

Chapter 14: Some final remarks on the Perspectives for Class Struggle

In this chapter we want to explain several conclusions of our analysis for the future developments in the relations between the imperialist masters and the semi-colonial world and for the class struggle. For us an analysis of the imperialist super-exploitation of the oppressed people is not an end in itself. It shall rather provide authentic Marxists with both the basis for the programmatic conclusions as well as a guideline for the revolutionary practice. Lenin liked to refer to Engels statement that Marxism “*is not a dogma, but a guide to action*”⁷⁷⁴ In fact, it cannot be otherwise: revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice are a *condicio sine qua non* for each other. Our Weltanschauung and the materialist dialectic as its method are characterized by “*the methodology of knowledge on the basis of action and the methodology of action on the basis of knowledge*” as the Soviet philosopher Ivan K. Luppel put it so well in his book on Lenin’s philosophy in 1928.⁷⁷⁵ However, given the character of our book, we have to limit ourselves to outline a number of perspectival factors as well as consequences for the Marxist programme and practice. For a more detailed examination we refer readers to the RCIT program and numerous other writings on revolutionary strategy and tactic which we have published over the last decades.

The possible developments in the relations between the imperialist masters and the semi-colonial world and for the class struggle cannot be understood correctly without viewing them in context with the general character of dynamics of capitalism in the present historic period. In the last twenty years I have defended an understanding of the world political and economic developments which focused on assessing the “true essence” of the totality of the class contradictions of capitalism in its development. Hence I opposed in the 1990s those comrades in our predecessor organization who thought at that time that we lived in a revolutionary period. I thought (and still think so) that the period after 1991 – when the political revolution in the Stalinist states were defeated and turned into democratic counter-revolutions and the restoration of capitalism – had a rather *transitional, non-revolutionary character*. In the year 2000 I argued that the contradictions of capitalism (over-accumulation of capital, tendency of the profit rate to fall, decline of US hegemony, etc.) are sharpening and therefore I predicted that at some point later in the 2000s they will lead to a

⁷⁷⁴ V.I. Lenin: Certain Features of the Historical Development of Marxism (1910); in: LCW 17, p. 39

⁷⁷⁵ Iwan K. Luppel: Lenin und die Philosophie. Zur Frage des Verhältnisses der Philosophie zur Revolution (1928), p. 115 (our translation). In another essay he also stated correctly that partisanship in science and partisanship in practice go necessarily hand in hand. (Iwan K. Luppel: Die materialistische Dialektik und die Arbeiterbewegung (1928); in: Unter dem Banner des Marxismus, II. Jahrgang (1928), p. 231)

“*revolutionary crisis period*”. After 9/11 in 2001, I came to the conclusion that a *pre-revolutionary period* has begun, characterized by the imperialist wars, massive neo-liberal attacks and corresponding class struggles. This period transformed into a *world historic revolutionary period* in 2008, when the Great Recession in 2008 led to an explosion of the accumulated contradictions. I have come to this assessment at the end of 2008 and defended this analysis since then together with my comrades in the RCIT.⁷⁷⁶

i) A world historic revolutionary period

Since the focus of this book is not a general discussion of the world situation I will only briefly outline here why we shall speak, in our opinion, of a *world historic revolutionary period*. We consider the present period as one of a historic crisis of the capitalist system. It is a period where the inner contradictions of this system are posed in such a sharp way that they unavoidably provoke pre-revolutionary and revolutionary, as well as counter-revolutionary situations. In other words, the aggravation of the class contradictions will pose the question of power – which class rules in the society – more often than in the past periods. The present period is therefore one in which the destruction of capitalism and the historical leap forward towards socialism is on the agenda.

When Trotsky characterized the dynamic of the class struggle in the inter-war period, he identified such abrupt changes as the fundament for the revolutionary character of the time he was living in:

“The revolutionary character of the epoch does not lie in that it permits of the

⁷⁷⁶ At an international leadership meeting of our predecessor organization, the LFI, in January 2009, the author of this book proposed the following resolution on the turn in the world situation:

„The new period is characterized by a historical crisis of capitalism. It is a period not of years but is has a more long-term character. It is a period where the “curve of capitalist development” (Trotsky) is pointing downwards and where the productive forces and the social development are rather retreating than advancing. It is a period where short-term booms are not excluded but where the crisis-ridden, depressive character of the world economy is the dominant aspect. World politics will be characterized by increasing instability and rivalry as a result of the imperialist hegemon – the United States of America – is not capable anymore of dominating the world. Faced with the crisis the imperialist bourgeoisie will launch huge attacks on the working class and the oppressed people and as a result we will see a sharp increase of class struggle. This is why this period will be marked by a series of wars, pre-revolutionary, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations. This is why the new period is a revolutionary period.

The working class enters this new period with a deep crisis of leadership. The official leaderships are very closely integrated into the bourgeois state apparatus and managements. The revolutionary forces on the other hand are extremely weak. But at the same time the working class and the oppressed will form new forces of struggle and new vanguards. Existing vanguard elements – under reformist leadership at the moment – will question their leaderships and come into conflict with them. Against this background the task of Marxist revolutionaries is to address these militant and vanguard elements by means of propaganda and agitation, by joining them in struggle and striving to give a lead, by putting demands on the existing leadership and applying the united front tactic. Our task is win the best elements of the vanguard for Bolshevism and to recruit them. The strategic task in the new period is to build the revolutionary party on a national and international scale.” Our position of the “*revolutionary period*” was narrowly defeated both at this meeting as well as at the LFI Congress in June 2010.

accomplishment of the revolution, that is, the seizure of power at every given moment. Its revolutionary character consists in profound and sharp fluctuations and abrupt and frequent transitions from an immediately revolutionary situation; in other words, such as enables the communist party to strive for power, to a victory of the Fascist or semi-Fascist counter-revolution, and from the latter to a provisional regime of the golden mean (the "Left bloc," the inclusion of the social democracy into the coalition, the passage of power to the party of MacDonald, and so forth), immediately thereafter to force the antagonisms to a head again and acutely raise the question of power." ⁷⁷⁷

In this period the dominant tendency of the productive forces can be characterized as a "curve of decline" – to use a category from Trotsky's concept of "curves of capitalist development" which he elaborated in a thoughtful article in 1923. ⁷⁷⁸ In chapter 3 we have already demonstrated how in the past decades the crisis of the capitalist world economy has deepened and led to a stagnation of the productive forces in the 2000s.

This, of course, does not mean that the economy is in decline in all parts of the world. That would be an un-dialectical way of thinking. In fact, the law of uneven and combined development is valid also in this field. We have seen significant growth in parts of the semi-colonial world and even feverish growth as China. However, this was the result of the stagnating capital accumulation process in the dominant parts of the world economy – the imperialist centers – which led monopoly capital to shift investment towards the semi-colonial world. In the case of China one has to add, that here the primitive accumulation of capital after the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s also played a very significant role – as we have outlined in chapter 10.

Such an uneven and combined development of the world economy is in no way exceptional but rather characteristic in the epochs of mankind history. In his book on imperialism, Lenin observed a similar unevenness in his time:

"However strong the process of levelling the world, of levelling the economic and living conditions in different countries, may have been in the past decades as a result of the pressure of large-scale industry, exchange and finance capital, considerable differences still remain; and among the six countries mentioned we see, firstly, young capitalist countries (America, Germany, Japan) whose progress has been extraordinarily rapid; secondly, countries with an old capitalist development (France and Great Britain), whose progress lately has been much slower than that of the previously mentioned countries, and thirdly, a country most backward economically (Russia), where modern capitalist imperialism is enmeshed, so to speak, in a particularly close network of pre-capitalist relations." ⁷⁷⁹

However, unevenness does not mean indetermination in the general direction of capitalist contradictions' unfolding. In fact, it is a general weakness which one

⁷⁷⁷ Leon Trotsky: The Third International After Lenin, New York 1970, pp. 81-82

⁷⁷⁸ Leon Trotsky: The capitalist curve of development (1923), in: Leon Trotsky: Problems of Everyday Life, New York, 1994, pp. 273-280

⁷⁷⁹ V. I. Lenin: Imperialism. The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916); in: LCW Vol. 22, p. 259

can observe many times amongst socialist intellectuals, that the unevenness in a given process makes them blind to recognize its direction. They are fearful to draw clear conclusion which imply consequences and prefer to rather describe a contradiction on a formal, superficial way (*"On one hand, there is...., one the other hand, there is ..."*). They forget, that – as Abram Deborin put it nicely – *"the Marxist must, above all, assess the general direction of the development."*⁷⁸⁰

So, in all the unevenness of the capitalist development, it is clearly the imperialist economies and states which – in the epoch of imperialism – dominate and give the general economic development its character. Similarly, in a given society it is the ruling class and not the oppressed which determine the general line of development. This was clearly demonstrated in the last years. It is the crisis and depression in the old imperialist centers which cause world recessions and stock market slumps and it is not the growth dynamic of semi-colonial countries or emerging imperialist China which put their mark on the world economy.

When we speak of the decline of humanity's productive forces, we don't mean only the development of economic output. We also have in mind the social regression which we see in all parts of the world: increasing sectors of the population are impoverished or are even permanently excluded from regular participation in economic production. There are parts of the semi-colonial world where we even see a return to barbaric conditions. Already now, about 100,000 people die of hunger every day! One has to add to all these symptoms of decline the horrendous destruction of the natural resources and environment in which humanity is living. This destruction leads to the widely known phenomena of climate change, increasing numbers of "natural" disasters, etc.⁷⁸¹

Various critiques of the US Empire have compared its decline with the final period of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth century. While this analogy is certainly valid, one must understand it in a broader context: it is the final decline of the whole capitalist world system which is similar to the Roman Empire!

For Marxists, this is no unexpected development. In fact, it is the result of the unfolding of the historic laws of capitalism and their tendency towards breakdown, as Karl Marx pointed out repeatedly. Thus he wrote in *Capital*:

"This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralization of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralization, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in

⁷⁸⁰ Abram Deborin: Lenin als revolutionärer Dialektiker (1925); in: Unter dem Banner des Marxismus, 1. Jahrgang (1925-26), p. 224 (our translation)

⁷⁸¹ Without sharing all the political positions of the authors, we want to refer readers to the website *Climate & Capitalism*, <http://climateandcapitalism.com>, as a useful source for information's on the destructive results of capitalism for environment.

common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as means of production of combined, socialized labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.”⁷⁸²

As it is well known, this historic prognosis was denied by Bernstein and later most social democratic theoreticians. Similarly we observed in the past decades a whole army of petty-bourgeois “Marxist” academics who claimed to have discovered new laws which allegedly showed that capitalism does not tend to breakdown. Various “Marxist” academics like Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris “improved” Marx’s law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and argued that there is no long-term decline of the rate of profit. Hence they prefer to speak about “*the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and its countervailing tendencies*”.

Just a few years ago, in 2005/06, the author of this book had to argue against a faction inside our predecessor organization which claimed that the world economy has entered a long wave of upswing, which was supposed to last till 2015. They accused the author of this book and other supporters of our position as “catastrophists”.⁷⁸³ History has rarely been crueller to a grouping’s prediction when in 2007/08 the world economy faced its worst recession since 1929.

On a theoretical level, the mistakes of these revisionist critiques lie in the following. On a theoretical level, the mistakes of these revisionist critiques lie in the following. First, it is not the Marxist view that there is a steadily linear decline. This is neither the case with the tendency of the profit rate to fall nor with capitalism’s general decline. There are – as Marx has pointed out (see

⁷⁸² Karl Marx: Kapital Band I, MEW 23, pp. 790-791; in English: Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. I; Chapter 32

⁷⁸³ This faction later became the British group „*Permanent Revolution*“. It gave up any attempt to international party-building and shortly afterwards party-building at all. It is now in a process of dissolving into a libertarian pseudo-Marxist network called *Anticapitalist Initiative*. Their views on the world economy and their polemics against us and others can be found e.g. at Keith Harvey: Myth or reality: debating long waves: Review of “*Richard Brenner and Michael Pröbsting: The Credit Crunch – a Marxist analysis*” (2008), <http://www.permanentrevolution.net/entry/2452>; Bill Jefferies: The SWP’s economics: A distorted picture of British and global capitalism (2007), <http://www.permanentrevolution.net/files/pr5/41-47%20Harman.pdf>; Bill Jefferies: Capitalism’s long upturn (2006), <http://www.permanentrevolution.net/files/pr2/36-45%20Economy.pdf>; Bill J: Perspectives and Period - a reply to Dave S (June 2006), <http://www.permanentrevolution.net/entry/334>

our reference to this at the beginning of chapter 5) – several counter-veiling tendencies. The point is however, that these counter-veiling measures can only halt or slow this decline temporarily. Why? Because of the inner unfolding of capital accumulation. As Marx wrote: *“The rate of profit does not sink because the labourer is exploited any less, but because generally less labour is employed in proportion to the employed capital.”*⁷⁸⁴

Secondly, Marxists should not even exclude the theoretical possibility that capitalism could reverse – under exceptional conditions and only for a limited period – its historic tendency to decline. Indeed this has happened in the period of the “Long Boom” in the 1950s and 1960s. But one has to see that this period was an *exception* in the imperialist epoch, a result of extraordinary historic circumstances (massive capital destruction in two World Wars before, fascism, historic defeats of the working class, establishment of the US as the absolute hegemon in the imperialist camp, the strengthening of the Stalinist bureaucracy which agreed with imperialism on building a world order – the Yalta agreement – and betrayed the revolutions which occurred in 1943-45 and after.) It was not a “long wave of upswing” which is supposed to alternate regularly with a “long waves of downturn”.⁷⁸⁵

To this one has to add the enormous differences between the conditions at that time and today. Several years ago I discussed this question and came to the conclusion that a repetition of such a long period of upswing is unlikely for the following reasons:

“Does this mean that the productive forces stagnate constantly in the imperialist epoch? No, that would be an undialectical, schematic interpretation. Imperialism is an epoch of fierce clashes of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. At a certain point, such clashes necessarily and inescapably lead to open explosions like wars and revolutions. Should, however, the leadership of the working class not be in a condition to exploit this period of acute crises of monopoly capitalism to bring about a victorious socialist revolution, the possibility opens up for the bourgeoisie to force back the contradictions, to keep them in check for a limited period of time. But the precondition for this are:

** that the ruling class inflicts historic defeats on the working class and by this lowers the price of the commodity labour to a qualitative lower level,*

** that a huge mass of superfluous capital is destroyed (via wars or similar catastrophes)*
and

** that a new capitalist world order under the undisputed hegemony of an imperialist power is formed (in the 19th century this was Britain, after 1945 it was the USA)*

The post-war boom of 1948 – 1973 was such a period. During this time, the productive forces by no means stagnated, rather there was a tremendous upswing. Technological

⁷⁸⁴ Karl Marx: Das Kapital III, MEW 25, p. 256; in English: Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. III; Chapter 15

⁷⁸⁵ A useful critique of the Long Wave-Theory can be read in Richard Brenner: Globalization and the Myth of the New Long Wave, in: Richard Brenner, Michael Pröbsting, Keith Spencer: The Credit Crunch - A Marxist Analysis (2008), <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/globalisation-and-myth-new-long-wave>

innovations led to overall social progress and the living standards of the majority of the working class were raised.

But a period like that was exceptional in the imperialist epoch. It would represent a break with the Marxist method, to regard such a period not as an exception but as normal, as one of the two possibilities — first an upturn, then a downturn — as long wave theory does.

Imperialism, then, is an epoch in which capitalist decline, stagnation of the productive forces represents the 'essence' — the general essence so to say — of the epoch. But this generality is not permanent (continuous) and not concretely of the same form or intensity. Various political factors — above all the treachery of the official leadership of the labour movement — can give the bourgeoisie a breathing space, a stay of execution for capitalism. After the ruling class obtained such a postponement in the post-war period, world capitalism re-entered a period of crisis at the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s, when the contradictions intensified and the tendency to stagnation reasserted itself.

Could we experience another long boom in the future, similar to that in the 1950s and 1960s? From a Marxist point of view, it would be wrong to exclude such a possibility. But it would be equally wrong to envisage such a possibility as a simple repetition of the events that led to this upturn. The monopoly capitalism of the 21st century is not the same as that of the 50s and 60s. The productive forces have developed enormously since then, and with them also the destructive forces. A world war today would have immeasurably worse consequences for humanity than World War II (including the wiping out of part of humanity and the destruction of civilization). The fine interconnection of the globalized world economy means that any serious regional upset — whether economic, political or military — would engulf the whole planet. The likelihood of even a temporary lessening of imperialist contradictions and a new long upturn is therefore much less than during the middle of the 20th century. The alternative, "socialism or barbarism", on the other hand, arises sharper than ever in the 21st century."⁷⁸⁶

The more imperialism decays in its senility, the more explosive its contradictions become. The preconditions for a temporary escape from its decline and another boom period would be an unprecedented massive destruction of capital, huge historic defeats for the working class and a war between the Great Powers so that a leading imperialist power could stabilize the world situation as an absolute hegemon. In other words, capitalism would require such *barbaric methods* that it would put the survival of humanity in question.

We should add to this that in the 1940s the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy advanced in Eastern Europe and China. In addition, Stalinism possessed a leading role in the workers movement in numerous countries. As a result it could play a decisive counter-revolutionary role in containing the revolutionary

⁷⁸⁶ Michael Pröbsting: Imperialism-Theory and World Economy today. An examination of the capitalist world economy in the light of the Marxist Imperialism-Theory (2007). This was a section of the draft for our book "*Credit Crunch – a Marxist analysis*" (see above) which was unfortunately deleted from the published version because the majority of the leadership in our predecessor organization opposed our position due to their theoretical vacillations.

class struggle in the phase after World War II.⁷⁸⁷ Stalinism however does not possess any similar influence today and there is no alternative strong reformist force inside the working class with a state power behind it.

And thirdly, Marxists don't say that Socialism will inevitably follow capitalism. As Rosa Luxemburg formulated it so famously in her draft program for the *Spartacus League*, humanity is rather faced with the alternative "*Socialism or Barbarism*".⁷⁸⁸ It is only if the working class consciously intervenes with a revolutionary mass party at its leadership, that socialism can replace capitalism.

Trotsky rejected the revisionist theories of a possible softening of capitalisms' contradictions and defended the Marxist theory of breakdown. His answer, written in 1939 as part of an introduction to Otto Rühle's popular summary of Marx's *Capital*, is still valid:

"The minds and hearts of middle class intellectuals and trade-union bureaucrats were almost completely enthralled by the achievements of capitalism between the time of Marx's death and the outbreak of the World War. The idea of gradual progress ("evolution") seemed to have been made secure for all time, while the idea of revolution was regarded as a mere relic of barbarism. Marx's prognosis about the mounting concentration of capital, about the aggravation of class contradictions, about the deepening of crises, and about the catastrophic collapse of capitalism was not amended by partly correcting it and making it more precise, but was countered with the qualitatively contrary prognosis about the more balanced distribution of the national income, about the softening of class contradictions and about the gradual reformation of capitalist society. Jean Jaurès, the most gifted of the social-democrats of that classic epoch, hoped gradually to fill political democracy with social content. In that lay the essence of reformism. Such was the alternative prognosis. What is left of it?"

*The life of monopolistic capitalism in our time is a chain of crises. Each crisis is a catastrophe. The need of salvation from these partial catastrophes by means of tariff walls, inflation, increase of government spending and debts lays the ground for additional, deeper and more widespread crises. The struggle for markets, for raw material, for colonies makes military catastrophes unavoidable. All in all, they prepare revolutionary catastrophes. Truly, it is not easy to agree with Sombart that aging capitalism becomes increasingly "calm, sedate and reasonable." It would be more apt to say that it is losing its last vestiges of reason. In any event, there is no doubt that the "theory of collapse" has triumphed over the theory of peaceful development."*⁷⁸⁹

What we have seen in the past years was exactly an unfolding of the chain of inner contradictions and their contradictions. The ruling class tried to contain

⁷⁸⁷ See on this our book on Stalinism: Workers Power: The Degenerated Revolution. The origins and nature of the Stalinist states, London 1982

⁷⁸⁸ Rosa Luxemburg: Was will der Spartakusbund? (1918), in: Gesammelte Werke, Band 4, p. 441; in English: What Does the Spartacus League Want? (1918), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/12/14.htm>

⁷⁸⁹ Leo Trotzki: Marximus in unserer Zeit (1939), Wien 1987, pp. 10-11; in English: Leon Trotsky: Marxism In Our Time, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/04/marxism.htm>

their crisis by substantially increasing the exploitation of the working class and the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. They massively raised private and public debt level. The US – as the world hegemon – tried to stop its decline by waging a wave of imperialist wars after 9/11 in 2001. As a result the contradictions of today's world could be whitewashed by bloating the contradictions of tomorrow's world. The rate of profit could superficially be stabilised for some time. But at some point all this artificial stabilisation had to explode inevitably as we could see in 2008/09.⁷⁹⁰

In fact, the imperialist bourgeoisie waged a massive offensive for more than three decades. Since the beginning of the 1980s they launched huge attacks which have been named “neoliberalism” and “globalization”. We have shown in this book how successful they were in their efforts to raise the surplus value from the working class. But these measures could only temporarily slow capitalisms' inherent tendency towards stagnation and decline since more fundamental economic laws proved to be stronger (e.g. growing organic composition of capital, increasing contradictions between national states and global acting productive forces etc.). And at the same time, the same measures, which temporarily slowed capitalisms' decline, prepared inevitable new economic, political and social contradictions and explosions.

We therefore see a capitalist world economy which is eroded by the over-accumulation of capital and the tendency of the profit rate to fall. It is not surprising that leading strategists of the imperialist bourgeoisie are themselves pessimistic about their prospects despite their usual professional optimism. Hence the 2012 report of the *National Intelligence Council* – the think tank of the US secret services – about the Global Trends till 2030, predicts a gloomy picture:

*“Most of the leading Western countries could therefore suffer the consequences of low economic growth that lasts longer than a decade.”*⁷⁹¹

The huge crisis of private and public debt is just one sharp expression of it. The desperate need to reduce the huge level of debt will constantly erode the economic and social stability of the imperialist societies. However, according to McKinsey Global Institute, deleveraging has not even begun in the majority of imperialist states.

⁷⁹⁰ We have discussed the development and inner contradictions of world capitalism in Michael Pröbsting: *Vor einem neuen Wirtschaftsaufschwung? Thesen zum marxistischen Konzept des Zyklus, dem Verhältnis des gegenwärtigen Zyklus zur Periode der Globalisierung sowie den Aussichten und Widersprüchen der künftigen Entwicklung der Weltwirtschaft* (2010), in: *Revolutionärer Marxismus* 41, Februar 2010, <http://www.arbeitermacht.de/rm/rm41/wirtschaftsaufschwung.htm>; Michael Pröbsting: *World economy – heading to a new upswing?* (2009), in: *Fifth International Vol 3, No. 3*, <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/world-economy-%E2%80%93-heading-new-upswing>; Michael Pröbsting: *Imperialismus, Globalisierung und der Niedergang des Kapitalismus* (2009), in: *Revolutionärer Marxismus* 39, <http://www.arbeitermacht.de/rm/rm39/rm39imperialismus.htm>; Michael Pröbsting: *Imperialism and the Decline of Capitalism* (2008), <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/imperialism-and-decline-capitalism>

⁷⁹¹ National Intelligence Council: *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (2012), p. 40

*“Across the ten largest economies, private-sector debt—defined as the debt of households, corporations, and financial institutions—has fallen by \$1.5 trillion, or 2 percent, from the peak in 2008. But, as is typical in the aftermath of financial crises, government debt has continued to grow—by \$7.8 trillion, or 26 percent, since 2008. As a result, the total debt of each of these countries has increased and the ratio of overall debt to GDP has risen in seven of the ten. Debt ratios have fallen in only three of these nations: the United States, South Korea, and Australia”*⁷⁹²

The regions with more growth dynamic – like China and others – cannot decisively alter the *“curve of capitalist decline”* because their weight in the world economy is not sufficient for this. In addition, China’s period of rapid growth – based on a vigorous primitive accumulation of capital – is already developing its own inner contradictions which will sooner or later explode and open a revolutionary crisis.

US imperialism is inexorably in decline as the US leading strategists themselves are aware: *“The United States’ relative economic decline vis-à-vis the rising states is inevitable and already occurring, but its future role in the international system is much harder to assess. (...) Although the US will remain the leading military power in 2030, the gap with others will diminish and its ability to depend on its historic alliance partnerships will diminish even further.”*⁷⁹³

At the same time there is no alternative imperialist power which could replace the United States as a world hegemon in order to stabilize the world political situation. The European Union is neither strong nor united enough. Japan is stuck in a stagnation period since two decades. China is growing but it is an emerging imperialism, far away from ruling the world. In fact, there will be an increasing rivalry of the imperialist powers with no one strong enough to subjugate the other powers. Militarism and armament are the inevitable consequences of this as well as more and more military interventions in foreign countries. To quote again the US National Intelligence Council:

*“Nevertheless, we and other experts believe that the risks of interstate conflict are increasing owing to changes in the international system. The underpinnings of the current post-Cold War equilibrium are beginning to shift. If the United States is unwilling or less able to serve as a global security provider by 2030, the world will be less stable. If the international system becomes more fragmented and existing forms of cooperation are no longer as seen as advantageous to many of the key global players, the potential for competition and conflict also will increase. In addition, the chances are growing that regional conflicts—particularly in the Middle East and South Asia—will spill over and ignite a wider conflagration.”*⁷⁹⁴

What the bourgeois strategists do not foresee today is the fact that the increasing rivalry between the Great Powers will and must intensify in the

⁷⁹² McKinsey Global Institute: Debt and deleveraging: Uneven progress on the path to growth (2012), p. 12

⁷⁹³ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. 99

⁷⁹⁴ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. 61

coming period of economic decline, political instability and social crisis. They only touch the subject and are unconscious of the consequences of their own insights:

*“The key question is whether the divergences and increased volatility will result in a global breakdown and collapse or whether the development of multiple growth centers will lead to resiliency. The absence of a clear hegemonic economic power could add to the volatility. Some experts have compared the relative decline in the economic weight of the US to the late 19th century when economic dominance by one player – Britain – receded into multipolarity.”*⁷⁹⁵

The bourgeois strategists don't dare to think about the historic development of Britain's decline. However, as we know, Britain's loss of absolute hegemony beginning in the late 19th century opened a growing rivalry which led to World War I in 1914. Similarly today, World War III with unspeakable consequences for humanity is nearly unavoidable as long as the working class does not overthrow the bourgeoisie in time.

Given this background of increasing decline, the ruling classes are forced to attack the working class and the oppressed people sharper and sharper and, for the same reason, to increase its rivalry against each other. Political destabilization of the world situation and more and more pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations, as well as counter-revolutionary threats, are the results. This is why we speak about a world historic revolutionary period, a period of *“actuality of the revolution”* – to borrow a famous phrase of the Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács.⁷⁹⁶

In their strategy papers – written for their inner circles – the ruling class speaks quite openly about the *“actuality of the revolution”*. The European Union Institute for Security Studies for example states in a major strategy study that the world has become *“a global village, but it is a village on the verge of revolution”*:

*“The defining political fault lines generating major violent confrontations are shifting away from yesterday's horizontal peer competition between elite states and towards the vertical tensions between different global socioeconomic strata. Technology is shrinking the world into a global village, but it is a village on the verge of revolution. While we have an increasingly integrated elite community, we also face increasingly explosive tensions from the poorer strata below.”*⁷⁹⁷

And it is also not accidental that the *National Intelligence Council* strategists open their latest report with the following statement which compares the present period with the period of the French Revolution of 1789:

“The backdrop for ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ was the French Revolution and dawn of the Industrial Age. We are living through a similar transformative period in which the

⁷⁹⁵ National Intelligence Council: *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (2012), p. vi

⁷⁹⁶ Georg Lukács: *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought* (1924), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/1924/lenin/index.htm>

⁷⁹⁷ Tomas Ries: *The globalising security environment and the EU*, in: *European Union Institute for Security Studies: What ambitions for European defence in 2020?* (2009), pp. 67-68

*breadth and scope of possible developments—both good and bad—are equal to if not greater than the aftermath of the political and economic revolutions of the late 18th century.”*⁷⁹⁸

ii) The present historic period and its consequences for the semi-colonial world

We have shown in the previous chapters of this book that the decline of capitalism inevitably pushes monopoly capital and their imperialist states to intensify super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world, to import migrants as cheap labor forces in growing numbers and to increase their political and military interventions. We have shown that both capitalist value production as well as the central weight of the world working class has shifted to the South. Since these developments are the result of the unfolding of the inner contradictions of capitalism in its late imperialist age, we have every reason to assume that these tendencies will continue and intensify.

The Shift to the South

Capitalist value production and the working class will grow in the foreseeable future rather in the South than in the North. According to a recent Hays/Oxford Economics Report, the global labor force is expected to grow by 932 million workers between 2010 and 2030. While the labor force in the old imperialist countries will stagnate, all of the labor force growth is expected to come from the South. Interestingly, China will not play a significant role in this growth but rather it will be in other countries of the South. The ten countries, in which the biggest increase of workers is forecasted, are India (up 241 million), Pakistan (up 62 million), Nigeria (up 54 million), Bangladesh and Ethiopia (each up 35 million), Indonesia (up 32 million), Congo (up 29 million), Philippines (up 24 million), Egypt (up 21 million) and Tanzania (up 20 million).⁷⁹⁹

This means that the central weight of the working class will be shifted even more to the South than it already is. A World Bank Report from 2007 forecasts that by 2030 out of a global labor force of 4.144 millions, 3.684 millions (or 88.9%) will work in the South and only 459 million (or 11.1%) in the old imperialist countries.⁸⁰⁰ In other words, 9/10 of the global labor force will be located outside of the old imperialist countries.

As we already suggested earlier, the labor aristocracy will only form a small part amongst the world working class. According to the same World Bank Report, in 2030 about 85.6% of the global labor forces are forecasted to be unskilled. If

⁷⁹⁸ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. 1

⁷⁹⁹ Hays/Oxford Economics: Creating Jobs in a Global Economy 2011-2030: The Hays/Oxford Economics global report (2011), p. 5

⁸⁰⁰ World Bank: Global Economic Prospects 2007. Managing the Next Wave of Globalization, p. 110

we bear in mind that the labor aristocracy is again only a minority amongst the skilled workers, it becomes obvious that this bribed, privileged layer will be only a very small minority amongst the future proletariat. However, as long as the revolutionary workers vanguard does not successfully push back the bureaucracy and the aristocratic elements, the labor aristocracy will still have substantial influence inside the official workers movement.

As a result from this growth of value producers in the South, capitalist value production will shift to the South too. We do not only think about China, but also other countries like India, Brazil and those capitalist semi-colonies which Goldman Sachs calls the “*Next Eleven*”: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, The Philippines, South Korea, Turkey, and Vietnam.

⁸⁰¹ The US National Intelligence Council forecast is gloomy:

“The diffusion of power among countries will have a dramatic impact by 2030. Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based upon GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment. China alone will probably have the largest economy, surpassing that of the United States a few years before 2030. In a tectonic shift, the health of the global economy increasingly will be linked to how well the developing world does — more so than the traditional West. In addition to China, India, and Brazil, regional players such as Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Turkey will become especially important to the global economy. Meanwhile, the economies of Europe, Japan, and Russia are likely to continue their slow relative declines.” ⁸⁰²

Given this further shift of capitalist value producers and value production to the South, the imperialist monopolies – the multinational corporations, the financial institutions, etc. – will become even more dependent on appropriating a substantial share of surplus from the semi-colonial world. In other words, to stem the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, the monopolies *must* increase the super-exploitation of the South.

The shift to Asia

The single most important world’s region which will gain in importance is Asia. This is not only for the obvious fact that it is the most populous continent but also because it is the continent with the most significant growth in capitalist value production as well as labor forces. A reflection of this development is the fact that 25% of the world’s crude and half the world’s merchant tonnage currently pass through the waters of the South China Sea alone. ⁸⁰³ Additionally, it is the continent which saw the emergence of a new imperialist power – China.

⁸⁰¹ See on this e.g. Goldman Sachs: BRICs and Beyond (2007), pp. 129-182

⁸⁰² National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. iv

⁸⁰³ Peter Lee: Maybe that war with China isn’t so far off, Asia Times Online 22.12.2011, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/ML22Ad05.html>

Therefore, the old imperialist powers all increasingly focus their attention to strengthen their influence in Asia and to counter the rise of China.⁸⁰⁴ Japanese imperialism will increase its military expenditures in the future in order to stop China's growth as a Power and to defeat relatively independent states like North Korea.

The leaders of US imperialism are absolutely conscious of this shift to Asia. They speak about "*our strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific region*" (as former foreign secretary Hillary Clinton formulated it)⁸⁰⁵ and its consequences for the still biggest Great Power. William J. Burns, US Deputy Secretary of State, expressed the focus of US foreign policy explicitly: "*To sum up, in order to lead in the 21st century, America must think strategically as the world's economic and strategic center of gravity shifts inexorably toward the Pacific.*"⁸⁰⁶

The US leaders are quite open about the close relationship of economic interests, political influence and military policy. In a strategy speech, Hillary Clinton, stated: "*Our economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia. Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, countering the proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region's key players.*"⁸⁰⁷

In chapter 10 on China we have outlined in more detail the numerous conflicts in East Asia which will lead to wars sooner or later. The imperialist leaders are aware that such conflicts will have massive consequences for the whole world economy: "*A conflict-ridden East Asia would constitute a key global threat and cause large-scale damage to the global economy.*"⁸⁰⁸

Asia will also play a key role for the world proletariat and its struggle for liberation. 60% of the global industrial proletariat is living in this continent. It creates an increasing share of the global capitalist value, but faces super-exploitation and political oppression at the same time. As we have shown in chapter 10, China's working class is already rebelling against the Stalinist-capitalist dictatorship. Others will follow like in Vietnam. The workers, peasants and poor in Thailand have already shown in the form of the Red-Shirt movement that – despite the bourgeois leadership – they are prepared to fight against the reactionary monarchy of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. In India, the

⁸⁰⁴ See e.g. Michael Klare: US returns in strength to the Pacific. America's maritime power, Le Monde diplomatique, March 2012, <http://mondediplo.com/2012/03/06uspacific>

⁸⁰⁵ Hillary Clinton (Deputy Secretary of State): America's Pacific Century. The future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action, Foreign Policy November 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century

⁸⁰⁶ William J. Burns (Deputy Secretary of State): Asia, the Americas, and U.S. Strategy for a New Century. Remarks at World Affairs Councils of America National Conference, Washington, DC, November 4, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2011/176667.htm>

⁸⁰⁷ Hillary Clinton: America's Pacific Century

⁸⁰⁸ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. 62

increasing strength of the working class has led in February 2012 – as a sign of future things to come – to the biggest general strike in history with more than 100 million workers.

Add to this the poor peasant rebellion in India led by Maoists as well as the mass protests in Nepal. Finally, the region witnesses a growing number of anti-imperialist struggles as seen in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as struggles of oppressed nations like in Balochistan, Kashmir, in the South of Thailand, Tibet and East-Turkestan, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the various national minorities in India, etc.

The second important region – and next to East and South Asia – is the Middle East and North Africa. The main reasons are, on one hand, that this region is home to 3/5 of the world-wide oil reserves and more than 2/5 of the world-wide gas reserves. Additionally, 4 of the 6 biggest oil exporters are from this region. Naturally neither the region's reserves nor the imperialists desire to get access to them will change in the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, the region is also home to a growing and young proletariat which has started the Arab Revolution in the spring of 2011.⁸⁰⁹ Despite the unfinished character of the revolution and the various setbacks, the working class and the poor have already experienced their power to overthrow ruling dictatorships. This is an experience which no one can rob them of and on which they will build for their future struggles.

Finally this chapter would be very incomplete without referring to the future role of the Sub-Saharan African and the Latin American proletariat. The working class in Latin America is the most developed and politically experienced proletariat of the South and has demonstrated this again in the last decade with various revolutionary uprisings (Argentina 2001/02, Venezuela 2002, Bolivia 2003-05 etc.). And the heroic miners' strike in Marikana (South Africa) as well as the mass protests against the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe have also shown the combat readiness of the African working class.

Increasing Migration and Internationalization of the working class in the North

We have already shown the rising importance of super-exploited migrant workers for the imperialist economies in Western Europe, North America and Australia. Given the stagnation of capital accumulation in these countries as well as the superannuation of the native population, the only possibility for the monopoly capitalists to get new, young and cheap labor forces are additional

⁸⁰⁹ We have analyzed the Arab Revolution in a German-language book: Michael Pröbsting: Die halbe Revolution. Lehren und Perspektiven des arabischen Aufstandes (The Half Revolution. Lessons and perspectives of the Arab Uprising, in: Der Weg des Revolutionären Kommunismus, Theoretisches Journal der Revolutionär-Kommunistischen Organisation zur Befreiung, RKOB), Nr. 8 (2011), <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-8>

imports of migrants. Not surprisingly, the OECD expects a continuation if not intensification of the past trends: *“Worldwide, migration flows are very likely to rise or at least remain constant over the next 20 years or so, much in line – on aggregate – with trends of the last 30 years.”*⁸¹⁰

The US strategists formulate the ruling class’s desire for super-exploited migrant workers in the following way: *“Increasingly, elites in developed countries are likely to consider migration policy as part of an economic growth strategy, particularly as competition grows for highly skilled employees.”*⁸¹¹

In Europe this will not only lead to a massive increase of migrants amongst the working class but also to a substantial growth of the Muslim population. The Pew Research Center reports that Europe’s Muslim population grew from 4.1% of Europe’s total population (1990) to 6% today. It forecasts further growth to 8% by 2030. In some countries the share is supposed to be even higher: France (10.3%), Belgium (10.2%), Sweden (9.9%) and Austria (9.3%).⁸¹²

The consequences of these developments will be a growing multinational composition of the working class in the imperialist countries and an increasing influence of non-aristocratic layers who are coming from the South and face additional oppression. The mass demonstrations of Latino migrant workers on May Day in the USA and the prominent role of migrant workers and youth in the Anti-war mobilizations in Europe are an indication for the future important and progressive role of migrant workers in the class struggle.

At the same time we also have to expect growing racist and social-chauvinist tendencies by bourgeois forces in the imperialist countries – including by the labor bureaucracy and their shrinking aristocratic basis inside the workers movement. These forms of chauvinism include, of course, the open reactionary right-wing racism which praises the superiority of their own nation or of the “white race”. It also includes the finely woven forms of liberal chauvinism which praises the superiority of the imperialist “democratic” aristocratic civilization and the liberal values which have to be taught to the “backward” migrants “in the interest of their own enlightenment”. Islamophobia is one of the results of this bourgeois-liberal current. Increasing calls for immigration control and discrimination of migrants at the domestic labor market will be another result.

The program of the Bolsheviks-Communists – struggle for complete equality and self-determination on all levels, against any privileges and aristocratism in the domestic workers movement, for revolutionary integration – will therefore become even more important in the coming period.

⁸¹⁰ OECD: The Future of International Migration to OECD Countries (2009), p. 43

⁸¹¹ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), p. 25

⁸¹² Pew Research Center: The Future Global Muslim Population. Projections for 2010-2030 (2011), p. 124

Great Power Rivalry and increasing imperialist leverage and wars of aggression against semi-colonies

To summarize, the capitalist world economy is in decline, the value production increasingly shifts to the South and therefore the imperialist Great Powers not only intensify their rivalry but also get more and more dependent on the capitalist production and the raw materials from the South. The only possible conclusion from this is an intensification of the tendencies we already seen in the last decade: more imperialist interventions and wars in the South as well as an increasing rivalry between the Great Powers leading to more armament.

In fact, these two tendencies are related to each other. Faced with their decline each imperialist Great Power – the USA, Germany/France/EU, China, Russia and Japan – have to struggle more to increase or even to keep their share in the world market as well as their place in the world political hierarchy. This is why they are forced to be even more aggressive against each other and against the semi-colonial countries. This is why the “war against terror” – or whatever will be the code name for imperialist aggression – will continue. It will however continue not only from the side of the USA, but increasingly also by the other Great Powers as the military intervention of France and the EU in Mali since January 2013 demonstrates.

For the reasons mentioned above the focus for the imperialist’s military interventions will likely be Eastern and South Asia as well as the Middle East. The *National Intelligence Council* report reflects the imperialists’ outlook: *“Regional dynamics in several different theaters during the next couple decades will have the potential to spill over and create global insecurity. The Middle East and South Asia are the two regions most likely to trigger broader instability. The number of potential conflicts in these two regions is rising.”*⁸¹³

The consistent anti-imperialist struggle – supporting a military victory of the semi-colonial country and calling for the defeat of the imperialist power on the basis of a socialist program for class independence – will be of decisive importance in the coming period.

In conflicts between imperialist powers – as we see it in East Asia between Japan and China (and at some point unavoidable also the U.S.) – Bolshevik-Communists will stand for revolutionary defeatism on both sides, i.e. call for the defeat of both sides and for the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. This will be probably be very contentious in the workers movement since many Stalinist, Bolivarians and centrists look to imperialist China as a progressive alternative to Western imperialism and will support it in such conflicts.

The increasing rivalry between the Great Powers also has important consequences for conflicts and wars in and between semi-colonial countries. In

⁸¹³ National Intelligence Council: *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (2012), p. 70

the period of the Cold War (1948-1991) it was usually (albeit not always) the case that the imperialist camp – led by the absolute hegemon USA – supported one side and the Stalinist camp – led by the USSR – supported the other side. After 1991 the different imperialist states were usually more or less united behind the USA when it was intervening or containing this or that struggle or war in the semi-colonial world.

This has now changed because of the dramatic decline of the USA, the rise of China (and to a certain degree Russia) and the strong will (and lesser unified ability) of the European Union to play a growing global role. The result will be more conflicts and wars in the semi-colonial world where Great Powers support – veiled or openly – different sides. While such conflicts can degenerate into proxy wars, this will often not be the case. The revolutionary civil wars of the Libyan and Syrian popular masses since 2011 against reactionary dictatorships are examples of conflicts where imperialist powers supported different sides (or even had a limited military intervention like in Libya 2011). This, as we showed in chapter 12, did however not rob the rebellions of their character as authentic democratic revolutions. It will be an important task for revolutionaries to analyze each such conflict concretely and intervene with a correct revolutionary tactic. The *dual military tactic* in cases of limited imperialist interventions – where revolutionaries continue to support the progressive side in a given war but oppose sharply the intervention of imperialist powers on their side – will be an important instrument in such cases.

Increasing cases of imperialist colonial wars will trigger mass protests as we already saw in the 2000s during the US and Israeli wars of aggression in the Middle East. They will strengthen anti-imperialism world-wide amongst the popular masses and increase the demoralization in the imperialist countries themselves when the colonial powers suffer heavy losses amongst their soldiers and finally, defeats.

Tendency towards Colonialism or more room to maneuver for the semi-colonial bourgeoisie?

Let us now look again at the future dynamics between the imperialist powers and semi-colonial countries. We have pointed towards the increasing contradictions of capitalism in decline and explained that - given the further shift of capitalist value production to the South – the imperialist monopolies will become increasingly dependent on squeezing profits out of the super-exploitation of the South. This will naturally not only result in harsher economic conditions but also in more frequent political and military interventions.

It is however necessary to fully understand the contradictory nature of these developments. The world capitalist production's shift to the South forces the imperialists to increase their reactionary drive to subjugate the semi-colonial countries. This is why we can speak about a *tendency towards colonialization*. In

order to stabilize economic exploitation in a period of growing instability, the imperialists must enforce their control via political and military means. They must put the gun to the heads of the semi-colonies. The US occupation wars in Afghanistan and Iraq or the EU drive to wage war in West Africa have been expressions of this tendency. We can expect an increasing number of such colonial wars as well as veiled intervention by sending army detachments as “military advisers” etc. Indeed the *tendency towards colonialization* will become an important feature of the coming period.

However, at the same time there is also another, contrary, tendency. The combination of the shift of the capitalist production to the South and the increasing rivalry between the Great Powers have the effect, that they might allow the bourgeoisie in the semi-colonial countries sometimes a certain room to maneuver. The bourgeoisie of a given semi-colonial country can look for support from the Great Power B, if Great Power A puts more pressure on it. We have already seen in the past years that various Latin American and African countries have looked increasingly for trade agreements and foreign direct investments from China to counter the pressure from the USA.

Our thesis might seem to some readers as a formal contradiction. On one hand we speak about an increasing subjugation of the semi-colonies to imperialism. And on the other side we speak about an increasing room to maneuver for the semi-colonies. But in reality it is a dialectical contradiction, born out of the essence of the contradictions in imperialist capitalism itself. They are just two sides of the same coin. The imperialists are forced – because of the economic shift to the South and the increasing rivalry between themselves – to increase their attempts for more subjugation of the semi-colonies. But the same shift lead to a contrary dynamic – more room to maneuver for the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. In fact, this contradictory situation bears certain similarities with the state of the relationship of the Latin American semi-colonies during the 1930s on which Leon Trotsky wrote: “*This is the period in which the national bourgeoisie searches for a bit more independence from the foreign imperialists.*”⁸¹⁴

To conclude, these contradictory tendencies will lead towards more zigzags, sharp turns and massive instability in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries.

Globalization, regionalization and protectionism

In this book we have outlined the process of globalization and introduced the formula “*Globalization = Internationalization + Monopolization*”. We have explained that the massive amount of accumulated capital, the development of the productive forces etc. requires a world market. A retreat to relative isolation – as there was such a tendency amongst the US ruling class in the 1920s and

⁸¹⁴ Leon Trotsky: Latin American Problems: a Transcript (1938), in Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement (1934-40), p. 784

1930 – is impossible today.

However, we have also outlined that the same process of globalization which creates improved conditions for profits and extra-profits, also creates enormous contradictions and crisis at the same time. Furthermore, capitalism rests – and will rest as long as it exists – on national states. Without them the capitalist ruling classes can neither organise their domestic basis for exploitation nor possess a strong arm for support on the world market.

However, the increasing rivalry between the Great Powers is undermining this globalization. The monopolies need a market as big as possible. But at the same time they need absolute dominance, unrestricted access for themselves but maximum possible restriction for their competitors. As a result there will be a tendency towards forms of protectionism and regionalisation. Each Great Power will try to form a regional bloc around it and restrict access for the other Powers. By definition, this must result in numerous conflicts and eventual wars.

We referred above that the semi-colonial bourgeoisie will have, to a certain degree, more room to maneuver. Such a space for maneuver could also lead to situations where the ruling class of a given semi-colonial country restricts the imports or foreign investment of this or that imperialist country. The nationalization of companies of the Spanish oil multinational corporation Repsol in Argentina under the bourgeois Peronist government of Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in 2012 is an example for this.

As we have elaborated in this book, revolutionary Marxists differentiate between the class character of imperialist and semi-colonial countries and hence between the imperialist and the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. This has important consequences for Marxists in the case of conflicts including wars between the two, as we have demonstrated. Such a differentiation is therefore also necessary in the case of protectionist measures. Bolshevik-Communists strongly oppose any form of protectionist measures (including for migrant labor forces!) by the imperialist ruling class. This is particularly true for the massive import restrictions for goods from semi-colonial countries (e.g. in the agricultural sector). On the other hand, we support import control against commodities from and nationalization of imperialist companies by the ruling class of semi-colonial countries. Of course, such a support by the workers movement must be critical for two reasons: first the semi-colonial bourgeoisie will try to utilize such steps as much as possible for their own interests and not for the working class. And secondly, we strongly reject the bourgeois-reformist illusions that a capitalist semi-colonial country could prosper for any longer period outside of the world market.

Nevertheless we support such steps because, first, they weaken the main enemy of the oppressed people – the imperialist powers. This in turn is not only important for the proletariat in the South, but also for the workers in the imperialist countries themselves. And, second, they imply the potential for

struggles against imperialism which the working class in the semi-colonies can utilize to strengthen its independent organizations, its links with allied petty-bourgeois classes and layers and to finally turn in a better, more powerful position against its own domestic bourgeoisie.

The Prospects of Revolution and the Crisis of Working Class Leadership

As we explained above, the present historic period is one of the historic crises of capitalism, a period which contains the objective conditions of the socialist revolution. The decline of the world economy, the sharp and abrupt changes, the political and military crisis etc. – all this will unavoidably provoke massive class struggles on a global scale.

The global objective conditions leading to an intensification of the class struggle resemble the situation Trotsky spoke about at the Comintern's Third Congress in 1921: *"The classes of Germany, the number of workers and their concentration, the concentration of capital and its organizational form- all this had taken shape prior to the war, and in particular as a result of the last two decades of prosperity (1894-1913). And later on, all this became still more aggravated: during the war — with the aid of the state intervention; after the war — through the fever of speculation and the growing concentration of capital. We thus have two processes of development. National wealth and national income keep falling, but the development of classes continues there- with not to regress but to progress. More and more people are becoming proletarianized, capital is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, banks keep merging, industrial enterprises become concentrated in trusts. As a result, the class struggle inevitably becomes sharper on the basis of a declining national income. Herein is the whole gist of the matter. The more restricted becomes the material foundation under their feet, the more fiercely must classes and groups fight for their share of this national income. We must not lose sight of this circumstance for a single moment. While Europe has been thrown back 30 years with regard to her national wealth this does not at all mean that she has grown thirty years younger. No, in the class sense, she has become thirty years older."*⁸¹⁵

Both in the old imperialist countries as well as in the South there is a massive re-composition of the working class underway. In the old imperialist countries the proletariat expands only little or not at all. But it is re-composed since its component of migrant workers coming from the semi-colonies is constantly growing. Such an internationalization of the proletariat in the old imperialist metropolises and an increasing influence of workers who don't come from the corrupting aristocratic milieu of the old Great Powers is undoubtedly a healthy development. It will help the working class to develop a more radical class

⁸¹⁵ Leon Trotsky: Report on the World Economic Crisis and The New Tasks of The Communist International (1921), in: The First Five Years of the Communist International Vol. 1, pp. 264-65, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1924/ffyci-1/ch19.htm>

consciousness and facilitate the formation of a revolutionary workers party.

The proletariat of the South, on the other hand, is substantially expanding as we have shown. Millions and millions of people will flock from the countryside to the urban centers and factories. Such a process implies several consequences. It strengthens the proletariat and weakens the weight of the petty bourgeois peasantry. It pulls millions of people out of the rural isolation and introduces them in the modern world. Beverly J. Silver, a progressive US sociologist, published some years ago a thoughtful book on the international workers movement and she pointed to the *“combination of the grave grievances and significant workers power in the post-colonial world which creates the conditions for permanent social crisis.”*⁸¹⁶

One also has to see the difficulties connected with these developments. Naturally, an increasing flow of new workers increases the competition in the labor market and hence lowers the wages. Also, many workers, who newly arrive from their rural homes, will have many backward prejudices initially. Combined with the historic betrayal of the traditional leaderships of the workers movement – in particular Stalinism – this is an important factor which helps to explain the present strength of various forms of (petty-)bourgeois populism in the working class in the South (like Bolivarianism, Islamism etc.).

However, the massive militancy of the Egypt textile workers in Mahalla and other cities demonstrate that the young working class in the South can and will develop their class consciousness. The example of Russia in the early 20th century shows that a young working class with many newcomers from the countryside has an enormous revolutionary potential. And, indeed, the development of the working class in the South resembles, in many aspects, Russia before 1917 – but on a global scale! The Arab Revolution, which started in 2011, was a historic confirmation of the Southern working class’s revolutionary potential.

It would however be a huge mistake to imagine that the working class will arrive spontaneously to a revolutionary consciousness. The biggest obstacles of all are the corrupt labor bureaucracies, the reactionary clerical leaders and the bourgeois-populist parties. In addition to this the vanguard of the working class is faced with various forms of revisionist concepts which sound revolutionary but, in reality, are just centrist distortions of authentic Marxism. In this context, the application of the united front tactic, including the anti-imperialist united front tactic, towards these manifold bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships will be of central importance in order to break the workers away from these misleaderships.

It is very likely, given the historic crisis of capitalism, that sooner or later socialist ideologies will again gain mass influence. We already see repeated references

⁸¹⁶ Beverly J. Silver: *Arbeiterbewegungen und Globalisierung seit 1870*, Berlin 2005, p. 214. This is the German translation of the English-language original *“Forces of Labor: Worker’s Movements and Globalization since 1870”*, Cambridge 2003. Since the author does not possess the English original, the quote is our translation.

to Marx and his analysis of crisis-ridden capitalism even in bourgeois papers. It is not accidental that even the US secret service strategists talk in their “Global Trends 2030” about a new upsurge for Marxism.⁸¹⁷ However, revolutionaries must not become complacent. The decisive question will be *which* Marxism will become popular amongst the working class? Will it be another degenerated, pacified, de-revolutionized form of “Marxism” (in fact pseudo-Marxism) which would lead the working class towards defeat and demoralization? Or will it be the revolutionary, militant, Bolshevik version of Marxism – in other words the authentic Marxism? This is the challenge and the task with which Bolshevik-Communists will be faced.

To transmit the revolutionary program into the working class and to fight against the treacherous leaderships, a communist combat organization is the necessary pre-condition. Such a communist organization is the collective of revolutionary workers and those coming from other classes, but who break with their class origins and dedicate themselves completely to the struggle for working class liberation. It understands that the revolutionary struggle has to be waged uninterrupted against the ruling class and their lackeys inside the working class, i.e. that – to use Trotsky’s words – “*Leninism is warlike from head to foot*”⁸¹⁸

The RCIT is dedicated to build a revolutionary International which understands the programmatic and practical lessons of the new historic period. Such a new International must fight for a Transitional Program which combines the daily economic demands, the issues of democratic and national liberation with the strategy for working class power in the enterprises and the state.⁸¹⁹

Given the sharpening of the class contradictions, the shift to the South and the growing imperialist aggression, we can expect that questions of democratic struggles, national liberation and anti-imperialism will substantially gain in importance. Similarly, the struggle against super-exploitation and for economic minimum demands will be a central issue. The task of revolutionaries will be to explain to the workers that a consistent solution for all these demands is only possible if the working class organizes in a revolutionary party and overthrows the capitalist class so that it can build its dictatorship of the proletariat as a step towards a classless society without exploitation and oppression.

Given the massive shift of the world proletariat to the South, it is important to translate this analysis into practical conclusions. The RCIT summarized the consequences of these important changes in the composition of the world working class in its programme “*The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*”. We Bolshevik-Communists emphasized that the workers international organizations must pay particular attention to the South. The huge weight of

⁸¹⁷ National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds (2012), pp. 119-125

⁸¹⁸ Leon Trotsky: The New Course (1923), in: The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25), S. 99

⁸¹⁹ See on this Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT): The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, published in 2012; online on the RCIT website at www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto

the Southern proletariat must be reflected in their massive participation not only in the workers international organizations but also in their leaderships. The questions of particular importance for the Southern working class – the super-exploitation, national liberation struggles against imperialism etc. – must take a central place in the organizations' propagandistic and practical work.

It follows that the struggle for political and organizational independence of the working class focuses particularly on the broad mass of the working class – i.e. its lower and middle layers. This means that the workers' organizations - trade unions, youth and women's organizations and in particular the revolutionary international organization – must reflect the changing composition of the proletariat. In other words, to meet the growing significance of the proletarians of the poorer countries, of women, migrants, etc. they must strive to attract and organize them and also to represent them in their own ranks and leadership structures.

Leon Trotsky once stated, making a balance of the lessons of the successful October Revolution 1917 by the Bolshevik Party that the very essence of Bolshevism lies in its orientation towards the lower strata of the working class and the oppressed and not towards the labor aristocracy:

"The strength and meaning of Bolshevism consists in the fact that it appeals to oppressed and exploited masses and not to the upper strata of the working class." ⁸²⁰

This is even truer today. The future revolutionary communist world party therefore has a strong semi-colonial, young, female, migrant face or it fails in its task.

Success or failure to build such a revolutionary combat party will decide the fate of humanity. Let us finish this chapter with the following paragraph from our program: *"The likely extensive nature of the current historical period also follows from this. Due to the lack of a revolutionary combat party on the basis of a Bolshevik programme, the proletariat and the masses will rather first suffer painful experiences and bitter defeats. The task is to draw the necessary lessons of this experience and to forge such a party in the fire of the battles. The masses get exhausted in the longer run and lose faith in the possibility of victory. At the same time, the ruling class upgrades its arsenal for a decisive counterattack and prepares the creation of open or semi-open dictatorships. Against the background of a deep economic and social crisis in the case of a continued failure of the labour movement the strengthening of the rabid nationalism and fascism is inevitable. The main question of the class struggle in the revolutionary period is: crush or get crushed. Only the timely construction of a revolutionary workers party based on a Bolshevik, thus a consistently revolutionary programme, can ensure that the resolute struggle of the masses ends with a victory - that is, the proletarian seizure of power – and not with a heavy defeat."* ⁸²¹

⁸²⁰ Leon Trotsky: Perspectives and Tasks in the East. Speech on the third anniversary of the Communist University for the Toilers of the East (21. April 1924); in: Leon Trotsky Speaks, Pathfinder 1972, p. 205

⁸²¹ See on this RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, p. 14