analysis of China and Russia's status as emerging imperialist powers and, hence, of the accelerating rivalry between Great Powers as a key factor in the understanding the dynamics of the present world situation. From this follows the only possible conclusion: that the workers' movement must fight against *all* Great Powers – both the old as well as the new, emerging ones. The workers of the world must lend no support, whether direct or indirect, to *any* imperialist state – neither in times of peace nor in times of war. Therefore, the following statement of the Fourth International formulated 80 years ago remains fully valid today: "*The struggle against war, properly understood and executed, presupposes the uncompromising hostility of the proletariat and its organizations, always and everywhere, toward its own and every other imperialist bourgeoisie.*"³⁷

The Social-Imperialist Lackeys of the Western and Eastern Great Powers

50. It is all the more astonishing, as well as very characteristic, that most so-called "Marxist" organizations fail to understand this fundamental issue. Naturally, in many cases, this is not a "theoretical mistake" but rather the unavoidable consequence of the bourgeois character of the bureaucracy dominating these parties. In the case of various reformist mass parties, this has clearly material reasons, seeing how the bureaucracy is linked directly or indirectly with the state machinery of one or several imperialist powers. In Europe, numerous left social democrats and ex-Stalinists (united in the *Party of the European Left*) are fully integrated in the imperialist state apparatus. In France, the PCF has a strategic alliance with the governing "Socialist" Party of Hollande; in Germany the Linkspartei is part of several regional governments, and hopes to join the next coalition government; and in Greece, SYRIZA, in power since January 2015, is loyally implementing the austerity dictates of the EU. As we have seen in the past two decades, these Western "Socialist" and "Communist" parties are perfectly capable of combining devout praises of "peace" and "socialism" with practical support for the current EU sanctions against Russia (on the backdrop of the crisis in the Ukraine), as well as backing NATO's imperialist wars against Serbia and Afghanistan (PCF in 1999 and 2001) and the West's military aggression

since 2013 in Syria, Iraq and Mali.

51. On the other hand, there are those Stalinist parties which effectively operate as pro-Eastern social-imperialists. These parties regularly come together– the last time was the recently held “18th International Meeting of Communist and Workers’ Parties” held on 28-30 October 2016 in Hanoi. A brief overview of the participants which, at the end of the meeting, agreed on a number of resolutions in which, among other things, they expressed their solidarity for the “socialist” regimes of Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, and their opposition to NATO.³⁸ At this conference, China’s ruling Communist Party met with other Stalinist parties which have similarly demonstrated their loyalty to the further implementation of capitalism for years. From India, two “Communist” parties were present (the CPI and the CPI[M]), which have participated in state or the federal of governments for decades. The same is true for the Brazilian PCdoB. In a number of other cases, the conference hosted Stalinist parties which have for decades held power at the head of dictatorships from whence they administered the restoration of capitalism (China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba). The South African CP also participated in recent conference in Saigon, a party which has been part of the popular-front government successfully defending the power of (mostly white) monopoly capitalists for more than two decades. From Russia, attending the conference was a “Communist” Party like the KPRF, which, while formally in the opposition, in fact has numerous ties with Putin’s state apparatus and effectively supports his policies.

52. In short, what we see then are a vast array of social democratic or Stalinist parties which either overtly or covertly support one or several imperialist Great Powers. In the 1930, Trotsky characterized the Stalinist degenerated “Communist International”, as well as the social democratic parties as a social-patriotic parties which have become instruments of imperialism. “*The ex-communist International, following in the footsteps of the Social Democracy, has transformed itself from an instrument of the emancipation of the workers and the exploited into an*

instrument of ‘democratic’ imperialism.”³⁹ This is even truer today. In fact, all these reformist parties are either pro-Western or pro-Eastern social-imperialist parties and, in some cases, such parties even try to serve both masters. We hardly need explain that any struggle against the imperialist powers is impossible without an intransigent struggle against all such social-imperialist lackeys of the Great Powers, wherever they may be around the world.

Centrist Confusion

53. The situation is not much better with the “*professional confusionists of centrism*” (Trotsky). While they are usually not integrated into the bourgeois state apparatus, they adapt to the bureaucracy of reformist mass parties in the hope of gathering any of the remaining crumbs of bread. In general, one can say that – after years and years of open rivalry between the Great Powers – most self-proclaimed “Trotskyist” organizations (e.g., the comrades of the PTS/FT) have proven to be utterly incapable of achieving a clear, class-based characterization of Russia and China, and have thus studiously avoided declaring either of these powers as “imperialist.” Some fools, like the sects of the Spartacist tradition, still spread the myth that China and Vietnam are “deformed workers states,” while in fact by doing so they have only demonstrated their own adherence to a deformed caricature of Marxism. Others explicitly reject the characterization of Russia and/or China, as “imperialist” (like the Morenoite UIT and Alan Woods IMT).

54. The result of such confusion is the failure of all these organizations to take a clear stand on the issue of Great Power rivalry or – if they have taken a clear stand – they have chose to support one of the imperialist camps. If China and Russia are *not* imperialist powers – as most self-proclaimed “Trotskyist” organizations believe – they can only be semi-colonial countries or “deformed workers states.” The result of such a conclusion can only be their giving support to these powers in any confrontation with the US, the EU or Japan. Or, in other words, they are

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forced to become social-imperialists. Some may sincerely believe that they are acting as “anti-imperialists” if they lend support not to “their” imperialist bourgeoisie, but to that which is in conflict with their own ruling class. Nothing could possibly be a worse tragic-comic mockery of Marxism! From such a grotesque point of view, the German social democrats and Stalinists supporting the US, Britain and France against Hitler should be seen as having acted as “anti-imperialists.” Similarly, such praise should also be given the Stalinists in Britain and France who attacked their governments for not accepting Hitler’s “peace offers” in 1939-41 during the period of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. As a matter of fact, history knows many cases of reformist and even outright bourgeois forces (e.g., the Vichy collaborationists in France in 1940-45) aligning themselves with a foreign power which is in conflict with their “own” imperialist bourgeoisie. No, as we have explained in past documents, these Stalinists, social democrats and centrists are nothing but “*inverted social-imperialists*”!

55. Lenin and the Communist International unambiguously condemned all forms of social-imperialism – irrespective of whether they support their “own” or another bourgeoisie: *„Social-chauvinism is advocacy of the idea of “defence of the fatherland” in the present war. This idea logically leads to the abandonment of the class struggle during the war, to voting for war credits, etc. In fact, the social-chauvinists are pursuing an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, for they are actually championing, not “defence of the fatherland” in the sense of combating foreign oppression, but the “right” of one or other of the “Great” Powers to plunder colonies and to oppress other nations. The social-chauvinists reiterate the bourgeois deception of the people that the war is being waged to protect the freedom and existence of nations, thereby taking sides with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Among the social-chauvinists are those who justify and varnish the governments and bourgeoisie of one of the belligerent groups of powers, as well as those who, like Kautsky, argue that the socialists of all the belligerent powers are equally entitled to “defend the fatherland”. Social- chauvinism, which is, in effect, defence of the privileges, the advantages, the right to pillage and plunder, of one’s “own” (or any) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions and of the decision of the Basle International Socialist Congress.“*⁴⁰

56. Similarly, Trotsky denounced these inverted social-imperialists just as mercilessly as he condemned the “normal” social-imperialists: *“The Italian, German, Austrian, and now the Spanish socialist parties too are not directly bound by the discipline of national imperialism which rejected their services with a kick. They were cast into an illegality counter to their traditions and their best intentions. Because of this, naturally, they have not in the slightest degree become revolutionary. They do not of course so much as think of preparing the socialist revolution. But their patriotism is temporarily turned inside out. They stubbornly dream that the armed force of the “democracies” will overthrow their national fascist regime and enable them to reestablish themselves in their former posts, editorial offices, parliaments, leading bodies of the trade unions and to reopen their bank accounts.“*⁴¹

57. It is true that some organizations honestly do want to avoid such social-imperialist conclusions. But as, until now, they have been unable to arrive at a clear class characterization of China and Russia, their only way out

of this dilemma is simply to avoid the issue and to remain silent on the question of whether revolutionaries should take a revolutionary defeatist or defensist position in the case of conflicts between the US, EU, Japan, Russia and China. But this is hardly a revolutionary attitude – neither in the field of theory or of practice! Trotsky emphasized that military conflicts and wars are among the most important questions for any revolutionary organization. Ambiguity and confusion on this issue can only have devastating consequences and must be combated by all revolutionaries: *“The problem of war, next to the problem of revolution, is the touchstone of a revolutionary party. Here no kind of equivocation is permissible. The principled decision is clear beforehand: defensism and defeatism are as incompatible as fire and, water. It is necessary to say this first of all. This truth must be taught the members of the party.“*⁴²

58. We emphasize that the new Revolutionary World Party can *only* be built on the basis of a political struggle against *all* those forces which side with one or another camp of the imperialist Great Powers. In the times of Lenin and Trotsky, socialist internationalism was irreconcilable with direct or indirect support for imperialist powers. This must be also be a fundamental programmatic principle for the future revolutionary International!

Imperialist Wars against Oppressed Peoples

59. The new historical phase will see an acceleration of imperialist wars in the South. True, Trump has promised to avoid costly wars of occupation like the one in Iraq from 2003. But only fools can conclude from this that the Trump era might have any shade of “pacifism”! In fact, he has already announced his intention to increase the budget for the Pentagon. He has also appointed several retired generals for top positions in the military and security administration who are all known as extremely aggressive militarists. In our pamphlet on Trump’s victory, we have described these figures more in detail. The past period was already characterized by a number of wars waged by US imperialism in the Middle East. The Obama administration has pursued a systematic campaign of assassination against various Islamist organizations in Syria that played a key role in the struggle against the Assad regime.⁴³ The entire outlook of Trump himself, as well as his militarist clique of Islamophobic warriors, can only mean that US imperialism will accelerate its aggression in the region. We need only recall the words of General Flynn, Trump’s National Security Advisor, who fantasizes about a *“multi-generational world war against Islam.”*

60. This acceleration of US military aggression is in addition to the devastating war already which is waged by Russian imperialism in support of Assad’s annihilation war against the Syrian people. As the Great Powers conspire together it is difficult to assess the detailed consequences of their so-called “War against ISIS” which in fact is an imperialist war against the Syrian and Iraqi people. However there are a few indications which demonstrate the devastating dimensions of their imperialist aggression. Recently the Pentagon announced *“that some 50,000 Islamic State fighters have been killed since the United States started battling the group more than two years ago”*. A senior US military official called this a *“conservative estimate.”* The official, who spoke to Pentagon reporters

on condition of anonymity, said “the figure showed how the United States was effectively combating the group with US-led coalition airpower and limited US troop deployments in support of local forces.”⁴⁴ In this context it is interesting to remember that in September, 2014 the CIA corrected its estimation of the numbers of Daesh fighters in Iraq and Syria from about 20,000 to 31,500 fighters on the ground, much higher than a previous estimate of 10,000.⁴⁵ Given the fact that Daesh obviously still has many thousands – more likely, tens of thousands – fighters which are still retaining substantial territory under their control, this can only mean two things: either that Daesh is much more popular and, hence, has many more fighters than the CIA believed or – more likely – that the American imperialists and their local lackeys have indiscriminately slaughtered tens of thousands of people – among them many fighters from other Islamist organizations as well as civilians. As the Russian imperialists – together with their Iranian and Hezbollah mercenaries – are doing the same, we see an indication of the monstrous and barbaric dimensions of the Great Powers’ wars in the Middle East.

61. In addition to their reactionary war against the Syrian people, we can assume that the Great Powers will also wage wars to intensify their intervention in other countries. Naturally, the slogan of the “The War on Terror” or – in the words of General Flynn “The War against Islam”

– creates a justification for military operations throughout wide areas of the globe, from Western and Central Africa to Somalia, the entire Middle East and up to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Another target which Trump has already publicly attacked is Iran, and has announced his plans to rescind the nuclear deal with that country. This reflects the desire of one wing of US imperialism, which advocates the closest possible alliance with Israel in waging a purely military confrontation in the Middle East. Unsurprisingly, Netanyahu and the Zionist Right have been rejoicing over Trump’s victory – irrespective of anti-Semitic tendencies among sections of Trump’s supporters.⁴⁶ While it is conceivable that Trump will not openly wage war against Iran – not least because the latter it has the backing of Russia and China – it may encourage, or not actively discourage, Israel from attacking against Teheran. Obviously, such aggression would provoke major tensions and unrest in the Middle East and beyond.

62. For the same reason there is a real danger that Trump’s victory – as well as Israel’s improved relations with the Putin regime – will encourage the Zionist state to attempt once again to defeat Hamas in Gaza, something which it has failed to do three times in the past decade. In other words, the Netanyahu government may try to use the changed world political situation in order to initiate wars – be they against the Palestinian people in Gaza,

New Book!

Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice

Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*. The book’s subtitle is: *Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*. The book is in English-language. It contains four chapters on 148 pages and includes 42 pictures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

A few months ago, our movement commemorated its 25th anniversary. In the summer of 1989 our predecessor organization, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) was founded as a democratic-centralist international tendency based on an elaborated program. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) continues the revolutionary tradition of the LRCI. Below we give an overview of our history, an evaluation of its achievements as well as mistakes, and a summary of the lessons for the struggles ahead. This book summarizes our theoretical and practical experience of the past

25 years.

In Chapter I we outline a summary of the Bolshevik- Communists’ theoretical conception of the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the working class. In Chapter II we elaborate on the essential characteristics of revolutionary party respective of the pre-party organization. In Chapter III we deal with the history of our movement – the RCIT and its predecessor organization. Finally, in Chapter IV we outline the main lessons of our 25 years of organized struggle for building a Bolshevik party and their meaning for our future work.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/> ■

**Building the
Revolutionary Party
in Theory
and Practice**

Looking Back and Ahead after
25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

against Hezbollah in Lebanon or, as already said, Iran. Any of these might provoke major political explosions around the globe, but in any case will ensure that Israel becomes more isolated and hated than ever before.

Reformist and Centrist Cowardice in Face of the Imperialist Aggression

63. While the Islamophobic petty-bourgeois left turns a blind eye to this imperialist aggression, revolutionaries insist that these wars waged by Washington and Moscow are wars intended to liquidate legitimate resistance movements – usually under the leadership of various Islamist forces – fighting against dictatorships and imperialist occupation. We have already seen this in the shameful support which numerous Stalinists and centrists (e.g., Alan Woods’ IMT) lends to Assad and his Russian backers in the Syrian civil war.⁴⁷

64. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that authentic revolutionaries take clear and unambiguous stands in these conflicts. Lenin’s Third and Trotsky’s Fourth International had clear principles on this issue. The Communist International in 1920 called the active support of the national liberation struggle as the duty of every revolutionary in the imperialist states: “A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of ‘its’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude to the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples.”⁴⁸ In a

speech at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, Trotsky stated: “Every colonial movement, which weakens the capitalist rule in the metropolises, is progressive, because it makes the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat easier to achieve.”⁴⁹ Later, the Fourth International repeated this principle in a resolution: “The struggle against war and its social source, capitalism, presupposes direct, active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and wars against imperialism. A ‘neutral’ position is tantamount to support of imperialism.”⁵⁰

65. However, as a matter of fact, numerous reformists and centrists have accumulated a shameful record of failing to support oppressed peoples against the Great Powers. As already noted above, the French PCF was even part of a government which waged wars in the Middle East. The pro-Russian supporters of Putin’s war crimes in Syria are hardly better. So are the centrists. As we have demonstrated in various documents, these social-imperialist positions are not sudden turns, but rather a continuation of a long tradition.⁵¹ Groups like the British-dominated CWI/IMT tendency (they were united in a single organization until their spilt in 1992) lent indirect support to British imperialism when it waged war against Argentina in 1982. Since 2001, the CWI has explicitly refused to give any support to Islamist-led resistance movements against the US/NATO occupation forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Neither do CWI or IMT support Hamas in its military confrontation against Israel.

66. The new Revolutionary World Party can only be built on the basis of an intransigent struggle against any vacillations of reformism and centrism on the issue of imperialist wars against oppressed peoples. How shall the new International win the trust of the popular masses who are suffering under the yoke of imperialism if it does not wage a political war against such forces which combine “socialist” phrases with direct or indirect support for the Great Powers’ military aggression?!

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FOOTNOTES

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What the RCIT Stands for

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a revolutionary combat organisation fighting for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in a number of countries. The working class is composed of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labor power as wage earners to the capitalists. The RCIT stands on the theory and practice of the revolutionary workers' movement associated with the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky.

Capitalism endangers our lives and the future of humanity. Unemployment, war, environmental disasters, hunger, and exploitation are all part of everyday life under capitalism as are the imperialistic oppression of nations, the national oppression of migrants, and the oppression of women, young people, and homosexuals. Therefore, we want to eliminate capitalism.

The liberation of the working class and all oppressed is possible only in a classless society without exploitation and oppression. Such a society can only be established internationally.

Therefore, the RCIT is fighting for a socialist revolution at home and around the world.

This revolution must be carried out and led by the working class, for only this class has the collective power to bring down the ruling class and build a socialist society.

The revolution cannot proceed peacefully because a ruling class never has nor ever will voluntarily surrender its power. By necessity, therefore, the road to liberation includes armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasants' republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in councils democratically elected in rank-and-file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods, and schools. These councils, in turn, elect and control the government and all other state authorities, and always retain the right to recall them.

Authentic socialism and communism have nothing to do with the so-called "socialism" that ruled in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and which continues to do so in China and Cuba, for example. In these countries, the proletariat was and is dominated and oppressed by a privileged party bureaucracy.

Under capitalism, the RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of the workers and oppressed, while simultaneously striving to overthrow this system based on economic exploitation of the masses.

Towards these ends, we work from within the trade unions where we advocate class struggle, socialism, and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy perniciously connected with the state and capital via status, high-paying jobs, and other privileges. Thus, the trade union bureaucracy is far from the interests and living conditions of

its members, based as it is on the top, privileged layers of the working class – a labor aristocracy which has no real interest in replacing capitalism. Therefore, the true struggle for the liberation of the working class, the toppling of capitalism and the establishment of socialism, must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their "representative" from the upper trade union strata.

We also fight for the expropriation of the big land owners as well as for the nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the poor and landless peasants. Towards this goal we struggle for the independent organisation of the rural workers.

We support national liberation movements against oppression. We also support the anti-imperialist struggles of oppressed peoples against the great powers. Within these movements we advocate a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to nationalist or reformist forces.

While the RCIT strives for unity of action with other organizations, we are acutely aware that the policies of social democrats and pseudo-revolutionary groups are dangerous, and ultimately represent an obstacle to the emancipation of the working class, peasants, and the otherwise oppressed.

In wars between imperialist states we take a revolutionary defeatist position: we do not support either side, but rather advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class in each of the warring states. In wars between imperialist powers (or their stooges) and a semi-colonial countries we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed countries.

As communists, we maintain that the struggle against national oppression and all types of social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) *must* be led by the working class, because only the latter is capable of fomenting a revolutionary change in society. Therefore, we consistently support working class-based revolutionary movements of the socially oppressed, while opposing the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism, etc.), who ultimately dance to the tune of the capitalists, and strive to replace them with revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class be victorious in its struggle for liberation. The establishment of such a party and the execution of a successful revolution, as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks in Russia under Lenin and Trotsky remain the models for revolutionary parties and revolutions in the 21st century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries!
For a 5th Workers International to be founded on a revolutionary program! Join the RCIT!

No future without socialism!

No socialism without revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

