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The National Question

The Marxist Approach to the Struggle of the Oppressed People

by Yossi Schwartz

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The picture on the cover is from a demonstration in solidarity with Gaza which was held in Vienna on 4 June 2010

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The National Question

The Marxist approach to the struggle of the oppressed people

A Pamphlet by Yossi Schwartz, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, August 2019

Introduction

The aim of this small booklet is neither to serve as a mere summary of the positions of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg on the national question, nor to merely explain the Marxist method of analyzing the national question from a working class revolutionary perspective, but also to *add* three elements to the usual presentation of the national question from a Marxist perspective.

The first one, is the consequences of the concentration of the working class in the semi-colonies regarding the national question. The second one, is the difference between nations in the ancient past as opposed to the modern nation state. The third one, is on settler-colonialism that Lenin and the Third International during his lifetime did not deal with.

The emerging of the nation state was a huge step in removing obstacles for the development of the forces of production. From small manufacturers producing for small local markets the bourgeoisie, that created the national states, was able to move to large factories producing for a national market. At that time the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary class. Its historical role was the destruction of any remaining feudal relations of production as well as political and cultural superstructure, carrying out the agrarian revolution, fighting for a unifying language, equality of languages and the free development of culture and science.

By 1848 in Europe, with the end of the American civil war, the bourgeoisie ended its revolutionary role and has become an obstacle for the development of nation that did not go through the democratic revolution early enough. Due to the workings of the historical law of uneven and combined development, these countries were colonized by the European, American and Japanese imperialists. In the imperialist states themselves remained the unsolved issues of oppressed minorities.

The national question in all its manifestations is very important for revolutionary Marxists because without unifying the working class, revolutions are doomed to fail. The imperialists have divided and inflamed hate between nations. All the while, the local bourgeoisies that serve the imperialists are unable, even if willing, to solve the national question.

The national question is most complicated in Africa because of the legacy of the colonialist past and the economic domination of the imperialists with the collaboration of the new, local, weak and corrupt bourgeoisie. The decades of political independence in Africa has failed to change the super-exploitation of the continent. The local bourgeoisie simply Africanized the exploitative, repressive, and arrogant appropriation and deployment of power in the tradition of the colonial state. The continent has seen coups and counter-coups, civil wars, ethnic violence that in many cases have been the result of imperialist interventions.

The Revolutionary Communist Internationalist Tendency

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.

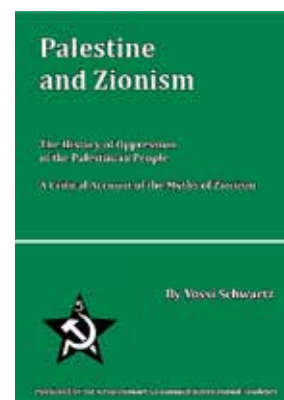
Yossi Schwartz also shows that the Palestinian people have heroically resisted against the occupation resulting in two Intifadas as well as the successful defense of Gaza against the Israeli aggression in three wars (2008/09, 2012, 2014). The author also analysis the shameful betrayal by the PLO leadership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



(RCIT) wrote on this subject:

"The official borders between the states African states are often an artificial legacy of the colonial powers who divided and created artificial states. The imperialist policy of divide and conquer, as well as the reactionary policy of bourgeois African leaders using tribal lines, has been a huge obstacle for the formation of modern nations (The tensions between Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda, between the Xhosa and the Zulu in South Africa, between the Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe). The socialist goal is to unite the African peoples by first taking into account the huge diversity among its nations and ethnic groups (e.g., between 1,200 and 3,000 languages are spoken on the continent). We strive for maximum unity throughout the entire continent combined with a respect for the rights of all ethnic minorities (except, of course, those of privileged settlers). Our vision of Pan-African unity is characterized by its voluntary and federal character, as well as by respecting of local self-government." [1]

There is an historical connection between the Black people of Jamaica, Trinidad, Haiti and People of Color in the US whose ancestors were brought to these countries as slaves. The fact that the American Blacks refer to call themselves African-American shows that they consider themselves member of an ethnic group in the United States whose ancestors, were indigenous to Africa.

The connection between African Americans and Africa manifested itself already in the late 19th century with the movement of "back to Africa". In 1935-1941 when Italy invaded and occupied Ethiopian territory, African-Americans showed solidarity with the Ethiopians and mobilized to assist them in their struggle. *"By the 1970s African-Americans were aware that they had close affinity with Africans in the continent, because of their common exposure to White racist and capitalist exploitation. They saw themselves and the African people on the continent as the "source of super-profits, the victims of physical oppression, social ostracism, economic exclusion and personal hatred."* [2]

After WWI African Americans and Black South Africans forged ties and developed a sense of shared struggle through travel and cultural exchange. Black singers like Miriam Makeba and Paul Robeson, functioned to sustain the links between African Americans and Black South Africans. This was a clear form of internationalism.

Africans Americans played an important role as individuals or through organizations that mobilized support for the African cause in the U.S.. They were inspired by "Pan-Africanism". The *African Liberation Support Committee* (ALSC) of the 1970s was one such organization that provided a veritable forum for African-American to support the liberation of Africa.

The term "African-American" has been in common usage in the United States since the late 1980s, when greater numbers of African Americans began to adopt the term. Malcolm X favored the term "African American" over "Negro" and used the term at an OAAU (Organization of Afro American Unity) meeting in the early 1960s, saying, *"Twenty-two million African-Americans- that's what we are- Africans who are in America."*

Revolutionary struggle for the unification of Africa as a federative socialist state will influence the struggle of the African Americans who are a leading force for progressive change in the USA and they will influence the struggle in Africa. This shows that there is a real connection between the nationalism of the oppressed and internationalism.

Revolutionary internationalist tactics serve the strategy of forming the revolutionary International - the highest form of working class consciousness aiming at replacing rotten capitalism with a socialist society. Tactics that obstruct this strategy are either opportunistic or ultra-leftist and must be rejected because they are harmful to the revolutionary struggle of the workers and the oppressed.

The ultra-left tactics are those that reject the struggle for self-determination of the oppressed nations while the opportunist tactics are those that subordinate the struggle of the workers and the oppressed to the imperialists or to the local bourgeoisie.

The national question has many aspects and we cannot deal with all of them in this booklet. In this booklet we will deal with the following questions:

1. The implication of the shift of the industry to the semi-colonies.
2. What is a nation?
3. When nations appear in history?
4. What is the attitude of revolutionary Marxists to the national question in the semi-colonies and colonized nations and the tactic they use?
5. What is the attitude of revolutionary Marxists to the national question in the imperialist countries and the tactic they use?
6. The national question in settler colonies.

One of the most important national questions of this period is the Syrian revolution and this booklet will deal with it in more details as well as with Israel as a settler colonialist and imperialist society.

1. The Change of the Weight of the Struggle in the Semi-colonies

The national question must be analyzed not in abstract but in the conditions that exist today, where the imperialists have moved industry to the semi-colonies because the cost of labor there is cheaper. At the same time this is a very reactionary phase of the capitalist class that attacks the social and democratic gains of the past. However, at the same time this is also an objectively revolutionary period because the capitalists cannot develop the forces of production. A good metaphor is the Israeli space rocket that reached the moon and crashed. Today the working class is larger and stronger than what it was during the 20th century, but its location has changed. For this reason we see that the sharper class battles take place in the semi-colonies. This, as we shall see, has an implication for the national question. [3]

The starting point for the unity of the working class is the need for the workers of the imperialist nations to defend unconditionally the right of self-determination of the oppressed nations. This does not mean that as an iron rule that the task of the working class of the imperialist nations is to liberate the oppressed nations, as many centrist believe. It is possible and even probable that the victorious struggle of the working class in the semi-colonies against the imperialists and their local servants will assist the struggle of the workers in the imperialist countries in the struggle for socialism.

As long as the working class in the imperialist states does not stand with their brothers and sisters of the oppressed nations but stand with the imperialists they cannot lib-

erate themselves. As Marx observed already in the 19th century - a nation that oppressed another nation cannot be free. The poison of racism is penetrating the working class in particular the labor aristocracy that the imperialists bribe by throwing them crumbs from the looting of the semi-colonies.

This bribery is the basis of reformism in the imperialist countries. The reformist parties that serve the imperialists are an obstacle to the revolutionary unity of the working class. Lenin explained the cause of counter revolutionary reformism: *"The period of imperialism is the period in which the distribution of the world amongst the 'great' and privileged nations, by whom all other nations are oppressed, is completed. Scraps of the booty enjoyed by the privileged as a result of this oppression undoubtedly fall to the lot of certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and bureaucracy of the working class."* [4]

The relocation of the industry of the imperialists in the semi-colonies, the super-exploitation the workers in these countries and the weakness of the labor reformists in these countries are the causes of the sharper class struggle in the semi-colonies as we have seen in the Arab Spring that has not died in spite of the defeats in Egypt and Syria as we see today in Sudan and Algeria.

We see also the sharper struggle of the working class and the oppressed in black Africa, in Nicaragua, India and Mexico. For this reason the struggle against the super-exploitation and the oppression of the workers, the poor peasants and other layers of the oppressed in the semi-colonies has an encouraging impact on the struggles in the imperialist countries as we see in France with the Yellow Vests, the movement against "rent sharks and speculators" in Germany, the Black Lives Matter and the Women March in the USA.

These are not yet revolutionary struggles of the working class in the imperialist countries. Nevertheless, we can expect a stronger class struggles in the imperialist countries with the looming of the next world economic crisis that will be sharper than the one in 2008.

The liberation of the working class can be achieved only by a world revolution. Revolutions start in one country and must continue in other countries. The victory of the revolution in one isolated country surrounded by imperialist states can be corrupted by degeneration accompanied by national chauvinism – as we saw in the case of the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR in the 1920s and 30s. [5] In 1922 Lenin, who was aware of Stalin's oppressive policy toward Georgia wrote on this question:

"In my writings on the national question I have already said that an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.

In respect of the second kind of nationalism we, nationals of a big nation, have nearly always been guilty, in historic practice, of an infinite number of cases of violence; furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it. It is sufficient to recall my Volga reminiscences of how non-Russians are treated; how the Poles are not called by any other name than Polyachiska, how the Tatar is nicknamed Prince, how the Ukrainians are always Khokhols and the Georgians and other Caucasian nationals always Kapkasians.

That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or "great" nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view. [6]

2. What is a Nation?

The Communist Manifesto states: *"The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word."*

The Communist Manifesto also states: *"When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"* [7]

Thus the founders of scientific socialism declared that under capitalism the working class does not have a state. The state belongs to the bourgeois class that formed nation states. When the working class will liberate itself it will replace the bourgeois state with workers states that will serve the interest of the workers and the oppressed. They will defend the nationalized and socialized economy working for the needs of the population. Clearly what Marx and Engels meant is that after the socialist revolution there will be proletarian nations until the level of production will be so high that it will put an end to the existence of class antagonisms and of classes in general and the working class will abolish its own supremacy as a class. This will be the natural end of nations that will be replaced by the united human race in a fully developed communist society.

Thus, like anything else, nations are a historical phenomena. Not always there were nations nor will they exist forever.

There have been two main approaches to the question what a nation is, based on opposite philosophies. The first one is the materialist approach that relates nations to the level of the development of the forces of production and the other one is an idealist approach that relates nations only to psychology - a feeling of common destiny. The first one is a Marxist analysis and the other one is a reformist rooted in the approach of Otto Bauer (1881-1938) of the Austrian Social Democracy.

One of the more known definitions of a nation was provided by Joseph Stalin who applied Leninist thinking on this question prior to WWI. According to Stalin's definition "a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted stable community of people." What distinguishes a national community from a state community? Stalin wrote that "the fact, among others, that a national community is inconceivable without a common language. There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages, but this does not mean that there cannot be two nations speaking the same language! Englishmen and Americans speak one language, but they do not constitute one nation. The same is true of the Norwegians and the Danes, the English and the Irish. But why, for instance, do the English and the Americans not constitute one nation in spite of their common language?"

Stalin continued and wrote: "Firstly, because they do not live together, but inhabit different territories. A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of people living together generation after generation. But people cannot live together, for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. But this is not all. Common territory does not by itself create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond to weld the nation."

Thus Stalin continued: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common "national character" who, nevertheless, cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, American, Georgian and Caucasian Highland Jews, who, in our opinion, do not constitute a single nation." [8]

While this is a materialist analysis of what constitute a nation, it has some problems. It is too mechanical. First of all, it is possible that the same nation will speak different languages. For example the Swiss who speak three different languages, or the Belgian who speak two languages. Secondly, this definition of a nation fits Europe but it does not fit, what Lenin will call after the revolution, the "small nations". According to Lenin's more advanced theory the "small nations" were the not fully developed nations of central Asia that were included in the Russian Empire. Nations that have the right of self-determination and after the Bolshevik revolutions were organized in autonomic territories, and were assisted in developing their economy, written language and culture until such time, so Lenin thought, they will be able to form a state within the Socialist Federation or separate if they wish to. In 1923 Trotsky explained the relationship between the Russian working class the workers state and the small nations.

Trotsky wrote: "To turn one's back on the demands and interests of the formerly oppressed small nationalities, especially those which are backward and consist mainly of peasants, is a very simple and perfectly easy thing to do, especially if this sort of lazy indifference can be covered up with general phrases about internationalism, about the dictatorship of the Communist Party being more important than any and every national question...[] In our Soviet Union the link with the peasantry naturally presumes not merely a link with the Great Russian peasantry. We have a large non-Great Russian peasantry, and it is distributed among numerous national groups. For these national groups each national, political and economic question

is refracted through the prism of their native language, their national-economic and folk peculiarities, their national mistrust which has its roots in the past. Language is the most basic, most broadly embracing and deeply penetrating instrument of the link between man and man and so, between class and class. While in our conditions the question of the proletarian revolution is, as you acknowledge, above all a question of the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry, this latter question amounts, more than fifty percent, to the question of relations between the more advanced and influential Great Russian proletariat and the peasant masses of the other nationalities, which were mercilessly oppressed in former times and still remember very well all that they suffered. [9]

The other approach to the definition of a nation as we mentioned was of Otto Bauer. He advocated cultural autonomy for oppressed nations rather than the right to separate and form an independent state.

Bauer criticized the concept of a language as the essence of a nation. He wrote: "Is it a common language which makes people a nation? But the English and the Irish... speak the same language without, however, being one people; the Jews have no common language and yet are a nation. A nation is a relative community of character. National character is "the sum total of characteristics which distinguish the people of one nationality from the people of another nationality – the complex of physical and spiritual characteristics which distinguish one nation from another. The character of people is determined by nothing so much as by their destiny... A nation is nothing but a community with a common destiny" which, in turn, is determined by the conditions under which people produce their means of subsistence and distribute the products of their labour.. Thus a nation is an aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a common destiny." [10]

Bauer also wrote: "All nations," wherever they may reside, would always constitute corporations independently managing their national affairs. Two or more nations would live side by side in the same city, without interfering in each other's affairs, and would peacefully develop their own forms of national self-government and build their own educational institutions" Thus the theory of cultural-national autonomy relied on the concept that nation as an association of like-minded people that evolved through a common fate. It separated the nation from the territory it occupied and ignored the division of nations into antagonistic classes. The theory reduced the solution of the national problem to the attainment of national self-government in cultural, educational, and language matters." [11]

Lenin correctly replied to him:

"As a matter of fact, "cultural-national autonomy", i.e., the absolutely pure and consistent segregating of education according to nationality, was invented not by the capitalists (for the time being they resort to cruder methods to divide the workers) but by the opportunist, philistine intelligentsia of Austria. There is not a trace of this brilliantly philistine and brilliantly nationalist idea in any of the democratic West-European countries with mixed populations. This idea of the despairing petty bourgeois could arise only in Eastern Europe, in backward, feudal, clerical, bureaucratic Austria, where all public and political life is hampered by wretched, petty squabbling (worse still: cursing and brawling) over the question of languages. Since cat and dog can't agree, let us at least segregate all the nations once and for all absolutely clearly and consistently in "national curias" for educational purposes! —such is the psychology that engendered this foolish idea of "cultural-national autonomy". The proletari-

at, which is conscious of and cherishes its internationalism, will never accept this nonsense of refined nationalism." [12]

It is not by chance that the reactionary Zionists definition of a nation is psychological-cultural definition based on Bauer crude idealist philosophy. They claim:

"Throughout the middle ages and into the 20th century, most of the European world agreed that Jews constituted a distinct nation. This concept of nation does not require that a nation have either a territory nor a government, but rather, it identifies, as a nation any distinct group of people with a common language and culture. Only in the 19th century did it become common to assume that each nation should have its own distinct government; this is the political philosophy of nationalism. In fact, Jews had a remarkable degree of self-government until the 19th century. So long as Jews lived in their ghettos, they were allowed to collect their own taxes, run their own courts, and otherwise behave as citizens of a landless and distinctly second-class Jewish nation." [13]

In the real world the Jews are not a nation because they do not live in the same territory and half of them live in North America. Jews speak different languages and different religious streams. Many Jews are not religious at all. In Israel the Jews are not allowed to consider themselves as Israeli nationals because of the Zionist definition of a world Jewish nation. Thus Israel denies not only the right of self-determination of the Palestinians but the existence of an Israeli nation.

One argument of the Zionists is that the Palestinians are not a nation because there has never been a Palestinian state. The racist former Minister of Educations Benet declared : "There has been Palestinian life in Jerusalem for thou-

sands of years," he retorted: "You're talking about a Palestinian presence? Has there ever been a Palestinian state? Show me what its flag was, show me what was its anthem, show me who its leader is- show me anything that mentions the word 'Palestinians' more than 65 or 80 years ago."

According to this nonsense the Kurds are not a nation they since they never had their own state. Under the existing conditions they cannot set their own independent state. Their only chance of having their own state is by joining the Arab revolution and helping to form the socialist federation of the Middle East, rather than the existing rotten Kurdish leadership that helped the imperialists against the Arab revolution.

In conclusion as to the revolutionary definition of a nation, the minimum requirement for a nation is being population living in the same territory and consider themselves a nation. They tend as a norm to have a spoken language and cultural unique aspects. Using this definition, the question for example whether the North American Indians were tribes or nations depend on their own definition. For example, the Iroquois Confederacy call themselves the Indian Six Nations. After the socialist revolution they will have the right to autonomous socialist territories which will be very different from the oppressive Indian reserves of today.

3. Ancient Nations

Most people when they think about nations have in their minds modern nation states that emerged at the end of the era of absolute monarchies. They were not composed of capitalist and working class but of different older classes

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

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mostly of peasants and slaves on one hand and the slave owner aristocracy and priests on the other. The slaves were not considered part of the nation. These nations appeared in history after the city-state, the confederation of tribes and before the ancient empires. They were relatively stable and existed beyond the life of a ruler. They had a common territory and citizens that considered themselves a nation.

Engels in his writing on ancient Ireland wrote: *"Ireland was far from being inhabited by a single nation at the end of the eighth century. Supreme royal power over the whole island existed only in appearance, and by no means always at that. The provincial kings, whose number and territories were continually changing, fought amongst themselves, and the smaller territorial princes likewise carried on their private feuds."* [14]

It seems as Engels wrote that while there was no ancient Ireland during the Middle Ages, there possibly were other countries with single nations, otherwise why would he mention that Ireland was not always a nation state?

Then Engels wrote: *"The further back we go into history, the more the characteristics distinguishing different peoples of the same race disappear. This is partly because of the nature of the sources, which in the measure in which they are older become thinner and contain only the most essential information, and partly because of the development of the peoples themselves. The less remote the individual branches are from the original stock, the nearer they are to each other and the more they resemble each other. Jacob Grimm has always quite correctly treated the information given by Roman historians, who described the War of the Cimbri, Adam of Bremen and Saxo Grammaticus, all the literary written records from Beowulf and Hildebrandslied to the Eddas and the sagas, all the books of law from the Leges barbarorum to the ancient Danish and ancient Swedish laws and the old Germanic judicial procedures as equally valuable sources of information on the German national character, customs and legal conditions."* [15]

It seems that according to Engels in the earlier period people were closer and that there was a German national character as described in the ancient Danish and Swedish laws. It is possible to reach the conclusion that Engels thought that a German nation existed in early times. Yet this is not certain.

However, the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 98) wrote on the German that they are a nation that lives in a very specific territory. Tacitus differentiates between a German nation composed of the *Chatti* or *Tencteri*, and tribes (*Suebi*). They had slaves, common religions and laws.

"The country we know under the name of Germany is separated from Gaul, on the one hand, and from Rhaetia and Pannonia, on the other, by the rivers Rhine and Danube, from Sarmatia and Dacia by the barrier of mutual fear or mountain ranges. Its northern coasts, with their broad promontories and vast islands beyond, are lapped by Ocean. It is only in recent times that war has revealed the existence there of nations and kings unknown before. ...[] For myself I accept the view that the peoples of Germany have never been tainted by intermarriage with other peoples, and stand out as a nation peculiar, pure and unique of its kind. Hence the physical type, if one may generalize at all about so vast a population, is everywhere the same wild, blue eyes, reddish hair and huge frames that excel only in violent effort. ...[] As for the name of Germany, it is quite a modern coinage, they say. The first people to cross the Rhine and oust

the Gauls are now called Tungri, but were then called Germans. It was the name of this tribe, not that of a nation, that gradually came into general use. We must come now to speak of the Suebi, who do not, like the Chatti or Tencteri, constitute a single nation. They actually occupy more than half Germany, and are divided into a number of distinct tribes under distinct names, though all generically are called Suebi." [16]

The scribes of the ancient societies used terminology that indicate the existence of nations. The biblical Hebrew term *gôy* ('nation'); the Akkadian *gayûm*; the Aramean 'Aram Kulloh ('all Aram'); the Greek *panhellenas* ('all the Hellenes') and *génos*; the Persian *irāniyyat* ('being a Persian').

We can find legal categories that were used to differentiate between natives of the land and outsiders. For example the ancient Israelite differentiated between a 'native of the land' on the one hand, and the 'foreigner', on the other.

"Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. The same concept we find in the Japanese 'Ritsuryo State', Korea during the Koryo period (c. 935–1392), Poland, and medieval England. A category absent in the case of, the Vandals, who did not have a stable territory." [17]

Steven Grosby, an academic intellectual wrote: *"I stated in Nation and Nationalism that 'it is difficult to avoid suspecting that, given developments such as a territorially unifying religion and a law propagated by the center ... there must have been some degree of recognition by the peasantry that the center of their society was precisely that, and accordingly was due their respect, even if the center was experienced, as it often is for modern nations, as being burdensome'.*

"Despite numerous complications, those societies (ancient Israel/Judah, early Sri Lanka, eighth-century Japan, medieval Poland) exhibited: (1) a self-designating name; (2) a written history; (3) a degree of cultural uniformity, often as a result of and sustained by religion; (4) legal codes; (5) an authoritative center; and (6) a conception of bounded territory." [18]

Azar Gat, an academic intellectual wrote: *"Asia, where states evolved the earliest, is also where some of the most ancient national states can be found. From around 3000 BC, unified Egypt emerged as the world's first large, territorial national state, congruent with a distinct people of shared ethnicity and culture. This, indeed, was the secret of its remarkable endurance for nearly three millennia. Further east, the small national states of Israel, Amon, Moab and Edom, together with other incipient national states and city-states in the Ancient Near East, were destroyed by Assyria, the region's first territorial empire.... Thus, the pristine emergence of national states in that part of the world was interrupted by the rise and triumph of imperial power.... Modernist historian and theorist Eric Hobsbawm has noted that China, Korea and Japan are 'among the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous'... Here lies the answer to the question raised by why French Indochina disintegrated into separate national states upon decolonisation, rather than becoming a single realm as did Dutch Indonesia. This outcome ensued because each of Indochina's modern states had a long history and an ethnic core or Staatsvolk identified with it, which constituted at least 85 percent of its population. These included: a Viet state since the tenth century; Cambodian-Khmer state since the sixth century; a Siamese-Thai state since the fourteenth century; and a Mayanmar-Burman state since the tenth century (the last one being the exception with only 68 percent of the population Bamar). Evidently, Hobsbawm was far too modest in singling*

out China, Korea and Japan for their close connection between people and state." [19]

The relevance of the existence of ancient nations is also evident in the numerous uprisings of people which the Roman Empire subjugated. Examples for this are the Berber and Nubians in Northern Africa, the Jews in Palestine, various Germanic and Slavic people, the invasions of the so-called barbarians etc. These insurrections and wars played – in combination with the social struggles of the coloni (tenant farmer) and the slaves – a crucial role in the decline and collapse of the Western Roman Empire in its late period of the 3rd to the 5th century.

At this point the reader may ask: why is it important to find whether there existed ancient nations and why it is important to distinguish between the ancient nations and modern nations.

It is important because reactionary nationalists tend to claim that the modern nations are the continuation of the ancient nations which is reactionary nonsense.

For Mussolini one important goal was the revival of the glory of the Roman Empire as he claimed that the modern Italians are the continuation of the Romans; The Boers of South Africa claimed they were the Israelites who escaped Pharos (the British); The Zionists claim that the Israelis of today somehow are the continuation of the Israeli ancient nation. In reality these are two different societies. The ancient Israelites were a peasant nation while the Zionists are capitalist settler colonialists. The same type of peasant and slave society is true for other ancient nations.

4. What It Means to Unconditionally Support the Oppressed Nation

Marx and Engels supported the right of self-determination of the Poles and the Irish who were oppressed European nations.

Before the late 1860s Marx thought that the English working class living in industrial society will liberate Ireland. But by the late 1860s, Marx recognized the racism and chauvinism among the English workers themselves against Irish people. He reached the conclusion that it is necessary to support self-determination and independence for the Irish nation as the best means for the Irish workers to fight capitalism. He urged the English workers to stand up for Irish independence.

Marx wrote: "All English industrial and commercial centres now possess a working class split into two hostile camps: English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker because he sees in him a competitor who lowers his standard of life. Compared to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and for this very reason makes himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland and thus strengthens their domination over himself... it is in the direct and absolute interests of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland. I long believed it was possible to overthrow the Irish regime by way of the English working class ascendancy. A deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never achieve anything before it has got rid of Ireland." [20]

A very similar position Marx and Engels held about Poland very early in their political development. In a speech in London in November 1847 Engels said:

"We Germans have a particular interest in the liberation of Po-

land. German princes have profited from the partition of Poland and German soldiers are still exercising oppression in Galicia and Posen [parts of Poland]. It must be the concern of us Germans, above all, of us German democrats, to remove this stain from our nation. A nation cannot be free and at the same time continue to oppress other nations. Thus Germany cannot be liberated without the liberation of Poland from oppression by Germans. And for this reason Poland and Germany have a common interest, for this reason Polish and German democrats can work together for the liberation of both nations." [21]

It will be a mistake to assume that the leadership of the oppressed Polish and the Irish was a revolutionary or progressive and that Marx and Engels supported the Irish and the Poles because of it. As a matter of fact the leadership of both oppressed nations was reactionary.

On this issue Trotsky wrote:

"We do not and never have put all wars on the same plane. Marx and Engels supported the revolutionary struggle of the Irish against Great Britain, of the Poles against the tsar, even though in these two nationalist wars the leaders were, for the most part, members of the bourgeoisie and even at times of the feudal aristocracy... at all events, Catholic reactionaries". [22]

This is a very important question because reformist and most centrists do not support the struggle of the oppressed when they have a reactionary leadership and by this they expose their own class character as social-imperialists.

5. The Position of the Second International as Social-Imperialist and the National Question

The Second International, that was formed in 1889 as a Socialist International, was an organization of socialist workers parties with different positions on all questions concerning the working class and the oppressed. Unlike the First international that was a small world party, the Second International was a federative mass organization. Was it a revolutionary organization we would have lived in a socialist society long ago. As it turned out, it became an obstacle for the socialist transformation of the rotting capitalism over 100 years ago.

In 1907 in the Stuttgart International Congress the delegates debated the colonial question. Karl Kautsky wrote a report on this congress. The majority draft resolution stated:

"The Congress confirms that the general usefulness or necessity of the colonies – particularly for the working class – is highly exaggerated. However, congress does not in principle reject all colonial policy for all time, as it could have a civilizing effect under a socialist regime."

After various deliberations this sentence was changed to:

"Taking into consideration that socialism will develop the productive forces of the whole world and will raise all peoples to the highest cultural level, congress does not reject all colonial policy on principle because it could have a civilizing effect under socialism."

Van Kol, reporting from the Commission, explained their position:

"The minority resolution denies the possibility of developing the productive forces of the colonies by capitalist colonial policy. I am quite unable to understand how a thinking man can hold this position. One has only to briefly consider the colonization of the United States of America. Without colonization the natives would still be living in the most needy cultural circumstances

today. Is Ledebour going to withdraw from the present social order indispensable raw materials which are provided by the colonies? Is he going to sacrifice only for the present the immeasurable riches of the colonies? Do those German, French and Polish delegates who have subscribed to the minority resolution wish to undertake the responsibility for simply abolishing the present colonial system? Colonies have existed as long as mankind and I believe they will continue to exist for a long time to come. There will indeed not be many socialists who consider colonies to be unnecessary to the future social order. But we need not discuss this question today. I only ask Ledebour whether he has the courage to give up the colonies now under a capitalist regime. Perhaps he will also then tell us what he will do with the surplus population of Europe: in what countries those having to emigrate should seek their cities, if not in the colonies? What will Ledebour do with the growing produce of European industry, if he will not create new sales territories in the colonies? And will he as a Social Democrat reject the duty of continually working to further civilise and develop underdeveloped peoples?" [23]

Bernstein followed in van Kol's report stated:

"We may not occupy a purely negative standpoint on colonial policy, but must pursue a positive socialist colonial policy. (Applause), We must get away from the utopian idea which leads to disposing of the colonies. The final, consequence of this approach would be to return the United States to the Indians. (Protests) The colonies are here to stay: we have to come to terms with that. Civilised peoples have to exercise a certain guardianship over uncivilised peoples – even socialists have to recognise this. Let us base ourselves on real facts, which will lead us to oppose capitalist colonial policy with a socialist one. Much of our economic life rests upon products from the colonies which the natives were not able to utilise. On all these grounds we must accept the resolution of the majority."

Lenin who participated in the congress reported on this racist resolution:

"This is not the first time the colonial question has figured at international congresses. Up till now their decisions have always been an unqualified condemnation of bourgeois colonial policy as a policy of plunder and violence. This time, however, the Congress Commission was so composed that opportunist elements, headed by Van Kol of Holland, predominated in it. A sentence was inserted in the draft resolution to the effect that the Congress did not in principle condemn all colonial policy, for under socialism colonial policy could play a civilising role. The minority in the Commission (Ledebour of Germany, the Polish and Russian Social-Democrats, and many others) vigorously protested against any such idea being entertained. The matter was referred to Congress, where the forces of the two trends were found to be so nearly equal that there was an extremely heated debate.

The opportunists rallied behind Van Kol. Speaking for the majority of the German delegation Bernstein and David urged acceptance of a "socialist colonial policy" and fulminated against the radicals for their barren, negative attitude, their failure to appreciate the importance of reforms, their lack of a practical colonial programme, etc. Incidentally, they were opposed by Kautsky, who felt compelled to ask the Congress to pronounce against the majority of the German delegation. He rightly pointed out that there was no question of rejecting the struggle for reforms; that was explicitly stated in other sections of the resolution, which had evoked no dispute. The point at issue was whether we should make concessions to the modern regime of bourgeois plunder and violence. The Congress was to discuss

present-day colonial policy, which was based on the downright enslavement of primitive populations. The bourgeoisie was actually introducing slavery in the colonies and subjecting the native populations to unprecedented outrages and acts of violence, "civilising" them by the spread of liquor and syphilis. And in that situation socialists were expected to utter evasive phrases about the possibility of accepting colonial policy in principle! That would be an outright desertion to the bourgeois point of view. It would be a decisive step towards subordinating the proletariat to bourgeois ideology, to bourgeois imperialism, which is now arrogantly raising its head."

Based on these reports it is not surprising that in 1914 the majority of the Social Democrats betrayed the working class by supporting the imperialist war. Each party stood behind its own imperialism.

6. Lenin's Evolution of Thinking on the National Question

Lenin's ideas on the national question like on other questions such as the class character of the Russian revolution have evolved. His positions on the national question can be classified as belonging to three different periods: A) until the First World War, when he examined the national question in relation to the development of capitalism and the struggle for democracy in Russia; A period he was influenced by Karl Kautsky 2) the period of the war when the social democracy including Kautsky betrayed the working class and the immediate period of the proletarian revolution in Russia; 3) the period after the revolution when Lenin supported the concept of a voluntary federation that will include not only states but regional autonomies for the small nations.

The First Period

During the first period Lenin criticized Rosa Luxemburg for her refusal to defend the self-determination of the oppressed Polish nation. She wrote that Marx and Engels position in support of self-determination of Poland is outmoded:

"The founders and theoretical leaders of the Proletariat Party were by no means unfamiliar with Marx's and Engels' opinions on the Polish question, yet they were not in the least confused by them; on the contrary, they regarded them merely as the outworn vestige of old views that had been based on an ignorance of the social content of the nationalist movements within Poland and of the social changes that had taken place within the country since the last insurrection." [24]

She added: "But this, as we said, by no means implies that the proletariat is capable of taking upon itself the historical task of the *schlachta*, (Aristocracy) as the anachronistic minds of petit bourgeois nationalism would have it; this task, to restore Poland to its existence as a class state, is an objective which the *schlachta* itself abandoned, and the bourgeoisie has rendered impossible through its own development. But our proletariat can and must fight for the defense of national identity as a cultural legacy, that has its own right to exist and flourish. And today our national identity cannot be defended by national separatism; it can only be secured through the struggle to overthrow despotism and solidly implant the advantages of culture and bourgeois life throughout the entire country, as has long since been done in

Western Europe.”

Lenin, that at the time was influenced by Kautsky accepted the right of nations to establish a nation state with its own territory and that a federative state represents backwardness and is an obstacle to fully developed capitalism, replied to Rosa Luxemburg:

“Therefore, Rosa Luxemburg notwithstanding, the example of the whole of progressive and civilised mankind, the example of the Balkans and that of Asia prove that Kautsky’s proposition is absolutely correct: the national state is the rule and the “norm” of capitalism; the multi-national state represents backwardness, or is an exception. From the standpoint of national relations, the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the national state. This does not mean, of course, that such a state, which is based on bourgeois relations, can eliminate the exploitation and oppression of nations. It only means that Marxists cannot lose sight of the powerful economic factors that give rise to the urge to create national states. It means that “self-determination of nations” in the Marxists’ Programme cannot, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state.” [25]

He also wrote: *‘There is no doubt that the greater part of Asia, the most densely populated continent, consists either of colonies of the “Great Powers”, or of states that are extremely dependent and oppressed as nations. But does this commonly-known circumstance in any way shake the undoubted fact that in Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production and the freest, widest and speediest growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state? The latter is a bourgeois state, and for that reason has itself begun to oppress other nations and to enslave colonies. We cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national states, like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact that capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia; that it is such states that ensure, the best conditions for the development of capitalism.’* [26]

Lenin did not change his position on the right of self-determination for the oppressed nations and their right to national territory if they wish so. In this he was absolutely correct. However, at the same time as we pointed out, Lenin advocated the idea that multinational large-scale centralized states are progressive development. He considered that such states were more suitable for the workers’ movement and lead to the fusion of nations, which Lenin saw as a socialist ideal. For this reason in 1913 he opposed the idea of a federation and he wrote:

‘The right to self-determination does not imply only the right to secede. It also implies the right to federal association, the right to autonomy,’ you write. I disagree entirely. It does not imply the right to federation. Federation means the association of equals, an association that demands common agreement. How can one side have a right to demand that the other side should agree with it? That is absurd. We are opposed to federation in principle, it loosens economic ties, and is unsuitable for a single state. You want to secede? All right, go to the devil, if you can break economic bonds, or rather, if the oppression and friction of “coexistence” disrupt and ruin economic bonds. You don’t want to secede? In that case, excuse me, but don’t decide for me; don’t think that you have a “right” to federation’. [27]

Lenin wrote: *“Marxists are, of course, opposed to federation and decentralisation, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most centralised possible states. Other conditions being equal, the class-conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state. It will always fight against medieval particularism, and will always welcome the closest possible economic amalgamation of large territories in which the proletariat’s struggle against the bourgeoisie can develop on a broad basis.”* [28]

In 1913 Lenin was for an assimilation of nations. He wrote: *“The question of assimilation, i. e., of the shedding of national features, and absorption by another nation, strikingly illustrates the consequences of the nationalist vacillations of the Bundists and their fellow-thinkers”. [...]* *“whoever does not recognise and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat. That is beyond doubt. But it is also beyond doubt that the pseudo-Marxist who heaps abuse upon a Marxist of another nation for being an “assimilator” is simply a nationalist philistine. In this unhandsome category of people are all the Bundists and (as we shall shortly see) Ukrainian nationalist-socialists such as L. Yurkevich, Dontsov and Co”.*

As we shall see later on, Lenin changed his position on the federal state, but for now we shall deal with Lenin’s concept on the national question in chronological order.

Lenin’s Second Stage of Development on the National Question

Following the betrayal of the working class by the Second International in 1914 Lenin wrote: *“The betrayal of socialism by most leaders of the Second International (1889-1914) signifies the ideological and political bankruptcy of the International. This collapse has been mainly caused by the actual prevalence in it of petty-bourgeois opportunism, the bourgeois nature and the danger of which have long been indicated by the finest representatives of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries. The opportunists had long been preparing to wreck the Second International by denying the socialist revolution and substituting bourgeois reformism in its stead, by rejecting the class struggle with its inevitable conversion at certain moments into civil war, and by preaching class collaboration; by preaching bourgeois chauvinism under the guise of patriotism and the defence of the fatherland, and ignoring or rejecting the fundamental truth of socialism, long ago set forth in the Communist Manifesto, that the workingmen have no country; by confining themselves, in the struggle against militarism, to a sentimental philistine point of view, instead of recognising the need for a revolutionary war by the proletarians of all countries, against the bourgeoisie of all countries; by making a fetish of the necessary utilisation of bourgeois parliamentarianism and bourgeois legality, and forgetting that illegal forms of organisation and agitation are imperative at times of crises. One of the organs of international opportunism, Sozialistische Monatshefte, which has long taken a national liberal stand, is very properly celebrating its victory over European socialism. The so-called Centre of the German and other Social-Democratic parties has in actual fact faint heartedly capitulated to the opportunists. It must be the task of the future International resolutely and irrevocably to rid itself of this bourgeois trend in socialism.[...] It is the first and foremost task of Russian Social-Democrats to wage a ruthless and all-out struggle against Great-Russian and tsarist-monarchist chauvinism, and*

against the sophisms used by the Russian liberals, Cadets, a section of the Narodniks, and other bourgeois parties, in defence of that chauvinism. From the viewpoint of the working class and the toiling masses of all the peoples of Russia, the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and its army, which oppress Poland, the Ukraine, and many other peoples of Russia, and foment hatred among the peoples so as to increase Great-Russian oppression of the other nationalities, and consolidate the reactionary and barbarous government of the tsar's monarchy, would be the lesser evil by far.[...] The following must now be the slogans of Social-Democracy:

First, all-embracing propaganda, involving the army and the theatre of hostilities as well, for the socialist revolution and the need to use weapons, not against their brothers, the wage slaves in other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments and parties of all countries; the urgent necessity of organising illegal nuclei and groups in the armies of all nations, to conduct such propaganda in all languages; a merciless struggle against the chauvinism and "patriotism" of the philistines and bourgeoisie of all countries without exception. In the struggle against the leaders of the present International, who have betrayed socialism, it is imperative to appeal to the revolutionary consciousness of the working masses, who bear the entire burden of the war and are in most cases hostile to opportunism and chauvinism.

Secondly, as an immediate slogan, propaganda for republics in Germany, Poland, Russia, and other countries, and for the transforming of all the separate states of Europe into a republican United States of Europe." [29]

In 1915 Lenin clarified his position of the Republican United States of Europe: *"But while the slogan of a republican United States of Europe—if accompanied by the revolutionary overthrow of the three most reactionary monarchies in Europe, headed by the Russian—is quite invulnerable as a political slogan, there still remains the highly important question of its economic content and significance. From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism—i.e., the export of capital and the division of the world by the "advanced" and "civilised" colonial powers—a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary" [...]. A United States of the World (not of Europe alone) is the state form of the unification and freedom of nations which we associate with socialism—about the total disappearance of the state, including the democratic. As a separate slogan, however, the slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first, because it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others."* [30]

This does not mean that Lenin thought in 1914 or even after the revolution that the form of the state after the revolution in Russia will be of a federation. The Bolsheviks learned this necessity as a result of their experience.

The Third Stage of Lenin's Position on the National Question

Shortly after the Bolshevik revolution the new workers state faced the invasion of the imperialists. This invasion forced the Bolsheviks to realize the need to guarantee the small nations national autonomy. The first one was Bashkiria. In early July 1918, White Czechs and White Guards seized Cheliabinsk, Ufa, and Orenburg. In late 1918 the

Red Army began its offensive in Bashkiria against the White Guard forces of A. V. Kolchak. Mounting dissatisfaction among the soldiers of the Bashkir White Army and the entire Bashkir population with the rule of Kolchak caused the Bashkir nationalist government to switch over to the side of the Soviet government.

It turned to the government of the RSFSR with a request for assistance and an alliance. The agreement of the Bolsheviks with the Bashkir Government on the Soviet Autonomy of Bashkiria (made public on March 23) was signed on Mar. 20, 1919. Bashkiria was the first autonomous soviet republic to become a member of the RSFSR. Fifteen nationalities were given the highest standing of Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs), according to four criteria: a set territory, national language, culture, and economy. Within these fifteen republics were twenty Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), eight Autonomous Regions (oblasti), and ten Autonomous Areas (okruga).

One man who influenced the formation of the USSR was the Tatar Sultan-Galiev. In May 1917, Sultan-Galiev participated in the All-Russian Muslim Conference in Moscow and was elected to the All-Russia Muslim Council. In July that year he went to Kazan, where he met Mullanur Waxitov [31], with whom he helped set up the Muslim Socialist Committee, with a program close to that of the Bolsheviks. In November 1917 he joined the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Following the establishment of Narkomnats in June 1917, Sultan-Galiev was asked to become head of the Muslim section. In December 1917, in response to some Tatars' accusations that he was betraying his own people to the Bolsheviks, Sultan-Galiev wrote a revealing explanation for his decision to join the Bolsheviks:

"I now move to my cooperation with the Bolsheviks. I will say the following: I associate with them not from sycophancy. The love for my people, which lies inherently inside me, draws me to them. I go to them not with a goal to betray our nation, not in order to drink its blood. No! No! I go there because with my whole spirit I believe in the rightness of the Bolsheviks' cause. I know this; it is my conviction. Thus, nothing will remove it from my soul. I realize that only some of the bolsheviks were able to implement what was promised at the beginning of the revolution. [But] only they stopped the war. Only they are striving to pass the nationalities' fates into their own hands. Only they revealed who started the world war. What does not lead me to them? They also declared war on English imperialism, which oppresses India, Egypt, Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia. They are also the ones who raised arms against French imperialism, which enslaves Morocco, Algiers, and other Arab states of Africa. How could I not go to them? You see, they proclaimed the words, which have never been voiced since creation of the world in the history of the Russian state. Appealing to all Muslims of Russia and the East, they announced that Istanbul must be in Muslims' hands. They did this while English troops, seizing Jerusalem, appealed to Jews with the words: 'Gather together quickly in Palestine, we will create for you a European state. "

During the Civil War, Sultan-Galiev was active in organizing the defense of Kazan against the Whites in August 1918 and liquidating opposition after they had been driven out. He was also instrumental in ensuring that the Bashkir people, led by Zeki Velidi Togan, joined the Bolshevik side which weakened the military potential of Kolchak's army. He wanted to give Marxism an Islamic form. He argued

that Tsarist Russians had oppressed Muslim society apart from a few big landowners and bourgeois. He was, despite this attempt at synthesis, thought of by the growing bureaucracy as being excessively tolerant of nationalism and religion and, in 1923, he was accused of nationalist, pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic deviations and he was arrested and expelled from the party.

He was freed, but with Lenin's death in 1924, he lost his only protector. In 1928, he was arrested a second time and sentenced to be shot in July 1930. However, in January 1931 his sentence was commuted to ten years of hard labour for nationalism and anti-Soviet activity. In 1934 he was released and given permission to live in the Saratov Oblast. At the beginning of 1937 he was again arrested, and was forced to make a confession; he was convicted of being the "organizer and factual leader of an anti-Soviet nationalistic group," who led an "active struggle against soviet power" and the party "on the basis of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism, with the goal of tearing away from Soviet Russia Turkic-Tatar regions and establishing in them a bourgeois-democratic Turan state." In December 1939, he received the death sentence which was carried out on 28 January 1940 in Moscow. [32]

However, in December 1922 the USSR was declared as a unity of socialist republics. The Declaration of Union and Treaty of Union, December 30, 1922 states: "*The will of the peoples of the Soviet Republics, expressed in the recent Congresses of their Soviets, which unanimously adopted the decision to create a Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, is a reliable guarantee that the Union is a voluntary union of equal peoples, that entry into the Union is open to all Socialist Soviet Republics, either already in existence or to be formed in the future, that the new united State is a fitting consummation to the peaceful Communism and fraternal cooperation of peoples begun in October, 1917, that it will form a firm bulwark against world capitalism, and will be a decided step towards the union of the workers of all countries into a World Socialist Soviet Republic.*" [33]

Lenin and the Bolsheviks changed their position on the structure of the Soviet state and in doing so were influenced among other things also by the Ukrainian "national communists". The Ukrainian "national communists" influenced Lenin to accept a Soviet Federation rather than centralized state. This stream existed in the Ukraine before the Bolshevik revolution. After the February Revolution of 1917, the national aspirations gained strength in the Ukraine.

In 1917 the Ukrainian Central Council (Tsentral'na Rada) was formed. The strongest party in the Council was the

Ukrainian Social-Democratic Working Party (USDRP) that was formed in 1905. After the failure of the Ukrainian revolution of 1917-21 many of its former supporters cooperated with Bolsheviks as the only possible way to defend the existence of a Ukrainian national state. Almost all the leaders of Ukrainian Social Democratic Working Party became members of the Russian communist party.

Before 1922 the Bolsheviks thought that the best way was to build a strong centralized government rather than a federation. To strengthen the Soviet rule in Ukraine Lenin appointed Mykola Skrypnyk, who had been the head of Ukrainian Soviet government in 1918, as the first leader of that party.

Mykola Skrypnyk (1872-1933) was a leading figure in the Secret Police-the Cheka, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage. Skrypnyk fought ardently against Russian chauvinism implemented by Stalin after 1924. He spoke about economic exploitation of the Ukraine and the importance of Ukrainian language and culture.

But he always remained a loyal Stalinist. In 1933, he committed suicide after having been discharged and criticized by Stalin. Another party member who contributed to the definition of national communism was Sergiy Mazlakh (1878-1937). He was expelled from the party in 1937, arrested and executed under the charge of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism.

These people argued that the independence of Ukraine did not contradict the principle of international revolution. They suggested that the pro-Russian CP(B)U should be replaced by a Ukrainian Bolshevik party that would affirm the Ukrainian language, culture and independent statehood. They joined the Communist International and argued for the right to form a separate communist party and to unite in a free federation with the RSFSR and other Soviet republics.

Founded in 1920, the Ukrainian Communist Party (Ukrains'ka Komunistychna Partia, UKP) became the most consistent proponents of Ukrainian national communism. That party united those members of the Ukrainian Communist Party of Borot'bysts who after its unification with CP(B)U remained loyal to national communist orientation. In 1920, the program of the Ukrainian Communist Party was adopted, in which some of the main ideas of Ukrainian communism were set forth. It was proclaimed that both national and social emancipation was the key question for the party. Its program stated:

** Independence of the Ukrainian socialist republic;*



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

* Separation and independence of Ukrainian communist party representing the interests of Ukrainian working class and peasantry;

* Equal membership within the Communist International;

* Political and economic cooperation with other sovereign socialist republics;

* Free development of Ukrainian language and culture as the only possible base for a sovereign state

The Ukraine obtained the status of a separate republic in free federation with other Soviet republics. Certain visible political autonomy was given to the Ukraine, especially in the form of a right to implement internal policy upon its territory. Together with administrative reform, Bolsheviks began to introduce new national policy, called *korenization* (Korenizatsija).

Among the goals of that policy was the development of national economies and harmonization of the relations between the Soviet regime and local population. For those reasons the native languages were reinstated into all spheres of the state.

Eventually they convinced Lenin of the need for a federative state which became reality in 1922 at least on paper before Lenin was replaced by Stalin and his Russian chauvinism. By 1925 all parties of national communistic orientation had been prohibited, dissolved or merged with CP(B)U.

Jumping ahead with the chronology, in 1939 Trotsky defended the right of the Ukraine to separate from the Stalinist Soviet Union as part of the struggle against imperialism and the Soviet Bureaucracy, in a form of Soviet Ukraine. He wrote: *"There is every reason to assume that in the event of the triumph of the world revolution the tendencies toward unity will immediately acquire enormous force, and that all Soviet republics will find the suitable forms of ties and collaboration. This goal will be achieved only provided the old compulsory ties, and in consequence old boundaries, are completely destroyed; only provided each of the contracting parties is completely independent. To speed and facilitate this process, to make possible a genuine brotherhood of the peoples in the future, the advanced workers of Great Russia must even now understand the causes for Ukrainian separatism, as well as the latent power and historical lawfulness behind it, and they must without any reservation declare to the Ukrainian people that they are ready to support with all their might the slogan of an independent Soviet Ukraine in a joint struggle against the autocratic bureaucracy and against imperialism."* [34]

In the Rapallo conference in 1922 where the Bolsheviks signed the first treaty with the capitalist states, Georgy Chicherin, the Soviet Russian commissar for foreign relations, signed the document on behalf of the Russian republic, formed in July 1918. He attempted to sign on behalf of other Soviet republics, including Ukraine and Belarus, but they denied that he had such power.

According to the agreement signed between Russia and the other Soviet republics, the Russian authorities had no right to speak in the name of the Ukrainian institutions without the Ukrainian government's approval. The same was the case with the Georgian communists, who also denounced Georgy Chicherin, insisting on their rights as members of an independent republic. This resulted in the formation of the USSR rather than Russian Socialist Federation.

In August 1922, Joseph Stalin and Sergo Ordzhonikidze,

his man in the Caucasus (the region encompassing Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan), formed a special commission that tried to force the independent republics to be incorporated into the Russian Soviet Federation with rights of autonomy. He called his plan "Autonomisation".

The republics rebelled but Stalin refused to budge. However, Lenin, who sided with the Georgians and Ukrainians, stood against him. Lenin's position was that the inclusion of those republics into the Russian Federation, especially against the will of their leaders, will put the Russians in the position of chauvinists who undermined the idea of the voluntary union of nations and making them little better than the Tsarist empire they had overthrown.

Lenin wrote on Stalin's plan of forcing Georgia into the Russian Federation: *"It is quite natural that in such circumstances the "freedom to secede from the union" by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is. There is no doubt that the infinitesimal percentage of Soviet and sovietised workers will drown in that tide of chauvinistic Great-Russian ruffraff like a fly in milk."* [35]

7. The Third International and the National Question

Because of the betrayal of the Second International it was necessary to build a new one, not to repair and rebuild it. Following the Bolshevik revolution it was possible to form a new International - the Communist. The first congress of the Third International that took place in 1919 came with a communist programmatic fundament elaborated by Trotsky. Overly optimistically the manifesto declared: *"Thus the colonial question in its fullest extent has been placed on the agenda, not only on the order papers of the diplomats in congress in Paris, but also in the colonies themselves. Wilson's program, at its best, is meant only to change the commercial label of colonial slavery. The emancipation of the colonies is possible only in conjunction with the emancipation of the metropolitan working class. The workers and peasants not only of Annam, Algiers, and Bengal, but also of Persia and Armenia, will gain their opportunity of independent existence only when the workers of England and France have overthrown Lloyd George and Clemenceau and taken State power into their own hands. Even now the struggle in the more developed colonies is more than the struggle for national liberation; it is assuming an explicitly social character. If capitalist Europe forcibly dragged the backward sections of the world into the capitalist whirlpool, then socialist Europe will come to the aid of liberated colonies with its technology, its organization, its spiritual forces, in order to facilitate their transition to a planned and organized socialist economy."* [36]

The second congress of the Third International dealt with two aspects of the national question: 1. the difference between the oppressed and oppressor nations; 2. support only for national movements fighting imperialism. Lenin reported:

"First, what is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasise this distinction. In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International

to establish the concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in all colonial and national problems.”[...]

“Third, it is important to emphasize the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. This is a question that has given rise to certain differences. We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the “bourgeois-democratic” movement.

It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships. It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them, can pursue communist tactics and a communist policy, without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support.

However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too.

There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often—perhaps even in most cases—the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e., joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes.

This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term “national-revolutionary” for the term “bourgeois-democratic”. The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited.

If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie, to whom the heroes of the Second International also belong. Reformist parties already exist in the colonial countries, and in some cases their spokesmen call themselves Social-Democrats and socialists. The distinction I have referred to has been made in all the theses with the result, I think, that our view is now formulated much more precisely.” [37]

The fourth congress of the Communist International elaborated the *Anti-Imperialist United Front*. Among other things it stated: “In the Moslem countries, the national movement is guided in its early stages by the religious-political slogans of the pan-Islamic movement, and this gives the Great-Power diplomats and officials the opportunity to exploit the prejudices and ignorance of the broad masses and turn them against the national movement (British imperialism dabbles in pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism and plans to transfer the Caliphate to India;

French imperialism pretends to “Moslem sympathies”). However, as the national liberation movements grow and mature, the religious-political slogans of pan-Islamism will be replaced by political demands. This is borne out by the recent struggle in Turkey to remove temporal power from the Caliphate. The basic aim shared by all the national revolutionary movements is to bring about national unity and achieve state independence. The actual realisation of this aim depends on the extent to which the national movement in any particular country can break all links with reactionary feudal elements, embody in its programme popular social demands and so win the support of the broad working masses.

The Communist International, though well aware that in different historical circumstances fighters for national political independence can be very different kinds of people, gives its support to any national revolutionary movement against imperialism. However, it still remains convinced that the oppressed masses can only be led to victory by a consistent revolutionary line that is designed to draw the broadest masses into active struggle and that constitutes a complete break with all who support conciliation with imperialism in the interests of their own class rule. The bonds that link the indigenous bourgeoisie with the feudal-reactionary elements allow the imperialists to disorganise the mass movement by exploiting to the full feudal anarchy, the rivalry of different leaders, races and tribes, the antagonism between town and country, and the struggle between castes and national-religious sects (China, Persia, Kurdistan, Mesopotamia).[...] The refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the fight against imperialist tyranny, on the pretext of their supposed ‘defence’ of independent class interests, is the worst kind of opportunism and can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East. No less harmful, it must also be recognised, is the attempt to remain aloof from the struggle for the immediate everyday demands of the working class in the interests of ‘national unity’ or ‘civil peace’ with the bourgeois democrats. A dual task faces the Communist and workers’ parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries: on the one hand, they are fighting for a more radical answer to the demands of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, directed towards the winning of national political independence; on the other hand, they are organising the masses of workers and peasants to fight for their own class interests, making good use of all the contradictions in the nationalist bourgeois-democratic camp. By putting forward social demands, Communists will stimulate and release revolutionary energy which can find no outlet in liberal bourgeois demands. The working class of the colonies and semi-colonies must be firmly convinced that it is only the overall intensification of the struggle against Great-Power imperialist oppression that can promote it to revolutionary leadership. On the other hand, it is only the political and economic organisation and the political education of the working class and the semi-proletarian layers that can increase the revolutionary scope of the anti-imperialist struggle.” [38]

What does it mean to support the struggle of an oppressed nation? Is it sufficient to write about it? Or even to organize or participate in a demonstration? This depends on the size and the influence of the revolutionary organization.

On September 11th 1924, *l’humanité* the French Communist newspaper published a telegram sent by Pierre Séward, General Secretary of the *Parti communiste français* (PCF) and Jacques Doriot, leader of the *Federation des jeunes communistes*, to the leader of the Republic of the Rif,

Muhammad bin 'abd al-Karim al-Khattabi. It read:

'We hope that after the definitive victory over Spanish imperialism, it [the Republic] will continue, with the French and European proletariat, the struggle against all imperialists, including the French [français y compris], until the complete liberation of Morocco's soil.'

'Abd al-Karim's forces' destroyed a force of a 30,000-strong Spanish soldiers in the early summer of 1921 and was followed by more victories, that led to the establishment of the republic by early 1923. By April 1925 the republic of the Rif led by an Islamist faced imperialist France. The PCF's line at the outbreak of hostilities being:

'Fraternisation between French soldiers; not a man or woman in France for the war in Morocco; peace in the Rif; total evacuation of France from Morocco.'

Working with the *Confédération générale du Travail unitaire* (CGTU), the PCF organized a 15,000-strong protest against the war on May 16th in Paris, and over the spring and early summer of 1925 encouraged the crews of half a dozen cruisers to mutiny (100 sailors were sentenced in courts in late July). Between May and October there were over 250 meetings against the war across France, all building towards the 12th October 24-hour strike, involving 500,000 workers, albeit few of those involved in day-to-day mechanics of war. [39]

8. Stalinism and the National Question

The Stalinists reversed Lenin's revolutionary internationalist policies with Russian chauvinism inside and outside the Soviet Union. Under Stalin the role of the Communist parties was to carry out the policies of the Soviet Bureaucracy and this bureaucracy was moving more and more to the right. In the Soviet Union they oppressed the weaker nations like the Ukrainians, the Asians, small nations like the Tatars and used Anti-Semitism during the Stalinists war on the left-wing opposition. The Stalinists also persecuted Islam.

The Stalinist policy ruined the Chinese revolution and party in 1925-7 by subordinating the Chinese Communist party to the nationalists in China. By 1935, the Stalinists became counter revolutionary reformists when in France the PCF supported the popular front government of Leon Blum – a coalition of the social democratic party and a section of the capitalist class. This popular front government continued the colonial oppression the nations in Vietnam, Cambodia, Syria and Lebanon. This government ended in the victory of the counter revolution led by Marshal Philippe Pétain. The same policies led to the victory of Franco in Spain because, among other things, the Republican government oppressed the Moroccans which enabled France to recruit Moroccan soldiers against the Republic. At the end of the war the Soviet Stalinists betrayed the Greek working class revolution and returned France and Italy to the capitalist class. It blocked the revolution in Vietnam, and tried to block it in Algeria. They blocked the revolution in France in 1968. They grubbed Eastern Europe after the war, supported the Zionist in the 1948 war and supplied them with weapons that were used to expel the Palestinians. In Cuba they initially supported Batista that served US imperialism. They supported Al Sisi military coup in Egypt in 2013 and Assad in Syria.

9. Trotsky and the Fourth International on the National Question

Trotsky and the Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union when it was a deformed workers state, not only against imperialism but even when it clashed with a semi-colony which, at the time, acted in the service of imperialism.

In 1929 there were clashes between the reactionary government of Chiang Kai-shek that defeated the Chinese revolution, and served the imperialists against the Soviet Union over the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Trotsky took the position that in a case of a war, the revolutionary opposition would side with the workers' state, even though it was going through degeneration, against a reactionary government of a semi-colony in the service of imperialism.

Trotsky wrote: *"The army of Chiang Kai-shek was victorious in 1925-27 [against the warlords] thanks to the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. In turning against them, the army has forfeited its chief source of strength. As a purely military organization, Chiang Kai-shek's army is extremely weak. Chiang Kai-shek cannot help but realize that the Soviet government is well aware of the weakness of his army. It is unthinkable that Chiang Kai-shek could wage a war against the Red Army without the aid of other powers. It is more accurate to say that Chiang Kai-shek would wage war only if his army were merely the auxiliary detachment to the forces of another power. I do not believe that at this time such a combination is very likely, especially in light of the Soviet government's sincere desire, as indicated above, to settle problems by peaceful means.... It goes without saying that in the event that war is imposed on the Soviet people, the Opposition will devote itself fully to the cause of defending the October Revolution."* [40]

However, when the Chinese nationalists fought against Japan, an imperialist state, Trotsky defended China. He wrote to Diago Rivera:

"...The duty of all the workers' organizations of China was to participate actively and in the front lines of the present war against Japan, without abandoning, for a single moment, their own program and independent activity. But that is "social patriotism!" the Eiffelites cry. It is capitulation to Chiang Kai-shek! It is the abandonment of the principle of the class struggle! Bolshevism preached revolutionary defeatism in the imperialist war. Now, the war in Spain and the Sino-Japanese War are both imperialist wars. "Our position on the war in China is the same. The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army." These four lines, taken from an Eiffelite document of September 10, 1937, suffice entirely for us to say: we are concerned here with either real traitors or complete imbeciles. But imbecility, raised to this degree, is equal to treason." [41]

Trotsky stood with India against Britain, despite being ruled by a "socialist" government: *"What an instructive historical lesson it is that the Indian revolution, even in its present stage, when it has not yet broken loose from the treacherous leadership of the national bourgeoisie, is being crushed by the "socialist" government of MacDonald. The bloody repressions of these scoundrels of the Second International who promise to introduce socialism peacefully in their own home countries represent so far that small deposit which British Imperialism brings in today on its future accounting in India. The sweet social democratic deliberations about reconciling the interests of bourgeois England with democratic India are a necessary supplement to*

the bloody repressions of MacDonald, who is of course ready, between executions, for the thousand and first commission of reconciliation.” [42]

In 1936 Trotsky defended Ethiopia under the Emperor Haile Selassie against Italian imperialism under Mussolini. He wrote: "Maxton and the others opine that the Italo-Ethiopian war is "a conflict between two rival dictators." To these politicians it appears that this fact relieves the proletariat of the duty of making a choice between two dictators. They thus define the character of the war by the political form of the state, in the course of which they themselves regard this political form in a quite superficial and purely descriptive manner, without taking into consideration the social foundations of both "dictatorships." A dictator can also play a very progressive role in history; for example, Oliver Cromwell, Robespierre, etc. On the other hand, right in the midst of the English democracy Lloyd George exercised a highly reactionary dictatorship during the war. Should a dictator place himself at the head of the next uprising of the Indian people in order to smash the British yoke – would Maxton then refuse this dictator his support? Yes or no? If not, why does he refuse his support to the Ethiopian "dictator" who is attempting to cast off the Italian yoke? If Mussolini triumphs, it means the reinforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism, and the discouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of the Negus, however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples. One must really be completely blind not to see this." [43]

The middle class reformists and centrists who refused to defend the semi-colonies because of their reactionary leadership, attack Trotsky's method of defending the semi-colonies when they are led by reactionaries while they fight imperialism, have the same argument that the ILP, led by Maxton, had in 1936. For example, Joseph Green, a leading member of the pseudo-revolutionary group that publishes Communist Voice wrote in 2015: "Selassie was one of the absolute rulers of the Ethiopian Empire; he was Regent from 1916 to 1930, and Emperor from 1930 to 1974. Trotsky was right to back Ethiopia against Italian invasion and occupation during the latter 1930s, but wrong to prettify Selassie's absolutism and

wrong to regard Ethiopia as a blank slate, without significant internal struggles. On April 22, 1936, Trotsky wrote that workers faced "making a choice between two dictators", either Mussolini or Haile Selassie. He didn't look towards the victory of the Ethiopian people, but the "victory of the Negus"; "Negus" referred to Haile Selassie, and Trotsky was saying something like "victory of his royal majesty". Trotsky held that "the victory of the Negus... would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples." [44]

10. The Fourth International on the National Question after Trotsky

The Fourth International that was reunited after WWII held centrist positions on different issues. The political programs of some of the centrists who call themselves Trotskyites on the question of the socialist revolution in Palestine are rooted in the positions of the Fourth International (FI) and of the Shachtmanite split of 1940.

The FI was already making a centrist failure in 1941, conducted by the SWP during the Minneapolis trial in October, when Cannon expressed concessions to defensiveness and social patriotism. Although the Fourth International followed by and large a revolutionary course during WWII, its degeneration developed later on to an extreme.

This degeneration process towards centrism became strongly apparent – in addition to the shameful failure in the Israel-Palestine War in 1948 – in the "Open Letter" to Tito and the political support to Mao Zedong, while denouncing the Chinese Trotskyists in 1948. The position of others who call themselves Trotskyists is influenced by the Shachtmanites who stood to the right of the FI. [45]

The FI did not take a position on the war of 1948 when it broke out. This by itself is a symptom of degeneration. It took months before the FI came up with a political position and it was wrong. Clearly as a fast degenerating organization, an organization transforming into a centrist organization, it was already unable to examine the war from the perspective of the revolutionary international working class. It defended the right of self-determination



Frontpage of the Central Organ of the Communist Party of France in 1924 stating its support for the anti-colonial liberation struggle in North Africa

of the Israelis though it opposed the partition and it took the position of revolutionary defeatism both for Israel and the Arab states.

In the real world it is impossible to support the right of self-determination for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. One has to choose a side either for the settler colonialists or for the oppressed colonized Palestinians. To support the right of self-determination means to support the right to set up a state. A Zionist state even in parts of Palestine could be formed only by the stealing of Palestinian lands.

Not only this, but any Zionist state with a majority of Jews would have had to expel most Palestinians from the Zionist territory. This was clear already in 1937 with the recommendation of Peel Commission calling for the partition plan that at the same time called for the removal of a quarter of a million Palestinians. Those who support today the existence of Israel oppose the full right of return of the Palestinian refugees whom Israel expelled in 1947-48.

The Shachtmanites, who split from the FI in 1940, elaborated their position on the emerging Zionist state in their theoretical journal *New International* (which they appropriated after the split with the Fourth International in 1940). They supported the right of self-determination for Israel and opposed the Arab states in the war. The FI on the other hand, opposed the partition and took the position of revolutionary defeat for the Zionists and the Arab states.

Hal Draper, a Shachtmanite, wrote in July 1948 in the *New International*, which by then was already a right-wing centrist organ, that it would be better if the partition plan was rejected. However since it was not rejected, Draper continues, it is necessary to defend Israel's right to exist as a reflection of the principle of the right of self-determination to all nations. In light of this right it is necessary to defend Israel against the reactionary Arab states that want to prevent the implementation of this right.

The united front tactic in semi-colonies can include a common action with bourgeois parties against imperialism and its servants on condition that the revolutionary party maintains the freedom to carry their own banner, propaganda and mobilize the workers and the oppressed. It does not include a vote for a bourgeois party that can win the elections, nor participation in a government with the bourgeoisie. It includes the defence of an elected government against a military coup. Voting for a bourgeois party that can be elected to government or participate in a coalition government with the bourgeoisie is class collaboration that block the revolution and lead to the defeat of the revolution. When a bourgeois party takes power it is necessary to mobilize the workers and the oppressed against it.

One of the worst betrayals of the FI was the capitulation of the POR, the Bolivian section of the Fourth International that had mass influence, to bourgeois nationalism. During the Bolivian revolution in 1952, they joined the popular front led by the MNR (Revolutionary National Movement), and accepted posts in the bourgeois' governmental apparatus; Guillermo Lora, leader of the party, was appointed to the Stabilization Office; Moller, another leader of the POR, was a director of the Workers' Savings Bank, controlled by Juan Lechin, a member of the Cabinet; Alayo Mercado, another POR leader, was a member of the Agrarian Commission.

This betrayal was known by the political leadership of the FI. The Trotskyist Transitional Program in the section dealing with semi-colonies states: *'It is impossible merely to reject the democratic program; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a National (or Constituent) Assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the "national" bourgeoisie. Then, at a certain stage in the mobilization of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise. Their historical role in each given period, particularly their relation to the National Assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.'*

Instead of a political revolutionary struggle against the bourgeois government by mobilizing the workers and the poor peasants first on the basis of revolutionary democratic demands and then for a workers revolution, the politics of the POR was class collaboration that blocked the revolution and ended in a bloody defeat. It is one thing to use the Leninist tactic of a united front even with nationalists against imperialism and another thing to join their government.

History has shown that popular fronts and class collaborations that arise in a revolutionary situation can lead only to *defeat*. In June 1936, the working class of France could take power. The strike breaking policy of the Popular Front, the betrayals of the Socialist and Communist leaders, led to the defeat. Defeat for the workers' movement, defeat of the Popular Front itself and then the victory fascism. In 1940 the Nazis were already in Paris.

The same happened in Spain. Those centrists who would argue that the anti-imperialist united front in the semi-colonies means that workers parties should join a bourgeois government, ignored the result in Indonesia of Sukarano and the fate of Allende in Chile. These centrists show that they have not learned anything from the defeat of the revolution in China in 1925-1927 when the Communist Party of China under Stalin's directions turned the united front tactic to a strategy that leads to the Menshevik two stages theory - first an historical stage of supporting the national bourgeoisie and only in the second historical stage, a socialist revolution. This notion guarantees that the socialist revolution will be blocked.

The capitulation of a section of the LSSP to bourgeois nationalism of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, in 1964, is yet another proof. The *Lanka Sama Samaja Party* (LSSP) the section of the International Secretary joined the ruling coalition led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike.

The LSSP accepted three cabinet positions with LSSP leader N.M. Perera in the post of finance minister. The majority of delegates in the national congress were in favor of Perera's resolution to join the ruling coalition. A minority of 159 delegates opposed the motion and split to form the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (Revolutionary) or LSSP (R).

This government, after demoralizing the masses, was defeated in the 1965 elections.

In Egypt, during the Arab Spring beginning in 2011, the Revolutionary Socialists, affiliated with the British SWP, instead of fighting for a workers' revolutionary party to lead a socialist revolution, joined the program of the liberal block. Then, it called to vote for Morsi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, during the presidential elections in 2012 and then supported the military coup of Al Sisi on 3 July 2013. When confronted, they lied and denied that they support the military coup. Today they hide their actual positions during the coup. However at the time they took the following position: *"What happened on June 30 was, without the slightest doubt, the historic beginning of a new wave of the Egyptian revolution, the largest wave since January 2011. (...) What has happened in Egypt is the height of democracy, a revolution of millions to directly topple the ruler."* (Statement by the Revolutionary Socialists organisation in Egypt: Four days that shook the world, July 4, 2013, <http://links.org.au/node/3424>)

They also stated in another declaration: *"But the stubbornness, stupidity and criminality of the US-backed Muslim Brotherhood and Mohamed Badie, its General Guide, open the terrifying horizons of civil war. This can only be stopped by millions coming into the squares and streets to protect their revolution. They must abort the US-Brotherhood plan to portray the Egyptian Revolution as a military coup. The popular uprising of 30 June threw the Muslim Brotherhood out of power, and its plan is now clear. The Brotherhood is seeking to take over the squares in order to project an image of false popularity for the president who was removed by the uprising. It may even be aiming to negotiate his return to power with the support of the US and other imperialist powers in order to accomplish what Mursi promised to do for them in Syria and the region. Leaving the squares to Mursi and his supporters today is the biggest danger that faces the revolution."* (Statement from the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt: Victory to the 30 June revolution: Statement of the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, 6 July 2013)." [46]

By contrast, the RCIT's position on Egypt was: *"The RCIT does not support in any way the politics of this party. Quite the opposite, the RCIT supported the mass protests against the Morsi government on 30th June and before. These protests were progressive because the workers and poor fought for bread and democratic freedom against the bourgeois-democratically elected Morsi government. However, the military coup created a completely new situation. The army command takeover was thoroughly counter-revolutionary albeit it claimed to be related to the 30th June demonstration. In fact this claim was nothing but a figleaf for the army command, the imperialists and the fulool (remnant of the Mubarak regime) to take power directly in their hands and to start an anti-democratic rollback."*

The RCIT sharply condemns those leftists in Egypt and internationally who objectively helped the reactionary military regime in their counterrevolutionary plans by whitewashing their coup d'état on 3rd July as an "advance for the revolution" or even a "Second Egyptian Revolution". The centrist Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt and their international co-thinkers of the SWP(UK) and the ISO(USA) or the IMT of Alan Woods are examples for this shameful betrayal. They are a warning example for the workers vanguard that political organizations lacking a revolutionary method in program and politics will inevitable end on the side of the counterrevolution." [47]

11. On Self-Determination of Oppressed Nations

From time to time we hear or read the argument of reformists and different centrists that Marxists and other left-wingers must defend the right of self-determination of all nations, imperialist nations and oppressed nations. This, as we mentioned, was the position of the Shachtmanites. Thus, for example the CWI argues that the solution in Palestine is two socialist states. The IMT argues that the Israelis and the Palestinians have the right of self-determination and the form it must take is a socialist federalist state. The Communist Party of Israel and Hadash argue that the solution is two capitalist states based on the borders of 1967.

Marx and Engels, who lived in a period when capitalism was still a progressive mode of production, did not support the right of self-determination of the confederation of the South in the American civil war, because the economic system of the South was based on slavery that was an obstacle to capitalist development. Marx also wrote: *"In the United States of North America, every independent workers' movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic."* [48]

Engels did not support the right of self-determination of the southern Slavs. Engels explained his position saying that the Southern Slavs are serving reactionary Russia:

"As far as pan-Slavism in particular is concerned, in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung No.194 we showed that, part from the well-meaning self-deceptions of the democratic pan-Slavists, it has in reality no other aim than to give the Austrian Slavs, who are split up and historically, literally, politically, commercially and industrially dependent on the Germans and Magyars, a basis of support, in Russia on the one hand, and on the other hand in the Austrian united monarchy, which is dominated by the Slav majority and dependent on Russia. We have shown how such little nations, which for centuries have been taken in tow by history against their will, must necessarily be counter-revolutionary, and that their whole position in the revolution in 1848 was actually counter-revolutionary. In view of the democratic pan-Slavist manifesto, which demands the independence of all Slavs without distinction, we must return to this matter. Democratic pan-Slavism." [49]

Thus Marxists do not support the right of self-determination of oppressive or counter revolutionary nations but only of the oppressed nations in their struggle against imperialism and its servants.

It is important to understand what are the political implications of the support for the self-determination for the imperialist nations. The first implication is that it compels one to support the bourgeois imperialists and their servants, or at least taking a neutral or pacifist position during military conflicts, when the imperialists fight among themselves or against a colony or a semi-colony.

This position characterized the Socialist International in WWI and WWII. During the WWII the FI was not able to hold a united world party. Each section acted under its own local pressures.

In France one wing supported the self-determination of imperialist France. The other one refused to struggle against the German occupation and connect this struggle to a socialist revolution. A document of the Fourth International from February 1944 that re-established the unity

of the French Trotskyists read: *“Instead of distinguishing between the nationalism of the defeated bourgeoisie which remains an expression of its imperialist preoccupations, and the ‘nationalism’ of the masses which is only a reactionary expression of their resistance against exploitation by the occupying imperialism, the leadership of the POI considered as progressive the struggle of its own bourgeoisie....”* [50]

Some confused middle class centrists who hold liberal definition of imperialism are likely to wonder why not supporting the right of self-determination of France that was occupied by Nazi Germany and thus was a colony? The answer is very simple France remained an imperialist state and support for the restoration of the independence of France would be to support its super-exploitation by France in countries like Vietnam, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon and Algeria.

At the same time it was necessary and legitimate to participate in the popular struggle against the German occupation – including in the movement of the *Résistance* in France. However, Marxists had to counterpose proletarian internationalism against the widespread ideas of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

During WWII the British centrist WIL, the parent organization of the CWI and IMT that showed its nationalist deviation already before WWII when it refused to join the Fourth International because of its disagreement over a tactical question related to their strategic orientation to the labor party, related to the Eighth Army led by Montgomery and thus part of British imperialism army as *“our army”*. In 1943 conference, one of its leading members, Ted Grant, declared: *“We have a victorious army in North Africa and Italy, and I say, yes. Long Live the Eighth Army, because that is our army.”* [51]

Later, Ted Grant and the CWI/IMT developed such opportunist mistakes into a consistent social-chauvinist and pro-imperialist line which resulted in their refusal to defend Argentina, a semi-colony, against British imperialism during the Malvinas war in 1982. Consistent with this social-imperialist line, the IMT of Woods refused to defend Hamas against the attack of the Palestinian Authority, backed by Israel, in 2007 on the ground that Hamas are *“Muslim fundamentalists”*.

They wrote: *“In July (2007) we published an article on the conflict between the forces of Hamas and those of Fatah in the Gaza Strip. The article was written by Yehuda Stern in Israel, but it had been heavily edited by the Editorial Board of www.marxist.com. The original article that we received came under the title “The Liberation of Gaza and the Questions Facing Israeli and Palestinian Workers”.*

Upon receiving the article the Editorial Board informed the author that many changes had to be made for it to be published on our website, starting with the title itself. We do not consider the victory of Hamas in the conflict with Fatah in Gaza in any way a *“Liberation of Gaza”*, nor is it in any way a progressive step for the Palestinian masses. It is in fact a tragedy that the vacuum created by the corruption and collaboration with imperialism on the part of the PLO leadership in running the Palestinian Authority has been filled by the reactionary Hamas.

We sent our comments to the author (and to Yossi Schwartz), who then made some corrections, but we considered these were still not enough. We had a long phone conversation and we followed this with emails detailing the changes we considered needed making. The article was changed but we still considered

that it was not satisfactory. We went ahead and edited it further. Eventually the author and Yossi Schwartz accepted the form in which it was published. On this basis we believed we had an agreement on the fundamental issues.

Unfortunately, we must admit that some unfortunate formulations were still present in the article. It must be said that what seemed to be a movement in the right direction by the author was no such thing. He (in agreement with Yossi Schwartz) very quickly reverted to the opinions he had expressed in the original text. He maintains that Hamas led an anti-imperialist struggle, mobilizing the masses, and that therefore Marxists should support the *“military victory”* of Hamas, claiming that the situation in Gaza was a blow to imperialism and that it would push forward the class struggle throughout the Middle East[...] We believe the approach developed by the Moroccan Marxists is what is needed. We are implacably opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. To make any kind of concession to these reactionary forces would be disastrous for a genuine Marxist tendency in the labour movement. We will return to this question again, but for now we believe the comments of the Moroccan Marxists suffice.” [52]

This Islamophobia is but a reflection of the imperialist political line and is common among the different centrists calling themselves Trotskyists. During the Second Lebanon war in 2006, the middle class radicals opposed supporters of Hezbollah joining their demonstrations. In other words they opposed the Leninist tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front.

Nadin Rosa Roso wrote: *“Massive demonstrations in European capitals and major cities in support of the people of Gaza highlighted once again the core problem: the vast majority of the left agrees in supporting the people of Gaza against Israeli aggression, but refuses to support its political expressions such as Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The left not only refuses to support them, but also denounces them and fights against them. Support for the people of Gaza exists only at a humanitarian level, but not at the political level[...]The headline of the French website ‘Res Publica’ following the mass demonstration in Paris on January 3 read: “We refuse to be trapped by the Islamists of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah!” The article continued: “Some activists of the left and far left (who turned out only in small numbers) were literally drowned in a crowd whose views are at odds with the spirit of the French Republican movement and of the twenty-first century Left. Over 90% of the demonstrators championed a fundamentalist and communitarian worldview based on the clash of civilizations, which is anti-secular and anti-Republican[...]one finds on the websites of both the French Communist Party and the Worker’s Party of Belgium an article entitled, “How Israel put Hamas in the saddle.” The article itself supplies us with little more than the assertion that Hamas has been supported by Israel, the United States and the European Union. It was published on January 2, after a week of intensive Israeli bombardment and on the day before the ground offensive whose declared aim was the destruction of Hamas.”* [53]

In France the so called far left were the first to spread Islamophobia: *“It’s greatly to their discredit that it was leading members of the main national revolutionary organisations (Lutte Ouvrière—Workers’ Struggle – and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR)—the Revolutionary Communist League) who triggered the sequence of events leading to the anti-headscarf law of 2004. They did so by pushing for the expulsion of two headscarf-wearing young adults from the school in which*

both party members taught. This expulsion soon snowballed to become the defining political moment in France's pre-ISIS relation to Islam". [54]

As we already mentioned, it is very common among reformists and centrists of our time, in opposition to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, to refuse supporting revolutionary struggles of oppressed nations because of the reactionary nature of its leadership. We have seen it very clearly during the Arab revolution and in particular in the case of Syria.

As our comrade Michael Pröbsting wrote in 2017 in his three-part essay *Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?*: "In the last few years, various left-wing groups have dropped their support for the ongoing Syrian Revolution – some sooner and others more recently – and became abstentionists or Third Campists. This means that while they don't support the Assad regime (in contrast to the Stalinists, Castro-Chavistas and various centrists) they prefer to abstain from the popular struggle against the dictatorship instead of supporting it, i.e., they support neither side but constitute a "neutral" third camp. These abstentionists justify their stance by arguing that workers and peasants wouldn't play any active role in the struggle anymore, that the liberation struggle was hijacked by reactionary Islamist forces, or that the rebels have become agents of US imperialism or of other regional powers." [55]

He also wrote: "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? [...] A 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. [...] n 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 replace 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."

To those reformists and centrists who condemned the rebels for getting some weapons from the imperialists, Lenin answered: "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." [56]

To avoid any misunderstanding by those who would claim that the analogy is wrong as we speak about rebel receiving weapons from an imperialist state, Trotsky relates to a situation where rebels got weapons from an imperialist state and with a fascist government. "Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against a democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism.

Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favor of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise they would be no more than wretched trade unionists – not proletarian revolutionists.

At the same time, the French maritime workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism.

Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fascism renders “aid” to the Algerians only in order to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous “ally” and at the same time continue their own irreconcilable struggle against fascism, “the main enemy in their own country”. Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their own revolutionary position.” [57]

But we are speaking about Muslim reactionaries who hijacked the revolution, the reformists and the centrists will say. Really? To them Trotsky replied: “When Abdel-Krim rose up against France, the democrats and Social Democrats spoke with hate of the struggle of a “savagely tyrant” against the “democracy.” The party of Leon Blum supported this point of view. But we, Marxists and Bolsheviks, considered the struggle of the Riffians against imperialist domination as a progressive war. Lenin wrote hundreds of pages demonstrating the primary necessity of distinguishing between imperialist nations and the colonial and semi-colonial nations which comprise the great majority of humanity. To speak of “revolutionary defeatism” in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists.” [58]

It is interesting to note that the right-wing philo-Stalinist centrists who defend the butcher Assad backed by Russian imperialism love to quote Lenin position of 1913 as if he did not extend his position on the national question after the Bolshevik revolution. The successors of the notorious Gerry Healy, the ICFI, who deny that Russia and China are imperialist states but claim that they are simply capitalist states, oppose the right of self-determination of the oppressed nations from all the imperialists, not only of the US, Japan and the European Union but also from China and Russia. [59]

They wrote: “Even in 1913, Lenin rejected support for the formation of innumerable small states under the banner of national separatism. He emphasized the economic significance of centralization, arguing that “the class-conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state.” This was written 103 years ago, at a far lower level of development of capitalist globalization, before the October Revolution, and before the promotion of national and ethnic separatism became the most potent weapon of the capitalist-imperialist war against the socialist and internationalist aspirations of the class conscious sections of working class.”

They also wrote: “The RCIT explicitly calls for “Unconditional support for the liberation struggle—including in its armed form!” This applies “for example for a socialist Tamil Eelam, a united Ireland, a united Kashmir, an independent Kurdistan, Chechnya, Tibet, etc.” The RCIT extends this separatist program to “the Uyghur in China, the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, the Chechens and other Caucasian peoples in Russia.” [60]

To sum up their position, they call for the oppressors of the world to unite. Their position is not very different from the right-wing of the Second International prior to WWI and of Stalin.

Another social-imperialist position was expressed by LCFI, a splinter group from the political bandit, Gerry Healy, following the mass killing of civilians in Aleppo by Assad army, that was reported in Al Jazeera on 22 Sept 2015 [61] and in AP in December 2016. [62]

This group claimed that the Aleppo mass killing was the liberation of Aleppo and attacked the RCIT for its consistent defense of the Syrian revolution. Their wooden head argument was that Russia is not an imperialist state and that the rebels “are barbaric jihadists in the pay of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Jordan all seeking to curry favour with and carry out the agenda of the USA in their own way.” [63] Their denial of the class nature of Russia 15 years after it became an imperialist state echo the position of the ICFI.

While the Stalinist parties have been standing with butcher Assad and Russian imperialism, while different centrists like the CWI and IMT claimed that the Syrian revolution was hijacked by Islamists armed by U.S imperialism, the RCIT defended the Syrian revolution regardless of the Islamists. Those who refused to defend the Syrian revolution because of the Islamists fit Lenin’s accusation that they are the worst opportunists. [64]

12. The National Question in Russia

Russia is an imperialist state, that among other things, oppresses nations in Russia itself. Those who claim that Russia is simply a capitalist state ignore the fact that Lenin, before the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, called Russia an imperialist state. Today Russian economy is characterized by monopolies and its state acts as a Great Power in world politics. Russia is a multinational state with 186 nationalities. These nationalities are not recognized by Russia’s rulers to have a right to self-determination.

One of the most oppressed nations are the Chechens. “Chechnya is a republic in southwestern Russia, situated on the northern flank of the Greater Caucasus. Chechnya is bordered by Russia on the north, Dagestan republic on the east and south-east, the country of Georgia on the southwest, and Ingushetiya republic on the west.” [65]

The Chechens are Muslim and their language belongs to the Nakh group. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the Chechenians demanded their right to self-determination. In 1994, Russian troops occupied Chechnya. Boris Yeltsin and the Chechen leader Maskhadov signed a provisional peace treaty in May 1997 and the question of Chechnya’s eventual status was not resolved. It was estimated that up to 100,000 people in Chechnya died and more than 400,000 were forced to flee their homes during the 1990s.

The RCIT wrote on Chechnya:

“[...] two wars of occupation against the Chechen people – the

first in the years 1994-96 and the second since late 1999 – were very important events during this decade. Against the desire of the Chechen people for independence, Moscow waged an incredibly brutal war. During the first war it massacred about 100,000 Chechens and during the second again up to 50,000 (in a country with a population of only one million!). The victory of the Chechen guerilla war in 1996 was an impressive event – compare the small Chechen people with Russia’s 143 millions! – demonstrating once again how much a liberation war supported by the whole population can achieve against a demoralized great power.

While the Putin regime has succeeded in occupying the country until now, the resistance continues at a low level. This resistance has become dominated mostly by petty-bourgeois Islamist forces.

We supported the Chechen liberation struggle from the beginning and called for the defeat of the Russian occupation forces. We gave no political support to the petty-bourgeois and Islamist leaderships and called for an independent workers’ and peasant republic of Chechnya.

The Chechen war also provided the backdrop for a deeper analysis of Russian capitalism. It reflected the transformation of Russia into an emerging imperialist power.” [66]

During the war between Georgia and South Ossetia it was necessary to defend the right of self-determination of Ossetia that demanded separation from Georgia without giving any support to Russia.

The bombardment and occupation of the region, killed hundreds of civilians and casualties included a number of Russian ‘peacekeepers.’ Thousands of Ossetian refugees were driven from the region and from surrounding villages.

Russia, mobilized special forces and regular troops, allegedly in defense of Ossetia, but in reality, for its own imperialists goals. At stake there were the oil reserves of the circum-Caspian Sea region and the locations for new pipelines to pump it westward, outside Russian territorial control.

Whilst the fighting continued, the hypocritical voices of the US and its British allies have been raised in calls for Russia to respect “Georgia’s territorial integrity”. They demanded that Russia respected Georgia’s borders while they themselves violated those of Iraq and Afghanistan with impunity.

The Russian stance is no less hypocritical. Its delegate to the UN piously backed the national rights of the South Ossetians, and those of the Abkhazians, Georgia’s other large national minority in its Western region. But who still buys into the Russians’ commitment to the right of nations to self-determination when they continue to bloodily suppress the Chechen nation?! [67]

13. The National Question in China

China is an imperialist state that also oppresses national minorities: The people of Tibet and the Muslim population of East Turkestan.

The Tibetan Plateau is a large region of southwestern China consistently above 4000 meters. This region was an independent kingdom that began in the eighth century and developed into an independent country in the twentieth century. In 1950, shortly after Mao Zedong’s led revolution, China invaded Tibet. In 1959 a Tibetan uprising was suppressed by the regime and the leader of the theocratic Tibetan government, the Dalai Lama, fled to Dharamsala, India and created a government-in-exile.

The Stalinists repressed the Tibetan Buddhists and destroyed their places of worship, especially during the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76). After Mao’s death in 1976, the Tibetans gained limited autonomy. However many of the Tibetan government officials are of Chinese-Han nationality. The Chinese government has administered Tibet as the “Autonomous Region of Tibet” (Xizang) since 1965. Many Chinese have been financially encouraged to move to Tibet in order to, dilute the ethnic composition of the region. The inhabitants in Tibet today include Tibetans, Menpa, Luopa, Han Chinese, Hui, Sherpa, and a few Deng people. Among them, the Tibetans are the main inhabitants, who take up more than 92 percent of the regional population. The total population of Xizang is approximately 2.6 million. The transformation of China from Stalinism to imperialism has not changed the level of oppression.

Muslims have lived in China from as early as the eighth century. Many Muslims came to China as soldiers, providing military aid to the Tang dynasty government during a

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rebellion and then remained in China. They also came as traders and diplomats along the Silk Road, setting up communities that maintained their own religion and lifestyle.

Since intercultural marriages with local Chinese often occurred, the Muslim population increased, as non-Muslims had to convert to Islam before. Although Muslims live all over China, the majority lives in the northwestern regions of Xinjiang, Ningxia, Gansu and the Qinghai provinces.

Chinese citizens are divided into 56 different 'minzu' or ethnic groups; a category that is not based on religion. The vast majority of Chinese belong to the 'Han'. Within the other 55 minzu, there are ten that are Muslim: Hui, Uyghurs, Kazaks, Dongxiangs, Khalkas, Salas, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Bao'ans and Tatars.

About half of China's Muslims belong to the Hui, the ethnic minority that descends from the foreign Muslims who arrived during the Tang dynasty. In Xinjiang, a region almost as big as Alaska, more than half the population of 24 million belongs to Muslim ethnic minority groups. Most of them are Uyghurs, whose religion, language, culture and history of resistance led the Stalinist-capitalist regime to repress them and send many of them to camps for cruel forms of "reeducation" in order to force them to give up their religion.

We of the RCIT are saying: *"Stop the oppression of the national minorities in East Turkestan ("Xinjiang"), Tibet and other provinces! Dissolution of the so-called re-education camps! Compensation to all prisoners and their families! For the right of national self-determination, including the right to establish independent states. This can be achieved only by a social revolution of the Chinese working class and the oppressed."* [68]

The ICFI denounced the RCIT for calling China an imperialist state. It is only consistent for them, although they recognize that the Tibetans and Uyghurs are repressed, to sympathize with the regime in Beijing instead of defending their right of self-determination conclude: *"At a more fundamental level, the US, by encouraging and backing separatist groups, has the potential to weaken and even fracture China into a series of subservient nation states. Strategists in Washington are no doubt hoping for a repeat of the events that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Beijing regime is also acutely aware of that precedent and is determined to use all means, including police state repression, to counter the threat."* [69]

The ICL that also claim that China is a workers' state calls for its defense against US imperialism and does not even mention the repression of the Tibetans and Muslims.

The CWI condemns the repression by saying: *"Credible evidence that the camps exist on a truly mass scale has been provided by Human Rights groups and exile Uighur organisations...."*

Socialists condemn the Chinese regime's large-scale repression in Xinjiang and support full democratic rights for the Uighurs and other nationalities in respect of language, culture, religion and political freedoms. This, in our opinion, can only be won through mass struggle that links up with the working class throughout China and beyond its borders, aiming to overthrow capitalism and authoritarianism with a socialist alternative.

But we warn there should be no trust in, or support for, Western capitalist governments that have only recently taken up the plight of the Uighurs, Tibetans, Hong Kongers and other minorities under Chinese rule in order to recast themselves in a more favourable light in global public opinion and particu-

larly to cover up their own Islamophobic policies. This is all so much political camouflage for an increasingly ruthless strategic struggle against the Chinese regime for economic and geopolitical advantage.

The Uighurs are being used as a gigantic test group for mass collection of DNA, blood samples and other biometric data, which the regime is using to perfect its police state machinery. Police spyware must be installed in every mobile phone belonging to a Uighur. Wifi equipment in all public places can detect phones that don't have this spying app. Random police searches on the streets also enforce this law. To possess a phone without the spying app is a serious offence. Such methods can be exported to other parts of China in the future.

A mass incarceration and indoctrination campaign ("transformation through education") has led to hundreds of thousands of Uighurs and other Muslims being held in camps. Viewing foreign websites, receiving phone calls from abroad, praying regularly, or growing a beard, are all 'suspicious activities' that could result in detention.

The construction of new camps has surged since early 2017. Despite official denials, research and reporting by foreign media and rights groups offers credible evidence of the scale of the camps. Maya Wang of Human Rights Watch says the overall number in the camps could be 800,000 (Xinjiang's population is 22 million people)." [70]

However, as typical centrists, while they defend the right of self-determination of the Zionists they do not call for the right of self-determination for the oppressed Tibetans and the Uighurs.

14. The National Question in Europe Today

It would be a mistake to believe that the national question was resolved once and for all in Europe and we will point out to two of them: the Ukraine and Catalonia.

The national question can be a complicated question to which only truly internationalist perspective can offer a solution. Russia is an imperialist state while the Ukraine is not. Nevertheless US imperialism has been behind the Ukraine against Russian imperialism. The government of the Ukraine is a coalition of right-wing parties, that oppress the Russian minority and the Tatar minority. The RCIT wrote:

"The rivalry between the imperialist powers has dangerously escalated. Now in power is a right-wing coalition – the so-called "Euro-Maidan" movement – composed of pro-Western conservative parties and fascist forces. This coalition overthrew the former government of Viktor Yanukovich who acted as a lackey of most Ukraine oligarchs as well as of Russian imperialism, and who ruled with increasingly authoritarian methods. (...) While we resolutely defend the rights of the Russian-speaking minority, we no less equally defend the rights of the Crimean Tatars who were brutally displaced by Stalin's regime in 1944. The Tatars constitute a minority in Crimea only due to their displacement by the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy 70 years ago. We uncompromisingly defend their rights to return to their homeland, use their national language, and fully exercise their cultural rights without facing discrimination." [71]

In Spain the Catalans are an oppressed nation that has the right of self-determination. The RCIT wrote on this question:

"Catalonia has a long, historic tradition of demanding independence from the Spanish rulers which was massively nourished

during the era of the Franco-regime. About 80% of the people in Catalonia are in favor of having the referendum and nearly half of the Catalan people are currently for the separation. In addition, mobilizations of the supporters for the independence were impressively big in the last years and involved up to more than one million people (out of a population of 7.5 Million!). Last but not least, Catalonia as such is not only a traditional stronghold of the working class (likewise the Basque country) in Spain, it organized also the biggest pro-refugee protests in Europe. Therefore, there can be no doubt about the progressive character of the forces in favor of national self-determination as well as of the strength of the independence movement among the politically conscious workers and youth in Catalonia." [72]

The RCIT also wrote:

"All above mentioned tasks are both important and urgent. They must be implemented if the people of Catalonia should have a chance to succeed in their struggle. For this the workers and oppressed in Catalonia and all other parts of Spain need a revolutionary leadership. It is therefore highly urgent for all authentic revolutionaries to join forces and to form a revolutionary party of the workers and oppressed. Only such a party is able to elaborate a revolutionary strategy to lead the masses in a successful fight for independence of Catalonia on a socialist base. This is what the RCIT is fighting for! We call all authentic revolutionaries to join us in this struggle!"

Another aspect of the national question in Europe are the guest workers and refugees from Syria and Africa. They are refugees because of the imperialist interventions in their countries in addition to the legacy of the colonialism. They should be welcome and receive full citizenship rights." [73]

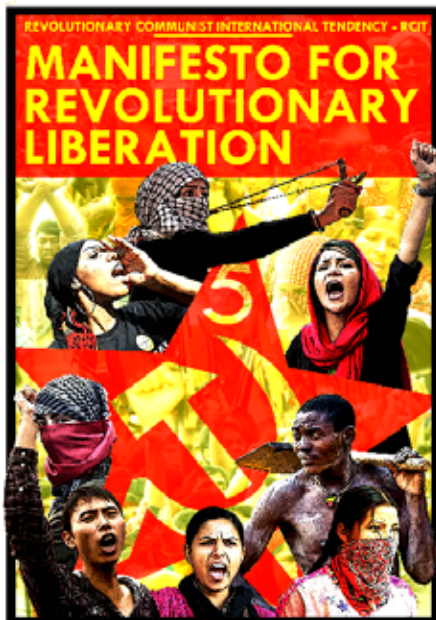
15. Settler Colonialism

The question of settler colonialists is not a new question. The second British Boer war over South Africa natural resources took place at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (1899-1902). The British socialists at that time supported the Boers against British imperialism. It was correct to oppose British imperialism but was it correct to support the Boer settlers? It would be correct if the Boer allied themselves with the native Africans, in particular the Zulu, as happened in Latin America. The Boer however did not have any interest in such an alliance.

Thus, while a defeat for the British was in the interest of the working class, supporting the Boers was not.

Lenin and the Third International during his life did not deal with one aspect of the national question which is settler colonialism. This can be explained by the experience of settler colonialists who joined with the native people against the domination of the colonialist power in the 18th and the 19th century and with the positions taken by the early Communist parties in the US, South Africa and Palestine, that were formed by white radicals influenced by the Bolshevik revolution.

"The historian Edward Johanningsmeier wrote that CPSA's was involved with the 'Rand Revolt' of 1922, a large strike by white miners against the mining corporations attempts to reduce wages and place blacks in semi-skilled mining jobs. They believed that the white working class would move to the left in its conflicts with the capitalists. David Ivon Jones, believed that the revolution in South Africa would be led by white, skilled workers. Thus, they supported a strike in which the banner 'Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White South Africa' was prominently displayed. However, this view was based on a misunderstanding of the class position of the white workers. Racial segregation in the work process put white workers in the position of direct supervisors or even contractors of black labor. A few communists pleaded for racial solidarity during the strike, but violence against blacks escalated during the strike. Because of its close relations with the strike and its leadership, the CPSA lost some of the prestige it had gained among black organizations. David I. Jones, writing from Moscow to his comrades in South Africa, claimed that the Rand Revolt might mark the beginning of the socialist revolution. W. H. Andrews, a radical unionist who had been elected first chair of the South African Labour Party in 1909, resigned as secretary of the CP in 1925 because of its decision against affiliating with the South African Labour Party. He remained in the CP, but his main sphere of activity continued to be in the leadership of the established white trade union movement. In 1924, Sidney Bunting and Edward Roux, were elected chair and vice-chair of the South African party, respectively, and the Communist Party began a serious effort to recruit blacks. This change in orientation resulted in the recruitment of a number of African leaders and organizers, including Thomas Mbeki, Edwin Mofutsanyana, Edward Khaile, John Gomas, James La Guma, J. B. Marks, Albert Nzula and



NEW RCIT PROGRAM!

Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation

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

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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 36 pages, A5 Format

Moses Kotane.

In the USA in 1919, a small number of black nationalists, socialists and radicals came together in a secret revolutionary organization mainly in Harlem called the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB). The ABB was founded by Cyril Briggs, a West Indian intellectual, and the most influential of the earliest black communists in the US who were born in the West Indies included Briggs, Richard B. Moore, Wifred A. Domingo and Claude McKay. At the Fourth Congress in 1922, the Comintern declared that 'the world Negro movement' should be organized with America as 'the center of Negro culture and the crystallization of Negro protest' and Africa as the 'reservoir of human labor for the further development of Capitalism'. Because of the rhetorical importance placed by the Comintern on the potential revolutionary role of African Americans, in the 1920s black communists were encouraged to travel to Moscow for ideological training, The Comintern endorsed the ABB idea that 'the Negro workers of the [US] are an especially exploited class'. In 1915 in his study of agriculture in the United States, Lenin took up the question of Black oppression. In early 1917 in an article on the national question inside the advanced capitalist countries Lenin says that Blacks, "should be classed as an oppressed nation." [74]

"John Reed, a white American delegate at the Second Congress deprecated nationalist or separatist sentiments among African Americans in his speech before the committee. He minimized the influence of the Garvey movement, and argued that most blacks at the time 'consider themselves first of all Americans'. The policy of 'Negro self-determination in the black belt', emerged out of the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928.

The 'self-determination in the black belt' thesis was linked in the same resolutions to a call for a black nation, or 'native republic', in South Africa. As in the CPUSA the South African CP endorsed the idea that black liberation had to be framed in terms of state independence and self-determination was vehemently opposed by a majority of the communist leadership. However the new thesis seemed validated by the depth and intensity of white racism in South Africa in the early years of the Depression. A period of sharply escalated oppression of blacks began in 1929, following the re-election of the now more electorally-secure Nationalist Party. The Afrikaner general, J. B. M. Hertzog, won the election on the Nationalists' platform of a 'Black Menace' and after the election his government vigorously pursued a policy of replacing Africans in certain jobs with unemployed." [75]

The demands of native (black) South Africans was dropped in 1948 at the same time that the Stalinists supported the creation of Israel.

The historian Amir Locker-Biletzki wrote: "In all his theorizing, however, Lenin did not account for the establishment of settler colonial societies whose logic of capital and labor at times went beyond the logic of market and surplus value. His portrayal of monopoly capitalism left out the reaction of the colonial peoples. Yet this theorizing became the ideological bedrock on which Communist parties in the non-European world, including the Communists in Palestine/Israel based their ideology on. While Palestinian and Jewish Communists both adhered to the ideological concepts formalized by Lenin, there is undoubtedly a difference in their understanding of them. The rhetorical convergence around imperialism enabled the Jewish Communists to perceive the settlers as fighting against imperialism. The Palestinian Communists, on the other hand, were aware of the settler-colonial reality of what was happening in Palestine and understood it as imperialism, or more accurately as settler

imperialism. [...] the inability of Communism in Palestine to comprehend and represent Palestinian national agency originated from the shared background of many Jewish Communists in Palestine, whose Zionist roots gave rise to an interpretation of Zionism that did not completely negate the Yishuv (i.e. settler colonialism). As for the Arab Palestinian Communists, they remained attached to Leninist anti-imperialism because it allowed them to express their nationalism in what they perceived to be a modern radical way. Thus, both Palestinian and Jewish Communists paradoxically had strong motivations to hold on to an ideology that separated the Yishuv and its Zionist content. [76]

"In the main lecture marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the CP, Meir Vilner, at the time the secretary-general of Rakah (New Communist List), recounted the history of Communism in Palestine/Israel. The lecture was built around a theme that might be summarized as the progressive development of the Party from its Zionist origins toward a full and correct ideological appreciation of the conditions of the country: 'After many developments, advances and setbacks, a Marxist-Leninist, Communist and Arab-Jewish party was formed in the country. As regards British rule in Palestine, Vilner approaches it as a classic military colony:

British mandatory rule in Palestine was a regular colonial rule, different only by name [...] British imperialism exploited all aspects, political, agricultural and military, of the Zionist movement to implement its policies in the Middle East, in order to keep its economic positions (oil, markets) and strategic (the road to India) positions, and acted against the Arab anti-imperialist movement. Zionism, in this formulation of classic metropole colonialism, is attacked not because of its settler colonial nature, but for being a collaborator with British imperialism. Indeed, the disinheritance of the Palestinians is not ignored by Vilner. Recounting the Party's struggle against the removal of Palestinian fellahin from their lands and their displacement from workplaces, he interprets it in anti-colonial and class terms. The analysis of the Party, then, was that the Jewish settlers themselves became colonial subjects. The resolutions of the Second Congress of the Party (1921) stated that 'the present friendly approach of the English administration to the Jewish population is just a temporary expression of British imperial policy. With the first change in the political situation this policy will become hostile. A 1930 letter from a Comintern executive to Party members shows that this sentiment was shared by the Soviets:

The main thing in understanding this question is that Palestine is a colony of British imperialism safeguarding its rule with the help of the Jewish bourgeoisie. The Jewish national minority that is in a state of subjection in relation to British imperialism stands as a privileged minority against the Arab masses.

Apart from identifying Zionism with the Jewish middle class and imperialism, the document accepts the fact that the settler society, albeit privileged, is also subject to colonization." [77]

It must be said that not only the Stalinists did not understand the nature of Zionism but so were the Trotskyists, such as the RCL led by Tony Cliff.

"The RCL was incapable of challenging the PKP influence amongst the Arab workers because it did not possess a revolutionary understanding and program for Palestine. It was blinded by a superficial understanding of the "Jewish-Arab conflict" as a confrontation between two equally reactionary nationalist camps. They failed to see the colonial settler nature of Zionism, the subsequent real national oppression of the Arabs by the Zionists and hence the justified national liberation struggle of the Arab masses against the Zionists (which was betrayed by the

Arab bourgeoisie and landlords).

This programmatic failure of the Trotskyists in Palestine – which reminds us of Lenin’s polemics against “imperialist economism” – became completely evident in an article by the RCL leader Tony Cliff in November 1938. In a chapter entitled “The Jewish-Arab conflict”, Cliff wrote:

“What are the causes of this conflict? Two answers are advanced in Palestine. The Zionist groups say that the conflict is simply the collision of feudalism and reaction with the progressive forces of capitalism. The Arab nationalists and their Stalinist supporters claim that the collision is between the Arab liberation movement and Zionism.

But the first explanation is wrong because the fact of the conflict between feudalism and capitalism does not explain the Arab national movement in Palestine. There are parallel manifestations of nationalism in the adjacent countries (Syria, Egypt). Moreover it does not explain how a clique of effendis succeeded in getting control over a militant national movement of hundreds of thousands. It is clear that the basis of the antagonism of the Arab masses to the Jewish population does not arise from the fact that the latter have brought in a higher standard of living and have created a modern labour movement. Their principal opposition arises from the fact that they see in the Jewish population the bearers of Zionism, that political system based upon national exclusivism, and hostility to the aspirations of the Arab masses to independence and democratisation of the political regime.

The second view, the claim of the Arab nationalists, is likewise erroneous. It does not take into consideration that there really is a conflict between feudalism and capitalist development, secondly, that inside the nationalist movement there is an Arab bourgeoisie which in competition with the closed Jewish economy de-

velops exclusivist Arab tendencies, and thirdly, that the Jewish population is no integral part of the imperialist camp.

What follows therefore is that the collision in the Arab-Jewish conflict is between two national exclusivist movements (between Zionism and the feudal, semi-bourgeois Arab leadership on the one hand, and on the other the struggle of the Arab masses against Zionism). The consistent struggle for the easing up of this conflict is therefore only possible on the basis of the struggle against Zionism, against Arab national exclusivism and anti-Jewish actions, against imperialism, for the democratisation of the country and its political independence.”

So we see the RCL leader adhering to an idealist, not dialectical-materialist method, which equates both Zionist and Arab nationalism or “national exclusivism” without understanding the difference between an oppressed nation and a colonial settler oppressor nation. Consequently, Cliff could not see the important difference between the nationalism of an oppressed nation and the nationalism of a colonial settler oppressor nation.” [78]

As far as we know, Maxime Rodinson who was a member of the French Communist Party and resigned from it in 1958 over their rotten Stalinist line on Algeria, was the first Marxist who defined Israel as settler-colonialist. He wrote in his book *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*:

“I am well aware that the designation “nationalist” for the Zionist movement often gives rise to protest on the part of Arab intellectuals. I have already come up against it. This is because in the Arab world, for reasons which are evident, the term “nationalism” has acquired a positive connotation, a sacred aureole. For the Arabs, nationalism is by definition a feeling, a passion, a duty, a praiseworthy (even admirable) movement. Zionism, being in their view something which is in its very essence bad,

Books of the RCIT

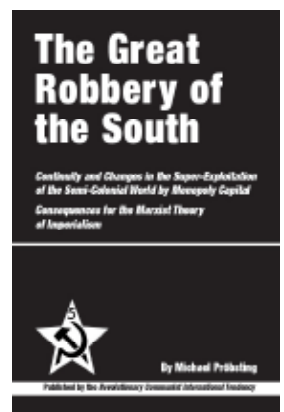
Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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)



a perverse undertaking, cannot be nationalistic. It is a project of pure banditry, an operation planned by Satanic manipulators which sweeps along the deceived masses or individuals essentially just as evil”.

Yet his line was a reformist one and not revolutionary as he urged peaceful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians as if it was possible in light of the nature of Israel.

These days imperialist Israel has remained the last state of colonial settlers. In the past, South Africa, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were among the settler colonialist societies. In this historical period of imperialism and the reactionary phase of globalism anyone who supports the right of self-determination of the Zionists stands against the self-determination of the oppressed Palestinians and denies the right of return of the Palestinian refugees who were expelled by Israel in 1948. One has to choose between the right of self-determination of the oppressors and the oppressed.

Unlike the Stalinists, the RCL as many of today’s centrists, Trotsky opposed the self-determination of settler colonialists. He opposed the white settler colonialists in South Africa he wrote: *“The South African Republic will emerge first of all as a “black” republic; this does not exclude, of course, either full equality for the whites, or brotherly relations between the two races – depending mainly on the conduct of the whites. But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state.*

Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change not only the relation between the classes, but also between the races, and will assure to the blacks that place in the state which corresponds to their numbers, insofar will the social revolution in South Africa also have a national character.

We have not the slightest reason to close our eyes to this side of the question or to diminish its significance. On the contrary, the proletarian party should in words and in deeds openly and boldly take the solution of the national (racial) problem in its hands.” [79]

A common argument among the centrists who support the right of self-determination of the Zionists in one or another form (two states, bi national state, a federal state) among them the right centrists of the CWI and IMT, is that to win the struggle of the Palestinians we must guarantee the right of self-determination of the Israeli working class.

They ignore the fact that the Jewish Israeli working class vote for the Likud of Netanyahu because they see him as the protector of their privileges comparing to the Palestinian workers and refugees. It is not the Israeli working class that will liberate the Palestinians but the victorious Arab revolution that will win when the Arab workers, supported by the poor peasants at the head of the masses, fighting for democratic rights, will win and establish a socialist federation of the Middle East.

The writer of this book had an argument with Mahover, the founder of Matzpen, who argued that if Israel will lose a war the Israelis will be oppressed nation and as such it will be necessary to support their right of self-determination. He was unaware of the fact that he repeated the position of the French POI during WWII.

16. Conclusion

The national question is a very important question in the struggle against imperialism and their local servants. Without a correct theory, program and revolutionary practice on this question the world socialist revolution cannot be won. In this epoch only the international working class can solve this question by using the theory and strategy of Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution.

From a Marxist revolutionary perspective, this complicated question is clear. It is the persistent defense of all aspects of the national question in the struggle against the imperialists and their servants, including in time of military conflicts. Marxists differentiate between imperialist nations and oppressed nations. Marxists support only the oppressed nations regardless of its leadership secular or religious, as long as they struggle against imperialism resp. against an oppressor state.

The tactic Marxists use in the national struggle is the Anti-Imperialist United Front. It is a tactic, not a strategy. As a strategy it will only lead to the reformist two-stage nonsense and the politics of class collaboration. While Marxists stand with the oppressed in the military conflict and can even vote for petty-bourgeois non-workers’ parties of the oppressed nation, they do not vote for bourgeois non-workers’ parties when they have a real chance to win (like Morsi in Egypt). The national question still exists in many imperialist states and Marxists used the same united front tactic in defense of the oppressed nationalities and the guest workers and refugees.

One of the essentials preconditions to take a correct position on the national question is the attitude towards Russia and China, the new Eastern imperialists. Those who claim that these are not imperialist state also take social-imperialist positions against the oppressed nations. We see it in China and in Russia, we have seen it in Syria and Egypt.

The question of Israel as a colonial settler’s society is very important because it is the front line of the imperialists in the Middle East. In many ways it is a litmus paper that tests the nature of political currents. Those who claim that in order to win the Israeli working class it is necessary to support the right of self-determination of the Zionists, are right-wing centrists, following the steps of Shachtman in the war of 1948. Such a position is similar to those who praised the Rand strike of the white workers in South Africa in 1922 who called for: *“Workers of the World, Unite and Fight for a White South Africa”.*

We conclude in emphasizing that a correct understanding of the crucial role of the national question is a decisive precondition for any Marxist organization to master the tasks of the current historic period. Without a correct position on the struggles for the oppressed people, it is impossible to build a revolutionary world party which can organize the workers vanguard and advance the struggle for socialism. The RCIT is defending the Marxist program on the national question against all forms of revisionist distortion. We commit our forces to build a revolutionary world party on the basis of a Marxist program and call all revolutionaries around the world to join us in this great task!

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What the RCIT Stands for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

