



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE RCIT

ONE WORLD - ONE STRUGGLE - ONE REVOLUTION



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

www.thecommunists.net

Issue Nr.42

November 2015

Support the Syrian Revolution! Russia & US: Hands Off Syria!

- * Victory to the 3rd Intifada!
- * Netanyahu's Holocaust Denial
- * Turkey/Kurdistan: Stop the Terror
- * UK: Defend Socialists in Labour Party
- * State-Capitalism in South Yemen
- * Dialectics of Revolutionary Strategy

Price: €3 / \$3,5 / £2

English-Language Journal of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), No. 42, November 2015

Defend the Syrian Revolution against Russian Imperialism!	p.3
Rally against Russia's War in Syria	p.5
Occupied Palestine / Israel: Victory to the 3rd Intifada!	p.6
Netanyahu's Demagogy is Holocaust Denial	p.8
Occupied Palestine: Without Revolution There Is No Solution!	p.10
Occupied Palestine: The sparks which ignited the rebellion	p.13
Turkey/Kurdistan: Stop the Terror against the Masses!	p.16
Iran: Stop the Oppression of the Ahwazi Arabs!	p.18
Britain: No Expulsions of Socialists in the Labour Party!	p.19
Austria: Mass Demonstration Proclaims „Refugees Are Welcome Here!“	p.20
Was the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen a Deformed Workers State?	p.21
The Dialectics of Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics	p.29
NEW BOOK: Building the Revolutionary Party	p.17
RCIT: What do we stand for	p. 39

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT). The RCIT has sections in Pakistan (Revolutionary Workers Organisation, RWO), Sri Lanka (United Lankan Workers Party, ULWP), Brazil (Corrente Comunista Revolucionária, CCR), Israel/Occupied Palestine (Internationalist Socialist League, ISL), USA (Revolutionary Workers Collective, RWC), and Austria (Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation, RKOB). In addition the RCIT has members in Yemen, Tunisia and Britain.

**www.thecommunists.net - rcit@thecommunists.net
Füchselhofgasse 6, 1120 Vienna, Austria**

Defend the Syrian Revolution against Russian Imperialism!

Stop the US, UK and French Air Strikes! Smash the Assad Dictatorship!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 09.10.2015

1. Since 30 September, the Russian air force has been undertaking massive strikes against Syrian rebels as well as the country's civilian population. The Putin regime has transferred about 50 military aircraft and helicopters, several SA-22 surface-to-air anti-aircraft systems, T-90 tanks, artillery, BTR-82A armored personnel carriers, and several hundred marines to its naval military base at Tartus on Syria's southern Mediterranean coast. They are closely coordinating their military intervention with Iranian troops as well as with Assad's butchers.

2. This invasion of Russian imperialism started only shortly after British and French imperialism joined the US in their reactionary military campaign against Islamist rebels in Syria. Like Obama, Cameron and Hollande, Putin also justifies his intervention as a "*struggle against ISIS terrorism.*" As in all other cases, this is a total lie! Moscow's military intervention is nothing but an invasion intended to save the bloodthirsty dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad! This is demonstrated by the fact that most of Russian air strikes are not directed against *Daesh* (the so-called "Islamic State") but against important factions of the rebels like *Jabhat al-Nusra*, *Ahrar ash-Sham*, the *Free Syrian Army* and others.

3. This is hardly surprising. The Assad regime has been the closest ally of imperialist Russia in the Middle East for many years. Developments during the past six months, like the complete liberation of the Idlib province by the rebels and their advances towards Latakia – the strategically crucial area for the survival of Assad's regime – have sounded the alarm bells among the rulers in Damascus as well as in Moscow.

4. In addition, the Putin regime is frightened that a defeat for Assad at the hands of an Islamist-led popular uprising would increase the unrest amongst Muslim minorities which make up a seventh (14%) of Russia's population. Moscow justifiably fears the deep-seated hatred for it by its numerous national minorities, having so oppressed them for centuries (with the exception of a brief period, 1917–1923, when the young Soviet Union was being led by Lenin and Trotsky). The most barbaric symbol of Russia's colonial rule is its occupation of Chechnya, where it slaughtered at least a fifth of the small Chechen people and has raped and expelled most of the rest since 1994. While the world leaders all remained silent, no person of conscience can or will forget such a genocide – one of the worst crimes in modern human history!

5. However, there are two important additional factors which explain the fact and the timing of the Russia's military intervention. First, as the RCIT has explained many times, Russia – together with China – is a rising imperialist power, as it already clearly demonstrated during the Syrian crisis in September 2013 as well as by its annexation of Crimea and Moscow's intervention in the Ukrainian civil war. At the same time US imperialism – the

global absolute hegemon for decades – is in the midst of a long-term decline in its relative power, as are the great powers of Western Europe. These developments have resulted, among others things, in important geopolitical changes in the Middle East: US imperialism was forced to end its cold war against Iran; Russia has built close relations with the military dictatorship of General al-Sisi in Egypt; and Israel – the US's most important ally in the region – is now closely collaborating with Russia in the latter's invasion of Syria.

6. Second, and related to the above, Putin is skillfully exploiting the strategic cul-de-sac in which US and EU imperialisms have maneuvered themselves. In the 1990s and 2000s Western imperialism collaborated with Assad on numerous issues including the 1991 Gulf War as well as the CIA's program of torture by proxy conducted globally. However, when the Arab Revolution started in January 2011, and one regime after another was either overthrown or seriously shaken, Washington, London, Paris and Berlin hoped to retain their influence in the region by building alliances with the most corrupt sectors of the liberal and Islamist bourgeoisie. They pretended to defend "freedom" and "human rights." When it became clear that the mass uprising of the Syrian workers and fallahin was a hard fact, Western imperialism hoped to replace Moscow's puppet, Assad, with its own puppet. While Obama, Cameron and Hollande tried to gain some influence among the rebels by mostly verbal support (they managed to train only a few dozen rebels), their main desire was to install an Assadist regime without Assad in charge – i.e., to keep the state apparatus and to change only the leading figures.

7. However, until now this strategy of Western imperialism has failed on all fronts. The few rebels trained by the US have deserted them and either handed over their weapons to anti-Western Islamist rebels or were completely crushed by them. Furthermore, the civil war in Syria has thus far cost the lives of some 250,000 Syrians and turned half of Syria's population of 22 million into refugees. Since the neighboring countries Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey have already taken in about 4 million refugees, more and more Syrians are now trying to enter Europe. This in turn has provoked a massive political crisis in Europe and has led to the rise of both a pro-refugee solidarity mass movement as well as of extreme right-wing racist parties. For all these reasons Western governments are increasingly changing their tactics and now express their support for a "political solution of the Syrian civil war which includes Assad." It is likely that, in the coming months, there will be an intensive tussle between the great powers in which, on the one hand, they will try to increase their influence at the expense of their rivals (which also includes the possible danger of military friction between them). On the other hand, all the great powers will cooperate in order to pacify the civil war and

to impose a reactionary “political solution” at the heart of which will be the continuity of the Assadist state apparatus (with or without Assad).

8. It is hardly surprising that all Syrian rebel forces – from the *Local Coordination Committees of Syria*, the *Syrian Muslim Brotherhood*, *Jabhat al-Nusra*, *Ahrar ash-Sham*, to the *Free Syrian Army* – sharply denounce the Russian invasion. Furthermore, the *Syrian Opposition Coalition* and 70 armed rebel forces have issued a statement in which they announced their decision to cease cooperating with the initiative of the UN envoy Staffan de Mistura.

9. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) sharply denounces the Russian invasion of Syria as well as the Western imperialist intervention in that country. We continue to support the Syrian Revolution. True, many factions of the fractured rebel movement follow a petty-bourgeois Islamist agenda with which we cannot identify as communists. However, this is the tragic result of the absence of an authentic revolutionary leadership in Syria, and is by no means the fault of the popular masses! It is a shameful fact that many official Syrian “communists” (i.e., the two Stalinist parties) have duly supported the Assad dictatorship for decades. In such a situation, the Islamists have treacherously managed to present themselves as the only force fighting against the Assad dictatorship while also opposing both Western and Russian imperialism. However, these political deficiencies don’t change the fact that the Syrian workers and fallahin are continuing to fight against the Assad regime for their freedom and see the rebels as their leadership.

10. The RCIT continues to support the struggle of the Kurdish people for national self-determination. This includes support for the legitimate military struggle of Kurdish forces against those who try to suppress this right (like *Daesh*, for example). However we strongly denounce the petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership of the YPG/PKK which openly collaborates with US imperialism in its military campaign against the Islamists in Syria, and which has failed for years to join the struggle against the Assad dictatorship. It is characteristic of the petty-bourgeois and opportunist nature of major sections of the international left that they uncritically hail the PKK and its so-called “revolution” in Rojava.

11. Socialists both in Syria and internationally should rally to support the Syrian Revolution and the struggle of the rebels against Assad as well as against the reactionary Salafist-Takfiri *Daesh*. The RCIT supports the rebels’ resistance both against all imperialists, the Russians as well as the US, British and French. At the same time socialists have to fight against the political agenda of the rebels’ leadership. It is vital to support all steps to strengthen local self-governing structures. It is crucial to build local councils and militias in order to break the hold of the petty-bourgeois militaristic Islamist and secular factions over the revolution. This is the only perspective to advance in the struggle for a workers’ and fellahin republic in Syria and a socialist federation in the Middle East. In any possible confrontation between Russian and Western military forces, revolutionaries must support neither side but oppose both, since both are reactionary imperialists and enemies of the Syrian Revolution.

12. We denounce the pro-Russian social-imperialist left – like the Stalinist supporters of Castro-Chavezismo, the

centrist muddle-heads supporting the “anti-imperialist” Putin and Xi regime, etc. – who praise the Assad regime and the Russian support for it. Authentic Marxism is incompatible with support for one of the imperialist great powers as well as for a reactionary dictatorship against the uprising of its own working class and peasantry!

13. The RCIT calls upon socialists to combine internationalist solidarity with the Syrian revolution with ongoing support for the Palestinian liberation struggle against the Zionist state, the popular resistance against the Egyptian dictatorship, and the Yemeni liberation war against the foreign invasion by the Al-Saud gang. At the same time socialists in Europe should participate in the pro-refugee solidarity movement and fight for a working class and internationalist perspective.

14. Most importantly revolutionaries have to unite on the basis of a international program which includes solidarity with the Arab Revolution, the struggle for permanent revolution and for working class power, and against both Western and Eastern imperialism. The RCIT calls revolutionaries around the world to join us in the struggle for a new world party of socialist revolution!

15. The RCIT calls upon authentic socialists, on all workers, and the poor and oppressed to fight with us together for:

* *Victory in the Syrian Revolution! Down with the Assad Dictatorship!*

* *Defeat military intervention by Russia, the US, the UK and France!*

* *No to reactionary sectarianism! Down with the Salafi-Takfiri Daash!*

* *For Workers’ and Fallahin councils and militias! For a Workers’ Government allied with the Fallahin based on local councils and militias!*

* *For international solidarity with the Syrian rebel and popular movement! For a campaign of the mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed to facilitate military aid for the rebel movement!*

* *For international solidarity of the workers’ movement with their brothers and sisters in Egypt!*

* *Down with the Zionist Apartheid State! Solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle! For a Free, Red Palestine from the River to the Sea!*

* *Defend Yemen against the al-Saud Gang of Aggressors!*

* *Revitalize and spread the Arab Revolution which began at the end of 2010! For a socialist federation of the Middle East!*

* *Forward in building revolutionary parties in Egypt, Syria and internationally! For the revolutionary Fifth Workers’ International!*

International Secretariat of the RCIT ■

Rally against Russia's War in Syria

Report from a Rally in Vienna on 23 October 2015, Austrian Section of the RCIT

On 23 October May, more than 100 Arab and Kurdish migrants assembled in front of the Russian as well as Iranian embassy in Vienna to protest Putin's military intervention in Syria. The organizers of the rally invited the Austrian section of the RCIT to attend and asked our comrade Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, to address those gathered.

In his speech comrade Pröbsting expressed the RCIT's solidarity with the Syrian Revolution. He denounced Russia's military aggression with Iran's assistance against the Syrian people. He called for an end of the military interference of all great powers including the US in Syria. Comrade Pröbsting called for solidarity with the libera-

tion struggle to overthrow the Assad dictatorship which should continue until the Syrian workers and peasants have taken power. He said the Syrian people must not trust any of the great powers but only in the international solidarity of the people. Finally, comrade Pröbsting also expressed the international solidarity of the RCIT with the Palestinian Intifada.

See photos and video clips of the rally's speeches at the following link:

<http://www.rkob.net/wer-wir-sind-1/rkob-aktiv-bei-syrien-kundgebung-23-10-2015/> ■



Pictures from the Rally in Solidarity with the Syrian Revolution in front of the Russian and Iranian Embassies, Vienna 23.10.2015

Occupied Palestine / Israel: Victory to the 3rd Intifada!

No Peace with Apartheid – Mass Resistance, International Solidarity and Armed Struggle Will Free Palestine!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 13.10.2015

In recent days we have witnessed an impressive upsurge of resistance by the Palestinian masses against the Zionist occupiers. Until now, more than 20 Palestinians have been killed brutally by the Israeli occupation forces, including a pregnant women and her three year old daughter as well as two youths in Gaza one 13 and the other 15 years old.

The Trigger for the Uprising

The trigger for the recent clashes between the Palestinian masses and the Israeli occupation forces was and is the fear of many Palestinians that Zionist hardliners will take control of the Al-Aqsa compound. But as revolutionary Marxists we know that the root causes of the coming Intifada lie much deeper. During the last year, Israel has brutally repressed the masses of the Palestinian people, while at the same time Fatah and the Palestinian National Authority have lost most of their credibility with the masses. Today, the majority of the Palestinian people favor (once

again) a one-state solution, simply because the Zionist settlers have created a situation on the ground where there is no realistic option for a separate Palestinian mini-state (even one which is absolutely depended as a colony of Israel). Although it is not yet certain that the clashes and mass-resistance will develop into a new Intifada, this is a very realistic possibility and revolutionaries must help expand the struggle to make the 3rd Intifada a fact!

What We Are Fighting For

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* which has sections and supporters in Occupied Palestine (Israel), Pakistan, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Brazil, Austria, Britain, and the US confirms our unconditional support for the Palestinian liberation struggle. Marwan Barbakh and Omar Othman, the two young martyrs from Gaza who were murdered by the occupation army are a symbol of the unbroken resistance of the Palestinian masses. Generation after generation will continue to



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

struggle until the occupation ends in all of Palestine – from the Jordan River to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, from Gaza to Al Quds to Jaffa, Haifa and Ramallah. We call upon the Palestinian workers, youth and fellahin to continue the fight for one Palestinian, multinational state in which the workers and fellahin will take power. The RCIT sends its warmest greeting to the heroic Palestinian youth who are struggling so bravely, but we also send our condolences to the comrades, friends and families of murdered Palestinians – the Intifada will avenge them!

The Leadership of the Palestinians

It is clear now that Abbas is nothing more than a lackey of the occupation. In this critical hour, after more than twenty Palestinians have been killed, he joined the war criminal Netanyahu in calling upon the Palestinian masses to be calm. In Occupied Palestine, revolutionaries also have to fight politically against the leadership of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. These forces are unable to liberate Palestine because they are not capable of or willing to organize the struggle not only against the Apartheid regime but against capitalism and the roots of the occupation and imperialism as well. We in the RCIT are also against the policy of the various Palestinian Stalinist originations of which Al Jabha (the PFLP) and the DFLP are the largest. Without casting any doubts on the true heroism of their struggle, the leaders of these organizations are not genuine revolutionary-socialists but rather petty-bourgeois left Arab nationalists. Regardless of our political criticism of Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, Al-Fatah or Al-Jabha (PFLP), we condemn every attack by Israel upon them. The fighters of these organizations are not terrorists but freedom-fighters; our criticism of them is not meant to somehow defend Israel but rather to really win the struggle!

What are the Tasks?

In parallel to the recent upsurge of resistance, while the Israeli police and army are preparing to suppress an even more extensive uprising, the masses of the Palestinians and the anti-Zionist Jews must also prepare for this uprising. They need to expand the struggle to new layers of the masses and build resistance and self-defense committees in the districts, villages, factories and harbors. For revolutionaries, it is vital to fight from within the new Intifada for a revolutionary-internationalist working-class perspective! We oppose nationalist and religious hatred – but since the Israelis are the oppressor-nation it is an urgent task for Jewish workers in Israel and anti-Zionist Jews in general to make it clear that they have nothing in common with “their” oppressive government. Palestinian revolutionaries, while constituting the bravest and most courageous fighters on the barricades and wielding arms against the Israeli occupation forces, must oppose any manifestations of reactionary Anti-Semitism. Taking this internationalist position could very well result in the Palestinian masses’ breaking away sections of the Israeli-Jewish working class from the chauvinist-Zionist camp. We call upon Jewish revolutionaries to use every means possible to weaken the Israeli occupation army. This means practically: striking out against the Netanyahu government; go down to the streets to protest against

racism; organize soldier resistance committees; and soldiers, don’t follow orders and sabotage the military!

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* calls for revolutionaries to:

** Found resistance committees in the districts, the factories and in the villages, to organize the fighting masses!*

** Build self-defense committees to defend the poor Palestinian masses against the terrorism of Israel. Actions against the Israeli state apparatus – if they are to be successful – must be organized and carried out by the masses!*

** Arm the masses! The international workers’ movement and the movement of the oppressed should organize a solidarity campaign with Palestine and provide weapons for the resistance. The workers’ movement and the movement of the oppressed masses around the world should form international brigades to struggle alongside the Palestinians for their liberation!*

** Defend all Palestinian factions against the state-terrorism of Israel, regardless of whether they are Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, Fatah, DFLP, etc.*

** No to attacks on Jews civilians! Attack the IDF, the police and the Israeli state apparatus, as well as openly racist Israelis – but don’t attack innocent civilians; true Internationalism is against all religious hatred!*

** Israeli anti-Zionist Jews, workers and oppressed of Israel – support the Intifada! Strike against the government, sabotage its weapons, industry and the military, and organize resistance in the army against the racist occupation and the war-mongering Generals!*

** Down with the direct or indirect allies of Israel. Throw all imperialists out of the Middle East, whether Israel, the US, the EU, Russia or China! Overthrow the brutal dictatorships in the Arab world, whether that of General al-Sisi in Egypt who is helping Israel in the Sinai and is participating in the blockade of Gaza; the Al-Saud Gang who is murdering the rebellious masses of Yemen; the brutal dog Assad in Syria who didn’t lift a finger to help the Palestinians, or the Jordanian monarchy. Down with the reactionary takfiri-salafist Daesh/IS which openly states that Muslims must first fight against the Palestinian factions and only then against Israel.*

** Victory to the 3rd Intifada! Long live the martyrs – the Intifada will avenge them! For a multinational, democratic Palestinian workers’ and fellahin state from the River to the Sea – For a Free, Red Palestine!*

** Fight along with the RCIT to serve the oppressed and liberate Palestine once and for all!*

International Secretariat ■

Netanyahu's Demagoguery is Holocaust Denial

By Yossi Schwarz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT Section in Israel / Occupied Palestine), 23.10.2015

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in his inexhaustible demagoguery, claimed on 21 October 2015 that it was the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who convinced Hitler to exterminate the Jews.

"Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time, he wanted to expel them," Netanyahu said in his speech to the World Zionist congress. When Hitler asked al-Husseini what to do, Netanyahu said he replied: "Burn them." (1)

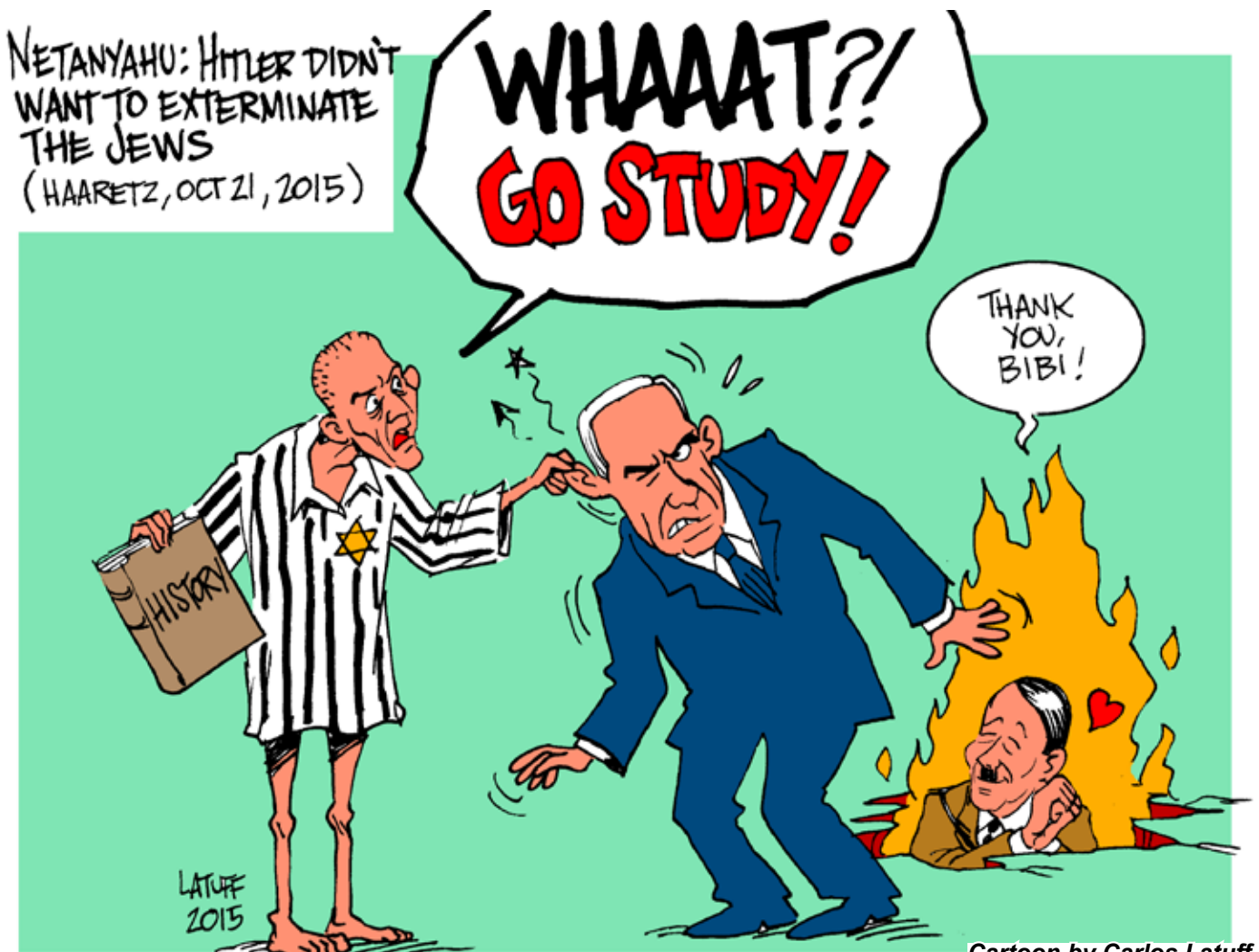
If we believe Benjamin Netanyahu, were it not for Haj Amin al-Husseini, Hitler would not have exterminated the Jews. This position is beyond contempt, as it whitewashes Hitler's crimes in order to blame the victims of Zionist oppression for the Nazis' crimes. In reality, the mass killing of Jews by SS mobile killing units – *Einsatzgruppen* – began in July 1941, before Hitler ever met the Mufti. *Einsatzgruppen C*, led by Otto Rasch, murdered more than 34,000 Jews in the Babi Yar near Kiev.

Haj Amin al-Husseini indeed was reactionary Jew-hater who supported Hitler and had a radio program from which, broadcasting from Berlin, he supported the Nazi regime. However it's important to remember that Haj

Amin al-Husseini was appointed to the position of the Mufti by Herbert Samuel, the first high commissioner of Palestine during the British Mandate, who was a Zionist and Samuel was influenced in his decision by the leaders of the Zionist settlers. The latter initially considered al-Husseini as one who would serve the interests of the British Mandate, and thereby the Zionist aims.

Another important fact to recall is that the Zionists openly collaborated with Nazi Germany until 1939 in the "transfer" of Jewish funds out of Germany to Palestine. On August 7, 1933, leaders of the Zionist movement concluded a pact with the Third Reich by which some 60,000 Jews and \$100 million were transferred to Jewish settlers in Palestine. In return, the Zionists halted the worldwide anti-Nazi boycott campaign and became distributors of products from Nazi Germany in the Middle East. Today even Zionists have to admit to this. (2)

Another point: In 1941 the Zionist terrorist organization Lehi (NMO) sent a letter of support to the leaders of Nazi Germany asking them to form an alliance, as the Lehi wanted to establish a similar regime in Palestine the letter



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

reads as follows:

"The NMO, which is well-acquainted with the goodwill of the German Reich government and its authorities towards Zionist activity inside Germany and towards Zionist emigration plans, is of the opinion that:

1. Common interests could exist between the establishment of a new order in Europe in conformity with the German concept, and the true national aspirations of the Jewish people as they are embodied by the NMO.

2. Cooperation between the new Germany and a renewed folkish-national Hebraium would be possible and,

3. The establishment of the historic Jewish state on a national and totalitarian basis, bound by a treaty with the German Reich, would be in the interest of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East." (4)

Proceeding from these considerations, the NMO in Palestine, under the condition the above-mentioned national aspirations of the Israeli freedom movement are recognized on the side of the German Reich, offers to actively take part in the war on Germany's side.

According to Netanyahu's logic, the NMO is responsible for the extermination of the Jews in Europe. But, of course, this is total nonsense.

Is it any wonder that the most right-wing pro- Nazi organizations love Netanyahu and Israel?

As early as 2008, the Israeli journalist Tamar Fox pointed this out when she wrote: *"A Neo Nazi group in Germany recently launched a website that expresses its solidarity with Israel."* According to Ynet:

'A strong nation is worthy of life; an ailing nation deserves death,' it said, before detailing an ideology sporting the traditional Nazi concept of purity of the race on the one hand, and calling on National Socialists to let go of their hatred for Jews and support the Jewish people's right to their own homeland on the other. "Deportations, pogroms and inquisitions were all understandable acts which were carried out by nations merely trying to defend themselves," said the website of past persecutions of Jews." That is also the context in which the event called the "Holocaust" must be viewed... This does not justify it. Instead of destroying the Jews we should have taken every measure possible to support the Zionist movement.' The group goes on to harshly criticize the Nazi regime as the cause of the "unnecessary rivalry" between Germany and its "brethren neighbors," and slams the current leaders of Germany's extreme right as "cowardly reactionaries.'

The group is called National Socialists for Israel, and among other things, they've started distributing stickers in Berlin with Israeli soldiers on them and the words, "A 2000-year struggle for survival. Respect those who have earned it." Another sticker has a picture of senior Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich, and under the words, "As a Nazi, I'm a Zionist." (5)

This is far from an isolated case. As was published in al-Jazeera:

"Far-right parties are professing a new found love of Israel as a way of escaping their past anti-Semitism and racism, and to justify their prejudice towards European Muslims as not being racist," Toby Archer, a researcher who studies far-right parties and the "counter-jihad blogosphere", explained to Al Jazeera. "Parties like the British National Party (BNP) in the UK, Vlaams Belang in Belgium, and the National Front in France are all coming out from a neo-fascist past." (5)

The scandalous statement, made by the Israeli Prime Minister before the conference of the World Zionist

Congress now being held in Jerusalem, was intended to justify Israel's extra-judicial killing of Palestinians. But, based on reactions till now, Netanyahu's ploy has backfired. On 21 October 2015, the British *Guardian* wrote that Netanyahu's speech has attracted a storm of criticism: *"Yad Vashem's chief historian, Prof Dina Porat, told the Israeli news website Ynet that Netanyahu's claims were incorrect: "You cannot say that it was the Mufti who gave Hitler the idea to kill or burn Jews. It's not true. Their meeting occurred after a series of events that point to this." (6)*

By making the claim he did, Benjamin Netanyahu has joined the camp of holocaust deniers. It takes the son of Ben-Zion Netanyahu, a known fascist whom even Menachem Begin called a *"right-wing extremist"* and others called *"racist"* (7) to issue a statement that in effect whitewashes Hitler, as if Hitler needed encouragement from Haj Amin al-Husseini to exterminate the Jews. Such claims dovetail nicely with the pro-Nazi propaganda which nowadays is aimed directed towards Muslims.

Footnotes

(1) Josef Federman: Israel's Netanyahu heads to Berlin to meet Kerry, Oct 21, 2015 http://www.yakimaherald.com/news/world_news/netanyahu-causes-uproar-by-linking-palestinians-to-holocaust/article_8ee200ac-d437-597c-a966-c8bcd2197bc9.html

(2) Yfaat Weiss: The Transfer Agreement and the Boycott Movement: A Jewish Dilemma on the Eve of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20203231.pdf

(3) Quoted in Lenni Brenner: 51 Documents, December 23, 2002, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2002/12/23/51-documents/>

(4) Tamar Fox: Neo-Nazis Love Israel, June 6, 2008, http://jewcy.com/jewish-religion-and-beliefs/neo_nazis_love_israel#sthash.WJqbMFKY.dpuf

(5) Nour Samaha: JDL and far-right parties find common ground. Extremist Jewish factions and far-right parties team up against "Islamisation" despite the latter's anti-Semitic past, 29 Dec 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/12/2011121391638252910.html>

(6) Peter Beaumont: Anger at Netanyahu claim Palestinian grand mufti inspired Holocaust, The Guardian, October 21 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/21/netanyahu-under-fire-for-palestinian-grand-mufti-holocaust-claim>

(7) Lawrence Joffe: Benzion Netanyahu Obituary https://www.academia.edu/10235422/Obituary_Benzion_Netanyahu ■



Occupied Palestine: Without Revolution There Is No Solution!

The Escalation of Israeli Repression and the Pathetic Reaction of the Israeli "Left"

By Yossi Schwarz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT Section in Israel / Occupied Palestine), 22.10.2015

In the youth uprising which has erupted here in recent weeks, so far 40 Palestinians have been killed and at least 1,000 were injured, while 8 Israelis have died and fewer than 100 have been injured. Some Palestinians were killed after they stabbed or attempted to stab Israelis, but most have been demonstrators or stone throwers shot dead by Israeli soldiers during protests. Thus, what we have here is the continuation of the war against the Palestinians to break their will to live as free people.

"But they began it" say the Zionists and "they want to kill us all". In reality, the Israeli oppression has led desperate youth to fight even when they know they will be killed. Do we know other situations in history when young people fought oppression even when they knew they would be killed? What about the Ghetto rebellions of the Jews? But Israel is not Nazi Germany. True! The Nazis wanted to kill all the Jews – Israel just wants to transfer the Palestinians and take their land and property. A better analogy is South African apartheid except that in South Africa the white settlers wanted the blacks to remain as a source of cheap labor while the Zionists want to get rid of the Palestinians and remove them from history as a nation.

The deafening silence in the capitalist media as the toll of Palestinians injured and killed by the Israeli army grows daily is appalling but not surprising. Most imperialist governments, mainly the US, see only a serious threat to "Israeli security" and to "Israeli Jewish lives." What they see is a "cycle of violence" that must be broken by the Israeli army and police.

France has suggested that international observers be stationed in the al-Aqsa Mosque. But Israel, which claims that it is maintaining the status quo, objects to such a suggestion. While we certainly do not trust international observers to protect Palestinians rights, does Israel really oppose it because it is changing the status quo? No, Israel's own actions to encroach upon the al-Aqsa compound is what ignited the youth rebellion.

Palestinians youth are being killed en masse

Let us clarify one fact: most Israelis who have been the targets of stabbing attacks are settlers or armed soldiers or police, mainly in East Jerusalem and Hebron. These groups are the direct oppressors of the Palestinians. And Palestinians youth are being killed in East Jerusalem, the West bank and Gaza, at a ratio of five for every one Israeli who has been killed by Palestinians.

Israelis take as a given that that Arabs simply want to kill Jews for no reason, and this belief is based entirely on the denial that Israel has occupied and repressed the Palestinians and that the reaction to this oppression is the young Palestinians armed with stones and knives.

Israel's iron fist policy includes sealing off Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, the demolition of homes of the families of Palestinian attackers, and Israel's security cabinet has also recently approved a proposal by

the Minister for Public Security, Gilad Erdan, that Israel not hand over the bodies of those killed to their families. These measures are aimed at inflaming further resistance to the oppression and, if possible, lay the groundwork for a new ethnic cleansing.

Mass repression in Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza

Al Jazeera reported about a massive escalation of the Israeli repression. It spoke to two residents of Jerusalem's old City who said the area had turned into a war zone. "This racist government has turned Jerusalem into a war zone ... We are being chased out of our homes ... our streets," said Aziz Abbasi. "In every corner [and] alleyway in Jerusalem, there are armed men, border police, army, intelligence officers." (1)

In Hebron, located in the southern part of the West Bank and its most populous city, Israel killed two youths on Saturday, October 16. A general strike was called in to protest the killings. Al Jazeera reports:

"Seventeen-year-old Bayan Ayman Abd al-Hadi al-Esseili was shot by Israeli border guards after allegedly stabbing a soldier near the settlement of Kyriat Arba.." Maan News reported that the soldier's hand was slightly injured. In an earlier incident, an Israeli settler shot and killed 18-year-old Fadel al Qawasmeh on Shuhada Street in Hebron's Old City. Middle East Eye spoke to eyewitnesses to this second incident who saw al Qawasmeh walking down Shuhada Street early in the morning. "My daughter saw him from the widow," said Mufid Sharbati, whose house looks onto the street. "She saw a settler approaching him. The settler shouted curse words at him, then took out his pistol and shot him in the head." Upon hearing his daughter's screams, Sharbati run up to the roof and his brother filmed the moments following the shooting. The video, widely shared by the group Youth Against Settlements, shows soldiers approaching Qawamseh following the shooting and possibly placing something by the body, which has led to speculations of a knife being planted at the scene. (...) "It is as if a European country placed a group of neo-nazis to live in a Jewish neighbourhood," Hisham Sharbati, an activist with the Hebron Defence Committee, told MEE, "it would be an outright provocation." (2)

Likewise, in Gaza, thousands assembled in areas along the Israeli border, as Israeli forces responded with tear gas, stun grenades, rubber-coated steel bullets and live ammunition. Here too, a number of Palestinian youth were shot by the Israeli army. (3)

Young Palestinians Are Ready to Die

The preparedness of young Palestinians to attack police, soldiers, settlers and even Israelis who are not settlers from the territories occupied since 1967, knowing they stand a good chance of dying due to Israel's policy of extra-judicial killings, has fundamentally changed the situation in Israel and the occupied territories. This is not yet a full-fledged third intifada, but the actions by the Israeli government

are pushing in that direction. Thus, even if the scope of the uprising is limited and smaller than during the first month of the two previous intifadas (which broke out in 1987 and 2000), Israel's actions are exacerbating the anger against the occupation and oppression. This is no longer limited to East Jerusalem. At the same time the reaction of the Israeli public is not only one of panic but has actually led to unprovoked attacks on Arabs and even Jews who are suspected of being Arabs. This, in addition to the army and police's shooting to kill immediately after a Palestinian youth has wounded an Israeli, or the army or police suspect that the given Palestinian may try to kill or wound an Israeli.

Silence on the Left

Since the mass media in the West portray the youth rebellion simply as terrorism, many of the left-wing petty-bourgeois organizations have remained silent on the entire rebellion.

Among those who remain dumb to events are the IMT, CWI (except their section in Israel, Ma'avak Socialisti, see below), ISO, LRP, IBT, Spartacist League, and the IG. Other groups have reacted, but without offering any action program. The British SWP's Nick Clark explains the reasons for the outburst of Palestinian anger, but he offers no concrete measures and his only conclusion is that conditions are ripe for a Third Intifada. How to win this struggle is beyond him.

The Left-Zionism of Ma'avak Socialisti (CWI Israel)

Ma'avak Socialisti (Socialist Struggle), the section of the CWI in Israel, characterizes the uprising as a national conflict where on one side the Israeli government and the settlers are attacking the Palestinians, and on the other side terrorist Palestinian nationalists are attacking Israelis. They say that the government's policy of "conflict management" has led to a serious crisis. They condemn Israel's killing of unarmed Palestinians who were protesting in Gaza and in the West Bank, and they symmetrically blame the right-wing on both sides, in Israel and Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the territories, for inciting violence. Then, they call for the recognition of the right for self-determination to both nations. They accuse the Israeli government of refusing to recognize the right of self-determination of the Palestinians and blame Netanyahu's government for pushing for a religious conflict over the al-Aqsa Mosque. In the opinion of *Ma'avak Socialisti*, it is in the interest of both the Israeli workers and the Palestinian workers to protest against the policy of the government and to demand from the Israeli trade unions and student organizations to organize protests against the government which serves the capitalist class. Against what they call the "nationalist incitement of both sides," they call for joint demonstrations to end the occupation, the settlements, and to end the attacks on civilians. (4)

This is not a bad position for left-wing Zionists, but as Lenin told Borochoy, the ideologue of the Left Zionists, when the latter asked him what he thinks about his organization: "It's hard to sit on the space between two chairs."

One of the main issues concerning the right of self-determination for the Palestinians is the right of return of

the refugees from 1948 and later, something which Israel will never accept as it contradicts the idea of a state with a Jewish majority. Thus, in the real world those who support the idea of two states oppose the return of the Palestinian refugees, even if they do not admit it. Even without the Palestinian refugees, the number of Palestinians residing in the entire country (between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea) is 6.2 million, which is the same as the number of Israeli Jews. Thus, it is impossible to be for the right of self-determination for both the Israelis and the Palestinians without sitting on the space between two between chairs.

This is not a conflict between two national movements. It is a conflict between the oppressed Palestinian indigenous population fighting for its national freedom and a settler colonialist society. To claim that it is a conflict between two nationalisms is to entirely ignore the nature of the Israeli society. Marxists do not support the right of self-determination of settler colonialists. Marxists do not support the right of self-determination of the Protestant settlers in Northern Ireland or the right of self-determination of the white settlers in South Africa.

On the question of South Africa, Trotsky supported not two socialist states, one white and the other black, but a black republic. He wrote:

"A victorious revolution is unthinkable without the awakening of the native masses; in its turn it will give them what they are so lacking today, confidence in their strength, a heightened personal consciousness, a cultural growth. Under these conditions the South African Republic will emerge first of all as a "black" Republic; this does not exclude, of course, either full equality for whites or brotherly relations between the two races (which depends mainly upon the conduct of the whites). But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the State." (5)

The leaders of *Ma'avak Socialisti* are well aware of Trotsky's position. To this they reply that the ratio between the number of Israeli Jews and Palestinians is much different than what was the case in South Africa between blacks and whites, and that the Israelis are far too strong. Consequently, without getting the Jewish workers to support the right of self-determination for the Palestinians there will be no solution. According to this argument, the Israeli Jews will not support the right of self-determination for the Palestinians without giving the Israelis the right of self-determination. The problem with this false argument is that the Israeli workers are part of the settler colonialist society, and they therefore must oppose the right of self-determination for the Palestinians as long as they are Zionists. Of course, the Palestinians cannot win the struggle for freedom by themselves, and only will be able to win it as part of a regional Arab revolution having the support of the international working class.

Yes, today the Arab workers and *fellahin* cannot support the Palestinians because of the situation in the Middle East. For this reason, the Israeli government feels free to implement its policy of killings, a policy which is supported by the majority of the Israeli workers and poor.

The blind anger of the young Palestinians who are today fighting their oppression with stones and knives against the heavily armed soldiers and police, and in some cases attack not only the settlers, soldiers, and policemen but

unarmed Israelis civilians is because they do not see a mass movement in Israel on their side. Netanyahu won the elections with the votes of Jewish workers who support the repression of the Palestinians.

A call to the Histadruth to organize protests against the repression of the Palestinians is at best a bad joke. In reality, it entirely ignores the nature of the Histadrut as an arm of the colonialist settler state and its role as an arm of the Zionist state in the international trade unions. In their call to the Histadruth, Maavak Socialisti ignores the fact that the Palestinian trade unions call for a boycott of the Histadruth because of this very nature. The Histadruth was founded as a colonialist enterprise, and in each of Israel's wars against the Palestinians it has supported the Zionists. Growing numbers of trade unions in the world understand this and therefore support the call of the Palestinians trade unions to boycott the Histadruth.

Thus in the name of abstract worker unity, Maavak Socialisti stands with the Histadruth against the Palestinians workers and alongside its own capitalist ruling class.

Hadash: Stalinist Zionism

Hadash in its newspaper, *Zo Haderech* (This is the Way), of October 14 has a very similar line to Maavak Socialisti. The headline reads "The end of conflict management" under which it claims that only peace negotiations and a Palestinian state in the borders of 1967 will bring peace and an end to the bloodshed.

Negotiations between whom? Negotiations between Netanyahu, Bennet Lieberman, and Abu Mazen will bring peace and a Palestinian state? Or maybe negotiations between the Zionist Camp, which supports the government's repression, and Abu Mazen will bring about peace?

The majority of the Palestinians no longer believe in this empty formula which only helps the Israeli government to perpetuate its policies under such empty slogans. This is the very slogan of Obama, who himself supports Israel repression. Most Palestinians already support the idea of a single state and Hadash is trying to pull them backward.

Towards the Third Intifada!

The simple truth is that, short of a revolution, there is no solution. For a revolution, a third massive uprising is necessary with no illusions about peace between Israel and the Palestinians. As long as Israel exists as a Zionist colonial settler state, the repression of the Palestinian must continue. The only solution to an apartheid state from the river to the sea is a multi-national workers' state. Only in such a state will Jews and Arabs be able to live in peace and the Palestinian refugees will be able to return. Of course, we have to stand with the Jewish workers in their struggle against the capitalists, but at the same time tell them the truth that Israel is not only an oppressor but a death trap for them unless they will break with Zionism. (6)

In the meantime the most important task of the Palestinians is to organize for their own self-defense in each neighborhood and in every village.

Down with Israel oppression!

For a third popular intifada!

For a multi-national workers state from the river to the sea! For a free, red Palestine!

Footnotes

(1) Al Jazeera: Palestinians killed after alleged Hebron stabbings, 17 October 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.680936>

(2) Al Jazeera: Israeli forces kill Gaza border protesters 17 October 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/israeli-forces-kill-gaza-border-protesters-151016134046980.html>

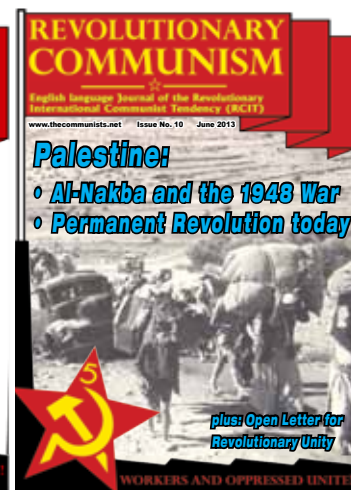
(3) Al Jazeera Israeli police kill more Palestinians in Jerusalem, 15 October 2015, Al Jazeera Israeli police kill more Palestinians in Jerusalem

(4) See e.g. Shachar Ben Horeen: The Crisis of Conflict Management, 9.10.2015, <http://socialism.org.il/maavak/?article=1430>

(5) Leon Trotsky: On the South African Theses (1935); in: Trotsky Writings 1934-35, p. 249

(6) For the RCIT's and the ISL's analysis and perspective for the Palestinian liberation struggle see numerous statements and articles on our website. ■

Order RCIT Document's on the Arab Revolution via our Contact Address!



Occupied Palestine: The sparks which ignited the rebellion

Solidarity with the Intifada! Down with the Israeli repression!

By Yossi Schwarz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT Section in Israel / Occupied Palestine), 18.10.2015

The struggle of Palestinians is not a popular uprising as was the first popular "Intifada" which began in 1987, nor an organized small scale guerrilla campaign against the occupation like the second Intifada that began in 2000. It is certainly not a wave of "terror" as Israel calls it. It is the reaction of young Palestinians who can no longer stand the lack of any hope for a normal life and who have had enough with the systematic repression by the Israeli state and the settlers. It was triggered by Israeli actions in the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) and the anger over the killing of the Dawabsheh family in the isolated village of Duma, 25 km southeast of Nablus, by Jewish right wing terrorists who are apparently known to the authorities, as Israel's Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon has admitted on two occasions: *"We know who is responsible, but we will not expose those findings in order to protect our intelligence sources."* (1)

The Dawabsheh family home was set alight on July 31st. An initial investigation revealed that masked men threw Molotov cocktails into two homes, and spray painted "Long live the messiah king" and "revenge" in Hebrew on the walls. The Dawabsheh family was staying in one of the homes, while the other was vacant. The family woke up as a result of the fire, and tried to escape the flames with two of their children, four-year-old Ahmed and eighteen-month-old Ali. The family managed to escape, however infant Ali died as a result of his burns. Saed Dawabsheh, Ali's father, succumbed to his injuries a week later. Ali's mother, Reham fought for her life for over a month, after which she too died of her wounds. The only survivor of the heinous attack was the family's eldest son, four-year-old Ahmed, who continues to be treated in an intensive care hospital unit.

Naser Dawabsheh, a member of the extended family, responded to the statement of Israel's Minister of Defense saying, *"Ya'alon's statement is not justified, Israel must immediately expose the murderers. They burned the whole society and not just Duma."* Dawabsheh continued to say, *"I know the attack was a major incident for Israel, and that Israel wants to arrest them in order to show the world that it is a country which chases and apprehends murderers."* But he also added that, *"Even if they will be arrested, what will happen then? The court will just say they are crazy, and they will live out their lives in some hotel like the murderers of Mohamed Abu-Khdeir."*

A communist Member of Knesset Aida Toma-Suleiman (Joint Arab List) also reacted to Ya'alon's comments saying, *"The Minister of Defense, who left the Dawabsheh family to die, continues his flagrant scornful attitude by saying that they will not prosecute the criminal murderers - in order to not expose their sources."* The Joint List MK continued to say, *"Would it even be possible to think that the defense establishment would act the same way if a Jewish family was murdered. Ya'alon's remarks confirm the forgiving attitude within the system towards settler terrorism, which allows for the next murder."*

The nature of the rebellion

Regardless of how Israel and Western media may be portraying the current round of violence, it is in fact an anti-imperialist struggle in the form of blind anger. Like similar events in history, some of the victims of blind fury against oppression are not directly involved in any specific act of oppression, but at the same time do not oppose the oppression. Thus they are not exactly innocent victims, but they are the wrong target and the violence against them only serves the Israeli government and its campaign of state terrorism.

This rebellion brings to mind some of the black slaves' rebellions in America and in particular the rebellion of Ned Turner. The historian Herbert Aptheker in his study *American Negro Slave Revolts*, found records of approximately two hundred and fifty revolts and conspiracies in the history of American Negro slavery. Aptheker defined a slave revolt as an action involving 10 or more slaves, with *"freedom as the apparent aim [and] contemporary references labeling the event as an uprising, plot, insurrection, or the equivalent of these."* (2)

Such rebellions were directed not only against the slave masters but against his family, including young children. Nevertheless these were authentic struggles for freedom, and only those who support slavery can condemn these rebellions on the ground that innocent white people died during them. Slavery and the slave masters were responsible for the violent blind form of the rebellion in the same way the Israeli state and the Israeli government are responsible for the blind violent form of the Palestinian's current rebellion. The demand of the Israeli government from the leaders of the Arab list to condemn the struggle is grossly hypocritical and should be rejected.

Let it be said loud and clear that the present struggle is justified even when the means are wrong. What is needed are not young people armed with stones and knives that attack simple Israeli civilians, but a massive armed uprising of the Palestinian workers and the poor peasants together with that section of the Jewish workers who support the struggle, with the aim of forming a multinational workers' state from the river to the sea in place of the current racist imperialist state currently existing on this territory.

The government pushed for this confrontation

The Israeli government has pushed for this confrontation for a long time and the struggle around the Al Aqsa Mosques is a manifestation of the Israeli drive to complete the transformation of Palestine and turn the mosque compound into an integral part of the Israeli state. At the same time, the Arab masses are unable to support the Palestinians because of the situation in Syria and in Egypt.

When the Zionist right wing tried to change the status quo of the Buraq Wall (Western Wall) in 1929, it led to a

bloody conflict. An international committee was convened to investigate the situation and determined that the Buraq Wall is absolute Muslim property and Jews are only allowed to pray there “as per custom,” provided they do not install any permanent structures. (3)

In 1967 Israel destroyed the 800-year-old Moroccan Quarter adjacent to the Buraq Wall. In 1969, a fire was started in the Al Aqsa Mosque by a visitor from Australia named Denis Michael Rohan. Rohan was a member of an evangelical Christian sect known as the *Worldwide Church of God*. He hoped that by burning down al-Aqsa Mosque he would hasten the Second Coming of Jesus, making way for the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount. (4) In the ensuing blaze Saladin’s minbar (a pulpit in a mosque where the imam [prayer leader] stands to deliver sermons) was burned down. Since then Israel has not only restricted the rights of Moslems to pray in the Mosques in the compound, but the far-right wingers in Israel, protected by the police, have entered the sanctuary time and again against the wishes of the Moslems. These fascists do not hide their plan to destroy the Mosques and build the “Third Temple”.

The Israeli government claims that The Palestinians are lying when they say that Israel wants to change the status

quo of the Mosques. However the one who lies on this question is Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

On October 15, Amos Harel wrote in *Haaretz*:

“But let’s take a look at what has happened at the compound in recent years: The rabbinic taboo against Jews visited the Temple Mount has been broken, and some 10,000 Jews visit there annually; the activities of various groups seeking to change the status quo on the site are increasingly persistent; and cabinet ministers, Knesset members and other public figures support this. Many of them visit the site frequently, until each time the government comes to its senses under the pressure of events and forbids their entry (as it did last November and this month).

There has been no change in the status quo in terms of restricting the rights of Muslim worshippers for the benefit of Jewish worshippers. The Palestinian concerns stem from — in addition to their fondness for conspiracy theories — the precedent of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where over several years the Jews have received additional rights and Muslims are still conducting a containment battle over prayer at the site. Of course there is also the reality the Palestinians see around them, from the expansion of settlements through building Jewish enclaves (essentially Jewish settlements) in the heart of Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem.

To sum up, the status quo regarding prayer rights has not



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

changed, but the circumstances on the ground and certainly the atmosphere have changed completely. Israel is not blameless in this regard. A tougher government stance earlier on could probably have helped curb the current escalation. With regard to the Temple Mount, the behavior of ministers Uri Ariel, Miri Regev (in the previous government) and others in the extreme right wing of the government and the coalition was irresponsible and dangerous.” (5)

However, Harel didn't do his homework regarding the tomb of Tomb of the Patriarchs. If he had, he would have known that Israel claimed that it would not change the status quo of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, while in fact it did.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron

Between 1929 and 1967 Jews were not allowed to enter the cave. In 1968, a special arrangement was made to accommodate Jewish services on the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement. This led to clashes between the Moslems and the right wing Zionist settlers. In 1994 it led to the massacre committed by Baruch Goldstein an Israeli-American settler that left 29 Palestinian Muslims dead and scores injured. The resulting riots resulted in a further 35 deaths.

The 1996 “Wye River Accords” included an agreement for the site restricting access by both Jews and Muslims. As part of this agreement, the Islamic *waqf* controlled 81% of the building. This includes the whole of the southeastern section, which lies above the only known entrance to the caves and the entirety of the caves themselves. Jews were not permitted to visit the Cenotaphs of Isaac or Rebecca, which lie entirely within the southeastern section, except for during ten days a year that hold special significance in Judaism. The Israeli government did not allow Jewish religious authorities the right to maintain the site and allow only the *waqf* to do so. Since the first Intifada the Israeli army controls the access to the shrines. Israeli forces also subject locals to checkpoints and bar all non-Jews from using some of the main roads to the complex.

On February 21, 2010, Israel announced that it would include the site in an Israeli national heritage site protection and rehabilitation plan. (6) The announcement sparked protests from the UN, Arab governments and the United States. UNESCO voted that the “*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs in al-Khalil / Hebron*” was “*an integral part of the occupied Palestinian Territories.*”

Israeli authorities have placed restrictions on calling the Moslems to prayer by the *muezzin* of the Ibrahimi mosque. The order was enforced 61 times in October 2014, and 52 times in December 2014. Today the Tomb of the Patriarchs is divided and a Jewish synagogue occupies a large part of the tomb.

Thus, while Israel, at the beginning of the 1967 occupation of Hebron, promised not to change the status quo, since then it has in fact changed quite a lot. Therefore, the Palestinians have every reason to suspect Israel, as Israel wants to turn all of Palestine into a Zionist state.

Prior to 1967, the Zionist movement was mostly secular even if the leaders of the colonialist settlers needed the Bible to justify the settling in Palestine. However since 1967 the Zionists have used religious dogmas as a cover for their theft of the lands occupied during the '67 war. In the

process, the ideas of the far-right religious extremists have become the dogma of the mainstream represented by the most right wing government in the history of Israel. Today most of the members of the Israeli government support the *Third Temple movement*. The far right extremists reason that violent clashes between Jews and Moslems will result in a new ethnic cleansing and following by the annexation of the rest of Palestine.

This is the reality which stood behind the brutal killing of the Dawabsheh family and the brutal murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir. The aim was to provoke the Palestinians. Israeli's government policy of facilitating killings is now intended to break the will of the Palestinians to achieve their own mini-state even in a ridiculously small part of Palestine.

The Palestinian Authority which collaborates with Israel is not only betraying the Palestinians masses but is digging its own grave.

The young Palestinians, including women, who are fighting the occupation are acting without leadership and a program that can win this struggle. They're using stones and knives against the Israeli army, one of the strongest armies in the world. The Israeli army and police do not hesitate to kill the Palestinians fighting for freedom. As we have said, the tactics being used by the uprising are wrong, as they cannot lead to victory, and simply provide the Israeli government and state with an excuse by to inflict as much suffering on the Palestinians as possible. However, irrespective of this, we stand in full solidarity with the Palestinian youth their struggle for liberation!

For a Free, Red Palestine from the River to the Sea!

Footnotes

(1) Yoav Zitun, Moran Azulay, Elior Levy: Ya'alon: We know who was behind Duma attack, ynet, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4699818,00.html>

(2) Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Did African-American Slaves Rebel? <http://www.theroot.com/views/did-african-american-slaves-rebel>

(3) See on this also our historical analysis by Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1

(4) Wikipedia: Al-Aqsa Mosque, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque

(5) Amos Harel: Terror Wave Q&A: Haaretz Military Analyst Answers Readers' Questions, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/premium-1.680471>

(6) See Wikipedia: List of National Heritage Sites of Israel, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_National_Heritage_Sites_of_Israel ■



Turkey/Kurdistan: Stop the Terror against the Masses!

Down with the reactionary Erdogan-government and its war against the Kurdish people!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 14.10.2015

A cowardly and despicable bombing against a peace demonstration took place in Ankara last Saturday, 10 October. Until now it is known that at least 125 people were killed (according to the left-reformist HDP) and hundreds were wounded; but since Saturday the numbers of killed and wounded are continually rising. The demonstration was organized by four trade unions to demand that the Turkish state stop its war against the Kurdish people.

Who is responsible?

Up until now it is still not completely certain who was behind the bombing. At first the Turkish government even dared to insinuate that the leftwing nationalists of the PKK and the Stalinists of the DHKP-C were responsible. But this was simply spontaneous stupidity and impertinence. Now they are blaming the reactionary Takfiri-Salafists of Daesh/IS which is more realistic hunch, but not the only possibility. Evidence pointing to this latter possibility is that witnesses heard the suicide bombers chant "Allahu akbar" shortly before the explosions. Another option might be that behind this crime were reactionary fascist-nationalists like supporters of the MHP who have been responsible for pogrom mobilizations against the Kurds during the last weeks and months; but such groups normally don't resort to suicide-bombings. It is also possible that the reactionary-capitalist Erdogan government itself, together with its state-apparatus, is responsible at least indirectly for the crime by deliberately not preventing it. According to such a scenario, while the massacre may have in fact been planned and executed by IS/Daesh, the Turkish state may simply have let it happen. Evidence pointing to this possibility is that the Erdogan government is now interested in escalating the political crisis in Turkey/Northern Kurdistan by granting itself more executive powers. The ruling class of Turkey, traditionally more aligned with the CHP and the army command, is currently displeased with the ruling AKP and Erdogan, as these are to a certain degree affiliated with the religious rural masses and the religious urban petty-bourgeoisie. But by escalating and transforming the situation in Turkey/Northern Kurdistan into a civil war, Erdogan might be hoping to present himself as a "national savior" and "trustable Bonaparte" (of course only from the point of view of the capitalists).

Either way, political responsibility for the vial crime that occurred on Saturday belongs to the Erdogan government, the ruling class of Turkey, the fascists of the MHP and the CHP. These forces whipped up the arch-reactionary chauvinism against the Kurdish people and other minorities under the pretext of the "war against terrorism." They often use the petty-bourgeois, left-nationalists of the PKK as an excuse to persecute the Kurdish masses,

other national minorities and the Turkish revolutionary working-class movement.

How to respond?

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT, *Devrimci Komünist Uluslararası Eğilim* in the Turkish language) condemns this heinous terrorism against the masses by the Turkish capitalists, Saturday's Ankara massacre being simply the highest peak yet reached in terms of the number of victims. We wish to send our warmest condolences to the comrades, friends and family of the martyrs! Let's honor their memory by continuing the struggle for liberation and avenging their deaths by overthrowing the murderous capitalist state of Turkey! As a direct response towards the Ankara massacre, revolutionaries in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan should support attempts to organize a general strike against the government. They also need to establish self-defense committees against the police violence, the fascist thugs and the pogrom attempts. There should also be an independent investigation of the bombing under the independent control of the workers' movement and the Kurdish national movement. Don't trust the bourgeois courts! Send the backers of the bombing to workers' tribunals – only this will achieve justice!

The Tasks of Turkish Revolutionaries

Revolutionaries in Turkey and in Northern Kurdistan must prevent the capitalists and their parties (AKP, MHP, CHP) from whipping up nationalist hatred and take an unwavering stand against the government-sponsored hatred of the Kurds. Turkish revolutionaries must also develop a campaign in the defense of the Kurdish people, defending the PKK in practice against the Turkish state while at the same time not giving any political support to their petty-bourgeois left-nationalism and guerilla-strategy (combined with their endemic capitulationism). Revolutionaries must strive to organize anti-militarist committees in the army to undermine the reactionary war against the Kurdish people. The campaign in defense of the Kurds should raise a slogan calling for a referendum in Southeast Turkey and fight for its implementation in practice. In this referendum the residents of every city and village will decide whether they want to secede from Turkey and form a new Kurdish state, if they want to remain within Turkey but be granted a large degree of autonomy, or whether they want to retain the status quo.

This demand should also be directed towards the workers and peasants who still follow Erdogan. Revolutionaries must tell them: "*Tayyip always claims that he stands for democracy but he opposes a referendum which is the most democratic means. If the current situation escalates to a civil*

war – every man, woman and child that is killed will be the responsibility of Erdogan, because he could have prevented this with a simple democratic vote!” It is very important that revolutionaries find a way to get in touch with the grass roots of the AKP – which is clearly the strongest party amongst the Turkish urban and rural toilers – and try to break them away from the party’s leadership. An essential precondition for this is for revolutionaries to deal pedagogically with the religious faith of the Muslims, while at the same time struggle for a secular, red Turkey and Kurdistan.

The tasks of Kurdish Revolutionaries

For their part, Kurdish revolutionaries must fight from within the Kurdish masses to combine the struggle for liberation with the aim of a United Red Kurdistan. In such a Kurdistan the working and poor masses, i.e., the working class, the poor peasantry and the urban poor will take political power and – in contrast to Rojava – there will be a true workers’ democracy. This will also mean full democratic rights for parties and organizations who oppose PKK/PYD, but which stand for election on the basis of the Kurdish liberation struggle. Kurdish revolutionaries must orient their struggle away from the mountains and towards the masses of the Kurdish working class, not just in Diyarbakır and Batman but in Istanbul and Ankara as well! They must fight against the capitulationism of the PKK, their collaboration of their leadership with US imperialism in Syria, their disarming

of the masses, and their anti-Marxist theory of Apoism, in addition to ideologically fighting against the concept of Kurdish nationalism, especially when this is directed against all Turks (and not simply the fascists, the military and the police).

Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries also have to form a single party to fight for the liberation of all the workers and the oppressed of the region.

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* declares:

** No to the war against the Kurds and the masses in Turkey! Prevent the army, the police and the fascists from carrying out pogroms! Organize self-defense committees!*

** Down with the reactionary-capitalist Erdogan government, but also down with the reactionary Kemalists of the CHP and the fascists from the MHP! For a general strike against the government!*

** For international solidarity of all workers and oppressed! Support the Kurdish liberation struggle!*

** For a referendum in Southeast Turkey to democratically determine who wants to secede from the Turkish state!*

** For a united, free and red Kurdistan!*

** For the formation of an united revolutionary party in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan which will be forged in the heat of the struggle and quenched and hardened with the blood of the martyrs!*

International Secretariat ■

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

Iran: Stop the Oppression of the Ahwazi Arabs!

Report from a Rally in Vienna in Solidarity with the Ahwazi Arabs in Iran on 16 October 2015, Austrian Section of the RCIT

On 16 October May, more than 150 Arab and Kurdish migrants assembled in front of the United Nations office complex in Vienna to protest the oppression of the Arab minority in Iran. A number of speakers from Iran, Syria as well as Kurdistan addressed the rally and called for solidarity.

The organizers of the rally invited the Austrian section of the RCIT to attend and speak at the rally. We participated with a delegation, and our comrade Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, addressed those gathered.

In his speech comrade Pröbsting expressed the RCIT's solidarity with the Ahwazi Arabs in Iran. He called for the right of national self-determination for all minorities including the Arab minority in Iran. Comrade Pröbsting denounced the bloody dictatorship ruling in Teheran. He also criticized the hypocrisy of Western imperialism. For decades the ruling class in the US and the EU denounced Iran as evil. Now, when their global power is dwindling and new rivals emerge (Russia and China) and when they need the help of Teheran in order to put down the Syrian Revolution, Obama & Co "forget" all their accusations about the violations of human rights in Iran. Finally, comrade Pröbsting also expressed the international solidarity of the RCIT with the Syrian Revolution as well as the Palestinian Intifada.

See photos and video clips of the rally's speeches at the following link:
<http://www.rkob.net/wer-wir-sind-1/rkob-aktiv-bei/ahwazi-kundgebung-16-10-2015/> ■



Michael Pröbsting addressing a Rally

Order from our contact adress past issues of the RCIT's Journal Revolutionary Communism!

The collage displays five covers of the journal 'Revolutionary Communism' with the following headlines:

- Cover 1 (September 2012):** South Africa: The Miners fight, ANC/SACP betrays plus: Revolution in Libya, Greece, WikiLeaks, Bosnia, Turkey, Maoism
- Cover 2 (August 2012):** China as an imperialist power: background, nuances and tactics plus: South African Miners Strike, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Canada
- Cover 3 (June 2012):** Elections, United and the struggle for workers' Government plus: Programme for Pakistan, France, Chinese Imperialism, Zimbabwe...
- Cover 4 (January 2012):** and Resistance in Pakistan plus: General Strike in Greece plus: Occupation Movement, Fifth International, Iran, Libya, Israel...
- Cover 5 (September 2011):** Tactics of the Arab Revolution, Organising of the Poor in Britain plus: Theses on Migration, Workers Struggle in Pakistan, What We Stand For

Each cover features the journal's title, issue information, and a price tag (e.g., Price: €5 / \$7 / £4.5).

Britain: No Expulsions of Socialists in the Labour Party!

Statement by Supporters of the RCIT Britain, 21 October 2015

Numerous supporters of Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour party are being threatened with expulsion from the party. A letter from "Member Services" has been sent to many members which reads "Name of member. You have been auto-excluded from membership of the Labour Party".

These progressive activists are being expelled because of their political beliefs. The bureaucracy in the Labour party is determined to rid itself of any pro socialist or anti-austerity elements within the party.

The Blairites in the Labour party now that Corbyn has been elected are out to purge the Labour party of his supporters. During the election for leader campaign they managed to prevent many of his supporters mostly young and new to politics from voting in in the election.

The majority of the parliamentary Labour party have supported pro-austerity policies advocated by Cameron and Osborne. On the welfare reform proposals they abstained and the majority of the PLP support the bombing of Syria and are for imperialist war. Corbyn and

a few Labour MP's oppose this policy but Corbyn remains a hostage to the Blairite wing in the Labour party.

The RCIT in Britain, inspite of political differences with some of Jeremy Corbyn's supporters, calls for the widest support to defend those expelled members.

The RCIT Britain puts forward the following demands:

* *There must be a united front of all socialists and revolutionaries to defeat these expulsions. A conference must be called to organise the widest support from people inside and outside the Labour party.*

* *To ask all Constituency Labour Parties and affiliated organisations to pass motions of support and lobby the National Executive Committee to rescind these expulsions and reinstate these members. A full apology must be given to all members facing expulsions.*

* *To ask Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell and other Labour MP's to support this campaign and use their influence to ensure that all expelled members are reinstated back into the Labour Party. ■*

NEW PAMPHLET!

The British Left and the EU-Referendum

The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism

An analysis of the left's failure to fight for an independent, internationalist and socialist stance both against British as well as European imperialism

By Michael Pröbsting (International Secretary of the RCIT)

LIBERATION

Monthly Bulletin of the RCIT Britain

Price: 2 Pound (plus delivery charges)

Order the pamphlet as well as the Bulletin LIBERATION via our contact addresses:

Email: info.rcitbritain@aol.com or rcit@thecommunists.net

Austria: Historic Mass Demonstration Proclaims „Refugees Are Welcome Here!“

Report from the Austrian section of the RCIT, 6.10.2015

More than 50,000 people marched in Vienna on 3 October against racism and in solidarity with the refugees attempting to reach Europe. Later more than 120,000 people joined an open air concert. The demonstration was so big that the metro stations near the rallying point were clogged up and the march could start only two and a half hours later than scheduled.

In contrast to usual demonstrations, the mood among the people was very lively and militant. In addition, many people on the sidelines expressed their sympathy for the goals of the demonstration.

The Austrian section of the RCIT was present with a big contingent marching behind a banner “*Syria, Egypt, Yemen ... Solidarity with the Arab Revolution! OPEN BORDERS! REFUGEES STAY!*” Our contingent included a number of Egyptian and other migrants (see pictures and videos below).

Many young people were attracted to our contingent because of its militant and organized character. We chanted many slogans in favor of opening the borders for refugees, against the right-wing populist party of Strache, for joint struggle of Austrian and migrant workers, against US and Russian imperialism as well as against the dictators Assad and al-Sisi and for international solidarity.

This was already the second mass demonstration in Vienna in solidarity with the refugees in a short period of time, 20,000 people having demonstrated on 31 August.

As the RCIT has elaborated in its statements on the refugee “crisis,” these recent developments are of a fundamental, historic character. It seems to us that they open a new period of polarization in Europe which provokes both massive attacks from the state as well as racist forces, but at the same time also spur massive pro-refugee mobilizations and an important politicization of sectors of the working class, migrants and youth. These present developments are historic in character. We call all revolutionaries in Europe to join us in intervening in this crisis with a proletarian, internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective.

See many pictures and videos from the RCIT in Austria at the demonstration here: <http://www.rkob.net/wien-wahl-2015/refugees-welcome-3-10/>

See the recent statements of the RCIT on the refugee “crisis”:
RCIT: Throw Open the Gates of Europe to Refugees! Long live International Solidarity of the Workers and Poor! Down with the Imperialist Fortress EU! Advance the Arab Revolution to Build Workers and Peasant Republics! 15.9.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/refugees-are-welcome/>
RCIT: Europe / North Africa: Storm the Gates of Rome! Open Borders for Refugees! Stop the Imperialist EU-War against Refugees! No to the Preparations for an Imperialist Aggression against Libya! 22.5.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/eu-war-against-refugees/> ■



Contingent of the Austrian Section of the RCIT at the Solidarity demonstration with Refugees on 3.10.2015 in Vienna

Was the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen a Deformed Workers State?

By Yossi Schwartz, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), August 2015

The RCIT supports the just struggle of the Houthis against the Saudi Arabian-led coalition of monarchies and the Egyptian military dictatorship backed by US imperialism. We think that the only way to win this struggle is not by compromising with the old regime but by fomenting a working class revolution supported by the peasants and led by a revolutionary workers' party.¹

Our opponents will ask "A socialist revolution in a country like Yemen?" Yes, a socialist revolution in a country that went in the direction of a deformed workers state in the 1960s. Had there been a revolutionary working class leadership then, the revolution in Yemen would have established a healthy workers' state which could change the course of history.

In this article we will first deal with the theoretical questions regarding the nature of a deformed workers' state and then we will examine whether Yemen was indeed such a state.

Workers' State

The 1917 Bolsheviks led a working class revolution which established, for the first time in history, a workers' state. However before describing the normative workers' state, we must explain what a state is.

*"The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state."*²

Lenin in *State and Revolution* wrote:

"... the 'Kautskyite' distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. 'Theoretically', it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is overlooked or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing above society and 'alienating itself more and more from it', it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this 'alienation'. As we shall see later, Marx very explicitly drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion on the strength of

*a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And — as we shall show in detail further on — it is this conclusion which Kautsky has "forgotten" and "distorted"."*³

Relying on Engels, Lenin further wrote:

*"'Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. ... The ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs; likewise, 'the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labor by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power as ostensible mediator acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both....' Such were the absolute monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany."*⁴

Thus the state is not a neutral body holding power; rather it is the instrument of the ruling class and in capitalism the ruling class is the capitalist class. The state apparatus (the army, police, courts, jails, public administration, etc.) defend the ruling class's mode of production. For the workers and the poor peasants to liberate themselves it is necessary to smash this instrument and replace it with a workers' state apparatus and expropriate the big capitalists under workers control in the economy and in the state apparatus.

In October 1917, the old Czarist state apparatus was smashed and a new revolutionary state apparatus replaced it. At the same time Lenin wrote:

*"The proletariat needs the state—this is repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they 'forget' to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away."*⁵

Lenin was very concerned with the danger of the growing power of the bureaucracy and he wrote:

*"The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become 'bureaucrats' for a time and that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a 'bureaucrat'."*⁶

The Soviets became state organs and the executive committee of the Supreme Soviet became the government.

As Lenin wrote:

*"In this country, in Russia, for the first time in the world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters; constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power."*⁷

The Bolsheviks eliminated the old ruling classes as classes by expropriation of the banks, big industry, and the large estates. They nationalized industry and the banking system and distributed lands to the peasants. The nationalized economy was under workers control.

The program of the Communist Party of Russia declared: *"The organisational apparatus of socialised industry must in the first place rely on the trade unions. The latter must to an increasing degree free themselves from the narrow craft spirit and become big industrial associations embracing the majority and gradually all the workers in the given branch of production. Since, according to the laws of the Soviet Republic and by established practice, the trade unions already participate in all the local and central organs of management of industry, they must eventually concentrate in their hands the entire management of the whole of national economy as a single economic unit. Establishing in this way indissoluble ties between the central state administration, national economy and the broad masses of the workers, the trade unions must draw the latter as much as possible into the immediate work of business management. The participation of the trade unions in business management, and their drawing the broad masses into this work, represent at the same time the principal means of struggle against the bureaucratisation of the economic apparatus of the Soviet government and render possible the establishment of genuine popular control over the results of production..."*⁸

Tony Cliff, in his weak analysis of the former Soviet Union as a form of state capitalism as early as 1928, with the introduction of the first Five Year Program, nevertheless correctly pointed out in his book *State Capitalism in Russia* that:

*"... the Party cells participated in the running of industry together with the workers' plant committees. Together with these, and under their control, worked the technical manager: the combination of these three formed the Troika."*⁹

This structure of workers power in the factories was demolished by Stalin's political counterrevolution. In 1936 Trotsky wrote:

*"The present Soviet Union does not stand above the world level of economy, but is only trying to catch up to the capitalist countries. If Marx called that society which was to be formed upon the basis of a socialization of the productive forces of the most advanced capitalism of its epoch, the lowest stage of communism, then this designation obviously does not apply to the Soviet Union, which is still today considerably poorer in technique, culture and the good things of life than the capitalist countries. It would be truer, therefore, to name the present Soviet regime in all its contradictoriness, not a socialist regime, but a preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism."*¹⁰

In 1938, Trotsky explained that the rule of the bureaucracy in the economy stands in contradiction to the needs of the revolutionary form of the expropriated properties:

"The incumbent ruling clique has replaced Soviet, party, trade-union and cooperative democracy by the domineering of functionaries. But a bureaucracy, even one composed entirely

*of geniuses, could not assure from its bureaus the necessary proportions between all branches of economy, that is, the necessary correspondence between production and consumption. What the lexicon of Stalin's justice designates as "sabotage," is in reality one of the evil consequences of bureaucratic methods of domineering."*¹¹

For Trotsky it was clear that the only way to defend the Soviet State and open the road to socialism was the removal of the Stalinist bureaucracy by a political revolution, as capitalist restoration was then a danger but still not a reality.

*"... The chief political task in the USSR still remains the overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy. (...) It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants and Red Army men."*¹²

Trotsky also called for the return of workers control of the economy:

*"A revision of planned economy from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organized consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products."*¹³

As long as capitalism was not restored in the USSR it was necessary to defend the Soviet state against imperialism. When Stalin and Hitler signed the non-aggression treaty in August 1939 and the Soviet Union invaded Finland, a tendency around Max Shachtman was formed in the SWP, the US section of the Fourth International as the Trotskyist International was called after its foundation in 1938. This tendency denied that the Soviet Union was still a degenerated workers state. In this debate Trotsky wrote:

*"The overthrow of the bureaucracy therefore presupposes the preservation of state property and of planned economy. Herein is the nub of the whole problem. Needless to say, the distribution of productive forces among the various branches of economy and generally the entire content of the plan will be drastically changed when this plan is determined by the interests not of the bureaucracy but of the producers themselves. But inasmuch as the question of overthrowing the parasitic oligarchy still remains linked with that of preserving the nationalized (state) property, we called the future revolution political."*¹⁴

Trotsky emphasized that the gains of the Soviet Union were result of:

*"...the nationalization of the means of production and the planned beginnings, and by no means the fact that the bureaucracy usurped command over the economy. On the contrary, bureaucratism as a system became the worst brake on the technical and cultural development of the country."*¹⁵

Trotsky elaborated on how to defend the Soviet Union against the Nazis:

"We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin. We are for the independence of Soviet Ukraine, and if the Byelo-Russians themselves wish – of Soviet Byelo-Russia. At the same time in the sections of Poland occupied by the Red Army, partisans of the Fourth International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land among the peasants, in creating Soviets and

Workers' Committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections the Soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust towards the Kremlin and its local agencies.

But let us suppose that Hitler turns his weapons against the East and invades territories occupied by the Red Army. Under these conditions, partisans of the Fourth International, without changing in any way their attitude toward the Kremlin oligarchy, will advance to the forefront as the most urgent task of the hour, the military resistance against Hitler. The workers will say, "We cannot cede to Hitler the overthrowing of Stalin; that is our own task". During the military struggle against Hitler, the revolutionary workers will strive to enter into the closest possible comradely relations with the rank and file fighters of the Red Army. While arms in hand they deal blows to Hitler, the Bolshevik-Leninists will at the same time conduct revolutionary propaganda against Stalin preparing his overthrow at the next and perhaps very near stage.

This kind of "defense of the USSR" will naturally differ, as heaven does from earth, from the official defense which is now being conducted under the slogan: "For the Fatherland! For Stalin!" Our defense of the USSR is carried on under the slogan: "For Socialism! For the world revolution! Against Stalin!" In order that these two varieties of "Defense of the USSR" do not become confused in the consciousness of the masses it is necessary to know clearly and precisely how to formulate slogans which correspond to the concrete situation. But above all it is necessary to establish clearly just what we are defending, just how we are defending it, against whom we are defending it. Our slogans will create confusion among the masses only if we ourselves do not have a clear conception of our tasks."¹⁶

Trotsky believed that the USSR would not survive the war:

"Can we, however, expect that the Soviet Union will come out of the coming great war without defeat? To this frankly posed question we will answer as frankly; if the war should only remain a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union will be inevitable. In a technical, economic, and military sense, imperialism is incomparably more strong. If it is not paralyzed by revolution in the west; imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October Revolution."¹⁷

On this last point Trotsky was wrong as the Soviet Union not only survived but expanded first into Eastern Europe. To be sure, turning Eastern Europe into a bunch of deformed workers states was not the result of Stalin's plans. Stalin wanted these states to remain capitalist states which at the same time function as buffer states. The needs of the nationalized economy that, at that time, was still expanding even under the Stalinist bureaucracy, the pressure of the working class and the threats of British and American imperialism pushed Stalin in the direction of transforming these states into types similar to the Soviet Union.

The Confusion of the Fourth International

When WWII was over and the Soviet Union survived the war, James P. Cannon, an American Trotskyist and leader of the Socialist Workers Party, stated that the war is not over because the Soviet Union still exists:

"Trotsky predicted that the fate of the Soviet Union would be

decided in the war. That remains our firm conviction. Only we disagree with some people who carelessly think the war is over. The war has only passed through one stage and is now in the process of regroupment and reorganization for the second. The war is not over, and the revolution which we said would issue from the war in Europe is not taken off the agenda. It has only been delayed and postponed, primarily for lack of a sufficiently strong revolutionary party."¹⁸

The reaction of the Fourth International to the formation of the East European Stalinist regimes was denial calling them state capitalism.¹⁹ In the course of the discussion on East Europe, James P. Cannon, wrote:

"I don't think you can change the class character of the state by manipulations at the top. It can only be done by a revolution which is followed by a revolution in fundamental property relations ... If you once begin to play with the idea that the class nature of the state can be changed by manipulations in top circles, you open the door to all kinds of revisions of basic theory."²⁰

Yet Eastern Europe went through a social transformation from above and the new state apparatus in the new states defended the working class form of property, while the capitalist class was eliminated as a class by expropriations. This was possible because the Soviet Union was still a degenerated workers' state and because the pressure of the working class in these states and the threats of US and British imperialism. This brings to mind Napoleonic revolutions from above in the early 19th century. This point was already made by Isaac Deutscher who quoted Sorel:

"In the countries which France united with her territory or constituted in her image [says Sorel], she proclaimed her principles, destroyed the feudal system, and introduced her laws. After the inevitable disorders of war and the first excesses of conquest, this revolution constituted an immense benefit to the peoples. This is why the conquests of the Republic could not be confused with the conquests of the ancien régime. They differed in the essential characteristic that, despite the abuse of principles and the deviations of ideas, the work of France was accomplished for the nations."²¹

In the other countries where deformed workers states were created it was done through revolutions led by petit-bourgeois leadership with the working class playing an active role in the revolution. We will examine this point in two different revolutions: those of China and Cuba.

China

It is not true that the working class in China in 1949 revolution was completely passive but it is true that the working class did not play the same role as in the Russian Revolution. As Ted Grant, a leader of the British section of the Fourth International, correctly noted at that time:

"One of the outstanding facts in the situation in China is the relative passivity of the working class. It is true that as a result of the collapse of the Chiang armies, there have been widespread strike struggles in the large cities, Shanghai, Canton, Hankow and Nanking, despite the repressive conditions. However, it is clear that as the Stalinists advance towards the big cities on the Yangtse, the workers, for lack of a mass alternative, can only rally to their banner. The workers never supported the Chiang Kai Shek regime."²²

The workers in the big cities were active during the revolution:

“Chinese workers were organized in the sense that they were organized to become part of a support base for the new government. But when we talk about this support base, we’re talking about a very small minority of the Chinese working class as a whole. Those workers who lived in large cities like Wuhan, Shanghai, Beijing, did enjoy comparatively reasonable standards of living, health benefits, access to medical care, pensions, all very important things to working class people, of course. But they were a minority.

However the transformation of China to a deformed workers state did not happen in 1949 but in the early 1950..... In 1950 there was a large wave of industrial unrest where workers expressed disappointment with the gains of the revolution. Again in ‘55 after a process of nationalization of privately-owned industry in China, there was another wave of industrial unrest where workers were again expressing tremendous disappointment with the pace of change.

After 1953, and as the contradictions within the new regime, within the national barriers and parameters of the new regime became more and more apparent, the government was primarily interested in restraining and repressing labor dissent and militancy.”²³

Thus in China the revolution could not take place without the participation of the working class in contradiction to the Cliffites and their theory of “deflected permanent revolution” which claims that where a revolutionary working class does not exist, the intelligentsia could, in certain limited circumstances, take the leadership of the nation and lead a successful revolution in the direction of a state capitalist solution. The outcome of such a revolution would be deflected from the goal of a social revolution as envisaged in Trotsky’s original work.

The LRP denies that, under pressure from the working class and the masses on one hand and the pressure of imperialism during the Korea war on the other, the Chinese Stalinists founded a deformed workers state. They do not deny that a revolution took place in China. The question to ask, however, is what kind of a revolution it was? From their writings it is clear that they think it was a bourgeois democratic revolution.

“Unable to crush the masses or to develop as rapidly as necessary, given the Cold War and the Russian threat, the CCP had to institute a series of measures embodying important democratic and material gains. These included distribution of the land to peasants and the destruction of landlord power in the countryside; elevating the status of women; kicking out imperialist firms and providing a measure of unity to a badly fragmented country; raising health and educational standards; beginning a system of job guarantees for urban workers. In the same period, the regime tamed inflation and corruption and increased industrial production, using the Soviet model of development. All this won it a large measure of popular support and willingness to sacrifice.”²⁴

However, this claim is not consistent with Trotsky’s theory of the permanent revolution. Trotsky’s theory states that only the working class can win the democratic revolution by combining it with the socialist revolution. Assuming that they mean a deformed democratic revolution, did Trotsky argue that the petit bourgeois can carry out a deformed democratic revolution? Their theory is very similar to the Cliffites’ theory of a “deflected permanent revolution.”

Cuba

In his book on Cuba, Michael Pröbsting of the RCIT has written:

“Contrary to the legend that the Revolution of 1959 in Cuba took place without the participation of the working class the M-26-7 movement organized an underground Sección Obrera which had about 15,000 members. Later the M-26-7 helped to launch the Frente Obrero Nacional Unido (FONU) together with other unions. This new organization adopted a 12-point programme that called for a 20% wage increase, for opposition to mechanization along with other measures against unemployment, for an end to racial discrimination, for social protection for women, children and the unemployed, for the reinstatement of victimized workers, for trade union democracy and the end to the compulsory check-off as well as for the reinstatement of the 1940 constitution. The workers section of the M-26-7 played an important role in organizing several political general strikes in which sugar workers were actively involved. Thus, for example, during the strike which started on 30th November 1956, the workers in the processing plant of the ‘Ermita’ sugar estate, where the M-26-7 had two active cells, successfully attacked the police barracks on the plantation. While the M-26-7 supporters called this combination of mass action with armed resistance and sabotage ‘sindicalismo beligerente’, the fact remains that such working class action always only played a supportive role for the M-26-7’s main form of struggle – the rural guerilla war. In contrast to the Bolsheviks and the socialist revolution they led in 1917, the workers organizations and struggle never became the heart of the M-26-7’s struggle and the movement itself.”²⁵

Like in China, where the social transformation took place in 1953 and not in 1949, the social transformation in Cuba did not occur in 1959, when the Castroites took power, but later on. The transformation took place because of mass pressure from below, US imperialist pressure from outside, and the existence of the Soviet Union that was ready to support the Cubans economically. The Cuban workers did go on general strikes in 1959 and were more active than the Chinese workers but, like in China, the Trotskyists were too few while the influence of the Stalinists and the Castroites was large and thus the working class did not have a revolutionary leadership; the result was the founding of a deformed worker state.

The Confusion over the Question of the Deformed Workers State versus State Capitalism

In the late 1940s the Forth International declared that the states of Eastern Europe remained regimes of state capitalism while the Soviet Union stayed a deformed workers state. This is illogical, as Tony Cliff wrote:

“No scholastic argument will succeed in convincing anyone that the “People’s Democracies” with state ownership, a monopoly of foreign trade, planned economy, the increasing collectivization of agriculture, are capitalist countries, while Russia, the motive force behind the development of all these traits in the “People’s Democracies”, is a workers’ state. In time the position of Germain and John G. Wright will become less and less tenable, and its main danger is not so much in itself, as its absurdity will become manifest, but that by preventing people from thinking it out to its logical conclusion, it can drive them to the other alternative, namely that if Russia is a workers’ state,

then the "People's Democracies" are also workers' states. This position forces us to drop our definitions of Stalinism in general as counter-revolutionary."²⁶

However, Cliff's incorrect conclusion was that the Soviet Union became a regime of state capitalism in 1928 when the rising bureaucracy responded to the threat of invasion from Britain and France by a shift towards rapid industrialization. For Cliff, the litmus test was whether workers were in control of the state and the means of production. But if the working class was in control of the economy and the state apparatus it would be not a deformed workers' state but a "healthy" workers' state.

The LRP maintains that the Soviet Union became a regime of state capitalism in 1939.

*"We agree with Trotsky's outlook up to 1939. But we hold that the counterrevolution culminated on the eve of World War II. It created a new ruling class by transforming the state apparatus and destroying the Bolshevik party; contrary to Trotsky, the restoration of capitalism was completed. Accompanying the well-known centralized power of the Stalinist state were qualitative steps toward the effective decentralization of state property, forerunners of the "markets" and anarchy clearly visible today."*²⁷

The LRP's main argument is that only a working class revolution can form any kind of a workers' state. Their method denies concrete reality and "corrects" Trotsky's analysis of the USSR by means of a pragmatist theory. They argue that only the working class can liberate itself which is very true, but then they equate the healthy workers' state with the deformed workers' state. If the two were essentially the same, there would be no need for a political revolution by the workers in the deformed workers states.

Marxist Theory

There is nothing new in any of these arguments which Trotsky did not already reply to in 1940. The Stalinists are a counterrevolutionary force which blocks the road to socialism. They must be removed by political revolution to prevent the restoration of capitalism. A workers' state is not the first stage of socialism but a transitional formation between capitalism and socialism. Because of its transitional nature, it is possible that the bureaucracy itself restore capitalism in a deformed workers' state as we saw in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba. The difference between state capitalism and a deformed workers' state is the elimination of the capitalist class as a class when the transition from capitalism to a deformed workers' state is taking place. The cases where the Stalinists or the Fidelists founded deformed workers' states is not the historical norm, but the result of exceptional circumstances which pushed them further than they intended to go; pressure from below by the working class and from the imperialists. Under different circumstance, they would have turned themselves into a new capitalist class and restore the capitalist mode of production. The proof is the fact that the USSR became a capitalist economy in the early 1990s and not in 1928 or 1939.

The *Spartacists* and the *League for the Fourth International* tried to defend the USSR by allying themselves in East Germany with the army, the Stalinists state apparatus, and simply ignored the fact that the Stalinist state apparatus

no longer defended the workers form property, because under the Stalinist bureaucracy the forces of production stopped developing. The circumstances were very different in WWII, when the Stalinists defended the degenerated workers' state using counterrevolutionary methods. The argument of the Spartacists and company that the Stalinists are both revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries at one and the same time is entirely false, and simply an apologetics for the Stalinists, as we saw when they defended the Stalinists against the working class

Ted Grant's theory of proletarian Bonapartism which claims that presumably every party, including the army, can under pressure form a deformed workers' state is false as well. Iraq, Syria, or Yemen, to mention a few examples which were claimed to be deformed workers' states were not in fact deformed workers' states but regimes of state capitalism. Furthermore, in their politics these states not only tailed Chavez, but regarding Cuba they denied the need for a political revolution at the time that Cuba was still a deformed workers state.

Yemen: Deformed Workers' State or State Capitalism?

Let us now discuss the issue of the class character of South Yemen – or the *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen* (PDRY) as it was officially called – between the early 1970s and 1994.

At the same time that the former Soviet Union was collapsing, South Yemen, which was considered by bourgeois scholars to be a "socialist" state, and North Yemen, which no one ever thought was a "socialist" state, reunited. The gains in education and health services of the workers and the poor, especially women, in South Yemen, were to a large degree lost. Human Rights Watch reports about the terrible conditions in the health sector:

*"People with HIV and AIDS are routinely denied care within Yemen's health care system, Human Rights Watch said in an October 2014 letter to the Yemeni Minister of Health released today. Yemeni authorities should end discrimination by health workers against people with HIV and ensure patients' equal access to healthcare services, as mandated by a 2009 law."*²⁸

Likewise, the UN's World Health Organization gives a grim picture of the development in the past two decades:

*"Since the reunification of Yemen and the economic crises of the early 1990s, health spending had declined dramatically with a consequent deterioration of state-guaranteed services. Widespread poverty is exacerbated by the side effects of the structural adjustment programmes adopted by the government. Today, Yemen's health situation is one of the least favourable in the world, and more than half of the Yemenite population lacks access to health care. This is partly due to the lack of reachable provider facilities, mainly in rural areas where more than two out of three citizens are excluded from health care. The other relevant factor that affects accessibility is the inability of the poor population to pay for health care. Only a minority has access to any type of pre-payment scheme for covering personal expenditure in case of illness. The cost of treatment, the main determinant for having access to health care services, makes poor people drop out of the health."*²⁹

Likewise there has been a significant deterioration in the education sector which negatively affected particularly women.

"Just prior to Southern independence from Britain only 15.3

percent of South Yemeni women could read, and only 231 girls attended secondary school. Within the Socialist period's first decade, not only were primary and secondary rates for girls and boys equal, but women outnumbered men in the fields of medicine and education at the university level. (...) The contrast with the experience of Northern women during the same period could hardly be starker. When the Imamate was dissolved in 1962, there were no government schools for girls in Yemen." ³⁰

The gains of the workers, peasants, and poor in PDRY were the result of the nationalization of parts of the economy and the more egalitarian policies of the government. The fact that bourgeois scholars call this socialism reflects their admission that socialism is better for the workers and poor than capitalism. But, unfortunately, the PDRY was not socialism and not even a workers' state, i.e., a transition to socialism, nor even a deformed workers' state but rather a regime of state capitalism.

Massive nationalization even under one-party rule is not the litmus test that allows us to differentiate between state capitalism and a deformed workers state. The real test is whether the local capitalist class was eliminated as a class. The case of South Yemen is very interesting, as it went very far on the road leading towards the creation of a deformed workers state. However, it retained a form of state capitalism. The old state apparatus was destroyed to a large degree, a section of the local bourgeois escaped after the nationalizations, the organized workers supported the left wing of the FLN, but still the local bourgeois was not eliminated as a class. While many bourgeois scholars claim that South Yemen became a "socialist" state, a review of all the information leads to the conclusion that in the PDRY there remained a regime of state capitalism.

Yemen was an agrarian, largely nomadic society until the British occupation of South Yemen at the beginning of the 19th century. The port of Aden and the oil refinery at Little Aden (the peninsula that encloses the western side of Aden's harbor), built originally by British Petroleum in the 1950s, led to the appearance of local comprador capitalists and a small industrial working class. South Yemen was a part of the British Empire from 1839 to 1967, when they were driven out by the anti-imperialist struggle.

"The first trade union was started by pilots in 1952. After Queen Elizabeth visited Aden in 1954, strikes and protests intensified and by 1956 all workers were unionized, with workers fighting for better social and working conditions, with the support of youth and students. Increasingly these struggles clashed with the occupation regime and the uprising took up the demand for independence for the South. The independence movement was strongly influenced by the Arab nationalism of Nasser in Egypt. Initially a peaceful movement, the Aden TUC turned to armed struggle after a bomb explosion killed trade unionists protesting at the airport." ³¹

The struggle for independence from British imperialism was at the same time a struggle among the different nationalist organizations and eventually the more radical wing of the FLN won and transformed itself into the *Socialist Party of Yemen*, a "Marxist-Leninist" (i.e. Stalinist) party. This left wing nationalized a large section of the economy and parts of the capitalist class fled to North Yemen. However, the private sector survived.

During the struggle to liberate South Yemen from the British rule three rival petty-bourgeois nationalist movements struggled for control of Yemen. Least

important was the *South Arabian League*, formed around the Sultan of Lahej. It was also the most conservative force, backed by Saudi Arabia.

Then there was the *Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen* (FLOSY). FLOSY was strongly influenced by Egypt's president Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir's. It was based in Aden and had close connections with the *Aden Trade Union Council* (ATUC).

Finally, there was the *National Liberation Front* (NLF). The NLF was a loose movement amongst which the strongest faction was related to the *Arab National Movement*. (The Palestinian PFLP and DFLP also emerged out of this radical pan-Arab nationalist organization.) The NLF has its base amongst the lower popular strata outside of Aden, including in the North. It initiated an armed struggle against the British occupation in October 1963.

As the British were ready to leave South Yemen a military conflict between the NLF and FLOSY took place and the NLF won. The latter declared independence in the South on November 30, 1967. The new state was named the *People's Republic of South Yemen*. This new republic consisted of the southern provinces of Yemen -- Aden, Lahij, Abyan, Shabwa, Hadramawt and Mahra.

Later, in 1970, it was renamed the *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen* after a radical wing of the self-proclaimed Marxist NLF came to power and all political parties were forced to join the *Yemeni Socialist Party* (YSP). The PDRY became the Arab world's first "Marxist" state. The Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and radical Palestinians established close ties with the new state. ³²

In 1967 the new government was made of three factions. One was led by Qahtan Al-Shaabi an Arab socialist, who was orientated towards Nasser's Egypt, Algeria and Syria. His support was mainly in the army. Another one was led by Salim Rubi Ali, a populist influenced by China who became the first president. The third one was led by his successor Abdel Fattah Ismail. He was pro-Moscow and established a "vanguard party" rather than a mass party. Qahtan Al-Shaabi was soon to be overthrown by the more radicals. The left called for a purge of the army and the government. However, the army leaders fought against the more left radicals and at the beginning they won.

Haytham became the new Prime Minister and a coalition with the left existed for a time. The army was purged and popular militias were organized by the left. Land reforms were carried out. The left removed Haytham from power in 1971. At first Ismail won and close relations with the USSR were established. The new internal security force was trained by East Germany and the Cubans trained the militias. In 1972 the old NLF became the Socialist party of Yemen.

Soon the new regime implemented a number of radical social and economic reforms. A Central Planning Organization (CPO) was established which in 1972 produced a three year plan followed by five years plan for 1976-81. However, in contrast to the degenerated workers states in the USSR, China or Eastern Europe, the reforms aimed to establish a strong state-capitalist sector in order to modernize the country but not with the goal of liquidating the law of value.

The result was a mixed economy with a strong state-capitalist sector alongside a private capitalist sector. Land ownership was dramatically equalized, but the economy

retained many features of a traditional agrarian economy comparable to that of North Yemen, which was just embarking on its first commercial and industrial projects.

*"Production systems in the South included subsistence agriculture on family land mixed with herding on commons, sharecropping on pre-capitalist estates, and wage labor on modern farms. In Aden and Lahej, where ownership was most distinctively class-divided, the revolutionary regime expropriated the largest holdings as well as religious endowments (waqf). The number of expropriated estates increased from 18 to 47 between 1975 and 1982 with the addition of some smaller properties of unpopular landlords. These state farms, with modern equipment and wage labor, managed most farm land in Aden governorate and nearly a third in Lahej just to the north. Redistributed land, nearly two-thirds of the South's cultivated area, was classified as cooperative. Over a quarter, mostly in the east, remained private."*³³

The state-capitalist sector dominated the central industry like power, water and the oil refinery. At its highpoint it controlled about 60-70 percent of the value of industry in the South. Mixed companies produced cigarettes, batteries and aluminum utensils. Wholly private firms were either small-scale plastic, clothing, glass, food and paper-goods manufacturers or traditional carpentry, metal, pottery or weaving industries.

It is important to bear in mind, in the words of Sheila Carapico, that *"at best, the North's capitalist orientation and the South's socialism represented tendencies or goals, for both were really "mixed" economies."* As she notes, the South never was an entirely state-owned economy. The nationalizations of 1969 affected foreign financial, trade and services businesses. Between 1973 and 1976, consolidation of state and joint industrial ventures continued, reducing the contribution of private domestic firms to industrial production from 51 percent to 38 percent, and the contribution of foreign firms from 36 percent to 10 percent. In fishing, however, foreign investors replaced some cooperative production. By 1976, private domestic and foreign firms held about 40 percent of the construction market, and local private transportation had over half the market. Cooperatives were credited with 71 percent of agricultural output, and the state with the rest, but livestock production was over 90 percent private.

Later, the state-capitalist regime focused on promoting private investment. This was formulated in the regime's plan for 1981-1985. In fact, during the first three years of the plan private sector participation exceeded expectations by eight percent, mostly in agriculture and local private fishing. The 1988 census reported that of nearly 35,000 establishments, 75 percent were private, 21 percent governmental, and the remainder cooperative or joint ventures. As a result only 25 percent of the work force was employed in state-owned enterprises in 1988.³⁴

This drive towards reduction of the state-capitalist sector was accelerated by the decline of the USSR – the main ally of the South Yemen regime. Once the so-called Marxist Leninists saw themselves deserted by Gorbachev, the darling of the US and European imperialists, they decided to save their good life by joining the capitalist class of the North. To ensure as little resistance as possible these "Marxist-Leninists" spread the illusion of a bright future on the horizon. They were also motivated in their desire to unite with the North by potentially large profits to be

gained from a rational exploitation of the newly found oil and gas deposits.

Obviously the unification of North and South Yemen was a fusion of equals. The ruling class in the North was the dominant part despite the attempts of the Socialist Party to claim victory.

*"When the unification of Yemen was declared in 1990, the south Yemenis thought that they had finally succeeded in achieving their old slogans that called for safeguarding the Yemeni revolution, unity, and democracy. For a long time, school students in south Yemen chanted these slogans and sung the praises of unification. But the years that followed the reunification of Yemen were sufficient to turn this dream into a nightmare for most south Yemenis."*³⁵

Once the Northern capitalists took over South Yemen, they started to loot the South's economy. Jomana Farhat describes this accurately:

*"For example, up to 46 governmental and public sector institutions and establishments were forcibly seized, including the Monetary Authority and the General Establishment for Flour Mills. Aqel also said that more than 28 state-owned factories were appropriated, including manufacturers of textiles, dairy products, and agricultural equipment. But this did not stop with the public sector. About 11 mixed private-public and privately-owned production plants were also seized, in addition to around 33 state-owned farms with a total area of approximately 28,000 acres, scattered throughout the southern provinces. The 56,000 employees of these establishments were fired after the war of 1994. Furthermore, 86 agricultural and service cooperatives were confiscated, in addition to properties owned by agricultural associations. Their members, who are estimated to number around 16,449, were in turn denied access. Similarly, the fishing fleet belonging to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was looted, having once been the second largest Arab fleet of its kind."*³⁶

In conclusion, in the 1960s the NLF led a revolution backed by the working class and the peasants. What kind of a revolution was it? Yemen, like many other former colonies, did not go through a bourgeois democratic revolution. The main tasks of the democratic revolution are liberation from the imperialists, an agrarian revolution, and equality of all before the law. While the YSP was able to carry out some of the tasks of the democratic revolution it was unable to free the country from imperialist domination. While it succeeded in implementing a number of social and economic reforms, it did not abolish capitalism altogether.

At the same time, its existence was dependent on the economic support of the Soviet Union which was a degenerated workers' state until 1991. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the PDRY collapsed as well.

However, this must not make us ignore the important achievements of the revolution. The national liberation movement – led by the petty-bourgeois nationalist NLF and supported by the working class and the fallahin – succeeded in driving out the British imperialists which occupied the country since 1839. After the revolution took place and the left wing of the NLF took power, the new regime called its state "socialist" while in fact it was state-capitalist. Nevertheless, it was an important achievement that properties that previously were robbed by the imperialists were nationalized as well as part of the property of the local capitalists.

The revolutionary events in South Yemen in the late 1960s

and early 1970 show that a socialist revolution would have been possible if a revolutionary workers' party had existed. Building such a party remains the central task for revolutionaries in Yemen as well as internationally.

Footnotes

1 For the RCIT's analysis of the Yemeni Revolution we refer readers to:

RCIT: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Arab World: An Acid Test for Revolutionaries, 31 May 2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 36, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-arab-revolution/>

RCIT: Yemen: The al-Hadi Puppet Government Calls for an Imperialist Invasion! Victory to Yemen! Defeat the Al-Saud Gang of Aggressors! 8.5.2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 36 <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/assault-on-yemen/>

Yossi Schwartz: The War in Yemen, Iran and US-Imperialism, 20.4.2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 35, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-war-us-and-iran/>

RCIT: Defend Yemen against the Al-Saud Gang of Aggressors! No to Sectarian Divisions and Civil War! For a Workers' and Popular Government! Joint Statement of the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) and the RCIT Yemen, 3.4.2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 34, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/saudi-aggression-vs-yemen/

Mohammed Al Wazeer: Yemen Under Attack, RCIT Yemen, 15.4.2015, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-under-attack

RCIT: Yemen: Down with the Price Hikes! For a "Second Revolution" to Establish a Workers and Fallahin Government! 3.9.2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 27, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-uprising/>

Yemen: The Mass Protests continue, Report from a Yemeni Supporter of the RCIT, 4.9.2014, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 27, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-report-4-9-2014/>

2 Friedrich Engels: The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884), in: MECW 26, p. 269

3 V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution. The Marxist Teaching on the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution (1917), in: LCW Vol. 25, p. 393

4 V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution, p. 397

5 V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution, p. 407

6 V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution, p. 486

7 V.I. Lenin, What Is Soviet Power? (1919), in: LCW Vol. 29, p. 248

8 Program of the CPSU (Bolsheviks), adopted March 22, 1919 at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, See <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/1919/03/22.htm> or Robert McNeal (Editor): Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Toronto 1974, University of Toronto Press, p. 66

9 Tony Cliff: Russia: A Marxist analysis, 1964, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1964/russia/ch01-s1.htm>

10 Leon Trotsky: The Revolution Betrayed (1936), Pathfinder Press, New York 1972, p. 47

11 Leon Trotsky: Twenty Years of Stalinist Degeneration (1938), Fourth International [New York], Vol.6 No.3, March 1945, pp.87-89, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/xx/stalinism.html>

12 Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Transitional Program (1938); in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, pp. 212-213

13 Ibid

14 Leon Trotsky: The USSR in War (1939), in: Leon Trotsky,

In Defense of Marxism, Pathfinder Press, New York 1973, p. 4

15 Leon Trotsky: The USSR in War, p. 6

16 Leon Trotsky: The USSR in War, pp. 20-21

17 Leon Trotsky: The Revolution Betrayed, p. 227.

18 James P. Cannon: The Russian Revolution – Twenty-eight Years After (November 1945), in: James P. Cannon: The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century", New York 1977, Pathfinder Press, p. 200

19 See e.g. SWP (U.S.): Internal Bulletin, Vol. XI, No. 5 (October 1949). We have dealt with the Fourth International's failure to understand the bureaucratic social transformation in the late 1940s and early 1950s in Workers Power (Britain) and Irish Workers Group: The Death Agony of the Fourth International, London 1983 as well as Workers Power: The Degenerated Revolution. The Origin and Nature of the Stalinist States (1982).

20 SWP (U.S.): Internal Bulletin, October 1949, p. 25

21 Albert Sorel, L'Europe et la Révolution Française, Part I (Paris, 1893), quoted in Isaac Deutscher : Two Revolutions (1950), in : Isaac Deutscher : Russia in Transition, Grove Press, New York 1960, p. 171

22 Ted Grant: Stalinist land programme wins peasants (1949), in: Ted Grant: The Unbroken Thread, Fortress Books, London 1989, p. 286

23 Chinese Workers' Resistance, Norm Diamond interviews Tim Pringle, in: Against the Current No. 111, July-August 2004, <http://solidarity-us.org/node/1116>

24 LRP: China's Capitalist Revolutions, in: Proletarian Revolution No. 53 (Winter 1997), <http://lrp-cofi.org/PR/ChinaPR53.html>

25 Michael Pröbsting, Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? RCIT, Vienna 2013, pp. 17-18

26 Tony Cliff: On the Class Nature of the "People's Democracies (1950), in: Duncan Hallas (ed.), The Fourth International, Stalinism and the Origins of the International Socialists, Pluto Press, London 1971, pp. 22-23

27 Walter Däum: The Life and Death of Stalinism, Socialist Voice Publishing Co., New York 1990, pp. 9-10

28 Human Rights Watch: Yemen: HIV Patients Denied Health Care, November 3, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/03/yemen-hiv-patients-denied-health-care>

29 WHO: Towards a national health insurance system in Yemen: www.who.int/health_financing/countries/yemen_en1-2_9-background.pdf

30 Steven C. Carton (Editor): Middle East in Focus: Yemen, Santa Barbara 2013, p. 110

31 Mirfat Sulaiman: Letter From... South Yemen, in: Socialist Review No. 385 (November 2013), <http://socialistreview.org.uk/385/letter-south-yemen>

32 For an overview of the first tumultuous years see Fred Halliday: Revolution and Foreign Policy. The Case of South Yemen 1967-1987, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, chapter I; Laurie Mylroie: Politics and Soviet Presence in the People Democratic Republic of Yemen, RAND 1983; Paul Dresch A History of Modern Yemen, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000; Global Security.Org: South Yemen History <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/yemen/yemen-south.htm>

33 Sheila Carapico: The Economic Dimension of Yemeni Unity, in: David McMurray, Amanda Ufheil-Somers: The Arab Revolts: Dispatches on Militant Democracy in the Middle East, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2013, p. 130

34 Susanne Dahlgren: The Snake with a Thousand Heads. The Southern Cause in Yemen, in: Middle East Research and Information Project, Middle East Report No. 256 (Fall 2010), <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer256/snake-thousand-heads>; See also Dilip Hiro (Editor): Inside the Middle East, Routledge, Oxon 1982; Manfred W. Wenner: Yemen, Economy, Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Yemen/Economy>

35 Jomana Farhat: South Yemen: Unification Dream Becomes Nightmare, Al Akhbar Newsletter, 13. 11. 2012, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/13582>

36 Ibid

The Dialectics of Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics

by Alex Steiner, 9 July 2015

Below we reprint a talk of Alex Steiner which he gave on 9 July at the Locomotiva Cooperative Cafe in Athens, Greece. The event was a huge success attracting a packed audience of about 50 people. The talk was sponsored by the Workers Revolutionary Party of Greece (EEK) and was chaired by Savas Michael-Matsas. A lively discussion followed the presentation. Below is a lightly edited version of the talk.

We reprint this talk irrespective of political differences we have with comrade Steiner (e.g. in contrast to the RCIT he takes a defeatist position in the Syrian civil war like EEK and DIP). However we think that the following lecture is a profound presentation of some principles of the revolutionary strategy and tactic relevant for the present period. Steiner is the editor of the website <http://permanent-revolution.org/>

* * * * *

The topic of my talk is the Dialectics of Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics. With Greece being in a pre-revolutionary situation now, the subject could not be more relevant. Now when I speak about the dialectics of revolutionary strategy and tactics I want to first of all consider dialectics. I am not assuming that everyone knows what Marxists mean when they use the term 'dialectics'. So let me give a brief introduction as to what I mean.

The term as you know derives from the ancient Greek word *διαλεκτική*. It was first used in philosophy by Plato, who employed it to describe the Socratic method. The Socratic method consisted of asking a question and then considering the possible responses. The first response, which always represents the opinion of the average individual, is then considered further. And once one digs deeper into the proposition it is revealed that it is internally contradictory. Therefore it cannot be true. [1] Thus, a new and improved proposition replaces the original one as a candidate for the truth. Initially, the new proposition does not suffer the defects of the one it replaced. But after deeper consideration, we discover that it harbors a new contradiction. This process continues until a proposition is arrived at that cannot be refuted. Thus the ancient dialectic of Socrates and Plato was a dialectic of arguments that arrived at the truth through negation. If we jump to modern dialectics, we arrive at Hegel. And Hegel's great insight was to see that dialectic is not only a method of argumentation but is also the very logic of the real world. The ceaseless motion that we see in the arguments of the ancient dialectic is a reflection of the ceaseless motion of reality itself.

The first philosopher to have explicitly defined reality as consisting of ceaseless motion and change was the pre-Socratic Heraclitus, and this is how Hegel understood him. He was the first to articulate what we call today the *Philosophy of Becoming*. In the history of philosophy the person who first articulated the opposite teaching, that reality consists of that which is Eternal and Unchanging, is Parmenides. He said that only that which is Unchanging is real and our experience of motion and change is just an illusion. This is the *Philosophy of Being*. If Heraclitus is in some way the father of modern dialectics, then Parmenides must be considered the father of its opposite. Let's call

the anti-thesis to dialectics formalism. What I want to say is that that a dialectical understanding of reality requires not only Heraclitus but also his opposite, Parmenides. Or to put it another way, any account of change and motion must incorporate that which remains the same over time. You need to incorporate *Being* into *Becoming*. What happens if you have *Becoming* without *Being*? You get *Chaos*. That is when you get irrationalism and postmodernism. On the other hand *Being* without *Becoming* leads to a world of Eternal Unchanging reality. This is the world of the Platonic Forms, Of Christianity and other doctrines that deny or belittle the ceaseless motion of the world. It is also the world of the sectarian – a point I will discuss later.

Let us look a little more at how it is necessary to bring together *Becoming* and *Being* to see what I mean.

One of Heraclitus's most famous epigrams is this: 'You cannot step into the same river twice'. If we break down that statement we see something very interesting: First, why can't you step into the same river twice? Clearly because every time you do so the current of water splashing around you is different. Therefore it is not the same. But in order to differentiate the water we step into today from the water we stepped into yesterday, we say that it was in the same river. What does it mean when we say "The same river?" Here we begin to see that there is a necessary interconnection in our thinking between that which we see as changing and that which we see as remaining the same. You cannot think of a river whose currents are always changing without first positing it as one river. In dialectical theory as developed by Hegel this is called the *Identity of Identity and Difference*. Mostly, if we are not reflecting on things but just relying on common sense, we think that there are things that are changing and things that remain the same. The current in the river changes, but the river remains the same. It does not occur to us that you have to bring the two thoughts together in the same thought. You cannot have the changing current without the river. It means that the categories of common sense, those concepts with which we try to understand the world around us, while they serve us well for the most part, may not be adequate when we interrogate them at a deeper level.

There is of course a lot more to thinking dialectically than just understanding that Identity is the Identity of Identity and Difference. For instance, there is the relationship of the parts to the whole. In ordinary common sense we think that we can understand a part irrespective of the whole and that the whole is just an accumulation of parts. In Dialectical thinking we understand that there is a relationship to the whole inherent in every part. For instance let us take the Nation as an example. It is a whole, though to be sure it is part of a larger whole, the world economy, since there is hardly such a thing today as a Nation that is not dependent on relations with other Nations. Therefore you cannot understand the Nation without seeing it as a part of a larger whole.

Likewise you want to examine the parts within the Nation itself. Within the nation are classes who are related to each other through their role in the process of production. You have that class within the Nation that is exploited and you

have another class that are the exploiters. This relationship is characteristic of class society as such. Within the specific form of class society known as capitalism the mechanism of exploitation consists in the extraction of surplus value by the capitalist at the point when the worker sells his labor power for its value. It is in a formal, contractual sense an equal exchange, but at the same time it is a form of enslavement. In today's global economy the capitalists are tied by a thousand threads to other nations, in many cases the capitalists are in fact multinational corporations that have no allegiance to any nation. Furthermore, while each national economy is dependent on other nations this dependency is as much a matter of cooperation as it is a rivalry. And rivalries can sometimes turn into conflicts and wars. So this whole of the Nation conceals lots of internal contradictions, all of which are covered over in the myth of National Unity. And we cannot make sense of this myth without examining the concept of the Nation dialectically and working out the real underlying relationships of wholes to parts.

There is also the notion in dialectical thinking of leaps in development. Change does not consist simply of the accumulation of greater and greater quantities of something, but we understand that at a certain point quantity is transformed into quality. For instance, in order to finance projects corporations and even nations borrow money. They go into debt on the assumption that the projects they are financing will boost their income so that they can pay off their loans. This is a normal way of doing business. But what if the debt does not boost their income but instead servicing the debt becomes a drain on the national economy? There many reasons why this can happen – an economic crisis that depresses earnings, corruption on the part of the lender or borrower, etc. Whatever the reason, you are no longer able to pay the interest on the loan through normal means. So you take out more loans, this time to service the debt itself that you have accumulated. And this process can go on for a while, until the burden of paying interest on the debt reaches the point where it is no longer sustainable. At that point the institutions get into the picture and they insist that the condition of further loans is to make structural changes so that less of the national budget is going to service the needs of the population and more is going to service the payment of interest on the debt. That is called austerity. And with the introduction of austerity debt is transformed from a means for financing new projects into a form of slavery. In this way the gradual accumulation of debt transforms the very nature of the debt itself. Quantity is transformed into quality.

There are of course many other examples.

As I said, the modern understanding of dialectics as the way of thinking that corresponds with reality was first developed in a comprehensive form by Hegel, though as I pointed out, he had his precursors in Ancient Greek philosophy. Now let me say something about the Marxist dialectic. Without examining the nuances of the transition from Hegel to Marx, I will just say that even if you consider Hegel an idealist and Marx a materialist, the dialectic of Marx is the dialectic of Hegel though perhaps stripped of the mystical form in which Hegel sometimes presented it. Many of the points I have been discussing are nicely summarized by Trotsky in the short handout I recommended, *The ABC of Materialist Dialectics*. [2] And if I

had to summarize all this in one sentence, I would say that dialectics is the thinking we need to employ if we are to understand the world of ceaseless motion and change. Our ordinary common sense thinking is not sufficient when we are faced with any but the most simple of phenomenon in the real world. That is the end of my brief introduction to dialectics.

Now if what I have said so far about dialectics has any validity, that it is necessary to understand complex phenomenon of motion and change, then it should be clear why dialectics should be important for revolutionaries. For what characterizes revolutions and the events leading up to them are precisely the rapid changes that take place in the political sphere and in the psychology of the masses. No one expressed this better than Trotsky in his History of the Russian Revolution where he writes,

"In a society that is seized by revolution classes are in conflict. It is perfectly clear, however, that the changes introduced between the beginning and the end of a revolution in the economic bases of the society and its social substratum of classes, are not sufficient to explain the course of the revolution itself, which can overthrow in a short interval age-old institutions, create new ones, and again overthrow them. The dynamic of revolutionary events is directly determined by swift, intense and passionate changes in the psychology of classes which have already formed themselves before the revolution." [my emphasis AS]

In the same passage Trotsky also points to the contradictory source of this "swift, intense and passionate changes in the psychology of classes";

"The swift changes of mass views and moods in an epoch of revolution thus derive, not from the flexibility and mobility of man's mind, but just the opposite, from its deep conservatism. The chronic lag of ideas and relations behind new objective conditions, right up to the moment when the latter crash over people in the form of a catastrophe, is what creates in a period of revolution that leaping movement of ideas and passions which seems to the police mind a mere result of the activities of 'demagogues.'" [3]

I think from these remarks we can see what a complex problem it is to find your way clearly in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation. The tempo of events is accelerated and the weight of every decision enormously magnified. The responsibility for carrying out a correct strategic orientation and implementing it through a series of tactical steps grows enormously. And there are of course no guarantees that you will not make mistakes, even for a dialectical thinker. But what marks a revolutionary leader trained in dialectical thinking is his or her ability to quickly learn from a mistaken evaluation of events and reorient ones direction.

Let us examine this more concretely with some examples of how the greatest revolutionaries of the last century, Lenin and Trotsky were able to orient the practical work of the revolutionary movement because they had mastered the art of dialectical thinking, and, together with a careful study of the historical forces involved, made the right decisions at the right time. Now it is well know that both Lenin and Trotsky devoted a considerable amount of time to the strictly theoretical part of the issue. Lenin for instance, during the world shattering events of the start of World War I and the betrayal of Social Democracy, took time out from his practical activities to spend time at the library in Zurich, where he was then living in exile, to make a careful study of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Many years later, the notes he wrote in his notebook while he was studying the Logic

were published in what was later called his *Philosophical Notebooks*.

And although they are not as well known as Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, Trotsky also took time out during a critical period of his life, at the time when he was in exile and trying to build the Left Opposition against the murderous Stalinist bureaucracy, to also make a study of Hegel's logic and other material so as to deepen his understanding of dialectics. In Trotsky's *Philosophical Notebooks* you can find a number of gems where he relates dialectics to revolutionary politics. And later on during his last struggle before his death, when he was fighting against the challenge to the program of the Fourth International by a faction inside the American Socialist Workers Party led by James Burnham and Max Shachtman, Trotsky began his refutation of the perspectives of the opposition with a lesson in dialectics. This is the section called the ABC of dialectics that I recommended as preparation for this talk.

I would now like to turn to some examples of Lenin's and Trotsky's use of dialectics in a revolutionary situation. However finding examples is not so easy. You can certainly pour through the collected works of Lenin and Trotsky and look for examples where they had an explicit discussion of dialectics in one context or another. For instance, Lenin said, during the debate on trade union policy in the Soviet Union, that Bukharin had never really understood dialectics, that he substituted eclecticism for dialectics. It's an intriguing passage and was used by the Stalinists to discredit Bukharin, but it is only the skeleton of an idea.

It is possible to pour through the collected works and find a few quotes like this and that is what most of the authors have done who have written on the subject of Lenin and Trotsky's use of dialectics. But their explicit remarks on dialectics in their political writing are few and far between and often are too brief to tell us very much. I think a better approach is to find examples in their writings of their use of dialectical thinking in analyzing a situation. That can tell us a lot more about how they used dialectics to prepare for and lead the Russian Revolution. However no one has, as far as I am aware, tried to compile a handbook of such examples, with an explanation of each one. So we have to do it ourselves. I have tried to find a few that I want to discuss.

The first example is from Lenin. He was writing in 1908, in a period after the defeat of the 1905 revolution. One of the things that revolutionaries were trying to figure out then is if the working class was ready for a new offensive after the defeat or were we still in a period of retreat. Lenin writes, *"Some say that offensive economic struggles by the workers are as impossible as before, and consequently a revolutionary upswing is impossible in the near future. Others say that the impossibility of economic struggle impels a turn to a political struggle, and therefore a revolutionary upswing is inevitable in the near future. We think that both arguments have at their foundation the same error, which consists in simplifying a complex issue. Undoubtedly the detailed study of the industrial crisis is of the greatest importance. But it is also beyond doubt that no data about the crisis, even if they were ideally accurate, can in reality decide the question of whether a rise of the revolutionary tide is at hand or not: because such a rise depends on a thousand additional factors which it is impossible to measure beforehand. It is indubitable that without the general groundwork of an agrarian crisis in the country, and depression in industry, profound political crises are impossible. But if the general groundwork exists, that does*

not permit us to conclude whether the depression will for a time retard the mass struggle of the workers in general, or whether at a certain stage of events the same depression will not push new masses and fresh forces into the political struggle. To answer such a question there is only one way: to keep a careful finger on the pulse of the country's whole political life, and especially the state of the movement and of the mood of the mass of the proletariat."

[my emphasis AS] [4]

What Lenin is doing here is trying to determine the strategic orientation of the revolutionary movement. And to do that it is necessary to first determine if we are dealing with a rising tide of the class struggle or a period of retreat and defensive actions. In other words we try to determine the direction of the class struggle. But we also need to determine the tempo. Are developments likely to move very quickly or are we dealing with a period of gradual change or maybe even relative stagnation? We also want as far as possible to anticipate the forms in which the next phase of the class struggle is likely to take. And we need to keep an eye out for the moment when changes in degree can suddenly lead to a qualitative leap. Are we going into a period where Soviets are on the agenda or are we preparing for a period in which the best we can do is fight against repressive legislation or prepare for strikes against the employers attempts to cut wages?

To arrive at the correct conclusion to any of these questions it is necessary to think dialectically. For instance, how do we determine if we see a workers action such as a strike, that it signifies a rising tide of the class struggle or a retreat from previous gains? If you just look at this one event separate from anything else there is no way to tell. And for the non-dialectical thinker, for the empiricist, that is all there is. It's just a strike and nothing more and has no other significance. It is like looking at a half moon one evening and trying to determine if it is in its waxing or the waning cycle. There is no way to tell just from looking at it at that moment. You have to have followed its development over time. In other words you cannot understand the significance of this part without seeing its relation to the whole.

Now the question Lenin is dealing with is of course far more complicated than whether the half moon is heading to a new moon or a full moon. To answer the latter question we only have to know what the moon looked like yesterday as compared to this evening. But the direction of the class struggle is determined as Lenin says, by *"a thousand additional factors which it is impossible to measure beforehand."* We understand as historical materialists that economic relations provide us with the basic ground for the class struggle. But we also know that arising on those foundations are political relations which within certain limits are relatively autonomous and have their laws of motion. Finally, we know that arising out of the political relations in society are the consciousness of the masses – what Lenin called *"the mood of the masses"*. Now when we speak of the relationship of wholes to parts it is important to keep in mind what the context is – that is which whole we are investigating. For what we see in nature society and thought is not simply one whole, but a whole that may encompass another whole within it each of them having their own logic of motion and change.

Thus the largest whole in class society is always the economic foundation. But the political relations that arise out of the economic foundation can be considered a whole in its own right with its own dynamic. This subordinate whole is not

entirely disconnected of course from the larger whole of which it is itself a part, but neither is it directly determined by it, though as we Marxists say, it is determined by it "in the last analysis". And finally the mood of the masses that arises on the basis of the political relations can be considered yet another whole with its own dynamic, what has sometimes been called mass psychology. Now in a normal situation, the economic foundations determine the political relations and these in turn determine mass psychology. But what distinguishes a revolutionary situation from the "normal" state of things is that the determination can go in the other direction. That is to say the psychology of the masses can have a decisive impact on the political relations and these in turn can overturn the economic foundations of society. Lenin meant something like this when he called politics "concentrated economics."

I think all these thoughts are encompassed in what Lenin is saying in this passage. I think it gives you a good idea of just how challenging it can be to approach problems of revolutionary strategy and tactics dialectically. And this a good place to contrast the dialectical approach with the approach used by sectarians and opportunists. Let us examine the sectarian first.

And the first thing to note about the sectarian approach is that it has the advantage over our approach of being much simpler. The entire network of complex relations between economics, politics and mass psychology are completely irrelevant to the sectarian. He does not really have to determine either the direction or tempo of the class struggle because he already has his strategic orientation. And it is always the same one. Philosophically the sectarian is a Platonist and for him there is one unchanging Truth which he never tires of repeating. And just like a stopped clock, the sectarian can sometimes be correct but only twice a day. For the rest of time there is a huge gap between the expectations of the sectarian and the actual development of the class struggle. And when the sectarian sees that the masses are not moving along in the way he thinks they should, he becomes angry with them and denounces them, saying they have been tricked by "fake leftists". All questions as we said are enormously simplified for the sectarian. As Trotsky wrote, the sectarian recognizes only two colors, that of the revolutionary and that of the counter-revolutionary. There is nothing in between and there are no contradictions in the way revolutionary consciousness can express itself. The breeding ground for a sectarian is when the class struggle is in a quiet phase or the working class is in retreat. The sectarian thrives in those conditions, when revolutionaries are isolated from the working class.

Conversely, when the working class is in a period of ascendant struggle and when conditions are created for revolutionaries to break out of their isolation, the sectarian goes into crisis. The movement of the masses passes by him and he is brushed aside like a flea. Worse, sometimes not only is the sectarian made irrelevant, but he actually joins the camp of reaction. I think you saw this very clearly recently with the role played by the sectarian politics of the Communist Party which urged its members to cast an invalid ballot in the referendum. And if you have ever argued with a sectarian you will probably know that you can never convince them that they are wrong about anything. That is because in general they are close minded and dogmatic and do not admit of anything in their world outlook that would contradict their schemas. That

is why the pronouncements of the sectarians are always predictable, because they rely on formulas and not on the living movement of classes in developing their approach. In general, allowing for individual exceptions, sectarianism is a disease for which there is no cure. Here we can quote Trotsky,

"Sectarianism is hostile to dialectics (not in words but in action) in the sense that it turns its back upon the actual development of the working class."[5] [my emphasis AS]

The dogmatic approach of sectarians highlights, by way of contrast, another aspect of dialectical thinking - it is always open and tentative in its approximations to the reality of the existing situation. There is nothing more anathema to dialectics than the bastardized caricature of dialectics that was developed by Stalin and Mao-Tse-Tung whereby dialectical sounding phrases were used to rationalize a dogma and discourage an open mind. It is not by accident that the Stalinist caricature of dialectical philosophy has been labeled the philosophy of "*Soviet scholasticism*", recalling the dogmatic approach of the scholastic philosophers of the middle ages.

Now let us take a look at the opportunist. The opportunist, unlike the sectarian, comes into his own when the class struggle sharpens. This is because the opportunist always wants to jump in and in get involved. And whereas the sectarian is guided by a single unchanging Truth, the opportunist is not guided by any concept of Truth. The opportunist is not really interested in determining the ebbs and flows of the class struggle, its tempo and its probable development because for him the strategic goal is of no importance. This was summed up by the phrase used to describe the first revisionist, Eduard Bernstein, about whom it was said that for him "The movement is everything, the final goal nothing". So for the opportunist also, life is much easier than for the dialectician, though in a very different way than for the sectarian. There is one thing however that the opportunist is interested in that distinguishes him from the sectarian. The opportunist also, like the dialectician wants to keep his finger on the pulse of the masses, but in his own way, without all the baggage of determining the relationship of the mood of the masses to the entire complex of determinations of which it is part. The opportunist however approaches the masses not in order to bring them closer to the next stage of the class struggle, but solely to adapt to the present movement.

Now when we speak of opportunists, it is important to distinguish between the different types of opportunists. First there is the careerist and professional politician and those groups on the left who lead a parasitical existence off the trade unions and their bureaucratic apparatus. These are the opportunists by virtue of their class position and psychology. But opportunism can also be expressed by layers of the working class coming into struggle as a result of their political immaturity and their theoretical confusion. We must see opportunism therefore not as a fixed category but in motion. The opportunism of the careerists and bureaucrats is an opportunism that always tries to hold back the movement of the masses when it attempts to break through the status quo. The opportunism that we find in the masses coming into struggle, while perhaps looking like the same thing, is entirely different. It is the opportunism of ideas that are struggling to break out of the straitjacket of bourgeois ideology which they have inherited. It is possible to overcome this kind of opportunism.

And then there is also the opportunism that sometimes takes hold of revolutionaries who get caught up in the events of the moment and forget to assess them dialectically. If one becomes conscious of this form of opportunism and pays attention to its theoretical roots it is possible to overcome it. But if one does not pay attention to the theoretical issues, then this kind of opportunism can become fixed and leave one however unconsciously, vulnerable to the pressures exerted by bourgeois ideology. Now in a revolutionary situation, opportunism is a far greater danger than sectarianism because it can take hold very easily even for those whose intentions are anything but opportunist. This was nicely summed up by Trotsky, who writing in 1940 said,

"Anyone acquainted with the history of the struggles of tendencies within workers' parties knows that desertions to the camp of opportunism and even to the camp of bourgeois reaction began not infrequently with rejection of the dialectic." [6] [my emphasis AS]

There is no formula for avoiding the twin evils of opportunism and sectarianism. The only antidote is training to think dialectically. And there is no formula for learning how to think dialectically. It is as much an art as a science and can only be mastered through continuous practice. And in this connection we have another wonderful quote from Trotsky,

"Dialectical training of the mind is as necessary to a revolutionary fighter as finger exercises to a pianist." [7] [my emphasis AS]

Let us take one more look at something else in Lenin's quote – that *"it is impossible to measure beforehand"* the form that the class struggle will take. What exactly did he mean by this and how then do we measure these things?

We can find a clue if we examine the course of the Russian Revolution when in a rapidly changing situation it was not at all clear what the appropriate course of action should be to advance the revolution. There were many disagreements within the Bolshevik Party at every turn of the events in 1917 and Lenin was sometimes correct in his estimation and sometimes he was not. But what distinguished him was his flexibility, his ability to learn from his mistakes and even sometimes to completely change his position on a critical question after gauging the reaction of the masses to an action supported by the Bolsheviks. I don't have the time to go into these events except to mention them. It is discussed in Trotsky's masterful History of the Russian Revolution and a good supplement to that classic work is the book by the non-Marxist historian Alexander Rabinowich, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, which I would recommend.

I do want to conclude by examining how this idea of 'keeping a finger on the pulse of the masses' works out in Trotsky's thinking, especially in his discussions with leaders of the American Socialist Workers Party on the Transitional Program of the Fourth International.

For in developing what are called transitional demands we have an excellent example of what Lenin meant by keeping a finger on the pulse of the masses. There are many misconceptions about transitional demands and this is not the way the topic is usually presented. For instance, there is a common misconception that transitional demands are a kind of trick whereby revolutionary socialists push for something that they know cannot be met but sound very reasonable. In this way supposedly the revolutionaries hope to foment discontent among workers. But this is to

completely misunderstand what transitional demands are about. I want to examine transitional demands as an example, perhaps the most developed one, of how to think dialectically about strategy and tactics. Let's start with a quote from Trotsky where he discusses the political backwardness of the American working class,

"The American workers have the advantage that in their great majority they were not politically organized, and are only beginning now to be organized into trade unions. This gives to the revolutionary party the possibility of mobilizing them under the blows of the crisis."

What will the speed be? Nobody can foresee. We can see only the direction. Nobody denies that the direction is a correct one. Then we have the question, how to present the program to the workers? It is naturally very important. We must combine politics with mass psychology and pedagogy, build the bridge to their minds. Only experience can show us how to advance in this or that part of the country. For some time we must try to concentrate the attention of workers on one slogan: sliding scale of wages and hours."

The empiricism of the American workers has given political parties great success with one or two slogans – single tax, bimetalism, they spread like wildfire in the masses. When they see one panacea fail, then they wait for a new one. Now we can present one which is honest, part of our entire program, not demagogic, but which corresponds totally to the situation. Officially we now have thirteen million, maybe fourteen million unemployed – in reality about sixteen to twenty million – and the youth are totally abandoned in misery. Mr. Roosevelt insists on public works. But we insist that this, together with mines, railroads, etc., absorb all the people. And that every person should have the possibility of living in a decent manner, not lower than now and we ask Mr. Roosevelt and his brain trust propose such a program of public works that everyone capable of working can work at decent wages. This is possible with a sliding scale of wages and hours... We must begin a concentrated campaign of agitation so that everybody knows that this is the program of the socialist workers party." [8]

Let me emphasize in this long quote the words,

"We must combine politics with mass psychology and pedagogy, build the bridge to their minds. Only experience can show us how to advance in this or that part of the country."

Here you have stated succinctly the relationship of wholes to parts that I outlined earlier. And note the emphasis on mass psychology. Psychology is the final link in the chain that goes from the economic foundation to the political crisis. And transitional demands are developed primarily to address this final link in the chain. That does not mean that we forget about the rest of our program. For instance, on the political front the fight to convene a farmers and workers government as a step toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, or on the economic front to take measures to transition from an economy based on the law of value to an economy based on social needs. But the crux of the matter, where the revolutionary party can make its impact at a decisive moment, is precisely on the level of mass psychology, in affecting the consciousness of the masses. Now transitional demands are a tactic and the series of tactics forms the chain through which we try to implement our strategic goals. And in thinking about strategy and tactics we tend to think that a strategy is primary and tactics are secondary. This is true as far as it goes. If your strategic direction is misconceived, no amount of clever tactics will advance you any closer to your goals. But it is also true that

for the most part the revolutionary movement can only affect the situation through tactical steps and these tactical steps can at times play a decisive role in either advancing or retarding the march toward a strategic goal. This is why Trotsky emphasizes the importance of coming up with simple slogans that both fulfill the objective requirements of the situation and have a chance of 'clicking' in the consciousness of the masses. In our time it is something like uploading a video to Youtube that goes viral, only in our case the message spreads like wildfire not because of its sensationalist appeal, but because it touches a nerve in the historical consciousness of the working class and speaks to their objective requirements today. The classic example of this was the slogan adopted by the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution – "*Land, Peace and Bread!*" What could be simpler?

Let us look at one other example from Trotsky's discussions on the Transitional Program. During the time when Trotsky was discussing the Transitional Program with the American comrades, there was an initiative proposed in the U.S. called the Ludlow amendment. It was intended as a referendum opposing war. And just like you saw in the run up to the referendum on July 5, there were various sectarian groups who opposed the Ludlow Amendment because it did not go far enough, it maintained certain illusions in pacifism, it was tied to a bourgeois government, etc, etc. Trotsky's attitude was of course that revolutionaries should support the measure while at the same time pointing out its limitations. Only by going through the experience with the masses would it be possible to have a dialogue with them whereby they could become receptive to our critique and get beyond their illusions in pacifism. Here is how he put it, "*We must advance with the masses, and not only repeat our formulas but speak in a manner that our slogans become understandable to the masses.*" [my emphasis AS]

Trotsky continued, "*The referendum is not our program, but it's a clear step forward; the masses show that they wish to control their Washington representatives. We say: It's a progressive step that you wish to control your representatives. But you have illusions and we will criticize them. At the same time we will help you realize your program. The sponsors of the program will betray you...*" [9] [my emphasis AS]

Here we have a good example what Lenin meant in keeping a finger on the pulse of the masses. Our program must be flexible if we are to speak to the masses in a language they understand while we go through their experiences with them. The opportunist will also go through the experience with the masses, but in his case it is to gloss over the contradictions buried within that program. The revolutionary leader will on the other hand go through that experience with the masses in order to reveal those contradictions. For instance, last Sunday's referendum did not address the question of what happens when you say **NO**. The masses thought they were saying **NO** to austerity, but the Tsipras government took the referendum to mean that they were saying **NO** only to the most recent terms offered by the institutions. They therefore took the **NO** vote to mean **YES** to further austerity which they hoped – in vain as it turns out – that the new austerity program would not be quite as onerous as the current one. When you bury contradiction a **NO** becomes a **YES**.

But this is not something that the masses can learn just

through propaganda. It is necessary to go through the experience with them. Without that dialectical link to the activity and thinking of the masses it is not possible to win them over to our program.

Now let us think about how we can distill these lessons into developing transitional demands in Greece today. What kind of slogans should we raise in the context of post Referendum Greece today? I cannot say as I do not have the experience and the knowledge of the Greek working class and its history. Maybe you can put forward a simple slogan like "Austerity is Slavery"? Or maybe something like the slogan "30 hours work for 40 hours pay", which was a slogan that the Socialist Workers Party campaigned with in America in the 1930's when the U.S. was going through the great Depression and we saw levels of unemployment and misery that are close to what we are seeing in Greece today. But you also have to take into account that the political understanding of the Greek working class today after the resounding victory of the **NO** vote in Sunday's referendum, is much higher than that which existed in the U.S. in the 1930s. And you need to take into account the relationship of the party to the working class. Is the immediate task of the party to mobilize large sections of the working class directly through an appeal of the party, or is it to win over masses of workers and youth who have not been convinced yet that the conciliatory road taken repeatedly by Syriza's leadership is a disastrous policy? Or does the party stand somewhere in between these extremes, that is, maybe it can mobilize workers to some degree on its own but still needs to win over the great bulk of workers and youth to its program?

This is something that revolutionaries in Greece and their international allies need to work out. But the important thing I want to emphasize is not this or that particular slogan, but the dialectical thinking that needs to go into developing the appropriate policies and programs insofar as we keep our finger on the pulse of the masses.

Footnotes

[1] A good example is the discussion in Plato's dialogue, *Euthyphro*. There the question posed by Socrates is "What is piety?" Euthyphro answers that "Piety is that which is beloved by the gods." But there are many gods and some of them hate the same thing that others love. Therefore the same thing can be both pious and impious. But this is self-contradictory. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the proposition that "Piety is that which is beloved by the gods."

[2] L. Trotsky, *The ABC of the Materialist Dialectic, In Defense of Marxism*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/12/abc.htm>

[3] History of the Russian Revolution, L. Trotsky, Preface, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch00.htm>

[4] *The Assessment of the Present Situation, Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1973, Moscow, Volume 15, pages 267-280 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/nov/01.htm>

[5] L. Trotsky, Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International, <http://forum.permanent-revolution.org/2009/05/sectarianism-centrism-and-fourth.html>

[6] L. Trotsky, *An Open Letter to Comrade Burnham*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/idom/dm/14-burnham.htm>

[7] L. Trotsky, *The ABC of the Materialist Dialectic*, *In Defense of Marxism*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/12/abc.htm>

[8] *The Transitional Program of Socialist Revolution*, L Trotsky, with Introductory Essays by Joseph Hansen and George Novack. Pathfinder Press, 1973. P. 192-193.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 116-117.

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!

