



# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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## A "Pre-68" Phase Has Begun

Global Wave of Popular Upsurges & Great Recession

by Michael Pröbsting

## English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.28, November 2019

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Picture on the cover: Activists prepare for the defense of a demonstration in Ecuador; Source: Wikipedia, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Protestas\\_en\\_Ecuador\\_1.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Protestas_en_Ecuador_1.jpg)

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# Another Great Recession of the Capitalist World Economy Has Begun

## The economic crisis is an important factor in the current dramatic shift in the world situation

by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 19.10.2019

### Introduction

We are in the midst of a dramatic shift in the world situation. There are at least four major developments which, in combination, herald a huge acceleration of the global political and economic contradictions. These developments are:

- a) The beginning of another Global Recession
- b) The decline of U.S. hegemony globally and, in particular, in the Middle East
- c) The political crisis of counter-revolutionary leaders in the West (e.g. Trump, Netanyahu, Mohammed bin Salman, General Sisi)
- d) A huge upswing of the global class struggle (Ecuador, Haiti, Chile, Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Hong Kong, etc.)

It is self-evident that these developments are of crucial importance for socialist activists. It is of utmost importance to understand the nature of this global process and to draw the necessary conclusions. The RCIT has undertaken substantial efforts in the past years to analyze the current historic period of capitalist decay and its specific characteristics. As a result we have been able to predict the fundamental line of development and to prepare politically for them.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore we have already started in the past weeks to analyze the features of the current shift in the world situation.<sup>2</sup> In the present essay we will focus on analyzing a further important development – the beginning of another Global Recession of the capitalist world economy.

It is well known that for Marxists theoretical work is not an end in itself. It should be a “guide to action”, as Engels once wrote.<sup>3</sup> Theoretical work must inform the practice and the practice shall fertilize the theory. Trotsky’s thoughtful remark has lost nothing in validity:

„The strength of Marxism is in the unity of scientific theory with revolutionary struggle. On these two rails, the education

of the communist youth should progress. The study of Marxism outside the revolutionary struggle can create bookworms but not revolutionaries. Participation in the revolutionary struggle without the study of Marxism is unavoidably full of danger, uncertainty, half-blindness. To study Marxism as a Marxist is possible only by participating in the life and struggle of the class; revolutionary theory is verified by practice, and practice is clarified by theory. Only the truths of Marxism that are conquered in struggle enter the mind and the blood.”<sup>4</sup>

The following analysis of the capitalist world economy should be read in this context. Its purpose is to aid Marxists in understanding the current upheavals in the world situation so that they can intervene more effectively in the mass struggles and work towards winning activists for a revolutionary perspective. And indeed, this is the central task today: winning the vanguard of the workers and oppressed and organizing them in a revolutionary party nationally and internationally. Because without such a party, it will be impossible to organize the international socialist revolution – the only way to liberate humanity from the misery of capitalism! The RCIT calls all revolutionaries to join us in this great task!

### The beginning of the Great Recession

The RCIT predicted in its last *World Perspective* document, published in March 2019, that the capitalist world economy is at the threshold of another Great Recession. “In our *World Perspectives* documents we have pointed out an acceleration of several lines of contradiction. In particular we stressed that the world capitalist economy has not overcome its fundamental problems but has rather just delayed its explosion (by rising indebtedness, “Quantitative Easing”, etc.). Likewise, we have seen a constant acceleration of the tensions between the Great Powers – in particular since the beginning of the Trump Administration. Both these lines of contradiction – the economic crisis as well as the Great Power rivalry – are now experiencing

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a transformation from quantity into quality. (...) We have also drawn attention to the looming next great recession. In fact, it seems that this recession is about to begin now.”<sup>5</sup> This period of a severe economic slump has started now – a decade after the last one in 2008/09 which again was the worst crisis of the capitalist world economy since 1929-33. As we have showed elsewhere the last decade has been characterized by economic stagnation.

The sector dragging the world economy into the current Great Recession is industry – i.e. the sector which produces the largest part of capitalist surplus value – alongside with global trade. The *International Monetary Fund* (IMF) shows in its latest *World Economic Outlook* that the *Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index* (PMI) has turned negative since about several months, i.e. that corporations around the world report a decline of business activities. (See Figure 1) Likewise, manufacturing around the world has already entered recession or is close to that. (See Figure 2)

Gita Gopinath, a leading economist at the IMF, soberly summarizes the IMF assessment of the state of the global economy: “The global economy is in a synchronized slowdown and we are, once again, downgrading growth for 2019 to 3 percent, its slowest pace since the global financial crisis. Growth continues to be weakened by rising trade barriers and increasing geopolitical tensions. We estimate that the US-China trade tensions will cumulatively reduce the level of global GDP by 0.8 percent by 2020. Growth is also being weighed down by country-specific factors in several emerging market economies, and by structural forces, such as low productivity growth and aging demographics in advanced economies.”<sup>8</sup>

### Economic downturn in the old imperialist economies ...

This decline takes place in every major region of the capitalist world economy. In the U.S. the *National Association of Purchasing Managers'* index of manufacturing activity fell during 2019. In September it dropped by 1.3 points to 47.8 – the lowest reading since 2009. (Any reading below 50 indicates contraction.) It was the second month in a row manufacturing has contracted, continuing a slowing trend underway since March, according to data from the *Institute for Supply Management*.

According to the official statistics of the Federal Reserve Bank, U.S. industrial production already declined by -1.9% resp. -2.2% in the first two quarters of 2019.<sup>9</sup> This tendency has continued in the last months. “At 109.5 percent of its 2012 average, total industrial production was 0.1 percent lower in September than it was a year earlier. Capacity utilization for the industrial sector decreased 0.4 percentage point in September to 77.5 percent, a rate that is 2.3 percentage points below its long-run (1972–2018) average.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, manufacturing in the U.S. has entered a recession.<sup>11</sup>

In Europe, the industrial sector faced decline already since late 2018. (See Figure 2 and 3) This is particularly the case with Germany, the continents' largest and most important economy. The European Central bank reports in the latest issue of its Bulletin: “After a sharp decline in 2018 amid weak global trade, year-on-year growth in euro area industrial production (excluding construction) recovered marginally in 2019 but remained in negative territory. In the period from January 2018 to June 2019 the year-on-year growth rate of euro area industrial production (excluding construction) fell by

6.3 percentage points overall, from 3.9% to -2.4%. This is by far the largest fall recorded among major economies in that period. In the United States, the decline in industrial production started later, in September 2018.”<sup>12</sup>

A similar development can be observed in Japan. According to the latest official statistics of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan's manufacturing and mining sector declined in the first and second quarter of this year by -1.7% resp. 2.3% (year-on-year) – a process which has continued until today. (See also Figure 2)<sup>14</sup>

### ... as well as in China

A crucial factor is the development of China's economy which has become the largest or second-largest economy in the world (depending on the method of calculation). Due to the peculiar process of capitalist restoration in the 1990s, the country's economy has experienced a long-lasting period of growth reflecting the process of initial accumulation of capital.

However, China's economy is experiencing currently its most significant downturn since the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s. The *South China Morning Post*, an informative newspaper owned by the Alibaba corporation (it's CEO until recently, Jack Ma, is one of the richest capitalists in China) reports: “China's manufacturing sector remained in the doldrums in September, with sentiment among factory operators remaining in negative territory for the fifth month in a row. The manufacturing purchasing managers' index, released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Monday, was 49.8 in September, up from 49.5 in August and above a survey of analysts by Bloomberg, the median forecast of which was 49.6.”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, China is – like other countries – affected by the consequences of the Global Trade War. However, this decline in manufacturing has first and foremost structural and domestic causes as it started already before the latest escalation of Trump's rise of tariffs against China's export to the U.S. “China's industrial engine continued to stutter in August, with a key gauge of the country's manufacturing output slumping to a new 17-year low, in the last month before the United States imposed new tariffs on Chinese-made goods. Industrial production, which measures China's industrial output, including manufacturing, mining and utilities, grew at 4.4 percent last month, down from 4.8 percent in July, which in itself was the lowest rate since February 2002.”<sup>16</sup> (For the declining growth rates of industrial production in China see also Figure 2)

The declining dynamic of China's economy is also reflected in its lowest growth figures since the restoration of capitalism. According to the latest data, China's gross domestic product growth slid to 6.2% in the second quarter and to only 6% in third quarter of 2019. These are the weakest quarterly growth rates since 1992 according to government statistics.<sup>17</sup> (We leave aside at this place that since a number of years several economists have raised serious doubts about the validity of the high figures of China's economy in the official statistics.<sup>18</sup>)

Another indication for the structural reasons of the decline of China's economy is the fact that the process of capital accumulation has dramatically slowed down since 2009 – i.e. since the last global Great Recession. (See Figure 4)

Figure 1: World Trade, Industrial Production, and Manufacturing PMI, 2015-19 <sup>6</sup>

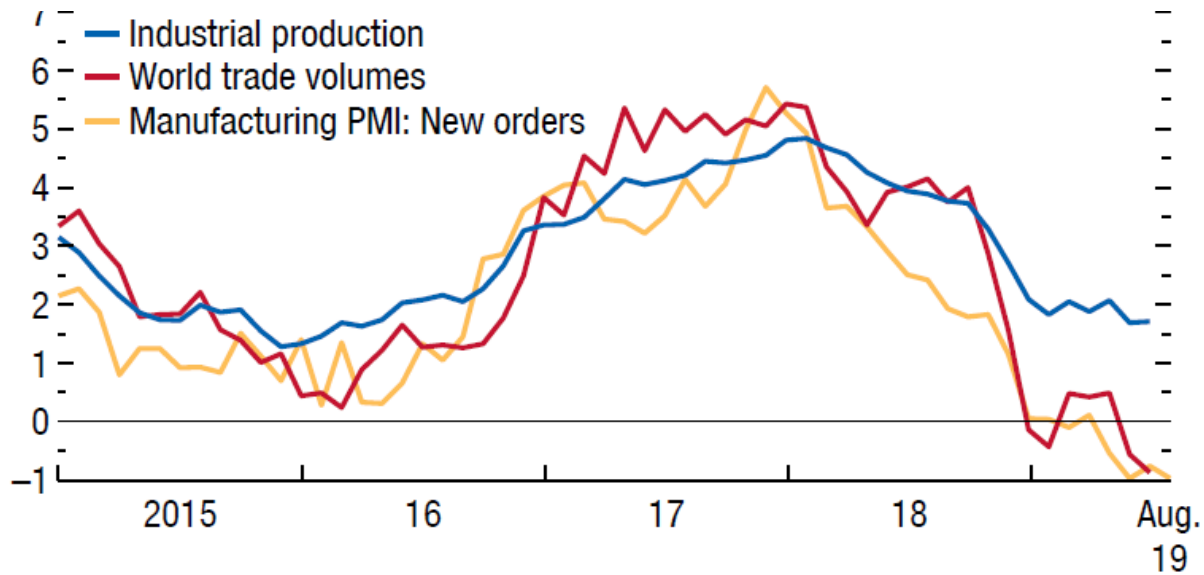


Figure 2: Industrial Production, 2015-19 <sup>7</sup>

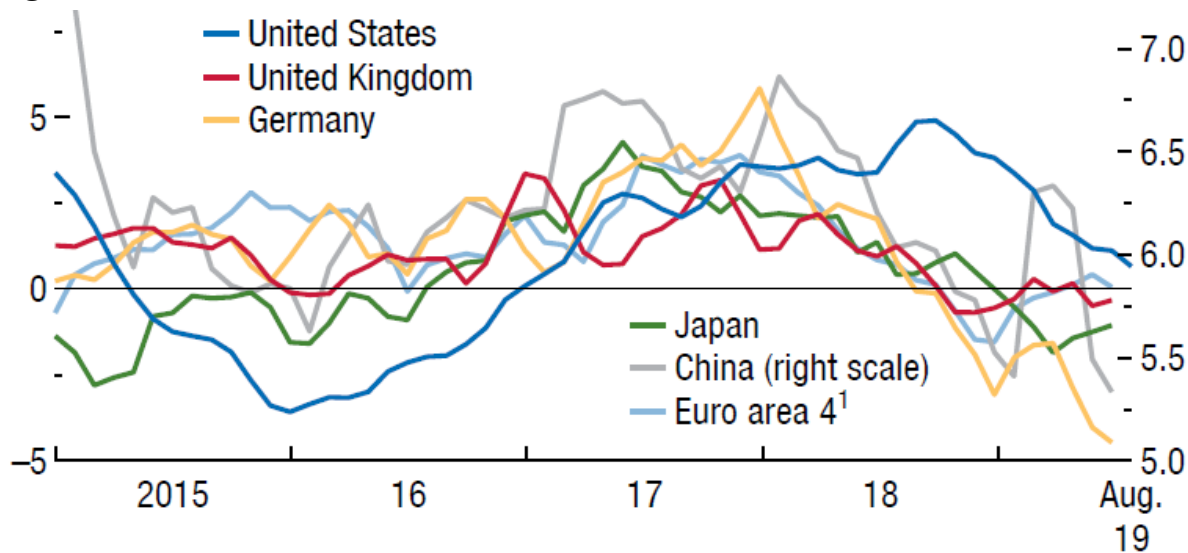
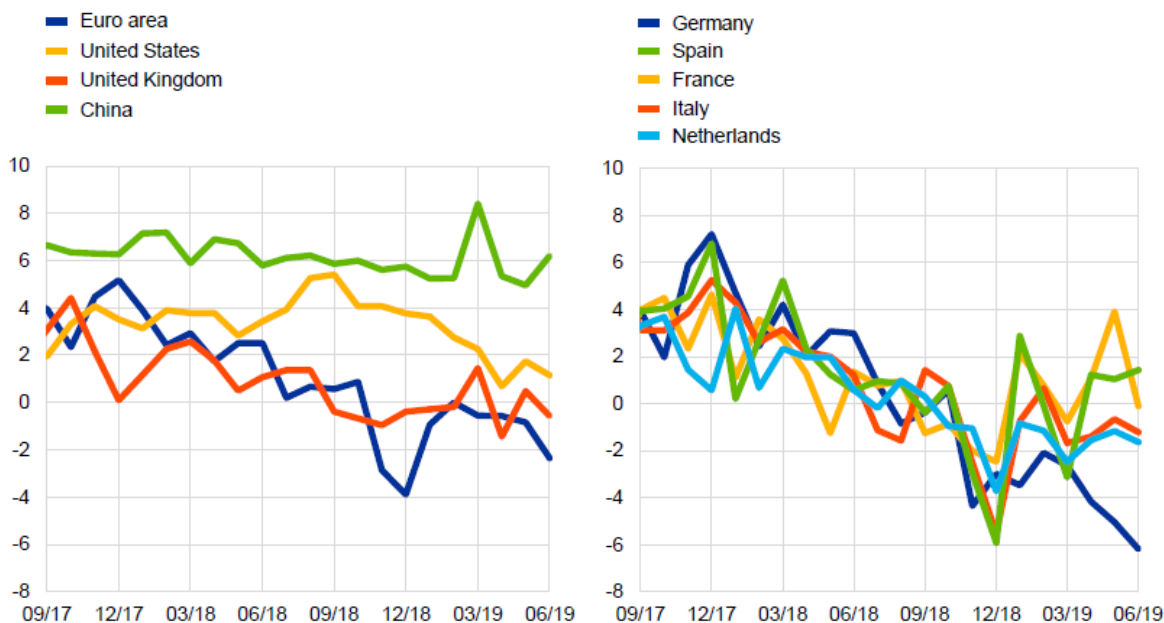


Figure 3: Industrial Production in Euro Area, United States, Britain and China, September 2017 – June 2019 <sup>13</sup>

(year-on-year percentage changes)



## A crisis of profits

The final cause of the declining dynamic of the capitalist world economy, as Marxists have repeatedly pointed out, is the tendency of the profit rate to fall. As we have shown in past documents, this tendency is indeed determining the long-term development of capitalism. (See Figure 5)

Likewise, we see a crisis of profitability behind the current recession. Bloomberg reported recently: *“Global profit growth stalled in the second quarter, depressing business confidence and leading to cutbacks in capital spending worldwide. Behind the earnings squeeze: rising worker wages, lackluster productivity growth and a general lack of pricing power. The danger is that profit-pinched corporations will next take the chop to their work forces, knocking consumer confidence and spending for a loop.”*<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, such a decline of profits also takes place in China’s large corporations. *“China’s creaking economy is showing further signs of stress as the trade war with the United States drags on. Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Friday revealed that profits at industrial companies dropped by 2% in August. Triggered by weak domestic demand and fallout from the row between Beijing and Washington, industrial profits came in at 517.8 billion yuan (US\$72.59 billion). That was 2% down compared to the same period last year and reversed the 2.6% gain in July.”*<sup>22</sup>

Given the fact that *“there’s little to stop the American manufacturing sector from falling over the edge”* (Bloomberg)<sup>23</sup>, panic is spreading among the bosses. The *Financial Times*, one of the global flagships of the Western bourgeoisie, recently published a highly interesting article which reported that the big capitalists are trying to get rid of shares of their own companies fearing the imminent slump. *“Executives across the US are shedding stock in their own companies at the fastest pace in two decades, amid concerns that the long bull market in equities is reaching its final stages. Corporate insiders — typically chief executives, chief financial officers and board members — sold a combined \$19bn of stock in their companies through to mid-September, according to data from Smart Insider, a UK-based group. That puts them on track to hit about \$26bn for the year, which would mark the most active year since 2000, when executives sold \$37bn of stock amid the giddy highs of the dotcom bubble. That projected total for the year would also set a post-crisis high, eclipsing the \$25bn of stock sold in 2017.”*<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the capitalist rats are fleeing the sinking ship!

## Confirmation of the Marxist analysis of China’s class character

The latest developments confirm once more the Marxist analysis of the capitalist class character of China’s economy and its rise to an imperialist Great Power.<sup>25</sup> As it is well known numerous Stalinist parties and pseudo-socialist groups characterize China as a *“socialist country”* or as a *“deformed non-capitalist workers state”*. In fact, China was a deformed workers state dictatorially ruled by a Stalinist bureaucracy until the early 1990s. By that time, the ruling elite systematically introduced the law of value in the economy and China became a capitalist state. At the same time, the regime transformed into a Stalinist-capitalist dictatorship.<sup>26</sup>

However, as we have demonstrated above, China is head-

ing a cyclical crisis. This in itself demonstrates the existence of capitalist business cycles in China as well as its organic connection with the capitalist world economy. This is in contrast, we note in passing, to the development of the Stalinist states in from the 1950s until 1989. While they faced from a certain point onwards a tendency towards stagnation inherent to the rotten Stalinist methods of bureaucratic planning, their economies were not characterized by a cyclical development as it has always been characteristic for capitalism.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the capitalist character of China’s economy is also demonstrated by the declining dynamic of capitalist profit in the large corporations.

As we have discussed repeatedly, there are also a number of socialists who understand (incompletely) the capitalist character of the Chinese regime. However, as we analyzed in detail in our latest book on the Great Power rivalry, they wrongly refuse to recognize the imperialist character of China. They mistakenly view it as something qualitatively different and weaker and use descriptors such as *“semi-colonial”* or *“sub-imperialist”*.

However, the enormous weight of the China in the world economy indicates that it is not a subordinated country. If one takes, for example, India – a country with nearly the same population size like China – the difference is visible. India is a much weaker economy, indeed it is a semi-colonial intermediate power.<sup>28</sup> Hence, its economic development does not shape the process of the capitalist world economy. This is in sharp contrast to China! Its relative boom in the later 2000s avoided a worse slump of the world economy. And, on the other hand, its current downturn accelerates the current global crisis.

Likewise, China has been successfully able to withstand the pressure of U.S. imperialism in the Global Trade War which lasts now already since more than one and a half years. Not only this, Beijing seems now to force the Trump Administration to beat a retreat or, at least, to look for a compromise. A *“semi-colonial”* or *“sub-imperialist”* country could not have achieved this. Only an imperialist Great Power could do so!<sup>29</sup>

## Remarks on the peculiar character of the current Great Recession

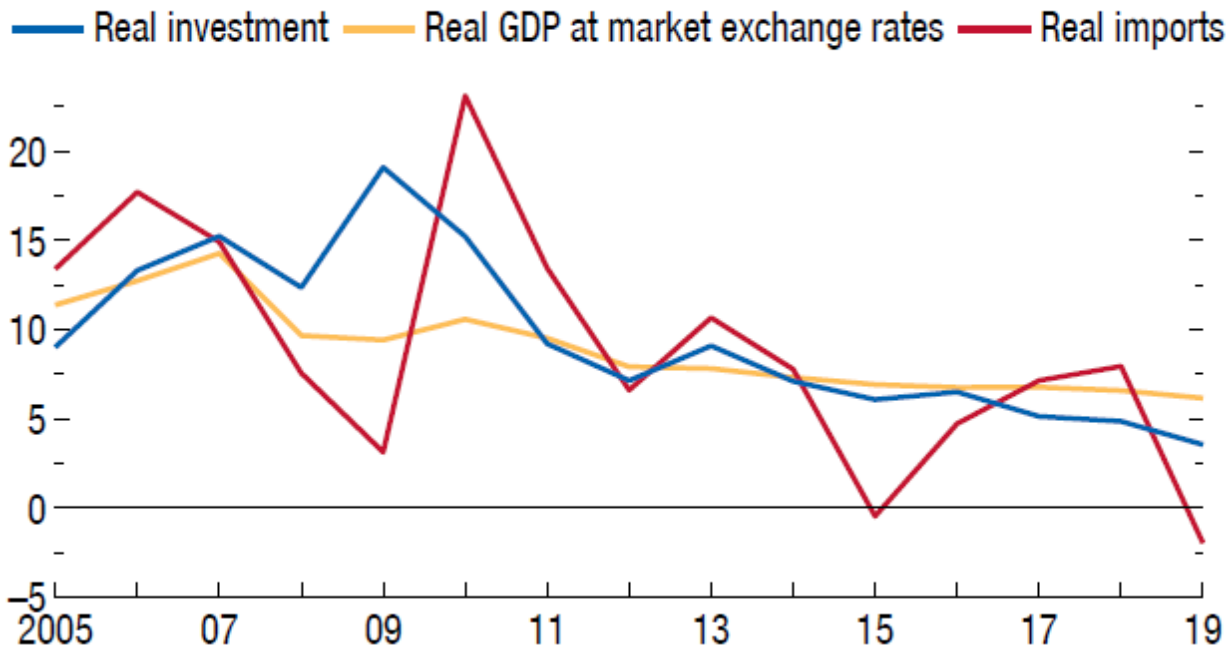
We conclude this essay with two remarks. First, we are convinced that this recession will become more severe than the last one ten years ago. The reason for this is that in 2008/09, the slump hit in particular the old imperialist economies – the U.S., Western Europe and Japan. Naturally, this dragged down the whole world economy given the central weight of these regions. However, China and some other so-called *“emerging economies”* were much less hit by the recession at that time which prevented a complete collapse of the capitalist world economy. As we have shown above, this time it is different. China’s capitalism has joined now the declining dynamic of the capitalist world economy.

In addition, as we have repeatedly pointed out, the bourgeoisie intervened at the last Great Recession with a massive program of pumping money into the economy (loans, *quantitative easing*, etc.). However, the ruling class continued this kind of *“financial Keynesianism”* even after the Great Recession was over. As a result there has been a

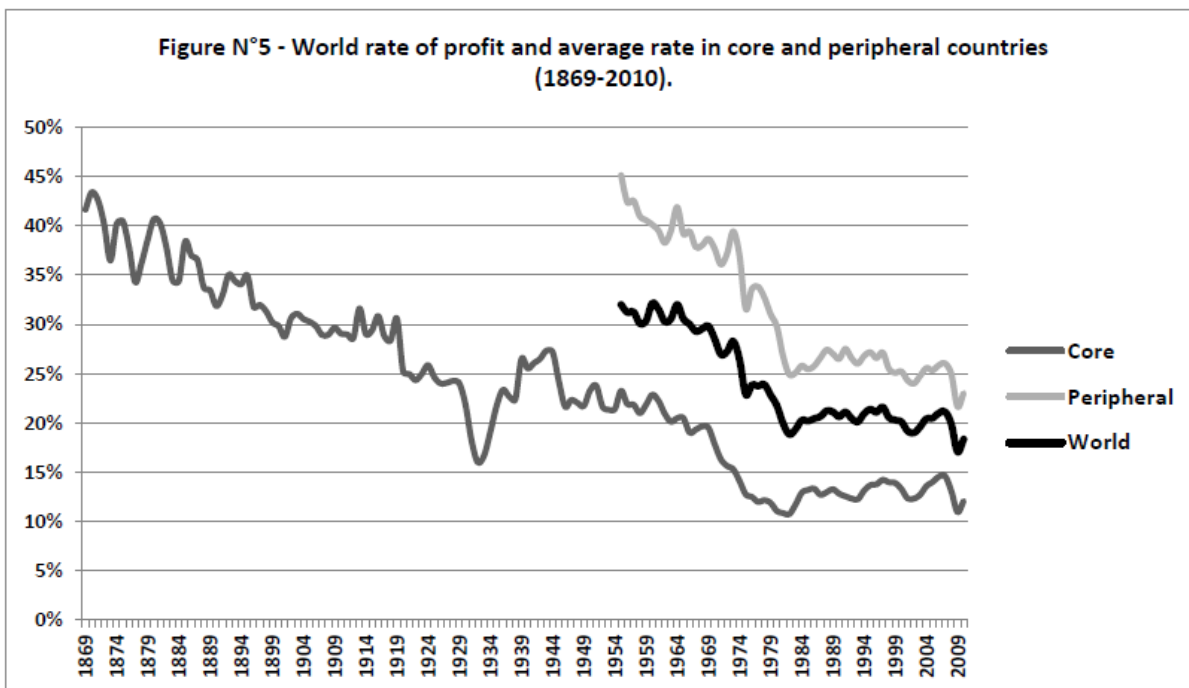
**Table 1: Global Sectoral Indebtedness, 2019 versus 2007 (as % of GDP)** <sup>31</sup>

	Non-Financial Corporations	Government	Financial Sector	Household
2019 Q1:	91%	87%	81%	60%
2007 Q3:	77%	58%	86%	57%

**Figure 4: China's Investment and Trade, 2005-19** <sup>19</sup>



**Figure 5. World Rate of Profit and Average Rate in Core and Peripheral Countries (1869-2010)** <sup>20</sup>



massive rise of indebtedness in the past decade. According to the *Global Debt Monitor* of the *Institute of International Finance*, “debt around the globe hit \$246 trillion in Q1 2019, rising by \$3 trillion in the quarter, and outpacing the rate of growth of the global economy as total debt/GDP rose to 320%.”<sup>30</sup>

Today, indebtedness is in all sectors of the economy higher than in 2007, i.e. before the start of the last Great Recession (except, ironically, the financial sector as the banks succeeded in shifting the bad loans to the state)! (See Table 1)

The consequences of this development will be dramatic. Given the fact that the corporations have much more debts today than in 2007, they will be less able to take new loans in order to avoid bankruptcy. At the same time, the capitalist state is much less in a position to intervene and to save the corporations from bankruptcy than this was the case a decade ago. It is difficult to see how capitalist corporations could be able to avoid an economic massacre in their ranks!

It is noteworthy that while indebtedness has grown nearly all over the world, the fastest growth of debt since 2008 has taken place in China. According to the *Institute of International Finance* China’s gross debt surged dramatically from 171% of GDP in Q4 2008 to 299% in Q1 2018. This increase of debts has continued since then.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, this process has taken place in nearly all sectors of the economy, i.e. in government, non-financial sectors and household.<sup>33</sup>

Another important character of the current recession is that it appears, and to a certain degree is, triggered by geopolitical decision. Everyone is aware that the Global Trade War, launched by Trump the Dumb, has caused disruption and decline in the world economy. Naturally, Marxists have to explain that such dubious personalities might have *triggered* the Great Recession its causes but that the real causes have to be sought in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless, such a “political” character of the new Great Recession will have important consequences for the political consciousness of the working class and the popular masses. It might help to show that it is not an “anonymous system” – against which people are impotent – which drives the economy into the abyss but a concrete ruling capitalist class with political figures at the head.

We conclude by repeating that the beginning of another Great Recession goes hand in hand with profound world political shifts. In combination they will aggravate the antagonism between the states as well as between the classes and, thus, qualitatively transform the world political relations. We will see an increasing number of revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary developments.

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

## Footnotes

1 See e.g. RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 2 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2019/>; Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings, RCIT Books, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT’s International Executive Committee, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT’s International Executive Committee, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013/](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013/); Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

2 The RCIT has published a number of statements and articles in the past weeks on dramatic events in the Middle East, in Ecuador, Hong Kong, Kashmir, Catalunya etc. They can all be found in the respective sections on our website for the different continents; see also Michael Pröbsting: The Gang Leaders of Western Counterrevolution Are Faltering. Some observations on an interesting historic moment in the world situation, 25 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-gang-leaders-of-western-counterrevolution-are-faltering/>

3 Friedrich Engels: Letter to Friedrich Adolph Sorge, 29 November 1886, in: MECW Vol. 47, p. 532

4 Leon Trotsky: To the Spanish Youth, in: Leon Trotsky: The Spanish Revolution (1931-39), Pathfinder Press, New York 1973, p. 180

5 RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 2 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2019/>. We have regularly analyzed the development of the global economy. In addition to the annual documents on the *World Perspectives* mentioned above we refer e.g. to Michael Pröbsting: The Next Looming Great Recession. Observations on the Latest Stock Market Slump and the Structural Crisis of the Capitalist World Economy, 12 October 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-next-looming-great-recession/>

6 IMF: World Economic Outlook: Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers. Washington, DC, October 2019, p. 2

7 IMF: World Economic Outlook: Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers. Washington, DC, October 2019, p. 2



8 Gita Gopinath: The World Economy: Synchronized Slowdown, Precarious Outlook, October 15, 2019 <https://blogs.imf.org/2019/10/15/the-world-economy-synchronized-slowdown-precious-outlook/>

9 FEDERAL RESERVE statistical release, October 17, 2019, Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization, p. 7

10 FEDERAL RESERVE statistical release, October 17, 2019, Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization, p. 2

11 See e.g. David P. Goldman: Trump may have secured re-election today, 2019-10-12 <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/10/article/trump-may-have-secured-re-election-today/>; Al Jazeera: Global shares sink as US manufacturing hits 10-year low, 2019-10-02 <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/global-shares-sink-manufacturing-hits-10-year-191002012021910.html>; Asia Times: Worst month for US manufacturers since 2009: ISM, 2019-10-02 <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/10/article/worst-month-for-us-manufacturers-since-2009-ism/>; David P. Goldman: US data crashes stock market, threatens Trump, 2019-10-03 <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/10/article/us-data-crashes-stock-market-threatens-trump/>

12 Roberto A. De Santis and Srečko Zimic: Domestic versus foreign factors behind the fall in euro area industrial production, in: European Central Bank: Economic Bulletin, Issue 6 / 2019, p. 50

13 Roberto A. De Santis and Srečko Zimic: Domestic versus foreign factors behind the fall in euro area industrial production, in: European Central Bank: Economic Bulletin, Issue 6 / 2019, p. 50

14 Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Japan): Report on Indices of Industrial Production (Production, shipments and Inventories), October 2019, p. 5, <https://www.meti.go.jp/english/statistics/tyo/iip/index.html>. We draw attention to the fact that the statistical methods in Japan differ somehow from those used in the U.S. and the EU. Hence, growth resp. decline in output in these statistics is calculated in relation to a selected level of production in a past year. In this case, for example, the figures are in

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## Books of the RCIT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

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



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International of Workers

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## PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

# The Meaning, Consequences and Lessons of Trump's Victory

By Michael Pröbsting, November 2016

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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 40 pages, A4 Format

## Are We Nearing a New “68 Moment”?

### A massive upsurge of global class struggle in the midst of a dramatic shift in the world situation

by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 22.10.2019

#### Introduction

We are in the midst of a massive upsurge of the global class struggle. In the past weeks a number of countries have experienced heightened class struggles which often resulted in the emergence of pre-revolutionary or even revolutionary situation. To name only the most important ones:

\* Ecuador: A popular upsurge against the austerity package<sup>1</sup>

\* Chile: A youth-led revolt against drastic subway fare hike and against right-wing President Piñera

\* Haiti: A popular uprising against the neoliberal pro-US regime of Jovenel Moïse

\* Honduras: Mass protests against the reactionary government of President Hernandez<sup>2</sup>

\* Iraq: A revolutionary upsurge against the corrupt government of Adel Abdul-Mahdi<sup>3</sup>

\* Lebanon: A popular upheaval against the government of Prime Minister Hariri and its tax hikes<sup>4</sup>

\* Egypt: A new upsurge of mass protests against the military dictatorship of General Sisi<sup>5</sup>

\* Algeria: ongoing mass protests against the “old guard” of the army which tries to keep power<sup>6</sup>

\* Hong Kong: A popular revolt against the Beijing-imposed regime of Carry Lam<sup>7</sup>

\* Kashmir: A looming intifada and a general strike against the evocation of autonomy rights by the right-wing Hindu

chauvinist government of Narendra Modi<sup>8</sup>

\* Catalunya / Spanish State: A mass upsurge in reaction to the draconic prison sentences against nine leaders of the Catalan independence movement<sup>9</sup>

\* In addition, there is an ongoing global mass movement led by youth against climate change<sup>10</sup>

In addition to these, the heroic liberation wars of the Syrian people against the Assad dictatorship (since March 2011)<sup>11</sup> and of the Yemeni people against the Saudi-led invasion (since March 2015) are still continuing despite all setbacks and mass killings.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, there have been a number of significant struggles and political confrontations in other countries which might not have already resulted in pre-revolutionary situations but which are nevertheless significant (e.g. general strike in Columbia, violent clashes in Guinea, teachers strike in Jordan, the *Gilets Jaunes* in France<sup>13</sup>, mass protests against electoral fraud and repression in Russia, etc.). In the case of Sudan we have seen a degree of stabilization after a democratic-counterrevolutionary compromise and the creation of a bourgeois “transitional government”. However, this situation could change soon.<sup>14</sup>

Some of these struggles achieved partial victories (e.g. Ecuador). However, nearly all of them face brutal repression by the state apparatus. Such repression is not surprising since the capitalist regimes have little room to maneuver – we are, as we outlined in our recent analysis of the world economy, at the beginning of another Great Recession.<sup>15</sup>

## Books of the RCIT

### Michael Pröbsting: Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today

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

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

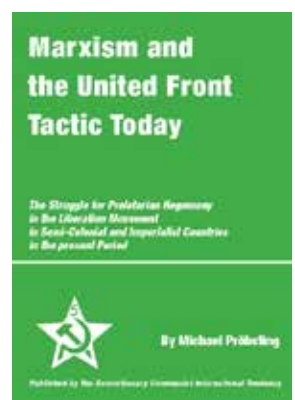
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

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

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

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

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



Hence, the ruling class tries to suppress these popular revolts as much as possible.

As we have already pointed out somewhere else, the current upswing of the global class struggle must not be viewed in isolation. It has to be seen – in fact it can only be understood – in combination with several other crucial developments which, in combination, herald a dramatic shift in the world situation. These additional developments are a) the decay of the capitalist world economy, b) the decline of U.S. hegemony globally and, in particular, in the Middle East<sup>16</sup> and c) the political domestic crisis of counter-revolutionary leaders in the West (e.g. Trump, Netanyahu, Mohammed bin Salman, General Sisi).<sup>17</sup>

The combined process of these four fundamental developments will, most likely, result in a significant aggravation of the economic and political crisis of capitalism and a massive intensification of the struggles between the classes and the states. While the outcome of this process is unpredictable, it is evident that there exists the possibility of the emergence of a *pre-revolutionary world situation*.

This course of the events does not come as a surprise. As a result of our efforts in the past years to analyze the current historic period of capitalist decay and its specific characteristics, we have been able to explain the fundamental line of development, to predict the general course of events and to prepare politically for them.

Readers can verify this on the basis of a number of documents which the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) published in the past years.<sup>18</sup> In our book on the *World Perspectives 2018*, we noted: “One could say that we are in a pre-phase of capitalist breakdown, i.e. we are before a phase of catastrophic events like major wars, economic collapse and revolutionary explosions. (...) In summary, the present world situation is characterized by an increasing polarization and instability. It is pregnant with huge possibilities as well as dangers. The multitude of factors and the intertwining of conflicting forces exclude the possibility of a concrete prognosis. But the general tendency of development is absolutely clear: the old world order is breaking down and we are heading towards both devastating regional wars as well as (pre-)revolutionary waves of popular uprisings. This puts an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of all activists fighting against imperialism and capitalist exploitation!” (Theses 16 and 17)

And a few months ago, we summarized the theses of our *World Perspectives 2019* document in the following sentences: “In conclusion, all elements of the world situation point to global political and economic earthquakes ahead. Such convulsions will result in a major transformation of the world political situation. The developing Great Recession will destabilize the social fabric in all countries and accelerate the assault of each ruling class against the exploited classes. They will try to rob from the workers and oppressed even more than they have done already in preceding decades. This process will inevitably include increasing attacks on democratic rights and a tendency towards the creation of authoritarian regimes. The Great Powers will intensify their rivalry and so will a number of regional powers. In other words, the war danger will dramatically accelerate. The counter-revolutionary offensive of the ruling class has provoked and will continue to provoke mass struggles and revolutionary upheavals. In short, a phase full of military tensions and saber-rattling, class struggles, counter-revolutionary attacks, and revolutionary explosions lies ahead of us. We are heading towards a volcanic political eruption.” (Thesis 40)

## The relevance of the democratic question

The purpose of this article is not a detailed analysis of each of these struggles. The RCIT has already published statements and articles on most of these popular revolts as can be seen in the footnotes above. Obviously, we will continue to do so. In the present essay, we will rather limit ourselves to outline some important characteristics of the present popular uprisings and to discuss the necessary conclusions for the strategy of revolutionaries.

A common characteristic is that these mass revolts have an *elementary character*. They usually focus on *economic attacks* (austerity packages, price rises, higher taxes, etc.) and/or *democratic demands* (corruption, authoritarian laws, dictatorships, etc.). We already noted in our *World Perspectives 2019* document that “the ruling classes around the world are waging a reactionary offensive against the social and democratic rights of the working class and oppressed.”

This is not surprising. The capitalist crisis pushes the bourgeois government all around the world to attack the remaining social gains of the masses. Furthermore, the increasing erosion of the social basis and popular support for these government forces them to rely more and more on authoritarian laws and repression. This means that the present polarization with an increasingly aggressive reactionary trend among the bourgeoisie pushing for an authoritarian “solution” is not a temporary phenomenon. It is a necessity for the ruling class in a period of capitalist decay to strive towards one or the other form of an open dictatorship. The struggle against such tendencies will remain of central importance for the Marxist program. As Trotsky emphasized repeatedly, it is necessary to combine the struggle for minimal demands – like the defense of social gains or democratic rights – with a transitional program directed at the conquest of power.<sup>19</sup> In the end, only the overthrow of the capitalist class via a socialist revolution of the working class and the oppressed will eradicate the danger of bourgeois authoritarianism and fascism.

We are convinced that such an approach is particularly relevant in the present period. Hence, the RCIT has repeatedly pointed to the significant relevance of the democratic question in the present historic period.<sup>20</sup> This is why we have always rejected a sectarian approach which ignored or despised the relevance of democratic demands and denounced them as a kind of “backward” issue not worthy the attention of Marxists.

“Without understanding the revolutionary potential of the democratic question and its relationship to the strategy of permanent revolution, one is incapable of finding a correct political orientation in the current events in the Arab world (or anywhere else). Ignoring the challenges of prevailing mass consciousness, with all of its initial petty-bourgeois democratic limitations, leads directly to the cul-de-sac of sectarian isolation. Revolutionaries must champion the democratic question and not leave it to the petty-bourgeois leaders and bourgeois traitors! This was the approach of the Bolsheviks and Leon Trotsky... and this is our approach too!”<sup>21</sup>

## Violence and pacifism

Another important feature, related to the previous point, is the violent character of nearly all mass protests in the recent weeks and months. This reflects an important development. The increasing authoritarian character of the bourgeois governments and its repressive handling of the protests have provoked a growing readiness of sectors of the masses to fight back by any means necessary.

It is obviously a positive development if sectors of the masses learn that pacifism is a useless and illusionary approach when faced with the bourgeois state. It has always been a pillar of the Marxist program that the capitalist state can not be overthrown without violence and, hence, that *“there can be no peaceful evolution towards socialism.”*<sup>22</sup> Lenin insisted repeatedly on this key lesson: *„History has shown that without revolutionary coercion victory cannot be achieved. Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters.”*<sup>23</sup>

Of course, this does not mean that Marxists endorse acts like senseless violence against public property or looting. But the conclusion from this is not to denounce violence as such but rather to advocate the organizing of the masses in order to fight back against the bourgeoisie state forces in a purposeful way. This is why revolutionaries should advocate the formation of *self-defence committees* which protect demonstrations against the brutal police and which, at a later point, can be developed into *workers and popular militias*.

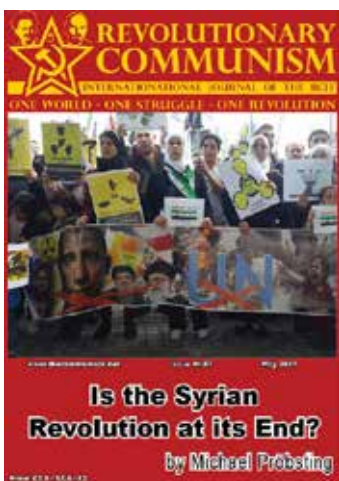
In contrast, it has been always a classic feature of petty-bourgeois reformism and centrism to imagine that a

peaceful transformation to socialism would be possible. The RCIT warns that it is unavoidable that reformist and centrist forces will use their influence in order to spread pacifist illusions and to undermine any efforts to build such self-defence committees. As we have pointed out repeatedly various Stalinists and pseudo-Marxist centrists like the CWI and the IMT defend theories that a peaceful transformation to socialism is possible. We emphasize that this is a dangerous illusion which has been refuted by history again and again!<sup>24</sup>

## Spontaneity and raw mass consciousness

Another crucial feature of the upsurge of global class struggle is its largely spontaneous character. There are certain exceptions like for example in Ecuador where several indigenous mass organizations like CONAIE as well as trade unions played a leading role in it. The well-rooted *Comités de Defensa de la República* are also playing an important role in the popular upsurge in Catalunya. However, in most cases – and even in the two cases mentioned – there exists a large degree of spontaneity.

This is largely the result of the discrediting of existing bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and reformist leaderships. The masses are looking for new ways and new alternatives. Such a spontaneous character of the protests reflects on one hand a crucial element for any revolutionary upsurge: a deep-seating hatred of the masses against the rulers and a strong determination to fight against injustice. It also reflects that the masses don't longer trust the old leaderships (or at least don't wait for them and don't trust them blindly).



## Publications of the RCIT

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

By Michael Pröbsting, April 2017

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

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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

On the other hand, Marxists must also see the weaknesses and dangers of such spontaneity. First, there is a huge danger that popular upsurges erupt as spontaneous outbursts but disappear again relatively soon because of the lack of structures. Various rebellions in Iraq, the *Umbrella movement* in Hong Kong in 2014, the *Occupy Wall Street* movement in 2011 are examples for this.

Secondly, the ruling class is well-organized and in the end it will smash any mass movement if it does not organize itself and fights back in an organized way. Hence, revolutionaries have to explain patiently the urgent necessity to organize the masses in *committees of actions rooted in work places, neighbourhoods, schools and universities, villages*, etc. Such committees should elect delegates in order to coordinate the struggle locally, regionally and nationally.

Furthermore, spontaneity opens the doors for various petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces which will try to influence the mass movements in a dangerous direction. The reactionary role of pro-American groups in the Hong Kong protest movement is an example for this. The role of petty-bourgeois liberals and later Islamists in the Arab Revolution is another example. Or take the pro-UN forces in the "Friday for Futures" movement who insist of coordinating all activities with the police. Such forces exploit existing illusions and try to channel them into a futile direction.

### The role of backward ideologies

Related to this issue is another question which is often misunderstood by Marxists today. The lack of experience of the masses, the absence of a revolutionary mass party, setbacks in struggles – all this results in a situation where the popular masses enter the battle field with a backward consciousness. Such a backward consciousness can take varying forms. It can result in naïve hopes that the United Nations could reverse the climate change or that it shall intervene in this or that country in order to find a solution. It can take the form of various petty-bourgeois ideologies (nationalism, Islamism, libertarianism, etc.). Or it can take the form of illusions into foreign powers (e.g. illusions in the West in Hong Kong).

Unfortunately, Marxists draw all too often wrong conclusions from such developments. One type of mistake is sectarian denouncing such movements because of their backward consciousness. Such an approach is highly dangerous. It condemns revolutionaries to self-isolation from important mass struggles. It is based on a failure to understand the role of ideology in a dialectical and materialistically way. Marxists have to view the role of backward ideologies in mass movements primarily as a distorted expression of social interests. This is often the role of ideology in the consciousness of the masses, as Engels explained in a letter to Franz Mehring in 1893:

*"Ideology is a process which of course is carried on with the consciousness of the so-called thinker but with a false consciousness. The real driving forces which move him, he remains unaware of, otherwise it would not be an ideological process. He therefore imagines false or apparent driving forces."*<sup>25</sup>

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

*"In the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, very positive material class-interests were at play, and those wars were class wars just as were the later collisions in England and France. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks, if the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a religious screen, it little changes the actual situation, and is to be explained by conditions of the time."*<sup>26</sup>

Engels' approach remains relevant today since religion has also played an enormous ideological role in liberation struggles in the modern epoch of imperialism. As examples we refer to the *Boxer rebellion* in China in 1900, the role of Islamist forces like *Mojahedin-e Khalq* in Iran in the 1970s, *Hamas* and *Palestinian Islamic Jihad*, the *Afghan Taliban* or various Islamist currents in Syria, Yemen and Egypt today, to name only a few examples.

Petty-bourgeois liberalism has been another ideology influencing the masses as we can see currently in Hong Kong or in the *Climate Change* movement. Nationalism is highly influential in other cases (e.g. in all countries of the Arab Revolution, in Catalunya).

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

We point out in this context that the famous world-wide revolt of the workers and youth in 1968 did also start with very limited demands and highly confused ideologies. The university students were demanding only some reforms in the education system or the end of the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. For a long time they had a disdain for the working class and considered it as "fully integrated into the system" (not accidentally were petty-bourgeois ideologists of the so-called *Frankfurt School* like Herbert Marcuse highly influential for a long time). It was only after a process of several years that many activists turned towards Marxism (at least in those versions which were available at that time).

On the other hand it would be equally wrong to opportunistically adapt to such backward ideologies in mass movements. Surely, sterile sectarian denunciations are entirely wrong. But neither must Marxists share the illusions of the masses. Spreading illusions that peaceful transition is possible, that the system can be changed via parliamentary elections, that the "multitude" instead of the working class is the subject for social change – all these are examples of such an opportunist adaptation to an underdeveloped mass consciousness.

### United Front Tactic

In periods like the present one where Marxists are a tiny minority in large mass movements, it is particularly urgent to understand the method of the united front tactic and to apply it according to the circumstances. First, it is crucial to work *within* mass movement irrespective of the

immature, backward consciousness of most participants. Obviously, such an approach would be wrong in cases of reactionary movements (e.g. the right-wing movement in the Ukraine in spring 2014 or the recent pro-US protests led by the bourgeois opposition politician Gaido in Venezuela). However, the vast majority of mass movements today reflect a progressive reaction of the popular classes against attacks of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Any sectarian abstentionism from such legitimate movements would be utterly wrong.

Secondly, it is crucial for revolutionaries to advocate the necessary tactics in order to win the struggle. This means calling for the appropriate forms of mass actions (mass demonstrations, strikes, general strikes, occupations, etc.) as well as for the appropriate forms of mass organization (committees of actions, self-defense committees, etc.).

Thirdly, the united front method necessitates appeals to significant forces in such mass movements for joint actions resp. to call them to take up the tactics which are necessary to win the struggle.<sup>27</sup> It is true that usually such forces don't have a revolutionary but rather a reformist or populist character. However, since the masses currently follow such forces (and not the Marxists), it is necessary to relate to their illusions. Masses learn through their experience and the task of Marxists is to aid the masses in this process. Putting demands on such reformist or populist leaderships can help the masses to make such experience. In addition, it helps the Marxists to get access to the masses so that they can explain their program and to win sectors of the vanguard.

Finally, Marxists must explain the masses the deficits of the current leaderships, what is wrong with their politics and why they must be replaced by a revolutionary leadership.

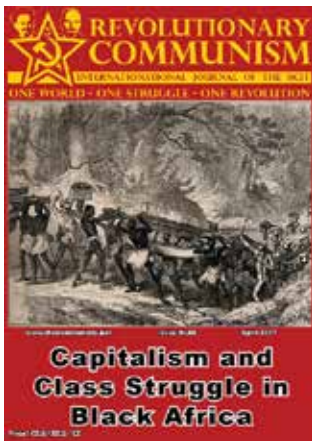
### Is this a new 1968?

The current global wave of mass struggles is indeed exceptional. The only parallel in recent history is first phase of the Great Arab Revolution in 2011. However, as the name already indicates, this revolutionary process was limited to only a single region.<sup>28</sup> Today we have a truly global process of mass uprisings.

A parallel which comes into mind is the upsurge of mass struggles around the year 1968. At that time the world order was shaken by anti-imperialist liberation wars (e.g. Vietnam) as well as mass struggles up to general strikes in various countries (France, Italy, Mexico, Argentina, Czechoslovakia, India, etc.). In addition, there were huge upheavals in China against the backdrop of the so-called "Cultural Revolution".

Are we already in such "68 moment"? We think that is not the case, at least not yet. The main reason for such an assessment is that until now the popular upsurges have not reached major countries of the capitalist world order. In those cases where they have affected such major countries the popular upsurge remains isolated to a specific region (i.e. Hong Kong in China and Kashmir in India). A similar situation is the case in Catalunya and the Spanish State.

However, there can be no doubt that this situation can change relatively quickly. Why should it not be possible that the fire of Ecuador electrifies Mexico, Argentina or Brazil?! Or why should the example of Kashmir and Hong Kong not inspire others in China or India?! And could it not easily be the case that the military dictatorship of General Sisi crumbles pretty soon and he – and may be Saudi's Mohammed bin Salman too – might ask be forced to ask Trump or Putin for asylum?! And can the example of Catalunya not find copycats in Europe?! And is it beyond



## PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

# Theses on Capitalism and Class Struggle in Black Africa

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

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format*

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

imagination that a reactionary dumbass like Trump could try to impose a state of emergency and provokes thereby the first revolutionary situation in the United States since 1865?!

Naturally, these are only just a few examples. However, we think they demonstrate very clearly that we are nearing a “68 moment”. True, there can be reversals – even in the near future. The Hong Kong uprising can be smashed by an invasion of the Chinese PLA. Idlib could be drowning in blood by the Assadist army and the Russian Air Force (with the implicit help of Erdoğan). But when we talk about the nearing of a “68 moment” we don’t mean this to happen necessarily in the coming weeks. As we indicated before the events in 1968 where prepared by various mass protests in the years before. However, it seems to us that we have entered such a process.

Of course, it would be naïve and silly to believe that we have entered now a period of never-ending upswing of global class struggle. The lack of revolutionary leadership, the inexperience of the masses, the influence of various petty-bourgeois forces – all this makes it nearly inevitable that the workers and oppressed will suffer setbacks or even outright defeats. This is the real life of class struggle which might be uncomfortable for reformist routines or sectarian phrase-mongers. However, masses learn only in such struggles and vanguard forces are only tested in such experiences. Revolutionary organizations themselves are forged in such historical moments. Authentic revolutionaries look towards such upsurges of the global class struggle full of joy and are prepared to fully throw themselves into such movements. The unavoidable defeats don’t frighten Marxists as they know that this will help them and all other activists to learn and to mature so that they can prepare the victories of the future!

## Petty-Bourgeois pessimism makes political preparation impossible

While here is not the place to deal with this issue in detail, we note in passing that various reformist and centrist forces enter the new period of heightened class struggle in a completely confused state. Just a few days ago, the “Fourth International” in the tradition of Pablo and Mandel – historically the largest of the self-proclaimed “Trotskyist” organizations albeit it hardly claims any longer adherence to Trotskyism (not to speak about its politics characterized by right-wing centrist opportunism) – published a characteristic article.<sup>29</sup> It carries the indicative title “*Latin America and the global reactionary wave*” and reflects the demoralized outlook of a “left-wing” academic. The author, Martín Mosquera, is an Argentinean intellectual (in the worst sort of meaning) who shrouds his pessimism in the torturous language of Althusserian structuralism (with a dose of Gramsci) – confirming the rule “the more academic words, the less meaning”.

While the Mandelist author recognizes the existence of class struggles (at least!), he is resigned to the dominance of a “reactionary wave” globally as well as in Latin America. (“*Despite the new social struggles, the spiral of defeats of the working class has not been broken, so that the relationship of social and political forces tends to favour the far right as a way out of social unrest.*”) For such pessimistic academics, class struggles are not chances to advance the political and organizational independence of the working class and the oppressed but rather futile attempts given the “hegemony of the right-wing forces”.

Characteristically, the author’s only hopes are ... the Bolivarian state-capitalist regimes! (“*However, a quick look at the Latin American geopolitical landscape shows a relevant trend*”)

# Books of the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: Greece - A Modern Semi-Colony

### The Contradictory Development of Greek Capitalism, Its Failed Attempts to Become a Minor Imperialist Power, and Its Present Situation as an Advanced Semi-Colonial

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – *GREECE: A MODERN SEMI-COLONY*. The book’s subtitle is: *The Contradictory Development of Greek Capitalism, Its Failed Attempts to Become a Minor Imperialist Power, and Its Present Situation as an Advanced Semi-Colonial Country with Some Specific Features*. It contains six chapters (144 pages) and includes 12 tables, 35 figures and 4 maps. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

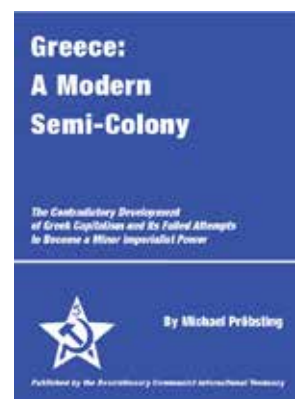
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which gives an overview of its content.

Greece is at the forefront both of the capitalist crisis in Europe as well as of the class struggle. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that what the Arab Revolution has been for the world in the past few years, Greece has been for Europe.

Subsequently, the question of the class character of Greece is of crucial importance both for the domestic as well as for the international workers movement: Is it an imperialist

state, a semi-colonial country or something else, and what are its specific features?

In Chapter I we outline a summary of the Marxists’ theoretical conception of imperialist respectively semi-colonial states. In Chapter II we give a brief historical overview of the development of Greek capitalism. In Chapter III we deal with Greece’s failed attempt to become a minor imperialist power. In Chapter IV we outline the historic crisis of Greek capitalism from 2008 until today. In Chapter V we elaborate the most important programmatic conclusions and in the last Chapter we present a summary in the form of these. The book contains 12 Tables, 35 Figures and 4 Maps. ■





for our strategic debates: the radical experiences of Venezuela and Bolivia, despite having faced the most aggressive hostilities (military coups, separatist attempts, interventional manoeuvres) are the ones that achieve the greatest sustainability and penetration in the popular classes.”)

Another example for such pessimism is the current outlook of a much smaller self-proclaimed Trotskyist group – the “League for the Fifth International” (L5I). In a document on the global situation adopted by its recent congress the comrades proclaim that we are in a “counterrevolutionary phase”.<sup>30</sup> In the very first paragraph of the resolution the comrades even raise the spectre of a long counter-revolutionary period. (“If the crisis of the bourgeois system is not solved in a revolutionary way because of the weakness of the global proletarian movement and its crisis of leadership, long periods of counterrevolutionary attacks and setbacks are inevitable.”). Unsurprisingly, the resolution also confirms the defeatist position of this organization that “2014/2015 marked the end of the Arab Spring.”

Naturally, our disagreement with such comrades is not the existence of counter-revolutionary attacks of the ruling classes. The RCIT has repeatedly outlined in its *World Perspective* documents that such a reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie is an essential feature of the current period (and will remain so since the decay of capitalism does it not leave with any alternative for compromises!).

The fundamental problem with such petty-bourgeois pessimism is rather that it recognizes only *this side* of the coin, that it ignores or underrates *the other side*: the fact that such a reactionary offensive of the ruling classes *inevitable* provokes counter-tendencies – huge social instability, political explosions and revolutionary class struggles! As we stated in our *World Perspectives* 2019 document: “Both

these lines of contradiction – the economic crisis as well as the Great Power rivalry – are now experiencing a transformation from quantity into quality. It is evident that such an acceleration of contradiction inevitably drives the ruling classes to press ahead with their counter-revolutionary offensive that, in turn, will provoke new upsurges of the class struggle.”<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to the suggestions of various reformist and centrist forces, we are not living in a period like that of Hitler’s triumph in Germany in 1933 which smashed the workers movement and liquidated the class struggle in this country for a number of years. Quite the opposite, we are in period of a rising wave of class struggles in which, by the way, a number of right-wing regime face increasing problems at home.

### The Great Arab Revolution: a humiliating lesson for demoralized reformists and centrists

In this context it is necessary to point out that numerous reformist and centrist organizations have prematurely declared the Arab Revolution as “dead” or even joined the counterrevolution. As we have shown somewhere else international Stalinism has always sided with the Assad dictatorship against the uprising of the Syrian people.<sup>32</sup> Likewise did the “Communist” Party in Egypt hail the military coup of General Sisi as the “Second Revolution”. However, such outright betrayal was not limited to Stalinism. Alan Woods’ IMT and the Morenoite LIT also welcomed the military coup in Egypt in July 2013 (as did the Cliffite “Revolutionary Socialists” in the first phase).<sup>33</sup> The Argentinean *Partido Obrero* and their international co-thinkers in the CRFI have ignored since years the imperi-

## Books of the RCIT

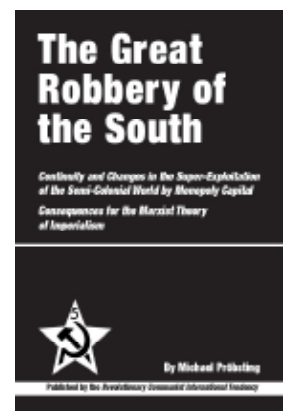
### Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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)



alist character of Russia and China and called to side with them against “the Yankees”.<sup>34</sup>

Other organizations did not join the counterrevolution. But several of them – like the Argentine PTS and the *Fracción Trotskista* or the CWI – declared the revolutionary process in the Arab world as dead. They used such a characterization in order to legitimize a neutral position in the civil wars in Syria and Yemen instead of siding with the popular masses.<sup>35</sup>

These developments have not been accidental. Various centrists hailed (often much too uncritical) the Arab Revolution in the first phase when it was led by various liberal-democratic forces and university academics. However, when these petty-bourgeois forces were removed by other petty-bourgeois forces (i.e. Islamists) they turned their position by 180-degree and denounced the revolutionary process. (We note in passing that the petty-bourgeois nationalist Kurdish YPG remained a hero for nearly all these centrist organizations despite the fact that they became foot soldiers of U.S. imperialism in conquering East Syria and remain their darlings when they recently formed an alliance with the mass murder Assad and Russian imperialism!<sup>36</sup>) Behind these phenomena is the opportunist adaptation of centrist forces to the left-liberal academic milieu with all their libertarian and Islamophobic prejudices.

However, as the RCIT has repeatedly pointed out, such a premature obituary of the Arab Revolution by various centrists (in order to justify their desertion of the ongoing liberation struggles) was completely wrong and could only result in sowing confusion among vanguard layers of activists. A few months ago, we noted on such forces: “Likewise we have repeatedly argued against the defeatist doom-sayers who confused the setbacks with a final defeat of the Arab Revolution and who used this gross misjudgment as an excuse for denouncing the ongoing liberation struggles of the popular masses as “reactionary”. Well, the profound ruptures in Algeria and Sudan, the ongoing civil wars of the popular masses against dictatorship and foreign invasion in Syria, Libya and Yemen, the steadfast liberation struggle of the Palestinian people against the Zionist enemy, the increasing number of mass struggles in Iran, Iraq, and Jordan, etc. – all of these events have demolished the reactionary myth of the “done” and “degenerated” Arab Revolution and exposed it as the wishful thinking of demoralized fellow-travelers, Eurocentric skeptics, and Stalinist slanderers.”<sup>37</sup>

This assessment is ten times more relevant today when more rulers in the Arab world are faltering in the face of more popular uprisings like those in Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt! One has only to look at the mass rallies in Idlib – the last citadel of the Syrian Revolution – where people raise the Iraqi and Egypt flags in order to express their solidarity with the uprisings of their brothers and sisters! All these struggles are part of one and the same process of the ongoing Great Arab Revolution!

We repeat: the reformists and centrists failure to recognize the nature of the ongoing Arab Revolution is primarily not an issue of the “difficulty to make a correct judgment from far away”. That might be true in one or another case. But as nearly all these forces veer in the same direction, there must be a political logic behind this. This logic is opportunist adaptation to the left-liberal academic milieu with all their libertarian and Islamophobic prejudices!

We have drawn attention to this shameful debacle of re-

formism and centrism not only because it is an important and characteristic issue in itself. We have done so also because we think that there are important lessons to learn.

We think that it is likely that various reformist and centrist forces will now jump the bandwagon and praise the new global wave of class struggles. Many of them might forget their pessimism of the past and become “optimistic”. However, we warn that these reformists and centrists will be of no use for the construction of a revolutionary leadership. As they do not understand the central role of the revolutionary party, they will turn their hopes to various “progressive” bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships (like the Bolivarians in the example above). And as soon as the struggles suffer defeats (which is quiet likely), these people will quickly leave the battle fields and return to their pessimism.

### The urgent necessity of a revolutionary party – national and international

This brings us to the most important conclusion: the current global wave of class struggles offers a huge opportunity to advance the construction of a revolutionary party – nationally and internationally. It makes the advance of such a project imperative because the crucial factor which will finally decide if those revolutionary upheavals will be crushed or not is the question whether the politically most advanced working class activists will learn the lessons of these struggle and succeed in building a revolutionary party in time.

As long as the working class and the oppressed do not possess a revolutionary combat party – nationally as well as worldwide – they *cannot succeed* in their struggle for liberation. In order to succeed against its powerful enemies, the working class must have a party with a clear program – outlining the way from the present situation to the conquest of power. It needs a party which concretizes such a program in a series of strategies and tactics related to the changing conditions of the class struggle. And it must have a party which accompanies such a program with a combat organization of steeled cadres which act in a centralized, coordinated fashion as a single clenched fist for the proletarian class struggle.<sup>38</sup>

Such a party has to be based on a revolutionary program focused on the present situation. The RCIT calls all those who agree on a general outlook on the current world situation and the corresponding tasks to unite in order to advance the struggle for building such a party.<sup>39</sup>

We emphasize that a revolutionary party must not and cannot be built in national isolation. Each country depends on others and each national class struggle is determined by international factors. There is no *national* road to build a world party, but only an *international* one. Hence, a true revolutionary party, as well as pre-party organization, must exist as an *international formation from the beginning*. Without an international organization, national centeredness and finally nationalist deviations are unavoidable – as there is no consciousness without matter and no spirit without a body.

For this, activists must break with all those political currents which have led past revolutionary struggles into the present cul-de-sacs. They must build a revolutionary party *independent* of all variations of Stalinism, populism,

nationalism, Islamism or bourgeois liberalism. At the same time, it can not and must not be built outside of the concrete mass struggles which are currently taking place under the leadership of such forces.

True, a new a revolutionary party nationally and internationally cannot be established in a single stroke. It must be politically tested in the struggles of the workers and oppressed. However, the *organizing of a nucleus* – irrespective of its current size – to build such a party *can* and *must* start immediately. Hence we repeat our call to all authentic revolutionaries to *immediately start coming together* and discuss a concrete platform for the class struggle and for advancing the building of a party.

Comrades, let us be clear about the responsibility of each and every of us! We are in the midst of a quickly evolving process full of huge political crises and class battles. We will see major victories and defeats. Such a period ahead offers tremendous opportunities as well as dangers for revolutionaries. It is of utmost importance that socialist activists around the world understand the nature of this process, draw the necessary lessons and jointly organize and fight for a consistent revolutionary program. The Marxist workers leader Wilhelm Liebknecht stated that the task of revolutionaries is “*study, propagate, organize!*” This slogan remains highly valid!

## Foodnotes

1 See e.g. RCIT: Ecuador: For a Popular Insurrection to Bring Down the Lenin Moreno Regime! For a workers, indigenous, peasant and popular government! 12 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/ecuador-for-a-popular-insurrection-to-bring-down-the-lenin-moreno-regime/>; Joint statement of the RCIT and the PRT (Costa Rica): *Ecuador: For an Indefinite General Strike against the Neoliberal Austerity Pack! Build democratic popular assemblies to defeat the government of Moreno – servant of the IMF! For a workers, indigenous, peasant and popular government!* 06 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/ecuador-for-an-indefinite-general-strike-against-the-neoliberal-austerity-pack/>; PRT (Costa Rica): ECUADOR: DERROCAR A MORENO Y EXPULSAR AL FMI, 14.10.2019, [https://www.thecommunists.net/forum/prt-cr-ecuador-](https://www.thecommunists.net/forum/prt-cr-ecuador-derrocar-a-moreno-y-expulsar-al-fmi/)

[derrocar-a-moreno-y-expulsar-al-fmi/](https://www.thecommunists.net/forum/prt-cr-ecuador-derrocar-a-moreno-y-expulsar-al-fmi/)

2 See e.g. Tomás Andino Mencía: Del auge al ocaso de la dictadura de “JOH”, 18 julio, 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/forum/del-auge-al-ocaso-de-la-dictadura-de-joh/>

3 See e.g. RCIT: Iraq: Victory to the Popular Insurrection against the Government of Abdel Mahdi! Build Popular Councils! For a Workers and Poor Peasants Government! 04 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/iraq-victory-to-the-popular-insurrection-against-the-government-of-abdel-mahdi/>; Yossi Schwartz: On the Background of the Popular Uprising of the Iraqi People, 04.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/background-of-popular-uprising-of-the-iraqi-people/>

4 See e.g. Yossi Schwartz: Lebanon: A Revolutionary Situation, 20.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/lebanon-a-revolutionary-situation/>

5 See e.g. RCIT: Egypt: Bring Down the Tyrant Sisi! Spontaneous mass protests shatter the military dictatorship of General Sisi, 23.09.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-bring-down-the-tyrant-sisi/>

6 See e.g. RCIT: Algeria and Sudan: Two Important Victories and a Warning. No trust in the army command and the old elite! Continue the Revolution! 11 April 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/first-victories-in-algeria-and-sudan/>; RCIT: Algeria: Bouteflika Retreats! Now Let Us Defeat His System! Organize Committees of Action! For a General Strike and Popular Insurrection to bring down the regime! For a Workers and Poor Peasants Government! 12 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/algeria-bouteflika-retreats-now-let-us-defeat-his-system/>; RCIT: Algeria: Victory to the Popular Insurgency against Bouteflika and his System! 9 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/algeria-victory-to-the-popular-insurgency-against-bouteflika-and-his-system/>

7 See e.g. RCIT: China: Solidarity with the General Strike in Hong Kong! For an international solidarity movement as the Stalinist-Capitalist regime in Beijing prepares a brutal crackdown! 01 August 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/solidarity-with-the-general-strike-in-hong-kong/>; RCIT: China: Long Live the Popular Uprising in Hong Kong! After protestors storm the parliament: general strike against the extradition bill and the Lam Administration! 03 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/long-live-the-popular-uprising-in-hong-kong/>; RCIT: China: Mass Protests against Reactionary “Extradi-

tion”



## RCIT AFRICA PROGRAM

# Manifesto for the Revolutionary Liberation of Black Africa

*Adopted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of the RCIT in November 2017*

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

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A5 Format*

tion Law" in Hong Kong. For an indefinite general strike to kill the bill and to bring down the Administration of Carrie Lam! 18 June 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-mass-protests-against-reactionary-extradition-law-in-hong-kong/>

8 We have collected the RCIT's statements and articles on Kashmir in a special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/collection-of-articles-on-the-liberation-struggle-in-kashmir/>. Our statement on the latest escalation by the Indian Modi government can be read here: India: Defend the Kashmiri People against Modi's "Israel-Style" Attack! India's ultra-chauvinist BJP government abolishes decades-old autonomy rights of Muslim-majority province, 6 August 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/india-defend-the-kashmiri-people-against-modi-s-attack/>; see also the following essays by Michael Pröbsting: The Kashmir Question and the Indian Left Today. Marxism, Stalinism and centrism on the national liberation struggle of the Kashmiri people, 26 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/kashmir-question-and-indian-left-today/>; Revolutionaries and the Slogan of "Azadi Kashmir". Should Marxists advocate the independence of Kashmir? 13 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/revolutionaries-and-the-slogan-of-azadi-kashmir/>; India: A Prison House of Nations and Lower Castes (On the Reasons for Modi's Coup in Kashmir). Essay on the social and national contradictions of Indian capitalism and the rise of Hindutva chauvinism, 16 August 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/india-is-a-a-prison-house-of-nations-and-lower-castes/>

9 For the RCIT's analysis of Catalonia's struggle for independence, we refer readers to numerous documents which are collected in a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/collection-of-articles-on-catalunya-s-independence-struggle/>; on the recent developments see e.g. RCIT: Spanish State: Freedom for Catalan Political Prisoners! 15 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/spanish-state-freedom-for-catalan-political-prisoners/>; Javier Cadenas: Cataluña: ¡Libertad para los Presos Politics!, 14.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/home/esp%C3%B1ol/cataluna-libertad-para-los-presos-politics/>

10 See e.g. RCIT: Revolutionary Change to End Climate Change! Only expropriation of the capitalist corporations opens the road towards the end of climate change, 20 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/revolutionary-change-to-end-climate-change/>

11 The RCIT has published a number of booklets, statements, and articles on the Syrian Revolution that can be accessed on a special sub-section of this website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>. In particular we refer to: RCIT: Syria: Assad Regime and Kurdish YPG Strike a Reactionary Deal. Assad, Putin, Trump, Erdoğan and the PYD/YPG leadership are all reactionary enemies of the Arab and Kurdish masses in Syria! 15 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-assad-regime-and-kurdish-ypg-strike-a-reactionary-deal/>; Yossi Schwartz: Syria: US Imperialism Deserts the Kurds ... Once Again. The fruits of the collaboration of the Kurdish YPG/SDF leadership in Syria with Washington, 08.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-us-imperialism-deserts-the-kurds-once-again/>; RCIT: Save the Syrian Revolution! A call for international solidarity with the Syrian people in Idlib suffering from the barbarous onslaught by Assad and Putin! 04 June 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/call-save-the-syrian-revolution/>

12 See e.g. RCIT: Yemen: Another Humiliating Blow for the Saudi Aggressors! Yemeni popular resistance eliminates three pro-Saudi military brigades, 02.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/yemen-another-humiliating-blow-for-the-saudi-aggressors/>

13 See e.g. RCIT: France: Defend the "Yellow Vests" Movement against State Repression! Build local Action Commit-

tees! Push the Trade Unions to Join the Movement! Organize an Indefinite General Strike! 03.12.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/france-defend-the-yellow-vests-movement-against-state-repression/>

14 See e.g. RCIT: Sudan: The Deal with the Military Council is a Sell-Out of the Revolution! 08 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/sudan-the-deal-with-the-military-council-is-a-sell-out-of-the-revolution/>; RCIT: Sudan: Fight Back against the Generals with a General Strike! International solidarity with the Sudanese people! 04 June 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/sudan-fight-back-against-the-generals-with-a-general-strike/>; Yossi Schwartz: Sudan: Down with the Military Dictatorship! 03.06.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/down-with-sudan-s-military-dictatorship/>; RCIT: Sudan: Bring Down the Regime of Omar al-Bashir! Organize Committees of Action! For a General Strike and Popular Insurrection to bring down the Regime! For a Workers and Poor Peasants Government! 28 December 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/sudan-bring-down-the-regime-of-omar-al-bashir/>

15 Michael Pröbsting: Another Great Recession of the Capitalist World Economy Has Begun. The economic crisis is an important factor in the current dramatic shift in the world situation, 19 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/another-great-recession-of-the-capitalist-world-economy-has-begun/>

16 See e.g. our articles on the Global Trade War which are collected in a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-global-trade-war/>; for an extensive study of the Great Power rivalry see e.g. our book by 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, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019. The book can be read online or downloaded for free here: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>; on the latest developments of the U.S. role in the Middle East see e.g. RCIT: No to the Turkish Invasion in North-East Syria! Erdoğan's so-called "safety corridor" is an attack both against the Kurdish people as well as against the Syrian Revolution!, 10 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/no-to-the-turkish-invasion-in-north-east-syria/>; Yossi Schwartz: Syria: US Imperialism Deserts the Kurds ... Once Again. The fruits of the collaboration of the Kurdish YPG/SDF leadership in Syria with Washington, 08.10.2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-us-imperialism-deserts-the-kurds-once-again/>; RCIT: Aramco Attack: Defeat the US/Saudi/Israeli Warmongers! Defend Iran against any imperialist aggression! But no political support for the reactionary Mullah Regime in Teheran! 16 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/aramco-attack-defeat-the-us-saudi-israeli-warmongers/>; RCIT: Strait of Hormuz: Escalating Tensions between the US/UK and Iran. Drive the Great Powers out of the Middle East! But no political support for the reactionary Mullah Regime in Teheran! 22 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/escalating-tensions-between-the-us-uk-and-iran/>

17 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Gang Leaders of Western Counterrevolution Are Faltering. Some observations on an interesting historic moment in the world situation, 25 September 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-gang-leaders-of-western-counterrevolution-are-faltering/>

18 See e.g. RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 2 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2019/>; Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives

2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings, RCIT Books, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013/](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013/); Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

19 "The Fourth International does not discard the program of the old "minimal" demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the dem-

ocratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective. Insofar as the old, partial, "minimal" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism — and this occurs at each step—the Fourth International advances a system of transitional demands, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old "minimal program" is superseded by the transitional program, the task of which lies in systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution." (Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Transitional Program (1938); in: Documents of the Fourth International, Pathfinder Press, New York 1973, p. 184)

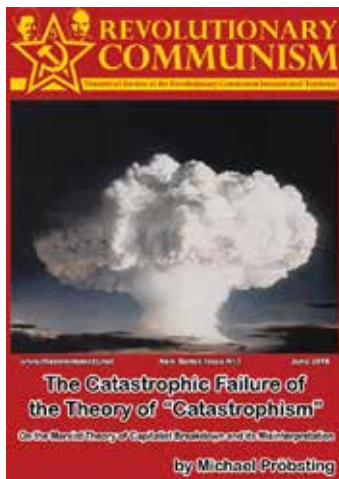
20 See on this Michael Pröbsting: The Struggle for Democracy in the Imperialist Countries Today. The Marxist Theory of Permanent Revolution and its Relevance for the Imperialist Metropolises, August 2015, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 39, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/democracy-vs-imperialism/>

21 Michael Pröbsting: The Slogan of the Constituent Assembly in the Great Arab Revolution. Defending the Marxist approach against ultra-left and opportunist criticism, 23 April 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-slogan-of-the-constituent-assembly-in-the-great-arab-revolution>

22 V. I. Lenin: Deception of the People with Slogans of Freedom and Equality (First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education, 19 May 1919); in: LCW Vol. 29, p. 363

23 V.I.Lenin: Speech at the Fourth Conference of Gubernia Extraordinary Commissions (6.2.1920), in: LCW Vol. 42, p. 170

24 As examples for such centrist pacifism we refer to pseudo-Trotskyist groups like Alan Woods IMT or Peter Taaffe's CWI. Woods emphasized in a theoretical essay: „A peaceful transformation of society would be entirely possible if the trade union and reformist leaders were prepared to use the colossal power in their hands to change society. If the workers leaders did not do this, then there could be rivers of blood, and this would entirely be the responsibility of the



## NEW RCIT PUBLICATION!

# The Catastrophic Failure of the Theory of "Catastrophism"

By Michael Pröbsting, May 2018

*On the Marxist Theory of Capitalist Breakdown and its Misinterpretation  
by the Partido Obrero (Argentina) and its  
"Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International"*

Introduction \* A Note on the PO's term "Catastrophism" \* What did the Marxist Classics Say? A Brief Overview \* Empirical Evidence for the Long-Term Decline of Capitalism \* What will come after Capitalism? \* Epoch and Periods \* The Current Historical Period which Opened in 2008/09 \* Empirical Evidence for the Decay of Capitalism in the Present Historic Period \* The Dialectical and the Mechanistic Interpretation of Cycles on Capitalism \* Permanent Collapse? No, there is Collapse and Collapse \* Consequences of "Catastrophism" (I): Confusion on Capitalist Restoration \* Consequences of "Catastrophism" (II): Confusion on China and Russia as Capitalist Powers \* Excuse: The Theory of "Long Waves" and Dialectical Materialism \* From Economic Crisis to Revolutionary Situation? \* Can the Crisis of Leadership be Solved without an International Democratic-Centralist Organization? \* Conclusions \* Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 32 pages, A4 Format

reformist leaders." (Alan Woods: Marxism and the State, December 2008, <https://www.marxist.com/marxism-and-the-state-part-one.htm>)

The IMT explicitly defended the idea that a "peaceful transition to socialism" is even possible in countries like Pakistan which have a long history of military dictatorships! Such wrote their long-time leader in that country: „The situation in Pakistan had "got out of hand" from the bourgeois point of view. The government had lost its nerve; the ruling clique was suspended in mid-air; the police force was demoralised and sections of the armed forces wavering; the mass movement, affecting all sections of the populace, had set about a transformation of society. All the elements of a classical revolutionary situation were present, except one: the revolutionary leadership. Under those conditions, if a clear lead had been given, a peaceful transition could have been affected. But if the magnificent movement of the Pakistani workers and peasants were worthy to be placed on a par with the movement of their class brothers in France and Italy, the cowardice, shortsightedness and cynicism of the leadership was not far behind that of its European counterparts. The betrayal of the Pakistani Stalinists, who refused to mobilise the masses for the seizure of power, inevitably prepared the way for reaction. The truly magnificent struggles of the Pakistani workers and peasants at this time are worthy to be put on a par with the great movement of their French and Italian class brothers. The movement in Pakistan, given a correct leadership, could have led to a peaceful seizure of power" (Lal Khan: Pakistan's Other Story: The Revolution of 1968-69, 16 April 2009 <http://www.marxist.com/pakistans-other-story.htm>, Preface by Alan Woods)

Peter Taaffe, the historic leader of the CWI (which experienced recently a devastating split), said in an interview a few years ago in answer to the question if there will be a revolution to overthrow capitalism: "Well yes, a change in society, established through winning a majority in elections, backed up by a mass movement to prevent the capitalists from overthrowing a socialist government and fighting, not to take over every small shop, every betting shop or every street corner shop -- in any case, they are disappearing because of the rise of the supermarkets -- and so on, or every small factory, but to nationalise a handful of monopolies, transnationals now, that control 80 to 85% of the economy." (The Socialist, 29 June 2006, The Socialist Party's history. The Militant Tendency, [http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/html\\_article/2006-446-militant](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/html_article/2006-446-militant))

And in an educational pamphlet which the CWI publishes on its website another central leader, Lynn Walsh, repeats this idea: "Our programme presented the case for "the socialist transformation of society" - a popularised form of 'socialist revolution'. We use this formulation to avoid the crude association between 'revolution' and 'violence' always falsely made by apologists of capitalism. A successful socialist transformation can be carried through only on the basis of the support of the overwhelming majority of the working class, with the support of other layers, through the most radical forms of democracy. On that basis, provided a socialist government takes decisive measures on the basis of mobilising the working class, it would be possible to carry through a peaceful change of society. Any threat of violence would come, not from a popular socialist government, but from forces seeking to restore their monopoly of wealth, power and privilege by mobilising a reaction against the democratic majority." (Lynn Walsh: The State: A Marxist Programme and Transitional Demands, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/marxism-and-the-state/re-marxists-state/>)

25 Friedrich Engels: Letter to Franz Mehring (July 14, 1893), in: MECW Vol. 50, p. 164

26 Friedrich Engels: The Peasant War in Germany (1850), in: MECW Vol. 10, p. 412

27 Michael Pröbsting: Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the present Period, RCIT Books, Vienna 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/book-united-front/>

28 It is true that there were also some democratic mass protests in Spain and later the U.S. in the same year. But they were far less developed than the struggles in the Arab world.

29 Martín Mosquera: Latin America and the global reactionary wave, 20 October 2019, <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article6256>

30 Global capitalism at a turning point. Our perspectives on the current global situation, League for the Fifth International Congress in Berlin, June 2019, August 10, 2019, <https://www.red-flagonline.org/2019/08/global-capitalism-at-a-turning-point/>

31 RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption (Thesis 4)

32 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Stalinism: Assad's Best Friends Forever. A commentary on a joint international initiative of Stalinist parties, 3 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/stalinism-is-assad-s-best-friends-forever/>; Michael Pröbsting: Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“. The bleeding Syrian Revolution and the recent Escalation of Inter-Imperialist Rivalry between the US and Russia – A Marxist Critique of Social Democracy, Stalinism and Centrism, 21 April 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syria-great-power-rivalry-and-the-failure-of-the-left/>

33 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: The Coup d'État in Egypt and the Bankruptcy of the Left's "Army Socialism", August 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/egypt-and-left-army-socialism/>

34 Michael Pröbsting: Russia and China: Neither Capitalist nor Great Powers? A Reply to the PO/CRFI and their Revisionist Whitewashing of Chinese and Russian imperialism, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/russia-and-china-neither-capitalist-nor-great-powers-reply-to-po-crfi/>; Michael Pröbsting: The Catastrophic Failure of the Theory of "Catastrophism". On the Marxist Theory of Capitalist Breakdown and its Misinterpretation by the Partido Obrero (Argentina) and its "Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International", RCIT Pamphlet, May 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-catastrophic-failure-of-the-theory-of-catastrophism/>

35 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“

36 See on this e.g. RCIT: Syria: Assad Regime and Kurdish YPG Strike a Reactionary Deal; see also the following publications by Michael Pröbsting: Syria: The Shameful Alliance of the Saudi Monarchy and the "Left-Wing" YPG, 4 July 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/shameful-alliance-of-saudi-monarchy-and-ypg-in-syria/>; The Revelations of a U.S. General on Washington's Allies in Syria. Another Blow to the Stalinist Myths about the Character of Syrian Liberation Fighters and the Role of the Kurdish SDF/YPG, 27.10.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/revelations-of-u-s-general-on-washington-s-allies-in-syria/>; Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified? An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution, 5 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/>

37 Michael Pröbsting: The Slogan of the Constituent Assembly in the Great Arab Revolution

38 See on this RCIT: *Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation. The Tasks of the Liberation Struggle against Decaying Capitalism (adopted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of the RCIT in October 2016,* <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-program-2016/>)

39 We refer readers RCIT: Great Tasks Demand Great Initiative! A call to all revolutionary organizations and activists to fulfill our responsibility in this historic time! Open Letter from the International Secretariat of the RCIT, 7 January 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-great-tasks-demand-great-initiative/>; see also Michael Pröbsting: Our Next Steps. A Proposal for Building a New Revolutionary International. A contribution to a highly important debate among Marxists, 11 February 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/next-steps-in-building-the-international/>

# 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 5<sup>th</sup> Workers International on a revolutionary program! Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism!*

*No socialism without a revolution!*

*No revolution without a revolutionary party!*

