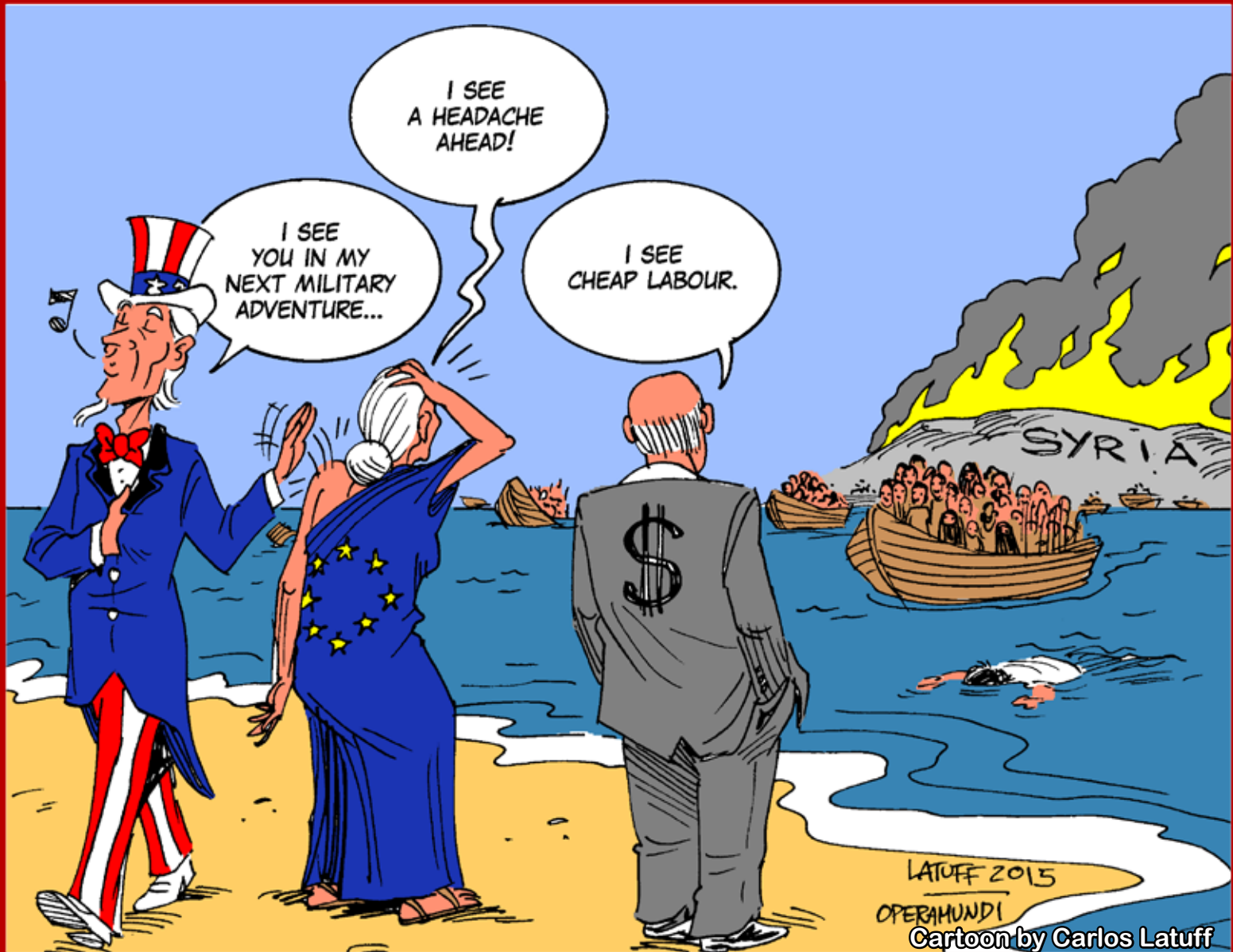




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A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings (Part 1)

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

by Michael Pröbsting

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World Perspectives 2018 (Part 1): A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)

PREFACE

The following document – in fact, given its length it has become rather become a book – is a major contribution of our organization to keep the Marxists' analysis of the world situation and its accelerating contradictions updated. As we emphasize in the document, we consider it as crucial for revolutionaries to understand the nature and the inner dynamics of the current historic period. Without such an understanding it is impossible for socialists, indeed for all liberation fighters, to possess the necessary political compass on which they can base their program, strategy and tactics.

Since several years does the RCIT publish annual studies on the world situation in which it analysis its most important developments and changes. This book updates the Marxist analysis of the state of the world economy, of the relations between the Great Powers, of the struggle between the classes and the tactics of revolutionaries. We also deal in depth with new issues respectively extend our theoretical analysis on several questions. In particular we have deepened in this book, among others, our understanding of the nature respectively the transitional character of the present world political phase, of the nature of different types of wars and the tactical conclusions arriving from this, of the complex nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, of the capitalist restoration in North Korea and, finally, we have elaborated a new proposal for an international platform for the unification of revolutionary forces in the present phase.

In this brief preface we also wish to draw attention to two limitations of this book of which we are fully aware of. First, there is certain danger that the document becomes outdated soon on this or that aspect. In fact, already in the weeks between finishing the draft of this book and its final adoption at an international leadership meeting of the RCIT, several important events took place. Among them were the global stock market panic, the shooting down first of a Russian warplane and later an Israeli warplane in Syria, the mysterious killing of 100 pro-Assad fighters by the US military in Syrian Deir-ez-Zor which allegedly included Russian soldiers, or the political crisis in the Maldives and the threat of a military intervention by India. It is most likely that additional important events will take place in the coming weeks and months. However, we think that this limitation is not only unavoidable but it rather confirms the RCIT's fundamental analysis in this document: that the present world situation is characterized by accelerating contradictions and that we are approaching a pre-revolutionary phase.

Secondly, we are aware that this book does not deal

equally with the political developments on all continents around the world. For reasons of time and space we had to focus on an in-depth analysis of those regions which we consider to be the most important focal points of the present world situation: the Middle East and North Africa as well as the Korean Peninsula. However, as readers will be aware, the RCIT deals in its publications also with the other regions of the world and we refer those interested to our website respectively our journals.

We ask readers to study this book and to let us know their views and criticism. We call all those who share the broad outlook of this document to contact us and to discuss with us about concrete ways to open collaboration in joint activities so that we can strengthen the revolutionary forces around the world and move forward to build a Revolutionary World Party. The old German workers leader Wilhelm Liebknecht, a close collaborator of Marx and Engels, coined the excellent phrase when he summarized the task of revolutionaries: „*Study, Propagandize, Organize*“. And indeed, this is what the RCIT is doing since a number of years and this is what we wish to do jointly with all serious revolutionaries around the world!

Aluta continua!

INTRODUCTION

1. The recent developments of the world political situation have been a profound confirmation of the Marxists' analysis of the fundamental characteristics of the contradictions of today's global capitalism. Trotsky once stated that "*the strength of Marxism lies in its ability to foretell.*"¹ And indeed, as the RCIT predicted, the fundamental tendencies of the last years, and in particular since the inauguration of the Trump Administration, have accelerated: the reactionary offensive of the ruling class, the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world as well as the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – all these tendencies have intensified. And, again as we predicted, these developments provoke mass resistance both against austerity plans as well as against anti-democratic attacks. By this, these contradictions of capitalism are preparing tremendous explosions – political crisis, wars and popular uprisings – with regional or even global consequences. As we already emphasized in the past, history's pace is accelerating.²

2. Such perspectives, when we are marching towards great events, make the struggle for the creation of new Revolutionary World Party more urgent than ever! The RCIT calls all socialists to make unification in a strong international revolutionary organization priority number one. Such unification should take place on the basis of a revolutionary platform which draws the class line on all major issues of global class struggle and which offers a program for socialist revolution. The RCIT is publishing a concrete proposal for revolutionary unity and calls all like-minded comrades to put aside any minor differences in order to advance our joint struggle for building the new Revolutionary World Party! (See Appendix)

3. This document should serve the purpose to offer activists an analysis and explanation of the contradictions and likely future developments of the present world situation. It will furthermore present an orientation to support activists in arming themselves for the future class struggles.

I. THE REACTIONARY OFFENSIVE OF THE RULING CLASS INEVITABLE PROVOKES POLITICAL CRISIS, CONFLICTS, WARS AND POPULAR UPRISINGS

4. The capitalist world system remains stuck in a chronic stagnation of its economy. While the world economy has not entered a new period of deep recession yet, it is characterized by high debts and low productivity growth. While the IMF predicts that 2018 will be a year of moderate economic growth, others believe that a new recession will already hit this year. In fact, the latest panic at the global stock markets in early February underlines the fragile state of the capitalist world economy and its enormous inner contradictions.

5. What is clear, however, is that the beginning of the recession could only be delayed because governments, corporations and private households around the world – from the US to China – were prepared to increase their debts even more. Today, the capitalist world in East and West is more indebted than it was before the last recession in 2008/09. Furthermore, while during the last recession it was possible to cushion the blow because China and other "emerging markets" had relatively low debts, this is no longer the case. However, at the same time, such means of delaying the outbreak of the next recession will guarantee that once the downturn starts, it will become more destructive with unforeseeable political consequences.

Main Characteristics of the Current World Situation

6. The main political characteristics of the present world situation are the following:

i. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked an *acceleration of the tensions between the imperialist Great Powers* (e.g. US vs. Russia, the looming trade war between US and China) or between imperialist powers and major regional powers (e.g. the military stand-off between China and India in summer 2017). Likewise there has been a cooling of the historic close relationship between the US and the EU.

ii. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has also provoked an *acceleration of the imperialist aggression against the oppressed people of the South* (e.g. US vs. the Afghan people, North Korea, and Iran, Russia vs. the Syrian people, the pro-US Saudi coalition vs. Yemen, Israel vs. the Palestinian people, or the pro-imperialist AMISOM vs. the Somali people). Each of these conflicts has either already escalated into an open war or has the potential to do so in 2018.

iii. The reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked a *massive acceleration of the tensions between regional powers* (e.g. Saudi-Arabia/UAE/Israel vs. Iran,

Saudi-Arabia/UAE vs. Qatar, Egypt/Eritrea vs. Ethiopia/Sudan, or Tunisia vs. UAE). Most of these conflicts can explode into an open war in 2018.

iv. Furthermore, the reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked *serious or even deep domestic political crises* (e.g. the Trump Administration in the US; the preventive civil war from above of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman against a sector of the traditional political and religious establishment of the Saudi-Arabia; the ongoing malaise of Temer's illegitimate government in Brazil; the crisis of the regimes of Kabila in DRC, of Kenyatta in Kenya or of Gnassingbé in Togo; the enormous difficulties of Germany's Angela Merkel to establish a coalition government). Such crises can provoke mass struggles, and has already in some cases, or even trigger pre-revolutionary situations.

v. Finally, the reactionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked a *new upsurge of class struggles*. We can say that in the last few months we have seen, on an international scale, a higher level of class struggles than at any time since the strategic defeat of the Egyptian masses by the military coup of General Sisi on 3 July 2013. Examples for this encouraging development are the popular uprisings in Palestine, Iran, Tunisia, Sudan, Honduras and Catalonia; the mass protests in Togo, Kenya, Zambia, Morocco, and India; the mass strikes in Brazil, Argentina; the remarkable popular protests in the USA against the Trump Administration, etc.

vi. However, given the profound *crisis of leadership of the working class and popular movements*, these struggles are either very spontaneous and lack a strong, organized leadership – which implies the danger that they lose steam and get smashed by the regime (e.g. in Iran, Zambia); or that they are misdirected by petty-bourgeois reformist or populist leaderships which lead the struggle into a cul-de-sac (e.g. Syria, Kenya, Brazil, Argentina, Catalonia).

Domestic Crisis and Aggressive Foreign Policy

7. The uniqueness of the present situation is that the ruling classes of capitalist states – both of imperialist powers as well as of semi-colonial countries – are forced to take aggressive steps in order to avoid the consequences of a domestic political crisis, a looming economic recession, a loss of sphere of influence abroad, etc. However, by taking such steps they either unintentionally deepen the crisis or, by avoiding a crisis in the short-term, they provoke an even worse crisis in the future. The pathetic US Administration of Donald “Dumb as Shit” Trump is a prime example for this.³ In order to boost his dwindling domestic support by appeasing the Evangelic, pro-Zionist fundamentalists, Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital ... and destroys at the same time the so-called peace process in the Middle East. In order to survive its domestic crisis, this Administration is so desperate that it is ready to undertake every possible hara-kiri operation. This, again, is a reflection of the decay of U.S. imperialism. Indeed, one could characterize this bizarre amalgam of extreme right-wing billionaires, ultra-imperialist adventurists, evangelic tea-party morons and Zionist fanatics as the *Armageddon faction of the American bourgeoisie*. But Trump is not the only example. Take for example Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who wants to “modernize” the

country and expand its regional influence ... and in order to achieve this he launches one foreign policy adventure after the other which all turn out to be embarrassing failures (Yemen war, boycott of Qatar, arrest of Lebanon's Prime Minister Hariri, agreement to Jared Kushner's bizarre and doomed to fail Middle East “Peace” Plan etc.). Or take Philippines' strong man Rodrigo Duterte who announces a nation-wide war on drugs in order to create a Bonapartist authoritarian regime and ends up in corruption scandals, public humiliation and an embarrassing five-month battle in Marawi where the army hardly manages to defeat a few hundred encircled Islamist rebels. The reasons for this unique characteristic of the world situation can not be found in the dumbness of this or that individual (albeit some are really blessed with abysmal stupidity!) but rather in the decay of the capitalist world order which pushes its leaders to act increasingly in a desperate and adventurist way.⁴

8. Trotsky always emphasized that *“foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy, for it is conducted by the same ruling class and pursues the same historic goals.”*⁵ Given the decay of the productive forces in the present historic period and the corresponding increasingly fragile domestic rule of the bourgeoisie, it is only logical that the foreign policy of the ruling class increasingly become more aggressive. Chauvinism, militarist rhetoric and wars are important instruments for the ruling capitalist class to deflect from domestic crisis. However, they usually work for the bourgeoisie like a drug. In the short-term, an aggressive foreign policy often gives the bourgeoisie a kick at the beginning, i.e. it serves to strengthen it via an ideological offensive. But the more it strengthens the ruling class at the beginning, the more it threatens to ruin it later. A saber-rattling foreign policy creates huge expectations by the public opinion which can easily result in embarrassment and humiliation if such an adventure does not end in total victory. A war, destined to be short and decisive, can turn out to take much longer and to result in a quagmire – with all the risky domestic consequences (e.g. the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, Saudi Arabia in Yemen). Furthermore, such a war often results in much higher economic losses than gains. In other words, chauvinism and militarism of the ruling class make it look strong and stable but in fact is an expression of domestic crisis and bears high risks to deepen such a crisis sooner or later.⁶

Like the situation before the Balkan Wars 1912-13

9. We are marching towards great events and explosions as the world is sitting on a powder keg. The imperialist ideologists are fully aware of the dangers for their system. Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the *World Economic Forum*, which is organizing the annual conferences in Davos, pessimistically warns in the group's annual report that *“this is perhaps the first generation to take the world to the brink of a systems breakdown.”*⁷ And another Western imperialist think tank, the *Eurasia Group*, warns its readers in alarming words in its latest forecast: *“Let's be honest: 2018 doesn't feel good. Yes, markets are soaring and the economy isn't bad, but citizens are divided. Governments aren't doing much governing. And the global order is unraveling. The scale of the world's political challenges is daunting. Liberal*

democracies have less legitimacy than at any time since World War II, and most of their structural problems don't appear fixable. Today's strongest leaders show little interest in civil society or common values. In the 20 years since we started Eurasia Group, the global environment has had its ups and downs. But if we had to pick one year for a big unexpected crisis—the geopolitical equivalent of the 2008 financial meltdown—it feels like 2018. Sorry.”⁸ These warnings are in line with a statement which Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the former president of the *International Crisis Group*, made last year: “The world is entering its most dangerous chapter in decades. The sharp uptick in war over recent years is outstripping our ability to cope with the consequences. From the global refugee crisis to the spread of terrorism, our collective failure to resolve conflict is giving birth to new threats and emergencies. Even in peaceful societies, the politics of fear is leading to dangerous polarization and demagoguery.”⁹

10. To a certain degree, we can compare the present world political phase with the situation before the Balkan Wars 1912-13. At that time the contradictions between regional powers like Serbia, Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire and other states as well as the tensions between the Great Powers resulted in two devastating wars. As is well known, the Balkan Wars were the prelude to the first imperialist world war which started in August 1914. Even the German weekly newspaper “*Die Zeit*” compares the present situation in a recent editorial article with the period before the beginning of World War One and refers to the descriptions of the historian Christopher Clark in his famous book “*The Sleepwalkers*”.¹⁰ With this analogy we don't want to suggest that the Third World War will start in one or two years. As we have stated in past documents, while we consider an imperialist World War III as unavoidable if the international working class does not overthrow the global capitalist order beforehand, we think that the aggravation of the inter-imperialist antagonism to such a degree will take longer.

11. In the current period, the application of the dialectical method and its transformation into a concrete program of revolutionary action is of particular importance as the world situation becomes more and more complex. We see the unfolding of new historic circumstances as the US has outlived its role as the absolute hegemon of the capitalist world – a role it carried since 1945 – and the emergence of new imperialist rivals like China and Russia. We face the acceleration of imperialist wars against oppressed people as well as of democratic and national liberation struggles against dictatorships and foreign occupation. And we face numerous attempts of imperialist powers to exploit and utilize such liberation struggles. And there are more and more conflicts between semi-colonial states. Indeed, the increasing complexity of the world situation is one of its most important features. All these complex and contradictory developments require Marxists to elaborate a scientific and clear analysis as well as a sharp program to intervene in the class struggles.

The Most Explosive Focal Points of the Current World Situation

12. If we have to identify the most explosive focal points of the current world situation, we would name the *Middle East* and the *Korean peninsula*. It is in these two regions where the interests of most imperialist Great Powers directly clash, where long-standing conflicts exist and where major wars with devastating consequences could break out. As the WEF's *Global Risks Report 2018* points out: “the North Korea crisis has arguably brought the world closer than it has been for decades to the possible use of nuclear weapons.”¹¹ Furthermore such devastating wars, with potentially hundreds of thousands of casualties, could provoke major domestic political crises, yet even pre-revolutionary situations, in the countries concerned, including in the U.S. In addition, there could be a new wave of revolutionary uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa – similar to the insurrectional wave in 2011. In short, the *Middle East* and the *Korean peninsula* are currently the two most important focuses of the world situation because what is happening there has immediately and direct global consequences and can abruptly change the entire world situation. A U.S. war against North Korea or a major war in the Middle East would have major repercussions for the relations between the Great Powers and it would also most likely provoke an immediate crash of the world economy.

13. The U.S. decline as the hegemonic imperialist power vis-à-vis the rise of China and Russia combined with the domestic crisis of the Trump Administration could tempt Washington to launch catastrophic adventures like a “limited” attack against North Korea resulting in a nuclear war on the Korean peninsula. In fact, such an attack is concretely discussed in the White House. It would have horrific consequences for the Korean people North and South and would immediately provoke a crash of the world economy. According to a report of the *Congressional Research Service*, sent to the U.S. lawmakers in October 2017, a conflict on the Korean peninsula could result in up to “300,000 dead in the first days of fighting” even if no nuclear weapons are involved. Likewise, we could see soon a devastating regional war in the Middle East involving Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran and possibly even some of the Great Powers. The latest issue of the annual *Munich Security Report* notes that the deterioration of the security situation in Europe is also increasing the risks of armed conflicts even in Europe: “In this dire state of affairs, miscalculations and misunderstandings could well lead to an inadvertent military clash.”¹² Such catastrophic events like wars (or environmental disasters) can provoke mass unrest and pre-revolutionary situations on a regional or even global level. A genocidal attack of Israel against the Palestinian people, aiming at a second *Nakba*¹³ by expelling the Arabs from parts of the West Bank or Gaza could provoke mass rebellions not only among the Palestinians but also among other Arab and Muslim peoples. Furthermore, we increasingly see “bread riots” as a result of the austerity policy enforced by the capitalist decay (e.g. Iran, Tunisia, Morocco, and Sudan). Such spontaneous mass protests could spread and lead to regional waves of uprisings (we saw such an elementary wave during the hunger revolts in 2008/09 and, in a more developed form, in 2011 in the Arab world).

14. Such mass popular uprisings could result in the revolutionary overthrow of reactionary regimes as it happened in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. Likewise they could result in the splitting-up of oppressor states (e.g. if Catalonia becomes independent of Spain). Such events would be of enormous importance as they could advance the liberation struggle of the working class and the oppressed and enrich its political experience. However, at the same time, our class suffers from the chronic crisis of leadership. A number of forces parading under the banner of socialism or even communism implement in their day-to-day practice the worst austerity policy in the service of the capitalist monopolies or attack the workers' right to strike (e.g. SYRIZA in Greece – the flagship of the ex-Stalinist *Party of the European Left*); others support imperialist wars in the South or "anti-terrorist" emergency decrees at home (e.g. the French "Communist" Party or the KPRF in Russia). Other "Communist" Parties like those in Syria are profoundly loyal servants of the Assad dictatorship. Various pseudo-Trotskyist groups hailed the military coup of General Sisi in Egypt in July 2013 as a "Second Revolution" (e.g. Alan Woods IMT, the Cliffite RS/IST or the Morenoite LIT) or they take a neutral stand in the epic struggle between the Assad regime and the Syrian people (e.g. the CWI, IMT, PTS/FT). Many of these pseudo-Marxists refuse to recognize the imperialist character of China and Russia. Hence, they fail to understand the inter-imperialist rivalry as a major factor in the present world situation and are incapable to apply the Leninist program of revolutionary defeatism.

15. However, such a crisis of leadership is no reason for revolutionaries to stand aside from the mass struggles and to passively wait for a *Deus ex machine* to solve this misery. No, revolutionaries are obliged to intervene in the mass struggles, even when these struggles are led by non-revolutionary forces and they themselves constitute only a small minority. They will be capable to advance their strategies and programs among the vanguard and the masses only with an approach as a *fighting force and not as a cynically commenting force*. Clearly, the struggle to build a Revolutionary World Party does not and cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to be conducted by applying the united front tactic towards those forces which have mass influence among the fighting workers and oppressed.¹⁴ At the same time such tactics must be combined with fearless exposure of the failure of the official leadership and, in particular, the merciless denunciation of those pseudo-socialist forces which, through their reactionary deeds, smear the banner of communism in the eyes of the masses. The struggle for the construction of the Revolutionary World Party will advance only by removing these reformist and centrist obstacles.

Changes in the Current World Political Phase

16. We are still in the political phase which opened up in 2013/14 and which is characterized by a counter-revolutionary offensive of the ruling class – a phase which tremendously accelerated since the victory of Trump in the US' Presidential elections in November 2016. However, a shift has taken place since the later part of 2017 as we see both an acceleration of counterrevolutionary attacks and war threats as well as an upsurge of the class struggle in a number of countries. In fact, these developments of the last few months point towards the pre-revolutionary nature of the next phase. In this phase there will wars, counter-revolutions and revolutions to a qualitative greater extent. In our opinion there are strong indications that we are already nearing the transition from the phase of counter-revolutionary offensive towards a new world political phase which will most likely have a pre-revolutionary character.

17. Such rapid changes lie in the revolutionary nature of the long-term, historic period we are in since 2008/09.¹⁵ Such a historic period has to be understood, in fact it can only be understood, in a dialectical way. This period is characterized both by revolutions as well as by counter-revolutionary offensives. On the surface, these two elements seem to contradict each other. However, using the method of dialectics, the two poles form a unity of opposites. It is a revolutionary period because the capitalist class cannot develop the forces of production (as reflected, among others, by the fact that economic growth is based more on debts than increasing production) and because of it, the ruling classes are attacking the social gains and the democratic rights of the workers and the oppressed. In the current phase, the ruling class is winning in some countries (e.g. the military coup in Egypt in 2013) but in various other countries, the mass struggle is on the rise. Like in every situation the unity of opposites is in motion – one side in the process is growing stronger and the other side weaker. The question is whether the class enemy is getting stronger or our side is in the process of becoming stronger. It seems that we are entering in the last months a situation of growing resistance of the masses (Iran, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Honduras, India, Catalonia, etc.). Marxists have to observe indicators like mass rallies, demonstrations, strikes, voting for left parties, liberation wars, etc. In other words, we live in a period of revolutions, counter-revolutions including the danger of fascism and wars. We remark, as a side-note, that intelligent bourgeois analysts with a sense for history are also recognizing in their own way the fundamental explosive character of the present period.¹⁶

18. One could say that we are in a *pre-phase of capitalist breakdown*, i.e. we are before a phase of catastrophic events like major wars, economic collapse and revolutionary explosions. In the light of the distortion created by various revisionist theoreticians, starting with Eduard Bernstein, about the Marxist concept of *capitalist breakdown* we want to clarify that Marx, Lenin and Trotsky never understood this concept in the way that capitalism would collapse and disappear by itself so that it clears the way for socialism. This has always been complete nonsense. The Marxist classics rather understood by the concept of breakdown that this system is in a historic cul-de-sac and

inevitable provokes wars, environmental catastrophes and revolutions. It will be sooner or later replaced, as Rosa Luxemburg famously coined the phrase, by socialism – if the working class successfully overthrows the bourgeoisie via an international socialist revolution – or by an epoch of barbarism, if the working class fails in its historic mission. Today, it would be more accurate to concretize the stage of barbarism by an epoch of “stone age” given the vast amount of destructive forces which the ruling class has accumulated over the past decades and which could multiple destroy the planet.

19. In summary, the present world situation is characterized by an increasing polarization and instability. It is pregnant with huge possibilities as well as dangers. The multitude of factors and the intertwining of conflicting forces exclude the possibility of a concrete prognosis. But the general tendency of development is absolutely clear: the old world order is breaking down and we are heading towards both devastating regional wars as well as (pre-) revolutionary waves of popular uprisings. This puts an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of all activists fighting against imperialism and capitalist exploitation!

20. The most crucial task of today remains to advance the construction of a Revolutionary World Party. In order to achieve this, revolutionaries must develop a correct assessment of the present world situation and the resulting strategies, programmatic demands and tactics. They have to fight for a revolutionary program which combines correct tactics in the major issues of the global class struggle with the goal of the international socialist revolution. It is urgent to overcome any kind of conservative routinism

and sectarianism. Revolutionaries must unite *now* when they have reached agreement on such a program! The RCIT is fighting for such unity since its foundation and will continue to do this with redoubled energy in the coming period! As a concrete step in this direction we propose “6 Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today” and submit it for discussion for revolutionaries around the world. (See Appendix)

21. The RCIT looks back to a proud record as we understood from the beginning the major lines of the global dynamic of the present historic revolutionary period. We drew attention to the imperialist character of Russia and China when others were incapable to recognize it and hence failed to draw the necessary tactical conclusions of revolutionary defeatism. We recognized the reactionary character of the coups in Egypt, Ukraine and Brazil when other hailed them or took a neutral position. We continued to defend democratic and national liberation wars in Syria or Yemen when others denounced them as reactionary proxy wars and refused to support the struggles of the workers and oppressed. We took the banner of anti-imperialism by siding with national liberation struggles against imperialist occupiers when others refused to do so denouncing these struggles as “reactionary” because of their Islamist leadership (e.g. Hamas in Gaza, Taliban in Afghanistan, Islamists in Mali). The RCIT calls all revolutionaries around the world to unite on the basis of agreement of a program for the victory of the liberation struggles of the working class and the oppressed people via the world socialist revolution!

Books of the RCIT

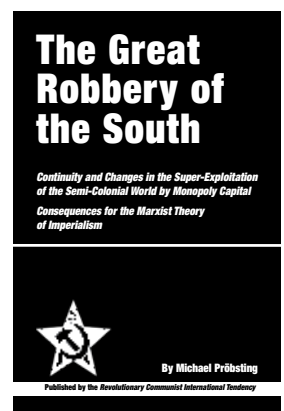
Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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)



II. EXCURSE: DIFFERENT TYPES OF WARS IN THE PRESENT PERIOD AND CONSEQUENTIAL REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

22. As wars become an increasingly crucial feature of the present historic period, it is urgent for revolutionaries to have a clear understanding of their nature and the consequential tactics. It should be evident for Marxists that the issue of war is a litmus test for every organization. Trotsky once remarked accurately: *“The problem of war, next to the problem of revolution, is the touchstone of a revolutionary party. Here no kind of equivocation is permissible. The principled decision is clear beforehand: defensism and defeatism are as incompatible as fire and water. It is necessary to say this first of all. This truth must be taught the members of the party.”*¹⁷ As the RCIT has already dealt with this issue repeatedly, we will summarize here the results of our analyses and conclusions, apply them to recent developments as well as deal with some specific new issues which have gained importance in the past years.¹⁸

23. Basically, we can differentiate between the following different types of wars in the present period:

i. There are *conflicts between imperialist states*. Such conflicts can have the character of chauvinist campaigns, diplomatic tensions, trade wars, and finally, they can escalate into open wars as we have seen in two World Wars in the first half of the 20th century. As the RCIT has shown in its past World Perspective documents as well as specific case studies, we have seen in the past decade an increasing number of inter-imperialist tensions as a result of the decline of the US as the absolute hegemon and the rise of China and Russia as new imperialist powers.¹⁹ Examples for this type of conflict are the present tensions between the US and Japan vs. China in East Asia²⁰, between the US vs. Russia in the Middle East²¹, or between the US and the EU vs. Russia since the beginning of the civil war in the Ukraine in 2014.²²

Lenin often quoted the famous dictum of Clausewitz: *“War is merely a continuation of policy by other means.”* This means that Marxists don’t change their approach to the ruling class in wartimes, hence, the working class must fundamentally oppose its imperialist government equally in times of peace as well as in times of war.

A particular case, as we have explained in our special pamphlet, has been the conflict between China and India during the military stand-off in summer 2017. While India is not an imperialist state but rather a semi-colony, its sheer size (it will soon become the most populous state in the world), its role as a regional power in South Asia as well as its increasing close alliance with US and Japanese imperialism (as well as with Israel) give the conflict between the two powers a reactionary character on both sides.²³

ii. There are also *aggressions up to open wars of imperialist states against oppressed people*. Examples for this are the U.S. occupation wars in Afghanistan since 2001 and Iraq since 2003, Russia’s war against the Chechen people, or Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian people including its recent three wars against Gaza (2009, 2012, and 2014).

Other examples are the military intervention of the US in Somalia as well as in Northern and Western Africa or of European powers in Mali and other central African states. In the same category falls the US aggression against semi-colonial states like North Korea and Iran. An example for such a conflict of national oppression which has not been transformed into a civil war yet is the oppression of the Catalan people by the Spanish state or that of the Uyghur people by China.

In recent years we increasingly have seen cases where imperialist powers collaborate with allied regimes of semi-colonial states and equip and finance military forces composed mainly of soldiers from these countries. Examples for this are the Ethiopia-led AMISOM which acts, in close collaboration with US and EU imperialism, as an occupation force in Somalia fighting against Al-Shabaab; the recently constituted G5 force in Western Africa which shall fight against Islamist “terrorists” under French command; or various Iraqi special units which have been trained and equipped by the U.S. Such forces basically resemble the colonial troops of the British, French as well other Empires. While the troops might come from semi-colonial countries, they act as imperialist proxies and their wars have to be characterized as imperialist wars.

A specific case is the Kurdish PYD/YPG in Syria. While it has its historic origin in the struggle of the Kurdish people for national self-determination, its reactionary Stalinist-nationalist leadership has isolated itself from the liberation struggle of the Syrian workers and oppressed. Instead they collaborated with the Assad regime and later became the main proxy for US imperialism in Northern Syria (under the name of *“Syrian Democratic Forces”*). Today the SDF acts as foot soldiers for US imperialism.

iii. Likewise, there are wars of national oppression which are launched by semi-colonial capitalist states against weaker nations. The causes for this can be a long-standing relationship of national oppression (e.g. Serbia vs. Kosova; Turkey, Iran and Iraq vs. their Kurdish minorities; Iran vs. the Arab minorities; Ethiopia vs. Eritrea until 1993), or the interest of the semi-colonial state to suppress an ongoing revolutionary process, or the willingness of the semi-colonial regime to serve the interests of an imperialist powers. Naturally such causes don’t exclude each other but can exist in combination. The aggression of the Saudi-led alliance, with the support of US imperialism, against the Yemeni people since 2015 or of the Iraqi regime against Iran in 1980/81 are examples where the latter two causes exist in combination.

iv. There are *civil wars of the workers and oppressed against a reactionary dictatorship*. The most prominent actual example for this is the ongoing Syrian Revolution which started in March 2011 and which, despite many setbacks, is still continuing. The civil war in Libya against the Gaddafi regime between February and autumn 2011 is another example as well as the popular uprising in Yemen

which started in autumn 2014 and which transformed into a civil war in spring 2015 driving out the pro-IMF Hadi government.

v. Finally, there are conflicts up to *wars between capitalist semi-colonial states*. Currently such wars can erupt at any given moment between Saudi-Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) vs. Iran, between Saudi-Arabia and the UAE vs. Qatar (with Turkey's support for the latter), or between Egypt (in alliance with Eritrea) vs. Ethiopia and Sudan (with Turkey's support for the latter).

We can expect a substantial increase of this type of wars. The reasons for this are the following:

We are living in a period where there exists no longer a single absolute imperialist hegemony (the U.S.) which acts as a kind of guarantor of the existing world order. Quite the opposite, there are now several imperialist Great Powers which are all rivaling to increase their sphere of influence at the cost of the others. Such circumstances allow the ruling classes of some semi-colonial states a certain, albeit limited, degree of independence and room for maneuver.

Furthermore, as we have elaborated in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, the development of modern capitalism has led to a substantial shift of capitalist value production to countries of the South. These developments have created a number of advanced semi-colonial states which have become, or which desire to become, regional powers.

The combination of these factors has created a situation where conflicts up to open wars between non-imperialist states are becoming an increasingly important feature of the present world situation.

This type of wars is the most complicated issue for Marxists. This is so also because, as Trotsky emphasized, "*the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries is a semi-ruling, semi-oppressed class.*"²⁴ This means, it is a capitalist class which is fundamentally dependent on and subjugated to imperialism but which has also, to a certain degree, contradictory interests to the Great Powers.

Taking these factors into account we can say that the bourgeoisie of a given semi-colonial state *can* act in such conflicts as a proxy for the interest of imperialist powers. Given the semi-colonial character of the bourgeoisie of such countries, they are dependent on and subordinated to the imperialist powers. However, while they can not act independently of imperialist powers *in the long run*, this does not necessarily mean that they have no independent interests at all or that they would have no limited independent room for maneuver at all. The capitalist class of the given state often attempts to utilize the conflict between the imperialist powers and to create a space to expand their influence. The Erdoğan regime in Turkey is an example for this as it tries to play off Russia, the U.S. and the EU. Likewise, the Egypt regime of General Sisi, and even the Saudi Kingdom to a certain degree, tries to build closer relations to Russia despite their traditional dependence on the US.

Furthermore, because of its "*semi-ruling, semi-oppressed*" character, the bourgeoisie of semi-colonial countries can also, for a limited period and only to a certain degree, come under the pressure of the popular classes in extraordinary cases when it faces a serious confrontation with an imperialist power or a war with another state.

The Importance of Dialectic

24. However, as always, it is crucial to approach analyzing a war in a dialectical way, i.e. looking at each case concretely.²⁵ One must bear in mind that the schema elaborated above must not be viewed mechanically. First, there can be combinations of different types. The Saudi assault on Yemen served Riyadh's interests to liquidate a revolutionary process as well as to reduce Iran's regional influence and, in addition, it also serves the Western imperialist interests to control the strategically important entry to the Red Sea. These waters are key to international trade — 4 million barrels of oil pass through the strait every day. Second, during the course of a conflict its character can change to a certain degree or even completely. For example the democratic liberation war of the Syrian people against the Assad dictatorship also got an anti-imperialist character since 2015 when the Putin regime sent Russian military in support of the regime. Russia's massive military intervention in Donbass in summer/autumn 2014 transformed the character of the Ukrainian civil war into a reactionary proxy war on both sides.

There was a similar case in the early 1980s. In 1980 Iraq's Baath regime attacked Iran because it wanted to liquidate the revolutionary process which opened up there in February 1979. Later, when the Khomeini regime consolidated its power and smashed the workers and youth vanguard by summer 1981, the character of the war changed. While the war, in the first phase until summer 1981, was reactionary on the side of Iraq but a legitimate defensive war on the side of Iran, this was no longer the case when the revolutionary process in Iran had ended. From that moment on, the war took a reactionary character on both sides. Hence, revolutionaries defended Iran in the first period, but changed their tactic towards defeatism on both sides by summer 1981.²⁶

25. In fact, such combinations of different types of war are often the case in one way or another. For example the Saudi war of aggression against the Houthi-led resistance in Yemen has also an element of a proxy war. While the Saudi-led alliance is openly backed by US imperialism (as well as several European powers), the Houthis receive support by Iran and hence indirectly by the later allies, imperialist Russia and China. Likewise, there have been phases in the past where sectors of the Syrian rebels fighting against Assad received some modest support by US imperialism. Or, to give some historic examples as we have explained in past documents, the Chinese national resistance forces fighting against Japanese imperialism in 1937-45 received material support by the U.S. The same was the case with the Yugoslavian partisans during World War II. This however, did not transform these forces into proxies of Anglo-American imperialism. The task of Marxists is to analyze each conflict in a concrete way and to view these different factors in their totality, i.e. to understand reality as a "*concrete totality, a unity of the universal and the particular*" — to use the words of the distinguished Soviet philosopher of the 1920s, Abram Deborin.²⁷

26. What are the tactics of revolutionaries in these different types of wars? Fundamentally, Marxists derive their assessment of a war not from the issue of the ideologies of the parties involved or who fired the first

shots but from an analysis of the class interests involved. Lenin remarked accurately: *"It seems to me that the most important thing that is usually overlooked in the question of the war, (...) is the question of the class character of the war: what caused that war, what classes are waging it, and what historical and historic-economic conditions gave rise to it."*²⁸

Revolutionary War Tactics

27. As we have explained many times, the position of orthodox Marxists in such wars are the following.

i. In the case of *conflicts between imperialist states* (or such special cases like the China-India conflict in summer 2017) revolutionaries can not support either side. We take the same approach on issues like trade agreements (e.g. RCEP, TPP) or Brexit. Both sides are reactionary forces striving to increase the exploitation and oppression of the working class and the poor. The maxim that *"foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy"* is not only true for the bourgeoisie but for the proletariat too. Therefore, Marxists apply the Leninist program of *revolutionary defeatism*. This means, as the RCIT summarized in its program: *"In imperialist wars, we reject any support for the ruling class. We advocate the defeat of the imperialist state. Our slogan is that of Karl Liebknecht: "The main enemy is at home". Our goal is to transform the imperialist war into a civil war against the ruling class."*²⁹ Hence, in conflicts between the U.S. vs. Russia and China or between China vs. Japan, revolutionaries must oppose both sides and stand for their defeat.

Contrary to the hysteric denunciations of reformists against the program of revolutionary defeatism, Marxists insist that it is only the application of the program of class struggle in peace times in wartime. When workers in a given enterprise go on strike this has an undoubtedly negative consequence for the profit of the owner. Hence, it helps the competitors to gain an advantage. Naturally, this is not reason for the workers to hold back their struggle. The policy of revolutionary defeatism is the generalization of such an approach to the collective capitalist class in wartime.

In our opinion, it is impossible to build the new Revolutionary World Party without a clear understanding of the imperialist nature of *all* Great Powers, and the importance of the rivalry between them as a driving force of the world political situation. Hence, Marxists oppose the approach of many reformists and centrists (e.g. Stalinists, Bolivarians) which can be characterized as *bourgeois geopoliticism*. Such an approach divides the world in the main enemy, usually it is U.S. imperialism, on one side and all its opponents on the other side. This shall justify a policy of support for those powers in opposition to the main enemy. Usually this results in social-imperialist support e.g. for China and Russia against the U.S.

Such *bourgeois geopoliticism* has nothing to do with authentic Marxism! Lenin and the Bolsheviks unambiguously condemned all forms of social-imperialism – irrespective of whether they support their "own" or another bourgeoisie: *"Social-chauvinism is advocacy of the idea of "defence of the fatherland" in the present war. This idea logically leads to the abandonment of the class struggle during the war, to voting for war credits, etc. In fact, the social-chauvinists are pursuing an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, for they are actually*

*championing, not "defence of the fatherland" in the sense of combating foreign oppression, but the "right" of one or other of the "Great" Powers to plunder colonies and to oppress other nations. The social-chauvinists reiterate the bourgeois deception of the people that the war is being waged to protect the freedom and existence of nations, thereby taking sides with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Among the social-chauvinists are those who justify and varnish the governments and bourgeoisie of one of the belligerent groups of powers, as well as those who, like Kautsky, argue that the socialists of all the belligerent powers are equally entitled to "defend the fatherland". Social-chauvinism, which is, in effect, defence of the privileges, the advantages, the right to pillage and plunder, of one's "own" (or any) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions and of the decision of the Basle International Socialist Congress."*³⁰

ii. In the case of *aggressions of imperialist states (or their proxies) against oppressed people* we stand for the defeat of the imperialist side and for the military victory of the oppressed people. To quote again our program: *"In military conflicts between imperialist states and Stalinist degenerated workers states or semi-colonial peoples and states, we call for the defeat of the former and for the victory of non-imperialist side. We defend the latter, even if they are led by bourgeois (e.g. Saddam Hussein), petty-bourgeois (e.g. Hamas in Palestine, Taliban in Afghanistan) or Stalinist-bureaucratic (e.g. the Communist Party of Cuba) forces. At the same time we desire to break away the working class and the oppressed from these forces and to win them for an independent class policy through the application of anti-imperialist united front tactic. This means putting demands on the existing leaderships for a common struggle against imperialism under our own banners."*

³¹ Hence, in the wars of the US against the Afghan or the Iraqi people, of Russia against the Syrian or the Chechen people, of Israel against the Palestinian people, of European imperialists against resistance forces in Africa, of imperialist proxies against the popular resistance in Somalia or in Syria, revolutionaries stand for the defeat of the imperialist camp and for the military victory of the oppressed people. The RCIT takes the same position in the case of the U.S. aggression against North Korea or Iran.

Here, too, do we strongly renounce all those reformists and centrists who refuse to support unconditionally the struggle of the oppressed people against the imperialists. Groups like the CWI or the IMT usually justify their refusal to apply the anti-imperialist united front tactic in the national liberation struggle of Argentina against Britain in 1982, of the Afghan people against the Western imperialists or of the Palestinians against Israel by referring to the reactionary leadership of the forces at the leadership of these struggles. Contrary to them the RCIT stands on the principles of Trotsky's Fourth International: *"The struggle against war and its social source, capitalism, presupposes direct, active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and wars against imperialism. A 'neutral' position is tantamount to support of imperialism."*

³² We categorically denounce these reformist and centrist forces which do not fully support the struggles and wars of the oppressed people against the imperialist masters as social-imperialist agents. To put it into the words of Leon Trotsky: *"Whoever directly or indirectly supports the system of colonization and protectorates, the domination of British capital in India, the domination of Japan in Korea or in Manchuria, of France in Indochina or in Africa, whoever does not fight against*

*colonial enslavement, whoever does not support the uprisings of the oppressed nations and their independence, whoever defends or idealizes Gandhism, that is, the policy of passive resistance on questions which can be solved only by force of arms, is, despite good intentions or bad, a lackey, an apologist, an agent of the imperialists, of the slaveholders, of the militarists, and helps them to prepare new wars in pursuit of their old aims or new."*³³

iii. In the case of wars of national oppression which are launched by semi-colonial capitalist states against weaker nations, the RCIT stands for the defeat of the former and the defense of the latter. Our approach is similar like elaborated above (in the case of an aggression of imperialists against oppressed people). Naturally, it can be the case that such a war becomes a subordinated element in a wider war, e.g. between two imperialist powers. (This was e.g. the case with Austria-Hungary's war against Serbia which became a subordinated element in the imperialist World War I.)

iv. We take a similar position in *civil wars of the workers and oppressed against a reactionary dictatorship*. Hence we stand for the defeat of the Assad regime in Syria and support the ongoing liberation struggle despite our sharp political opposition to the petty-bourgeois nationalist and Islamist leadership forces standing at the top of these struggles.

The last three types of war named here are *wars of liberation*, not *wars of oppression*. This is why socialists must take a side and support the working class and the oppressed people. *"The revolutionary proletariat distinguishes only between wars of oppression and wars of liberation. The character of a war is defined, not by diplomatic falsifications, but by the class which conducts the war and the objective aims it pursues in that war. The wars of the imperialist states, apart from the pretexts and political rhetoric, are of an oppressive character, reactionary and inimical to the people. Only the wars of the proletariat and of the oppressed nations can be characterized as wars of liberation (...)"*³⁴

v. As we said above, *conflicts between capitalist semi-colonial states* are highly complicated issues. In principle we oppose the bourgeoisie of all semi-colonial states equally. Hence, in a conflict which exists in a vacuum, we would take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. standing for the defeat on both sides. However, in real life things don't exist in a vacuum and hence each conflict has to be analyzed concretely. In the case of a power struggle let us say between the ruling classes of Egypt and Ethiopia about access to the Nile water resources, we would, under normal circumstances, support neither side. The same could be said, in principle, about a war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

But, as we have seen repeatedly, there can be additional factors which make such issues more complicated. For example in the case of the Saudi/UAE aggression against Qatar since summer 2017, we defended the later despite the fact that formally all sides are semi-colonial states. However, as we explained in our literature, under the concrete circumstances the Saudi aggression had a thoroughly reactionary character since it was attacking Qatar because of the later support for legitimate resistance movement fighting against imperialist occupation and dictatorship (e.g. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian Hamas, Syrian rebels or the Afghan Taliban), because of its support of the TV channel *Al-Jazeera* as well as because of its opposition to the US, Israeli and Saudi

war drive against Iran. In short, the Saudi aggression against Qatar was part of Riyadh's efforts to completely liquidate all obstacles for the establishment of a stable and thoroughly pro-US and pro-Israeli counter-revolutionary order in the region.³⁵

In general, it is urgent for revolutionaries in such cases to take into account the state of the class struggle in the concerned countries as well as the role of the imperialist powers (both old and new) in it. Likewise, one must study any significant changes in such developments. As we mentioned above, we have seen the example of the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s where such changes affected the tactics of Marxists. In short, revolutionaries will have to analyze each war in its concrete totality, its different factors and their relationship to each other and elaborate out of this the correct tactical conclusions. As we said somewhere else: *"This is why a conflict or war has to be studied in all its aspects, with the general, fundamental, as well as its secondary, particular, characteristics. Such an approach must follow Lenin's dialectical method to study a thing or a process 'from appearance to essence and from less profound to more profound essence.'"*³⁶

vi. Another highly complicated issue are *wars with a combined character, i.e. broader wars which includes two or more wars of different character*. World War II is a well-known example for this. Here one had wars between imperialist powers which were reactionary on both sides (e.g. Germany, Italy and Japan vs. UK/USA/France). But there were also wars between imperialists and colonial and oppressed people (e.g. China vs. Japan, Indian people vs. UK, partisan wars in Germany occupied countries) as well as between imperialist Germany and the USSR, a Stalinist-led degenerated workers state. In such cases, Marxists supported the anti-imperialist side. A similar situation can also take place in the near future. As we have dealt with this issue in detail in a special essay, we will only summarize our methodological approach at this point.³⁷

In the concrete situation today it is possible that a similar situation could emerge in a broader war in the Middle East. There could be a war between Iran and Saudi Arabia and, in parallel, between Israel and Hezbollah and/or Gaza. While the US would support, in such a scenario, the Israeli/Saudi camp, Russia and China would probably side with Iran. Let us assume that neither the U.S. nor Russia intervene directly in the war but confine themselves to delivering supply and logistic support. Here we would have a contradictory situation, or to be precise, we would be presented with dialectical contradictions of a highly contradictory imperialist world and regional order.

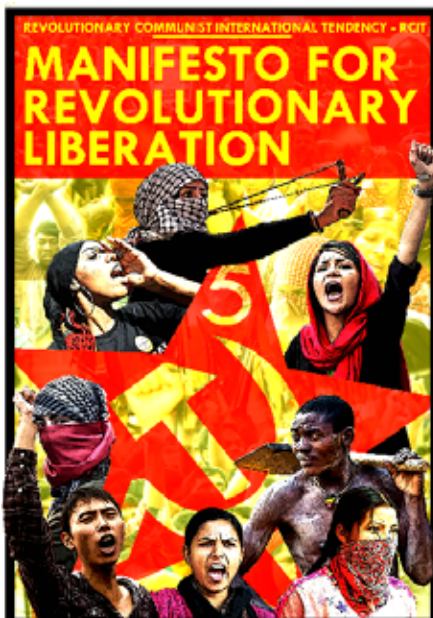
In such a scenario, the war of Israel against Gaza or Hezbollah would be utterly reactionary and Marxists would stand for the military victory of the Palestinian or Hezbollah side. However, the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have a different character. Here we would have a reactionary war on both side and Marxists would take a defeatist position in relation both to Iran as well as to Saudi Arabia.

Relationship between War and Revolution

29. We conclude this chapter by emphasizing the close relationship between war and revolution. A major war forces the ruling class to mobilize the resources of the society, taking away many people from their families (and sending a certain number back in coffins), to wage a hysterical campaign of chauvinism and ideological manipulation, etc. All this creates huge risks and particular in cases where the ruling class ends up as loser of the given war (i.e. all the sacrifices of the masses were in vain), a war can provoke mass unrest at home and even revolutionary situations. This is why the Leninist approach of transforming a reactionary war into a civil war against the own ruling class is not only correct from the view point of the historical interests of the proletariat but relates also to a realistic possibility. This is why Lenin spoke already during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05 about *"the great revolutionary role of the historic war"*.³⁸ Later, when he elaborated the full Marxist program for wars, he explained the necessity to relate the revolutionary war tactics to the objective explosive situation which a major war creates and to utilize it to advance the class struggle: *"The war has undoubtedly created a most acute crisis and has immeasurably increased the distress of the masses. The reactionary nature of this war, and the unblushing lies told by the bourgeoisie of all countries to conceal their predatory aims with "national" ideology are, on the basis of an objectively revolutionary situation, inevitably creating revolutionary moods among the masses. It is our duty to help the masses become conscious of these moods, deepen them and give them shape. This task finds correct expression only in the slogan: convert the imperialist war into a civil war; all consistently waged class struggles in wartime and all seriously conducted "mass-action" tactics inevitably lead to this. It is impossible to foretell whether a powerful revolutionary movement will flare-up in connection with, during or after the first or the second imperialist war of the Great Powers; in any case it is our bounden duty to work systematically and unswervingly in this direction."*³⁹

30. In fact, the whole history of class societies confirms that major wars are pregnant with revolutions. To name but a few historical examples we refer to the *Jacquerie*, the great peasant uprising in northern France during the Hundred Years War after the ruling class suffered a number of defeats against the English; the heroic uprising of the Russian peasants led by Yemelyan Pugachev in 1774/75 at the end of the long and exhausting Russo-Turkish war; the humiliating defeats of the despised Qing dynasty in the two Opium Wars against the Western Great Powers which gave birth first to 110 local peasant insurrections in 1841-49 and finally to the powerful uprising of the religious social-revolutionary *Tai ping* popular movement – one of the longest and bloodiest civil wars in human history (1850-64); and then we have the well-known examples of modern history with the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71 leading to the *Parisian Commune*, the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05 which led to the first Russian Revolution in 1905-07, World War I which resulted in the Russian October Revolution 1917 as well as a number of other workers uprisings in 1918/19 and finally World War II which provoked civil wars and revolutionary developments in various countries (e.g. China, Korea, Greece).

31. This does not mean that every war will result in a revolutionary uprising of the popular masses. But these examples demonstrate that major wars which mobilize the resources of the whole economy, which effect all classes of the society and which influence the whole political life and hence the consciousness of the masses, that such events provoke massive social and political instability and hence can lead to revolutionary ruptures. As we are convinced that chauvinism, military tensions and wars are becoming an increasingly defining feature of the capitalist society, we think that such a development towards militarism will in the end also break ground for sharp class struggles and revolutionary explosions.



NEW RCIT PROGRAM!

Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation

Adopted at the 1st World Congress of the RCIT in October 2016

Introduction * I. Decaying Capitalism * II. Today's Worldwide Historic Revolutionary Period * III. The Reactionary Offensive of the Ruling Class * IV. A Program for Socialist Revolution to Halt Humanity's Collapse into Barbarism * V. The Crisis of Leadership and the Construction of a Revolutionary World Party * VI. Work in Mass Organizations and the United Front Tactic * VII. The Semi-Colonial South * VIII. The Emerging Imperialist Great Powers of the East: China and Russia * IX. The Old Imperialist Great Powers: The EU, North America and Japan * X. Conclusion

A RCIT Pamphlet, 36 pages, A5 Format

III. THE STATE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY: DELAYING THE ERUPTION OF ACCUMULATED CONTRADICTIONS

32. As we noted already in our last World Perspective document, the bourgeoisie has succeeded in delaying for now the collapse of the world economy by a new Great Recession. The latest IMF reports present a relatively optimistic picture. In its *January 2018 Update* the IMF states: “The cyclical upswing underway since mid-2016 has continued to strengthen. Some 120 economies, accounting for three quarters of world GDP, have seen a pickup in growth in year-on-year terms in 2017, the broadest synchronized global growth upsurge since 2010.”⁴⁰ The World GDP is supposed to grow (calculated by Market Exchange Rates) by 2.5% (2016), 3.2% (2017), 3.3% (2018) and 3.2% (2019).⁴¹ The *IMF October 2017 Report* gave the following figures for the development of global GDP, industrial production, investment and trade. They reflect a certain, albeit not particularly impressive, upswing. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2)

33. However, the latest panic at the global stock markets in early February demonstrates the fragile state of the capitalist world economy and confirms the RCIT’s analysis which we have elaborated in the past years.⁴⁴ The smarter bourgeois economists are also fully aware that there is not much behind the official optimistic fanfares. The *World Economic Forum*, the organizer of the summit of the world’s elite in Davos in January, warns in its report: “However, this relatively upbeat picture masks numerous concerns. This has been the weakest post-recession recovery on record. Productivity growth remains puzzlingly weak. Investment growth has been subdued, and in developing economies it has slowed sharply since 2010. And in many countries the social and political fabric has been badly frayed by many years of stagnating real incomes.”⁴⁵ Likewise, the OECD notes in its latest report: “Whilst the near-term cyclical improvement is welcome, it remains modest compared with the standards of past recoveries. Moreover, the prospects for continuing the global growth up-tick through 2019 and securing the foundations for higher potential output and more resilient and inclusive growth do not yet appear to be in place.”

⁴⁶ In fact, there has not been a single year in this cycle since 2008 in which global production has reached the average of the years 1990-2007! (See Figure 3 and Figure 4) The development of investment and profits continues to be weak or is even in decline. In Figure 5 we see the latest World Bank statistic showing how weak investment and profit growth is, particularly if we compare it with the last cycle in the 2000s. We get an even worse picture when we look to the dynamic of investment in the other major economy – China. (See Figure 6)

34. Furthermore, as we have pointed out in past World Perspectives documents, we continue to see a stagnation of world trade in relation to production.⁵¹ This reflects the stagnation tendencies of the world economy in general and the rise of protectionism in particular since the beginning of the new historic period in 2008. (See Figure 7) As we have said, the era of globalization is about to come

to an end. According to the *World Trade Organization* 791 new non-tariff barriers appeared annually on average in the years 2010-15 – that is, more than ever in history.⁵² Another reflection of this development is the decline of cross-border capital flows as a percentage of global GDP since the Great Recession in 2008/09. From a peak level of 20.7% in 2007 it fell to a record-low of 2.6% in 2015. (See Figure 8) This trend of de-globalization is also reflected in the decline of merger & acquisitions and greenfield investment by the multi-national corporations in 2017. According to a UNCTAD report investment in merger & acquisitions decreased from \$869 billion (2016) to \$666 (2017) and greenfield investment projects from \$834 billion (2016) to \$571 (2017).⁵³ Given the aggressive protectionism advocated by the Trump Administration there is a realistic possibility that a trade war could start in 2018 between the U.S. and China which would trigger another recession.⁵⁴

35. These stagnation tendencies of the business cycle reflect the failure of the monopoly bourgeoisie to overcome the fundamental inner contradictions of the capitalist world economy – its over-accumulation of capital and the fall of the rate of profit. Even the latest issue of the U.S. “*Economic Report of the President*”, annually produced by the White House and not known for a pessimistic outlook, is forced to draw attention to the decreasing rate of capital accumulation. It reproduces a figure showing the development of net investment as a share of the U.S. capital stock between 1945 and 2015. (See Figure 9) This figure reflects the declining dynamic of the expanded reproduction of capital: “In 2009, net investment as a share of the capital stock fell to its lowest level in the post-World War II era and the nominal capital stock even declined. Although net investment has rebounded somewhat in the recovery, its level as a share of the capital stock remains well below the historical average and it declined slightly in 2015.”⁵⁷ Hence, business investment in the US has ground to a halt and the age of the existing means of production has risen as aging equipment and technology is not replaced. As a result, as the economist David Rosenberg observed in a report to the U.S. Senate: “The last time the private sector capital stock was this old and obsolete was back in 1958.” (See Figure 10) We see a similar tendency in the downward trend of the global rate of profit as the Marxist economist Michael Roberts, among others, has demonstrated in his works. (See Figure 11)

Figure 1. World Trade, Industrial Production, and Manufacturing PMI, 2011-2017 ⁴²



Figure 4. Global industrial production growth ⁴⁸



Figure 2. Global Fixed Investment and Trade ⁴³

Figure 1.2. Global Fixed Investment and Trade

Investment began to pick up in the third quarter of 2016. Global trade accelerated as well, before moderating more recently.

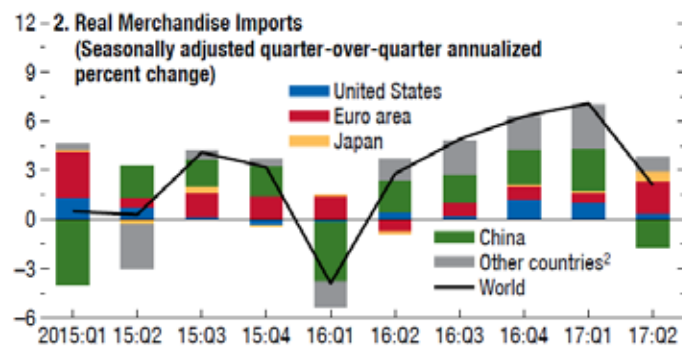
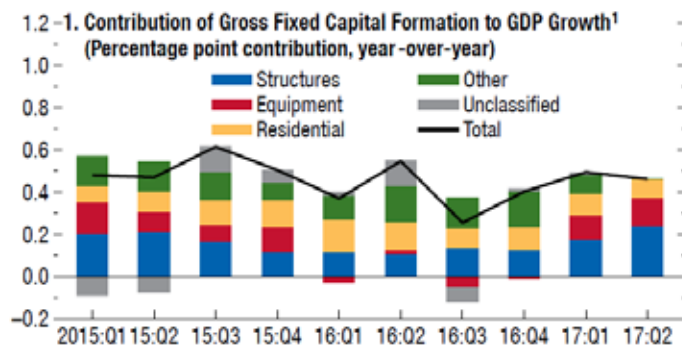
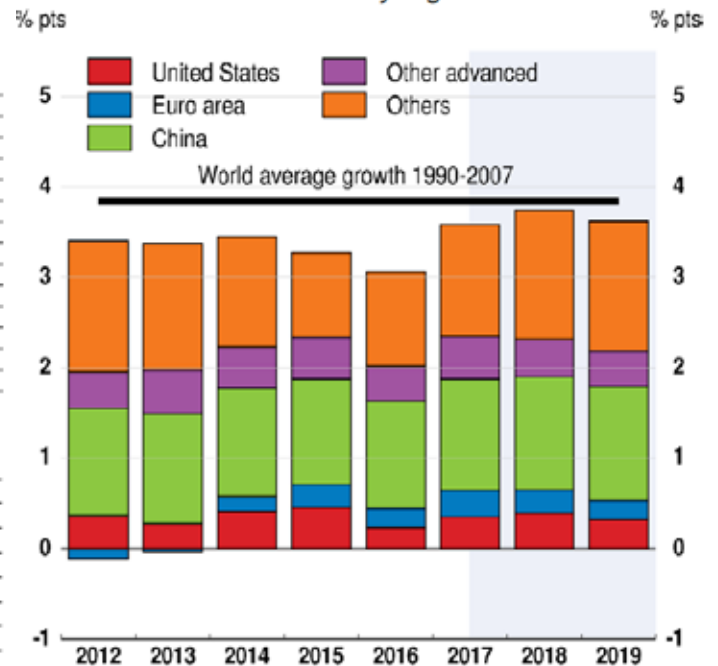


Figure 3. Global GDP Growth 2012-2019 compared to Average Growth 1990-2007 ⁴⁷

Global GDP growth

Contributions by regions



Delaying the Beginning of the Next Recession

36. While the capitalist class has been unable to overcome these fundamental contradictions of its mode of production, it has been able, until now, to delay the beginning of the next recession. What have been the reasons for this? There are several reasons but the most important seem to be a massive increase in debt reaching a level higher than before the last recession in 2007. Related to this there is a huge bubble in the financial sector which will sooner or later explode. All this has been made possible by the reckless policy of the imperialist central banks of printing money and keeping down the interest rates at nearly zero.

37. Let us look to these developments more in detail. In Table 1 we see the latest calculations of the *Institute of International Finance* on global debt. It shows that debt as a share of global output rose massively in the past 15 years. Significantly, while debt as a share of global GDP was 276% before the last recession, this has grown to 327% in 2017 – despite all the official promises to reduce debt as it was understood to be a major reason for the severity of the last recession!

38. In Table 2 we see the breakdown of this debt into the different sectors: Non-Financial Corporations, Government, Financial Sector, Household. It is of particular interest to see that – compared with the situation before the last recession – the two sectors where debt increased most rapidly have been the non-financial corporations and the government. While it is only logical that the capitalists are prepared to increase their debt in order to keep their business operations going in this period of declining profit rate, it is telling that government debt is increasing massively but not that of the financial sector. This is all the more interesting since it was the financial sector which was massively in debt before the recession in 2007 and which triggered it. The explanation lies in the fundamental character of the capitalist government – as Marx and Engels already stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: “*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*”⁶² Concretely, the capitalist state has taken over the debts of the banks and, by this, helped the financial speculators to start their risky business again. Meanwhile, the working class has to pay for the increased public debt with higher taxes and cuts in social service!

39. The growth of indebtedness is taking place in *all* imperialist economies. In Figure 12 we see how massively the gap between corporate debt and productive capital stock has been growing between 1995 and 2016 both in the United States as well as in the Euro Area. However, while the level of indebtedness was already high in the Western imperialist economies before the recession in 2008/09 but not so much in the so-called “emerging markets” (including China), this has changed now. In fact, debt has even increased faster in China than in the old imperialist economies! According to the latest OECD report, aggregate debt in China rose from less than 100% of GDP at the end of 2008 to 170% by early 2016.⁶⁴ According to another report, China’s total debt is believed to be around 280% of GDP, with corporate debt rising quickly to 160% of GDP, the highest level among the major world economies.⁶⁵ Finally, in Table 2 we can see that debts in government

and non-financial corporations sector increased in nearly all G20 countries. Marx observed in Volume III of *Capital* that the credit system helps the capitalists to accelerate production. However, he also warned that indebtedness is a double-edged sword. The more it accelerates production, the more it will later result in violent eruptions: “*Hence, the credit system accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world-market. It is the historical mission of the capitalist system of production to raise these material foundations of the new mode of production to a certain degree of perfection. At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this contradiction – crises – and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production.*”⁶⁶

40. There are many indications that the global economy is experiencing a similar bubble as it did in the last two decades. Global stock markets are hitting all-time high after all-time high. But in fact this is a bubble which should soon implode. The WEF alarmingly observes: “*US stocks have only twice in history been higher than they are at the moment: just prior to the crashes of 1929 and 2000.*”⁶⁹ Another example for the bizarre bubble is the hype around the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, which increased in value by around 1200% in 2017! Likewise, the *Global House Price Index* has increased massively and has reached now the same level when the bubble was at its height in 2007! (See Figure 13) In short, assets are unsustainably overpriced and this bubble must implode rather sooner than later. Such an implosion most likely would trigger another Great Recession.

Why the Next Recession will be Worse

41. In fact, the next recession will most likely be worse than the last. This is the case for a number of reasons related to the deep stagnation of the capitalist world economy. But at this place we want to point out only three important factors. First, during the last recession in 2008/09, the dramatic effects on the world economy could be softened by the fact that the recession had its focus in the old imperialist countries. Hence, China which experienced still some significant growth, as well as other “emerging economies”, could soften the consequences of the slump. This is no longer the case. As we have demonstrated, indebtedness in China and other “emerging economies” has significantly increased and, hence, their ability for counter-cyclical interventions is much more limited now.

42. Secondly, the dramatic effects on the world economy in 2008/09 could be softened by the massive state-capitalist intervention. The capitalist governments were prepared to bail out the banks, take over their debts and pump money into the economy since then (the so-called “*Quantitative Easing*”, as we have explained in past documents on the world economy). However, again, this instrument is no longer available. The governments are now much higher indebted than they were last time and therefore their room for maneuver is much more limited.

43. Thirdly, the central banks were able in past recessions to lower the interest rates. This monetary instrument made it easier for banks and corporations to take new loans and to soften the effects of the recession. However, this instrument too is no longer available since the central banks already lowered the interest rates to nearly 0% in the past years! Former U.S. Treasury

Figure 5. US: Investment and Profit Growth 2000-2017 ⁴⁹

A. Investment and profit growth

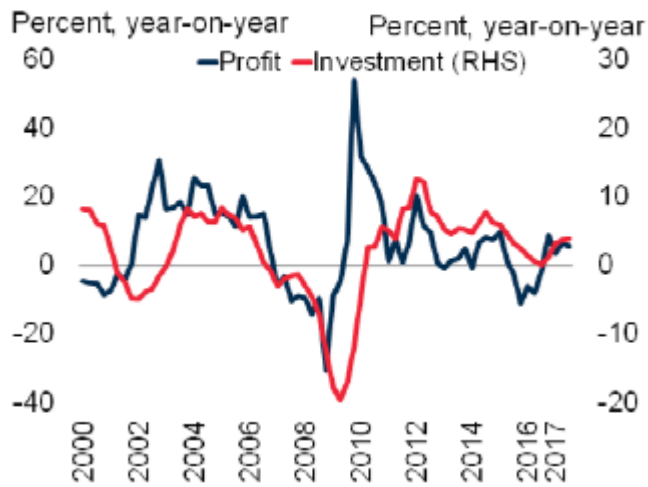


Figure 6. China: Investment Growth 2015-2017 ⁵⁰

B. Investment growth

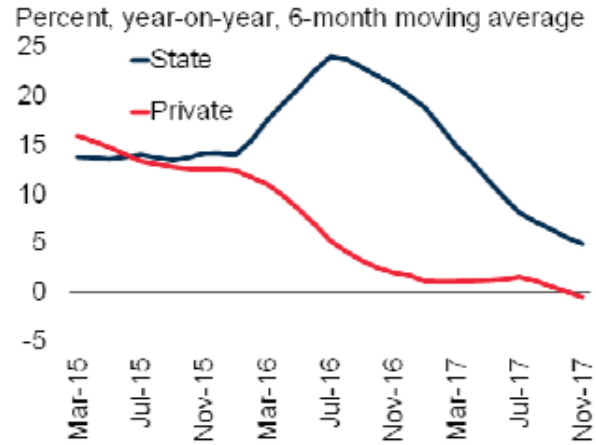
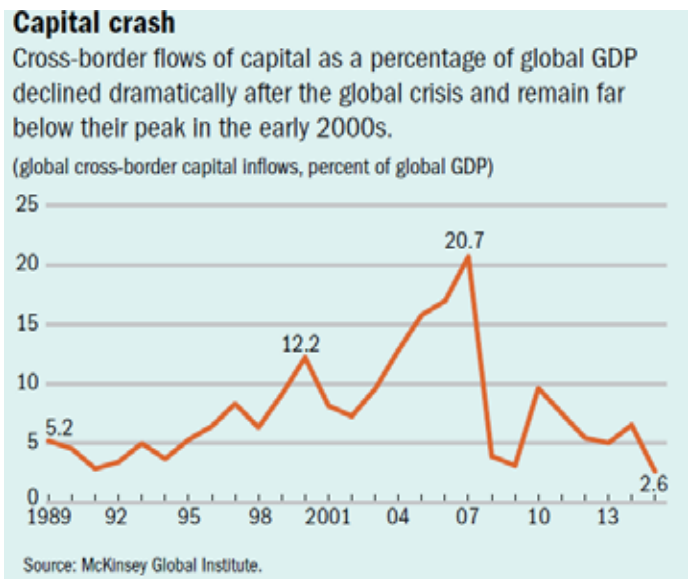


Figure 7. Ratio between Global Goods Trade and Global Industrial Production 2000-2018 ⁵⁵

D. Ratio between global goods trade and global industrial production



Figure 8. Cross-Border Capital Flows as a Percentage of Global GDP ⁵⁶



Secretary Larry Summers noted in a recent speech that the Fed typically has lowered interest rates by 5 percentage points over time to stimulate the economy in recessions. As we can see in Figure 14 the U.S. Fed lowered interest rates in every recession since the mid-1970s between 5 and 10%. This is no longer possible as the Fed had lowered the federal funds rate close to zero and just recently raised it to 1.25-1.5%. Other Central Banks – like the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England – are in an even worse position since their interest rates are currently even lower than the Fed's.

44. There can be no doubt that the capitalist world economy is heading towards a new Great Recession which will be most likely more devastating than the last one. An increasing number of economists already get nervous. Jean-Claude Trichet, the former President of the European Central Bank from 2003 to 2011, recently warned in an interview about the “a very serious risk of a new crisis.”⁷² We can not say if the next Great Recession will happen in 2018 or later. In fact, the massive state-capitalist interventions and the huge global indebtedness, which reminds one to a Ponzi scheme, make a precise prognosis difficult. Furthermore, as the IMF pointed out in a recent

report, geopolitical crises like wars or political crisis can also provoke recession: “Rising geopolitical tensions and domestic political discord can hurt global market sentiment and confidence, burdening economic activity.”⁷³

45. The Marxist economist Evgenij Preobrazhensky pointed out in his last book, before he was silenced by the Stalin regime, that “the monopolistic structure of capitalism so curtails—or perhaps it would be better to say, so distorts—the action of the law of value, that today this law can no longer regulate the process of reproduction as it once did in the epoch of free competition.”⁷⁴ Such a distortion of the law of value as a regulator results in “changing the character of the economic cycle under monopolism”.⁷⁵ Therefore, Preobrazhensky concludes, the business cycles in the epoch of monopoly capitalism takes “inevitably longer and assumes a more agonizing character”.⁷⁶ It seems to us that these observations of this great Marxist economist are particularly relevant for understanding the stagnant and protracted nature of the cycle since the new historic period opened up in 2008/09. In any way, we are convinced that whenever the next Great Recession will explode, it will tremendously shatter the bourgeois order and open a new phase of major attacks by the capitalists as well as of class struggles.

FOOTNOTES

1 Leon Trotsky: The Third International After Lenin. The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals (1928), Pathfinder Press, New York 1970, p. 198

2 We refer readers to the RCIT's past World Perspective documents which can be accessed in our journals as well as on our website: RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013

3 This is how Trump's economic adviser Gary Cohn characterizes him. Others choose similar attributes. For Steve Mnuchin and Reince Priebus, Trump is an “idiot”. For his national security adviser, H. R. McMaster, Trump is a “dope”. (Quotes are taken from Michael Wolff: Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House, Henry Holt and Company, London 2018, p. 301). And Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called Trump, as has been widely

reported, a “moron”. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/04/politics/tillerson-trump-moron/index.html>) For the RCIT's analysis of the Trump Administration we refer readers to the pamphlet of Michael Pröbsting: The Meaning, Consequences and Lessons of Trump's Victory. On the Lessons of the US Presidential Election Outcome and the Perspectives for the Domestic and International Class Struggle, 24.November 2016, Special Issue of Revolutionary Communism No. 58 (December 2016), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/meaning-of-trump/>

4 For our analysis of capitalism's decay in the present historic period we refer readers to RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, Chapter II, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/part2/>; Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, Vienna 2013, chapter 14, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

5 Leon Trotsky: The Revolution Betrayed. What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going? (1936), Pathfinder Press, New York 1972, p. 186

6 We remark, as a side-note, that anti-migrant chauvinism fulfils not the same, but a similar role. It is destined to strengthen the ideological control of the bourgeoisie over sectors of the domestic working class and middle layers. It often fulfils this purpose for a certain period. However, it is also a risky instrument in cases of domestic crisis of the ruling class where sectors of the working class and the middle layers radically turn away from the ruling elite. In such situations chauvinism can provoke massive political instability: either by leading to clashes between sectors of the working class and the middle layers and / or by creating a fertile soil for the fraternization between domestic and migrant brothers and sisters on an anti-patriotic platform.

7 World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2018 13th Edition, p. 5

8 Eurasia Group: Top Risks 2018, p. 3

Figure 9. Net Investment as a Share of the Capital Stock, USA, 1945-2015 ⁵⁸

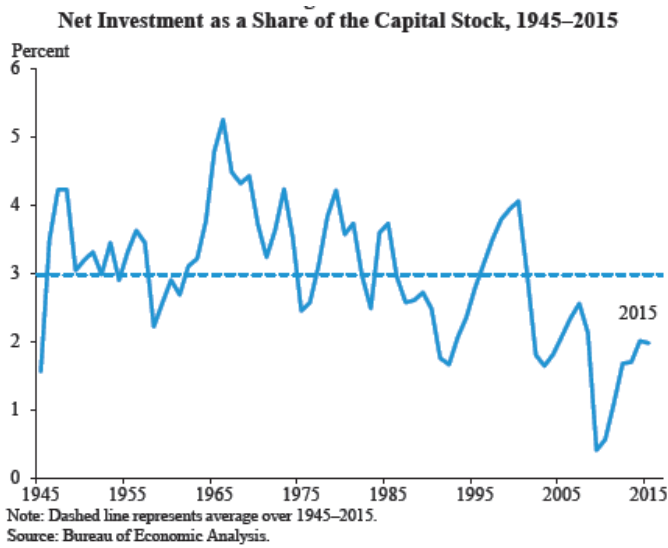


Figure 10. USA: Average Age of Private Fixed Assets, 1975-2014 ⁵⁹

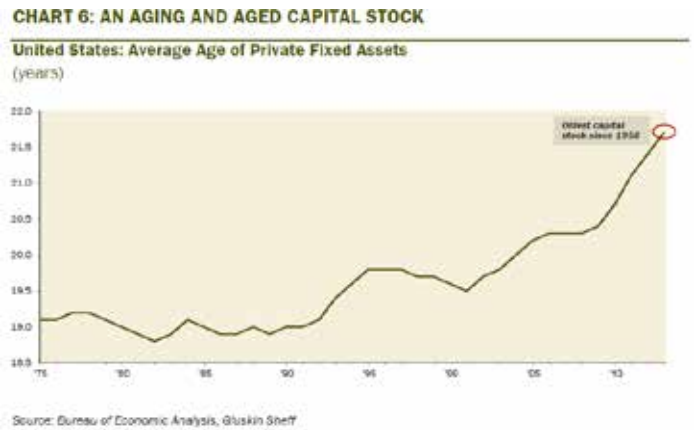


Table 1. Global Debt (All Sectors), 2002-2017 ⁶¹

	<i>In Trillion US-Dollar</i>	<i>Global Debt as a Share of Global GDP</i>
2002	86	246%
2007	149	276%
2012	205	305%
2017	217	327%

Figure 11. Global Corporate Profits ⁶⁰

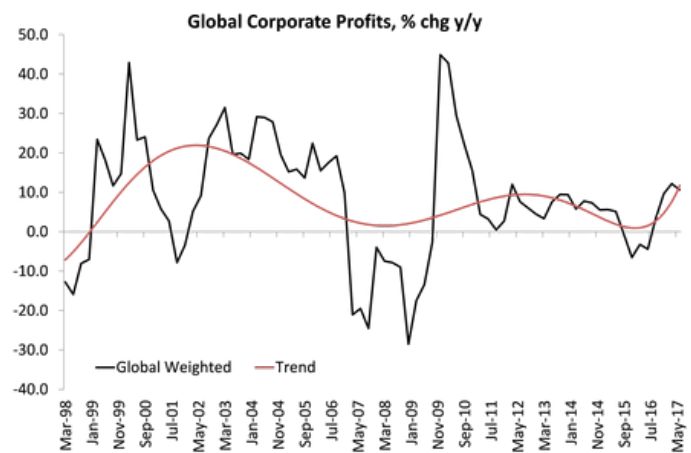


Table 2. Global Sectoral Indebtedness (All Sectors), as a Share of Global GDP, 1997-2017 ⁶³

	<i>Non-Financial Corporations</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Financial Sector</i>	<i>Household</i>
1997	64%	58%	53%	42%
2007	77%	58%	86%	57%
2017	92%	87%	80%	59%

Figure 12. Corporate Debt and Productive Capital Stock in the US and Euro Area, 1995-2016 ⁶⁷

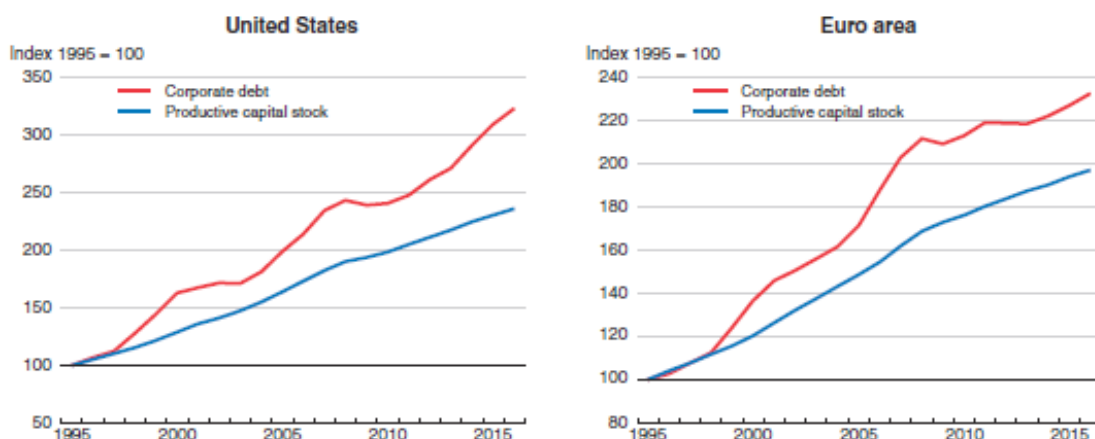


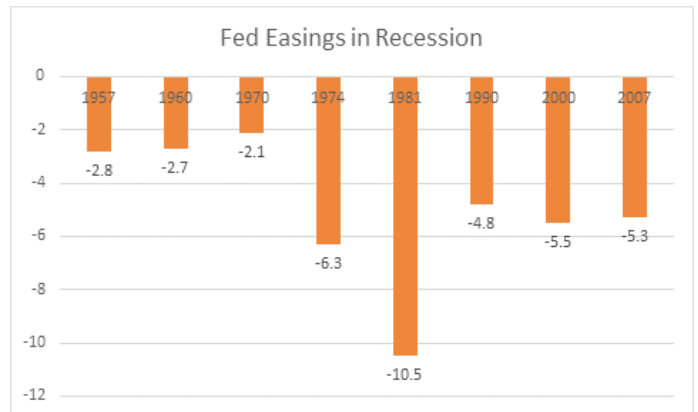
Table 3. Sovereign and Nonfinancial Private Sector Debt-to-GDP Ratios (Percent) ⁶⁸

2006	2016	
Japan	343	388
Canada	221	
295		
USA	225	259
Britain	210	250
Italy	205	246
Australia	187	243
South Korea	183	232
France	164	226
Germany	180	168
China	142	254
Brazil	118	145
India	125	125
South Africa	104	124
Turkey	81	113
Mexico	64	103
Russia	49	84
Saudi Arabia	66	78
Argentina	93	73
Indonesia	61	68

Figure 13. Global House Price Index Q1-2000 – Q2-2017 ⁷⁰



Figure 14. U.S. Fed lowering of Interest Rates in Recession, 1957-2007 ⁷¹



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9 Jean-Marie Guéhenno: 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2017, Foreign Policy, January 5, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/05/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2017/>

10 Jochen Bittner und Jörg Lau: Nichts ist mehr sicher. Von Trumps Amerika über Nordkorea bis zum Mittleren Osten: All diese Krisen stehen für eine Welt in Unordnung. Und manchmal genügt ein Funke, um einen großen Krieg auszulösen, DIE ZEIT, 7. Dezember 2017, p. 2

11 World Economic Forum: The Global Risks Report 2018 13th Edition, p. 10

12 Munich Security Report 2018. To the Brink – and Back?, p. 32

13 The Palestinian people and the Arabs in general, call the expulsion of the Palestinian people by the Zionists in 1948 “Nakba”.

14 The RCIT has published a more detailed elaboration of the Marxist United Front Tactic in a book of Michael Pröbsting: *Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today*. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today. On the Application of the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period, RCIT 2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/book-united-front/>

15 For a more detailed elaboration of our understanding of the historic revolutionary period which opened in 2008/09 we refer readers to Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, Vienna 2013, chapter 14i), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>; RCIT: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries (January 2016), Chapter II, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 46, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>;

16 To give an example we refer to a recently published study of two analysts from the U.S. Federal Reserve Board. This study attempts to create an index of “geopolitical risk” and their effects for the world economy. They conclude that geopolitical events (we Marxists would prefer to speak about the struggle between the classes and states) indeed have important consequences for the economy. *“We find that an increase in geopolitical risk induces persistent declines in industrial production, employment, and international trade, and that both economic policy uncertainty and consumer confidence enhance the transmission of geopolitical risk shocks. We also document that stock returns experience a short-lived but significant drop in response to higher geopolitical risk. The stock market response varies substantially across industries, with the defense sector experiencing positive excess returns, and with sectors exposed to the broader economy – for instance steelworks and mining – experiencing negative returns.”*

Moreover, the authors arrive to the conclusion that such “geopolitical risks” have substantially increased in the past years. They construct a historical index covering the years 1900 to 2017. They arrive at the conclusion that, leaving aside the periods around the two world wars, the period since 9/11 in 2001 has seen the most significant instability and crisis and that this process is accelerating. *“High geopolitical risk leads to a decline in real activity, lower stock returns, and movements in capital flows away from emerging economies and towards advanced economies. (...) Extending our index back to 1900, geopolitical risk rose dramatically during the World War I and World War II, was elevated in the early 1980s, and has drifted upward since the beginning of the 21st century.”* (Both quotes are taken from: Dario Caldaray Matteo Iacoviello: Measuring Geopolitical Risk, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, January 10, 2018)

17 Leon Trotsky: Defeatism vs. Defensism (1937), in: Trotsky Writings 1937-38, p. 86

18 See e.g. RCIT: On the 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of World War I: The Struggle against Imperialism and War. The Marxist Understanding of Modern Imperialism and the Revolutionary Program in Light of the Increasing Rivalry between the Great Powers, Revolutionary Uprisings, and Counterrevolutionary Setbacks, 25.6.2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/struggle-vs-imperialism-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, Vienna 2013, chapter 12 and 13, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>; Yossi Schwartz: Marxism and War, 30.1.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxism-and-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference. The failure of sectarian “anti-imperialism” in the West: Some general considerations from the Marxist point of view and the example of the democratic revolution in Libya in 2011, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>; Michael Pröbsting: Dialectics and Wars in the Present Period. Preface to Rudolf Klement’s Principles and Tactics in War, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/dialectics-war/>

19 See in addition to the books and pamphlets mentioned in other footnotes in this chapter:

Michael Pröbsting: Is Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism Incompatible with the Concept of Permanent Revolution? 5 May 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-permanent-revolution/>; Michael Pröbsting: The China Question and the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, December 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/reply-to-csr-pco-on-china/>; Michael Pröbsting: China’s Emergence as an Imperialist Power, Summer 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-china-new-politics/>; Michael Pröbsting: Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today’s Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: Russia and China as Great Imperialist Powers. A Summary of the RCIT’s Analysis, 28 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-china-and-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: More on Russia and China as Great Imperialist Powers. A Reply to Chris Slee (Socialist Alliance, Australia) and Walter Daum (LRP, USA), 11 April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/reply-to-slee-on-russia-china/>; Michael Pröbsting: Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, Special Issue of *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21 (March 2014), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; Michael Pröbsting: China’s transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4/>;

20 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: No to chauvinist war-mongering by Japanese and Chinese imperialism! Chinese and Japanese workers: Your main enemy is at home! Stop the conflict on the Senkaku/Diaoyu-islands in the East China Sea! 23.9.2012, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 6, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/no-war-between-china-and-japan/>

21 See on this the numerous documents and articles of the RCIT on the Syrian civil war which are collected in a special section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

22 See e.g. the RCIT’s pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: The Uprising in East Ukraine and Russian Imperialism. An Analysis

of Recent Developments in the Ukrainian Civil War and their Consequences for Revolutionary Tactics, 22.October 2014, in: Special Issue of Revolutionary Communism No.28, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-and-russian-imperialism/>. More statements and articles on the civil war in the Ukraine can be read in the following section of our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/>

23 See on this the RCIT's pamphlet Michael Pröbsting: The China-India Conflict: Its Causes and Consequences. What are the background and the nature of the tensions between China and India in the Sikkim border region? What should be the tactical conclusions for Socialists and Activists of the Liberation Movements? 18 August 2017, Revolutionary Communism No. 71, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-india-rivalry/>

24 Leon Trotsky: Not a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State? (1937); in: Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38, p. 70

25 The German philosopher Hegel liked to say – and the Marxist classics referred to this insight many times – that “*the truth is always concrete*”.

26 See e.g. Workers Power: The Iran-Iraq war: Generalised Defeatism - not the Marxist method (1980), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-iran-iraq-war-generalised-defeatism-not-the-marxist-method-1980/>

27 Abram Deborin: Lenin als revolutionärer Dialektiker (1925); in: Nikolai Bucharin/Abram Deborin: Kontroversen über dialektischen und mechanistischen Materialismus, Frankfurt a.M. 1974, p. 125 (out translation)

28 V. I. Lenin: War and Revolution (1917) ; in: CW Vol. 24, p. 398

29 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, p.62, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>

30 G. Zinoviev / V. I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915) ; in: LCW Vol. 21, pp. 306-307 (our emphasis)

31 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, pp.62-63

32 Resolution on the Antiwar Congress of the London Bureau (1936), in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, p. 99

33 Leon Trotsky: Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam (1932), in: Writings 1932, p. 153

34 Leon Trotsky: Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam (1932), in: Writings 1932, p. 153

35 Michael Pröbsting: Qatar-Gulf Crisis: Another Offensive of the Arab Counter-Revolution, 10 June 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/qatar-gulf-crisis/>

36 See Michael Pröbsting: Dialectics and Wars in the Present Period. Preface to Rudolf Klement's Principles and Tactics in War, June 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/dialectics-war/>. Lenin's quote is taken from: V.I. Lenin: Conspectus of Hegel's Book *The Science Of Logic*. Section Three: The Idea (1914); in: LCW 38, p.221

37 See Michael Pröbsting: Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference. The failure of sectarian “anti-imperialism” in the West: Some general considerations from the Marxist point of view and the example of the democratic revolution in Libya in 2011, Autumn 2012, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>; Yossi Schwartz and Max Bonham: On the new Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran, 26.12.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/new-cold-war-between-saudi-arabia-and-iran/>

38 V.I. Lenin: The Fall of Port Arthur (1905), in: LCW 8, p.53

39 V.I. Lenin: Socialism and War (1915), in: LCW 21, p.313

40 IMF: World Economic Outlook, Update, Brighter Prospects, Optimistic Markets, Challenges Ahead, 22 January 2018, p. 2

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“Purchasing Power Parity” instead those calculated on the basis of “Market Exchange Rates”. Calculations based on “Purchasing Power Parity” are said to better reflect the growth of poorer countries while the “Market Exchange Rates” reflect growth rates expressed in the money terms of the leading world currencies (usually the US-Dollar). Leaving aside that this claim is in itself doubtful, it is clear that *global* growth rates must be calculated by a *single* measure, i.e. a single currency and not by different measures. The IMF and other economists do so only because they want to make the official growth rates look better, i.e. suggesting a higher growth rate.

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46 OECD: Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 12

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48 OECD: Economic Outlook, Volume 2017 Issue 2, p. 14

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- 55 World Bank: Global Economic Prospects, January 2018, p. 18
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- 57 Economic Report of the President, January 2017, Washington, p. 104
- 58 Economic Report of the President, January 2017, Washington, p. 105
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- 69 WEF: Global Risks Report 2018, p.19
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Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today

The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today.

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – MARXISM AND THE UNITED FRONT TACTIC TODAY. The book's subtitle is: The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today. On the Application of the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period. It contains eight chapters plus an appendix (172 pages) and includes 9 tables and 5 figures. 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.

The united front tactic is a crucial instrument for revolutionaries under today's circumstances in which the mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed are dominated by social democratic, Stalinist and petty-bourgeois-populist forces.

The purpose of this document is both to summarize the main ideas of the Marxist united front tactic while at the same time explaining its development and modification which have become necessary due to political changes which have transpired in the

working class liberation movement since the tactic's original formulation.

In this book we initially summarize the main characteristics of the united front tactic and elaborate the approach of the Marxist classics to this issue. We then outline important social developments in the working class and the popular masses as well as in their political formations in recent decades. From there we will discuss how the united front tactic should be applied in light of a number of new developments (the rise of petty-bourgeois populist parties, the decline of the classic reformist parties, the role of national minorities and migrants in imperialist countries, etc.). The eight chapters of the book are accompanied by nine tables and five figures.

