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Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

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Down with the Military Coup in Egypt!

History: Israel's War in 1967

plus: Pakistan, Syria, Brazil, Venezuela, ...

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!

Revolutionary Communism

No. 12, July/August 2013

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This issue of our journal contains an actual as well as a historic core theme: on one hand the advances and setbacks in the current phase of the Egyptian Revolution and on the other hand the historical assessment of Israel's Six-Day War in 1967.

The fate of the Revolution in Egypt is without doubt a model example of the laws of dialectic in the class struggle. As such the lessons of the mass mobilizations against the Mursi government – culminating in an huge demonstration of many millions of workers and youth on 30th June – and the reactionary military coup d'état on 3rd July are highly instructive. They illustrate how a progressive class struggle can – given the lack of a revolutionary leadership – be exploited and politically beheaded by the reactionary state apparatus and the Western imperialist powers. The petty-bourgeois left – including the leadership of the new trade union movement around Kamal Abou Eita – tailed the bourgeois-liberal forces which were in opposition against the Muslim Brotherhood government of Mursi. The bourgeois-liberal forces (ElBaradei etc.) conspired with the pro-imperialist and US-paid army command to facilitate a military coup d'état. The lack of class independence in the program and perspective of the workers movement was related to their lack of a revolutionary understanding how to fight for democratic rights against the bourgeois-Islamist government of Mursi. As a result many workers who were on the streets on 30th June were politically paralyzed when faced with the old generals overthrowing Mursi and imposing a neoliberal, pro-Western regime.

The RCIT has promoted from the beginning a revolutionary program of class independence which called the activists of the workers movement to advance the class struggle both against the military dictatorship as well as against the Mursi government and to combine it with the perspective for a workers and peasants government and a socialist revolution. We insisted that working class organizations must refrain from any political alliance with bourgeois forces – be it left-Nasserites like Hamdeen Sabahi, liberals like ElBaradei or the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood.

Such a rejection of a political alliance with such forces – which would be nothing else but a popular front – does not exclude joint actions with them for strictly limited practical goals, provided that they advance the struggle for the democratic and social rights of the working class and the oppressed. Trotsky's approach from the early 1930s – when he called for a united front tactic towards the social democratic party – is highly relevant for today:

"No common platform with the Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! March separately, but strike together! Agree only how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike! Such an agreement can be concluded even with the devil himself, with his grandmother, and even with Noske and Grezesinsky. On one condition, not to bind one's hands." (Leon Trotsky: For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism, 1931)

Revolutionary events always imply the danger of a counter-revolution. Such is the nature of things. The counter-revolution in turn carries the seed of future revolutionary struggles. Revolutionary Communists have to be prepared for sudden changes in the situation and adapt their tactics on the basis of a firm revolutionary program. Such a program – as we have done in the RCIT's *Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* – must be based on the lessons of the workers

movement and the teachings of Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky. The current events in Egypt demonstrate once more the importance of such a revolutionary program and an international organization which is homogeneously united on the basis of such a program.

In fact such a sudden turn in the relation of the class forces, as we see it currently in Egypt, is not without precedence. We have seen similar events a number of times in the past when for example progressive national liberation struggles were mixed with imperialist interference and finally exploited by one or several imperialist powers. (e.g. the Anti-Japanese resistance in the Philippines and Indonesia during and after the World War II, Bosnia 1992-95, Kosova 1997-99).

Other examples for such exploitations of class struggles and their change of character are the progressive democratic struggles of the working class in Eastern Europe and the USSR against the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1989-91. Given the lack of a revolutionary leadership, they ended in defeat for the political revolution and were utilized by Western imperialism to facilitate the restoration of capitalism.

As we elaborate in this journal, the response of many petty-bourgeois leftist in Egypt – like the Cliffite *Revolutionary Socialists* – and international to the military coup has been characterized by a complete lack of understanding of its meaning and consequently a wrong tactic of not fighting consistently or even not at all against the coup.

The hidden (or not so hidden) sympathy of these leftists for the army command coup brings the critique of Marx and Engels against Lassalle – the great German workers leader of the 19th century who however followed a program of petty-bourgeois and opportunist socialism – to mind. The founders of scientific socialism called Lassalle's program sarcastically a *"Royal Prussian Government Socialism,"* and denounced his *"alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents against the bourgeoisie"*. (Karl Marx: Critique of the Gotha Programme, 1875)

In fact the whole history of the workers movement is full with examples of such petty-bourgeois deviations where socialists "tactically" side with the ruling class – or their dominant faction – to beat another (petty-)bourgeois opponent. Obviously such a program is disastrous for the working class and its struggle for political independence from the numerous petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces. With our modest forces the RCIT contributes to the programmatic clarification which is the precondition for the international workers vanguard to win in the coming struggles of which our historic revolutionary period is so rich.

The second important focus of this issue of *Revolutionary Communism* is a long historic analysis of Israel's Six-Day War in 1967. Our comrade Yossi Schwartz elaborates the approach of Marxists who ought to have stood for the defeat of Israel and military victory for the Arab States without, at the same time, giving any political support to the Arab regimes. In an appendix, Schwartz critically examines the position of the *Israeli Socialist Organization* (ISO), better known as *Matzpen*, regarding the Six-Day War of 1967.

In other articles we deal with the popular uprising in Brazil, the civil war in Syria as well as with the situation in Israel. We also reprint an Action Program on Venezuela written by the RCIT in Venezuela as well as a leaflet of our Pakistani comrades about the national liberation struggle in Balochistan.

Egypt: Down with the Military Coup d'État!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 8.7.2013

1. The Revolution in Egypt faces a new danger! After the heroic mass demonstration of 17 million workers and peasants against the Mursi regime on 30th June, the *Supreme Council of the Armed Forces* (SCAF) has organized a reactionary, pro-Western coup d'état on 3rd July. The popular masses must oppose this conspiracy of the army and organize mass resistance. Only the struggle for a *general strike*, for a *revolutionary Constituent Assembly* and ultimately a *workers and peasant government* based on worker and popular councils and militias offers a way out of the crisis.

2. The heroic masses have demonstrated their revolutionary determination on 30th June when roughly 17 million workers, peasants and youth (about half of the adult population!) marched in the streets against the bourgeois Islamist regime of Mursi. As we explained in the RCIT statement on 2nd July, the task of the day was to build *action committees* and *self defense committees* in order to organize "*a General Strike to bring down Morsi government*". We called against any political support for the National Salvation Front and warned about the danger of a military coup d'état. (See RCIT: Tasks of the Revolution in Egypt, 2.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/tasks-of-egypt-revolution)

3. Fearing an authentic popular revolution to bring down the Mursi regime and looking to exploit the situation for their own anti-people interests, a pro-imperialist coalition of the SCAF under General Commander of the Armed Forces Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, pro-Western forces around ElBaradei and the *National Salvation Front*, Naguip Sawiris (one of the richest tycoons of Egypt) and various *feloul* (remnants of the old Mubarak regime) has staged a military coup d'état and tries to expropriate the glorious Egypt revolution. Since then the SCAF started a wave of repression. It arrested hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) activists and took off the air four TV satellite channels that belonged to the MB or the Islamists, as well as two Al-Jazeera channels. On 8th July, the army massacred several dozens of pro-Mursi demonstrators who staged a sit-in in front of an army headquarter in Cairo.

4. The SCAF won support for their coup d'état from the domestic liberal bourgeoisie and US imperialism as well as the public approval of the Saudi regime and the Assad regime in Syria. The *Wall Street Journal*, a central mouthpiece of US imperialism, supports the military's coup d'état and call it to follow the road of the mass murder and dictator Pinochet in Chile who brutally ruled the country from 1973-89: "*Egyptians would be lucky if their new ruling generals turn out to be in the mold of Chile's Augusto Pinochet, who took power amid chaos but hired free-market reformers and midwifed a transition to democracy.*" (Wall Street Journal: After the Coup in Cairo. The U.S. shouldn't cut off aid to a new Egyptian government, July 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324399404578583932317286550.html#>)

5. The RCIT denounces the petty-bourgeois left

which is shamefully failing to oppose the SCAF coup d'état. The bourgeois-dominated alliance NSF, of which the left-Nasserites around presidential candidate *Hamdeen Sabahi*, the *Egyptian Communist Party* and the *Revolutionary Socialists* (sister organization of the centrist British SWP) are part of, openly support the coup d'état. The NSF stated "*The Egyptian people should defend the legitimacy of the people and its will to end the oppressive rule. They need to support the democratic transition that started with the statement read out by the armed forces in response to the people's will to start a transition period guided by a civil institution that reflects all forces. The people need to aid the armed forces to guard this achievement.*" Similarly *Tamarod* openly support the coup d'état and defended it as an act of "*revolutionary legitimacy that has reflected the people's will against the tyrants who do not want stability in Egypt.*" (Both quotes from Ahram Online: Egypt's Rebel, NSF urge protesters to protect revolution as clashes erupt near Cairo's Tahrir, 5 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/75806/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-Rebel,-NSF-urge-protesters-to-protect-revol.aspx>) *Tamarod's* leaders appeared in press conferences together with SCAF generals. It is currently involved in negotiations about a provisional government which will be nothing but a stooge of the SCAF. The fake-Trotskyist *Revolutionary Socialists* – which only one year ago made a similar reactionary betrayal by calling to vote for Mursi in the presidential elections – too refrain from calling the military coup d'état by name, from denouncing the military's actions and from calling for mass mobilizations against the military coup. All this equals the centrists implicit support for the military coup d'état. It shows once more that these centrist and reformist forces lack both a revolutionary program and a political compass and hence end up as political appendix of a section of the ruling class.

6. The central task now is to defend the gains of the revolution by organizing the struggle against the military and its puppet regime. The RCIT states that the working class must not lend any support for the military's conspiracy and needs to organize independently of all bourgeois forces. Working class organizations must break once and for all with bourgeois alliances like the NSF. They must fight against the repression by the army – including against the oppression of the Mursi supporters. How can the socialist forces ever break the still existing mass support for the MB amongst sections of the poor and the lower petty-bourgeoisie, if they don't defend them today against the army's repression?! Combined with this, it is a central task to split the army along the class lines and to win the soldiers for a working class program.

7. Revolutionaries in Egypt need to organize around an Action Program which combines the struggle against poverty, super-exploitation by foreign imperialism with revolutionary-democratic demands and a perspective for working class power via a socialist revolution. A central slogan of such a program which can unite those who opposed Mursi as well as the new army-imposed regime is

the call for a *revolutionary Constitutional Assembly*. Such an assembly should be elected with equal voting rights for all over the age of 12 (the age when youth in Egypt can enter job-training and a substantial number has entered the labor force). It should have proportional representation and no threshold, and its delegates must be recallable by those who elect them. It must be protected by workers and popular militias against any interference by reactionary forces. Clearly such a program must be combined with the perspective of a *workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor committed to the expropriation of the multinationals, big capital and banks under workers control as well as the replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by workers and peasant organs!* There will be no real democracy as long as Egypt is depended of and exploited by imperialist capital and powers, as long as the super-rich capitalists dominate the country and as long as the armed state apparatus related to the rich elite is not smashed.

8. It is urgent to build an authentic revolutionary workers party to fight against the disastrous influence of the petty-bourgeois left inside the mass movement. The revolution in Egypt can only succeed if the working class has built such a revolutionary leadership. The RCIT urges revolutionaries in Egypt to work out and unite around a revolutionary Action Program as part of an international struggle for the *Fifth Workers International*. An important step in building a revolutionary party will be the struggle to win the independent trade unions and other workers organization to break with the Nasserite and liberal forces and to form an independent *Mass Workers Party*. Authentic

socialists would fight for a revolutionary Action Program as the basis of such a Workers Party We are willing to support any step which leads towards the formation of a Bolshevik organization.

In the present situation the RCIT raises the following slogans:

** Down with the military coup d'état! No support with the SACF's puppet regime! No to the repression of Muslim Brotherhood supporters! But also no to a return of Mursi to power!*

** Prepare for mass mobilizations and a general strike against the SACF and its puppet regime!*

** For Action Committees in each factory, workers neighborhood and village to be organized on district and national level to coordinate the protest activities!*

** For self defense committees! Split the army to win the soldiers for revolution!*

** For a revolutionary Constitutional Assembly!*

** Working class and socialist organizations: Break with the National Salvation Front!*

** Cancel the debts!*

** For a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor committed to the expropriation of the multinationals, big capital and banks under workers control as well as the replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by workers and peasant organs!*

** Build a revolutionary organization! All Workers Organizations should break with the bourgeois opposition forces and form an independent Mass Workers Party based on a revolutionary program!*

International Secretariat of the RCIT, 8.7.2013



Egyptian police beats up and undress a female demonstrator. Source: jarogruber.blogspot.co.at/2011/12/gonna-crash-this-political-military.html

Egypt: The U.S. Support for the Military Coup and the Left

Notes on the role of US imperialism in the military's coup d'état and the failure of the Egypt left

By Yossi Schwartz, *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*, 11.7.2013

As revolutionary Marxists we do not have any false tears for the former Egypt president Mursi and we do not support the call to reinstall him in power. But at the same time we oppose not only the military coup that removed the democratically elected government of Mursi but also the paid agents in the service of the imperialists that were involved in planning the coup. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) explained in two statements in the last days that we support the revolutionary overthrow of the Mursi government by the uprising of the masses. At the same time we totally oppose the overthrow of the Mursi government by the reactionary military in alliance with US imperialism. The military coup d'état was a reactionary maneuver of the ruling class to avoid a revolutionary overthrow of Mursi by the masses and to prepare the future suppression of the workers, peasants and urban poor. Only an independent organization of the working class can ensure that it leads the Egyptian Revolution forward instead of subordinating it to either the bourgeois-Islamist Muslim Brotherhood of Mursi or the reactionary army and the bourgeois-liberal forces. This has not happened until now because the working class in Egypt lacks an authentic workers party based on a revolutionary program. (1)

US imperialism behind the military coup d'état

Mursi was removed from power not because of his association with the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood or because he did not want to be a regional lackey of US imperialism. No, the real reason was that he was unable to control the masses. Once the 17 millions Egyptian workers and lower middle class – many of them religious who only a year ago supported Mursi – took to the streets, Mursi lost his credits with the real masters of Egypt: the US-American imperialists.

According to *Al Jazeera* of 10 Jul 2013, documents obtained by the *Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley* show the US channeled funding through a State Department programme to pro imperialists politicians.

“Documents obtained by the Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley show the US channeled funding through a State Department programme to promote democracy in the Middle East region. This programme vigorously supported activists and politicians who have fomented unrest in Egypt, after autocratic president Hosni Mubarak was ousted in a popular uprising in February 2011. The State Department's programme, dubbed by US officials as a “democracy assistance” initiative, is part of a wider Obama administration effort to try to stop the retreat of pro-Washington secularists, and to win back influence in Arab Spring countries that saw the rise of Islamists, who largely oppose US interests in the Middle East.” (2)

The new government in Egypt led by Hazem el-Beblawi a former finance minister and Mohamed ElBaradei, the

vice president, are exactly the kind of the pro-imperialist politicians Washington “democracy assistance” has been aimed at. They are what the Egyptians call the *feloul* (“remnants”) of the Mubarak's regime.

In simple words the coup was planned not only against Mursi but against the revolutionary masses – many of them workers and poor who came out on June 30 to bring down Mursi government.

The US paid army – let us recall that Egypt is world-wide the second-biggest recipient of US military aid only behind Israel – claims that the army only wants a new democratic elections within six months. But the roundups of Muslim Brotherhood members, closure of pro-Morsi media outlets and shooting of unarmed demonstrators suggest it has other intentions.

It is a shame that the middle class activists, who have led the movement so far, have cheered the military coup. This just shows the need for a working class revolutionary leadership because those who cheered the coup have proven that they are at best blind to the real forces that act in Egypt. We in the RCIT are convinced that such ignorance is a terrible danger for the Egyptian Revolution.

It is in the interest of the working class in Egypt that its vanguard rallies the workers as well as the lower middle class and poor to oppose the military coup. This necessitates calling for a united front – this means practical agreements for joint actions without any political support for non-revolutionary forces involved in such a bloc. Under the present circumstances such a united front call must also be directed to forces of the Muslim Brotherhood who are on the streets in massive numbers protesting against the military coup.

The RCIT says that such an application of the united front tactic in order to defend the revolution against its currently most immediate danger – the military coup d'état – must be combined with total opposition against either another Muslim Brotherhood government nor a secular pro-imperialist one. The only perspective the vanguard forces of the Egyptian revolution should fight for is a workers government allied with the poor peasants and the urban poor. Such a revolutionary government should carry out the complete break with imperialism and Zionism, expropriation of the foreign and domestic bourgeoisie, the smashing of the Egyptian state apparatus and the building of a socialist society.

Failure of the reformist and centrist left in Egypt

If Mursi exposed his reactionary role within one year, this new government will expose itself in much shorter time. Those left groups like the *Revolutionary Socialists* that in their July 6th statement did not oppose the coup but claim that the army was forced to act in defense of the revolution and parties like the *Communists Party* that supported

the coup have proven once again on which side they stand. They are obstacle for the advance of the Egyptian Revolution.

The following is the position of the *Revolutionary Socialists* in Egypt (sister organization of the British SWP) which we reprint in full. (3) It shows that this centrist organization simply ignored the coup.

Victory to the 30 June revolution: Statement of the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt

Statement from the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, 6 July 2013

During days that rocked the world, millions of Egyptians poured into the streets and forced their institutions to remove the failed president. Mohamed Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood had betrayed the principles of the 25 January 2011 revolution and overthrown its goals.

But the stubbornness, stupidity and criminality of the US-backed Muslim Brotherhood and Mohamed Badie, its General Guide, open the terrifying horizons of civil war. This can only be stopped by millions coming into the squares and streets to protect their revolution. They must abort the US-Brotherhood plan to portray the Egyptian Revolution as a military coup.

The popular uprising of 30 June threw the Muslim Brotherhood out of power, and its plan is now clear. The Brotherhood is seeking to take over the squares in order to project an image of false popularity for the president who was removed by the uprising. It may even be aiming to negotiate his return to power with the support of the US and other imperialist powers in order to accomplish what Mursi promised to do for them in Syria and the region.

Leaving the squares to Mursi and his supporters today is the biggest danger that faces the revolution. The return of the Brotherhood to power will mean the defeat of the greatest uprising of the masses, setting the revolution back and destroying the hopes that launched it.

The masses who made the revolution in January 2011, and sought to complete it in June 2013, are the only ones who can save it from danger.

The people who called on the military to protect them on 30 June and subsequently, can defend themselves, without waiting for a hesitating army or police. The valour of the people of Boulaq Abu Al-Ala and Maniyal and Sayyida Zeinab and Sidi Gaber and elsewhere last night in the face of the attacks of the Brotherhood, is our best example.

The revolution is continuing, but it still needs time and to organise itself. This requires the reformation of popular committees to defend our revolution in every street, neighbourhood and factory. We are multitudes, but we lack organisation in our ranks.

Whoever is the next prime minister must be from among the ranks of the January Revolution.

We demand that the priorities of the coming government must be:

* Immediate steps to achieve social justice for the benefit of millions of poor and low-income. These are the people who paid the greatest share of the price for Mursi's failure to implement the goals of the revolution—and that of the Military Council before him.

* Election of a Constituent Assembly, representing all sections of the people—workers, peasants and the poor, Coptic Christians and women—to write a civil, democratic constitution which entrenches the values of freedom and social justice.

* The drafting of a law of transitional justice which holds to account the Brotherhood for the blood it has spilled, as well as

the Military Council and the symbols of the Mubarak regime, and achieves retribution for the martyrs and injured of the revolution.

We will not leave the streets and squares to the merchants of religion, the friends of the US. We will not wait for the army to protect us; we will defend our revolution with our own hands.

Glory to the martyrs! Victory to the Revolution! Shame on the murderers!

All power and wealth to the people.

The Egyptian Communist Party is even worse. They openly support the military coup d'état. The following is part of an interview with Salah Adli, who is the General Secretary of the Communist Party in Egypt which appeared under the peculiar title "*Egyptian Communist Party: What happened in Egypt was not a military coup*". (4) His comments should be compared with the latest information of the US real activity in Egypt.

"What has happened is not a military coup in any way, but a revolutionary coup by the Egyptian people to get rid of this fascist rule. What the army did is carrying out the will of the people and protecting them from the plots of the Muslim Brotherhood and their armed terrorist allies who want to ignite sectarian strife and civil wars, divide the Egyptian army and destroy the institutions of the Egyptian state to serve the interests of imperialism and Zionism in the region."

Revolutionary Tasks

The next step in the revolutionary development will most likely be the polarization of the cross-class movement between the working class and the other oppressed classes like the peasantry and the urban poor that have genuine revolutionary interests on one hand and the middle class that support the new reactionary government on the other. Socialists and the workers vanguard in Egypt should intervene in the movement with a clear set slogans and a program for revolutionary working class power. The goal must be to break the workers, youth and poor away from the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois leaders – be it secularists or Islamists.

Most importantly, activists should unite in an authentic revolutionary organization in order to advance the struggle. The RCIT is willing to support all steps which advance the struggle in such a direction.

In the present situation the RCIT raises the following slogans:

* *Down with the military coup d'état! No support with the SACF's puppet regime! No to the repression of Muslim Brotherhood supporters! But also no to a return of Mursi to power!*

* *Prepare for mass mobilizations and a general strike against the SACF and its puppet regime!*

* *For Action Committees in each factory, workers neighborhood and village to be organized on district and national level to coordinate the protest activities!*

* *For self defense committees! Split the army to win the soldiers for revolution!*

* *For a revolutionary Constitutional Assembly!*

* *Working class and socialist organizations: Break with the National Salvation Front!*

* *Cancel the debts!*

* *For a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor committed to the expropriation of the multinationals, big capital and banks under workers control as well as the*

replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by workers and peasant organs!

* Build a revolutionary organization! All Workers Organizations should break with the bourgeois opposition forces and form an independent Mass Workers Party based on a revolutionary program!

Footnotes:

(1) See the two RCIT Statements: Tasks of the Revolution in Egypt, 2.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/tasks-of-egypt-revolution; Egypt: Down with the Military Coup d'Etat! Prepare Mass Resistance!, 8.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-down-with-military-coup-d-etat

(2) Emad Mekay: US bankrolled anti-Morsi activists. Documents

reveal US money trail to Egyptian groups that pressed for president's removal, Al Jazeera, 10 Jul 2013 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/2013710113522489801.html

(3) Statement from the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt: Victory to the 30 June revolution: Statement of the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, 6 July 2013, http://enpassant.com.au/2013/07/07/victory-to-the-30-june-revolution-statement-of-the-revolutionary-socialists-in-egypt/ (our emphasis)

(4) Egyptian Communist Party: What happened in Egypt was not a military coup. Interview with Salah Adli, general secretary of the Egyptian Communist Party by "Nameh Mardom", the Central Organ of the Central Committee of the Tudeh (Communist) Party of Iran, 6 July 2013, http://21centurymanifesto.wordpress.com/2013/07/10/egypt-crisis-analysis-from-the-egyptian-communist-party/



Map of Egypt: Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/a/ae/Egypt-map-idsc.gif

The Military's Coup d'État in Egypt: Assessment and Tactics

A reply to the criticism of the WIVP and the LCC on the meaning of the Military's Coup d'État and the slogan of the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly

By Michael Pröbsting, *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*, 17.7.2013

The military's coup d'état, whose purpose was to halt the revolutionary wave in Egypt, is a central issue of the present conjuncture of the Arab Revolution. Unsurprisingly it has provoked a series of controversies and debates and has led to confusion amongst a number of progressive organizations and activists. In fact most of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the left in Egypt praise the ruling class' army command. (1) We have already dealt with the treacherous positions of the reformist *Communist Party of Egypt* who openly welcomed the coup d'état. We also criticized the centrist *Revolutionary Socialists* in Egypt (affiliated to the British SWP as well as the US-American ISO, both in the tradition of Tony Cliff) who downplay the danger of the coup d'état and jumped from welcoming Mursi's electoral victory one year ago to a popular front with the pro-imperialist liberals like ElBaradei. (2) The RCIT's analysis and programmatic response has however also provoked a discussion amongst serious Marxist forces. The South African *Workers International Vanguard Party* (WIVP) has published a statement on the events in Egypt in which they criticize the RCIT's application of the slogan of the *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly*. (3) The *Liaison Committee of Communists* (LCC, with groups in New Zealand, USA; Zimbabwe) in its declaration on Egypt expressed its agreement with the WIVP criticism on the RCIT and went even further to reject our assessment that a military coup d'état has happened at all. (4) We think that the comrades both of the WIVP as well as of the LCC are mistaken on these issues. In the following article we will elaborate our arguments in defense of the RCIT's line on the present phase of the Egypt Revolution.

To deny the military's coup d'état is to deny reality

Let us start with the question if a military coup d'état has happened or not. This seems a bizarre question but unfortunately it is not only the Egyptian Stalinists and right-wing centrists like the RS or the IMT of Alan Woods who deny the fact of a military coup d'état but also the LCC comrades. (5)

Such the comrades wrote: *"The masses put a stop to this regime. Leftists who are fixated on BBC reports and subsequent talking heads' buzz of a military coup don't realize who has been in power continuously but uninterruptedly since 1952. And they do not realize that the Army acted to remove Mursi by force after he had already been de facto removed by the resignations of his cabinet ministers. This distinction between coup d'état myth and mass action reality matters because some on the left buy the story that a "democracy" has been suppressed. (...) What coup, we ask...? Coup d'état? Who did they think was in power all this time?! Certainly not some MB "democracy!"*

This critique of the RCIT's position is totally wrong. First it was a military coup d'état by all meaningful criteria. The army put first an ultimatum to the Mursi government on

1st July and then overthrew it 48 hours later. Since then soldiers are on the streets en masse to suppress any resistance. It closed several TV stations and arrested the president, its advisors and 300 leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood respectively put them on the wanted list. It massacred 54 Brotherhood supporters and wounded hundreds in a single incident on 8th July when the Brotherhood staged a sit-in in front of the Republican Guard's headquarters. The army command suspended the constitution and imposed a new provisional constitution. It imposed a new president, vice-president as well as a new government. By any meaningful standards this is a military coup d'état and not a *"coup d'état myth"*!

We ask: If *"the masses put a stop to this regime"* and if *"Mursi had already been de facto removed by the resignations of his cabinet ministers"*, why was it then necessary for the army command to deploy its troops on the streets and kill, wound and arrest hundreds of people?!

The comrades write that talking about a military coup means not to realize that the army *"has been in power continuously but uninterruptedly since 1952"*. While it is certainly true that the army always had a central bonapartist role in the Egyptian state since 1952 it is impossible to deny that an important change took place in 2011. After the first stage of the revolution in January 2011, the army lost some of its power. Now, with the coup d'état they got some power back. If one ignores this and sees just one and the same *"uninterrupted"* rule of the military, any talk about the *"Egypt Revolution"* becomes meaningless. Nothing would have changed between 1952 and 2013. Of course, the LCC comrades know that there is a revolutionary process since early 2011. But why do they then downplay the importance of the army's intervention in the class struggle?!

The coup has shifted the balance of power towards the pro-US-American bourgeoisie and its army command

The comrades refuse to understand that the military's coup d'état shifted the balance of power towards the *feloul* (remnants of the old Mubarak regime) and the openly pro-Western imperialist forces amongst the ruling class and not towards the working class and the oppressed. They completely ignore this aspect despite the obvious evidence.

As we already stated in our past declarations the Egypt army itself is in close relations with the US forces and financially dependent on them. The new interim president, Supreme Court judge Adly Mansur, as well as vice president ElBaradei are liberal, pro-Western figures. The new interim Prime Minister Hazem Al-Beblawi, First Deputy Prime Minister Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi (he is also the army chief and Minister of Defence, the real strong man of the new regime) and Deputy Prime Minister Bahaa El-Din (who served under Mubarak as Chairman of the Egyptian

Supervisory Authority in 2009 and Chairman of the Egyptian General Authority for Investment and Free Zones form 2004-2007) are other pro-Western figures. (6)

Expressing its reactionary goals, the military even announced that Mubarak-era attorney-general Abdel Maguid Mahmoud had been reinstated by the judiciary. (Amid many protests, he however immediately announced his resignation.) All these figures don't represent in any way a progress in the revolutionary process. They have been put in power because the ruling class and the US administration hope that it will implement the imperialist's austerity program and at the same time to channel and suppress the mass protests.

The new military-imposed regime already showed its true color by announcing a decree which gives the interim president broad legislative powers to *"take all necessary measures and actions to protect the country"* which means he has unrestricted power. The petty-bourgeoisie Tamarod movement, whose spokesman Mohammed Badr shamefully was among the 14 people who joined Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sissi on the stage when he announced the coup d'état, already broke with the new government because of this decree. It rightly criticizes the decree *"as a reversion to practices under President Hosni Mubarak"*. The movement said that the decree means that the interim president has *"absolute and unrestricted power."* It also observed: *"This is an obvious theft of the revolution, taking us back to Jan. 25, 2011"*. In addition, despite all the rhetoric of a danger of theocratic rule by Mursi, the army's decree itself refers to the Shariah law. (7)

The USA and the European Union have discreetly approved the coup d'état. The Obama administration proved their support by denying it was a coup d'état so that it continues to send its \$1.3 billion in military aid and \$250 million in economic aid to Egypt (which it would not be allowed by law if it would officially designate the military's coup d'état as such). As we already quoted in our statement from 8th July, the *Wall Street Journal*, a central mouthpiece of US imperialism, openly supports the military's coup d'état and calls it to follow the road of Pinochet. (8)

In addition, shortly after the coup d'état Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates did already give the new government loans totaling \$12bn. (9) But Hasan Tariq Al-Hasan, a Bahrain-based political analyst, commented: *"Gulf leaders' show of support to army chief El-Sisi illustrate the extent of relief in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE at the ouster of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, whom they perceived as dangerously close to Iran and to their own domestic opposition groups"*. (10)

As we already referred to in a past article, *Al Jazeera* has demonstrated with a number of secret documents that the US administration has planned and supported the coup d'état. (11) The *New York Times* reported that US imperialism pressurized Mursi to resign. (12)

The Palestinians are worse off after the coup than they were already before. Already the reactionary Mursi regime started to destroy tunnels to Gaza. However the new military-imposed regime goes even further and has closed completely the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza since the 3rd July. Worse, they are now deporting Palestinians trying to return to Gaza via Cairo, sending them back to the countries they flew in from! (13)

Not surprisingly, Israel welcomes the coup d'état. Tzachi

Hanegbi, Israeli Likud Knesset member and advisor for Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, said *"that the military coup carried out by the Egyptian army in Egypt was good news for Israel."* And the pro-imperialist lackey Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, too *"offered praise for the Egyptian army, saying it had preserved security, and congratulated Mansour."* (14)

In short, the Western imperialists and their closest lackeys know that this was a military coup d'état which strengthens their influence and power and which weakens the working class and the oppressed masses (including the Palestinians). Why does the LCC refuse to acknowledge this simple matter of fact?!

A "formalistic" defense of democracy?

Those sectors of the revolutionary masses that were on the streets on 30th June have been demobilized since then. We ask: If the coup d'état would have been a step forward in the revolutionary process why do we see a decline of mass mobilizations and strikes of those organizations which have been involved in the great 30th June march?!

It is therefore in complete contradiction with the reality of the class struggle in Egypt if the LCC comrades present the RCIT as formalistic defenders of an abstract concept of "democracy" and claim that the events in Egypt are just a *"suppression of the major theocratic group"*:

"To confuse the suppression of the major theocratic group, however reprehensible this may seem as a violation of civil liberty, with the suppression of democracy, is to side with those who believe democracy is parliaments and laws and not the activity of millions of Egyptians taking the streets and speaking their minds!"

The truth is that the Muslim Brotherhood is not a bunch of obscure Salafist dictators. It represents the class interests of sectors of the Egyptian smaller and middle bourgeoisie and has substantial roots amongst the petty-bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the urban poor. Why else did they become the strongest force in all parliamentary and presidential elections in the last one and a half years?!

What many leftists forget is the fact that the Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood do not represent the most immediate threat of counter-revolution (the *"vendee"* in the IMT's words). These comrades forget that Mursi won the presidential elections against Ahmed Shafik, the last prime minister under Mubarak's dictatorship and candidate of the *feloul*. They forget that the Muslim Brotherhood joined the revolutionary mass movement lately as a conservative and inhibiting force in spring 2011 against the Mubarak regime and the army command. It is the old institutions of the ruling class – first and foremost the repressive military bureaucracy with its close links with US imperialism and Zionism – which are the most immediate threat to the Egyptian Revolution. Those who ignore this are incapable of understanding the tasks of the Revolution.

The RCIT says: if the revolutionary masses which were on the streets on 30th June would have overthrown the Mursi regime, it would have been a tremendous step forward in the revolutionary process. (15) If however the Mursi regime is overthrown by a military coup d'état which enables the ruling class and the imperialists to determine more directly the composition and policy of the Egyptian government, then we don't have a step forward but a *step*

backward in the revolutionary process. This is the only concrete and dialectical understanding of the dynamics of the present situation.

Those who claim the Islamists are the most immediate danger to the Revolution and not the so-called "secular" army command should also consider the following: Are they not in danger of unintentionally coming close to repeat the logic of those Stalinists who claim that the Islamists in the rank of the Syrian rebels are the most immediate threat since they want to impose an Sharia theocracy instead of understanding that it is the "secular" Assad dictatorship which is the most immediate enemy of the Syrian workers and peasants?! (16)

What is the meaning of the RCIT's slogan of a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly?

The LCC comrades can't see the important democratic questions which are involved in the military coup d'état. Hence they criticize the RCIT for raising the slogan of a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly. The comrades from the WIVP correctly understand the nature of the military coup d'état but unfortunately they also criticize the RCIT for raising this slogan. What are the arguments of the comrades? Let us first quote them.

The WIVP writes: "A Constituent Assembly? Some of the left like the RCIT are calling for a Constituent Assembly. But the central question is: who will convene it? The military? They have shown that they will do everything to water down and constrain any Constituent Assembly. The only force that can convene it without restrictions, is the working class in power, a workers government, but for this to happen, the military regime has to be overthrown. The 17 million in the streets are not demanding a Constituent Assembly; in a sense, the fact they are there, means they have moved beyond capitalist parliament. Why should we hold the masses back, take them back to bourgeois parliament? The imperialist only hope is to offer a sham Assembly, maybe with some more concessions, but only enough to keep the system intact. The other option, if they can get away with it, is to divert the masses struggle into inter-group fighting and in this case try to wipe out a generation of fighters- but the masses are not defeated, they are on the march, the capitalists are on the defensive, why should we help them get out of their corner?"

They also state: "At this time, while the masses are in the streets, it would be creating dangerous illusions to call for a Constituent Assembly as the whole struggle would now be diverted once more into the path of bourgeois elections, although with red colours but essentially the line of the imperialists, who are now calling for elections next February."

The LCC comments on the WIVP statement and adds: "We agree with the July 8th statement of the South African Workers International Vanguard Party (WIVP) where the comrades reject the slogan for a Constituent Assembly. Even though we don't agree that a military coup took place we can't imagine how a Constituent Assembly could be revolutionary at this time. (...) Class War maintains that the call for a Constituent Assembly, or a "Revolutionary Constituent Assembly," is ALL WRONG at this time and plays the game of the bourgeois democrats seeking to broker a new constitutional arrangement with the armed forces."

Let us deal with the arguments one at a time. The WIVP comrades ask: "who will convene it? The military? They have shown that they will do everything to water down and constrain

any Constituent Assembly. The only force that can convene it without restrictions, is the working class in power, a workers government, but for this to happen, the military regime has to be overthrown." Unfortunately this argument betrays the comrades' lack of understanding of the transitional method. If it would be wrong for revolutionaries to raise a slogan because it can only be implemented by the working class in power, then it would always be wrong to raise transitional demands including revolutionary-democratic transitional demands. However, the purpose of such slogans is exactly to lead the masses towards the revolution, towards a workers government.

Of course, revolutionaries must openly say that the struggle for a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly – as for all transitional demands – has to be combined with the perspective of a workers' and peasants' government. Contrary to the WIVP suggestion, the RCIT does not create the illusion that such a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly should be convened and controlled by the army. If the WIVP comrades would have read carefully the RCIT statement they could have seen this. We wrote:

"Revolutionaries in Egypt need to organize around an Action Program which combines the struggle against poverty, super-exploitation by foreign imperialism with revolutionary-democratic demands and a perspective for working class power via a socialist revolution. A central slogan of such a program which can unite those who opposed Mursi as well as the new army-imposed regime is the call for a revolutionary Constitutional Assembly. Such an assembly should be elected with equal voting rights for all over the age of 12 (the age when youth in Egypt can enter job-training and a substantial number has entered the labor force). It should have proportional representation and no threshold, and its delegates must be recallable by those who elect them. It must be protected by workers and popular militias against any interference by reactionary forces. Clearly such a program must be combined with the perspective of a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor committed to the expropriation of the multinationals, big capital and banks under workers control as well as the replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by workers and peasant organs!" (17)

Posing the slogan of a Constituent Assembly in a revolutionary or an opportunist way?

As we have seen in the Arab Revolution, the opportunists raise the slogan of the Constituent Assembly in a reformist way. For example in Tunisia the Maoist PCOT and the Mandeliste *Ligue de la Gauche Ouvrière* asked the bourgeois transitional government to convoke a Constituent Assembly. We reject this reformist method of raising the slogan of a Constituent Assembly. The slogan of the Constituent Assembly must be linked to the slogans of workers and peasant soviets, militias and a workers and peasant government. (18)

The fact that reformists or even sectors of the bourgeoisie raise the question of a Constituent Assembly is however not an argument against the dealing with this issue by the revolutionaries. Quite the opposite, it is an argument for taking up this issue and tackling it from a communist point of view.

When Lenin discussed the way how to raise the slogan of the Constituent Assembly in 1905 he made this difference clear. He was aware that in this situation also the pro-

monarchist was in favour of a Constituent Assembly.

"We thus see that the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class quite naturally and inevitably lead it at the present revolutionary moment to advance the slogan of a Constituent Assembly of the people, but in no case the slogan of a provisional revolutionary government. The first slogan is or has become the slogan of the policy of compromise, huckstering, and brokerage; the second is the slogan of revolutionary struggle. The first is the slogan of the monarchist bourgeoisie, the second, the slogan of the revolutionary people. The first slogan makes it possible chiefly to preserve the monarchy, despite the revolutionary onset of the people; the second offers the straight road to the republic. The first leaves the power with the tsar, restricted only by public opinion; the second is the only slogan which consistently and unreservedly leads to the sovereignty of the people in the full sense of the word." (19)

This of course did not stop Lenin from raising this slogan but he emphasised that this slogan must be combined with the slogans of the revolutionary overthrow of czarism and the provisional revolutionary government. Such he wrote:

"The keynote of our programme, too, is the demand for a popular Constituent Assembly (...). But this slogan does not stand isolated in our programme. The context and the addenda and notes prevent any misconstruction on the part of those who are least consistent in the struggle for liberty or who even struggle against it. It occurs in our programme in conjunction with the following other slogans: (1) the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy; (2) its replacement by the democratic republic; (3) the sovereignty of the people, safeguarded by a democratic constitution, i.e., the concentration of supreme governmental authority entirely in the hands of a legislative assembly composed of representatives of the people and forming a single chamber." (20)

He explained further:

"The slogan of a popular Constituent Assembly, taken by itself, separately, is at the present time a slogan of the monarchist bourgeoisie, a slogan calling for a deal between the bourgeoisie and the tsarist government. Only the overthrow of the tsarist government and its replacement by a provisional revolutionary government, whose duty it will be to convene the popular Constituent Assembly, can be the slogan of the revolutionary struggle. Let the proletariat of Russia have no illusions on this score; in the din of the general excitement it is being deceived by the use of its own slogans. If we fail to match the armed force of the government with the force of an armed people, if the tsarist government is not utterly defeated and replaced by a provisional revolutionary government, every representative assembly, whatever title—"popular", "constituent", etc.—may be conferred upon it, will in fact be an assembly of representatives of the big bourgeoisie convened for the purpose of bargaining with the tsar for a division of power." (21)

It is this method which we are applying with our slogan of a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly. We say only in this way can the masses make sure that the delegates of the Constituent Assembly are controllable and can be replaced if they do not implement what their electoral base wanted them to do. In this sense the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly is not simply a bourgeois parliament.

So, our call for a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly is a revolutionary democratic slogan to mobilize the masses

around a central issue in the coming period. Whatever the WIVP and LCC comrades wish for, the question of the constitution will be a most central issue of the class struggle in the coming months – for the army command, for the liberals and for the Islamists. (22)

This should be pretty obvious given the fact that the constitution put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood was one of the main issues of the present events and given the fact that the military-imposed regime suspended the existing constitution and invented a new provisional one. By refusing our slogan for a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly the comrades leave this issue to be exploited by the enemies of the Egyptian Revolution.

Another mistake of the comrades is their confusion of the call for a *Constituent Assembly* with a bourgeois parliament. The RCIT of course rejects calls for new elections particularly in times of mass mobilization. But a *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly* is something different. It is a slogan which relates to situations where fundamental questions of the constitution are involved – which is undoubtedly currently the case – and where masses have democratic illusion.

This is why we have summarized our position in the RCIT Program in the following way: *"Where there are basic issues of political sovereignty on the agenda and there is still no awareness among the masses about the superiority of proletarian council democracy, in certain phases the slogan of a revolutionary Constituent Assembly can be important."* (23)

Shall Marxists raise the slogan of a Constituent Assembly only if the Masses are not mobilized?

In our opinion, the WIVP comrades completely err if they say: *"At this time, while the masses are in the streets, it would be creating dangerous illusions to call for a Constituent Assembly as the whole struggle would now be diverted once more into the path of bourgeois elections"*. With such a method Marxists can never raise the Constituent Assembly slogan when the masses are mobilized. But this is completely alien to the tradition of the revolutionary Marxist movement. Marxists indeed also raised the slogan of Constituent Assembly in situations where the masses were mobilized and where constitutional issues were of central importance. The argument of the LCC comrades *"the RCA is a defensive slogan for revolutionaries"* is refuted by the experience and the theory of Bolshevism.

For example the Bolsheviks agitated for a Constituent Assembly during the whole revolutionary period of 1917! This was a situation where mobilized fully and armed and when even Soviets already existed! But the question of a constitution was a central issue and the masses had democratic illusions. This was the criteria for the Bolsheviks to raise this slogan and so it is for us. Similarly Trotsky raised the slogan of a *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly* during the Spanish Revolution in 1930/31. Here too the masses certainly were mobilized on the streets but had massive illusions. (24)

Trotsky explained the Marxist approach to the slogan of the Constituent Assembly on numerous occasions. In a reply to Chinese comrades, who had sectarian tendencies and rejected the agitation for a Constituent Assem-

bly, Trotsky explained:

“You ask: ‘Is it possible to carry on agitation for a Constituent Assembly while denying that it can be accomplished?’ But why should we decide beforehand that it cannot be accomplished? Of course the masses will follow the slogan only if they consider it feasible. Who will accomplish it, and how will it be accomplished? Here only suppositions are possible, in case of the further weakening of the military-Kuomintang regime and the growth of discontent among the masses, particularly in the cities, it is possible that an attempt will be made by a part of the Kuomintang together with a ‘third party’ to convene something on the style of a National Assembly. Of course, they will as much as possible cut into the rights of the more oppressed classes and layers. Will we Communists, go into such a curtailed and manipulated National Assembly? If we will not be strong enough to replace it, that is to take over power, we will, of course, go in. Such a stage would in no way weaken us. On the contrary, it would help us gather and develop the forces of the proletarian vanguard. Inside the pseudo-assembly, and particularly on the outside of it, we would carry on our agitation for a new and more democratic assembly. In case of a revolutionary mass movement we would simultaneously build Soviets. It is very possible that in such an event the petty-bourgeois parties would convene a comparatively more democratic National Assembly, as a dam against the Soviets. Would we participate in such a sort of representation? Of course we would participate. Again, if we would not be strong enough to replace the assembly with a higher form of government, that is the Soviets. But such a possibility reveals itself only at the highest point of revolutionary ascent. But as it is presently, we have not as yet approached the beginning. Even if the Soviets were a fact – which is not the case in China at present – this in itself would not be cause enough for the abandonment of the slogan of the National Assembly. The majority in the Soviets may be (and at the beginning will certainly be) in the hands of conciliatory and Centrist parties and organizations. We will be interested to have these parties exposed in the open forum of the National Assembly. By this method the majority of the Soviets will be won over to our side sooner, and much more certainly. When our conquest of the majority will become a reality, we will counter-pose the program of the Soviets against the program of the National Assembly, we will gather the majority of the country around the banner of the Soviets, which will give us the possibility, in deed and not on paper, to replace the National Assembly, this parliamentary-democratic institution, by Soviets, as the organ of the revolutionary class dictatorship.”

(25)

The RCIT is convinced that the slogan of a *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly* – as all democratic slogans by the way – is a slogan for mobilization of the masses and not for diversion. Only if the masses have overcome their democratic illusions and understand the need for taking power by workers and peasants councils, only then can revolutionaries drop slogans like *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly*. Is it surprising that the masses in Egypt – after many decades of bourgeois dictatorship – still have democratic illusions?! It is likely that this will continue to be case for some time.

So we think that the comrades both of the WIVP and the LCC misunderstand the situation in Egypt after the military’s coup d’état and the issue of revolutionary democratic demands like the *Revolutionary Constituent Assembly*. We look forward to hear the comrades’ elaboration of their criticism.

Footnotes

(1) An useful overview on the liberal’s capitulation can be found for example in David D. Kirkpatrick: *Egyptian Liberals Embrace the Military*, *Brooking No Dissent*, July 15, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/16/world/middleeast/egypt-morsi.html?_r=0 as well as in *The Associated Press: Egypt’s liberals pressing for democracy after coup*, July 11, 2013, <http://newsok.com/egypts-liberals-pressing-for-democracy-after-coup/article/feed/565053>. Shamefully even Kamal Abu Eita, President of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, sold himself to the army command and serves as a minister in their government. (See *Ahram Online: Labour leader Abu Eita to be appointed Egypt’s manpower minister*, 15 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/76509/Egypt/Politics-/Labour-leader-Abu-Eita-to-be-appointed-Egypt-s-manp.aspx>)

(2) See Yossi Schwartz: *Egypt: The U.S. Support for the Military Coup and the Left’s ignorance. Notes on the role of US imperialism in the military’s coup d’état and the failure of the Egypt left*, 11.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-us-support-for-military-coup

(3) *Workers International Vanguard Party: Down with the preemptive military coup in Egypt*, 8.7.2013, <http://www.workersinternational.org.za/downwithcoup8.7.2013.htm>. All quotes from the WIVP in this article are from this statement.

(4) *Liaison Committee of Communists: Egyptian Class Combat Deepens: On to the Mass Political Strike! Forward to workers councils!* July 15, 2013, <http://cwgusa.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/egyptian-class-combat-deepens-on-to-the-mass-political-strike-forward-to-workers-councils>. All quotes from the LCC in this article are from this statement.

(5) We will not deal with the outrageous absurdities of Alan Woods’ IMT but only note in passing that they downplay the army’s massacre against the Muslim Brotherhood which killed dozens of demonstrators and wounded hundreds as an “armed clash” between which was supposedly provoked by the Brotherhood supporters. (“*A Brotherhood sit-in in front of the Republican Guard’s headquarters, where Morsi is believed to be held, suddenly turned into an armed clash between the army and the Brotherhood, which left 54 dead and hundreds wounded. Although it is not clear how the clash started it is clear that it had been prepared for several days. The same day the Brotherhood was also trying to provoke a clash with the anti-Brotherhood protests in Cairo, by blocking the main roads to the Ittihadiya presidential palace where a huge rally was headed. Besides this there were countless attacks against anti-Morsi rallies leaving up to 40 dead in the previous days. What the Brotherhood was aiming at was to create a clash that could galvanize support around them.*”)

The military’s intervention was therefore supposedly not a coup d’état but expressed the “right of the people to implement change in society.” (“*The hue and cry of the bourgeois ‘democrats’ about a coup – which is shamefully echoed by some so-called lefts – is not a defence of democracy at all, but a disgusting slander and an attack on the revolution itself. It is a hypocritical attempt to deny the right of the people to implement change in society. That the prostitute bourgeois media should use the argument of a so-called coup to try to discredit the revolutionary movement and lower its confidence is perfectly understandable. That people who call themselves ‘lefts’ should act as an echo of this miserable bourgeois campaign is merely despicable.*” The IMT also hallucinates: “*The Brotherhood has suffered a decisive defeat, not by the army, but by the revolutionary people of Egypt.*”)

It is therefore supposedly not the US-financed Egyptian army which is in power since 1952 who is the arch-enemy of the Egyptian Revolution but the Muslim Brotherhood – which the IMT calls the “*Vendee*”, i.e. the most counter-revolutionary force, against the Revolution. (“*The Muslim Brotherhood represents the Vendee of the Egyptian Revolution. Its defeat is the prior condition for the further advance of the Revolution.*”)

All quotes are from a recently published lengthy IMT article: *Alan Woods and Hamid Alizadeh: The Egyptian Revolution – a nightmare for the bourgeoisie*, 12 July 2013, *International Marxist Tendency*, <http://www.marxist.com/the-egyptian-revolution-a-nightmare-for-the-bourgeois.htm>.

Such conclusions are characteristic for a right-wing centrist organization that believes in a peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism because the bourgeois state apparatus is supposed to be reformable and which has again and again praised the army bureaucracy like the Assad regime in Syria of leading

a "proletarian-bonapartist" social transformation to create a deformed workers state.

(6) On the composition of the new, army-imposed government see Ahram Online; Who's who: Egypt's full interim Cabinet, 17 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/76609/Egypt/Politics-/Whos-who-Egypt-s-full-interim-Cabinet.aspx> as well as Joel Gulhane: Ziad Bahaa El-Din appointed deputy PM, July 12, 2013 <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/12/ziad-bahaa-el-din-appointed-deputy-pm>

(7) See Roy Gutman: New Egyptian coalition splits over granting interim president broad powers, McClatchy Foreign Staff, July 9, 2013, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/07/09/196253/new-egyptian-coalition-splits.html#.UeVijm0uz0Y>

(8) "Egyptians would be lucky if their new ruling generals turn out to be in the mold of Chile's Augusto Pinochet, who took power amid chaos but hired free-market reformers and midwifed a transition to democracy." (Wall Street Journal: After the Coup in Cairo. The U.S. shouldn't cut off aid to a new Egyptian government, July 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324399404578583932317286550.html#>)

(9) Egypt billionaire Sawiris family to invest 'like never before', Reuters, 15 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/76521/Business/Economy/Egypt-billionaire-Sawiris-family-to-invest-like-ne.aspx>

(10) Quoted in Bassem Aly: Old friendships never die: Egyptian-Gulf relations after Morsi. The ouster of Mohamed Morsi has been warmly welcomed in Arab Gulf States, except Qatar, with aid now following to prop up Egypt's shaky economy, 14 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/76430/World/Region/Old-friendships-never-die-Egyptian-Gulf-relations-a.aspx>

(11) Emad Mekay: US bankrolled anti-Morsi activists. Documents reveal US money trail to Egyptian groups that pressed for president's removal, Al Jazeera, 10 Jul 2013 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/07/2013710113522489801.html>

(12) David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim: Brotherhood Says U.S. Diplomats Urged It to Accept Ouster of Morsi, July 7, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/world/middleeast/egypt.html?google_editors_picks=true&_r=1&

(13) Ali Abunimah: Egypt deporting Palestinians trying to return to Gaza, 07/08/2013, <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/egypt-deporting-palestinians-trying-return-gaza>

(14) See Israel welcomes Egyptian army coup, 05 July 2013 <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/6472-israel-welcomes-egyptian-army-coup> and Reuters: Former IDF chief: Morsi's fall doesn't pose immediate danger to Israel, 07/04/2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Former-IDF-chief-Morsis-fall-doesnt-pose-immediate-danger-to-Israel-318738>

(15) See on this also our statement RCIT: Tasks of the Revolution in Egypt, 2.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/tasks-of-egypt-revolution

(16) On the RCIT's analysis of the Syrian Revolution and its in-

ner contradictions see some of our recent articles: Yossi Schwartz: Class struggle and religious sectarianism in Syria, 12.6.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/class-struggle-and-religious-sectarianism-in-syria/>; Yossi Schwartz: Syria: After the defeat in Qusayr and ahead of the Battle for Aleppo, 11.6.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-after-defeat-in-qusayr/>; ISL-Leaflet: Victory to the Revolution in Syria! <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/victory-to-revolution-in-syria>.

(17) Revolutionary Communist International Tendency: Egypt: Down with the Military Coup d'État! Prepare Mass Resistance! 8.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-down-with-military-coup-d-etat

(18) We have discussed the question of how to pose the slogan of the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly for example in Michael Pröbsting: Die halbe Revolution. Lehren und Perspektiven des arabischen Aufstandes (2011), Der Weg des Revolutionären Kommunismus No. 8, August 2011, www.thecommunists.net/publications/werk-8

(19) V.I.Lenin: Revolutionary Struggle and Liberal Brokerage, in: LCW Vol. 8, pp. 492-493, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/jun/09c.htm>

(20) V.I.Lenin: The Democratic Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat, in: LCW Vol. 8, pp. 513-514, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/jun/17b.htm>

(21) V.I.Lenin: The Democratic Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat, in: LCW Vol. 8, p. 517, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/jun/17b.htm>

(22) The question of the constitution is for example the focus of the newly-formed liberal movement 'National Popular Alliance'. (See Ahram Online: 'National Popular Alliance' launched, calls for a new constitution. New political alliance includes syndicates, unions and revolutionary groups; calls for a new constitution, not amendments, 14 Jul 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/76470/Egypt/Politics-/National-Popular-Alliance-launched,-calls-for-a-ne.aspx>

(23) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto, p. 46, www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/revolutionary-struggle-for-democracy

(24) See various writings of Trotsky on the Spanish Revolution, e.g. his letter from 12.1.1931 "Soviets and the Constituent Cortes" or the chapter "The Programme of the Revolution" in his pamphlet "The Revolution In Spain" (1931), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/spain/spain04.htm> or the article "'The Spanish Revolution And The Dangers Threatening It'" <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/spain/spain01.htm>

(25) Leon Trotsky: The Slogan of the National Assembly in China; in: Trotsky Writing 1930, pp. 164-165, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/04/china.htm> ■

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Tasks of the Revolution in Egypt

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 2.7.2013

Over the past two months, the *National Salvation Front* (NSF) – a coalition of Liberals, Left and Nationalist forces that includes figures from the Mubarak time like Mohamed ElBaradei and Amr Moussa – has been infused with more energy by the activity of the dynamic *Tamarod* (*Rebel*) movement. This movement gathered 22 million signatures on a declaration calling for Mursi to step down and for new Presidential elections to be held.

Starting two months ago, the small cadre of the pre-Tahrir protest group “*Kefaya*” movement joined by the *April 6 Movement* – the group that organized the first January 25, 2011 demonstration – has become *Tamarod*. By now it has hundreds of thousands activists. *Tamarod* is the force that pulled together the *June 30 Coordination Committee* made of 30 parties, and organizations including the NSF that called for the June 30 demonstrations.

Capitalist Misery of the Masses continues under Morsi

On June 30, 2013 Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi said there would not be a second revolution in Egypt. This misreading of the political reality brings to mind another figure, history did not deal with very kindly: Queen Marie Antoinette who said to the French hungry masses “*if you do not have bread eat cakes*”. Leading figures of the old regimes are known for being detached from reality in time of revolutions and what we have in Egypt is nothing less than the third wave of the revolution that began in 2011. The first one removed Mubarak, the second one removed the military council and the immediate aim of this wave is to remove Morsi and the Moslem Brotherhood from power. The only difference is that by now the misery caused by the capitalist system controlled by the imperialists is much worse than it was in 2011.

According to an analysis of the Egyptian *Al-Masry Studies and Information Center*:

“In the first year of Morsy’s presidency (...) economic growth rates registering only 2.3 percent in the first nine months of the current fiscal year. This, in turn, has raised unemployment rates to 13.2 percent in the first quarter of 2013, compared to 12.5 percent in the third quarter of 2012.

Since its installment, Prime Minister Hesham Qandil’s cabinet has announced intentions to implement austerity measures to reduce the growing budget deficit to pave the way for borrowing from the IMF. However, the postponement of some of those measures because of the fear of the reaction of the masses has caused the budget deficit to continue to widen, reaching LE 203 billion in 11 months, up 48 percent from the same period in the previous fiscal year.

The budget deficit has led to greater internal and external borrowing, causing the local public debt to hit LE1.3 trillion by the end of March 2013, the equivalent of 80 percent of the gross domestic product. In June, the Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) said external debt has climbed to US\$44 billion. (...)

In the first year of Morsy’s presidency, the fuel and electricity crises renewed, with the government failing to provide a solu-

tion and only making promises.” (Reported in Ibrahim al-Ghitany: The performance of the Egyptian economy under Morsy, *Egypt Independent*, 25/06/2013, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/performance-egyptian-economy-under-morsy>)

Imperialist Plunder of Egypt

The cause of the misery of the many millions workers and poor in Egypt is the continuing robbery of Egypt by the multinationals and the imperialist financial institutions served by the Egyptian semi-rulers – the local capitalists including the army generals. They are very good in creating the problems but are unable to solve the Egyptian economic and socio-political crisis which is part of the world economic crisis.

Egypt’s foreign debt has massively risen recently. According to the May 2013 issue of the *Statistical Bulletin* from the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE), the country’s foreign debt has reached \$38.8 billion in the second quarter of 2013. This is an increase by 15.2% compared to the same quarter the previous year. According to the Finance Ministry it “*is considered the highest growth rate recorded for Egyptian foreign debt since March 2008*”. (See Central Bank of Egypt: May 2013 Statistical Bulletin, p. 95, <http://www.cbe.org.eg/English/Economic+Research/Publications/Monthly+Statistical+Bulletin/May+2013+Statistical+Bulletin.htm>)

The RCIT states that any government that intends to serve the Egyptian masses must begin by announcing that Egypt will not pay the debts as this debt is a form of a robbery. Needless to say neither Morsi nor the leadership of the Salvation front will take such an anti-imperialist step that will be supported by the masses because of their fear of losing control of the masses.

Independence from the imperialist monopolies and powers is part of the democratic revolution that the masses demand by striving for. For these democratic demands to be realized a socialist revolution is necessary. But such a socialist revolution can only win if a revolutionary party is leading the working class. Unfortunately such a party does not exist in Egypt as yet. For this reason what we have is an unfinished revolution.

A New Revolutionary Wave

The current revolutionary wave is the largest mobilization of the workers and the poor so far. Not tens of thousands as the supporters of Morsi hoped, not one million as the organizers hoped, but 15-17 millions took to the streets in different cities on 30th June! These cities did not only include Cairo, Alexandria or Suez but also for example the industrial proletarian stronghold of Mahalla where hundreds of thousands of workers were gathered at Al-Shoun Square.

Before, Morsi said that there would not be a second revolution in Egypt, but by the end of the day he was hiding

while anger against Morsi swept the streets. At least seven people were killed and more than 600 wounded in clashes between the pro and anti-Morsi groups. Former leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Tharwat Kherbawi said that President Mohamed Morsi is hiding now in an undisclosed location, in preparation for his escape out of the country. (<http://www.alroeya-news.net/en/political/33266-33266.html?videolimitstart=114>)

While Morsi declares no revolution will take place five Ministers deserted him. The rats are leaving the sinking boat.

One year in power has been sufficient to expose the nature of Morsi regime. It showed to be a bourgeois regime in religious cloth, serving the imperialists and the local capitalists as well as an ally of Israel (as was Mubarak before Morsi).

On June 30 different marches met in Tharir Square. The fact that the revolutionary masses took over Tahrir square is by itself an indicator of the relationship of forces in favor of the revolution. The march from Giza was led by Nasserite presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabahi and the Kamal Abou Eita, the leader of the newly formed *Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions*. This march merged with another one led by liberal opposition leader Mohamed El-Baradei.

The Web site "*Ahram Online*" quoted the Egyptian socialist and workers leader, Kamal el-Fayoumi, who played a central role in organizing the protests on 30.6. in the working class city of Mahalla: "*The Muslim Brotherhood doesn't dare to organize protests in Mahalla. The people of the city voted against the constitution and President Morsi and they reject the group's presence in power. (...) I am expecting around 1 million people to take to the streets of Mahalla this afternoon. (...) Only 10 percent of workers at the state-owned Mahalla Misr Spinning and Weaving Company are working today, the others will be protesting. (...) President Mohamed Morsi Mubarak has failed to fulfill any of his election promises. (...) Mahalla contributed heavily to the removal of Mubarak from power, and we will do the same thing with Morsi.*" (Live updates: Millions join anti-Morsi protests in Egypt, *Ahram Online*, 30.6.2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/75297.aspx>)

No to a Popular Front with Nasserites and Liberals!

This is all very good but what was missing was a working class revolutionary perspective to replace Morsi. The workers, poor peasants, oppressed women and youth, the unemployed want nothing less than a revolution. They demanded bread and freedom in 2011 and they demand the same today. They know from experience they have the power to remove Morsi and they act on it today. They have shown all of those who only yesterday said that the masses can get only religious dictator instead of another dictator that the millions of workers and poor who want and deserve much better are able to get rid of the dictators whether secular or religious. However without a revolutionary leadership the masses cannot take power.

The lack of such a party is clearly visibly if one looks to those forces which claim to be revolutionary and pro-working class. The *Revolutionary Socialists* (sister organization of the British SWP) is part of the bourgeois-dominated alliance *National Salvation Front*.

The RCIT is of the opinion that while it is necessary to

take part in joint actions with those forces – even if they are bourgeois – who lead sectors of the rebellious masses against the Morsi regime, it is a betrayal to the principles of working class independence to join a political alliance with them.

So while it is correct to march with the June 30 coordination committee – including the forces of the Nasserite Hamdeen Sabahi and the bourgeois-liberal ElBaradei – as part of a united front, the question is which class will lead this revolution. This magnificent show of the power of the masses must not be wasted by the bourgeois leaders of the Salvation Front who simply want to take the place of Morsi in order to do the same – serving the imperialists and the local capitalist.

Meantime the US has joined the pressure on Morsi to include some of the leaders of the opposition in his government:

"The White House said Tuesday that U.S. President Barack Obama called embattled Morsi to convey concerns about mass protests against the Egyptian leader's regime and urged him to respond to issues raised by the demonstrators. The U.S. president "told President Morsi that the United States is committed to the democratic process in Egypt and does not support any single party or group," the White House said." (Haaretz: Morsi rebuffs Egypt army's ultimatum, as Obama urges him to respond to protesters, 2.7.2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/tags/Barack%20Obama-1.476751>)

The Army threatens with a coup d'état

One of the key issues of the revolution is how to deal with the Egyptian army. On Monday the Egyptian army has given a 48 hours ultimatum to resolve the current political stalemate. The army statement, delivered on state television on Monday, stated: "*The armed forces repeat their call for the people's demands to be met and give everyone 48 hours as a last chance.*" *The national security of the state is in severe danger,*" it added, warning that if there was no resolution the army "*will be obliged by its patriotic and historic responsibilities... to announce a road map for the future and the steps for overseeing its implementation, with participation of all patriotic and sincere parties and movements.*" (Al Jazeera: Egyptian army issues 48-hour ultimatum, 02 Jul 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/07/201371231726346358.html>)

What is the meaning of this ultimatum? It could mean that the army has already decided to take over. Or that it applies pressure on Morsi and the National front to force them to make concessions, which could include changes in the constitution, adding representatives of the protest movements to the new government, or setting a date for new parliamentary elections. Such moves could allow both sides to call on their supporters to disperse. And they could lead to political demoralization of the masses rather than to a revolution.

This danger becomes clear from reports from the reaction of sectors of the masses at the Tahrir Square to the army's ultimatum. Al Jazeera reports:

"Mean time hours after the ultimatum, army helicopters flew over Tahrir Square trailing large Egyptian flags, a move interpreted by some protesters as a show of support. "The army and the people are one hand," protesters chanted. Tamarod, praised the statement, saying it showed the military was on the side of

the people. "I don't think the army will control this transitional period," said Eman el-Mahdy, a spokeswoman for the group. "I think they should play the role to prevent further bloodshed." (Al Jazeera: Egyptian army issues 48-hour ultimatum, 02 Jul 2013)

To entertain hopes in the army is a serious mistake reflecting bourgeois illusions. The RCIT warns that the Egyptian army – like all armies in the capitalist society – is not the army of the workers the peasants and the rebelling youth. It is the core of the capitalist state apparatus and it defends capitalism. Therefore this army must be split and replaced by workers and peasants self defense guard.

The role of this illusion that the army is on the side of the people is leading to the subordination of the revolutionary masses to the capitalist state. The army generals may have reached the conclusion that Morsi does not serve them any more in controlling the masses, but the army high command is the enemy of the masses – not a friend!

Revolutionary Perspectives

The RCIT says that this is the time to bring down Morsi by a general strike and replace his government with a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor. The *Coordination Committee* including the *Salvation Front* and *Tamarod* call for a new elections and spread illusion about the role of the army. By this they are pushing the movement backward trying to channel the revolutionary energy into reformist safe channels for the capitalist state.

The *Revolutionary Socialist* group (RS) in Egypt, the largest group on the left, is calling for a general strike and:

"* The overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood's failed regime and the withdrawal of confidence from its president Mohamed Mursi;

* The formation of a revolutionary government to manage the transitional period, the first of whose priorities will be the issue of social justice and security;

* The head of the revolutionary government shall be barred from candidacy in early presidential elections."

(Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists call for general strike until the fall of the regime, June 30, 2013, in: Socialist Worker (Paper of the SWP Britain), <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/33754/Egypt's+Revolutionary+Socialists+call+for+general+strike+until+the+fall+of+the+regime>)

While the call for a general strike is correct the question is what kind of a transitional revolutionary government the RS has in their mind? From the formulation it sounds as a call for a bourgeois revolutionary government not a workers revolutionary government. What does it mean: "social justice and security"? This is a meaningless abstraction – not a revolutionary action program. And who needs now new presidential elections now?!

No, the task ahead is organizing forms of workers and peasant's power like popular actions committees organized nationally into a system of workers and peasant councils. Similarly it is urgent to organize an armed popular militia in order to defeat Morsi's thugs as well as an army coup d'état. Furthermore a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor, should immediately start to expropriate the big firms and banks under workers control.

If the reformists and the centrists of all stripes would be able to block for now the revolution and elections will be called, revolutionaries will not boycott the elections but use it as a platform to propagandize for a revolutionary perspective.

The revolution in Egypt can be won but for this a working class revolutionary leadership can and must be built. Otherwise we will have a new set back until the next revolutionary wave after further suffering. Forming a Bolshevik organization should be the first step in order to build an authentic revolutionary workers party.

In working towards such a goal, revolutionaries should also urge the independent trade unions and other workers organization to break with the Nasserite and liberal forces and to form an independent *Mass Workers Party*. Authentic socialists would fight for a revolutionary Action Program as the basis of such a Workers Party.

In this situation the RCIT raises the following slogans:

* For a General Strike to bring down Morsi government!

* No political support for the National Salvation Front!

* For action committees in each factory, workers neighborhood and village to be organized on district and national level to coordinate the revolutionary activities!

* For self defense committees! Split the army to win the soldiers for revolution!

* Cancel the debts!

* For a workers government, based on the poor peasantry and the urban poor committed to the expropriation of the multinationals, big capital and banks under workers control as well as the replacement of the bourgeois state apparatus by workers and peasant organs!

* Build a revolutionary organization! All Workers Organizations should break with the bourgeois opposition forces and form an independent Mass Workers Party based on a revolutionary program!

International Secretariat of the RCIT, 2.7.2013



Class struggle and religious sectarianism in Syria

To win the revolution in Syria, a revolutionary working class party must be built!

By Yossi Schwartz, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, 12.6.2013

It has been a week of military gains for the Syrian government, whose soldiers won an important battle against the rebels after long and intense fighting over Qusayr, a strategic city near the Lebanese border. The fact that the Syrian army and Hezbollah fighters are much better armed is an important factor in the battle. However this is only a secondary factor.

Classes in the Syrian Revolution

As Carl von Clausewitz wrote, war is the continuation of politics by other means. This is certainly true in Syria. The Syrian civil war is a manifestation of class war: the rich Sunni merchants are on the side of Assad – in addition to the capitalists from the Alawites/Shiites, Christians and other sects. On the other side, we see the workers and the poor peasants mostly on the side of the rebels. It is no accident that the biggest industrial and working class concentration of the country – the Aleppo region with nearly 5 million people – is one of the biggest strongholds of the rebels.

But due to the policies of Assad and his imperialist allies, plus Iran and Hezbollah, on one side and those of Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the Islamists they are arming on the other side, the class nature of the war is obscured, and the conflict consequently has the outward appearance of a sectarian struggle between Sunnis and Shiites. This obscuring of the class war is the prime reason for Assad's victories. (1)

Qatar's and Saudi Arabia's interests and interference

Some on the reformist and centrist Left who support the Assad regime, claiming that his regime is anti-imperialist, argue that the Islamist rebels being armed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia are tools of the imperialists. According to this argument, these reactionary states are simply vehicles for the transfer of weapons by the imperialists to the rebels. Yet, we have never received an answer from Assad's supporters to the simple question: Why would the imperialists elect to send the rebels weapons indirectly when they can easily enough send them directly? While our defense of the masses of Syria fighting for revolution would not be different even if the American or European imperialist were to send arms to the rebels, so long as the imperialists do not directly command the rebel forces, the fact is that the Western imperialists have *not* sent the rebels any weapons. However, Saudi Arabia and Qatar *are* sending weapons to the Islamist rebels, not as agents of imperialism, but rather for their own self interests in gaining influence, achieving a bourgeoisification of the rebel movement and hereby preventing an authentic revolution in Syria. These reactionary states use their influence to encourage the Syrian regime's sectarian policies, very effective tools of counter-revolutionary policy.

In reality, the interest of the imperialists – whether American, European, Israeli, Russian or Chinese –, are served by the obscuring of the revolutionary nature of the struggle by means of these sectarian policies of the regime and the middle class leadership of the opposition. Sectarianism is a poison that prevents the unification of the masses against the oppressive regime.

Lessons from History

As the history of the Russian revolution has shown, only the working class, led by a revolutionary Bolshevik party at the head of the masses, can unify these masses irrespective of religious or ethnic background. Tsarist Russia was well-known as a prison house for many nationalities and, were it not for the Bolshevik policy on the national question, the revolutionary struggle could have easily degenerated into a sectarian nightmare. However, in Syria a revolutionary party still does not exist and, therefore, the obscuring of the class nature of the war depicted as a sectarian war is helping Assad win battles, as the Syrian army and its allies are much better armed than the rebels. The real potential of the revolution is in the unity of the struggling masses led by the working class. As long as this does not occur, the stronger and better-armed side will win.

In one respect, the Syrian revolution is similar to the Spanish civil war of the 1930s. In Spain, the imperialists did not send weapons to the Republican forces fighting against Franco's Nationalist rebels and his much better armed German and Italian allies. However, the main reason for the defeat of the Spanish Republicans was the policies of the popular front government, which paralyzed the working class and the poor peasants. Consequently, Franco's better-armed side won the civil war.

In civil war Spain, revolutionaries stood shoulder to shoulder with the Republicans, but at the same time opposed the anti-working class policies of the Republican government. In Syria, *militarily* we stand with the opponents of the Assad regime, but give no *political support* to the secular pro-imperialists and the reactionary Islamists. Furthermore, the RCIT opposes all policies that divide the masses in Syria, and blame not only Assad but the middle class organizations as well who similarly foster the poison of sectarianism that ultimately contributes to Assad's victories. (2)

Revolutionary Tactics in case of a war with Israel

While discussing the military aspect of the civil war in Syria, it is important to address the possibility of a war between Israel and Syria. This year, Israel has already attacked military convoys in Syria carrying weapons to Hezbollah on three separate occasions, and Assad has declared that Syria will respond the next time this occurs. While the chances for such a war are not great, it cannot

be ruled out.

In such a war, the interests of the international working class will be the defeat of Israel, as Israel is both a reactionary settler state as well as an imperialist state. (3) In such a situation, the RCIT will call for the Syrian opposition to fight on two fronts: one against Assad's army and the other one against Israel. How much relative effort the opposition will have to invest simultaneously in each front will depend on which of the two enemies is more dangerous at any given moment. (4)

While a victory for Assad in the civil war will weaken the revolution, a defeat of the Israeli ruling class will strengthen the revolutionary struggle. Such a defeat may even split the Israeli Jewish population, as a section of the Israelis, especially the most exploited and oppressed among the Jewish workers, may realize that, for them, Israel is a death trap, and that it is better to be alive in a Free, Red Palestine than to be dead, wrapped in a blue and white shroud.

Footnotes:

(1) In this context we refer to a number of articles published on the RCIT's website www.thecommunists.net in which we analyzed the contradictions and perspectives of the Syrian Revolution. The most recently published articles on Syria are Yossi Schwartz: Syria: After the defeat in Qusayr and ahead of the Battle for Aleppo, 11.6.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-after-defeat-in-qusayr/>; Leaflet of the International Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Occupied Palestine/Israel): Victory to the Revolution in Syria! (in: Revolutionary Communism No. 11, June 2013) <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/victory-to-revolution-in-syria/>; Budour Hassan: Syria: Urgent appeal to Free Ali Shihabi; (in: Revolutionary

Communism No. 11, June 2013) <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-free-ali-shihabi/>

(2) The RCIT has elaborated the Marxist position on Liberation Wars in which reactionary forces intervene on the progressive side in a document of Michael Pröbsting: Liberation struggles and imperialist interference. The failure of sectarian "anti-imperialism" in the West: Some general considerations from the Marxist point of view and the example of the democratic revolution in Libya in 2011, (in: Revolutionary Communism No. 5, September 2012) <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>

(3) We have studied the nature of the Israeli state in various documents. See e.g. two longer studies which we recently published: Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1/>; Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine. Thoughts on some exceptionalities of the Israeli state, the national oppression of the Palestinian people and its consequences for the program of the Bolshevik-Communists in Palestine, May 2013 <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine/>. Both documents have been published in the RCIT's international journal Revolutionary Communism No. 10, June 2013)

(4) See on this also the RCIT's statement Israel: Hands Off Lebanon and Syria!, 6.5.2013, (in: Revolutionary Communism No. 11, June 2013) <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/israel-hands-off-lebanon-and-syria/> ■



Nina Gunić, leader of the RCIT, speaks at a demonstration in solidarity with the Egyptian Revolution: Source: Martin Juen, martinjuen.wordpress.com

After the defeat in Qusayr and ahead of the Battle for Aleppo: Revolutionary working class leadership to lead the Syrian Revolution to Victory!

By Yossi Schwartz, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, 11.6.2013

Imperialist propaganda seeks to present a picture of hopelessness in Syria and to present the only alternatives available to the Syrian masses as being support for one of the following:

- * Either Assad as he continues to slaughter his own people;
- * the Syrian pro-imperialists who are demanding a massive military intervention by the West;
- * or the forces controlled by Islamist reactionaries.

The *revolutionary* position is unequivocal: no political support for either pro-imperialists or Islamists. Instead we call for the masses of the Syrian people to stand united in a *military front* against the Assad regime together with all those who are currently struggling against him.

Defeats for the Syrian Revolution

As these lines are being written, the Syrian army has launched a new offensive named "*Northern Storm*" which aims to take back complete control of the city of Aleppo and its environs. According to reports, Hezbollah forces are fighting alongside the Syrian regime, after having helped Assad to regain control of the strategic city Qusayr.

Currently, most of Aleppo is held by the rebels, while only a few areas remain under the control of the Syrian army. After taking control of Aleppo, the rebels have been trying to establish a buffer zone up to the Turkish border to help them move their forces and equipment. If the Syrian army manages to retake Aleppo, this would be a serious setback for the rebels who, in any case, suffer from a lack of weapons and material due to the repeated, still unfulfilled, proposals being considered in the West, particularly in the UK. Until now, no Western imperialist power has sent weapons to the rebels. Those reactionary Arab regimes, like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, who have and continue to send arms to rebel forces, are supplying them to Islamists, whose sectarian politics greatly impede a successful struggle against the Syrian army.

At the same time, the Assad regime receives massive military support particularly from imperialist Russia but also from imperialist China and the reactionary Islamist regime in Iran.

The only solution to the difficult problems in Syria is a Socialist Revolution: Unless the working class assumes leadership of the Syrian masses in revolt, the revolution cannot be won. The current petty bourgeois rebel leaderships, with no program, strategy or tactics, are obviously unable to mobilize the whole working class and peasants irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation against the Assad dictatorship. But without such a broad mobilization and organization in popular councils and militias, it is impossible to defeat the Assad regime and replace it with a truly popular, workers' and peasants government. To achieve this, the working class needs a revolutionary leadership, i.e. a revolutionary party.

The difference between political and military support

Here it is important to clarify and emphasize the difference between *political support* for and *military support* for the rebels fighting against the Assad regime: *Political support* means taking the position that the establishment of a pro-imperialist or Islamic government would be a progressive, advantageous first step in the revolutionary struggle. By contrast, *military support* means attempting to achieve *only* military coordination between all forces fighting against the Syrian army, *without* ceasing a political struggle against the various rebel leaderships, the goal being the taking of power by the working class, and *not* the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie.

We want to bring down Assad, but do *not* want a pro-imperialist or Islamist regime in his place. Anyone who knows history knows that this was the line taken by the Bolsheviks in 1917, when they formed a joint military front with the Kerensky government against the revolt led by Kornilov, without giving any political support to the Kerensky government. Immediately after revolutionary forces defeated Kornilov, the Bolsheviks toppled the regime of Kerensky and his pro-imperialist partners in the October Revolution.

Western or Israeli imperialist attack

If the Western imperialists, including Israel, attack Assad's Syria, we will call for the rebels to fight on two fronts: one against Assad and the other against imperialism. How many forces should be dedicated to each front will depend on who is the more dangerous of the two enemies at any given moment. However, if Assad will fight the imperialist invasion and cease hostilities against the rebels, the latter can consider forming a military front with the Syrian regime against Imperialism. It is not a question of Assad's being the "bad guy" and the rebel leaderships being the "good guys" or *vice versa*. Rather, what is vital at any given moment is to analyze the actual power relations and to act consistent with the derived conclusions. ■



Proposal for a New Law in Apartheid Israel

By Yossi Schwartz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Occupied Palestine/Israel), 18.6.2013

Haaretz, the Hebrew-language daily newspaper, writes today (June 18): “If there was anyone hoping that the wave of anti-democratic legislation which characterized the previous Knesset would stop with the end of its term, the decision of the Ministerial Committee on Legislation from the day before yesterday demonstrates that the current government and Knesset apparently intend to outdo all their predecessors in repressing minorities and institutionalizing discrimination against them.”

Hiding behind the seemingly innocuous name *State Donors’ Rights Act* are a number of Machiavellian and cynical proposals that have been approved by the ministerial committee. In general, these proposals permit the giving of *preferential treatment* to persons who have served in the IDF (Israel army) in issues relating to: employment in general and specifically employment by the state; salaries paid for the same work; providing services to and receiving orders from state offices and private commercial firms; the allocation of land for building homes; and the provision of day care services at institutions of higher learning. The meaning of the proposed legislation, if passed, is increased discrimination against *already* disadvantaged and marginalized groups, in particular the Arab population of Israel, but also Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews), the disabled and sick, and others who have received exemptions from service in the IDF.

Legalization of Inequality

There are those who justify the proposed legislation as a means to compensate those who serve or have served in the standing army and in the IDF reserves. However, the proposed law is not *really* about such compensation, since the state can directly compensate those who in fact perform such service. Furthermore, if passed, the bill will sanction preferential treatment for anyone who served in the IDF for at least 12 months, regardless of whether or not they serve in the reserves. In this way, instead of adopting affirmative action to improve the lot of the disadvantaged and marginalized, the proposed legislation seeks to further improve the lot of the already strongest and best represented groups in Israeli society: Jewish citizens, especially males.

The proposed legislation undermines the idea of equality in that it chooses to discriminate against those whose starting point in society is the worst – the Arab public. In practice, despite the laws against discrimination that are on the books, the Arab public and members of other populations – precisely those who the proposed legislation will hurt – are *already* discriminated against; they already have less access to employment, land, and government services. If the new bill is approved, it will effectively circumvent all laws prohibiting discrimination *by making it legal* to give preferential treatment to those who have served in the IDF. If passed, *it will be legal* to give preference to the hiring of Jews over Arabs; *it will be legal* to pay more for the same work done by a man who served in the army than to one who did not serve; for example, a physically dis-

abled person who received a medical exemption from army service. *It will be legal* to allocate more land for building to Jews than Arabs.

Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein, whose legal opinion was presented to the Committee of Ministers, stated that the proposal violates the right to equality enshrined in Israel’s quasi-constitutional Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, and therefore should be buried quickly. If not, it will be yet another stone in the Israel’s Apartheid Wall.

Liberal Zionist newspaper Haaretz admits that Israel is an ‘Apartheid State’

Of course, what’s new in this story is *not* the promulgation of yet another racist law or even the hope of Israeli liberals that racist legislation will somehow stop. Rather, for the first time, a liberal Zionist newspaper, *Haaretz*, has called this country by name: “Apartheid State,” including Israel in its pre-1967 borders; or in other words, an “Apartheid State from the River to the Sea.”

To this proposed law and the reaction of *Haaretz*, we need only add the recent statements of Naftali Bennett, Minister of Trade and Economic Affairs, from the Judea and Samaria Conference held on Monday of this week (June 17) that “...*The attempt to establish a Palestinian state is over. We need to build, build, build...*” He then reiterated and explained: “*The most important thing today in the Land of Israel is to build and build and build ... It is important that Israel be present everywhere. Our main problem remains our leaders’ unwillingness to declare openly and simply that the Land of Israel belongs to the People of Israel. We must say to ourselves and*



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

to the entire world that this country has been ours for 3,000 years... There has never been a Palestinian state here, nor have we ever been occupiers here. This home is ours; we are the legal owners and tenants here; we are not occupiers." (By Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury: Idea of a two-state solution has reached 'dead end,' Bennett says, Haaretz, Jun.17, 2013 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/idea-of-a-two-state-solution-has-reached-dead-end-bennett-says.premium-1.530310>)

For socialist revolution!

There is, therefore, no denying that the State of Israel is an apartheid state from the river to the sea. Furthermore, there is no credence to any of the hopes or predictions of those who expect that the imperialist powers supporting the State of Israel will eventually force her to give up all or some of the territory she conquered in 1967. There is no solution other than a socialist revolution aimed at establishing a single democratic state from the river to the sea. But the only ones who can establish such a state are the Palestinian workers and that portion of the Jewish working class who will join them in their revolutionary struggle, together with the Palestinian peasants, poor, and lower

levels of the *petite bourgeoisie*. Thus, the class character of this state will be a workers' state from the river to the sea. If Israel, as usual, will attack Syria and a regional war will develop in which Israel is defeated, we are likely to see, sooner than generally expected, the opening of a rift that will bring some parts of the Jewish working class to prefer life *with the Arabs as equals* over the privileges that Israel still gives them as colonial settlers. If we take into account the 185,000 families living in tents and shacks, it is clear that these privileges are rapidly diminishing.

However, a socialist revolution requires building a revolutionary party. We need every man and woman who wants to fight for life instead of only the oppression and death that the Zionist state will ultimately bequeath to its residents and citizens, Palestinians and Jews. Having said this, we are prepared to fight in a united front alongside any group or individual who is prepared to struggle, even partially, against national oppression; against racism towards Ethiopians; against the super-exploitation of Palestinian workers and foreign worker; and against the exploitation of Jewish workers -- as long as their demands are directed against *the exploiters*, and *not* against our Palestinian brothers and sisters; *not* against migrant workers or Ethiopians. Join the *Internationalist Socialist League* and the *RCIT!* ■

Israel: Down with opportunistic leadership!

Letter from an Activist on the causes for the failing of the social protest movement

by Shmuel Yerushalmi, Occupied Palestine/Israel, June 2013

For many years I have been active in the social protest movement in Israel, and have taken part in hundreds of demonstrations, strikes, and other actions organized by Israelis and Palestinians. My long experience has led me to the conclusion that the Israeli workers' movement lacks two essential elements: *class consciousness* and *worker solidarity*.

Active today in Israel are a number of general trade unions: The *Histadrut*, *Koah LeOvdim* ("Power to Workers"), and *Maan* (a small workers organization affiliated with the political party DAAM). The one thing all three organizations have in common is a heavy dose of trade union opportunism, i.e., trying to resolve all problems within the framework of the present system. This is attempted using a number of means sanctioned by "democratic" capitalism: participating in elections; bringing workers grievances to state labor courts; and by conducting negotiations with employers.

Established in 1920, the *Histadrut* is the largest trade union in Israel and was founded as an integral part of the Zionist movement. Since the end of the British Mandate in 1948, the *Histadrut* has continuously collaborated with the government of Israel to prevent authentic worker struggles in the country. Usually, this is done by the trade union's calling for symbolic strikes of only one or two days, thereby exerting as little pressure as possible on the capitalists and state-owned companies and offices of the governmental bureaucracy, before ending the strike. At all times the *Histadrut* does the maximum to prevent true mass demon-

strations of the workers and is never prepared to cooperate with the Palestinian working class for joint struggles. Every time Israel has set out on one of its military adventures against the Palestinians or Arab states, the labor aristocracy of the *Histadrut* calls off all labor disputes and strikes, thereby demonstrating its complete identification with and loyalty to Israel's bourgeois, colonialist regime.

Koah LeOvdim ("Power to Workers") officially defines itself as cooperative trade union for Jews, Arabs, and migrant worker. Even in this relatively progressive movement, we find a great many signs of opportunism on the part of the movement's leadership. Perhaps the best example is that the majority of its leadership supports the Scandinavian model of a social state. Such support demonstrates both opportunism and ideological hypocrisy. I have taken part in many actions, meetings, and demonstrations organized by *Koah LeOvdim*, and have always heard their leaders say "We support the power of the worker class; working class power called Social-Democracy, the best examples of which are the Scandinavian states where the workers are in power!" I've had many discussions and debates with representatives of *Koah LeOvdim* around questions like: What exactly is a workers state? Do Sweden, Denmark, and Norway really exemplify political and economic power in hands of the working class?

A few days ago, a demonstration of the building cleaners trade union from Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva, organized by *Koah LeOvdim*, was supposed to have taken place. A few hours before the scheduled start of the

demonstration, it was called off by the Southern district leadership of Koah LeOvdim. Instead of a demonstration, a brief meeting of the workers was held, after a committee of the Knesset that reviews worker-related and social issues met with directors of the University, and promised to intervene and support a negotiated resolution of the conflict. It should be noted that these very same cleaners at Ben Gurion University, whose strike was called off at the last moment by Koah LeOvdim, like so many other wage earners in Israel, are not directly employed by the institution they work at, but are rather contract workers who are severely exploited by their middleman employer. The heads of Koah LeOvdim with whom I spoke afterwards claimed that the workers themselves were eager to call off the demonstration. I replied that *true labor leadership* needs to explain to the workers the central importance of demonstrations and strikes in the struggle against capitalist exploitation. But the Negev district leadership of Koah LeOvdim preferred to cancel this demonstration, with the claim that they intend to eventually initiate combined demonstration and strike of cleaners, non-tenured faculty, and other workers and students of the university. We will wait and see...

On 3rd June, I participated in a meeting of about 30 social activists from Beer Sheva devoted to the planning of new protest actions in our city. This meeting revealed at its worst the bourgeois, reformist nature of most of the local protest movements. During this meeting I made a number of suggestions to intensify the level of protest in the city. One suggestion I made was to make workers struggles central to all protests. Some of the meeting's participants supported this idea, but all the organizers of the meeting (students and labor bureaucrats) were strongly opposed to any making any link between general protests and protests related to workers struggles. They claimed that the protest movement and worker struggles are two separate matters and that we don't have to combine them (!). I objected that such a position is both opportunistic and reactionary and that a truly revolutionary struggle cannot to be divided from working class questions.

The masses of Israeli and Palestinian workers must unite and topple the opportunistic and bureaucratic leaderships of workers and protest movements in the entire area of Palestine from the river to the sea. We need a strong, ideologically-based movement that can (a) integrate the worker struggles with the protest movement and (b) create a united revolutionary protest movement of Israelis, Palestinians, and migrant workers that serve as the basis of a single revolutionary, multi-national state in all of Palestine. Without class consciousness and a fusion between protest movements and the working class struggle in all parts of Palestine, the protest movement in Israel cannot succeed.

* * *

Comment from the Editorial Board:

While, in general, we agree with the conclusions Comrade Yerushalmi's brings in the last paragraph of the above article, we must emphasize what, to our own thinking, is the authentic key to the failure of the protest movement in Israel.

Israel is a colonialist settler society that, by definition, oppresses and must continue to oppress the indigenous Palestinians Arab population. This is so whether the latter are 2nd class citizens of

Israel (one quarter of whom are "internal refugees"), residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (nearly half of them being refugees), or entirely ex-territorial refugees living in neighboring countries or overseas.

The position of the Israeli working class within this reality is such that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, its members have absolutely no will or desire to give up their own relatively privileged status compared to that of Palestinians workers, unemployed, and increasingly landless peasants. A large proportion of the Israeli working class has been and remains bought-off by that portion of the 'primitive accumulation of Capital' allotted to them by the Zionist political elites and bourgeoisie since the 1948 war, when 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes and possessions as well as the massive economic support by US and European imperialism throughout its whole history and finally the imperialist extra-profits which Israeli monopoly capital is achieving. The Israeli working class has been educated from childhood to believe in the sanctity and the absolute inviolability of the Zionist state; that without this state, their fate, as Jews, is one of utter destruction; and that they must therefore gratefully accept their ultimate existential duty as payers of this state's taxes and soldiers in this state's army.

In such a reality, there is no realistic possibility that the masses of the Israeli working class will develop automatically a political class consciousness and international workers solidarity that comrade Yerushalmi so perceptively notes is missing from the social protest movement in his country. Doing so would necessitate a radical break with the sectarian, chauvinistic, and often racist attitudes endemic to so much of the Israeli 'Weltanschauung'. For such a break, massive political concussions in the Middle East and North African region are necessary such as a successful working class revolution in one of the countries or a massive military defeat of Israeli imperialism in a war with its neighbors. Secondly the formation of a revolutionary party is required which can transmit a socialist, internationalist class consciousness and help to break away a section of the Israeli-Jewish working class from Zionism.

The relatively small percent of Israeli workers who have or will achieve such a proletarian and internationalist outlook must understand that the only potential for a significantly powerful revolutionary force resides in the Palestinian working class and peasants in conjunction with the oppressed masses of the entire Middle East. Nevertheless, it remains the right and obligation of this small Israeli revolutionary vanguard to stand shoulder to shoulder with their Palestinian working brothers and sisters to bring about a Free, Red Palestine. To move forward with this task, the building of a revolutionary party as part of the Fifth Workers International is necessary.

For a better understanding of the complexity of the revolutionary program in Occupied Palestine/Israel we refer readers to two longer studies which the RCIT has recently published:

** Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1/>;*

** Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine. Thoughts on some exceptionalities of the Israeli state, the national oppression of the Palestinian people and its consequences for the program of the Bolshevik-Communists in Palestine, May 2013 <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine/>. Both documents have been published in the RCIT's international journal *Revolutionary Communism* No. 10, June 2013). ■*

Israel's Six-Day War in 1967

On the Character of the War, the Marxist Tactic and the Position of the Israeli Left

By Yossi Schwartz, *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)*, July 2013

Preface of the Editorial Board: The following document by comrade Yossi Schwartz analyzes the character and background of the 1967 Israeli war. He elaborates the approach of Marxists who ought to have stood for the defeat of Israel and military victory for the Arab States without, at the same time, giving any political support to the Arab regimes. In an appendix, Schwartz critically examines the position of the *Israeli Socialist Organization (ISO)*, better known as *Matzpen*, regarding the Six-Day War of 1967.

This document is the author's second contribution in a series of articles by him on the Marxist position towards Israel's numerous wars during the course of its history. The first article of this series dealt with Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, and was published in the RCIT's journal *Revolutionary Communism* in a special issue on Palestine released in June 2013. (1)

Yossi Schwartz, is an Israeli-Jewish Trotskyist and Anti-Zionist. He has been politically active since the 1960s and has always supported the Palestinian liberation struggle. He is a long-time leader of the *International Socialist League* which joined the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* in spring 2013, becoming it's the RCIT's section in Occupied Palestine/Israel.

Comrade Schwartz is particularly qualified to write the present document, not only because of his deep knowledge of Israel's history, as well as the Marxist *Weltanschauung*, but also because he participated in the 1967 war as a military medic, and around the same time he became a member of *Matzpen* – the only existing socialist organization in Israel during the 1960s. For all these reasons, we consider the following document to be an important contribution to understand the reactionary history of Israel, and to learn from it lessons for the working class liberations struggle today. We hope that this document will lead to a discussion amongst serious revolutionary forces both in Occupied Palestine/Israel as well as internationally.

* * *

Introduction

Following the first world-wide imperialist war, the Middle East came under the rule of French and British imperialism. A generation later, at the end of WWII, while the British and French were among the formal victors, in reality they lost their empires. The real winners, US imperialism and the Soviet Union, henceforth competed in the region over spheres of influence.

For the United States, the importance of the Middle East was a question of controlling its vast oil resources, super-exploiting its Arab workers, and as a cornerstone in the overall US strategy to control the world. For the Stalinists in power in the degenerated workers' state, influence in the region was mainly a question defending the Soviet Union

by relying on local capitalist states friendly to the USSR, rather than on the working class of these states. At the same time, the Stalinist regime sought to demonstrate to the Western imperialism that its existence – as a force that blocked socialist revolutions – was in fact in the interest of the West. The Soviet bureaucracy and the local Stalinist parties in the states of the Middle East used their influence to make the working class and the peasants subservient to the friendly local bourgeoisie and to prevent any serious attempt by the workers to overthrow the existing capitalist states. This policy, known as "*peaceful co-existence*," in reality only sabotaged the defense of the Soviet Union and allowed the imperialists to ultimately win the global conflict. To actually save the deformed workers' state and undermine imperialist control in the region, a political revolution was necessary to remove the counter-revolutionary Stalinists in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba, thereby opening the road to authentic socialism and a true revolutionary struggle in the Middle East. As this did not happen, capitalism was eventually restored in Russia, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, and China. Today, Russia and China are themselves imperialist states.

The 1956 war (the Suez crisis) was launched by French and British imperialism, assisted by Israel, with the goal of forcibly toppling Nasser's regime in Egypt, after the latter nationalized the Suez Canal. After the fighting, Britain, France, and Israel were forced to withdraw from Egyptian territory by the United States and the Soviet Union. Thus, this "swan's song" of Anglo-Franco imperialism in the Middle East in fact led to the liquidation of any remnant of British and French hegemony in the region. Israel, for its part, was forced to bury Ben-Gurion's reactionary dream of the *Third Jewish Kingdom*. This may have deluded the Stalinists and their followers into believing that their own policy regarding the Middle East was successful, but then came the war of 1967.

Forty six years ago, in June 1967, Israel launched attacks against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The war began on June 5 and ended by June 10, and was thus subsequently referred to by Israel and its friends as the "*Six Day War*." This relatively brief conflagration, a watershed event in modern Middle Eastern history, would shape the relations between Israel and the Arab semi-colonies for years to come.

At the time, the war brought close to an additional million Palestinians, residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, under Israel's brutal rule. Since 1967, the Palestinian population of the West Bank has grown by nearly 400% to over 2.7 million, while that of the Gaza Strip has more than quintupled (!) to over 1.7 million, meaning that together, 4.4 million Palestinians today live in the territories occupied by Israel during the 67 war. Add another 1.6 million Palestinians within Israel's pre-67 borders, and the total Palestinian population living within what was once Mandatory Palestine is approximately 6 million, compared to 6 million Israeli Jews. Of course, this number of Palestinians

does not include the additional nearly 6 million Palestinians living “around the edges” of the country, in Jordan, in Syria, and in Lebanon, refugees and their descendents from both the wars of 1948 and 1967, nor those living further afield both in the Middle East and overseas. To control the territory in which Palestinians will soon reach parity with Israeli Jews, if they have not already done so (Israeli official statistics are notorious for counting among its population Jewish Israelis who live abroad, and who have done so for years, even decades), Israel has established an apartheid regime that effectively gives total hegemony to the Zionist state, in all the territory from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean Sea.

The 1967 war also changed the balance of power between American imperialism and the then Soviet Union, still a deformed workers’ state. Within a relatively short period after the war, the US became the sole power controlling the entire Middle East.

With her victory in the 1967 war, Israel reached the peak of her power in the region. By contrast, the years since 1967 have been years of horror and repression for the Palestinians, the Lebanese, and the Arab masses in general, manifesting itself in additional all-out wars and more limited military operations. This goes hand in hand with Israel’s need to terrorize the Arabs masses in order to deter them – workers and peasants (*fellahin*), the lower middle class and poor – from rising up against the imperialist super-exploitation of the region and the local pro-imperialist dictators.

Paradoxically, but only on the surface, these wars are also a means of Israel’s retaining the loyalty of its Jewish population, a loyalty based on chauvinistic ties of blood (purportedly at least), occupation and the relative privileges given to the Jewish masses in the Zionist colonial project. Israel will continue its military offensives until it is either overthrown by a socialist revolution led by the Palestinian workers, at the head of the masses as part of a regional socialist revolution, or until it is decisively defeated in a regional war. This may be sooner than the Zionist ruling class thinks. In the other barbaric wars launched by Israel following the 1967 war, she has failed. The defeat of the Israeli war machine in Gaza in 2008/09 and 2012, the hasty, middle-of-the-night retreat from Lebanon in 2000 (after 18 years of occupation), and her defeat in the 2006 war against Hezbollah (what Israelis refer to as the “*Second Lebanese War*”), have utterly changed the image of Israel formed in 1967. This change has been an important factor in the revolutionary Arab struggle that began in 2011.

Today, not only is Israel weaker, but American imperialism is also declining. In the Kosovo war in 1999, the United States, the sole remaining imperialist super-power led a war against the Serbians. But its occupations of Iraq ended as a defeat for US imperialism, as is soon to be the case in Afghanistan. During the military intervention in Libya in 2011, the European imperialists were subcontracted by the Americans to lead the western military intervention. Today, two-and-a-half years after the first outbreak of the Arab revolutions, the US and the European imperialists remain very reluctant to intervene militarily in Syria. It does not appear likely that they will intervene with full force any time in the near future.

The high degree of military tension between Israel and Syria in the past few weeks and months is more like the

barking of sick dogs than a fight between two tigers. This tension assists Israel’s bourgeois regime in silencing the local protest movement; it also serves internally-embattled Syrian president Assad who can pretend that he is ready to go to a war against Israel to whom which he attributes the Syrian uprising.

The War of 1967

On the eve of the 1967 war, 50 left-wing bourgeois intellectuals led by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir – so popular among the centrist SWP in Britain and other middle class intellectuals (2) - declared that Israel’s actions demonstrated to the world that she only wanted peace. (3) After Israel’s victory, acting on the advice and with the full support of the USSR, these same intellectuals parroted the Zionists’ lie that they had to fight to save their state from annihilation by the Arab states. (By the way, it was this same Sartre who, during Stalin’s lifetime, would cover up the crimes of the Soviet dictator. However, being a particularly astute intellectual, Sartre was one of the first rats to abandon the sinking Soviet ship and switch masters.)

The official Israeli line maintained that Damascus forced Cairo to stand by its side when Syria provoked Israel, and it was this that led Nasser to send two divisions into Sinai in the middle of May, 1967. Two days later, Nasser demanded the withdrawal of the UN observer force (UNEF) which had been stationed in Gaza and Sharm-el-Sheikh from the end of 1956. The final straw, the *casus belli*, according to this Israeli version of the events, was the closing of the Straits of Tiran, a life-line, purported by Israel to be vital for her economic survival. Nasser declared that Egypt would not allow ships sailing under the Israeli flag to reach the Gulf of Aqaba, the entrance to which is via these straits and at the northern end of which lies the Israeli port of Eilat. For Israel this unilateral step by Egypt merely justified retrospectively why she so reluctantly withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, after yielding to severe threats from Washington and Moscow, in the wake of the 1956 war waged by herself and her imperialistic British and French allies against Nasser’s Egypt.

In 1965 and 1966, Nasser’s rhetoric had become increasingly anti-imperialistic, for example: “*We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand,*” he declared on March 8, 1965, “*we shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood.*” (4) As it prepared to strike, Israel used such statements to her benefit, presenting them to the world as evidence that the Arab states intended to destroy her.

When the war began, Moshe Dayan, the new Minister of Defense, told the Israeli soldiers: “*We do not want to conquer, but only to prevent the Arabs from conquering us. The Arabs are many and strong, but we are a stubborn, small nation ready to fight to save ourselves.*”

Israel’s Leaders Spoke the Truth – but only after the War

What the Israeli government and the official propaganda machine did *not* tell the public, but admitted only after the war, was that she had provoked Syria time and again, and had decided to launch a war with the knowledge that she would be victorious within a few days.

After the war, Yitzak Rabin, the army chief of staff, said: “*I*

do not think Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent to the Sinai would not have been sufficient to launch an offensive war. He knew this and we knew it." (5)

General Ezer Weitzman, commander of the Israel Air Force at the time of the war, and who would eventually become President of Israel, stated that there was actually no threat of destruction from Israel's neighbors, but that war with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria was justified so that Israel could "exist according the scale, spirit, and quality that she now embodies." (6)

Menachem Begin later stated: "In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches did not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him." (7)

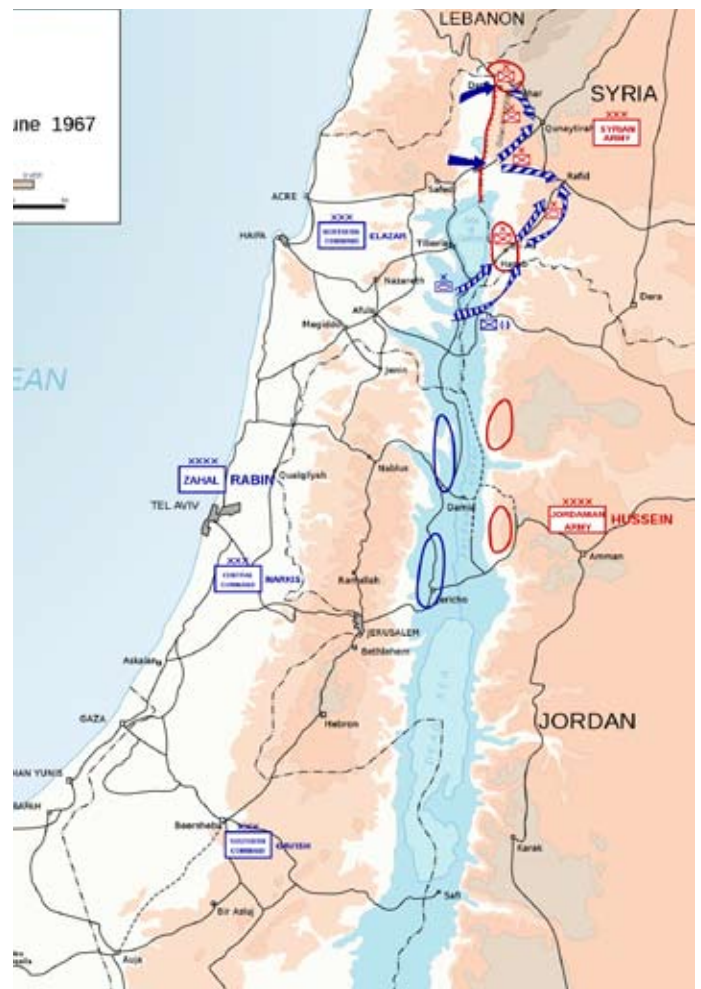
One of the better-known Israeli historians, Tom Segev, has written: "Six months prior to the Six-Day War, the heads of the Mossad, Military Intelligence, and the Foreign Ministry explored the possibility of Israel occupying the West Bank. Various scenarios that might lead to such an outcome were discussed, such as the fall of King Hussein's regime in Jordan, an Iraqi invasion of Jordan or a Palestinian uprising. At the end of the deliberations, all were in accord that the occupation of the West Bank would be contrary to Israel's national interest. They concluded that Israel would reap nothing good from ruling over the

Palestinians, only bad – including an erosion of the country's Jewish majority and a violent uprising against the occupation... But what was dictated by sound thinking six months prior to the war was quickly forgotten that morning." (8)

Certainly, even if Egypt and Syria had fired the first shots, the duty of working class revolutionaries would still have been to stand together with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan on the military front, while at the same time giving no political support to the rulers of these states. Revolutionaries do not judge wars by criteria of who starts them or by the political character of the regimes involved in the conflict, but rather by the class character of these states.

For the very same reason, revolutionaries would have had to stand alongside the Palestinians and the Arab states on the military front in 1948, without giving them any political support. Inasmuch as revolutionaries can put no faith in the bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces to win the struggle against imperialism, we give them no political support, nor do we call for an end to the struggle against these regimes in times of war. During a revolutionary struggle in which a local dictator is mowing down the masses with bullets, if an imperialist power were to attack this semi-colonial regime, we would argue for the revolutionary position: the masses must fight on dual military fronts, one against the imperialists the other against the regime. (9)

Israel's War in 1967: The Jordanian and Syrian Front



The Israel attack on the Westbank (left) and the conquer of the Golan Height (right) Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day_War

Why the 1967 War?

Israel's contention that the closing of the Straits of Tiran to its shipping constituted a legitimate *casus belli* was no more than a red herring. The straits are located *inside* the territorial waters of Egypt. Inasmuch as, in 1967, Egypt and Israel were still officially in a state of war, according to international law Egypt was not obliged to allow Israel, or any other enemy for that matter, to pass through its territory.

Before the outbreak of hostilities, the Israeli government was divided about when to launch the strike. On one side, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and the National Religious Party (NRP) wanted to attack, but only after the US would commit itself to aid Israel, or at least to give it the green light. The other side in the government, supported by the IDF general staff, wanted to launch the war immediately. On the question of the Straits of Tiran, the Israeli historian Tom Segev has written that the leader of the NRP, Moshe Shapira, was opposed to initiating hostilities because of the closing of the straits to Israeli shipping. Rabin tried to persuade Shapira to change his mind. "You explain to me," he said to Rabin, "until 1956 the straits were closed. Did this threaten the existence of Israel? No, it did not." (10)

The immediate causes of the friction between Israel and Syria were the result of a number of factors: disputes about fishing rights in the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias); Israeli incursions into the post-1948 demilitarized zone; Fatah guerrilla attacks against Israeli targets launched from Syria; and the Israel's development of a project that diverted waters from the Jordan River. However, the long-term causes of the enmity were rooted in the very nature of the Zionist apartheid state which cannot survive without wars and expansion. Thus, the most fundamental reasons for the outbreak of the war in June, 1967 were: Israel's decision to achieve hegemony over the entire region; her need to divert growing class tensions in Israeli society into a chauvinist war against a "common enemy"; and her goal of expanding the territory under her control which would give her access to additional markets and cheap sources of labor. Israel's initiative in planning and winning this war is one of the keys to understanding how she became an imperialistic state.

Israel's Zionist ruling class understands the efficacy of beating on the war drums. When the government gives the signal, most Israelis patriotically jump into uniform in a mad rush to defend the Zionist state. For it is this state that is the protector of their relative privileges compared to their Arab neighbors, and particularly when compared to the Palestinian refugees that Israel banished from their lands in 1948 and after, on which Israelis have lived ever since. Such is the nature of this settler colonialist state. Due to this inherent nature, Zionism is still able to bribe most Israelis into upholding the status quo. For this reason, the Israeli working class cannot possibly ever become the vanguard of the socialist revolution. The only way for the Israeli working class to develop an authentic, class-based political struggle is to break with Zionism and join the Palestinian revolutionary struggle. The pro-Zionist left, like the Woods-led MIT and the CWI, the latter having a local section in the Israeli *Maavak Socialisti* (Socialistic Struggle) movement, shamelessly tail the Jewish workers' aristocracy. As such, they live in a world of pure fantasy when

they believe that, because Israel is more economically developed than her Arab neighbors, the Israeli working class in fact constitutes the vanguard of the socialist revolution in the Middle East. (11)

In 1966, Israel entered a recession, but initially this was obscured by elections late in the year. One of the main causes of this economic downturn was West Germany's decision, two years earlier, to reduce payments made to Israel as compensation for the crimes of the Nazi regime against Jews. Subsequently, the Israeli government, which until 1966 had undertaken much large-scale development, in part funded by these payments, stopped coming up with new projects. By 1967, the recession was visible for all to see. Not surprisingly, it began in Israel's large construction industry, where many businesses soon went bankrupt. There was a 30% decline in investment in construction while industrial investments fell by 20%. Sharp rises in prices together with a money shortage among the working class caused the recession to deepen. An often-heard attempt at black humor was "Will the last one to leave please turn off the lights?"

During this period, the Israeli workers organized many strikes and mass demonstrations. The government, in turn, denounced workers who demanded rises in pay, while it praised a group of "patriotic" university professors who agreed to accept lower wages.

Facing a class struggle based on economic demands, the rulers of Israel decided to use the age old trick of rulers – always very successful in Israel – to prevent its exacerbation and possible transformation into a political struggle: they diverted the class struggle into a military struggle against common external enemies. Israel's leaders also understood that winning this war would transform Israel into a major regional power, making it the most important strategic asset of the US in the Middle East. As its proponents envisioned, war would also provide Israel with other benefits: its borders would be expanded and consequently bring under Israeli control new sources of cheap labor and new markets. In fact, for twenty years following the 1967 war, until the outbreak of the first *Intifada* in December, of 1987, Israel constituted the workplace for large numbers of super-exploited Palestinian residents of the occupied territories. However, when the *Intifada* unexpectedly erupted with the participation of Palestinian workers, the Zionist capitalists switched gears and began importing into the country migrant workers from Eastern Europe and the Far East, to replace the vast majority of Palestinian workers.

Alone in the War?

Israel wanted to go to war, but not alone. US president Lyndon B. Johnson had already moved the US Sixth Fleet into the eastern Mediterranean. On May 23, while declaring an embargo on the shipment of arms to the area, Johnson secretly authorized the air shipment of important spare parts, ammunition, bomb fuses, and armored personnel carriers to Israel. (12) The first major US arms agreement with Israel was signed in 1966. It involved A-4 Skyhawk fighter jets and Sherman tanks, and was worth more than all other US arms supplied to Israel since 1948. The Eshkol government also tried to secure France's support. On May 24, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Aba Eban, arrived at the Elysee Palace where he was received by

President Charles de Gaulle who told Eban: "*Ne faites pas la guerre!*" (Do not go to war!), and warned him that Israel must not be the first side to shoot. On that same day, at Number 10 Downing Street in London, Prime Minister Harold Wilson invited Eban to attend a cabinet meeting. The position of the British government was that it would be prepared to act to open the Straits if there were an agreement with other nations to do so, but advised Israel not to act alone.

Eban's next stop was Washington on May 27. He had a telegram with him from Prime Minister Eshkol informing the US government that the Arab states intended to attack Israel immediately. The information Dean Rusk had from US intelligence sources was that there were no signs that the Arab states wanted to launch an offensive. In the meeting with Johnson, the US President, who did not want to be involved in two wars at the same time, in Vietnam and in the Middle East, told Eban "*Israel should get the other maritime powers on its side. Any participation of the USA will need the approval of Congress. We do not believe that the Arabs are about to attack Israel, and if they do you will win within seven days. You are not in danger.*" After Eban left, Johnson turned to advisor Walt Rostow and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and told them, "*I have failed. They are going to go to war.*"

In the report of his recent trips, Eban told the Israeli cabinet that President Johnson had promised that the US would take all the necessary measures to open the Straits of Tiran. This however, was not true. Prime Minister Eshkol even sent a letter of gratitude to Johnson for this promise. Washington replied that the US government had made no such promise. Eshkol hesitated. Even Ben-Gurion advised him not to launch a war without the support of the imperialist powers.

"Ben-Gurion thought that the crisis with Egypt was the result of the erroneous, even unbalanced judgment on the part of Eshkol. In November 1966, Eshkol ordered the attack on Samoua, a village in Jordan, in retaliation for an incursion by guerillas who entered Israel from this village. Ben-Gurion was very critical of the escalation with Syria after Israel sent 80 warplanes to sonic-boom Damascus." (13)

Ben-Gurion was even angry with General Rabin and lashed out at him saying: "*You have brought the state to a most dangerous situation, and you are to be blamed for it.*"

Rabin, as is known, later had a nervous breakdown because he knew that Ben-Gurion may have been right. However, some of Israel's generals, including Ariel Sharon, who was for launching the war without delay, were planning a military coup to replace Eshkol, whose hesitation grew after he received a message from Kosygin, the President of the USSR, who urged him not to go to war. Clearly, the President of the Soviet Union was trying to prevent the war at the last minute, once it had become clear that Israel intended to go to war.

On May 30, Meir Amit, the head of Mossad, visited McNamara after a visit to the head of the CIA, Richard Helms. From Helms he learned that the US would not send an armada to open the Straits. He told McNamara the Secretary of Defense that "*We want three things from you. One, that you refill our arsenal after the war. Two, that you help us in the United Nations. Three, that you isolate the Russians in the area.*" McNamara replied, "*I hear you loud and clear.*" He then asked how long it would take Israel to defeat the

Egyptians. Amit replied, "*One week.*" Amit added, "*I am going home to recommend that we launch the war.*" In his report to the President, McNamara informed him that the Israelis were going to attack. No one was surprised, as everyone knew that McNamara was in favor of Israel striking first.

This was the green light that the Israeli government had been waiting for. On June 5th, 1967 the war began. After the start of the war, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for Israel to return to its pre-war borders, and Johnson refused to criticize Israel for starting the war.

It is possible that the US was more involved in the war than it admitted. The historian Stephen Green has written that pilots of the US Air Force's 38th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron flew RF-4Cs with the white Star of David and Israeli Air Force tail numbers over bombed air bases in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in order to take pictures for the Israelis. He contends that they flew 8 to 10 such missions a day during the course of the war. When the air power of Israel's enemies was destroyed, the RF-4C missions were changed to tracking the movement of Arab troops so that the Israelis could bomb them the next morning. In the end, none of these missions proved decisive in the war. However, the Arabs did accuse the United States of providing tactical air support, which apparently was untrue. In response, President Johnson declared publicly that the US had provided no assistance of any kind to Israel. (14) Green's principal source claims to have participated in these operations.

The So-Called Miracle

With its *Blitzkrieg* victory, the Israeli government claimed that a miracle had occurred. Like all kinds of miracles, this one was a fake. A strong and modern capitalist state on its way to becoming an imperialist power destroyed the weaker Arab armies of semi-colonialist states within six days. Israel had already won the war on the first day when it destroyed the Egyptian Air Force.

Early in the morning of June 5, 200 Israeli jets attacked the Egyptian air fields in Sinai and destroyed the country's entire air force. Within three days, the Israeli army defeated the armies of Egypt and Jordan and had captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The rest of the war was only a question how far and wide Israel would expand before international pressure forced them to halt their advance.

On June 8, Egypt, having lost the Sinai to Israel, accepted the UN-proposed cease-fire. Syria accepted it the following day. Regardless, Israel launched an additional offensive and conquered the Golan Heights.

On June 8, yet an additional myth was created by the state of Israel and its friends. On that day, Israeli war planes and torpedo boats attacked the USS Liberty, an intelligence gathering ship, while on a surveillance mission off the shores of El Arish in the Sinai Peninsula. Thirty-four Americans died and 171 were injured. Israel claimed that it mistook the Liberty for an enemy vessel. All US governments have since backed up this story. In 1999, a National Security Agency report from 1981 was released claiming that "*the tragedy resulted not only from Israeli miscalculation but also from faulty US communications practices.*" Since July 2003, this report has been available on the website of the

National Security Agency (NSA) Website. However, this "conclusion" has been disputed. In 1976, James Ennes, a survivor of the attack on the Liberty, argued in his book *Assault on the Liberty* that Israel was actually planning a surprise attack on Syria and was worried about the interference of the United States. The bombing of the Liberty was an attempt to disrupt the ability of the US to gather intelligence about the plan. This argument was presented in the History Channel production "Cover Up: Attack on the USS Liberty" originally aired in 2001. Another writer, James Bamford, in his book *Body of Secrets* (2000), argued that Israel attacked the ship because it was worried that the Liberty would learn of the killing of hundreds of Egyptian POWs by the Israeli army that had taken place nearby. (Ret.) Admiral Thomas Moorer, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a leader in the effort to expose the cover-ups of the attack, stated in a press conference on October 22, 2003 that Israel planned to sink the ship and then implicate Egypt, thereby pushing the US to fight on the side of Israel.

At the same press conference, Capt. Ward Boston, a retired Navy lawyer and counsel to the Court of Inquiry in the Navy's investigation into the case, released a statement in which he declared: "I am outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of mistaken identity." Boston also said that officials in the White House at that time had ordered investigators to conclude that "the attack was a case of 'mistaken identity.'" Boston also said that he was told by Rear Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, who served as president of the Court of Inquiry, that he had been forced to find that the attack was unintentional. (15)

Is it possible that Israel would intentionally attack a ship of its closest ally? The history of the State of Israel has its precedents. In 1954, Israel clandestinely carried out terrorist attacks on Egyptian, British, and American institutes in Cairo. Ever since, these events are dubbed in Israel "the bad business" or the "Lavon Affair." (Lavon was Israel's Minister of Defense at the time.) Israel's aim was to embroil Egypt and the US in a conflict. The group responsible for the attacks was apprehended after a small explosive device went off prematurely in the pocket of one its members trying to carry out a bombing mission in a movie theater.

The Arab Perspective on the War of 1967

On the 40th anniversary of the 1967 War, Danny Rubinstein, an Israeli journalist for *Haaretz*, published an article entitled "A 40-year journey to a low point" which describes how the average person in the Arab world perceives the 1967 War:

"For more than a week now, the most popular Arabic television station, Al Jazeera, has been broadcasting man-in-the-street interviews in various places around the Arab world to mark the 40th anniversary of the Six-Day War. People say the Arab defeat was caused by the impotence of the Arab rulers. They speak in generalizations, without mentioning the name of any particular ruler. For most of the speakers the war is associated with the president of Egypt at the time, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Interviews in Cairo say the problem was that Nasser was surrounded by unreliable people, including the Arab rulers, his partners in the war." (16)

According to the *Haaretz* article, Palestinians tend to deny

the applicability of the term "war" for the events of June, 1967: "'On the very first day at 10am everything was over. Is that a war?' asked one shopkeeper in Gaza. Then he gave an example: 'Suppose the Israeli government decides today for the tanks of the Israel Defense Forces to retreat immediately from their positions in the West Bank, and they start moving toward Israel. How much time will that take them? At least two weeks. So how is it possible that they occupied the whole West Bank in three or four days?'"

Rubinstein infers a conspiracy: "Traitorous Arab leaders collaborated with Israel and helped it gain control of the territories. Many of the Palestinians who say this are referring to King Hussein of Jordan. They don't explicitly mention his name, but they hint that the Jordanian regime was and remains a secret ally of Israel, and it conspires with Israel."

It is not difficult to understand this belief on the part of many Palestinians that the Arab states were defeated so easily due to sinister conspiracies. However, while, in fact, many conspiracies are hatched in our world, history is not driven by conspiracies, but rather by economic, social, and political factors. As Marx and Engels have written, the engine of history is class struggle. Therefore, the only way to defeat the imperialist system is by being victorious in a revolutionary class struggle fought by the most consistently exploited layers of the working class, led by a revolutionary party.

After the War

Israel and her supporters pompously claimed the war as an astounding victory: once again, the small David had defeated the mighty Goliath. In fact, this was a reactionary and expansionist war of aggression, initiated by Israel with the blessings of US imperialism. It derailed the class struggle in Israel and strengthened the most reactionary sections of Israeli society. It led to the eventual creation of the reactionary, fanatical settler movement *Gush Emunim* with a messianic agenda which would henceforth lobby for and implement settlement in the territories captured by Israel during the war. The war also set in motion developments that would culminate in the elections of 1977, which brought Menachem Begin to power (1977), paving the way for the eventual premiership of the butcher, Ariel Sharon. (2001).

The war of 1967 had nothing to do with the claims of the Israeli ruling class that they were fighting for the survival of the Jews. Rather, it had everything to do with the drive of these elites to destroy the relatively progressive bourgeois-bonapartist regime of Nasser, which enjoyed close relations with the USSR; the economic crisis in Israeli; and Israel's goal of becoming the "strategic asset of the West" in the Middle East.

For Egypt, the war would topple Nasserism (Nasser, himself, died at the age of 52, in 1970) and replace it with the reactionary regime of Sadat, who was followed by Mubarak. These regimes turned Egypt into a bastion of reaction in the region.

The Six-Day War would also open the road to the 1973 war (the Yom Kippur War) and further the control of US imperialism over the region. However, the laws of dialectics teach us that every reactionary period, such as the one we lived through in this region for many years, eventually creates a movement in the opposite direction. This could already be clearly seen with the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan that led to serious defeats for US imperialism.

The revolutionary tide continued in the Arab revolution of the entire region.

Israel has never been as isolated as she is today. Growing numbers of trade unions and unorganized workers around the world understand that Israel is no different than South Africa and is an enemy of the international working class. Israel still has a strong war machine but it has been defeated time and again. In 2000, after 18 years of brutal occupation of Lebanon, it had to escape like a thief in the dark from Lebanon. It was defeated by Hezbollah in 2006. It was defeated in Gaza twice, once in 2008/09 and the other time in 2012.

Today many Israelis feel alienated from the corrupt state apparatus and the capitalist tycoons it serves. However they are helpless and know that they cannot break, by themselves, the chains that keep them shackled to the Zionist state. In the past, Israel was a golden cage for the better off Jewish Israelis, whose average yearly income was approximately the same as that of the US. However, those days are gone. The economic inequality in the Israel is worse than in Mexico, and the number of the citizens of Israel living under the poverty level is growing. While a higher proportion of officially-poor come from among the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the ultra orthodox, the Haredim, the cycle of poverty is engulfing others as well. (17) The cage remains, but its golden plating has worn off, for all Israelis to see. This change in living and working conditions will force sections of the most exploited Jewish Israeli working class down the road of struggle until they come to a crossroads at which they will have to decide: either join the Palestinian revolutionary struggle or carry on living to fill the pockets of the tycoons and to be cannon fodder, with far fewer benefits than in the past.

Israel and the Imperialists today

Forty-six years after the 1967 War, the prime minister of Israel and his cronies would love to have been part of a larger alliance in a new war against Syria and Iran. This is nothing new; it has been so for years. From his perspective, Netanyahu would ideally cut a deal with Syria thereby isolating Iran. However, under current conditions, such reactionary daydreams are no more than pie-in-the-sky. (18)

Israel's elites may fantasize about pulling off a lightning victory like that of the 1967 war. But, in their hearts, they know that this time a war against Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas will end very differently. The ruling class of Israel cannot rely on help from pro-imperialist Arab regimes such as Egypt, whether led by the now defunct counter-revolutionary regime of the Moslem Brotherhood under Morsi, or the new interim government set up by the Egyptian army on July 3rd 2013 with Adli Mansour at its head. (19) The opposition of the Egyptian masses is too strong. Similarly, Israel cannot rely on the US imperialists, who are seeking now to end the revolutionary struggle in Syria by a so called American-Russian "peace plan," that still refuses to get off the ground. (20)

A Zionist website named "Tablet" reflects the awareness in Israel that it cannot rely on the US: "*Kerry's efforts to broker peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the Assad regime and its opponents, will obviously come to nothing. Being an experienced politician, Kerry may even have some inkling that his plans have no connection to reality. The reality in which he moves is too grim to present as the public face of American*

diplomacy: President Barack Obama is not obviously prepared to invest his own prestige in an Israel-Palestinian peace process that is doomed to fail. Nor is Obama any more inclined now than he was two years ago, when the Syrian uprising began, to throw his weight behind any policy that will actually bring about Assad's fall. Under the circumstances, Kerry's love of theater may actually be the least bad option for a man with the misfortune to have his lifelong ambition for higher office gratified at exactly the wrong time". (21)

If Israel were able to go to a war against Syria or Iran, it would have done so long ago. Israel still possesses a mighty war machine, but it can no longer use it as it did in 1967, because of its fear of the Arab masses who no longer fear Israel.

On the situation for Israel today in relation to Syria, we can learn from New York Times that writes: "*Analysts on Wednesday dismissed the possibility of Israel's establishing a new buffer zone on the Syrian side of the line, and not just because doing so would be seen as a major incursion into Syrian territory.*

Two rivers that are close to the line in the southern Golan Heights create geographical challenges, they said, and in other areas there are several key Syrian Army positions.

"A buffer zone doesn't work there," said Ehud Ya'ari, an Israel-based fellow for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "If you would try to create a buffer zone, it immediately gets you into proximity and friction with main Syrian military forces and camps."

Another idea being discussed here is Israel's establishing a sort of proxy force inside Syria, by arming or otherwise supporting residents of villages close to the cease-fire line, perhaps led by the Druze, a minority sect in Syria that also has some 20,000 members living in Israeli-controlled territory...

For Israel, deeper involvement in the Syrian conflict could lead to an unwanted result: hastening the fall of the Assad government, leaving areas close to the cease-fire line in the hands of radical jihadist groups.

It could also have dire diplomatic consequences for Israel's complicated relationship with Russia. ..." (22)

The decline of Israel and its increasing isolation is part of the overall decline and decaying of the imperialist order. This period is characterized by growing mass struggles against the capitalist classes who continually try to force the workers and the masses to pay for the capitalist economic crisis. This gives the revolutionary Communists the opening to build a revolutionary International, the Fifth International with sections in Palestine and the Arab world. (23)

An important part in the struggle against the class enemy is the struggle to expose the role of reformist and the centrists as an impediment to socialist revolution. This of course cannot be done by simply denouncing the misleadership of these tendencies, but by utilizing the Leninist tactic of a united front aiming at mobilizing the workers and the masses. Only in the midst of a real struggle will the revolutionary masses understand the role of these tendencies. If reformists and centrists agree to a united front, this will be a positive development, as it will advance the struggle. If their leadership will refuse to mobilize their followers, this will expose them.

As we see in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie forces, whether secular or religious, cannot solve the crisis of the capitalist system. Only a so-

cialist revolution led by the working class will complete the heroic Arab revolution that began with the democratic demands for bread and democracy. Unlike 1967, Israel is much weaker and so are the other imperialists. We can change the world and transform it to be a place with work, education, and health for the workers and the oppressed; a planet without imperialist robbery and unending imperialist wars. But, as Lenin said many years ago, for humanity to survive, capitalism and imperialism must die.

* * *

Appendix: The War of 1967 and the Israeli Left

by Yossi Schwartz

Between 1948 and 1967, the left throughout the world did not pay much attention to the questions of Palestine and Israel. For this reason, it is no simple task to locate any documents related to the positions taken by various left wing organizations in with regard to the 1967 war. However, we do have a statement by the *Israeli Socialist Organization* (ISO), better known by the name of its journal, *Matzpen*, called *The Third Round* and published in June 1967. (24) At that time, the ISO was the most radical left wing organization in Israel, bringing together as it did all the secular anti-Zionist tendencies including the centrist *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* led by Ernest Mandel. In the following chapters we will outline a number of fundamental criticisms of the ISO's policy because it failed to defend the Arab states in the war against Israel in 1967. However we repeat what we already stated in another document: "Irrespective of these political failures we appreciate the important role which *Matzpen* played in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the only, pre-dominantly-Jewish, Anti-Zionist organization in Israel. They stood against the stream in words and deeds. Revolutionaries in Israel today can build on their courage and achievements and at the same time overcome their political weakness." (25)

Erroneous Characterization of the Post-War Period

From its very beginning, this statement was wrong as it characterized the 1950s as a period of victories for the working class, a period that witnessed the ostensible socialist revolutions of the peasants, in the Stalinist-led revolution of 1949 in China and the petty bourgeoisie guerrilla-led revolution in Cuba in 1959. The ISO wrote:

"... The fifties was a period of victories for socialism, for the world forces of progress and for the anti-colonialist revolution. In China, the revolution became well established; in Indo-China, the socialist forces defeated French colonialism; in Cuba, a socialist revolution took place. Anti-imperialist forces came to power in many countries in Asia and Africa, and the direct presence of the colonial powers was considerably reduced in these continents. The forces of imperialism were retreating..."

In fact, the 1950s was a period of great contradictions. On the one hand, it was a period during which a number of working class movements that rose up towards the end of WWII were either defeated by imperialist forces (Greece, for example) and their servants or were blocked by the Stalinists (in Eastern Europe) and the Social Democrats (in

Western Europe). Another reactionary development was the creation of the Israeli state and the expulsion of the Palestinian people in 1948. In some places, the imperialists were unable to defeat the mass uprisings and the result were revolutions in China, Vietnam, and Cuba that led to the creation of deformed workers states; states in which the local bourgeoisie was eliminated as a ruling class and fled the respective countries. While the economic foundations following these revolutions were essentially that of workers' economies, these states must be characterized as workers states. However, the counter-revolutionary regimes that took control in these countries (thus the deformed nature of the states) were, in fact, an impediment that had to be removed in order to move to authentic socialism. Without a political revolution of the working class, such states would only, inevitably revert to capitalism, as history has shown. (26)

The ISO was right when it wrote that:

"... As a part of its global offensive, American imperialism tried to bring about the overthrow of the regime in Syria... The Western powers fortified their neo-colonialist positions in the Third World; American imperialism became a "world gendarme"; in many countries reactionary coups d'état took place – inspired, instigated and financed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency – which succeeded in overthrowing anti-imperialist governments..."

The ISO's position was also correct when it realized that the Stalinists policy of "peaceful coexistence" assisted the imperialists and that Israel, together with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, had become bastion of the imperialists.

Understanding Israel's Military Provocations

The ISO also indicated that it was Israel that had provoked Syria:

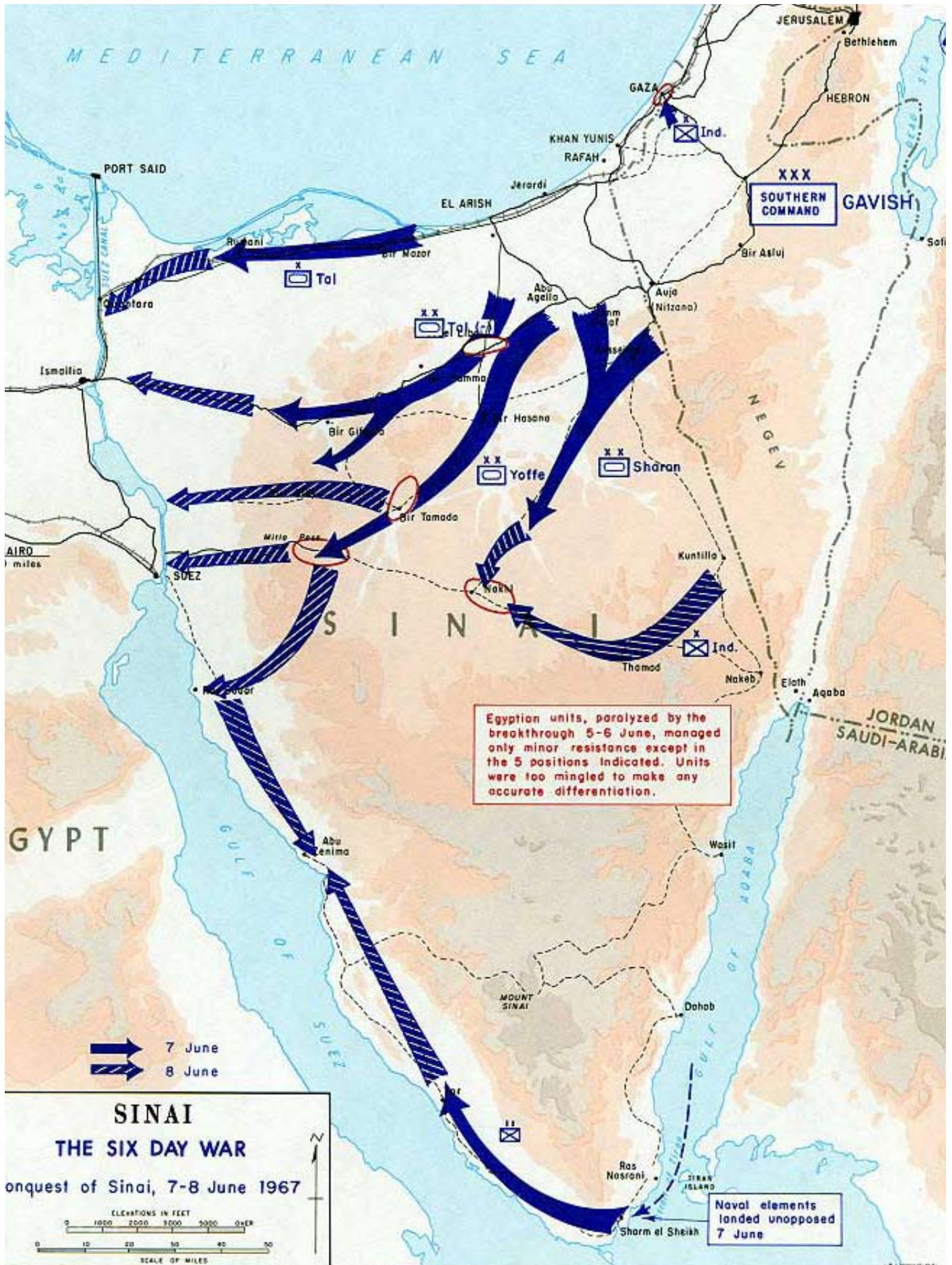
"... After the Israeli-Syrian talks on the cultivation of the disputed plots had failed (largely because of Israel's intransigence), Israel took unilateral action and began to cultivate the disputed plots. The tension on the border readied a climax. On April 7, Israel took a military step whose scale went far beyond the previous clashes and caused a considerable escalation of the conflict: Israeli planes penetrated into Syria, bombed the Syrian Heights and reached the outskirts of Damascus; air battles were fought in the skies of Syria..."

In its analysis, the ISO also correctly wrote:

"It is clear that the United States was interested in weakening Nasser, because of his prestige in the Third World and particularly because of the situation in the southern Arabian peninsula. It must also be pointed out that the Americans – unlike their Soviet rivals – do not stick so rigidly to the rules of the coexistence game. They are not frightened by every military conflict and do not subscribe to the mistaken views that every such conflict leads straight into nuclear conflict..."

... Following the steps taken by Nasser, the most extreme pro-war elements in Israel were strengthened. Begin and Dayan were co-opted into the Cabinet – the latter in the key position of Minister of Defense. It should be stressed that Moshe Dayan had lately also become an outstanding representative of the pro-American line in Israel; this fact became especially clear when he visited Vietnam as the guest of the Americans, who also paid -for his trip..... From all that has been said here, it follows that the consequences of the June 1967 war, regarded from the point of view of their global significance, join the list of successes of the

Israel Six-Day War in 1967: Conquest of Sinai on 7-8 June



Egyptian units, paralyzed by the breakthrough 5-6 June, managed only minor resistance except in the 5 positions indicated. Units were too mingled to make any accurate differentiation.

Naval elements landed unopposed 7 June

Source: Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1967_Six_Day_War_-_conquest_of_Sinai_7-8_June.jpg

general offensive waged by American imperialism in the international arena..."

Failing to Side with the Arab Peoples

Based on all this information, any *truly* revolutionary Marxist organization should have sided with the Arab states against Israel which was in the service of imperialism. However, this was beyond the ability of the ISO. Instead, they continued to walk the same path of the Tony Cliff group in Palestine before the founding of Israel. (27) To avoid taking an authentically revolutionary position, the ISO mechanically separated the external, international factors and the internal, regional factors. Whereas, from an international perspective according to the ISO's scheme, the 1967 war was an imperialist war, internally they contended that it was an *"historical conflict between Zionism and the Arab national movement. These local and national aspects complicated and obscured the general picture."*

To justify its failure to adopt a position of revolutionary defensism for Arab states, backing them *militarily* while at the same time giving them *no* political support, and a position of revolutionary defeatism for imperialist-backed Israel, the ISO gives the lame excuse that Egypt has not undergone a socialist revolution:

"The first factor that should be mentioned – and which to a large extent determined the outcome of the campaign – is the nature of Egypt's regime. The Egyptian revolution, though it had been a progressive phenomenon in its time, halted in mid-course and did not assume a socialist character. The group of officers ruling Egypt did carry out various important economic and social reforms, but the regime nevertheless remained petit bourgeois; it failed to organize the masses and to involve them in political life. ... Even the attempts to set up a mass party (the Socialist Union) as a groundwork for the regime were no more than bureaucratic abortive experiments and ended in utter failure. The mainstay of Egypt's regime is the Army, together with a new bureaucratic stratum which took root after the coup d'état. The old ruling classes were not shattered but remained in the Army and state apparatus."

While all of this is correct, rather than provide the ISO a fig-leaf to hide behind, they simply point out to the reasons Egypt was weaker than Israel. For its part, the latter could easily mobilize Israeli Jews against the Arabs, as the Israelis are by and large intensely loyal to the Zionist state which they see as the protector of their relative privileges as settler colonialists. However, these facts do not change a thing with regard to the question of Marxist defense of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan against Israel in the 1967 war. As Lenin and Trotsky wrote many times, the interest of the working class in a war is to defend the colonies and semi-colonies, regardless of their regime, against imperialism. Egypt, Syria and Jordan were semi-colonies in 1967, while Israel was a tool of imperialism.

Right of National Self-Determination for Israel?

Behind ISO's refusal to take a revolutionary Marxist position regarding the war of 1967, something else was being hidden: this organization's defense of the national right of the Zionist oppressors. As it is always the case with middle class leftist such as *Matzpen*, under the seemingly progressive banner of the right to self-determination for

all nations, the ISO defended this right for imperialist oppressor nations rather than exclusively forming an alliance with the working class and oppressed nations. To forge such an alliance, revolutionary conscious workers must defend the right of self-determination *only* for oppressed nations in their struggle against imperialist powers. Contrary to this, the ISO explicitly wrote:

"In a statement we had published in the beginning of May (before the Middle East crisis became acute), we made the following criticism of the position of nationalist Arab leaders: 'The solution of the Palestine problem must not only redress the wrong done to the Palestinian Arabs, but also insure the national future of the Hebrew masses. These masses were brought to Palestine by Zionism – but they are not responsible for the deeds of Zionism. The attempts to penalize the Israeli masses for the sins of Zionism cannot solve the Palestinian problem but only bring about new misfortunes.'"

No Marxist wants to punish the Israelis, and it is true that we cannot blame the Israeli masses for the crimes of their rulers and their state. However, anyone who supports the right of the national self-determination of the Israelis, demands from the Palestinians – the direct victims of Zionist oppression – to pay the price.

While *Matzpen* opposed Zionism, it defended the existence of a separate Jewish state on Arab lands. This becomes also clear from another statement of the ISO: *"As for Israel, here, a socialist revolution is needed radically to change the character of this state, transforming it from a Zionist state – an instrument for furthering Zionist colonization, a natural ally of imperialism – into a socialist state representing the true interests of the Israeli masses, a state oriented toward the surrounding region and both willing and capable to integrate itself in it."* (28) As we have already stated repeatedly, Marxists do not support the right to self-determination for *all* nations. They support such a right only for oppressed nations. Lenin, who fully developed the communist understanding of the program of national liberation, was absolutely clear about this. He explained that the right to national self-determination is a programmatic consequence of the oppression of one nation by another:

"That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not significant from the angle of bourgeois pacifism or the philistine Utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It is from this division that our definition of the "right of nations to self-determination" must follow, a definition that is consistently democratic, revolutionary, and in accord with the general task of the immediate struggle for socialism." (29)

This is particularly true for the right to national self-determination of Israeli Jews. The right of national self-determination implies naturally the right of separation to form an independent state. But any continued existence of an Israeli-Jewish state on Palestinian land constitutes a denial for millions of Palestinian refugees – who constitute the majority of the Palestinian people – to return in their homeland. It would furthermore continue the massive economic and social discrimination of the Palestinian people since Israel is – thanks to the long-term massive support by Western imperialism – economically much

more advanced. (30)

The ISO's Failure to Consistently Oppose Zionism

Further on, in their statement, the ISO writes: "In the same [earlier] statement we also said: 'It should be understood that the Israeli masses will not be liberated from the influence of Zionism and will not struggle against it unless the progressive forces in the Arab world present them with a prospect of coexistence without national oppression.'"

Of course an internationalist message of Arab revolutionaries that guarantees the Israeli masses a common life without national oppression can change the equation, but capitulation to Zionism by promising the Israelis a state at the expense of the Palestinians is *not* an internationalist message, but rather a pro-Zionist message. For *Matzpen*, the main question was *not* how to win over a section of the most oppressed and exploited of Jewish workers to the socialist revolution, a road that can only be taken by joining a Palestinian socialist revolutionary against national oppression, but instead how to fully integrate Israel, as a Zionist state, in the region. This position is clear when we read the following:

"Essentially, the Israeli-Arab problem is not confined to the questions of the refugees, or of the borders or of the political future of the Palestinian Arabs. These are only several aspects and manifestations of the central problem: the future of Israel in a predominantly Arab region. The question is whether Israel will become a second edition of the crusader's [sic] state or will successfully be integrated in the region and in the historical processes that will determine the fate of this region."

The problem here is that Israel, as a settler colonialist society, is precisely analogous to the Crusaders. Nearly 90 years after the arrival of the Crusaders in Palestine, Salah A-Din was able to unite Moslems, Christians, and Jews in a war against the Crusade. This unity was not founded on a wing of the Crusaders who argued for the integration of their Kingdom of Jerusalem in the region. It came as a unity in struggle against the Crusaders.

The consequence of the ISO's failure to consistently oppose Zionism was that it promised to support only those forces that supported Israel's right to exist, in other words, they demanded the acceptance of Zionism by Arab forces as a pre-condition to side with them.

"While recognizing the unconditional right of the conquered to resist occupation, we can support only such organizations which, in addition to resisting occupation, also recognize the right of the Israeli people for self-determination. On such a basis the struggle of the Palestinian people can become combined in a joint struggle of Arabs and Jews in the region for a common future." (31)

It is therefore only logical that the ISO could not consistently break with Zionism and call for the military defeat of Israel in its wars and for the military victory of the Arab states.

The Fiction of the Two-States Solution

True, the ISO understood what is wrong with the concept of two states:

"Another suggestion being aired is the creation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of an Arab state under Israeli protection. In practice this would mean the annexation of these territories to

Israel without giving their inhabitants civil rights and without rehabilitating the refugees of the 1948 war in Israel. Such a protectorate would be like the Bantustans planned by the government of South Africa for the black-skinned inhabitants of that country. It is clear that the Palestinian Arabs will not accept such a political fate; and the creation of this kind of Bantustan will also be an imposed solution sure to backfire on its authors."

Some circles in Israel who are usually considered progressive have become enamored of a variation of the same plan. They speak about granting self-determination to the Palestinian Arabs, who will establish an independent state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This state is to have federal ties with Israel. We warn: Despite the good intentions of some of those who support this formula, in the present situation its realization would be a negative step. The very notion of self-determination and free choice under present conditions can be nothing but a fiction, a pure mockery.

"Considering the international significance of the June 1967 war, considering our opposition in principle to the Zionist policy of imposing faits accomplis on the Arabs, and out of concern for Israel's fate in the Arab world – we think it is the duty of the Israeli Government to withdraw from all the occupied territories and from the attempt to impose a settlement by force. This demand is the test for every progressive group and person.

It should be made clear that we are under no illusion that withdrawal to the 1949 armistice lines and agreements will, in itself, constitute a solution to the Palestine problem and Israeli-Arab relations. It is only a necessary step, without which no progress can be made, toward a genuine solution.

As for the longer term, we hold today – as we have before – that the only real and stable solution for the Palestine problem and the Israeli-Arab conflict is Israel's withdrawal from the Zionist path and the integration of a socialist, non-Zionist Israel in the region. The socialist revolution, under the leadership of the workers, is also the only way to Arab national unification and to ending the Balkanization imposed by imperialism on the Arab world."

While, of course, it was correct to demand the withdrawal of Israel from the lands occupied in 1967, the very notion of the integration of Israel as a settler colonialist state in the region shows how little the ISO understood what a state is. Zionism is not simply a racist ideology that the ruling class can peel off. A state is an instrument of domination of the ruling class. For the Israeli workers to be integrated in the region, it is necessary to join the Palestinians and to overthrow the Zionist state that in the meantime has become an imperialist state, and replace it with a Palestinian state from the river to the sea. This state will be a multi-national, revolutionary workers state run democratically by Palestinian, Jewish, and migrant workers and supported by the *fallahim*, covering the entire territory of what was once Mandatory Palestine.

Footnotes:

(1) Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1

(2) See e.g. Rebecca Pitt: Jean-Paul Sartre – Philosophy of Freedom, in: Socialist Worker, Issue No. 1955, 11 Jun 2005, <http://socialistworker.co.uk/art/6501/Jean-Paul+Sartre+%E2%80%94+philosophy+of+freedom>

(3) See e.g. Sartre Completes Visit in Israel; Finds Strong De-

sire for Peace, March 30, 1967, <http://www.jta.org/1967/03/30/archive/sartre-completes-visit-in-israel-finds-strong-desire-for-peace>; DER SPIEGEL: Salem oder Schalom. Intellektuelle / Israel-Konflikt, No. 28/1967, 03.07.1967, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46214183.html>

(4) Sachar, Howard, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) p. 616

(5) Le Monde, February 28, 1968, quoted in Stop de Bezetting van Palestina: The 1967 War and the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, <http://www.stopdebezetting.com/geschiedenis/palestina-the-1967-war-and-the-israeli-occupation-of-the-west-bank-and-gaza.html>

(6) Quoted in Noam Chomsky: Fateful Triangle, Updated Edition: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians, Pluto Press, London 1999, p. 192

(7) Address by Prime Minister Begin at the National Defense College, 8 August 1982, Yemima Rosenthal: Israel's Foreign Policy - Historical Documents Volume 8: 1982-1984, Jerusalem, Israel State Archives, 1995 <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook6/pages/55%20Address%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Begin%20at%20the%20National.aspx>

(8) Tom Segev: What was forgotten that morning, Haaretz, June 5, 2007, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/what-was-forgotten-that-morning-1.222307>

(9) For a detailed exposition of the Marxist approach to imperialist wars we refer readers to chapters 12 and 13 in the recently published RCIT book by Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism. (for details see www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net)

(10) Segev, Tom, 1967: *Israel, the War and the Year That Transformed the Middle East*, Metropolitan Books 2006, p. 261

(11) For a critique of the CWI and the IMT see Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, pp. 26-28, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine> as well as in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, pp. 353-357

(12) Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1986, p. 113

(13) Michael Bar-Zohar: Ben Gurion: a biography. New York: Adama Books, 1986, p. 1588

(14) Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel*, Brattleboro, Vt.: Amana Books, 1988, pp. 204-11.

(15) For a detailed exposé of this event see USS Liberty Veterans Association: A Report: War Crimes Committed Against U.S. Military Personnel, June 8, 1967, Submitted to the Secretary of the Army in his capacity as Executive Agent for the Secretary of Defense, June 8, 2005, <http://www.usliberty.org/report/report.htm>

(16) Danny Rubinstein: A 40-year journey to a low point, Haaretz, June 4, 2007, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/a-40-year-journey-to-a-low-point-1.222235>

(17) See on this Yossi Schwartz: What is the meaning of the Zionist's Offensive against the Haredi Jews? Internationalist Socialist League (Israel/Occupied Palestine), 25.3.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/israel-haredi-jews

(18) On the Zionist provocations against Syria see the RCIT-Statement: Israel: Hands Off Lebanon and Syria!, 6.5.2013, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 11, June 2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/israel-hands-off-lebanon-and-syria; on a possible imperialist attack against Iran see the statement of the RKOB (Austrian section of the RCIT): Defend Iran against the U.S., EU and Israel warmongers! 9.11.2011, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 2, January 2012, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/iran-no-war

(19) On the RCIT'S analysis and tactics on the military's coup d'état in Egypt see RCIT: Egypt: Down with the Military Coup d'État! Prepare Mass Resistance! 8.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-down-with-military-coup-d-etat; Yossi Schwartz: Egypt: The U.S. Support for the Military Coup and the Left's ignorance. Notes on the role of US imperialism in the military's coup d'état and the failure of

the Egypt left, 11.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-us-support-for-military-coup; Michael Pröbsting: The Military's Coup d'État in Egypt: Assessment and Tactics. A reply to the criticism of the WIVP and the LCC on the meaning of the Military's Coup d'État and the slogan of the Revolutionary Constituent Assembly, 17.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/egypt-meaning-of-coup-d-etat; RCIT: Tasks of the Revolution in Egypt, 2.7.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/tasks-of-egypt-revolution. All these documents are published in Revolutionary Communism, No. 12, July/August 2013

(20) On the RCIT's analysis of the Syrian Revolution and its inner contradictions see some of our recent articles: Yossi Schwartz: Class struggle and religious sectarianism in Syria, 12.6.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/class-struggle-and-religious-sectarianism-in-syria/>; Yossi Schwartz: Syria: After the defeat in Qusayr and ahead of the Battle for Aleppo, 11.6.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-after-defeat-in-qusayr>; ISL-Leaflet: Victory to the Revolution in Syria! <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/victory-to-revolution-in-syria>, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 11, June 2013; Yossi Schwartz: Victory to the Revolution in Syria! The second anniversary of the uprising in Syria, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 8, April 2013, 15.3.2013, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/victory-to-syrian-revolution

(21) Lee Smith: John Kerry's Silly Play, May 22, 2013, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/132685/john-kerrys-silly-play>

(22) New York Times: Israel Finding Itself Drawn Into Syria's Turmoil, May 22, 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/world/middleeast/israel-is-drawn-into-syrias-turmoil.html?ref=world&_r_

(23) For the RCIT's actual assessment of the world situation see The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists (March 2013). Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: Revolutionary Communism, No. 8, April 2013, www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013

(24) Israeli Socialist Organization: The Third Round, July 5, 1967, Matzpen, No.36, June-July 1967, <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?u=120&p=doc2>. All quotes in this appendix are from this ISO document if not stated otherwise.

(25) Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, p. 38, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

(26) For an overview and analysis of the Stalinist-bureaucratic social transformations in Eastern Europe, China and Cuba we refer to two books: one from the League for a Revolutionary Communist International / Workers Power (Britain): *The Degenerated Revolution. The Origin and Nature of the Stalinist States* (1982); the other publication is a forthcoming book from the RCIT written by Michael Pröbsting: *Cuba: A Revolution Betrayed and Sold Out. How Castroism led the Cuban working class from Capitalism to Stalinism and back. What are the tasks of the socialist revolution?*

(27) See Yossi Schwartz: Israel's War of 1948 and the Degeneration of the Fourth International, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, in particular the second half of the document on pp. 10-20, www.thecommunists.net/theory/israel-s-war-of-1948-1

(28) Israeli Socialist Organization: General Declaration by the ISO, March 22, 1968, <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?p=doc3&u=120>

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

(30) See on this the chapters "Can Marxists support the right of national self-determination for the Israeli Jews?" and "The Marxist classics and the right of national self-determination" in Michael Pröbsting: On some Questions of the Zionist Oppression and the Permanent Revolution in Palestine, in: Revolutionary Communism, Special Issue on Palestine, No. 10, June 2013, pp. 26-28, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/permanent-revolution-in-palestine>

(31) Israeli Socialist Organization: General Declaration by the ISO, March 22, 1968, <http://98.130.214.177/index.asp?p=doc3&u=120>

Brazil: Solidarity with the Popular Uprising!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)
and Blog El Mundo Socialista (Brazil), 19.6.2013*

1. Brazil has joined the chain of spontaneous popular uprisings against the brutal anti-democratic and anti-social policy of the capitalist ruling classes around the world. On 17th June alone, 250.000 people marched on the streets against price rises for public transport, corruption and police brutality. This shows once more that the deepening of the social and political contradictions in the revolutionary period of historic crisis of capitalism which opened in 2008 lead globally again and again to revolutionary explosions. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and *El Mundo Socialista* (EMS) welcome and fully support these protests.

2. As so often in revolutionary events, a movement starts with what seems to be small incident. After the municipal government of São Paulo – led by the reformist “Workers Party” (PT) – increased the fares for public buses and subways by 6% or R\$0.20 (about \$0.10), the *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL) organized protests. As it is so common in crisis-ridden capitalism, the ruling class and their reformist lackeys soon reacted with gross police brutality. In São Paulo in the night of 13th June, police fired tear gas and rubber bullets indiscriminately at peaceful demonstrators, journalists and passersby. Many demonstrators were injured, along with at least eight journalists, one of whom was blinded in one eye after being struck by a rubber bullet. Like in Turkey, this police brutality provoked a storm of mass protests across the whole country. On 18th June, mass demonstrations took not only place in the metropolises like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Porto Alegre or Brasilia but also in 30 smaller cities.

3. While the price rise and the police brutality were the trigger for the social explosion, the popular uprising reveals the deep-seating revulsion amongst the people against the corrupt elite in business and government. The PT-led popular front governments of the former Brazilian president Lula and his successor Dilma Rouseff – which are in power since 2003 without interruption – governs the country in the service of the multinational corporations and the domestic elite. The country still has one of worldwide highest income inequalities. According to the United Nations about 27% of its urban populations are living in *favelas* (slums). Rio de Janeiro alone has more than 1,000 *favelas*! At the same time, the PT-led government spends billions of Dollars for the football World Cup in 2014 and the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

4. The policy of the Lula/Rouseff governments in the past 11 years shows once more that the reformist PT-bureaucracy is a lackey of the capitalist class. While it speaks in favor of social justice and hosted repeatedly the World Social Forum, while it controls the leaderships of most trade unions, it serves in reality the ruling class and acts as its agent in the ranks of the workers movement. It is high time, that the urban and rural workers and their organizations break with the reformist bureaucratic leaders and form a new party of the working class which – in opposite to the PT today – is independent of the bourgeoisie

and which is based on a revolutionary program.

5. The popular uprising represents the biggest class struggle in Brazil since more than twenty years and therefore opens a new political phase with tremendous opportunities. However the movement is currently characterized by a number of political and organizational weaknesses which are not dissimilar to the *Occupy movement* in the USA or the *Indignados* in Spain:

a dominance by university students and middle class elements and at the same time a lack of involvement of the organized working class and the lower strata of the popular masses;

a lack of organization and a strong influence of petty-bourgeois libertarian ideologies against parties as such which of course is pretty understandable given the experience of the people with the corrupt parties of the bourgeois establishments like the PSDB, the PT etc.

the struggle, until now, has not spread to strikes in the enterprises but remains limited to the streets.

6. In order to overcome these weaknesses, revolutionaries call for *regular mass assemblies of the workers and oppressed in the enterprises, popular neighborhoods and favelas as well as in the educational institutions*. These assemblies should lead to the formation of *action committees*. These committees should elect delegates in order to build a *national coordination to lead the struggle effectively*.

7. Such action committees shall orientate to *win over the trade union and other mass organizations of the workers and oppressed to join the struggle*. No doubt, for this they need to *fight against the bureaucratic leaderships of these mass organizations* who have close relations with the PT-led popular front government. Such a campaign should be directed to prepare and organize a *general strike* against the anti-democratic and anti-social policy of the government.

8. To defend themselves against the brutal police force, the activists need to build *self-defense committees*. Such committees shall take the necessary measures to protect the movement against the thugs in uniform. In addition to this we welcome efforts of socialists and trade union activists to form blocs in order to defend themselves against attacks during the demonstrations by agent provocateurs as well as hard-core libertarian anti-party thugs.

9. Naturally such mobilizations – as important as they are – can at best temporary mitigate the attacks of the ruling capitalist class. But as long as the capitalists own and control the economy and the state apparatus, as long as the society is subordinated to the rule of profit, as long misery and crisis will be a permanent feature of the masses lives. The only lasting solution is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialist society. The RCIT and EMS call workers and oppressed to organize for such a perspective and to fight for a *Workers Government supported by the poor peasants and the urban poor and based on popular councils and militias*.

10. The RCIT and EMS point out that the popular uprising in Brazil is not only caused by the system of global

imperialism but is also part of the international wave of uprisings which started in the Arab world two years ago and which have spread to South Africa, Southern Europe, Turkey and now Latin America. The movement needs therefore an international orientation as well as an international program to fight against capitalism.

11. The popular Uprising in Brazil - as all the other revolutionary upheavals in the last years - has been marked by a dramatic crisis of leadership. The working class does not possess a revolutionary party which can show the way and organize the struggle in order to avoid the defeats by the ruling class. This was underlined once

more in the recent teachers struggle in São Paulo which was sold out by the pro-PT trade union bureaucracy with the help of the centrist Morenoite PSTU and PSOL. It is urgent that revolutionaries in Brazil join forces on the basis of a revolutionary Action Program to form a first nucleus for a Bolshevik party. Such a nucleus should be based not only on a national but also an international program as well as organization. The RCIT and EMS are willing to support all serious efforts which represent serious steps in such a direction.

** Forward in building a new revolutionary workers party in Brazil as part of the new Revolutionary Workers International!*

Brazil: Before the General Strike on 11th July

Report from El Mundo Socialista, <http://elmundosocialista.blogspot.com.br>, 2.7.2013

A “general strike” called by an anonymous Facebook group for the 1st July has not taken off. However on Sunday, 30th June, a number of important mobilizations took place, especially in Rio de Janeiro against the Municipal, State and Federal Governments as well as against the FIFA. The City of Rio de Janeiro and the State of Rio de Janeiro (Both have the same name) are both governed by the PMDB party, which supports on the federal level the PT-led government. The repression was violent. As a result of the protests, these leading politicians and the president Dilma Rousseff were unable to attend the final football game between Brazil and Spain at the Maracana stadium. By this they avoided the expected massive boos from the audience.

The popularity of the federal government, led by President Dilma Rousseff from the Workers Party (PT), is falling dramatically. As we said before, no ruler, nor right-wing party, nor center nor pseudo left party, is spared from popular hatred. Hence, the popularity of the state government of São Paulo, Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) – a traditional rightist party and the main opposition force to PT – is also falling.

Rousseff calls for a plebiscite for “Political Reform”

Reacting to this political crisis of the ruling class, Dilma Rousseff called for a plebiscite for comprehensive “Reforma Política” (Political Reform). In her message on TV last week, she even talked about convening a constituent assembly to enact this Reforma Política. In this she is barred by the constitution itself, which prohibits the convening of a constituent assembly for only one subject. Her proposal was also met with massive resistance from the bourgeois PMDB which is one of the biggest parties in Brazil and which supports the PT-led government. At the last presidential elections, the PMDB made a joint slate with the PT and got as a result its leader, Michel Temer, elected as the country’s vice president. The PMDB leadership felt betrayed because they were not informed by the President of these proposals. For all these reasons the country is facing now a crisis in its government.

Either way, Rousseff’s proposal for constituent assembly was denied by the Federal Supreme Court.

But Rousseff insists on making a plebiscite. Politicians, even those who support the government, are strongly reacting against it, because they don’t want political reforms which are not controlled by them. Therefore they are threatening to put a proposal for such a plebiscite which would prevent the re-election of Rousseff.

In the context of the political crisis in Brazil, many people talk about the possibility of calling the former PT president, Lula da Silva, back to being a candidate. Such calls are also coming from sectors within the PT.

Political and Economic Crisis

All these mobilizations caused political earthquake. But in our opinion, it is the PT who loses most. Two months ago, Rousseff was approved by 57% in polls. This has plummeted to 30% - a precipitous drop of 27%. Before this, a re-election was guaranteed, but not anymore.

The PT was the most affected, because its main ally the PMDB is a bourgeois party chameleon. The PMDB is the second largest party in Brazil and has control of the Senate. It is however prepared to form an alliance with anyone who wins the presidency in the next elections in 2014. So if the PT is down in the polls, it loses its main ally.

Various factors will make sure that the political crisis in Brazil will not diminish in the near future: Inflation is on the rise to at least 6.5%, industrial production is stagnating, US Dollar value reaches 2.15 Brazil Real, real wages drop and the world-wide wave of mass protests. All this indicates that the crisis is here to stay and that the dissatisfaction, which was hidden for a long time, has surfaced in full force. We can expect that the global economic crisis of capitalism will sooner or later increase the economic crisis in Brazil since it is – as a semi-colonial country and an a commodity exporter – and thus dependent on developments on the world market.

Trade Unions call for General Strike on 11th July

The unions are calling for mass mobilizations on the 11th July. They are under massive pressure from the rank and file. The leaderships of the CUT (trade union controlled by the PT) and the CTB (trade union controlled by the Stalin-

ist PCdoB which is also part of the ruling PT-led coalition) are in danger to discredit themselves since they are occupying positions in the government of Dilma Rousseff. Given the possibility of an electoral defeat for the PT-led government in 2014, they need to go back to the streets for pressurizing the government to implement certain social reforms. Since they do not want to appear to people as distant of Dilma Rousseff, they say that there is a dispute within the government between the right-wing parties in government (PMDB, PP, etc.) and the left-wing parties in government (PT, PCdoB). They declare to support the later against the right-wing forces in government.

By this the union leadership hopes to reoccupy the space lost on the streets. But in fact the demands are mostly the same as advocated by the federal government: End of Social Security Factor (1); 40 hours of work per week without salary reduction; Readjust worthy for retirees; more investments in health, education and security; Public transportation quality; End of the federal bill 4330 which extends the outsourcing; Agrarian Reform; End the auction of oil.

These demands are a classic expression of bourgeois reformism: they are either not concrete and therefore open for manipulation by the capitalists and government; or they are correct in itself but by far not enough giving the severity of the social crisis.

It would be however necessary to raise demands which would help to tackle the most burning issues for the working class. Such demands are:

- * Cancellation of the Pension Reform
- * Down with the Withdrawal of rights of public employees by the PT-Lula-Rousseff government
- * Sliding scale of wages
- * Re-nationalization of the oil industry under workers' control
- * Re-nationalization of all privatized companies under workers control
- * Radical land reform under control of the poor and landless peasants

The PSTU and PCO

The PSTU (main section of the Morenoite LIT-CI) and PCO are important parties, which claim to be Trotskyist, and which compete in the elections. The problem is that in order to accommodate to the labor bureaucracy, they debase their flags and lower their program. For example, the PSTU makes a call for the mobilization of the 11th July with the same demands of the government itself.

The PCO argues that we need to preserve the PT-led government against the supposed danger of the growth of right. The PCO even claimed that the corrupt politicians of the PT, which were convicted by the Supreme Court last year, were victims of the right which is attacking leftist parties. This weekend they repeated the same argument claiming that the PT-Dilma government is under fire from the right-wing forces and that it is necessary to protect the PT government. The truth is that the PSTU and PCO are capitulating to the Popular Front government.

Many speculate that the end of the Confederations Cup the demonstrations will decrease. We will see. Anyway this political earthquake has caused effects long enough to influence the presidential election of 2014. As revolutionary and Trotskyists, we are small at the moment. But we will take advantage of mass mobilizations on 11th July and will put forward our revolutionary demands.

Footnote:

(1) *Social Security Factor*: It is a pension law which basically increases the working time. The government states that life expectancy of the Brazilians increases and therefore they should work more to get the full benefits. However, the institute that calculates the life expectancy is a federal agency – the *Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics* (IBGE). ■



Brazil: Long live the Uprising!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) in Venezuela, 20.6.2013

1. The chain of spontaneous uprisings (which now has reached Brazil) shows the decline of capitalism and its efforts to prevent its ultimate downfall. The capitalist class tries and can only try to maintain its rule through policies that directly attack the masses and make them pay for their crisis. The deepening of social and political contradictions mark the current revolutionary world-historic period which opened in 2008. The *RCIT Venezuela* supports the revolutionary struggles in Brazil and in any other country, as the only way for working class to take the power.

2. The increase of the public transportation fares in Brazil by 6% may appear for ruling class as something minimal, but for working class and poor people it means a direct attack on wages, which are already very low. The reaction of the ruling class against revolutionary uprising of the masses, through its repressive state apparatus, was inevitable and almost immediate. However, as it happens regularly in revolutionary events, the reaction of ruling class did not stop the developments and the mass demonstrations were extended to several cities in Brazil.

3. Dilma Rousseff's regime (like Lula Da Silva did in past) rules in the interest of the elites and the multinational corporations. It tries to hide the massive social contradictions which exist in Brazil. Nevertheless, the masses don't hide their deep contempt for the corrupt elites, the predatory capitalists and their friends in the PT government.

4. The policies applied by Rousseff's government (which represents a continuity of Lula Da Silva) show that the PT's reformist bureaucracy is a lackey of the capitalist class. The organizing of several occasions of the reformist World Social Forum has not done any good for Brazil. The PT dominates most trade unions and by this it guarantees its service to ruling class. It betrays genuine workers' struggles and subjects them to the interest's of the labor aristocracy. It's time for Brazilian working class to break with the reformist PT and to organize independently with peasants and poor people on the basis of a revolutionary

program.

5. This new political revolutionary era in Brazil should be utilized as good as possible. However, the current crisis of revolutionary leadership threatens to abort a revolutionary outcome of these struggles.

6. To overcome these weaknesses, we support the formation of people's assemblies which must be extended to companies (including transportation sector), neighborhoods and favelas. These assemblies must create *action committees* as revolutionary organs. Furthermore, these committees should elect delegates to build a national coordination to effectively lead the struggle.

7. Action committees must call trade unions, organizations and revolutionary groups to join this struggle. Only an independent organization of working class can ensure success.

8. The main task is to overthrow capitalism and build socialism worldwide. This will only be possible through a genuine revolutionary international leadership with a Marxist revolutionary program against capitalism.

9. The Brazilian revolutionary working class must fight against treacherous leaders, reformists, renegades of Trotskyism and denounce them openly. It is urgent for the Brazilian working class to adopt a revolutionary action program (nationally and internationally) which may lead to create a committee or foundation nucleus for a new independent Bolshevik Party. In order to assist in this imperative task, we must establish closer contact with organizations, militants, activists and revolutionaries in Brazil.

10. We must move forward in timely construction of an independent Bolshevik Workers' Party in Brazil as part of the new Fifth Workers International. The *RCIT Venezuela* is also committed to this task.

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■



Cartoons by Carlos Latuff

Action Program for Venezuela

by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) in Venezuela, June 2013

Introduction

Capitalism has entered a new historic period of decline. It is crisis-ridden because of its escalating inner contradictions. This crisis leads inevitable to economic, political, social and military explosions. The deeper cause of this is that fact that the productive forces (labor, machinery and equipment, etc..., and their products) are so advanced that they clash more and more with the increasingly unbearable limits of the capitalist mode of production. The private ownership of the production means allows the capitalists to direct the production process in their companies to the sole purpose of increasing their profits. The source of this profit is not the labor of the capitalists but the surplus value which is created by the workers.

Therefore, every capitalist has the objective – regardless of his or her personality – to appropriate profit for him- or herself and not to work for the prosperity of the society. Otherwise, he or she would not be a capitalist.

In our era, capitalism exists and can only exist as imperialism. This is a system

- * in which the world is dominated by few hundred monopolies and a handful of Great Powers,

- * in which the working class and the popular masses are exploited and oppressed and

- * in which the semi-colonial countries (like Venezuela) are super-exploited.

These exploitation, super-exploitation and oppression by the imperialist monopolies and great powers are escalating in the present period because of capitalism's crisis as a system.

No fundamental problem can be solved in a national way. We will have a future only if we destroy capitalism and build socialism worldwide. To achieve this, we need an armed insurrection of the working class – history has shown that any idea of a peaceful transformation to socialism is a ridiculous illusion. Only the dictatorship of proletariat and the creation of a workers' state which strives to spread the revolution internationally can open the road to authentic socialism without any bureaucratic rule.

The working class can only march forward and can only succeed in the overthrow of capitalism, if it builds timely a revolutionary party, as part of new *Fifth Workers International*. This new International must be founded on the traditions of four revolutionary precursors' internationals: the First International of Marx and Engels, the Second International until 1914, the Third International founded under the leadership of Lenin up to its Stalinist degeneration in 1924 and the Fourth International led by Leon Trotsky till its centrist degeneration in 1948-52.

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) in Venezuela is committed to this task.

Latin America: The Struggle to Liberate the Continent from Imperialist Chains and the 'National' Bourgeoisie

Latin America is a region of semi-colonial countries which super-exploited by imperialist monopolies and oppressed

by great powers (especially the USA) for centuries.

The decline of capitalism in recent decades had a severe impact for Latin America. It resulted in massive impoverishment of the popular masses, public debt crisis, devaluations, bankruptcy, etc. In the last ten years there has been a net flow of financial resources from Latin America to the imperialist metropolises of annually between 50 and 140 billion US-Dollars.

At the same time the decline of US imperialism, the increasing rivalry of the Great Powers (including imperialist China) and the rising prices of raw materials provide some room for maneuver to the semi-colonial Latin American bourgeoisie.

Against the background of capitalism's decline, economic, political and even military confrontations between imperialist powers and Latin America countries are likely in the future (see, for example, the commercial disputes between Western Hedge Funds and Argentina or its conflict with Britain over the Malvinas Islands). In such cases the RCIT Venezuela stand for the defense of any Latin American country and the defeat of the Great Powers and imperialist monopolies.

However, the 'national' bourgeoisie is deeply rooted in the world capitalist system and cannot escape from there. The reality of '*bolivarianismo*' – after being in power for 15 years in Venezuela – has proven that it cannot break with imperialism and capitalism. Instead it rather continues the regime of exploitation and oppression.

Is Cuba a model? The RCIT Venezuela doesn't think so. Cuba is a Stalinist degenerated workers' state. This means that its economy is not subordinated to the principle of profit for a few capitalists but is planned by the state (albeit in a bureaucratic way). At the same time the working class is oppressed by a bureaucratic caste which rules the country since more than five decades. Currently the Stalinist regime of the Castro brothers prepares capitalist restoration.

We defend Cuba against any imperialist aggression. We defend Cuba against the sanctions and blockades imposed by the United States. But the Cuban working class must prepare and organize in an independent way for a political revolution against the dictatorship of the Castroite CP. In all struggles to defend social gains and national and democratic rights we put forward the methods to class struggle (mass mobilizations, independent organization of the workers, peasants and poor in action committees and popular militias etc.). However we participate in the class struggle as it is and don't wait till the workers suddenly discover the Marxist program. We join and support the class struggle even if it takes place under a non-revolutionary leadership. However, while the RCIT Venezuela give critical support to petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois forces in situations where they take actions against the imperialists – according to the Leninist method of the *Anti-Imperialist United Front* tactic – we strive to organize the working class independently in order to prepare for the revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist bourgeoisie and the 'national' bourgeoisie.

For this we must replace the existing 'bolivarian' leadership and Stalinist leadership with a genuine international revolutionary party.

'Bolivarian' Venezuela is a semi-colonial capitalist country, not a socialist republic

Venezuela is a capitalist semi-colonial country which is dependent of imperialism, both of the USA and Europe and now also of the new emerging Chinese imperialism. USA is the leading trading partner of Venezuela. Of 2.5 million barrels of oil which are exported daily, 1.5 million are destined for the USA. Nearly all European oil monopolies have investments to exploit the Orinoco Oil Belt through joint ventures and take the oil to continue their domination and oppression of the working class in their respective countries. China offers technological cooperation, electronic products at low prices and financing in exchange for debt, oil and quotas on production.

The Bolivarian regime uses since 2005 increasingly a 'socialist' rhetoric to disguise the most pure capitalism. The truth is that Bolivarian 'socialist' bourgeoisie is just social-imperialist: it collaborates directly with emerging Chinese imperialism and indirectly with USA and Europe imperialism. The 'bolivarianismo' is a fake.

Maduro's regime and PSUV are pro-bourgeois. They continue Chavez's bonapartism sui generis which in fact is more bonapartist than sui generis. The working class' vanguard must break with 'bolivarianismo' and organize independently in a revolutionary party.

The majority of the bourgeoisie sympathizes with Capriles – the leader of the right-wing opposition. However, some sectors are closely linked to Maduro's regime and some others have business relationships with it. The PSUV regime depends to a certain degree on the masses, in order to counteract the pressure of USA imperialism and the right-wing bourgeoisie.

For this reason it has been forced to give some reforms and concessions to the masses (such as social missions, pensions for old people, etc.). These reforms are possible due to the rent derived from the oil exports to the imperialist countries.

However, these reforms and concessions are at the same time undermined by the galloping inflation and attacks by the capitalists. They will come even more under attack if the oil price declines. It is not surprising that after 15 years of Bolivarian regime, the workers share of the national income is today lower than in 1998! The reformist dream to regulate capitalism is a terrible illusion. The alternative is "socialism or barbarism".

PSUV: the Enemy within the Working Class and the Popular Masses

The PSUV was born as deformed reformist-populist party with massive social and ideological contradictions. This is because it organizes many workers but also many middle class people and bureaucrats with close ties to capitalists. It is a popular front party where the pro-capitalist wing subordinates the working class. This has resulted, in a short time, to its huger bureaucratization. The party serves as a machinery for bourgeois elections, it supports the state bureaucracy and the business interests of the "Bolivarian

bourgeoisie". It has blocked the revolutionary developments in the trade union movement by strengthening a labor aristocracy, subordinating it to its control and aborting the workers' struggle.

Because of reforms and concessions as well as the conflicts between Venezuela and USA imperialism, the PSUV regime was able to obtain significant support among workers and popular masses. Authentic revolutionaries should patiently explain to pro-bolivarian masses that they are wrong to believe the PSUV is socialist. Revolutionaries must tell the truth, however hard it may seem. They must warn the masses against any illusions they may have in 'bolivarianismo'. They must call the working class to organize independently in *action committees* and *armed militias*. They must apply the *united front tactic* developed by the Communist International and the Trotskyist Fourth International. They must put demands to the Chavista's leaders in the trade unions and other mass organizations not only to talk about social justice, but to fight for it and against the Bolivarian state bureaucracy. Similarly they should call workers and trade unions to break with the PSUV and form an independent workers party. Revolutionaries would participate in such a Workers Party in order to win it for a revolutionary program. The united front tactics have to be combined with a clear revolutionary propaganda and agitation which denounces the PSUV's bureaucrats. This will help the working class to overcome illusion in chavismo through own practical experience.

In the case of a new imperialist intervention or coups d'état of right-wing opposition (like in 2002), the RCIT Venezuela take side of those forces that oppose these attacks (including chavismo). However, at the same time, we warn about these bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaderships which are not really able to decisively defeat the pro-imperialist forces, not to speak about leading the working class to socialism.

Authentic revolutionaries must also warn about forces in labor movement, like Orlando Chirino and his Morenito UIT-FI. They do not offer a road to class independence but collaborate directly with Capriles and Venezuelan traditional right-wing bourgeoisie. Similarly, Alan Woods' International Marxist Tendency doesn't offer a revolutionary and independent alternative. While they don't collaborate with the traditional right-wing bourgeoisie, they opportunistically adapt to the Chavista bureaucracy and apply a gross caricature of Trotsky's entryism tactic.

Furthermore, centrism – which is 'revolutionary' in words but adapts to reformism, the petty bourgeoisie, populism and nationalism – is unable to provide leadership for the workers' vanguard. Only an authentic revolutionary organization can do this. The RCIT in Venezuela is fighting to build such an organization.

A Programme for Action

Our programme for revolutionary action includes:

* *Fight insecure employment!* Conversion of unprotected, informal and temporary contracts into permanent contracts, with alignment of the employment protection provisions and wages. The adherence of these should be regulated by collective tariff agreements and controlled by trade unions and workforce representatives!

* *No to any pay freeze!* For massive wage increases and a

minimum wage, the amounts of which should be set by independent workers' committees!

* *Fight all layoffs and plant closures!* Expropriation without compensation of all enterprises that don't pay wages completely, who threaten with layoffs, who don't pay their taxes in full or threaten with closure or relocation of the site! In such cases: the entrepreneurs must be made to pay out of their private property! Continuation of these companies as public companies under the management of the employees!

* *Committees for unemployed!* Fight for a job which fits to the special skills each worker has.

* *Reduction of working hours!* The aim is division of work among all hands. This means that every worker will have a job with less working hours and unchanged equal wages.

* *Fight against inflation!* Sliding scale of wages which automatically adjust against inflation. Automatic adjustment also for social benefits and old age pensions.

* *For the control of prices through price monitoring committee, elected by the workers, housewives and -men as well as consumers!* The basis should be a cost of living index, which is determined by representatives of the working class, the peasants and small traders.

* *Accessible and quality housing for all, with essential services and built in areas which are not isolated but where people and workers live!*

* *Open the books – bookkeeping, bank accounts, tax returns, etc.!* Inspection by accountants elected by the workers!

* *Workers committees to investigate fully the corruption in capitalist companies as well as between state companies and government agencies!*

* *Workers committees to plan production and take managerial decisions!* Equal wages for all workers, no matter their position. All posts or positions shall be revocable at any time.

* *Public employment program to improve infrastructure (power supply, public transport, education, child care, etc.)!* This program will not be subject to bureaucratic state control, but planned and controlled by workers committees. It must be paid with the profits and assets of capitalists.

* *All essential services like water, electricity, health, education, etc., should be public property and controlled by workers and user committees!* Free access to basic services for all.

* *Fight women oppression!* Equal pay for equal work! For the massive construction of free, well-equipped 24-hour child-care facilities! For a wide range supply of affordable and high-quality public restaurants and laundry facilities! Our goal is the socialisation of housework!

* *For a public employment programme to create the conditions for the socialisation of housework and simultaneously eliminate unemployment among women!*

* *Free access to free contraception and abortion on demand regardless of age and no matter in what month of pregnancy the woman is!*

* *Nationalization for all media under workers' control and consumer committees!* Democratic participation for workers, peasants, poor, people with African descendants, etc. in media.

* *Abolition of indirect taxes such as VAT!*

* *Massive reduction in taxes on wages! Drastic increase in taxes on profits and speculation! Elimination of tax loopholes for businesses! Immediate recovery of outstanding tax debts of the companies!*

* *Confiscation of property belonging to powerful and influential families and use it for a national economic plan!* Expropriation of bourgeoisie.

* *No more interest and debt repayment!* Immediate and complete cancellation of all public and private debt.

* *Nationalization to all banks and financial institutions!* Fusion in a single central bank under workers' control. Nationalization of big business, wholesale trade, transportation, health, education and communication sector without compensation and under workers' control. Expropriation of big landowners and equitable land distribution through peasant committees. Introduction of foreign trade monopoly.

* *For a government of workers, poor peasants and urban poor!* It must be based on workers' councils in companies and neighborhoods. Armed militias to provide security. All representatives of Committees and Councils are elected directly – after extensive discussion in order to reach the widest possible consensus – and can be revoked at any time. No worker will receive more than a skilled worker wage.

* *For a Federation of Socialist Republics in Latin America!*

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■



Cartoons by Carlos Latuff

Pakistan: Baloch people fight for national liberation!

Leaflet from the Revolutionary Workers Organization (RCIT-Section in Pakistan), June 2013

Preface of the Editorial Board: The following leaflet has been published and distributed in June 2013 by the *Revolutionary Workers Organization* which is the Pakistani Section of the RCIT. It deals with the appointment of Dr. Abdul Malik as new Chief Minister of Baluchistan by the federal government dominated by the conservative *Muslim League* (PML-N). Malik is the leader of the bourgeois-democratic nationalist *National Party*. Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif hopes to pacify the Baloch people by integrating Malik into the regional government in order to continue the oppression and exploitation of Balochistan.

This appointment – which is a maneuver by the right-wing, pro-imperialist government of Nawaz Sharif to weaken and disorientate the national liberation struggle in Balochistan – has been hailed by various leftists in Pakistan, including the leadership of the thoroughly reformist *Awami Workers Party*. This demonstrates once more that the AWP leadership is prepared to act as a lackey of the bourgeois state in the ranks of the workers movement.

Balochistan is a geographically large province of Pakistan, covering nearly 44% of the land. It has however only a small population of about 11 million people amongst which the Baloch people constitute the majority. Because of the so-called Durand agreement in 1893 by the imperialist colonial powers, the Baloch people got divided between what is today Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

Baloch people were conquered and annexed by the ruling class of Pakistan in 1948. Since then they have risen up five times in armed uprisings against the Pakistani state.

We finish this introduction by quoting from our *Action Program for Pakistan*:

“Tens of thousands of Balochis have been killed or disappeared. Their natural resources are exploited without any benefits for the local population. Mega projects like the construction of a huge port in Gwadar by the Army in cooperation with the new imperialist power China takes place without the involvement of the Baloch people and the government in Quetta. No surprise that the Baloch youth has started the just, armed national liberation struggle for independence again with the support of the Baloch masses. At the leadership of this struggle are revolutionary-nationalist forces like the BLA and tribal leaders.

We support the struggle for independence where it is clear that the majority of the oppressed people wish for it (which is the case in Kashmir and Balochistan). We combine the slogan for independence with a socialist perspective since only an independent state lead by a workers government based on the poor peasants and urban poor can bring real liberation.

** For a united Azad, Socialist Kashmir! For an Azad, Socialist Baluchistan!”*

(For the English translation see *Revolutionary Communism*, No. 3, June 2012, pp. 15-26, www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/pakistan-action-program)

Balochistan, Election and Democracy

The situation in Baluchistan is getting worse and worse. This has not changed even after the so-called “historic election” in Pakistan and the appointment of the left-nationalist Dr. Malik as Chief Minister of Baluchistan. Many in the left welcome this decision which was made by Muslim League. They believe that this government is elected by the Baloch people and will be able to eradicate the problems of national oppression. They also think that the Baloch nationalist movement should enter in negotiations with the current government in order to find solutions for the fundamental grievances.

The truth is that this government neither will nor can change anything in Balochistan. The number of missing people and their murder has not declined and is even rising. The military counter-insurgency operations are intensifying and so is the Baloch national movement protesting against it.

The recent elections in Balochistan were a fraud. In accordance with the call of the Baloch national movement the people boycotted the elections. Independent sources report that not more than 3% of the electorate participated. This means that the boycott call by the Baloch nationalists was successful.

The state apparatus and the ruling class are spreading the propaganda that the Baloch national movement is supported by India and the USA. They claim that the movement is part of a conspiracy against Pakistan, that they have no mass support in Balochistan and that they are opposed to social progress and economic development in the province.

The truth is that the Baloch national movement is a genuine movement of the working class, poor’s and youth who are fighting against the national oppression and the plundering of their resources. Given their oppression and lack of perspective, many have illusions that foreign powers might help them but this is not representative for the whole movement.

It is a big lie to claim that the movement is opposed to social progress and economic development. It rather rejects the plundering of the resources of Balochistan and the misery of the ordinary people caused by this robbery. The Baloch national movement is led by sectors of the middle class youth and some tribal leaders. This needs to be challenged so that the working class becomes the leading force of the liberation struggle. This can only be achieved if socialists participate in the movement and do not ignore it.

Socialists support the national movement of the Baloch people and their goals. We want to unite this movement with the working class in the whole of Pakistan and internationally. ■

Announcement of a new Book from the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South

Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new book. It's called **THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH**. The book's subtitle is: *Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*. The book is in English-language. It has 15 chapters, 448 pages and includes 139 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the *International Secretary* of the RCIT.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. *The Great Robbery of the South* shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions.

The Great Robbery of the South demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before has such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

The Author

Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 30 years. He is the author of many articles and pamphlets in German and English language. He published books or contributed to books on *Rosa Luxemburg* (1999), on the *World Economy* (2008), on *Migration* (2010) and the *Arab Revolution* (2011). He is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

You can view more details of the book as well as excerpts at the special website which we have created for this book:

www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net

You can order the book via

* our contact address rcit@thecommunists.net,

* online via the RCIT's website www.thecommunists.net

* the special website for the book

Price: 15 Euro / 20 US-Dollars / 13 British Pound ■

The Great Robbery of the South

*Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation
of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital*

*Consequences for the Marxist Theory
of Imperialism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

From the Archives of Marxism

Leon Trotsky: The Slogan of the National Assembly in China (1930)

The following article was written by Leon Trotsky in April 1930. He elaborates the meaning of the slogan of the Constituent Assembly (or National Assembly as it was called in China at that time). He condemns the Stalinist sectarian approach which refused to apply the revolutionary-democratic demands. The article is of specific interest because Trotsky discusses the applicability of this slogan not only in respect to the concrete conditions of the class struggle in China (which was characterized by the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1925-27) but in a more general sense. It shows that for Marxists the slogan of a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly is an important tool in the programmatic arsenal.

The article has been reprinted in *Leon Trotsky's Writings* Trotsky Writing 1930, pp. 164-167, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/04/china.htm>

It seems to me that our Chinese friends import too much of metaphysics and even some scholasticism into the question of political slogans of democracy.

The "delicacies" begin with the name: Constituent Assembly or National Assembly. In Russia until the revolution we used the slogan of Constituent Assembly, because it most clearly emphasized our break with the past. But you write that in Chinese it is difficult to formulate this slogan. If so, it remains to adopt the slogan of the National Assembly. For the consciousness of the masses the contents of this slogan will depend, firstly, in the implication the revolutionary agitation will give it, and secondly, on the events. You ask: "Is it possible to carry on agitation for a Constituent Assembly while denying that it can be accomplished?" But why should we decide beforehand that it cannot be accomplished? Of course the masses will follow the slogan only if they consider it feasible. Who will accomplish it, and how will it be accomplished? Here only suppositions are possible, in case of the further weakening of the military-Kuomintang regime and the growth of discontent among the masses, particularly in the cities, it is possible that an attempt will be made by a part of the Kuomintang together with a "third party" to convene something on the style of a National Assembly. Of course, they will as much as possible cut into the rights of the more oppressed classes and layers. Will we Communists, go into such a curtailed and manipulated National Assembly? If we will not be strong enough to replace it, that is to take over power, we will, of course, go in. Such a stage would in no way weaken us. On the contrary, it would help us gather and develop the forces of the proletarian vanguard. Inside the pseudo-assembly, and particularly on the outside of it, we would carry on our agitation for a new and more democratic assembly. In case of a revolutionary mass movement we would simultaneously build

Soviets. It is very possible that in such an event the petty-bourgeois parties would convene a comparatively more democratic National Assembly, as a dam against the Soviets. Would we participate in such a sort of representation? Of course we would participate. Again, if we would not be strong enough to replace the assembly with a higher form of government, that is the Soviets. But such a possibility reveals itself only at the highest point of revolutionary ascent. But as it is presently, we have not as yet approached the beginning.

Even if the Soviets were a fact – which is not the case in China at present – this in itself would not be cause enough for the abandonment of the slogan of the National Assembly. The majority in the Soviets may be (and at the beginning will certainly be) in the hands of conciliatory and Centrist parties and organizations. We will be interested to have these parties exposed in the open forum of the National Assembly. By this method the majority of the Soviets will be won over to our side sooner, and much more certainly. When our conquest of the majority will become a reality, we will counter-pose the program of the Soviets against the program of the National Assembly, we will gather the majority of the country around the banner of the Soviets, which will give us the possibility, in deed and not on paper, to replace the National Assembly, this parliamentary-democratic institution, by Soviets, as the organ of the revolutionary class dictatorship.

The Constituent Assembly in Russia

In Russia, the Constituent Assembly existed only for one day. Why? Because it made its appearance too late, when the Soviet power was already in existence, and came into conflict with it. In this conflict, the Constituent Assembly represented the yesterday of the Revolution. But let us suppose that the bourgeois provisional government had been sufficiently decisive to convene the Constituent Assembly in March or April (1917). Was it possible? Naturally it was. The Cadets were busy with legal trickery to drag out the convening of the Constituent Assembly in the hope that the revolutionary wave would subside. The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries took their cue from the Cadets. If the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries would have had a little more revolutionary drive in them they could have convened the Constituent Assembly in a few weeks. Would we Bolsheviks have participated in the elections and in the Assembly itself? Undoubtedly, for it was we who demanded all the time the speediest convening of the Constituent Assembly. Would the course of the revolution have changed to the disadvantage of the proletariat by an early convening of the Assembly? Not at all. Perhaps you remember that the representatives of the Russian possessing classes and following them also the conciliators

were postponing all the important questions of the revolution “until the Constituent Assembly”, at the same time also dragging out the convening of it. This gave the landowners and capitalists a possibility to mask to a certain extent their property interests in the agrarian question, industrial, etc. If the Constituent Assembly would have convened let us say in April 1917 then all the social questions would have been raised before them. The possessing classes would have been compelled to show their cards, the treacherous role of the conciliators would have been apparent, the Bolshevik faction of the Constituent Assembly would have acquired the greatest popularity and have assisted the Soviets to elect a Bolshevik majority. Under these circumstances the Constituent Assembly would have existed not one day but possibly several months but that would have enriched the political experiences of the laboring masses and not only would not have retarded the proletarian revolution but would rather have accelerated it. This in itself would have been of greatest significance. If the second revolution would have occurred not in October but let us say in July or August the army at the front would have been less exhausted and weakened and the peace with the Hohenzollerns might have been more favorable to us. Even if we should assume that the proletarian revolution would not come a single day sooner because of the Constituent Assembly, the school of revolutionary parliamentarism would not have passed without leaving its trace on the political level of the masses and this would have made our tasks the day after the October Revolution much easier.

A Slogan to Mobilize the Masses

Is this sort of a variant possible in China? It is not excluded. To imagine and expect that the Communist Party of China can make the jump from the present conditions of the rule of the unbridled bourgeois military cliques, the oppression and dismemberment of the working class, and the extraordinary low ebb of the peasant movement to the seizure of power – this would be to believe in miracles. In practise this leads to guerilla adventurism, to which the Comintern now lends its covert support. We must condemn this policy and guard the revolutionary workers from it. The political mobilization of the proletariat and following it the peasant masses is the first task that must be solved in conjunction with the present circumstances. And these are the circumstances of the military-bourgeois counter-revolution, the power of the suppressed masses is in their number. When they awaken they strive to express their strength of numbers in politics through the medium of the universal suffrage. The handful of Communists know even today that universal suffrage is an instrument of bourgeois rule and that they can liquidate this rule only through the medium of the proletarian dictatorship. In this spirit you can educate beforehand the proletarian vanguard. But the millions of the toiling masses can come to the dictatorship of the proletariat only on the basis of their own political experience and the National Assembly would be a progressive step on this road. This is why we come out for this slogan in conjunction with, four other slogans of the democratic revolution: the transfer of the land to the peasant poor; the eight hour work-day; the independence of China; the right of self-determination of the nationalities

included in the territory of China.

It is understood that we cannot deny also such a perspective – it is theoretically admissible – that the Chinese proletariat leading the peasant masses and supporting itself on the Soviets will come to power before the achievement of the National Assembly in one or another form. But for the immediate period this is at any rate improbable, because it *presupposes the existence of a powerful and centralized revolutionary party of the proletariat*. But in its absence what other forces will unite the revolutionary masses of your gigantic country? In the meantime it is our misfortune that there is no strong centralized Communist Party in China as yet. It first has to be formed. The struggle for democracy is the precisely necessary condition for that. The slogan of the National Assembly would unite the scattered provincial movements and uprisings, give them political unity and create the basis for welding together the Communist Party as an all-national leader of the proletariat and the entire toiling mass.

That is why the slogan of the National Assembly (on the basis of the universal, direct equal and secret ballot) must be raised as forcefully as possible and a courageous decisive struggle developed around it. A month sooner or later the sterility of the purely negative position of the Comintern and the official leadership of the Chinese Communist Party will mercilessly expose itself. This will happen the sooner, the more decisively the Left Communist Opposition will unfold and develop its campaign for the slogans of democracy. In this case the inevitable crash of the policy of the Comintern will greatly strengthen the Left Opposition and will help it become the decisive force in the Chinese proletariat. ■



Leon Trotsky as a young militant (1879-1940)

Revolutionary Communist International Tendency:

What does the RCIT stand for?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

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

emancipation of the working class.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*No future without socialism! No socialism without a revolution!
No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■*



