

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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FOR LIBERATION (AUSTRIA) AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS COLLECTIVE (USA)

NUMBER 1, SEPTEMBER 2011

Perspectives of the Arab Revolution ***The Uprising of the Poor in Britain***

plus:

Theses on Migration

***Workers Struggle
in Pakistan***

What We Stand For

**FORWARD TO A
REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST FIFTH
INTERNATIONAL OF
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**WORKERS AND OPPRESSED
PEOPLES OF THE WORLD,**

UNITE!

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No. 1, September 2011

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Editorial

We welcome our readers to the first issue of this journal. Revolutionary Communism is the English language organ of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB), based in Austria and the Revolutionary Workers Collective (RWC), based in the USA. The founding cadres of these two organisations were leading members of the League for Fifth International from which they were either expelled or resigned.

At the moment no consistently revolutionary international organisation exists. All the existing international tendencies which claim to stand on the basis of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism have shown that in fact they are non-revolutionary, centrist formations. In this issue of the journal Revolutionary Communism we demonstrate that at the examples of two major events in the global class struggles 2011 – the Arab Revolution and the August Uprising of the poor in Britain.

This crisis of the working class leadership is a tragedy given the tasks and challenges of the new historic revolutionary period which has opened at the end of the 2000s. Capitalism as a system is in a historic crisis. Its decay endangers the continuity of mankind's existence as the numerous environment catastrophes, wars, increasing hunger and poverty demonstrate. This is why Bolshevik-Communists fight for the perspective of the permanent revolution to overthrow capitalism and build a global socialist society.

But this is impossible to achieve without a new revolutionary communist world party – the Fifth Workers International. Only such a world party is capable of leading the working class and oppressed towards revolution.

For us as Bolshevik-Communists the burning issue therefore is to build a new revolutionary communist international organisation. Such an organisation needs a clear programmatic foundation. Of course while we are numerically weak we have the fortune to stand on the shoulders of our political predecessor of revolutionary Marxism. This is first and foremost the achievements of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky and also of other central figures of the revolutionary workers movement like Rosa Luxemburg. But "Marxism is not a dogma but a guide for action" as Lenin explained repeatedly. It therefore needs development and modifications in accordance with the development of the class society which to overthrow is its purpose. For this we build on the revolutionary tradition of the LFI before its recent centrist degeneration. The LFI and its forerunners have played an important role in applying the principles of Marxism to a wide range of questions which arose since the death of Trotsky. But the pressures and challenges of the class struggle in the new historic period were too big for the majority of its leadership. Our central task is to apply and to develop Bolshevism – as the theory and practice of the proletariats liberation struggle – to the conditions of the class struggle in the new historic period of the 21st century. This journal shall act as an instrument for this goal.

The RKOB and the RWC are at the moment national organisations. But this is a situation which we desire to overcome as soon as possible. A revolutionary organisation in the long run can only exist as an international organisation. If revolutionaries are nationally isolated they are doomed to degenerate politically. Therefore independent of our nu-

merical strength or weakness we must strive from the first day to build parallel and combined Bolshevik organisations both nationally and internationally.

We base our understanding on Trotsky's method of party building. At the time when the Left Opposition was itself weak he opposed those who wanted to focus first on building a national organisation and only sometime later an international one. He answered one of his national-centred critiques:

"Your conception of internationalism appears to me erroneous. In the final analysis, you take the International as a sum of national sections or as a product of the mutual influence of national sections. This is, at least, a one-sided, undialectical and, therefore, wrong conception of the International. If the Communist Left throughout the world consisted of only five individuals, they would have nonetheless been obliged to build an international organization simultaneously with the building of one or more national organizations.

It is wrong to view a national organization as the foundation and the international as a roof. The interrelation here is of an entirely different type. Marx and Engels started the communist movement in 1847 with an international document and with the creation of an international organization. The same thing was repeated in the creation of the First International. The very same path was followed by the Zimmerwald Left in preparation for the Third International. Today this road is dictated far more imperiously than in the days of Marx. It is, of course, possible in the epoch of imperialism for a revolutionary proletarian tendency to arise in one or another country, but it cannot thrive and develop in one isolated country; on the very next day after its formation it must seek for or create international ties, an international platform, an international organization. Because a guarantee of the correctness of the national policy can be found only along this road. A tendency which remains shut-in nationally over a stretch of years, condemns itself irrevocably to degeneration." (Leo Trotzki: To the Editorial Board of Prometeo (1930); in: Writings 1930, S. 285f.)

Since the purpose of Revolutionary Communism is to advance the building of a revolutionary communist international organisation it also means that we will deal with important programmatic and theoretical questions in it. We will present in this journal our point of views but we also want to stimulate a debate and an exchange of ideas with activists and organisations from the working class and the oppressed. We therefore invite readers to send us letters and contributions.

This first issue of Revolutionary Communism has its focus on the two most important issues of the present world situation. The revolutionary process in the Arab world which started with the revolution in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and – while we are writing these lines – see a new highpoint in the successful overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. We therefore reprint the RKOB resolution written in the days of the victory of the rebels in Tripoli. We also publish several chapters of a recently published book from Michael Pröbsting on the Arab Revolution in German language. Adam Beltz has thankfully translated them into English.

The second focus of this journal is the August Uprising of the poor, black and migrant youth in Britain. This event shows that revolutionary class struggles are not confined to the semi-colonial world only but – given the enormous sharpening of the class contradictions in the new historic period – are becoming now an important feature in the old imperialist world too. This Uprising also demonstrated how separated the centrist and reformist left is from these layers of the working class and how little is able to meet the task of applying a revolutionary policy in such a situation. Several articles from Nina Gunić, Michael Pröbsting plus a report from a RKOБ delegation which we sent to London in these days cover the Uprising and its lessons. In addition we publish a summary of the RKOБ thesis on Migration and the Marxist strategy of revolutionary integration. The thesis was initially written when we were still

in the LFI and the majority's hostility to our position forms an important background for our expulsion. We also print an article from Adam Beltz and Ahmed Sharan on the heroic struggle of the KESC workers in Karachi in Pakistan. And finally we reprint our short declaration of principles. We are confident that this journal will succeed in making a contribution to the development of Bolshevism to the 21st century class struggle conditions. And we are optimistic that it will also succeed in winning new co-fighters for the biggest goal it is worth living for: the creation of a world party for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed. ■

1. September 2011
Editorial Board of the
Journal Revolutionary Communism



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky - Leaders of the October Revolution (Drawings from Nikolai Bucharin, another leader of the Bolshevik Party)

After the collapse of the Gaddafi regime: Where now for the Libyan Revolution?

Resolution of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB), 24.8.2011

1. According to many media reports the Gaddafi regime is about to collapse. This is great news for the rebelling working people in Libya and the whole Arab world and also for the international working class movement. As the RKOB has repeatedly stated the Gaddafi regime was in no way socialist or anti-imperialist. It was a state-capitalist, bourgeois-bonapartist regime based on the fortunes of huge oil reserves and the exploitation of nearly 700.000 migrant workers (close to a half of the total work force!). In the last years the Gaddafi regime has closely collaborated with European imperialism in stopping people from migrating via the Mediterranean Sea to the EU. It also started to privatise its companies and sell them to imperialist capital.

2. We restate our assessment that the uprising and the civil war in Libya was and is part of the Arab Revolution. This was clear from the whole history of the uprising which started as part of the revolutionary wave in spring 2011. This was also obvious from Gaddafi's repeated expressions of condemnation toward the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions and his solidarity with the fallen dictators Ben Ali and Mubarak. The final stage of the civil war was marked by the popular revolt in the working-class districts in Tripoli which is why the rebels coming from Western Libya met only little resistance. This once more demonstrates how empty the regime's claims about its popular support were. The popular masses did not raise a single finger to defend the dictatorship but instead supported the revolution.

3. Imperialist NATO undoubtedly played a role in finishing off the Gaddafi regime. Indeed they did everything possible to derail the revolution and to bring it under their control. This is why they have built close relations with the leadership of the rebels in Benghazi. However this was not of decisive importance and did not determine the character of revolution against Gaddafi. The lack of modern weapons, the militia character of the rebels, and their lack of coordination (indeed NATO was surprised about the sudden fall of Tripoli) all make a mockery of the claims by some Western socialists that the rebels were not part of a popular revolution but rather stooges of a CIA-conspiracy against Gaddafi.

4. However after the successful and welcome overthrow of the Gaddafi dictatorship it is necessary to repeat our warning about the dangers for the Libyan revolution. These dangers come from the bourgeois leadership around the Transitional National Council (TNC) which is prepared to serve the imperialists as their marionette government. This is why the RKOB spoke about the process of bourgeoisification of the rebel movement and the danger of counter-revolution within the revolution. This danger becomes now particularly urgent.

5. Indeed the main danger now is that the victory of the Libyan popular masses will be snatched away from them and that they become politically expropriated by the imperialist powers and their stooges in the TNC. The Bolshevik-Communists therefore consider the following

demands and tactics as essential for the working and oppressed masses in Libya to defend their interest:

- Build councils of actions in all enterprises, urban districts and villages! Elect delegates to form a workers and peasant government based on these councils! Down with the TNC!

- Don't dissolve the militias but rather transform them into a national army under the control of the councils! Smash the remaining elements of the regimes military and security apparatus!

- No to any privatisation of the oil industry! For the nationalisation under workers control of the central sectors of the industry, the financial sector and the service industry!

- Expropriate the foreign multinational assets! The Western government must give back the assets of the Gaddafi regime to the Libyan people!

- No to any NATO military and advisors in Libya!

- For an election of a revolutionary Constitutional Assembly!

- For full citizenship rights for the migrant workers! Equal wages for equal work!

- Equal rights for all national minorities like the Berber and the Tuareg and Tebu people! Down with Arab chauvinism against them! No discrimination of their languages! For their right of national self-determination including the right to have their own state

- A central task of the works movement in Europe is to fight against the racist policy of immigration control. They must demand from the EU governments to open the borders for all refugees from Libya and North Africa!

6. The victory of the Libyan Revolution over the Gaddafi dictatorship must be used for a new push for the Arab Revolution – in particular in Syria where the masses are struggling against the repressive apparatus of the Assad regime. The only road forward is the strategy of the permanent revolution!

7. However the permanent revolution will not succeed if a revolutionary party, as part of the Fifth Workers International, is not built in the coming period. Because only such a party – composed of dedicated fighters for socialist revolution and based on a revolutionary program – can lead the masses to victory against the imperialist powers, the local ruling class and their various liberal and reformist lackeys. The RKOB is dedicated to this task.

***For a workers and peasant government in Libya!
Victory to the Arab Revolution!***

For a socialist federation of North Africa and the Middle East! ■

The Intervention of the imperialist powers in Libya, the struggle of the masses against Gaddafi's dictatorship and the tactics of revolutionary communists

by Michael Pröbsting

This text is the English-language translation of an excerpt from a book on the Arab Revolution published by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) in early August 2011. The Book – Michael Pröbsting: The Half Revolution. Lessons and Perspectives of the Arab Uprising – is in German language and contains eight chapters. It discusses the background of the Arab Revolution and its most important lessons. It outlines a program with the central demands and transitional slogans to continue the revolution up to the seizure of the power by the working class. In addition it relates the present-day challenges of the Arab Revolution to central theoretical and programmatic disputes in the history of the workers movement (like the law of the uneven and combined development, the strategy of permanent revolution versus socialism in one country, questions of revolutionary strategy etc.).

The RKOB has published this book because we consider the Arab Revolution as a historic event. As we write in the preface of the book we consider this uprising "as the first revolutionary wave in the new world historic period. (...) The Arab Revolution therefore constitutes an important touchstone for Marxism today." Here we publish chapter VII on Libya. We hope to translate more of the book in the near future. We welcome contributions and critique – particularly of those who have an active interest in fighting for a Marxist perspective for the Arab Revolution and for building a revolutionary communist international organization.

This translation would not have been possible without the hard work of our US-American comrade Adam Beltz. He not only read the draft of the book and made numerous critical comments for its improvement but also took the hard work of translating this chapter into English.

The Book can be ordered at the Onlineshop on our website or under the e-mail address aktiv@rkob.net. It costs 5 Euro plus costs for mailing.

* * *

The course of the Revolution in Libya demonstrates the dangers posed by the lack of revolutionary leadership within. It also shows how essential a clear analysis of class forces, as well as a principled stance on Imperialism is.

The Libyan Revolution began – as in other Arab countries – as a spontaneous uprising of the masses. Numerous reports attest that masses of people in Benghazi, Tripoli, and other cities took to the streets where they were able to drive out the Gaddafi loyal troops. They also took steps towards building Peoples Committees. The news agency Reuters reported in late February after the liberation of Benghazi on Peoples Committees, which took over the public order. (1)

But the revolution in Libya developed differently than earlier in Tunisia and Egypt. The Gaddafi regime tried by every means to crush the insurgency and to remain in power. There are several reasons why this occurred. First, because of the extraordinary wealth of natural resources

of the country – and at the same time having a relatively small population – the Gaddafi regime is in a position to maintain a certain privileged social base in the petty bourgeois layers of society. Add to this that the weight of the native working class is smaller because a large part of the proletariat consists of disenfranchised immigrants. Moreover, for many years the regime has built up an apparatus of repressions whose top staff is closely intertwined with the Gaddafi clan and his tribe. The strong (lasting for more than 42 years) dominance of the Gaddafi clan within the ruling class was also a factor which prevented Gaddafi from being forced to resign as happened in Tunisia and Egypt.

The situation developed into a rapid escalation of the protests into an open civil war which created a pretext for open military intervention of the imperialist powers. Meanwhile, NATO began bombing targets in Libya daily. Between March 31st and June 20th alone the U.S. Led military alliance performed almost 11,000 air operations and more than 4,000 combat missions. Even before March 31st there were hundreds of air raids and more than 160 attacks with cruise missiles launched from ships. A spokesman for the Libyan government announced in late May that the NATO air attacks had already resulted in 718 civilians killed and 4067 injured. (2) At the same time it does everything possible to persuade officials of the regime to overthrow Gaddafi.

The alleged concern for human rights and the killing of civilians by the Gaddafi forces are, of course, only a pretext to cover for imperialist aggression. NATO troops kill innocent civilians in Pakistan and Afghanistan every day. It is completely absurd to assume that with the help of NATO democracy and human rights can be brought to Libya. In Iraq and Afghanistan, NATO along with Saudi Arabia and many other Arab countries had many years of opportunity to bring the blessings of democracy and human rights. But the imperialists have not brought democracy – in fact, they have supported and financed the dictators. Faltering dictatorships and energetic steps towards democracy have not been brought by NATO bombers, but by the revolutionary uprisings of the Arab masses.

The real reasons for the military intervention of NATO lie elsewhere. The ruling classes in Washington, Paris, and London have understood that the wave of Arab revolutions threatens to destroy the old order and thus endangers the influence of the western powers in this geo-strategically important region. This led to the decision to interfere directly in the events and thus on one hand present itself as a defender of democracy and human rights. In view of the historic and close ties to the old corrupt dictatorship this is not so easy, yet all the more urgent. On the other hand, Obama, Sarkozy, and Cameron hope to get through the NATO intervention influence on the rebels and thus to create the necessary pre-conditions for the establishment in the future of a pro-western regime. A strong political,

military, and economic foothold in Libya in turn improves access to the entire African continent and the Middle East. This is of course linked to the competition between the major imperialist powers and the hope that it can expand its influence at the expense of China, Russia, and obviously others.

This is accompanied, naturally, with the hoped for direct access to Libyan oil. The Belgian journalist and historian Michel Collon noticed rightly: "*Libyan oil accounts for only 1-2 percent of world production? Agreed, but it is of excellent quality, easy to win, and thus highly profitable. In addition, the country is located in close proximity to Italy, France, and Germany. To import oil from the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, or Latin America is associated with much higher costs. So obviously we have to do with a struggle for Libya's black gold.*" (3) Especially for European imperialism, the Libyan oil fields have great importance. For a long time Libya was the largest oil and third largest natural gas supplier to Italy. Europe currently acquires 14% of its energy needs from Libya. Italy imports 22%, France 16%, and Spain 13% of its oil consumption from Libya. (4)

Bourgeoisification of the rebel movement

Due to the absence of revolutionary leadership of the working class in Libya it therefore came to a swift *bourgeoisification of the revolution*. This is also apparent when looking at the leaders in the so-called Transitional Council. It is dominated by pro-western figures as well as former officials of the Gaddafi regime. Among the more important members of the council include: (5)

* Abduljalil Mustafa, President of the Council and a former justice minister under Gaddafi

* Ali al-Eesavi, Minister of the Economy, Trade, and Investment under Gaddafi 2007-2009, afterwards a Libyan ambassador to India

* Mahmoud Jebril, first a professor in the U.S., from 2007 Chairman of the National Economic Development Council, an agency of the Gaddafi regime to attract foreign investment in Libya

* Khalifa Hifter, former officer in Gaddafi's army, deserted in the late 1980's, then lived in the U.S. and worked for the CIA. Was involved in coup attempts against Gaddafi, such as in 1996

* Abd Al Fattah Younis, Minister of the Interior under Gaddafi

* Omar Al-Hariri, a former officer who first staged a coup with Gaddafi in 1969 and then in 1973 took part in a failed coup against Gaddafi

* Abdolrahman Shalgam, until recently Libya's ambassador to the U.N.

The predominance of former senior bureaucrats of the Gaddafi regime along with pro-imperialist Libyans demonstrates the enormous bourgeoisification of the rebel movement. By this the strong influence of the imperialist powers was made possible. In short, the developments in Libya underscore the dangers that threaten a democratic revolution under non-revolutionary leadership: namely, the *counter revolution within the revolution*.

What is the position that follows for revolutionary tactics? Our position is based upon the recognition that the uprising in Libya began as part of the Arab revolution, as a real democratic uprising. Gaddafi demonstrated his bourgeois class instinct by declaring at the beginning of the revolu-

tion his solidarity with Ben Ali and accused the people of being stupid. This clearly shows the solidarity of the reactionary dictators. The alleged "socialist" and "anti-imperialist" said in a speech delivered to the Tunisian people - in the style of a typical arrogant dictator: "*Zine (that's what Gaddafi calls Ben Ali) is the best for Tunisia. He is the one who gave Tunisia pride of place. I don't care whether you like him or not, whether you're against him or not. No one is better than Zine at the moment. What I wish is not for Zine to remain in power until 2014, but for him to remain in power for life.*" (6)

The masses in Libya who took to the streets for democratic rights also showed just as clearly that they see themselves as part of the Arab Revolution.

A large number of Stalinist and centrist organizations believe that the armed uprising against Gaddafi - or the protests against the Assad regime in Syria - are an imperialist-inspired conspiracy against progressive, anti-imperialist regimes is complete reactionary nonsense.

The Gaddafi regime has always been a state capitalist bureaucratic dictatorship. Like several other regimes in the semi-colonial world, Tripoli was also temporarily in conflict with the major imperialist powers. But this does not alter its bourgeois character. Similarly, the war between the west and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in Iraq changes nothing about the bourgeois capitalist class character of the latter. This claim of Gaddafi's "anti-imperialism" seems especially ridiculous given the fact that the regime in Tripoli has opened the country to imperialist capital and how close the collaboration with the West has become in recent years.

Indicative of the reactionary character of the Gaddafi regime is the fact that the numerous migrants - who make up about a third of the work force - are forbidden to join a union. Thus it is a fact that a major part of the working class is prohibited by law to unionize. What a travesty it is that many Stalinists nevertheless still speak of the progressive or even quasi-socialist character of the Gaddafi dictatorship!

Among the masses there is a broad anti-imperialist sentiment. A clear example of this is when during the insurgency in Benghazi activists hoisted a huge banner (which was seen in a photo across the globe) that said in English: "*No foreign intervention, Libyan people can do it alone.*" Even Western media quoted Libyan intellectuals in this sense. Abeir Imneina, an university professor in Benghazi, was quoted saying: "*We do not want the Americans to come here because then we will have to regret the end of Gaddafi's role.*" (7)

This anti-imperialist sentiment is so strong that even the bourgeois leaders of the rebels had to speak out officially against a western military intervention.

But the absence of a firm leadership of the rebels (which is unable to arouse the popular masses) and the lack of an international anti-imperialist solidarity movement which could supply the resistance in Libya with support and weapons and could lead a boycott movement against the Gaddafi regime provided the bourgeois forces in Benghazi the excuse that salvation from militarily superior Gaddafi forces could only be found with NATO bombs.

The clear siding with the rebellion and against the reactionary Gaddafi regime of the masses must be combined with an equally clear siding against imperialist intervention. It might be understandable that the rebels have hopes

in the Great Powers. But the great powers want to stall, disarm, and ultimately strangle the revolution. They want to utilize the revolution to bring their stooges to power in Tripoli.

Ultimately what they want is to bring a puppet regime to power as has happened in Kabul and Baghdad in 2001 and 2003. But neither the Libyan nor the Arabian masses can have an interest in such a development.

Therefore it is important for activists to connect several tasks of the revolutionary struggle together:

* Participation in the mass struggle against the Gaddafi regime on the basis of a revolutionary program for the proletarian seizure of power.

* Fight within the insurgent masses against the bourgeois rebel leadership of Abduljalil, al-Esavi Jebri, etc.

* For the establishment of councils of workers, peasants, and the oppressed.

* For the establishment of an independent workers' and people's militia to enter the fight against the Gaddafi regime independently of the bourgeois leadership.

* For international solidarity with the rebels in Libya. For international brigades and weapons for the fight against Gaddafi's troops.

* At the same time, however, fight against NATO! For the defeat of the NATO armed forces! For direct actions of the workers' movement, especially in the NATO countries and in the countries where the imperialist forces and their accomplices have bases, in order to impede their military action and if possible to prevent them. (8)

Social Imperialism, Pacifism and petty-bourgeois "Anti-imperialism"

Many reformist and centrist organizations in the labor movement however, take insufficient or openly reactionary positions on the civil war and NATO's war in Libya. Sectors of the left declared themselves – at last in the first phase – in favor or not against the NATO war in Libya.

For example, the left-reformist Red-Green Alliance (RGA) in Denmark – which is also represented by four deputies in Parliament – supported in the first phase the NATO bombing arguing that it would contribute to the protection of civilians. It later withdrew this support, but with thoroughly reactionary arguments. They argued that first, further support for the NATO attack was no longer necessary because they had already achieved their goals, fortunately. Second, NATO is now overstepping the established objective in the UN resolution. And thirdly, it is contrary to the objectives of the RGA to take part in a civil war in another country. *"The Red-Green Alliance will work to get the operation (of NATO, MP) back on the UN track as soon as possible."* (9) That internationalists indeed become party in conflicts outside their own national borders, that anti-imperialists cannot support wars of the ruling imperialist class – these old insights of the labor movement seem to be the fruits of whom the Red-Green social imperialists have not yet tasted. A congress of the party in late May subsequently supported the decision of the RGA members of Parliament. (10)

This openly reformist, social imperialist Red-Green Alliance is part of the so-called *European Anticapitalist Left* – this is an informal alliance of left-reformist and centrist organizations in Europe existing since 2000. Members of this alliance – which have meetings twice a year – include

the NPA (France), the SWP (UK parent organization of the IS), the SP (British parent organization of the CWI), the Left Block (Portugal), the ODP (Turkey), the German Communist Party, and the Sinistra Critica (Italy). The opportunistic, centrist nature of the *European Anticapitalist Left* manifests itself precisely in view of NATO's war in Libya where now within this alliance opposite class positions on one of the most important questions of the present are represented – both supporters and opponents of the NATO war.

The Danish section of the Fourth International, which has long been part of the Red-Green Alliance, criticized support of NATO by the RGA. Nevertheless, the siding of the Red-Green Alliance with the NATO soldiers and the continuing membership of the Fourth International within this social imperialist Alliance is characteristic of the non-revolutionary nature of the two organizations.

The social imperialist accommodation to NATO is a phenomenon not limited only to Denmark. The majority of the French New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) is against the military intervention. But in their ranks is left-wing writer and NATO war advocate Gilbert Achcar and his supporters whose positions the NPA has published on their website. (11) Achcar argues that *"we cannot oppose the no-fly zone request made by the Libyan insurgents and its initial implementation."* (12) Another famous intellectual with a similar viewpoint is the U.S. Middle East expert Juan Cole. A similar split as in the NPA takes place in the *Solidarity* (USA), which is associated with the Fourth International. The two wings of *Solidarity* (USA) have published two separate documents explaining why they are either for or against the slogan *"No to the UN/NATO/U.S. Intervention"*. (13)

Several other left leaning organizations do not support the NATO intervention. However, the nature of their rejection often takes the form of petty-bourgeois pacifism. *"War is no solution"*, *"Stop the bombing"*, *"No to NATO intervention"*, etc. are the typical slogans. But hardly anyone goes beyond the rejection of the imperialist war and advocates the traditional policy developed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and continued by the Fourth International under Leon Trotsky of *revolutionary defeatism*. (14) The Bolsheviks declared bluntly:

"During a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but desire the defeat of its government. This is axiomatic, and disputed only by conscious partisans or helpless satellites of the social-chauvinists." (15)

Bolshevik Communists must pursue such an approach also today. We reject not only the NATO war, we fully support demonstrations, strikes, and sabotage actions that lead to the defeat of NATO in this conflict. The RKOB has therefore since the beginning combined the support for the uprising of the Libyan people with a strict commitment to the defeat of the NATO forces: *"No to NATO's war! For demonstrations, strikes, and direct action in the NATO countries to stop their military! For the defeat of NATO troops in Libya."* (16)

On the other hand, other sectarian and Stalinist influenced organizations make the 180 degree opposite mistake of the opportunists. They degrade the people's uprising as an imperialist conspiracy and stand on the side of Gaddafi's regime in the Libyan Civil War. Examples of this include the Spartacists of the ICL, the Internationalist group/LFI or Stalinist groups like the Communist Party of Great Britain

(Marxist-Leninist). (17)

We have already demonstrated how little progressive the Gaddafi regime was, which has been in power since 1969. All attempts to portray the dictator of Tripoli as an “anti-imperialist” or even a “socialist” are without foundation. Gaddafi’s solidarity with Ben Ali and his rejection of the Tunisian national uprising was therefore the only logical consequence of his class position as a representative of the ruling bourgeoisie.

Added to this is also the inability of the petty-bourgeois “anti-imperialists” to understand that against the backdrop of a militant mass movement one can only develop the anti-imperialist struggle *from amongst the middle of this mass movement* and never apart from this, or even against them! Illusions of the masses in petty bourgeois leaderships cannot be removed by the clubs of police thugs, but by patient education and common struggle with the mass movement for democratic and social rights.

Naturally there are not only progressive mass movements, but also reactionary ones. The right wing mobilizations against Chavez in Venezuela or nationalist movements against oppressed national minorities are examples of this. But any comparisons of the democratic revolutionary movement in Libya, Syria or Iran with such backward mass movements are hair-raising nonsense. Yes, in some cases reactionary elites recruit a mass base to use as a battering ram against mass movements of the oppressed or progressive classes. But the democratic mass uprising in Libya and Syria against dictatorships which have no base among the oppressed classes, can mobilize at best – equipped with the tools of bureaucratic pressure – the public sector employees or befriended, privileged tribes, must under no circumstances be compared with the anti-Chavez mobilization or the so-called “Orange Revolution”. The uprisings in Benghazi, in Hama, and in Dar’a are part of an international revolutionary wave against oppressive and corrupt, closely connected with the rich elites, dictatorships.

In this context it is necessary to address the specifics of the war in Libya. Without doing so one would easily stumble into political errors. Marxist tactics in Libya must be based on the recognition of the dual nature of this war. On one hand the war includes the bombardment of the semi-colonial country of Libya by the imperialist powers. On the other hand the masses in Libya are leading a civil war against the Gaddafi regime – similar to their brothers and sisters throughout the Arab world. Simultaneously a bourgeois leadership has been lifted to the forefront of this uprising. In this sense the war in Libya has a dual character – and thus there is a certain resemblance to the war in Kosovo in 1999. At that time the Albanians in Kosovo were fighting for their independence while NATO was trying to exploit the situation to achieve their own goals and bombed Serbia which was ruled by the Milosevic regime. The mistake that many leftist organizations make is that they give up an independent class position, a position that represents the international interests of the liberation of the proletariat and oppressed peoples and exchange it for the banal and schematic approach: *“The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”* For some the main enemy is the Gaddafi regime and therefore they subordinate their fundamental opposition to NATO to the struggle against the regime in Tripoli. The others, in turn, subordinate the struggle for democratic rights to the struggle against imperialism. As

we wrote in 1999 during the Kosovo War: *“But the slogan of the enemy of my enemy is my friend has nothing to do with consistent, proletarian internationalism and a lot to do with the adaptation to petty-bourgeois forces.”* (18)

What these leftists cannot or will not understand is this: A victory for NATO in Libya represents a serious setback for the liberation of both the Libyan workers and peasants as well as their class brothers and sisters in the Arab world. A NATO victory means a strengthening of access to the entire region for the imperialist powers. On the other hand a defeat of the uprising by Gaddafi’s henchmen means a setback for the whole of the Arab revolution. It is no coincidence that Gaddafi expressed solidarity with Ben Ali and Mubarak and the Libyan demonstrators in Benghazi with their brothers and sisters on the streets of Tunis and Cairo.

The Attitude of Trotsky’s Fourth International

The complex dual nature of the war in Libya is confusing only for those who have not internalized the central tenets of the revolutionary workers movement. Several revolutions have seen the mixture of revolutionary and reactionary forces. Take for example the February 1917 revolution in Russia. The uprising of the workers and soldiers in Petrograd was seen before power struggles within the ruling class and there were plans in advance of a coup to overthrow the Tsar – allegedly even the Ambassador of allied British imperialism was involved. Although historians are not entirely agreed on the exact dimensions of the preparations for the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas it is clear that such plans existed. And it is equally clear that after the successful revolution of February 1917 which overthrew the Tsar, the imperialist, pro-entente circles seized power and sought to exploit the revolution for their own war policy. (19)

The Bolsheviks naturally did not situate themselves against the February revolution and the Soviet movement that emerged from it, even if it was dominated for a time by pro-imperialist social democratic circles. On the contrary, they worked within the movement against the reformist leadership in the councils and for the overthrow of the provisional government.

The Fourth International under Trotsky had a dialectical tactic which took the concrete contradictions in the given wars into account and defended it against schematic, petty-bourgeois falsifications. Rudolf Klement, a secretary of Trotsky and leading member of the Fourth International laid out the arguments of the Fourth International in an article. (20) Klement developed in this article on war tactics, the necessary combination of tactics of the revolutionary communists in specific types of wars. Faced with criticism on Trotsky’s sophisticated formulation on the various variations of revolutionary defeatism in imperialist countries (from Georges Vereeken, the leader of the Belgian Trotskyists) Klement defended the Marxists method:

“Class struggle and war are international phenomena, which are decided internationally. But since every struggle permits of but two camps (bloc against bloc) and since imperialistic fights intertwine with the class war (world imperialism – world proletariat), there arise manifold and complex cases. The bourgeoisie of the semi-colonial countries or the liberal bourgeoisie menaced by its “own” fascism, appeal for aid to the “friendly” imperialisms; the Soviet Union attempts, for example, to utilise the

antagonisms between the imperialisms by concluding alliances with one group against another, etc. The proletariat of all countries, the only international solidarity—and not least of all because of that, the only progressive—class, thereby finds itself in the complicated situation in wartime, especially in the new world war, of combining revolutionary defeatism towards his own bourgeoisie with support of progressive wars.”

Klement defends a dialectical approach, arguing that *“the proletariat, especially in the imperialist countries, requires, in this seemingly contradictory situation, a particularly clear understanding of these combined tasks and of the methods for fulfilling them.”* Near the end of his article he goes on to emphasize: *“Thus we see how different war situations require from the revolutionary proletariat of the various imperialist countries, if it wishes to remain true to itself and to its goal, different fighting forms, which may appear to schematic spirits to be “deviations” from the basic principle of revolutionary defeatism, but which result in reality only from the combination of revolutionary defeatism with the defence of certain progressive camps.”*

Some Historical Examples

In fact, history knows of various war situations that were so complex that a dual tactic was required. So, for example the Second World War was not only an imperialist war, but also included other wars with other class characteristics. For example the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, China’s war of national liberation against Japanese imperialism and of the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Balkans against the German occupiers. These were all war situations in which there was a clear progressive camp with reactionary leaders at the top (the Stalinist Soviet Union, the bourgeois and Stalinist Chinese national movement, the Stalinist guerilla armies) which the Fourth International supported critically yet unconditionally.

The Trotskyist movement has always held the view that during the Second World War, despite its imperialist character, the Soviet Union must be defended, and for the support of the Chinese national movement and of the Greek and other resistance movements against the German occupiers. Centrists such as the US-American Workers Party (led by Max Shachtman) tried to squeeze the Second World War into a schematic theoretical corset and deduced that neither the Soviet Union nor the Chinese nationalist movement should be supported. (21)

Naturally, the petty-bourgeois or bourgeois leaderships at the forefront of progressive movements always try to attain their own material and political interests. Thus, the Tito leadership tried to exploit inter-imperialist conflicts for its own interests just like the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Arab national movement during the First World War (Lawrence of Arabia!), and many other national liberation movements. So did the Kosovar UCK leadership during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign against Serbia.

The partisans in Yugoslavia and China for example received military and financial support from the imperialist Allies. Also, the Allies had official liaison officers in Tito’s General staff. In the case of the Chinese nationalist movement under Chiang Kai-shek, even the Chinese aircraft was flown by U.S. Pilots under supervision of General Joseph Stillwell, the Supreme Commander of the U.S. Army.

The devastating influence of the imperialists became obvious at the end of the war as they either targeted their weapons against the partisans or destroyed them (Greece),

or they forced the partisans – with the help of the Stalinist bureaucracy – to disarm and subordination (e.g. Italy, France). Nevertheless, it would have been completely wrong for Marxists not to participate in the anti-fascist partisan movement.

In the Event of a NATO Invasion

Let us turn to the question: can a change in the character of the war result in a necessary change of tactics of Bolshevik communists? As we reject schematic thinking we necessarily assume that the change of certain conditions can change the character of a war. We believe that a broad, massive ground intervention would alter the conditions of the struggle for liberation in Libya fundamentally. (22)

During the war in Kosovo in 1999 we wrote in our LRCI resolution: *“In such a ground war the Kosovars would lose all effective independence of imperialism. Any Albanian Kosova government, whether under Rugova or the UÇK (or a coalition between them), would be simply a puppet government of NATO. If the UÇK were to subordinate themselves to this reactionary goal and to the imperialist forces carrying it out, then the workers’ movement would have to withdraw its support for the UÇK.”* (23)

Today too a NATO ground war in Libya would change the character of the war itself. It would be a transformation of quantity into quality. The popular uprising of the rebels would be deprived of any independence in the case of a NATO troop intervention. The rebels would become under such circumstances indeed an “appendage of NATO”. Under such a change of conditions we would therefore change our tactics. We would subordinate the democratic struggle against the Gaddafi regime to the defense against a threatening imperialist occupation. We would therefore end our tactics of a united front with the rebels in favor of deploying a united front tactic with the forces who are fighting against the imperialist invaders (which may include pro-Gaddafi forces).

Footnotes:

(1) Sarah Mikhail: People in Libya’s Benghazi hand back weapons- residents, 23. February 2011, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/02/23/uk-libya-benghazi-witness-idUK-TRE71M24E20110223>

(2) Sew Rick Rozoff: NATO Incorporates Libyan Experience For Global War Template, Global Research, 18. June 2011, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=25314>

(3) Michel Collon: Understanding the war in Libya, 27. April 2011, <http://www.michelcollon.info/Understanding-the-war-in-Libya.html?lang=fr>.

(4) Siehe Ruth H. Santini / Arturo Varvelli: The Libyan Crisis Seen from European Capitals, The Brookings Institution, 1.6.2011, http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0601_libya_santini.aspx

(5) See on this e.g. Barak Barfi: Who Are the Libyan Rebels? Inside their leadership structure; 30. April, 2011, <http://www.tnr.com/article/world/87710/libya-rebels-gaddafi-ntc-saif>

(6) Cited in Nouri Gana: Libya’s tragedy, Gaddafi’s farce, The Electronic Intifada, 22.2.2011, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/libyas-tragedy-gaddafis-farce/9814>

(7) AFP/de: We’ll oust Gaddafi ourselves, Libyans tell

West, 1. March 2011, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_world/view/1113581/1/.html

(8) See on this the article of Johannes Wiener: Imperialismus und Revolution in Libyen; in: *REVOLUTIONÄRE BEFREIUNG* Nr. 195 (April 2011). *REVOLUTIONÄRE BEFREIUNG* (Revolutionary Liberation) is the central organ of the RKOB.

(9) Red-Green Alliance, Denmark: Red Green Alliance withdraws support for Libya intervention, 30. March 2011, <http://links.org.au/node/2250>

(10) See on this Dick Nichols: Denmark: Red-Green Alliance congress debates elections, Libya, 29. May 2011, Green Left Weekly, <http://links.org.au/node/2345>

(11) See e.g. the Interview de Gilbert Achcar sur les événements en Libye..., 20.3.2011, <http://www.npa2009.org/content/interview-de-gilbert-achcar-sur-les-%C3%A9v%C3%A8nements-en-libye>

(12) See Gilbert Achcar: Libya intervention: A legitimate and necessary debate from an anti-imperialist perspective, 25. March 2011, ZNet, <http://www.zcommunications.org/libya-a-legitimate-and-necessary-debate-from-an-anti-imperialist-perspective-by-gilbert-achcar> sowie Gilbert Achcar: The Libyan Insurrection Between Gaddafi's Hammer, NATO's Anvil and the Left's Confusion: Results and Prospects, 23. April 2011, <http://www.zcommunications.org/the-libyan-insurrection-between-gaddafis-hammer-natos-anvil-and-the-lefts-confusion-results-and-prospects-by-gilbert-achcar>

(13) See Solidarity National Committee: Libya: revolution, intervention and crisis, <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2144>

(14) See on this Michael Pröbsting: Umwandlung des imperialistischen Krieges in den Bürgerkrieg. Die Strategie Lenins und der Bolschewiki (2009); in: *Revolutionärer Marxismus* Nr. 40. The RM is the theoretical journal of the at that time still consistently revolutionary League for the Fifth International, from which the founding members of the RKOB have been expelled in April 2011.

(15) W.I. Lenin: Über die Niederlage der eigenen Regierung im imperialistischen Krieg (1915); LW Bd. 21, S. 273 (The Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War, www.marxists.org)

(16) See on this the article from Johannes Wiener: Imperialismus und Revolution in Libyen; in: *REVOLUTIONÄRE BEFREIUNG* Nr. 195 (April 2011).

(17) See Internationale Kommunistische Liga: Verteidigt Libyen gegen imperialistische Angriffe! 20.3.2011; Internationalist Group: Defend Libya – Defeat U.S./U.N./NATO War! “Antiwar” Social-Democrats Back Pro-Imperialist Rebels, Paving the Way for Bombing, 8.4.2011, <http://www.internationalist.org/imperialistmaraudersnorthafrica1104.html>; Communist Party of Great Britain – Marxist-Leninist: Victory to the Libyan Revolution; Victory to Gaddafi! 11.5.2011

(18) See on this Michael Gatter: Über die Bedeutung und die Folgen des Balkankrieges für die weltpolitische Lage und die revolutionäre Kriegstaktik: *Marxismus, Imperialismus und der Balkankrieg* (1999); in: *ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt* Nr. 98. The *ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt* was the paper of the organisation with the same name – a forerunner of the RKOB.

(19) See on this e.g. Leo Trotzki: *Geschichte der russischen Revolution* (1930); Frankfurt a.M. 1973, Band 1, S. 63-75 (in English: *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, Chap-

ter “The Idea of a Palace Revolution”); M. Pokorowski: *Russische Geschichte*, Berlin 1930, S. 311-320; The remarks in W. I. Lenin: *Sämtliche Werke*, Band XX, 1. Halbband (1928), S. 531f.

(20) Rudolf Klement: *Principles and Tactics in War* (1938); in *New International* (Theoretical journal of the Socialist Workers Party, US-American section of the Fourth International) The LRCI has re-published this very interesting and thoughtful article from which we quote. (in: *Trotskyist International* No. 5, Autumn 1990)

(21) Shachtman was the co-founder and leader of US-American Trotskyism. He capitulated at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact against the pressure of petty-bourgeois democratism and rejected the defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism. Because of this and other questions the minority lead by him, Burnham and Abern from the US-American section of the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party, in spring 1940 and founded the Workers Party.

(22) It is by the way interesting that the leadership of the Chinese section of the Fourth International around Peng Shu-tse had a similar position on the anti-Japanese liberation struggle during the II. World War. They argued that the Bolshevik-Leninists should actively participate in the struggle of the Chinese people under the reactionary leadership of Chiang-Kai-Chek against the Japanese imperialism despite the support of the Western Allies and the US war against Japan. This would change in the case that US Imperialism directly intervenes at the ground in China. (see Wang Fanxi: *Erinnerungen eines chinesischen Revolutionärs 1919-1949* (1957), Frankfurt a.M. 1983, S. 282f.)

(23) Resolution of the International Secretariat of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI): Resolution on the Kosova War (16.5.1999). The author of this book, Michael Pröbsting, was at that time a member of the international leadership of the LRCI. ■

The Arab Revolution: The reformist illusion of democratic control of bourgeois governments

by Michael Pröbsting

This text is the English-language translation of an excerpt from a book on the Arab Revolution published by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) in early August 2011. The Book – Michael Pröbsting: The Half Revolution. Lessons and Perspectives of the Arab Uprising – is in German language and contains eight chapters. The translation was done by Adam Beltz.

The leaders of the Peoples' Committee hold the incorrect view. For example, Khaled Abdel Shaheed, a leader of the Conference of the Peoples' Committees supports a combination of peoples' committees and bourgeois government. The Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram quoted him as saying:

"Our ultimate aim is for there to be social monitoring in the coming period for all branches of the government and all institutions as a guarantee of the revolutions' consummation." (1)

The slogan of "government monitoring" by committee or by a popular front party alliance is also supported by various left-wing organizations. We have already shown that the Hoxhaistische PCOT and the Fourth International in Tunisia or the NPA of France.

But they are not alone. The League for the Fifth International (LFI) uncritically hailed the "Conference of the Peoples' Committees" as a "revolutionary conference" and states that the "monitoring of all branches of government and all institutions as a guarantee of the revolution's consummation" is "absolutely right." (2) Such a policy of support for the illusory "monitoring of bourgeois government to complete the revolution" is anything but "absolutely right." It is completely false and reformist. It is a further sign of the LFI slipping into centrism and away from their existing revolutionary program. "Pure nonsense" is what Lenin had to say about the policy of "monitoring of bourgeois government."

Naturally the desire for social control of political power on the part of the newly formed Peoples' Committees is positive. But the concept of an inclusion of the Peoples' Committees in the bourgeois system of government is what is politically incorrect. It is a dangerous fallacy to believe that such a combination-the bourgeoisie and their government continue to retain power while the Peoples' Committees look over their shoulder to make sure everything goes alright- consummates a revolution. Various centrist and left-reformist forces have clung to such a dangerous illusion. For example, the leaders of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (such as Rudolf Hilferding) and the Austrian left Social Democrat Max Adler were committed to combining the bourgeois parliament with workers' and soldiers' councils under which the latter would have the power of veto on political and cultural decisions. (3)

What Lenin thought on the "Supervision of the Government" in April 1917

Even within the Bolshevik party during the fall of 1917 the right wing (under Zinoviev and Kamenev) supported such a reformist approach, which they described as a

„combined type of state institutions.“ In March 1917-before Lenin arrived in Russia – also Stalin himself supported such a reformist policy of "control of government by the Soviets." Thus in a speech given at the party conference of the Bolsheviks on March 29 Stalin argued:

"The power has been divided into two Organs, of which neither one possesses full power. There is and ought to be friction and struggle between them. The roles have been divided. The Soviet has in fact taken the initiative in effecting revolutionary transformations. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is the revolutionary leader of insurrectionary people; an organ of control over the Provisional Government. On the other hand, the Provisional government has in fact taken the role of fortifier of the conquests of the revolutionary people. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies mobilized the forces and exersizes control, while the Provisional Government, balking and muddling, takes the role of fortifier of these conquests by the people which they have already seized as a fact. Such a situation has disadvantageous, but also advantageous sides. It is not to our advantage at present to force events, hastening the process of repelling the bourgeois layers, who will in the future inevitably withdraw from us." (4)

Lenin (who was in exile in Switzerland) learned from the bourgeois press about the establishment of a „contact commission“ by the Soviets to supervise the Provisional Government. He initially responded positively to the slogan of monitoring the Provisional Government. (5) But a few weeks later, when he returned to Russia and became acquainted with the concrete situation of dual power and noted the difference between the coverage in the newspapers and the reality of bourgeois revolution, he changed his position. From then on he became against the slogan of "control of government by the Soviets." So in early April he laid out a pamphlet opposing the attitude of the petty-bourgeois reformists (Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks) and the Bolsheviks on the question of monitoring the government through the "contact commission" of the Soviets as follows:

*"Question: Should the Provisional Government be supported?
Response of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks: It should but on condition that it carries out its agreement with the Soviet and attends the meeting of the Contact Commission.
Response of the Bolsheviks: No; let the capitalists support it. Our job is to prepare the people for full and undivided power wielded by the Soviets.*

*Question: For undivided power or dual power?
Response of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks: For dual power. The Soviets to exercise "control" over the Provisional Government. It is bad to reflect whether control can be effective without power.*

Response of the Bolsheviks: For the undivided power of the Soviets from the bottom up all over the country."

At the Petrograd city conference of Bolsheviks in April 1917 Lenin argues against the "control solution":

"In revolutionary times control means deception. To seek the truth in the contact commission is impossible. there can be no control without power. To control by means of resolutions, etc., is sheer nonsense. Control means dispelling the petty-bourgeois

illusions, fog." (6)

At the Petrograd City Conference of the Bolshevik Party Lenin argued against the supporters of the slogan for "control":

"Control in a revolutionary period is a swindle. (...) Without power one can not control." (7)

As Trotsky said, Stalin soon rejected the slogan of government control by the Soviets.

"Only after the lesson of the April days, Stalin at last came out against the theory of benevolent "control" over the Provisional Government, cautiously retreating from his own previous position." (8)

The Comintern and Trotsky on the mixture of bourgeois and working class power

The rejection of the centrist theory of mixing a combination of soviet and bourgeois government was a cornerstone of the Bolsheviks and the Communist International. In an article on the founding of the Communist International Lenin denounced the policies of the centrist Independent Socialists in Germany, which strove for such a connection of the councils and parliament:

"This manifesto accuses the Scheidemanns of wanting to abolish the Workers' Councils, and proposes - don't laugh - that the Councils be combined with the Assembly, that the Councils be granted certain political rights, a certain place in the constitution."

To reconcile, to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat! How simple! What a brilliantly philistine idea.

The only pity is that it was tried in Russia under Kerensky, by the united Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, those petty-bourgeois democrats who imagine themselves socialists.

Anyone who has read Marx and failed to understand that in capitalist society, at every acute moment, in every serious class conflict, the alternative is either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat, has understood nothing of either the economic or the political doctrines of Marx.

But the brilliantly philistine idea of Hilferding, Kautsky, and Co. of peacefully combining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat requires special examination, if exhaustive treatment is to be given to the economic and political absurdities with which this most remarkable and comical manifesto of February 11 is packed." (9)

In his "Lessons of October", where in 1924 Trotsky generalized the experiences of the October Revolution and undertook a severe criticism of the centrist drift of the Stalin/Zinoviev/Kamenev leadership as well as the Menshevik policies including the "control" of bourgeois government

"Lenin's position was this: an irreconcilable struggle against defensism and its supporters; the capture of the Soviet majority; the overthrow of the Provisional Government; the seizure of power through the soviets; a revolutionary peace policy and a program of socialist revolution at home and of international revolution abroad. In distinction to this, as we already know, the opposition held the view that it was necessary to complete the democratic revolution by exerting pressure on the Provisional Government and in this process the soviets would remain the organs of "control" over the power of the bourgeoisie." (10)

And further: *"We are to participate in a block with the petty-bourgeoisie and exercise control over the bourgeois power until the bourgeois revolution has been completely accomplished. The*

pattern is obviously Menshevik. Imitating in a doctrinaire fashion the tasks of the revolution by its nomenclature (a "bourgeois" revolution), one could not fail to arrive at the policy of exercising control over the Provisional Government and demanding that the Provisional Government should bring forward a policy of peace without annexations, and so on." (11)

The centrist Italian communists developed a similar idea to Hilferding and Zinoviev/Kamenev in the 1920's. They stood for a "Republican Assembly based on the Workers' and Peasants' Committees". Trotsky vehemently rejected this improper mixing of bourgeois and proletarian organs. He wrote:

"Class organs of the workers and poor peasants...always constitute organizations of struggle against the bourgeois state, then become organs of insurrection, to be transformed finally, after the victory, into organs of the proletarian dictatorship. How, under these conditions can a Republican Assembly - supreme organ of the bourgeois state - have as its basis organs of the proletarian state?" (12)

Now a centrist could argue: *"But then why have Lenin and Trotsky demanded the slogan of workers control in the factories with relevant veto rights for the delegates of the employees at the companies' leadership? Perhaps Lenin and Trotsky made a mistake when they rejected the slogan of "workers control" over the bourgeois government?"*

The answer is clearly: no. These comrades have overlooked several things. First, the solutions cited include the "supervision of government" by bourgeois and reformist parties or by committees, which are usually referred to as embryonic councils although they normally don't develop into councils of action.

Secondly - and this is far more important - a "control" of the bourgeois state apparatus is not possible and leads inevitably to corruption and capitalist integration of the councils in the bourgeois state apparatus. This is because the specifics of the proletarian revolution consists in the fact that the critical and qualitative turning point is precisely in the destruction of the political power of the bourgeoisie - ie, the political state apparatus of the ruling class. Dual power does not mean a combination of two opposing class institutions - be it as simple as "monitoring" like a counselor. For such an understanding - to put it in Trotsky's words - *"The organ of the bourgeoisie and the organ of the proletariat - were to be combined in a peaceful system of dual power."* (13)

By such an institutionalization the people of the councils/committees are integrated into the capitalist state and thus become bourgeois. The Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky criticized - based on the experience with the councils of the revolutions in Europe 1917-1920 - such a strategy of "mixed political systems":

"The attempt by the social traitors in Germany to clip the soviets' (the Russian word for council) wings, debase them, and incorporate them into the overall bourgeois-democratic constitutional system is a betrayal of the workers' cause and misleads the workers. For real soviets are only possible as a form of state organization that supersedes bourgeois democracy, shatters it, and replaces it with a workers' dictatorship.

The propaganda by right-wing leaders of the Independents (Hilferding and Kautsky, among others) aimed at demonstrating that the "soviet system" is compatible with a bourgeois national assembly either shows a complete lack of understanding of the laws of development of the proletarian revolution or is a conscious effort to mislead the working class. Soviets mean the dictatorship

of the proletariat. National assembly means the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is not possible to unite and reconcile workers' dictatorship with dictatorship by the bourgeoisie." (14)

No, the role of councils/committees would be rather that they become real. For this they must integrate the oppressed classes. Their task is not to „supervise“ the existing bourgeois government, but to fight and overthrow it.

The mixture of bourgeois and working class power in the light of the experience of the October Revolution

In his great book on the history of the 1917 revolution, Trotsky once again addressed the opportunistic theory of the combined form of government and set out the central arguments of both sides:

“The touchstone of a revolutionary political leader is the question of the state. In their letter against the insurrection of October 11th Zinoviev and Kamenev wrote: “With correct tactics we can win a third, yes and more than a third, of the seats in the Constituent Assembly. . . . The Constituent Assembly plus the Soviet, that is the combined type of state institution toward which we are travelling.” The “correct tactics” meant a renunciation of the conquest of power by the proletariat. The “combined type” of state meant a combination of the Constituent Assembly, in which the bourgeois parties would constitute two-thirds, with the soviets, where the party of the proletariat was in command. This type of combined state subsequently formed the basis of Hilferding’s idea of including the soviets in the Weimar constitution. General Lisingen, commandant of the Mark of Brandenburg, in forbidding the formation of soviets on November 7, 1918, on the ground that “institutions of this kind conflict with the existing state order,” showed at least a great deal more penetration than the Austro-Marxists and the German Independent Party.

Lenin gave warning in April that the Constituent Assembly would sink into a subordinate place. However, neither he himself nor the party as a whole ever during the year 1917 formally renounced the idea of democratic representation, it being impossible to declare confidently in advance how far the revolution would go. It was assumed that having seized the power, the soviets would succeed soon enough in winning the army and the peasants so that the Constituent Assembly – especially after a broadening of the electorate (Lenin proposed in particular to lower the voting age to 18) – would give a majority to the Bolsheviks, and merely supply a formal sanction to the soviet regime. In this sense Lenin sometimes spoke of a “combined type” of state – that is, of an accommodation of the Constituent Assembly to the soviet dictatorship. The thing actually developed along different lines. In spite of Lenin’s insistence, the Central Committee could not make up its mind after the conquest of power to postpone for a few weeks the call for the Constituent Assembly – although without this it was impossible either to broaden the electorate or, what is most important, give the peasants a chance to re-define their relation to the Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks. The Constituent Assembly came into conflict with the Soviet and was dissolved. The hostile camps represented in the Constituent Assembly entered upon a civil war which lasted for years. In the system of soviet dictatorship not even a secondary place was found for democratic representation. The question of the “combined type” was withdrawn in fact. Theoretically, however, it retained all its importance, as was subsequently proven by the experiment of the Independent Party in Germany.

In 1924 when Stalin, obedient to the demands of an inner-party struggle first attempted to make an independent appraisal of the past, he came to the defence of Zinoviev’s “combined state,” sup-

porting himself in this with a reference to Lenin. “Trotsky does not understand . . . the peculiarities of Bolshevik tactics when he snorts at the theory of a combination of the Constituent Assembly with the soviets as Hilferdingism,” wrote Stalin in his characteristic manner. “Zinoviev, whom Trotsky is ready to turn into a Hilferdingist, wholly and completely shares the point of view of Lenin.” This means that seven years after the theoretical and political battles of 1917, Stalin had completely failed to understand that with Zinoviev as with Hilferding it was a question of bringing into accord and reconciling the powers of two classes, the bourgeoisie through the Constituent Assembly and the proletariat through the soviets, whereas with Lenin it was question of combining two institutions expressing the power of one and the same class, the proletariat. The idea of Zinoviev, as Lenin explained at the time, was opposed to the very foundation of the Marxian teaching about the state. With the power in the hands of the soviets,” wrote Lenin against Zinoviev and Kamenev on October 17th, “the ‘combined type’ would be accepted by everybody. But to drag in under the title ‘combined type’ a refusal to transfer the power to the soviets . . . is it possible to find a parliamentary expression for that? We see, then, that in order to evaluate this idea of Zinoviev, which Stalin declares to be “a peculiarity of Bolshevik tactics” supposedly not understood by Trotsky, Lenin found it difficult even to find a parliamentary expression, although he was not distinguished by an excessive squeamishness in these matters. A little over a year later Lenin wrote, applying the same thought to Germany: “The attempt to combine the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat is a complete renunciation both of Marxism and of socialism in general.” Could Lenin indeed have written otherwise?

The “combined type” of Zinoviev was essentially an attempt to eternalize the dual power – that is, a revival of the experiment completely exhausted by the Mensheviks. And if Stalin in 1924 was still standing on the same ground with Zinoviev on this question, it means that in spite of his adherence to the theses of Lenin, he has nevertheless remained at least halfway true to that philosophy of dual power which he himself developed in his report of March 29, 1917: “The roles have been divided. The Soviet has in fact taken the initiative in the revolutionary transformation. . . . The Provisional Government has in fact taken the role of fortifier of the conquests of the revolutionary people.” The mutual relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are here defined as a simple division of labor.” (15)

Particularly absurd, although consistent in the logic of reformism, is the idea of “completing the revolution” with the combination of bourgeois government and “committees.” How should a merger of the dictatorship of the proletariat (we leave the usually embryonic nature of the peoples’ committees aside) and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie complete the revolution? A revolution in the interests of which class? In the interests of the bourgeoisie? The proletariat cannot and must not complete such a revolution, for it will be at their own expense. A revolution in the interests of the proletariat? Such an upheaval will in turn provoke the most violent opposition of the bourgeoisie.

Either one understands this Marxist principle or one slides into reformism. It is thus hardly surprising that the idea of soviet “control” of bourgeois governments neither in Trotsky’s Transitional Program nor in programmatic texts of Marxist classics appears.

In his “Lessons of the Revolution” Trotsky characterized the strategy of “mixed state systems” as indicative of cen-

trist forces as they *“fight against the seizure of power by the proletariat.”* (16)

Dual power in the Marxist sense is the temporary coexistence of two mutually hostile and irreconcilable class organs - a coexistence that sooner or later must end with the victory of one and the defeat of the other. Bolshevik communists fight for the confrontation, for the fight of the soviets against the bourgeois government and against centrist distortion of “supervision” - the combination of soviet and bourgeois government.

Footnotes:

(1) Yassin Gaber: Popular committees hold first general conference, 22 Apr 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/10556/Egypt/0/Popular-committees-hold-first-general-conference.aspx>

(2) siehe Markus Halaby/Jeremy Drinkall: Egypt: the struggle for freedom continues (Workers Power Nr. 354, Mai 2011, <http://www.workerspower.co.uk/2011/04/egypt-struggle-for-freedom/>;

(3) See on this e.g.: Raimund Löw: Theorie und Praxis des Austromarxismus; in: Raimund Löw/Sigfried Matzl, Alfred Pfabigan: Der Austromarxismus – eine Autopsie, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, S. 69ff.

(4) Josef Stalin: Report on the attitude to the Provisional Government (29.3.1917); in: Leo Trotzki: The Stalin School of Falsification (1932), London 1974, S. 186f. The minutes of this conference were never published in the USSR under the Stalin regime.

(5) See W. I. Lenin: Briefe aus der Ferne. Brief 2 (1917), in: LW 23, S. 332; Second Letter from afar

(6) W. I. Lenin: Die politischen Parteien in Rußland und die Aufgaben des Proletariats. (1917), in: LW 24, S. 84f.; Political Parties in Russia and the Tasks of the Proletariat, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/x02.htm>

(7) W. I. Lenin: Zwei Entgegnungen in der Diskussion zur Resolution über die Stellung zur Provisorischen Regierung (1917), in: LW 24, S. 138f.

(8) Leo Trotzki: Geschichte der Russischen Revolution, Frankfurt a. M., 1973, Band 1, S. 301; The History of the Russian Revolution, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/download/hrr-vol1.pdf>

(9) W. I. Lenin: Die Dritte Internationale und ihr Platz in der Geschichte (1919), in: LW 29, S. 301f.; The Third International and Its Place in History, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/apr/15.htm>

(10) Leo Trotzki: Die Lehren des Oktober (1924); in: Die Linke Opposition in der Sowjetunion 1923-1928, Band II, S. 210; The Lessons of October, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lessons/1924-les.pdf>

(11) Leo Trotzki: Die Lehren des Oktober (1924); in: Die Linke Opposition in der Sowjetunion 1923-1928, Band II, S. 211; The Lessons of October, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lessons/1924-les.pdf>

(12) Leo Trotzki: Problems of the Italian Revolution (1930); in: Writings 1930, S. 221f.

(13) Leo Trotzki: Geschichte der Russischen Revolution, Frankfurt a. M., 1973, Band 2.2, S. 820; The History of the Russian Revolution, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/download/hrr-vol3.pdf>

(14) Leitsätze über die Bedingungen der Bildung von Arbeiterräten. Resolution des II. Weltkongreß der Kommuni-

stischen Internationale, in: Die Kommunistische Internationale, Manifeste, Thesen und Resolutionen, Band I, Köln 1984, S.196f.; Theses on the Conditions under which Workers' Soviets may be Formed, <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/doc02.htm>

(15) Leo Trotzki: Geschichte der Russischen Revolution, Frankfurt a. M., 1973, Band 2.2, S. 995f.; The History of the Russian Revolution, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/download/hrr-vol3.pdf>

(16) Leo Trotzki: Die Lehren des Oktober (1924); in: Die Linke Opposition in der Sowjetunion 1923-1928, Band II, S. 220; The Lessons of October, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lessons/1924-les.pdf> ■

The Arab Revolution: The Embryonic Stages Theory of the League for the Fifth International

by Michael Pröbsting

This text is the English-language translation of an excerpt from a book on the Arab Revolution published by the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) in early August 2011. The Book – Michael Pröbsting: The Half Revolution. Lessons and Perspectives of the Arab Uprising – is in German language and contains eight chapters. The translation was done by Adam Beltz.

Unfortunately, the LFI support of the slogan of “supervision of bourgeois government” is not the only programmatic mistake in their response to the Arab revolution. If one studies the most detailed resolution of the LFI so far (about 7,000 words) titled “*Perspectives of the revolutionary movement*” it reveals a deepening of the revisionist degeneration of the organization. So writes the comrades in this resolution on the relationship between democratic and social revolution:

“This is why the democratic revolutionary tasks cannot be abandoned or skipped over; they have to be fulfilled whilst at the same time the immediate socio-economic demands are brought to the fore. The masses by using their democratic freedoms will never willingly let go of them again. This is a stage that can only be completed through militant mass action in which the working class must play a leading role if they are to succeed. But revolutionary socialists do not believe it is either possible nor desirable to halt the revolution even with the completion of this democratic stage. On this question the Stalinist Communist parties have left us a disastrous legacy, which nevertheless is still sadly influential. This stages theory, taken over from classical Menshevism, means limiting and containing working class struggles to the democratic stage, allowing the supposedly liberal democratic capitalists to take power.” (1)

In this key paragraph of the LFI resolution on their perspectives the new theoretical confusion of the LFI leadership becomes obvious. What we have here is the pseudo-Trotskyist variant of the embryonic stages theory. Let’s go point by point through this paragraph.

Can the Democratic Revolution be completed without the Dictatorship of the Proletariat?

First, it is striking that the conclusion of the democratic revolution, the democratic stage, is thought possible without that the working class smashes capitalism through a proletarian revolution and established their dictatorship. So writes the LFI that *“the democratic revolutionary tasks (must) be fulfilled whilst at the same time the immediate socio-economic demands are brought to the fore.”* That is, it is possible according to the LFI leadership, to realized the democratic-revolutionary tasks (full democratic freedoms, expropriation of large estates and distribution of their land, elimination of discrimination against minorities, women and young people, actual self-determination of oppressed nations, etc.) while at the same time the social, economic demands are only “brought to the fore” – i.e. clearly before the capitalists, to which one shall indeed direct such demands have been overthrown. In support

of this revisionist nonsense the LFI leadership writes in the next sentence: *“This is a stage that can only be completed through militant mass action.”* Thus, the LFI falsely says not only that the democratic stage can be completed without a socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but they also claim that this “militant mass action” would be suffice, instead of clearly saying that to seize power, armed rebellion and civil war are necessary.

This completely false vagueness in naming the instruments of the revolution – algebraically formulated “*decisive class struggle*” and so on instead of insurgency and civil war - is also found elsewhere in the same resolution. The LFI leadership writes:

“Only the most powerful development of the class struggle here and now and an uncompromising drive for the complete demolition of the old regime can drive the revolution forward to lasting achievement and establish the power of the working people, fighting for socialist goals and the ousting of western imperialism from the region.”

What an absurd adaptation of petty-bourgeois pacifism! The old regimes cannot “completely destroyed” by “the most powerful development of the class struggle” and “uncompromising drive” but by armed uprising and the replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of soviet power. Such inappropriate formulations do not clarify the tasks of the vanguard, but rather create confusion. They blur the crucial differences between the Bolsheviks and the diverse forms of the revisionists and Mensheviks.

Is the pressure of class struggle enough to win?

Later on, the LFI leadership again repeats this incredible semi-pacifist statement:

“This means continuing the strikes and mass protests, pushing the democratic demands as far as they can go, fighting for working class control of workplaces and production, demanding nationalization of the large scale sections of the economy, the banks, etc., to take them out of the hands of foreign capital. This alone will guarantee the maximum gains of the democratic revolution and prepare and focus the working class for the next phase of the struggle when capitalists rule and its exploitive system is called into question and the possibility of a socialist seizure of power becomes concrete reality.”

So, according to the LFI, democratic demands, workers’ control and nationalization of key sectors of the economy are won through the “*continuation of strikes and mass protests*”?! In this case the ruling class but could easily intimidated, if mass strikes and mass protest would be sufficient for the establishment of dual power and the nationalization of key sectors. Again they reveal a criminal underestimation of class antagonisms and of the tasks of the proletarian class struggle. Incidentally, it is interesting - or rather embarrassing - that the LFI leadership now counts the establishment of workers’ control and nationalization of key sectors of the economy to be the “*greatest achievement of the democratic revolution.*” Since when has this had something

Menshevism and the Theory of Permanent Revolution

But let us return to the new embryonic stages theory. The LFI leadership writes: *“But revolutionary socialists do not believe it is either possible nor desirable to halt the revolution even with the completion of this democratic stage.”* Here the error is repeated in a different form. The comrades say that Menshevism wants to stop the revolution at the completion of the democratic stage. Yes this is true, but it is also Menshevism to claim that the democratic revolution *can* be completed without the dictatorship of the proletariat. Why? Because the capitalist ruling class is closely linked to the landowners, because they maintain their power only by the fact that the masses, the oppressed classes and nations are not only exploited but also politically and socially oppressed.

It is the naive hope of many petty-bourgeois revolutionaries today that in the Arab states the democratic revolution can be separated from the social revolution, that the latter is not necessary for the realization of democratic freedoms. But this is a false hope, which has been refuted by the harsh reality of revolution of the last hundred years. This is precisely why the leader of the October Revolution, Leon Trotsky, has generalized and summarized the experience of the class struggle in the theory of permanent revolution. The central lesson is:

“This is turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution.” (2)

Shortly before his assassination he repeated these basic concepts of the theory of permanent revolution in his analysis of the Russian Revolution:

„The perspective of permanent revolution may be summarized in the following way; the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution.” (3)

According to the LFI leadership the democratic revolution can be realized independently of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But in their adaptation to prevailing petty-bourgeois political trends the leaders of the LFI forget these central teaching of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and the embryonic stages theory. This revisionism stands together with the obvious underestimation of the *necessity* to advance the class struggle to an armed insurrection and civil war in order to lead the revolution to victory. This revisionist thinking outlined above also forms the background for the adaptation to the reformist concept of “supervision of bourgeois government.” Forgetting the central demand of the Constituent Assembly as well as a systematic outlining of the petty-bourgeois class roots of the wrong concepts in the reformist and centrist said basic revolution, round up the picture of the increasing theoretical and highly regrettable degeneration of the LFI.

(1) League for the Fifth International: The revolutionary wave in the Middle East and North Africa, 29.4.2011, <http://www.fifthinternational.org/content/revolutionary-wave-middle-east-and-north-africa>. All quotes in this chapter are from this resolution. It is highly symbolically that this resolution was adopted at the same international leadership meeting where the foundation members of the RKOB were expelled by the LFI leadership majority.

(2) Leo Trotzki: Die permanente Revolution, in: Leo Trotzki: Ergebnisse und Perspektiven. Die permanente Revolution; Frankfurt a. M., 1971, S. 158f.; The Permanent Revolution, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/tp/index.htm>

(3) Leo Trotzki: Drei Konzeptionen der russischen Revolution (1939); in: GRM: rotfront-Texte Nr. 1, Wien 1975, S. 53; The Character of the Russian Revolution. As Foreseen by Plekhanov, Lenin and Trotsky, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/xx/russia.htm> ■

These are not „riots“ – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain! The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!

by Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting

In contrast to the bourgeois commentators and the middle class left the 68-year-old former black civil rights activist Darcus Howe expressed very well what is involved in the so-called “riots” in Britain’s cities. In an interview with the BBC (which this capitalist state television put off soon from their website), he explained:

“I don’t call it rioting, I call it an insurrection of the masses of the people! It is happening in Syria, it is happening in Clapham, it is happening in Liverpool, it is happening in Spain, it is happening in Chile then, it is the nature of an historical moment!”

We agree with his testimony and add: It was high time for the rebellion! Every day, black people and immigrants are discriminated and oppressed not only at work, in education and at the authorities. We are also systematically discriminated by the police, no matter how “good” or “integrated” we are. That is a fact which is not only true in a few countries but all over the world. Our brothers and sisters in Britain are at the point, where they defend themselves against this daily oppression and harassment. We have great respect for this step.

The UK is covered by riots

Protests and street fighting are spreading all over UK. In addition to various areas of London, like Tottenham, Hackney and Peckham, cities like Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Kent are already covered by the so-called “riots”. Dozens of shops and businesses are burned to the ground. Even houses and cars were set on fire. Meanwhile, more than 600 activists were arrested, the government has announced its decision to exercise the most severe measures against activists and appealed publicly to all citizens, to report to the police if they know participants of the protests from their own families and friends (!). This was coupled with suggestions that it was not a minor offense, if it fails to give the police report.

Already a 26-year-old man was killed by shot by police. His name was not announced yet - probably not to give the movement even more faces.

Meanwhile, 50 policemen were injured, Prime Minister David Cameron stopped his holiday, and the media claim that residents would demand the use of the British army against the militants. The latter is obviously a warning to what means the British government is prepared to do.

Racist Police

It all started with Mark Duggan, 29-year-old father of four children. He was shot during a planned police arrest. Interestingly, in the British media almost never mentions that Duggan is a black British. They want to hide the motives of the police who killed this unarmed young man apparently for no other reason than racism. The racial oppression of black people, national oppression of migrants, the super-exploitation they experience as workers – all this takes

place not only at the workplace and the education system but in all areas of capitalist society. Add to this that it is also not the first time that a black worker was shot dead for no reason.

Poverty, hopelessness, harassment ... resistance!

The bourgeois media also do not show how big the poverty and hopelessness of the British youth is, especially of the immigrants and black people. After all, the government implemented austerity measures, the toughest since the Second World War, which resulted in an unemployment rate of nearly 8%. Unemployment is particularly high among immigrants and black people. One in five black people is unemployed. Already before the Tories came to power every second black teenager between 16 and 24 years was unemployed! Current surveys for 2011 do not exist yet. But it is only logical that the number of unemployed black youth has not reduced since then, but has probably increased rather significantly.

No wonder then that it is mainly the young who are participating in the uprising of the poor. Especially the first two nights the 14 to 17-year-olds have led the street battles. Since then, now, older activists are involved in the uprising.

It is precisely the poorer, the lower, the oppressed layers of the working class – including the young, the racially and nationally oppressed layers – that are often ready to resist against the massive oppression and exploitation. And this part of the working class constitutes the largest mass, the heart of our class.

How absurd is – given the present development - the theory of the League for the Fifth International that the labour aristocracy constitutes the core layer of the working class (at least in imperialist countries like the UK). In fact, this part of our class is – as Lenin put it – *“the craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous, and petty-bourgeois “labour aristocracy”, imperialist-minded, and imperialist-corrupte, (...). That is incontestable.*

In contrast to the false assumption of LFI, the oppressed, the lower layers of the working class can play a central role in taking the class struggle against capitalist oppression on the streets. This is what we see today in Great Britain.

The political situation in Britain: a pre-revolutionary development

It is crucial that activists in Britain have a correct assessment of the political situation, derive the right political perspectives, and try to implement them – as much as it is possible for them given their strength – into practice.

The worldwide decline of capitalism has also shaken the economic and political system of Britain deeply. Spreading poverty and unemployment and welfare cuts are the result. It is inevitable that this historic crisis of the capitalist system provokes sharp class struggles, including a

number of (pre) revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations. That is why we from the RKOB speak of a world-historical period in which humanity is faced with the alternative "socialism or barbarism".

The uprising of the poor in Britain - as Darcus Howe noted correctly - is part of a wave of revolutionary events in the recent past: the Arab Revolution and the general strikes and occupations in Greece and Spain.

Already in the autumn of 2010 hundreds of thousands of youth held a mass protest in Britain, which culminated in the storming of the Tory party headquarters. This was followed on 26th March 2011 by a day of action organized by the TUC with half a million demonstrators. And eventually on 30 June 750,000 employees in public service went on strike. In short, after the mass protests of the youth in the education sector and the strikes of the trade unions, the lower strata of the working class, blacks and migrants have now entered the battlefield of class struggle with their uprising. All this underscores that Britain is going through a pre-revolutionary development.

What has to be done?

What are the key tasks? The RKOB answers: the goal must be the expansion of the riots - mainly lead by the lower strata of the working class - to the participation of the entire working class. The riots in poor neighborhoods must be transformed to a nationwide revolution. That will not happen overnight and certainly not spontaneous.

Until now, there is no connection, no solidarity with the uprising of the poor from the side of the unions and the anti-cuts movement that existed in Britain since months. But this is necessary in order not to remain at the level of individual street fights, but rather to fight shoulder to shoulder with organized workers who are probably on strike. The RKOB says: activists need to stand up for a radical change within the labor movement, trade unions, progressive parties and alliances. These organizations should not longer stand beside the insurrections. They need to show solidarity with the uprising of the poor. They need to contribute on the extension of the struggle and therefore mobilize workers at their workplace to take active part in mass actions.

The split between the different layers of the working class must be overcome. But we can only overcome the split during a common struggle. Actually the lower strata of the working class is fighting, is acting as the strike team of our class. But the other parts of the working class have to be mobilized now to take part of the insurrections and to fight for the interests and goals of the whole class.

The uprising of the poor should be connected with a general strike of the workers' movement!

The aim must be to connect the so-called riots with a mass strike up to a general strike in the workplace and in education sector. In this way, the working class be united and won over to the perspective of a general strike in connection with an insurrection. By this we mean a general strike, which is associated with the arming of the working class and an orientation to the overthrow of the government and its replacement by a workers' government. Such a workers' government would be a government that rests on mass action councils (soviets), in which the workers

and the oppressed in the factories and neighbourhoods are organised and elect their delegates which are at any time replaceable.

Such a perspective must begin with the immediate requirements of combat. Here we have first of all the defence of the urban areas of the poor against the police force. The struggle against police violence requires the building of self-defense units by the activists to protect the urban districts against the repressive machinery of the capitalists - the police and possibly military. The building of such self-defense units must be carried out naturally first of all by those affected in the districts of the poor. But it is also necessary that the organized labour movement - trade unions, progressive parties and alliances - participate in the formation of such self-defense units active. Out of such units could then later emerge workers militias - armed bodies of the working class and the oppressed.

Hand in hand with defending the urban districts the building of action committees must take place. They are an important means to provide the movement with structures and to prevent unelected representatives to sell out the struggle. Such action committees could emerge out of mass meetings in the neighborhoods, workplace and schools where the people elect delegates. These delegates must be permanently accountable for their words and deeds and recallable by the mass meetings. In this way a movement can be built with controllable delegates who can coordinate regionally and nationally and who are constantly under control of the base of the movement. Thus also the biggest enemies in our own ranks, the bureaucrats of the trade unions and the Labour Party, the careerists and traitors can be branded and exposed by the movement.

Today it is more obvious than ever: those in the British Left who stand aside from the riots, reduce themselves to comment on the events or who congratulate the movement from outside but are not part of this movement, those who refuse to close the ranks with the rebels, these people have no right to consider themselves as revolutionary! Because history and the people who make history will judge us and our organizations primarily by our action and deeds, and not by our words.

Looting is no solution!

The resistance of the proletarian youth on the streets of Britain is an important factor. The labour movement must deal with the demands of these young people. It must fight together with the proletarian youth on the streets. But it is also necessary to prevent damages which hit the workers in the neighbourhoods. Workers' belongings should not be destroyed during the insurrections. The labour movement - together with organized committees of the proletarian youth - must make sure that the houses and cars of individuals (mostly of the workers) are not set on fire.

The looting of shops and pharmacies is understandable given the massive poverty of the people. Nevertheless, it is much more useful if these actions are coordinated by the labour movement and the committees of the workers, the migrants and young people. They should not be committed as random looting. Rather the committees have to set the distribution of food and medicine under the control of the labour movement and the committees themselves. In this way all people will receive exactly the goods of daily life that they need. At the same time, this also prevents

that the shops and supermarkets will be set on fire. Otherwise it hits the daily supply of the people living there. The credo has to be: everything that helps our class and which from our class can benefit, is good. The arbitrary destruction and the looting of supplies is not part of it!

The Road to Revolution

The ruling class is fighting a preventive war and uses 16,000 police officers (in London alone) against the poor, the blacks and the young people. In contrary to the naive dreams of the petty-bourgeois left, a peaceful transition to socialism is impossible. The path to socialism is bound to the civil war of the workers and oppressed. This civil war must aim to overthrow the capitalist class through a revolution and to expropriate them, as well as to build a workers' government on a socialist basis. The civil war requires participating in its preparations. It requires that the labour movement as well as single activists fight together with the young people during the insurrections. If one has the opportunity to participate at the insurrections it is abso-

lutely necessary to show solidarity not only in words but in actions.

The overthrow of the capitalist class and a successful revolution needs a successful strategy of the working class. We need to build up a revolutionary party of the fighting masses, which is capable of developing and implementing such a strategy and which leads the vanguard of the working class. The revolutionary organization RKOB has the goal to build up such a revolutionary party worldwide. Today Britain is set ablaze by the so-called riots. It has to be the goal of our class to combine the uprisings of the poor with the strategy to revolution. Revolutions are the locomotives of history - but to guarantee that the revolution can be fulfilled is only given if the revolutionary party becomes its platoon leader. Today the building of such a revolutionary party is more urgent than ever before!

Class against class,
Force against force,
Socialism or Barbarism! ■



Vladimir Tatlin - Monument to the Third International (1920)

The August uprising of the poor and nationally and racially oppressed in Britain: What would a revolutionary organisation have done?

by Michael Pröbsting

The uprising of the poor, of the black and migrant people in Britain between the 6th and the 10th of August was a "historic moment" in the country's history as the black civil right activist Darcus Howe and a number of other people have accurately put it. It was a "historic moment" which ended up in defeat. Why? Because the existing leadership of the workers movement and the oppressed communities betrayed the struggle, left it alone and in most cases denounced it. The most urgent task in the coming period is to build a new revolutionary party which can give future uprisings a perspective to win and to build a socialist society.

Our organisation, the *Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation* (RKOB), has explained its analysis and perspectives for the uprising in the statement from 10th of August ("*These are not "riots" – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain! The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!*", <http://www.rkob.net/new-english-language-site-1/uprising-of-the-poor-in-britain/>) Based in Austria, the RKOB sent a delegation to Britain to follow the events on the ground, get involved with the activists and get a better understanding of the situation and the tasks following from it. Given the complete failure of the left in Britain to intervene in the uprising and to take a revolutionary position we will elaborate in this statement concretely what in our opinion a revolutionary organisation should have done in this situation.

1. This uprising is often wrongly characterised only as "riots". This makes it easier for the Tory government and the bureaucrats in the workers movement to criminalise this uprising, to declare that looting was its main focus. A revolutionary organisation in Britain would have said from the beginning that this uprising is in its essence a spontaneous rebellion of the lower strata of the working class and of the racially and nationally oppressed minorities against the police repression and the poverty of the capitalist system. It would have declared that these so called "riots" *are in essence a form of class struggle*. Of course a form of class struggle with all its weaknesses, its raw and unorganised features, but a form of justified and progressive class struggle nevertheless. It would have explained that while certainly criminal acts happened in the context of the uprising this was in no way its essential character. It would therefore have sharply denounced all those non-revolutionary forces who associate this uprising with the "*lumpenproletariat*", who slander it as "*cancer*" (e.g. IMT/Socialist Appeal), who "*is appalled at the current rioting*" and reject the uprising as "*only damaging for the communities in which working-class people live*" (CWI/Socialist Party) or who are vague about the motivation of this uprising ("*Some are motivated by hatred of the police and rage at this society – others by the promise of raiding local shops for goods – some by both.*", LFI/Workers Power)

2. Recognising the character of the uprising as a form of class struggle of the lower and oppressed strata of the working class, a revolutionary organisation would

have immediately after the beginning of this spontaneous rebellion *issued a public call to support and join the uprising*. It would have criticised all those reformist and centrist forces which restrict themselves to merely explain why the poor and oppressed take the streets, to explain why this is understandable or who only call for abstract solidarity without raising a finger for practical participation and support for the uprising. A revolutionary organisation would have worked on the basis of the Marxist approach of the founder of the Fourth International, Leo Trotsky, when he explained the abyss which divides Bolshevism and centrism (taking the example of the German centrist Ledebour) in their attitude to the struggle of the oppressed:

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

What characterizes Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognizing their "right" to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus, or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilized executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism." (Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, 1932)

3. As a consequence a revolutionary organisation would not have only called to join the uprising but would have *mobilised its members and supporters as much as possible to actually go to the areas of the struggle* (Tottenham, Brixton etc.) *and to play an active role in the resistance against the police*. It would have denounced all those who speak only about solidarity in words but in practise don't join the class struggle as it is - typical for centrist cowards and windbags. At the same time it would also have sent its supporters to other working class areas not yet affected by the uprising to call for solidarity, to counter the bourgeois lies against the riots etc. It would have sent delegations to trade unions, to the various organisations of the workers movement to urge them to join the struggle, to organise solidarity actions etc. – in short to call for a united front campaign.

4. A revolutionary organisation would have intervened by disseminating revolutionary ideas to help raise the activist's consciousness from spontaneous outrage and hatred against the system to a political class consciousness.

For this it would have distributed leaflet and made agitation and propaganda for the central tasks. Revolutionaries would not have called only for the "right of self-defence" but would have called for building organised *workers and oppressed self-defence units now*. It would have called for the organisations of the labour movement to come and help build these self-defence organisations. It would have called for *councils of action, i.e. mass assemblies in the communities*, to discuss the most urgent tasks and elect delegates to coordinate and build a movement of the workers and oppressed. It would have called for spreading the struggle nation-wide by *calling the workers movement to join and link the struggle against the police repression and poverty with the movement against the cuts*. The perspective would have been a *general strike* against the cuts, against racism and for the overthrow of the Tory government.

5. A revolutionary organisation would have tried to organise the resistance to drive out the police and to stop acts of vandalism. It would have explained that looting is no solution. It would have argued that the task of *workers and oppressed self-defence units* is to prevent acts of vandalism, of looting small shops etc.

6. A revolutionary organisation would have issued public appeals for the organisation and the activists of the workers movement to come to Tottenham, Brixton, Birmingham etc and to help organising the struggle. It would have applied the united front tactic to spread the struggle, to organise solidarity, to call for the defence against the police repression.

7. A revolutionary organisation would have called to spread the struggle and to link it with the perspective of struggle against cuts etc and for a general strike. Not at some time later when the bureaucrats might be ready to prepare and build another of their impotent one-day actions but in the concrete situation of the uprising. To call for a link with the struggle against the cuts not at the same time while the riots take place but one, two or three months later (as the IST/SWP, CWI/SP, IMT/SA, LFI/WP etc. did) is a *schematic, passive, non-revolutionary approach* to an explosive situation of class struggle. It is a refusal to understand the revolutionary dynamic of the class struggle and the call for the activist of the uprising to subordinate to the plans of the labour bureaucrats and their one-day actions.

8. Today after the defeat of the uprising two things are urgent. First, to organise a broad defence campaign against the police repression. Secondly, to draw the lessons, to spread these lessons amongst the activists and to organise the most militant and politically conscious amongst lower strata of the proletariat, the migrants and the black community in a revolutionary, Bolshevik force.

9. Organising a *broad defence campaign* means to call for a united front of the organisations of the labour movement and the migrant and black communities. Demands must be raised for an independent inquiry of the police murder of Mark Duggan by the workers movement and the migrant and black communities. Release of all those arrested in connection with the uprising, no criminal prosecution, no cuts in the social and communal services! Down with the "stop and search" operations of the police! Build for an indefinite general strike against the cuts, against police repression and to bring down the Tory government! The police and state forces will not behave better in the future – build *workers and oppressed self-defence units!*

For a *working class government based on councils of action of the workers, black and migrant communities!*

10. At the same time it is essential to understand the central lessons of the uprising and to spread them. The most important lesson is to recognise the *huge crisis of leadership of the working class and the oppressed*. The uprising of the poor, the black and the migrant people was completely spontaneous and lacked the involvement of any organised structures. It was unorganised because the organised workers movement and the established community leaders betrayed the struggle. They betrayed it by refusing any participation and in most cases even denounced the uprising. The trade union leadership calls only for limited and belated one-day actions. The reformist and centrist left adapted to the bureaucracy and didn't participate itself in the uprising. It prefers to leave the poor and oppressed alone instead of acting alone and independent of the bureaucracy in the uprising.

11. Understanding the lessons of the August uprising means also to recognise the *isolation of the British left and labour movement from the poor and the nationally and racially oppressed*. This is not an unexpected situation but the expression of the many decades long isolation of workers movement and the left from these masses of the middle and lower strata of the proletariat. Unfortunately their structures and influential forces are dominated by the middle class and the labour aristocracy. The ignorance of the uprising by this reformist and centrist left is therefore not an accident but the result of their aristocratism. It is now high time to understand the danger of this and the need to overcome this as soon as possible. One step to overcome this was to join the ranks of the struggle of the oppressed. But who has done this? Building the revolutionary organisation in Britain in the coming period is impossible without learning these lessons and recognising the historic failure of the reformist and centrist left in the past.

12. A small revolutionary organisation would most likely not have made a difference to the outcome of the uprising. An organisation of one, two or five dozen activists is under normal circumstances too small to decide the fate of an uprising of the masses. But it could have made a major step in gaining experience, spreading revolutionary ideas and organising activists from the oppressed communities and also made steps in building roots in the community. It is highly urgent to correct the mistakes of the past and build a truly revolutionary, Bolshevik organisation in Britain now. The *Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation* (RKOB) wants to collaborate with all those who share such an outlook. ■

The August Uprising in Britain - A Report

Report of the RKOB delegation on its visit to London in August

The RKOB considers the uprising of the poor, blacks and immigrants in Britain as a "historic moment" - to put it in the words of the black civil rights activist Darcus Howe. The RKOB therefore decided at the start of the uprising to send a delegation of several comrades to London to study the events in the area. For this purpose we reproduced and distributed several English language pamphlets from the RKOB and the youth organization Red Antifa in London. We have outlined our analysis of the uprising and the revolutionary tactics and the necessary lessons from the defeat in three articles. (1) Below we publish the first part of the report from the RKOB delegation.

Thursday August 11, 2011

5:00 PM- 7:00 PM

After almost 24 hours of riding the bus we arrived in London. Even from the bus we could see various shops that have their displays covered with wood. Many police cars were driving past on a regular basis as well as a number of police officers patrolling the streets. We went directly after the bus ride (with all of our gear) to a meeting of the "Coalition of Resistance" platform.

On the way there we met an activist of the platform named Francis. He is an unemployed young black man in his twenties. The meeting resulted in a very interesting conversation about unemployment and poverty in the neighborhood (he is from the Peckham neighborhood) and about how to evaluate of the so-called "riots", the uprising of the young people. A longer conversation results as we are walking for some time to the university where the meeting takes place. In light of the discussions with Francis, it becomes very clear how important it is to build a revolutionary party that has roots in the organized working class and especially in the most oppressed layers within its ranks.

Until now the labor movement has widely ignored precisely these layers; the nationally or racially oppressed, the young people, etc. Due to the ongoing treason of the reformist leadership through their close links with the capitalist system there are increasing sectors of the masses which are not organized in the unions. At the same time however, it is often the most oppressed layers of society that choose the radical forms of protest against that state and the oppressive apparatus. The RKOB advocates that the labor movement organizes the most oppressed layers, and that we as an organization aiming to build a revolutionary party include activists from such layers. Today a large part of the comrades in the ranks of the RKOB are from amongst the lowest strata of the working class. Francis saw this as an positive characteristic of our organisation.

7:00 PM - 9:30 PM

The meeting of the "Coalition of Resistance" has begun. This is an alliance of several left-wing groups and trade unionists that was formed against the austerity policies

of the Tory government. Quite a number of speakers are planned for the platform. It is obvious that the audience is made up primarily of activists from different groups and there are few unorganized activists, such as Francis. Therefore the proportion of workers, immigrants, and black activists is very small.

Inevitably the question of the uprising is an issue at the meeting. Two main positions are represented. One position condemns the uprising as "chaotic riots" that bring nothing but harm, even if the anger of the youth is understandable. The other position calls for neither condemning nor supporting the so-called "riots" with an emphasis on a great understanding of the frustration of the youth against the system. The dominance of these views is not surprising given the positions of the left-wing organizations to the uprisings. The labor movement has at best ignored the uprising, and at worst condemned it. This position is shared by the opportunist left. Additionally the young proletarian rebels are exactly from those strata of the working class, which has been largely ignored for decades by the left. This has become particularly obvious today. We recognize to what extent the aristocratism, which we have even identified in the LFI, is present throughout the British left. London is burning, therefore there are incredible opportunities to intervene in a very radical protest - but the left-wing organizations in fact focus mainly on themselves.

We were only impressed by the fiery speech from a black woman on the panel whose son was killed by the police in May. The mother of Demetre Fraser denounced the police as murders and emphasized how obvious the police violence against blacks is a burning issue. In contrast to the position that the CWI (2) holds, police officers are not "workers in uniform", but part of the bourgeois apparatus which is used against the working class. The slogan "Murderers in uniform" therefore is quiet accurate. At the same time from the podium, however - totally contrary to the obvious facts - it is stressed that only peaceful protests make sense. It is even stated indirectly that support from the Coalition of Resistance will only be given to actions that proceed "peacefully".

After the speeches from the podium there is a round of discussion in which the audience can participate. We, from the RKOB, take part. Nina Gunic, RKOB spokeswoman, confirms that the characterizations of police as murderers in uniform are not only true in Britain, but world wide. She argues that the events in London show just how naive it is to have illusions in peaceful protests. The goal must rather be an indefinite general strike *in connection* with the organizing of youth uprisings. The government cannot be simply overthrown peacefully. Rather - at a certain point - it will use its apparatus of repression against the general strike. Thus it is an absolute illusion to believe that it is possible to overthrow the government with a peaceful protest. Total solidarity with the uprising of the young people is necessary and the connection of actions by the workers' movement with the uprising is what is needed.

Except us, there is only a female activist from the SWP (3)

that emphasizes solidarity with the uprising of the youth. It is obvious that it is currently an unpopular solution in the ranks of the British left. Given the massive uprisings in the past few days this is a pure betrayal against the proletarian youth. Each organization on the ground that now shuns open solidarity and organized participation in the uprisings has failed the test of history.

Events such as this uprising show whether organizations have a Marxist program only in words, or if they are capable to put this into practice and by this shows to be capable to lead the vanguard in the class struggle. It is characteristic for centrism to shun the latter like the plague. This is true even if the organization has a revolutionary program, as is still the case with the LFI, and certainly not the SWP, CWI or IMT which have centrist programs.

We suspect that interventions in the working class districts of London will be very modest from these forces and are curious about what will happen in the coming days.

10:30 PM - 2:00 AM

Later in the evening we try to find out about where there will be more uprisings. We are prepared for any action with both our agitational and propaganda materials as well as practical participation. But the night is rather calm.

Friday August 12, 2011

7:30 AM - 1:00 PM

We're preparing for a day in Tottenham. The materials are packed. The youth community centers of the city and the focal point of the events are our focus. The plan is clear: we will try to talk to the residents of the neighborhood as well as get an impression of the situation on the ground. Moreover, it is important to get a closer knowledge of the area in order not to run into dead ends or similar mistakes during the evening. We get a cheap camera because we are taking photos as well as recording video.

2:00 PM - 7:00 PM

As we arrive in Tottenham we are surprised; there are very few people on the street. We go through the apartment blocks of Tottenham. Children under 10 years old are playing on the streets. An adult comes along now and then. The mood is depressed. We take some time to look around the residential area more closely. There is garbage not just out on the street, but even on the intermediate floors. To a large extent the children wear tattered clothes and are very thin. They laugh and play. As we look around we listen with half an ear to what the children are saying. A young black boy is talking loudly with a friend and says that his older brother has still not come home. His family does not know where he is but the police will surely know. He looks forward to being older because no one will catch him. His parents only say that it was high time for something to happen. One time in the future the police will arrest him anyway, no matter what he had done. At least there was some kind of resistance. But the friend should keep that to himself. The boy's parents do not like that he overheard their conversation.

As Marxists we know that the repression by the police and the entire state apparatus will come over the activists

as well as large sections of the racially and nationally oppressed. Because the organized labor movement has still not taken the side of the proletarian youth – and without this it is the petty-bourgeois community leader that act as the only spokespersons.

We get confirmation by a number of reports, that the community leaders mobilize community members to talk to young people in order to stop them from continuing the uprising. The slogan “we do not destroy our own neighborhoods” was spread by the churches, mosques, community centers and other facilities. They urge the people to demonstrate “peacefully.” In this way pressure is build up and the protests are stifled.

We go from the residential area over to the main streets. Meanwhile, it is already afternoon. We have become familiar with Tottenham and we get along very well with the people in the neighborhood. They are mostly blacks and immigrants. We get their attraction by our appearance. Most whites in the area are not citizens, but police officers. The workers district has apparently received only rare visits by activist leftist organizations. The MLCP (4) is the only organization that has left their mark in the district using stickers and graffiti.

As we go down the main street up to Enfield (a northern suburb above Tottenham) we are surprised: the shops that were demolished were mostly betting offices. Several shops are covered with wood planks, but these are not the ones with little glass left in their window sills. The betting offices, on the other hand, have fine pieces of glass everywhere which is not easy for someone to clean up. Many stores also have preventive covered the windows with wood, not because they were attacked. This is a fact that both journalists and people would not perceive as they drive past. We were encouraged with this realization, especially because it belongs to an observation that one can only make on site.

We get into a conversation with a young black woman named Laura. At first she is very distant. She does not tell us very much and says that she rejects the “riots”. We don't agree with her but rather emphasize that the uprisings deserve support and that it is important to show solidarity or try to participate. We tell her that we have even traveled from Austria because we believe that this is a very important event and if possible will attend. Of course it is wrong to attack local shops and residential blocks, but if it happens it is because there is no organization to the protests, no leadership. This is not the fault of the young people, but rather the leaders of the organized labor movement. Our English is obviously not the best, but we are able to understand each other. She smiles during our statement and suddenly her tone changes and we see that the statement from her was out of pure caution. She believed us and probably no longer thought we were trying to trick her. She then tells us that her sister and friends have participated in the uprisings. She did not go because her sister did not want her to go. Since then her sister has been in hiding because the CCTVs (video cameras) might have captured her on tape. We talk for a while, then she gets a phone call and we say goodbye.

The conversation was very important because it confirmed to us how serious the political mistakes of the union are not to organize lower layers of the workers en masse. Likewise, there is a lack of a revolutionary youth organization that focuses clearly on these layers. Even though there are

a number of leftist organizations in Britain and some even play an important part in the international leadership of these organizations, their distance and ignorance of these layers is more than devious.

Not surprisingly Laura knew of none of these groups. She will not be the only one in Tottenham.

7:00 PM - 12:30 AM

It is slowly but surely getting dark outside. This also increases the proportion of police officers on the street. We can't be traveling for more than two minutes without running into police officers, usually a man and a woman. So far we have only seen white police officers. They wear yellow safety vests that say "community support." This so-called support does not mean that they aren't armed. On the contrary, they are in full gear with just different vests than the other police officers.

What we observe: the police patrolling in vehicles and at every few meters the stop without reason cars to control the drivers. Some of them hide around corners, some behind a bus station such that oncoming drivers cannot see the police car behind it. They not only search the car and write down the information from their identity cards, they also interrogate the drivers asking where they were for the past few days and also urge them to tell if any of the drivers' friends or family participated in the "riots." Not surprisingly we see how the police officers control only the black residents and immigrants with a slightly darker skin tone. Not so much amongst the pedestrians on the street but amongst the car drivers there is a significant proportion of white people. But during our entire stay the police never stopped them once. We constantly hear police car sirens. Likewise, we see how every hour a helicopter makes several rounds over Tottenham.

We notice a phone booth that was destroyed, but only the glass was smashed. The phone itself works perfectly. Also the glass was shattered at many bus stops. Traffic sign posts are slightly bent. The latter probably happened rather before the uprising when cars had sideswiped them, as a single activist would not have the force to bend them. Today we did not see a single dwelling or a single shop that was destroyed. The only things we saw destroyed were: four betting offices (two William Hills, Coral, and one other), a bank, two ATMs, bus stops and the mentioned phone booth.

Despite or perhaps because of the constant police patrols, it remains calm this night – if one leaves aside the constant police harassment. We got news about the ongoing arrest of activists. It is said that there have been more than 1,600 arrested today. The repression seems to be in full force. We suspect that the climax of the uprisings has been crossed. The current slowdown will continue for some time. A massive wave of reactionary agitation is sweeping the country which is hard to put into words. We get several newspapers, all of which denounce the rebels as "looters" and proclaim one or another store owner as a "local hero" because they were against the alleged hooligans and were set up for defense. Interestingly there were no blacks amongst these "local heroes" but most were white with a few migrants thrown in.

The rag "London Evening Standard" (a free newspaper) even launched a campaign report with the slogan "SOS - Save Our Shops!" On the way home, after midnight, we

read in today's edition an article about the uncle of Mark Duggan. He is a supposed felon and had more weapons stockpiled than a police station. This clearly attempts to defame Duggan, who was executed by the police, as a member of a family of crime. It is particularly obvious, especially in such reports, that "independent press" does not exist. Under the class system, the press writes in the service of the ruling class. The ruling class in Britain has an interest in denouncing the uprising. The bourgeoisie press is an important tool for this.

We get ready and go home. It's after midnight and leaving aside the police operations there are no further incidents. It is very quiet on the streets. We realize how unusual this is because normally most shops were open until midnight.

(1) Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting: These are not „riots“ – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain! The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!; Michael Pröbsting: The August uprising of the poor and nationally and racially oppressed in Britain: What would a revolutionary organisation have done?; Michael Pröbsting: Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward.

(2) Committee for a Workers International. The English section is the Socialist Party.

(3) Socialist Workers Party, British section of the International Socialist Tendency whose historic leader has been the deceased Tony Cliff.

(4) Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. A left-Stalinist party based in Turkey/North Kurdistan which has a base amongst migrants in Western Europe. ■



Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left

The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward

by Michael Pröbsting

The uprising in Britain in August 2011 was a historic event. It marked the entering of the class struggle by the lower strata of the working class and the nationally and racially oppressed. As we – the *Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation* (RKOB) – already stated in our publications these so called riots were in reality an explosive uprising. (1) Despite all its limitations and weaknesses it was definitely one of the most important class struggles in Britain since the miner strike 1984/85. It brought thousands and thousands of working class youth, black and migrants on the streets fighting against the police and expressing their anger. It forced the Tory/Liberal-Democrat government to mobilise 16.000 police men and women on the street to put down the uprising and even to consider the use of the army against its own population.

This uprising was a sign of the things to come. A correct assessment of this event, drawing the right conclusion and employing the necessary revolutionary tactics are of decisive importance because in the coming years we will see a number of similar spontaneous uprisings of the lower or middle strata of the proletariat. And we will see such events not only in Britain again but also in a number of other imperialist countries.

Why is this case? Because world capitalism has entered a new historic period of its decline in which its inner contradictions are increasing enormously. Mankind is faced with the alternative “socialism or barbarism”. As a result of the qualitative increase of the class contradictions the class struggle is sharpening rapidly compared to the years before the revolutionary period begun. This is why we see in the last two years more and more (pre-)revolutionary (and counter-revolutionary) developments like the Arab revolution, the general strikes and mass occupation movements in Spain and Greece and now the August uprising in Britain. This is why the RKOB characterise the present historic period as a revolutionary one.

Only if one puts the August uprising in Britain in this context one can understand its importance and meaning. Only if one understands this context it is possible to prepare for future uprisings and to help overcome the crisis of leadership. Because only if a revolutionary party with roots in the working class and particularly its lower and oppressed strata, the most active and militant elements in class struggle, can be built in time, only then will it be possible to overcome the weaknesses of the August uprising – its lack of organisation, direction and its lack of connection with the other layers of the working class. And only then it will be possible to connect such uprisings with a general strike movement of the whole proletariat leading up to an armed insurrection to overthrow the ruling class.

The RKOB has already explained in two articles and our comrades from the delegation which we sent to London in these days argued on the streets that the central tasks for revolutionaries in the days of uprising were:

- * to join the movement and therefore to participate actively in the uprisings
- * to participate in the struggle to drive the police out of the areas
- * to argue for steps to organise of self-defence units
- * to agitate for mass assemblies and the formation of councils of actions
- * to argue against looting and burning of property of common people and for actions by self-defence units from the activists to prevent this happening
- * to agitate for the spreading of the uprising
- * to call the workers movement (the trade unions, the left-wing parties etc.) to join the uprising and to mobilise now against the cuts (instead of waiting for Autumn) and to connect the uprising with a general strike movement

I. An Uprising which the left missed

One of the most striking features of the August Uprising is that the self-proclaimed socialist, revolutionary organisations were not involved in it. It was a five-day uprising of the poor sectors of the masses in which the petty bourgeois left simply missed out. Of course this or that individual member was on the streets, but neither the Socialist Workers Party (International Socialist Tendency, SWP/IST), the Socialist Party (Committee for a Workers International, SP/CWI), Socialist Appeal (International Marxist Tendency, SA/IMT), the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) nor Workers Power (League for the Fifth International, WP/LFI) have called for joining the uprising nor did they have an organised intervention trying to give the uprising an organisation, direction and guidance.

This in itself is a devastating fact for a left who claims to fight for the working class, for the poor, the youth, the black and the migrant minorities. The uprising was a historic test for a number of international centrist organisations because Britain is the home of the mother sections – usually the numerically strongest groups and certainly the location of its historic cadre base – of a number of international so-called Trotskyist tendencies (like the SWP/IST, the SP/CWI, SA/IMT and WP/LFI). Add to this that the heart of the uprising was in London where all these groups have their centre and a substantial number of cadres and members.

So in opposite to other sharp class struggles in the past which happened in countries with none or only a small presence and where these tendencies could therefore confine themselves to produce this or that resolution – or to intervene with one or two cadres - , this time they had to demonstrate their politics in words and deeds in an uprising which took place at their front door.

Our criticism is not that the British left were not strong enough to lead the uprising. This was impossible given their failures in the past years and decades to build roots

amongst the poorer strata of the working class and the nationally and racially oppressed. But given the fact that there are today let us say one, two or three thousand socialists in London it would have been definitely possible to influence the uprising, to help the youth take steps to organise against the police and they could have definitely had a political impact on the consciousness of these layers. They could have helped to form the political consciousness of thousands and thousands of young fighters for the coming years. Years in which we will certainly see more struggles, strikes and insurrections. The British left could have done this ... but they did not. This failure is not accidentally. It is the result of historic weaknesses in theory, programme and practice.

II. Understanding of the August Uprising

Of course the bourgeoisie was frightened by the August Uprising and unleashed a huge propaganda wave of hatred against the rebellious youth and oppressed. This is not surprising, indeed in a class society it cannot be otherwise as that the ideological apparatus – to which the media (including the internet) belongs – serves the ruling class. Those who own the media apparatus call the shots. However if the bourgeois journalists write not for the masses, but for the ruling class, they don't need to create an ideological fog but have a more realistic understanding of what is going on. A good example for this is a recent article in one of mouth pieces of monopoly capital, the US Forbes Magazine, called: *"The U.K. Riots and the Coming Global Class War"*. This article, shortly published after the Uprising, openly describes this event as part of the class struggle and as a phenomena which will globally spread: *"The riots that hit London and other English cities last week have the potential to spread beyond the British Isles. Class rage isn't unique to England; in fact, it represents part of a growing global class chasm that threatens to undermine capitalism itself."* (2)

The author fears that this will lead to a strengthening of right-wing and left-wing extremism: *"This expanding class war creates more intense political conflicts."* The article concludes pessimistically from the bourgeoisies' point of view: *"But modern society (...) must deliver results to the vast majority of citizens. If capitalism cannot do that expect more outbreaks of violence and greater levels of political alienation – not only in Britain but across most of the world's leading countries, including the U.S."*

And indeed the whole reaction of the British government to the uprising demonstrates that they understand it as a serious danger, as a spontaneous form of revolutionary class struggle of the lower strata of the proletariat. This is the reason why the Cameron government mobilised 16.000 police officers on the streets and threatened to use of the army against the uprising. This is why the government is now imposing a 30-day ban of any demonstrations and marches. (3) In short: the counterrevolutionary measures of the British government show that the ruling class understood the revolutionary potential of the August Uprising.

But not only does monopoly capital understand the class struggle character of the Uprising. Also a number of people and organisations with roots amongst the oppressed characterise it as a justified rebellion, not simply as riots. As we already quoted in our recent articles the 68-year-old

former black civil rights activist Darcus Howe expressed very well what is involved in the so-called "riots" in Britain's cities. In an interview with the BBC (which this capitalist state television put off soon from their website), he explained:

"I don't call it rioting, I call it an insurrection of the masses of the people! It is happening in Syria, it is happening in Clapham, it is happening in Liverpool, it is happening in Puerto Spain, it is happening in Chile then, it is the nature of an historical moment!"

Another well-known anti-racist writer, the Tamil-born director of the Institute of Race Relations and long-time editor of the Journal *Race & Class*, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, wrote a statement at the end of the Uprising which stated defiantly: *"This is not the end of rebellion – it is the beginning"* (4) And John Pilger, also a radical journalist, characterised clearly the so-called riots as an *"insurrection"*. (5)

Several organisations with direct or indirect links with the oppressed layers of the black and migrant people also made clear that they do not consider the Uprisings as simply riots or "mindless acts of violence". The Black-nationalist *African People's Socialist Party* and the *Uhuru Solidarity Movement* called for *"Solidarity with the rebellions in Britain!"* and stated: *"We support the right of the African community to fight back against the injustice and oppression imposed on their communities by the British white power government. The Uhuru Solidarity Movement is in unconditional solidarity with the African population of Britain who are courageously resisting the oppression and colonial domination of their communities. (...) It is this relationship between colonizer and colonized that is at the root of what is happening right now on the streets of London."* (6)

While we criticise the characterization that the Uprising is "a conflict between colonizer and colonized" as false it is certainly correct to refer to the relationship of imperialist oppression behind this event.

And despite its ultra-Stalinist policy the CPGB-ML – with its chairman Harpal Brar, who was the long-time leader of the *Indian Workers' Association* in Britain – managed to understand better than many so-called Trotskyists what was the meaning of the August Uprising. Instead of describing the uprising as about criminal looting, they did put it in the context of the *"working class fight back"*. (7)

Of course all these people and organisations mentioned above have no political perspective for the Uprising to win. They offer – if anything – a black-nationalist or Stalinist, abstract-propagandist outlook. Therefore they present only ways which weaken the working class and harm it. But as we will see, in opposition to the majority of the left-reformist and centrist forces they *at least* recognised that these so-called riots were an authentic uprising of the youth and the oppressed.

III. Žižek: The August Uprising as a "zero-degree protest". Or how a zero-philosopher is frightened by the reality of class struggle

But before we deal with these organisations we want to refer our readers to the assessment of Slavoj Žižek, one of the favourite intellectuals of the British left and a philosopher of the radical wing of the petty bourgeoisie. His attitude to the August Uprising is characteristic of the approach of the middle class left. He wrote in an article in the online-edition of the *London Review of Books*:

“Although the riots in the UK were triggered by the suspicious shooting of Mark Duggan, everyone agrees that they express a deeper unease – but of what kind? As with the car burnings in the Paris banlieues in 2005, the UK rioters had no message to deliver. (There is a clear contrast with the massive student demonstrations in November 2010, which also turned to violence. The students were making clear that they rejected the proposed reforms to higher education.) This is why it is difficult to conceive of the UK rioters in Marxist terms, as an instance of the emergence of the revolutionary subject; they fit much better the Hegelian notion of the ‘rabble’, those outside organised social space, who can express their discontent only through ‘irrational’ outbursts of destructive violence – what Hegel called ‘abstract negativity’. (...) If the commonplace that we live in a post-ideological era is true in any sense, it can be seen in this recent outburst of violence. This was zero-degree protest, a violent action demanding nothing. In their desperate attempt to find meaning in the riots, the sociologists and editorial-writers obfuscated the enigma the riots presented. The protesters, though underprivileged and de facto socially excluded, weren’t living on the edge of starvation. People in much worse material straits, let alone conditions of physical and ideological oppression, have been able to organise themselves into political forces with clear agendas. The fact that the rioters have no programme is therefore itself a fact to be interpreted: it tells us a great deal about our ideological-political predicament and about the kind of society we inhabit, a society which celebrates choice but in which the only available alternative to enforced democratic consensus is a blind acting out. Opposition to the system can no longer articulate itself in the form of a realistic alternative, or even as a utopian project, but can only take the shape of a meaningless outburst. What is the point of our celebrated freedom of choice when the only choice is between playing by the rules and (self-)destructive violence?”

(8)

Žižek’s statement is a perfect example of the reactionary nature of the left-wing intelligentsia which in the hour of sharp class struggle denounces the rebels from the proletariat and the oppressed. Furthermore it summarises the arrogance of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals towards the proletariat and expresses the gross distance – no, let us better say the abyss – between such intellectuals and the mass of the proletariat.

First Žižek claims that the working class fighters *“had no message to deliver”*. The Uprising was according to him a *“meaningless outburst”*, a *“‘irrational’ outbursts of destructive violence”*, a *“zero-degree protest, a violent action demanding nothing”*. This can only be said by an intellectual who didn’t participate in the uprising, who refuses to read or to understand the many reports of eye-witnesses and who considers the fighters to be *“ferals”* or *“stupid animals”*. The whole chronology of the August Uprising starting with the police murder of Mark Duggan and the violent suppression of the protest rally on 5th August, the numerous statement of activists reported in the media, our own experience of the RKOBS delegation in conversations with the people in Tottenham and Enfield – all this makes it completely obvious that the hatred against the police, against the racist discrimination, against the poverty and the system behind it were the causes and the motivation for the rebellion. The problem is not the *“zero-degree protest”* but the zero-degree understanding of the revolt by a middle class intellectual.

It is only logical that Žižek slanders the rebellious working class youth as *“rabble”* – abusing poor old Hegel. It is not

a far way to conclude from the *“rabble”* to the *“feral”* of Cameron and his right wing propagandists.

Žižek tries to present his slander as philosophical wisdom with his reference to Hegel’s *‘abstract negativity’*. But we Marxists know that movement is impossible without negativity – indeed Lenin spoke about *“negativity, which is the inherent pulsation of self-movement and vitality”* (9) Negativity is a step towards Negation, part of the movement of the contradictions. Politically speaking the spontaneous August Uprising of the poor and oppressed was a step on their contradictory road in acting as a revolutionary subject – despite the denial of the zero-philosopher.

Finally Žižek arrogantly compares the rabble rioters to the university student demonstrating in November 2010. The unruly spontaneous protest of university students is great (these are the people whom Žižek teaches every day) while the unruly spontaneous protest of the dangerous *“rabble”* (with whom people like Žižek hardly ever have contact) is dangerous and *“mindless”*. It is true that the working class youth in the poor districts are not well organised in parties and unions. This is not their fault, but the fault of the labour movement. It is therefore not surprising that they did not formally present petitions and declarations. It is also quite possible that they are not as educated as the university students who could explain more eloquently their demands to the media. So what, Mister Philosopher?! You better learn the language and the desire of the working class – go to the areas where they live and support their struggle and efforts to organising. If not, Mr. Žižek, stay at your university but please spare us with your wisdom about the working class, black and migrant youth whom you slander as *“rabble”*!

It is a shame that many leftists praise Žižek as a Marxist philosopher. This tells us a lot about the understanding of Marxism of these leftists. In fact reading Žižek’s assessment of the Uprising is important because it expresses – on a *“philosophical”* level – the approach of the left-wing middle class and labour aristocracy to the violent forms of class struggle of the lower strata of the proletariat. To a certain degree he acts today as the philosopher of petty bourgeois left-wing aristocratism.

Some time ago comrade Simon Hardy from the League for the Fifth International published a good critique of Slavoj Žižek and correctly characterised him as an *“idealist Trojan horse”*, writing *“but he is in fact a Trojan horse, smuggling in idealist and anti revolutionary concepts into the left.”* (10) But today as the LFI and its British section Workers Power have ceased to be a revolutionary organisation they promote Žižek’s reactionary article about the Uprising on their own website. (11) Without a single word of critique in their preface readers of the WP website are invited to join Žižek denouncing of the *“zero-degree protest”* of the *“rabble”*. It reflects the sentiments about the August Uprising and the political degeneration of the LFI/WP leadership that such a reactionary statement can find praise and promotion on its website!

It is the arrogant reaction of the pseudo-Marxists to the spontaneous uprisings of the masses. The Russian Marxist fighter, Vladimir Lenin, wrote a polemic in his preface to the Russian translation of Karl Marx’s letters to Kugelmann in 1907 against the Menshevik Intellectual Plekhanov, who was an old leader of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Plekhanov condemned the defeated Revolution of 1905 in Russia, moaning that the *“masses should not have*

taken up arms". Plekhanov compared himself even with Marx, who was warning the masses in Paris in September 1870 that the insurrection under the concrete circumstances would be an act of desperate folly. Whilst Marx warned the masses in advance he didn't hesitate a single moment to support their struggle half a year later culminating the Uprising of the Paris Communes in March 1871. He rather expressed full enthusiasm, developed tactics to guide the masses, to show them the next steps forward combined with the perspectives in their concrete struggle.

Lenin wrote about this in his polemic against Plekhanov: *"The historical initiative of the masses was what Marx prized above everything else. Ah, if only our Russian Social-Democrats would learn from Marx how to appreciate the historical initiative of the Russian workers and peasants in October and December 1905!*

Compare the homage paid to the historical initiative of the masses by a profound thinker, who foresaw failure six months ahead – and the lifeless, soulless, pedantic: "They should not have taken up arms"! Are these not as far apart as heaven and earth?

And like a participant in the mass struggle, to which he reacted with all his characteristic ardour and passion, Marx, then living in exile in London, set to work to criticise the immediate steps of the "recklessly brave" Parisians who were "ready to storm heaven".

Ah, how our present "realist" wiseacres among the Marxists, who in 1906-07 are deriding revolutionary romanticism in Russia, would have sneered at Marx at the time! How people would have scoffed at a materialist, an economist, an enemy of utopias, who pays homage to an "attempt" to storm heaven! What tears, condescending smiles or commiseration these "men in mufflers" would have bestowed upon him for his rebel tendencies, utopianism, etc., etc., and for his appreciation of a heaven-storming movement!" (12)

Žižek today as well as all "Marxists" who share his sentiments on the August Uprisings, including the LFI/WP leadership, sneered at the masses on the streets and the ones who are really participating in their fight. If this behaviour would be characteristic for Marxists, than Marx would not have been one.

In contrary to the behaviour of LFI/WP leadership a delegation of the RKOB from Austria went to Britain to agitate day and night in the working class districts of London and to participate in the struggle of the proletarian youth. Of course there have been a lot of weaknesses of these struggles and one can even say that the perspective of the developments, i.e. the massive repression afterwards, could have been foreseen. But Marxism includes a very simple principle: If the proletarian masses are on the streets fighting against the bourgeois state apparatus revolutionaries have to participate, have to develop the correct tactics for this struggle. Wiseacres can sneer at the masses (the revolutionary masses will sneer back at them too) but if they dare to call themselves Marxists they have to be unmasked.

IV. Lootings and the illusion of "pure" Insurrections

It is no surprise that the bourgeoisie, the reformist bureaucracy and their mouth pieces utilise the looting as a pretext to denounce the August Uprising as criminal and apolitical. It is a shame that the majority of the centrist left adapts to this "public opinion" and emphasizes the criminal, looting character of the uprising.

But in fact history has seen many protests which involved mass violence and looting. For example in Vienna in 1911 mass protests occurred against the inflation of food prices. When the police dispersed the demonstrators with brutal force and killed several of them riots broke out.

The social democratic leader Otto Bauer wrote at that time about the forms of this uprising:

"In whole districts of Vienna there was no house, no window, no lantern which was still intact. In the working class district Ottakring school building and tram wagons were set on fire. Barricades were build, the soldiers shoot at the people and behind the enraged masses the lumpen proletariat looted the shops." (13)

Marxists take the class struggle as it is. They do not raise arrogantly their noses if the masses do not organise the way they would like them to. If an anti-colonial uprising included the "senseless" slaughtering of white settlers and their families and the destruction of property this certainly could never have stopped revolutionaries to support this uprising (while of course rejecting all harmful actions). When the national uprising of the Tibetans erupted in March 2008 it also involved a number of attacks against the Chinese and the destruction of their shops. Again only a Stalinist or a reactionary lump could have refused support for this progressive national liberation struggle (again this has to be combined with sharp propaganda and agitation against nationalism). Also today many spontaneous mass protests are accompanied with such features as looting and burning. One just has to look to the hunger revolts of the last years. The author of this article himself saw such results of a spontaneous insurrection when he was in Argentina after the *revolutionary days* in December 2001.

A number of socialists are prepared to accept this argument ... if it is about events far away. But at home where the pressure of the bourgeois public and the petty-bourgeois milieu of the reformist bureaucracy is strong, they "forget" this, i.e. they capitulate to the pressure of the class enemy.

It is characteristic of the reformist and centrist left that many of them approach an uprising by judging it if it meets the standards of a "pure", peaceful and orderly protest. To avoid any misunderstanding: We Marxists say that looting of small shops, burning of shops which can even lead to the destruction of working class homes are wrong. But what various left reformists and centrists do is that they claim that such looting of small shops, burning of houses – the "mindless destruction of the working class community" – were the main feature the essence of the uprising. This is nothing else than capitulation to the British bourgeois public opinion produced by the ruling class, their Tory government and their servants at the top of the Labour movement.

Without claiming to have a full picture it is worth mentioning that when our comrades from the RKOB delegation visited Tottenham it was visible that small shops were not the targets of destruction but supermarkets and betting shops were.

Yes, if the revolutionary party is a mass party and has an organised workers militia we would have stopped the looting of small shops and similar destructive acts. But this is not the case today and the revolutionary party will be built via struggles which are either spontaneous or under the leadership of the reformist bureaucracy. Revolutionaries take developments in class struggle with the masses on the streets as they are; they join the masses with a given

consciousness and fight inside the militant masses for the correct, the consequent revolutionary line.

As Marxists we denounce all those who claim that the looting is the essential, the main characteristic of the August Uprising. Yes, there were many weaknesses in the uprising. But this is natural for a spontaneous movement. And even organised mass movements can and do have many weaknesses. Let us not forget the huge weaknesses of the peaceful protests or the orderly general strikes. Does anyone seriously believe that they are sufficient to bring down a government?!

“But the August Uprising with its destructions weakened the popular support and divided the working class!” – the centrists say to cover their betrayal. But Marxists reply that it often happens if the oppressed rise up that the backward layers of the working class are opposed to it. Many workers in Germany initially opposed the student uprising in the 1960s. Many white workers in the USA opposed the black insurrection in Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore etc in the same decade. And does anyone believe if the public transport workers, the hospital workers or the kindergarten workers go on strike that the majority of the working class always supports them?!

No, all these reference to the wrong actions of the oppressed which divide the working class are a reflection of the failure to withstand the pressure of the bourgeois public opinion and the labour bureaucracy by the reformist and centrist left.

The leader of the Bolshevik party, Vladimir Illich Lenin, once wrote about the contradictory nature of mass uprisings:

„To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.-to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says, “We are for socialism”, and another, somewhere else and says, “We are for imperialism”, and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a “putsch”.

Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But objectively, the mass movement was breaking the hack of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it – without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible – and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will

attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for difficult reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately “purge” itself of petty-bourgeois slag.” (14) These observations are particularly true today in the period of capitalist decay, mass upheavals and at the same time a lack of revolutionary leadership.

V. Failure of the Left to understand the nature of the so-called “riots”

Most on the reformist and centrist left failed to understand the riots as a justified uprising, as a rebellion of the oppressed, in short as a form of class struggle. Of course nearly every progressive person (even some parts of the bourgeois media did this) points to the deeper reason for the riots - the misery and unemployment caused by capitalism and now escalated by the Tory policy of cuts in social service. And how can one overlook the fact that the uprising was triggered by the police killing of Mark Duggan and the violent reaction of the racist police forces against the community’s peaceful protest?! Of course how could one ignore the misery caused by mass unemployment and impoverishment?! This connection is no mystery even for the liberals. But most of the left don’t draw the conclusion out of this – to understand that the riots are an (often semi- or unconscious) expression of anger and hatred against the forces and symbols of the capitalist system (police, shops). This is why we called it from the beginning an uprising of the poor and the oppressed.

In addition to this is has the nature of a *spontaneous uprising of the masses*. This means of course that facing the weaknesses of the leadership of the labour movement, this kind of protest was unavoidable badly organized. Everyone who is arrogantly wrinkling his nose because of the lack of organized structures has not understood the depth of the leadership crisis, is not seeing the tragedy lying in the betrayal from the reformist leaderships of the trade unions and its organizations. How can anybody who calls himself a Marxist blame the masses in acting spontaneously and to a certain degree also chaotic? The centrist left has its structures and organization, but everyone who is more than just a Marxist by name stands nearer to the unorganized and “chaotic” proletarian youth on the streets during the uprisings than to every organization in the centrist and reformist spectrum. There is a time for discussions and a time for actions. When parts of our class are on the street, fighting against the police and the capitalist system than we have to be there too, proving that we are in solidarity with the masses not only as an idea but in real actions.

Stalinist CPB / YCL

Instead various left-reformist and centrist organisation have openly condemned and denounced the uprising. The Stalinists from the Communist Party of Britain – whose leadership just came back from visiting and congratulating their “comrades” in the Chinese Communist Party (for what? For successfully building China’s emerging imperi-

alism?!) (15) – condemned the uprising and demonstrated that it is a reformist obstacle for the class struggle. In a statement “*No to violence, but capitalism is the root cause of alienation*” its youth organisation managed not only to “*condemn the reckless violence and widespread criminality of recent nights*” but also made the bourgeois media responsible for it because ... it gave too much coverage to the unorganised, spontaneous square occupation movement in Spain and the Arab world!

“The Young Communist League supports the call of the youth of London for justice and for a future. We condemn the reckless violence and widespread criminality of recent nights but understand it as a direct product of the capitalist system, and the resulting dangerous lack of security and stability for the youth of today, accompanied by disenfranchisement and exacerbated by unprecedented levels of alienation. Additionally, the chaotic manner in which the youth are expressing their anger is just one dangerous consequence of the promotion by the bourgeois media of “indignant peoples” protest, protest without organisation, called through social media and without structure, democracy, leadership or clear politics.” (16)

So the bourgeois media are responsible for the riots ... because they report about the mass protests and revolutions in the Arab world and Southern Europe! The Stalinist bureaucrats are disappointed that the media reports about mass uprisings instead of the glorious achievements of the Communist Party in Britain. The official state media in the Stalinist states before 1989 certainly would not have allowed such failures! The only kernel of truth in this utterly reactionary statement of the CPB/YCL is their unintended recognition of similarities and connections between the uprisings in the Arab world, Southern Europe and Britain. But as the CPB disregards the popular uprising in Libya as a CIA-sponsored conspiracy against the “anti-imperialist” Gaddafi-regime it is understandably not amused by the violent character against the order of His Majesty in their own backyard. Well, this reactionary statement of the CPB/YCL hardly needs any further comment.

Socialist Party / Committee for a Workers International

The so-called Trotskyist Socialist Party/CWI also stated in various statements its condemnation of the uprising:

“The Socialist Party does not support rioting as a method of protest, but we place the blame for what has taken place firmly on the Con-Dem government and say that it must be removed.” (17)

The SP in Liverpool expressed the same sentiment in even stronger terms:

“Liverpool & District Socialist Party is appalled at the current rioting which has resulted in the destruction of working peoples’ homes, workplaces, and the community facilities and shops they rely on.” (18)

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

“However, rioting is not the means to defeat the government, but, on the contrary, only damages the communities in which working-class people live, and gives the capitalist class an excuse to increase the repressive apparatus of the state.

The Socialist Party does not agree with those on the left who condone the riots, such as the Socialist Workers Party, whose

posters in the areas affected by riots declare them to be a step from ‘riot to revolution’.” (19)

The latest SP’s youth campaign added in its leaflet another argument for opposing the riots: “*But we will not defeat the government by rioting. On the contrary, the destruction of homes and services hugely exacerbates the problems our community faces.*” (20)

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

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

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

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

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

“Well yes, a change in society, established through winning a majority in elections, backed up by a mass movement to prevent the capitalists from overthrowing a socialist government and fighting, not to take over every small shop, every betting shop or every street corner shop -- in any case, they are disappearing because of the rise of the supermarkets -- and so on, or every small factory, but to nationalise a handful of monopolies, transnationals now, that control 80 to 85% of the economy.” (21)

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." (22)

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

„The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution.“ (23)

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

„The proletarian revolution is impossible without the forcible destruction of the bourgeois state machine...“ (24)

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

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

„The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker. Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain.“ (25)

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

against the police?! These centrists don't care. Instead they praise the reformist policy of *“controlling”* the police:

“For control of the police to be placed under the auspices of democratically elected local committees involving representatives from trade unions, councils, tenants associations, and community organisations.“ (26)

This is of course a completely illusory, wrong perspective. We don't need stupid hopes in reforming the police but rather decisive steps to organize armed self-defense units against the police. If police men and women are really standing on the side of the working class, they will leave the oppression apparatus to join such organs of self-defense. The only way to be a *“worker in uniform”* is possible via the total break with the police background, i.e. quitting this job, swapping the police uniform with the uniforms of the working class militias. As long as one stands in the duty of the apparatus oppressing the working class, he or she is not part of this class. What counts is not what police men or women are thinking, but rather what they are doing.

Socialist Appeal / International Marxist Tendency

Similarly reactionary was the position of Alan Woods' Socialist Appeal/International Marxist Tendency which operates since 1964 (until 1991 as part of the CWI) as a left opposition inside the social democratic Labour Party. Like the CWI the SA/IMT in its leaflet mixed together and presented as an identical thing the resistance against the police, the looting of Tesco, Aldi etc and the few incidents of burning houses. It went even further in its use of reactionary terminology than the CWI and compared the uprising with *“cancer”*:

“Do Marxists condone rioting, looting and vandalism? No, of course we do not. We do not condone cancer, either. But as everybody knows, it is not enough to condemn cancer. It is necessary to discover its causes and find a cure. We reject rioting and looting utterly.“ (27)

Again we see the denunciatory lumping together of the fight against the police, destruction of gambling clubs, looting of super-markets and vandalism against homes and cars. This is what the bourgeois media, the government etc. already do massively. What a shame that so-called Marxists help them in arguing similarly!

No, comrades of the IMT leadership, the cancer is not the riots but the Labour bureaucrats and their left fig leaves that disorganize and obstruct the struggle against the cuts. The youth, the poor, the nationally and racially oppressed are not part of the problem (the cancer) but they are part of the solution. They can be a decisive force to revitalize the workers movement, to bring in a revolutionary spirit and to build a revolutionary party.

As with the CWI the IMT condemnation of the Uprising is related with their refusal of the violent class struggle, their reformist conception of the peaceful transformation of the capitalist state and the illusory hope that the labour bureaucrats could overcome their petty-bourgeois essence and become servants of the working class:

„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 reformist leaders.“ (28)

And like the CWI the IMT too believes that the bourgeois parliament could become a vehicle for socialist transformation. Their leader Alan Woods claims that Portugal – in fact an example of the impossibility to utilise the state apparatus for socialism – in 1974 is a good example for his reformist theory:

“Under these circumstances, there is not the slightest question, not only that the revolution in Portugal could have been carried out peacefully, but that it could have been done through parliament.” (29)

No surprise that the IMT also dreams the dream of the police as “workers in uniform”.

Alliance for Workers Liberty

The AWL also joined the chorus of those condemning the uprising:

“No one with any sense will endorse, still less glorify or romanticise, the four-day outbreak of street violence, random destruction and pitiful looting that swept over Britain last week.” (30)

Representative for a whole strand in the left they blame the uprising for dividing the working class and community. Rather the opposite is the case: Actions like the uprisings of the poorer strata of the working class can be very useful and inspiring for the rest of our class. They show readiness in taking militant forms of action. They show fearlessness in class struggle, which is rooted in poverty and daily oppression that can't be shaken off. And they show how urgent the building of the revolutionary party is which organizes these fearless militants, and which leads the struggle to success.

So instead of the putting the responsibility for all failures and weaknesses to whom they belong - to the left-wing bureaucrats in the labour and student movement with whom the AWL leaders are regularly collaborating and who failed to build a indefinite general strike movement against the government, and who failed to integrate the poorer strata of the working class into the struggle - the AWL put the blame for the divide on the youth who are fighting!

“They will be further alienated from the young people in Lewisham, Peckham, Nottingham. The rioting will alienate the organised labour movement, even those large sections of it which will instinctively sympathise with the plight of the people in the riot hit areas. These outbreaks in areas with large black population, and involving young black people, cannot fail to stimulate and strengthen racism. They will help those such as the EDL in fomenting a ‘them and us’ view of British society. The fact that Asian and Muslim shops have been burned out and looted and that many of the rioters were white will not lessen or off-set that.” (31)

What a shameful blaming of the fighters against the police albeit not surprisingly coming from an organisation which has political positions like supporting Zionism and defending the existence of the racist Apartheid state Israel!

As a side note one cannot fail to mention that all these right-wing centrist organisations with their open condemnation of the so called riots were more backward and right wing than the openly reformist Labour Representation Committee (LRC) chaired by the left-wing Labour MP John McDonnell! In its statement – distributed as a leaflet in London – the LRC at least did not openly condemn the uprising. (32)

Finally we want to draw our reader's attention to the fact that these very same organisations – like the Stalinists, SP/CWI, SA/IMT etc. – supported the chauvinist strike in the campaign “*British Jobs for British Workers*” in 2009. (33) At that time British workers at the Lindsey Oil Refinery wanted to stop the hiring of migrant workers – a social-chauvinist campaign which Marxist revolutionaries correctly condemned sharply.

This correlation is of course no accident. It shows the close connection between the left-reformist and centrist social-imperialists, labour-aristocratic prejudices and the open condemnation of the class struggle of the lower strata of the proletariat including the black and migrant communities.

Socialist Workers Party / International Socialist Tendency

To the credit of the SWP they did not join the chorus of the left's condemnation of the so-called riots. Their main failure was that they didn't develop a concrete tactic, a programme for action in the uprising. But we will deal with this later.

What has to be said here is that the SWP failed to grasp the full meaning and importance of the uprising. They failed to see that it was part of a pre-revolutionary development in the British society. Therefore they had no perspective to spread the struggle but dealt with them like an isolated riot in a district somewhere in Britain.

In addition to this they had no aim to organize the black and migrant youth independent from the petit-bourgeois leadership of the communities. This leadership was one of the reasons why it was possible for the ruling class to bring the uprisings to an end. There was a big campaign going on in the communities organized by the leaders to get control over the actions of the migrant and black youth to “bring them home”, i.e. to stop the uprisings.

This is not surprising if one remembers the SWP's opportunistic adaption to the Muslim business men and community leaders when they built together with the RESPECT party for several years in the 2000s. In the end this project failed: the party had no success at the elections and the SWP left RESPECT. But while they have broken with a failed project they have not broken with the popular-frontist method behind it.

Workers Power / League for the Fifth International

Workers Power – an organisation which comes from a revolutionary tradition but which has unfortunately degenerated in the recent past into a centrist direction – had a similar assessment of the situation. They refused the reactionary condemnation of the organisations mentioned above. But they treated the riots as understandable, even justified, but hopeless and perspective-less local uprising. During the uprising the SWP at least touched the question of the connection of riots and the perspective of the revolution. While this was inconsistent and not enough at least they expressed this important idea.

But the erstwhile revolutionary Workers Power group failed even in this. Worse they made concessions to the petty-bourgeois public opinion in relativization of the motivation of the masses in this uprising. In their statement they wrote: “*Some are motivated by hatred of the police and*

rage at this society – others by the promise of raiding local shops for goods – some by both.” (34)

This was the assessment of the two articles which WP published in the two weeks after the beginning of the uprising. Only one and a half weeks after the end of the uprising the WP leadership adopted a resolution which – probably after being reminded how WP assessed similar riots in the past – turned to evaluate the uprising much more positively. The comrades now – like the RKOB – speak about the “so-called riots” and even adopted our name we gave to this event: “*the August Uprising*”. The article also was now more explicit about the character of the uprising. Instead of the “mixed motivations” the WPB leadership accepted now what we said from the beginning:

“In all cases, there were a mix of people, classes and motivations for those who came onto the streets. Like revolutions, so-called ‘riots’ bring people from all the lower classes onto the streets, but this does not mean it is impossible to discern the dominant groups and the main class interests driving the action. It was in the main an uprising of working class youth against police brutality, racism and harassment, and the underlying conditions facing the working class today” (35)

However as we will see this didn’t lead them to any correction of their non-revolutionary policy. In fact only a few words in the official assessment changed which couldn’t have any practical consequences since the Uprising “fortunately” (for WP) was already over. This is why WP can publish an optimistic sounding resolution on the August Uprising and at the same time promote a reactionary condemnation of the Uprising by Žižek. There is no contradiction in this because in essence there is a tendency of Žižekism in the Workers Powers analysis. While they would not use the same words as the philosopher they share his scepticism towards the youth of the lower strata of the working class and their ability to play a central role in the struggle for liberation. That’s why they never orientated towards these layers and why in the past decades hardly recruited anyone from amongst the black, migrant and poorer strata of the working class.

VI. SWP: Solidarity but no revolutionary tactics

Those reformist and centrist forces which condemned the August Uprising naturally didn’t provide any tactics to win the struggle. But even those centrists who refused to condemn the uprising failed in this.

As we already said the SWP positively differentiated itself from other centrists by relating the riots to the perspective of revolution. However such associations in slogans are hardly sufficient as a compass in such days. In fact if one looks at the SWP statement which was also distributed in these days as a leaflet it didn’t contain any tactics for the Uprising.

In their statement the paragraphs which relate to the perspectives said only this:

“We need more protests like the huge demonstration on 26 March and the strike by 750,000 workers on 30 June. Such struggles can unite desperate young people and workers who face job cuts, attacks on pensions, huge wage reductions and worse conditions. We call for the TUC, trade unions, and campaign groups to hurl themselves into the fight against the cuts, poverty and racism. We call for building events such as the demonstration against the English Defence League in east London on 3 September, the protest at the Tory conference in Manchester on 2 October, and

the coordinated strike by more than a million workers planned for November. A real solution to the despair that creates riots will need a different sort of society, where the needs of the vast majority, rather than a tiny elite, come first.” (36)

So while the SWP leadership flirts with the link of riots and revolution when it come to the concrete proposals they refer to the routine menu of the British left – they already pre-planned demonstrations in one, two or three month time. Not a single proposal on how to fight now, how to organise, which demands to raise etc.! “From Riots to Revolution” sounds good but the SWP leadership did not even call for organised self-defence against the police! No, comrades of the SWP, despite the best intentions this is useless as a perspective for an uprising of the masses and it doesn’t help the activists which are now suffering from the massive wave of repression.

The historic – meanwhile deceased – SWP/IST leader Tony Cliff used to joke about the Marxist method of developing programmes and making propaganda for them. He used to say: “*You don’t need the blueprint for a gun you need the gun itself*” Well, the August Uprising is an excellent example that if you don’t have a blueprint you will never be able to build a gun, not even to understand how to build a gun correctly. The SWP refused to develop a method of how to intervene in such struggles, to develop a programme from which one can derive slogans and tactics. As a result it was completely overwhelmed by the Uprising and lacked any perspective. It could not play the role of a vanguard but rather could only applaud what the masses already did and invite them to their next routine demonstrations and meetings.

Behind this failure is – on a theoretical level – the refusal of the Marxist theory of class consciousness. Marx explained at the beginning of Volume I of “*Capital*” that the dual nature of commodities as exchange value and use value creates a so-called “*commodity fetishism*”. (37) Indeed this fetishism is reproduced in all areas of the complex social formation of capitalism. It is doubled and tripled by the huge ideological apparatus of the ruling class (media, School, university etc.). This ideological fog makes it impossible for the workers (and of course even less for other layers) to spontaneously understand the inner mechanism of capitalism and to develop a programme how to smash it. For this – in addition to the collective practice of the proletariat – a scientific analysis is necessary. That’s why Marx noted at the end of Vol. III of “*Capital*”: “*But all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.*” (38)

The organisational vehicle for this – the fusion of theory and practice – is the collective of the revolutionary party which consists of the most class consciousness workers and those non-workers who dedicate themselves to the proletarian liberation struggle. The revolutionary party develops the socialist *Weltanschauung* and the programme for the liberation struggle based on the experience of the past class struggles and transmits this understanding to the mass of the working class. In that sense it brings the socialist class consciousness into the proletariat.

It is not by accident that all the major groups of centrism (SWP/IST, SP/CWI, SA/IMT, the Mandeliste Fourth International) explicitly reject Lenin’s theory of the relationship of consciousness and spontaneity and the role of the party in it which he developed it in his major work “*What is to be done?*”. Lenin explained that the working class can-

not achieve a socialist consciousness spontaneously since it does not arise automatically from the economic sphere of the relationship between workers and capitalists in the enterprise. It is the task of the revolutionary working class organisation to develop a revolutionary outlook from studying all spheres and the relationship between all classes and layers in the capitalist society and to transmit this outlook to the working class. The revolutionaries must do everything possible "to elevate the spontaneity to the level of consciousness" (39)

Lenin therefore summarised the task of Marxists as follows:

„Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes. For that reason, the reply to the question as to what must be done to bring political knowledge to the workers cannot be merely the answer with which, in the majority of cases, the practical workers, especially those inclined towards Economism, mostly content themselves, namely: "To go among the workers." To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions." (40)

Contrary to the claims of the centrists he defended this fundamental understanding until the end of his life:

„On the other hand, the idea, common among the old parties and the old leaders of the Second International, that the majority of the exploited toilers can achieve complete clarity of socialist consciousness and firm socialist convictions and character under capitalist slavery, under the yoke of the bourgeoisie (which assumes an indefinite variety of forms that become more subtle and at the same time more brutal and ruthless the higher the cultural level in a given capitalist country) is also idealisation of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy, as well as deception of the workers. In fact, it is only after the vanguard of the proletariat, supported by the whole or the majority of this, the only revolutionary class, overthrows the exploiters, suppresses them, emancipates the exploited from their state of slavery and immediately improves their conditions of life at the expense of the expropriated capitalists—it is only after this, and only in the actual process of an acute class struggle, that the masses of the toilers and exploited can be educated, trained and organised around the proletariat under whose influence and guidance, they can get rid of the selfishness, disunity, vices and weaknesses engendered by private property; only then will they be converted into a free union of free workers." (41)

This is important to understand since in it are all these mistakes of spontaneism, tailism and opportunism where socialists fail to support the working class by advancing their insight, by explaining what are the conditions of the struggle and what is the way forward to win. But a revolutionary organisation only has legitimacy if it strives to educate, organise and lead the vanguard of the proletariat. Fighting for the revolutionary program and helping the working class to overcome illusions is not an exercise which can be undertaken from outside the struggle. Quite the contrary it necessitates that revolutionaries fight inside the masses, that they participate in the struggle and do not just comment from outside. This again shows how criminal the failure of the so-called revolutionaries was to abstain from joining the Uprising.

The mistakes of the other forces who expressed their solidarity, like the pan-African black nationalists or the Stalinists, are similar. The only answer they had for the struggle was to create a self-reliant black community or build socialism and "join the party" - but no program for the struggle, no tactics how to organise. Again even the most sincere in solidarity with the Uprising failed to advance a set of revolutionary tactics.

The August Uprising and its failure are indeed a tragic and powerful verification of the correctness of Lenin's and Trotsky's understanding of the central role of the revolutionary party. Because a revolutionary party was lacking the masses rose up spontaneously but in an unorganised way and without a clear programme, i.e. clear perspectives for its struggle. That's why they could be defeated after a few days. The bureaucratic leadership of the organised workers movement nearly completely denounced the uprising and as a result the workers movement didn't raise a finger in support of it.

This demonstrates the multiple challenges for the future class struggle: Bolshevik-Communists must both support workers and oppressed to overcome the limits of their spontaneous consciousness and to raise it to a socialist class consciousness. They must do this not only by arguing verbally and in writings but by participating actively in actions of class struggle like the uprisings, and by trying to get strong enough to lead at least a part of the vanguard in these actions. They also have to wage a bitter struggle inside the *organised* workers movement against the treacherous bureaucracy and to rally them behind a revolutionary leadership. Only a strong revolutionary party can achieve this and this is therefore the central task of the coming period.

VII. Cynical Sunshine-Socialism: Workers Power/LFI/ REVOLUTION refuses to join the barricades

Workers Power/LFI and its youth organisation REVOLUTION failed in its biggest test of the class struggle since the miner strike in 1984/85 to act as a revolutionary organisation. It failed both politically and practically. It saw the Uprising as an understandable, justified protest but without any perspective. It did not approach it as a class struggle which revolutionaries join and support but as an event on which it commented but which it refused to join. What is justified in situations in which a handful of anarchists loot without any sort of mass influence and/or support from the working class is a crime during situations like the August uprisings.

In relation to this, they did not treat the tens of thousands of youth as part of the revolutionary subject to change the society.

The main political failures of WP leadership were that:

* It did not call to join and support the Uprising (and therefore also did not participate itself).

* It did not apply a united front tactic in calling the organisations of the workers movement to join, support and spread the Uprising.

* It didn't raise a single proposal to the tens of thousands of youth on how to fight and to spread the struggle except one sentence "we support self-defence".

It is a scandal that the WP leadership failed in their already modest production of propaganda during the Uprising to call for joining the struggle. They preferred to express

sympathy and “understanding” but not to call the workers movement and the youth to come out and join the barricades. But the proletariat is not measuring forces by their “sympathy”, or their (indeed arrogant) “understanding” in words, but by their concrete actions. Therefore while after the end of the Uprising they called the workers movement to defend the poor against the repression, they failed to call the same workers movement during the Uprising to support and join it. Why? Because their failure to understand the Uprising as an important class struggle is related to their opportunistic adaptation to the reformist and centrist left. And for this left it is much easier (i.e. much less risky) to defend victims against victimisation than to support rebels during their rebellion when the whole bourgeois public opinion (including the Labour bureaucracy) denounces them in a hysteric campaign.

WP/REVO’s failure to see the tens of thousands of youth as a revolutionary subject led them to make hardly any proposals for them to fight. Nothing about how to organise in the struggle like calls for mass assemblies in the districts, the formation of councils of action, etc.. Nothing about how to spread the Uprising to other areas of the country. No proposals on how to put pressure on the labour movement to give up its silence or condemnation.

WP claims to be a fighting propaganda group. But in fact they hardly delivered any propaganda during the uprising to the fighters and they have not joined the struggle. A fighting propaganda group is also characterized by its preparedness to participate in struggles. “Revolutionaries” who are not participating in revolutions although they happened at their doorstep can call themselves revolutionaries, but they aren’t (any more). A fighting propaganda group who is not willing to join the struggle of the proletarian masses can call itself a fighting propaganda group but with such an attitude it becomes a laughing stock. They didn’t go to the areas of struggle. They didn’t produce any agitation – they only had their 2-page statement. These statements show that they have no idea what the situation in the proletarian districts is like. They didn’t go to other areas of London to raise support for the Uprising.

As the practical result of this political failure WP/REVO refused to join these tens of thousands of youth at the barricades. Instead they consciously decided to stay away from the Uprising and to remain at home or in their youth camp. In fact they didn’t have any organised intervention in the August Uprising despite its duration of several days and despite the most possible favourite conditions. Very favourite because first the Uprising happened in London, the city where the whole LFI has its strongest local branch. And secondly because at exactly the same time they had from 5-7th August an international REVO conference and from 8-12th August their international REVO summer camp close to London which – according to a public REVO report – was attended by more than 80 people. (42) They easily could have sent a delegation of several dozens of comrades to the Uprising to intervene, to participate, to discuss with people and to learn in concrete struggles together with the proletarian youth. But the leadership strongly intervened against any suggestion from young comrades to join the Uprising.

Instead of intervening in the class struggle the LFI and REVOLUTION enjoyed their summer camp close to London – at the same time when tens of thousands of youth were fighting on the streets! In a public REVO statement

titled “*Summer, sun, socialism - that was our international summer camp this year*” the comrades report about “*interesting workshops*” and the “*opportunity of sports and leisure facilities of the camping grounds*”. “*Every day we watched the events of the ‘riots’ in London and discussed about it at the Camp plenary. So we adopted for example a resolution and an international united front call against police violence and about the conditions for the British youth. Since as a youth organization we also like to fete, we had in the evening parties at a big camp fire or in the community tent. On Thursday “Broken Dialect,” an anti-capitalist hip-hop crew, was our guest and thereafter DJs made music for us. The camp offered a lot of room for members, supporters and contacts to hold political discussions, but also to build new friendships.*” (43)

This official REVO report makes clear what the practical attitude of this organisation is to a mass uprising of the lower strata of the working class which happened in front of their nose. Published two weeks after the Uprising, it is nothing other than a verification and justification of the collapse of LFI/REVO’s revolutionary basic attitude. These sun-shine socialists don’t feel ashamed in any way when they report about their interesting workshops and how they enjoyed their parties in the evening while at the same time the police killed and crushed working class youth which was fighting back on the barricades. And they are bold enough to write “*With the working class youth - against the police!*” at the same time. What a cynicism, what a petty-bourgeois collapse of any basic revolutionary backbone! Every activist participating in the uprisings would be correct to answer to such statements:

Marx once wrote: “*Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes.*” (44) Here we have to say that the LFI/REVO’s complete failure to join a real movement tells us more than a dozen of their programmes. It is easy to support an uprising of the migrants in the French banlieues in autumn 2005 and to develop tactics for them while being far away from France. It is easy to write an action programme for the revolution in Tunisia, Egypt or Libya. But when an uprising of the lower strata of the proletariat happens in their own country, in their own cities (!), they are not capable to implement, not even to develop, the correct tactics or any sort of a revolutionary action programme for the fighters and even refused to join them on the barricades. When there was the uprising of the masses on the Tahrir square in Cairo, the LFI sent two comrades to Egypt to write eye-witness reports. When there was an uprising at home they did not even send comrades to the barricades to – at least – write eye-witness reports, not mentioning the possibility to have an intervention. The absolute majority of the so-called Marxists in LFI/REVO did prefer to have programmatic discussions (and fun) while an uprising happened in the front of their door.

What the WP/LFI/REVO leadership doesn’t understand is that Marxism cannot be learnt and internalised without the participation in the class struggle. Of course a small propaganda group cannot participate in each and every struggle. But we don’t talk about a minor event. We talk about one of the most important class struggles in Britain since 1984/85 in cities where the WP/LFI/REVO had at that time – because of the REVO camp near to London – altogether about 100 people available. This is more than it ever had at any major working class struggle in its whole history!

In a letter to the Spanish youth Trotsky advised his sup-

porters – at a time when the Bolshevik-Leninists also were propaganda groups – that Marxism can only be learnt if theoretical education is combined with “*participating in the life and struggle of the class*”. It is a devastating fact that the WP/LFI/REVO leadership refused to join the working class youth when it was fighting on the barricades:

„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.” (45)

WP claimed in their statement from 8th August: “*Our stance is clear: we are 100% for the people on the streets and against the police*” (46) After the Uprising they wrote big-mouthed: “*The August 2011 riots will be remembered as a working class youth uprising against repression, racism and the recession. Workers Power stands solidly with the youth and against the police.*” (47)

But August 2011 has shown what standing “*100% for the people on the streets and against the police*” means for WP/REVO. Yes, “*the August 2011 riots will be remembered as a working class youth uprising against repression, racism and the recession*”. But it will be also go down in the history of the LFI and REVO as their centrist bankruptcy when at the same time as tens of thousands working class youth did fight on the streets nearly literally in front of their doors

for several days ... these sunshine-socialists preferred to discuss about it every day, adopted a resolution and went to party each night. What else than contempt for such holiday-socialists can a militant black youth, an unemployed white worker, a migrant woman in a precarious job living in Tottenham feel?!

It all ended up in a bizarre, indeed embarrassing situation: Leading LFI comrades gave talks on the inspiring uprisings in North Africa while at the same time a few kilometres away there was a quite inspiring uprising. They had training for self-defence at demonstrations against the police while at the same time they could have practised self-defence with people who were actually fighting the police! Afterwards a leading REVO and LFI comrade reported that at the camp they “*discussed progress every day and REVO’s international leadership adopted a declaration of solidarity with the youths. Yesterday (on 13th August when there was a demo against police repression several days after the end of the Uprising, MP) comrades departed to the city to conduct interviews with young people, to share the flyers and to intervene at a large meeting in one of the universities (...). It feels good to be part of a movement that swims against the tide in this situation, and striving to do what you can to channel the anger and frustration in a struggle to get to the real and underlying problems (...).*”(48) Well, it might feel good to stay in a camp and refuse to join an Uprising. But being a revolutionary in a situation of a mass uprising demands a bit more than “*feeling good*”!

Unfortunately this is not a description of a Monty Python movie but a real soap opera from an erstwhile revolutionary organisation. What comes to one’s mind is the betrayal of the centrist Lambertist group in May 1968. On 10th May

FIGHT



RACISM!

1968 the Lambertist after a meeting marched with hundreds of activists to the Quartier Latin where thousands of students built barricades against the police. After reviewing the situation the Lambertist leaders came to the conclusion that this was only a petty-bourgeois action. They decided to leave the place and walked away. This was at that time correctly denounced as betrayal by nearly all activists of the radical left. And when the LFI was still a revolutionary organisation we characterised this behaviour correctly as “political cowardice” and as a “very unrevolutionary reflex”. (49) But what shall we say about the behaviour of Workers Power today when there is an Uprising not in Paris (or in Cairo or Tripoli) but in London during an assembly of nearly a hundred of their activists?! In fact the WP leadership acted worse than the Lambertists. They did not even walk to the barricades but remained in their camp or at home. They preferred the fun before the fight. In other words, WP/LFI/REVO’s motto was: e-enjoying the party in the tent, instead of joining the barricades to build the party!

When various centrists denounced the uprising of sectors of the oppressed which were defeated by the ruling class (like the Irish Uprising in Dublin in 1916) Lenin replied to them that it is the duty of Marxists to support every rebellion of the oppressed to weaken the bourgeoisie and to go forward in our liberation struggle:

„We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat’s great war of Liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise every popular movement against every single disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are “opposed” to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a “putsch”, we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905.” (50)

In the same spirit Trotsky drew the line between Bolshevism and centrism. While the former calls and supports the oppressed in their struggle, the centrists consider this as “adventurist” and prefer to limit themselves to defend the oppressed:

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

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

The decision of the WP leadership to stay away from the mass uprising is simply a betrayal to the revolutionary goals and the struggle of the working class. This was not a wrong decision of a few persons in a confusing situation. This Menshevik cowardice was pushed by the LFI leaders, confirmed by the decisions of REVOLUTION at their summer camp, confirmed by the WP resolution from 19th August and by official REVO reports published since then. All this demonstrates that the degeneration of WP/LFI/REVO in the recent past has now crossed the Rubicon. They have betrayed the revolutionary method – the fight for the revolutionary program in the class struggle; they have therefore become a left-centrist organisation.

VIII. The failure of the British left and the crisis of leadership

The total failure of the reformist and centrist left in Britain to intervene in the August Uprising is a dramatic example of the crisis of proletarian leadership. Trotsky wrote in his *Transitional Program* in 1938: “The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.” Unfortunately this is even truer today.

Left reformism and centrism in Britain (as in many other countries) adapts or even capitulates to the pressure of the bourgeois public, the labour bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy. They are not capable to swim consistently against this stream. This is why hardly anyone of them openly called to join the Uprising and to spread it. Even those who didn’t condemn the Uprising failed to advance a program of struggle to spread and organise the insurrection.

This opportunism goes hand in hand with the open or hidden refusal by most of the British left of the Leninist theory of party building, of openly fighting against the labour bureaucracy and bringing a socialist class consciousness into the working class.

In addition the Uprising – in which the black and migrants played a central role – showed that the British left has hardly any connections with these oppressed strata. One could see this at the meeting of Coalition of Resistance on 11.8. or the demonstration in Tottenham on 13.8. which the RKOB delegation attended. (52) In both these events black and migrant people were an extremely small minority despite the fact that they were a major force in the August Uprising and constitute the majority in the Tottenham area where the demonstration on 13.8. took place. In Tottenham the Turkish/Kurdish left-Stalinist organisations MLKP and TKP/ML were the only ones which had

political graffiti on the walls.

This is a particularly tragic failure given the fact that the migrants and black play an increasing role in the British society. Today in London only 57% of the population are British White and more than 30% are non-White. (53) It is clear that amongst the mass of the working class and in particular amongst the lower strata the non-white people have an even higher share.

A scientific Marxist understanding of the migrants from semi-colonial countries as national oppressed and super-exploited is now of particularly huge importance. As we have explained somewhere else this was on the most controversial issues in the LFI before we got expelled in April 2011. (54) In our opinion it is important to analyse today the situation of the black and migrant layers of the working class in Britain based on a Marxist method. In our thesis on Migration and revolutionary integration we have developed our understanding of this question. (55)

As we explained repeatedly a revolutionary organisation must not orientate itself primarily to the middle class and the labour aristocracy but towards the middle and lower strata of the proletariat and the oppressed.

Again it is not accidentally that nearly all the groups of the British left (SWP/IST, SP/CWI, SA/IMT, AWL etc.) either openly reject Lenin's theory of the labour aristocracy or consider it as no longer relevant. Or they formally keep it but remove the content and reduce the labour aristocracy to just one of many different social layers of the proletariat without recognising the corruption of them by imperialist super-profits (like WP/LFI).

In the period of decay of capitalism the pressures on the labour aristocracy itself increases. This feature was also very visible in the 1920s and 1930s when the capitalist crisis resulted in the decline of the petty bourgeoisie. So the living conditions of an important part of the labour aristocracy come closer to the mass of the proletariat. This can lead on one hand that sectors of the labour aristocracy join the struggle of the lower and middle strata of the proletariat and one could see (if one looks at the statistics of the mass arrests) that it were not only the poor who joined the Uprising. On the other hand this downward pressure can also lead to the situation that sectors of the labour aristocracy rather join the camp of the counter-revolution. The rise of the English Defence League shows that fascism can become an attractive force again.

The other side of the Menshevik coin is the widespread aristocratic attitude of the left towards the lower strata of the working class and the black and migrants. This is why their ignorance of the Uprising is not accidently. Unfortunately the British left has a strong *political and social middle class DNA* – meaning that many are coming from this strata and don't have the will to win, or even to have regular contact with the lower and middle layer of working class. Workers Power is a good example for this. Despite our repeated proposals in the years before we got expelled they refused to put an emphasis in their orientation to these oppressed layers. As a result they became over many years more and more distant from the lower strata and when these layers rose up they simply ignored them. It is highly symbolic that on the same day when WP published its statement about the aftermath of the uprising it also published its political perspective document. Despite its considerable length (nearly 6.000 words) the document does not contain anything about the lower strata of

the working class, about the black and the migrants. Not a single word! These important layers are not even mentioned once. (56) It is a shameful consistent ignorance of the oppressed layers both in analysis and in their practice. A Bolshevik organisation can never be built on the fundament of such aristocratism! Bolshevism means to be the voice and the arm of the vanguard of the working class, means to be the Pallas with the mass of the working class and the oppressed.

The August Uprising demonstrated the desperate need for a truly Bolshevik organisation in Britain. No one should forget the lessons of these days. These five days shook Britain but failed to wake up the left. Revolutionaries are not only tested by this or that theoretical question or this or that slogan in a resolution (as important as these are). They are tested first and foremost by the class struggle. Which side are you on? Do you enter the struggle and bring socialist consciousness into those layers who fight against the class enemy – or do you prefer to stand on the sidelines, comment or worse lament on the backwardness of the youth, black and migrants, call for understanding of their motives and for solidarity with the victims. This was the test in early August and the Left in its huge majority failed.

The time has now come to draw a conclusion. We need to build a new Bolshevik organisation on an unambiguous revolutionary program, with a healthy orientation to the lower and middle strata of the working class and the oppressed and an understanding of the need of the combination of theory and practise. The RKOB wants to discuss and collaborate with all those who agree with the spirit of our analysis and positions on the August Uprisings which we have published in the last few weeks. Contact us! Join us!

Footnotes:

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(2) Joel Kotkin: The U.K. Riots and the Coming Global Class War, Forbes, 8/15/2011, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2011/08/15/u-k-riots-global-class-war/>

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- (12) W. I. Lenin: Vorwort zur russischen Übersetzung der Briefe von K. Marx an L. Kugelmann (1907); in: LW 12, S. 101; in English: Preface to the Russian Translation of Karl Marx's Letters to Dr. Kugelmann, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1907/feb/05.htm>
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- (35) Workers Power: The political situation in Britain after the August uprising; Resolution on the political situation after the riots, 19.8.2011, <http://www.workerspower.com>

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(37) As a side note we want to remark that it is astonishing to hear these middle-class leftists and intellectuals who sneer about youth who looted shops to take a computer or a TV-screen. Often this complaint about the "mindlessness" and "consumerism" of the youth comes from people who already have their laptops and TV-screens. Why on earth does the "rabble" desire to have the same?! May be they just take a little back what this system robbed them in their whole life!?

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(43) Here is the complete report which we translated from the German original into English.

Sommer, Sonne Sozialismus – das war unser diesjähriges internationales Sommercamp

REVO Deutschland, 29. August 2011, <http://www.onesolutionrevolution.de/?p=1645>

Das diesjährige internationale REVOLUTION Sommercamp fand vom 8. bis zum 12. August in der Nähe Londons statt. Insgesamt waren mehr als 80 Genoss_innen aus Großbritannien, Schweden, Österreich, der Slowakei und Deutschland anwesend. Tagsüber gab es ein vielfältiges Workshopprogramm.

Die Workshops reichten über den Aufbau von Schulstreikkomitees, Augenzeugenberichte vom Tahrir Platz in Kairo bis hin zu Diskussionen über die Krise des Kapitalismus oder die Befreiung Palästinas. Außerhalb der Workshops nutzten Viele die Möglichkeit der Sport- und Freizeitangebote des Campinggeländes.

Täglich verfolgten wir die Ereignisse der „Riots“ in London und diskutierten darüber Campplenum. So verabschiedeten wir zum Beispiel eine Resolution und einen internationalen Bündnisaufruf, gegen Polizeigewalt und über die Umstände der britischen Jugend.

Da wir als Jugendorganisation natürlich auch gerne feiern, wurden abends am großen Lagerfeuer oder im Gemeinschaftszelt Party gemacht. Am Donnerstag war „Broken Dialect“, eine antikapitalistische Hip-Hop Crew, zu Gast und danach Dj's, die für uns auflegten.

Das Camp bot viel Raum für Mitglieder, Sympathisanten und Kontakte, um politische Diskussionen zu führen, aber auch, um neue Freundschaften zu schließen. Wir gehen daher nicht nur gestärkt aus dem diesjährigen Sommercamp in London, sondern freuen uns vor allem auf das nächste internationale Sommercamp in zwei Jahren, dass wahrscheinlich in Österreich stattfinden wird.

Summer, sun socialism - that was our international summer camp this year'

This year's international REVOLUTION summer camp was held from 8th to 12th August near London. In total, more than 80 comrades from Great Britain, Sweden, Austria, Slovakia and Germany were present. During the day there was a varied workshop program.

The workshops ranged from the structure of school strike committees, eyewitness reports from Tahrir Square in Cairo to discussions about the crisis of capitalism or the liberation of Palestine. Outside of the workshops many used the opportunity of sports and leisure facilities of the camping grounds.

Every day we watched the events of the "riots" in London and discussed about it at the Camp plenary. So we adopted for example a resolution and an international united front call against police violence and about the conditions for the British youth.

Since as a youth organization we also like to fete, we had in the evening parties at a big camp fire or in the community tent. On Thursday "Broken Dialect," an anti-capitalist hip-hop crew, was our guest and thereafter DJs made music for us.

The camp offered a lot of room for members, supporters and contacts to hold political discussions, but also to build new friendships. We therefore emerge not only strengthened from this year's summer camp in London, but especially look forward to the next international summer camp in two years that will probably take place in Austria."

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(48) Gunnar Westin (REVO Sweden): The British media campaign worthy of the worst dictatorship, 14.8.2011, <http://revolutionsweden.wordpress.com/2011/08/14/de-brittiska-mediernas-kampanj-vardig-den-varsta-diktatur/#more-3743> (our own translation)

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(55) The Thesis constitutes a book in German and can be ordered at our contact address aktiv@rkob.net. We have published an English language summary: Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration, <http://www.rkob.net/new-english-language-site-1/revolutionary-integration/>

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Marxism, Migration and revolutionary Integration

Theses on Racism, Migration, the situation of Migrants and the Strategy of revolutionary Integration

by Michael Pröbsting

The following is a translation of the summary of long document which was written by Michael Pröbsting in autumn 2010. It was published in October 2010 as a special edition of the theoretical journal "Under the Banner of Revolution" of the Austrian section of the League for the Fifth International. However it was later rejected by the League for the Fifth International (Workers Power in Britain) as a result of their opportunist adoption to labour aristocratic prejudices. It was one of the important issues the comrades of the today's Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) argued for and were expelled in April 2011. The RKOB stands on these positions.

The theses have a focus on the situation of migrants in Austria. However in its analytical and programmatic aspects they are of international relevance.

The main elements of the analysis and the program of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation (RKOB) against racism and national oppression of the migrants are as follows:

1. Migration in the age of capitalism is a "natural", i.e. for this social formation essential phenomenon.
2. In modern capitalism - the era of imperialism since the beginning of the 20th Century - migration takes the form of emigration from poor, colonial, semi-colonial or weak imperialist States towards the rich imperialist countries.
3. Especially in recent decades - since the beginning of the crisis-ridden development of capitalism in the early 1970s and then particularly with the onset of globalization - migration has increased substantially.
4. Migration is an essential part of super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world by imperialist monopoly capital. Just as the monopoly capital extracts surplus profits from the semi-colonial world (through the export of capital and unequal exchange), there is also an appropriation of super profits through migration. Imperialist capital draws profit from the fact that it can exploit migrants due to smaller or no cost for their education, smaller or no cost for their pension, by the possibility way to exploit migrants as a cheaper (compared to domestic) labour force because of their social position which is characterised by less rights and national oppression etc. The super-exploitation of migrant labor is an important source of imperialist super-profits. Thus it is also an important source for strengthening the power of the imperialist ruling class and the corruption of the upper layers of the working class - the aristocracy of labor.
5. Immigrants are a nationally oppressed layer of super-exploited labour force. Migrants do not belong to the dominant state nation and therefore experience discrimination concerning the language in all public areas such as public authorities, the media and schools, have less democratic rights as foreign citizens, including their dependency of a work permit, the so-called "Foreigners Employment Act", etc. On this basis a specific position in the social hierarchy of the capitalist system is the

consequence for the vast majority of migrants: in its large majority migrants belong to the lower layers of the working class and that small part of them, which belongs to the petty bourgeoisie, is usually part of the poorest sectors of the petty bourgeoisie.

6. Of course the forms of national oppression and super-exploitation are not the same for all migrants. Second generation migrants do not experience the same conditions as those of the first generation, foreign citizens do not experience the same conditions as immigrants with citizenship, highly skilled migrant workers do not experience the same conditions as those who are employed as unskilled workers, etc. What is more, the separation of the migrants into groups according to their different national origins, which is why we can not speak of a common national identity. We rather speak of a joint *negative national identity* (namely, that they are 'Non-Austrians', "Non-British" etc. with roots in - in relation to the country of immigration - poorer countries). But ultimately all these different parts of the migrants have much more in common than what divides them - namely, the social position as a layer, who in their vast majority experience in one form or another national oppression and super-exploitation.

7. It is only partly true that any person with foreign roots automatically shares the fate of the majority of the migrants, who determine the essence of being immigrants (national oppression, super-exploitation). Immigrants from rich, imperialist countries are on average not super exploited and often take a relatively high place in the social hierarchy of the capitalist order. Concerning German immigrants it has to added that they don't face language discrimination. We consider this group of immigrants from rich, imperialist countries, therefore only as a secondary group of migrants or as a layer that is less exposed to the typical ways of discrimination and exploitation. By far the largest group of immigrants are those with roots in the poorer, semi-colonial countries.

8. About 2 to 2.2 million immigrants live in Austria, making up a quarter of the population. (Most official statistics underestimate the number of migrants and recognize only 1.4 to 1.5 million of them). In Vienna migrants represent even 44% of the population. Two thirds of them come from the former Yugoslavia, Turkey or the Eastern European EU-States. One fifth of immigrants come from rich, imperialist countries.

9. Migrants from the semi-colonial countries earn significantly less than their domestic colleagues (only 40% to 65% of the income of workers who are Austrian citizens of the same sex). Their jobs are less secure and therefore they are often affected by unemployment, their homes are poorer and smaller and generally their standard of living is of lower quality. In addition to this comes the language discrimination due to the non-recognition of their mother language in all public areas, which leads to enormous

problems with public authorities and a less favourable position in education.

10. Migrant women and youth experience an additional suppression. Migrant women are even more than their male colleagues employed as a very low-paid unskilled work force. Because of oppression as migrants the patriarchal structures are more pronounced and migrant women are employed to a lesser extent than their domestic colleagues. Also, immigrant youth are oppressed in the patriarchal family and due to the social and language discrimination their education level is significantly worse than that of their domestic colleagues.

11. The ideology of racism plays an important and necessary role for the maintenance and justification of national oppression of the migrants. There are different forms of racism, seeking to justify the suppression of the migrants with various lies: i) biological and genetic inferiority, ii) other, with the nation-state incompatible cultural values (the "clash of civilizations"), iii) so-called backward, aggressive religion (e.g. different forms of Islamophobia). These reactionary justifications can and will in practice of course often be mixed together. Also racism operates at different levels - laws, populist politics, confrontations on the street, etc.

12. Racist policies therefore are not only pursued by the right-wing parties, although they promote the most aggressive anti-immigrant policy. All the bourgeois parties (including the conservatives, social democracy and the Greens) are supporting and justifying, in one form or another, the oppression of immigrants.

13. The widespread racism in the working class has its objective basis in several factors: i) the real causes of rising unemployment and poverty are spontaneously not recognized and can therefore the ruling class can put the responsibility for it to the migrants, ii) the enormous super profits that are partly caused by the super-exploitation of migrants and from which specific, more privileged parts of the domestic working class benefit.

14. The revolutionary workers' movement - from the First International of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to the internationalist policies of the Left by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg in the II, III. and Fourth International - has a long tradition of struggle against racism and for full equality of migrants. They fought from the beginning against the social-chauvinist tendencies within the labor movement.

15. This fight against the social chauvinism is now of paramount importance. The leading reformist forces (social democracy) support the discrimination of migrants. The most centrist organizations such as CWI, IMT etc. make substantial concessions to the social-chauvinism. (as the support as for the racist strikes in Great Britain 2009 against the employment of migrant workers under the reactionary slogan "British jobs for British workers"; not support the policy of the right to mother tongue in public areas, etc.)

16. The resistance against racism and for full equality of migrants can be successful only on the basis of consistent internationalism and the orientation of the joint fight and organization of the entire multinational working class.

17. This strategy is the concept of revolutionary integration. It is based on the following principles:

i) Our goal is the achievement of the international unity of the working class of all countries and the internationalist

unity of the multinational working class in each country. This unity can never be achieved by force, but solely on the basis of voluntariness and equality. Ultimately, we want to overcome national differences and create a new, socialist - a truly - human culture.

ii) This unity requires both persistent propaganda for internationalism and against racism and the consistent struggle for complete equality and full democratic rights for all migrants.

iii) This unit can only be achieved in common class struggle and through the common class struggle, and through the joint organization. It must be understood as a process, as a long-term goal.

18. Revolutionary integration is not assimilation, forced adaptation with the help of the state's coercive methods. It also does not mean the multicultural, mutually separated co-existence of different nations. It means the struggle for full equality of national groups, languages, etc., and on the basis of this struggle, a voluntary, long-term convergence from below.

19. Because racism and the national oppression of migrants is a necessary component of capitalism, they cannot be eliminated as long as capitalism is not overthrown by a socialist revolution by the - in its character multinational - working class and any remaining elements of all forms of oppression continuously die/disappear with the construction of a new socialist system. This in turn requires the building of a revolutionary party and the Fifth International rooted in the working class.

20. The RKOB therefore fights for a socialist program against the oppression of the migrants, which includes the following demands:

* Full citizenship rights for all immigrants - regardless of what passport they hold and whether they are EU citizens or not. (this includes active and passive right to vote at all - local, regional and national - level)

* Abolition of all special laws for immigrants! Migrants should have equal access to the claims for all benefits.

* Immediate legalization of all who are living illegal in the host country and the immediate release of all detainees! Immediate removal of all legal sections for right to stay!

* For the complete legalization of migrant workers! The unions must run a vigorous campaign to organize the illegal workers and of migrants in general. For equal pay for equal work and equality in the workplace! Same minimum wage for Migrants as for the whole working class! Abolition of all special laws for migrants (e.g. the Settlement and Residence Act, Employment of Foreigners Act)!

* Joint struggle of the national Trade Union Federation with the unions in Western and Eastern Europe and Turkey for an increase in the working and living conditions!

* Migrants must have the right to their own meetings in the union and the company. Likewise, migrants should have a quota among the shop stewards and in the councils of the trade union bodies according to their proportion amongst the members.

* We are fighting against the spreading propaganda against Muslim immigrants. We support the right to a free exercise of religion. Therefore, we defend the right of Muslims to build mosques. We defend the right of Muslim women to wear at their workplace and every public space a veil (be it a veil or a burqa)! At the same time we say: No one shall be compelled to bow to religious rules against his or her will

(such as wearing a headscarf)!

* Smash the fascist organizations! Prevent any public appearance by fascists! For the construction of collective self-defense units of both the national citizens and the migrants to protect against fascist and racist attacks!

* Removal of the official language! Equal recognition of at least the more commonly used languages of migrants in all public institutions (government, teaching in schools and universities, etc.)! Massive recruitment of migrants in public services, etc. as teachers in schools! Free offers for language courses (including within the working hours)

for each language (at least of those languages spoken by at least a relevant minority on a voluntary basis)!

* Get rid of the new Iron Curtain for migrants at the borders of imperialist national state and the EU! Open borders for all!

21. The high proportion of migrants in the working class and its unique situation on the basis of their oppression give them an important place in the class struggle and thus in the struggle for socialist revolution. The building of the revolutionary party must therefore necessarily put a special emphasis on the organization of migrants. ■



**МЕРТВЕЦЫ ПАРИЖ-
СКОЙ КОММУНЫ
ВОСКРЕСЛИ ПОД КРАСНЫМ
ЗНАМЕНЕМ СОВЕТОВ!**

Bolshevik Poster - 'The martyrs of the Paris Commune were resurrected under the red banner of the Soviets' (1921)

Pakistan: Workers in Karachi show the way forward

by Adam Beltz and Ahmed Sharan

Workers of Pakistan's KESC (Karachi Electric Supply Company) are again threatening to go on strike. This will make it their third strike this year and interestingly all three strikes revolve around the same issue: the sacking of 4,500 employees. Let us recap the situation from the beginning.

KESC is a company with over 18,000 workers. It has a market capitalization of nearly US\$ 725 million and in 2008 it generated revenues of nearly US\$ 1 billion. After its privatization in the early 2000s its majority stake is held by Abraaj Capital, a major private equity firm based in Dubai. The government of Pakistan has a minority stake of 26%.

In January 2011 the KESC sacked 4,500 employees and threatened with more massive cuts. The KESC workers and their union decided that it was time to act to get their co-workers their jobs back and to stop the KESC from making more cuts. The workers staged a sit-in outside the KESC headquarters which lasted for 4 days and 5 nights - when they had achieved victory.

There was a mass backing for the workers as residents took to the streets in anger against the KESC. The government decided that it was time to step in and get the situation pacified before the situation escalated anymore. After pressure was applied by the workers, the people and the government KESC management announced that it had agreed to reinstate the 4,500 workers.

After the striking workers went back to work the KESC management began to change its story. They were now saying that the KESC was prepared to pay the sacked workers their salaries and would still have their health care for 45 days after January 15, but they would not take them back on the job.

The workers, furious with the back sliding of the KESC management again decided to strike. They had already won once and they could do it again. The strike started April 30th and lasted for 90 days. Again the strike ended with a victory to the workers. The KESC management agreed to the demands of the workers; the sacked workers would not be forced into "voluntary separation" and would receive three months worth of pay.

Now we come back to the current situation. KESC has stopped paying the terminated employees after only one month and so the workers and the KESC labor union have declared that they will not accept this treachery. Union leaders warned the KESC: "*We will launch a massive protest drive after Eid (a 3 day long holiday that starts August 30th) that would make it difficult for the utility's CEO and management to work.*" So far the KESC management has not backed down and the stage is set for a new round of strikes.

The workers of the KESC must be prepared to take this third action to a victorious conclusion. If this third action results in defeat they will lose all of the gains they had earned for themselves in the previous two strikes. They would only be able to look forward to more terminations and more cuts.

In order to win the workers need the full and unconditional support of their working class brothers and sisters of Karachi and from the rest of the country. The actions of the KESC workers are not just defending their own inter-

ests they are also defending the rights of all of the workers in Pakistan. They are setting the example to the rest of the workers that they have the power to make changes, to control their destiny. The solidarity of the rest of the city and of the nation will ultimately help the workers win and ultimately protect their own jobs and rights.

The struggle of the KESC workers in Karachi is of national importance. The repeated power cuts in the country show that the ruling class is not capable of delivering the necessary supply for running the economy and the society. This is why socialist activists fight for the full nationalization of KESC and the whole electricity industry in Pakistan. But this time KESC and all the electric companies must not be run by corrupt state bureaucrats! It must be put under the control of workers and representatives of the consumers. Only in this way we can make sure that the company works for the needs of the people.

The workers of Karachi and of the country should therefore show their solidarity with the KESC workers against the treachery of the KESC management. The workers of Karachi should begin a series of actions up to a local general strike in solidarity. Given the national importance of the struggle at KESC it is important that militant activists work to extend the struggle to the rest of the country.

The defeat of the KESC workers would be a defeat for the entire working class of Pakistan. The workers and the oppressed must take this opportunity to send a message to all of the bourgeoisie of Pakistan: "*We can work together to defend ourselves from you. We can defeat you!*" ■

Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation: What does the RKOB stand for?

The Revolutionary Communist Organization for Liberation – RKOB – is a combat organization for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. 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 RKOB 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 of 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 RKOB 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 cannot 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 RKOB is fighting for the establishment of workers' republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighborhoods 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 RKOB 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 RKOB strives for unity in action with other organizations. But 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 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.

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 a new, revolutionary workers' party! For a 5th Workers International on a revolutionary basis! Join the RKOB!

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■

