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Afghanistan: The Defeat of U.S. Imperialism and the Opportunist Left

by Michael Pröbsting

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Pictures on the cover: Tortured prisoners from Afghanistan in the U.S. Guantanamo Camp in 2002 (Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Camp_x-ray_detainees.jpg)

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Afghanistan and the Left: Closet Social-Imperialism

A critique of reformist and centrist forces which are outraged about the Taliban's victory against the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan

A Pamphlet (with 5 Tables) by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, 24 September 2021

Introduction

It is an axiom among Marxists that great historical events are a test for all political forces, including self-proclaimed socialist organizations. The current period has experienced quite a number of such tests within a short space of time – a development which reflects the revolutionary nature of political conditions in a world which is out of joint. Popular uprisings, the COVID Counterrevolution, the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers in East and West – all these are examples for such key questions which also constitute crucial tests for socialists.

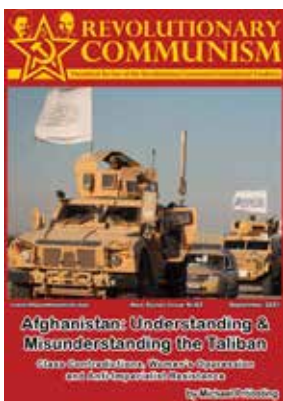
The recent events in Afghanistan belong without doubt in such a category of historic events. One of the poorest nations in the world defeated the most powerful Western states after a 20-year long insurgency. A quarter of a million people died in the course of this struggle, many more were injured, raped and maimed and millions were made refugees. But in the end, these gigantic sacrifices enabled the heroic Afghan people to drive out the imperialist occupiers! As the RCIT has pointed out in recent months, this is a historic defeat for the Western imperialist powers and a historic victory not only for the Afghan people but for all oppressed peoples.

In this essay, we do not intend to repeat our extensive analysis of the character and the background of the imperialist defeat in Afghanistan. We refer interested readers to the special sub-page on our website where we have compiled the respective RCIT documents.¹ At this point we will rather deal with the approach of left-wing organizations to this historic event. Hence, this essay should be read in conjunction with our previous documents published in the past weeks.

As we will see below, only a few of these organizations were able to take a principled, anti-imperialist position while most have failed to comprehend the character of the events in Afghanistan.² As a result, they were unable to take a consistent anti-colonialist position and ended up as closet social-imperialists!

The Class Character of the Afghan Insurgency

The bedrock of the failure of the opportunist left is their complete ineptitude to recognize the differences in the class character of countries involved in this conflict. On one side were several Great Powers like the U.S., Britain, Germany and others; on the other side was one of the



PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Afghanistan: Understanding & Misunderstanding the Taliban

*Class Contradictions, Women's Oppression
and Anti-Imperialist Resistance*

by Michael Pröbsting

Introduction * Ignoring Differences in the Class Character of Countries * Have the Taliban been Agents of ...? * "Feudalist" Taliban? * Land Ownership and Class Relations in Afghanistan's Agriculture * Did Afghan Women Benefit from the U.S. Occupation? * Excuse: The Increase in the Cultivation of Opium in Afghanistan after the Overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 * Women's Oppression: The Example of Child Marriage * The Systematic Rape of Women and Boys: The Warlords and their American Protectors * The Taliban: a Petty-Bourgeois Islamist-Nationalist Movement Rooted among the Rural Poor * Excuse: The Islamist-Nationalist Rhetoric of the Taliban in their own Words * A Popular Basis as a Result of Two Decades of Anti-Colonial Struggle * Afghanistan 2021: A Historic Defeat for Western Imperialism by a Popular Guerrilla Struggle * Conclusions * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

poorest countries in the world. These facts are so obvious that hardly anyone would dare to publicly dispute them.

But what does this mean translated into the language of Marxism? It means that the conflict in Afghanistan in 2001-2021 was a conflict between several imperialist powers and a semi-colonial country (which, in fact, was transformed into a de facto colony in this period). In other words, the nature of this conflict was a *reactionary, imperialist and colonialist war of aggression against the Afghan people*. In turn, from the Afghan point of view, the conflict had the character of a *progressive, national liberation, and anti-colonial war of defense*.

Some “socialists”, reflecting the pressure of the imperialist world public, claim that the Taliban did not represent the Afghan people. Well, the Taliban ruled the country in 1996-2001 and they do so now. And in between they were the main force fighting against the U.S./NATO occupation. How could they hide among the people, wage myriads of guerilla attacks against the occupiers, create large zones in from which they de facto expelled the occupiers, how could they do this for over twenty years against the most powerful imperialist armies, if they would not have large support among the rural popular masses?!

Furthermore, if the Taliban did not represent the Afghan people, who else did so? The corrupt warlord regime, which was imposed by the imperialist occupiers in 2001, which terrorized and raped the Afghan people, and which collapsed like a house of cards once the U.S. withdrew money and guns? Hardly! So, who else could represent the Afghan people? The little NGO's which lived from Western donations and existed mostly only in the safe zone in Kabul? Well, think again!

Or do the pro-Western “socialists” want to claim that nobody represented the Taliban people? Really, nobody represents a people for decades?! As a matter of fact, this is a deeply euro-centric and racist position which denies that poor people can be actors of history. Such arguments objectively only serve the imperialists to pose as “enlightened civilizers” against the “poor and backward” Afghan people who are supposedly too stupid to act as subjects and not only as objects of the class struggle!

“But the Taliban are a reactionary force!”, object many leftists. No doubt, every Marxists is fully aware of this. But, first, this argument does not remove the fact that the Taliban have been clearly the strongest force in the country and led the insurgency against the occupiers. And, second, there is reactionary and reactionary. Social and political movements are full of contradictions. Bourgeois dictatorships are reactionary by definition. Nevertheless, under specific conditions, they can play a certain objective progressive role – for example when they defend a semi-colonial country against an imperialist aggression. To give only two examples, we refer to the defense of Ethiopia against Italy in 1935-37 by Emperor Haile Selassie or to the defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism in 1991 and 2003 by the regime of Saddam Hussein. And to those, who refer to the reactionary women's policy of the Taliban, we say: it is no doubt that the Taliban promote such a policy. But, as we have demonstrated in our latest pamphlet on Afghanistan, the situation for the mass of women (at least outside of the middle-class districts of Kabul) was definitely not better during the time of the U.S./Warlords occupation – rather the opposite!³ Hence, if the Taliban promote a reac-

tionary women's policy, the U.S./warlords occupiers promoted an even more reactionary women's policy!

No, it is an undeniable fact

a) that the Western Great Powers imposed an imperialist occupation on Afghanistan, a poor semi-colonial country and

b) that the Taliban stood at the top of an insurgency against this imperialist occupation.

Hence, this insurgency had an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist character, i.e. an objectively progressive character despite the reactionary policy of the Taliban's leadership in many issues.

It is worth noting that Tariq Ali, a well-known left-wing intellectual of Pakistan origin, managed to understand the events in Afghanistan better than all those Stalinist and “Trotskyist” smart alecks. In a recently published article in *New Left Review*, he welcomed the defeat of the U.S. and compared the Taliban's victory with the historic victory of the Sudanese insurgents against the British occupation forces in 1885. “*The fall of Kabul to the Taliban on 15 August 2021 is a major political and ideological defeat for the American Empire. The crowded helicopters carrying US Embassy staff to Kabul airport were startlingly reminiscent of the scenes in Saigon – now Ho Chi Minh City – in April 1975. The speed with which Taliban forces stormed the country was astonishing; their strategic acumen remarkable. (...) In some respects, the closest analogy is not Saigon but nineteenth-century Sudan, when the forces of the Mahdi swept into Khartoum and martyred General Gordon. William Morris celebrated the Mahdi's victory as a setback for the British Empire. (...) The twentieth anniversary of the ‘War on Terror’ thus ended in predictable and predicted defeat for the US, NATO and others who clambered on the bandwagon. However one regards the Taliban's policies – I have been a stern critic for many years – their achievement cannot be denied. In a period when the US has wrecked one Arab country after another, no resistance that could challenge the occupiers ever emerged. This defeat may well be a turning point. That is why European politicians are whinging. They backed the US unconditionally in Afghanistan, and they too have suffered a humiliation – none more so than Britain.*”⁴

The Marxist Classics on Anti-Colonial Wars

As the RCIT has pointed out repeatedly, the Marxist classics left no doubt about the duty of socialists in case of such wars. They have to support the struggle of the oppressed people and work towards the defeat of the imperialist aggressors.⁵

The following short selection of authoritative texts of the communist movement should leave no doubt about the position of revolutionary organizations in such conflicts. The Communist International, in the period when it was led by Lenin and Trotsky, stated in 1920 as one of the conditions for admission: “*A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of ‘its’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude to the working people of the colonies*”

and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples.”⁶

Such an approach was based on the Lenin’s analysis of imperialism as the highest and final stage of capitalism which he elaborated during World War I. Such he wrote in 1916: “National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but inevitable. About 1,000 million people, or over half of the world’s population, live in the colonies and semi-colonies (China, Turkey, Persia). The national liberation movements there are either already very strong, or are growing and maturing. Every war is the continuation of politics by other means. The continuation of national liberation politics in the colonies will inevitably take the form of national wars against imperialism.”⁷

In one of their crucial documents published during World War I, the leaders of the Bolsheviks stated that it is the highest duty for all socialists to take the side of the oppressed in such wars: „By a ‘defensive’ war socialists have always understood a ‘just’ war in this particular sense (Wilhelm Liebknecht once expressed himself precisely in this way). It is only in this sense that socialists have always regarded wars ‘for the defence of the fatherland’, or ‘defensive’ wars, as legitimate, progressive and just. For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be ‘just’, and ‘defensive’ wars, irrespective of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slaveholding and predatory ‘Great’ Powers.”⁸

At the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, Trotsky expressed the same approach: “Every colonial movement that weakens capitalist rule in the ruling country (métropole) is progressive, because it assists the proletariat in its revolutionary task.”⁹

Consequently, Trotsky sharply denounced all those pseudo-socialists who refused to take the side of the oppressed people: “The struggle against war and its social source, capitalism, presupposes direct, active, unequivocal support to the oppressed colonial peoples in their struggles and wars against

imperialism. A “neutral” position is tantamount to support of imperialism. Yet, among the announced adherents of the London Bureau congress are found ILPers who advocate leaving the courageous Ethiopian warriors against marauding Italian fascism in the lurch on the grounds of “neutrality,” and “Left” Poale Zionists who are even at this moment leaning upon British imperialism in its savage campaign against the legitimate, even if confused, struggle of the Arab peasantry.”¹⁰

One could find dozens of similar statements of the Marxist classics. But we think this short selection makes it clear what is the duty of revolutionaries in a conflict between imperialist and (semi-)colonial countries.

A Few Historical Examples

Unfortunately, all this is a closed book to the opportunist left. They refuse to recognize the anti-imperialist character of the 20-year insurgency by referring to the petty-bourgeois Islamist nature of the Taliban. By this, these reformist and centrist forces ignore the fact that, in many cases, national liberation struggles have been led by non-revolutionary forces, including Islamist, nationalist or authoritarian parties.¹¹

As we have elaborated this argument many times, we limit ourselves at this point to briefly mention the struggle of the Riffian Berbers against the Spanish and French imperialists in the early 1920s which was led by the petty-bourgeois Islamist Abd el-Krim. The French communists at that time waged a militant anti-colonial mass campaign in solidarity with the Riffians which even included a general strike on 12th October 1925. In its propaganda and agitation, the PCF publicly expressed its support for the Riffians struggle until “Moroccan soil was completely liberated” from both Spanish and French imperialists.¹² Likewise, one could refer to the resistance of the Syrian people against the French occupiers in 1925-27 or in Palestine where the masses fought against the British imperialists and the Zionist settlers under the leadership of petty-bourgeois Islamist and nationalist forces.¹³ Another example is the anti-colonial struggle of the Ethiopian people



Publications of the RCIT

The Inter-Imperialist Cold War between the US and China

By Michael Pröbsting, March 2021

Introduction * A symbolic public row * Two thieves as upholders of moral standards * Escalating the conflict between China and Japan * The Quad Summit * Inter-Imperialist tensions in the Taiwan Strait * Unavoidable continuation and acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry * Continuing doing business * Towards escalation on the Korean Peninsula? * “Fuck the EU” and Russia, again? * Confirmation of the Marxist analysis * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format

against Italy in 1935-37 which was led by Emperor Haile Selassie and which had the sympathy of the international workers movement.

Another example of a historically progressive war despite its reactionary leadership is the Turkish national liberation struggle against British imperialism and its Greek allies in 1919-22. This struggle was led by Mustafa Kemal and resulted in numerous massacres against civilian population. Historians estimate that in this period, Turkish forces killed between 213,000 and 368,000 Anatolian Greeks and expelled many more from their homes (of course, Greece did the same with the Turkish and Muslim minorities living on its territory).¹⁴ Despite all that, Turkey's war was first and foremost a progressive liberation struggle for national independence and for this reason the Soviet Union supported it by various means.¹⁵

To give more actual examples of progressive national liberation struggles against oppressive forces under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois Islamist-nationalist leadership we refer to the struggle of the Chechen people against Russia in the 1990s and 2000s¹⁶, the Iraqi people against the U.S. occupation since 2003¹⁷, the Syrian people against the Russian/Iranian/Assadist tyranny¹⁸, the Kashmiri people against India¹⁹, the Yemeni people against Saudi Arabia²⁰, the Muslim Rohingya people in Burma-Myanmar, etc.²¹

Denouncing an Anti-Colonial Insurgency as Equally Bad as Imperialist Occupation ... or Even Worse

However, the opportunist left refuses the teachings of the Marxist classics as well as the lessons of history. They ignore the anti-colonial character of the 20-year insurgency of the Afghan people, under the leadership of the petty-bourgeois Islamist-nationalist Taliban and reduce it to a conflict between two reactionary forces. In a number of cases, such "socialists" even suggest that the victory of the Taliban would be worse than the previous imperialist occupation.

Let us demonstrate this with a number of examples. Unsurprisingly, most Stalinist parties hate U.S. imperialism ... but hate popular insurgencies against imperialists even more – particularly if they are led by Islamist forces. We have seen this in Syria where the Stalinists loyally support the Assad tyranny and their Russian masters against the revolutionary uprising since 2011. The same in Egypt where they hailed the military coup of Genera Sisi in July 2013 against the parliamentary democratic regime with the Islamist Morsi at the top.²²

These Islamophobic cretins are no better when it comes to Afghanistan. Take the Iranian Tudeh Party. This is the Stalinist party which initially hailed Khomeini in the early 1980s and since then, after their cadres were murdered by the very same regime, they support each and everyone against the Mullah regime irrespective if they are imperialists or not. Such writes this party: "*The fall of Kabul and return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan on Sunday, August 15, is a colossal tragedy for its people.*"²³ So, we see, the expulsion of the imperialist occupation forces by the hand of a popular insurgency is not a victory against the Western Great Powers but ... a "*colossal tragedy*".

Their Stalinist comrades of the *Communist Party of Bangladesh* say basically the same. "*The Communist Party of*

Bangladesh (CPB) has expressed deep concern over the 'dramatic' and dangerous incident of the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan. (...) After a long dark period of American occupation in this 'blue-print game' of imperialism, the Afghan people are now facing the darkness of medieval barbarism of the violent fanatical militant Taliban regime. While the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan is long desired to the people of that country and to the whole world, the Taliban regime is by no means an alternative. Afghanistan today has been thrown from a boiling pot into a burning furnace."²⁴ This means nothing but that the situation after the expulsion of the imperialist occupiers is as bad or even worse than before!

There are also some "Trotskyists" like the notorious AWL in Britain which currently boast that they never called for the withdrawal of the imperialist occupation forces. "*We have never sloganised for 'US troops out of Afghanistan', because that would suggest some support for a Taliban victory.*"²⁵ Such a position is hardly surprising as it comes from a group which is known for its support for Zionism. Its historic leader even went so far to state in their paper that one could hardly criticize Israel if it would attack Iran! "*We do not advocate an Israeli attack on Iran, nor will we endorse it or take political responsibility for it. But if the Israeli airforce attempts to stop Iran developing the capacity to wipe it out with a nuclear bomb, in the name of what alternative would we condemn Israel?*"²⁶

"Trotskyists" Jump the Wagon of Imperialist Public Opinion (CWI, IMT, ISA, IRI)

One could imagine that "Trotskyist" organizations would approach the developments in Afghanistan in a better, more Marxist way. Far from it! The "*Fourth International*" in the tradition of Pablo and Mandel published an article saying about the situation now – after the end of the imperialist occupation – that "*under the Taliban it will go from bad to worse*". "*Yet again, puritan barbarism has landed Kabul. Yet again, the bigger barbarism, the US imperialism, paved the way for the junior partner, the Taliban. However, instead of examining Kabul's ignominious fall, let's begin by flagging dangerously brave resistance to the Taliban occupation. (...) Another group incapable of recognizing the unchanging character of Taliban is the troupe of self-styled 'anti-imperialists' detecting decoloniality in the fall of Kabul. Life no doubt was bad under the US occupation. Taliban suicide missions further compounded the misery bombed onto Afghan villages by the US war jets. The latter claimed more civilian lives. However, under the Taliban it will go from bad to worse.*"²⁷

The CWI led by Peter Taaffe calls the victory of the Taliban not a victory of an anti-colonial struggle but rather a "defeat". "*The Taliban's gains, putting huge parts of the country under their reactionary medieval rule, are a defeat for the aspirations of the mass of Afghans.*"²⁸

Their former comrades in the ISA, who split with Taaffe two years ago, share this outlook and even suggest that the capitalist-imperialist occupation by the U.S. has been replaced by an even more backward – a pre-capitalist feudal – force! "*The defeat of US Imperialism now, however, has not only strengthened the other capitalist-imperialist power – China, it has seen a reactionary, religious and practically feudal force come to power.*"²⁹ What could be the conclusion from this if not to stay neutral in a conflict between a "*capitalist-imperialist power*" and a "*feudal*" force or even to support

the former?!

Another group which also spit from the CWI in 2019 – the Spain-based IRI – defends such a reactionary line of argument even more explicit. *“US imperialism has left Afghanistan defeated. This is true, but who is raising its head is the most fundamentalist and obscurantist reaction. We cannot forget that the taliban were a product of an operation put in place by US imperialism, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia both in the struggle against the Soviets and to attempt to tackle the chaos caused by the bloody war between the different warlords after Moscow’s retreat. The taliban can only offer the Afghan people what they have already lived through between 1996 and 2001: unbridled oppression, slavery for women and a policy of agreements with imperialism which will benefit a privileged elite. We have seen it in the last few decades: islamic fundamentalist plays the same role as the fascist groupings, dismantles the revolutionary movements and allows capitalism to function unhindered. The imperialists and the integrists are two sides of the same coin: they feed and need this epoch of world crisis, recession, pandemic and capitalist decomposition. The ones which made the horrifying scenario in Afghanistan possible are the same who have done it before in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. Yes, on one hand are the taliban, the Islamic State, all type of jihadi reactionary groupings... but behind them lie their sponsors- the Gulf reactionary monarchies, the Iran mullahs, and the imperialism that sows the conditions for their existence, when it doesn’t organise and strengthen them directly.”*³⁰

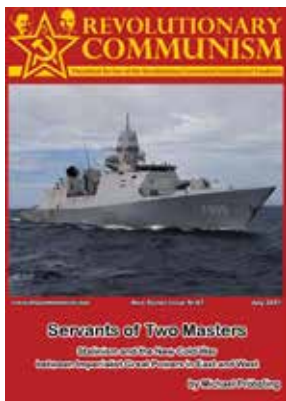
This statement reflects the delirium of political Neanderthals who do not know much more about Afghanistan than its geographic location! “Imperialists and Islamists are just two side of the same coin” – the classic nonsense which we hear since many years from Stalinism. The fact that one side represents the most powerful imperialist stats and the other is located in semi-colonial countries – such trifles don’t matter for the centrist muddleheads! This is hardly surprising as this current refused to recognize

a class difference between imperialist Britain and semi-colonial Argentina and, hence, refused to side with the latter during the Malvinas War in 1982. (The leaders of the CWI, the IMT, ISA and IRI were all united in a single organization at that time.)

Likewise, putting all these organizations in the same basket (“taliban, the Islamic State, all type of jihadi reactionary groupings”) is as idiotic as claiming that all “Marxists” (left social democrats, Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists, etc.) are the same. As we have explained in our works, most Islamist organizations are nationally based and are related to specific class forces in their respective countries. They play a given role in political life depending on the concrete forms of class contradictions and struggles. For example, when they are in power, they play a different role compared with when they are the top of an insurgency; or when a country is under imperialist attack compared with a situation when this is not the case. Or take the role of Islamists in imperialist countries where such forces could be based among nationally oppressed Muslim migrants. All these different conditions have profound consequences for forces like the Islamists which are usually based on petty-bourgeois layers and impoverished masses. In fact, the primitive prejudices of such “Trotskyist” forces are nothing but a brainless reproduction of imperialist-liberal schemas about “backward Muslims”.

By the way: the denunciations of the Taliban as “fascist” – a term which serves to justify support imperialist aggression – is not only used by the above-mentioned Spanish “Trotskyists” but also by the Stalinist party in the same country: *“Now that the US occupation and war ends and the country moves towards jihadist fascism, the workers of the world cannot ignore the suffering of Afghanistan.”*³¹

We could go on with many more examples. Just one last. The IRI suggest that the “taliban, the Islamic State, all type of jihadi reactionary groupings” are sponsored by “the Gulf



PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Servants of Two Masters

Stalinism and the New Cold War

between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West

by Michael Pröbsting

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

Introduction * The New Inter-Imperialist Cold War * A View on the Military Strength of the Great Powers * The Main Point of both Statements: Siding with Chinese and Russian Imperialism * Stalinist Fantasies Shredded in the Light of Reality: The Rise of Chinese Imperialism * The KKE’s “criticism” and its fraternal bonds with the Chinese CP * Beside the Servants of Assad the Butcher - Who Signed the KKE-initiated Joint Statement? * The Xi Fan Club: Signatories of the CPUSA-initiated Joint Statement * The Concept of Multilateralism and Peaceful Coexistence: A Reactionary Illusion * “Socialism in One Country”: The Historical Roots of the Stalinist Concept of “Peaceful Coexistence” * Serving Two Masters: The Eastern Imperialists as well as Sectors of the Domestic Bourgeoisie * A Note on the tight-lipped “Trotskyists” (CWI, IMT, ISA) * Conclusions * Footnotes

reactionary monarchies, the Iran mullahs, and the imperialism". This nonsense is another attempt to deny that Islamist forces have a certain basis in concrete class configurations in this or that country. It depends on the concrete situation – who against whom – if a given petty-bourgeois Islamist force plays an objective reactionary role or if it is part of an objective progressive struggle. But such a concrete dialectical and materialistic approach is alien to centrism. Instead, they fantasize that the Gulf monarchies, i.e. those states who are closely allied to U.S. imperialism and depend on its protection, would sponsor the "Islamists". Well, which "Islamists"? The Taliban, i.e. those who fought against the protectors of the Gulf monarchies for 20 years?! Daesh/ISIS, i.e. those who has fought against the U.S. forces and its allies in Syria and Iraq?! The *Muslim Brotherhood*, i.e. the organization which was overthrown and bloody suppressed in Egypt by a military coup financed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE? All these claims are nothing but extraordinary silly conspiracy theories! Furthermore, have these pseudo-Trotskyists ever heard about the years-long armed conflict between the Taliban and Daseh/ISIS?! Or between the Syrian "jihadists" (HTS, Muslim Brotherhood and others) against Daseh/ISIS?!

The IMT, another group led by Alan Woods which originated from a split in the CWI in 1991/92, share the same logic of denouncing the Western imperialists ... for not acting more aggressively against the Taliban. They criticize the U.S. and NATO forces not for occupying Afghanistan for 20 years but for leaving the country "cowardly"! "After having ravaged the country for 20 years, these cowards are now finally fleeing like dogs with their tails between their legs, leaving the Afghan people at the mercy of the Taliban madmen. For this, they deserve to be eternally cursed by the working masses everywhere." ³² Consequently, the problem is not the occupation but the "the cynical betrayal of US imperialism" against those Afghans who supported the occupation!

It is also worth noting that the IMT sections have participated wherever possible in the pro-imperialist demonstrations against the "terror regime of the Taliban" which have taken place recently in a number of European cities since

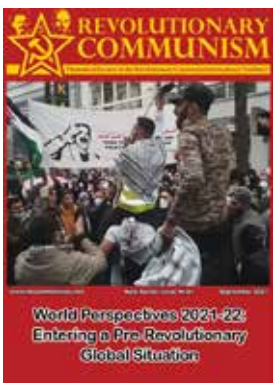
the defeat of the NATO imperialists. In London, they were one of the very few left-wing organizations which joined in such reactionary mobilizations. ³³ Their Austrian comrades participated in similar events and distributed a flyer in which they attacked Washington for its supposed weakness in the face of the "terrorists": "The negotiations of the U.S. with the Taliban in the last years and the pressure to let them have a share of power and to release hundreds of their fighters, has encouraged and legitimized the terrorists." ³⁴ Say hello to the advocates of the imperialist "war on terror" calling for a harder line against the "terrorist" Taliban! Do you remember Bush saying: "We don't negotiate with terrorists!" Well, here are his successors!

Some "Orthodox Trotskyists" Follow the Opportunist Trend (COR-TRCI, IG)

It is not only the larger Stalinist and "Trotskyist" organizations which mourn the defeat of the U.S. occupation but also smaller one which claim to be more "orthodox Trotskyists". Take the Argentinean-based COR-TRCI which is literally shocked and demoralized by the expulsion of the U.S./NATO forces by the Taliban-led insurrection. "The defeat of imperialism in Afghanistan tastes like death, because the Taliban takes power. (...) "The catastrophe of the withdrawal from Kabul is a warning also for the revolutionary ranks: never has the achievement of a progressive slogan such as the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan been so far from advancing the positions of the world proletariat." ³⁵

"The defeat of imperialism tastes like death", "the catastrophe of the withdrawal from Kabul is a warning for revolutionaries", ... these people have completely lost their political balance and got caught up in the maelstrom of imperialist hysteria! What an example for the Marxist thesis that historical events are major tests for socialists ... and only a few of them pass such!

The ex-Spartacist IG, led by Jan Norden, combines an "orthodox anti-imperialist" rhetoric with similar conclusions as the previous mentioned groups. A lot of denunciations of the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan ... but not



Publications of the RCIT

World Perspectives 2021-22: Entering a Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation

Theses of the International Executive Committee of the RCIT, 22 August 2021

Introduction * I. Great Depression, its Genesis and its Relevance for the COVID Counterrevolution * II. Peculiar Features of the Crisis and Prospects of the Capitalist World Economy * III. Acceleration of the Cold War between the Imperialist Great Powers * IV. The COVID Counterrevolution Enters a New Phase * V. A New Global Wave of Mass Struggles * Entering a Pre-Revolutionary World Situation of Accelerating Polarization between Classes and States * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 28 pages, A4 Format

a single word of supporting the 20 year-long insurgency and not a single word about the anti-colonial character of this struggle. Instead, “one oppressor regime is replaced by another”, i.e. both the imperialist occupation as well as the anti-occupation Taliban regime are *equally* reactionary.³⁶

It is worth noting that 20 years ago, the IG at least managed to raise the slogan “*Defend Afghanistan, Defeat U.S. Imperialism*”. So, why could the IG defend a Taliban-led Afghanistan against the imperialists but not side with the Taliban-led insurgency against the imperialists?! Probably, the explanation is simple that in 2001, the IG leaders were 20 years younger and not as demoralized as they are today!

The Orthodox Past and the Revisionist Present: The Example of the L5I

The same is even more true for the ex-revolutionary L5I which repeats the imperialist mantra that the situation under the Taliban is worse than under the U.S./NATO occupation. “*For the masses in Afghanistan, dark times are dawning. The victory of the Taliban will effectively drive all democratic organisations, women’s organisations, trades unions and socialist or communist forces into illegality.*”³⁷ Instead of recognizing the nature of the latest developments – a victorious anti-colonial struggle against the most powerful imperialist state – the L5I slanders this victory as “*regime change*” – a well-known phrase for the replacement of one reactionary regime by another.³⁸ Worse, they implicitly criticize the U.S./NATO forces that they “*failed to stand up to the Taliban!*” “*Afghan women are leading the way in organising anti-Taliban protests in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan. They are doing what US and allied occupying forces failed to do: stand up to the Taliban.*”³⁹

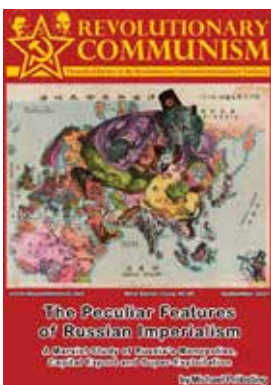
In the past – long, long ago when this organization was still revolutionary – they wrote very differently about this issue. At that time, we said: “*The LRCI and its British Section - Workers Power - stand clearly for the military victory of*

all Afghan forces that resist the US/UK offensive. This includes Taliban forces that resist the imperialist offensive.”⁴⁰ But when this organization entered the path of centrist degeneration, they dropped our anti-imperialist tradition and no longer sided with the Afghan resistance (including the Taliban) against the imperialist occupiers. In fact, they did their best to simply ignore this issue. It is characteristic that a few months after the expulsion of the founding cadres of the RCIT in 2011, the L5I stopped publishing any article about Afghanistan!⁴¹

This is all the more remarkable (and shameful) as the two most important sections of the L5I (the British and the German) are based in countries who participated in the last decade with thousands of troops in the occupation of Afghanistan! As we demonstrated in the quote above, the Communist International in the times of Lenin and Trotsky demanded from its sections that they “*expose the tricks and dodges of ‘its’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, ...*” Obviously, the revisionist L5I approached the occupation of Afghanistan by “their” troops very differently!

When they resumed to write about Afghanistan two months ago (i.e. nearly a decade later!), they didn’t express a single word about support for the 20 years-long struggle against the imperialist occupation. Obviously, they are ashamed about their revolutionary past!

However, the contradictions between their past and their current position on Afghanistan are so evident that the L5I cadres increasingly feel obliged to explain and defend their revisions of Marxist anti-imperialism. A few days ago, the German L5I youth group published a long article which tried to defend their new position. This article is remarkable by any standards and demonstrates – compared with past publications of the L5I on Afghanistan – particularly clearly how much the L5I has abandoned even verbal adherence to the Marxist principles of anti-imperialism!⁴²



Publications of the RCIT

The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism

A Study of Russia’s Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory

By Michael Pröbsting, August 2021

Introduction * Another Denial of Russia’s Imperialist Character * The Methodological Failure of our Critics * Russia’s Economy: Dominated by Domestic, not Foreign, Monopolies * Capital Export and the Problem of “Round-Tripping” Foreign Direct Investments * “Phantom FDI”: No Russian Peculiarity but a Global Phenomenon * Russia’s Leading Multinational Corporations and their Foreign Investments * Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Capital Export * Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Migration * Conclusions * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format

This article starts with the following statement: *“In general, there was no significant resistance against the advance of the Taliban ... The reason for this is not that the Taliban had large support among the people. The reason for the lack of resistance against the Taliban was rather the corruption of President Ghani and his puppet government, the non-payment of wages to the Afghan soldiers after the withdrawal of NATO forces, the demoralization of the Afghan military and the bad supply conditions for the population.”*

As we did already explain, this is simply not true and, in any case, an empty tautology. The Taliban won because 1) the government and the army did not want to fight and 2) the people are living in misery. In war-torn countries, living conditions are always bad. In Afghanistan, this is the case for four decades! This does not explain the process of strengthening of the Taliban in the course of a 20-year long insurgency. Obviously, the government and the army did not want to fight as the NATO forces withdrew. But this shows that foreign money and guns were the only reasons why they existed in the past 20 years! There was no other reason. All the so-called advantages of the period of occupation about which the liberals and the “Marxists” phantasies, all the supposed horror about the Taliban ... did not motivate anyone to fight against the Taliban! What does this tell us? It shows that the Taliban – despite having much less money and guns – advanced over the years while the NATO/warlord forces – despite having gigantic superiority in terms of money and guns – were forced to retreat and, eventually, collapsed. The main difference is that the former had popular support and the later lacked such.

However, the revisionist L5I strongly denies this. They claim that the occupation created a number of liberties and achievements for the Afghan people which the Taliban are now abolishing. *“It is clear that the new rule of the Taliban (...) will create no improvements for the large majority of the population but only deterioration. (...) Education, the development of the individual (!), cultural offers etc. will be subordinated under the rule of the feudal Taliban gangs (!) with their backward vision of a society. The common lifestyle in the large cities, employment opportunities for women, the right to assembly and freedom of speech will be abolished with the Taliban taking power. The Taliban want to create a theocracy, an Afghan califate. The rule of the Taliban means a deterioration for the living and employment conditions for the masses, limitation of democratic rights, revocation of women’s rights, banning of women from public space, tighter control of women, LGBTQIA+ people, youth and national minorities.”* As we demonstrated in our above-mentioned pamphlet, these so-called achievements are a phantasy of Western and middle-class liberals.

When the L5I was still a revolutionary organization, i.e. before 2011, their cadres were fully aware of the arch-reactionary, anti-democratic and oppressive nature of the occupation regime and they did not believe that that was better than the rule of the Taliban. At that time, they did say: *“This conflict was sold to the public as a “War on Terror” to spread democracy and protect women’s rights. Instead, it has produced a corrupt dictatorship with the thinnest veneer of democratic legitimacy. Its warlord allies in the north of the country impose conditions on women even worse than under the Taliban, using the weapon of rape to reward loyalty and punish opposition.”*⁴³

“Actually, the occupation, far from liberating Afghan women,

*has been a catastrophe for them. Today, most women must wear a full-length burka or risk being attacked or raped. Surveys show that 80 per cent of marriages are forced, leading to widespread depression in women, which is so severe that 250 suicides were reported in the first six months of 2007. While schools have theoretically opened their doors to girls, in truth they are discouraged from attending, and in some areas Mujahideen militiamen kidnap and rape them on their way to school. As a result, only 20 per cent of girls are enrolled at primary schools, and a paltry 0.5 per cent at secondaries, according to research by Oxfam. Far from doing anything to prevent this horrific oppression, US strategy has been to support Northern Alliance warlords, whose practices are just as oppressive to women as the Taliban.”*⁴⁴

We wonder: what has changed? Why was the imperialist occupation in 2008-09 at least as reactionary for women as the Taliban if not worse? Did the warlords rape less women and children since then? Have they become less oppressive and corrupt since then? Or did the Taliban become more reactionary and oppressive since 2008-09? Well only a fool could claim such nonsense and even the L5I does not dare to say such in public. They simply conceal what they did say in the past and hope that nobody reminds them!

In contrast to other articles which the L5I published in the past months, the German article has the advantage that it is far more explicit in drawing political consequences. *“For all these reasons it is evident that support for the Taliban in the spirit of the anti-imperialist united front is excluded (!). In addition, all leftists, socialists, Marxists, anarchists etc. will have to organize themselves under conditions of illegality and have to face persecution by the Taliban. (...) Furthermore, the Taliban do not represent independence of imperialism but rather demonstrate that they are open for collaboration with Russian and, in particular, Chinese imperialism. (...) For us, it is out of question to support the Taliban against imperialism (!). In such a proxy war between imperialist camps, the only legitimate position is independence of imperialism, for the building of an international, anti-imperialist movement and for the liberation of all oppressed and exploited. The struggle against imperialism can not be conducted successfully with the Taliban but only against them.”*

So, the new bible of the L5I is that any application of the Marxist tactic of the anti-imperialist united front has been impermissible in Afghanistan when the Taliban have led an insurgency against the U.S./NATO occupation. The arguments presented here are ridiculous. Of course, the Taliban are oppressive. But Marxists do not side with a given force because they are open for collaboration with us but because they lead an objective progressive struggle. This is why Marxists supported the Soviet Union despite the oppressive Stalinist dictatorship which slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Trotskyists and other communists, or Turkey under the oppressive regime of Mustafa Kemal despite the fact that he killed many people (including communists), or Iraq under Saddam Hussein and so on. Clearly, Marxists can not lend any political support to such forces as they promote a reactionary policy. But they can, and must, support the practical struggle as it weakens the main enemy and improves the conditions for the international liberation struggle of the working class and oppressed.

The other “argument” – that the Taliban would be proxies of Russian⁴⁵ and Chinese imperialism⁴⁶ – are no less ri-

diculous. Which proof do the comrades have for their bold claim that the Taliban were “proxies” of Beijing and Moscow in the past years and that the civil war in Afghanistan was simply a “proxy war between imperialist camps”? Of course, the Taliban leadership established contact with these powers (as well as with Pakistan, Qatar and Iran). Of course, these states had a certain interest to make life more difficult for the U.S. But the form of their material support was limited. One has just to take the fact that the Taliban fighters had only primitive weapons. They never got any meaningful anti-aircraft missiles which could have broken the undisputed air superiority of the NATO and regime forces. Most Taliban fighters did not even have uniforms and boots! Judge yourself, how significant could the material support of other states have been?!

To give another example: Russia has officially designated the Taliban as a “terrorist organization.”⁴⁷ China has always mistrusted the Taliban as they have traditional close relations with the Islamist Uyghur organization *Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement* which China has designated as a “terrorist organization.” If the Taliban would have been Beijing’s and Moscow’s proxies they would now immediately recognize their government, establish close political and economic relations etc. But in fact, they are negotiating and putting pressure on them!

Yes, most likely, the Taliban government will establish relations with these (and other) states. But this does not mean that the developments in Afghanistan were not an anti-colonial victory. Most petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist (and Islamist) movements which win a struggle against an imperialist power will go that way. When Asian

and African countries won independence from Britain and France in the 1950s and 1960s, they often established close relations with U.S. imperialism. Does this mean that socialists could not support their struggle against the British and French colonial masters? Only a social-imperialist lackey could advocate such an abstentionist position!

In the past, when the L5I was still revolutionary, they knew that too. At that time, they said: “*Victory to the resistance! Troops out now! (...) The US/UK anti-war movement must support all those forces fighting for their liberation against the imperialist forces and fight in our own countries to end the occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.*”⁴⁸

“*The resistance has grown since 2004 when it became increasingly clear that the US-led occupation, far from bringing security, was leading to more chaos and destruction. The resistance has generally pledged allegiance to the Taliban for the simple reason that they are the main force that has consistently opposed occupation. They have also restrained any tendencies towards Pashtun chauvinism and called for all Muslims to fight together. This means a more united resistance that does not face the terrible ethnic divisions seen in Iraq. The Taliban now controls huge areas of the country. Since 2006, their influence has spread beyond the Pashtun regions. (...) Every day that occupying troops remain in Afghanistan the country falls further into chaos and bloodshed. In this context, anti-imperialists must unequivocally call for the immediate withdrawal of all occupying troops. We must give unconditional support to all those taking actions against the occupying forces, even where we oppose their religious, political or social views and their treatment of women. If workers and progressive movements absent themselves from the resistance because of these differences, the Taliban will be*

Books of the RCIT

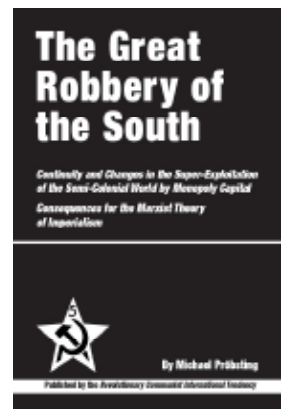
Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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)



*strengthened as the only force consistently fighting the hated occupation. This would guarantee that they take control of the country when the occupiers are finally forced out. On the other hand, if workers and progressive forces join in fighting against the occupation and show themselves to be the best and most militant fighters they can come to the head of the resistance and be the ones to liberate Afghanistan.”*⁴⁹

At that time, the L5I also recognized the huge progressive potential of a defeat of the imperialist occupation at the hand of the resistance – even if it is led by the Taliban. This is why Marxists can not lend any political support to them but must support their practical and military struggle against the occupiers. *“In this situation all socialists support the democratic right of people in the semi-colonial world to defend themselves from imperialist attack. We do not in any way seek to aid the political islamist forces presently leading the resistance to come to power- such a regime has been and would be again as reactionary as Karzai’s, repressive against workers, women, students and youth- we do on the other hand believe that if the resistance movements were to drive out the imperialists this would be is a progressive act which will show the world, as it saw after the Vietnam war in 1975 that the most powerful army in the world could be beaten. However our support is solely and exclusively for real acts of resistance to the Nato occupiers. We do not believe the methods of the islamist forces can decisively defeat the imperialist and their Afghan allies, especially if they turn to the “Al Qaeda” tactics of indiscriminate bombings in urban areas, fomenting sectarian and national strife. In Iraq their tactics brought the resistance to the edge of defeat and saved the American occupation forces from expulsion. We believe only the working class can bring victory by fighting not only to drive out the invaders and overthrow their stooges but by offering a progressive programme to the Afghan masses (...) We believe therefore that revolutionary socialists can and must come to the head of such resistance movements, offering a programme of action which not only mobilises the greater part of the working class in the democratic struggle but also prepares them for a struggle for power. Whoever is the leader of a victorious resistance movement will be best placed to take power after the imperialists have been defeated.”*⁵⁰

Well, indeed, so it has been: *“Whoever is the leader of a victorious resistance movement will be best placed to take power after the imperialists have been defeated.”* But now, when the Taliban emerge as the victorious force, the politically degenerated L5I whines about the supposed “democratic achievements” of the occupation period and denounces retrospectively any support for the Taliban-led resistance against the imperialists in the past two decades!

Unfortunately, the revisionist L5I cadres are prepared to go the way down with all consequences. The German article ends with a call to pressurize the imperialist and regional capitalist states to boycott the new Taliban-led government! *“It is necessary to organize the Afghan people in the diaspora who are part of the proletariat in their neighboring countries and to fight in these countries with demonstrations and strikes for open borders and against any military, economic, and political support for the Taliban government. (...) In Germany, we face the task to organize resistance against the relations of German capital with forces which support the Taliban like Pakistan which is among the five largest trade partners of German imperialism (!).”*

Really, Pakistan is among the five largest trade partners of Germany? These are, how shall we say, extraordinary

news! One does not need to be an economist to recognize immediately that this is absolutely nonsense! According to the official statistics of Germany, Pakistan was ranked as number 50 in terms of German imports and as number 65 in terms of German exports!⁵¹

Unfortunately, the German L5I youth group’s knowledge of the Marxist principles of anti-imperialism is not more advanced than their knowledge of economy. It is a mockery of the Marxist program to call the capitalist global rulers to boycott Afghanistan which has just liberated itself from the imperialist yoke after 20 years of insurgency! In the past, the L5I was able to recognize the progressive nature of this insurgency and supported it. Today, after the victory of this insurgency, they call the capitalist states to boycott and starve out Afghanistan! This sad episode summarizes the political degeneration of an erstwhile revolutionary organization!

What will be the consequences for the future? Which position will the L5I take in case of an imperialist aggression against Iran by the U.S. or by Israel? The latter is also a capitalist theocracy and, to put it mildly, not a friend of women’s and LGBT rights! Or in the case of another invasion in Somalia where the petty-bourgeois Islamists of al-Shabaab lead the resistance? Or in the case of an imperialist aggression against North Korea, a full-blown Stalinist-capitalist dictatorship? Will the L5I support these countries against an imperialist aggression? If yes, why do they apply the anti-imperialist united front tactic in these cases but not in the case of Afghanistan 2001-2021?! If not, they are consistent – in renouncing their tradition! In this case, the L5I should at least officially admit their new approach to anti-imperialist struggles and state clearly what, in their view, was right and what was wrong about their past positions. In the case of Afghanistan, they already seem to have made such a renouncement.

A Secret Alliance of US Imperialism and Taliban? Someone Should Tell Beijing!

Stalinism often replaces dialectical thinking based on the recognition of contradictions between states, classes and factions of classes with primitive conspiracy theories. The latest events in Afghanistan are an outstanding example for this. Various Stalinist parties even go so far and deny that there has been a conflict at all between the U.S. and the Taliban. They also suggest that the retreat of NATO forces has been a clever maneuver of Washington with the Taliban acting as their agents. This is, the Stalinists claim, a conspiracy of Washington to weaken it Chinese and Russian rivals.

Such writes the daily paper of the *Communist Party of Britain*: *“In the light of that, we would do well to be cautious about labelling the exit of America and its allies a “defeat.” The planned reinstatement of the Taliban presents significant economic, political, and strategic advantages to the US. (...) So far as the West is concerned, the Taliban also offers the potential of exporting radical Islamic destabilisation to neighbours and rivals — in the north, to former Soviet republics allied with the Russian Federation and in the east to China’s western provinces. They also ensure that progressive changes are threatened and thwarted across the region and that a continually unstable Middle East can be maintained in which US, Britain and allied powers can implement their strategies at will. This is why*

the US has been in protracted negotiations with the Taliban and planned its return to power with not a care for the impact on the Afghan people and the horror for women, as events in August have shown.”⁵²

The Communist Party of Pakistan follows the same logic: “There are more questions than answers. How is it possible Taliban could occupy the whole Afghanistan in 11 days while they were fighting 20 years against the US and NATO forces with no real gains? One thing is clear that Doha agreement was to construct the scene of the events and Taliban was handed over the power by US to play a role in the region for the US interests. They will be proxy of US imperialism and the conflict zone and the great game battle field will be extending now not only to the neighbouring Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian countries but Afghanistan and Taliban will be used to protect US interests in the region creating a defence line against China and Russia.”⁵³

Another statement of the same party is even more explicit. “The United States also saved its face and tried to hide a complete defeat from the world and brought the Taliban to power in less time than a long period of time taken in the 1990s, is the work of a new strategy of the US in Afghanistan. (...) Taliban captured Afghanistan according to the script written and designed by the US. Pakistan is a facilitator of the United States in this process. In the coming days, the game that the US will play in the region under the auspices of the Taliban with the help of ISIS, East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement and other groups is likely to have consequences for China, Central Asian states as well as Pakistan.”⁵⁴

Other Stalinist parties – like the Iranian Tudeh party and the Communist Party of Bangladesh – repeat the same conspiracy theory. “In addition to these U.S. and NATO plans

- which see the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan ready for their dispatch to the next arena of aggression and destruction - one of the planned consequences of this withdrawal and bringing the reactionary Taliban to power is the creating of major insecurity in Western Asia, especially on the borders of Iran and Central Asian nations, and even Russia and China.”⁵⁵

“There is a deep conspiracy behind the resurgence of the Taliban. It is also linked to billions of dollars in drug trafficking and illegal arms trade. In the statement, CPB leaders called the resurgence of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan a serious threat to the security of the whole of South Asia.”⁵⁶

Ironically, the idea that the U.S. has a secret conspiracy with the Taliban about “regime change” is also promoted by ... Daesh/ISIS. This arch-reactionary organization also claims that the Taliban are agents of U.S. imperialism.⁵⁷ With such claims, they justify their terrorist attacks against the new government.

However, it seems that the ruling circles in Beijing and Moscow don’t know that the Taliban are agents of U.S. imperialism. Probably, the Taliban are also not aware of it! Otherwise, how can one explain that the Taliban leaders develop good relations with China and Russia – Washington’s main rivals?! Why did the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid announce that China would be the new Afghan government’s “most important partner and represents a fundamental and extraordinary opportunity for us... China is our pass to markets all over the world”?⁵⁸ The Taliban leaders made similar statements already months ago. “The Taliban sees China as a “friend” to Afghanistan and is hoping to talk to Beijing about investing in reconstruction work “as soon as possible”, the group’s spokesman Suhail Shaheen”⁵⁹

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.

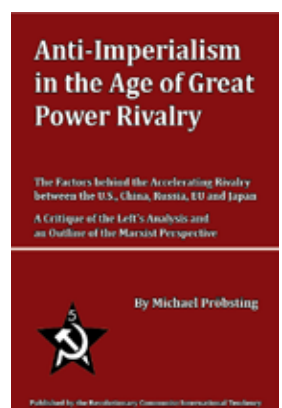
Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is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



Why does the Chinese regime announce a \$31 million grant to the new Taliban government if the latter is supposed to be an agent of U.S. imperialism?!⁶⁰ And if the Taliban are allies of U.S. imperialism, why does China call Washington to lift its sanctions against Afghanistan and why does it hope for business opportunities under the new government?!⁶¹

Stalinists Call Great Powers and Regional Powers to Intervene in Afghanistan

The Stalinists are not content with spreading their wired conspiracy theories about a secret alliance of Washington and the Taliban against China and Russia. They go even further and call the “international community”, i.e. the imperialist Great Powers as well as regional powers, to intervene in Afghanistan! Such write the two largest Stalinist parties in India – the CPI(M) and the CPI – in a joint statement: “The international community’s concern that Afghanistan should not become a haven for terrorist groups like the Islamic State and the Al Qaeda was collectively expressed by the United Nations Security Council in its emergency meeting on Afghanistan on August 16. India must work closely with major regional powers to see that the Afghan people are able to live in a peaceful and stable environment. Indian government should immediately work towards safe evacuation of all stranded Indian citizens in Afghanistan.”⁶²

If one would not know the authors of this statement, one could assume this has been written by advisers of the imperialist “war on terror”!

Likewise does the Communist Party of Pakistan alert its government and its army to take the “necessary steps”. “Instead of celebrating over the oppression and looting of its neighbours, Pakistan should think of its own good. This victory of the Taliban will give courage to their followers and thinkers

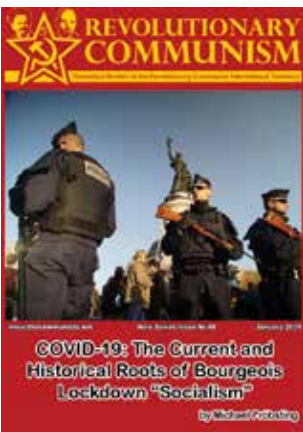
in Pakistan and they will try to do the same in Pakistan. For this reason, the state of Pakistan should adopt a serious defence strategy. At the same time, the democratic and progressive forces must reorganise their strategies in view of this situation.”⁶³

Appealing to the Pakistani or the Indian capitalist state or to the Great Powers which are represented in the United Nations Security Council is a social-imperialist policy and has nothing to do with Marxism! It was exactly the United Nations Security Council which authorized the imperialist occupation in a resolution of 20 December 2001.⁶⁴ It was the Indian government which strongly supported – politically, economically, and militarily – the U.S. puppet regime in Kabul.⁶⁵ Socialists can never call such states to intervene in another country – even less so when this country has just successfully expelled foreign occupiers after 20 years of heroic resistance!

Stalinists and “Trotskyists” Appeal to Capitalist Governments Not to Recognize the New Afghan Government

Another reactionary demand of Stalinist and “Trotskyist” forces to capitalist governments is their call not to recognize the new Taliban-led government. Such write the Communist Party of Pakistan: “The Communist Party of Pakistan is also appealing to all fraternal communists and workers parties in the world to pressurise their respective governments to not recognise the Taliban regime until a free election is held in Afghanistan and a Democratic government is elected in Afghanistan ensuring the basic human and civic rights for all Afghans specially the rights of Women and children are respected.”⁶⁶

Their Iranian comrades raise the same call: “Such a tragedy should not be allowed to happen again, including in Iran. In these difficult and dangerous circumstances, the Tudeh Party of



Publications of the RCIT

COVID-19: The Current and Historical Roots of Bourgeois Lockdown “Socialism”

Police State, Universal Basic Income & a new version of “War Socialism” of 1914

By Michael Pröbsting, January 2021

Introduction * 1. An Overview of the Policy of the Lockdown Left * 2. A Marxist Critique of Lockdownism and Universal Basic Income * 3. The Bourgeois Ideology of the “Caring State” (The Capitalist Handout State) * 4. The Objective Basis for Lockdown Socialism: Changes within the Political and Economic Physiognomy of Capitalism * 5. A Historical Analogy: The Mobilization of the Imperialist State for World War I * 6. War Socialism in 1914: The Social-Chauvinist Lensch-Cunow-Haenisch Group in German Social Democracy * 7. Lenin and other Marxists Declare War on War Socialism * 8. The Lockdown Left: A Worthy Successor of Social-Chauvinist War Socialists * 9. Once Again, the State Question: Marxism versus the Opportunist Left

A RCIT Pamphlet, 32 pages, A4 Format

*Iran calls upon all the defenders of peace, democracy, justice and human rights to echo the humanitarian demands of the Afghan people and their supporters against the Taliban's reactionaries and imperialist powers. A government that does not adhere to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an international treaty for all countries, and does not respect the democratic rights and freedoms of the people - especially women, girls and children - cannot be recognised as a legitimate or defensible government."*⁶⁷

Shamefully, there are also "Trotskyists" who share such a reactionary policy. *Izquierda Socialista*, the Argentinean "mother" section of the UIT, organized a special rally in front of the Foreign Ministry in Buenos Aires where they demanded that the Peronist government refuse recognition of the new Taliban-led government. *"On Monday, August 23, an act was held in front of the Foreign Ministry in solidarity with the Afghan people and especially with the women and dissidents of that country. It was convened by the group of Isadora Women and Socialist Left / FIT Unidad under the slogan "Neither Taliban regime nor imperialist interference." Several candidates of the Socialist Left of the Left Front Unit list 1A Unidad de la Izquierda participated in the activity. The national deputy Mónica Schlotthauer, the Buenos Aires legislator Mercedes de Mendieta and the candidate Mercedes Trimarchi were received by Ambassador Pablo Tettamanti to whom they delivered a letter demanding the non-recognition of the Taliban government."*⁶⁸

The call not to recognize the Taliban-led government is thoroughly reactionary and pro-imperialist. Not recognizing the new government means simply to continue recognizing the previous government, i.e. the U.S./NATO puppet regime which collapsed so pathetically. It means that these "socialists" didn't have a problem with recognizing the pro-imperialist warlord regime in the past two decades but have a big problem recognizing the new government which came to power after 20 years of insurgency against the imperialist occupation! What is this if not lending more legitimacy to the imperialist occupation than to the resistance against the very same imperialist occupation?!

Furthermore, this is not simply a juridical matter. Refusal to recognize a government creates the legal basis for boycotting it politically and economically or to withhold its property. As we pointed out in past documents, the Western imperialists try to economically blackmail the new Afghan government. Washington has scandalously freeze \$7 billion of Afghan reserves (which have been based in Washington as an instrument of colonial subjugation). Likewise, the IMF is blocking \$460 million of COVID relief utilizing the same argument of not recognizing the new government.

In short, the refusal to recognize the new Taliban-led government is nothing but an instrument of imperialist pressure. Leftists who support such a policy act as social-imperialists.

Conclusions

We conclude this essay by emphasizing that getting right the anti-imperialist struggle in Afghanistan in the past two decades is of huge importance. It is crucial not only because of the relevance of this issue in order to understand the political developments in this country. It is important not only because of the fact that 2021 saw a historic defeat of the one of the most powerful imperialist states. It is also decisive to understand the political nature of this liberation war as this is a test for future class struggles. In the past decades there have been a large number of national liberation struggles against imperialist powers or their proxies. There will be no less in the future. Those who confuse historically reactionary and progressive wars, those who can not recognize which struggle is a step forward in the international war for liberation and which struggle is a step back – such people are also incapable to differentiate reactionary and progressive politics. In the end, let us not forget this, *"war is a mere continuation of policy by other means"* as Carl von Clausewitz famously said.⁶⁹

Our historic period is full of explosive contradictions and class struggles where the masses fight for their rights under a non-revolutionary leadership. However, in order to change this, revolutionaries must support, and participate wherever possible, in such struggles instead of denouncing them in a sectarian way as "reactionary". Of course, in such struggles they must not lend any political support for such non-revolutionary leaderships and try to replace them by an authentic revolutionary leadership. However, the precondition for this is to recognize the progressive, legitimate character of a liberation struggle. Without this, "left-wing" organizations are doomed to place themselves on the wrong side of the barricade!

Unfortunately, our overview in this pamphlet demonstrated that large sectors of the so-called left are inseparable bound to the imperialist public opinion and their prejudices. The 4 August 1914 exposed with one stroke how rotten social democracy has become as it capitulated to the imperialist-patriotic pressure and supported the war efforts of their respective governments. The last years have demonstrated a similar process. Where have all those super-"Marxist" organizations been? When it comes to the gigantic COVID Counterrevolution, they support in one way or the other the offensive of the capitalist state (Lockdown, Green Pass and enforced vaccination, etc.)⁷⁰ When the Western imperialists suffer a historic defeat in Afghanistan, they join the liberal public opinion and mourn the setback for "civilization"! Let us note at this point that most of these organizations also deserted the Arab Revolution which started in 2011 and declared it prematurely "dead" when in fact the masses were still fighting. And how many of these "Marxists" manage to recognize the nature of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the Great Powers (U.S., China, EU, Russia and Japan) and to raise the program of revolutionary defeatism directed against all Great Powers?!

In fact, the refusal of the Stalinists and pseudo-"Trotskyists" to side with the popular resistance against the imperialist occupation in 2001-2021, is worse than the betrayal of social democracy in 1914. In World War I – an inter-imperialist war between equally reactionary Great Powers – socialists could not side with any of these reac-

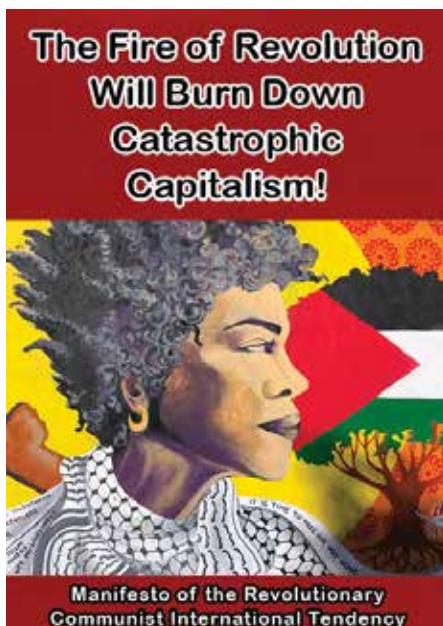
tionary governments. In the case of Afghanistan, things are different. Here, socialists had to side with one camp – the Afghan resistance against the imperialist occupation. There is a material basis for such political confusion and bankruptcy, as it has been the case with social democracy in 1914. It is the comprehensive bonds of many leaders and cadres of the opportunist left with the middle-class intelligentsia and the labor bureaucracy and aristocracy. These links predispose them for the pressure and the prejudices of the imperialist public opinion and transform them into defenders of imperialist “civilization”.

Finally, we shall note that the failure of the opportunist left to recognize the progressive nature of the victory of the popular insurgency in Afghanistan against the imperialist occupiers betrays a deep *historical pessimism* of these “leftists”. Again and again, when the masses rise (under non-revolutionary leadership) and fight against this or that attack, against this or that oppressor, ... the opportunist left turns away in disgust and denounces such struggles as “reactionary”. They are probably not aware of this but, in fact, they perceive the imperialist civilization as a lesser evil compared with the “backward barbarians” who fight this “civilization” in Syria, in Afghanistan, on the streets against the bonapartist Lockdown and Green Pass policy, etc.

Socialists must be clear about the main task of the current period: building a new, revolutionary leadership. It can only be built in the intransigent struggle against all forms of revisionism and capitulation to imperialist public opinion. It can only be built on the side of the masses fighting for their rights. This is the road on which the RCIT and all authentic revolutionaries are advancing!

Footnotes

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New Program of the RCIT

Manifesto for the Liberation Struggle

Adopted at the III. World Congress of the RCIT in April 2021

- * **Introductory Note**
- * **A New Era of Counterrevolutionary Offensive and Revolutionary Upheavals**
- * **The Capitalist State Monster Attacks Democracy! Defeat Chauvinism and Bonapartism!**
- * **Great Power Rivalry and Imperialist Aggression in the South: Turn the Guns against the Lords of Power and Money!**
- * **Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: How to Organize and How to Fight?**

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