



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency



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Crisis in the CWI: The Marxist Way Out

**Open Letter to CWI * The State * Anti-Imperialism * Oppression * China
Reformism * Arab Revolution * UK's Brexit * Party * Revolutionary Unity**

English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.20&21, July/August 2019 Special Double Issue on the Crisis in the CWI

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Source of the picture on the cover: Facebook account of Socialist Alternative (USA)

Revolutionary Communism is the monthly English-language journal published by the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT). The RCIT has sections and activists in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Yemen, Israel / Occupied Palestine, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Britain, Germany, and Austria.

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Introduction

By the Editorial Board, July 2019

The “Committee for a Workers’ International” (CWI) is deeply divided in different factions and will most likely split in the near future. As we outline in this pamphlet, this crisis is the result of fundamental defects of a wrong political method.

We are aware that hundreds of militants in the CWI are looking for a way out and are currently discussing about different political strategies. As a Trotskyist organization, we are highly interested to contribute to this debate with our analysis, program and strategies

In this special double issue of our theoretical journal, we present a selection of documents (respectively excerpts of documents) which outline the RCIT’s analysis and program on crucial issues for Marxist politics. They also deal critically with the positions of the CWI on these questions. In addition, we republish our 6 POINTS, a document which summarizes our approach on the issues which we consider as most important in the current world situation and which could, in our opinion, be the starting point for a process of revolutionary unification.

We have explained since many years that while the CWI leadership claimed to follow the Trotskyist method, in fact it has violated fundamental principles of Marxism again and again. Now is the time to correct these mistakes!

We urge all comrades of the CWI to study our documents seriously. The collapse of the CWI might be the end of political activity for some activists who will become demoralized. However, we are convinced that many other comrades are determined to continue the revolutionary struggle. To them we say that the present crisis can be also the beginning of step forward and a new stage of revolutionary party building. However, such a positive outcome is only possible under one condition: that the causes for the failure are correctly understood and the right lessons drawn.

The RCIT looks forward to discuss these issues and to listen to the experience and arguments of comrades. We are committed to work hand in hand with comrades to build together a healthy revolutionary international based on authentic Marxism.

Crisis in the CWI: For a Marxist Way Out!

A proposal to all current members and former members of the CWI to discuss the way forward in these tumultuous times

Open Letter from the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 29 June 2019

Dear comrades,
As you are obviously aware, the CWI has entered a period of deep crisis that will most likely end in a split. Understandably, many comrades are confused how such a sudden collapse could have happened. Many will view this as a disappointing experience.

However, important revolutionary currents have previously emerged out of splits. This includes the early Christians; Hus, Luther and Müntzer in the Middle Ages; and the Bolsheviks, the Communist International, and the Trotskyist movement in the modern era. But the precondition for a progressive outcome of a split is the making of a proper assessment of the causes of the crisis and the drawing of appropriate conclusions for the way forward.

For some it might seem that the deep crisis of the CWI has occurred because of the bureaucratic methods of the Taaffe-led International Secretariat or because of the opportunist adaption to so-called “identity politics” of the “Coordination” (also called “Non-Faction Faction”). As a matter of fact, neither bureaucratic leadership methods nor opportunism to petty-bourgeois currents are new phenomena in the CWI. The real impulse is lodged in the fact that these methods can no longer be reconciled with the changed reality – a world situation characterized by sharply accelerating contradictions between classes and states.

In the following paragraphs, we will summarize what we in the RCIT consider as the main issues that need to be addressed in order to find a revolutionary way out of the crisis.¹

1. **Authentic Marxism rejects the petty-bourgeois illusion of the peaceful transformation of capitalism.** One of the basic pillars of the CWI (as well as Alan Woods’ IMT) has always been the thesis that capitalism can be overthrown by peaceful means or even via the parliamentary road. As the RCIT has explained many times, such a position has been proven wrong by history and is in full contradiction to the views of Lenin and Trotsky. Consider the October Revolution. There was very little loss of life in the initial uprisings. The response of world imperialism was to drench the Russian Revolution in three bloody years of Civil War. Comrades of the CWI need to understand that capitalism can only be overthrown (and the revolution defended) by an armed uprising of the working class and the popular masses. Related to this, Marxists must oppose the classic CWI position that police forces are part of the working class and that their unions should be part of the labour movement.² The police are not exploited by the bourgeoisie but are the guardians of the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

2. **Authentic Marxism is anti-imperialist or it is not Marxism.** Throughout its whole history the CWI leadership has failed to side with semi-colonial countries in wars with imperialist powers (e.g. Malvinas War of Britain against Argentina 1982, U.S. wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003, NATO war against Afghanistan in 2001). As a result, it took an openly or disguised pacifist neutral position. Marxists must base themselves on the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky who advocated “active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and

wars against imperialism. A 'neutral' position is tantamount to support of imperialism." ³

3. Marxists consistently support the struggle of oppressed nations. While the CWI nowadays supports the national struggle of the Catalan people (a position probably accepted due to the pressure of their former comrades in Spain), it failed to do the same in crucial liberation struggles in other countries. In Ireland, it consistently refused to side with the nationalists fighting against British occupation in the North. The Irish section's leadership even went so far as to reject implementing the united front tactic towards Sinn Fein in any mass struggle. In Israel the CWI calls for a "socialist" Israeli-Jewish state instead of a single state with the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. This is effectively support for the continued existence of a colonial, settler state on historic Palestinian territory. ⁴ Likewise, we consider the CWI's opposition to open borders for migrants and refugees and its support for capitalist immigration control as a fundamental violation of the Marxist principle of internationalism. ⁵

4. Revolutionary opposition instead of adaption to the labour bureaucracy and labor aristocracy. The above-mentioned anti-Marxist positions of the CWI leadership are not accidental but the result of its long-term opportunistic adaption to sectors of the labour bureaucracy and to the prejudices of the most privileged sectors of the working class. For decades it worked inside British Labour and other social democratic parties. It opposed the understanding that these parties have become "*bourgeois workers parties*" (Lenin and Trotsky) and claimed instead that these parties could be transformed into "socialist parties" without ruptures. Then, in the early 1990s, the majority made a 180-degree turn (the minority which became Alan Woods' IMT upheld the old position.) The leadership now claimed that these parties were no longer any kind of "workers parties". As a result, the CWI in Britain has been totally surprised and confused by the left-reformist shift in the Labour Party under Corbyn. Marxists have to recognize the character of reformist parties as "*bourgeois workers parties*". At the same time, however, they should apply the united front tactic to such forces including, when merited, critical electoral support. Under certain conditions, a short-term entryism tactic is legitimate. However, the consistent strategic goal must be to break the workers away from the bureaucracy (both left-wing and right-wing). ⁶

Throughout the whole time, the CWI leadership continued the same opportunist approach within the trade union bureaucracy. Instead of building a revolutionary rank and file movement and opposing all sectors of the bureaucracy, they entrenched themselves within the left-reformist bureaucracy. As a result, CWI cadres developed, in a number of cases, close links with that bureaucracy and even entered its ranks as well-paid subordinates (see e.g. the 15 year long close alliance with the Serwotka leadership of the PCS union in Britain which recently ended in collapse and the desertion of many CWI cadres.)

The opportunism of the CWI leadership is not limited to the trade unions. It applies the same methods to other, alien class forces. Take for example the alliance of the US section of the CWI with Senator Bernie Sanders. In 2016 and now again, it is supporting Sanders' campaign to become the Presidential candidate of the Democrats, one of the two parties of the U.S. monopoly bourgeoisie. ⁷ An-

other expression of this extreme, opportunist adaption to bourgeois forces is the vote of CWI US leader Kshama Sawant on 13.08.2018 at the Seattle City Council to confirm the Chief of the Police Department. ⁸

5. Marxists must understand the political nature of the current historic period. This period is characterized by a massive acceleration of the contradictions between classes and between states. As a result, this period is now marked by important waves of class struggle. The CWI leadership has failed, however, to grasp the nature of these political convulsions. It claims that the class consciousness is still marked "by the defeat of Stalinism" instead of recognizing the insurgent radicalization of workers and the oppressed around the globe. As a result of such "pessimism", it failed to understand the nature of the Arab Revolution (since 2011) and dropped its support for the ongoing popular struggles against dictatorships and imperialist aggression in Syria, Yemen, etc. because the masses have continued their struggles under a non-socialist leadership. ⁹ In contrast, the CWI leadership had no such hesitance when it comes to the truly reactionary, imperialist forces leading the Brexit campaign. ¹⁰ Likewise, the CWI leadership has failed to grasp the emergence of China and Russia as imperialist Great Powers and, as a result, can't see the nature of current events (like the Global Trade War) as *inter-imperialist* conflicts. Hence, they lack a theoretical perspective to apply the Leninist program of *revolutionary defeatism*, i.e. intransigent opposition against all Great Powers and the advocacy of their defeat. ¹¹

Comrades, these are some of the most crucial issues on which the CWI leadership has completely failed the international working class. That is why the CWI is now experiencing serious splits similar to a host of other organizations in the recent past which also lack a consistent Marxist method (e.g. SWP/IST, PSTU/LIT, IMT, the Lambertists or the American ISO).

There are numerous, well-intended people sympathetic to the socialist project in the ranks of the CWI. We appeal to them to rethink the fundamental principles on which the CWI has based its politics for decades. Only overcoming these basic shortcomings will allow the construction of a healthy new international based on authentic, revolutionary methods.

We are convinced of the following formula: the foundation of any revolutionary organization is a revolutionary perspective. As Lenin clearly explained, "*There can be no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory.*" Achieving this is only possible if one rethinks the old positions and overcomes mistakes. As mentioned in the beginning, splits have occurred various times in history but they are not doomed to be failures. The Taborite and Müntzerite revolutionary movements which split with the moderates were of historic importance as Engels pointed out. The Bolsheviks' split in 1903 and the foundation of the Trotskyist movement were crucial for the further development of revolutionary Marxism as a vivid antagonist against both Tsarism and bourgeois liberalism as well as against Stalinist degeneration. But such positive outcomes of splits need the courage for change of methods of the past. Such positive outcomes need an open mind that looks at each and every key position with the readiness to question its correctness.

The RCIT is ready to discuss these issues and to listen to

your experiences, insights, and arguments. You can contact us at rcit@thecommunists.net. We are committed to working hand-in-hand with you in the construction of a healthy, revolutionary international based on authentic Marxist principles.

Footnotes

1 We urge comrades to read the following document which summarizes the view of the RCIT on the crucial tasks in the current period: *Open Letter: Great Tasks demand Great Initiative! A Call to All Revolutionary Organizations and Activists to Fulfil Our Responsibility in this Historic Time!* 7 January 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-great-tasks-demand-great-initiative/>.

2 See on this e.g. *Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward*, September 2011, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/sp-and-committee-for-a-workers-international>. In order to avoid an overblown footnote apparatus we provide in the following footnotes only a few selected publications of the RCIT. They usually contain numerous quotes both from the CWI as well as from the Marxist classics on the issues involved. They also provide links to many other RCIT publications dealing with these issues.

3 See on this e.g. our book *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, 2013, Chapter 12 and 13, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

4 See on this e.g. *The CWI's "Socialist" Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle*, 15.9.2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/cwi-and-israel/>

5 See on this e.g. *The Slogan of "Workers" Immigration Control: A Concession to Social-Chauvinism*, 27.3.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/workers-immigration-control/>

6 See on this e.g. *Marxism and the United Front*

Tactic Today. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the present Period, RCIT Books, Vienna 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/book-united-front/>; *RCIT-Theses on Revolutionary Trade Union Policy*, January 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-trade-union/>

7 See on this e.g. *The CWI and the U.S.-China Cold War. Some Notes on Centrists' Confusion about the Character of the Global Trade War*, 27 May 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-cwi-and-the-u-s-china-cold-war/>; *Why Not to Vote for the Democratic Party in the Forthcoming US Elections Or At Any Other Time*, 2.3.2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/northamerica/no-vote-sanders/>; *Once Again: Opportunism of US Left Exposed. An Analysis of the US 2016 Elections Campaign*, 14 August 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/left-and-us-election/>.

8 See on this e.g. <https://www.leftvoice.org/open-letter-to-kshama-sawant-don-t-support-the-police>

9 See on this e.g. *Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“*, 21 April 2018, Part III, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syria-great-power-rivalry-and-the-failure-of-the-left/>

10 See on this e.g. *The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism*, August 2015, see in particular chapter II.2., <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>

11 See on this e.g. *The CWI and the U.S.-China Cold War. Some Notes on Centrists' Confusion about the Character of the Global Trade War*, 27 May 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-cwi-and-the-u-s-china-cold-war/>; see also our book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019. See in particular chapter XI and XXVIII. The book can be read online or downloaded for free here: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan.
A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting analyses the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, EU, Russia, and Japan. He shows that the diplomatic rows, sanctions, trade wars, and military tensions between these Great Powers are not accidental or caused by a mad man in the White House. They are rather rooted in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. This rivalry is a key feature of the current historic period and could, ultimately, result in major wars between these Great Powers.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is crucial for assessing the character of the current inter-imperialist rivalry.

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting critically discusses the analysis of modern imperialism by a number of left-wing parties (left social democrats, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others). He demon-

strates that most of these organizations fail to understand the nature of the Great Power rivalry and, consequently, are not able to take an internationalist and revolutionary stance.

The author elaborates the approach of leading Marxist figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg to the problems of Great Power rivalry and imperialist aggression against oppressed peoples. He outlines a Marxist program for the current period which is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

The book contains an introduction and 29 chapters plus an appendix (412 pages) and includes 61 figures and tables. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan
A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

By Michael Pröbsting



Published by the Revolutionary Communist International of Workers

I. Revolutionary Overthrow of the State

Is a socialist transformation possible through peaceful or parliamentary reforms?

Introduction by the Editorial Board: In this part we will deal with the CWI's approach to the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state. We reprint an excerpt from an essay dealing with the *August Uprising* of the black and migrant youth. In August 2011, 30,000 youth fought against the police for several days after it had killed Mark Duggan, 29-year-old father of four children, during a police control. The RCIT welcomed the spontaneous uprising as a limited but legitimate protest while the CWI and its British section condemned it.

The essay was published in August 2011 in our journal *“Revolutionary Communism”* No. 1 (*“Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward”*, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/>)

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The so-called Trotskyist Socialist Party/CWI also stated in various statements its condemnation of the uprising: *“The Socialist Party does not support rioting as a method of protest, but we place the blame for what has taken place firmly on the Con-Dem government and say that it must be removed.”*¹

The SP in Liverpool expressed the same sentiment in even stronger terms: *“Liverpool & District Socialist Party is appalled at the current rioting which has resulted in the destruction of working peoples' homes, workplaces, and the community facilities and shops they rely on.”*²

And the SP's deputy general secretary, Hannah Sell, not only condemned the riots as *“only damaging for the working-class communities”* but even went so far to openly denounce the SWP for linking the riots with the idea of a revolution!

*“However, rioting is not the means to defeat the government, but, on the contrary, only damages the communities in which working-class people live, and gives the capitalist class an excuse to increase the repressive apparatus of the state. The Socialist Party does not agree with those on the left who condone the riots, such as the Socialist Workers Party, whose posters in the areas affected by riots declare them to be a step from ‘riot to revolution’.”*³

The latest SP's youth campaign added in its leaflet another argument for opposing the riots: *“But we will not defeat the government by rioting. On the contrary, the destruction of homes and services hugely exacerbates the problems our community faces.”*⁴

Of course it is obvious that riots will not defeat the government. But this is true for most forms of the class struggle today! Will a peaceful demonstration – which the CWI-leadership prefers to the riots – defeat the government?! Will a peaceful one-day general strike – another slogan favoured by the CWI-leadership – bring down the government?! Will the occupation of a square bring down the government?! Dream on, comrade pacifists!

Yes, the riots could not bring down the government but this was because of their lack of organisation, their lack

of spreading and their failure to involve wider sectors of the working class. For all these one must not blame the youth, the blacks and migrants but the leaderships of the Trade Unions, the Labour Left and of the various anti-cuts movements who terrible failed in the past to rally and organise the masses for a full onslaught against the government and by this to attract and organise the poorer sector of the proletariat. In addition to it all of these forces are not even in contact with these sectors of our class. They have no idea about these layers – not even when one can find the poorest sector being active in uprisings, not to mention times of lower class struggle.

Building the fight back will not only enter the road of peaceful demonstrations and orderly strikes including general strikes. It will also enter the road of violent uprisings of which the August uprising was only a first step, a beginning as Ambalavaner Sivanandan correctly stated.

What in fact is behind the SP/CWI's reactionary condemnation of the August Uprising is their adaption to the reformist Labour bureaucracy. This adaption expresses itself in anti-Marxist understanding of the nature of the bourgeois state. The bourgeois state – according to the CWI – does not need to be smashed by an armed uprising of the proletariat but can be peacefully transformed, even by getting a majority in parliamentary elections. This is a reformist position which the CWI held since their foundation in the 1970s.

Peter Taaffe, the central leader of the SP/CWI, defended this idea explicitly. In an interview a few years ago he answered to the question if there will be a revolution to overthrow capitalism:

*“Well yes, a change in society, established through winning a majority in elections, backed up by a mass movement to prevent the capitalists from overthrowing a socialist government and fighting, not to take over every small shop, every betting shop or every street corner shop -- in any case, they are disappearing because of the rise of the supermarkets -- and so on, or every small factory, but to nationalise a handful of monopolies, transnationals now, that control 80 to 85% of the economy.”*⁵

And in an educational pamphlet which the CWI publishes on its website another central leader, Lynn Walsh, repeats this idea:

*“Our programme presented the case for “the socialist transformation of society” - a popularised form of ‘socialist revolution’. We use this formulation to avoid the crude association between ‘revolution’ and ‘violence’ always falsely made by apologists of capitalism. A successful socialist transformation can be carried through only on the basis of the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class, with the support of other layers, through the most radical forms of democracy. On that basis, provided a socialist government takes decisive measures on the basis of mobilising the working class, it would be possible to carry through a peaceful change of society. Any threat of violence would come, not from a popular socialist government, but from forces seeking to restore their monopoly of wealth, power and privilege by mobilising a reaction against the democratic majority.”*⁶

As we can see the CWI doesn't understand the character of the bourgeois state with its huge machinery – built from top down without any democratic control from below and which serves and can only serve the capitalist class. It exists and can only exist in order to implement the class interests of the bourgeoisie and enforce them against the resistance of the working class and oppressed. The CWI doesn't understand that such machinery is incompatible to serve the working class in its road to socialism. This is why Marxists say that the bourgeois state cannot be reformed but must be smashed by a violent revolution. This is why Lenin repeated again and again:

*„The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution.“*⁷

And against the centrist Kautsky, who like the CWI, today praised the peaceful transformation of capitalism Lenin stated:

*„The proletarian revolution is impossible without the forcible destruction of the bourgeois state machine...“*⁸

As a result of their revisionist theory of the capitalist state the CWI clams that there is no class contradiction involved between the police (despite the fact it is the armed fist of the ruling class) on one hand and the working class and oppressed on the other hand. Therefore the CWI see the police men and women as *“workers in uniform”*.

This is obviously wrong and in contradiction to the classic lessons of the Marxist classics – and in contradiction to the experiences the labor movement made for more than 150 years. The only purpose of the police is to control and oppress the working class – like low-level managers in the enterprise. Neither of them directly or indirectly creates or distributes value in any form. They are paid parasites and thugs of capitalism. They are part of the middle layers and not of the working class. It doesn't matter if the police man or woman initially comes from the working class. Not the past but the present and the foreseeable future are decisive. This is why Trotsky thought any such idea of police men or women are *“workers in uniform”* is ridiculous:

*„The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker. Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain.“*⁹

As a result the SP/CWI doesn't want to smash the police but rather reform it and *“put them under control of the people”*. This wrong theoretical concept of the CWI leads to a reformist practice. Not only did they condemn the violence of the oppressed – they also didn't call for organized self-defense of the workers and youth in Tottenham, Brixton etc! How should they have defended themselves against the police?! These centrist don't care. Instead they praise the reformist policy of *“controlling”* the police:

*“For control of the police to be placed under the auspices of democratically elected local committees involving representatives from trade unions, councils, tenants associations, and community organisations.“*¹⁰

This is of course a completely illusionary, wrong perspective. We don't need stupid hopes in reforming the

police but rather decisive steps to organise armed self-defence units against the police. If police men and women are really standing on the side of the working class, they will leave the oppression apparatus to join such organs of self-defence. The only way to be a *“worker in uniform”* is possible via the total break with the police background, i.e. quitting this job, swapping the police uniform with the uniforms of the working class militias. As long as one stands in the duty of the apparatus oppressing the working class, he or she is not part of this class. What count is not what police men or women are thinking, but rather what they are doing.

Footnotes

(1) Judy Beishon: Con-Dems to blame for anger of youth - mass, trade union-led workers' response needed, The Socialist newspaper, 16 August 2011, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/12555/16-08-2011/con-dems-to-blame-for-anger-of-youth-mass-trade-union-led-workers-response-needed>.

(2) Liverpool & District Socialist Party statement on the riots in Liverpool, 10 August 2011, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/12516/10-08-2011/liverpool-socialist-party-statement-on-the-riots-in-liverpool>.

(3) Hannah Sell (Socialist Party deputy general secretary): As inner cities erupt - A mass workers' movement is needed to defeat the government, 9 August 2011, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/12510/09-08-2011/as-inner-cities-erupt-a-mass-workers-movement-is-needed-to-defeat-the-government>.

(4) Youth Fight for Jobs: London is Burning: Youth Demand A Future (Leaflet)

(5) The Socialist Party's history – The Militant Tendency, The Socialist, 29th June 2006, http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/html_article/2006-446-militant.

(6) Lynn Walsh: The State – A Marxist Programme and Transitional Demands; in: Marxism and the State – An Exchange by Michael Wainwright and Lynn Walsh, <http://www.socialistalternative.org/literature/state/>

(7) V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution. The Marxist Teaching on the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution (1917), Foreign Languages Press Peking 1970, p. 25

(8) V. I. Lenin: The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Foreign Languages Press, Peking 1972, p. 13

(9) Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, <http://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next01.htm#s1>.

(10) Hannah Sell (Socialist Party deputy general secretary): As inner cities erupt - A mass workers' movement is needed to defeat the government, 9 August 2011, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/12510/09-08-2011/as-inner-cities-erupt-a-mass-workers-movement-is-needed-to-defeat-the-government>.

II. Anti-Imperialism: A Decisive Test for Marxists

On defending semi-colonial countries against imperialist aggression

Introduction by the Editorial Board: In this part we will deal with the CWI's approach on imperialist wars against semi-colonial countries. Taking the examples of major wars of the past (the Malvinas war in 1982 and the Afghanistan war starting in 2001), we analyse the arguments of the CWI. We also outline the RCIT's understanding of the Marxist program on this issue. We sided with the semi-colonial countries – without lending support for the political leadership at the top – and called for the defeat of the imperialists. In contrast, the CWI refused to side with the forces attacked by imperialism and advocated a neutral stand.

Below we publish some excerpts from our book *"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"*, written by Michael Pröbsting, the International Secretary of the RCIT. The 448-page book can be read online or downloaded for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>.

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Just Wars and Resistance of the Oppressed

As we said above, there exist also other types of wars, wars between imperialist ruling classes and semi-colonial people or between reactionary ruling classes and oppressed classes or nationalities. In such wars, revolutionaries stand for the victory of the semi-colonial and/or oppressed people's camp respectively. The RCIT has summarized its position on such types of wars in its programme in the following way:

*"In military conflicts between imperialist states and Stalinist degenerated workers states (such as Cuba or North Korea) 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 tactics. This means putting demands on the existing leaderships for a common struggle against imperialism under our own banners. This principled stance distinguishes authentic Marxism from the Social Democratic, Stalinist and centrist variants of pseudo-Marxism who usually either refuse in a war, to openly call for the victory of the oppressed peoples against imperialism or they confuse military support with political adaption to the semi-colonial regimes (e.g. the pro-Qaddafi left during the civil war in Libya 2011)"*¹

Again, this is a condensation of the Marxist position as it was elaborated by Lenin and Trotsky. The whole history of mankind has seen such progressive, just wars. For example, the slave revolt of Spartacus against the Romans was progressive, as well as the peasant uprisings of Thomas Münzer or of the Hussites in the 16th century. For the same

reason Marx and Engels supported the Northern states against the slave owners in the South in the American civil war in 1861-65 or the uprisings of the Poles against Russian Tsarism in 1830, 1846 and 1863. Lenin and Zinoviev wrote:

*"There have been in the past numerous wars which, despite all the horrors, atrocities, distress and suffering that inevitably accompany all wars were progressive, i.e., benefited the development of mankind by helping to destroy most harmful and reactionary institutions (e.g., an autocracy or serfdom) and the most barbarous despotisms in Europe (the Turkish and the Russian). That is why the features historically specific to the present war must come up for examination."*²

This also applies to wars of oppressed nations who fight against the imperialist powers and their stooges. Lenin wrote:

*"National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but inevitable. About 1,000 million people, or over half of the world's population, live in the colonies and semi-colonies (China, Turkey, Persia). The national liberation movements there are either already very strong, or are growing and maturing. Every war is the continuation of politics by other means. The continuation of national liberation politics in the colonies will inevitably take the form of national wars against imperialism."*³

Lenin and Zinoviev conclude from this that it is the highest duty for all Socialists to take the side of the oppressed in such wars:

*"By a 'defensive' war socialists have always understood a 'just' war in this particular sense (Wilhelm Liebknecht once expressed himself precisely in this way). It is only in this sense that socialists have always regarded wars 'for the defence of the fatherland', or 'defensive' wars, as legitimate, progressive and just. For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be 'just', and 'defensive' wars, irrespective of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slaveholding and predatory 'Great' Powers."*⁴

It was in this same spirit that the Communist International in 1920 called the active support of the national liberation struggle as a duty of every revolutionary in the imperialist states:

*"A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of 'its' imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude to the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples."*⁵

In a speech at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, Trotsky stated: *"Every colonial movement, which weakens the capitalist rule in the metropolises, is progressive, be-*

cause it makes the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat easier to achieve.”⁶

Faced with the lack of support for liberation struggles of the oppressed people by the centrists, Trotsky emphasized this principle of revolutionary anti-imperialism:

“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.”⁷

Likewise, Trotsky explained unequivocally that the attitude of Marxist revolutionaries towards a war must not be derived from superficial appearances on the level of the political superstructure but must instead focus on the objective character of the classes involved. *It is important but not decisive for the formulation of the correct revolutionary tactic, if a given regime has a more democratic or a more fascist character, if it is religious or secular, if it uses a more progressive rhetoric or not – what is decisive is its class character, i.e. which classes does it rest on and the which classes do its action serve and respectively strike against.* So taking the example of a war between a semi-fascist Brazil and a democratic Britain, Trotsky elaborated:

“I will take the most simple and obvious example. In Brazil there now reigns a semifascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of “fascist” Brazil against “democratic” Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of

democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat. Truly, one must have an empty head to reduce world antagonisms and military conflicts to the struggle between fascism and democracy. Under all masks one must know how to distinguish exploiters, slave-owners, and robbers!”⁸

On the basis of these principles, Marxists always supported the liberation struggle of oppressed people even if they took place under the leadership of (petty-)bourgeois forces. Naturally they supported only the practical, military struggle without giving an inch of political support for those (petty-)bourgeois forces. Lenin, Trotsky and the Communist International called for the support of Turkey in its struggle against British imperialism and its Greek allies in the years after the end of WWI, despite the fact that Turkey was ruled by the bourgeois, anti-communist regime of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. They also supported the struggle of the Riffian Berbers under the leadership of Abd el-Krim in the 1920s against the Spanish and French imperialists drive to occupy their country. The French Communist Party (PCF) organized a militant anti-colonial mass campaign in solidarity with the Riffians – including a general strike on 12th October 1925. The PCF publicly expressed its support for the Riffians struggle until *“Moroccan soil was completely liberated”* from both Spanish and

Books of the RCIT

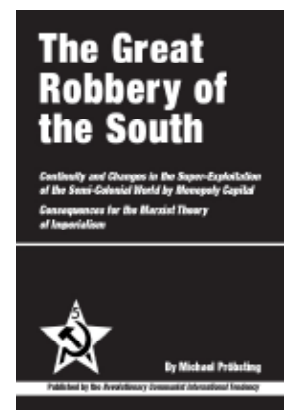
Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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)



French imperialists.⁹

Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International continued this revolutionary anti-imperialism. They supported the struggle of the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s despite the fact that it was led by the reactionary general Chiang Kai-shek. As we said, practical support for concrete steps against imperialism is obligatory for Marxists. This is relevant for all practical forms which hit the monopoly capitalists including – but not exclusively – military strikes. Hence the Trotskyists equally supported the nationalization of the British owned oil companies by the Mexican Cardenas government in March 1938. Trotsky characterized the expropriation as part of the national liberation struggle of a semi-colonial country: *“Semi-colonial Mexico is fighting for its national independence, political and economic. (...) Under these conditions expropriation is the only effective means of safeguarding national independence and the elementary conditions of democracy.”*¹⁰

In his balance sheet at the 90 year anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, Leon Trotsky stressed the duty of the proletariat in the imperialist countries to support the national liberation struggles in the oppressed countries:

*“The Communists,’ declares the Manifesto, ‘everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.’ The movement of the coloured races against their imperialist oppressors is one of the most important and powerful movements against the existing order and therefore calls for the complete, unconditional, and unlimited support on the part of the proletariat of the white race. The credit for developing revolutionary strategy for oppressed nationalities belongs primarily to Lenin.”*¹¹

This policy was later continued by Marxists when they supported national liberation struggles without identifying with the policy of its (petty-)bourgeois leaderships. To name only a few examples: one had to support the Algeria and the Vietnamese people’s struggle against the French imperialists as well as the Vietcong’s struggle against US imperialism.

In the war between semi-colonial Argentina and British imperialism on the Malvinas islands in 1982, our predecessor organization – the then revolutionary British group *Workers Power* – called for the defeat of British imperialism and the victory of Argentina. In the first Gulf War in 1991 we Bolshevik-Communists called for the defense of Iraq against the imperialist attack without giving any political support to the Saddam Hussein regime.¹² Similarly we stand on the side of the Afghan resistance against the imperialist occupiers since 2001 despite being led by the reactionary Taliban forces.¹³ And so we did in Iraq in 2003 and after.¹⁴ And on the same basis of Marxist anti-imperialism we supported the Hezbollah-led resistance in Lebanon in 2006, the Hamas-led resistance in Gaza in 2008/09 and 2012 against Israel as well as the Islamist-led resistance in Mali against the imperialist invaders from France, the EU and their African allies.¹⁵

The Struggle for Class Independence and the Anti-Imperialist United Front Tactic

The intensification of the contradictions between the classes and between the oppressor and oppressed nations in the era of imperialism repeatedly provokes massive resistance from the working class as well as middle-class and sometimes even amongst bourgeois layers in the semi-colonial countries. Moreover, because of the weakness of the organized workers movement, it often happens that petty bourgeois or bourgeois forces constitute the leadership of national resistance movements. Indeed, this was the case in the times when Lenin and Trotsky lived and it is generally also the case today (see e.g. Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka etc.). What tactical conclusions arise from this situation for Marxist revolutionaries?

Revolutionary tactics are derived from the *strategy of independent class struggle*. This means that we advocate the independent class interests and the independent organization of the working class. What is class independence? A clearly and scientific answer to this question is a prerequisite for the development of an appropriate tactic in the class struggle.

Class independence of the proletariat is first and foremost a political category and means the independence the working class from all petty-bourgeois and bourgeois influence and domination. Class independence means the recognition of the need by the working class of unceasing class struggle against the bourgeoisie; the recognition that it can advance its interests only if it makes itself the leading force in the resistance of the popular masses; that it has to create a political party out of its own ranks instead of subordinating to alien class forces and that it must itself become the ruling class through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist rule and the creation of a global socialist society. Hence class independence means the struggle against all stooges of the bourgeoisie within the ranks of the workers movement – i.e. the reformist bureaucracy in the trade unions, in social democratic, ex-Stalinist and Stalinist parties – which hinder the working class in its struggle via numerous methods of appeasement, deception and open repression. Likewise, class independence means the political struggle against the bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces that are in the leadership of national resistance movements. The political nature of class independence must necessarily express itself in organizational forms. Therefore class independence means necessarily the struggle for the organization of the proletariat independent from the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, and therefore the building of grassroots movements in the unions, a revolutionary youth movement, and above all a revolutionary workers party nationally and internationally.

Class independence means for Marxists, as the pioneers of such independence, permanent war against the imperialist bourgeoisie and their stooges. The working class is a class exploited and oppressed by capital. It is therefore exposed to the bourgeois pressure in all areas of life (work place, media, school, etc.). Accordingly, the revolutionary organization must act as a vanguard of the class in order to fight this bourgeois influence at all levels – economic, political and ideological-theoretical.

Such a struggle for class independence includes the application of the united front tactic. Revolutionaries take into

account that the masses still have illusions in non-revolutionary forces. When the revolutionaries advocate calls to advance the class struggle – with the formation of action councils, mass demonstrations, occupations, strikes, general strikes etc. – they direct these calls not only to the broad masses of the workers but also to the mass organizations of the class (including their leaderships). The leadership of these organizations must be actively addressed for joint actions. Given the extreme minority status of the revolutionary forces they must seek to participate in mass struggles led by reformists and intervene in these struggles with practical initiatives, a sharp and independent propaganda profile including explaining and warning of the treacherous role of the non-revolutionary leaderships and by putting demands on these leaderships. In doing this the revolutionaries must not give the impression that they themselves believe in the good intentions of the reformist leaders, but that they want to help the masses to make their own experience. The goal of such a united front tactic, as it was developed by the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky, is to break the influence of the non-revolutionary forces amongst the masses and to rally them under the leadership of a Bolshevik party.

In the semi-colonial countries and amongst the oppressed people this approach also includes the anti-imperialist united front tactic. This tactic usually focuses on the terrain of minimum or democratic demands – like the struggle against imperialist domination, for national independence and unity, for democracy and democratic rights, against the domination of the domestic industries and markets by imperialist monopolies etc. Revolutionaries seek to draw into such a united front not only the workers' organizations but also those of the petit-bourgeoisie (the peasantry, the small urban property holders, the professionals etc.) and even sections of the national bourgeoisie itself, where even the latter is compelled to resist imperialism by the pressure of the masses.

The possibility of applying the anti-imperialist united front tactic also to sectors of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie is based on the fact that it is – as we already outlined – “a semi-ruling, semi-oppressed class” (Trotsky).¹⁶ In other words there is a material basis for frictions between imperialism and sectors of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie which of course can only be of a temporary nature since against a fighting working class they will join forces.

Exactly because of its capitalist nature, the semi-colonial bourgeoisie has more in common with its big imperialist class brothers and sisters than with the working class in its own country. This is why they can be – at best – only a very temporary and unreliable ally in the struggle against imperialism which will soon stab the workers in the back.

Indeed, most often the petty-bourgeois or bourgeois forces will reject the calls for forming an anti-imperialist united front. Or if they agree to form such a front, they will sooner or later – rather sooner than later – betray it. This is however not an argument against the anti-imperialist united front tactic since this is a general characteristic of the united front tactic. Usually the reformist labor bureaucrats also resist forming united front's with revolutionary forces or they betray it very soon. Let us not forget that it was the social democratic government of Ebert and Noske which ordered the suppression of the Spartacus Uprising and led to the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in

January 1919. But Marxists do not pursue the united front tactic (including the anti-imperialist united front tactic) because they believe it is very likely that either the bureaucracy or the semi-colonial bourgeoisie would be loyal partners in such a united front. They rather do so because these forces often have control over mass organization or state institutions (like the army) in which many workers and peasants have illusions. In order to break such illusions, the bureaucracy and the semi-colonial bourgeoisie must be permanently “bombarded” with demands for joint actions. Only in this way can these treacherous forces be tested in practice and hence the masses can be supported to shed their illusions by their own experience.

Hence the goal of the anti-imperialist united front tactic is to advance the independent organization of the workers, peasants and oppressed in action councils or similar forms of soviet-like organization and to break them away from these (petty-)bourgeois leaderships and to win them for the perspective of the socialist revolution.¹⁷

As all united fronts, the anti-imperialist united front too, must be focused on agreements for practical actions and not joint political programs. And also similarly, the (petty-)bourgeois leaderships will in nine out of ten times refuse to form such a united front. This however does not rob the united front tactic of its importance. Calling these leaderships for joint actions remains an important tactic in order to show the masses our willingness for the joint struggle and to expose these leaders – if they fail to fight – in the eyes of the masses. Joining any practical struggle against imperialism and its reactionary accomplices is an important necessity even if it is led by (petty-)bourgeois forces and even if they refuse any collaboration with the revolutionaries. Only by this can revolutionaries prove to the masses that they are the best fighters for national independence, democracy etc. Only by this can they win the trust of the masses and finally break them away from the rotten leaderships.

The Communist International developed the anti-imperialist united front tactic in its “*Theses on the Eastern Question*” at its Fourth Congress in 1922. It emphasized the progressive nature of the struggle against imperialist domination – even if it takes place under the leadership of (petty-)bourgeois forces:

“The chief task which is common to all national revolutionary movements is to bring about national unity and achieve political independence. The real and logically consistent solution of this question depends on the extent to which such a national movement is able to break with the reactionary feudal elements and to win over the broad working masses to its cause, and in its programme to give expression to the social demands of these masses.

Taking full cognizance of the fact that those who represent the national will to State independence may, because of the variety of historical circumstances, be themselves of the most varied kind, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism. At the same time it does not forget that only a consistent revolutionary policy, designed to draw the broadest masses into active struggle, and a complete break with all adherents of reconciliation with imperialism for the sake of their own class domination, can lead

*The oppressed masses to victory.”*¹⁸

The Communist International stressed that Marxists must have no illusions in (petty-)bourgeois forces at the top of national liberation movements. They must apply

the united front tactic in order to maximize the mobilization power and in order to weaken the influence of these leaderships.

*„The expediency of this slogan follows from the prospect of a prolonged and protracted struggle with world imperialism which demands the mobilization of all revolutionary elements. This mobilization is the more necessary as the indigenous ruling classes are inclined to effect compromises with foreign capital directed against the vital interests of the masses of the people. And just as in the West the slogan of the proletarian united front has helped and is still helping to expose social-democratic betrayal of proletarian interests, so the slogan of the anti-imperialist united front will help to expose the vacillation of various bourgeois-nationalist groups. This slogan will also promote the development of the revolutionary will and the clarification of the class consciousness of the working masses and put them in the front ranks of those who are fighting not only against imperialism, but also against the survivals of feudalism.“*¹⁹

However, we repeat that a pre-condition for this is the active participation of revolutionaries in these struggles as the most active fighters. Revolutionaries must join these struggles against imperialist dominations, for democratic rights, for national rights etc. where and as they concretely take place. They must not refuse participation in such movements because they are led by (petty-)bourgeois forces (as it is often the case today). Only with such an approach can revolutionaries break the influence of these leaderships and win the workers and oppressed for the class independent policy.

For these reasons communists and later Trotskyists participated in many national and democratic liberation struggles despite the fact that they were led by (petty-)bourgeois forces. In several cases these leaderships even tried to suppress and kill the communists by all means. For example, the Kemal Pasha leadership in Turkey or the Chinese Kuomintang.

Therefore, while Marxists sharply denounced such bourgeois leaderships they supported them insofar as they took concrete actions against the imperialist enemy. The Communist International and later the Fourth International of Trotsky refused a platonic anti-imperialism, i.e. an anti-imperialism which “in principle” supported a given semi-colonial country but refused to apply the united front tactic to the very concrete forces which were at the helm of these struggles. They opposed any political support for the bourgeois forces of a struggle against imperialism, but called for practical support and participation in these struggles even when it was under such bourgeois leaderships.²⁰

The Soviet Union supported Turkey under Kemal Pasha in its struggle against British imperialism and its Greek allies. This policy was supported by the Communist International and also defended later by Trotsky. Trotsky also called for the critical but unconditional support of Chiang Kai-shek struggle against the Japanese invaders in the late 1920s and 1930s (despite the fact that the later murdered tens of thousands of communists in 1927!):

*“Quite so: as against imperialism it is obligatory to help even the hangmen of Chiang Kai-shek.“*²¹

The leader of the Fourth International sharply criticised those Ultra-leftists who refused to join an anti-imperialist struggle under a bourgeois leadership on the grounds that this would constitute a form of popular-frontism. He

called revolutionaries in 1937 to participate and support the military struggle against Japan under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek as long as they are not strong enough to replace him. He compared the necessary tactic for revolutionaries with those during a workers strike under the leadership of reformist, treacherous bureaucrats. It would be the duty of every class-conscious worker to join such a strike without supporting the bureaucrats politically. Trotsky’s attitude becomes clear from a document he wrote on the Chinese war against Japan in 1937 from which we quote here extensively:

“But Chiang Kai-shek? We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China, just as Marx and Engels had no illusions about the ruling classes of Ireland and Poland. Chiang Kai-shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle.

Let us use the example of a strike to clarify the question. We do not support all strikes. If, for example, a strike is called for the exclusion of Negro, Chinese, or Japanese workers from a factory, we are opposed to that strike. But if a strike aims at bettering — insofar as it can — the conditions of the workers, we are the first to participate in it, whatever the leadership. In the vast majority of strikes, the leaders are reformists, traitors by profession, agents of capital. They oppose every strike. But from time to time the pressure of the masses or of the objective situation forces them into the path of struggle.

Let us imagine, for an instant, a worker saying to himself: “I do not want to participate in the strike because the leaders are agents of capital.” This doctrine of this ultraleft imbecile would serve to brand him by his real name: a strikebreaker. The case of the Sino-Japanese War, is from this point of view, entirely analogous. If Japan is an imperialist country and if China is the victim of imperialism, we favor China. Japanese patriotism is the hideous mask of worldwide robbery. Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive. To place the two on the same plane and to speak of “social patriotism” can be done only by those who have read nothing of Lenin, who have understood nothing of the attitude of the Bolsheviks during the imperialist war, and who can but compromise and prostitute the teachings of Marxism. (...) But Japan and China are not on the same historical plane. The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China.

But can Chiang Kai-shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle. It is

necessary, however, to know when and how to transform political opposition into armed insurrection.

During the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 we attacked the policies of the Comintern. Why? It is necessary to understand well the reasons. The Eiffelites claim that we have changed our attitude on the Chinese question. That is because the poor fellows have understood nothing of our attitude in 1925-27. We never denied that it was the duty of the Communist Party to participate in the war of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of the South against the generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. We never denied the necessity of a military bloc between the CP and the Kuomintang. On the contrary, we were the first to propose it. We demanded, however, that the CP maintain its entire political and organizational independence, that is, that during the civil war against the internal agents of imperialism, as in the national war against foreign imperialism, the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. We hold the same policies in the present war. We have not changed our attitude one iota. The Oehlerites and the Eiffelites, on the other hand, have not understood a single bit of our policies, neither those of 1925-27, nor those of today.

In my declaration to the bourgeois press at the beginning of the recent conflict between Tokyo and Nanking, I stressed above all the necessity of the active participation of revolutionary workers in the war against the imperialist oppressors. Why did I do it? Because first of all it is correct from the Marxist point of view; because, secondly, it was necessary from the point of view of the welfare of our friends in China. Tomorrow the GPU, which is in alliance with the Kuomintang (as with Negrin in Spain), will represent our Chinese friends as being "defeatists" and agents of Japan. The best of them, with Chen Tu-hsiu at the head, can be nationally and internationally compromised and killed. It was necessary to stress, energetically, that the Fourth International was on the side of China as against Japan. And I added at the same time: without abandoning either their program or their independence.

The Eiffelite imbeciles try to jest about this "reservation." "The Trotskyists," they say, "want to serve Chiang Kai-shek in action and the proletariat in words." To participate actively and consciously in the war does not mean "to serve Chiang Kai-shek" but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence — to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek . . . that is the only revolutionary policy. The Eiffelites counterpose the policy of "class struggle" to this "nationalist and social patriotic" policy. Lenin fought this abstract and sterile opposition all his life. To him, the interests of the world proletariat dictated the duty of aiding oppressed peoples in their national and patriotic struggle against imperialism. Those who have not yet understood that, almost a quarter of a century after the World War and twenty years after the October revolution, must be pitilessly rejected as the worst enemies on the inside by the revolutionary vanguard. This is exactly the case with Eiffel and his kind!"²²

We see that Trotsky continued the application of the anti-imperialist united front tactic. In his critique of the Stalinist Draft Programme for the Communist International, he defended such a tactic on a general basis:

"It goes without saying that we cannot renounce in advance

such rigidly delimited and rigidly practical agreements as serve each time a quite definite aim. For example, such cases as involve agreements with the student youth of the Kuomintang for the organization of an anti-imperialist demonstration, or of obtaining assistance from the Chinese merchants for strikers in a foreign concession, etc. Such cases are not at all excluded in the future, even in China."²³

He repeats this idea of a united front tactic even towards reactionary figures like Chiang Kai-shek:

"By its absurd conditions, which serve to paint the bourgeoisie in bright colors in advance, the draft program states clearly and definitely (despite the diplomatic and incidental character of its thesis) that involved here are precisely long-term political blocs and not agreements for specific occasions concluded for practical reasons and rigidly confined to practical aims. But in such a case, what is meant by demands that the bourgeoisie wage a "genuine" struggle and that it "not obstruct" the workers? Do we present these conditions to the bourgeoisie itself, and demand a public promise from it? It will make you any promises you want! It will even send its delegates to Moscow, enter the Peasants' International, adhere as a "sympathizing" party to the Comintern, peek into the Red International of Labor Unions. In short, it will promise anything that will give it the opportunity (with our assistance) to dupe the workers and peasants, more efficiently, more easily, and more completely to throw sand in their eyes -- until the first opportunity, such as was offered in Shanghai."²⁴

On the basis of such an understanding of the united front tactic in order to break their basis away, Trotsky considered even an entry tactic into such bourgeois mass parties with an active rank and file of workers as a principled possibility for revolutionaries. While he sometimes was not sure if the entry tactic of the Chinese Communist Party in the Kuomintang in the early 1920s has been right or wrong from the beginning, he certainly was not in principle against such tactics. Such he wrote:

"The participation of the CCP in the Guomindang was perfectly correct in the period when the CCP was a propaganda society which was only preparing itself for future independent political activity, but which, at the same time, sought to take part in the ongoing national liberation struggle."²⁵

He repeated his support for the principled character of such an entry tactic several times: "The temporary entry into the SFIO, or even the Kuomintang, is not an evil in itself; however, it is necessary to know not only when to enter, but also how to leave."²⁶

The Trotskyists tried — with their limited forces — to put the anti-imperialist united front tactic into practice. Ch'en Pi-lan, a leading Chinese Trotskyist and the wife of the most prominent Trotskyist leader in China, Peng Shu-tse, reports that the Chinese section of the Fourth International decided at a conference in 1937 to "support the armed struggle being waged by the Kuomintang government against Japanese imperialism. Accompanying this was a criticism from the political point of view of the government's reactionary policy."²⁷

Gregor Benton reports in his study on the Chinese Trotskyists how they tried to enter the ranks of the official army and to participate in the anti-Japanese struggle and to build revolutionary cells at the same time. They even formed guerilla units during the war. A leading cadre of Chinese Trotskyists, Wang Fanxi, reports the same. Needless to say, that all this was conducted under the most difficult circumstances and with heavy losses.²⁸

Our understanding of anti-imperialism finds a clear expression in the Communist International's condemnation of all those pseudo-Marxists who refused to support a concrete struggle against imperialist forces led by (petty-) bourgeois forces with the argument that this would be in contradiction with class independence:

"The refusal of the communists in the colonies to take part in the struggle against imperialist tyranny, on the ground of the ostensible 'defence' of their independent class interests, is opportunism of the worst kind, which can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East." ²⁹

* * * * *

The CWI and the "imperialist" Argentina

Taking Argentina, which the CWI failed to defend against the British imperialism's war on the Malvinas in 1982, these centrists demonstrate how fast the discard of the Leninist theory of imperialism leads to theoretical confusion and practical desertion. So instead of stating clearly the (imperialist) class character of Britain and the (semi-colonial) class character of Argentina, the CWI replaces the Marxist categories with confusing, "common sense" (God save us from the Anglo-Saxon pragmatism!) categories and "characterizes" both countries as *"two fading second or third division powers"*:

"Twenty years ago in 1982, British imperialism's war with Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas islands burst out like a sudden storm. This minor war between two fading second or third division powers, cynically described as "two bald men fighting over a comb", only lasted ten weeks." ³⁰

In another document, the central CWI leader Peter Taaffe, even states that Argentina itself is somewhat "imperialist":

"This was the programme advocated by us at the time of the Malvinas/Falklands conflict. This was not a classic conflict between an imperialist power and a 'colony' in which Marxists were called upon to 'critically' support the latter. Argentina was a relatively developed capitalist power. It was not a feudal or semi-feudal regime in which the bourgeois-democratic revolution needed to be completed (apart from freeing Argentina from the economic vice of US imperialism and the world market, which is a socialist task). It was itself 'imperialist' towards other countries in Latin America – exporting capital and exploiting them – as well as being 'exploited' by the major imperialist pow-

ers. Moreover, it had a more developed capitalist structure than pre-1917 Russia, for instance. The latter, according to Lenin and Trotsky, was both a 'semi-colony' of Anglo-French imperialism and, at the same time, an 'imperialist' oppressor of the 57% of the population of the Tsarist Empire who were non-Russians. Lenin and the Bolsheviks never supported Russia, a 'semi-colony', in the wars against Japan in 1905, for instance, or German imperialism in the First World War." ³¹

Hardly any sentence of this makes sense. Let us first briefly refute the assertion that Lenin and Trotsky saw Russia as a semi-colony. The CWI hopes that its readers are unaware that the Bolsheviks clearly characterized Russia under the Tsar as an *imperialist state* – not as a semi-colony. Yes, there was an *element* of a semi-colonial relationship towards French financial capital but this was a *subordinated* aspect. That's why the Bolsheviks were clear in their characterization of Russia as imperialist. In their theoretical organ during the First World War, the Bolsheviks recognized that *"the Russian imperialism differs from Western European imperialism in many aspects. It is not an imperialism of the latest stage of capitalist development. Russia is a country which imports capital, which is an object of capital exporting countries. The Russian imperialism is a feudal, militaristic imperialism. (...) There is no imperialism which is cruder, more barbaric, and bloodier than Russian imperialism."* ³²

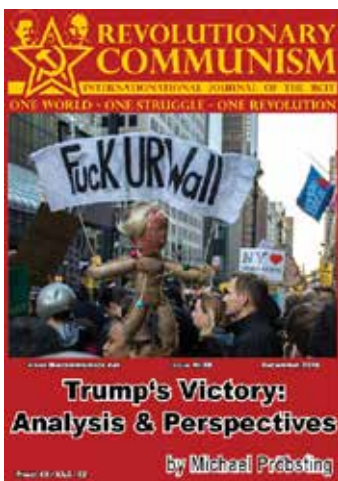
Trotsky later explicitly emphasized the difference between a semi-colonial bourgeoisie like the one in China and the imperialist bourgeoisie like the one in Russia before 1917:

"The Russian bourgeoisie was the bourgeoisie of an imperialist oppressor state; the Chinese bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie of an oppressed colonial country." ³³

It was the Stalin bureaucracy which for some time spread the nonsense that Russia before 1917 was a "semi-colony" but even they had to give up this ridiculous nonsense after some time. The CWI however wishes to revive what for Marxists is nothing but an embarrassing example of intellectual striptease.

It hardly needs elaboration why Argentina can never be compared with imperialist Russia which in the late 19th century and early 20th century was one of the longest-standing and biggest powers in Europe and world-wide.

Lumping together Britain and Argentina as essentially both capitalist *"second or third division powers"* serves as pretext for the CWI's desertion in the class struggle but is a smack in the face of reality. Let us briefly compare the economic, politically and military strength of these two



PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

The Meaning, Consequences and Lessons of Trump's Victory

By Michael Pröbsting, November 2016

Introduction * I. The Election Outcome * II. Where is the Trump Administration Heading? * III. Global Consequences: The Beginning of a New Era * IV. Lessons and Perspectives for the Struggle * V. Summary Theses * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 40 pages, A4 Format

"second or third division powers": In 2003, when the CWI wrote such nonsense, Britain had 77 of the world-wide biggest 1000 corporations. Argentina had ... none.³⁴ Argentina's GDP per head was 5.150 \$ - the equivalent of 1/8 of Britain.³⁵ Britain is one of the five veto-wielding powers in the United Nations and possesses a significant army with approximately 225 nuclear weapons and the world-wide fourth-biggest military budget.³⁶ Argentina, on the other hand, has no meaningful influence in world economy and world politics. So we see that there is an abyss between the economic, political and military power of Britain and Argentina. Any failure to recognize this is criminal stupidity to justify a petty-bourgeois desertion from class struggle when it is most urgently needed – in the case of an imperialist war.

The next quote from the CWI leadership shows us another form of distortion of the Marxist theory of Imperialism: *"Nevertheless, in the past period of world economic upswing, Argentinean capitalism developed a semi-industrialised basis of its own. It is ludicrous to portray Argentinean capitalism as a completely dependent, 'comprador' capitalism, dominated by the agents of foreign capital. This is the analysis offered by some of the sects in an attempt to justify their support for the Junta.*

A few crucial statistics reveal the absurdity of this position. In 1979, industry accounted for 45% of GNP, compared to 13% for agriculture (and 42% for services). Manufactured goods, it is true, account for only 22.7% of the country's exports, compared to 65.5% for food and agriculture, thus reflecting the weakness of Argentine industry on world markets. But the urban population now accounts for over 82% of the total population. Twenty-nine per cent of the active population work in industry, as compared to only 14% in agriculture (57% work in the enormous service sector). In other words, Argentina, despite its continued neo-colonialist subservience to American, West European and Japanese big business, nevertheless has all the characteristics of a semi-industrialised capitalist economy.

*If there were an Argentinean population on the Islands, subjected to British rule against their will, the situation would be different. Then there might be a case for the "national liberation" of the Islands. But this is not the case. Apart from one or two Argentines married to Islanders, there have been no Argentines on the Islands for 150 years."*³⁷

The last paragraph is obviously a particularly vulgar form of adaptation to British imperialism. Since the British colonial empire succeeded in preventing Argentina for more than 150 years to bring the islands in front of its coast under their control and since Britain succeeded in sending a few settlers to these islands, Argentina – according to the CWI social chauvinists – has lost its national rights on a territory which is in front of its coast but more than 12,700 kilometres away from Britain. This is nothing but a justification for the conquests of centuries of Western colonialism!

However the quote represents a good example of the typical confusions. The CWI says *"it is ludicrous to portray Argentinean capitalism as a completely dependent, 'comprador' capitalism, dominated by the agents of foreign capital"*. This is a deliberate exaggeration and confusion, since no one claims that it is "completely dependent". This is the nature of semi-colonies; otherwise they would be just colonies.

The Malvinas War in 1982

In the spring of 1982 Argentina – ruled by a reactionary military dictatorship at that time – took back the Malvinas Islands which are in front of its coast but occupied by British imperialism. The right-wing Tory government of Margaret Thatcher sent the British Navy and troops and – after a 74-day war with more than 900 dead – they re-occupied the islands. *Militant* – the mother section of the CWI (which at that time also had the leading cadre of the later split IMT, Ted Grant and Alan Woods, in its ranks) – completely capitulated to the imperialist pressure. The CWI supported and still supports until today Britain's claims on the Malvinas. It not only failed to support Argentina but even failed to call for an end of the war and a withdrawal of the British troops! It slanders opponents of the imperialist war as *"the ultra-left sects who, all forlorn, cry 'Stop the war!'"*³⁸ Instead the centrist CWI called for new elections to bring the Labour Party into power and ... to continue the war against Argentina *"on socialist lines"*!

*"The labour movement should be mobilised to force a general election to open the way for the return of a Labour government to implement socialist policies at home and abroad. Victory of a socialist government in Britain would immediately transform the situation in relation to the Falklands. The junta would no longer be able to claim to be fighting British imperialism ... A Labour government could not just abandon the Falklanders and let Galtieri get on with it. But it would continue the war on socialist lines."*³⁹

While formally opposing the right-wing Thatcher government, the CWI called for alternative measures to fight against semi-colonial Argentina and to support British imperialism's claims on the Malvinas: *"As an alternative to Thatcher's war, we called for international class action against the junta such as trade union blacking of trade."*⁴⁰ And this at the same time as the British government was waging an imperialist war against Argentina!

As a justification it referred to the right of national self-determination ... of the 1,800 British colonial settlers living on the Malvinas Islands! The CWI leadership defends their capitulation until today. In his book on the history of *Militant*, CWI leader Peter Taaffe argues: *"The democratic rights of the 1,800 Falklanders, including the right to self-determination, if they so desired, was a key question in the consciousness of British workers. (...) Marxists could not be indifferent to the fate of the Falklanders, particularly given the consciousness of the British working class as it developed over this issue."*⁴¹

In other words, since the CWI leadership believes that British imperialism has succeeded in poisoning the consciousness of the British working class by colonial, aristocratic prejudices, it considers itself impotent to oppose this but rather joins British imperialism's "care" for the settlers! Naturally such an ill-concealed support for the logic of colonialism is a shame for any group which calls itself "Marxist". The CWI propaganda is exactly a reflection of the imperialist propaganda to justify its global interventions by referring to the fate of their settlers. We will later see that the CWI repeats this reactionary logic in its support for Zionism and Israel's right to exist.

The same supposed backward consciousness of the British working class was utilized by the CWI leadership to justify its refusal to mobilize for an end of the war: *"To force the withdrawal of the Task Force would have involved the*

organization of a general strike, which itself would have posed the question of the coming to power of a socialist government. Yet at the outset of the war, such a demand would have received no support from the British workers. (...) Nor would the call to stop the war or to withdraw the fleet have provided a basis even for a mass campaign of demonstrations, meetings and agitation." 42

Another argument which the CWI leaders invented was the supposed "imperialist" character of Argentina: "The Argentine regime's invasion was not a war of 'national liberation' against imperialism. On the contrary, in seizing the Falklands/Malvinas the Argentine Junta was pursuing the 'imperialist' aims of Argentine capitalism." 43 We have dealt with this nonsense already in chapter 9 in this book.

The CWI leaders also tried to justify their support for "our boys" - i.e. the soldiers of the imperialist British army - by referring to them as "workers in uniform". This was used as an argument to oppose calls that Labor Party Members of Parliament should vote against any war credits since they would leave "our boys" defenseless. 44

All this is a graphic example that centrism shares a common ground with left-reformism and social-imperialism.

* * * * *

CWI and their Capitulation to Imperialism

The CWI demonstrates their adaption to the labor bureaucracy since the start of the imperialists' "War on terror" by refusing to call for the defeat of the Great Powers and their allies and for the victory of the forces that fight them. As we will see, they pursue such a social-pacifist policy in a more open, unhidden way than, for example, the IST.

In 2002, the CWI leading figure, Peter Taaffe, presented their method in a long article. He explained that because of the supposed different consciousness of the working class, Marxists cannot raise the same anti-imperialist principled positions in colonial wars as the Trotskyists did in the 1930s. He argues that the masses in 1930s had much more sympathy for the Ethiopian kingdom than for the Taliban. Therefore, Taaffe concludes, the Fourth International was correct to defend the Ethiopian resistance under the leadership of the reactionary Haile Selassie regime. Today, however, workers in the imperialist countries would not

understand defending the Afghan resistance under the reactionary Taliban leadership and hence Marxists - i.e. the CWI - should limit themselves to platonic opposition to war and occupation:

"The masses in the 1930s would have understood little of the precise detail of the Haile Selassie regime. Moreover, Ethiopia was under attack by the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini at the time Trotsky was writing. Given the democratic illusions of the working class of Europe or the US in particular, together with the recent bloody example of what fascism would mean for them in the coming to power of Adolf Hitler and Mussolini, it was natural that the sympathies of the masses in the 1930s would be with Ethiopia against fascist Italy. The British and most of the European bourgeoisie together with the US, for their own imperialist strategic interests, also played on this sympathy for Ethiopia. It is nonsense to imply, however, as the sectarian organisations do by quoting these remarks of Trotsky, that the mass of the populations in most industrialised countries could take the same attitude today towards bin Laden and the Taliban." 45

Readers will probably see the similarity to the CWI argumentation at the time of the Malvinas war in 1982: British workers would not understand slogans like "Down with the war!", they would not understand a failure to defend the settler "Falklanders" and certainly would not a support for the Argentine's attempt to take back the islands. Hence, according to the CWI logic, it must not raise any consistent slogans against the British war and should even promise to continue the war "on a socialist basis" when the Labour Party comes to power.

Therefore, the CWI leader states unambiguously: "To call baldly and crudely for the 'defeat of US imperialism' and its coalition allies as an agitational slogan is wrong."

Naturally, the CWI is faced with the problem that its position is in complete and obvious contrast to all statements of Lenin's Communist International and Trotsky's Fourth International about imperialist wars in the colonial world. So they claim that "in principle" they support the resistance of oppressed people against imperialism, but not the struggles of those, who are actually putting the resistance into practice. This is a model for "platonic anti-imperialism": Resistance against imperialist occupation? Yes, of course, "in principle". Support for those, who are fighting the imperialist occupation in Afghanistan, in Iraq or Palestine today? No, never, they are reactionary and workers in

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<p>Kenya: Down with the pro-imperialist Kenyatta Regime!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Gnassingbé Regime in Togo * Zambia: Still Not Free * 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"> * Interview with Ghana's CPP * Syria: Liberation Struggle at a Crossroad * Brazil: The Shadow of a Military Coup * Catalonia's Struggle for Independence 		<p>The Imperialists Enslave the African People - Then as Now!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Successful 2nd RCIT World Congress * MGPK (Russia) & RCIT collaborate * Syria: No to Turkey's Attack on Afrin! * Tunisia: Solidarity with the Protest! * Palestine: Free Ahd Tamimi NOW! 		<p>The Syrian Revolution is in mortal Danger!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Balfour's Declaration - Myths vs. Fact Six Points for Revolutionary Unity * Italy sends Soldiers to Niger * Class Warfare in Zambia * Liban: American Puppet President! * UK: Carillon Crisis 	
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the West wouldn't understand. This is the shameful policy of the CWI, as the following quotes from the same CWI document show:

"We clearly differentiate between the advanced imperialist countries and those in the colonial or the neo-colonial world. In general we still support the peoples in the neo-colonial world in the struggle against imperialist domination, particularly when this takes on the form, as it did in Afghanistan, of military intervention. In this case we were clearly on the side of the Afghani people and in the imperialist countries we opposed the war. Support for the Afghani people and their resistance against the armed incursions of imperialism is not the same as support for the Taliban, even if this support is 'critical', as some left organisations have posed it."

So, Taaffe contrasts the CWI policy to those of principled anti-imperialists like our organization:

"If, therefore, we perceive this war as thoroughly reactionary on the part of imperialism, does this mean that we throw in our lot, albeit 'critically', with those who have allegedly 'resisted' the US juggernaut, namely bin Laden, his al-Qa'ida and the Taliban government? Unbelievably, this is the position of some small Trotskyist groups, such as Workers Power (our predecessor organization, MP) and the Morenoite LIT. The latter is largely based in Latin America. Their approach will find absolutely no echo amongst the world working class, particularly the proletariat in the developed capitalist countries. Nevertheless, because they utilised some of the past writings of Trotsky to justify their position during the war they could, and did in some instances, confuse and befuddle some young people and workers who came into contact with them. It is necessary, therefore, to deal with their arguments here as a means of clarifying the issues within our own ranks. They also show utter confusion on developments within 'Islam'."

It is only consistent that the CWI not only failed to support the Afghan resistance against imperialist occupation but also the resistance in Iraq, in Lebanon in 2006 and in Palestine in 2008/09 and 2012 against Israel as well as in Mali in 2013.⁴⁶ Lenin's emphasis in his report about the Thesis on the National and the Colonial Questions at the Second World Congress of the Communist International is completely alien to the CWI method: *"What is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations."*⁴⁷

Therefore, when the CWI sometimes slip in a little sentence like *"We support the right of the Palestinian people to defend themselves"*, it is nothing but a meaningless phrase. First, it is nothing but imperialist arrogance to allow the oppressed people "the right" to defend themselves. Secondly, it does not clearly state that an organization is committed to support this resistance and to call for mass support for it. Thirdly, as we said above, such formulations are intended to cover the fact that the CWI actually does not support the resistance which is coming from Hamas and other Islamists against Israel but which is the concrete form of Palestinian resistance today.

The IMT – which share the same method with the CWI – has a similar cowardly, social-pacifist approach. This is both true for the wars in Palestine as well as in Mali.⁴⁸

To illustrate this point, we want to give the reader the following example. Let us imagine that we are not dealing with the Palestinian resistance against Israel's state terrorism but with a workers strike in Britain which is organized by a bureaucratic trade union like UNISON (or any

other union). This union is forced under the pressure of the fierce attack of the bosses and the militant mood of the workers, to call an indefinite strike from this day on and which takes place in this and that enterprise in the cities X, Y and Z. It is the obvious duty of any revolutionary to support this strike, despite the bureaucratic leadership of the union, to call for the concrete support of this specific strike in all the enterprise and cities where it takes place. Let us now imagine, that the police attack the union leaders – or even tries to kill them. Again, despite all our criticism of the union leaders, only a traitor would deny them the complete and unconditional defence against the police.

Surely, CWI comrades would agree with such an attitude. But when the CWI has to deal with a political and military struggle for national liberation of an oppressed people and not with an economic strike in an imperialist country, they refuse such an unconditional solidarity. Imagine, an organization – faced with a workers strike in Britain – would limit itself to state: *"We support the right of the British workers to strike"* without calling to rally in support for the UNISON led strike on this and that! We would call them traitors. But this is exactly what the CWI is doing with the struggles of the oppressed people if they come into conflict with imperialist powers or their allies! The CWI's failure in the anti-imperialist duty is a glaring example how a confused, blurred theory leads to a blurred, impotent tactic in the face of imperialist bullying and wars.

Leon Trotsky made a similar point when he remarked: *"... it is a bad Marxist who tries to fix common rules for imperialist France and colonial China. Not to distinguish oppressor countries from oppressed countries is the same as not to distinguish between the exploiting class and the exploited. Those who place imperialist and colonial countries on the same level, no matter what democratic phrases they might use to conceal this fact, are nothing but agents of imperialism."*⁴⁹

Of course, Marxists must not lend any *political* support to Hamas or other forces as we stated in our declaration on the latest Gaza war. But this must not lead revolutionaries to deny support for the Palestinian resistance which today takes place under the leadership of Hamas.

"The RCIT condemns all those reformist forces (like most left-wing social democrats and ex-Stalinist parties) which criticize equally Israel and "terrorist organizations" like Hamas, which defend the right of existence for Israel (including centrists like the CWI) or which refuse to support the Palestinian resistance because it is led by petty-bourgeois Islamist forces like Hamas (including many other centrist groups based in the Western world like the IMT or the British AWL). Of course, revolutionary socialists don't share an inch of the political goals of the petty-bourgeois leaderships of Hamas. However only a fool or a servant of imperialism can deny that this is a war between an oppressor state (Israel) and an oppressed people – the Palestinians! The Palestinians fight for their right to live and exist! Any left-wing organization which stands aside in this war, which refuses to support the struggle of the Palestinian resistance under its existing leadership against the Israeli aggression, under the pretext of secular democracy or socialism, betrays exactly such democratic and socialist principles!

While we support the heroic struggle of the Palestinian fighters of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other resistance organizations, we warn against any illusion in the petty-bourgeois leaderships of these organizations. The working class in Palestine and internationally need their independent fighting party for socialism.

*Forward in building a revolutionary workers party as part of a Fifth International based on a revolutionary program! Long live international solidarity!"*⁵⁰

The CWI commits a characteristic failure of centrism: they call for the solidarity with the victims but fail to support their concrete struggles for liberation. Trotsky's condemnation of the centrist politician Georg Ledebour, written in 1932, also hits well at the political failures of the CWI today:

„Nevertheless, Ledebour's position even on this question does not leave the precincts of centrism. Ledebour demands that a battle be waged against colonial oppression; he is ready to vote in parliament against colonial credits; he is ready to take upon himself a fearless defense of the victims of a crushed colonial insurrection. But Ledebour will not participate in preparing a colonial insurrection. Such work he considers putschism, adventurism, Bolshevism. And therein is the whole gist of the matter.

*What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their "right" to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism."*⁵¹

Footnotes

- 1 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, pp. 62-63
- 2 V.I. Lenin/G. Zinoviev: Socialism and War (1915); in: LCW 21, p. 299
- 3 V.I. Lenin: The Junius Pamphlet (1916); in: LCW 22, p. 310
- 4 V.I. Lenin/G. Zinoviev: Socialism and War (1915); in: LCW 21, pp. 300-301
- 5 Communist International: Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, approved by the Second Comintern Congress (1920); in: The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents. Selected and edited by Jane Degras, Volume I 1919-1922, p. 170
- 6 Leo Trotzki: Auszug aus einer Rede zur französischen Frage auf dem IV. Weltkongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale (1922); reprinted in: Jakob Moneta: Die Kolonialpolitik der französischen KP, Hannover 1968, p. 22 (our translation)
- 7 Resolution on the Antiwar Congress of the London Bureau (1936), in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, p. 99
- 8 Leon Trotsky: Anti-Imperialist Struggle is Key to Liberation. An Interview with Mateo Fossa (1938); in: Writings of Leon Trotsky 1938-39, p. 34
- 9 Quoted in: David H. Slavin: The French Left and the Rif War, 1924-25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism, in: Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 26, No. 1, January 1991, p. 10; see also numerous documents from the PCF which are reproduced (in German language) in Jakob Moneta: Die Kolonialpolitik der französischen KP, Hannover 1968, S. 42-61
- 10 Leon Trotsky: Mexico and British Imperialism (1938), in: Writings 1937-38, p. 359
- 11 Leon Trotsky: Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto (1937); in: Writings 1937-38, p. 25
- 12 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Am Beispiel des Iraks: Anti-Imperialistische Strategie und Taktik, ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (October 1990); Michael Pröbsting: Kampf dem Imperialismus!



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By Michael Pröbsting, May 2018

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Verteidigt den Irak!, in: ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt Nr. 32 (January 1991); Michael Pröbsting: Stoppt den imperialistischen Massenmord!, in: ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt Nr. 33 (February 1991); Workers Power (Britain): Working class action to defeat imperialism Victory to Iraq! (1991), <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/working-class-action-defeat-imperialism-victory-iraq>;

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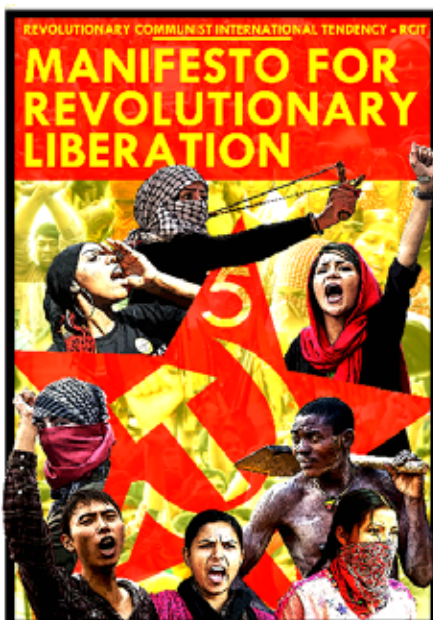
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PROGRAM OF THE RCIT

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

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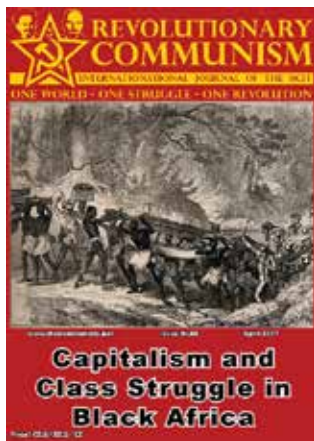
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PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Theses on Capitalism and Class Struggle in Black Africa

An Analysis of Imperialist Exploitation and Oppression and the Perspectives of the Liberation Struggle

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

Introduction * Some Background Notes on Black Africa's Modern History: How Colonial Plunder and Oppression Blocked Independent Development * Popular Struggles against Colonialism Led to Formal Independence * Formal Independence as Disguised Imperialist Dependency * The Reactionary Role of White Settlers * Is Capitalist Black Africa Rising? * Africa in the Grip of Imperialism * China as a new Imperialist Great Power Challenging the Western Domination * The Working Class and the Oppressed * Rising Class Struggle * Key Lessons for a Revolutionary Strategy in Black Africa * Imperialist Domination and Authoritarian Regimes Remain in Place despite Formal Changes * Breaking the Capitalist Chain – The Program of Permanent Revolution * The Revolutionary Struggle against Imperialism * Imperialist Chauvinism and the Anti-Imperialist Patriotism of the Oppressed * The Independence of the Working Class and the Struggle against the Popular Front * The Struggle for Pan-African Unity * The Revolutionary World Party and its African Sections * Footnotes

III. The Struggle against National Oppression

Revolutionary support for the struggle of the oppressed versus social-chauvinist opportunism

Introduction by the Editorial Board: In this part we will deal with the CWI's approach on national oppression and the struggle against it. While this issue is relevant in many countries, we discuss two examples: the position of the CWI to the Zionist state Israel as well as its position on migration.

The RCIT supports the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. We advocate the destruction of the Zionist Apartheid state and fight for a single democratic state from the river to the sea with the right of return for all Palestinian refugees. Such a state which would have a Palestinian majority population should be a workers and peasant republic. In contrast, the CWI advocates the continuing existence of a "socialist" Israeli-Jewish state on Palestinian territory alongside a "socialist" Palestinian state.

On the issue of migration, the RCIT opposes all restriction of imperialist states against free movement for migrants and refugees. In contrast, the CWI supports immigration control and rejects "Open Borders".

Below we publish an essay called "*The CWI's "Socialist" Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle*". It was originally published in our journal "*Revolutionary Communism*" No. 27 (October 2014), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/cwi-and-israel/>. In addition, we reprint an excerpt from our pamphlet "*The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism*", published as special issue of the journal "*Revolutionary*

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The CWI's "Socialist" Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle

Peter Taaffe, the CWI's long-standing leader, recently published a response to criticism against the position of his organization regarding the Palestinian liberation struggle. (1) In addition, on 31 August a public debate took place between representatives of the Austrian sections of the RCIT and the CWI in which the participants debated strategy for the Palestinian liberation struggle. (2) Furthermore, RCIT comrades in Israel / Occupied Palestine as well as socialists inside the *Workers and Socialist Party* (WASP) in South Africa regularly hold discussions with CWI activists on this issue.

While Taaffe's article takes the form of a reply to an article by the Cliffite US group ISO, it is in fact an attack on the positions of all consistent socialists who take an anti-Zionist stand in their support for the Palestinian liberation struggle. In fact, Taaffe's article is a reaction – on the backdrop of the massively growing international solidarity movement for Palestine – to the increasing criticism which the CWI is facing from socialists. This criticism targets the

Books of the RCIT

Yossi Schwartz: Palestine and Zionism

The History of Oppression of the Palestinian People. A Critical Account of the Myths of Zionism

In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz provides a critical analysis of numerous Zionist myths about the Jews as well as about the Palestinians. He demonstrates that the Zionist claim that Palestine is the historic homeland of the Jews lacks any serious basis.

Palestine and Zionism shows that the history of Zionism in the 20th century is a history of colonialism in the service of the Great Powers and directed against the native population – the Arabs. In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz deals with key events – the "Nakba" in 1948, the wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973, more recent events like the Lebanon War, etc. – which were decisive for the expulsion of most Palestinians from their homeland.

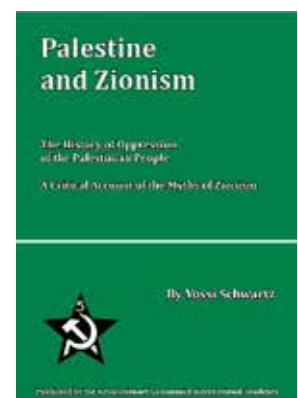
Yossi Schwartz also shows that the Palestinian people have heroically resisted against the occupation resulting in two Intifadas as well as the successful defense of Gaza against the Israeli aggression in three wars (2008/09, 2012, 2014). The author also analysis the shameful betrayal by the PLO leadership by signing the Oslo Agreement in 1993.

In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz defends the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian people and

outlines a socialist perspective. He emphasizes that the only solution is the right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and to replace the Zionist entity with one democratic state from the river to the sea – a *Free Red Palestine* with equal civil rights to the Arabs and the Israeli Jews.

The book contains an introduction and 7 chapters (112 pages) and includes 7 Tables and 3 Maps. The author of the book is Yossi Schwartz, a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency and its section in Israel / Occupied Palestine..

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



CWI's failure to side with the Palestinian resistance in the ongoing liberation struggle against the Zionist state, as well as its long-standing support for a "socialist" Jewish state of Israel alongside a "socialist" Palestine. In the following essay we will reply to the arguments of the CWI and explain the position of the RCIT.

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and its section in Israel / Occupied Palestine – the *Internationalist Socialist League* (ISL) – have a long-standing record of fighting for a communist and anti-Zionist program in the struggle for the national liberation of the Palestinian people and a socialist federation of the Middle East. We – and our predecessor organizations respectively – have always fought against the Apartheid State of Israel and for its replacement by a single state in all of historic Palestine, one which should have a democratic and socialist character. Equally, we have always sided with the Palestinian resistance and the Arab people in their struggles with and wars against Israel, and have helped to organize numerous solidarity actions. Thus, we refer all those who are interested in learning more about our program for Palestine to the numerous documents and articles which we have published in our journals and online. (3)

What are the Main Differences between the RCIT and the CWI regarding Palestine?

Let us start by giving a brief recapitulation of the main differences between the RCIT and the CWI regarding the issue of Palestine.

I. Permanent Revolution for a "Free, Red Palestine" or "Socialist" Zionism for a Two State Solution?

We begin by analyzing the differences between the respective programmatic goals of the RCIT and the CWI. As we have stated above, all RCIT comrades, both in the *Internationalist Socialist League* and in their respective organizations internationally, stand for a *Free, Red Palestine from the River to the Sea*. We consider this as the only possible solution to the burning national question which dominates political life both in Israel / Occupied Palestine as well as throughout the entire Middle East. The national oppression of the Palestinian people, the majority of whom live either in refugee camps or in the Palestinian Diaspora, can only be ended if all Palestinians are given the right to return to their homeland – currently under Israeli occupa-

RCIT

The RCIT considers Israel to be an imperialist, colonial settler state with no legitimacy. It calls for a *Democratic, Palestinian, Multinational and Socialist Workers and Fallahin Republic from the River to the Sea*. In such a single state in the whole of historic Palestine, the Palestinians – having the right to return to their homeland – would naturally constitute the majority of the country's population. Such a state should be part of a socialist federation of the Middle East. All Jews will be welcomed to live in such a state as long as they accept the democratic rights of the Palestinian majority. In short, we fight to replace the State of Israel with a "*Free, Red Palestine*." The RCIT believes that the right of national self-determination is only a right for oppressed nations, not oppressor nations.

The RCIT sides with the practical struggle (including its military aspects) of the Palestinian resistance and calls for the application of the anti-imperialist united front tactic as elaborated by Lenin's Communist International. We call for the victory of the Palestinian resistance and for the defeat of Israel, while at the same time giving no *political* support to the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois leaderships of the Palestinian resistance (like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah, PFLP etc.).

The RCIT critically supports the international mass boycott campaign against Israel which has been joined by many trade unions and solidarity organizations around the world. While this campaign alone cannot defeat Israel, it can contribute to the support of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Equally, the RCIT calls the international trade union movement to break their links with the Histadrut, the Zionist trade union which is closely connected with the Israeli state.

CWI

The CWI considers Israel as a normal capitalist state, not a colonial settler state. It views Israel as being similar to other capitalist states, like Egypt. While the CWI recognizes the *Nakba* as a tragedy, it believes that this is a historic episode belonging to the past. According to the CWI, an Israeli Jewish state is an historic fact which should be accepted. Therefore, the CWI defends the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews, including the right to have their own state. Consequently it calls for a socialist Israel alongside a socialist Palestine. Both states should be part of a socialist federation of the Middle East.

The CWI opposes Israel's wars of aggression. While it abstractly "defends the right of the Palestinians to resist," it explicitly rejects any united front approach or support for the struggle of the Palestinian resistance as it exists today (i.e., with Hamas in the leadership role). The CWI considers Hamas to be an enemy of the Palestinian people no less than the Israeli state.

In general, the CWI opposes the boycott campaign against Israel, with the exception of some selected measures against this or that company located in the West Bank settlements, or against arms exports by Israel. The CWI claims the broad boycott campaign against Israel should not be supported, since it is rejected by the Israeli workers. The CWI also opposes calling for the international trade union federation to sever their links with Histadrut.

tion.

Such a state must be socialist in character because only a Workers' and Fallahin Republic which expropriates the (mostly Israeli Jewish) capitalist class will be able to ensure social equality and mobilize the huge economic resources which are indispensable to implementing a program of return for the Palestinian refugees, and at the same time ensure an overall improvement of living conditions for the popular masses.

The CWI slogan of a two-state solution – i.e., retaining the Israeli-Jewish state which was founded on and nurtured by the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their historic homeland – effectively means denying the Palestinians the right of return to that homeland. Simply calling two such proposed states “socialist” doesn't make them so; if it doesn't change the basic injustice of denying the Palestinians the right to return to their homes in Haifa, Jaffa, and hundreds of ethnically cleansed villages, while at the same time perpetuating the Jewish colonialist legacy which preceded and was many times augmented after the Nakba. A priori, such an arrangement could never be deemed socialist, but rather would be something like calling for a “socialist” state in which women don't have the same voting rights as men. If such a state would deny women equal rights – irrespective of its disingenuously being called “socialist” – it would not be socialist at all. Thus, the CWI's two-state program effectively makes its adherents “socialist” Zionists. It is a pure expression of social-imperialism or “social-Zionism.”

Will a “Free, Red Palestine” Lead to the Expulsion of the Israeli Jews?

In our recent debate with the CWI representatives in Austria, these comrades maintained that our program of a *Free, Red Palestine* would lead to the expulsion of the Israeli Jews. We replied then and we repeat now that this is utter nonsense. In a *Free, Red Palestine*, Jews would be a legitimate and integral part of the multinational state. No authentic socialist can call for the expulsion of the Jewish people from Palestine. Jews would have the right to maintain their culture and languages (including observing holidays, obtaining kosher food, founding their own schools, and establishing media in their languages, etc.).

A Palestinian workers' state would mobilize the huge financial resources required to organize a massive public program of building new homes. Only such a program will ensure that both the Palestinian people can return to their former places of residence while, at the same time, the Israeli Jews can continue to live in decent housing.

However, we do not deny that a significant proportion of Israeli Jews may not readily accept the loss of the privileges to which they have become accustomed during the decades of an apartheid system in Israel. In an earlier essay on the question of permanent revolution in Palestine, we addressed historical examples of other settler peoples.

“If one takes into account the extraordinary privileges which the Israeli Jewish population enjoy by the Zionist Apartheid state, it is very likely that a significant proportion of them will not accept a democratic state and equality with the Palestinians. We have seen the developments in Africa after the end of the European colonial empires. Many of the white colonial settlers left the country since they didn't want to accept being a minority

in a (formally) independent country in which the black population dominates. For example, at the end of the 1970s, Portugal's withdrawal from Mozambique and Angola spurred a great exodus, in which 95% of whites in both countries left. In Zimbabwe, this exodus was also huge where the white population dropped from a peak of around 296,000 in 1975 to 120,000 in 1999 to just 30,000 today. In South Africa this development was less dramatic. Nevertheless even here and even despite the fact that the white population could retain their privileged material position, some 800,000 out of a total white population of 4 million have left the country since 1995.” (4)

The Right of National Self-Determination: A Principle of Socialism?

In an attempt to justify their neglect of the Palestinian national liberation struggle as part of the program for permanent revolution, the CWI has reinvented some “Marxist” principles. Such ideological acrobatics demonstrate that the CWI comrades have, in fact, broken with Marxist methods. For example, Peter Taaffe claims: *“The right of self-determination is not a “socialist principle”, as the ISO asserts, but a democratic task.”*

Such a claim only reveals the extent to which Taaffe is not familiar with the Bolshevik program. Of course, it is certainly true that, in a revolutionary situation, the right of national self-determination – like many other goals of the socialist program – can be superseded by more burning tasks of the socialist revolution. For example, in the course of a successful proletarian revolution it might become necessary to invade another country, and thereby temporarily suppress its population's right of national self-determination, in order to spread the world revolution. Similarly, it may become necessary to temporarily suspend the democratic right of factory workers to elect their superiors; or that of rank and file soldier to select their commanders.

However, taking such temporarily necessary steps does not alter the fact that the right of national self-determination is an indispensable part of the socialist program for working class power. Lenin was quite clear that this right is a fundamental principle of socialism and not just “a task”:

“On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists, who “repudiated” the national problem “in the name of the social revolution,” Marx, having in mind mainly the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put into the forefront the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism, viz., that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.” (5)

The Peculiarity of the Colonial Settler State Israel

Similarly, the CWI tries to deny the peculiarity of Israel as a colonial settler state. (6) Essentially they claim that, as horrible as it might have been, the *Nakba* – the expulsion of the Palestinian people from 1948 onwards – it is an historical fact and one has to accept the existence of a Jewish majority in historic Palestine which desires to live in a state of their own. Peter Taaffe writes:

“A state or a series of states can be established by the brutal displacement of peoples. Look at the removal of the Greek population from many parts of Asia Minor and of Turks from Greece following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. If you went back

and redrew the map, you would now have huge exchanges of populations. (...) However, the reality now is that, in the course of time, a Jewish or Israeli national consciousness has been created. What do Marxists say to this? Just ignore the real situation and continue with the old position?"

However, this comparison with events in Greece and Turkey in 1923 is not valid. Without doubt, these expulsions of about 350,000 Muslims from Greece and of 1.2 million Greeks from Turkey were utterly horrible and reactionary. But they represented the expulsion of small minorities when compared with the total Greek and Turkish populations respectively. At the time, Greece had 6.2 million inhabitants (1928) and Turkey had 13.6 million inhabitants (1927). (7) Furthermore, contemporary with these events, both the Greek and the Turkish people already had a nation state in which the expelled persons could settle.

This is entirely different from what happened to the Palestinian people. During 1948/49, the Zionists drove out nearly the entire Palestinian population from the territories in which Israel was established within the Armistice lines (commonly referred today as the "Green Line") of 1949. Until now, the Palestinians have never had any kind of national state. As a result, out of 11.6 million Palestinians (according to official statistics), 5.8 million live in the Diaspora (mostly in Arab countries). Of the 4.4 million Palestinian living in the West Bank and Gaza, 44% are refugees. Add to this the approximately one-fifth of the 1.6 million Palestinians who live inside the Green Line, but who are "internally displaced" refugees forbidden by Israeli law to return to their original homes. All in all, a total of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all Palestinians are refugees either living in refugee camps or in the enforced Diaspora. (8)

But maybe there are better arguments for the CWI position than their leader can think about? Would it be more valid if one compared Israel with other historic settler states like the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand? No, as we have already elaborated in an essay on issues related to permanent revolution in Palestine:

"These states also expelled and murdered the Native Americans, Aborigines and Maoris. There are indeed strong similarities which, by the way, show the hypocrisy of these imperialist "democracies" and which are the reason why we fully support the struggle of the Native Americans, Aborigines and Maoris for their national rights. However, from a historical-materialist point of view there are also important differences. Colonial settler states like the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have all been formed in the ascending epoch of capitalism in the 16th to the 19th century. In opposite to these examples, Israel and the Israeli-Jewish "nation" have been formed in the imperialist epoch in the 20th century, i.e. in the epoch of capitalism's decline. This had important consequences. The white majority nation in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand could nationally integrate and develop over a long historic period and at the same time they could successfully reduce and imprison the aboriginal people into small enclaves. Hence the aboriginal people in these countries today form only small minorities and have been denied, to a larger or smaller degree, the possibility to develop themselves as proper nations. Israel and Zionism on the other hand came – historically speaking – "too late". As a result the Israeli-Jewish "nation" itself has important deficiencies in its national formation as they still constitute only a minority in Palestine while the Palestinians, on the other hand, are a fully developed majority nation (with the support and sympathy of

the whole surrounding Arab and Muslim world)." (9)

Unfortunately, as we indicated above, the CWI comrades deny the nature of Israel as a colonial settler state and maintain that it has become a "normal" capitalist state. During our recent debate in Austria, their representatives stated that there is no difference between Israel and states like Egypt, since are both are capitalist and pro-imperialist. This is economic reductionism which entirely ignores the national peculiarities distinguishing Israel, on the one hand, as a colonial settler state brought into existence by the great powers, and Egypt, on the other hand, as a national state which is dependent on and oppressed by imperialism. In passing we note that, in addition to this, Israel has created its own monopoly capital and has, in the past two decades, transformed itself into a small imperialist power. (10) Based on these criteria, it is only logical that, while the RCIT would take the side of Arab states in the event of war against Israel – as we have in the past – the CWI always failed to do so. (11) In short, CWI's denial of Israel as a peculiar colonial settler state serves as its justification for calling for the continued existence of Israel (in a "socialist" form) and, hence, the continuation of the Palestinian people's expulsion, as well as the CWI's refusal to side with Arab countries in a war against Israel.

Israel and South Africa

No less, the CWI also rejects the comparison of the apartheid state of Israel and South Africa:

"[T]here are profound differences between the South African apartheid regime and Israel, particularly from a demographic angle. There were seven times more Africans and others than the white population in South Africa. This is not the situation in Israel/Palestine at this stage. If threatened with destruction, the Israeli population will fight."

It is certainly true that there are differences between Israel and South Africa. While the demographic ratio between white and black people in South Africa was about 1:7, it is about 1:2 between Israeli Jews and Palestinians (in historic Palestine and those living in the Palestinian Diaspora). However, this is only true if one limits one's outlook to Palestine itself. In fact, Israel is a settler state which was forcefully implemented by the imperialists as their bridgehead into the Arab world. As a result, today there live 6.1 million Israeli Jews in a hostile environment of the Middle East with about 366 million Arabs – i.e., there is a ratio of 1:60 between Israeli Jews and Arabs. These Arabs are deeply hostile to the state of Israel because of its historic role as an anti-Arab colonial settler state in the service of the imperialist powers. They have equally strong national and religious bonds with the Palestinian people and their liberation struggle.

Another difference is that the South African capitalists under the Apartheid regime exploited the black workers as a source of cheap labor. However, the Israeli capitalists can make do with other sources of cheap labor and, therefore, ideally would want to expel all the Palestinians, if this were feasible. As our comrade Yossi Schwartz, a leader of the RCIT section in Israel / Occupied Palestine, noted:

"Many people deny that Israel is similar to South Africa during the Apartheid regime, and they are right to do so. In fact, Israel is not the same but worse. In South Africa, the white settler colonialists needed the blacks to accumulate capital, and thus turned

the blacks into a source of cheap labor. Israel does not need the Palestinians as cheap labor. It wants them out of Palestine.” (12)

However, the fundamental similarities between Israel and pre-1994 South Africa remain. Both did, and Israel still does, propagate a system of Apartheid using a wealth of discriminatory laws and brute force (leading to regular incidents of murder, imprisonment, and expulsion) to ensure that the minority population is granted formal and de facto sovereignty, while the majority are systematically oppressed. It is grotesque how the CWI can ignore this obvious reality!

It is also somewhat amusing that— in order to emphasize the differences between Israel and South Africa – Peter Taaffe claims that: *“If threatened with destruction, the Israeli population will fight.”* Mr. Taaffe may have forgotten this, but the Black people in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique recall very clearly that the white populations in these countries also fought to retain their Apartheid system! Thus, this willingness to do battle is certainly nothing unique to Israel!

The CWI Capitulates to the Chauvinism of the Oppressor Nation

Again and again the CWI leadership justifies their advocacy of a two state solution by referring to the wishes of the Israeli working class. They write:

“If threatened with destruction, the Israeli population will fight. (...) Even the ‘peace camp’ will fight if their right to a separate state is under threat. The Israeli working class will fight if you threaten them that they will be driven into the sea. (...) A key question in the Middle Eastern revolution is how to split the Israeli workers away from the ruling class. Challenge them, threaten the idea of an Israeli ‘homeland’, then there is no chance of achieving this. (...) At the moment, we have to face the fact that the Palestinian and Jewish peoples have decided that they could not live together in one state. That is their consciousness.”

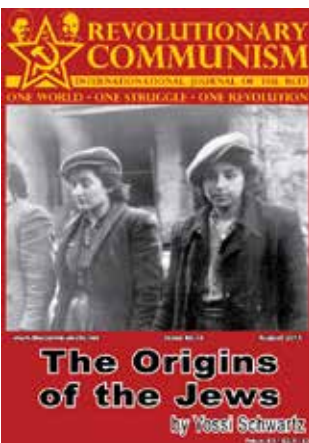
The bottom line of such an argument is that, as long as the Israeli working class does not agree to give up its privileges – relative to Arab workers and peasants – which are the direct result of Israel’s status as a rich, imperialist, settler state, socialists must uncritically accept such Israeli Jews’ wishes for a state of their own so that they can retain these privileges.

This contention is both utterly absurd and anti-Marxist. Socialists have never subordinated their principles – among them, the right of self-determination for oppressed nations – to the wishes of privileged oppressor nations.

The RCIT’s comrades in Israel / Occupied Palestine rightly remarked recently on the CWI’s program to retain the Israeli state:

“The current round of massacres will end in a few days or weeks, but sooner or later the killing will be resumed because Israel is committed to removing most of the Palestinians from their country, as it did in 1948. These cycles of violence will end either when Israel will be militarily defeated or when the struggle for liberation leading to a socialist revolution will win. Those who speak about a two-state solution, whether capitalists, socialist reformists (the Communist Party of Israel), or those like centrist Maavak Socialisti (CWI) who call for two “socialist states,” all take as given that the existing imperialist order is permanent and, at the same time, entirely ignore the nature of the Israeli apartheid. There is no way, at one and the same time, to support both the right of self-determination for the Palestinians and the right of self-determination for Israeli’s since by definition the state of Israel must act to oppress, kill, and otherwise remove the Palestinians from the entire country. And there can be no other Israel. What does Maavak Socialisti mean when they call for two “socialists states”? It is essentially their recognition of the right of the settler colonialist oppressors to self-determination. Indirectly, such recognition is a rejection of the right of return of the Palestinians refugees. For, if the refugees will be allowed to return to what is today Israel, the Palestinians will constitute the demographic majority of the state. Why, then, will there be a need for two states with a Palestinian majority rather than a single socialist state where they will be the majority and those Israelis who accept this new reality will not be discriminated against? Why, indeed, if in such a state, where the Israeli workers who will participate in the socialist revolution will be part of the new ruling class, until classes will entirely disappear and with them the state itself?” (13)

We could also take other examples. It is an historic fact that the huge majority of the white people in the USA in the early 20th century thought that it was justified that the black people were oppressed. Did this stop the communists and Trotsky from advocating the black liberation struggle, including the right of national self-determination? Of course not! Likewise, many French – and even more so, the French settlers in Algeria – supported the colonial subjugation of Algeria for a long period of time. Similarly, there is virtually no doubt that the white settlers in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique were also adamantly opposed to the black liberation struggle. If one would accept the CWI’s logic, one could conceivably argue that these European settler families in colonial Africa had even greater historic rights to “their”



Publications of the RCIT

The Origins of the Jews

By Yossi Schwartz, July 2015

Chapter I: What are the origins of the Jews?

Chapter II: The Rise of Anti-Semitism

Chapter III: Anti-Semitism and Zionism

Chapter IV: The Russian Revolution:

Bolshevism, the Bund, and Stalinism

respective lands than the Israeli Jews, since they lived far longer in these colonies than most Israeli Jews have lived in Palestine! However, in all these cases, communists consistently supported the right of the oppressed nations *irrespective* of the consciousness of the oppressor nation. The South African communists did not make their support for black liberation dependent on the consciousness of the white minority (which, in its overwhelming majority, favored Apartheid until 1994).

Finally, let us not forget that, for a long period of time, the majority of men actually opposed granting the right to vote to women. And today, it is still not uncommon that the majority of people oppose granting full and equal rights to sexual minorities, or that many people in Western Europe are against the right of Muslim women to wear a scarf. Should such opposition deter socialists in their support for such democratic rights? Only if they are opportunistic capitulationists!

How Central is the Israeli Working Class for the Permanent Revolution in the Middle East?

The CWI considers the Israeli working class as a central component of the revolution without which it is not winnable. Peter Taaffe writes: *"We do stress that only unified mass action of Israeli and Palestinian workers can create a force which can overthrow the capitalists, both Israeli and Palestinian."*

In a resolution of its congress in 2010, the CWI emphasized *"It is only through united mass movements of the working class and poor in Palestine, and in Israel, as well, that a solution will be found; opposing national oppression, the bosses' parties and imperialism; and bringing about real self-determination for Palestinians - for a socialist, democratic Palestine and a socialist Israel, as part of a equal and voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East."* (14)

The significance of the above is that the CWI sees permanent revolution in Palestine not primarily as part of the Arab revolution, but rather as a local struggle for which the participation of the relatively small Israeli working class – as an equal partner with the Palestinian workers – is a precondition.

Similarly, in our debate with the Austrian CWI, the CWI comrades objected to our program: *"How can you liberate Palestine if you repulse a core component of the population there – the Israeli Jews – who oppose the formation of a single multinational state?!"* To this we reply that, for Marxists, it is hardly surprising that the Israeli working class is by far the most reactionary, pro-imperialist, and politically backward. This is a direct result of its being the most privileged and aristocratic component of the entire working class in the Middle East.

Consequently, it is most probable that the Israeli workers will be the last to join the permanent revolution in the region – and perhaps only parts of it will in fact join. A far more likely scenario is that the Palestinian liberation struggle will unite with the revolutionary struggles throughout the Arab world, and only when the Israeli aristocratic working class faces such tremendous combined pressure, may significant sectors of it be prepared to break with Zionism.

Our comrades in the ISL are certainly aware that, today, the overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews oppose the dis-

mantling of the state of Israel and its replacement by a single workers' state. However, sooner or later, this will change. When the national liberation struggle of the Algerian workers and peasants reached its height, significant sectors of the French people started to change their view on the colonial occupation. When the Palestinian liberation struggle will fuse with the Arab Revolution, more sectors among the Israeli working class will also begin rethinking their Zionist prejudices. Yes, it is likely that particularly reactionary sectors will continue to maintain their Zionist views and may even move into a fascist direction (indications of which we witnessed during the recent Gaza war). Obviously, such arch-reactionary supporters of Apartheid will have a hostile attitude to the future democratic and socialist state in Palestine. For them there will be only one choice: capitulate or leave.

We repeatedly have questioned our comrades from the CWI: why do you insist that the fate of Palestinian liberation is dependent on this small minority of six million Israeli Jews, people who directly and indirectly profit from the Palestinians' oppression? Is it not much more likely that Palestinian liberation will be tied to the struggle of the worker and peasant masses numbering more than 360 million who contend with living conditions much more similar to those faced by their Palestinian brothers and sisters, and with whom they are related through national and religious bonds?! Have the Arab masses not proven their ability for revolutionary actions in the past few years?! Have the Egyptian masses – when they were not bound in chains by a pro-imperialist dictatorship – not demonstrated their close ties with their Palestinian brothers and sisters, demonstrating numerous times in front of the Israeli embassy in Cairo, and culminating in its storming in September 2011?!

In fact, the CWI leaders themselves are fully aware of these ties between the Palestinian and Arab workers and poor and their common anti-imperialist hatred against Israel. Peter Taaffe himself has admitted:

"We accept that many Arab workers have the hope that the Israeli state must be destroyed. It is an imperialist wedge against the Arab Revolution." (15)

We ask Peter Taaffe: Are the Arab workers not right in viewing Israel as a *"wedge against the Arab Revolution"*?!

The Rights of Oppressed Nations, Not of Oppressor Nations!

Finally, let us return to CWI's approach to the Marxist position on the national question. A central methodological failure of the CWI is its inability to understand the essence of the Leninist position regarding this issue. The CWI does not understand that Marxists view national oppression as a central component of the world capitalist system – in particular during the epoch of imperialism. By contrast, we emphasize – as Lenin did time and again – that the *"division of nations into oppressor and oppressed ... forms the essence of imperialism"*. (16)

Hence, it is absolutely indispensable that the workers' movement supports *all* struggles against national oppression (without, at the same time, supporting *any* nationalist ideology) and connects these struggles with that for an international socialist revolution against imperialist capitalism. It is only by supporting all struggles against national

oppression and for full equality that the working class can learn to overcome all nationalist prejudices and appropriate a thoroughly internationalist class consciousness.

Contrary to this position, the CWI believes that it is sufficient to agitate against nationalism – irrespective of whether it is the nationalism of an oppressed or oppressor nation – without *actively* supporting the specific struggles of the oppressed nations. Such Peter Taaffe writes:

“The national question is immeasurably more complicated than even existed at the time of Lenin and Trotsky. For Marxists it has two sides. We are opposed to bourgeois nationalism, which seeks to divide the working class. We are for the maximum unity of the working class across borders, continents and worldwide but at the same time we oppose the forcible incorporation of distinct nationalities into one state against their will.”

What the CWI forgets here is the essential, “small detail”: Marxists differentiate between oppressed and oppressor nations and they support the struggle of oppressed nations against their oppressor. Hence, while we reject *all* forms of nationalism, we differentiate between the nationalism of the oppressed nation and the nationalism of the oppressor nation. Why do we do so? Because the nationalism of the oppressed has a justified, democratic element as it is an (albeit insufficient and distorted) expression of the struggle for national liberation. On the other hand, the nationalism of the oppressor nation is thoroughly reactionary, since it is an expression of its privileges and dominance.

This was the method of Lenin and the Bolsheviks as was outlined in *“The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”* in 1914:

„The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support.” (17)

This failure of the CWI is linked to their misunderstanding of the essence of the right of national self-determination. This right is categorically *not* a liberal proclamation, but rather a revolutionary tool in the struggle of oppressed nations for liberation. Hence the right of national self-determination *cannot* be applied to nations which oppress others, but only to those nations which actually face oppression.

This distinction should be obvious to every clear thinking socialist. Can there be a right of national self-determination for imperialistic Germany, France, or the USA? Could there have been a right of national self-determination for the white minority in South Africa or in Zimbabwe? It is obvious that only reactionaries and social-chauvinists could support such an application of the right of national self-determination. In fact, this fallacy was a key element in the ideology of the reformist social democracy in Europe at the beginning of World War I, upon which they based their support for their respective imperialist “fatherlands” by citing the right of national self-determination.

However, as Marxists have repeatedly pointed out, socialists only support the struggle for national rights of those people who are facing oppression, not for those who are oppressing others. The Bolshevik leaders G. Zinoviev and V. I. Lenin wrote in 1915 during World War I:

„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 champi-

oning, 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.” (18)

Marxists have always rejected such a bourgeois liberalization of the revolutionary-democratic demand for the right of national self-determination. Instead, they consistently understand this right as a means for achieving national liberation which will ultimately bring about internationalist unity of the workers of oppressed and oppressor nations. Hence Lenin and Trotsky emphasised that the right of national self-determination applies for *oppressed nations* and not for oppressor nations. Below, we provide a small sample of quotations to demonstrate this, and refer readers to the relevant chapter in our study on the permanent revolution in Palestine. (19)

“That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not significant from the angle of bourgeois pacifism or the philistine Utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It is from this division that our definition of the “right of nations to self-determination” must follow, a definition that is consistently democratic, revolutionary, and in accord with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism.” (20)

“The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. (...) It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression.” (21)

This is also how Trotsky understood both the Bolshevik and his own approach towards the national question:

“But the very conjuncture of the national movements with struggle of the proletariat for power was made politically possible only thanks to the fact that the Bolsheviks during the whole of their history carried on an irreconcilable struggle with the Great Russian oppressors, supporting always and without reservations the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, including separation from Russia. The policy of Lenin in regard to the oppressed nations did not, however, have anything in common with the policy of the epigones. The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination with the methods of the proletarian class struggle.” (22)

We emphatically repeat that our denial of the right of national self-determination for the Israeli-Jews has nothing whatsoever to do with the desire to expel them from Palestine, or to implement any other reactionary anti-Semitic fantasy. It simple means that the Israeli Jews have no right to deny the Palestinian people their democratic rights, just

as men do not have the right to deny women their democratic rights. This is the Marxist meaning of our approach – nothing less and nothing more.

To summarize: Our rejection of a “right of national self-determination” for the Israeli-Jewish nationality is not a denial of any inherent revolutionary democratic right due to them as a group. It is rather our rejection of their right to oppress the Palestinians and to perpetuate the expulsion of the latter from their homeland. It is our refusal to condone and continue the inherently racist political project of Zionism.

The CWI Method of Adaption to the Heritage of Imperialist Colonialism

In the past, we have already stressed that there is nothing exceptional about the CWI’s “socialist” Zionism. Rather, it is rooted in and yet an additional manifestation of this tendency’s adaption to imperialism and the aristocratic privileges of oppressor nations. In this light we remind the CWI comrades of their leaders’ support “for self-determination” of the pro-British Protestant minority in Northern Ireland against the wishes for unification of Ireland by the entire Irish nation. As a result, the CWI consistently refused to support the armed struggle of the IRA against the British occupation army and their RUC police force.

Based on this very same social-chauvinist methodology, until today the CWI continues to support the British imperialists’ claim to Argentina’s Malvinas Islands because of the “right of national self-determination” of 1,800 colonial settlers. This position becomes evident from the following statements made by CWI leaders:

“The labour movement should be mobilised to force a general election to open the way for the return of a Labour government to implement socialist policies at home and abroad. Victory of a socialist government in Britain would immediately transform the situation in relation to the Falklands. The junta would no longer be able to claim to be fighting British imperialism ... A Labour government could not just abandon the Falklanders and let Galtieri get on with it. But it would continue the war on socialist lines.” (23)

In his book on the history of Militant, CWI leader Peter Taaffe argues: *“The democratic rights of the 1,800 Falklanders, including the right to self-determination, if they so desired, was a key question in the consciousness of British workers. (...) Marxists could not be indifferent to the fate of the Falklanders, particularly given the consciousness of the British working class as it developed over this issue.”* (24)

From this we see how the CWI completely distorts the Leninist notion of the right of national self-determination and transforms it into an ideology to justify colonial possessions of imperialism, specifically the existence of a colonial settler state as is the case with Israel.

II. “Socialist” Pacifism or Support for the Struggle of the Oppressed Nations?

The consequence of this social-chauvinist distortion of the right of national self-determination is a complete failure to support the struggle of oppressed nations. The CWI leaders may protest against our thesis, and refer to statements like the following one from Peter Taaffe:

“We have never opposed the right of the Palestinians to defend

themselves against Israeli attacks, including armed defence in Gaza and legitimate attacks on military targets in Israel itself. We did, however, point to their ineffectiveness – it is like using peashooters against tanks – but also that they are counter-productive when indiscriminately used against civilians.”

Surely, the Palestinian people must be “grateful” that the CWI grants them the “right” to defend themselves. However, as we have pointed out in the past, this is in fact a meaningless phrase because the CWI in fact supports Palestinian resistance in the abstract, but not one which is actually taking place. The concrete Palestinian resistance which exists, lives, and fights is the one under the leadership of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committees, the Al-Aqsa Brigades, the PFLP, etc.

Two different Things: The Palestinians “Right to Defend Themselves” vs. Taking the Side of the Palestinian Resistance as it Concretely Exists

In our recent debate in Austria, as well as on other occasions, the CWI has refused to support the struggle of the Palestinian resistance as it concretely exists today. It justified this refusal by referring to the reactionary nature of these organizations. Characteristically the CWI has no problems supporting a strike of Israeli workers organized by the Histadrut, the Zionist racist trade union which is organically linked to the Israeli state and which has supported Israel in all its wars. Similarly, the CWI didn’t see any problem in supporting the reactionary strike demanding *“British Jobs for British Workers”* in 2009. However, it does feel itself incapable of supporting an anti-imperialist struggle led by a (petty-) bourgeois organization, even one supported by the entire people – particularly if they are engaged in a struggle against their own imperialism.

This reluctance is in complete contradiction with classic Marxist theory. As we explained in our book *“The Great Robbery of the South”*:

“Lenin, Trotsky and the Communist International called for the support of Turkey in its struggle against British imperialism and its Greek allies in the years after the end of WWI, despite the fact that Turkey was ruled by the bourgeois, anti-communist regime of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. They also supported the struggle of the Riffian Berbers under the leadership of Abd el- Krim in the 1920s against the Spanish and French imperialists drive to occupy their country. The French Communist Party (PCF) organized a militant anticolonial mass campaign in solidarity with the Riffians – including a general strike on 12th October 1925. The PCF publicly expressed its support for the Riffians struggle until “Moroccan soil was completely liberated” from both Spanish and French imperialists. Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International continued this revolutionary anti-imperialism. They supported the struggle of the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s despite the fact that it was led by the reactionary general Chiang Kai-shek.” (25)

We therefore characterize the CWI attitude as *platonian anti-imperialism*, i.e., one which does not draw the necessary practical conclusions about supporting the struggles of the oppressed today, due to its own backward leadership. In practice, the CWI approach is a kind of “socialist” pacifism, being “against the war” and failing to actively support those who are fighting the imperialist aggressor.

This is the reason why, in its agitation, the CWI does

not call for support for and the victory of the Palestinian resistance. It does so neither locally, in the theater of the struggle itself – Israel / Occupied Palestine -- nor internationally. In countries where pro-Zionist sentiment is particularly strong among public opinion and in the labor movement, like Austria, the CWI refuses to mobilize for or even participate in pro-Palestinian demonstrations of migrant communities, these being the only forces besides the Austrian's RCIT section which mobilizes on this issue. This has been the practical policy of the CWI section in Austria for many years. When we challenged them on this policy in our public debate on 31 August, the CWI speaker explicitly defended their refusal to participate in these demonstrations, arguing that the CWI section is too weak to change the pro-Palestinian nationalist and religious character of these demonstrations -- and as long as they cannot change this character, "it is better to stay at home" (quote). This is an open admission of the harmful, social-chauvinist consequences of the CWI's refusal to support the Palestinian liberation struggle as it concretely exists.

When we consider that, in Israel, the CWI has no problem joining anti-war demonstrations organized by left or not-so-left Zionists, it becomes clear that they feel much more comfortable in the company of the latter than they do among nationalist or religious, anti-imperialist migrants in Europe.

Naturally, we are fully aware that intervening in nationalist and religiously-inspired migrant communities can be difficult, requiring socialists to struggle against the influence of Islamists and bourgeois community leaders. However, this is life, and Marxists are keenly aware that intervening in trade union mobilizations and strikes also often involves intense conflicts with bureaucrats. But such difficulties shall never stop authentic Marxists from supporting and participating in such actions. In fact, there is no other way to approach the masses that are fighting against the imperialist and capitalist enemy than by joining their struggles, even when these are organized by the wrong leadership. The RCIT section in Austria has shown many times that it is possible to become respected by many migrants from these communities and to earn the right to disseminate our propaganda among them. As a result, we have been invited to speak at these actions a number of times. (26)

A General Method: Failure to Support Struggles against Imperialism which Take Place under a Non-Socialist Leadership

We have shown above that the CWI distorts the right of national self-determination in order to justify the defense of various imperialist occupations (e.g., Israel, Northern Ireland, the Malvinas). Similarly, they generally tend to refuse giving support to concrete practical struggles of oppressed nations which usually take place under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership.

The CWI leaders opportunistically justify this abstention from participation by referring to the consciousness of the masses in the imperialist countries. Taking the example of the resistance in Afghanistan, Peter Taaffe even argued the communists' method of the anti-imperialist united front is no longer applicable today:

"The masses in the 1930s would have understood little of the

precise detail of the Haile Selassie regime. Moreover, Ethiopia was under attack by the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini at the time Trotsky was writing. Given the democratic illusions of the working class of Europe or the US in particular, together with the recent bloody example of what fascism would mean for them in the coming to power of Adolf Hitler and Mussolini, it was natural that the sympathies of the masses in the 1930s would be with Ethiopia against fascist Italy. The British and most of the European bourgeoisie together with the US, for their own imperialist strategic interests, also played on this sympathy for Ethiopia. It is nonsense to imply, however, as the sectarian organizations do by quoting these remarks of Trotsky, that the mass of the populations in most industrialised countries could take the same attitude today towards bin Laden and the Taliban." (27)

Similarly, according to Taaffe, it would be wrong to call for the defeat of the imperialist occupation forces: "To call baldly and crudely for the 'defeat of US imperialism' and its coalition allies as an agitational slogan is wrong."

In the case of Afghanistan, the CWI once again demonstrates its platonic anti-imperialism. While it supports "resistance in general", it does not support the resistance which is actually taking place. Thus, Taaffe wrote: "Support for the Afghani people and their resistance against the armed incursions of imperialism is not the same as support for the Taliban, even if this support is 'critical', as some left organisations have posed it. (...)„If, therefore, we perceive this war as thoroughly reactionary on the part of imperialism, does this mean that we throw in our lot, albeit 'critically', with those who have allegedly 'resisted' the US juggernaut, namely bin Laden, his al-Qa'ida and the Taliban government? Unbelievably, this is the position of some small Trotskyist groups, such as Workers Power (our predecessor organization, MP) and the Morenoite LIT. The latter is largely based in Latin America. Their approach will find absolutely no echo amongst the world working class, particularly the proletariat in the developed capitalist countries."

Unfortunately, the Taliban, doubtless a reactionary Islamist force, is the dominant force among the Afghan resistance. Refusing to support their military struggle against the NATO forces is equivalent to rejecting practical resistance on the ground against the imperialist occupation in Afghanistan.

Armed, or rather disarmed, with the same method, the CWI leadership failed to support the military struggle of Argentina against British imperialism in 1982; of Iraq both in 1991 and 2003 and later; as well as in Lebanon in 2006. (28)

It is therefore obvious that the CWI failure to support the Palestinian resistance struggle is no exceptional case but rather an expression of its consistent social-pacifist, centrist method. Trotsky's condemnation of the centrist politician Georg Ledebour, written in 1932, also illuminates well the political failures of the CWI today: "Nevertheless, Ledebour's position even on this question does not leave the precincts of centrism. Ledebour demands that a battle be waged against colonial oppression; he is ready to vote in parliament against colonial credits; he is ready to take upon himself a fearless defense of the victims of a crushed colonial insurrection. But Ledebour will not participate in preparing a colonial insurrection. Such work he considers putschism, adventurism, Bolshevism. And therein is the whole gist of the matter. What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the ob-

ject but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their "right" to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism." (29)

III. The International Solidarity Movement

This leads us to the next methodological difference between the RCIT and the CWI, that pertaining to the international solidarity movement with Palestine. The RCIT calls for an international worker and popular boycott campaign against Israel in order to weaken it and to support the Palestinian resistance. Hence, we critically support the ongoing international boycott campaign like BDS which has received mass support not only from the Palestinian side but also from many trade unions around the world (like COSATU in South Africa, numerous trade unions in Norway, Canada, Ireland, Britain, etc.). In our joint statement which we published with other organizations during the recent Gaza war we stated:

"We call for the building of a mass international solidarity movement of the working class and the oppressed. We call on the mass organizations of workers' and popular movements (trade unions, parties etc.) to join the international solidarity campaign for Palestine and to actively engage in boycott actions against all commercial activities with Israel! It should boycott all contacts with Zionist institutions while – at the same time – encouraging close collaboration with all progressive Israeli Jews who protest against the apartheid regime. Such a mass solidarity movement should mobilize to close down Israel's embassies around the world. Equally such a solidarity movement must work towards ending the military and financial aid for Israel by the imperialist states." (30)

Contrary to this position, the CWI generally rejects the ongoing boycott campaign against Israel with the exception of some targeted measures against this or that company from the settlements in the West Bank or against exporting arms to Israel:

"Should all BDS campaigns be avoided because of the viewpoint of Israel workers? Not necessarily, because some types of selective boycott or sanctions can aid the Palestinians' cause while, at the same time, coming across to Israeli workers as less hostile to them than blanket boycotts of 'everything Israeli'. 'Selective' can mean targeting the export to Israel of arms and equipment that could be used against the Palestinians; firms that profit from the occupation; goods produced in the Jewish settlements; certain sporting and cultural events to gain publicity; the Ariel university in the occupied territories; Israeli ministers when they make overseas visits – among other possible targets." (31)

The CWI justifies its refusal to support the international boycott campaign by referring again to the consciousness of the Israeli working class. It says that a campaign like BDS should not be supported because it is rejected by the Israeli workers. This becomes evident from the following quote which we have taken from the same article:

"Israeli Jewish workers genuinely fear for their own security and

want to protect the state that was intended to be a safe haven for Jews. This, with the constant barrage of propaganda, unsurprisingly leads them to believe that advocates of the BDS campaign around the world don't understand the situation in Israel. Also, many of the Israeli Jews who are most critical of their government's brutality against the Palestinians, at the same time don't see why Israeli workers should be punished for it by suffering the effects of boycotts. So it needs to be taken into account that boycott campaigns can assist the propaganda of the Israeli government domestically, and can create a barrier between workers in Israel and internationally, negative consequences that need to be weighed up against the advantages."

Similarly, Peter Taaffe states: *"Moreover, a targeted campaign, which could grow now in the wake of the horror of Gaza, should be discussed with both Palestinian but particularly Israeli workers."* (Our emphasis)

It seems that the consciousness of the small Israeli working class is a far more important factor in the political calculations of the CWI leaders than the consciousness of the much larger working class in the Arab world, in Latin America, and increasingly also in North America and Western Europe! This is just another confirmation of their aristocratic attitude which aligns itself with the rather privileged layers of the working class and not the lower, much larger strata of the world proletariat.

In fact, the CWI's negative position towards international boycott campaigns is in contradiction to the tradition of the revolutionary workers' movement. During the international solidarity campaign for the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s, militant trade union federations like the CGTU in France called for the boycott of all US commodities, both by consumers as well as by transport workers. They even organized groups which broke up cinema showings of American films. (32) Similarly, Trotsky and US Trotskyists supported the boycott of German commodities after Hitler took power in 1933. (33)

Naturally, Marxists must warn against harboring any illusions that such a boycott campaign could abolish Apartheid in Palestine, contrary to what the initiators of the BDS campaign claim. But this is true for many working class actions. In Greece, the trade union leaders called for two dozen one-day general strikes. Marxists always warned that even these will be insufficient in achieving the desired goal of halting the austerity policy of the government. However, only a traitor and strike breaker would have refused to support and to participate in these one-day general strikes! Unfortunately, the CWI fails to support the international boycott campaign against Israel and in doing so plays the strike breakers against the explicit wishes of the entire Palestinian national movement, as well as numerous international trade unions and solidarity organizations.

The difference between the methods of the RCIT and CWI also is manifested in our respective attitudes towards Histadrut, the main Zionist trade union federation of the Israeli workers. The RCIT, as well as many other progressive organizations, call upon the international trade union movement to sever its relations with the Histadrut. The rationale for such a severe step is the strict and uninterrupted support of the Histadrut for the expulsion and oppression of the Palestinian people since 1948 as well as its support for the Israeli Apartheid system.

On the other hand, the CWI opposes calls to the interna-

tional trade union federation to break with the Histadrut – irrespective of its criticism against the organization’s leadership. As Judy Beishon from the CWI writes:

“Should trade unions internationally have links with the Israeli trade union federation, the Histadrut? The Histadrut leaders have always had close ties with the Israeli elite. (...) A vital task that Histadrut members face is to remove the leaders that are holding back workers’ interests, and to replace them with leaders who will be under the democratic control of the membership. Meanwhile, links should be maintained by trade unions internationally with the rank-and-file workers in the Histadrut – encompassing over 700,000, the overwhelming majority of organised workers in Israel, including Palestinians and migrant workers. It is more workable to maintain links with the rank and file if formal links are maintained with the Histadrut leadership bodies, not in order to give any support to the positions of the union federation’s bureaucracy, but to have a dialogue and links with the organised Israeli working class.”

In the end, the CWI’s softness regarding the Histadrut is hardly surprising, given the fact that it also considers police officers as “workers in uniform” who should be part of the trade union federation. The CWI in Britain even has among its members the president of the prison officers!

Conclusion

Ultimately, the issue of the Palestinian liberation struggle demonstrates that the CWI’s failure goes far beyond this issue alone, but rather is rooted in its overall method. It clearly demonstrates that the CWI is not a revolutionary, Marxist, anti-imperialist tendency but rather a *centrist* one. This means that the CWI adapts itself to the reformist bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy and their pro-imperialist prejudices.

Trotsky and the Fourth International sharply denounced such a failure to support the struggles of the oppressed people against imperialism. In a declaration of 1932, they stated:

“Capitalist brigands always conduct a “defensive” war, even when Japan is marching against Shanghai and France against Syria or Morocco. 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 (...)

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.” (34)

Trotsky once described centrism in the following way: “Centrism is the name applied to that policy which is opportunist in substance and which seeks to appear as revolutionary in form.” (35) Unfortunately, as we have shown in the case of Palestine, but also in other anti-imperialist struggles, this characterization is entirely applicable to the CWI. We call on the many comrades in the ranks of this organization to critically discuss these issues and to break with such an opportunist program.

Footnotes

- (1) Peter Taaffe: Socialism and national rights. Ukraine, Israel/Palestine and other countries, in: Socialism Today No.181, September 2014, pp. 13-17, <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/6875>. If not indicated otherwise, all quotes from Peter Taaffe in our reply are taken from this article.
- (2) A report as well as photos of this meeting, which was attended by about 80 people, can be found on the RCIT’s website <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/austria-intervention-at-cp-fete/>
- (3) The RCIT and the ISL have published numerous documents and articles on Palestine. They can be found on our websites at <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/>, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/> as well as <http://www.theisleague.com/>; For an overview of our tactics as well as our historic and programmatic positions we refer readers to the following documents – Joint Statement: Israel Starts Ground Offensive: Defend Gaza! Defeat Israel’s War! Support the Palestinian Resistance! For

Publications of the RCIT in Arab Language

The image displays a collection of Arabic-language materials from the Revolutionary Communist Internationalist Tendency (RCIT). At the top, there are two prominent red banners with white text. The left banner reads "البيان الشيوعي الثوري" (The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto) and "الثورة والثورة المضادة في العالم العربي: اختبار للثوريين" (Revolution and counter-revolution in the Arab world: a test for revolutionaries). The right banner reads "كفاحها ضد القوى الامبريالية" (Struggle against imperialist powers) and "من أجل فيدرالية اشتراكية للشعر" (For a socialist federation of the Arab world). Below these banners, there is a logo for "ثورة" (Revolution) featuring a red star with a hammer and sickle, and the text "AWRA" and "REVOLUTION". To the right of the logo is a small portrait of a man. In the center, there is a large image of a woman wearing a keffiyeh and a black headscarf, holding a rifle. At the bottom, there is another banner with the text "الشيوعي الثوري الدولي" (The International Revolutionary Communist Manifesto) and a small image of a man in a military-style jacket.

a Workers' and Popular International Campaign to Boycott Israel! Down with the Regimes which Collaborate with Israel! For a Free, Red Palestine! Joint Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel / Occupied Palestine), the Communist Left of Australia and the Editor of the Blog vansterparlan.v-blog.se (Sweden), 22.7.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/joint-statement-defend-gaza/>; RCIT and ISL: Palestine: Forward to the Third Intifada! Organize the Uprising in Workers, Peasant, and Youth Popular Committees! Revitalize the Arab Revolution! Smash the Imperialist Apartheid State Israel! 7.7.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/victory-to-palestinian-uprising/>; Internationalist Socialist League: Summary of the ISL-Program, February 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/summary-of-isl-program/>; Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1; Yossi Schwartz: Israel's Six-Day War of 1967. On the Character of the War, the Marxist Analysis and the Position of the Israeli Left, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 12, July/August 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1967/; Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

(4) Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, p. 35, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

(5) V.I.Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1916), in: LCW 22, p. 149 (our emphasis)

(6) On this issue we refer readers also to the chapter "Socialist Zionism a la CWI" in: 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, pp. 353-357, 2013, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/>

(7) See Sutay Yavuz: Fertility Decline in Turkey from the 1980s Onwards: Patterns by Main Language Groups, Ankara 2008, p. 133; DEIK/TAIK: Turkey Brief: Turkish - U.S. Relations, 2011, p. 13; Dimitrios Trichopoulos and George Papaevangelou: The Population Of Greece. A Monograph for the World Population Year 1974, CICRED, Athen 1974, p. 11

(8) See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Palestine in Figures 2012, Ramallah 2013, p. 10; Elior Levy: Report: Palestinians to outnumber Jews by 2020, 01.01.13, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4327295,00.html>; Asher Zeiger: Israel at 65: Population tops 8 million, April 14, 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-at-65-population-tops-8-million>

(9) Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, p. 24, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

(10) On this, see the chapter "Israel's development into an imperialist state" in Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine.

(11) On this, see Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948/> and Yossi Schwartz: Israel's Six-Day War of 1967, July 2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1967/>

(12) Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War against the Palestinians, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel/Occupied Palestine), 23.7.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/gaza-war/>

(13) Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War against the Palestinians, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel/Occupied Palestine), 23.7.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/gaza-war/>

(14) CWI: The crisis of capitalism and the naked role of imperialism are graphically manifested in the Middle East. Document No. 3, CWI 10th World Congress, 28.12.2010 <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/4736>

(15) Peter Taaffe: Marxismus heute. Antworten auf Krieg, Kapitalismus und Umweltzerstörung (2006), p. 40; We are quoting and translating from the German translation since we don't possess the

English-language original of „Marxism in today's World“.

(16) V. I. Lenin: The revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1915); in: LCW 21, p. 409

(17) V.I. Lenin - The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1914); in: LCW 20, p.412 (emphasis by Lenin)

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

(19) See chapter "The Marxist classics and the right of national self-determination" in Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine

(20) V. I. Lenin: The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 21, p. 409

(21) V. I. Lenin: The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, in: LCW 22, p. 146

(22) Leon Trotsky: On the South African Theses (1935); in: Trotsky Writings 1934-35, p. 251

(23) Lynn Walsh: Falklands war: what lessons for the labour movement? in: Militant International Review, Nr. 22, Juni 1982 (reprinted in: Socialism Today, Nr. 108, April 2007, <http://www.socialismtoday.org/108/falklands.html>)

(24) Peter Taaffe: The Rise of Militant, London 1995, Chapter 20 "The Falklands/Malvinas War", <http://socialistalternative.org/literature/militant/>

(25) Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, pp. 306-307

(26) To give an overview of our work we refer to some reports and videos from the last 9 months: Austria: Rally in Solidarity with Gaza on 13.7.2014! <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/rally-for-palestine-13-7-2014/>; Austria: Demonstration on the Anniversary of the Raaba Massacre in Egypt! <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/report-egypt-rally-14-8-2014/>; Egypt: Report with Videos from Demonstration in Austria against the Military Dictatorship on 20.4.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-solidarity-demo-in-austria-20-4-2014/>; Austria: Solidarity with the Resistance against the Military Dictatorship in Egypt! <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/solidarity-rally-for-egypt/>

Those who are interested can view more videos on our YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/revolutioncommunism>

(27) Peter Taaffe: Afghanistan, Islam and the Revolutionary Left (2002), <http://www.socialistworld.net/pubs/afghanistan-afghanp1.html>; The following quotes from Taaffe are taken from this document.

(28) We have dealt in detail with the CWI's position on imperialist wars in the chapter "Centrism's Failure in the Struggle against Imperialist Wars" in: 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, 2013, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/>

(29) Leo Trotzki: Was nun? Schicksalsfragen des deutschen Proletariats (1932); in: Schriften über Deutschland, pp. 246-247; in English: Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next02.htm>

(30) Israel Starts Ground Offensive: Defend Gaza! Defeat Israel's War! Support the Palestinian Resistance! For a Workers' and Popular International Campaign to Boycott Israel! Down with the Regimes which Collaborate with Israel! For a Free, Red Palestine! Joint Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel / Occupied Palestine), the Communist Left of Australia and the Editor of the Blog vansterparlan.v-blog.se (Sweden), 22.7.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/joint-statement-defend-gaza/>

(31) Judy Beishon: Boycotting Israel: the socialist view, in: Socialism Today Issue 169, June 2013, <http://www.socialismtoday.org/169/israel.html>

(32) Johann Zelt: Proletarischer Internationalismus im Kampf um Sacco und Vanzetti, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1958, pp. 219-220

(33) See: Leon Trotsky: Building a New International and the United Front Policy, in: Trotsky Writings Supplement 1929-33, p. 279 as well as CLA(US): The Militant, Editorial, 21.20.1933

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

(35) Leon Trotsky: Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Mudleheads (1939); in: Writings 1939-40, S. 54

Socialist Party of England and Wales (CWI): Defense of Immigration Control

The opportunistic adaption of SPEW/CWI to the imperialist state is not only reflected in its campaign for Britain's exit from the EU and its spreading of illusions about the possibility of a peaceful transformation towards socialism. It also becomes obvious in its support for immigration control by the imperialist state. They justify this adaption to chauvinism using classically opportunistic arguments: the majority of the workers do not currently support such anti-immigration slogans. With such an opportunistic approach, revolutionaries would also have to refrain from standing up against nationalism and arguing for a consistent internationalist line! As it is well known, opportunists of all sorts justify their capitulation to imperialism by claiming that a principled "demand would alienate the vast majority of the working class." German social democrats likewise used this argument to justify why they had to support the imperialist war in 1914. Here is how SPEW explained its stance in a resolution put forth in a congress in 2013.

*"Of course, we have to stand in defence of the most oppressed sections of the working class, including migrant workers and other immigrants. We staunchly oppose racism. We defend the right to asylum, and argue for the end of repressive measures like detention centres. At the same time, given the outlook of the majority of the working class, we cannot put forward a bald [?] slogan of 'open borders' or 'no immigration controls', which would be a barrier to convincing workers of a socialist programme, both on immigration and other issues. Such a demand would alienate the vast majority of the working class, including many more long-standing immigrants, who would see it as a threat to jobs, wages and living conditions. Nor can we make the mistake of dismissing workers who express concerns about immigration as 'racists'. While racism and nationalism are clearly elements in anti-immigrant feeling, there are many consciously anti-racist workers who are concerned about the scale of immigration."*¹

It is therefore no coincidence that SPEW/CWI also justifies their support for Britain's exit from the EU with their opposition to free movement within the EU. As Peter Taaffe states:

*"The alleged benefits of the 'free movement of labour' are in reality a device for the bosses to exploit a vast pool of cheap labour, which can then be used to cut overall wage levels and living standards."*²

And on the website of the No2EU-Campaign, of which SPEW/CWI is a member like the Stalinist CPB, the following statement appears:

*"To reverse this increasingly perverse situation, all nation states must have democratic control over their own immigration policy and have the right to apply national legislation in defence of migrant and indigenous workers."*³

Naturally, such a position is deeply hostile to the principles of Marxism or even consistent democracy and internationalism. As we have elaborated elsewhere, the revolutionary workers' movement has a long tradition of opposition to immigration control.⁴

Communists don't claim that migration is the cause for lowering of wages and lay-offs but rather these are caused by the capitalists and their system of profit. Communists oppose immigration control because this binds workers to their imperialist nation state and undermines the interna-

tional solidarity with foreign workers. The solution is to struggle to organize migrant workers in trade unions and other organizations of the workers' movement and to fight for equal wages for all workers in a given industry – irrespective of their skin color or passport.

The Communist International took such an internationalist perspective – which includes opposition to all forms of immigration control – and made it mandatory for its sections in the imperialist countries.

"The communist parties of the imperialist countries, America, Japan, England, Australia, and Canada should not restrict themselves, in face of the threatening danger, to propaganda against war, but must make every effort to eliminate the factors which disorganize the workers' movement in these countries and make it easier for the capitalists to exploit the antagonisms between nations and races. These factors are: the immigration question and the question of cheap coloured labour power. Even today the contract system of indentured labour is the chief means of recruiting coloured workers on the sugar plantations of the south Pacific area, to which workers are brought from China and India. This induces the workers in the imperialist countries to demand legislation prohibiting immigration and hostile to the coloured workers, both in America and Australia. Such legislation deepens the antagonism between the coloured and white workers, and splits and weakens the workers' movement."

*The communist parties of America, Canada, and Australia must conduct an energetic campaign against laws prohibiting immigration and must explain to the proletarian masses of these countries that such laws, by stirring up race hatred, will in the end bring injury to themselves. The capitalists on the other hand are prepared to dispense with laws against immigration, in order to facilitate the free entry of cheap coloured labour power and thus lower the wages of white workers. Their intentions can only be successfully frustrated by one thing – the immigrant workers must be enrolled in the existing trade unions of white workers. At the same time the demand must be made that the wages of coloured workers must be raised to the level of the wages of white workers. Such a step by the communist parties will expose the intentions of the capitalists and at the same time clearly show the coloured workers that the international proletariat knows no race prejudice."*⁵

Ultimately the whole debate about open borders and migrant workers is a repetition of the discussions on female labor in the First International. The petty-bourgeois socialist adherents of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argued against female labor since it was said to be "unnatural" and that it would reduce the employment chances for male workers. Of course, on a superficial level, it was true that women workers got jobs more readily than men since their wages were lower – just as it is the case with migrants and white workers today. But Karl Marx, and all socialists since then, explained that the problem is not women (or migrants) entering the labor market and seeking employment. The problem is the capitalists' ownership of the means of production. The task is to organize the women (or migrant) workers together with their male or white colleagues and to counter the capitalists' desire to divide the working class by fighting for equal wages.

Hence, the RCIT – in contrast to SPEW/CWI – consistently opposes immigration control as we call for in our program: *"The right to stay and immediate legalisation of all illegal migrants and asylum seekers! Right of asylum for those fleeing war, oppression and poverty in their countries! Open borders*

for all!"⁶

For the very same reason true Marxists opposed the chauvinist strike of 2009 which was conducted under the chauvinistic slogan "British Jobs for British Workers." At that time British workers at the Lindsey Oil Refinery wanted to stop the hiring of migrant workers. It is a shame that many British left-reformists and centrists – like the Stalinist CPB, the CWI, IMT etc. – supported this strike. Until this very day, SPEW/CWI even proudly boasts that one of its members was a leader in this strike!⁷

Equally unsurprisingly, SPEW/CWI joined the chorus of the reformists and centrists who denounced the August Uprising of black, Asian, migrant and poor white youth in 2011, instead of supporting this as a justified spontaneous insurrection.⁸

While we cannot go into great detail on the issue of migration here, this is as a key question for all imperialist countries in the present period and in particular for Britain. We simply refer to the fact that, according to the latest official census of 2011, national and ethnic minorities constitute 1/5 of the population of England and Wales. In London, only 45% (3.7 million) out of 8.2 million usual residents were white British, i.e., national and ethnic minorities already constitute the majority. In Leicester, the share of the white British is 60% and in Birmingham 65%.⁹

Hence, implementing a correct, Marxist line on the issue of migration is a central requirement for any revolutionary organization in Britain.

Footnotes

- 1 Socialist Party: British Perspectives 2013 (Congress Document), http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/partydoc/British_Perspectives_2013_a_Socialist_Party_congress_document/16413
- 2 Peter Taaffe: European Union referendum: No to a capitalist EU, Yes to a socialist Europe!
- 3 Alex Gordon: Social Europe is a con, http://www.no-2eu.com/?page_id=263
- 4 See Michael Pröbsting: Marxismus, Migration und revolutionäre Integration (2010); in: Der Weg des Revolutionären Kommunismus, Nr. 7, pp. 38-41, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-7>.

<http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-7>. We have published a summary of this study in English-language: Michael Pröbsting: Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 1 (English-language Journal of the RCIT), <http://www.thecommunists.net/oppresed/revolutionary-integration/>

5 Jane Degras: The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents. Volume I 1919-1922, pp. 391-392

6 RCIT: *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* (2012), p. 51, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/against-oppression-of-migrants/>.

7 For our position on these reactionary strikes we refer to the resolution of the statement of the at that time still revolutionary organisation Workers Power: No to the nationalist strikes, 1st February 2009, <http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?id=47,1821,0,0,1,0> and an article the author of these lines wrote in German-language: Einleitung der Liga der Sozialistischen Revolution zur Stellungnahme Britannien: Nein zu den nationalistischen Streiks!, 5.2.2009, <http://arbeiterinnenstandpunkt.net/phpwcm/index.php?id=25,579,0,0,1,0>

8 See on this Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting: These are not "riots" – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain! The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!, 10.8.2011, <http://www.rkob.net/new-english-language-site-1/uprising-of-the-poor-in-britain/>; Michael Pröbsting: The August uprising of the poor and nationally and racially oppressed in Britain: What would a revolutionary organisation have done?, 18.8.2011, <http://www.rkob.net/new-english-language-site-1/august-uprising-what-should-have-been-done/>; Bericht der RKO-Delegation über ihren Aufenthalt in London 2011, <http://www.rkob.net/international/berichte-uprising-in-gb/>; Michael Pröbsting: Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward; in: RCIT: Revolutionary Communism No. 1, (September 2011), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/>

9 Office for National Statistics: 2011 Census: Key Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011, p. 4 and 11. See also our article Laurence Humphries: The General Election in Britain on May 7th 2015: Vote Labour- But No Illusions in the Milliband Leadership! RCIT Britain, 20.3.2015, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 34, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-elections-2015/>



RCIT AFRICA PROGRAM

Manifesto for the Revolutionary Liberation of Black Africa

Adopted at the 2nd World Congress of the RCIT in November 2017

Introduction * Foreign Exploiters – Out of Africa! * The Wealth to Those Who Create It! Economic Freedom Now! * Down with the Capitalist Dictatorships and Corrupt Pseudo-Democracies! * Organize the Workers and Oppressed for the Mass Struggle! * For a Government of Workers and Poor Peasants! For a Socialist Revolution! * For Pan-African Unity! For the United Socialist States of Africa! * For a United Front of Struggle! Overcome the Crisis of Leadership – Build a Revolutionary Party Nationally and Internationally! * Appendix

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A5 Format

IV. Reformism and the Labour Bureaucracy

On the nature of the reformist parties and trade unions and the necessary tactics

Introduction by the Editorial Board: In this part we deal with the issue of reformism. We discuss the developments of social democratic and ex-Stalinist parties in Europe as well as the necessary revolutionary tactics. We also outline the Marxist approach to the trade unions. The CWI never understood the contradictory nature of the reformist parties in a dialectical way. Until the early 1990s it saw them just as “workers parties” and ignored the bourgeois aspect. Then, after a sudden 180-degree turnaround, it announced that these parties have lost any organic relationship with the working class! Correspondingly, while the CWI in the first period was deeply entrenched inside the reformist parties and opportunistically adapted to them, it ignored them in a sectarian way in the later period. As a result, it never applied the united front tactic correctly.

In the trade unions, the CWI leadership constantly adapted to the left wing of the trade union bureaucracy and refused a policy of revolutionary opposition against all sectors of the bureaucracy.

Finally, we deal with the US Senator Bernie Sanders who has been enthusiastically supported by the CWI in the last years.

Below we publish two excerpts from our book *“Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today”*, written by Michael Pröbsting. The book can be read online or downloaded for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/book-united-front/>. In addition, we reprint the RCIT’s *“Theses on Revolutionary Trade Union Policy”* (Revolutionary Communism No. 18, February 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-trade-union/>). The last part is an article of Yossi Schwartz, a leading member of the RCIT, on the US Presidential elections in 2016 and the Bernie Sanders campaign (August 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/left-and-us-election/>). It is followed by brief excerpts from two articles on the Global Trade War (*“The Next Round of Escalation in the Global Trade War”*, 13 May 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-next-round-of-escalation-in-the-global-trade-war/>), and *“The CWI and the U.S.-China Cold War”*, 27 May 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-cwi-and-the-u-s-china-cold-war/>)

The Crisis of Bourgeois Workers’ Parties

One of the most important developments in the past two or three decades has been the extraordinary bourgeoisification of the traditional reformist parties of the social democratic and Stalinist hue. At the same time, we have witnessed a surge of new left-wing reformist or petty-bourgeois populist forces. These changes constitute the crucial backdrop for the development and the application of the Marxist tactic of the united front during the present period.

Let us examine these developments and changes in more detail. The most important factor in the world situation –

and this is even truer today than at the time of Trotsky in the 1930s – is the complete lack of a strong revolutionary world party. Trotsky’s words – *„Without the slightest exaggeration it may be said: the whole world situation is determined by the crisis of the proletarian leadership”*¹ – are even more relevant today, more than half a century after the political and organizational collapse of the Fourth International, when the numbers of authentic revolutionary forces are so abysmally small compared with the historic task ahead of us.² This absence of a world party for socialist revolution is the main reason why so many class struggle eruptions leading to pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations are ultimately defeated. And it is precisely for the same reason that the right-wing shift of traditional reformism resulted in the surge of new left-wing reformist and populist political formations.

The historic crisis of social democracy and Stalinism expresses itself in a dramatic political shift to the right, a bourgeoisification of its composition and leadership, and its precipitous decline in membership and electoral strength. Let us examine some examples.

The German SPD led Germany – in a governmental coalition with the Green Party – to the country’s first war abroad when NATO attacked Serbia in 1999. They did the same in Afghanistan in 2001 and during the imperialist occupation afterwards. The SPD imposed the draconian Hartz IV reforms which led to substantial cuts in unemployment benefits and social subsidies. Since then this party has been the junior partner in pro-austerity coalitions with the CDU, the conservative party of Angela Merkel, in the years 2005-09 and once again since 2013.

It is hardly surprising that this neoliberalization of the SPD had dramatic effects on its support and membership. Its electoral support has declined from 40.9% (1998) to 23.0% (2009) and 25.7% (2013). The number its members has more than halved between 1990 and 2014 (the latest available data). While the party had 943,402 members in 1990, this figure has dropped to 459,902 by the end of 2012.³ 50% of these members are aged 60 years and above and only 16% are below the age of 40! The social composition of the party is particularly revealing: pensioners constitute the largest group (34%), followed by “Beamte” (a German word for privileged employees in the public sector, 23%), white-collar employees (15%), blue-collar workers (8%) and unemployed (5%). The remaining 15% are housewives, students, self-employed, etc.⁴

True, none of this means that the SPD has ceased to be a bourgeois workers’ party, given its close connections with the trade union federation and other workers’ organizations. Furthermore, many pensioner members were previously workers. But it is clear that the party has substantially weakened its links with the working class and barely represents the working class in its composition, but rather the oldest and most-privileged (Beamte!) sectors of the working class as well as a sector of the lower middle class.

The situation is similar to that of the Spanish PSOE. The party has moved dramatically to the right and has for decades adhered to the neoliberal agenda. Its electoral sup-

port has halved since the beginning of the new historic period which began with the start of the Great Recession – dropping from 43.9% (2008) to 22.0% (2015) of the votes cast. The party's constituency is dominated by "inactive" people (i.e., pensioners) who constitute 41.4% of its entire membership⁵.

However, despite this decline and the progressive aging of its membership, a majority of them are from the working class. Also, the PSOE still maintains close relations with the UGT, one of the two major trade union federations in Spain. However, this close relationship helped bring the UGT leadership (together with the Stalinist-led CCOO union), to sign a "social pact" with the then PSOE-led government. This pact is more appropriately termed an "anti-social pact," and included increasing the official retirement age from 65 to 67.

The French Socialist Party, too, is deeply in crisis, having been transformed into a neoliberal party long ago. This crisis has accelerated since President Hollande's ascension to power in 2012. Under his leadership, the PSF has waged unprecedented attacks on democratic rights (an indefinite "state of emergency," since November 2015; anti-democratic amendments to the constitution; thousands of raids against Muslim migrants, etc.). Furthermore, Hollande's government has engaged in a series of imperialist wars in Mali, the Central African Republic, Iraq and Syria.

Unsurprisingly, these developments go hand in hand with the decline of the party. While it officially had a membership of 203,000 in 2009, this figure declined to about 120,000 in 2015. Since Hollande took power, 40,000 of the PSF's members have left the party.⁶

No less important is the traditionally petty-bourgeois social composition of the PSF – a characteristic which doubtless has exacerbated in the last few years. According to the French political scientists Laurent Bouvet, only 16% of PSF members are workers and low-ranking wage earners as opposed to 35% who belong to higher management and the professions. The party's membership is also strongly dominated by the relatively privileged public sector employees (58% of all members). Like all other social democratic parties, PSF members has a high average age (67% being above 50 years old). Furthermore, Bouvet reports: "It [the PSF's electorate, Ed.] comprises mainly voters from the middle and upper strata and few from the working classes (especially from the social and occupational groups »employees« and »workers,« who represent more than 50 percent of the active population in France). Furthermore, the proportion of voters from the public sector is particularly significant in relation to their weight in the active population."⁷

Furthermore, nearly one quarter of all party members are elected representatives in municipal, regional, or national parliaments, governmental authorities, etc.⁸

The British Labour Party underwent a very similar development until the summer of last year (2015). When the Blair government took power in 1997, it abolished the party's close links with the trade unions (albeit these links still do exist) and deleted the party program's famous Clause 4 which declared the goal of nationalizing key sectors of British industry. Blair's government implemented a neoliberal agenda and was a driving force in the imperialist war offensive in the Middle East. In fact, the "social democrat" Blair was the closest collaborator of US-President Bush and his militaristic, neo-conservative administration.

Likewise the Labour Party has proven to be a loyal supporter of Israel and the latter's colonial wars against the Palestinian people. Recently, despite the new left-reformist leadership of Corbyn, the party has started to expel Anti-Zionist members.⁹

Like in other countries, the Labour Party's membership figures declined from about 400,000 individual members in 1997 to about 200,000 in 2015. However, with the successful campaign of the left-reformist Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn in summer 2015, this decline has been turned around. Despite open hostility by the pro-Blairite party establishment, Corbyn's campaign was based on an anti-austerity and anti-militaristic platform which created huge enthusiasm among young people. In the space of a few months, the Labour Party's "membership jumped from 201,293 on 6 May 2015, the day before the general election, to 388,407 on 10 January 2016."¹⁰

This development is an important indicator that bourgeois workers' parties, even after a long period of decline, can revive and be rejuvenated if newly-radicalized youth and workers see no alternative to them to politically express their desire for change. Labour's membership comeback also demonstrates how wrong numerous centrists (like, for example, the CWI) were when they declared in the early 1990s that the Labour Party (and social democratic parties in general) are no longer bourgeois workers' parties. We authentic Marxists have always rejected this assumption while, at the same time, having also consistently denounced the opportunistic adaption to Labourism and never-ending entryism as practiced by the CWI's former comrades, the IMT of Ted Grant and Alan Woods.

While we are not aware of a concrete study of the party's social composition, an internal report which was recently published contains some interesting conclusions. The British newspaper *The Guardian* reported about the findings of this report: "The report portrays a party in transition, attracting a higher proportion of new members from wealthy inner-city areas. While there has been a dramatic rise in members across the entire party, Labour's traditional supporters from poorer parts of society are now a smaller proportion of the total membership. (...) But the report's summary warns: 'Groups which are over-represented as Labour party members tend to be long-term homeowners from urban areas (particularly inner city area) who have high levels of disposable income.' 'Those who are under-represented tend to be either young singles/families who rent properties on a short-term basis and require financial assistance or those who live in rural communities.' (...) It points out that 'high-status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards are highly over-represented.' 'As a group they make up 4% of the general population in contrast to 11.2% of party membership,' it says."¹¹

Similar developments can be observed in the Austrian social democratic party and even more in the Irish Labour Party. The latter suffered an historic defeat in the 2016 elections after having participated in an aggressive pro-austerity government since 2011. It lost two third of its voters (dropping from 19.5% to 6.6% of the votes cast) and most of its parliamentary seats (from 37 to 7).

Finally, one should not forget the sad fate of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party in Italy. Both the PSI as well as the PCI simply dissolved themselves and fused with openly bourgeois parties.

The Stalinist and ex-Stalinist parties have faced a some-

what different fate, but they too are in crisis. With important exceptions, they have not participated in government coalitions and thus have avoided the same sharp decline in membership that the neoliberalized social democratic parties have experienced, because they could still present themselves as anti-austerity opposition parties which enabled them, to a certain degree, to attract workers and youth who were disgusted by social democracy. This, for example, was evinced with electoral rise of the Italian *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* which split from the PCI when the latter dissolved. A similar manifestation occurred in Germany with the founding of LINKE after the ex-Stalinist PDS in Eastern Germany fused with the West German WASG, which had previously split off from the SPD. And in France, the *Front de Gauche* (FdG) – a fusion of the ex-Stalinist PCF and the *Parti de Gauche*, the latter having split from the PSF – experienced some electoral successes, as did the Spanish *Izquierda Unida* (which was initiated by the Stalinist PCE).

However, the respective successes of these ex-Stalinist parties – most of which are united in the *Party of the European Left* (PEL) – was not sustainable. In France, the PCF participated in the neoliberal PSF-led government of Lionel Jospin in 1997-2002 which implemented many privatization programs and took part in the NATO wars against Serbia and Afghanistan. The PCF was severely punished for this betrayal during the 2002 presidential election when its general secretary, Robert Hue, received only 3.37% of the vote, less than the centrist-Trotskyist candidates Arlette Laguiller (5.72%) and Olivier Besancenot (4.25%). Later, after the creation of the FdG, the PCF revived. But in the last several years, the FdG has been plagued by internal tensions and PdG leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon – the FdG's candidate in the 2012 presidential elections who received 11.1% of the vote – is currently preparing a separate project.

In Germany, LINKE has continually been moving to the right. In the first decade of the new millennium, this party participated in a regional coalition government in Berlin with the SPD and was responsible for implementing various privatization programs. Some of its leaders openly supported Israel's wars against Gaza in 2008/09 and subsequently. The party officially forbids its members to support solidarity activities with the Palestinian people in Gaza (like participating in the Freedom Flotilla) or supporting the boycott campaign against the apartheid State of Israel.¹² Locally, Sahra Wagenknecht, the chairwoman of the LINKE parliamentary group, recently stated that refugees in Germany are only "guests" and if they do not behave like "guests" and respect the German law, they

should be expelled from the country!¹³ LINKE's obvious pandering to the ruling class in order to be accepted as a coalition partner is both embarrassing and disgraceful.

In passing, we note that the same pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist policy has been practiced for years by the LINKE's sister party in Austria – the *Communist Party of Austria* (KPÖ). As we have reported elsewhere, leading officials of the PEL and the KPÖ (as well as their Zionist pro-war allies) have for more than a decade repeatedly made public accusations against the RCIT – including in the bourgeois press – claiming that we espouse "Anti-Semitism," "revolutionary insanity," etc.¹⁴

Despite all their opportunism, or rather because of it, LINKE continues to lose members – dropping from 78,046 (2009) to 60,547 (2014).¹⁵ In contrast to right-wing parties, it has proven itself completely incapable of profiting from the decline of social democracy and increasing unrest among the working class and youth.

The same is true for the Spanish IU. After some electoral successes, it suffered several defeats and has been overshadowed by the rise of the left-wing populist *Podemos* party. During the most recent, December 2015 elections, IU received only 3.7% of the vote. In addition to its working class base, IU somehow remarkably still counts among its supporters a significant sector of very professional, well-paid middle class individuals – the *gauche divine*, as the Spanish sociologist Jorge Galindo calls them.¹⁶

In Italy, Fausto Bertinotti's PRC collapsed after it twice entered neoliberal governments and supported austerity attacks as well as the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. Since its collapse, the PRC has been unable to garner sufficient votes to pass the electoral threshold and thus currently has no seats in parliament.

Other Stalinist parties who remained outside of the PEL also face stagnation. Despite years of general strikes and political upheavals in Greece, the KKE has been unable to make any electoral advances, and draws an unimpressive 4-6% of the vote. Similarly, in Portugal the PCP, which runs together with the Green Party, has steadily maintained only 7-8.8% of the vote in all elections since 1991. None of these traditional reformist parties has proven itself capable of gaining in strength despite repeated waves of radicalization among the youth and workers, who instead have more readily been able to identify with newer formations (like SYRIZA or the Portuguese *Bloco de Esquerda*).

The decline of the traditional reformist parties has gone hand in hand with a substantial weakening of the trade unions. While an extensive study of the trade union movement is beyond the scope of this present document, we

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must nevertheless point to the fact that in the old imperialist countries (North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia), on the average trade unions have lost about half of their members since the 1980s. Trade union density in the OECD countries has decreased from 34% (1978) to 17.0% (2010). In France, the decline has been even more severe during the same period, membership having shrunk from 20.5% to 7.7%. In Germany, membership approximately halved from 35.5% to 18.1%, in Britain the drop was similar, from 48.8% to 25.8%, and in Italy, while the negative trend has been less precipitous, the reduction in trade union membership has gone from 50.4% to 37.3%.¹⁷

The bourgeoisification and decline of the reformist parties has not been confined to Europe alone, but has been witnessed in a number of important semi-colonial countries. In South Africa, the Stalinist SACP has undergone intense bourgeoisification. As part of the ANC, the SACP has been part of the government for more than two decades (1994). Today the party has five ministers and three deputy ministers in the coalition cabinet. Its thoroughly reactionary nature was shockingly revealed during the Marikana massacre of 2012 when the SACP leadership supported the killing of miners on strike. Later they sided with the collaborationist pro-government COSATU leadership against the more militant unions which coalesced around NUMSA. The SACP is a prime example of a party which formally adheres to the principles of "Marxism-Leninism" while in practice acts as a spearhead of capitalist counterrevolution.¹⁸

A similar example is the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) in Brazil. The PT emerged in the 1980s as a militant left-reformist workers' party closely related with the radical trade union movement. However, it subsequently formed a popular-front coalition with bourgeois forces (like the PMDB) and has been in power since 2002. (This, of course, is liable to change in the upcoming weeks and months with the coup d'état engineered by right-wing forces – at this stage manifesting itself in the senate trial of the impeached president Dilma Rousseff). As a result of its bourgeoisification, PT increasingly acquiesced to neoliberal demands by pursuing austerity programs. The party is intimately connected with various prominent capitalist tycoons, and thus has unsurprisingly been involved in various corruption scandals.¹⁹

In India too, we have a good example of the bourgeoisification and decline of a reformist parties in the evolution of the Indian CPI(M). This party ruled West-Bengal, the fourth most populous states in the country, for 34 consecutive years (1977-2011). During this period, the party not only suppressed peasant rebellions but increasingly collaborated with imperialist monopolies. It dispossessed peasants whose land was handed over to multi-national corporations, while unleashing the police and its own party thugs against those who fought back. Unsurprisingly, on the backdrop of massive protests, the CPI(M) lost power in the elections of 2011.²⁰

The Marxist Classics on the Labor Bureaucracy

All these developments are hardly surprising, because both the reformist parties as well as the trade unions are dominated by the conservative labor bureaucracy and their social base – the labor aristocracy, i.e., the upper strata of the working class which is extremely privileged and bribed by the bourgeoisie. Marxism characterizes the labor bureaucracy in their twin versions – in the reformist party as well as in the trade union – as agents of the ruling class inside the workers' movement. The labor bureaucracy is inextricably linked with the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie via countless bonds (positions in parliaments, social security institutions, other state institutions, corporations, etc.) These privileges are based on the super-exploitation of oppressed peoples by the imperialist monopolies and constitute the objective economic sources from which the labor bureaucracy and labor aristocracy are bribed, and in this way tie them to the rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Of course, since the working class forms the social base of the labor bureaucracy, the latter can come under pressure from below in periods of heightened class struggle. In such periods it can even be positioned at the top of a strike movement – or better, be dragged there – and half-heartedly implement reforms as a governmental party. However, it will always act with the purpose of undermining all forms of independent proletarian activity and liquidate any radical movement which could endanger the capitalist system.

The following quotes from Lenin and Trotsky demonstrate that this was the view of the Marxist classics. Hence, the leader of the Bolsheviks stated in 1916: *„... objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty bourgeoisie and of a certain strata of the working class who have been bribed out of imperialist superprofits and converted to watchdogs of capitalism and corruptors of the labour movement.“*²¹

In a preface for his book on imperialism, written in 1920, Lenin explained the economic basis of reformism and the role of its leaders:

*“Obviously, out of such enormous superprofits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their “own” country) it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And that is just what the capitalists of the “advanced” countries are doing: they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert. This stratum of workers-turned-bourgeois, or the labour aristocracy, who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and in our days, the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the “Versaillaise” against the “Communards”. Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problem of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution.“*²²

And in another document Lenin stated: *„Opportunism, or reformism, inevitably had to grow into a phenomenon of world-*

wide importance, socialist-imperialism, or social-chauvinism, because imperialism brought to the fore a handful of very rich, advanced nations, engaged in plundering the whole world, and thereby enabled the bourgeoisie of those countries, out of their monopolist superprofits (imperialism is monopoly capitalism), to bribe the upper strata of the working class."²³

After Lenin's death, Trotsky and his co-fighters continued the struggle for revolutionary Marxism. Based on the experience of reformism, and in particular its English version, Trotsky wrote:

„The question of the source of this bureaucratic danger is no less important. (...) In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucratism are to be observed precisely in the trade unions. It is enough to look at America, England and Germany. Amsterdam is the most powerful international organisation of the trade union bureaucracy. It is thanks to it that the whole structure of capitalism now stands upright above all in Europe and especially in England. If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian masses as nothing but pitiful and ridiculous playthings. The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt, and in the other colonies. One would have to be completely blind to say to the English workers: "Be on guard against the conquest of power and always remember that your trade unions are the antidote to the dangers of the state." The Marxist will say to the English workers: "The trade union bureaucracy is the chief Instrument, for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown." Parenthetically, it is especially for this reason that the bloc of Stalin with the strikebreakers was so criminal.

From the example of England, one sees very clearly how absurd it is to counterpose, as if it were a question of two different principles, the trade union organisation and the state organisation. In England, more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population of the country. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the state indirectly, through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy.

Up to now, we have not mentioned the Labour Party, which in England, the classic country of trade unions, is only a political transposition of the same trade union bureaucracy. The same leaders guide the trade unions, betray the general strike, lead the electoral campaign and later on sit in the ministries. The Labour Party and the trade unions – these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labour. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Labourite bureaucracy. And that cannot be attained by counterposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but only by the active opposition of the Communist Party to the Labourite bureaucracy in all fields of social life: in the trade unions, in strikes, in the electoral campaign, in parliament, and in power."²⁴

These conclusions have not lost their relevance. Quite the contrary, given the crisis of revolutionary leadership and the massive expansion of resources to bribe the labor bureaucracy and aristocracy through the intensification of the imperialist super-exploitation of oppressed peoples, these features have even substantially increased. We

drew attention to this development already in the RCIT Program where we stated: "In this deep crisis of leadership - combined with the possibilities of the imperialist bourgeoisie for the systematic bribery of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy - the ultimate cause can be found in the extraordinary bourgeoisification of the labour movement and the De-revolutionisation of Marxism, as is has been distorted by left reformism, centrism and the left-wing academics in recent decades."²⁵

Furthermore, as we have repeatedly emphasized, the deepening of the capitalist crisis in the age of globalization and in particular in the present historic period of capitalist decay which commenced in 2008, have only accelerated this development. The capitalist crisis forces all governments to intensify the attacks on the working class and oppressed people and to accelerate the rivalry against other capitalist states. The ruling classes are forced to implement bigger and bigger austerity packages, to attack more and more democratic rights at home, to wage more and more colonial wars in the South, and to whip up chauvinism against imperialist rivals. As we stated above, the entire *raison d'être* of the labor bureaucracy is to be admitted by the bourgeoisie into the government and other areas of the state apparatus. For this reason, the reformists are forced (not too much against their will) to adapt to the policy of the ruling class which again is adapted to the objective needs of imperialist capitalism. Therefore it is unavoidable that social democracy and Stalinism become more and more bourgeois and reactionary.

Of course, this is not a unilateral process. Since reformism is a contradictory phenomenon – with the labor bureaucracy constituting a petty-bourgeois stratum serving the bourgeoisie but based on the upper strata of the working class – the class contradictions in the society leave their mark on reformism too. Hence under specific circumstances, reformism can again temporarily swing to the left, albeit mainly in words but hardly in deeds (as we currently observe in Corbyn's Labour Party).

However, in such a period the possibilities substantially increase that the accelerated contradictions between the classes and the radicalization of the working class and the youth lead to either splits in the reformist parties and / or the emergence of new reformist or petty-bourgeois left-wing populist formations. This is exactly what we have seen in the recent years.

* * * * *

The Traditional Reformist Parties and Electoral Tactics Today

As we have outlined in our *United Front Theses*, the RCIT has always supported the tactic of critical electoral support for reformist parties as developed by Lenin and Trotsky. We have repeatedly explained that, where communist forces are very small, they should advocate the tactic of critical support for parties of the working class and the oppressed in their relations with the non-communist masses.

Our method of critical support implies raising a program of immediate and certain transitional demands which address the most burning needs of the masses. The purpose is to mobilize workers in the struggle and force a reformist party to take this or that act in the interests of workers. Such demands must always be combined with slogans for organizing the workers and oppressed, and which focus on establishing action committees composed of ordinary workers in workplaces and neighborhoods, and which are not controlled by the bureaucracy. This is crucial because, first, mass mobilizations are the only way to force the reformist bureaucracy to implement even limited progressive actions. And second, such organizing slogans can lay the groundwork for the workers to struggle for these demands independently if their bureaucratic leaderships refuse to carry them out.

In our predecessor organization, we explained the tactic of critical support in our *Theses on Reformism*:

*"Both of these elements of critical support — demands on reformists, and organising independent struggle in pursuit of these demands — are crucial because a government of a bourgeois workers' party (i.e. a bourgeois workers' government) will inevitably be the tool of capital against the working class. Organising for struggle is vital to prevent defeat and demoralisation amongst the masses when this becomes clear in practice. At the same time, the communists put forward their own programme, counterposing it to the reformist programme, even where they do not stand communist candidates. To win workers to a revolutionary alternative it is necessary to spell out, even for the duration of the united front (in this case, basically the election campaign) what the alternative is. The tactic of critical electoral support flows solely from the existence of the organic relationship between the bourgeois workers' party and the working class. It is not in any way predicated upon the programme or promises of the reformists. Communist agitation and propaganda for electoral support must not be open to interpretation as support for the reformists as a "lesser evil" than the open bourgeois parties. The purpose of bringing the reformists to power is precisely to put them to the test, to prove that they are indeed as willing as the open bourgeois parties to defend the class rule and state power of the bourgeoisie and to attack the working class to serve that end."*²⁶

Unfortunately, a number of centrists and ultra-leftists believe that critical support for reformist parties, which have repeatedly betrayed the working class, would be a contradiction of Marxist principles. This is absolutely incorrect. In fact, Lenin explained a very long time ago that the issue is not whether we, the communists, understand the treacherous nature of the reformists, but if the mass of the working class understands this. In his famous book *'Left-Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder* written in 1920, Lenin advised the British communists to lend critical electoral support to the reformist Labour Party:

"If we are the party of the revolutionary class, and not merely

*a revolutionary group, and if we want the masses to follow us and unless we achieve that we stand the risk of remaining mere windbags) we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or rather compel the former to beat the latter because the former are afraid of their victory!); second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right; i.e. that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petit-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; third, we must bring closer the moment when on the basis of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible, with serious chance of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once."*²⁷

At the time, the communists in Britain were a very small force numbering only a few hundred and were not yet united into a single party.²⁸ Nevertheless, or precisely for this reason, Lenin called his comrades to approach the mass of the working class with a tactic that addressed their current, non-communist, reformist consciousness:

*"We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets agitating for communism, and in all constituencies where we have no candidates, we would urge the electors to vote for the Labour candidate and against the bourgeois candidate. Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallagher are mistaken in thinking that this is a betrayal of communism, or a renunciation of the struggle against the social traitors. On the contrary, the cause of communist revolution would undoubtedly gain thereby. At present, British Communists very often find it hard even to approach the masses, and even to get a hearing from them. If I come out as a communist and call upon them to vote for Henderson and against Lloyd George, they will certainly give me a hearing. And I shall be able to explain in a popular manner not only why the Soviets are better than a parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (disguised with the signboard of "bourgeois democracy") but also that, with my vote, I want to support Henderson in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man — that the impending establishment of a government of Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and Snowdens just as was the case with their kindred spirits in Russia and Germany."*²⁹

Later Trotsky would continue to advocate such a method in relation to reformist mass parties. He emphasized that communists give critical support to reformists not because they have a better program or policy than openly-bourgeois parties, or because they are the "lesser evil." He argued that communists should apply the united front tactic on the electoral field only because of the organic relationship between the reformists and the working class. For the same reason, he would criticize the centrist ILP in Britain when the latter called for critical support only for those candidates of the Labour Party who opposed imperialist sanctions against Italy after its 1935 invasion of Abyssinia.

"No. Economic sanctions, if real, lead to military sanctions, to war. The ILP itself has been saying this. It should have given critical support to all Labour Party candidates, that is, where the ILP itself was not contesting. In the New Leader I read that your London division agreed to support only anti-sanctionist Labour Party candidates. This too is incorrect. The Labour Party should have been critically supported not because it was for or against sanctions but because it represented the working class masses. The basic error which was made by some ILPers who withdrew critical support was to assume that the war danger necessitated a

change in our assessment of reformism. But as Clausewitz said, and Lenin often repeated, war is the continuation of politics by other means. If this is true, it applies not only to capitalist parties but to Social Democratic parties. The war crisis does not alter the fact that the Labour Party is a workers' party, which the governmental party is not. Nor does it alter the fact that the Labour Party leadership cannot fulfill its promises, that it will betray the confidence which the masses place in it. In peacetime the workers will, if they trust in Social Democracy, die of hunger; in war, for the same reason, they will die from bullets. Revolutionists never give critical support to reformism on the assumption that reformism, in power, could satisfy the fundamental needs of the workers. It is possible, of course, that a Labour government could introduce a few mild temporary reforms. It is also possible that the League [of Nations] could postpone a military conflict about secondary issues—just as a cartel can eliminate secondary economic crises only to reproduce them on a larger scale. So the League can eliminate small episodic conflicts only to generalize them into world war. Thus, both economic and military crises will only return with an added explosive force so long as capitalism remains. And we know that Social Democracy cannot abolish capitalism. No, in war as in peace, the ILP must say to the workers: 'The Labour Party will deceive you and betray you, but you do not believe us. Very well, we will go through your experiences with you, but in no case do we identify ourselves with the Labour Party program.' Morrison, Clynes, etc., represent certain prejudices of the workers. When the ILP seeks to boycott Clynes it helps not only Baldwin but Clynes himself. If successful in its tactic, the ILP prevents the election of Clynes, of the Labour government, and so prevents their exposure before the masses. The workers will say: "If only we had had Clynes and Morrison in power, things would have been better." 30

Trotsky repeated Lenin's advise not to confuse the political conclusions of revolutionaries with those of the mass of

the working class.

"It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform. For example, by its decision at Brighton. For us — yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour." 31

Precisely because revolutionaries advocate electoral support for reformist parties *not* for their program but for their relationship with the working class, we usually do not give electoral support to small reformist or centrist lists. Their non-revolutionary program gives us no reason to support them, and because they lack a mass base in the working class, such a tactic would not help revolutionaries to come closer to non-revolutionary workers and the oppressed. Consequently, any support for such candidates would only be misinterpreted as support for their politics, something which communists can never give.

We have always insisted that it is foolish to believe that workers' illusions in reformist parties can readily be overcome. This is particularly true in light of the absence of a large revolutionary party. The longevity of these illusions in reformist parties is related to the historic roots of the social democratic and Stalinist parties among the working class. Therefore, these illusions don't automatically disappear when such parties enter a government.

However, while this has been the case for a number of decades after the World War II, important changes have taken place in the past 10–15 years. As we noted above, most reformist parties have not ceased to be bourgeois workers' parties, but there have been significant breaks of sectors of the working class with these parties. These ruptures either led to the formation of new parties or to fusions with other, smaller reformist parties. In other cases, this development only results in a higher rate of abstention from elections.

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice

Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*. The book's subtitle is: *Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*. The book is in English-language. It contains four chapters on 148 pages and includes 42 pictures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

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

A few months ago, our movement commemorated its 25th anniversary. In the summer of 1989 our predecessor organization, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) was founded as a democratic-centralist international tendency based on an elaborated program. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) continues the revolutionary tradition of the LRCI. Below we give an overview of our history, an evaluation of its achievements as well as mistakes, and a summary of the lessons for the struggles ahead. This book summarizes our theoretical and practical experience of the past

25 years.

In Chapter I we outline a summary of the Bolshevick-Communists' theoretical conception of the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the working class. In Chapter II we elaborate on the essential characteristics of revolutionary party respective of the pre-party organization. In Chapter III we deal with the history of our movement — the RCIT and its predecessor organization. Finally, in Chapter IV we outline the main lessons of our 25 years of organized struggle for building a Bolshevick party and their meaning for our future work.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/> ■

**Building the
Revolutionary Party
in Theory
and Practice**

*Looking Back and Ahead after
25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

As we have said above, raising the slogan for a new workers' party does not necessarily mean that revolutionaries should drop the tactic of critical electoral support for the traditional reformist parties. It is the role of revolutionaries to alert workers to the need for building a new party. However, as long as this process has not taken shape, it may still be useful to relate in our electoral tactics to workers who – despite being fed up – still vote for the traditional reformist party as “the lesser evil.”

We therefore stated in our *Theses* that in general, “critical support for non-revolutionary workers parties is a legitimate tactic for helping class-conscious workers to overcome their illusions in reformist leaderships.”

At the same time, we must take into account that the decay of the reformist parties and their increasing discrediting in light of the pro-austerity, pro-war, and racist policy with which they are complicit because of their participation in the government, provokes more and more such ruptures with sectors of its working class base. For this reason, revolutionaries have to carefully study under what conditions the progressive sectors of the working class view the reformist party as a tool to resist the offensive of the bourgeoisie and when this is no longer the case, and these workers would rather turn away from the reformist party.

The latter situation is particularly likely when a bourgeois workers' party is part of the government and serves as a whip or executioner in the implementation of severe attacks on the working class – austerity programs, imperialist wars, racist hatred, attacks on democratic rights, etc. Such a situation arose, for example, in France when Hollande imposed the state of emergency regime in 2015 or in Austria in 2016 when the government – led by the social democratic party – imposed harsh laws against refugees. Similar situations existed in Britain in the first decade of the new millennium when the Blair-led Labour Party became the strongest supporter of Bush's imperialist war offensives in the Middle East.

In such circumstances it would be wrong for revolutionaries to call for the electoral support of these reformist parties. Here the aim is rather to relate to the vanguard workers who have already broken with them. In such cases Marxists should either call for critical support for another party which better reflects the desire of the progressive workers and oppressed to fight back or, if such a party does not run in the upcoming elections, call for a blank vote.

Let us illustrate our approach with the following example. The Austrian section of the RCIT called for a critical vote for the social democratic party (SPÖ) in Vienna's regional elections in October 2015. As we have explained – in addition to the SPÖ's traditional relations with the organized working class – our position was based on a certain rallying in the weeks before the elections of important sectors of the vanguard and the working class as a whole around this party. The reasons for this shift towards the SPÖ were, on the one hand, the fear of a victory of the right-wing racist FPÖ party and, on the other, the positioning of the SPÖ as a “Refugees are welcome” party in distinct contrast to the anti-migrant position of the right-wing racists. Our assessment was vindicated in the polls by SPÖ's receiving more than 39% of the vote.

However, in the April 2016 Austrian presidential elections, we no longer called for critical support for the SPÖ

candidate. This is because, in the period following the October 2015 elections, the SPÖ had diametrically shifted its policy and – as the leading party in the governmental coalition – implemented a harsh anti-refugee policy. Consequently, the vanguard and a huge proportion of former SPÖ voters turned away from the party and, as a result, the SPÖ candidate won only 11% of the vote – a historic low for this party.³²

We note, in passing, that the Austrian section of the RCIT has had some successful experiences applying the united front tactic towards social democratic activists. For example, in the autumn of 2014, our section recruited the majority of social democratic youth organization activists from the largest and most proletarian branch in Vienna.³³

In other words, revolutionaries have to relate their electoral tactics to an attentive study of the political development of the vanguard sectors of the working class and their readiness to break with the traditional reformist parties. This is particularly relevant in a situation of accelerated class contradictions when the chances for a rupture of sectors of the working class with the traditional reformist parties are higher.

On the other hand, revolutionaries must also carefully analyze the dynamic relationship of the working class and reformist parties, because under specific circumstances the progressive sectors of the working class might rally once again under the banner of social democracy or Stalinism in an attempt to form a defense line against a right-wing, neoliberal onslaught.

Footnotes

1 Leon Trotsky: Luxemburg and the Fourth International (1935), in: *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1935-36*, p. 31 (Emphasis in the original)

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11 Rajeev Syal: Disproportionate number of Labour's new members are wealthy city dwellers. Figures that will be seized upon by Corbyn's critics show poorer supporters are now smaller proportion of membership, 21 January 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/20/labours-new-members-mostly-wealthy-city-dwellers-leaked-report?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

12 See Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, pp. 338-349

13 See e.g., Kevin Hagen: Wagenknecht und das Asylrecht: Die Gast-Rechte, SPIEGEL ONLINE, 12.1.2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/sahra-wagenknecht-zum-asylrecht-die-gast-rechte-a-1071614.html>

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Theses on Revolutionary Trade Union Policy

*Resolution of the Revolutionary Communist
International Tendency, January 2014*

Introduction:

The following set of theses summarizes the theoretical understanding of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) regarding trade unions and the tasks of revolutionaries in trade union work. While such theoretical understanding is a necessary precondition for a consistent trade union policy, it cannot replace either the concrete analysis of specific national and local conditions or the accumulated experience of the revolutionary organization and its members involved in a given trade union. In fact, only a fusion of correct theory with the practical experience and understanding of the party and its militant workers can ensure successful revolutionary work in the trade unions.

* * * * *

Work in the trade unions takes a central place in the activities of revolutionary communists. The reason for this is that the trade unions are one of the most important mass organizations of the working class. The precondition for Bolsheviks to conduct revolutionary work in the trade unions is a correct understanding of the nature of trade unions and their place in the revolutionary strategy.

1. Trade unions are not a goal in themselves but one of several means on the road towards the proletarian revolution. Hence, the work of revolutionaries in the trade unions is subordinated to the winning of workers over to communism, and it is therefore only one of several means to achieve this. (1)

2. The task of communists in their trade union work is to win the unions over to supporting the revolutionary struggle for working class power. (2) Therefore communists fight in the unions for the adoption of a Transitional Program which is focused on the arena of the trade union struggle. (3)

3. For the same reason, revolutionaries fight in the unions against their deep integration into the bourgeois state and their direct or indirect affiliation with bourgeois parties (including reformist ones). They struggle to break the unions away from the agents of the bourgeoisie and win them over to an independent working class policy. This means that the revolutionary party should try – through persuasion and political struggle – to win the unions over to the goals of communism, and to achieve leadership inside the trade unions.

4. An important tactic for this goal can be the call – directed to the trade unions or other workers' organizations or sections of them – to form a Workers' Party. Communists should fight for a revolutionary program as a platform of such a Workers' Party without making it a precondition for participation. Usually new Workers' Parties are formed by militant minorities and if they are successful – which, of course, can never be guaranteed – may subsequently win over the mass of the workers to join them. But it cannot be expected that the new Workers' Party will begin as a party of the *majority* of the working class. (See e.g., the history of the Social Democratic Workers Party in Germany in the late 1860s and early 1870s or of the Brazil

PT in the 1980s.) *"In countries where no working class party – i.e. not even a reformist one – exist (like e.g. in many semi-colonial countries or the USA), Bolshevik-Communists advocate the formation of an independent workers' party. A similar tactic might be legitimate in situations where progressive sections of the working class turn away from the established bourgeois workers' parties and look for a political alternative. We turn to militant trade unions, movements for democracy and social justice, political organisations, and all workers and oppressed people who are looking for an alternative to reformism and call upon them to establish new working class parties."* (4)

5. At the same time, revolutionaries are fully aware that the trade unions have natural limitations and, therefore, cannot replace the party. They are first and foremost the defenders of the workers as a labor force in the economic sphere. However, capitalism is a societal system composed of various classes and layers, and the interrelations between them based on capitalist exploitation and oppression. The struggle between the classes, therefore, entails not only the economic but also the political and ideological sphere. This is why revolutionary class consciousness does not arise spontaneously out of the economic class struggle but instead arises out of the political experiences of the working class and the conclusions reached by the revolutionary party, which it then transmits to the vanguard workers. (5) This is the reason that revolutionaries fight not only for trade unions but also for other forms of mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed, such as factory committees, youth movements, women movements, soviets, self-defense units, etc. These other forms of mass organizations are no less important than trade unions. However, the highest and most important form of working class organization is the revolutionary party. (6) It is only the Bolshevik party which completely expresses the historical interests of the proletariat and which can lead it – by leading the various mass organizations – to liberation. (7)

6. Trade unions can play a crucial role in mobilizing the working class for the revolutionary class struggle, but only on the condition that they are led by a revolutionary party. This is because the decisive issues in society are decided in the sphere of the *political* class struggle and not in the sphere of the *economic* class struggle. Such political issues, in one way or other, touch upon fundamental questions of power in capitalist society, and bring the working class to understand the necessity for taking power. Communists, therefore, reject the economist position which gives a priority to the economic or trade union struggle. While we fully recognize the importance of the economic struggle, we state that the goal is to raise the awareness and combat-readiness of the workers' vanguard for the political class struggle. As part of the political class struggle, we recognize the struggle for democratic issues. The highest form of the political class struggle, obviously, is the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

7. The trade unions have limitations not *only* because their focus is the economic sphere of defending the conditions of wage labor. They also have limitations for the following reasons:

- i) They usually contain only a minority of the working class.
- ii) They usually are rooted amongst the upper strata

of the working class (more skilled, better paid workers) and in particular the labor aristocracy. (8)

iii) They are usually controlled by the labor bureaucracy which acts as agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the workers' movement, and which subordinates the unions to the bourgeois state and the capitalist class.

8. These factors have important consequences for the strategy of the revolutionary organization. First, revolutionary organizations consider work in the trade unions as a central but *not* exclusive area for their efforts to recruit workers. Work amongst political and social movements (or parties) in which militant sectors of the working class are involved, or amongst oppressed sectors of the working class (youth, women, etc.) can be equally important areas of revolutionary work.

9. Revolutionaries struggle for the expulsion of the labor bureaucracy and its agents from the ranks of the workers' movement. These forces are the biggest obstacle for the working class struggle in the ranks of the workers' movement. Naturally, this is a long-term task and involves the application of the united front tactic (calls to the rank and file, but also the reformist leaders for joint actions, etc.). But communists should state clearly that the trade unions can only become an authentic instrument of the working class if they are liberated from the bureaucracy and brought under workers control.

10. Revolutionaries have to regularly explain that the trade union bureaucracy and its leaders follow a reformist policy, that they must not be trusted and that they will only betray the workers. They must repeatedly remind workers that the bureaucrats sell out the workers interests to the capitalists, *not* because they "don't understand" what are necessary working class politics; nor because they "wrongly believe" in reformist strategies

(social democratic, Stalinist, syndicalist, etc.). Rather, the ultimate and most basic reason for their repeated betrayals is *their own material interests* as bureaucrats. Their reformist ideology is a reflection of their petty-bourgeois social position as mediators between labor and capital ("*Social being determines consciousness.*"). They constitute – with their numerous privileges and their connections with the bourgeois state and the capitalists – not a proletarian layer, but a petty-bourgeois caste which is bribed by the capitalists. Revolutionaries must emphasize these material roots as the cause for the bureaucrats' betrayal, and not their erroneous political and ideological convictions. Otherwise, the illusion is created amongst the rank and file workers that it may be possible to convince the leaders of the correct policy, or that one just need simply replace the leaders instead of smashing the bureaucratic caste as such. (9)

11. Such a dialectical materialist analysis ensures that revolutionaries are not blinded by the concrete form of the ideological smokescreen which the bureaucrats use to cover their class-collaborationist policy. (10) It is possible for trade union bureaucrats to hide their narrow-minded defense of their privileged position with the help of "Marxist" slogans, and any oppositional movement of rank and file workers striving for democratic rights in the union or for a more militant union policy might lack such a finely-honed "socialist" consciousness. From history we know that there have been such cases in the Stalinist states (e.g., the uprising of the Polish workers in 1980/81). But, more recently, since 2011, this has also happened during the Arab Revolution; for example in the guise of the "anti-imperialist" and sometimes "Islamic socialist" or "nationalist-socialist" dictatorships of Gaddafi or Assad, the latter of which also contains in its ranks two Stalinist lackey parties. Similarly we saw such a development in South Africa

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.

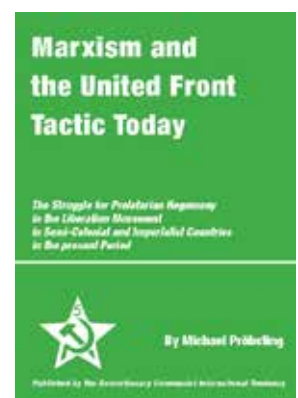
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

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.



during and after the Marikana miners' strike 2012, when the trade union bureaucracy of NUM and COSATU (both of which are close to the Communist Party) attacked the militant workers under the guise of "Marxism-Leninism." For Marxists to assess the objective social meaning of a given class struggle, it is incumbent that, rather than taking at face value the ideological delusions of the participants, we examine the class forces *behind* the different camps, and the potentials and consequences of the outcome of this struggle for the working class and the oppressed.

12. The labor aristocracy is the most important social basis of the labor bureaucracy. We defend the Leninist definition of the labor aristocracy as *"a thin layer at the top of the proletariat, which the capitalists bribe by the extra profits that they derive from the exploitation of the semi-colonial countries and the lower layers of the working class in the metropolises by means of various privileges and which they hope to bind as loyal supporters. It is this layer that defends an attitude like 'things are still going well,' against the broad masses of the proletariat – because they themselves actually live relatively 'good' and for them the efforts of smashing the system appears too large."* (11) The labor aristocracy usually is disproportional influential inside the trade unions. Marxists must fight against this influence, because the aristocratic workers bring a pacifying, reformist and corrupting spirit into the unions. (12)

13. However, as stated above, the problem of the trade unions is not reduced *solely* to the labor aristocracy but also contains the unions' dominance by the more, relatively privileged sectors of the working class. *"Moreover, the unions rely to a high degree on the upper, better-paid sections of the proletariat, and in particular on the labour aristocracy. The broad mass of our class and in particular the lower strata, however, are more or less neither organised nor represented by the union."* (13)

14. From the above issues, we derive the following set of strategies for revolutionary communists:

i) Building a rank-and-file movement in opposition to the bureaucracy, one which can fight both for more democratic rights and a militant union policy, and which has the goal of liberating the union from the bureaucracy.

ii) Fighting to change the composition of the unions. This involves driving back the influence of the 'aristocratic type' of the upper layer and transforming the unions into an instrument dominated by the 'mass type' of the working class, which means the lower and middle strata – i.e. the huge majority – of the proletariat. *"The unionization of the lower strata of the working class (especially the migrants, women, precarious workers, etc.) is an indispensable task. These layers must not, therefore, play the role of the infantry in the union, but should play a central role and should also proportionally be represented in the trade union bodies according to their share among the employees."* (14)

iii) Striving to utilize every class struggle to build action committees which organize the militant workers (including the unorganized workers) independent of the bureaucracy. *"In every battle and in preparation for this the Bolsheviks-Communists are therefore keen to establish rank and file committees outside the bureaucratic control. They will often bring together the most active and most militant elements in Action Committees."* (15)

15. Bolsheviks reject the concept that revolutionaries should attempt to split the unions in order to create small "revolutionary" unions. This would only isolate the

communists and leave the mass of the workers under the reactionary influence of the bureaucracy. *"It would be fundamentally wrong to draw the conclusion that one should ignore the existing unions. The Bolsheviks-Communists reject such an ultra-left nonsense. The bureaucracy is not beaten by sectarian standing aside (separate from the union), but by the struggle for democratic, militant trade unions which are independent of state and capital. This struggle must be carried out wherever possible within the unions – regardless of the inevitable attempts by the bureaucracy to pursue the revolutionaries and expel them."* (16)

16. However, we clearly differentiate between unwarranted attempts by small "revolutionary" forces to artificially split a union from the entirely legitimate and necessary rupture of the union by militant sectors of the masses. While it would be criminal to employ self-isolating divisive tactics of a small, politically organized, minority to create 'pure' unions, it would be no less criminal for revolutionaries to isolate themselves from militant sectors of the working class by not joining them. *"Sharp shocks through the class struggle can both cause new room for manoeuvring and radicalisation in the old trade unions (e.g. the UGTT 2011 in Tunisia) as well as lead to the creation of new unions. Bolshevik-Communists employ a tactical approach to this question but on the basis of a clear principle: seeking the unity of the union as long as possible as it serves the advancing of the struggle for the independence of the working class from the state, capital and bureaucracy; not being afraid of splitting or the formation of new unions if splitting does not lead to self-isolation of the revolutionaries, but allows the organising of large sections of the working class at a higher level of class independence."* (17)

17. In all types of trade unions it is necessary for revolutionaries to organize themselves and their close collaborators in a communist fraction. These fractions – working under the discipline of the party's leadership – should coordinate the activity of the communists in the unions. Their goal is, we repeat, to win the unions over for a revolutionary program and to transform them, under the leadership of the revolutionary party, into instruments for the advancement of the socialist revolution.

Footnotes:

(1) *"Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution."* (Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, 1938)

(2) *"The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."* (Leon Trotsky: Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay, 1940)

(3) *"The program of transitional demands adopted by the last congress of the Fourth International is not only the program for the activity of the party but in its fundamental features it is the program for the activity of the trade unions."* (Leon Trotsky: Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay, 1940)

(4) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 25, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/the-leadership-we-have-and-the-leadership-we-need/>

(5) *"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes. For that reason, the reply to the question as to what must be done to bring political knowledge to the workers cannot be merely the answer with which,*

in the majority of cases, the practical workers, especially those inclined towards Economism, mostly content themselves, namely: "To go among the workers." To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions." (V. I. Lenin: What Is To Be Done? (1902), in: LCW Vol. 5, p. 422, emphasis in the original) (6) "...the revolutionary party of the proletariat, the highest form of proletarian class organization" (V.I. Lenin: 'Left-Wing' Communism — An Infantile Disorder, in: LCW Vol. 31, p. 50). The Communist International stated: „The communist party is the chief and primary weapon for the liberation of the working class.“ (Communist International: Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution adopted by the Second Comintern Congress (1920), in: The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents Selected and Edited by Jane Degras, Vol. I 1919-1922, p. 135)

(7) "If the theoretical structure of the political economy of Marxism rests entirely upon the conception of value as materialised labour, the revolutionary policy of Marxism rests upon the conception of the party as the vanguard of the proletariat. Whatever may be the social sources and political causes of opportunistic mistakes and deviations, they are always reduced ideologically to an erroneous understanding of the revolutionary party, of its relation to other proletarian organisations and to the class as a whole." (Leon Trotsky: The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question. Some Preliminary Remarks (1931), (Emphasis in the original), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/unions/6-mistakes.htm>)

See also: "Independence from the influence of the bourgeoisie cannot be a passive state. It can express itself only by political acts, that is, by the struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle must be inspired by a distinct program which requires organisation and tactics for its application. It is the union of program, organisation, and tactics that constitutes the party. In this way, the real independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois government cannot be realised unless the proletariat conducts its struggle under the leadership of a revolutionary and not an opportunist party." (Leon Trotsky: Communism and Syndicalism, 1929)

(8) "Trade unions, even the most powerful, embrace no more than 20 to 25 percent of the working class, and at that, predominantly the more skilled and better paid layers." (Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, 1938)

(9) "The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt, and in the other colonies. One would have to be completely blind to say to the English workers: 'Be on guard against the conquest of power and always remember that your trade unions are the antidote to the dangers of the state.' The Marxist will say to the English workers: 'The trade union bureaucracy is the chief instrument, for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown.'" (Leon Trotsky: The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism. To Serve in the Discussion with Monatte and his Friends, (1929), in: Leon Trotsky: The Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay, New York 1990, p. 122, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/unions/4-errors.htm>)

(10) "Neither classes nor parties can be judged by what they say about themselves or by the slogans they raise at a given moment. This fully applies to groupings within a political party as well." (Leon Trotsky: An Analysis of the Slogans and Differences, in: Leon Trotsky: The Challenge of the Left Opposition 1923-25, New York 1975, p. 390)

(11) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 29, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/changes-in-the-working-class/>

(12) "Obviously, out of such enormous superprofits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their "own" country) it is possible to bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And that is just what the capitalists of the "advanced" countries are doing: they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert. This stratum of workers-turned-bourgeois, or the labour aristoc-

racy, who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and in our days, the principal social (not military) prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the "Versaillese" against the "Communards". Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problem of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution." (W. I. Lenin: Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916) (emphasis in the original))

„One of the chief causes hampering the revolutionary working-class movement in the developed capitalist countries is the fact that because of their colonial possessions and the super-profits gained by finance capital, etc., the capitalists of these countries have been able to create a relatively larger and more stable labour aristocracy, a section which comprises a small minority of the working class. This minority enjoys better terms of employment and is most imbued with a narrow-minded craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. It forms the real social pillar of the Second International, of the reformists and the "Centrists"; at present it might even be called the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie. No preparation of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is possible, even in the preliminary sense, unless an immediate, systematic, extensive and open struggle is waged against this stratum, which, as experience has already fully shown, will no doubt provide the bourgeois White guards with many a recruit after the victory of the proletariat. All parties affiliated to the Third International must at all costs give effect to the slogans: "Deeper into the thick of the masses", "Closer links with the masses"—meaning by the masses all those who toil and are exploited by capital, particularly those who are least organised and educated, who are most oppressed and least amenable to organisation." (V. I. Lenin: Theses on Fundamental Tasks of The Second Congress Of The Communist International (1920)) (13) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 27, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/the-struggle-for-the-unions/>

(14) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 28, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/the-struggle-for-the-unions/>

(15) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 30, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/action-committee-factory-comitees-councils/>

See also: "Therefore, the sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions." (Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, 1938)

See as well: „The strength and meaning of Bolshevism consists in the fact that it appeals to oppressed and exploited masses and not to the upper strata of the working class.“ (Leon Trotsky: Perspectives and Tasks in the East. Speech on the third anniversary of the Communist University for the Toilers of the East (21. April 1924); in: Leon Trotsky Speaks, Pathfinder 1972, p. 205)

(16) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 27, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/the-struggle-for-the-unions/>

(17) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 28, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/the-struggle-for-the-unions/>

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Once Again: Opportunism of US Left Exposed

An Analysis of the US 2016 Elections Campaign

The ABC of Revolutionary Marxism is the independence of the working class from the capitalist class and unity of the class in struggle. For this reason in a conflict between two imperialist camps, revolutionary socialists not only do not support any capitalist camp, but take the position of revolutionary defeat for both camps.

This is the only position that in time of imperialist wars can keep the unity and the independence of the international working class. Otherwise workers kill workers for the benefits of the capitalist class. The same principle applies when it comes to elections, i.e. no support for any capitalist imperialist party.

Critical support for a reformist, namely a workers' party (albeit under bourgeois control), could be considered if it is a mass party and in opposition to the attacks on the workers and the oppressed or against imperialist wars. In countries where such a party does not exist and there is a motion to the left, revolutionaries may call upon workers to forge a party armed with a transitional program. This is the application of the Leninist united front tactic. While chances are that this party will not *begin* as a revolutionary party, revolutionaries still will not call for a formation of a reformist party. The character of such a party will be formed in the course of the struggle, including electoral struggles. Revolutionaries would fight for its leadership and for its revolutionary character.

Based on this Leninist united front tactic, from the very beginning of the Presidential election campaign in the US, the RICT said that the working class should oppose the Republican and the Democratic party, including under Sanders, as both parties are capitalist imperialist parties that represent the class enemy of the working class and the oppressed in the US and the rest of the world. What then *should* be done? We called upon our class brothers and sisters to struggle for the formation of a labor party based on the transitional program, which can be used as a bridge between the existing level of the workers' consciousness and the socialist revolutionary consciousness.

Regardless of his empty phrases about socialism (by which he meant a welfare capitalist state) and what he believed he was doing, the apparent outcome of Sanders' (a bourgeois liberal falsely claiming to be a socialist) campaign was to bring votes for Clinton.

After the last eight years of economic insecurity and the bailing out of big capital, responsible for the capitalist crisis, what characterizes the situation is the strong feeling of most Americans that they have had enough with the close relations of big capital and government and that they want a different social reality. Many of them were not afraid any more of the word "socialism," even though they did not know how to achieve a socialist society.

Many workers and youth hoped Sanders will lead the struggle for socialism. Such feelings could have been translated into the formation of a labor party opposing the twin capitalist parties. Instead, Sanders opposed the formation of a labor party and loyally served the Democratic Party establishment that was active in sabotaging his chances to win the elections. The left tailed him instead of exposing him. By tailing Sanders the left tailed the Democratic Party and acted as an obstacle for the creation of a working class

independent party.

The Communist Party supported Sanders and when he endorsed Clinton, as he promised all along, these reformists endorsed Clinton as well. This position reflects its strategy of subordinating the working class to the ruling class. Soviet Stalinism is dead but the Stalinist policies are still alive in the so-called Communist Parties. This disastrous strategy is known as the "popular front." A policy that led to huge defeats of the working class in the 1930s and the 1940s. To cover up for this betrayal the CPUSA is calling Trump a fascist that can be defeated by the unity of all democratic forces including Clinton.

While Trump is a right wing racist and a demagogue, if he gets elected his regime will still not be fascism. Fascism usually can become a substantial force only in a (pre-) revolutionary situation where the working class struggle rises dramatically. However when the working class lack revolutionary leadership, the workers become demoralized because of the betrayals of the reformist and the centrist leadership. Fascism comes to power by mobilizing the middle classes and a section of the workers in the streets and its service to the capitalist class is to forcefully smash all working class organizations.

It is impossible to defeat fascism by casting a vote. The fascists must be smashed by the working class and its allies. Clinton and company are allies of big capital and racist cops, not of the working class and the oppressed. If there was a real danger of fascism the last thing Clinton and elk would like to see is a revolutionary mobilization of the working class smashing the fascist movement.

The fighters of the International Brigades who fought fascism in Spain in 1936-39 were persecuted by the so-called "democrats" as Roosevelt denounced the fighters of the Lincoln Brigade upon returning to the US.

"Communist" Party supports Clinton

Some reporters caught the irony of a so-called Communist party supporting a party of the big capital. According to the *USA News*:

"The leader of America's most prominent communist party credits Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders with helping usher socialism into the political mainstream, but says it's essential to back Hillary Clinton if she defeats Sanders in the Democratic presidential primary." (1)

John Bachtell, national chairman of the Communist Party USA, says he cast a ballot for Sanders in the Illinois primary in March, but that the self-styled democratic socialist's loyal backers should temper their criticism of Clinton as a warmongering Wall Street puppet.

"The most important thing is keeping our eye on this extreme right-wing danger and really hoping that all political organizations and democratic forces will unite together to try to defeat that," he says.

"Whoever emerges from the primary fight, there will be a very broad coalition to try to get them elected," he says. *"We support independence from the Democratic Party and work with forces laying the groundwork for a third party, but it's not realistic in this election."* (2)

In the real world a vote for Clinton is a vote for imperialist wars and support for the very rich capitalists, as her records have proven. As a U.S. Senator, Clinton voted for the Iraq War, the Patriot Act, the Patriot Act re-authoriza-

tion, for new “free trade”, the Wall Street bailouts (TARP), the 2006 border fence legislation. As Secretary of State she supported the military interventions in Libya and Syria that fueled the humanitarian crisis in the region.

A clear indication why this support for an imperialist party is in opposition to the unity and the independence of the international working class are the many mass demonstrations which have taken place in the last years against Obama, Clinton and their military interventions in the Middle East. While for the American Stalinists, Clinton is part of the anti-fascist camp, in the eyes of the workers and oppressed in many countries she is a bloody imperialist. Exactly for this reason the Stalinist who destroyed the Third International cannot re-form an international to this very day.

Socialist Alternative / CWI: Support for the petit-bourgeois Green Party

The right-centrist “*Socialist Alternative*” (the US section of the CWI led by Peter Taaffe) supported Sanders and now, that he backs Clinton, has switched to the Green Party. The Green party is a pro-capitalist, petit-bourgeois progressive party that raises many supportable demands, but at the same time spreads illusions in the nature of US imperialism that it can become, without a socialist revolution, a progressive force. The Green Party’s nature is comparable with the development of Green parties in Europe in their earlier stages, i.e. they represent progressive sectors of the middle class but are not based on organized support amongst the working class and the oppressed.

Socialist Alternative called for support for the Democratic Party candidate Bernie Sanders and even created a website to mobilize support for him (www.movement4bernie.org). Today, after Sanders aligned himself with the candidate of the US establishment Hillary Clinton, Socialist Alternative jumps wagon and support another non-working class force – Jill Stein and her Green Party.

The ISO (International Socialist Organization) also threw themselves behind Sanders and now, as he supports Clinton, they also support the Green Party with Kaine on the Presidential ticket. But this party is not a reformist workers’ party. Unlike bourgeois workers’ parties (Social Democracy and the Stalinists), the Greens forbid affiliation with trade unions. The party’s right wing has dominated it from its beginning. The worldwide green movement has shown its real nature by joining, in Germany or France, the Social Democrats in austerity and pro-war governments.

In 2000, the US Green Party received almost 3 million votes for Ralph Nader a consumer supporter of capitalism. When Nader’s magazine workers tried to form a union in 1984, he fired them. Nevertheless the ISO and Socialist Alternative continued to support him. Days before Sanders announced his support for Clinton, Jill Stein called on him to lead the Green party.

John Reed, the author of the “*10 days that shook world*”, described how one group of so-called socialists was chained to another similar group and at the end they were all chained to the capitalists and the big landlords except the Bolsheviks under Lenin. It is the same story with the Middle class socialists of today.

What is the result of the Popular Front politics of those who claim to be socialists?

Many of the people who supported Sanders will not vote for Clinton. While some of them *will* vote for her, some will not vote at all, others will vote for the Green party and some of them will vote for Trump. It is still more likely that Clinton will win with a slight majority but it is not guaranteed. One thing is clear by calling to vote for Sanders and for Clinton instead of fighting to organize a labor party the middle class left has pushed a significant section of the population into the hands of Trump as he presents himself as an anti-establishment candidate.

Now the only option that is meaningful for the working class in the US is not to vote for both parties nor for the Green Party and move to organize a workers party based on the most oppressed layers of the working class in particular the blacks.

Footnotes:

- 1) <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-05-31/communist-party-leader-voted-for-sanders-will-back-clinton>
- 2) *ibid*
- 3) For our analysis of Sanders and the Socialist Alternative’s support for him see Yossi Schwarz: Why Not to Vote for the Democratic Party in the Forthcoming US Elections or at any other time, 2.3.2016, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/no-vote-sanders/>

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Bernie Sanders: Supporter of U.S. Protectionism

Thirdly, the current Global Trade War shows the true character of various so-called progressive forces. This is not only true for the pro-Chinese Stalinists and semi-Stalinists. It is also true for a significant part of the US-American left. Various organizations – from the “Communist Party” to the CWI’s “*Socialist Alternative*” – have expressed their support for the 2020 presidential candidacy of US Senator Bernie Sanders. Last year, Sanders launched, together with Yanis Varoufakis, an international initiative called the “*Progressive International*”. (1)

The current Global Trade War demonstrates, as Marxists have repeatedly pointed out, that Sanders is a dyed-in-the-wool standard bearer of US imperialism and promotes a protectionist crusade against its Great Power rival, China. (2) Sanders attacked Donald Trump for undermining relations with the Western imperialist allies while simultaneously demanding sanctions against China, Russia, South Korea and Vietnam.

“*Donald Trump’s haphazard and reckless plan to impose tariffs on Canada and the European Union is an absolute disaster that will cause unnecessary economic pain to farmers, manufacturers and consumers in Vermont and throughout the country. “I strongly support imposing stiff penalties on countries like China, Russia, South Korea and Vietnam to prevent them from illegally dumping steel and aluminum into the U.S. and throughout the world.”* (3)

In his recently unveiled trade platform, Sanders calls for both Trump and all of his Democratic Party competitors to pledge to renegotiate U.S. trade deals and label China a currency manipulator. (4)

In recent days he attacked President Trump, not from an

internationalist, anti-imperialist point of view, but rather for not being protectionist enough! He also criticized the former Vice-President, Joe Biden, for being too soft on China: *"It's wrong to pretend that China isn't one of our major economic competitors. When we are in the White House we will win that competition by fixing our trade policies."* (5)

Of course, Sanders is packaging his protectionist support for US imperialism in "pro-workers" rhetoric. However, the authentic struggle for the true interests of U.S. workers can only be pursued by organizing and mobilizing them directly against the attacks of the bosses who are exploiting them, i.e. first and foremost, the U.S. capitalists. The interests of American workers can never be defended in a treacherous alliance with the American bosses against China!

The fact that large sectors of the U.S. left flirt with supporting the Sanders campaign reflects their adaptation to pro-U.S. social-imperialism.

Footnotes

(1) See on this e.g. Bernie Sanders: A new authoritarian axis demands an international progressive front, 13 Sep 2018 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/ng-interactive/2018/sep/13/bernie-sanders-international-progressive-front?CMP=share_btn_tw; Yanis Varoufakis: Our new international movement will fight rising fascism and globalists, 13 Sep 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/ng-interactive/2018/sep/13/our-new-international-movement-will-fight-rising-fascism-and-globalists>; Luis Martín: Bernie Sanders & Yanis Varoufakis call for Progressive Front against Trump's Neo-Fascist International, Open Democracy 09/19/2018 <https://www.juancole.com/2018/09/progressives-fascist-international.html>

(2) For a Marxist assessment of Bernie Sanders and the "left wing" of the Democratic Party see e.g. Yossi Schwarz: Why Not to Vote for the Democratic Party in the Forthcoming US Elections Or At Any Other Time, 2.3.2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/northamerica/no-vote-sanders/>; Yossi Schwartz: Once Again: Opportunism of US Left Exposed; 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, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/meaning-of-trump/>

(3) Sanders Statement on Trump Tariffs, June 1, 2018 <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-statement-on-trump-tariffs>

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The CWI and Bernie Sanders

Another disturbing aspect of these articles is a complete silence on the positions of Senator Bernie Sanders, the "progressive star" in U.S. politics and a Democratic Party presidential contender. As we recently analyzed, Sanders is an aggressive promoter of an anti-Chinese protectionist trade policy. He's an advocate of U.S. imperialism in "left-wing" clothing. (1)

The CWI's silence on this issue is not accidental since its U.S. section has maintained close relations with the Sanders campaign. After Sanders announced his candidacy for the 2020 presidential elections the U.S. section of the CWI quickly declared its enthusiastic support: *"Despite our disagreement with Sanders' decision to run on the Democratic Party ticket, Socialist Alternative will energetically campaign for him to win, while raising our proposals to strengthen the campaign."* (2)

Mirroring its position in the 2016 elections, the CWI doesn't see a problem in supporting a bourgeois candidate representing one of the two major parties of U.S. imperialism. In contrast, the RCIT and all consistent Marxists consider support for a candidate of a major party of the imperialist bourgeoisie as betrayal of the most fundamental principles of working class policy. (3)

This is another demonstration that confusion and opportunism in theory produces confusion and opportunism in practice and vice versa. The consequence is centrism, i.e. "Marxism" in abstract theory but opportunist adaption yielding a revisionist practice.

It is urgent that comrades in the CWI break with such a useless and dangerous method and turn to authentic Marxism!

Footnotes

(1) See Michael Pröbsting: The Next Round of Escalation in the Global Trade War (Chapter: Bernie Sanders: Supporter of U.S. Protectionism)

(2) Kailyn Nicholson: Democratic 2020 Race Begins – Establishment Tries to Stop Sanders, May 9, 2019 <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2019/05/09/democratic-2020-race-begins-establishment-tries-to-stop-sanders/>

(3) See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the present Period, RCIT Books, Vienna 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/bookunited-front/>

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V. The Nature of the Current Period and the Corresponding Tasks for Revolutionaries

On China's rise as an imperialist power and the Great Power Rivalry, on the Arab Revolution, on UK's Brexit and on building the Revolutionary World Party

Introduction by the Editorial Board: In this final part we deal with three important issues of the current world situation. China's rise as a new imperialist power and the acceleration of the Great Power Rivalry, the development of the Arab Revolution which began in 2011 as well as UK's Brexit from the European Union.

The CWI has not internalized until now the fact that China has become a major imperialist power challenging the US. As a result, it fails to recognize the character of the Global Trade War and other forms of inter-imperialist rivalry.

The CWI has also prematurely declared the Arab Revolution dead two, three years after its beginning. Consequently, it wrongly refused to support the ongoing popular liberation struggles since then.

In Britain, the CWI always supported Britain leaving the European Union. As a result, it objectively supported an imperialist patriotic campaign, one which has been always dominated by the reactionary sectors of the British bourgeoisie (e.g. Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson). In contrast, the RCIT has always advocated that revolutionaries must refuse both chauvinist options for British imperialism – leaving or remaining in the European Union.

On the Great Power Rivalry, we reprint two excerpts from our recently published book *“Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective”*. This 412-pages book has been written by Michael Pröbsting. It can be read online or downloaded for free here: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>.

On the Arab Revolution we republish two documents. The first is a long excerpt from our pamphlet *“Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?”* (*Revolutionary Communism* No. 67, May 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/>). The second is an excerpt from our pamphlet *“Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the 'Left'”* (*Revolutionary Communism* New Series No. 6 (May 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syria-great-power-rivalry-and-the-failure-of-the-left/>).

On Brexit and the EU, we reprint two excerpts from our pamphlet *“The British Left and the EU-Referendum: The Many Faces of pro-UK or pro-EU Social-Imperialism”*, published as special issue of the journal *“Revolutionary Communism”* No. 40 (August 2015), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/british-left-and-eu-referendum/>).

Finally, on the tasks of building a revolutionary world party, we reprint an excerpt of the RCIT's *“World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism”* (*Revolutionary Communism* No. 60, February 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>).

The Emergence of China and Russia as New Great Powers

This historic decline of the old capitalist powers and the resulting massive economic shift led to the creation of new imperialist powers (China and Russia) and, inextricably associated, to the acceleration of the rivalry between the Great Powers.

Production and Trade

As we have demonstrated in a number of studies, China has become the most important challenger of the U.S. as the hegemonic imperialist power.¹ 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). (See Figure 1) 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%. (See Figure 2)

According to the latest statistics published by the World Trade Organization, China's share in merchandise trade in 2017 was 11.5% while the US was 11.1%.⁴

In Table 1 and 2 we show figures which demonstrate the long-term development of world merchandise exports and imports since the end of World War II. They reflect, among others, the decline of the old imperialist powers and the rise of China – particularly since the beginning of the century. Since the restoration of capitalism in the former Stalinist states (the figures provided are for 1993), the share of the U.S. in world merchandise exports declined from 12.6% to 9.0% in 2017. There has been the same tendency in other Western countries (Japan: from 9.8% to 4.1%, Germany: from 10.3% to 8.4%, France: from 6.0% to 3.1%, UK: from 4.9% to 2.6%). In the same period China's share rose from 2.5% to 13.2% and Russia's from 1.7% to 3.0%. The same development has taken place in world merchandise imports.

Monopolies and Billionaires

Such a decline of the old Western imperialist powers and the emergence of China as a new challenger can be observed not only within the scope of capitalist value production and trade. We see the same development 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 3)

We see the same picture when we compare the regional composition of the world's Top 5000 companies (by market capitalization) for the years 2000 and 2016. (See Table 4) Given the larger number of monopolies, this statistic is even more representative for the dramatic change which has taken place in the relation of forces between the imperialist rivals. In this table China's rise as an imperialist power is confirmed again. In 2000, it's share among this list of leading corporations was 402 (8%). In 2016, this share has already grown to 1,085 (21.7%). At the same time did North America's share decline from 1,958 (39.2%) to 1519 (30.4), Europe's share from 1346 (26.9%) to 876 (17.5%) and Japan's share from 659 (13.2%) to 437 (8.7%).

Another study, published by UNCTAD, also confirms China's rise amongst the biggest global monopolies. It reports that China's share among the largest 2,000 Transnational Corporations (TNC) has grown so massively in the past two decades so that by 2015 they took 17% of all profits of these top monopolies. The UNCTAD report adds: *"Interestingly however, the share of Chinese financial TNCs in top TNCs profit expanded rapidly to more than 10 per cent to total top TNCs profits, exceeding those of United States financial top TNCs in 2015."*⁹

These figures prove beyond doubt that China's rise (and the West's decline) is not limited to production and trade. As we will see later, various revisionist deniers of China's imperialist character claim that the Middle Kingdom would still be the global workbench. But as we have argued in various works and as the figures above confirm, this is no longer true – at least not since one decade! China does not only produce and trade a significant share of the global capitalist value product but it also *owns* a large share of it. This is reflected in the substantial share of Chinese corporations among the world's top monopolies as well as their profits (both in the industrial and the financial sector). In other words, the Chinese corporations (even if they are formally state-owned) are not a kind of "socialist" mega-enterprises but undoubtedly capitalist monopolies.

Another example, telling a lot about China's "socialism", is the rise of the billionaires. As we have shown in other studies, China has become home to the largest number of billionaires, or the second largest – depending on which list one takes – in the world. According to the 2017 issue of the *Hurun Global Rich List*, 609 billionaires are Chinese and 552 are US citizens. Together they account for half of the billionaires worldwide.¹⁰ The *Forbes Billionaire List*, which is US-based while *Hurun* is China-based, sees the U.S. still ahead. According to *Forbes*: *"The U.S. continues to have more billionaires than any other nation, with a record 565, up from 540 a year ago. China is catching up with 319. (Hong Kong has another 67, and Macau 1.) Germany has the third most with 114 and India, with 101, the first time it has had more than 100, is fourth."*¹¹ While the detailed figures vary in the different reports, the trend in all available studies is the same: the weight of China's monopoly capitalists is increasing.

A very similar result emerges from the latest edition of the annual *Billionaires Insights* report published in October 2018 by the Swiss Bank UBS, jointly with Britain's PwC.¹² According to this report there are 2,158 billionaires in the world, of these have 373 their home in China. This figure rises to 475 if we add the billionaires living in Hong Kong, Macao (both of them are part of the Chinese state) as well as Taiwan. This means that about one fifth of the

global super-rich – i.e. the monopoly capitalists – are living in China! This figure is not much below the number of billionaires living in the U.S. (585) and above the figures for Japan as well as the combined figure for all imperialist powers in Western Europe (414). Furthermore, of all countries it was the Chinese billionaires which experienced the fastest growth of their wealth in 2017 (+39%). Billionaires in other countries had much lower growth rates (the global average growth was 12%). China is also the country with the highest number of new billionaires. 106 people became billionaires in 2017 (although a number dropped off the list from 2016). That comes out to roughly one new billionaire every three days.¹³

It is evident, that the Chinese capitalist class experienced the fastest growth in the world in the past decade. The UBS/PwC report comments: *"Twelve years ago, the world's most populous country was home to only 16 billionaires. Today, as the 'Chinese Century' progresses, they number 373, nearly one in five of the global total."*

It is important to recognize that China's capitalism is based not only on a tiny minority of super-rich (in contrast to countries like India or Saudi Arabia) but rather on a broader stratum of small and middle capitalists. As we show in Table 5, China is number two in all categories of millionaires – only behind the U.S. and ahead of all other imperialist Great Powers like Japan, Germany, France and Britain.

Another indicator to measure China's rise is, what Chinese economists call *net social wealth*. This is the total of non-financial assets and net foreign assets. A recently published report, which was released by the China-based *National Institution for Finance & Development*, calculates that China's net social wealth reached 437 trillion yuan (\$63.66 trillion) at the end of 2016, equal to about 70% of the US total and ahead of all other Great Powers.¹⁵

Capital Export and Military Spending

The next two tables demonstrate that China and Russia (to a lesser degree) are increasingly becoming major foreign investors. In Table 6 we reproduce the latest figure for the capital export of the Great Powers. As we can see China had already become number three in Foreign Direct Investment Outflows in 2017 – ahead of all European powers. Russia's figure is lower, slightly less than half of Germany's FDI.

When we look at the accumulated stock of FDI's outflows (by 2017) it is interesting to see the rapid catch-up process particularly of China. Despite the fact that China only became an imperialist power about a decade ago, its FDI Outward stock already equals the figures of all other Great Powers (except the U.S. (see Table 7).

We can observe a similar development in the field of investment in modern technologies. As Figure 3 shows, the U.S. remains the world's leading country in terms of spending for Research & Development. However, China is catching up rapidly. Beijing's current five year plan calls for increasing research and design spending to 2.5% of GDP, up from 2.1% in 2011-2015. As a result, it has become the second-placed country in the past decade.

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 Ros-

Figure 1. Global Industrial Production, US, Western Europe and China 1970-2015 (in Current Prices) ²

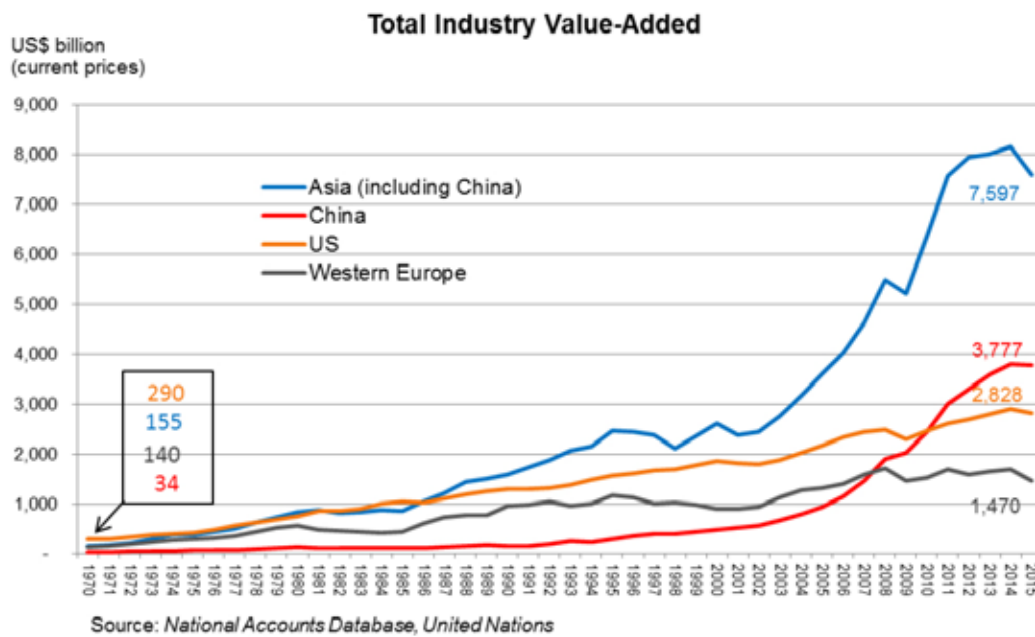


Figure 2. Share of the US and China in World Trade, 2001-2016 ³



Table 1. Share of World Merchandise Exports by Region and Selected Economy, 1953-2017 (Percentage) ⁵

Country	1953	1963	1973	1983	1993	2003	2017
USA	14.6	14.3	12.2	11.2	12.6	9.8	9.0
Germany	5.3	9.3	11.7	9.2	10.3	10.2	8.4
France	4.8	5.2	6.3	5.2	6.0	5.3	3.1
United Kingdom	9.0	7.8	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.1	2.6
China	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.2	2.5	5.9	13.2
Japan	1.5	3.5	6.4	8.0	9.8	6.4	4.1
India	1.3	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.7
CIS (Russia & ex-USSR)	-	-	-	-	1.7	2.6	3.0
South Africa	1.6	1.5	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5

neft, 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 8 and 9)¹⁹

Furthermore, it is essential to point out that the Russian state has only a relatively small amount of foreign debt.²² At the same time, the Russia's corporate debt is much higher and its total external debt at current point is around 30% of GDP. However, accelerating rivalry between imperialist states is pushing Russian corporation to sell its debt, which resulted in record payment of around 130 billion US Dollars in 2018.²³ Such high currency debt is connected with Russia's orientation to export commodities in order to gain foreign currency. Nevertheless, high debt payments do not automatically mean that Russia would be a "semi-colonial" state. There was a similar pattern in Tsarist Russia when French and German banks played a major role in the economy. Nevertheless, its military apparatus and its colonial expansion, combined with increasing foreign investments in Asian nations, gave Russia its imperialist character.

Today, modern Russia's imperialist ambitions are more far-reaching than those of the old Empire. For example, Russia is becoming a dominating force in Latin America states like Venezuela²⁴ and Cuba²⁵. It is also expanding its presence in the Middle East in Syria, Libya, Iran and Egypt. In Africa Russia already deploys more UN "peace-keeping" troops than other nations.²⁶ There is also some presence of Russian financial capital in Nigeria.²⁷ The Russian government uses different means to achieve its foreign political goals: military aid, loans, foreign investments, etc.

Understanding the imperialist character of Russia requires viewing the state not only from an economic but from a political-economic point of view. Usually economic-minded pseudo-Marxists tend to have a linear interpretation of the relationship between basis and superstructure and view politics as always directly following the economy. Engels repeatedly emphasized the "*relative independence of the super-structure*" and that the economy is the decisive determinant only in "*final analysis*".²⁸ Thus, political actions of the bourgeoisie sometimes can take place prior to changes and achievements in economy. In fact, this is the case with Russia. If we look at the political actions of Russian state and later its foreign policy in the Middle East, we can observe how its successful intervention in Syria created a very prestigious position for Russian monopolies in the region. For instance, *Rosatom* achieved a number of deals with Egypt and Turkey, the military-industrial complex acquired new contracts with several states and some forms of new partnerships with traditional US-allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel are on the horizon.

* * * * *

CWI: "Forgetting" about Russia's or China's Imperialist Character?

Let us move now to the *Committee for a Workers International (CWI)*, whose dominant section is the *Socialist Party* in Britain. This organization is certainly one of those groups which throughout their whole history were struggling with theory in general and Marxist theory in particular. In the 1990s and the 2000s it was discussing if capitalism finally had been restored in China or if it is still a deformed workers state. While this issue seems to be solved by now, the CWI has no clear line on the question if Russia and China are imperialist or not.

On one hand, this or that national section occasionally publishes articles which designate these two Great Powers as imperialist. The Russian section of the CWI has characterized "its" state as "imperialist" on several occasions. Likewise, its comrades in Hong Kong have published recently an article with a correct assessment of China and its *Belt and Road Initiative*: "*In reality, however, the BRI is an expression of the explosive emergence of China as a new global imperialist power vying with its older rivals, chiefly the US, to secure spheres of economic influence and control.*"²⁹

However, the CWI has rather a federalist approach on such theoretical issues. So the Russian or Chinese comrades are free to publish such characterizations if they like, but this has no meaning for the CWI as a whole. Such characterizations of Russia or China as imperialist power by individual comrades or sections are not reflected in any way in the international theoretical and programmatic documents of the CWI and don't influence their analysis of the world relations.

This becomes obvious when we look at the most comprehensive analytical documents of the CWI on the world situation of the last years. We are talking about the World Perspective documents which have been discussed and adopted either by the CWI World Congress or by its highest leadership body (the International Executive Committee or the International Secretariat).³⁰ In the five World Perspectives documents which the CWI has published since 2011, with a combined length of nearly 68,000 words, China is not characterized a single time as "imperialist". And only one of those five documents talks twice about "imperialist interests" of Russia. (More on this below) At the same time, the CWI talks in these documents extensively about US and European imperialism.

This failure to understand the class character of the Great Powers which are dominating world capitalism is also reflected in the CWI's analysis of flashpoints of the world situation. When Russia and the U.S. nearly clashed on Syria in April 2018, the relevant CWI article repeatedly attacked U.S. and Western imperialism by name, but failed to mention a single time that Russia is an imperialist power too!³¹

This fundamental failure to comprehend the class character of the Great Power dominating the world situation is accompanied by a superficial and confusing use of the category of "imperialist interests". As mentioned above, the CWI occasionally talks about "imperialist interests" of Russia. However, this rather reflects their indifference to central categories of Marxist theory. They use such categories also for countries which are clearly no imperialist powers but rather semi-colonies. In their World Perspectives document adopted in December 2014, for example,

Table 2. Share of World Merchandise Imports by Region and Selected Economy, 1953-2017 (Percentage) ⁶

Country	1953	1963	1973	1983	1993	2003	2017
USA	13.9	11.4	12.4	14.3	15.9	16.9	13.7
Germany	4.5	8.0	9.2	8.1	9.0	7.9	6.6
United Kingdom	11.0	8.5	6.5	5.3	5.5	5.2	3.7
France	4.9	5.3	6.4	5.6	5.7	5.2	3.6
China	1.6	0.9	0.9	1.1	2.7	5.4	10.5
Japan	2.8	4.1	6.5	6.7	6.4	5.0	3.8
India	1.4	1.5	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.9	2.5
CIS (Russia & ex-USSR)	-	-	-	-	1.5	1.7	2.3
South Africa	1.5	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.6

Table 3. National Composition of the World's 2000 Largest Corporations, 2003 and 2017 (Forbes Global 2000 List) ⁷

	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 4. Regional Composition of World's Top 5000 Companies 2000 and 2016 ⁸

	North America	Europe	Japan	China	Others
2000	1956	1346	659	402	635
2016	1519	876	437	1085	1083

Table 5. The Rich and the Super-Rich by Country, 2018 ¹⁴

Country	Wealth Range (in Million US-Dollar)				
	1-5m	5-10m	10-50m	50-100m	100-500m
500+m					
United States	14,520,885	1,855,679	902,736	50,144	19,253
China	3,094,768	235,858	132,701	10,113	5,690
Japan	2,627,845	125,377	51,947	2,478	1,027
United Kingdom	2,247,529	124,244	56,535	3,125	1,422
Germany	1,985,627	127,157	63,678	4,078	2,042
France	2,002,967	99,252	42,117	2,087	886

the CWI speaks about the “regional imperialist reasons” of the Turkish president Erdoğan.³²

Such confusion is not accidental but reflects the fundamental failure of the CWI throughout its history to understand Lenin’s theory of imperialism. As we have demonstrated in our book *The Great Robbery of the South* the CWI repeatedly confusingly applied the category of imperialism, usually in order to justify its opportunist adaption to social-imperialist forces. Hence, for example, the CWI suggested that Argentina would be a kind of imperialist state which, conveniently, helped their leadership to justify its capitulation to British imperialism during the Malvinas war in 1982. Likewise, they flirted with the idea of designating Iraq as imperialist in 1990/91 when the Western imperialist powers were assembling their forces to attack this Arab country.³³ Another example of the CWI’s adaption to social-imperialism is their support for the Zionist settler state Israel’s right to exist.³⁴ Finally, in our opinion, the article on China mentioned above is mistaken to characterize India as “a rival Asian imperialist power”.³⁵

Footnotes

1 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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3 Hong Kong Trade Development Council: Changing Global Production Landscape and Asia’s Flourishing Supply Chain, 3 October 2017, p.4

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

5 WTO: World Trade Statistical Review 2018, p. 122. We would also like to draw attention to the fact that the U.S. and Britain import substantially more commodities than they export, i.e. the live above their means. They are definitely the most rotten, parasitic old imperialist powers. No wonder that the U.S. has become the world’s biggest debtor.

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13 See also our article on this report: Michael Pröbsting China: A Paradise for Billionaires. The latest UBS/PwC Report about the Global Super-Rich Delivers another Crushing Blow to the Stalinist Myth of China’s “Socialism”, 27.10.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-is-a-paradise-for-billionaires/>; see also Michael Pröbsting: The Global Super-Rich Get Even Richer. UBS/PwC Publish their latest Report about the World’s Billionaires, 27.10.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-global-super-rich-get-even-richer/>

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17 UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2018, pp. 188-191

18 Pentagon: Assessing and Strengthening the Manufacturing and Defense Industrial Base and Supply Chain Resiliency of the United States, Report to President Donald J. Trump by the Interagency Task Force in Fulfillment of Executive Order 13806, September 2018, p. 39

19 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/>.

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

21 SIPRI Yearbook 2017 (Summary), p. 15

22 See e.g. Russia Total External Debt, <https://tradingeconomics.com/russia/external-debt>

23 See e.g. ING: Russia intensifies net foreign debt redemption in 3Q, 11.10.2018, <https://think.ing.com/snaps/russia-intensifies-foreign-debt-redemption-in-3q/>

24 See e.g. Anthony Faiola and Karen DeYoung: In Venezuela, Russia pockets key energy assets in exchange for cash bailouts, Washington Post, December 24, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-venezuela-russia-pockets-key-energy-assets-in-exchange-for-cash-bailouts/2018/12/20/da458db6-f403-11e8-80d0-f7e1948d55f4_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4c57edeb1009

25 See e.g. Russia to develop production facilities in Cuba, 21 Jun, 2016, Russia Today, <https://www.rt.com/business/347586-russia-cuba-facilities-development/>

26 See e.g. South China Morning Post: How Russia is boosting its role in Africa with weapons, investment and ‘instructors’, 14 August, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/2159622/how-russia-boosting-its-role-africa-weapons-investment-and>

27 See e.g. Financial Times: Fortunes of Nigeria’s banks tied to the oil price, 20.11.2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/370057c8-c71f-11e8-86e6-19f5b7134d1c>

28 See e.g.: „According to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitutes in the last instance the determining factor of history. Neither Marx nor I ever maintained

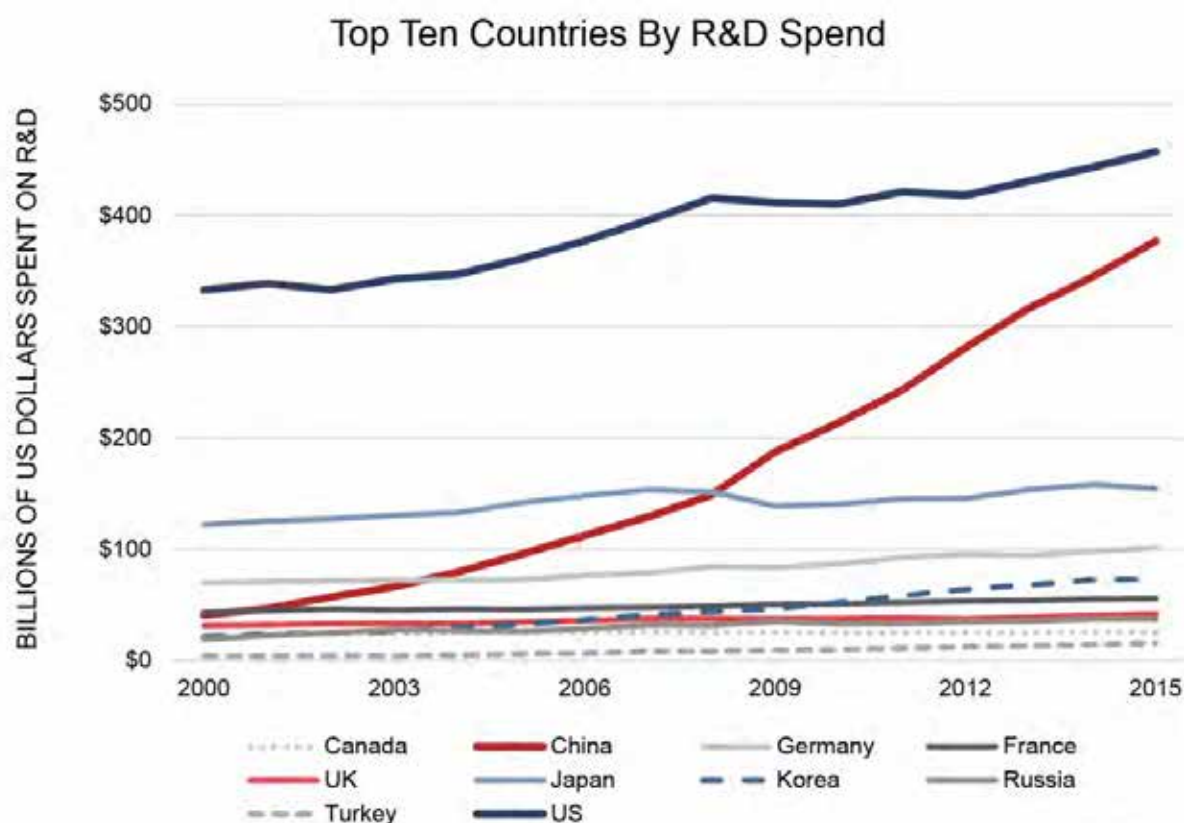
Table 6. Foreign Direct Investment Outflows by Country in 2017 (in Millions of \$US and as Share of Global FDI Outflows) ¹⁶

Country	2017	Share of the Global FDI Outflows
Total	1,429,972	100%
USA	342,269	23.9%
Japan	160,449	11.2%
Britain	99,614	7%
Germany	82,336	5.6%
France	58,116	4.1%
China	124,630	8.7%
Russia	36,032	2.5%

Table 7. Foreign Direct Investment Outward Stock by Country in 2017 (in Millions of \$US and as Share of Global FDI Outward Stock) ¹⁷

Country	2017	Share of the Global FDI Outflows
Total	30,837,927	100%
USA	7,799,045	25.3%
Japan	1,519,983	4.9%
Britain	1,531,683	5%
Germany	1,607,380	5.2%
France	1,451,663	4.7%
China	1,482,020	4.8%
Russia	382,278	1.2%

Figure 3. Top Ten Countries by Spending for Research & Development, 2000-2015 ¹⁸



Source: OECD

more. Now when someone comes along and distorts this to mean that the economic factor is the sole determining factor, he is converting the former proposition into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis but the various factors of the superstructure – the political forms of the class struggles and its results – constitutions, etc., established by victorious classes after hard-won battles – legal forms, and even the reflexes of all these real struggles in the brain of the participants, political, jural, philosophical theories, religious conceptions and their further development into systematic dogmas – all these exercise an influence upon the course of historical struggles, and in many cases determine for the most part their form. There is a reciprocity between all these factors in which, finally, through the endless array of contingencies (i.e., of things and events whose inner connection with one another is so remote, or so incapable of proof, that we may neglect it, regarding it as nonexistent) the economic movement asserts itself as necessary. Were this not the case, the application of the history to any given historical period would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree. We ourselves make our own history, but, first of all, under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these are the economic, which are finally decisive. But there are also the political, etc.” (Friedrich Engels: Letter to Joseph Bloch (1890); in: MECW 49, pp. 34-35)

29 Vincent Kolo: ‘Belt and Road’: Imperialism with Chinese characteristics. Gigantic Belt and Road infrastructure plan – spearhead for Chinese dictatorship’s economic and geopolitical strategy, February 19, 2018 <http://chinaworker.info/en/2018/02/19/16985/>. The same position is articulated by another comrade from the CWI in Hong Kong who speaks unambiguously and correctly about “the US and China, the two largest imperialist powers.” (Pasha: China: Deepening crisis and mass resistance, Socialist Action (CWI in Hong Kong), 14 August 2018 <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/international/asia/china/9905-china-deepening-crisis-and-mass-resistance>)

30 See: CWI: World Perspectives, 08 December 2017, CWI International Executive Committee, <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/theory-analysis/9544-cwi-world-perspectives>; CWI: CWI World Congress 2016 World Perspectives, <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/other-topics/activities/7517-11th-CWI-World-Congress--World-Perspectives>; CWI: World Perspectives: A turbulent period in history, International Secretariat of the CWI, 27 November 2014 <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/other-topics/activities/6995-World-Perspectives--A-turbulent-period-in-history>; CWI: World Perspectives, Thesis for the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the CWI 2013, 22/11/2013, <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/6565>; CWI: World Perspectives - New Period of Instability and Revolutions, Thesis of the European Bureau of the CWI, May 6, 2011, <http://www.socialistalternative.org/news/article11.php?id=1590>. A recently published article about the discussion on World Perspectives at the CWI School 2018 reports about the contribution of a comrade from Hong Kong who characterized China as imperialist. There is however no indication that this would influence the CWI’s analysis of the world situation. (Kevin Parslow, Socialist Party (CWI in England & Wales): CWI School 2018: 10 years after 2007/8 crisis, capitalism has solved nothing, 08 August 2018 <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/192-cwi/9901-cwi-school-2018-world-perspectives>)

31 Serge Jordan: No to the bombing of Syria! Build a mass movement against the war, CWI 12 April 2018 <http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/international/middle-east/151-syria/9750-no-to-the-bombing-of-syria-build-a-mass-movement-against-the-war>

32 CWI: World Perspectives. A turbulent period in history, 15/12/2014 <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/7008>

33 See Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, Chapter 9, pp. 211-215

34 See on this e.g. Yossi Schwarz: Occupied Palestine / Israel: Dead End for the Two-State Solution. The Palestinian Liberation Struggle and the CWI’s Centrist Adaptation to Zionism, 12.11.2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/palestine-and-cwi/>; Michael Pröbsting: The CWI’s “Socialist” Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle. A Reply from the RCIT, 15.9.2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/cwi-and-israel/>; see also Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, Chapter 9, pp. 349-365

35 Vincent Kolo: ‘Belt and Road’: Imperialism with Chinese characteristics. Gigantic Belt and Road infrastructure plan – spearhead for Chinese dictatorship’s economic and geopolitical strategy, February 19, 2018 <http://chinaworker.info/en/2018/02/19/16985/>

Table 8. World Nuclear Forces, 2018 ²⁰

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

Table 9. The World’s 10 Top Exporters of Weapons, 2016 ²¹

Exporter	Global Share (%)
1 USA	33
2 Russia	23
3 China	6.2
4 France	6.0
5 Germany	5.6
6 UK	4.6
7 Spain	2.8
8 Italy	2.7
9 Ukraine	2.6
10 Israel	2.3

Has the Arab Revolution finally been defeated?

A note on the adjectival juxtaposition of “progressive” to liberal democrats versus “reactionary” to Islamists

At this point it becomes necessary to state that we entirely reject the dichotomization – so widespread among the pseudo-Marxist left – between “progressive” liberal democrats and “reactionary” Islamists. While these leftists support struggles led by the former, they refuse any support for struggles by the latter.

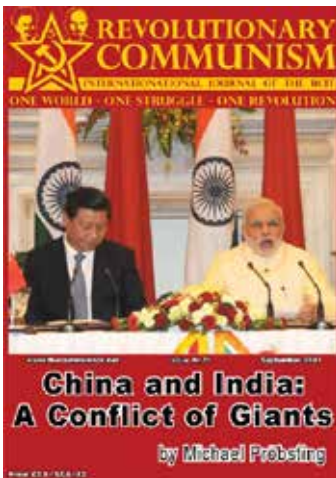
Naturally, we don't ignore that, generally speaking, liberal democrats hold more progressive views on women's rights and accept a pluralism of opinions, among other things, than most Islamists do. But at the same time we have seen so often how liberals become servants of Western imperialism. Let's just recall how closely the leaders of the *Syrian National Council* were willing to collaborate with the US and EU (but these Great Powers were not prepared to lend them any serious support). Furthermore, how can one forget that many of these liberal democrats (plus their Stalinist and centrists friends) applauded the military coup in Egypt in 2013 and refused to defend the pro-Mursi masses against the slaughter which followed 3 July?!

To this one has to add the horrible crimes of the Western imperialist powers – first of all the US – who have always been the role model of liberal democracy with which the liberal democrats in the South mostly identify. In fact, the

crimes of imperialist “democracy” far outstrip those of Daesh, to say nothing about other Islamist movements. In March 2015, the Washington DC-based *Physicians for Social Responsibility* (PRS) released a landmark study concluding that the death toll from 10 years of “War on Terror” since the 9/11 attacks is at least 1.3 million, and could be as high as 2 million. The study also estimates the total deaths from Western interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan since the 1990s – from direct killings and the longer-term impact of war-imposed deprivation. They reach the conclusion that the number of deaths is likely around 4 million (2 million in Iraq from 1991-2003, plus 2 million from the “War on Terror”).¹

In other words, in decisive situations, liberal democrats turn out not to be so democratic, but rather pro-imperialist and pro-dictatorship (if the regime is capitalist and secular). Given the lack of a revolutionary leadership, the petty-bourgeois Islamists are given the chance to opportunistically exploit the crimes of the “liberal-democratic” Great Powers and to present themselves as the *only* consistent anti-imperialist force.

Naturally, there are many shades among Islamist forces. Some – like the *Jamāwat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (the Muslim Brotherhood) – try to combine Sharia law with capitalist democracy (for instance, the Mursi government in Egypt). Others want to create a reactionary Caliphate without democratic institutions. However, we have always insisted that Marxists have to judge Islamist movements by their *current* role in any given concrete struggle. And, as we have elaborated in our *Theses on Islamism*, history has



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

Introductory Remarks * I. Recent Developments * II. The Struggle for Domination of Bhutan * III. The Background: Accelerating Rivalry between China and India in a Period of Capitalist Decay * China's Belt and Road Initiative * India's OCOR as an Alternative to OBOR? * India's Increasing Ties with US and Japanese Imperialism * How are the chances in a military confrontation between India and China? * IV. China as an Emerging Great Imperialist Power * China's Monopolies * Super-Exploitation of the Working Class * China's Capital Export * China as a Military Power * V. India: A Peculiar Semi-Colony in the Role of a Regional Power * A Brief Historical Review * The Characteristics of India's Semi-Colonial Economy * India's Economic Elites: Many ... and at the same time Few * The Parasitic Nature of the Indian Bourgeoisie * India as a Regional Power and an Oppressor State * Brief Remarks on an Historic Analogy: The Ottoman Empire * VI. Revolutionary Tactics in the China-India Conflict * Appendix: Imperialist vs. Semi-Colonial State: Some Theoretical Considerations * 1. What are the Respective Characteristics of an Imperialist vs. a Semi-Colonial State? * 2. Is a Transition from Being One Type of State to Another Possible? * 3. Is the Category of “Sub-Imperialism” Useful? * Footnotes

shown that, given their betrayal of Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism, Islamist currents have managed many times to stand at the forefront of mass movements against dictatorships and for national liberation.² To give just a few examples, we cite the cases of Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Yemen, etc.

Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham and Other Islamist Militias

Another factor demonstrating the popular character of the rebels is their class composition. They are dominated by urban and rural workers and poor. This class composition is directly related to the historic discrimination of the Sunni majority in Syria by the Assad regime. It was no accident that the uprising started with mass demonstrations in cities like Daraa, Homs, or Hama and that it had its strongholds in the proletarian and poor districts of Aleppo and Damascus. Since the close of the 19th century, East Aleppo – which the rebels managed to hold until the end of 2016 – has been proletarian in character, in contrast to the middle class western part of the city. Similarly, even today, it is the working class suburbs of Damascus like Qaboun, Jobar and Eastern Ghouta which the rebels control.

Naturally, in the wake of the revolution's defeats and setbacks, millions of workers and urban poor have had to flee – as we noted above, nearly half of the entire population of Syria has become refugees, whether internal or those 5 million who have migrated abroad! However, this doesn't change the fact that the rebels are deeply rooted among the popular masses.

In our opinion, it is vital to understand the *contradictory nature* of the rebels. On the one hand, their composition is essentially popular, as they are recruited from the poor masses. Furthermore, as they have no state apparatus or foreign troops behind them, they are entirely dependent on popular support. This popular character must be compared with the areas under control of the Assad regime, where there is a centralized bourgeois state apparatus, notorious for its brutality and corruption. In regime-held areas where the state apparatus has been weakened, the vacuum has been filled by private armed gangs linked to local businessmen. This demonstrates, once again, why it is that the rebels essentially represent the democratic revolution, i.e., one aimed at toppling the Assad dictatorship and achieving national independence (irrespective of the ideological cover of its participants).

The contradictory, undemocratic aspect of the rebel forces is the result of attempts by various Western powers to increase their influence among the leaderships of different rebel movements by means of political pressure and limited financial support. Naturally, such foreign influence is much less than that exercised by Russia and Iran on the Assad regime. Nevertheless, it constitutes a reactionary influence in the ranks of the rebels.

On the other side of the barricades, typically nearly the entire Syrian bourgeoisie – including those of Sunni background – has always supported the Assad regime. While some businessmen from the Syrian Diaspora do lend their support to the rebels (thereby adding another reactionary factor to the resistance), the huge majority still supports Assad.³

The most important Islamist formations in Syria today are *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham* (formerly the Nusra Front) followed

by *Ahrar al-Sham*. While the former is said to have 31,000 fighters, the latter numbers about 20,000 persons under arms. These formations, in particular *Tahrir al-Sham*, are replete with internal contradictions. On the one hand, they represent the tendency among the rebels which resolutely refuses to compromise with the regime and to capitulate to the pressure of the Great Powers. For this reason it's no accident that the US and other Western imperialist power began castigating al-Nusra, but also other groups like Ahrar al-Sham, as "terrorist organizations" soon after their formation in late 2011 and early 2012. Since 2014, US imperialism systematically targets the leaders of these organizations and has already succeeded in liquidating a number of them.

Tahrir al-Sham sharply denounces those forces among the rebels who collaborate with US imperialism. They similarly attack as "capitulators" those rebel forces who are prepared to participate in the Astrana negotiations controlled by Russia, Iran and the Assad regime.

Among these petty-bourgeois Islamist forces there are undoubtedly many dedicated fighters playing a vanguard role in the struggle against the regime and its Russian and Iranian backers. At the same time, these organizations maintain links with various wealthy donors in Gulf States. It is here that their contradictory nature becomes manifest, for they combine an *essentially progressive struggle* against the bloody Assad dictatorship with the perspective of a *reactionary social order*. Furthermore, these groups are Islamist chauvinist in nature, entirely denying the Kurds' national rights, while pursuing a virulent Sunni nationalism. They justify their reactionary sectarianism against the Shia minority of Syria by referring to them as agents of Iran. In other words, they fail – as nationalists typically do – to differentiate between the reactionary ruling class of Iran and Syria and the ordinary Shia workers and poor who must be won over to the side of revolution.

For these reasons we characterize forces like *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham* (formerly the al-Nusra Front) or *Ahrar al-Sham* as petty-bourgeois Islamists of the *Salafi-Nationalists* type. In contrast to them, we note as an aside, we characterize Daesh as a *Salafi-Takfiri* organization which does not support the Syrian Revolution, and sees everyone but themselves as a *Kuffar* ("unbelievers" deserving death).⁴

The Role of Religion in Democratic and National Liberation Struggles

One favorite argument against supporting the Syrian popular forces that have petty-bourgeois Islamists as their leadership is that such forces, defending as they do a religious agenda, are thoroughly backward. However, as Marxists we do not judge forces primarily by their ideology but by the social forces which they represent in a concrete struggle between the classes. In the case of Syria, this is the urban and rural poor – led by petty-bourgeois nationalists and Islamists – who are fighting against the Assad regime representing the bourgeoisie (plus their imperialist and Iranian backers) and most of the wealthy middle class.

We have elaborated extensively in other documents that Marxists have to understand the role of religion – as is the case with ideology in general – materialistically.⁵ This means that Marxists have to view religion primarily as a

distorted expression of social interests – in cases like the Syrian Revolution, the hatred of a specific dictatorship or of a foreign occupier. This is often the role of ideology in the consciousness of the masses, as Engels explained in a letter to Franz Mehring in 1893:

*“Ideology is a process which of course is carried on with the consciousness of the so-called thinker but with a false consciousness. The real driving forces which move him, he remains unaware of, otherwise it would not be an ideological process. He therefore imagines false or apparent driving forces.”*⁶

It is therefore not surprising that liberation struggles have taken place many times under the banner of religion. Engels, referring to the peasant wars in Europe in the 16th century, wrote:

*“In the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, very positive material class-interests were at play, and those wars were class wars just as were the later collisions in England and France. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks, if the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a religious screen, it little changes the actual situation, and is to be explained by conditions of the time.”*⁷

While a religious and socially conservative agenda like that championed by *Tahrir al-Sham* and others reflects the reactionary character of these petty-bourgeois Islamist leaderships, it is important for Marxists to learn from history that anti-dictatorial and national liberation movements have repeatedly worn religious garb. This was not only the case in the European peasant uprisings in the Middle Ages, but also in the Bahia Muslim slave rebellion in Brazil in 1835, in the *Taiping Revolution* in China from 1850 to 1864⁸, in the *Boxer rebellion* in China in 1900,⁹ for the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* in Iran in the 1970s, or in the cases of *Hamas* and the *Palestinian Islamic Jihad* or the *Afghan Taliban* today, to name only a few examples.

However, while Marxists obviously reject the socially conservative agenda of such movements, they cannot and must not ignore the democratic and revolutionary class interests which lurk behind the religious fog, as these manifest the determination of the oppressed popular classes to overthrow a reactionary dictatorship or a foreign imperialist invader. Marxists have to support and relate to this progressive class interest and oppose such movements' reactionary politics so as to be able to break the workers and oppressed away from the Islamist leaderships and to win them over to revolutionary politics.

Some Arguments on the Ongoing Progressive Character of the Syrian Revolution

One of the many indicators of the liberation character of a war on the side of revolutionary forces and the reactionary character of a war on the side of the regime and its foreign backers is the regime's continuously applying military tactics of annihilation against the civilian population living in areas under control of the rebels. The forces backing of the regime systematically and indiscriminately bomb the towns and villages being held by the rebels. This is why hundreds of thousands of Syrians (at least 400,000 according to official estimates, but most likely many more) have been killed – mostly at the hands of Assad's forces – with the result that half of the Syrian population has been forced to flee their homes.

On the other hand, rebel forces do not typically apply systematic bombardment of the civilian population as a prime military tactic. Naturally, the military struggle against the Assadist forces also takes its toll on civilians. But, while broad and systematic indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas is in fact the primary tactic of the regime and its Russian and Iranian backers, this is *not* the case with the rebels.

This is no accident: the regime – despised by the majority of the population – must drive out large sectors of the people so that it can maintain or regain control of regions of the country. The rebels – lacking the huge military arsenal and the financial backing of foreign powers that the regime has – needs, on the other hand, popular support.¹⁰

Why is this so in the case of Syria? Simply, the Assad regime has very little popular support outside of the small Alawite sect and they are all too acutely aware that they are despised by the vast majority of the population. Furthermore, the regime also understands that it lacks the military resources required to establish a stable rule over the people of Syria. Therefore, it must do everything in its power to uproot and expel large portions of the population which sympathize with the revolution.

It is for this reason that the Assad regime places towns liberated by the rebels under siege – adopting the notorious tactics deployed by Putin's Russian army against the Chechens in Grozny in 1999-2000 (which left it *“the most ravaged city on Earth”* according to the United Nations) – and formulate surrender deals which require the rebels and the population to leave liberated areas subdued by the regime, forcing them to move to territories which are still under the control of liberation fighters (e.g., the province of Idlib).

Another argument which used by some to demonstrate the loss of the revolution's progressive character cites local protest against the Salafist militias, and the counterrevolutionary repression by which such protests are put down. There can be no doubt that such incidents clearly demonstrate how such militias constitute a reactionary danger to all the democratic liberties won through the revolution.

However, we must not forget that the very existence of such demonstrations in the liberated areas actually affirms the revolutionary and democratic character of the liberation struggle being waged by the rebels who control a given region. Can we possibly imagine such protests ever taking place in those areas controlled by Assad? Of course not! All such protests were drowned in rivers of blood in 2011, which is precisely the reason that the revolution had to be transformed into an armed civil war against the dictatorship.

Have the Rebels Become Agents of US Imperialism and Regional Powers?

An argument often given for refusing to support the Syrian revolutionaries is that they are in fact “agents of US imperialism” or of regional powers. As we shall demonstrate, this argument is reactionary slander and simply stupid.

Let's start with the “strong” side of this argument: It is certainly true that there have been contacts and tacit support by the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar for this or that faction of the rebels. During the first phase of the revolution, the US and the regional powers hoped to re-

place Assad with another figure, without at the same time disrupting the Baathist state apparatus. This was particularly true of the Erdoğan regime in Turkey, which sought to destabilize its local rival while at the same time gaining popularity among Turkey's Sunni-majority population which identified with the uprising of their sectarian brothers and sisters in Syria.

However, the point is that such support for the rebels by the Erdoğan regime was always limited. It never came close to the systematic support of Russian imperialism and the Iranian regime for Assad. This is why the Syrian rebels have always been at a total disadvantage from a military point of view when compared with the Assadist forces. If the US (or Turkey or the Gulf States) would have seriously supported the rebels, they would have done much more than simply support them with their air force (as Russia did for Assad). Rather, they would have sent tanks, artillery and BMP's (as the Russians in fact did for Assad). But the only tanks which the rebels possess are those which they have captured from their enemies! Furthermore, these foreign powers would have sent anti-aircraft missiles to the rebels in order to end the terror brought down upon them from the sky. But the Western imperialists did not do so because they never wanted the popular revolution in Syria to be victorious.

At this point, we must address the idiocy of the claim that the rebels are "agents" of the US or Turkey. As a matter of fact, the US and Turkey *are* increasingly intervening in Syria. They are deploying their air forces and bombing their "opponents." They are increasingly sending their soldiers and heavy weaponry into battle. If the "agent theory" were true, the US and Turkey should, it would seem, be intervening on the side of the rebels fighting Assad. But as everyone knows, this is not what's happening. Quite the contrary: the US and Turkey are not deploying their military power against Assad, but against Daesh and Islamist factions of the rebels (in particular *Tahrir al-Sham*)! The US air force has repeatedly attacked various Islamist rebels and killed a number of their leaders. Turkey – with Erdoğan looking for an alliance with Putin – put pressure on militias to leave the Aleppo front when the Syrian people were under siege in Eastern Aleppo and needed the militias the most! How idiotic is the argument that the rebels fighting against Assad are supposedly agents of the US, when the latter doesn't care about attacking the Assadist forces, but rather the Islamists! In fact, very early on in the war the US designated several Islamist rebel militias as "terrorist organizations." Only fools can claim that these militias are the supposed allies of imperialism!

On Foreign Powers' Support for Liberation Movements

In fact, history is replete with examples of democratic and national liberation movements' receiving tacit support from adversaries of the regimes against which those rebels were fighting. German imperialism supported the Irish revolutionaries fighting British occupation during WWI; the British supported the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire; France and the USSR lent support to the Spanish Republic in 1936-39; the Allies supported the Tito partisans and the Chinese nationalist forces during WWII; during the same war Nazis lent support to Arab nationalists like Nasser who opposed British occupation; during

the Cold War, the USSR lend support to numerous national liberation movements as did Cuba in Latin America; various African governments supported SWAPO and the ANC; nearly all Arab states supported the PLO, etc.

Let's also take some more current examples: *Hamas* and the *Palestinian Islamic Jihad* receive substantial political, financial and military support from Iran, Qatar, Turkey and other states; Kashmiri independence fighters receive support from Pakistan and, vice versa; Baloch nationalists receive support from India. We could go on and on with many similar examples. The decisive question is: Does such support by foreign powers necessarily transform these organizations into agents of these states (as the Israeli, Indian, Pakistani and other governments have been claiming for years)? Of course not! True, the governments of these states have an (obviously negative) influence on the leaderships of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other movements. But does such support transform these movements into agents of these states? No, and it was only reactionaries who have denounced these movements as "agents" of the adversarial power.

Why are such reactionary claims slanderous? Because *all* these movements which receive aid and support from regimes adversarial to their oppressor authentically have substantial roots in the struggles of the oppressed classes. Therefore, these movements are *primarily* an expression of the desire of these classes to free themselves from oppression and occupation, and are not *fundamentally* an expression of the interests of foreign states.

Naturally, Marxists must draw attention to and emphasize the contradictory character of such movements, which have usually been led by petty-bourgeois forces. Naturally, these leaderships have been much more prone to the pressure exerted by their allies, which means that such support undoubtedly constitutes a conservative and negative influence. Marxists *always* fight against such influence. But the crucial issue here is that such negative influence *does not negate* the fundamentally popular and progressive character of these liberation struggles led by such forces.

So the question becomes, when does interference and influence of foreign powers transform a liberation movement into an agent of such powers? In our program – *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* – we stated our approach and gave some actual examples.

"Particularly, where authoritarian regimes or the military openly trample on democratic rights, mass movements rise and fight with determination for their rights. Other states and even great imperialist powers try to exploit such domestic crises and are only too happy to expand their influence. The Bolsheviks-Communists support any real movement of the popular masses against the suppression of democratic rights. We reject any influence of reactionary forces and defend the national sovereignty of semi-colonial countries against imperialism. This can not mean that revolutionaries renounce the support of revolutionary-democratic movement. In reality, the imperialist meddling is no help for the revolutionary-democratic struggle, but threatens to undermine it. That is why we have supported progressive liberation struggles of the masses against dictatorships, but at the same time rejected sharply imperialist interventions. (E.g. the struggle of the Bosnians 1992-95, the Kosovo Albanians in 1999, the uprising against the Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya in 2011). Only when the imperialist intervention is becoming the dominant feature of the political situation, revolutionaries must

subordinate the democratic struggle to the fight against such an intervention.”¹¹

In our essay “*Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference*” we dealt with this issue in more detail and discussed it with a number of historical examples. In conclusion we wrote:

“The key is always to concretely analyze whether a given democratic or national liberation struggle becomes entirely subordinate to the imperialist maneuvers and no longer possesses any significant internal dynamic of a workers and peasant liberation struggle. If this is the case, Marxists must change their position and give up critical support for the given national liberation struggle.”¹²

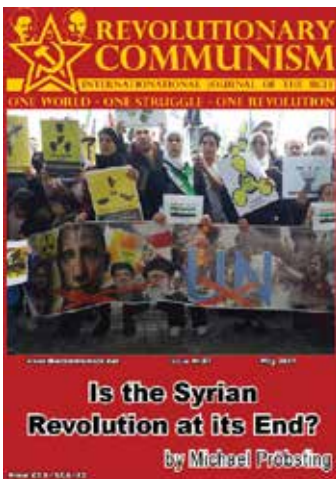
We have to now ask: To what degree does such a situation exist in Syria today. In our opinion, this is most certainly *not* the case with the Syrian rebels. However, another case is that of the so-called *Syrian Democratic Forces* (SDF) which consist mostly of the Kurdish YPG plus a few Syrian-Arab allies. While the Kurdish militias number about 60,000 fighters, their Syrian-Arab allies account for only a few thousand. The SDF forces as a whole are clearly and massively supported by US imperialism in their fight against Daesh. The US is supporting the Kurdish militias with massive air strikes as well as with up to 1,000 American soldiers on the ground. While, in the past, we supported the defense of the Kurdish minority against attacks by Daesh, the situation has now clearly changed. Currently the SDF/YPG – so beloved by the centrist left! – is serving as a counter-revolutionary spearhead for US (as well as Russian) imperialism in order to pacify the Syrian Revolution and divide Syria under auspices of the Great Powers.¹³ The SDF/YPG is even volunteering its services

to imperialism and, following the conquest of Raqqa, are offering to take Idlib in order to finish off the encircled Syrian revolutionaries!¹⁴ Since the autumn of 2016, the SDF/YPG has been besieging Raqqa and other Arab-populated areas in the service of US imperialism. In such a situation, revolutionaries must not side with them, the imperialist lackeys (i.e., SDF/YPG) but should rather call for their defeat, even if they are fighting against reactionary Daesh forces. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, we refer reader to the recently published article by our comrade Yossi Schwartz.¹⁵

A similar situation might exist with the so-called *Operation Euphrates Shield* led by the Turkish army which includes several Syrian rebel militias (again only a few thousands fighters).

Finally, one can test the “agent theory” by simply comparing the deeds of the Syrian rebels with the interests of the foreign powers. The interest of US imperialism is to destroy Daesh, but not to wage a war against Assad. Yes, some small units of the rebels are joining the Kurdish militias in this effort as part of the SDF. But nearly all Syrian rebels refuse to do so and continue the war of liberation against the Assadist forces. Obviously, they are not acting according to US priorities. Turkey’s main interests are to fight the Kurdish militias as well as Daesh. Again, yes, some Syrian militias have joined *Operation Euphrates Shield*, but the bulk of the rebels have not. In other words, the “agent theory” is nothing but disinformation designed to destroy the legitimacy of the Syrian Revolution!

As a side note, we call the reader’s attention to the fact that the same nonsensical “agent theory” is deployed by some ultra-left sects like the Moreonite FLTI. While the lat-



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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

ter organization supports the Syrian Revolution – in clear contrast to the abstentionists – they attack *all* rebel leaderships not only because of their incorrect policy (which, of course, is correct), but they also denounce them as “agents” of foreign powers. In doing so the FLTI unintentionally only helps the enemies of the Syrian Revolution by espousing such unmaterialistic nonsense.

In summary, until now, after six years since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, the vast majority of the Syrian rebels are not fighting under the command of the US or Turkey, and are most certainly not subordinating the struggle against the Assad regime to the geostrategic interests of these foreign powers (i.e., the struggle against Daesh or against the Kurdish YPG).

Of course, we cannot preclude such a development in the future. It is possible that, with the accumulating defeats of the Syrian Revolution, various leaderships of rebel militias may capitulate to the pressure of foreign powers and become “pragmatic.” They might be tempted to start serving as tools for advancing the geostrategic interests of foreign powers, in order to save for themselves at least a small part of the post-war order in Syria. Such a development is quite possible and, if it takes place, revolutionaries will have to adapt their assessments and tactics. But Marxists don’t develop tactics based on speculation about future possibilities, but only on the concrete relation of forces and on the current military situation on the ground. And today, most militias can by no means be characterized as being “agents” of foreign powers.

In conclusion, let us state that, for Marxists, it is vital to correctly understand the relationship between liberation struggles and imperialist interference, not only for the case of the Syrian Revolution, but also to be prepared for future developments.

Some years ago we warned: *“Such complications, amalgamations of different and contradictory interests in a given military conflict are likely to increase in the future. Why? Because of the increasing rivalry between imperialist powers. Due to this rivalry, all imperialist powers are more and more motivated to interfere in local conflicts and civil wars and to exploit them so as to advance their influence and increase their profits. Unfortunately, this trend is completely ignored by many sectarians who fail to recognize that in addition to the old imperialist powers – in North America, Western Europe, and Japan – there are also new, emerging imperialist powers, in particular Russia and China.”*¹⁶

The case of Syria has affirmed this warning and, in the future, there will be even more similar situations. If revolutionaries fail to analyze such developments concretely and correctly, and if they fail to support liberation struggles because of this or that interference by foreign powers, they cease to be revolutionaries and become traitors.

Lenin and Trotsky on Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference

Lenin and Trotsky were, of course, aware that, in the epoch of imperialism, the Great Powers will always try to interfere and utilize national and democratic conflicts for their own ends. However, from this they did not conclude that Marxists should automatically drop their support for such democratic and national liberation struggles. Rather, the position taken by Marxists should depend on which

factor becomes dominant – the national, democratic liberation struggle or the imperialist war of conquest.

*„Britain and France fought the Seven Years’ War for the possession of colonies. In other words, they waged an imperialist war (which is possible on the basis of slavery and primitive capitalism as well as on the basis of modern highly developed capitalism). France suffered defeat and lost some of her colonies. Several years later there began the national liberation war of the North American States against Britain alone. France and Spain, then in possession of some parts of the present United States, concluded a friendship treaty with the States in rebellion against Britain. This they did out of hostility to Britain, i.e., in their own imperialist interests. French troops fought the British on the side of the American forces. What we have here is a national liberation war in which imperialist rivalry is an auxiliary element, one that has no serious importance. This is the very opposite to what we see in the war of 1914-16 (the national element in the Austro-Serbian War is of no serious importance compared with the all-determining element of imperialist rivalry). It would be absurd, therefore, to apply the concept imperialism indiscriminately and conclude that national wars are “impossible”. A national liberation war, waged, for example, by an alliance of Persia, India and China against one or more of the imperialist powers, is both possible and probable, for it would follow from the national liberation movements in these countries. The transformation of such a war into an imperialist war between the present-day imperialist powers would depend upon very many concrete factors, the emergence of which it would be ridiculous to guarantee.”*¹⁷

In another article, Lenin compared imperialist interference in national liberation struggles for their own ends with the interference of sections of monopoly capital in democratic struggles within imperialist countries. In both cases, Lenin argued, it would be wrong to deny support for these struggles because of this interference:

*„On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilise the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers; in their internal policy they use these slogans for reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (for example, the Poles in Austria and Russia who come to terms with reactionaries for the oppression of the Jews and Ukrainians); in their foreign policy they strive to come to terms with one of the rival imperialist powers for the sake of implementing their predatory plans (the policy of the small Balkan states, etc.). The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain conditions, be utilised by another “great” power for its own, equally imperialist, aims, is just as unlikely to make the Social-Democrats refuse to recognise the right of nations to self-determination as the numerous cases of bourgeois utilisation of republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial plunder (as in the Romance countries, for example) are unlikely to make the Social-Democrats reject their republicanism.”*¹⁸

Therefore, we see that those who propagate an abstentionist or Third Camp position in the Syrian civil war because of Western interference can find no support in the writings of Lenin.

What Did Lenin and Trotsky Say about Getting Support from Imperialists?

Many leftists justify their refusal to support the Syrian rebels by claiming that they receive financial and military support from Western imperialists as well as from Turkey and the Gulf States. As we have already said, whatever support is thereby received is clearly not significant, as it has not altered the military inferiority of the rebels on the ground relative to the forces of Assad.

Irrespective of this, it is important for Marxists to understand that a liberation movement's receiving such aid from imperialists is, in itself, not illegitimate and therefore provides no justification for discrediting the liberation movement as an "agent of a foreign power." However, Lenin and Trotsky stressed as crucial the refusal of the liberation movement to accept *any* political conditions for receiving such aid. In other words, liberation movements must *not* subordinate their struggle to the interests of the imperialists from whom they receive such aid.

Lenin and Trotsky were quiet explicit on this issue, and it would be useful for various pseudo-Marxist muddleheads to take their advice to heart. In February 1918, Lenin defended the right of the Bolshevik government to take economic and military support from the imperialist Allies in order to defend themselves against the German Empire. In a polemic directed against Bukharin and other ultra-left inner-party opponents he wrote:

"What, for example, could be more conclusive and clear than the following truth: a government that gave Soviet power, land, workers' control and peace to a people tortured by three years of predatory war would be invincible? Peace is the chief thing. If, after conscientious efforts to obtain a general and just peace, it turned out in actual fact that it was impossible to obtain this at the present time, every peasant would understand that one would have to adopt not a general peace, but a separate and unjust peace. Every peasant, even the most ignorant and illiterate, would understand this and appreciate a government that gave him even such a peace.

Bolsheviks must have been stricken by the vile itch of phrasemaking to forget this and evoke the peasants' most legitimate dissatisfaction with them when this itch has led to a new war being launched by predatory Germany against overtired Russia! (...)

If Kerensky, a representative of the ruling class of the bourgeoisie, i.e., the exploiters, makes a deal with the Anglo-French exploiters to get arms and potatoes from them and at the same time conceals from the people the treaties which promise (if successful) to give one robber Armenia, Galicia and Constantinople, and another robber Baghdad, Syria and so forth, is it difficult to understand that this deal is a predatory, swindling, vile deal on the part of Kerensky and his friends? No, this is not difficult to understand. Any peasant, even the most ignorant and illiterate, will understand it.

But if a representative of the exploited, oppressed class, after this class has overthrown the exploiters, and published and annulled all the secret and annexationist treaties, is subjected to a bandit attack by the imperialists of Germany, can he be condemned for making a "deal" with the Anglo-French robbers, for obtaining arms and potatoes from them in return for money or timber, etc.? Can one find such a deal dishonourable, disgraceful, dirty?

No, one cannot. Every sensible man will understand this and will ridicule as silly fools those who with a "lordly" and learned

mien undertake to prove that "the masses will not understand" the difference between the robber war of the imperialist Kerensky (and his dishonourable deals with robbers for a division of jointly stolen spoils) and the Kalyayev deal of the Bolshevik Government with the Anglo-French robbers in order to get arms and potatoes to repel the German robber.

*Every sensible man will say: to obtain weapons by purchase from a robber for the purpose of robbery is disgusting and villainous, but to buy weapons from the same robber for the purpose of a just war against an aggressor is something quite legitimate. Only mincing young ladies and affected youths who have 'read books' and derived nothing but affectation from them can see something 'dirty' in it. Apart from people of that category only those who have contracted the itch can fall into such an 'error.' "*¹⁹

Similarly, Trotsky stated in 1935 that it was not illegitimate, in itself, for the Stalinist regime in the USSR to try and exploit differences between the imperialist Great Powers and to receive aid from one side. However, dealing with the same example of the Soviet government in 1918 as Lenin did in the quote just cited, Trotsky emphasized that such taking aid must not go hand in hand with political support for such imperialist powers.

"It would be absurd, of course, to deny the Soviet government the right to utilize the antagonism in the camp of the imperialists or, if need be, to make this or that concession to the imperialists. The workers on strike also make use of the competition between capitalist enterprises and make concessions to the capitalists, even capitulate to them, when they are unable to gain victory. But does there follow from this the right of the trade-union leaders to cooperate amicably with the capitalists, to paint them up and to turn into their hirelings? No one will label as traitors the strikers who are forced to surrender: But Jouhaux, who paralyzes the class struggle of the proletariat in the name of peace and amity with the capitalists, we have not only the right but the duty to proclaim as a traitor to the working class. Between the Brest-Litovsk policy of Lenin and the Franco-Soviet policy of Stalin, there is the same difference as between the policy of a revolutionary trade unionist, who after a partial defeat is compelled to make concessions to the class enemy, and the policy of the opportunist, who voluntarily becomes of ally an flunkey of the class enemy. Lenin received the reactionary French officer. During those same days, I also received him with the very same object in mind: Lubersac undertook to blow up bridges in the oath of our retreat so that our military supplies would not fall into the hands of Germans. Only some utterly harebrained anarchists will view such a "transaction" as a betrayal. During those same days, the official agents of France paid me visits and offered assistance on a wider scale – artillery and foodstuffs. We very well understood that their aim was to embroil us again in a war with Germany. But the German armies were actually waging an offensive against us, and we were weak. Did we have the right to accept the 'assistance' of the French general staff under these conditions? Unconditionally, yes! I introduced precisely such a motion in the Central Executive Committee of the party in February 22, 1918. The text of this motion has been published in the official minutes of the Central Executive Committee, issued in Moscow in 1929. Here is the motion.

'As the party of the socialist proletariat in power an waging war against Germany, we, through the state organs, take all measures in order best to arm and equip our revolutionary army with all the necessary means and, with this in view, to obtain them wherever possible and, consequently, from capitalist governments as well. While so doing (our) party preserves the com-

plete independence of its foreign policy, does not commit itself politically with any capitalist government and in every given instance takes their proposals under consideration from the standpoint of expediency.'

Lenin was not present at this session of the CEC. He sent a note. Here is its authentic text: 'Please add my vote for accepting potatoes and arms from the brigands of Anglo-French imperialism' (Minutes, p. 246). This is how the then Bolshevik CEC reacted towards the utilization of capitalist antagonism: practical agreements with imperialists ('accept the potatoes') are entirely permissible, but absolutely impermissible is political solidarity with the 'brigands of imperialism!'"²⁰

Trotsky did consider economic and military aid as legitimate, not only in the case of the revolutionary Soviet government and the Stalinist regime, but also in the case of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois-led national liberation movements. In a letter to Australian socialists in 1937, he explained that they should criticize their government for not sufficiently supporting the Chinese national liberation war which was, at that time, led by the reactionary General Chiang Kai-shek.

"We cannot, as stated above, entrust the bourgeoisie with the necessary means for helping China. But our policy would differ in these cases depending on whether Australia intervened in the war on the side of Japan or on the side of China. We would naturally in both cases remain in the sharpest opposition to the government. But at the same time as we boycotted with every means material help to Japan, we would on the contrary accuse the government of not sufficiently supporting China, that is, of betraying her ally, and so on."²¹

In summary, we re-emphasize that that all those leftists who refuse support for the Syrian rebels because of the alleged or real aid they receive from the US or Turkey ignore the lessons of past revolutions, as well as the teachings of the Marxist classics. They use a formally ultra-left position (condemning all those who take aid from imperialists, because it will inevitably corrupt them) in order to justify a thoroughly opportunistic conclusion: desertion of an ongoing, popular revolutionary struggle which is either merely despised by or even actually fought against by the Great Powers.

Imagining Two Different Scenarios: The Revolution Succeeds/Fails in Overthrowing the Assad Regime

By taking a neutral stance in the Syrian Revolution, the abstentionists implicitly maintain that *both* possible outcomes of the civil war are *equally negative* for the interests of the working class and the oppressed in the country, as well as internationally. Thinking about such a supposition should make it clear to anyone that it is completely wrong.

Let's imagine the possible scenarios for the different outcomes. Imagine that the Assad regime wins the civil war and liquidates the popular uprising: The practical outcome will be that most of the refugees will be unable to return to their homes, as the regime will be forced to retain the ethnic cleansing it undertook so that the population hostile to it decreases in numbers. For the same reason, it will have to retain the dictatorship which the Assad clan has already been running for four and a half decades – only, more likely, it will have to *intensify* its repression in light of all the popular hatred that has amassed against it after years of a most brutal genocidal war.

Furthermore, a victory for the Assad regime will have devastating consequences for the entire region. It will chalk up yet another victory for the old ruling class – after the military coup of General al-Sisi in Egypt and the return of the Ben Ali clique in Tunisia. Thus, it will in fact *strengthen* the reactionary regime in Tunis and Cairo. In other words, a victory for Assad will help to stabilize the imperialist order in the region – which is why *all* Great Powers now support the Assad regime, either actively or as the lesser of two evils.

On the other hand, imagine that the Syrian Revolution actually succeeds in overthrowing the regime. Such a victory would not only open the possibility for the war's 11 million refugees to return to their homes. It would also destroy the old state apparatus which has killed so many people. It would destabilize the entire imperialist order in the region. It would create panic not only in Washington, Brussels and Moscow but also in Tel Aviv. Let's not forget: the Syrian regime always served as a stabilizing factor for the imperialist order in the region. It has not fired a single bullet against Israeli territory since 1973. Syria invaded Lebanon in 1976, and fought against Palestinian militias. In 1991, Assad the father supported the US war against Iraq and even sent 14,500 troops to participate in the imperialist aggression. A victory of the popular uprising would have an electrifying effect for the workers and oppressed throughout the whole region!

The abstentionists might retort that, given the absence of a revolutionary party, it is possible that Syrian might deteriorate into another Libya, i.e., a country ridden by chaos and civil war and various Islamist movements. To this we reply that, indeed, such a development cannot be dismissed.

However, first Marxists develop a tactic in order to *advance* the current possibilities of the liberation struggle and to *increase* the influence of revolutionaries. To succeed in this, they must take their side of the struggle of the oppressed and not stand on the sidelines. If they would join the camp of abstentionism, they would curtail if not entirely eliminate their ability to link up with the tens of thousands of fighters who are waging an armed struggle for the victory of the Syrian Revolution. So even if a victory of the revolution were to end in a Libya-like scenario, revolutionaries would be in a better position to build a party in the future, as they could relate to a heritage of honor, not one of abstentionist betrayal.

Secondly, all the panic-mongers tearing out their hair over the fall of the Gaddafi dictatorship only repeat the reactionary nonsense spread by the Putin and Trump supporters and their reformist lackeys. Libya under Gaddafi served the Great Powers as a reliable oil-exporter. Libya under Gaddafi served the imperialist EU as a reliable guardian against African migrants. All this is gone, for now; should revolutionaries mourn this?!

Instead of retaining a reliable local guardian, the Great Powers have suffered various setbacks in Libya. The US got their ambassador killed by Islamists in 2012 and all Great Powers were forced to close their embassies there. Furthermore, there are still 150,000-200,000 persons in Libya under arms. It is ironically amusing that there are still many Stalinists and Castro-Chavistas who maintain that the outcome of the Libyan Revolution was a victory for NATO imperialism and a setback for the revolutionary

struggle!

Naturally, revolutionaries cannot ignore all the setbacks and challenges in Libya. The eastern part of the country is under control of General Haftar – an utterly reactionary local Bonaparte who first served in Gaddafi's repressive apparatus and later worked for the CIA. He is currently trying to conquer the entire country in the service of the Great Powers. Other parts of the country are under control of Islamist militias. In other words, the unfinished democratic revolution of 2011 resulted not in the working class and the oppressed taking power, but neither could the ruling class stabilize the political situation and create a strong state apparatus.²² Therefore, the country remains unstable in the extreme with an ongoing civil war.

As Marxists, we are all too aware that the liberation struggle in Libya is impeded by the lack of a revolutionary party. It is precisely for this reason that, after the fall of the Gaddafi dictatorship, the country is characterized by civil war, the spread of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Islamist forces and simple banditry. However, a revolutionary has to ask him or herself: would a stable dictatorship which arrests, tortures and kills every opponent improve the conditions for revolutionaries to build a party?! Which conditions are more favorable for the class struggle: stable dictatorships and regional control by the Great Powers or instability, collapsing regimes and a weakened grip by the Great Powers? Authentic revolutionaries should know the answer. No, more than five years after the downfall of Gaddafi, revolutionaries have no reason to wish his tyranny back!

A Period of Defeats and Retreats: What Are the Reasons?

Let's finally elaborate some thoughts on the future prospects of the Arab Revolution. As we have already stated, we reject the assertion of those who claim that the Arab Revolution is dead and buried, that a "counter-revolutionary period" has begun instead, and that revolutionaries should no longer support the struggle of the freedom fighters. However, as early 2013 we acknowledged that the Arab Revolution has entered a period of setbacks and retreats. In fact, this development does not come as a surprise to Marxists. The RCIT has repeatedly warned about the dangers and limitations of the Arab Revolution. On the second anniversary of the Syrian Revolution, in March 2013, we wrote:

"The ability of the Bashar al-Assad regime to survive so far is largely due to the lack of working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition. There are many local committees that could become Soviets and which are continuing to provide services. But they lack coordination and a revolutionary strategy. Equally, the resistance is still made up of countless formations of loosely connected armed militants, with no credible unified revolutionary command. The fractured character of this armed resistance is a result not only of the social segmentation and isolation policies enforced for decades by Damascus but also because of the class nature of the opposition at the moment. The opposition's failure to mobilize the masses against the regime has given El Assad a breathing space. The extent to which the opposition is fragmented we can learn from the number of groups that act within the opposition: (...) The middle class leaders of the uprising are blaming each other for the failure. The

*seculars blame the Islamists while the Islamists are blaming the secularists. The simple truth is that the middle class organizations – whether they are secularists or Islamists – do not have the program, strategy or tactics to mobilize the masses workers and peasants to overthrow the bloody regime. If the leaders of the opposition hate Assad they are at the same time afraid of working class revolution. If there is a clear lesson to learn it is that without the working class, women and men leading the masses including the lower middle class and without a revolutionary leadership of the working class the stalemate can continue for a longer period."*²³

And in a comprehensive document on the state and perspectives of the Arab Revolution which we adopted in May 2015 we stated:

"While the workers and poor succeeded in some countries – at least temporary – to bring down the old dictatorships and achieving certain democratic rights, nowhere did they succeed in completing the democratic revolution, let alone to get rid of poverty and super-exploitation by the imperialist monopolies and Great Powers. This would only have been possible by making the revolution permanent, as Leon Trotsky – co-leader of the October Revolution together with V.I. Lenin – already explained nearly a century ago. Such a permanent revolution must bear the character of a successful social revolution – combining the struggle for democratic rights with the expropriation of the imperialist monopolies and the domestic bourgeoisie and the destruction of the old, capitalist state apparatus. Hence, it must open the road to the creation of workers' and fallahin republics and the formation of a socialist federation of Maghreb and Mashreq.

Instead, the spontaneous popular uprisings of the Arab Revolution were soon hijacked by various types of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships. Some fostered the illusion that mass struggles can be victorious via peaceful mobilizations and organizing via social networks. Others propagated the orientation to parliamentary democracy and liberalism. Another trend was the orientation towards a combination of bourgeois democracy and a religious agenda (al-Ikhwan, Ennahda). What all these trends had in common was:

i. The refusal to smash the old state apparatus – usually dominated by the bureaucracy of the repression forces and closely aligned with the big domestic capitalists, as well as the imperialist powers.

ii. The acceptance of the ownership of the key sectors of the economy by private corporations.

*The domination of the popular democratic movements by such bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces ensured that they would fail to carry forward the revolutionary process. As a result, the initial revolutionary advances of the workers and poor – leading to the overthrow of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Gaddafi, and Saleh in 2011 – were derailed. In several cases they were contained by new bourgeois regimes. These regimes, while being forced to permit more democratic rights – reflecting the strength of the fighting people – prepared new attacks on the workers and poor on behalf of imperialism (Libya after Gaddafi, Morsi in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunisia, al-Hadi in Yemen). In Bahrain the popular uprising was smashed by the Saudi kingdom on behalf of imperialism in March 2011."*²⁴

Today, more than six years after the beginning of the Arab Revolution, we can summarize the reasons for its defeats and setbacks as follows. First, the uprising of the workers and peasants met a determined campaign of annihilation waged by much stronger enemies: the traditional ruling classes in the region which possess an oversized repressive

apparatus, trained for decades, which was not successfully smashed in the first attempt. In addition, the Arab Revolution faces the opposition of literally *all* imperialist Great Powers – in particular the US, Russia, the EU and China. They all support the reactionary dictatorships like that of General al-Sisi in Egypt and the Gulf monarchies. And, in the case of Assad, Washington has already reconciled itself with his staying in power as the only realistic option to “restore law and order” in Syria. Today there is a looming Great Power conspiracy – in cooperation with regional powers like Iran and Turkey – against the Syrian Revolution, as we see a combined and coordinated attempt by the US administration, Putin, Assad, Erdoğan, the Teheran regime and others to pacify the revolutionary process by a combination of buying off one sector of the rebels’ leadership and by annihilating the uncompromising sector of the rebels.

Furthermore, the Assad regime enjoys massive military and financial support. It can only continue the war because of assistance from Russian imperialism, the Iranian regime and Hezbollah. In fact, it can only survive because of this huge intervention. Iran officially announced in late November, 2016 that more than 1,000 of its soldiers have already died in Syria.²⁵ From this, one can conclude that there must be tens of thousands of soldiers fighting in Iranian militias in Syria. Iranian sources themselves have admitted that 20,000 Shia fighters alone from Afghanistan are engaged in Syria on behalf of Assad.²⁶ The fact is that regular Syrian soldiers constitute only a minority of Assad’s forces, and they are extremely demoralized. According to Mikhail Khodarenok, a retired Russian general, it is the foreign troops and private militias who are doing most of the fighting, while Assad’s official army mans checkpoints to extort bribes from the population. The general comments on *Gazeta.ru*: “It would be easier to disband the Syrian army and recruit a new one.”²⁷

Second, the workers and oppressed started a revolutionary process but lacked a leadership which could drive the struggle forward to victory. The petty-bourgeois liberal forces remained isolated from the downtrodden masses and soon sought to become servants of the imperialist powers and assume the guise of slightly “reformed” versions of the old ruling class (like the old Ben Ali clique in Tunisia led by the current President Beji Caid el-Sebsi). Bourgeois Islamists, like *Ennahda* in Tunisia or Morsi’s *al-Ikhwan* in Egypt, also saved the rule of the capitalist class in the midst of the Arab Revolution by demobilizing the popular masses. And the petty-bourgeois populist Islamists usually led the popular struggles into a sectarian and guerrilla-elitist dead-end (e.g., *Jabhat al-Nusra* and *Ahrar al-Sham* in Syria).

And, third, the international workers’ movement has completely failed to deliver any meaningful support to the revolutionary masses in Syria. Most social democratic, Stalinist or centrist organizations either openly or covertly sympathize with the counterrevolution, or they take a neutral position towards this ongoing revolution. Characteristic of this is the call by a significant sector of the centrists for weapons for Rojava, i.e., the YPG-led Kurdish struggle. But they never called for weapons for the Syrian rebels! Ironically, it is the YPG which is the main collaborator for US (and Russian) imperialism, and not the Syrian rebels!

* * * * *

CWI: refusing to support the Syrian Revolution

Let us now briefly deal with the position of these organizations on the liberation struggle in Syria. The CWI, the FT as well as others combine such failure to recognize the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist powers with an abstentionist, neutral position on the liberation struggle of the Syrian workers and oppressed. While they accept, contrary to the Stalinist fools, that the Syrian Revolution started in 2011 as a legitimate popular uprising, they claim that the liberation struggle soon degenerated into a “sectarian civil war” with no side worthy of support. Such the CWI states:

*“The situations in Iraq and Syria constitute at the moment the epicentre of the crisis engulfing the Middle East. The order inherited from the legacy of imperialism is exploding in the most brutal manner, under the effect of the power struggles for influence taking place between various reactionary forces and regimes. (...) On Syria, some on the international left have wrongly adopted some variant of a “campist” attitude, either by prettifying the -mostly jihadist- armed rebels fighting Assad, or by their apologism for the latter.”*²⁸

*“This is fundamentally a result of the counter-revolution that unfolded in Syria following a genuine mass revolt against the rule of Assad in 2011, inspired by revolutionary movements in Tunisia and Egypt. In the absence of strong, united, working class organisations and a socialist leadership, sectarian and Islamic forces were able to step into the vacuum, aided by reactionary Gulf States and Turkey and by Western powers. This led to the degeneration of the mass revolt into a vicious, multi-faceted civil war.”*²⁹

We have dealt elsewhere with the supposed transformation of the Syrian liberation into a reactionary civil war in detail.³⁰ At this point, we will only state that the abandonment of the popular uprising in Syria just because petty-bourgeois Islamist forces came to leadership is an outrageous and anti-Marxist capitulation to the reactionary wave of Islamophobia which is spreading in nearly all imperialist states around the world – in North America, Western Europe, Russia and China. These centrist deserters of the Syrian Revolution forget (or deny) the fact that various liberation struggles have taken place under a non-revolutionary leadership (including Islamists). We remind our opponents to the armed uprising of the Berber-speaking Rif tribes against French and Spanish imperialism, in northern Morocco led by the Islamist Abd el-Krim in 1921-26 and which was enthusiastically supported by the Communist International.³¹ The same was the case with the *Great Syrian Revolt* led by Sultan Pasha al-Atrash in 1925-27.³² More present day examples are the Chechen liberation struggle against the Russian occupation or the national liberation struggle against the US occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It goes without saying that revolutionaries must not support such Islamist-led liberation wars uncritically. Quite the opposite, they have to explain – as they do in all class struggles where non-revolutionary forces stand at the top – that these forces are incapable of leading the struggle to victory. They must be replaced by a socialist, working class leadership. This is why building a revolutionary party is the most important task all over the world. But constructing such a party is only possible as part of an ongoing liberation struggle and not against or aside of it!

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6 Friedrich Engels: Letter to Franz Mehring (July 14, 1893), in: MECW Vol. 50, p. 164

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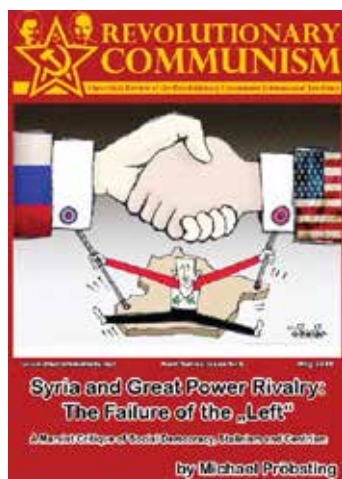
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10 It is remarkable that even the counterrevolutionary and barbarian Daesh hardly applies the genocidal tactics which are so characteristic of the regime and their Russian and Iranian backers.

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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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

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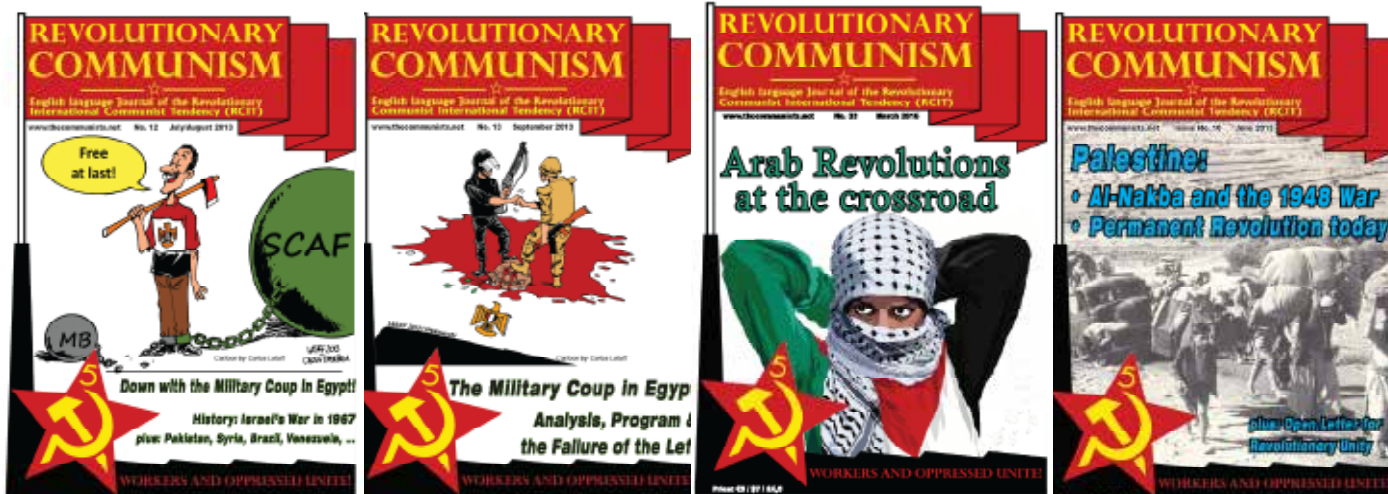
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Publications of the RCIT on the Arab Revolution



Brexit, British Imperialism and the EU: The Need for an Independent and Internationalist Working Class Position

As we elaborated in a recent statement, the RCIT considers Cameron's referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union as a political trap. "*Socialists have to explain that it is in the interest of the working class and the oppressed of Britain to oppose any form of imperialist state. They should refuse to be dragged into giving their support as gullible voters to either of these alternative forms of imperialism. Consequently, the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) and its supporters in Britain call upon workers and oppressed to vote neither YES or NO to UK membership in the EU. Instead, they should write on the ballot: "Neither Brussels, nor Downing Street! For international Unity of the Workers and Oppressed", i.e., effectively abstain in this vote.*"¹

In doing so, the RCIT is upholding the Marxist tradition of taking a defeatist position in any conflict between two imperialist camps. Faced with the alternative between an imperialist nation-state and an imperialist federation, we give preference to neither. Similarly, Marxists don't support any one imperialist state in a conflict with another. Neither do we support a smaller corporation against a bigger one or vice versa. Nor do socialist shop stewards support management in the latter's greedy desire to fuse with another corporation or to sell part of their company to another corporation.

It is a central pillar of the Marxist tradition that the working class be *politically independent* of the bourgeoisie or any one of its factions. This means that workers should refuse to become foot-soldiers for any imperialist camp.

The main issue at the referendum is not a domestic conflict between different parties (UKIP against the government, Labour and Liberal Democrats) or within the Conservative party. Neither is the main issue national independence or the unification of Europe. These are just phrases of the bourgeois protagonists of the rival camps. Nor is the main issue whether people are for or against austerity or for or against racism, because both austerity *and* racism have been implemented for decades in both Britain and the EU. The main issue of the referendum is the alternative between *two different political forms of imperialist state organization* – an imperialist UK within the imperialist EU or outside of it as a junior partner of US imperialism.

In a situation in which two factions of the ruling class try to rally the oppressed classes behind their imperialist banner, it is the paramount duty of Marxists to explain to the working class that it must not lend support to either of these reactionary camps. Instead they must follow the principles of revolutionary defeatism, fight against both proposed alternatives and advocate an internationalist perspective.

Furthermore, in their struggle against both British and EU imperialism socialists should strive to unite with workers and oppressed in other countries. Such an internationalist stand implies that workers in Britain should look for kindred actions and organizations beyond their own national borders which they can support. Similarly, British socialists should strive for multi-national unity between white, Asian, black and migrant workers in their own country. No less, they should mobilize to display solidarity with refugees and migrants and to smash immigration controls.

In the case of the EU referendum, the RCIT calls upon workers and oppressed in Britain to express their internationalist refusal of Cameron's pseudo-alternative by voting neither YES or NO to UK membership in the EU. Instead, as we wrote in our earlier statement cited above, they should write on the ballot: "*Neither Brussels, nor Downing Street! For international Unity of the Workers and Oppressed*", i.e., effectively abstain in this vote.

* * * * *

SPEW/CWI: The Hidden Patriotic "Socialists"

The Socialist Party of England and Wales (SPEW) is a right-centrist organization and the parent section of the *Committee for a Workers International* (CWI). It traditionally adapts to the reformist labor bureaucracy which results in its crude theory espousing the possibility of a peaceful transformation to socialism. One of its positions, for example, is that police men and women are not enemies of the working class but rather part of it ("*workers in uniform*"). SPEW also refuses to defend semi-colonial countries against the military attacks of imperialist powers; and it offers pro-Zionist support for a "socialist" Israel at the side of a Palestinian state.²

From the beginning of the No2EU movement, SPEW has been part of it together with the Stalinists. This is by no means fortuitous, since SPEW adapts to the "UK First" chauvinism of Stalinism. Naturally, as a formally Trotskyist, internationalist organization, it refrains from such openly advocacy of the pound against the euro or of presenting Britain's exit as a kind of "self-rule." Essentially these right-centrists advocate a "lighter" version of the national-centered conception of Stalinism is summarized within the slogan "*the devil resides abroad.*"

Reforming the British State?

Similar to the Stalinist propaganda, SPEW/CWI one-sidedly stresses the capitalist character of the EU as "*a bosses' club.*"

"*The EU is, in the final analysis, a bosses' club, with different wings of capitalism collaborating - like thieves chained together in the same cart - while also striking blows at one another, only differing on how best to defend their own 'national interests' and their system.*"³

It never occurs to these centrists that Britain *too* is "*a bosses' club*" – not an inch less than the EU! It is somehow embarrassing to have to explain to so-called Marxists, that the imperialist nation state is no more than an instrument of monopoly capital. Lenin was absolutely clear on this:

"*In explaining the class nature of bourgeois civilisation, bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system, all socialists have expressed the idea formulated with the greatest scientific precision by Marx and Engels, namely, that the most democratic bourgeois republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists*"⁴

SPEW/CWI stresses again and again that the EU *cannot* be reformed: "*This summarises the position of the left advocates of EU membership: why not try and 'reform the EU' in the interests of the working class? What is never explained is how this is to be achieved.*"⁵

While their position vis-à-vis the EU is obviously true, the tragedy is that SPEW/CWI truly believes that, in contrast to the EU, the imperialist nation state, such as Britain, can be reformed. Peter Taaffe, the central leader of the SPEW/CWI, defended this idea explicitly. In an interview he gave a few years ago in response to the question if there will be a revolution to overthrow capitalism, Taaffe answered:

*"Well yes, a change in society, established through winning a majority in elections, backed up by a mass movement to prevent the capitalists from overthrowing a socialist government and fighting, not to take over every small shop, every betting shop or every street corner shop -- in any case, they are disappearing because of the rise of the supermarkets -- and so on, or every small factory, but to nationalise a handful of monopolies, transnationals now, that control 80 to 85% of the economy."*⁶

And in an educational pamphlet which the CWI publishes on its website another central leader, Lynn Walsh, repeats this idea:

*"Our programme presented the case for 'the socialist transformation of society' - a popularised form of 'socialist revolution'. We use this formulation to avoid the crude association between 'revolution' and 'violence' always falsely made by apologists of capitalism. A successful socialist transformation can be carried through only on the basis of the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class, with the support of other layers, through the most radical forms of democracy. On that basis, provided a socialist government takes decisive measures on the basis of mobilising the working class, it would be possible to carry through a peaceful change of society. Any threat of violence would come, not from a popular socialist government, but from forces seeking to restore their monopoly of wealth, power and privilege by mobilising a reaction against the democratic majority."*⁷

As we see, the CWI doesn't understand the nature of the bourgeois state with its huge machinery – built top down without any democratic control from below – which serves and can only serve the capitalist class. The bourgeois state exists and can only exist to implement the class interests of the bourgeoisie and enforce them against the resistance of the working class and oppressed. The CWI doesn't understand that such machinery is incompatible with serving the working class on its road to socialism. This is why Marxists say that the bourgeois state cannot be reformed but must be smashed by a violent revolution, as we cited above in several quotes taken from Lenin.

So, from adapting to the reformist thesis that the instruments of the bourgeois state can be utilized to introduce socialism, SPEW/CWI concludes "logically" that the imperialist nation state is preferable to an imperialist federation like the EU. Consequently, they defend the British imperialist nation state against the EU as a "lesser evil."⁸

It is certainly true that the formation of a bourgeois nation state in Western Europe was a progressive development. But this was in the early epoch of capitalism when this mode of production had an historically progressive character compared with the feudalism of the middle ages. But this was a long time ago! Today, as we live in the epoch of decaying capitalism, the imperialist nation state has no progressive meaning at all! As we showed above, Lenin made this very clear as early as 1916 when, referring to imperialist countries like Germany, France, and England, he wrote:

"In these countries, which hitherto have been in the van of mankind, particularly in 1789-1871, the process of forming national

*states has been consummated. In these countries the national movement is a thing of an irrevocable past, and it would be an absurd reactionary utopia to try to revive it. The national movement of the French, English, Germans has long been completed. In these countries history's next step is a different one: liberated nations have become transformed into oppressor nations, into nations of imperialist rapine, nations that are going through the "eve of the collapse of capitalism" "*⁹

Does SPEW Suggest Socialists Should Become Better Nationalists?

Shamelessly, the SPEW/CWI goes even further in its adaptation to Stalinist patriotism and flirts with the idea that Britain is a country which somehow is oppressed and exploited by the European Union. In a recently published lengthy article in which the Taaffeites attempt to justify their support for the NO campaign, they even went so far as to compare the current situation of Britain with that of Germany in the 1920s after the Versailles Treaty.

Under the chapter sub-headline "*Vacating the field to the right*", Clive Heemskerck from the SPEW/CWI explains why socialists should not leave the campaign for Britain's exit from the EU to the right-wing populists and fascists.

"Days after the Front National won the 2014 European elections in France, its leader Marine Le Pen claimed she had a mandate to demand that president François Hollande nationalise Alstom, the builder of high-speed TGV trains, "contrary to the rules of the European Union, to save this strategic company" (The Guardian, 28 May 2014).

How would supporters of the EU in the workers' movement respond? By urging workers to accept 'EU rules'? An appeal to the European Commission for 'permission' to save workers' jobs? Or Lenin's advice, not to be bound by treaties that the working class have no responsibility for? (...) [T]he bigger danger is vacating the field to the right within the national terrain. The horrendous debt burdens placed on the workers of Greece and other countries after the crash of 2007-09 – policed in the eurozone by the EU institutions – are not incomparable, as a percentage of GDP, to the burdens imposed by the world war one 'victors' on the German working class and middle classes by the 'war reparations debt' clauses of the Versailles peace treaty. This sense of being 'punished' by the Entente powers of Britain and France was a feature of mass consciousness in Germany and needed to be taken into account by the workers' movement.

Writing in the early 1930s, before the victory of the Nazis in 1933, Leon Trotsky criticised the argument of the Stalinist leader of the German Communist Party (KPD) Ernst Thälmann that what was involved was "primarily a matter of national liberation" as Germany "is today a ball in the hands of the Entente". "France also, and even England", are 'balls' for the US, wrote Trotsky. "This is why the slogan of the Soviet United States of Europe, and not the single bare slogan, 'Down with the Versailles peace', is necessary (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, p102). But, Trotsky insisted, the working class cannot abandon the field to the nationalist right, as its mass organisations – the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the KPD – did in December 1929 when a referendum was promoted by the German National People's Party (DNVP – led by the media baron Alfred Hugenburg) to reject the Young Plan reaffirming German war reparation debts. The KPD abstained in the referendum while the SPD deputies voted for the Young Plan in the Reichstag, 'in support of international law'.

The Nazis participation with the DNVP in the referendum campaign – the first time an important section of the capitalists had collaborated with Hitler – was a factor in their phenomenal surge from 810,000 votes (2.6%) in the May 1928 general election to 6.3 million (18.2%) in September 1930, against the backdrop of the 1929 crash. Analysing the election results, Trotsky concluded that the working class had been given yet another “chance to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader”. Its failure to do so, following the missed opportunities of the previous decade to show it could “change the fate of all its [the nation’s] classes, the petit-bourgeois included”, was paving the way for a terrible reaction (ibid, p59).

The Versailles treaty debts were, of course, backed up by external military force, with French troops invading the Ruhr in 1923. This is not the case with the EU treaties; although the ‘unattributed briefings’ by EU officials that Grexit would necessitate a ‘state of emergency’, invoking spectres in a country with experience of military coups, are an ominous warning of how internal reaction could be ‘legitimised’.”¹⁰

We apologize to our readers for reprinting this long quote from the SPEW/CWI article, but we deem this necessary to demonstrate their political argument. Obviously the SPEW/CWI considers the example of Germany in the 1920s as relevant not only for Greece but also for Britain today and to justify its tactics in the EU referendum. This in itself is a monstrous absurdity! While Germany was an imperialist country in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was certainly a victim of British, French and US imperialism who imposed the draconian Versailles Treaty on it. Under this treaty Germany was forced to pay billions of pounds to the victorious powers. The same treaty served as justification for the military occupation of the Ruhr district in 1923.

While the present situation in Greece indeed includes parallels to Germany at that time, this is not at all the case with imperialist Britain! Britain is a profiteer from the EU, not its victim!

But even if one would accept the SPEW/CWI analogy of Germany in the 1920s with Britain today, the whole logic of the article remains an embarrassing scandal! The author relates the initiative of the extreme nationalist DNVP and the Nazis for a referendum about the Young-Plan (which, in contrast to Britain’s relation with the EU today, was indeed a Western imperialist plan to squeeze more money from Germany as war reparations). He explains how successful this initiative was for the right-wingers since they experienced massive growth in the period after the referendum. He reports that the Communist Party abstained at the referendum and concludes with a quote from Trotsky “that the working class had been given yet another “chance to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader”. Its failure to do so, following the missed opportunities of the previous decade to show it could “change the fate of all its [the nation’s] classes, the petit-bourgeois included”, was paving the way for a terrible reaction.”

In other words, the SPEW/CWI author suggests that the Communist Party should have not abstained in the referendum but should have supported the Nazi initiative by voting against the Young Plan!

As a matter of fact, Trotsky argued exactly the opposite. The last quote from Trotsky – about the need of the working class “to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader” – is taken from another article which doesn’t deal at all with

the Young referendum. Nor does it state any need for communists to support a referendum initiative by right-wing chauvinists.¹¹ It is simply a quote which SPEW/CWI takes completely out of context and misuses to justify its adaptation to British chauvinism.

In contrast to SPEW/CWI, Trotsky denounced the Stalinists for declaring the foreign imperialists as the main enemy of the German working class instead of recognizing that the “main enemy is at home,” i.e., that the main enemy of the German working class is the German bourgeoisie. This would have become obvious if the author would have also quoted what Trotsky wrote immediately before and the quoted statement:

*“The fact is that the former revolutionary worker, Thaelmann, today strives with all his strength not to be outdone by Count Stenbock-Fermor. The report of the meeting of party workers at which Thaelmann proclaimed the turn towards the plebiscite, is printed in **Rote Fahne** under the pretentious title, *Under the Banner of Marxism*. However, at the most prominent place in his conclusion, Thaelmann put the idea that “Germany is today a ball in the hands of the Entente”. It is consequently a matter, primarily, of national liberation. But in a certain sense, France and Italy also, and even England, are “balls” in the hands of the United States. The dependence of Europe upon America, which has once more been revealed so clearly in connection with Hoover’s proposal (tomorrow this dependence will be revealed still more sharply and brutally), has a far deeper significance for the development of the European revolution than the dependence of Germany upon the Entente. This is why – by the way – the slogan of the Soviet United States of Europe, and not the single bare slogan, “Down with the Versailles Peace”, is the proletarian answer to the convulsions of the European continent.*

*But all these questions nevertheless occupy second place. Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a “ball” in the hands of the Entente, but primarily by the fact that the German proletariat, which is split-up, rendered powerless and degraded, is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. “The main enemy – is at home!” Karl Liebknecht taught at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends? Or perhaps this teaching is no longer any good? For Thaelmann, it is very obviously antiquated, Liebknecht is substituted by Scheringer. This is why the title *Under the Banner of Marxism* rings with such bitter irony!”¹²*

As we see, Trotsky’s argument is diametrically opposed to what SPEW/CWI wants us to believe. While SPEW/CWI suggests in its discussion of the Nazi referendum against the Young-Plan that revolutionaries should not “vacate the field to the right”, Trotsky argued that German communists must not support a referendum initiated by right-wing chauvinists against foreign imperialists. They must rather see the German imperialists as their main enemy.

Trotsky’s approach was exactly the opposite of what SPEW/CWI is advocating today. Yet the latter unabashedly try to falsify Trotsky’s writings to support their own position. SPEW/CWI views EU imperialists as more dangerous enemies than British imperialists. Likewise, the German Stalinists viewed the British, French and American imperialists as more dangerous than their German colleagues. This is why SPEW/CWI supports Britain’s exit from the EU as the German Stalinists supported Germany’s rejection of the Young-Plan. This is why SPEW/CWI supports the NO campaign even though this campaign is the initiative of and is controlled by the right-wing Tories and

UKIP. However, the Stalinist Communist Party of the time did not dare support such a reactionary policy as does that support by SPEW/CWI today, but rather and correctly called for a vote of abstention in the referendum – even though the Young Plan *did* represent a direct attack on the German working class and was not “simply” a referendum about membership in a imperialist federation. While the Stalinist bureaucracy later condemned the KPD’s refusal to take part in the Young Plan referendum as an error, Trotsky and the Fourth International never did so.¹³

Predicting the Imminent Collapse of the EU ... for Four Decades!

Peter Taaffee and his CWI have traditionally supported the preference of imperialist nation states to a European federation. They called for Britain’s exit from the then federation in the 1975 referendum and have opposed the entry of all European countries into the EU since then. For decades four decades (1) they have hoped to underpin their position by predicting the imminent collapse of the EU and later of the Euro! As we showed above, they incorrectly cite Lenin, like the Stalinists, by acclaiming that any form of European unification is utopian.

*“The EMU [European Monetary Union] project will break down in fact. (...) It is not a question of ‘if’ the euro will break down, but only of ‘when’ and ‘how’.”*¹⁴

*“The Single European Act (‘the single market’), various EU legislation and uniform regulations, tax-harmonisation, etc. have acted as means of stimulating further integration inside the EU. This, together with the political consensus established throughout Europe during the 1990s, has given rise to the illusion that EU is on its way to become a ‘super-state’. This is certainly not the case. The new global crisis has already to some extent halted the process of globalisation.”*¹⁵

17 years after these words were written – and SPEW/CWI has made this dire prediction many times before and after then – the EU and the Euro not only still exist but have substantially deepened their political and economic integration.

In his recent programmatic statement on the EU referendum, SPEW leader Peter Taaffee repeats the same argument without answering why his groups’ prediction have not materialized in the past decades.

*“This even generated the illusion amongst many, including some Marxists, that unification of the continent was possible on a capitalist basis. But the Socialist Party insisted that the European capitalists could never succeed in completely overcoming the barrier of private ownership of industry on the one side and national states on the other.”*¹⁶

However, Taaffee & Co not only predicted that *“the European capitalists could never succeed in completely overcoming the barrier of private ownership of industry on the one side and national states on the other.”* They also predicted the imminent collapse of the EU and the Euro.

With the self-confidence of a political autistic, Taaffee writes that the EU and the Euro are already about to break down: *“This was reflected in a spiralling of growth that lasted for an unprecedented 25 years between 1950 and 1975! The advent of neoliberalism – characterized by colossal intensification of the exploitation of the working class, low-paid part-time jobs instead of high paid and permanent jobs, etc - greatly reinforced this process. Many were thrown off balance by this development and*

*swallowed the illusion that capitalism could complete the process and unify Europe. The establishment of the eurozone seemed to reinforce this. But the onset of the economic crisis, as the Socialist Party predicted, saw the exact opposite take place with the re-emergence of national divisions and nationalism with a pronounced tendency towards the eventual breakup of the eurozone itself. The introduction of the euro was utopian in its aim of establishing a lasting common currency, something that could only be possible on the basis of a ‘political union’, which has not and will not happen.”*¹⁷

This is complete nonsense. Taaffee obviously assumes that his readers are not aware of his “predictions” during the past decades. He writes that the EU could only deepen its integration in the period of the boom. Once the boom ended, the EU and the eurozone became doomed. (*“the onset of the economic crisis, as the Socialist Party predicted, saw the exact opposite take place with the re-emergence of national divisions and nationalism with a pronounced tendency towards the eventual breakup of the eurozone itself”*). But the end of the boom was as early as the early 1970s, as Taaffee’s organization themselves loudly proclaimed many times. Since the 1970s the integration of the EU has deepened, contrary to Taaffee’s fanciful “predictions.” 13 years after the introduction of the Euro, Taaffee still proclaims it as “utopian”! And he proclaims that a political union of the EU *“has not and will not happen”*. But why should the stronger European great powers (like Germany and France) and the monopoly capitalists not be able to “unite” parts of Europe or even most of Europe – of course not on the basis of equality but on the basis of subordination and domination?! Why should this be excluded IF the alternative for the other European capitalists is annihilation on the world market and IF they would lose much more in the case of a collapse of the Euro and the EU than in the case of deepening the integration?!

SPEW/CWI still tries to downplay the EU simply as a temporary agreement or treaty.

*“The EU, fundamentally, is only an agreement between the different national capitalist classes of Europe, with the aim of creating the largest possible arena for the big European multinational corporations to conduct their hunt for profits with the least possible hindrance. Each treaty, from the 1957 Treaty of Rome that created the European Economic Community (EEC) onwards, has developed and enhanced a Europe-wide market, with pan-European regulations and commercial law.”*¹⁸

In fact, the EU is not *only* a commercial project but a project for a political, economic, and military federation. What SPEW/CWI and many others don’t understand is that the European integration, i.e., the formation of a political and economic federation (a “super-state”), is the only chance for the European monopoly capitalists to withstand the increasing pressure of rivaling great powers on the world market and in global politics. As we have explained elsewhere, this is the fundamental cause of the overwhelming drive of the monopoly bourgeoisie in the main imperialist countries to advance the EU integration.¹⁹

What we have always and continue to insist on is that the EU could of course potentially collapse and split into its nation state components. This would naturally constitute a tremendous economic blow for the European states, given the overwhelming competition of the US, China, Japan, and perhaps even Russia. Yet another possibility is that the EU will indeed split apart but be replaced by a

smaller variant of European unification – a kind of “core Europe” coalesced around Germany. Or, in fact, Germany and France may succeed in bringing about the creation of a pan-European super-state. Naturally steps in this direction of a (smaller or bigger) European imperialist super-state will go hand in hand with vicious attacks on the working class – as would happen no less so if the nation states which leave the EU and are forced to survive alone on the world market.

Similarly, it is clear that any unification of Europe (or parts of it) would not be an organic, harmonious process. Rather, as we already pointed out some time ago, such a process would be undemocratic in character and would be linked with the creation of a Bonapartist pan-European state apparatus

“The process of European unification cannot be a “spontaneous” process – either on the political or on the economic level. Left to the market there will be no spontaneous emergence of a pan-European capital. We do not live in a period of rising capitalism where nation states are formed and capital first and foremost expands with them. We live in the era of globalization and neo-liberalism. Left to the market, the process of Europeanization of capital would be constantly disrupted and negated by mergers and acquisitions carried out by Japanese or US companies. Today, in the imperialist epoch, under the conditions of global capitalism with its enormous competition and rivalry, any organic formation of trans-national capital is an illusion. Let’s not forget: the most multinational capital blocs are those of the leading world powers – the Americans and, on a smaller scale, the British, as the former leading world power, who were able to open the markets with their huge combined economic, political and military power. Such a process is impossible inside the European Union. No power is strong enough to enforce its will and subordinate the others. So, European unification and the creation of pan-European capital have to be the result of a conscious intervention by a pan-European imperialist state apparatus. However, that, too, has first to be created and since, unlike any other state, it will not be the political instrument of an already existing ruling class, rooted in a national society, its creation can only result from the conscious decision of the existing imperialist states within the EU. That requires at least the major powers to each accept that its own interest lies in ceding power to the higher, pan-European body. Only the certainty that the

*alternative would be economic ruin could force them to this decision and, thus, it is precisely the overwhelming superiority of the US, by comparison with any individual European power, which is the principal unifying force in European politics. The need for a unified political EU state apparatus becomes even more evident if one looks at the meager role Europe plays in world politics, not to mention its inability to play any role as a world policeman or to impose its interests around the globe.”*²⁰

Hence, we concluded:

*“So, in effect, the new Constitution creates an imperialist EU state apparatus on the basis of bourgeois parliamentarism but with a strong Bonapartist element in the form of the European Commission.”*²¹

However, SPEW/CWI is incapable of understanding this process because it has always viewed the existence of the EU (respectively its predecessor institutions) as an unnatural agreement which was destined to quickly collapse. Thus, Taaffee and his collaborators have a lot of explaining to do regarding why this “unnatural agreement” has now held out for more than 60 years – if we take the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 as the beginning – and is increasingly deepening its integration.

Footnotes

1 See RCIT: Boycott Cameron’s Trap: Neither Brussels, nor Downing Street! For Abstention in Britain’s EU-Referendum! For international Unity and Struggle of the Workers and Oppressed! Fight against both British as well as European Imperialism! Forward to the United Socialist States of Europe, 2 August 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/eu-referendum-in-uk/>

2 For the RCIT’s critique of the CWI see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, Vienna 2013, chapter 13, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/great-robbery-of-south-online/download-chapters-1/chapter13/>, Michael Pröbsting: The CWI’s “Socialist” Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle. A Reply from the RCIT, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 27, 15.9.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/cwi-and-israel/>, Michael Pröbsting: Five days that shook Britain but didn’t wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward; in: RCIT: Revolutionary Communism No. 1, (September 2011), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/>

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Written by Michael Pröbsting
(International Secretary of the RCIT)



3 Peter Taaffe: European Union referendum: No to a capitalist EU, Yes to a socialist Europe! Socialist Party General Secretary, The Socialist newspaper, 3 June 2015, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/20815>

4 V.I. Lenin: Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1919); in: LCW 28, p. 458

5 Clive Heemskerck: Britain: Socialists and the EU referendum. How should socialists approach the in-or-out EU debate? Socialist Party (CWI in England & Wales), in: Socialist Review Issue 190 (July/August 2015), 3.7.2015, <http://www.socialistworld.net/doc/7267>

6 The Socialist Party's history – The Militant Tendency, The Socialist, 29th June 2006, http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/html_article/2006-446-militant

7 Lynn Walsh: The State – A Marxist Programme and Transitional Demands; in: Marxism and the State – An Exchange by Michael Wainwright and Lynn Walsh, <http://www.socialistalternative.org/literature/state/>

8 From the same reformist logic SPEW/CWI also claims that police are “workers in uniform” and that it is sufficient to call for their “democratic control” instead of advocating the formation of self-defense units which can be transformed into armed workers and popular militias in revolutionary situations. Unsurprisingly SPEW even has members among the trade union of the prison officers – the *Prison Officers' Association* – like the then POA General Secretary Brian Caton who joined the SPEW in 2009!

The position of SPEW/CWI is clearly wrong, contradicts the classic Marxist position, and is entirely inconsistent with the experience of the labor movement over more than 150 years. The only role of the police is to control and oppress the working class – like low-level managers in a business. Neither low-level management nor the police directly or indirectly creates or distributes value in any form. They are paid parasites and thugs of capitalism. They are part of the middle layers and not of the working class. It doesn't matter if the origins of an individual policeman or policewoman are in the working class. Not the past but the present and the foreseeable future are what is decisive. This is why Trotsky thought any idea of police being “workers in uniform” is ridiculous:

„The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker. Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi

students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain.“ (Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, <http://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/next01.htm#s1>)

9 V. I. Lenin: A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism; in: LCW Vol. 23, p.38

10 Clive Heemskerck: Britain: Socialists and the EU referendum

11 The quote is taken from Trotsky's article *The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany*, September 1930.

12 Leon Trotsky: Against National Communism! Lessons of the 'Red' Referendum (1931), in: The Militant, Vol. IV No. 24 (Whole No. 83), 19 September 1931, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/08/natcom1.htm>

13 Jane Degras: The Communist International 1919-1943. Documents. Volume III 1929-1943, p. 101

14 CWI: Resolution on World Relations (1998), in: Global Turmoil. Capitalist Crisis – A Socialist Alternative. Resolutions and conclusions of the 7th World Congress of the Committee for a Workers International held in November 1998, CWI Publications, London 1999, p. 26

15 CWI: Resolution 'Europe at a turning point' (1998), in: Global Turmoil ..., p. 107

16 Peter Taaffe: European Union referendum: No to a capitalist EU, Yes to a socialist Europe!

17 Peter Taaffe: European Union referendum: No to a capitalist EU, Yes to a socialist Europe!

18 Clive Heemskerck: Britain: Socialists and the EU referendum. How should socialists approach the in-or-out EU debate?

19 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: 'Americanise or bust'. Contradictions and challenges of the imperialist project of European unification (2004), in: Fifth International Vol.1, No.2, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-imperialism-americanise-or-bust/>; Michael Pröbsting: Die Frage der Vereinigung Europas im Lichte der marxistischen Theorie, ...; Michael Pröbsting: The EU Reform Treaty: what it is and how to fight it (2008), in: Fifth International Vol.3, No.1, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/eu-reform-treaty/>

20 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: 'Americanise or bust' ..., p. 9-10

21 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: 'Americanise or bust' ..., pp. 12-13

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Perspectives for Building of the Revolutionary World Party Today

1. The defeats which the workers and oppressed have suffered in recent years are the result of the terrible betrayal by their leaders who have led the struggles into a dead-end. The left reformists (like SYRIZA in Greece, the French Communist Party, and the Brazilian PCdoB) and the *Castro-Chavistas* in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc., have exchanged governmental posts and financial subsidies for the interests of the workers and poor. Various Islamist forces have either revealed their bourgeois nature when they saved the rule of the capitalist class in the midst of the Arab Revolution by demobilizing the popular masses (e.g., *Ennahda* in Tunisia or Morsi's *al-Ikhwan* in Egypt), or they showed their petty-bourgeois populist character as they led the popular struggles into a sectarian and guerrilla-elitist dead-end (e.g. *Jabhat al-Nusra* and *Ahrar al-Sham* in Syria). And the centrists have proven their role as an appendix of the labor bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie intelligentsia, as they usually lend support to the reformists and, in numerous cases, even to outright anti-democratic reaction and imperialist aggression.

2. The only way out of this dead-end is the creation of a new Revolutionary World Party on the basis of a Transitional Program adapted to the requirements and challenges of the present international class struggle. While such a party cannot be created out of the blue, without necessary preparation, there can be no doubt that revolutionaries must work energetically for its quickest possible formation. To be more precise, all authentic revolutionaries should, *as soon as possible*, hold an *international conference* in order to discuss close and systematic collaboration and, if possible, unification into a single organization on the basis of a program for the world class struggle during the current period. Such unification would represent a significant step forward for the authentic Bolsheviks and thereby enable a strengthening of those forces which are the sole ones capable of playing the role as the *driving force* in the future creation of such a Revolutionary World Party.¹

3. As the RCIT has repeatedly stressed, the struggle for the formation of a new world party must avoid all the strategic failures which are so widespread among the centrist left. We must not opportunistically strive towards the "*unification of the left*" (i.e., of reformists, centrists and revolutionaries) or the "*unification of the Trotskyists on the basis of the Transitional Program of 1938*" (i.e., of those who support the Syrian Revolution against Assad and those who don't; of those who lend support to the military struggle of Afghan people against the imperialist occupiers and those who don't; of those who side with Russia and China against the US and those who don't; etc.). Such unification could only be unprincipled in character, as it would represent agreement not on the central issues of the international class struggle, but only on some abstract general formulae which cannot provide any guidance for the struggles today. It is hardly accidental that all the "left unity" projects of past years ended in failure and tears.

4. No, instead of looking to "*the left*," i.e., the labor bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie intelligentsia, authentic revolutionaries orient themselves towards the new, militant layers from the working class and the oppressed

who are looking for a program and a strategy that will enable them to effectively and consistently fight exploitation and oppression. As we noted in a past document: "*Those who wish to develop in a revolutionary direction must break from an orientation towards the centrist and left-reformist swamp and look to root themselves in the healthy, militant proletarian milieu. This does not mean that revolutionaries should ignore the reformist parties or the centrist groups. The policy of the united front tactic remains in full force as well as the need for a hard struggle to remove these revisionists' influence in the workers vanguard. But in the first line the RCIT orientates towards new militants and initiatives from the ranks of the workers and the oppressed. From these layers only, new promising forces and a new dynamic will come. And such developments might affect healthier elements from the ranks of left-reformism and centrism and help them to break with the revisionists' rotten method. Revolutionaries have to understand in depth that not only has capitalism entered a new historic period of massive instability and sharp turns, but the international workers' movement has done so too. No stone is left unturned. Those forces, who don't understand the character of the period and its corresponding tasks, are doomed to degenerate more and more and get pushed to the right. For those forces, however, who are coming closer to an understanding of the sharply antagonistic nature of the present period, who are willing to join the masses in their struggles – in particular the lower strata of the working class and the oppressed – without arrogantly sneering about their "backward consciousness" and who are at the same time determined to fight intransigently for the revolutionary program and who ruthlessly attack the reformist and centrist traitors – those forces can revolve themselves and play a healthy and utterly positive role in the struggle to build the new World Party of Socialist Revolution. Being aware of the limitations of historic analogies, one has to see that to a certain degree the present period bears similarities to the years after the outbreak of World War I in 1914. In this period the workers' movement went through sharp crises, splits and transformations. In this period the rottenness of the centrist majority of the Second International – which already existed before 1914 but was less obvious – came to full light. The orientation and tactics of Lenin and his supporters are highly instructive for the Bolshevik-Communists today."*²

5. Building a revolutionary world party today demands breaking with any orientation towards the petty-bourgeoisie intelligentsia and the labor aristocracy which – particularly in the imperialist metropolises – are connected via numerous material and ideological bonds with the capitalist system and which makes them infested with all possible anti-revolutionary prejudices. No, the revolutionary party can and must be built amongst the non-aristocratic mass of the proletariat or – to put it in Trotsky's words – "*the unprivileged working masses*" who have nothing to lose but their chains.³ This has always been the strategic orientation of Bolshevism as Trotsky explained: "*The strength and meaning of Bolshevism consists in the fact that it appeals to oppressed and exploited masses and not to the upper strata of the working class.*"⁴

6. As crucial as Marxist theory and program is for a revolutionary organization, it does not replace the importance of exemplary mass work and participation in the struggles of the popular masses. Only such fusion of theory and practice will enable revolutionaries to demonstrate their program to the fighting workers vanguard. Such an understanding is not only relevant for full-fledged parties

but also for small pre-party communist groups.

7. Likewise, one of the chief tasks of revolutionaries today is to openly name and attack the obstacles for the class struggle which operate *inside* the working class movement, i.e. those forces which mislead the working class and its vanguard – the labor bureaucracy, reformists, centrists, official leadership of the oppressed, etc. The victory of the proletariat in its struggle for liberation against the capitalist exploiter class will be impossible to achieve if the revolutionary party does not first defeat the influence of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces inside the working class and among the oppressed. James P. Cannon, the historic leader of American Trotskyism, once stated: “*The strength of capitalism is not in itself and its own institutions; it survives only because it has bases of support in the organizations of the workers. As we see it now, in the light of what we have learned from the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers’ organizations, including the party.*”⁵ Numerous reformists and centrists condemn the Bolshevik-Communists’ approach of openly attacking erroneous programs and deceptive leaderships as “sectarian.” In contrast to them, we draw the lesson from the Bolsheviks’ successful building of a party which could lead the working class to victory that such a clear demarcation of what is right and what is wrong is the imperative precondition for organizing the workers’ vanguard on a solid communist program. Hence, the task of the revolutionary party is to fight politically against the reformist and centrist forces in order to push back and finally liquidate their influence.

8. Of particular importance today is the determination of revolutionaries to think and to act as internationalists not only in terms of program but also in terms of organization. Hence, our movement has always acted on the basis of Trotsky’s understanding that a revolutionary organization – particularly in the epoch of imperialism – *can only exist as an international organization*. Like the founder of the Fourth International we insist on the principle that a Bolshevik organisation must be *an international organisation from the beginning*. This principle is rooted in the nature of capitalism and of the working class which both are international in their essence. Only as an international organisation we can develop a truly internationalist outlook, internalise international experience and work as internationalist revolutionaries. If a group exists for too long as a national organisation it runs into serious danger to develop a national-centred experience and viewpoint. Hence we strongly reject the understanding of numerous nationally isolated organizations who put a priority of first building a strong national organization and only later to turn towards building an international organizations. Such an understanding unavoidable leads to national-centred deformations and programmatic deviations. Trotsky emphasised such an understanding many times. “*It is necessary to understand first of all that really independent workers’ parties – independent not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of both bankrupt Internationals – cannot be built unless there is a close international bond between them, on the basis of the same principles, and provided there is a living interchange of experience and vigilant mutual control. The notion that national parties (which ones? on what basis?) must be established first, and coalesced only later into a new International (how will a com-*

mon principled basis then be guaranteed?) is a caricature of the history of the Second International: the First and Third Internationals were both built differently. But today, under the conditions of the imperialist epoch, after the proletarian vanguard of all countries in the world has passed through many decades of a colossal and common experience, including the experience of the collapse of the two Internationals, it is absolutely unthinkable to build new, Marxist, revolutionary parties, without direct contact with the same work in other countries. And this means the building of the Fourth International.”⁶

9. In another article Trotsky wrote: “*From its very first steps the Opposition must therefore act as an international faction – as did the Communists in the days of the publication of the ‘Communist Manifesto’, or in the Zimmerwald Left at the beginning of the war. In all these cases the groups were for the most part small numerically or it was a matter of isolated individuals; but they nevertheless acted as an international organization. In the epoch of imperialism such a position is a hundred times more imperative than in the days of Marx. Those who believe that the International Left will someday take shape as a simple sum of national groups, and that therefore the international unification can be postponed indefinitely until the national groups “grow strong,” attribute only a secondary importance to the international factor and by this very reason take the path of national opportunism. It is undeniable that each country has greatest peculiarities of its own; but in our epoch these peculiarities can be assayed and exploited in a revolutionary way only from an internationalist point of view. On the other hand, only an international organization can be the bearer of an international ideology. Can anyone seriously believe that isolated Oppositional national groups, divided among themselves and left to their own resources, are capable of finding the correct road by themselves? No, this is a certain path to national degeneration, sectarianism, and ruin. The tasks facing the International Opposition are enormously difficult. Only by being indissolubly tied together, only by working out answers jointly to all current problems, only by creating their international platform, only by mutually verifying each one of their steps, that is, only by uniting in a single international body, will the national groups of the Opposition be able to carry out their historic task.*”⁷

10. The centrist conception of building a new World Party via the road of long-term alliances of different national Trotskyist organizations without a common program and without an internationalist democratic centralist modus operandi is hardly any better. Such a conception might enable the different organizations to *pretend* acting as Trotskyist internationalists. Such *international federalism* is in fact just another version of national Trotskyism. In fact, behind such international federalism usually disguises deep differences on theoretical and programmatic issues. A practical example for such a conception is the *Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International* (which includes the Argentinean PO, the Greek EEK, the Turkish DIP and the Italian PCL). Despite its long existence since 2004 it lacks until now both a joint program as well as an acting international leadership. In fact it hardly organizes any international conferences at all which is the only way to avoid the clash of numerous political differences between its various components. Trotsky was also faced with similar political formations in the person of the so-called “London Bureau” which included a number of national parties like the German SAP, the British ILP, the Norwegian NAP and later also the

Spanish POUM. He strongly condemned this international federation as thoroughly unprincipled and centrist: “As a matter of fact, the wretched balance sheet of the conference is to be explained not by lack of time but by the heterogeneity of its composition, with its preponderance of right-centrist combinationists. The very same heterogeneity distinguishes “some” of the parties that adhere to the IAG. Hence flows the internal need for not touching upon the most acute, i.e., the most important and undeferrable questions. The sole principle of the IAG is to keep mum about principles. Let us recall that the international plenum of the Bolshevik-Leninists in its resolution of September 13, 1933, made the following evaluation of the previous IAG conference held in August 1933: “There cannot be even talk, of course, that the new International can be built by organizations that proceed from profoundly different and even antagonistic bases ... As regards the decisions that were passed by the variegated majority of the conference and that are utterly pervaded with the seal of this variegated assortment, the plenum of the Bolshevik-Leninists deems it impossible to assume any political responsibility for these decisions.” *Whoever cherishes no illusions does not have to lose them subsequently!*”⁸

11. Naturally, the alternative to these variations of national Trotskyism is not organized international centrism like the Morenoite LIT or UIT, Alan Woods IMT, Peter Taaffe's CWI, the Cliffite IST or the Mandelist FI which have all once again demonstrated their rottenness in the face of the class battles of the past years. Authentic Bolsheviks must rather wage an intransigent political and ideological struggle against these organizations as they represent an obstacle to the creation of a Revolutionary World Party. The path of building such a party must be on the road of the method which Trotsky elaborated in the *Transitional Program* in 1938: “*The Fourth International declares uncompromising war on the bureaucracies of the Second, Third, Amsterdam and Anarcho-syndicalist Internationals, as on their centrist satellites; on reformism without reforms; democracy in alliance with the GPU; pacifism without peace; anarchism in the service of the bourgeoisie; on “revolutionists” who live in deathly fear of revolution. All of these organizations are not pledges for the future, but decayed survivals of the past. The epoch of wars and revolutions will raze them to the ground.*”⁹

12. Trotsky once observed, when putting together a balance sheet of his struggle to build the Fourth International, that the old generations have been mostly exhausted because of the series of defeats of the proletariat and the repeated betrayals of the social democrats, Stalinists and centrists. He concluded that the future of the World Party rests on new generations and the youth in particular.¹⁰ This is even truer today, as the past decades have witnessed unprecedented defeats for workers struggles along with various forms of ideological confusion and distortions in the name of “Marxism.” We confirm our statement in the RCIT's program: “*Strictly speaking, our class has not possessed a vanguard party since the middle of the 20th century. In this deep crisis of leadership - combined with the possibilities of the imperialist bourgeoisie for the systematic bribery of the labour bureaucracy and aristocracy - the ultimate cause can be found in the extraordinary bourgeoisification of the labour movement and the De-revolutionisation of Marxism, as it has been distorted by left reformism, centrism and the left-wing academics in recent decades.*”¹¹

13. In our opinion, revolutionaries all over the world should immediately start collaborating in laying the

foundations for a principled unification so that we drive forward the process of creating a new World Party with stronger forces. The starting point for the creation of such a party has to be agreement on the most important issues of the global class struggle. (See below the RCIT's document “6 Points for Revolutionary Unity”)

Footnotes

1 On the RCIT's history and understanding of party building see e.g., Michael Pröbsting: *Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice*. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism (2014), in: Revolutionary Communism No. 29 and 30, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>

2 RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists (March 2013). Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 8, p. 42, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013/>

3 Leon Trotsky: The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism (1935), in: Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35, p. 181

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

5 James P. Cannon: E.V. Debs (1956); in: James P. Cannon: The First Ten Years of American Communism, Pathfinder Press, New York 1962, p. 270

6 Leon Trotsky: The ILP and the Fourth International (1935), in: Trotsky Writings 1935-36, p. 143

7 Leon Trotsky: An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund (1930); in: Trotsky Writings 1930, pp. 91-92, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/02/leninbund.htm>

8 Leon Trotsky: Centrist Alchemy or Marxism? (1935), in: Trotsky Writings 1934-35, p. 261 (Emphasis in the original)

9 Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Transitional Program (1938); in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, pp. 147-148

10 On this, see e.g., Leon Trotsky: Fighting Against The Stream (1939), in: Trotsky Writings 1938-39, pp. 249-259

11 RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2012), p. 24, <http://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>

Great Tasks demand Great Initiative!

A Call to All Revolutionary Organizations and Activists to Fulfill Our Responsibility in this Historic Time!

Open Letter from the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 7 January 2019

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters!

We are living in historic times. Everyone with open eyes can see that the imperialist world order is in severe turmoil. We are heading towards a political volcano eruption.

The *stock markets are in panic*, reflecting the capitalists' fear of another, imminent Great Recession which will be even worse this time than in 2008/09.

The *tensions between the imperialist Great Powers are rapidly accelerating* as indicated by the looming Global Trade War, the tensions in the South China Sea, at the Russian-Ukrainian border, the new imperialist scramble for Africa, etc. President Trump's decision to withdraw substantial numbers of U.S. troops from the Middle East and his admission that the U.S. cannot continue to be "*the policeman of the world*" reflect the official end of the absolute domination of the former super-power. Only a political blind can ignore that the future will be decisively shaped by the rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, the EU, Russia and Japan.

At the same time we are at the beginning of a *new global wave of liberation struggles of the workers and oppressed*. The current popular uprising in Sudan, the ongoing liberation struggle of the heroic Syrian people against the tyranny of Assad, the mass protests in Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan and Iran, the steadfast Palestinian people resisting the Zionist oppressor, the powerful "*Yellow Vests*" movement in France which is inspiring similar movements all over the world (as far as Taiwan!), the protesting low-income workers in Hungary, the popular insurrection in Nicaragua, ... all these are powerful signs that we are facing a massive upturn of the international class struggle!

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters! No one should be surprised about these events. This is a complete confirmation of the prognoses which Marxists have repeatedly developed in the past years. We have pointed out since years that the laws of motion of class antagonism in the present historic period must inevitable result in such a development.

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* says straightforwardly that each and every one of us bears a great responsibility in such a period! We have seen numerous heroic mass struggles in the past years. Remember the Arab Revolution since 2011 which has given so many martyrs! Remember the mass movements in Latin America struggling for social justice! Remember the South African miners fighting against super-exploitation! Remember the Indian workers and poor peasants launching several general strikes with the biggest number of participants in history! And these are only a few examples!

But all these impressive struggles have suffered major setbacks and terrible defeats! Why? Because the workers and oppressed have lacked an authentic revolutionary leadership! Because they have been disorientated by various bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, reformist and centrist

forces! Because the workers and oppressed are misled by parties which talk about "liberation" or even "socialism" but which, in their deeds, are treacherously serving one or another imperialist Great Power or which are looking for a quick road to enter the system of capitalist power!

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters! The time has come to draw conclusions and to act! Great tasks demand great initiative! Do not wait for others, do not hope for "*favorable situations*" in the future! All this is nothing but a "socialist" version of resignation to fate. Such superstition is unworthy of authentic revolutionaries! Each and every one of us is obligated to exercise one's responsibility *now!*

It is *our responsibility* to free the worker and oppressed from such corrupting and bankrupt forces! It is *our responsibility* to provide the masses with a leadership which understands the dynamic of the world situation and which draws the consequential conclusions from this! It is *our responsibility* to organize the best, most dedicated fighters on the basis of a program of struggle and to unite them in a joint international organization! It is *our responsibility* to build a *Revolutionary World Party* which can replace the Stalinist, Bolivarian, reformist and pseudo-Trotskyist bankrupts! This is the only way to help the vanguard of the workers and oppressed to find the correct path of the liberation struggle!

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters! In order to meet the great tasks ahead, we must overcome routine, national-centeredness and complacency! We must join forces now in order to advance building a *Revolutionary World Party* with sections in each country! Such a party should be based on a program of struggle for the period ahead, a program which combines each and every struggle with the strategic goal – for the socialist world revolution!

In the last one and a half years the RCIT has intensified its efforts to expand and deepen its collaboration with other revolutionary forces. Today we have sections, activists and fraternal organizations in 18 countries all over the world. Last year, we have launched joint statements on crucial world events (see e.g. *May Day 2018 Statement*, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/may-day-2018-joint-statement/>; *Warmongering in the Middle East*, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/joint-statement-warmongering-in-the-middle-east/>; *Global Trade War: No to Great Power Jingoism in West and East!* <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-the-looming-global-trade-war/>). Our comrades are spreading the ideas of revolutionary socialism and are actively participating in the class struggles (see e.g. various reports on our activities on a special subpage of the RCIT website, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/activities-on-the-ground/>, as well as on various websites of the RCIT sections).

We are aware that these are still only modest achievements compared with the big tasks ahead. But it is a beginning and it helps us to be better prepared for the tu-

multuous world situation ahead! It is urgent that we join forces together – by practical collaboration, discussion and clarification of possible differences, etc. – in order to move forward *together* and to *build revolutionary unity on an international level*.

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters! We have no time to lose! The coming months and years will inevitable provoke gigantic battles and political volcano eruptions! It is urgent that revolutionaries around the world achieve a higher level of unity. Below we reissue a slightly actualized version of the RCIT's *Six Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today* which we published in February 2018. This is our proposal for a joint program of struggle in the current period. However, we are open to discuss any amendments or alternative platforms. We call all revolutionary organizations and activists around the world to contact us and to jointly elaborate plans for closer international collaboration! If you have proposals and suggestions for joint international campaigns in solidarity with liberation struggles, we welcome you to contact us! Please inform us about YOUR campaigns, YOUR ideas and initiatives for revolutionary unity! We plan to organize an international Skype conference of all those who agree on such joint work.

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters! Great tasks demand great initiative! Let us jointly tackle the great tasks of the year 2019! Let us join forces to march forward!

Unity – Struggle – Victory!

* * * * *

Six Points for a Platform of Revolutionary Unity Today

*A Proposal from the Revolutionary Communist
International Tendency (RCIT)*

We are living in a world of rapidly accelerating contradictions and sudden turns. As capitalism is decaying, the capitalist robbers try to raise their wealth by aggressively attacking the working class and the oppressed, by increasingly destroying the environment and, at the same time, by aggravating their rivalry against each other. The survival of humanity is endangered with the uncontrolled climate change and the accelerating rivalry between the Great Powers which creates the danger of an imperialist World War III. This is why we say that the alternative is "*Socialism or Stone Age!*"

This dramatic situation makes the organized struggle for socialism more necessary than ever. This means that the working class and the oppressed must have a party dedicated to the international struggle for a socialist future!

In our opinion, it is highly urgent that revolutionaries all over the world immediately start collaborating in laying the foundations for a principled unification, so that we drive forward the process of creating a new Revolutionary World Party with stronger forces. The starting point for the creation of such a party has to be agreement on the most important issues of the global class struggle. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* considers the following issues as such programmatic key-stones in the present political phase:

1) Recognition of the Accelerating Rivalry between the Imperialist Great Powers – the US, EU, Japan, Russia and China

It is *only* possible to understand the driving dynamic of the present period of capitalist crisis and to take a correct position if one recognizes the imperialist character not only of the US, EU and Japan but also of the new emerging powers, Russia and China. Only on such a basis is it possible to arrive at the only correct, anti-imperialist program on this issue – *proletarian internationalism* and *revolutionary defeatism*, i.e., the perspective of consistent struggle of the working class independent of and against *all* imperialist powers. This means that revolutionaries refuse to lend support to *any* Great Power in inter-imperialist conflicts under the slogan "*The main enemy is at home!*"

A similar approach is necessary when India enters into a conflict with imperialist China, as India – a non-imperialist regional power – acts under such circumstances as a proxy for US imperialism.

Those who fail to recognize the reactionary and imperialist character of these Great Powers will inevitable fail to take a consistent anti-imperialist, i.e. Marxist, line and will end up, consciously or unconsciously, supporting one or the other imperialist camp as a "lesser evil".

2) Consistent Struggle against Imperialism and for the Liberation of the Oppressed People

Revolutionaries stand for the *defeat* of imperialist states and their proxies in any conflict with forces representing oppressed people and for the *military victory* of the latter without, at the same time, giving any *political* support to the non-revolutionary leadership of the oppressed (e.g., petty-bourgeois Islamists, nationalists). This is true both in domestic conflicts (e.g., against an oppressed nation like the Chechen people in Russia or the East Turkestanis/Uyghurs in China) as well as in wars abroad (e.g., North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, Mali, Somalia). Such an approach is not only valid in the countries of the South but also in cases of national oppression and discrimination inside the old imperialist states (e.g. Blacks and Native Americans in the U.S.; Catalonia's struggle for independence against the imperialist Spanish State.)

Likewise, revolutionaries have to fight for *Open Borders* in the imperialist countries and for *full equality for national minorities and for migrants* (e.g. citizenship rights, language, equal wages).

Furthermore, revolutionaries refuse to lend support to one imperialist camp against another in any given conflict (e.g., Brexit vs. EU; Clinton vs. Trump).

Those who fail to support the popular struggles against oppression, referring to their bad leaderships as an excuse, desert the class struggle as it concretely takes place today and hence leave the camp of the working class and oppressed.

3) Continuing the Revolutionary Struggle in the Middle East and North Africa against Reactionary Dictatorships, Imperialism and Zionism

The mass popular uprisings in Palestine, Tunisia, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan and other countries have been the most important and progressive class struggle development so far since the beginning of the new historic period in 2008. True, given the lack of a revolutionary

leadership, the masses have suffered a number of terrible defeats – like the coup d'état of General al-Sisi in Egypt in July 2013, or the ongoing slaughter of the Syrian people at the hands of Assad and his foreign backers. However, the revolutionary process is continuing. This is reflected in the ongoing popular resistance in Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, etc as well as its spreading to new countries like Tunisia, Iran, Sudan and Morocco. The Palestinian and international mass movement provoked by Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital opens a new chapter of the revolutionary struggle against the imperialist powers and against the Zionist Apartheid state and for the creation of a single Palestinian state from the river to the sea (a "*Free, Red Palestine*"). The spontaneous popular uprisings in Tunisia as well as in Iran against the capitalist regime show that the revolutionary wave in the Middle East might be revived and spreads even to non-Arab countries. Authentic revolutionary forces must give unconditional support to these popular struggles against dictatorships and reactionary forces, without giving any political support to their non-revolutionary leaderships (e.g., petty-bourgeois Islamists and nationalists).

Those "socialists" who have failed to support the Arab Revolution since 2011 or who declare it as already finished and defeated, prove to be socialists and democrats only in words but not in deeds.

Revolutionaries oppose any reactionary war between regional power (e.g. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, etc.). They will determine their revolutionary tactics in any given war by analyzing the concrete character of the war and its political background as well as the role of imperialist powers (in particular the U.S., Russia, China) in it.

4) Revolutionary Struggle against Reactionary Attacks on Democratic Rights

Revolutionaries can only serve the interests of the working class and the oppressed if they are able to recognize the class enemy and to mobilize against it. Thus they must consistently fight against all reactionary dictatorships and corrupt and authoritarian pseudo-democracies (e.g. Syria, Togo, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe), against all forms of national and racial oppression (e.g. indigenous people in Latin America, Rohingya in Myanmar, African slaves in Libya), against all coup d'états (e.g. Egypt 2013, Thailand 2014, Brazil 2016) and against all authoritarian attacks (e.g. state of emergency in France since 2015).

All those who fail to recognize and to fight against these reactionary attacks but rather support them or take a neutral position, are traitors of the working class. Between them and us is a line of blood!

5) Application of the United Front Tactic in all Mass Struggles

Revolutionaries oppose *all* forms of sectarianism which refuses participation in mass struggles under the pretext of their non-revolutionary leaderships. Instead they apply the united front tactic in the struggles of the workers and peasants led by reformist or populist forces (e.g., trade unions, mass organizations of the peasants and the urban poor, but also political parties like PT, CUT, MST in Brazil; CGT, CTA, FIT in Argentina; Islamists in Egypt; rebels in

Syria; EFF in South Africa; SYRIZA in Greece before 2015, PODEMOS, Basque and Catalan nationalists in the Spanish State). Such an orientation must be combined with a consistent struggle against all forms of popular-frontism and petty-bourgeois populism, and for the breaking of workers and peasants away from these non-revolutionary leaderships and to advance the formation of an independent and revolutionary Workers' Party.

Those who fail to apply the united front tactic in such mass struggles, render their support for these struggles to an abstract statement without any concrete meaning.

6) Start Building a Revolutionary World Party Now!

The struggle for repelling the reactionary offensive of the ruling class and for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed can only succeed if it is combined with the struggle for the socialist revolution. This means nothing less than taking power by the working class and the oppressed and the overthrow and expropriation of the capitalist class so that the road towards socialism will be opened. History teaches us that all struggles of the masses for liberation will ultimately end in failure if they are not led by a revolutionary party. Such a party should organize the most politically conscious and dedicated fighters of the working class and oppressed, it must be free of any bureaucratic degeneration; and it must exist as an international party in order to avoid the dangers of national-centeredness.

Hence we call upon all organizations and activists which honestly strive towards the creation of a new Revolutionary World Party to join forces on the basis of these programmatic keystones. Concretely, the RCIT proposes that revolutionaries constitute a *Joint Contact Committee* in order to politically prepare and organize an *International Conference* which will discuss concrete steps to advance the formation of a Revolutionary World Party. The RCIT is committed to serious discussions and the closest possible collaboration with all forces who share such an outlook.

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The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* has sections and activists in Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Israel / Occupied Palestine, Brazil, Mexico, Britain, Germany, and Austria. Furthermore, the RCIT has fraternal relations with organizations in Kenya, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Russia and Turkey.

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!

