



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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The Next Great Recession of Capitalism is Looming

PLUS: Rivalry between the Great Powers U.S. and China

Syria: The Popular Masses Hold Out against the Assad Tyranny

China: Oppression of the Muslim Uyghurs

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The Rivalry between the U.S. and China as the Main Axis of Inner-Imperialist Contradictions

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 02.10.2018

Marxists have emphasized in the past years that the acceleration of the rivalry between the Great Powers is one of the most important characteristics of the present historic period. This is one of the crucial changes in world politics in the past decades. As we elaborated, there are basically five Great Powers: the U.S., China, the European Union, Russia and Japan. (In addition there are several smaller imperialist states like South Korea, Australia, or the Switzerland.)¹

However, we think it is possible and necessary to arrive at a certain "hierarchization" among these Great Powers.² In our view the two strongest, most important, the development of world politics and world economy most determining imperialist powers are the U.S. and China.³ These two states are without doubt the two strongest economic powers. This becomes, once more, obvious in the current Global Trade War which has at its center the conflict between the U.S. and China.⁴ While Russia is militarily superior to China (and all other imperialist powers except the U.S.), it is economically so much weaker that we can not treat Moscow as equal with Beijing.⁵ Consequently, we characterize the rivalry between the U.S. and China as the main axis of the global inner-imperialist contradictions.

We have demonstrated in a number of studies that China has become the most important challenger of the U.S. as the hegemonic imperialist power.⁶ At this place we limit ourselves to present only a few characteristic facts.

When we look at the basis of capitalist value production – global industrial production – we see that the US's share

decreased from 25.1% (2000) to 17.7% (2015), Western Europe's share also declined from 12.1% to 9.2%, while China's share grew from 6.5% (2000) to 23.6% (2015).⁷

Likewise, while the U.S.'s share in world trade declined from 15.1 (2001) to 11.4% (2016), China's share rose in this period from 4.0% to 11.5%.⁸ According to the latest statistics published by the World Trade Organization, China's share in merchandise trade in 2017 has been 11.5% while the US had 11.1%.⁹

A similar development can be observed when we analyze the national composition of the leading capitalist monopolies. Comparing the *Forbes Global 2000* list – a list the world's 2000 largest corporations – of the year 2003 with the year 2017, we see that while the US remains the strongest power, its share has declined substantially from 776 corporations (38.8%) to 565 (28.2%). At the same time, China's share grew dramatically and it has now become the number two among the Great Powers. (See Table 1)

While Russia is weaker on an economic level, it still plays an important role given its military and political weight. In addition to important monopolies like Gazprom or Rosneft, Russia has a huge military-industrial complex making it the second largest military power behind the U.S. and ahead of all other imperialist states. (See Table 2)¹¹

Other imperialist powers might come close to the U.S. respectively China in this or that area. But in their totality they do not match these two dominant Great Powers. Japan, for example, is economically strong. But for various reasons, one of them the consequences of its defeat in

Table 1. National Composition of the World's 2000 Largest Corporations, 2003 and 2017 (*Forbes Global 2000* List)¹⁰

	2003		2017	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
USA	776	38.8%	565	28.2%
China	13	0.6%	263	13.1%
Japan	331	16.5%	229	11.4%
United Kingdom	132	6.6%	91	4.5%
France	67	3.3%	59	2.9%
Canada	50	2.5%	58	2.9%
Germany	64	3.2%	51	2.5%

Table 2. World Nuclear Forces, 2018¹²

Country	Deployed Warheads	Other Warheads	Total Inventory
USA	1,750	4,700	6,450
Russia	1,600	5,250	6,850
France	280	20	300
China	–	280	280
UK	120	95	215

World War II, it is politically and military subordinated to the U.S. and can not play an independent role. Germany, the economically strongest European power, faces also the consequences of its defeat in World War II and, as a result, still can not play an independent military role in global affairs.

Furthermore, one has to make a certain reservation about the EU as a Global Power. Basically it is not a unified state but rather a federation in making with various inner contradictions. This substantially limits its ability to intervene politically and military in global affairs. However, we will not focus on this issue here since we have dealt with this elsewhere and, furthermore, it does not alter the fundamental argument in this place.¹³

Of course, each of these Great Powers is an independent power following their own interests. But they can only act in the world arena (and actually do so) if they operate in an alliance with one of the two dominating Great Powers U.S. resp. China. They can hardly play any significant role without the support of one of the two. And in any alliance with one of them (the U.S. resp. China), it is the later which plays the dominant role but neither the EU, Russia nor Japan.

Furthermore, when analyzing the Great Powers it is crucial to take into account *the dynamic of the development*. The U.S., the EU and Japan are old, declining, imperialist powers while China and Russia are new, rising powers. Naturally, this is a highly important factor for the political appeal of China resp. Russia. It has also profound consequences for the domestic stability and cohesiveness. Just look at the U.S. or the European Union. The ruling class of the strongest imperialist is deadlocked in a political civil war with Trump as a dysfunctional President who is detested by the majority of the monopoly bourgeoisie as well

as the population. And the imperialist governments of the European Union are self-absorbed with their conflicts between each other how to deal with Brexit, migration, trade war, etc.

Related with this decline of the old imperialist powers is the undermining of the social fabric in the U.S., Western Europe and Japan. Historically, these richest imperialist powers were able to afford a relatively stable bourgeois democracy for many decades because their wealth allowed them to build a social alliance of the ruling class with the middle class and the labor aristocracy. Politically, this "*historic bloc*" (to lend a category of Antonio Gramsci) has been expressed in relatively stable (coalition) governments – of the Republican resp. the Democratic Party in the U.S., of the leading conservative resp. reformist party in Europe, etc.

All this is changing now as we see with Trump, Macron, the M5S-Lega government in Italy, etc. In short, the decline of the old imperialist powers has provoked a lasting disintegration of this "*historic bloc*" and resulted in the break-away of sectors of the middle class (expressed in the emergence of radical right-wing racist movements or radical liberal-democratic movements). Likewise, we see crises or even splits in reformist parties like Corbyn's Labour Party in Britain, the collapse of the French Socialist Party and the rise of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's *La France Insoumise*, the rise of Podemos in Spain, etc. In short, the decline of the old imperialist powers has provoked a fundamental social and political destabilization. This domestic political crisis weakens these Great Powers in addition to their economic decline.

Compare these domestic problems of the old imperialist power with the situation in China and Russia. In both countries exists a stable Bonapartist regime since decades.

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018 - A World Pregnant With Wars And Popular Uprisings

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – WORLD PERSPECTIVES 2018: A WORLD PREGNANT WITH WARS AND POPULAR UPRISINGS. The book's subtitle is: Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries.

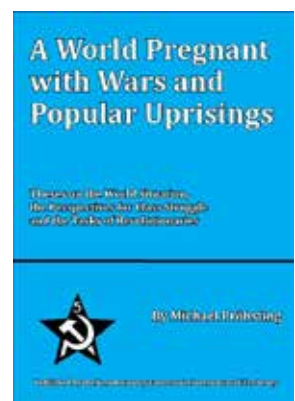
This book is a major contribution of our organization to keep the Marxists' analysis of the world situation and its accelerating contradictions updated. As we emphasize in the document, we consider it as crucial for revolutionaries to understand the nature and the inner dynamics of the current historic 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.

The book contains a preface, introduction and seven eight chapters plus an appendix (118 pages) and includes 23 figures , 9 tables and 2 maps. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>



Since Putin took power in 1999, Russia grew considerable as an imperialist power. Despite Western sanctions, the regime could maintain relative political stability at home. Similarly, the Stalinist-Capitalist ruling class in China has managed to keep their regime stable since their counter-revolutionary massacre against the workers and students on Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

In summary, for all these reasons we think it is justified to identify the U.S. and China as the two strongest, most important, the development of world politics and world economy most determining imperialist powers. Hence, the rivalry between the U.S. and China is the main axis of the global inner-imperialist contradictions.

Footnotes

1 For the RCIT's analysis of the Great Power rivalry see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>; 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*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>; see also the literature on Russia and China mentioned below.

2 It is worth noting in this context that Lenin, in his *Notebooks on Imperialism*, also suggested a "hierarchization" among the Great Powers. In one of his notes, he differentiated between three categories of imperialist states:

I. Three chief (fully independent) countries: Great Britain, Germany, United States

II. Secondary (first class, but not fully independent): France, Russia, Japan

III. Italy, Austria-Hungary" (V.I. Lenin: *On the Question of Imperialism*, in: *LCW 39*, p. 202)

3 On the RCIT's analysis of China as emerging imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. We refer readers, in particular, to 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/>; 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 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>

4 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *The Global Trade War is Escalating. Trump's new Tariffs on about \$200bn worth of Chinese Imports Reflect the Accelerating Rivalry between the Great Powers*, 19 September 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-global-trade-war-is-escalating/>; *Global Trade War: No to Great Power Jingoism in West and East! Neither Imperialist Globalization nor Imperialist Protectionism! For International Solidarity and Joint Struggle of the Working Class and Oppressed People! Joint Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), Marxist Group 'Class Politics' (Russia), Alkebulan School of Black Studies (Kenya), Pan-African Consciousness Renaissance (Nigeria), Courant des Jeunes Penseurs Congolais (Democratic Republic of Congo), and Sınıf Savaşı (Turkey)*, 4 July 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-the-looming-global-trade-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: *The Global Trade War has Begun. What is its Meaning and what should be the Response of Socialists?* 13 July 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-global-trade-war-has-begun/>; Yossi Schwartz: *Capitalist Trade and the Looming 3rd World War*, 15 July 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/capitalist-trade-and-looming-3rd-world-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: *Where Do Socialists Stand in Face of the Looming Global Trade War? A Showcase of the Practical Consequences of the Assessment of the Class Character of the Chinese State*, 17 June 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/where-do-socialists-stand-in-face-of-the-looming-global-trade-war/>; Michael Pröbsting: *World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>

5 On the RCIT's analysis of Russia as an imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer readers to 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 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/>

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[imperialist-russia/](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/).

6 On the RCIT's analysis of China as an emerging imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer readers to 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/>; 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 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>.

7 Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia's Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.1

8 Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia's Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.4

9 WTO: World Trade Statistical Review 2018, p. 23

10 Forbes Global 2000 List (2017), <https://www.forbes.com/global2000/list/45/#tab:overall>

11 On the RCIT's analysis of Russia as an imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer readers to 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 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/>.

12 SIPRI Yearbook 2018, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, p. 236

13 For an overview of the RCIT's writings on the European Union see Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, the European Union and Brexit. The L5I and the European Union: A Right Turn away from Marxism. The recent change in the L5I's position towards the support for EU membership represents a shift away from its own tradition, of the Marxist method, and of the facts; August 2016, in: Revolutionary Communist No. 55, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-and-brexite/>; Michael Pröbsting: Does the EU Represent "Bourgeois Democratic Progress"? Once again, on the EU and the Tactics of the Working Class – An Addendum to our Criticism of the L5I's Turn to the Right and Its Support for EU Membership, 16.09.2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-brexite-article/>; Manfred Meier: Nachbeben des Brexit - Zur Rechtswende von L5I: das „JA“ zum Verbleib in der EU, August 2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/home/deutsch/gam-brexite/>; Michael Pröbsting: The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism. An analysis of the left's failure to fight for an independent, internationalist and socialist stance both against British as well as European imperialism, Revolutionary Communism No. 40, August 2015 <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>; see also (in German language only) Michael Pröbsting: Die Frage der Vereinigung Europas im Lichte der marxistischen Theorie. Zur Frage eines supranationalen Staatsapparates des EU-Imperialismus und der marxistischen Staatstheorie. Die Diskussion zur Lösung der Vereinigten Sozialistischen Staaten von Europa bei Lenin und Trotzki und ihre Anwendung unter den heutigen Bedingungen des Klassenkampfes, in: Unter der Fahne der Revolution Nr. 2/3 (2008), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/marxismus-und-eu/>

Books of the RCIT

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

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

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

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

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

The Great Robbery of the South

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



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

The Next Looming Great Recession

Observations on the Latest Stock Market Slump and the Structural Crisis of the Capitalist World Economy

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 12.10.2018

Stock markets around the world experience another slump. We do not know if this is already the beginning of the next Great Recession. But we know that the combination of a crisis-ridden capitalist world economy and the accelerating tensions between the imperialist Great Powers create a powder keg which can explode at any moment.

At this stage, global stock markets experience “a bit of a bloodbath”, to quote a senior portfolio manager in New York. (1) U.S. stocks have fallen for a sixth day and experienced the biggest fall in eight months. By now, market value of U.S. common stock plunged by 6.8% for October to date. Stocks were hit particularly hard in Asia, where no market was spared in the sweeping sell-off. Stocks in Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong dropped 4% or more. China’s stock market is at its lowest level since November 2014. Europe’s major stock indexes fell less drastically – by about 1.5% – because they had already been on a downward trend for several months. (2)

No doubt, panic is spreading among the capitalists. The *International Monetary Fund* (IMF) – one of the central global institutions of capitalism – already warned a few days ago in unusual blunt language that “large challenges loom for the global economy to prevent a second Great Depression.”

(3) A journalist expressed his worries when viewing the stock market slump in combination with the convulsions in world politics: “That not the end of the world, per se. But with trade battles intensifying and dormant old devils re-emerging, all bets could soon be off. That is a lot more than depressing: it’s terrifying.” (4)

Now, as a matter of fact, we are not in a position to say if the current stock market slump is already the beginning of the next Great Recession or if the capitalists manage to

delay this for some time. However, even if a new Great Recession has not already begun, it is clear that the convulsions on the stock market are its harbinger.

The RCIT has drawn attention for many years to the colossal contradictions which characterize the capitalist world economy. We have warned in the past years that capitalism was incapable to overcome its structural problems which led to the Great Recession in 2008/09. Consequently, we predicted that another Great Recession – most likely an even “Greater” Recession – will shatter the capitalist world economy. (5)

Here is not the place to repeat our extensive analysis and we will limit ourselves only to a few observations. As we have demonstrated in past works, the capitalist world economy is in a long-term decline which has, as its basis, the over-accumulation of capital and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This results in declining growth rates, less investment and lower productivity.

What we will briefly show at this place is that the capitalist world economy today is in a worse position than it was before the last Great Recession in 2008/09 and, consequently, the economic collapse will be most likely even worse this time.

Stagnation Tendencies

First we reproduce a figure showing the growth of the global profit rate which has been weaker in the current cycle than in the one before. (See Figure 1)

This is related to lower growth rates of labor productivity as well as lower growth of the productive capital stock. In Figure 2 we show the relevant data for the old imperialist states – the U.S., Western Europe (the Euro Area) and Japan.

Table 1. Global Debt, in \$Trillions, 2000-2017

	2000	2007	2017
Household	18	31	43
Non-Financial Corporations	25	37	66
Government	21	29	60
Non-Financial Corporations			
Debt to GDP	78%	79%	92%

Table 2. Nonfinancial Corporate Bonds Outstanding, \$Trillion, 2010-2017 (16)

	2010	2017
United States	2.8	4.8
Western Europe	1.6	2.6
China	0.4	2.0
Other Advanced Economies	0.7	1.2
Other Developing Economies	0.6	1.2

Rising Debts

At the same time, indebtedness – a major trigger of the last recession – has substantially increased all over the world and in all sectors. In 2008/09 an even worse slump was only avoided because the China's economy was still robust and because the capitalist state apparatus in many imperialist countries was able to intervene and to bail out the banks. A repetition of such a development seems to be excluded.

The reasons for this are several. Corporations, governments as well as households have substantially increased their debts. According to the latest report of the IMF, *“total nonfinancial sector debt—borrowings by governments, nonfinancial companies, and households—has expanded at a much faster pace than the growth rate of the economy. As a result, total nonfinancial debt in countries with systemically important financial sectors now stands at \$167 trillion, or over 250 percent of aggregate GDP, compared with \$113 trillion (210 percent of GDP) in 2008.”* (See Figure 3)

Significantly, debt has risen in particular in the corporate as well as the public sector and less in the private household sector. As we show in Table 1 global corporate debt has increased from \$37 trillion to \$66 trillion in the past decade while government debt more than doubled from \$29 trillion to \$60 trillion.

To this one has to add that official figures for government debt usually do not cover large parts of public debts. This is the case because in most cases figures for accrued pension liabilities are excluded in these statistics. However, according to latest issue of the IMF's *Fiscal Monitor*, *“the standard measure of general government public debt compris[es] 94 percent of GDP for these countries. This is only half of total public sector liabilities of 198 percent of GDP, which also includes 46 percent of GDP in already accrued pension liabilities.”* (9)

In an article on the world economy which we published half a year ago we stated: *“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 since then into the economy (the so-called “Quantitative Easing”). 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.”* (10)

The IMF arrives at similar conclusions in the latest issue of its *World Economic Outlook*: *“Nevertheless, large challenges loom for the global economy. The extraordinary policy actions to prevent a second Great Depression have had important side effects. The extended period of ultralow interest rates in advanced economies has contributed to the buildup of financial vulnerabilities, as discussed in the April and October 2018 GFSRs. The large accumulation of public debt and the erosion of fiscal buffers in many economies following the crisis point to the urgency of rebuilding those defenses to prepare for the next downturn. Moreover, some of the crisis management tools deployed in 2008–09 are no longer available (the Federal Reserve's bailouts of individual institutions, for example), suggesting financial rescues in the future may not be able to follow the same playbook.”* (11)

U.S.: As if there is no tomorrow

The American bourgeoisie lives as if there is no tomorrow. The Trump Administration has massively increased public debt in an extremely short-time-span. The deficit for this year will rise to \$890 billion (it was about \$660 billion when Obama left office). The shortfall in government expenditures will rise above \$1 trillion next year. All in all, publicly held U.S. government debt has tripled in a decade. (12)

Corporate debt has also risen in the last decade. This was to a large degree because of massive borrowing to finance fusions between companies. A recently published article of Bloomberg which dealt with corporate debt in the U.S. was characteristically entitled *“A \$1 Trillion Powder Keg Threatens the Corporate Bond Market”*. It concluded: *“After a decade-long buying spree, many companies have pushed their leverage to levels that are typical of junk-rated borrowers in their sectors. The result has been a surge in debt issuance in the lowest rungs of investment-grade—the biggest share of it driven by corporate acquisitions. There's now about \$2.47 trillion of U.S. corporate debt rated in the BBB tier, more than triple the level at the end of 2008. (...) When it's all said and done, some \$1.1 trillion of investment grade debt could end up as junk.”* (13)

Debt of U.S. corporations stands now at a new high of \$6.3 trillion. The cash-to-debt ratio, which was 14% in 2008, has dropped to 12%, i.e. \$1 in cash for every \$8 of debt. (14)

China too

The effects of the last recession in 2008/09 could be mitigated because China avoided a slump. However, it did so via a massive state-capitalist interventionist program and a rapid rise of its corporate debt. As a result, China's *“corporate debt has increased by \$15 trillion, or more than half of global corporate debt growth. As a share of GDP, China's corporate debt rose from 97 percent of GDP in 2007 to 163 percent in 2017, one of the highest corporate debt ratios in the world apart from small financial centers that attract offshore companies.”* (15) This development is also reflected in the outstanding bonds of nonfinancial corporate. (See Table 2) All in all, China's combined debt (Non-Financial Corporations, Government and Household) as a share of GDP has increased from 145% (2007) to 256% (2017).

We note, as an aside, how bizarre it is that there still exist various Stalinists and pseudo-Marxists which continue to defend the nonsense that China would be a “socialist” or “workers” state! (17)

Furthermore, the global banking system suffers from the extraordinary imbalances in the current accounts, reflecting the fact that major economies like Germany, Japan and China export much more than they import while the U.S. “lives beyond its means”, i.e. it imports much more than it exports. An economist comments: *“Hedging the foreign exchange risk in this half-trillion-dollar per year business has exhausted the balance sheet of the global banking system. That explains a large part of the jump in the US 10-year note yield to 3.2% last Friday from 2.85% in early September. Hedging the foreign exchange risk in these massive flows created a derivatives mountain, and it has started to spew smoke and lava.”* (18)

Nearly three years ago, we made the following prediction in the annual RCIT *World Perspective* document: *“First, the coming recession – in contrast to the previous one – seems to be*

Figure 1. Global Corporate Profits 1998-15 (6)

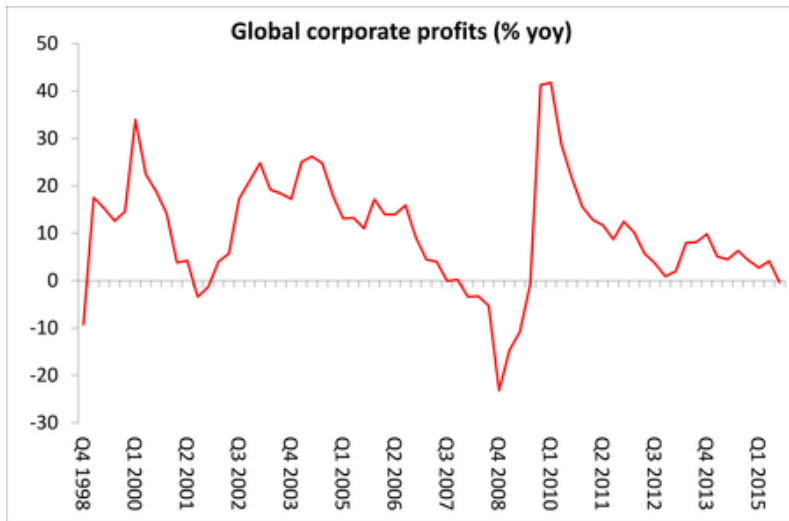


Figure 2. U.S., Euro Area and Japan: Growth of Productive Capital Stock and Labor Productivity Growth (7)

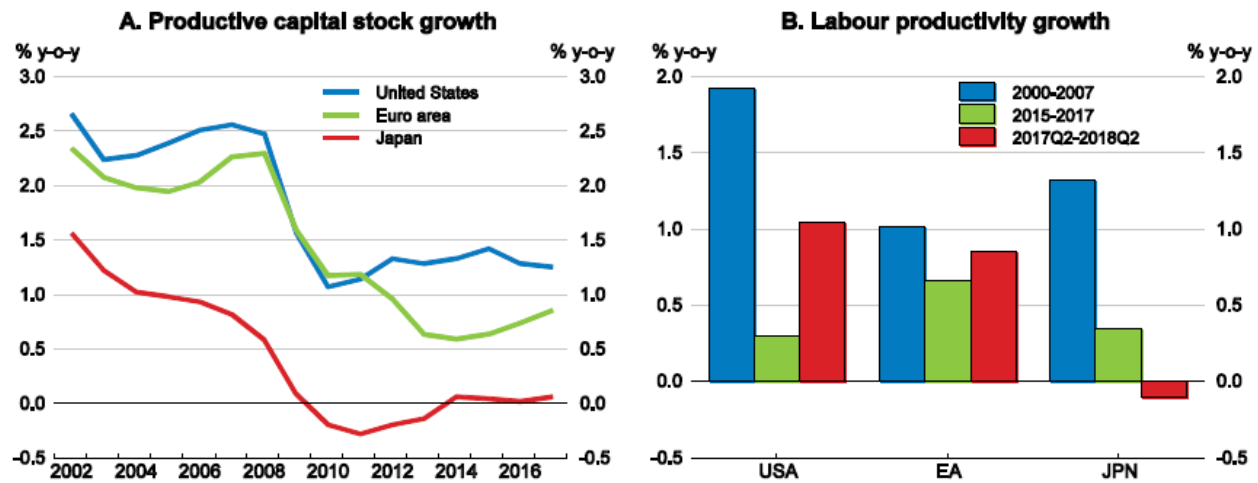
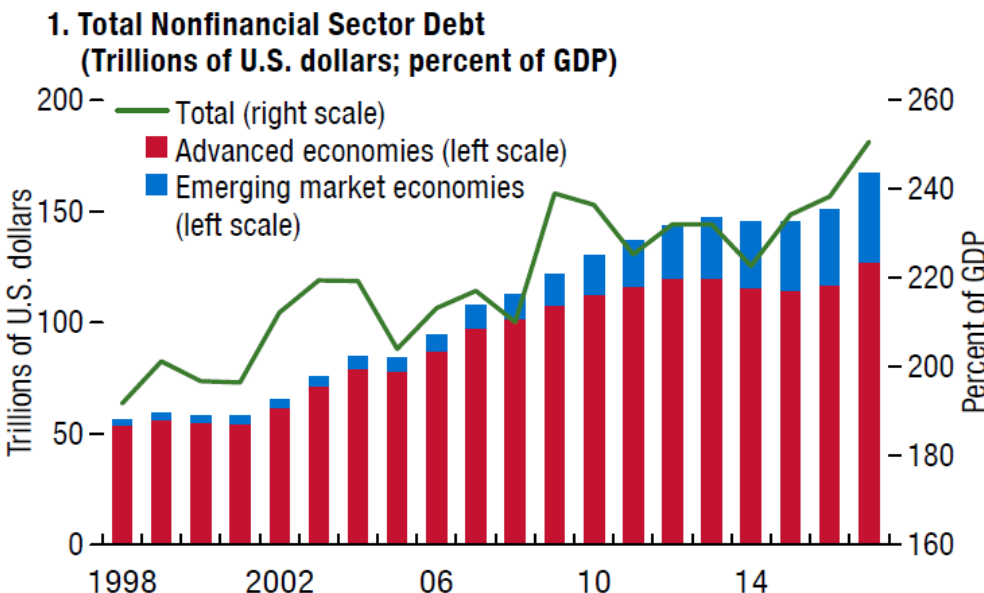


Figure 3. Growth of Global Debt in the Nonfinancial Sector, 1998-2017 (8)

Total nonfinancial sector debt has continued to swell since the global financial crisis.



spreading to and assuming a severe character in all major regions of the capitalist world economy. Secondly, financial speculation – a central trigger for the Great Recession in 2008/09 – has not decreased since then. In fact, today the financial bubble is bigger than it was in 2007. And third, corporate and public debt has risen in nearly all imperialist countries, which is why the bourgeoisie will not be able to use massive state-capitalist interventions yet another time to help their corporations escape the worst consequences of the recession simply by raising the national debt.” (19) We have every reason to stand by our assessment.

Global Trade War

In fact, the factors aggravating the situation have increased. The economic causes of the capitalist crisis are exacerbated by the accelerating political contradictions between the imperialist Great Powers. This is particularly evident with the Global Trade War. As we have elaborated in a number of articles in recent months, the Global Trade War – in particular between the U.S. and China – is a major factor not only in determining the world political situation but also for the future of the world economy. (20)

Chang Shu, a Bloomberg economist, wrote: “The U.S.-China trade war is shaping up to be a long confrontation. In our view, piling pressure on China is unlikely to result in concessions. A strategic misstep by the U.S. risks further escalating the tariff war, which would add to the drag on growth – with larger implications for Asia’s supply chains.” (21)

In fact, there are several crucial political factors which will influence the dynamic of the world economy. We already pointed this out in a recently published article: “We are experiencing the final phase of the current business cycle, the first cycle within the period of the Great Depression which began in 2008. The Global Trade War, in combination with the warmongering of US imperialism against Iran, could trigger an early economic collapse. While Washington’s attempts to exclude Iran – the third biggest global oil producer – from the world market will inevitable result in a massive rise of oil prices, the increase of tariffs will increase prices both for industrial as well as for consumer commodities.” (22)

Conclusions

There are a several indications that we are living in a historic moment: the contradictions of the capitalist world economy are exacerbating; the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers is accelerating (the Global Trade War between the two most important powers, the U.S. and China; the saber-rattling, alternating with deal-making, between Washington and Moscow; etc.); the never-ending domestic political crisis of the rotten Trump Administration; wars and political tensions all over the world – beginning from the last stand of the glorious Syrian Revolution in Idlib, the ongoing Saudi war of aggression against the Yemeni people, the shocking rise of the arch-reactionary presidential candidate Bolsonaro in Brazil, the barbaric butchery of the critical journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul – and so on. History is in the making and we might be close to the beginning of a new world political phase.

The central problem is not the strength of capitalism – in fact this system is in its death agony. The problem is rather the lack of political preparedness of the working class and its vanguard to utilize the bankruptcy of its class enemy. It is the task of Marxists to help the working class to organize its defense against the inevitable attacks of the capitalists.

No one should have any illusions: the bourgeoisie will do everything in its power to make the popular masses pay for the capitalist crisis. Reactionary forces – imperialist warmongers, chauvinist rabble-rousers, etc. – will spread the message of national hatred in order to divide and defeat our international class. Reformist muddle-heads will confuse and mislead the workers and oppressed.

All authentic socialists must unite in order to build a Revolutionary World Party based on a program for liberation struggle under the present conditions. The RCIT is dedicating its forces to this big, indeed this historic goal. Join us in this struggle!

REVOLUTIONARY LIBERATION - The RCIT's Monthly Journal

<p>www.thecomunists.net Issue Nr. 76 December 2017</p>	<p>Cartoon by Carlos Latuff www.thecomunists.net Issue Nr. 77 January 2018</p>	<p>www.thecomunists.net Issue Nr. 78 February 2018 www.thecomunists.net</p>	<p>www.thecomunists.net Issue Nr. 79 March 2018</p>
<p>Kenya: Down with the pro-imperialist Kenyatta Regime!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Grassingbè Regime in Togo * Zambia: Still Not Free * Interview with Ghana's CPP * Interview with Ghana's CPP * Interview with Ghana's CPP 	<p>Support the Liberation Struggle of the Palestinian People!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * settings for the New Year of 2018 * Popular Uprising in Iran * references on Syria are a Charade * men after the Death of Saleh * War between Saudi Arabia and Iran? * EU and African Slaves in Libya * Unemployment in Zambia * Election in Catalonia 	<p>The Imperialists Enslave the African People - Then as Now!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Successful 2nd RCIT World Congress * MGKP (Russia) & RCIT collaborate * Syria: No to Turkey's Attack on Afrin! * Tunisia: Solidarity with the Protest! * Palestine: Free Ahd Tamimi NOW! * Balfour's Declaration - Myths vs. Fac * Italy sends Soldiers to Niger * Class Warfare in Zambia * Liberia: American Puppet President! * UK: Carillon Crisis 	<p>The Syrian Revolution is in mortal Danger!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Palestine: PA collaborates with Israel * South Africa: Down with Ramaphosa! * Ethiopia: No to the State of Emergency * Liberia: 'Liberated' But Looted! * Brazil: Presidential Elections 2018 * Syria: Solidarity with the Revolution * Syria: Solidarity with East Ghouta! * Israeli Warplane Shot Down over Syria
<p>Workers and Oppressed Unite!</p>	<p>Price: €3 \$3,5 £2,75 and Oppressed Unite!</p>	<p>Price: €3 \$3,5 £2,75 and Oppressed Unite!</p>	<p>Price: €2 \$2,5 £1,60 and Oppressed Unite!</p>

Footnotes

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**PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT****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?

A Pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting (International Secretary of the RCIT)

A RCIT Pamphlet, 36 pages, A4 Format

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(10) Michael Pröbsting: The Latest Stock Market Panic, 8 February 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-stock-market-panic-february-2018/>

(11) IMF: World Economic Outlook, October 2018, p. 85

(12) George F. Will: Another epic economic collapse is coming, Washington Post Op-Ed, August 18, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/another-epic-economic-collapse-is-coming/2018/08/17/c26fb12c-a182-11e8-93e3-24d1703d2a7a_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e61009e0c452

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(14) John Feffer: There's a New Crash Coming, September 19, 2018, <https://fpif.org/theres-a-new-crash-coming/>

(15) McKinsey Global Institute: Rising Corporate Debt Peril Or Promise? Discussion paper, June 2018, p. 2

(16) McKinsey Global Institute: A Decade After The Global Financial Crisis: What Has (And Hasn't) Changed? Briefing Note, September 2018, p. 5

(17) On the RCIT's analysis of China as an emerging imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer readers to 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/>; 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 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>

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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.

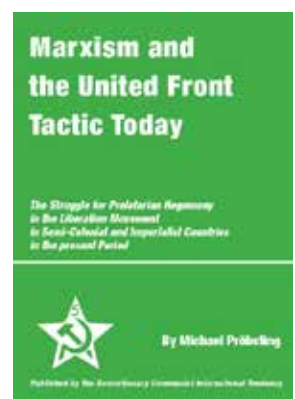
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

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.



China: Defend the Muslim Uyghurs against Oppression!

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 18.10.2018

The brutal oppression of the *Muslim Uyghurs*, or *East Turkestanis* as many prefer to call themselves, is another example of the reactionary character of the Stalinist-Capitalist dictatorship in China. The Muslim Uyghurs are a nationality which lives in East Turkestan (or Xinjiang as the province is officially called by the Chinese authorities).

There are at least about 11-15 million Muslim Uyghurs – according to the *World Uyghur Congress* it is even up to 20 millions. (1) However, a growing number of them have been forced to flee their native country because of the national oppression by Beijing. As a result there exists a sizeable Diaspora of Uyghurs in several countries (e.g. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia). (2)

In recent past, the Muslim Uyghurs have become a minority in their own country. According to official figures, they constitute 46% of Xinjiang's population. The background of this development is the fact that the Beijing regime systematically suppresses them and colonizes the province by settling Han Chinese people in order to change the ethnic balance. However, ethnic minorities still account for nearly 60% of Xinjiang's population.

Shocking Reports

In recent months the world public has become more informed about the dramatic scale of the Uyghurs' oppression. The United Nation has published recently a report with shocking details. Gay McDougall, a member of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, cited "*estimates that upwards of a million people were being held in so-called counter-extremism centres and another two million had been forced into so-called "re-education camps" for political and cultural indoctrination.*" (3)

In many cases, the Chinese authorities even take the children away of parents who are detained. They are brought to schools where they are forced to speak in Mandarin and to adopt the Han-Chinese culture. Such a policy echoes how white colonialists in North America and Australia treated indigenous children. "*What we're looking at is something like a settler colonial situation where an entire generation is lost,*" said Darren Byler, a researcher of Uighur culture at University of Washington. (4)

Another example of the massive scale of oppression is the fact that, according to official Chinese government data, criminal arrests in Xinjiang accounted for an alarming 21% of all arrests in China in 2017. This is a dramatic figure given the fact that the population in Xinjiang (of which officially less than half are Uyghurs) is only about 1.5% of China's total. (5)

Cynical Justification: "Colourful Life" in Internment Camps

Trying to whitewash the oppression of the Uyghurs, the Stalinist-Capitalist regime justifies the mass detentions as measures "*against extremism and terrorism*". (6) In an interview, recently published by the state-run news agency

Xinhua, the Xinjiang governor, Shohrat Zakir, said: "*Xinjiang conducts vocational skills education and training according to law. The purpose is to fundamentally eliminate the environment and soil that breeds terrorism and religious extremism, and eliminate the terrorism activities before they take place.*" (7)

Zakir added that residents at the internment camps in Xinjiang learn Mandarin "*to accept modern science and enhance their understanding of Chinese history and culture*". Students undergo legal training on the Chinese constitution, China's legal code, and local regulations, according to the governor. He said the camps were for people "*influenced by terrorism and extremism*" and suspected of "*minor criminal offences*" to receive "*free vocational training*". He cynically added: "*Many trainees have said they were previously affected by extremist thought and had never participated in such kinds of arts and sports activities. Now they realise how colourful life can be.*"

This reflects the assimilationist policy of the regime which aims for the eradication of the Uyghurs culture so that they speak in Mandarin and accept the Han-Chinese culture. This even goes so far that the regime launched in 2016 the "*Becoming Family*" initiative forcing Uighur families to host cadres of the ruling party at their homes for at least 5 days every two months. (8)

Strategic Importance for Chinese Imperialism

There is no reason to assume that the imperialist state of China would relinquish its grip over Xinjiang. (9) First, one must not forget that the Muslim Uyghurs are not the only national minority in China. There are also other, Muslim and non-Muslim, peoples who face national oppression like the Zhuang, the Miao, the Tibetans, the Mongols, etc. All together, they constitute about 1/10 of China's total population. Hence, accepting democratic rights for the Muslim Uyghurs could set a dangerous precedence for other discriminated nationalities and destabilize the imperialist state of China.

Furthermore, some of these national minorities inhabit large and geostrategic crucially important provinces (in particular Xinjiang and Tibet in the west of the country.) Hence, keeping control over Xinjiang is of strategic importance for the regime. This importance has even grown in the past years because of the so-called *Belt & Road Initiative* – a crucial project of Chinese imperialism to globally expand its political and economic influence. (10)

As a side note we draw attention to the bizarre claims of numerous Stalinist, semi-Stalinist and Bolivarian parties praise China as some kind of progressive or even "socialist" state. These forces scandalously tarnish the reputation of the authentic ideas of communism which are fully opposed to the oppression of national or religious minorities. These pseudo-communists do the same to the original ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky what the corrupted Catholic Church of the Middle Ages did with the original ideas of Christianity or what the decadent Sultans did with the original teachings of the Quran. Such Stalinists are whitewashing the brutal oppression of the national and religious minorities in China. In other words, they are

nothing but bourgeois lackeys of Chinese imperialism, i.e. pro-Chinese social-imperialists. (11)

Support the Struggle for National Liberation!

The Muslim Uyghurs are resisting their national oppression. A violent uprising in 2009 in Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, aimed at Han Chinese shattered the regime. Since then China's ruling class has massively tightened controls and surveillance of Xinjiang's population.

The RCIT stands in unconditional solidarity with the Muslim Uyghurs and their struggle for national self-determination. We support the struggle of all oppressed nations in China for national self-determination including the right to form their own nation state. (12)

Such a struggle should be combined with the resistance of China's workers (of all nationalities) against capitalist exploitation. In the past years, China has seen an explosive growth of strikes and workers demonstrations. If the workers and oppressed people unite their resistance against the ruling class, they are an all-powerful force!

We warn against any illusion in Western imperialism. Washington and Brussels want to exploit China's domestic problems – similar to attempts of Moscow and Beijing to interfere in domestic issues of Western countries. This is business as usual for the ruling classes all over the world – particularly in a historic period which is characterized by the acceleration of the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers. The workers and oppressed around the world must wage their struggles for liberation without relying on any of these Great Powers! (13) The Great Powers are all evil as they all strive to oppress and exploit the people – both domestically as well as abroad. (14)

The only way forward is to organize all fighters for liberation in a revolutionary party based on a program of independent and international class struggle. Such a struggle must aim for the revolutionary overthrow of all ruling classes and for the creation of a world without classes, without oppression and without exploitation. We call such a world "socialism". Join us in the struggle for such a future!

Footnotes

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Syria: Who is Responsible for the Civilian Death Toll from March 2011 to September 2018?

A Revealing Statistic Shows Who are the Real Terrorists in the Syrian Civil War

A Commentary (with three Charts) by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, 10.10.2018

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has published its latest calculations about the civilian death toll (including women and children) in the Syrian civil war. The results of its research are both shattering as well as revealing.

According to the SNHR a total of 222114 civilians have been killed between March 2011 and September 2018. Among them are 27,989 children and 25,179 women. (See the three Charts below.) This is a graphic demonstration of the horrible consequences of the barbaric war which the Assad tyranny has began when it started to slaughter peaceful demonstrators in spring 2011. There are only few wars in recent history which bear a similar barbaric character – the horrific civil wars in Congo and Sudan as well as the slaughter of the Chechen people by Russian imperialism (1) and of the Bosnian people by Serbian chauvinists (2) come into one's mind.

The study also calculates which parties are responsible for how many of these casualties. The results are revealing. As it is well-known, the pro-Assadist and pro-Russian media (including their Stalinist and semi-Stalinist minions) like to denounce the Syrian liberation fighters as "terrorists". (3) The Western media – which are more critical against the regime in Damascus because Assad is a puppet of Moscow and not of Washington – are more selective. But they too regularly slander the Islamist rebels (like *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS*) as "terrorists".

The latest SNHR study reveals, once more, who are the real terrorists in Syria. It is first and foremost the Assad tyranny! The regime is responsible for nearly 90% of all civilian death, for more than 85% of all women and 80% of all children killed. These shattering figures prove us right once again that the capitalist dictatorship of Assad – and its Russian and Iranian masters – is the main enemy in the Syrian civil war and that all revolutionary, democratic and righteous forces must support the insurrectional people fighting for freedom!

The charts also reveal that the imperialist armies likewise act as killing machines – first and foremost Russia (4) but also the U.S., France and Britain. (5) Despite the fact that they have relatively few troops on the ground, their air forces have killed more than 9,000 civilians since they began their intervention in 2015.

It is noteworthy that not only Russia but also the Western forces are responsible for more women and children killed than Daesh/ISIS. The latter is, no doubt, an arch-reactionary force which revolutionaries can only detest. However, as a matter of fact the imperialist Great Powers prove to be more efficient killers than the barbaric Daesh! (6)

Compare the mass killing of civilians by the Assad regime with the relative small figures for which the rebels are responsible – despite the fact that they had for many years up to 200,000 fighters in their militias! The facts revealed by the SNHR demonstrate once more that the rebels are a force representing the people and their struggle for free-

dom. Their strength relies on the support by the popular masses without which they could not survive. In contrast, the strength of the Assad regime relies on terrorizing the people and its support from a monstrous military machine boosted by the air force and troops of Russia and Iran.

It is also noteworthy that HTS – the petty-bourgeois Islamist movement which is the most intransigent force in the struggle against Assad and Russia – is responsible for less civilians killed (including women and children) than anyone else! This is also true in comparison with the Kurdish PYD/YPG which is the darling of the Stalinist pseudo-left. And this despite the fact that HTS is the most significant and strongest force among the rebels. (7) It should be mentioned that SNHR has no sympathy for HTS which is demonstrated by the fact that it lumps it together with Daesh/ISIS in its charts.

All these facts confirm once again the urgent necessity of all socialist, democratic and righteous forces in Syria and around the world to continue the support for glorious Syrian Revolution. The RCIT calls all similar-minded organizations and activists to join forces in fighting for this sacred goal!

The RCIT has published a number of booklets, statements and articles on the Syrian Revolution which can be read on a special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

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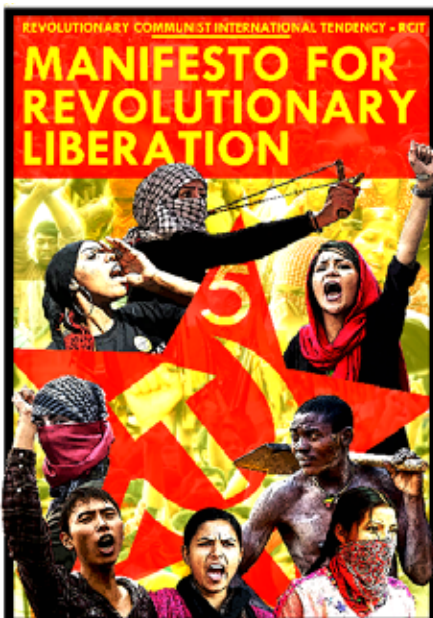
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PROGRAM OF THE RCIT

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

Chart 1: Civilian Death Toll in Syria from March 2011 to September 2018 (8)



Chart 2: Child Death Toll in Syria from March 2011 to September 2018 (9)

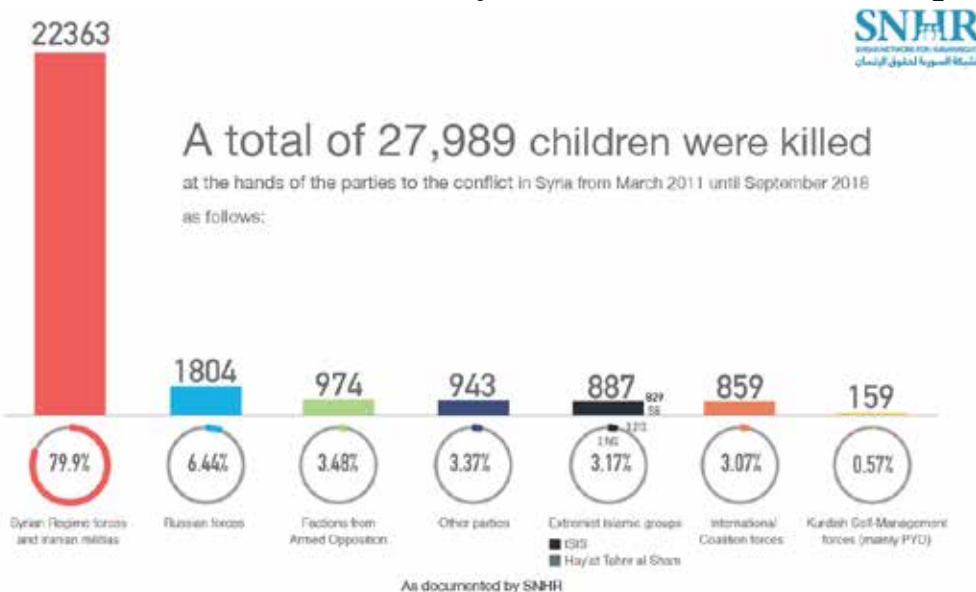
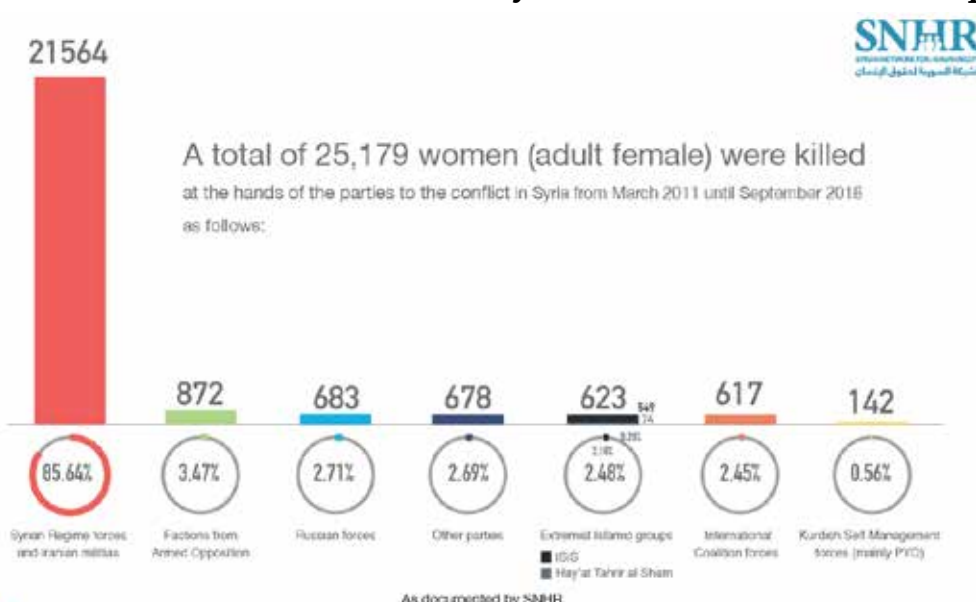


Chart 3: Women Death Toll in Syria from March 2011 to September 2018 (10)



Syria/Idlib: How to Assess the Official Statement of HTS on the Sochi Surrender Deal?

by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 15.10.2018

Yesterday, *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS), the most significant petty-bourgeois Islamist movement fighting against the Assad tyranny in Syria, has finally released its official statement on the Sochi Deal.

This deal has been concluded between imperialist Russia and Turkey, with the consent of Iran and the Assad regime and praised by the Western Great Powers, on 17 September. As reported, it obligates the rebels to remove all heavy weapons and to withdraw all intransigent fighters (i.e. the so-called “extremists”) from the 20 km-deep “Demilitarization Zone”. This zone is exclusively applied within the rebel-held territories and encompasses about half of the remaining liberated territory in the North of the country. Furthermore, Russia insists that the highways Aleppo-Hama and Aleppo-Latakia, running through the rebel-held areas, shall be re-opened again under the joint supervision of Russia and Turkey.

As we have explained in past statements, the Sochi Deal, if fully implemented, would represent a tragic defeat for the glorious Syrian Revolution. It only weakens and disarms the liberation forces so that they will be less capable to resist the inevitable invasion of the Russia/Assadist aggressors. It is therefore crucial that all supporters of the Syrian Revolution – in Idlib as well as internationally – decisively reject the Sochi Surrender Deal and organize resistance against it. (1)

A Summary of the HTS Statement

Unfortunately, the HTS statement is deliberately ambiguous reflecting a compromise between opposing wings inside the organization. (2) The statement, which has been published by HTS-related Telegram Channels, basically says the following: (3)

1) HTS will continue its Jihad and the struggle for the goals of the revolution, i.e. the overthrow of Assad, freeing of the prisoners and the return of the refugees. (“*We have not abandoned our choice of jihad and fighting towards implementing our blessed revolution.*”)

2) It stresses its solidarity with the foreign fighters in the ranks of the liberation movement. (Russia and Turkey pressurize HTS to expel all foreign fighters.)

3) It refuses to give up or hand over its weapons as they are crucial for the protection of the people.

4) It algebraically defends the necessities to apply “political tactics” as well as to make “agreements” and “internal and external arrangements in order to protect civilians and liberated areas.” (“*We appreciate the efforts of all those who strive inside and abroad to protect the liberated area*”, a formulation which can be interpreted as a reference to Turkey.)

5) At the same time HTS warns against trusting the “Russian occupiers”. (“*But at the same time, we warn of the deceitfulness of the Russian occupier.*”)

6) They finally call for international solidarity with the Syrian Revolution.

Hence, while the HTS statement emphasizes the necessity

to continue the struggle against the Assad tyranny and its Russian master, it does not elaborate concretely its stand on withdrawing its fighters and its heavy weapons from the so-called Demilitarized Zones in Idlib or to hand over control of the highways to Russia and Turkey. It neither commits itself to implement these demands of the counterrevolutionary Sochi Deal agreed by Russia and Turkey nor does it explicitly refuse to do so.

Tensions within HTS

The ambiguity of this statement is the result of the combined pressure of Russia, Turkey and the pro-Turkish rebel faction (organized in the JWT/NFL alliance) to liquidate the liberation struggle. This pressure has created enormous tensions inside the organization. On one side, there exists a pragmatic wing which seems to be prepared to adapt to the Turkish pressure and to go along the Sochi Surrender Deal. On the other side, there also exists another, more hard-line wing which insists on continuing the liberation struggle against the Assad tyranny. On the day before the publication of the official HTS statement, one of its leaders, Abu Malik al-Tali, issued a statement denouncing the Sochi Deal. (4) This is only the latest in a series of public statements of HTS leaders along these lines. (5)

There is a strong possibility that HTS will split: one wing might join the capitulationist sectors of the pro-Turkish rebels which are prepared to stop the struggle against Assad and to administer Idlib as a local police force under the directives of Ankara. Another wing, which is determined to continue the liberation struggle, might join forces with other hard-line, petty-bourgeois Islamist movements like *Tanzim Hurras al Din*, *Ansar ad-Din* and the *Turkistan Islamic Party* and launch a guerilla struggle.

Developments on the Ground

As reported, the Sochi Deal requires all factions to remove their heavy weapons from the Demilitarized Zones until 10 October. It also demands that the so-called “extremist” factions (i.e. those who are not willing to give up the struggle against the Assad tyranny and the Russian occupiers) remove all fighters from the Demilitarized Zones until today (15 October).

Reports from concrete developments on the ground are contradictory. While some observers suggest that all factions – including HTS – have removed their heavy weapons from the Demilitarized Zones, it seems that HTS and other intransigent factions have not removed their fighters, or only a few, by now. (6) Turkish security sources, quoted by the *Middle East Eye*, report that only about 1/5 of the HTS fighters stationed in the Demilitarized Zones have been withdrawn until now. (7)

Another sign of an incomplete fulfillment of the Sochi Deal is the fact that there have been exchanges of fire by mortar shells between rebels and Assadist forces on 13

October. According to the UK-based *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights*, two Assadist soldiers have been killed in this incident. (8)

Decisive Days and Weeks

As the RCIT has explained in numerous articles, these days are decisive to determine the fate of the Syrian Revolution. The purpose of the Sochi Surrender Deal is the liquidation of the liberation struggle. In fact, ending the Syrian Revolution is not only in the interest of the Assad regime as well as the Russian and the Iranian governments. It is also a goal of the Erdoğan government as well as U.S. and European imperialism.

The deal obligates the rebels to withdraw from significant parts of the still-liberated areas in the north of the country and hand over control of crucial highways. This shall prepare the conditions for the final defeat of the revolutionary forces. Turkey is mobilizing all means – persuasion, bribes, threats and assassinations – in order to make the rebels comply. It acts as a counterrevolutionary force from behind.

The coming days and weeks will show if HTS – or at least one wing of it – will comply with the Sochi Surrender Deal or not. They will show if the Assadist and Russian forces will launch attacks on the intransigent liberation forces. And they will show if Turkey, fulfilling its role as a servant of the imperialist Great Powers, will attack itself these intransigent liberation forces.

The RCIT repeats that it is urgent that all supporters of the Syrian Revolution oppose the Sochi Surrender Deal. We call for a broad rejectionist united front of all forces – in Idlib as well as internationally – which agree to continue the struggle against the tyranny! Long live the international solidarity with the Syrian Revolution!

* * * * *

The RCIT has published a number of booklets, statements and articles on the Syrian Revolution which can be read on a special sub-section on this website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

Footnotes

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(2) For our characterization of HTS see e.g. RCIT: Denounce the US terror listing of Syria's Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham! The Trump Administration delivers another blow to the Syrian Revolution. Continue the Solidarity with the liberation struggle of the Syrian people! 03.06.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/denounce-the-us-terror-listing-of-syria-s-hts/>; Michael Pröbsting: Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified? An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution, 5 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/>; Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings, February 2018, Chapter V, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/chapter-v/>.

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Syria/Idlib: Turkish Army Attacks HTS in Implementing the Sochi Surrender Deal Are we witnessing the last stand of the Syrian Revolution?

by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 09.10.2018

The implementation of the Sochi Surrender Deal – agreed between Russia and Turkey – is moving forward. As we have elaborated in a number of articles in the past weeks, this deal – which characteristically has been praised by the ruling classes of all Great Powers as well as regional powers – represents a mortal danger for the liberation struggle of the Syrian people. (1)

Russia and Turkey are putting enormous pressure on the rebels in the Greater Idlib region to withdraw all their heavy weapons from the so-called Demilitarization Zone. This zone, about 20 km deep from the frontlines, covers nearly half of the whole remaining liberated territory in the north. Furthermore, the Russian-Turkish deal stipulates that those forces which, until now, have been the most consistent, hard-line factions in struggling against the tyranny must be expelled from this zone.

If the Sochi Surrender Deal is fully implemented, it would represent a tragic defeat for the glorious Syrian Revolution. Idlib would be transformed into a Turkish colony and, sooner or later, it would be attacked and conquered by Russia and Assad.

Just a few days ago, Assad blatantly stated that the Sochi Deal is only a “temporary measure”: “The agreement is a temporary measure through which the state has realised many achievements on the ground starting with stemming the bloodshed. (...) This province and other Syrian territory still under terrorist control will return to the Syrian state.” (2) The same intention to attack and conquer free Idlib has been already announced by the Russian government as well as other officials of the regime in Damascus. (3)

Furthermore, despite pretending to defend the Syrian people against the Assad tyranny, the Turkish government has already outlined a scenario under which it would be prepared to hand over Idlib to the regime. A few days ago, President Erdoğan said that Turkish troops will stay in Syria only until the Syrian people hold elections: “Whenever the Syrian people hold an election, we will leave Syria to its owners after they hold their elections.” (4)

As it is well known, the Assad regime is quite capable of organizing “elections” (of course, with a guaranteed result in its favor). When Moscow, Ankara and Damascus will have agreed on a deal, Assad will hold such “elections” and Erdoğan will call them “fair” and withdraw his troops from Syria. There should be no doubt that they will leave a Syria ruled by the iron fist of a military dictatorship – irrespective if it is headed by Assad or another tyrant.

Hence, the evil Sochi Deal only weakens and disarms the liberation forces so that they will be less capable to resist the inevitable invasion of the Russia/Assadist aggressors.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the pro-Turkish rebel factions – nearly all of them are united in *Jabhat al-Wataniya lil-Tahrir* (National Front for Liberation) – have mostly agreed with the Sochi Surrender Deal and praised Ankara’s role (from where they also receive their salaries). They tell the Syrian people in Idlib to accept withdrawal and disarmament since they should trust the Turkish army to

defend them against Russia and the Assad tyranny.

This is a criminal deceit given the fact that Turkey has not lifted a finger when Russia and Assad broke other deals and stormed the liberated enclaves in Ghouta, northern Homs, or Deraa. It is evident that the Erdoğan regime is primarily interested in profitable relations with imperialist Russia and other powers and does not give a damn about the fate of the Syrian workers and oppressed.

According to Naji Mostafa, spokesperson of JWT/NFL, the pro-Turkish rebels have already withdrawn all their heavy weapons from the Demilitarization Zone in the last days. This has been confirmed by a number of reports. (5)

As we have shown in past articles Turkey is mobilizing all means – persuasion, bribes, threats and assassinations – in order to make the rebels comply. We have always warned that Ankara is prepared to military attack the liberation forces defending the Syrian Revolution.

The main targets of these threats are various petty-bourgeois Islamist movements like *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham*, *Tanzim Hurras al Din*, *Ansar ad-Din* and the *Turkistan Islamic Party*. While we are aware that they adhere to a reactionary ideology, we also recognize that these forces currently represent the most determined sectors of the liberation struggle which are unwilling to capitulate to the reactionary plans of the Great Powers and regional powers to liquidate the Syrian Revolution. (6) This is why all counterrevolutionary forces – from Assad, Putin, Rouhani to Trump and Erdoğan – want to smash them.

These factions are currently the main obstacle in implementing the Sochi Surrender Deal as they refuse to support it – in contrast to the pro-Turkish rebels. Some of these rejectionist factions have already formally denounced the Sochi Deal. The HTS leadership has not made an official statement until now. It is unclear if they are forced, under the combined pressure of Russia, Turkey and the JWT/NFL, to retreat or not. There are several reports about ongoing clashes between HTS and allied forces and the Assadist army, mostly in North-Eastern Latakia and Northern Hama, in which about 10 Assadist soldiers and a number of militants were killed. (7) There are also reports that these rejectionist factions are concealing their heavy weapons in trenches built for this purpose in the northern mountains of Latakia. (8)

As we did already report, it seems that a faction struggle is going on inside HTS if the movement should officially oppose the Sochi Deal. An opportunist wing seems to be prepared to accommodate to the Russian-Turkish pressure while the hard-line wing strongly opposes this. However, a number of leading figures have made clear that they reject the sell-out. Abu Malik al-Shami, the Number 2 in HTS, has denounced those who remove heavy weapons from the Demilitarization Zone. (9) Abu al-Fateh al-Farghali, a member of the HTS Shari’ah Committee and Shura member, has published a statement “*Me or the Wolf?*” in which he calls to oppose both an invasion by the Russian/Assadist forces as well as the Sochi Deal. (10) Other leading

figures like Abu al-Yaqdhan and Abu-Shu'ayb have made similar declarations. (11)

It seems that Turkey, which carries the main responsibility to defeat the hard-line factions according to the Sochi Deal, has started now to launch military attacks against the rejectionist factions. There are several reports – both from pro-Assadist as well as from pro-HTS sources – that the Turkish army as well as the Turkish Air Force attacked HTS militants in Western Aleppo as well as in Idlib in the past days. (12) Furthermore, various pro-Turkish factions seem to mobilize their forces in order to launch an all-out attack, with the support of the Turkish army and Air Force, against HTS and their allies. The recent clashes between HTS and *Nour al-Din Al-Zinki* in the town of Kafr Halab in West Aleppo might be an indication for this. (13) Meanwhile the wave of assassinations, mostly against HTS commanders and militants, is continuing. (Since late April 2018, more than 330 liberation fighters have been assassinated in Idlib.)

These developments confirm once more our warnings about the reactionary role of Turkey and its local agents in the Syrian Revolution. (14) One must have no illusions: we might witness the last stand of the Syrian revolution. If Turkey and its factions – with the tacit agreement of Russia, Iran and Assad – attack HTS and other rejectionist forces, it would represent a catastrophic stab in the back of the Syrian Revolution. In such a conflict, all supporters of the liberation struggle against the Assad tyranny and Russian imperialism must side with the opponents of the Sochi Surrender Deal and against the treacherous servants of Ankara.

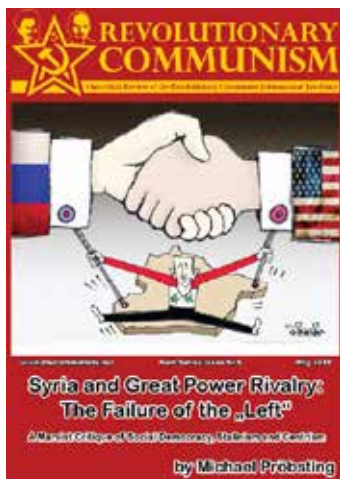
The RCIT repeats that it is urgent that all supporters of the Syrian Revolution – in Idlib as well as internationally – must oppose the Sochi Surrender Deal. We call for a broad rejectionist united front of all forces which agree to continue the struggle against the tyranny!

Footnotes

(1) See the RCIT's analysis of the most recent developments in Idlib and the grave dangers for the Syrian Revolution caused by the treacherous Sochi Deal we refer to several articles of Michael Pröbsting published in the past weeks: Syria/Idlib: For a Broad Rejectionist United Front against the Sochi Surrender Deal! 04.10.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-for-a-broad-rejectionist-united-front-against-the-sochi-surrender-deal/>; Syria/Idlib: Down with the Sochi Surrender Deal! Brothers and Sisters in Idlib: Reject the Deal between Putin and Erdoğan! Do not Hand over Weapons! Turkey's Army is not your Ally! Continue the Struggle against the Regime and Russia! 18.09.2018 (6.30 UTC Time), <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/sochi-deal-on-idlib-is-surrender/>; Syria/Idlib: News Confirm that the Sochi Deal Means Surrender! An additional Analysis: What are the Assadist and Russian Plans behind the Sochi Deal? What has been the Reaction until now of the Rebel Leaders to the Sochi Deal? 18.09.2018 (19.30 UTC Time), <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-idlib-news-confirm-that-the-sochi-deal-means-surrender/>; Syria: Mass Rallies in Idlib against the Regime and Russia. Support the Undaunted Revolutionary People resisting against the Final Onslaught of Assad and imperialist Russia against the last Citadel of the Syrian Revolution! 15.09.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/mass-rallies-in-idlib-against-the-regime-and-russia/>; Erdoğan Offers "My Dear Friend" Putin to Disarm the Syrian Revolution, 08.09.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/erdogan-offers-putin-to-disarm-the-syrian-revolution/>; Syria: Towards the Final Battle in Idlib. Assad, Russia, Iran and Turkey prepare for the final onslaught on the last Citadel of the Syrian Revolution, 04.08.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-towards-the-final-battle-in-idlib/>.

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Publications of the RCIT

Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“

By Michael Pröbsting, April 2018

*The bleeding Syrian Revolution and the recent Escalation
of Inter-Imperialist Rivalry between the US and Russia –
A Marxist Critique of Social Democracy, Stalinism and Centrism*

Introduction * The liberation struggle of the Syrian people against Assad retains its just character * Against all imperialist aggressors! * Old and new Great Powers * The Ex-Stalinist turned social democrats: “God save the United Nations” * The Stalinists (and some caricatures in Trotskyist camouflage): social-imperialist servants of Assad and Putin * The Morenoite LIT, UIT and FLTI: the heart on the right place but not their brains * CWI and FT: failure to understand the imperialist nature of China and Russia * CWI / SWP(UK) / FT: refusing to support the Syrian Revolution * Conclusion * Footnotes

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Publications of the RCIT

Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?

By Michael Pröbsting, April 2017

An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution

Introduction * The Nature of the Local Coordination Councils in Syria * The Contradictory Nature of the Petty-Bourgeois Rebel Factions * A note on the adjectival juxtaposition of "progressive" to liberal democrats versus "reactionary" to Islamists * Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham and Other Islamist Militias * The Role of Religion in Democratic and National Liberation Struggles * Some Arguments on the Ongoing Progressive Character of the Syrian Revolution * Have the Rebels Become Agents of US Imperialism and Regional Powers? * On Foreign Powers' Support for Liberation Movements p* Lenin and Trotsky on Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference * What Did Lenin and Trotsky Say about Getting Support from Imperialists? * Imagining Two Different Scenarios of the Revolution's Success & Failure * A Period of Defeats and Retreats: What Are the Reasons? * Some Thoughts on the Future Prospects of the Arab Revolution * The Urgent Need for a Revolutionary Party * Footnotes

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What the RCIT Stands for

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

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

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

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

This revolution must be carried out and led by the working class, for she is the only class that has nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolution can not proceed peacefully because never before has a ruling class voluntarily surrendered their power. The road to liberation includes necessarily the armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasant republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods and schools – in councils. These councils elect and control the government and all other authorities and can always replace them.

Real socialism and communism has nothing to do with the so-called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or Eastern Europe. In these countries, a bureaucracy dominated and oppressed the proletariat.

The RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of workers and the oppressed. We combine this with a perspective of the overthrow of capitalism.

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and

living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

The RCIT strives for unity in action with other organizations. However, we are aware that the policy of social democracy and the pseudo-revolutionary groups is dangerous and they ultimately represent an obstacle to the emancipation of the working class.

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

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

In a war between imperialist states (e.g. U.S., China, EU, Russia, Japan) we take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. we don't support neither side and advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class. In a war between an imperialist power (or its stooge) and a semi-colonial country we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed country.

The struggle against national and social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) must be led by the working class. We fight for revolutionary movements of the oppressed (women, youth, migrants etc.) based on the working class. We oppose the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism etc.) and strive to replace them by a revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class win. The construction of such a party and the conduct of a successful revolution as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia are a model for the revolutionary parties and revolutions also in the 21 Century.

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

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

