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Theses on Capitalism and Class Struggle in Black Africa

Document of the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 13 April 2017

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1. The historical background of the present disastrous situation in black Africa is the centuries of colonial exploitation by Great Powers and the inability of the small African bourgeoisies in the 20th century to break with the imperialist world system. The following theses, without dealing exhaustively with this subject, shall give a preliminary overview about the historical road of black Africa which led to the present situation. Going hand in hand with the RCIT's expansion to the black continent, these theses represent not the end but rather the beginning of our theoretical analysis of the problems of capitalism and class struggle in Africa.

Some Background Notes on Black Africa's Modern History: How Colonial Plunder and Oppression Blocked Independent Development

2. The first and foremost reason for black Africa's poverty and backwardness is its systematic plundering and oppression by the colonial powers and the resulting basic deformation of its economic and social physiognomy. The continent has attracted the appetite of the European powers starting in the Early Modern Age for two basic reasons: first, Africa's huge mineral wealth and, secondly, the transatlantic slave trade.

3. While there are debates about the exact numbers of black Africans who were shipped by the European powers to North and South America, there is no doubt that the transatlantic slave trade had devastating consequences for the African continent. Nathan Nunn, the author of a de-

tailed historical study on the effects of slave trade on the Africa, reaches to the unambiguous conclusion: "*The African countries that are the poorest today are the ones from which the most slaves were taken.*"¹

4. According to different estimates at least between 20-30 millions black Africans were deported in the transatlantic slave trade, one third to one half of whom died en route. Some calculations give even higher figures. In addition to the incredible human tragedy, the slave trade had a devastating impact on the social and economic conditions of the continent. The historian Herbert Klein calculates that, in 1700, about half of the total population of sub-Saharan Africa was exposed to the consequences of transatlantic slave trade.² Furthermore, those who were taken away were among the physically strongest. The historian Patrick Manning calculates that, in 1850, the population of all sub-Saharan Africa was only half the size of what it would have been without the slave trade. The late Angus Maddison, the most outstanding economic historian of the late 20th century, writes that Africa's population collapsed from 100 million in 1650 to 61 million in 1700 only to recover modestly to 70 million in 1800.³ So while the population was growing rapidly on all other continents, it actually shrunk in Africa because of the slave trade. Maddison estimates that "*without this [slave, Ed.] trade, African population growth in the eighteenth century might well have been three times as fast.*"⁴ As a result Manning "*estimates that Africa's proportion of the combined population of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the New World declined between 1600 and 1900 from about 30 percent to a little over 10 percent.*"⁵ Another negative result of the transatlantic slave trade was the emergence of a number of African states which

Map of European Possessions in Africa



were actually based economically on this trade.

5. As technological revolutions led to new forms of exploitation of labor, slavery became less and less profitable for Europe's and America's capitalists and plantation owners. Furthermore, mass resistance to slavery increased significantly. On the one hand, there were many slave uprisings which were brutally suppressed, but in the case of the *Black Jacobins* in Haiti, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the slaves successfully liberated themselves in 1791-1804.

⁶ On the other hand, popular abolitionist movements in Europe and America emerged and developed, finally resulting in the end of the transatlantic slave trade in the 19th century. However, with this change of attitude in the west, Europe's colonial powers became more and more eager to occupy and directly exploit the African continent. As a result, Britain and France – with Germany, Portugal, Spain and Italy playing a smaller role – started the “*scramble for Africa*,” claiming colonies for themselves on the black continent. Finally, these Great Powers met in Berlin in 1884 and agreed on the complete division of the African continent among themselves (with the small exceptions of Abyssinia and Liberia). (See Map 1)

6. This process of colonialization which had already commenced at the start of the Early Modern Age went hand in hand with a policy of land occupation by sending white settlers to the African continent. These settlers – whose numbers grew to several millions – became a crucial local force in supporting the subjugation of the indigenous population, as well as appropriating and exploiting the most fertile land. In terms of numbers – in relation to the indigenous black population – white settlers played a particular significant role in those areas which today are known as South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola, as well as in the Arab-populated North African colonies which the Europeans carved out for themselves in what became known as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco.

7. The colonization of Africa resulted in the vast economic plundering of the continent's mineral resources and the super-exploitation of its labor forces. African economies were transformed to produce raw materials for the European capitalists and at the same time served as a market for European manufactured products. Today, the continent is home to a third of the planet's mineral reserves, including a tenth of its oil, and produces 40% of the world's gold, two-thirds of its diamonds and 80-90% of its chromium and platinum. ⁷ Consequently, Africa's subordinated and super-exploited position in the hierarchy of the capitalist world economy has basically remained unchanged – with the only exception being the substitution of its imperialist exploiters: the US and more recently China have become important powers while countries like Portugal, Spain and Belgium hardly play a role anymore.

8. Various imperialist ideologists see in Africa's economic backwardness proof of the superiority of European (or Western) civilization. We strongly reject such a thesis as being both reactionary and racist. Firstly, as we have demonstrated in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, and as we shall describe in this document, the so-called backwardness of the South in general and of Africa in particular has to a large degree been caused by its exploitation by so-called Western civilization. ⁸ Thus, any blaming by Western ideologists of Africa for its own backwardness is sheer hypocrisy. Secondly, as can be seen in Table 1, the

gap between Western countries and the colonial and semi-colonial South has increased dramatically ever since the Western colonial powers occupied and began exploiting the latter. This once again demonstrates the central responsibility of the West for the backwardness of the South. Finally, while it is true that Africa's productive forces were less developed around 1500 than Western Europe's, there is no reason to assume that Africa (or other parts of the South) could not have developed independently – had the West not interfered – at a later time in a similar way. Why should Africa not have been able to develop its own productive forces as the West did?! We have, in fact, seen various examples of Non-Western countries which significantly did so later than the West, for example Japan and more recently China.

Popular Struggles against Colonialism Led to Formal Independence

9. The black toilers in Africa never accepted occupation and exploitation by the colonial powers. Their resistance started immediately after the conquest of the continent by the colonial powers in the late 19th century. To name but a few examples, we cite the defeat of the Italians against Ethiopia in 1896; the *Khaua-Mbandjeru uprising* and later the *Maji Maji uprising* against the German occupiers which resulted in a Holocaust-like extermination of the rebellious black people at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century; the Somali nationalist uprising leading to the creation of the *Daraawiish state* led by Sayid Maxamed in 1899-1920; the *Kongo-Wara rebellion* in the former colonies of French Equatorial Africa and French Cameroon in 1928-31; the *Malagasy Uprising* against French colonial rule in Madagascar after the Second World War; the *Mau Mau Uprising* against the British colonialists in Kenya in the 1950s; and the popular struggles for independence in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola during the second half of the 20th century. After numerous defeats and tremendous scarifies, these struggles achieved *formal* independence of the African states.

10. Following decades of heroic popular struggles, the majority of African countries won independence from the colonial powers in the late 1950s and 1960s. While this was an important achievement in itself, subsequent developments affirmed the Marxist analysis codified in Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. This theory explains, among others, that the central tasks of the liberation struggle – including those particularly relevant for semi-colonial countries like national independence, agrarian revolution, and the achievement of democratic freedoms – cannot be implemented under any form of capitalist regime, but only under the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other words, if a colonial people succeeds in creating an independent state, they will not be able to break the fetters of imperialist super-exploitation *as long as* its economic system, and the associated political regime, remain capitalistic. Only if the working class, in alliance with the poor peasantry, overthrows the bourgeoisie – both foreign as well as domestic – and creates its own state, only then will an oppressed people be able to free itself from imperialist domination. Trotsky stated: “*With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution*

signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”¹⁰

11. When the African states won their independence, a number of prominent radical black liberation state leaders were either killed by the imperialists or their local agents (e.g. Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, Amílcar Cabral) or were deposed by reactionary coup d'états (e.g., Kwame Nkrumah). Other leaders rapidly betrayed the cause of the liberation struggle and made their peace with the imperialist system (e.g., Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, Sam Nujoma). As a result, the independent African states have become *semi-colonies*, i.e., countries which are *formally* independent but which remain *essentially* dependent on the imperialist powers. This proves once more the Marxist contention that, having failed to break with capitalism, the leaderships of petty-bourgeois nationalist movements will themselves be transformed into bourgeois elites once they have achieved state power.

Formal Independence as Disguised Imperialist Dependency

12. The imperialist domination of Africa has had tremendous consequences for the African economy. It has resulted in a *massive deformation of the continent's economic basis* which became focused on two major realms: the extraction of raw materials and the development of agricultural monocultures. Until today, this deformation remains characteristic of nearly all African economies. Outside of these few sectors, industrialization of Africa remains very limited. Thus, minerals and ores account for more than two thirds of Africa's total exports. In 2014, the top dollar-value exports from sub-Saharan Africa were crude oil, diamonds, gold, copper, and agricultural products.¹¹ At the same time, the share of GDP held by the manufacturing sector has remained largely unchanged since the 1970s, and more than two thirds of the labor force is still employed in the agricultural sector.¹²

13. The epoch of colonialism preserved a backward, pre-capitalist mode of production for large parts of Afri-

ca's population. According to various studies, when many African countries were becoming independent in the late 1950s, between 65% and 75% of the total cultivated land area of tropical Africa was still devoted to subsistence production. While some countries (like the Gold Coast, later to be named Ghana) had a majority of its economically active population integrated into the capitalist market, this was not the case in most African countries. Figures for the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa suggest that “*the number of adult males engaged in money earning activities is approximately 40 per cent of the total male population over fifteen years of age, with the remainder engaged in subsistence production.*”¹³ Today, the majority of black peasants in Africa are still dependent on subsistence farming. An article of the *New York Times* published in 2008 stated that “*roughly 65 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population relies on subsistence farming.*”¹⁴ This astounding fact, a half a century after independence, demonstrates that capitalism is incapable of leading Africa's people out of backwardness and poverty.

14. Africa's industrialization – and more generally its economic and social development – is not only limited when compared with the imperialist countries of the Western world, but also in comparison with other semi-colonial regions in Latin America and Asia. While sub-Saharan Africa's population numbers nearly one billion persons (962 million in 2015) or 13.1% of the world population, it accounts for only 2% of the world's GDP.¹⁵ In other words, the combined national output of Sub-Saharan Africa is equivalent to the GDP of Spain. The region exports a miniscule 0.9% (a decline from 1.2% in 1980) and 0.3% of the world's light and heavy manufacturing products respectively.¹⁶ During the last quarter century, sub-Saharan Africa's share in manufacturing value added among all so-called developing countries (i.e., roughly the semi-colonial world) declined from 9% (1990) to 4% (2014).¹⁷ The region's share of manufacturing value added share in GDP is lower today than in any other region of the world (9.1% in 2010-2013).

15. Another result of the imperialist deformation of Africa's economy is the extraordinary lack of economic integration within the continent. Only 11.3% of trade in Africa is intra-regional, i.e., nearly nine tenths of trade by

Table 1: Levels of Per Capita GDP and Interregional Ratios, 1000–1998⁹

	(1990 international dollars)							
	1000	1500	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	1998
Western Europe	400	774	1,232	1,974	3,473	4,594	11,534	17,921
Western Offshoots	400	400	1,201	2,431	5,257	9,288	16,172	26,146
Japan	425	500	669	737	1,387	1,926	11,439	20,413
Asia (excluding Japan)	450	572	575	543	640	635	1,231	2,936
Latin America	400	416	665	698	1,511	2,554	4,531	5,795
Eastern Europe & former USSR	400	483	667	917	1,501	2,601	5,729	4,354
Africa	416	400	418	444	585	852	1,365	1,368
World	435	565	667	867	1,510	2,114	4,104	5,709
Interregional Ratios	1.1:1	2:1	3:1	5:1	9:1	15:1	13:1	19:1

African countries takes place with the outside world, not within the continent.¹⁸ (By way of comparison, the share of intra-regional trade is more than 20% in Latin America and more than 50% in Asia [excluding Japan].)

16. While black Africa experienced an economic upswing after achieving political independence in the period after the Second World War, its economy was seriously impaired by the onset of the capitalist crisis in the 1970s. Following independence, the percent of African labor employed in manufacturing grew rapidly from 4.7% in 1960 to 7.8% in 1975. Similarly, the continent maintained and even improved its level of productivity (compared with the US). However, all this began to change in the 1970s and since then the economic gap between Africa and other regions of the developed and developing world has increased (see Figure 1). From 1980 through the 1990s, per capita GDP in thirty two sub-Saharan African countries has dropped by almost 1% per year.¹⁹

17. Africa's economic decline goes hand in hand with its social decay. Child mortality in sub-Saharan Africa is over twice that of Latin America and the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Average life expectancy is just around 50 years, compared with over 70 years in both of the two other regions just cited. Similarly, only every second child on the African continent receives a secondary education and just a tenth of the age cohort goes on to enroll in tertiary institutions, compared with over a third in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Southeast Asia.²¹

The Reactionary Role of White Settlers

18. As noted above, white settlers played – as a reactionary, privileged oppressor group – a crucial role in imposing and consolidating colonial power in several African countries (e.g., Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique). However, even after the African people achieved formal independence and after they system of Apartheid was abolished, the settlers continued to play a central role in the economy of several countries. In some, like Mozambique and Angola, the withdrawal of the colonial power spurred a massive exodus of most of the white settlers (about 95%), since they weren't prepared to accept being a minority in a (formally) independent country in which the black population is dominant. In Zimbabwe, this exodus was huge too, the white population dropping from a peak of around 296,000 in 1975 to 120,000 in 1999, and to just 30,000 today.²²

19. However, the white settlers retained a disproportionately high influence in the economy, as the black bourgeoisie and political elites which came to power after independence was won and after Apartheid was abolished, strove to reach a compromise with the settlers. In South Africa, 60,000 white farmers owned almost 86% of the farmland and 68% of the total land area of the country when Apartheid was officially ended in 1994. Despite promises of land reform made by the post-Apartheid ruling ANC, most of the land remains in the hands of the white minority even today. Similarly, the influence of the white minority is also dominant in other sectors of the economy, filling as they do 64% of the country's top senior management positions, 90% of the board of the Central Bank, and 90% of media.²³

20. In Namibia, some 4,000 white settler own 6,400

farms, totaling 36.5million hectares, while smallholder farming covers only 34 million hectares yet supports 140,000 families (or about 50% of the population). In Zimbabwe, until the early 2000s, about 4,500 white farmers controlled 31% of the country's prime land, or about 42% of the total agricultural land, while 1.2 million black peasant families subsisted on 41% of the country's land area.²⁴ However, this has changed since then, because Zimbabwe's long-time dictator Mugabe was forced to attack the privileges of the white settlers lest the threatening domestic revolutionary crisis explode. Contrary to Western imperialist propaganda, this land reform has been a relative success. Since 2000, land reform has resulted in the transfer of around 8 million hectares of land across 4,500 farms to over 160,000 households, representing 20% of Zimbabwe's total land area, according to official figures. If the 'informal' settlements, outside the official 'fast-track' program are added, the totals are even larger. According to a study by Ian Scoones from the UK's *Institute of Development Studies* at Sussex University, two-thirds of people who were given land in the province of Masvingo were "ordinary" – low-income – Zimbabweans. The remaining one-third includes civil servants (16.5%), former workers on white-owned farms (6.7%), business people (4.8%) and members of the security services (3.7%). Despite many deficiencies, the land reform helped many poor peasants to improve their income.²⁵

21. As the RCIT has explained elsewhere, Marxists support the right of national self-determination for oppressed nations, but not for oppressor nations. Therefore, there can be no talk of national rights for the white settler minorities in Africa.²⁶ Revolutionaries support the abolition of all their political, social and economic privileges, including the expropriation of their wealth. The white settlers are welcome to continue living in Africa only if they accept living as ordinary citizens with the same rights as every black citizen, no more.

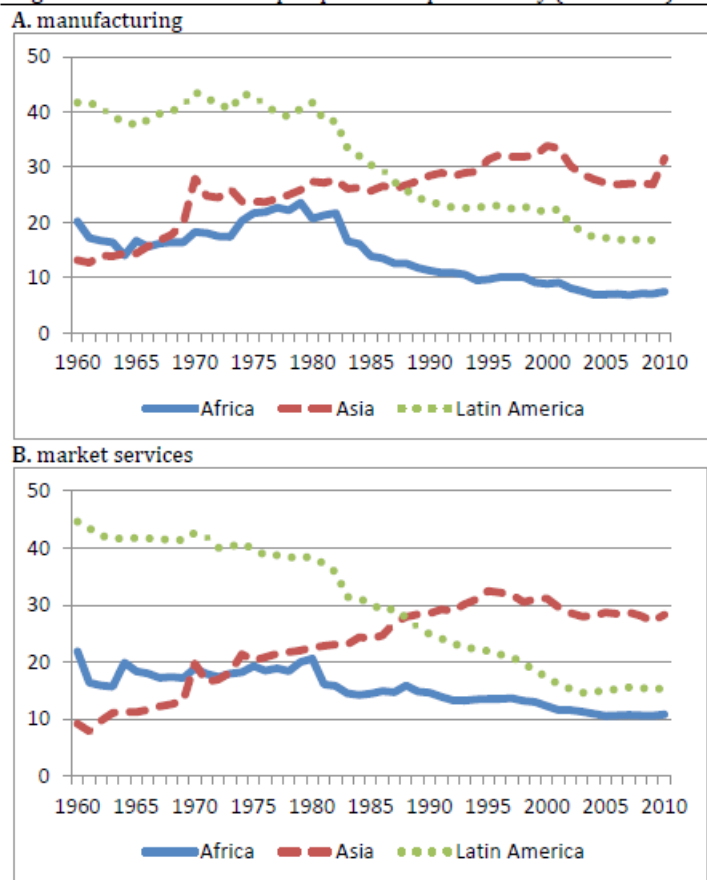
Is Capitalist Black Africa Rising?

22. It is true that Africa experienced an economic upturn in terms of GDP figures in the 2000s: average growth of real GDP more than doubled from just above 2% during the 1980s and 1990s to over 5% between 2001 and 2014.²⁷ However, contrary to the contention of neoliberal propagandists that "*Africa is rising*" and will supposedly even repeat the so-called "*Asian miracle*," this upturn is not a sustainable one based on the enlarging the continent's industrial capacity. Instead, it was primarily the result on a cyclical rise in prices of minerals. Consequently, with the collapse of mineral prices on the world market, the spectacular GDP growth figures have declined during the past two years. This becomes clear if we examine the growth figures for most black African countries (the so-called "*Least Developed Countries*") which averaged 7.9% between the years 2002-08, but which for 2015 and 2016 dropped respectively to 4.1% and 3.7%.²⁸

23. The basic determining factor for the economy of sub-Saharan Africa remains its deformed productive base focusing on mineral extraction and a the cultivation of a few agricultural commodities. In fact, as Rick Rowden has noted, "*the bulk of African countries are either stagnating or moving backwards when it comes to industrialization. The share*

Figure 1: Productivity of Africa, Latin America and Asia compared with the US, 1960-2011 ²⁰

Figure 1. An international perspective on productivity (USA = 100)



Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South* Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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

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

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

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future. Order your copy NOW! \$20 / £13 / €15 plus p+p (21\$ for US and international, £9 for UK, €10 for Europe)

The Great Robbery of the South

Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

of MVA [Manufacturing Value Added, Ed.] in Africa's GDP fell from 12.8 percent in 2000 to 10.5 percent in 2008, while in developing Asia it rose from 22 percent to 35 percent over the same period. There has also been a decline in the importance of manufacturing in Africa's exports, with the share of manufactures in Africa's total exports having fallen from 43 percent in 2000 to 39 percent in 2008."²⁹

Africa in the Grip of Imperialism

24. Despite its formal independence, black Africa remains more than ever imprisoned in the fetters of imperialist super-exploitation. As we have already mentioned above, our book *The Great Robbery of the South* describes how this exploitation by the imperialist monopolies can be divided broadly into four categories:

- i) Extra profits via capital export as productive investment
- ii) Extra profits via capital export as money capital (loans, currency reserves, speculation etc.)
- iii) Value transfer via unequal exchange
- iv) Value transfer via migration, i.e. the import of relatively cheaper labor force to the imperialist metropolises from the semi-colonies

25. The strategic sectors of Africa's economy, like mining and finance, remain dominated by foreign capitalist monopolies. For example, as many as 101 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange have mineral operations in sub-Saharan Africa. These corporations control over \$1trillion worth of Africa's resources with just five commodities – oil, gold, diamonds, coal and platinum. Furthermore, these foreign monopolies control vast swathes of Africa's land area, their concessions covering a staggering 1.03 million square kilometers of the continent.³⁰

26. Today, sub-Saharan Africa is the Southern continent with the highest share of foreign ownership in the financial sectors (52% of all banks representing 29% of all banks assets). A recently published bourgeois study commented on this figure: "*Foreign bank penetration in Sub-Saharan Africa, already high in 1995 at 31%, in part due to past colonial links, only further rose over the sample period and in 2009 over 50% of the banks active in the region were foreign owned.*"³¹

27. Furthermore, the Great Powers force African countries to accept so-called "free trade deals." While these deals require Africa to open its markets for commodities from the rich countries, the latter continue to block their domestic markets to African goods to varying degrees. As a result, African small producers are increasingly sidelined by cheaper products from the Western countries or China.

28. Another example of ongoing economic dependency is the use of the CFA franc by 14 Western and Central African countries. This currency, ostensibly guaranteed by the French treasury, which has a fixed rate of exchange opposite the euro, makes them entirely dependent on France's and hence the EU's monetary policy.

29. Furthermore, black Africa is once again becoming trapped in a cycle of indebtedness and payment of interest to Western creditors. While the continent's level of indebtedness was reduced to less than 30% by 2008 (thanks to a combination of debt forgiveness and booming commodity prices), its level of debt is now again rising rapidly, having

increased from \$282.9 billion in 2010 to \$416.3 billion in 2015. As a result, the debt-to-export ratio of the countries in the region sharply rose from 87% at the end of 2014 to 116% exactly a year later (end of 2015).³² Given the falling prices of commodities and the black African economies lower rates of growth, this ratio is likely to continue increasing.

30. Related to Africa's increasing indebtedness is another imperialist instrument to increase the continent's super-exploitation: the so-called *Structural Adjustment Programs* (SAPs). These programs consist of loans provided by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which are linked to strict austerity programs (e.g., cuts in social and health programs, mass lay-offs in the public sector, etc.) as well as plans to privatize public companies.

31. In addition, black Africa is exposed to significant economic drain by illicit financial flows. Between 2004 and 2013, \$675 billion was spirited out of Africa by fraudulently invoiced trade deals and leakages in the countries' balance of payments. This sum represents on average 6.1% of the region's annual GDP, meaning a greater relative spiriting away of wealth than that experienced by any other region of the world!³³ This figure reflects the close relations between the corrupt bourgeoisie of Africa and the imperialist financial institutions where the black capitalists ship their wealth.

32. Finally, another form of imperialist super-exploitation is that resulting from migration and the associated brain drain of Africans abroad. Millions of Africans live as cheap, super-exploited workers in Western Europe and North America. According to a World Bank report, about 23,000 African university graduates leave their countries every year. As a result, more African scientists live in the US today than in Africa!³⁴ Not only are African economies deprived of these talented workers, but they become increasingly dependent on the remittances which these migrants send home. In various countries of Africa, remittances make up 5%-20% of their annual GDP; in some cases as much as half!³⁵ In the future even more Africans are likely to migrate. Given the misery of life in Africa, nearly a third of all people in sub-Saharan Africa (32.1%) seek to move abroad.³⁶

33. Thus, contrary to the myth perpetuated by bourgeois public opinion, it is not the rich countries sending aid to Africa, but quite the opposite: If inflows and outflows are balanced, every year Africa pays billions of dollars net to the imperialist monopolies. A recently published study gives the following figures: "*While \$134 billion flows into the continent each year, predominantly in the form of loans, foreign investment and aid; \$192 billion is taken out, mainly in profits made by foreign companies, tax dodging and the costs of adapting to climate change. The result is that Africa suffers a net loss of \$58 billion a year.*"³⁷ We see, therefore, that for centuries Africa has been plundered because of its wealth in minerals and sources of labor. As a result, today it is the poorest and most backward continent. In other words, summarizing this dynamic in a dialectical formula, we can say that "*Africa is poor because it is rich*".

34. The Western imperialist powers try to secure their economic interests in Africa by keeping a military presence on the continent. Whenever the imperialists see their political and economic interests endangered, they send in their troops. Between 1968 and 2014, France intervened

Figure 2: US and Chinese Flows of Foreign Direct Investment into Africa, 2003-2012 ⁴⁸



China's transformation into an imperialist power

A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power

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militarily in African countries 42 times.³⁸ During the last 50 years, a total of 67 coups took place in 26 African countries; 16 of those countries are French ex-colonies.³⁹

35. The imperialists drive to increase their military strength has intensified in the past years using the pretext of the so-called “war on terror.” In addition to its traditional military bases in Réunion et Mayotte, Djibouti, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Senegal, France also has over 3,000 troops stationed across five countries in Africa — Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad — as part of *Operation Burkhane*.⁴⁰ The US *Africa Command* officially has a presence of some 5,000 US troops and a military base in Djibouti. However, in recent years, the Americans have increased their presence and built smaller military bases in several African countries.⁴¹

36. However, despite these troops on the ground, imperialist powers do not necessarily always intervene directly in local conflicts and civil war, but often use local lackeys to do their dirty work. A prime example is the so-called “*African Union Mission to Somalia*” (AMISOM) comprising an occupation force of more than 20,000 troops stationed in that Horn of African country since 2007. Given Somalia’s vital geo-strategic position on the Eastern corner of the African continent, with shores on the Gulf of Aden (leading to the Red Sea) and the Indian Ocean, the Great Powers are united in actively supporting the AMISOM forces. The leading local force involved in AMISOM is that of the reactionary Ethiopian dictatorship of Hailemariam Desalegn. This foreign occupation of Somalia has provoked a just popular resistance, the most important manifestation of which is the guerilla struggle being led by the petty-bourgeois Islamist *Al-Shabaab* movement.

China as a new Imperialist Great Power Challenging the Western Domination

37. For more than a century, Africa has been dominated by the Western imperialist powers – in particular Britain, France and the US. However, in the past decade their absolute domination has become increasingly challenged by the rise of China as a new imperialist power. As the RCIT has elaborated in several studies and essays, China’s (and Russia’s) emergence as new imperialist powers is one of the most important developments in the world situation, accelerating as it does the inter-imperialist rivalries and intensifying their super-exploitation of the semi-colonial South.⁴² This development is particularly relevant for Africa. China’s business with Africa is motivated by (a) its desire to find new markets for its commodities, (b) its interest in finding new markets where it can profitably invest its massively accumulated capital and (c) its need for raw materials.

38. Since the beginning of the new century, Chinese trade in Africa has been growing at a rate of 30% annually, with the result that, by 2009, China had surpassed the US to become Africa’s biggest trading partner, with trade for that year amounting to \$198.5 billion. The trade relations between China and Africa resemble the classic relations between an imperialist and a (semi-)colonial state: In 2011, more than 80% of China’s \$93.2 billion in imports from Africa consisted of crude oil, raw materials and resources. Africa has become the second largest supplier of crude oil for China (the top African suppliers are Sudan

and Angola), ranked behind the states of the Middle East. On the other hand, Chinese exports to Africa are primarily finished products such as machinery, textiles and electronics.⁴³

39. Furthermore, China has become one of the biggest foreign investors in Africa, there presently being about 2,500 Chinese-funded companies on the continent.⁴⁴ The top destinations for Chinese investment in the years 2005-15 have been South Africa, Nigeria, Guinea, and Congo.⁴⁵ Naturally, a realistic assessment must take into account that China started from a very low level of foreign investment in Africa, as from the end of the 19th until the end of the 20th century the black continent has been dominated by the European and US monopolies. While these two blocs still play a central role in African trade, starting a decade ago, China entered the circle of top foreign investors in the continent. In 2014, China ranked number four among the foreign investors in Africa. The annual flow of Chinese direct investment in Africa increased eight-fold between 2005 and 2014 when it reached an annual figure of \$3.2 billion. During this same 10-year period, the cumulative stock market value of Chinese investments in Africa grew twenty-fold, to \$32 billion.⁴⁶ While the US is still a bigger investor, China is catching up (see Figure 2). Currently, Beijing plans to increase its trade volume with Africa to \$400 billion and its direct investment in the continent to \$100 billion by 2020.⁴⁷ In the past, China’s main focus in Africa was on resources, especially mining and oil. Nowadays, infrastructure has become the priority, with companies like Huawei winning contracts to provide telecom services in Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Developing power grids has also become important in the bid to support and grow power-hungry, Chinese-owned mining interests.

40. Another important development is that Chinese capitalists investing in Africa rely less on native workers than other monopolies. Instead, they import many skilled Chinese workers. Furthermore, many Chinese go to Africa as private entrepreneurs to establish their businesses there – a kind of Chinese version of the white settlers of the old colonial powers in earlier centuries. According to China’s semi-official English-language newspaper *Global Times*, there are currently more than one million – some estimates are as high as two million – Chinese living in Africa.⁴⁹

41. China’s increasing economic interests in Africa makes Beijing determined to bolster their influence with a military presence. Since 2014, it has stationed a 700-member Chinese UN peacekeeping infantry battalion in South Sudan.⁵⁰ This military force should be understood in the context of Beijing’s massive investments in Sudan, where ¾ of all foreign investment are by Chinese monopolies.⁵¹ Similarly, China started to build its first ever overseas military base in Djibouti in April 2016. This deal ensures China’s military presence in the country up to 2026, with a contingent of up to 10,000 soldiers.⁵² This naval military base offers China strategic access to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

42. Naturally, the emergence of China as a new imperialist power to a certain degree increases the room for maneuver for African governments. They now possess an alternative to the Western powers and monopolies for loans and business deals. However, it is crucial for the working class not to align itself with one exploiter against another, but to fight independently of all exploiters. Revolutionar-

ies oppose the myth spread by various Stalinists (like the South African CP) and bourgeois nationalists that China is a socialist or a progressive, “non-hegemonic” country. The working class must not prefer, let alone support, one imperialist robber against another, but fight against them all. Socialists consider China as neither a worse neo-colonial power than the US or the Europeans – as various NGO’s paid by the West claim – nor as a better one. They are all equally imperialistic, and hence revolutionaries support all forms of class struggle and popular resistance against both Western and Chinese imperialists.

The Working Class and the Oppressed

43. The working class in black Africa is growing both in numbers and militancy. As Table 2 shows, the share of wage workers in the overall working population rose to 22.9% by 2006. However, it is important to note the sig-

nificant difference between the proportions of men and women working for a wage, twice as many men as women being salaried (29.2% of men vs. 14.4% of women).

44. Given sub-Sahara Africa’s low level of industrialization, its share of manufacturing employment in total employment is relatively small (only 6.0% in 2010-2013).⁵⁴ As a result, sub-Saharan Africa’s share of the world industrial proletariat is (with 29.3 million workers representing 4% of the global total) relatively small. (See Table 3) However, the industrial working class plays a strategic and crucial role in Africa’s economy. Since the growth of Africa’s capitalism depends in great part on the production and export of oil, gold, diamonds and other raw materials, the miners, oil workers, transport workers, etc. have powerful leverage. Clearly, the fate of the African revolution will be decided if the black Bolsheviks on the continent succeed in building a revolutionary party among these sectors of the working class.

Table 2: Share of wage and salaried workers in Sub-Saharan Africa (% of total employment)⁵³

Wage and salaried workers		Employers		Own-account workers		Contributing family workers	
1996	2006	1996	2006	1996	2006	1996	2006
20.6	22.9	3.1	3.0	49.1	48.7	27.2	25.4

Table 3: Distribution of Labor Force in Industry in different Regions, 2013⁵⁵

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

Table 4: Employment by Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2013⁵⁶

	<i>Million</i>	<i>Share (in %)</i>
Agriculture	202.4	61.3%
Industry	29.3	8.9%
Service	98.6	29.9%

45. Overall most Africans are still employed in the agricultural sector as peasants. In 2013, 202.4 million (61.3% of total employment) workers in sub-Saharan Africa were officially employed in the agricultural sector; 29.3 million (8.9% of total employment) were employed in the industrial sector; and 98.6 million (29.9% of total employment) worked in the service sector (See Table 4). Most workers and peasants are working in extremely insecure conditions. According to official figures, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ (76.4%) of all laborers are working in conditions classified as “vulnerable employment” by the ILO. Here again women (85.1%) are much more effected by these conditions than men (69.1%).

46. Africa’s trade unions have already played an important role in the struggle against colonialism and against Apartheid in South Africa, and they continue to do so today. The heroic strike of the South African miners in Marikana in 2012 and the subsequent split of the metal workers’ NUMSA from the treacherous COSATU federation are the best know recent examples of the ongoing heroic tradition of the black working class in Africa.

47. The central problem of the trade unions remains, as is the case on other continents, the enormous level of corruption and bureaucratization of the union apparatus. The widespread, closely-woven bonds between the leadership of various trade unions and their respective national government, along with the various business activities of the union bureaucrats often rob the unions of any independence from the bourgeois state and capitalist class. The corrupt links of the South African NUM leadership with the Lonmin Corporation and the strong ties between the COSATU leadership and the ANC government made sure that the union bureaucrats not only failed to support the miner strikes but even actively worked for its suppression! Similarly, we saw in Zimbabwe that many corrupt union bureaucrats preferred close relations to Mugabe ZANU-PF than with their own workers, something which led to a split of the trade union federation in the late 1990s. Later, the former Zimbabwean trade union leader Morgan Tsvangirai created the MDC which became just another example of a cross-class coalition of trade unionists and sectors of the capitalist class.

48. Hence, the case of Zimbabwe demonstrates yet another danger: Specifically, when a union leadership correctly breaks with the regime but, instead of building an independent party of the working class, it creates a popular-front alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie aligned with imperialist powers! The struggle for the *independence of the working class* – as well as all other oppressed – from the bourgeoisie and its state constitutes one of the most important tasks for revolutionaries in Africa.

Rising Class Struggle

49. A crucial factor for the global class struggle in the coming years and decades will be the rapid growth of Africa’s population, already the second largest among the world’s continents. According to estimates of the United Nations “*more than half of global population growth between now and 2050 is expected to occur in Africa. (...) Consequently, of the additional 2.4 billion people projected to be added to the global population between 2015 and 2050, 1.3 billion will be added in Africa.*”⁵⁷ Consequently, Africa will contribute a growing share of global working class in the years ahead.

50. Given the fact that capitalism has entered an historic period of decay manifested in a depressed level of capital accumulation, it is literally impossible that economic growth, in general, and industrialization, in particular, will be able to accelerate enough in the years ahead to absorb the rapidly growing number of young people entering the labor market. As a result, while the number of employed workers may grow to a certain degree, the “*industrial reserve army*” (Marx), i.e., the share of unemployed and, in particular, youth without jobs, will increase even more so. As a result, the future augers an African political landscape characterized by a more disturbed social equilibrium than that of today, which will at one and the same time exacerbate conditions with the potential to lead to revolution, while fostering the adoption of counterrevolutionary measures promoted by the respective national bourgeoisies and their states. The emergence of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria is an example for such reactionary dangers.

51. Black Africa has seen a massive upswing of class struggles, first in the early 1990s and then again after the beginning of the Arab Revolution in early 2011. Consequently, we have witnessed a huge increase of worker strikes not only in South Africa but also in Nigeria, the most populous of the African states, with nearly 190 million residents. Similarly, there have been a number of democratic uprisings against reactionary regimes in Burundi, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, among other African states.⁵⁸ In Somalia, an ongoing armed guerilla struggle has been waged for years against a foreign occupation force trying to pacify the country in the interests of the imperialist powers. In fact, as Firoze Manji – the editor of the African *Pambazuka News* – has pointed out, nearly every African country has seen a popular uprising since 2011. He explains: “*Each of these uprisings has been fuelled by decades of dispossessions and pauperisation that accompanied the latest phase of capitalism, popularly referred to as ‘neoliberalism.’ They were fuelled also by reversals of the gains of independence that established universal education, access to health care, social welfare, water, power and a wide range of social infrastructure.*”⁵⁹ The growth of class struggles in Africa is reflected in the steep rise of the curve starting in the second half of 2010 in Figure 3 as well as in the change in the social unrest index for 2015-2016 depicted in Figure 4. Figure 5 shows the intensity of mass protests throughout the entire African continent for 2015.

Figure 3: Index of Public Protests in Africa, 1996-2015⁶⁰

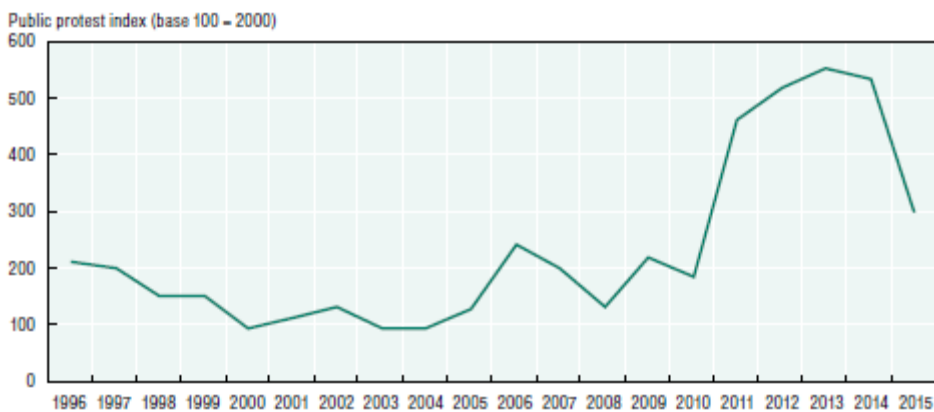


Figure 4: Global Index of Changes in Social Unrest, 2015-16⁶¹

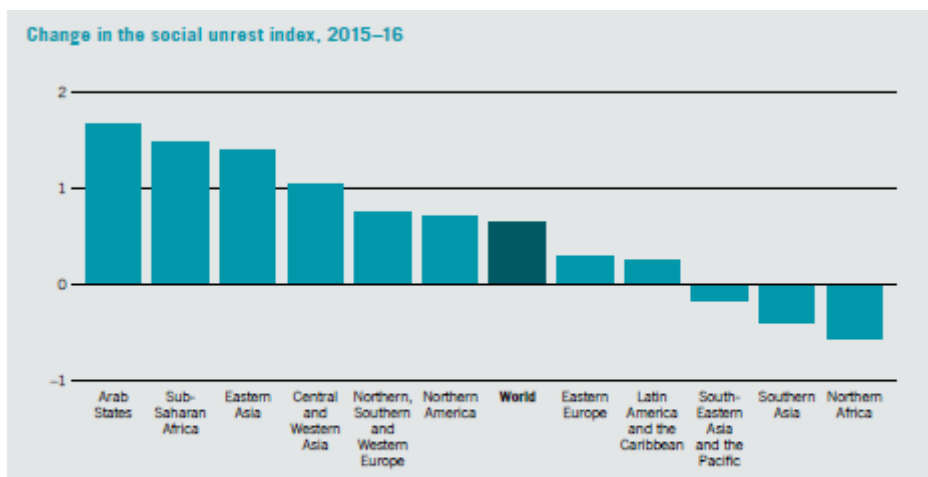


Figure 5: Intensity of Protests in Africa by location, 2015⁶²



Note: The size of the bubbles represents the intensity of public protests in 2015 (e.g. the number of protests weighted by the number of protesters and duration). See more details in the methodological annex of the report. Source: Authors' calculations based on news reports by journalists and press agencies across Africa, verified by AFP and Reuters.

Key Lessons for a Revolutionary Strategy in Black Africa

Imperialist Domination and Authoritarian Regimes Remain in Place despite Formal Changes

52. Africa's history is rich with lessons for revolutionaries. Most directly, it demonstrates that, in the age of imperialism, the formal political independence of a state is certainly not synonymous with notions of real independence. Imperialism and its monopolies keep the semi-colonial countries – like those in black Africa – in a perpetual state of dependence by controlling of their economies, by exploiting their raw materials, and by intractably tying them to the world market. In other words, ostensible formal independence is instead actually *disguised dependence* on the imperialists, because the formally independent semi-colonial counties invariably remain economically and thus politically subservient to the capitalistically stronger Great Powers and their monopoly capitalists.

53. The same insight also applies to the struggle against Apartheid. While formal Apartheid was abolished in South Africa in 1994, the oppression of the black majority population by the mostly white bourgeoisie continues until today. This oppression has only been modified *in appearance* by the incorporation of a small group of new Black capitalists and politicians into the South African power structure.

54. More generally, while the continent succeeding in ending its formal colonial occupation, subsequent to gaining their "independence" nearly all African states remain under the iron fist of open dictatorships or pseudo-democratic regimes of a strong Bonapartist character. Nevertheless, or rather because of this, the continent is shaken by popular uprisings against authoritarian and corrupt regimes. Even in those cases where formal democracy has been achieved, a *de facto* Bonapartist and militarized regime remains in place. These local authoritarian regimes are crucial for the preservation of the imperialist order. Without them, the imperialist Great Powers and monopolies would be unable to continue the oppression and super-exploitation of the continent.

55. Naturally, this does not make superfluous the general struggle for independence and national self-determination or democratic rights. Quite the contrary, the national and democratic struggles, directed against *all* imperialist powers and against the local dictatorships and pseudo-democratic regimes, continue to play a *central role* in the quest for African liberation.

Breaking the Capitalist Chain – The Program of Permanent Revolution

56. However, it is important not to limit this struggle to achieving formal independence, racial equality or formal democracy because, as we have seen, these purely formal changes in fact don't change the substance of national, racial and democratic oppression. Hence, complete liberation from imperialist oppression and super-exploitation is only possible if the working class – in alliance with the poor peasants and the urban poor – decisively *breaks the capitalist chain* and overthrows the bourgeois class, meaning both its foreign as well as domestic component. Only under such conditions will it be possible to establish true

democracy and self-determination.

57. From this it follows that the revolutionary class struggle – contrary to the myth spread by the Stalinists and bourgeois nationalists – must not strive for *mechanically separate stages of revolution* and must not be subordinated to any faction of the bourgeoisie, but rather must continue without interruption until the proletariat has conquered power and established its dictatorship. In the words of Trotsky: "*No matter what the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletariat vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution. (...) The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and, very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfillment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a permanent revolution.*"⁶³

58. Petty-bourgeois populists oppose the Marxist conception of the centrality of the working class as the leading force in the struggle for accomplishing both the democratic as well as the social tasks of the revolution. Therefore they feel comforted by the fact that the working class constitutes only a minority among the African people. However, their solace is historically and strategically wrong. The centrality of the working class in the revolutionary struggle is not, and has never been, founded upon its numerical majority. In the times of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, there were no or only very few countries with a proletarian majority. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks in Russia succeeded in achieving the first socialist revolution in humanity's history. In fact, in most African countries, the working class constitutes a higher share among the population today than it was the case in Russia in 1917. No, the central role of the proletariat in the revolutionary conception is based on (a) its key role as the producer of the capitalist value, without which profits and corporations could not exist and (b) its ability to produce a collective class consciousness (in contrast to the small property owners). Naturally, in order to transform this *potential* revolutionary role into an actual force for revolution, the working class needs to create a revolutionary party which can lead this struggle on the basis of a socialist program.

The Revolutionary Struggle against Imperialism

59. Therefore, the RCIT maintains that revolutionaries all over the world must commit themselves to continue their struggle against imperialism. While this struggle is of utmost importance for revolutionaries both in Africa as well as in the imperialist metropolises, this task manifests itself differently for revolutionaries in these two areas. In the imperialist states, like North America, the EU, Russia or China, the Bolshevik-Communists call for resistance against the imperialists' aggression in Africa and the super-exploitation of the workers and oppressed on that continent. They fight against "free trade" deals, against *Structural Adjustment Programs* as well as against the sell-out of Africa's economy and land to imperialist corpora-

tions, as these measures only intensify misery on the continent. Furthermore, they are not only opposed to the ruling class' adventures, but also give unconditional support to the resistance of the African people against the imperialist forces and their local allies, without lending political support to the leaderships of such struggles (e.g., in Mali or in Somalia). Likewise they oppose imperialist sanctions against African countries, like those against Zimbabwe.

60. Vital to conducting a struggle against imperialism, in fact an indispensable and essential ingredient in doing so, is identifying all imperialist states as such. Thus, the RCIT strongly opposes the myth spread by the Stalinists and various bourgeois nationalists, who deny the imperialist character of China and who advocate close collaboration with the Chinese CP and its state. China is as much an imperialist state as are North America, Western Europe or Japan and consequently has to be opposed in the same spirit by the African working class. We emphasize that those who deny or ignore the imperialist nature of China, inevitably end up on the side of the counterrevolution, as they – by the inner logic of their own position – have to side in one way or another with China. However, revolutionaries do not identify the Chinese working class and poor peasantry with the imperialist state. While we seek close collaboration and joint struggle with the Chinese workers and oppressed, we oppose any alliance with the rulers in Beijing.

61. Such a consistent anti-imperialism is based on the principles developed by the Communist International in the times of Lenin and Trotsky, and was stated by the Second Congress of the Comintern: *“The Socialist who aids directly or indirectly in perpetuating the privileged position of one nation at the expense of another, who accommodates himself to colonial slavery, who draws a line of distinction between races and colors in the matter of human rights, who helps the bourgeoisie of the metropolis to maintain its rule over the colonies instead of aiding the armed uprising of the colonies; the British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy – such a Socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of*

*the proletariat.”*⁶⁴ In the same spirit, Trotsky later explained the crucial difference between Bolshevism and pseudo-Marxist centrism: *„Nevertheless, Ledebour’s position even on this question does not leave the precincts of centrism. Ledebour demands that a battle be waged against colonial oppression; he is ready to vote in parliament against colonial credits; he is ready to take upon himself a fearless defense of the victims of a crushed colonial insurrection. But Ledebour will not participate in preparing a colonial insurrection. Such work he considers putschism, adventurism, Bolshevism. And therein is the whole gist of the matter. What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their ‘right’ to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism.”*⁶⁵

62. Furthermore, revolutionaries in the imperialist states totally oppose the imperialist chauvinism against migrants and refugees from the South. They fight against the racist immigration control and call for *open borders*. Likewise, revolutionaries stand for *full equality of migrants* in the imperialist countries (equal wages, full citizenship rights, equal status for the migrants’ native languages, etc.). Revolutionaries emphasize the necessity of jointly organizing with migrant workers and of the providing of practical support by the labor movements in the rich countries to their brothers and sisters in the South.

63. As part of this struggle, the Bolshevik-Communists in the imperialist countries fight against all forms of social-chauvinism inside the workers movement. They denounce those reformists like the ex-Stalinist PCF and Jean-Luc Mélenchon who supported the military intervention of French imperialism in Mali as well as the declaration of

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the state of emergency in autumn 2015. We also sharply oppose the German *Linkspartei* whose Stalinist leader, Sarah Wagenknecht, calls for more immigration control and more police on the streets to monitor refugees. Likewise, we denounce those centrists like the French LO who support the ban of the *hijab* for Muslim girls in schools, as well as those (like the NPA) who fail to call for support of the armed resistance against the French occupiers in Mali.

64. In Africa, revolutionaries oppose their "own" bourgeoisie too. However, here the Bolshevik-Communists attack the African bourgeoisie for its organic inability and unwillingness to fight against the old and new colonial powers. They denounce the African bourgeoisie because it plays a crucial role in keeping the workers and peasants of the continent under imperialist tutelage. While there can be tactical disagreements between the local black bourgeoisie and imperialism, the African capitalist class is deeply and inextricably linked to the Great Powers and their monopolies. The African bourgeoisie could not make *any* profits without their business with the imperialist corporations, without joint ventures, without loans from imperialist banks, without being able to ship their wealth to imperialist tax heavens, etc. Today the African bourgeoisie is attempting to vacillate between the US, the European and the Chinese imperialists in order to raise its own share of the surplus value which is squeezed out of the continents' working class and oppressed. Under no circumstances can a semi-colonial bourgeoisie – like that of Africa – play an independent role and lead a consistent struggle against the Great Powers. Even if there are tactical disagreements, which might lead to temporary conflicts between a semi-colonial bourgeoisie and one or another imperialist power, this will either lead to the subordination of that bourgeoisie to another Great Power (e.g. China) or, in the end, to its capitulation.

65. Therefore while revolutionaries in Africa support concrete measures taken against imperialist states (e.g., nationalizations of foreign enterprises, higher customs for imperialist import commodities, etc.) – even if such measures are adopted by African bourgeois governments for demagogic reasons – they expose the inconsistent and temporary nature of such bourgeois "anti-imperialism." Hence, the RCIT emphasizes the necessity for African workers and oppressed not to place any trust in the rhetoric of their bourgeoisie against one or more Great Powers, but to organize and fight independently.

66. Given the huge ongoing crisis of revolutionary leadership, the opposition to imperialist aggression and dictatorships, or even popular liberation struggles against these forms of oppression, is usually led by petty-bourgeois nationalist or Islamist and, in some cases, even bourgeois forces. Under such circumstances, the RCIT calls upon revolutionaries to apply the tactic of the *United Front* (including the *Anti-Imperialist United Front*) as it was developed by the Communist International in the times of Lenin and Trotsky. This tactic basically directs revolutionaries to attempt to undertake joint practical actions with non-revolutionary forces to achieve the broadest possible unity of the working class and its allied oppressed layers and classes in the struggle against imperialism and the bourgeoisie. At the same time as they undertake such joint actions, revolutionaries warn against any illusion in their petty-bourgeois and bourgeois allies, and call for the in-

dependent organization of the workers and oppressed.⁶⁶
67. Revolutionaries in Africa strongly oppose the rising chauvinism fostered by reactionary forces among the ruling class and the middle layers against migrants. Such counter-revolutionary hatred has even led, for example, to pogroms against Nigerian and Zimbabwe migrants in South Africa. Revolutionaries call for international unity among the workers and oppressed irrespective of their national and ethnic origin. However, a different issue is the problem of the white and Chinese settlers who have come as local representatives of imperialist powers. In such cases, revolutionaries call these settlers either to break with "their" colonial power and to support the African liberation struggle, or to leave the country. Likewise they defend the right of African states to block the influx of such settlers.

Imperialist Chauvinism and the Anti-Imperialist Patriotism of the Oppressed

68. Revolutionaries consistently warn the workers and oppressed against any form of bourgeois nationalism. However, the RCIT strongly differentiates between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressor. The nationalism of the imperialist oppressor (or the white or Chinese settlers) is totally reactionary and must be fought by revolutionaries by any means necessary. However, the nationalism of the oppressed contains a progressive element, as it expresses the just struggle against the foreign imperialist aggressor. In that sense revolutionaries support the patriotism of the oppressed insofar as it is directed against the oppressor. Hence, the RCIT calls to combine the *anti-imperialist patriotism of the oppressed* with a *proletarian internationalism*, i.e., the struggle for the international unity of the workers of all continents and for the support of workers and popular uprisings both inside as well as outside of Africa; for example: the Syrian Revolution, the struggle of the Yemeni people against the Saudi invasion, the resistance of the Brazilian workers and poor against the coup-regime of Temer, of the black and migrant workers and youth in the U.S., etc.

69. At the same time, the Bolshevik-Communists warn against the bourgeois nationalism or Pan-Africanism which the black bourgeoisie on the continent often utilizes to deflect public attention from its own failures. Lenin's statement – made at the time about the bourgeoisie of oppressed peoples in Europe – remains valid for all oppressed people today: "*The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilise the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers; in their internal policy they use these slogans for reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (for example, the Poles in Austria and Russia who come to terms with reactionaries for the oppression of the Jews and Ukrainians); in their foreign policy they strive to come to terms with one of the rival imperialist powers for the sake of implementing their predatory plans (the policy of the small Balkan states, etc.)*"⁶⁷

70. A concrete and actual example for international solidarity is the *Arab Revolution*. Starting in December 2010 in Tunisia, these revolutionary democratic uprisings of the workers and oppressed against the local dictatorships – which played a key role as oil producers for the Great Powers as well as local gendarmes for the imperialist regional order – rapidly spread to Egypt, Libya, Bah-

rain, Syria, Yemen and other countries. However, given the decisive intervention of the Great Powers and the old ruling class, the lack of a revolutionary leadership, the misleading or even treacherous role of various petty-bourgeois liberal and Islamist forces, this revolutionary process suffered – after some temporary victories – a series of important defeats. In Tunisia, Egypt and Libya the revolution – after successfully overthrowing the reactionary dictatorships of Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi – was derailed by bourgeois liberal and Islamist forces. In Egypt it suffered a strategic defeat when General al-Sisi launched a military coup on 3 July 2013. In Syria, the reactionary Assad clan started a genocidal civil war against its own population which until now has cost the lives of at least half a million people and which has transformed half of the population into refugees. Furthermore, the popular struggles for liberation are endangered by the accelerating imperialist aggression of Russia, the US and other imperialist powers and their local gendarmes (like the Gulf monarchies, the Iraqi government and Erdoğan) as well as the emergence of the counter-revolutionary Takfiri-Salafists of *Daesh*. Despite all these setbacks, the revolutionary struggle of the workers and oppressed continues – in particular in Syria and Yemen. Up to now, the Arab Revolution remains the most developed manifestation of the historic revolutionary period which started in 2008. It is impossible to be a revolutionary today without standing in unambiguous solidarity with the popular struggles against reactionary dictatorships and imperialist aggression. The solidarity of black African revolutionaries with the popular struggles in the Arab world can also play a crucial role in uniting the black African and the Arab peoples on the continent, and hence advance a truly Pan-African unity.⁶⁸

The Independence of the Working Class and the Struggle against the Popular Front

71. The precondition for the successful liberation struggle is the leading role of the working class. Without such a leading role, the leadership will automatically fall into the hands of bourgeois forces or petty-bourgeois forces which – incapable of playing an independent role in the long run – will sooner or later either lose power or willingly hand it over in an attempt to fuse with a sector of the bourgeoisie. This is the fundamental lesson of all revolutions since 1848 and, therefore, it constitutes a core principle of the Marxist doctrine.

72. A central tenet in the struggle for working class independence is opposition to any subordination of proletarian mass organizations – first and foremost the trade unions – to the bourgeois state or any faction of the bourgeoisie. The same holds true for all other mass organizations of poor peasants, women, youth and other oppressed. Such cross-class alliances constitute what Marxists call a “popular front” – a Stalinist conception which has invariably misled the proletariat and the oppressed and brought them to defeat. Such subordination can be implemented by open affiliation with a bourgeois government party (e.g., the South African ANC government, the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe), by constituting a political alliance with a sector of the bourgeoisie (e.g., the MDC of Morgan Tsvangirai in Zimbabwe) or with various imperialist states. In addition, such subordinating links with imperialist states can exist *indirectly* via the trade union bu-

reaucracy of, say, the US’s AFL-CIO, the EU’s ETUC or the Chinese state union federation (ACFTU). Revolutionaries oppose *all* such forms of political collaboration with the bourgeoisie and its state and fight inside the trade unions to cut such ties.

73. The struggle for working class independence is inextricably linked with the struggle against the trade union bureaucracy and for the broadening of the union’s base. The trade union’s subordination to the bourgeoisie always takes place via the bureaucratic apparatus whose appetite for posts and privileges leads them to the manger of the ruling class. Revolutionaries call for the building of a rank-and-file movement in opposition to the bureaucracy, one that can fight both for more democratic rights and a militant union policy, and which has the goal of liberating the union from the bureaucracy. Furthermore, revolutionaries work towards mobilizing and organizing those layers of the proletariat which are not already members of the union (which is usually the huge majority of the class). The same tactics should be applied in other mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed.

The Struggle for Pan-African Unity

74. As we have shown, Africa’s modern history is characterized by colonial occupation and imperialist plunder. The legacy of this has been the creation of artificial borders between the states and the fostering of tensions and divisions between ethnic tribes (e.g., the tensions between Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda, between the Xhosa and the Zulu in South Africa, or between the Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe). The ongoing imperialist policy of *divide et impera* as well as the reactionary policy of bourgeois African leaders looking for factional support along tribal lines has been a huge obstacle for the formation of modern nations. While this process is unevenly developed in different countries, it remains a crucial issue in black Africa, as is reflected by the fact that between 1,200 and 3,000 languages are spoken on the continent.

75. At the same time, the modern black liberation movement in Africa has always raised the issue of Pan-African unity. Naturally, revolutionaries support the desire to overcome tribal, ethnic and national divisions. Such a process of unification generally strives for the unification of the black people on the continent first. However, revolutionaries should always emphasize the need to respect the rights of *all* ethnic minorities (e.g., the Indian population in South Africa). More generally, the program of Pan-African unity should emphasize, on one hand, the voluntary and federal character of the union rather than any artificial centralization and, on the other hand, the importance of local self-government. Any centralist conception will inevitably provoke the feeling of discrimination among significant parts of the African peoples and create huge tensions, i.e., it would destroy the hope for Pan-African unity.

76. Africa cannot be united on the basis of capitalism. Such a capitalist unity – if possible at all – would inevitably lead to the discrimination and oppression of significant sectors of the oppressed peoples. Revolutionaries fight for the unification of Africa on the basis of a socialist program leading to the overthrow of the capitalist class and the creation of a federation of workers’ and poor peasants’ republics.

The Revolutionary World Party and its African Sections

77. The African working class suffers – like their brothers and sisters on all other continents – from the terrible crisis of leadership. The official leaderships are usually aligned the government or with bourgeois parties. Or they are led by petty-bourgeois populist forces – like Julius Malema’s EEF in South Africa – that have no strategy of working class struggle but rather focus on electoral campaigns and participation in the mechanism of bourgeois power.

78. The most important task of Marxists is the creation of revolutionary parties throughout all African countries as part of the struggle to build a revolutionary world party. Such a party should be based on a revolutionary program in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. It will have the task to organize the working class for the struggle for power, i.e., to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to build a workers’ and peasant republic.

79. There is no *national* road to build a world party, only an *international* road. Hence, a true revolutionary party as well as pre-party organization must exist as an *international formation from the beginning*. Without an international organization, national centeredness and finally nationalist deviations are unavoidable – as there is no consciousness without matter and no spirit without a body.

80. Likewise, a revolutionary party as well as pre-party organization must be based on the organizational methods of Bolshevism (*Democratic Centralism, cadre organization, etc.*). It should orient towards winning the best militants among the working class and the oppressed. Hence, we reject the orientation of many pseudo-Marxist organizations toward the middle class intelligentsia as well as the labor bureaucracy. Such work cannot be conducted by the means of propaganda alone, but has to be combined with exemplary work among the masses.⁶⁹

81. In most African countries, there is not only no revolutionary workers’ party but not even a reformist, i.e., a bourgeois, workers’ party. In those cases where such a party does exist (e.g., the South African CP) it has become so degenerated that they repel the workers’ vanguard, as we witnessed in the post-Marikana period. In such situations – when the working class has no independent party but at the same time does not yet understand the necessity to create a revolutionary party – revolutionaries advocate the *New Workers Party* tactic. This means that revolutionaries call upon the workers’ vanguard and mass organizations to found a new workers’ party (or “Labor Party”). They will have to fight against the danger of reformist degeneration of such a workers’ party. The fate of the Zimbabwean MDC in the early 2000s is a powerful example for this. To avoid this danger, revolutionaries will have to advocate a revolutionary program for the new workers’ party, i.e., a full transitional program as the party’s central principle. They will build a revolutionary tendency within such a party which will fight for the leadership of the party by exposing the betrayal of the reformists and the centrists in actual struggles. However, revolutionaries must not be ultimatumists. In other words, they must not enter such a labor party, present their program and, if rejected, immediately leave the party. Such a sectarian tactic would only be in the service of reformist forces trying to control such a party. Communists must attempt to win over rank

and file workers and youth and left-wing forces within the party by proposing concrete campaigns which help to advance the class struggle and the political development of the party in a militant, socialist direction. Of course, sooner or later the party will stand at a crossroads: either it will develop in a revolutionary direction and become a truly socialist party or it will degenerate bureaucratically and be transformed into a reformist force.

82. Surely, at this moment authentic revolutionaries cannot simply found a revolutionary party, as they are too small in numbers and not sufficiently rooted in the working class. But big accomplishments in the history of humanity are never gifts from heaven but are achieved by hard and systematic work. Forming an organized international unit of determined revolutionary workers and oppressed, based on a common program and a joint understanding of their practical and organizational methods is the most important prerequisite to build such a new, revolutionary International. It will be instrumental in the winning over of additional, broader sectors of the workers’ vanguard at a later date. This is the project the RCIT is dedicated to. We call African revolutionaries to join us in advancing this struggle!

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

FOOTNOTES

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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

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On the Syrian Revolution see e.g. The Syrian Revolution and the Assassination of the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, Joint Statement of the International Secretariat of the RCIT and Sınıf Savaşı (Section of the RCIT in Turkey), 21.12.2016; Michael Pröbsting: The Looming Kerry-Lavrov Agreement – A Great Power Conspiracy against the Syrian Revolution, 06.10.2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-kerry-lavrov/>; Joint Statement: Solidarity with Aleppo! Hands off Syria! 4 October 2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/joint-statement-aleppo/>; Syria: For an Independent Revolutionary Road! Down with the Bombing and Siege against Aleppo! Stop the Turkish Invasion and Occupation! No to the Imperialist Conspiracy against the Syrian Masses! Joint Statement of the RCIT and Sınıf Savaşı (Turkey), 25.09.2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/defend-aleppo/>; Yossi Schwartz: The Revolution in Syria won a Tactical Victory! Down with Assad the Butcher! 21 August 2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/aleppo-victory/>; The Imperialist Counterrevolution Threatens the Syrian Revolution! Down with the Great Powers' Wars! Solidarity with the Syrian Revolution against the Assad Dictatorship! For a Socialist Federation in the Maghreb and Mashreq! Joint Statement of the Agrupación de Lucha Socialista (ALS) and the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 07.12.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/imperialist-counterrevolution-syria/>; RCIT: Great Powers Aim to Liquidate the Syrian Revolution! Mobilize for International Solidarity with the Syrian Liberation Struggle against the Assad Dictatorship! Stop the US, Russian and French Air Strikes! No to Daesh/IS-Terrorism! 18.11.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/great-powers-syria/>; RCIT: Revolution against Russian Imperialism! Stop the US, UK and French Air Strikes! Smash the Assad Dictatorship! 9.10.2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/defend-syria-against-russia/>; RCIT: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Arab World: An Acid Test for Revolutionaries, 31 May 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-arab-revolution/>; RCIT: The Arab Revolution is a central touchstone for socialists! Open Letter to All Revolutionary Organizations and Activists, 4.10.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/open-letter-on-arab-revolution/>. For many more RCIT documents on the Arab Revolution see on our website: <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/>

69 See on this the RCIT's book by Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism, December 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>

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!

