

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM



English language Journal of the Revolutionary
International Communist Tendency (RCIT)

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Issue No. 8

April 2013



**Imperialism means
Aggression and War!**

plus: Mali

North Korea

World Situation

Syria, Chavez, Argentina

Bulgaria, Plekhanov on Dialectic

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!

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Revolutionary Communism

No. 8, April 2013

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Issue number 8 of the RCIT's English language journal *Revolutionary Communism* is published at a time of important political developments. To name just a few: The imperialist intervention in Mali, the escalation of the civil war in Syria, pre-revolutionary developments in Bulgaria, threats of the Western Great Powers against North Korea and the death of Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez. Our journal reflects these developments, which once more underline the fundamental unstable, explosive character of the present historic period.

As we already stated in the editorial of the last issue of *Revolutionary Communism*, we are publishing number 7 and 8 of this journal with a short time interval between them. The reason for this has been the priority we gave to finalizing and publishing our new book on imperialism and the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world called *THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH* (see below).

Issue number 7 was dedicated to the class struggle and the obstacles for the revolutionary way forward for the working class in Palestine and Syria as well as a theoretical analysis of Islamism. This issue focuses on areas of class struggle outside of the Middle East.

We publish a statement of the RCIT on France's imperialist War in Mali as well as a report from a protest rally in Austria. We outline the Marxist position of support for the oppressed people fighting against imperialist invaders and their local allies without giving any political support for the petty-bourgeois or bourgeois leadership of the resistance. We also show the treacherous, social-imperialist position of the French Communist Party PCF – a key component of the ex-Stalinist *European Left Party* – which supports the colonial war of the social democratic Hollande government.

We also reprint a statement of the RCIT which condemns the imperialist threats against the North Korea. We call for the defense of the country – which is a degenerated workers state – while at the same time advocating a political revolution against the Stalinist dictatorship of Kim Jong-un. This statement was endorsed by the *International Socialist League* (Israel/Occupied Palestine) with whom we are in an intensive process of discussion and collaboration.

The section on Latin America contains an obituary for Hugo Chavez who died recently. *Michael Pröbsting* explains in this article why the Bolivarian regime in Venezuela has a bourgeois and not a socialist character. However, he also shows why, at the same time, the international workers movement must defend the regime against the imperialist counter-revolution and defend certain gains of the revolutionary process.

Additionally, we reprint a balance sheet of the *Fracción Leninista Trotskista Internacional* of the spontaneous Hunger Uprising in Argentina which took place in December 2012. We also include a letter which the RCIT sent the FLTI comrades and which deals with issues of this Uprising.

While the focus of this issue is on areas of class struggle outside of the Middle East, it also contains a recently written article on Syria by *Yossi Schwartz* from the ISL. He combines an analysis of the class character of the Assad regime and of the inner contradictions of the rebel movement with a programmatic perspective for the democratic revolution to open the road for working class power and the socialist revolution.

The mass demonstrations in Bulgaria which led to the overthrow of the conservative government of Boiko Borissov show that the chain of revolutionary events has now also reached Eastern Europe. These developments are analyzed both in a statement of the *Revolutionary Communist Organization for Liberation* (RKOB, Austrian Section of the RCIT) as well as in a subsequent article from *Michael Pröbsting*.

Last November Europe faced a continent-wide Day of Action against the Austerity policy for the first time. A statement of the RCIT elaborates the progress which this international class struggle event represents as well as its limitations caused by the treacherous character of the reformist leadership of the trade unions, social democracy as well as the *European Left Party*.

A major component of this issue is the *Theses on the World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists*. In this document – adopted by the recent meeting of the RCIT's *International Executive Committee* – we give an overview of the central characteristics of the present phase of capitalism's decline. We outline the most important contradictions of the world situation as well as the progress and obstacles of the class struggle. The *Theses* also deal with the features of the deep crisis of working class leadership and outline a perspective on how to fight for the formation of authentic revolutionary parties nationally and internationally.

The document outlines that “not only has capitalism entered a new historic period of massive instability and sharp turns, but the international workers movement has too. (...) Those forces, who don't understand the character of the period and its corresponding tasks, are doomed to degenerate more and more and get pushed to the right. For those forces however, who are coming closer to an understanding of the sharply antagonistic nature of the present period, who are willing to join the masses in their struggles – in particular the lower strata of the working class and the oppressed – without arrogantly sneering about their “backward consciousness” and who are at the same time determined to fight intransigently for the revolutionary program and who ruthlessly attack the reformist and centrist traitors – those forces can revolve themselves and play a healthy and utterly positive role in the struggle to build the new World Party of Socialist Revolution.”

In our section “From the Archives of Marxism” we reprint the article *Dialectic and Logic*, written by *Georgi Plekhanov*. In this article Plekhanov – often called the “founder of Russian Marxism” – gives a useful outline of the materialistic conception of dialectics. The article was originally published in 1908.

Finally, we want to draw our reader's attention to a new book which the RCIT has published in February 2013. As mentioned above the book is 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 the 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. More details of the book and how to order it can be seen on page 32 in this journal.

21th March 2013

Editorial Board of the Journal *Revolutionary Communism*

Down with France's Colonial War in Mali!

**Solidarity with the Resistance! Let's transform Mali into another Afghanistan for imperialism! Fight for a workers government based on the peasants and poor!
For socialist revolution in North Africa and the Middle East!**

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 19.1 2013

1. French imperialism has started a new war in Mali – one of its former colonies in Western Africa. Since 10.1.2013 the “socialist” government of François Hollande has ordered its army to bombard the North of Mali and deployed 750 soldiers. The French intervention force should increase soon to 2.500 soldiers. British imperialism has already announced its readiness to support the French troops with its air force and the US will assist them too with its murderous drones. It is very likely that the imperialist European Union will also support this war in one way or another too. In addition, the bloc of Western African states, ECOWAS, plans to send 3.300 soldiers. Together with the Mali government's army they want to crush the Tuareg and Islamist rebels and re-conquer the North of the country.

2. Let us speak out the truth: This is no “humanitarian” war – *this is a reactionary colonial war!* The real goal of French imperialism and its allies is to strengthen its control over Mali and the Western African region and to suppress the revolution which is sweeping through North Africa.

3. Mali and most of its 14.5 million people are living in extreme poverty which is mainly the result of imperialism's control over the world economy and the super-exploitation by the multinational corporations. However, monopoly capital and imperialist power are greedy for the rich raw materials of Mali. The country is Africa's third largest gold producer. It is also believed to be filled with oil and gas as well as uranium and phosphate.

4. The Uprising of the Tuareg people in the North of Mali who are fighting for their own state *Azawad* has added another rebellion to the wave of revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East. Socialists support the struggle of the Tuareg people for national self-determination. We combine the support for the Tuaregs national liberation struggle with the perspective of a “*Socialist Azawad*”.

5. Both in Mali as well as in the Tuareg areas, the way forward for the workers and peasants is to take power and to expropriate the multinational corporations (like Anglo-Gold) and local capitalists without compensation. For the control of all natural resources by the workers, expel the multinationals and their greedy managers! For massive wage rise for the miners!

6. The RCIT opposes bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces like the Islamist Ansar al Din, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and MUJAO (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa) as well as the bourgeois nationalist MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) and the FLNA (National Front for the Liberation of Azawad). The workers, peasants and poor in Mali need to organize independently in action councils (like the Soviets in Russia in 1917) and armed militias to fight for their own interests. The recent heroic workers struggle in Marikana in South Africa as well as the bold struggle of the armed workers and peasants in Syria fighting against the jackal Assad are inspiring examples how we need to fight.

Protest Rally in Vienna against the French Invasion in Mali

Report from the RKOB (Austrian section of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency), 26.1.2013

On 25th January, a number of activists protested in Vienna (Austria) in front of the French embassy against the imperialist invasion in Mali. The platform of the united front rally was the slogan “*France and EU: Hands off Mali!*”. The activists – unimpressed by the minus degree temperature – chanted slogans like “*France, EU – Hands off Mali!*” and “*Long live international solidarity!*”

The rally was called by the RKOB (Austrian section of the RCIT) and supported by several other organizations like the GKK (Austrian section of CoReP), Kommunistische Initiative, Revolutionärer Aufbau, Initiative für den Aufbau einer revolutionär-kommunistischen Partei and the Antiimperialistische Koordination. The rally was also attended by representatives of the media.

Johannes Wiener, National Secretary of the RKOB, stated in his speech that France's war in Mali is a “*colonial war*”.

He pointed out that France did already intervene militarily 60 times in Africa. He referred to the fact that the imperialist powers did already wage a number of colonial wars in the past and this is just another reactionary, unjust war in the name of “*humanitarian interests*”.

Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT and convener of the rally, expressed in his speech the consistent anti-imperialist position of communists. He stated that while we have politically nothing in common with Islamism or petty-bourgeois nationalism, we are not neutral in this war. We stand for the defeat of the imperialist intruders and for the victory of the rebels who fight the French and their allied armies.

Pictures of the Rally and Videos of the speeches of Johannes Wiener and Michael Pröbsting can be viewed at the RCIT website at <http://www.thecommunists.net/multimedia-1/mali-rally-25-1-videos-and-pictures> ■

7. The French colonial war has again exposed the true reactionary character of the main forces of the French left. The Communist Party (PCF) – a constituent party of the reformist *European Left Party* as well as of the *Front de Gauche* in France – expressed in their public statements until now that they “share the goals of the Mali government to defeat the Jihadist terrorists in the North”. These social-democratised Stalinists are cynically worried that the French intervention “might risk a war”, so they “request that the French authorities respond to questions posed by heavy military intervention” (Statement from 12.1.). In other words, they are true social-imperialists which implicitly support the war goals of its ruling class. The NPA adopts the classic centrist line of social-pacifism. They verbally “denounce this imperialist military intervention decided by Holland”. (Statement from 11.1.) However, they fail to support the rebels, i.e. those who are actually fighting against this imperialist intervention, not do they call for the defeat of the French army.

8. The RCIT calls the international workers movement to mobilize against the imperialist intervention in Mali! We call for the defeat of the imperialist troops and the allied Mali government army! In the tradition of the Communist International in Lenin’s time and Trotsky’s Fourth International we support the military struggle of the colonial people against the imperialist forces and their allies without supporting in any way the politics of the Islamists and bourgeois nationalists. *Let’s transform Mali into another Afghanistan for imperialism!*

9. We call the international workers movement – especially in France – to mobilize for protest actions against the colonial war in order to undermine the government’s war efforts. For demonstrations and strikes against the imperialist war! Transport workers: refuse to do any work which supports the French military efforts!

10. The activists of the Revolution in North Africa and the Middle East must see the struggle against the im-

perialist intervention in Mali as part of their struggle. The workers and popular struggles in Tunisia against the Ennahda government and in Egypt against president Mursi, the heroic Palestinian resistance against the colonial settler state Israel, the heroic Revolution of the Syrian workers and peasants against the murderous Assad regime – they must be combined with the anti-imperialist resistance in Mali to a single wave of permanent revolution leading to working class power and the establishment of a *Socialist Federation of Workers and Peasant Republics in North Africa and the Middle East*. To succeed in this task we need to build new revolutionary workers parties and a new World Party of Socialist Revolution – the Fifth Workers International.

* *Down with France’s colonial war in Mali!*

* *For the defeat of the imperialist troops and the allied Mali government army!*

* *For the military victory of the rebels against the French/government troops!*

* *For the right of national self-determination of the Tuareg people in the North of Mali including the right to form their own state!*

* *No political support for Islamism and bourgeois nationalism!*

* *Break with imperialism – for the expropriation of AngloGold without compensation! For nationalization of the mines and all natural resources under control of the working class! For massive wage rise of the miners! For a joint fight with the miners of Lonmin against the imperialists and for workers control!*

* *For international solidarity against the imperialist intervention! For anti-war actions by the French and European workers movement!*

* *For a workers and peasant government in Mali! For expropriation of the multinational corporations and the local capitalists without any compensation! For socialist revolution in Mali and the whole of North Africa and the Middle East! ■*



Protest Rally against French Invasion in Mali, United Front Action initiated by the RKOB in Austria on 25.1.2013

New Imperialist Threats in East Asia: Hands off North Korea!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 12.3.2013
Supported by the Internationalist Socialist League (Israel / Occupied Palestine) on 13.3.2013*

1. The United Nations Security Council has voted unanimously for a US-drafted resolution which tightens the sanctions on North Korea. The RCIT denounces this decision as an attempt of the imperialist Great Powers – first and foremost the USA – to pressurize and subjugate North Korea. Worse, it could present the pretext of an US-led imperialist war against North Korea. The international workers movement must oppose these sanctions and mobilize against such a possible war. In case of a military conflict the RCIT calls for the defeat of the imperialist forces and their allies and for the defense of North Korea.

2. The official justification of these reactionary sanctions is that North Korea conducted its third nuclear test. This is completely ridiculous! Take the five permanent members of this UN Security Council which impose these sanctions: USA, Russia, China, France and Britain. According to the 2012 issue of the SIPRI Yearbook, these Great Powers possess currently – 8,000, 10,000, 240, 300 and 225 nuclear warheads. North Korea possess according to all serious reports *zero* nuclear warheads! And these arrogant imperialist powers take the liberty to impose sanctions against a small country like North Korea because it ... conducts its third nuclear test!

3. A similar laughable lie is the claim that North Korea poses a threat to the region or even the USA itself. Such a threat exist only in the fever fantasy of reactionary dumb US film makers who display the scenario of a North Korean paratrooper invasion of the USA in the recently published and unintended comical film *Red Dawn*. North Korea is a poor country of 24 million people with a GDP roughly equal to North Dakota's! While North Korea never attacked the USA, this biggest imperialist power indeed waged war against North Korea in 1950-53 in which one million people died. Since then the USA has built military basis in South Korea and currently stations there 28,500 soldiers. It is US imperialism and its allies who pose a threat to North Korea and not the other way round.

4. This shame sanctions show once more the reactionary character of the United Nations. It is an imperialist-dominated body which is only effective when the Great Powers agree on a common reactionary policy. If the Great Powers disagree, the UN becomes a toothless talking shop (see the charade resolutions which criticize the racist Apartheid state Israel). Only in the fantasy world of petty-bourgeois day-dreamers as well as social democratic and Stalinist bureaucrats the UN can play a progressive

role. The RCIT rejects all those reformist and pacifist strategies which appeal to the UN to solve any of the world's conflicts. It is only the consistent proletarian class struggle against imperialism and against reactionary ruling regimes leading to the international socialist revolution which can remove these threats to peace for once and all.

5. North Korea is a Degenerated Workers State. This means that a counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy rules over the working class. Its economic basis however remains a planned economy. Such proletarian property relations are superior to the anarchy of capitalism and have to be defended. However the regime of Kim Jong-un is a particularly grotesque form of Stalinist dictatorship. Its policy of national autarky leads to impoverishment and misery for the people. The regime does not allow any form of democracy – not to speak about working class councils. It opens its economy to foreign capitalists. In the so-called "*Kaesŏng Industrial Park*" – a North Korean region at the border to South Korea – 123 South Korean corporations operate currently. Under the strict control of the North Korean repression apparatus, they have produced commodities worth US\$470 million in 2012. The South Korean capitalists make massive profits from the super-exploitation of 53,500 North Korean workers employed at the industrial park who receive wages of only about \$160 per month. This is one-fifth of the South Korean minimum wage, and about a quarter of an average Chinese wage. What a disgusting example of "peaceful co-existence" between the Stalinist rulers and the capitalist exploiters on the back of the workers!

6. The North Korean working class, while defending its country against imperialism and its allies, must aim to prepare for a political revolution with the goal to overthrow the Stalinist regime and to create a healthy workers state based on workers and peasant councils and militias. Part of such a revolution must be its extension to South Korea whose proletariat has demonstrated a proud tradition of class struggle in the past decades. The rallying cry must be: "*For the revolutionary unification of the Korean peninsula!*" and "*For a Korean Workers and Peasant Republic!*"

7. US imperialism escalates its war-mongering against North Korea in order to strengthen its position in the increasingly important region of East Asia and to weaken its biggest rival, emerging imperialist China. In such a situation the international workers movement must not remain passive. It must oppose the imperialist sanctions and mobilize against a possible war in broad united front actions. Transport workers and their trade unions must attempt to break the sanctions.

8. In case of a military conflict the RCIT calls for the defeat of the imperialist forces and their allies and for the defense of North Korea. A successful defense of North Korea against US imperialism would weaken the biggest power and hence the biggest enemy of the world's working class and oppressed people. It would encourage the anti-imperialist liberation struggle all over the world. This



is why the international workers movement – including the social democratic, Stalinist, Maoist and centrist parties and trade unions – must unite in waging all forms of class struggle resistance. *For demonstrations, strikes, sabotage etc. in order to stop such a reactionary imperialist war!* They must strive to turn such a war into a defeat for the imperialist rulers. The RCIT denounces the cowardice of the reformists and centrist left who hardly can bring themselves upon an unambiguous stand to defend North Korea against sanction and wars.

9. At the same time there must be not an inch of political support for the reactionary regime of Kim Jong-un. The workers and peasants of North Korea should organize and prepare for the coming political revolution against the corrupt and repressive clique which runs the country in its comfortable palaces in Pyongyang. *Down with the Stalinist dictatorship! For the political revolution! For a Workers and Peasant Republic!*

International Secretariat of the RCIT ■



Obituary for Hugo Chavez Frias, 1954 - 2013

Millions mourn the Death of Hugo Chavez: Forward to Authentic Revolutionary Socialism!

By Michael Pröbsting, 7.3.2013,

Millions of workers, peasants and poor in Venezuela and around the world are mourning the death of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. For them he was a symbol of socialism, a symbol for a world free of imperialism, corporations and poverty.

While we share the masses' desire to purge the world of exploitation and oppression, we do not believe that Hugo Chavez was an authentic leader for such a struggle.

Surely Chavez came from a rural poor background. Surely he spoke about "*Socialism of the 21st century*". Surely for the masses he looked like a saint compared with his opponents such as the corrupt and evil Bush, Blair, Netanyahu, Obama, Uribe, etc. Surely, he was hated by the local oligarchs as well as US and European imperialism.

Why was he despised by the rich and powerful? They hated him because Chavez stood at the top of a regime which had the support of only a minority of the Venezuelan capitalists and which had to rest on the lower grades of the army and the millions of workers and poor. It was a regime similar to those which Trotsky analyzed in Mexico in the late 1930s and which he characterized as "*Bonapartist sui generis of a distinctive character*".

Therefore the Chavez regimes was forced – given the massive pressure from the workers and urban poor – to subsidize certain social reforms ("*misiones*") which were beneficial for the poorest strata of the population and which have contributed – at least according to official statistics – to a certain reduction of the extreme inequality of income in the country. The regime could do so because Venezuela is the fifth largest oil producer of the OPEC member states and its oil production and trade accounts for roughly 30% of GDP, 94% of export earnings, and more than 50% of the central government's budget revenues. This gave the regime the material basis to finance certain social reforms.

Given such a left-bonapartist stand which had to take care to keep its support amongst the popular masses, Chavez was also forced to use a socialist rhetoric. This is particularly obvious if one compares his speeches at the beginning of his presidency in 1999 – which were not socialist at all – and those he delivered after the failed coup d'états and attempts to bring down his regime particularly in 2002-2004, in which he increasingly used a socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric.

But despite all his socialist rhetoric, despite all our sympathy for those millions of workers and poor who admired Chavez, the duty of revolutionaries is to tell the truth. Ferdinand Lassalle, the German workers leader liked to say: "*All great political action consists of and begins with, speaking out about that which is. All political petty-mindedness consists of being silent and covering up that which is.*"

The truth is that Chavez was no socialist. He was rather a bourgeois-bonapartist politician who used socialist rhetoric but led a capitalist regime for 14 years. Under his government, between 1998 and 2008 the private sector's share of the economy grew from 64.7% to 70.9% at the expense of the public sector. In particular, the parasitic sector of "finance and insurance", i.e. money capital, grew rapidly in this period, by 258.4%. As a result the banking sector – including private banks like Banco Bisboa, Liberty Mutual, ABM-AMRO and Citibank – makes huge profits (in 2011: 14.5 billion bolivares which is about 3.4 billion dollars, a growth of 92.3% compared to the previous year.)

At the same time the working class' wage share in income has not improved in the 14 years of life under Chavez. According to United Nations UNCTAD and other sources, the share of workers' wages in national income is today below the level when Chavez took power. Wages for workers at state's oil company PDVSA were frozen by the state appointed executives between 2007 and 2009, despite inflation of about 30% a year. In other words, it meant a massive decrease of the living income for these workers. This has contributed to the situation whereby nearly 70% of public sector workers reportedly earn minimum-wage. In addition, militant workers who organized strikes or factory occupations faced reprisal, dismissal, jail or even murder. A well known example for this is the union leader Ruben Gonzalez, a member of the Chavez's party PSUV, who was sentenced to 7 years in prison, which accused him of violence during a strike at the state-owned Ferrominera Orinoco. While he was freed after one year in prison because of mass protests, at least 125 worker militants remain in prison for being involved in various strike actions or occupations and more than 2,500 activists have faced criminalization.

The bourgeois character of the Chavez regime was also demonstrated in its support for the reactionary dictatorships of Gaddafi in Libya and Assad in Syria as well as the Stalinist-capitalist dictatorship in China. When the masses



Two anti-working class Politicians: Chavez and Iran's Ahmadinejad

rose up in 2011 to bring down these dictators Chavez hailed these butchers as “anti-imperialists” up to his death. In fact Chavez’s lack of anti-imperialism also became visible when he announced before the US presidential elections in November 2012: “If I were American, I’d vote for Obama.”

In fact, if Chavez would have been a socialist, he would have expropriated the capitalist class. He would have taken their wealth and used it for the development of the social development. He would have put the enterprises under the control of the workers. He would not have supported reactionary dictators like Gaddafi or Assad but rather the revolutionary mass uprising against them.

For all these reasons the RCIT does not consider the Chavez regime and his party, the PSUV, as socialist, but rather as bourgeois, left-populist. For these reasons we did not support them at elections. As we wrote in our statement on presidential elections in Venezuela last year:

“[The Chavez regime] made certain concessions to the masses and implemented some nationalization of enterprises. But this was the result of mass pressure and not of a socialist government policy. Of course socialists must defend Venezuela (as well as Cuba, Bolivia etc.) against any attacks by US imperialism or the internal counter-revolution of the old oligarchy. For these reactionary forces even these limited reforms are too much. This is why US imperialism and the majority of the domestic bourgeoisie want to get rid of the Chavez government. Given the history of the past decade in Venezuela, the 2009 coup d’état against Honduras President Manuel Zelaya, the attempted coup d’état against Ecuador’s president Rafael Correa in September 2010 or the recent palace coup against Paraguay President Fernando Lugo, such a possibility is a real danger. In case of a reactionary coup d’état socialists must – following the method of the anti-imperialist united front tactic of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky – defend the Bolivarian movement including

the Chavez government against these attacks.

But such a defense against imperialism and domestic reaction must not lead the working class to renounce its political independence of Bolivarism and Chavez government. Supporting the PSUV and Chavez at the elections is equal to the political subordination of the working class to the Bolivarian bourgeoisie. Unfortunately this is exactly what various international centrists like the IMT, the Australian SA or the CWI are doing. In opposite to them, the RCIT calls workers not to vote for Chavez!”

Bolivarism is no solution. It means the political subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. But the working class needs an independent class perspective and an independent proletarian party. The goal must not be to support a bourgeois state apparatus with a caudillo at the top but rather to fight for a workers government, based on workers and popular councils and armed militias and which sets out to expropriate the bourgeoisie, to smash the state and to open the road to socialism.

Footnote:

A more extensive analysis of the Chavez regime, the political situation in Venezuela and the tactics of Bolshevik-Communists can be found on the RCIT’s articles on Venezuela:

RCIT: Presidential elections in Venezuela: There is no alternative for the workers on the ballot paper! Neither Hugo Chavez nor Orlando Chirino should be supported by the workers! For a new workers party on a revolutionary program! Statement of the RCIT, 3.10.2012, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 6, November 2012, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/elections-in-venezuela>

Michael Pröbsting: On the outcome of the presidential elections in Venezuela, 8.10.2012, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 6, November 2012, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/on-electoral-results-in-venezuela> ■



Report on the Uprisings for Bread in Argentina

IEC of the Fracción Leninista Trotskista Internacional, 24.12.2012

Comrades,
Together with this first report and conclusions we are writing, attached please find a declaration issued days before the hunger uprisings by the most destitute and desperate sectors among the Argentinean masses on December 20th and 21st. These events were followed by the world media. There we raised a program for unifying the worker ranks between employed and unemployed workers, a question that the union bureaucracies and the reformist left refuse to do day after day.

As the events showed, they – bureaucrats and reformist leaderships—are enemies to raise the demand for jobs for everybody, with a sliding scale of work hours and wages according to inflation with a basic wage that matches the cost of the basic goods for a family. The reformist left linked to the worker aristocracies and bureaucracies watches the most exploited and destitute layers of the working class, that is, the precarized (i.e., without stability or benefits) and outsourced workers, those that are unregistered, underemployed or unemployed –who are more than the 70% of the working class in Argentina, as alien to the same.

In Argentina only 30% of workers is unionized, registered and benefited by a collective contract, as the country has become a gigantic maquila with enslaved labor. That explains the role of the different union bureaucracies as well as of the left integrated to the bourgeois regime is that of dividing the working class ranks, ignoring the majority of enslaved proletarians. A majority that are not protected by collective contracts under the Labor law, have no collective bargaining, for whom the wages are not adjusted (even behind inflation) year after year; a majority that work ten or twelve hours a day without holidays or sickness leaves, when they are lucky to get a job, even a precarious one, that does not last long and has no social benefits attached; a majority that is dismissed without any severance compensation, that work amidst working conditions not deserved even by a beast. They are all abandoned to their fate by the labor aristocracy and union bureaucracies and the so-called left parties, which are totally integrated to the bourgeois regime.

The lower layers of the working class, those millions of pariah that survive thanks to miserable doles, state subsidies not amounting even a fifth of a minimum wage, consisting in miserable “working plans” totally precarized in the municipalities in exchange for dirty and physically burdensome jobs, for no more than USD 50-100 a month, are who irrupted in these hunger uprisings. Within this layer there are a million youth between 16-18 that does not study or work, and have no future at all.

So, you must know that what happened on December 20th and 21st were spontaneous hunger uprisings of the desperate and unemployed masses that are enduring unheard of conditions of misery, and as we said before they are left abandoned to their own luck by the unions (which refuse to organize them) and are sent to ask for charities to the municipalities and to the bourgeois politicians.

In Argentina no one bares any more the sufferings. Inflation turned unsupportable the situation of the most ex-

ploited sectors of our class and as is traditional in Argentina in times of crises, the lower layers of the working class start to fight by going to take the bread where it is, that is in the supermarkets.

These events were preceded by a general strike against Kirchner’s government on November 20th. This strike was imposed by the pressure of the unionized layers on the union bureaucracy. The bureaucracy took well care of not calling for more strikes, and on the contrary called for demonstrations in “opposition” rallies against the government. Where together with the left they put pressure on the government asking for the elimination of the profit tax applied to the wages of the unionized workers, which is a fare and felt demand but is separated from most of the workers.

Precisely this division of the working class ranks allows the government and the capitalists to attack all the sectors. The workers that earn more than USD800 per month are retained more than 35% of their wages in taxes. Those that earn more than USD600 lose their subsidy per child. What gains are got in the collective bargaining each year are lost due to the inflation that is now more than 25% annually. Moreover, the bourgeoisie uses those more than 6 million workers that are unregistered and work enslaved in maquilas for sinking the wages of the unionized workers.

As the Third International stated, the only possibility of uniting the ranks of the workers is raising a program that looks after the necessities of the most exploited sector of the working class. Decent jobs for everybody, one shift more in all the factories allowing for the reduction of the working hours, a minimum wage of Pesos 10,000 (more or less USD 2,000) monthly for everybody, that slides upwards with inflation and especially with the cost of the basic staples. That is, the same program for which the Marikana (South Africa) workers fought.

For that, as in Marikana, it is necessary to confront all the traitorous union bureaucrats and the left, be it Stalinism or the renegades to Trotskyism that support the bureaucracies, as a docile “opposition” in the unions.

The entire media in Argentina and internationally, while these spurts of spontaneous fighting of desperate masses were taking place, spoke about “well organized assaults on the supermarkets”. Organized? By whom? THAT’S A LIE! The truth is that a sector of the most starved pariahs in the Argentinean working class escaped from their control.

That explains the uncontrollable outrage and at the same time the limits of that action which deserves to elevate itself to setting up Unemployed Committees, committees of unregistered workers, committees of supplies and price control, against the rampant cost of living, to fight alongside the unionized workers against the taxing of the wages... but precisely that would signify going some stairs up in the fight, and combating like in the times when the political general strikes, unemployed movements staging pickets and roadblocks, and the workers attacking the property of Capital, dragging a sector of the ruined middle classes behind them... gave birth to the revolution in 2001.

The cynicism of the bourgeoisie, imperialism and their governments knows no end. All the renegades to Trotskyism and the union bureaucracy ran nervously to declare: "we have nothing to do with that!" "We didn't organize that!" Surely, IT WAS STARVATION WHAT ORGANIZED thousands and thousands of starving people that want to eat. Over 40 cities all over the country (Rosario-Santa Fé, San Fernando, Campana, Zárate, Martínez, Grand Burg en Buenos Aires, San Miguel-Tucumán, Bariloche-Río Negro, etc.).

This is an open confession: they, union bureaucrats and reformists, refuse to organize with a sole demand all the sectors of decent jobs and salaries for everybody, for the different sectors of the working class against the government and the capitalists that plunder the nation.

Proof of this is that on December 19th, a day before the spontaneous uprisings a rally took place, the fraction of the CGT and CTA bureaucracy ("opponent" to the government) held a demonstration which was supported by reformism and it was not for accident that this rally was headed by the bosses parties that are "opposition" to the government as the reactionary PRO (the party of right-wing Buenos Aires City mayor, Mauricio Macri, NT) and the Union Civica Radical (UCR, the party of former presidents Alfonsín and De la Rúa, NT).

The union bureaucracy together with the left carry a sector of the highest layers of the working class to a politics of popular front and class collaboration, while the Stalinist and Bolivarian currents carry strips of the working class and the unemployed to support the government of the Kirchners.

The government speaks all the time about its "model of social inclusion". The starving masses are the proof that the "market socialism" of the Bolivarians is so anti worker and makes people starve so much as the governments of Menem and De la Rúa.

The left integrated to the regime of the Constitution of 1853/1994, as the FIT (Left and Workers Front) is a courtesan that serves the different courts besides serving the queen. Yesterday it called to vote Kirchner for president but to "vote workers" for putting "socialist deputies"; today it marches together with the murderers of the UCR and the Alianza (the partners of De la Rúa, NT) who were expelled by the revolutionary masses on December 20th 2001 and during those combats they killed over 40 exploited martyrs.

Up to yesterday the FIT said they "confronted" the union bureaucrats in the union elections, and today it submits to them, refusing to call to set up the picketers movements to unify again workers ranks, who were divided by the bureaucracy and the reformist left. That would mean taking back the path of Mosconi and Cutral Co – where the revolutionary unemployed workers in the late '90s and early 2000 who anticipated the revolution. They fought for decent jobs by blocking roads and attacking oil imperialist companies and they had new martyrs to the world working class like Teresa Rodríguez, Aníbal Verón, Víctor Choque, and many others.

It seemed that the bourgeoisie was controlling everything. But the conditions of the world economic crisis are beginning to touch the Mercosur and Argentina in particular creating tendencies to recession, which are deepening, and a very accelerated inflation that does not leave alone

any sector of the working class and even some sectors of the middle classes.

Recession is putting a brake on the Mercosur; Argentina is in fact in a common market with Brazil, a country that has already entered a recessive phase.

The repayment to the external debt with the IMF, the repayment of the bonuses with which the external debt was re-financed in 2001/2002 means that the state has to put into the creditors pockets around USD 18 billions this year, (almost the 50% of the value of the country exports) plus the payments for utilities, patents and royalties of the MNCs. Besides, the expansive cycle of the economy multiplied the necessity for importing machine-tools (obviously they are not produced in the semi colonial countries), the looting and the money draining by the transnationals, are drying the reserves of the nation.

The government is abusing of the "creative expansion" putting the money-printing machine to work extra hours, issuing currency without a backing. It is spending "in advance", looting the retirement funds, the health funds of the unions and taxing the salaries and wages at an unheard level (with the ingenuous maneuver of not updating since 2002 the level of what was considered a "high" income, in an environment of several years of 25% of inflation per year, NT), in order to cover the emptying of the state treasury. With a VAT (taxes to the consume of manufactured products) of 21% and the taxing of the salaries and wages of the workers, they are looting the workers pockets.

Slowly but surely in Argentina, great producer of commodities, the world economic crisis begins to enter. *What has been exposed once more by these hunger uprisings is that in a country that is one of the main producers of wheat, soybeans, corn and meat in the world, millions of exploited starve and have nothing to eat.*

Moreover, the bourgeoisie is full of rage and fills the prisons with detainees who it calls "thieves, criminals". Over 600 young men and women were imprisoned and 3 of them (2 in Rosario and one in Tucuman) were killed in the last 2 days of hunger revolts.

The cynicism of the exploiters knows no limits. The cereal companies steal the 50% of the agrarian rent associated to the native oligarchy. The mining companies are destroying the Andes Cordillera, emptying it from lithium, copper, gold, etc. (and poisoning the underground waters by the way, NT), without paying a peso in taxes.

The Banks, which in 2001 stole the savings of the wide majority of the middle classes and the workers, are collecting repayments in dollars through the bonuses that the state issued to benefit the external creditors, which today are repaid religiously to benefit the bankers.

The capitalists evade their benefits and send them out of the country without paying taxes or fees; the MNCs are looting us. They are the thieves and criminals, the looters of the nation!

These uprisings of today have escaped the control of the different fractions of the bourgeoisie and the union bureaucracies and the left.

The hound dogs of Capital and the government call to order, they say it is necessary to repress the "savages and the vandals"; but here the question is crystal clear. There are some layers of the working class that can still eat, albeit each day less, and miserably; some other layer cannot eat any more. Some of them pressure for eating, some other

pressure for having tomorrow something to eat, for better wage conditions. The ranks of the working class are desynchronized due to the treason of their leaderships; this is what is now happening.

What symbolized this desynchronization is that on November 20 there was a pressure strike, against the taxing of the wages and the high cost of living held by the unionized workers; and a month later on December 20th there were the hunger uprisings that we are mentioning and the actors were those who have nothing. Though, in spite of the treason by their leaderships, the time of the fighting is being synchronized BY THE LASH OF CAPITAL, and that is what terrorizes the bourgeoisie and its hound dogs.

This is the reason why the government is on guard, to prevent this situation to pass over, with the police guarding all the supermarkets of the country.

Up to now the middle classes have taken the streets with slogans against the government, which are reactionary, because they are not allowed to buy dollars (which is the savings currency of the Argentinean middle classes against the inflationary peaks of the last decades), while the big bourgeoisie and the transnationals are taking dollars unrestricted and sending them abroad. But this middle classes that today cannot buy dollars, tomorrow will be dispossessed of their savings. *This is the law of big capital, first it uses the middle classes against the workers and then it attacks the middle classes and ruins them.*

Seeing these elements and contradictions, we can say that the situation in Argentina begins to become a preparatory one. The big TNCs in the Mercosur begin to suffer the fall in their rate of profit. Recession, caused by world capitalist economy crisis, everywhere has closed the markets for them. The states have started to feel their treasury empty due to the "financing" of the MNCs investments. It looks like an economic and political cycle of dominance is wearing out in Mercosur and Latin America.

Up to now, the price of the staple commodities in this region that is a main producer of food has been acting as a counter-tendency to the crisis, but at the same time it is what generates all the contradictions, because nobody accepts to starve where food is more than abundant. How can people accept starve to death in Argentina when it produces food to supply over 400 million people?

That's why the assault to the supermarkets is a spontaneous, incipient, limited method of fighting, however with it the lower layers of the working class are starting to express the beginning of a crisis, as in the '89, 2000-2001 and it seems to be the case now.

The elements of crisis in the economic plan of the government, the fact that the "blanket does not cover all the classes and the sectors of the classes", are starting to mark a time in which the "social peace" wears up and elements of civil war start to appear in the fringes, again in Argentina. The situation tends to become preparatory, unstable...

There is to group the forces and cadres to prepare the second Argentinean revolution of the 21st C. The reformist left is already at the skirt of the bureaucracy and the bourgeois state. The bourgeoisie is feeling this situation; therefore, they armor their regime and start to attack the revolutionary wing of the vanguard.

We can't do the blind eye to the fact that this mass action as such treacherous left does because it is a "brutal" and "unseasonable" action as well as "strange to the working

class' methods"; they only recognize the union fights to pressure. This isn't new. They did the same with the youth of Tottenham when they set on fire imperialist England, and trade unions bureaucracies and reformists let them freed to their own faith. We, Trotskyists, say that the hunger masses have the right to rebel for bread and this is inalienable and unconditional.

When they plunder and rob the nation, that is, the monopolies, oligarchy, bankers and capitalists. They must be jailed, they are the vandals and seditious. We have to face them as in Marikana (South Africa) with the miners of Asturias from Spain, as in Foxxcom (China), because they are the same TNCs, same monopolies and imperialist parasites who plunder and starve the masses of the world.

If we have something to say on this spontaneous mass fight is justly its spontaneity and lack of perspective. And this is not for responsibility of those in struggle but it is responsibility of the leaderships betraying them. Since through looting we can eat today but tomorrow...what?

Thus, it is necessary to set up again the picketer movement of unemployed workers that emerged in the 2001 revolution with their demands of decent job for all, reduction of the daily labour hours.

The shameless agents of the bourgeois regime, the Argentinean reformist left, instead of attacking the un-controlling spontaneity of the hunger, *why don't they call on workers to set up committees of unemployed workers together with the factory internal bodies they lead by hundreds in Argentina to demand one more labor shift in every factory and to fight together for salary and dignity?*

They beg for the government to do a plan of public construction...and the Money from where it comes? From the tax on salaries they take from the unionized workers? Please! *We must attack the capitalists' interests.* This is an anti-worker and pro-imperialist left similar to the union bureaucracy.

The problem of hunger in Argentina is resolved immediately, in two minutes, it would be enough either to expropriate all the lands of more than 1000 hectares, this would be sufficient for all the working class and children to eat for free all along their life. Or charge the same profit tax through which they rob the salary, but on the bankers and TNCs and stop paying the fake bonuses with which they rob the people in 2001; it would be enough to build 10 millions of housing for all the Argentinean people.

We must tell the truth: it is no longer possible to fight with these trade union's leaderships and this left of the bourgeois regime that divide the workers' ranks.

Expel the bureaucracy of the trade unions, expel the picketer bureaucracy. It is necessary to convene a national congress of all the worker organizations taken from the bureaucracy and set up again the picketer movement like yesterday in Mosconi and Cutral-có. Set up self-defense committees against the reactionary middle class and against the police that repress brutally those who rebel.

We must not allow any single prisoner in the jails of this vile regime, starting from fighting for the freedom for the more than 600 youth in detention. We must destroy the caste of corrupt judges of capitalists and dissolve the repressive force.

There is to say the truth: today we are in the same situation or worse than in 2001 in Argentina because we did not take power, because the bolivarians and reformist ex-

appropriate it from us, not only in Argentina but also in the entire Latin America.

There is to start to prepare the second revolution in Argentina and for that a revolutionary and internationalist party of the working class must be set up to unify his fights and demands with those of the Mercosur and Latin American working class. To conquer this leadership that the working class deserves for the victory, it is a task of all the revolutionary worker organizations of the world. For that reason, we will be doing reports and sending them so that all the revolutionaries can have this tool to contribute in the collective elaboration of the revolutionary program.

To conquer these lessons and such organization becomes necessary so that the working class gets prepared before BEING TOO LATE, so we can fight like in Syria, Libya, and like the Marikana workers fought against Lonmin and Anglo American.

We must fight against the hypocrisy and lie of the "market socialism" of the reformists and fight like in Tonghua and Lingzou.

The ousts and hungers in Argentina have the same right of the Asturias workers and their women to raise the slogan "*if our children starve, yours will bleed*"

The respond of the bourgeoisie is and will be more and more that the hungers come back to their Bantustans and concentration camps, miserable neighborhoods where they are grouped like cannon flesh to be exploited in the sweat shop of warm beds.

The hungers live like the miserable masses from Gaza (Palestine) or the hungers that rebel in Libya and Syria.

If the crisis enters in Argentina and Mercosur, it also enters and will enter the millstones of the revolutionary fight the masses at worldwide level are conquering, it is and it will be the tasks of the Trotskyists.

Rebellion or uprising, "revolt for bread", what does this mean? The difference between revolt and revolution is that revolution concentrates the forces that fight directly against power. The revolt is different. What we are seeing are revolts, i.e. riots, in this case for bread. That means the desperate uprising, as Lenin said, that expresses elemental forces of the class, motivated by rage and desperation, but it announces the break of social peace between classes.

All our political fight and program is to take the fight a step forward towards insurrection, to defeat the government and the regime; i.e. for the beginning of the revolution.

Before moving on, we pose a clarification: this revolt was preceded by a general strike 30 days ago which was much more powerful than what the bureaucracy expected to be. This means that the working class wanted to give a political blow against the government, but not to defeat it yet.

That is why we aren't living a pre-revolutionary situation yet. The dispute on high among different bourgeois factions, monopolies and TNCs who are fighting for who is going to rule the business in the next 10 years, since Kirchnerism can't keep in the government due to constitutional times, are gaps throw where masses passed by.

This crisis on highs and the two actions of November 20th and December 20-21st are pre-revolutionary elements of the situation. There the world crisis is starting to enter.

Middle classes are in a reactionary place, who want to maintain the consume cycle, is deeply rightwing. They have divided in two fractions: pro-clarin (oppositor news-

paper) and pro-government. They and treacherous leaderships of the working class who divide their ranks are the reactionary elements in the current situation which we could define as transitory, with reactionary and pre-revolutionary elements.

Our program starts then in developing the pre-revolutionary elements and the key for it means to unify workers' ranks so they hit as a single fit and define the situation in their favor. The fight is concentrated then, against the treacherous leaderships who prevent them from doing so.

This fight will define our location in the next objective processes that will merge from the masses due to this new opened situation.

A transitional and action program in this period is necessary but, mainly, a block of massive agitation slogans can make our organization well known in wide sectors of the vanguard. The fight for the cadres becomes decisive.

The tasks of propaganda and organization become decisive. We have to explain what is happening. We have to give a Marxist point of view of the events. Advanced workers and vanguard need to know what is happening against confusion, poison and quackery of the reformist left.

The shortest way to the vanguard is this deep explanation, which by itself together with the program separate reform from revolution.

The agitation with a block of slogans, which will merge from the different moments that will come, will be subordinated to clarify who speaks on behalf of revolution and who betrays it.

This preparatory stage to regroup cadres is decisive and the fact that the program reaches wide layers of the vanguard it also is.

The plunder (assault on supermarkets) was organized by starvation, the TNCs' plunder, the extreme sufferings and slavery.

The Argentinean Maquila (sweat-shop) has exploded! These are the first steps in the uprising of the working class that must unify its ranks and stand up!

The war cry must be: Decent jobs for everybody! Another labor shift in all the factories and workplaces! \$10.000 minimum-basic-indexed wage for all!

We must not recognize the debt with the bankers and imperialism!

We need to expropriate the oligarchy and transnational companies!

Bread, work and dignity for all!

Enough of trade union and picketer bureaucracy!

The internal commissions and delegates bodies taken from the union bureaucracy call for organizing: unemployed worker committees, factory committees and for the 3rd National Picketer Assembly of employed and unemployed workers!

Like in 2001: let's cry again "Everyone out, nobody left!"

We must fight like in South Africa, in Foxxcon, like in Libya and like in Syria!

We must fight alongside our brothers and sisters of Latin America. We must fight against the right wing pro-imperialist governments of Kirchner, Morales' price hikes, Chavez's high cost of living and the delivery of Cuba to imperialism and Obama.

We must re-found the 4th International! For a new revolutionary and internationalist party of the Argentinean working class!

The slave masters cannot even feed their slaves! The capitalist system and its lackeys deserve to die!

Long live to the Socialist Revolution! ■

On the spontaneous Hunger Uprising in Argentina

Letter from the RCIT to the FLTI on the spontaneous Hunger Uprising in Argentina, 26.12.2012

Dear comrades of the FLTI,
Thanks for sending us your documents on the recent events in Argentina. I have been asked by the International Secretariat of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) to send you our views on your documents on the Hunger Uprising on 20/21.12.2012 which you sent us. In addition to your documents, we have also reviewed the statements from PO, PTS/FT, PSTU/LIT, IS/UIT and Convergencia Socialista. (1)

The first and most important thing one has to say is that most of the centrist left in Argentina fail to recognize the essential character of these events: it was not just lootings ("saqueos") but a *spontaneous Hunger Uprising* which spread to about 40 towns in two days. We have seen similar Uprisings in other semi-colonial countries in 2008 or indeed in Argentina itself in December 2001.

Despite minor differences between them, it seems to us that the statements from PO, PTS/FT, IS/UIT (the three form together the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores), PSTU/LIT and Convergencia Socialista share a common political logic. This logic is that they basically explain that the culprits for the saqueos are the Kirchner government and the multinational corporations and their policy which impoverishes the people. Therefore – they continue – the people are poor and it is "understandable" that they loot the supermarkets. What should be done? Their answers are a number of social and economic demands as well as appeals to the trade unions to organize a fight for these goals.

While none of these points are wrong, they lack the most important issues and fail to understand the essential character of the uprising. What all these statements have in common is that for them those who rebelled – the poorest and most oppressed lower strata of the working class – are only "poor victims". They must be defended, full stop. They don't see the Uprising as a mass event where these sectors of the working class enter the stage of the political scene as *actors*, as a *revolutionary subject* and not as a blind victims.

Therefore the centrists don't support the Hunger Uprising but excuse it ("the looting is the fault of the government"). For the same reasons they have no slogans, proposals to organize the rebellious masses of the lower strata of the working class. They don't call for the formation of mass assemblies and action councils in the poor suburbs and shanty towns, they don't call for the formation of armed self-defense against the police repression forces. They only put forward demands to the trade unions. That's all.

All this reminds us very strongly to the reaction of the British centrist left when they were faced with the August Uprising of the poor, migrants and Black people in 2011. They all ignored or even condemned the Uprising. At that time we supported the Uprising, sent a delegation from Austria to Britain and elaborated our analysis and programmatic positions extensively.

At that time we said, that "a revolutionary organisation

would have intervened by disseminating revolutionary ideas to help raise the activist's consciousness from spontaneous outrage and hatred against the system to a political class consciousness. For this it would have distributed leaflet and made agitation and propaganda for the central tasks. Revolutionaries would not have called only for the "right of self-defence" but would have called for building organised workers and oppressed self-defence units now. It would have called for the organisations of the labour movement to come and help build these self-defence organisations. It would have called for councils of action, i.e. mass assemblies in the communities, to discuss the most urgent tasks and elect delegates to coordinate and build a movement of the workers and oppressed. It would have called for spreading the struggle nation-wide by calling the workers movement to join and link the struggle against the police repression and poverty with the movement against the cuts. The perspective would have been a general strike against the cuts, against racism and for the overthrow of the Tory government. A revolutionary organisation would have tried to organise the resistance to drive out the police and to stop acts of vandalism. It would have explained that looting is no solution. It would have argued that the task of workers and oppressed self-defence units is to prevent acts of vandalism, of looting small shops etc." (2)

Naturally the concrete conditions in Argentina today are not the same as in Britain 2011. In Britain the trigger for the Uprising was the murder of a black man by the racist police while in Argentina today the trigger was the hunger. But basically we think that the approach for revolutionaries should be similar.

It is a characteristic failure of centrism to limit itself to calls for solidarity with the victims but to fail in supporting their concrete struggles for liberation. Trotsky's condemnation of the centrist politician Georg Ledebour in his relation to the struggles of the nationally oppressed people, written in 1932, hits also well the political failures of the centrists in the Argentine Hunger Uprising today:

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

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

tionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism.” (3)

Compared with these centrist responses to an obviously sharp explosion of the class struggle, the LOI/FLTI – from what we can see from your statements – reacted very differently. You demonstrated a revolutionary approach to these events. You consider them as a legitimate rebellion and an indicator of the coming revolutionary crisis. While other organizations confined themselves to “understand” the rebellion, you declared your support and solidarity. This means that you were not at the sidelines, but on the right side of the barricade.

This is no minor issue. Revolutionary organizations are tested in the class struggle and how they react to the sharp turns, explosions and pressures from the ruling class. While other organizations in Argentina failed the test of the Hunger Uprisings, you reacted in a fundamentally revolutionary way.

You are completely correct in saying that the main critical thing to say about the Uprising is its lack of organization and perspectives – a point we also made during the British August Uprising. While the centrist left says that it is bad that the saqueos happened at all, you say it is bad that they were not organized sufficiently and were not transformed into a conscious political struggle. Furthermore you point correctly to the responsibility for this lack of organization and perspectives to the bureaucratic leadership. In addition you correctly link the failure of the bureaucracy to their material interest and their orientation to aristocratic layers of the working class. You also rightly stress the need to link the struggle of the non-unionized, lower strata of the working class with the unionized, often better paid sectors of the working class. And you rightly emphasize the need to build rank and file committees and call for a national congress of workers – employed and unemployed – delegados.

In this context that we want to discuss what we consider as a weakness in your statements. What is missing in our opinion is the application of the communist united front tactic. You don't raise any demands to the union leaderships. This seems to us to be in gross contradiction to the method developed by the Bolsheviks and later systematized by the Communist International and the Fourth International.

We have summarized our understanding of the Marxist United Front tactic in our program in the following way:

“An important tool for overcoming the crisis of leadership of the working class is the Marxist united front tactic. Revolutionaries stand for the greatest possible unity of the proletariat in the struggle for their rights. They also take into account that today there are still many workers who in one way or another have hopes in their traditional leaderships. They also recognise that the rotten nature of these forces can be exposed to the masses not only by revolutionary propaganda, but by their experience in practice. They, therefore, propose to the other organisations of the labour movement the common struggle for concrete demands. The central aim is to fight shoulder to shoulder with the workers who for now still follow the non-revolutionary leaderships. Of particular importance is the formation of common united front organs at the rank and file (action committees in the enterprises, neighbourhoods and schools, common workers' militias, etc.). To this end, they direct the proposal to form a united front especially to the rank and file of the non-revolutionary parties and organisa-

tions, but also to their official leadership. These tactics may also include a critical electoral support for non-revolutionary forces. The common struggle must never lead revolutionaries to give up the necessary criticism of the insufficient policy of the petty bourgeois leaderships and in particular to criticise them sharply when they betray a struggle. Rather, the united front tactic for Bolshevik-Communists is legitimate only under the condition that it is coupled with the readiness to immediately expose the betrayal of false leadership without any fear. Only through the application of such a united front tactic can the Bolshevik-Communists ultimately break away large sectors of the worker class who are today still under reformist leadership of the bureaucracy and win them a revolutionary perspective successfully.” (4)

So, putting demands of reformist leadership doesn't mean in any way to spread illusion in them or to mitigate the necessary revolutionary criticism. It rather means to find a way to those organized sectors which still follow the union bureaucracy. This sector of the working class is obviously of strategic importance. This could be seen in the militant general strike on November 20, which was called by the unions (CGT of Moyano, CTA of Michelli and CGT “Azul y Blanca” of Barrionuevo).

There is only a single sentence in the three documents you sent us which indicates such a united front orientation which we found in your balance sheet of the general strike on 20th November: *“Unions and labor organizations must break with the bourgeoisie and its institutions such as the Labour Ministry, the bosses' Justice, Legislatures and Parliament!” (5)*

This is of course correct. But why do you limit your united front tactic to only such a brief and general demand? Would it not be useful to call the trade union bureaucracy to fight for the necessary demands which you raise in your leaflets?! We think if you employ such a systematic approach it would be more in accordance with the united front tactic which Lenin argued for in his book on Left-wing communism.

Let us finally state that we think that it is decisive to fight for the organization of the lower strata of the working class in rank and file committees and to fight against the bureaucratic control of the unions and the piquetero movement. Indeed these two issues are related to each other since it is necessary – as Trotsky explained repeatedly – that the lower strata, the unorganized workers must be brought into the trade union in order to better fight the bureaucracy and the dominance of the aristocratic layers.

As you stress Argentina might approach in the near future a pre-revolutionary situation, a second Argentine Revolution after the failed attempt in 2001/02. I could personally observe the problems of the Revolution at that time when



I stayed twice in Argentina for altogether 6 months in 2002 (as a representative of our predecessor organization the LRCI/LFI when we were discussing with the PTS at that time). The organizing of the masses inside and outside of the trade unions in action committees – including in particular of the lower strata of the working class –, the intransigent struggle against the reformist bureaucracy also from inside the trade unions (which includes necessarily the application of the united front tactic) – these are decisive steps towards united the working class around a plan for struggle. The revolutionary events in December 2001 saw a combination of various forms of struggle – the street fighting, the mass strikes, the looting of the super-market. The decisive question now is how to advance the struggles to an insurrectional General Strike in order to pose the question of power.

As you are of course aware yourselves this poses the question of building a Bolshevik fighting party as an urgent task of the day.

I remain with best wishes for your work and look forward for an intensification of our discussion and collaboration!

Bolshevik Greetings,
26.12.2012, Michael Pröbsting
(International Secretary of the RCIT)

(1) FLTI, Urgent – Report on the Uprisings for Bread in Argentina (December 24, 2012); LOI: Leaflet (19.12.2012); LOI: And after November 20 what? (23.11.2012); PO: The Partido Obrero, On The Events In Bariloche, Rosario, Campana And Other [Argentine] Cities, El Partido Obrero, ante los hechos de Bariloche, Rosario, Campana y otras ciudades, 21.12.2012, <http://po.org.ar/blog/2012/12/21/el-partido-obrero-ante-los-hechos-de-bariloche-rosario-campana-y-otras-ciudades>; PTS: Argentina: Statement of the PTS, in view of the instances of looting, 23 December 2012,

http://www.ft-ci.org/article.php?id_article=6049?lang=en; José Castillo, IS (UIT): El ajuste de Cristina es el responsable de los saqueos, 22/12.2012, <http://www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar/comunicados/db/195.htm>; PSTU (LIT): LOS SAQUEOS DE LA MISERIA, Declaración del PSTU, 21 12 2012, http://www.pstu.com.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=513:saqueosdelamiseria&catid=59:cnacionalportadapestana&Itemid=68; CS y otras organizaciones escrachamos a los verdaderos saqueadores del país: el gobierno y los monopolios, <http://www.noticiastroskas.blogspot.co.at>

(2) Our analysis, perspectives and tactics of the August Uprising in Britain 2011 have been published in our journal Revolutionary Communism No. 1, pp. 17-41 (September 2011). They can also be read on our website. See: Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting: *The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution! These are not "riots" – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain!*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-uprising-of-the-poor>; RKOB: *The August Uprising in Britain - A Report of the RKOB delegation on its visit in London in August 2011*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-report-from-uprising>; Michael Pröbsting: *What would a revolutionary organisation have done? August uprising of the poor, the nationally and racially oppressed in Britain*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-august-uprising/>; Michael Pröbsting: *Five days that shook Britain but didn't wake up the left. The bankruptcy of the left during the August uprising of the oppressed in Britain: Its features, its roots and the way forward*, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/britain-left-and-the-uprising/>

(3) Leo Trotzki: Was nun? Schicksalsfragen des deutschen Proletariats (1932); in: Schriften über Deutschland, S. 246f.; in English: Leon Trotsky: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat (January 1932), <http://marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1932-ger/index.htm>

(4) Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT): *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*, published in 2012, pp. 24-25; online on the RCIT website at www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto

(5) LOI: And after November 20 what?, 23.11.2012 ■



Hunger Riots in Argentina in December 2012: The Spirit of Rebellion is Growing

Victory to the Revolution in Syria!

The second anniversary of the uprising in Syria

by Yossi Schwartz, *Internationalist Socialist League (Israel/Occupied Palestine)*, 15.3.2013

The wave of the Arab revolution that began in Tunisia reached Syria on March 15, 2011, when a group of schoolchildren used a can of spray paint to write on the school wall, the popular slogan of protesters in North Africa: “Down with the regime”. Syria’s Ba’ath administration reacted with cruel panics. The boys were arrested and disappeared. The residents of Deraa took to the streets to protest the torture of students who had put up the anti-government graffiti. The government responded with force, and demonstrations quickly spread across much of the country. Hamza Ali al-Khateeb, a 13 year old, was arrested at a protest in April. Days later his family received his corpse. Khateeb’s body was bruised, battered, and butchered – literally. His skin was torn, twisted, and shorn in a manner which would cause obvious suffering but not death. Cavities from bullet wounds replaced his kneecaps, offering a makeshift ashtray for Assad’s apparatchiks. Khateeb’s penis had been cut off. His father was then detained by state security and hours later appeared on state television wearing a forced smile. He was forced to thank Bashar al-Assad for retrieving his son’s corpse after ‘terrorists’ had kidnapped him.

Bashir al-Assad, at first wavered between force and hints of reform. But in April 2011, just days after lifting the country’s decades-old state of emergency, he sent tanks into the cities and the security forces opened fire on demonstrators. Thus began the civil war between on one side an army using tanks and airplanes, on the other side the protesters who had very few weapons, mostly rifles. A civil war where 70,000 people were killed and one million people have become refugees so far.

Lack of independent working class leadership of the rebel movement

The ability of the Bashar al-Assad regime to survive so far is largely due to the lack of working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition. There are many local committees that could become Soviets and which are continuing to provide services. But they lack coordination and a revolutionary strategy. Equally, the resistance is still made up of countless formations of loosely connected armed militants, with no credible unified revolutionary command. The fractured character of this armed resistance is a result not only of the social segmentation and isolation policies enforced for decades by Damascus but also because of the class nature of the opposition at the moment.

The opposition’s failure to mobilize the masses against the regime has given El Assad a breathing space. The extent to which the opposition is fragmented we can learn from the number of groups that act within the opposition: The *National Union of Free Syria Students*, led by Hassan Darwish; the *Levant Ulema League*; the *Independent Islamic Democratic Current*, led by Ghassan Najjar; the *Syrian Ulema League*, led by Mohammed Farouq Battal; the *Civil Society Organi-*

zations’ Union, a bloc of 40 Brotherhood-affiliated groups; the *Syrian Arab Tribal Council*, led by Salem Al Moslet and Abdulilah Mulhim; the *Revolution Council for Aleppo and Its Countryside*, led by Ahmed Ramadan; the *Body for Protection of Civilians*, led by Natheer Hakim; the *National Work Front*, led by Ramadan and Obeida Nahas; the *Kurdish Work Front*, led by Hussain Abdulhadi; the *Syrian Revolution face book*; the *Hama Revolution Gathering*; the *National Coalition for Civilian Protection*, led by Haitham Rahma; and the *Syrian Society for Humanitarian Relief*, founded by Hamdi Othman.

The middle class leaders of the uprising are blaming each other for the failure. The seculars blame the Islamists while the Islamists are blaming the secularists. The simple truth is that the middle class organizations – whether they are secularists or Islamists – do not have the program, strategy or tactics to mobilize the masses workers and peasants to overthrow the bloody regime. If the leaders of the opposition hate Assad they are at the same time afraid of working class revolution. If there is a clear lesson to learn it is that without the working class, women and men leading the masses including the lower middle class and without a revolutionary leadership of the working class the stalemate can continue for a longer period.

Stalinist and fake-Trotskyist slander against the Syrian Revolution

To justify its brutal repression Assad’s propaganda is that the US and Israel are behind the Syrian “criminal terrorists”, as Assad call the Syrian masses. This propaganda brings to mind the Russian Stalinists propaganda during the repression of the 1956 Hungarians revolution slandered by the Stalinists and their servants as a fascist counter revolution. Some left groups are assisting Assad’s repression by claiming that somehow the regime in Damascus is an “anti-imperialist”. For example *John Catalinotto* of the “*Workers World Party*”, founded by Sam Marcy, who split from the Socialist Workers Party in the US in 1958, wrote on August 8, 2012:

“The fighting in Syria is shaping up as a military showdown between the Syrian army on one side and “rebel” fighters openly backed by the U.S.-NATO imperialist powers, along with Israel, on the other. These “rebels” are being armed directly through NATO-member Turkey and the Qatari and Saudi Arabian monarchies. Syria defends itself against imperialist onslaught.

U.S. imperialism and the other NATO powers — that is, the former colonialist powers that still dominate the world — are on one side of the battle for Syria. At this point, the only contending force is the Syrian national army directed by the Assad government. For anti-imperialist and working-class forces, the only choice is to defend the Syrian government against imperialism. (<http://www.workers.org/2012/08/08/syria-defends-itself-against-imperialist-onslaught>)

British MP George Galloway, Maoists and even “Trotskyist” groups like “Socialist Fight” led by Gerry Downing re-

ally believe that the opposition to Assad are paid agents of Israel and the USA. The Communist Party of Great Britain (M-L) declared: *"This congress salutes the people and leaders of Syria in their continuing resistance to the murderous Islamist rebellion fomented by the West ... Victory to Syria! Victory to President Assad! Death to imperialism"* (CPGB-ML: No co-operation with the criminal war against Syria, 22.10.2012, <http://blog.cpgb-ml.org/category/middle-east/syria-middle-east>)

The statement of the "Liaison Committee" around Downings *"Socialist Fight"* describes the mass movement in Libya and Syria as a plot by the imperialists:

In Libya, Syria and Iran, Imperialism seeks to accomplish coups camouflaged as "democratic", by taking advantage of the "popular uprising" in neighbouring countries. In Iran, the U.S. and Israel seek to revive the reactionary "green revolution". In Syria U.S. Imperialism and its Zionist enclave strive to create the same scenario of civil war to justify another military intervention. In Libya, Imperialism made a qualitative leap in its intervention. Not only by what it did after starting the "rebellion", but they had also prepared beforehand. A "revolt" in Libya is not any kind of revolution, but a counterrevolution, directed by Imperialism and supported and sponsored by the CIA. It is the continuation of a series of attempts to restore the monarchy and tribal privileges in favour of U.S. and European Union, which began shortly after Gaddafi took power in 1969 and continued sporadically since then. Not coincidentally, the flag of the "rebels" is the flag of the monarchy imposed by Imperialism, the flag of the puppet King Idris (1951-1969)." (Statement on Libya by Socialist Fight – Britain, Revolutionary Marxist Group - South Africa, Liga Comunista – Brazil, 21.4.2011, <http://lcligacomunista.blogspot.co.at/2011/04/declaration-to-workers-of-world-and.html>)

Is Assad's regime an anti imperialist?

These organizations have a small problem to overcome, it is called reality. If Assad regime is an anti-imperialist,



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

how do they explain Assad killing of the Palestinian refugees? In November last year, *Arab Center for Research and Policy Study* reported that 851 Palestinians have been killed in Syria since the beginning of the uprising. Among other crimes the Syrian warplanes committed was to attack the al-Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, killing scores of Palestinians. While Stalinist Palestinian groups like the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command* is fighting alongside Assad's forces, Hamas is opposed to the Syrian regime (Tariq Hammoud <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/14e232ac-6d57-4de7-b38e-79c1f3287231>)

If the opposition in Syria is a creature of the US and Israel as these left leaning groups claim is Hamas than an agent of Israel that Israel enjoy killing?

Another variant of left leaning groups that cannot deal with reality are those that cannot bring themselves to side with the mass movement in Syria because it is dominated by the Islamists. Among them *"Stop the War"* Coalition in Britain (dominated by Counterfire, a split from the Clifite SWP, and the Communist Party of Britain), that has avoided dealing with the nature of the opposition in Syria; or groups like the LRP in the US that for two years has not been able to come with a position on Syria.

Let us examine the record of the Syrian regime. In 1976 during the civil war in Lebanon, Assad the father sent the Syrian army to support the right wing Maronites close allies of Israel against the more left forces including at that time the PLO. (See Fred H Lawson: Syria's intervention in the Lebanese civil war, 1976 a domestic conflict explanation, International Organization, Summer 1984, Vol. 38 Issue 3, <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=4308588>) The Syrian army intervened in the civil war with the agreement of Israel. Assad also agreed to Israel's demand that Syrian and Lebanese government troops not venture south of Tyre, into what became known as the Red Line zone. In the ensuing months a Christian militia trained and armed by Israel, operated in the zone with Israel to oppose PLO infiltration into the Galilee.

Some may say but this was the father, the son is really anti-imperialist. The WikiLeaks documents on Assad the son however reveal the true class nature of Assad's regime.

In late 2003, Bashar al-Assad met with former US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy in Damascus, and spent some time brainstorming with him about how to improve the US-Syrian relationship. Even during this tense period following the invasion of Iraq, the Syrian government was cooperating with the US on a range of issues such as border security and freezing Iraqi assets in Syrian banks. At one point in the conversation, a classified diplomatic cable tells us, Murphy asked Assad about Hezbollah's intentions vis-à-vis a peace settlement:

"Hassan Nasrallah, Assad replied, dresses like a religious man, but he is really an excellent politician whose basic interest is building an effective political party in Lebanon. Their interest is in liberating Lebanon, not in attacking Israel... Murphy noted the statements by Hezbollah leaders calling for the liberation of Jerusalem. Assad asserted that such statements were rhetorical only and ought not to be taken seriously. Hadn't the Blue Line remained quiet?"

During this tense period following the invasion of Iraq, the Syrian government was cooperating with the US on a

range of issues such as border security and freezing Iraqi assets in Syrian banks. The cache of US government cables released by WikiLeaks in 2010 represents one of the most significant documentary sources on Syria's recent diplomatic history. While the details of Asma al-Assad's shopping habits and the saccharine emails between sam@alshahba.com and his fawning coterie provide a tantalizing glance inside Syria's secluded elite, the original corpus of leaked cables is a far more valuable goldmine of information on the country's foreign policy objectives and its strategic orientation.

Assad's assurance to Murphy about Hezbollah's pragmatism is a leitmotif that is repeated in several other cables. It is regularly accompanied by Syrian earnestness about resuming peace negotiations with Israel over the Golan Heights. In 2002, Assad told Congressman David Price: "Off the record, I can say I want peace. But I can't tell that to the media, because no one wants to hear it." A couple years later, Assad took a further step by confiding to Spanish officials that he was willing to relinquish all water and navigation rights of Lake Tiberias, as long as Syria retained the symbolic significance of having recovered all of its territory.

By 2008, Assad had lost his squeamishness about publicly voicing a desire for peace, because his government was deep in negotiations with Israel. Lasting approximately eight months before they were interrupted by the Gaza War, Assad admitted to a US congressional delegation that "these talks had achieved more than several years of direct negotiations with Israel in the 1990s." A flurry of cables speculated about the strategic re-orientation that a peace agreement might bring about. An advisor to Walid al-Muallim suggested that Assad was trying to walk a tightrope between Iran and Turkey, assessing the possibilities that Syria could slowly wean itself off Iran in exchange for stronger relations with the West and the Arab world. This, too, was the Israeli hope for the talks, and also that of high-ranking "moderate" elements within the Syrian regime itself. (See Qifa Nabki: What WikiLeaks Tells Us About Assad's Foreign Policy Record, July 17, 2012, <http://qifanabki.com/2012/07/17/what-wikileaks-tells-us-about-assads-foreign-policy-record>)

Do the imperialists arm the rebel movement?

Since the argument of those who supports Assad's repressive regime, is that the mass movement fighting the Syrian army is the creature of the imperialists we should answer them by asking them to examine this claim in light of the following information. According to the New York Times: "Most of the arms shipped at the behest of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to supply Syrian rebel groups fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad are going to hard-line Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster, according to American officials and Middle Eastern diplomats. That conclusion, of which President Obama and other senior officials are aware from classified assessments of the Syrian conflict that has now claimed more than 25,000 lives, casts into doubt whether the White House's strategy of minimal and indirect intervention in the Syrian conflict is accomplishing its intended purpose of helping a democratic-minded opposition topple an oppressive government, or is instead sowing the seeds of future insurgencies hostile to the United States. (New York Times, Oct 14, 2012)

Should we believe that the NYT is distorting the truth we can still examine what the other reporters say about the arming of the rebels. The CNN on March 15 says:

"With the carnage in Syria mounting out of control, there's only one thing left to do, France says: Lift a European Union embargo and start arming rebels.

"We must convince our partners, particularly in Europe, that we have no other choice but lift the arms embargo in favor of the (opposition) Syrian Coalition," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius wrote in an op-ed for the French newspaper *Libération*.

"We must go ahead and allow the Syrian people to defend themselves against this bloodthirsty regime. It's our responsibility to help the Syrian National Coalition, its leaders and the (rebel) Free Syrian Army by all the possible means.

"If not," Fabius warned, "the slaughter will continue, and there will not be any other possible outcome but to strengthen the most extreme groups and the collapse of Syria with devastating consequences for the country itself and the region."

France isn't alone. British Foreign Secretary William Hague has hinted that he wants to arm Syrian rebels who are demanding

No Political Support for the pro imperialist Ghassan Hitto!

Syria's official opposition abroad has elected Ghassan Hitto, a pro-imperialist Syrian-American capitalist who has been resident in the United States for decades, as prime minister for rebel-held areas of Syria. This is nothing but an attempt of the leaders of the bourgeois *Syrian National Coalition* to politically highjack the revolution in co-operation with US imperialism.

The new "Provisional Government", led by Ghassan Hitto, was not elected by popular vote in Syria and does not represent the interests of the workers, the peasants and the owners of the small businesses of Syria who are struggling against Assad's tyranny. This "Provisional Government" represents the interests of the small minority of pro imperialist capitalists that want to replace Assad and his state capitalism with a capitalist government serving even more openly the imperialists. Such a

government – if it will come to power – will attack the workers, the peasants and the small business. It will demand of the masses to pay for the crisis of the world capitalist system and the cost of the civil war.

The ISL stand with the masses fighting against Assad bloody regime without giving any political support to the secular or the religious petit bourgeois and bourgeois leaders. We say it as clear as we can: The only road that will lead to a solution is the struggle for a workers revolution at the head of the oppressed masses. The masses should not allow the local capitalists and their imperialist masters to build their fortune on the bodies of the 70,000 Syrian who died to remove the tyranny. It is against their most basic interests to replace one form of a capitalist tyranny with another one.

President Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

This week, British Prime Minister David Cameron said the UK could make its own foreign policy on supplying rebels.

"We might have to do things in our own way," he told lawmakers Tuesday.

But Cameron stressed that the UK has not yet decided to circumvent the EU's arms embargo. "I hope that we do not have to break from a collaborative approach across the European Union," he said. However, "if we thought it was the right thing to do, we would do it." In February, the European Union renewed its arms embargo on Syria for three months but amended it to allow greater nonlethal support and technical assistance to help protect civilians. The embargo is set to expire in May. Member countries could renew it, add amendments or veto it. (CNN March 15, 2013)

May be the entire Western mass media is lying? We can examine what the Russian imperialists are saying:

"Russia has said that any attempt by the British government to arm the Syria opposition will be a violation of international law. During a press conference following a meeting with his British counterpart, Mr Lavrov said: "In our point of view it [arming the Syrian opposition] is a violation of international law. (...) The situation in Syria makes arming Assad's opposition difficult. While no one doubts the atrocities being carried out by Assad's forces the fact remains that many of the Syrian rebels have been accused of horrific crimes and have jihadist sympathies. It would be difficult to arm vetted rebel groups without being able to guarantee that weapons would not end up in the hands of the unpleasant elements of Assad's opposition. However, it is

concerns regarding international law that is worrying the Russian government about Syrian rebels receiving weapons, not potential human rights abuses by Assad's opposition". (Matthew Feeney: Russia Warns the UK Not to Arm Syrian Rebels, Mar. 13 2013, <http://reason.com/blog/2013/03/13/russia-warns-the-uk-not-to-arm-syrian-re>)

Thus it is clear that at least until now the Western imperialists have not armed the rebels and the reason they have not armed the rebels is because they do not trust them as many of them are Islamists. The problem the imperialists have in Syria is the relative strength of the Islamists in the mass movement. At this juncture of history in Afghanistan, in Palestine, in Mali the imperialists are on one side and the Islamists on the other. This of course can be changed and this would not be the first time in the history of the last 100 years that the Islamists would serve the imperialists. But today the Islamists are fighting against the imperialists and today Revolutionary Marxists are on the same side as the Islamists in the conflict against Assad's tyranny without giving the petit bourgeois or bourgeois secular or religious forces any political support. Those left groups that support Assad are simply living in a world of fantasy detached from reality.

The imperialists would love to remove Assad and install their own trusted servants. On this point we can learn from the German foreign policy electronic magazine that reports:

"For years, Berlin has been promoting the privatization of the Syrian economy, now being conferred to the "Working Group" -

Syria under Assad: State Capitalism with a Bonapartist

In the past there has been massive confusion on the nature of Syria's state. Soviet Stalinists claimed that Syria is a form of socialism. Centrist tendencies like the IMT led by Alan Woods and the CWI led by Peter Taaffe claimed that Syria was a deformed workers state. It is therefore important to understand the difference between state capitalism with a bonapartist regime as Syria still is, and a deformed workers state as Cuba or North Korea still are. State capitalism is an economy where the ruling class is the capitalist class and the nationalization of the economy serves the interests of this class. In Cuba the capitalist class was eliminated as a class and escaped to Miami. However the Stalinist state apparatus blocks the road to socialism and unless this block is removed by a political revolution the capitalist class growing out the Stalinist bureaucracy will take over the economy and the state and turn Cuba once again to a capitalist state. We saw such a process already in China that by now is an imperialist state.

Assad's state capitalism is very beneficial to some local capitalists who at the same time serve the interests of the real masters –the imperialists. The US business journal Forbes reported about the close relationship of the Assad regime and the local bourgeoisie:

"Too many benefited from the status quo, not least a powerful and wealthy clique of businessmen that had grown rich under his father's patronage in this poor country. They now control huge swaths of Syria's economy. Rami Makhoul, Assad's ma-

ternal cousin has interests in many sectors, including oil and gas, and telecommunications. During the last year of Hafez al-Assad's reign, Forbes visited Syria where it met several of those businessmen, most of them Alawite like Assad. Many were "five-percenters," because they got a 5% commission on deals they brokered. One of them was known as "Mr. Versace," because of his flashy Versace outfits. He had amassed a fortune estimated at \$300 million by representing bidders on government oil projects. One was the son of the former defense minister, who had become Syria's sugar king. He had the inside track when the government privatized that business. Another became a near-billionaire, when he had a law especially crafted for him to create a major chain of hotels in Syria. One hotel stands in Hama on the site of homes demolished by the government, when it crushed a rebellion in 1982." (Forbes: President Assad And The Syrian Business Elite, 3/30/2011, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/zinamoukheiber/2011/03/30/president-assad-and-the-syrian-business-elite>).

Three main groups have been at the core of the support of the regime: the high military and security establishment, the bourgeoisie and the high religious establishments of all sects.

An article of the "Revolutionary Left Current" in Syria, published in "International Viewpoint" – the journal of the centrist Mandelite "Fourth International" – explains the background to the revolutionary struggle in Syria "The High military establishment has accumulated profits since the arrival to power of Hafez Al Assad in 1970 that encouraged

for an extended period in close cooperation with Assad's regime. In 2006, the German development organization GTZ (today GIZ) had initiated a special program entitled "Supporting economic reform in Syria." According to its description, "in 2000, the Syrian Government decided to switch to a social market economy," but "the institutions involved do not have sufficient knowledge," which is why the GTZ has to aid the government. [6] The reform's "expected impact on income and employment will improve the lives of the Syrian population," continues the GTZ - an prognosis that simply did not materialize. Quite to the contrary: the liberalization of the Syrian economy had "harmful effects" on the local manufacturing trade, as the International Crisis Group confirmed last year. For example in Duma, a suburb of Damascus, the residence of numerous artisans, who, facing ruin by the liberalization, renounced their loyalty to the regime. In fact, today Duma is considered a hotbed of protest. Last January, the insurgents briefly took complete control of the town". (German Foreign Policy: Market Economy for Syria, 2012/05/30, <http://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/fulltext/58308>)

Of course the imperialist interest in rubbing the Syrian workers and peasants is behind some of the pro imperialist elements in the opposition that want to subordinate the masses to the imperialists. This we can learn from the same report of the German foreign policy magazine:

"Berlin is preparing for Syria's transformation to a liberal market economy. Under German leadership, a multinational "Working Group" began its work late last week. Immediately following the overthrow of the Assad regime, this "Working Group"

is planning to launch urgent economic measures, including the coordination of aid projects and the implementation of economic reforms. Together with the United Arab Emirates, the German government is establishing a "secretariat," under the leadership of a German with Afghanistan experience. In cooperation with the Assad regime, Berlin had already promoted the Syrian economy's privatization. However, the nascent liberalization drove sectors of the population into bankruptcy, thereby contributing to insurgency against the regime. Berlin has already received first drafts for Syria's new economic order. They were written by an activist of the Syrian National Council (SNC), which is under strong criticism by a large part of the opposition because of the pre-eminence of the Muslim Brotherhood. Washington-based Syrian exile politicians hold leading positions in the SNC. They are demanding a Kosovo-style western intervention and consider Kosovo's KLA to be a model for the Syrian opposition."

In *Foreign Affairs*, Michael Bröning argues for directly arming the Syrian rebels. He acknowledges the fact that aid and weapons from Arab Gulf states have "primarily reached the Islamist groups," but he claims that the new National Coalition Opposition, which President Obama and more than 90 countries have officially recognized, "changes the conflict's parameters." He argues that "Arming and financing the National Coalition could strengthen the more "moderate" opposition forces in Syria."

"Critics of a more active support for the opposition have long bemoaned the lack of a coherent opposition body that could bring together the various political and military opponents of the regime. But now, the newly established Syrian National Coalition

Regime, a „Socialist State“ or a „Deformed Workers State“?

massive corruption of the military and government officials in exchange for total loyalty to his person. The states through this generalised corruption became a real cash machine for the inner circle of the dictator, his family and his most loyal lieutenants.

This new "class" organically linked to the state needed to invest its wealth in the various sectors of the economy. Decree No. 10 of 1991 was the springboard by which this class could "launder" their wealth. It allowed investment in the private sector and has opened up import-export opportunities but is still under state control, enriching each of them and continuing the system of generalized corruption. The 1990s saw the emergence of this "new class" or *nouveau riche/bourgeois class hybrid* resulting from a merger of the bureaucracy and the survivors of the old bourgeoisie, the "private bourgeoisie." The regime bourgeois credentials were accelerated with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies with Bashar Al Assad's arrival to power in 2000. These policies especially benefited a small oligarchy and a few of its clients. Rami Makhlouf, the cousin of Bashar al-Assad, represented the mafia-style process of privatization led by the regime.

A process of privatization created new monopolies in the hands of relatives of Bashar al-Assad, while the quality of goods and services declined. These neoliberal economic reforms allowed the appropriation of economic power for the benefit of the rich and powerful. The process of privatization of public companies has been made for the benefit of few individuals close to

the regime. At the same time the financial sector has developed inside the establishment of private banks, insurance firms, the Damascus stock exchange and money exchange bureaus. Neoliberal policies undertaken by the regime have satisfied the upper class and foreign investors, especially from the Arab Gulf, by liberalizing the Syrian economy for their benefits and at the expense of the far majority of Syrians hit by inflation and the rising cost of living. In addition to that, Syria's agricultural and public sector were also declining and no effective strategy to strengthen them have been suggested yet, which could jeopardize the country's alimentary autonomy and harm the population by the constant rise in prices of food and non-food basic needs.

The last important base of support for the Syrian regime is the high religious establishment of all sects, which has benefited the regime for the past twenty years and supported it since the beginning of the revolution. The Syrian regime and its security services established political and economic links with the religious establishment, especially from the Sunni community following the repression of the 1980s. The high religious establishments of all the sects have increasingly been presented by the regime as actors of the "Syrian civil society" in the past as soon as a foreign delegation would visit the country". (Khalil Habash: Syria: Understanding the regime and the revolutionary process, 19 June 2012, <http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2660>) ■

for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which was founded with U.S. assistance in Qatar in November, has done just that". (Michael Bröning: Time to Back the Syrian National Coalition, December 17, 2012, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138509/michael-broening/time-to-back-the-syrian-national-coalition>)

This argument by the pro imperialist intellectual may explain the change of policy. However whether it is true that the SNC is in position of control of the movement is doubtful.

The SNC is largely another exile group without strong roots inside the country. There is little evidence the Syrian people accept it. But there is strong evidence that it has been rejected by the armed rebel groups fighting the Assad regime. And the fact that it was formed as a US initiative grants it even less legitimacy. Bröning readily admits that US imperialism fears losing any influence in a future post-Assad Syria if it does not try to build relations with sectors of the opposition in Syria: "Thus, Western support could draw fighters to the National Coalition and, in turn, significantly increase Western influence over their decisions. Without it, though, radical groups are well poised to determine the development of a post-Assad Syria -- to the detriment of Syrian and Western interests."

Bröning acknowledges the aid and weapons already being sent to Syria's rebels by Arab Gulf states have reached the Islamists. What he doesn't say is that this occurred despite the CIA's efforts to facilitate the delivery of these arms towards the pro imperialist.

Thus the struggle against Assad is continuing, and in the case the imperialists will intervene militarily the masses will have to fight in two fronts. One against Assad army and the other one against the imperialist forces. If Assad army will fight the imperialists and not the masses the masses will shoot in the same direction against the imperialists without stopping the struggle against the regime.

The Role of the Islamist Opposition

The Islamist movement is a populist movement that its head is a bourgeois while its feet are the poor peasants. It was massacred out of existence in the 1980s after the Baathist regime put down a Brotherhood-led uprising in Hama. But since the uprising began on March 15, 2011, it has grown again. At the beginning of the uprising the Brotherhood hesitated to join the secular anti-Assad forces. The Islamists suspended their opposition to the Baathist regime in the wake of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in 2009, and it pulled out of an alliance with Abdul Halim Khaddam, a former Syrian vice president who defected in 2005. However it did not take long and the Brotherhood joined the struggle against Assad regime and formed armed groups especially in Homs, Hama, Idlib, and Aleppo. The Islamists fight within the opposition for the leadership with the goal of forming an Islamic regime. However, the Islamists are divided among themselves not less than the secularists.

The Islamists were present in opposition bodies that later formed the core of the Syrian National Council (SNC), an umbrella group that ostensibly represented all anti-Assad forces. The council set aside seats for both the Brotherhood and members of the Damascus Declaration, a group of Syrian bourgeois' reformists established in 2005 where

the Brotherhood already had a significant presence within this group. The Islamists have a presence in most of the groups that are active within the fragmented movement. Islamists have joined the SNC as "independents." These include Nahas, the London-based director of the Levant Center; Louay Safi, a Syrian-American teaching at Georgetown University in the US and former chairman of the *Syrian American Council* (SAC); since September last year and Najib Ghadbian, a political science professor who also works at the SAC. Since September last year the Islamists that have shown better organizational skills dominate the movement against Assad even in groups like the SNC. The Brotherhood is using their base in Turkey to train fighters and Islamist political activists. When the trainees returned to Syria, they formed coordinating committees in dozens of small towns and cities to support the movement.

They have a presence even in groups that are not officially part of the armed opposition like the *Arab Orient Center*, for *Strategic and Civilization Studies*, headed by Brotherhood spokesman Zoheir Salem, and the *Syrian Human rights Committee*, led by Brotherhood representative and the opposition's ambassador to Britain Walid Saffour. A group representing women and children is also led by a daughter of Mohammed Farouk Tayfour, the deputy leader of Syria's Brotherhood.

Brotherhood members are also trying to recruit defectors from the regime's army and promise them a buffer zone in Turkey along its border with Syria. They won the loyalty of Col. Riad al-Asaad, who formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA), replacing the secular-leaning Free Officers Movement.

After the formation of the FSA, new brigades began to take religious names, instead of names of national figures or areas. The Brotherhood's influence within the FSA was known to military defectors at the time -- that was why the first Druze officer to defect from the army, Lt. Khaldoun Sami Zaineddin, joined the Free Officers Movement in October 2011, rather than the FSA.

The fighting factions backed by the Brotherhood include the *Tawhid Brigade*, supported in Aleppo, mainly Bayanouni and Ramadan; some elements in the powerful *Farouq Brigades*; the *Body for Protection of Civilians*, considered the military wing of the Brotherhood, led by Hakim; and Ansar al-Islam, based in Damascus and the surrounding countryside. The Brotherhood has brigades across the country whose names typically include the word "shield," such as the *Euphrates Shield*, the *Capital Shield*, and the *Aqsa Mosque Shield*. It also coordinates in some areas groups like *Jabhat al-Nusra* and *Ahrar Al-Sham*.

The Brotherhood has successfully opposed attempts to outline how the transitional period will be managed after Assad's fall. In June 2012, in the meeting in Istanbul organized by the Arab League to restructure the SNC, the U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford told the opposition that the council must subject itself to an independent committee that would lay out internal reforms if it hoped to win greater American support. In other words he said that the opposition must submit itself to American imperialism. The committee met in Cairo in July 2011 and presented a draft resolution that outlined the transitional period, laying out the duties of opposition forces and detailing the fate of armed factions. The document, which was signed by the leaders of opposition forces, dealt a blow to the Broth-

erhood's monopoly on power. The Islamist group moved quickly to prevent any restrictions on its ability to shape the post-Assad political order. According to members who attended the meeting, the SNC did not sanction a follow-up committee to ensure the document was incorporated into the opposition's vision. Despite pressure from the imperialists and their servants in the Arab League the Brotherhood dealt a final blow to the plan when it succeeded in having the plan excluded from the founding statement of the Syrian National Coalition, established in Doha in November 2012. (Hassan Hassan *How the Muslim Brotherhood Hijacked Syria's Revolution*, March 13, 2013 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/13/how_the_muslim_brotherhood_hijacked_syria_s_revolution)

The Syrian Communist Party: A History of Stalinist Betrayal

The Syrian working class has been crushed and atomized for decades. The Syrian working class has no independent organizations of its own that it can use to fight for its own interests. In Tunisia and in Egypt the working class used mass strike actions that tipped the balance against Mubarak. This has not happen so far in Syria. Workers participate in the struggle against Assad but not as an organized class. The *General Federation of Trade Unions* (GFTU) is the sole national trade union center in Syria, it was founded in 1948. By a 1968 decree establishing a single-trade-union system, all trade unions in the country are required to be affiliated to the GFTU, and the GFTU has the power to dissolve the executive committee of any union. The union is closely linked with the Baath Party, and the president of the GFTU, Shaaban Azzouz, is a member of the party. The last time the union went on strike was on January 22, 2003 because the Syrian Petroleum and Natural Gas Company didn't equip the workers with safety tools. The Syrian Communist Party (*Al-Hizb Al-Shuyū'ī Al-Sūrīy*) is a reformist party that contributed to the lack of the independence of the working class in Syria. The original Communist party that was founded in 1924 as a revolutionary party went through the process of degeneration and by 1935 when it supported the policy of class collaboration known as the popular front it became a reformist party. The existing party was founded in 1944. During the WW II it struggled for the independence of French imperialism and was part of the nationalist Anti-Vichy underground. As a token for its service to the French imperialists it was legalized at the end of the war. Many of those who participated in the underground later led the French colonial wars in Vietnam and in Algeria. During the union of Syria and Egypt (UAR) the Communist party was critical of this union and was outlawed by the Syrian regime. Then in 1972 instead of struggling for the independence of the working class it became a member of the National Progressive Front controlled by the Baath Party led by Assad the father.

As mentioned above, in 1976 with the Syrian intervention in the civil war in Lebanon – on the side of rightist Maronites Falange – against the nationalist bloc and its allies like the PLO. This was too much for the more radical wing of the Communist Party and Riyad al-Turk formed the Syrian Communist Party (Political Bureau). In the 1980s in spite of the political support of the main communist party

gave the regime, Assad the father repressed the Communist Party.

The party split in two in 1986 with two separate parties claiming to represent the original Syrian Communist Party; the *Syrian Communist Party (Unified)* and the *Syrian Communist Party (Bakdash)*.

Bakdash, with historical Stalinist leader and deputy secretary Yusuf Faisal at its top, rejected the policies of perestroika and glasnost adopted by Soviet Communist Party – in contrast to the party's general secretary Faisal. This led to another split in the party, with many of the party's intellectuals leaving with Faisal while much of its Kurdish base remained supportive of Bakdash. Both factions retained the name "Syrian Communist Party" and continued to participate in the NPF.

Revolutionary Perspectives

Unless the working class will lead the struggle, the struggle to overthrow the Assad dictatorship will take many more victims and it will most likely lead to a replacement of the old regime by another bourgeois government. The working class, in alliance with the poor peasantry, can only take power itself, if it is led by a revolutionary party.

Thus to win the struggle the first step is to form the nuclei of such a workers revolutionary party with a revolutionary working class program, strategy and tactics. Its program should begin with the fight for the independence of the working class, form independent democratic trade unions, support the Kurds right to self determination, and oppose the sectarian poison that only helps the regime. Fight against the oppression of women and youth, and fight for land to the peasants.

To win the struggle it is necessary to win over the majority of the workers, peasants, lower middle class people from the Alawite minority. Bashar al-Assad and his regime remain committed to pursuing the destructive sectarian survival strategy, one enjoying an echo among some radicalized but politically directionless sectors of the Alawites. Assad the father controlled the Syrian Alawites (which make up 12 percent of the population) to survive. Alawite domination of the military was rooted in the practices of the French mandate and nurtured by the Baath party.

The regime used the *shabiha* auxiliaries (largely poor Alawite youth supplemented by active duty military personnel), by sending these gangs into Sunni Arab villages to murder, loot, and rape, the regime consciously sought to terrorize its opponents into submission. The working class must fight against any expression of sectarianism among Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Kurd, Ismaili, Turkman, and Druze.

A revolutionary party has to fight for the democratic rights of the oppressed Kurds. The Kurdish national question in Syria has a long history. It is not a sectarian problem, as the Kurds are not a sect of Arabs or a special Islamic group. They belong to a people that are forty million strong and are distributed over a number of countries, and they are the largest national group in both the region and the world that is deprived of an independent state. The Kurds who are integrated into Syrian society (in Damascus, Hama, and Aleppo) have participated extensively in politics and have held high positions in the army and government, but only as Syrians, and only before the Ba'ath's

seizure of power and the exclusion of Kurds from all top positions, especially in the army and the diplomatic and political corps. On the other hand, the Kurdish nationalist sentiments that have sprung up in the period of nationalist enthusiasm have found other channels for expressing themselves: namely, the symbolic and political interaction with the political movement and struggle of the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey.

While Marxists recognize the right of self determination of the Kurds who are divided today among Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, this right of the unification of the Kurds cannot be achieved within the existing capitalist states. We support the establishment of an independent united Workers and Peasants Republic of Kurdistan. It should be part of a socialist federation of the region.

A revolutionary party will open its door to women and young workers suffering from special forms of oppression. The mass media is transmitting images of young men with AK47s. The preconceived notions about subservient Middle Eastern women could give the impression that there have been no women active on the ground in Syria. This is simply not true: Among the fighters in the FSA there are women using the same AK47s. The women who joined the FSA initially were all those who'd lost a male family member, a husband or a son. However their numbers is small because the FSA leaders "do not find the time" to train new fighters men or women. If women can fight in the FSA, women workers and peasants can certainly fight in workers and peasant militias!



YouTube popularized what has now become the anthem of the Syrian revolution, "Irhal ya Bashar" ["Bashar, get out"]. The song by Ibrahim Kashoush encourages the Syrian president to leave office, replete with provocative lyrics and a catchy *dabke* beat. The government first tried to stop it by silencing the singer: In a symbolic and macabre response to Kashoush's chanting, the singer was found dead on 5 July 2011, his throat cut and his vocal cords ripped out -- a clear message to young people willing to speak up.

Although Kashoush may have been killed, his voice was not silenced. The song became even more popular, among young people singing it in the demonstrators in Syria and abroad.

Other key demands – which the RCIT has already raised and which the ISL fully supports – are:

For expropriation without compensation of the main factories and the banks under workers control!

Organization of workers armed units to defend the workers and the masses!

Land to the peasants!

For the right of self determination of the Kurds!

Oppose the sectarian poison!

Total opposition to the imperialist political intervention in Syria!

For a general strike to bring down the bloody regime!

For Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers!

All Power to the Workers and Peasants! For the Socialist Revolution in Maghreb and Mashreq!

Down with the dictatorship of the dog Assad and the rich elite!

For the formation of action councils and armed militias of the workers and peasants which should coordinate nation-wide!

For a workers government allied with the peasants and urban poor and based on local councils and militias!

No trust in the bourgeois leaders of the official opposition! They are connected with the governments of the USA, EU, Saudi-Arabia, Turkey and Qatar and have many former members of the Assad regime in their ranks! Workers and Peasants: Trust only in your own strength, your own organizations and your own militias!

No to any imperialist intervention in Syria! NATO troops - Out of Afghanistan and Mali! Solidarity with the anti-imperialist resistance!

For joint struggle of the Workers, Peasants and Poor in Maghreb and Mashreq! Spread the Revolution! For a Socialist Federation of Workers- and Peasants-Republics in Maghreb and Mashreq!

International Solidarity with the Struggle of the Syrian masses! For an international solidarity campaign by the workers movement!

Build a revolutionary combat party of the workers!

For a new Communist International! ■

Greetings for New Year 2013 from the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting, Nina Gunić and Shujat Liaqat (for the RCIT), 31.12.2012

Dear comrades, brother and sisters!

Approaching New Year 2013, the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) sends its warmest greetings to all fighters for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed!

Behind us is year which has demonstrated again the willingness of the masses to fight for their liberation. To name only a few examples:

- * the heroic mass strikes of the South African miners,
- * the self-sacrificing struggle of the Palestinian masses in Gaza against the Zionist onslaught as well as of the Syrian workers and peasants against the reactionary Assad regime,
- * the general strikes and the Hunger Uprising in Argentina,
- * the repeated general strikes of the workers in Greece, Spain and Portugal,
- * the ongoing struggle of the Balochi people in Pakistan and the Tamil people in Sri Lanka or
- * the many local struggles of the workers and peasants in China against the Stalinist-capitalist regime which only 12 months ago exploded into the Uprising in Wukan.

These struggles are so full of dedication of countless numbers of liberation fighters. But this steadfastness and heroism unfortunately is not matched with the political leadership these mass struggles deserve and desperately need. As a result these mass movements often find at their top bureaucrats who are openly betraying the struggle or who are looking for a pathetic compromise. To give just a few examples we refer to the Stalinist CP bureaucrats in the South African trade unions, the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Islamist leaders in Syria and Palestine, the Moyano bureaucrats of the CGT in Argentina or the social-democratic, Stalinist or neo-social democratic (SYRIZA) trade union and party leaders in Southern Europe.

Of course, such terrible misleaderships are not the fault of the masses themselves but of the corrupt and bankrupt political forces which pretend since decades to stand for socialism (Stalinism, social democracy, centrism). Obviously, these difficulties must be no excuse for revolutionaries to avoid joining the struggle, fighting with the workers and peasants and applying the united front tactic towards these leaderships. Lenin and Trotsky taught us that there is no other way for revolutionaries to build roots amongst the fighting masses, gain the trust and break them away from the treacherous misleaders.

Indeed revolutionaries have demonstrated in the past year that they are prepared to fight with all the necessary sacrifices for the cause of the working class liberation.

* Let us commemorate first and foremost the five revolutionary martyrs *Abu Mwwayyah Al-Massry, Abu Mussa Al-Jaery, Abu Al-Qayss, Hesham Abu Salamah and Sanad Abu Jatab* from the Brigade Sevian Al-Laith (León Sedov Brigade, associated with the FLTI).

* We also want to refer to the bold intervention of the comrades from the WIVP during the South African miners' strike.

* And we want to draw attention to the ongoing cases of state repression against comrade Carlos Munzer from the LOI/FLTI in Argentina as well as our comrade Johannes Wiener from the Austrian section of the RCIT.

These sacrifices are part of the hard and necessary struggle to forge a new World Party of Socialist Revolution, which will be, in our view, the Fifth Workers International based on an authentic communist programme.

As Bolshevik-Communists we say that the struggle for liberation cannot win as long as we have not succeeded in the formation of such a revolutionary combat party nationally and internationally. Only such a party can give the necessary leadership for those struggles. Only such a party can transmit the communist program into the masses. It is therefore the central task of all consistent revolutionary forces to focus on building such a combat party.

The comrades in the RCIT – in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, USA and Austria – are dedicated to build such a party nationally and internationally. In 2012 we had the chance for discussion and collaboration with a number of revolutionary organizations. The RCIT hopes to deepen these discussions and collaborations with the view of joining forces. Let us march forward!

Workers and Oppressed, Unite!

Forward in building the Fifth Workers' International on a revolutionary basis!

Unity – Struggle – Victory!

Revolutionary Greetings,
Michael Pröbsting, Nina Gunić and Shujat Liaqat
(for the RCIT)



Nina Gunić, leader of the RCIT, at a Press Conference in 2008

Bulgaria: All power to the Working Class!

Resolution of the Revolutionary Communist Organization for Liberation (RKOB), Austrian section of the RCIT, 25.2.2013

In the last weeks we could see a heroic uprising of the Bulgarian working class. This uprising was directed mainly against increasing poverty and unemployment. The trigger for these events were high electricity prices, caused especially by foreign companies. With our minds and our hearts we stand with our class brothers and sisters. Their struggle is our struggle. They have our solidarity especially because their struggle is directed against our common enemy: the imperialism of Austria and the EU! They are an impressive example for working class fighters in Western Europe against imperialism and his monopolies! Their struggle did already overthrow the bourgeois government of Boiko Borissov who has connections to the organized crime. Bulgaria is now in a pre-revolutionary crisis.

Bulgaria is one of the poorest countries in the EU. Even if Stalinism disempowered the working class on a political level, the proletarian property relations brought social and economic advantages in comparison with capitalism. One can see this very well in Bulgaria, which was plundered by the imperialist banks and companies after the restoration of capitalism in 1989. The standard of living rapidly decreased, the population shrank by 15% in just 20 years. The life expectancy is far below the average of the EU, the rate of poverty is one of the highest in the EU, more than a quarter of the young people have no job and the average salary is not more than 400€. For many Bulgarian working people as well as retired people who often earn less than 100€ it is hardly possible to pay the electricity prices. The country is exploited in first line by the big capitalists of Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.

Movement at the crossroads: radicalization with illusions

After two weeks of mass protests the conservative government was forced to resign. But the ruling class is now trying to find a way out of this threat of a pre-revolutionary situation and has announced new elections.

However the protesting workers oppose not only the ruling GERB party, but all parliamentary parties. They continue to protest after the government resignation as the mass demonstrations on 24th Feb showed. They shouted at the demonstrations: "Enough of the illusion, citizen protests every day!" They realize that the ruling class is thoroughly corrupt. At the demonstrations slogans like "Mafia", "End to the Economic Domination of the Mafia" and "Out with All Parties" were shouted. They also demand the resignation of local mayors especially of Kiril Jordanov – the major of Varna which was the starting point of the protests. They call for a suspension of utility bills, the abolition of VAT on electricity bills and on the review of all privatization contracts in the energy sector. Even though the activists have no clear concepts of a socialist system that breaks with bourgeois democracy they show signs of a questioning of parliamentary democracy. At a meeting on 24th February, activists called for a change of the constitution which allows to elect representatives in the different constituency

and to judicially pursue representatives who do not meet the electoral mandate. Even if these demands are still connected with many bourgeois illusions as well as Bulgarian patriotism, they also show that the mass consciousness can change within a few weeks and radicalize massively.

How can the Bulgarian workers win?

The rule of small elite of capitalists in alliance with the foreign EU-imperialists and the mafia just brought misery for the working class and all oppressed people in Bulgaria. This rule of the parasites that live just out of the work of other people has to end now!

Now the workers should not orient to snap-shot elections! Rather the time has come to take their fate into their own hands and not to hope for one or the other party of the bosses! Therefore it is necessary that in the factories, in the districts and villages *action-committees* are formed that organize the struggle and the masses. These committees must be extended to *soviets*. These soviets must take all the power. But this is just possible on the way *socialist revolution* – that means an *armed uprising* - against all representatives and friends of the capitalist ruling class and imperialism!

The construction of action-committees and their country-wide connection can be reached in the best way through an *indefinite general strike* against the attacks of the ruling class.

Here the Bulgarian trade unions can play a key role. Of course, the leaders of the trade unions will try to betray their membership. It is therefore important to force them to organize actions by building a *rank and file movement* inside the trade unions.

Mass demonstrations have to be defended against police violence. Therefore we call for construction of *self defense committees* and to expand them step by step to *workers militias*. Such organs could implement the order which the corrupt police don't want, namely the order in interest of the working class against the rich and the fascists. All people who were imprisoned during the mass protests must be freed immediately!

Communists in Bulgaria have to fight for the *equality of the national minorities* which make up 15% of the population officially - especially of the Turkish minority and the Romany. That means: for the *right to speak their own language* in offices and to teach it in schools. We are fighting for *equal salary* for equal work, national minorities and women should not be discriminated.

All enterprises which were privatized after the fall of Stalinism in 1989 or which are in the hands of foreign companies must be immediately confiscated without compensation and put under the control of the workers. A *committee composed out of representatives of the labor movement as well as of experts* must develop a plan to provide the working population with cheap and high quality goods. That's the only way to reduce poverty effective! A *public employment program* has to be implemented to give everybody work. After all, there are enough things that have to be built up (public

housing, schools, utilities, public transport, etc.). Bulgaria is a *semi-colonial country* which is oppressed and exploited by imperialist countries. This means that the country is formally independent, but in fact it is exploited and oppressed by imperialist corporations and states. The national liberation is therefore an important task which has to be taken by the working class. This means: struggle against the imperialism of the EU and Russia. The Bulgarian economy has to pass into the hands of the Bulgarian working class! For the *exit of Bulgaria from the NATO and the EU!* The withdrawal from the imperialist EU must be connected with the conquest of power by the working class in Bulgaria!

For the building of a *revolutionary party* in Bulgaria! This party must aim to organize the vanguard of the working class and to lead them into the class struggle. For the construction of revolutionary parties in Eastern Europe which are intervening in the class struggle as sections of *5th International!*

For a Bulgaria in which the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, takes the power! For the extension of the revolution to Greece, the Balkans and Eastern Europe! For a Socialist Federation of the Balkans, for the United Socialist States of Europe!

For the Eastern European Revolution against Imperialism and for Socialism!

What are the tasks of the workers in Austria and the EU?

The workers in countries which exploit and oppress Bulgaria have to make clear that they have nothing in com-

mon with the politics of “their” imperialist governments and corporations. This means: full support of the mass protests, including material support and solidarity actions. We call on the trade unions in Austria and the EU to organize strikes in the companies which super-exploit the Bulgarian working class (for example the Austrian electricity company EVN). We call for the complete cancellation of all debts of Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries. We strongly condemn Austrian imperialism, as well as other EU states (Germany, France, Netherlands, etc.), which enrich themselves over the costs of other nations. We stand for the full equality of Bulgarian migrants (as well as all other immigrants) in Western Europe. That means: full citizenship, labor rights, the right to stay, the right to speak their own language in offices, as well as to teach them in schools. We are against any discrimination of workers because of their origin: equal pay for equal work! Bulgaria is exploited by imperialism through migration – already the country lost 15% of its population in 20 years. It is mainly the imperialist corporations which gains from this. We call up on the labor movement in Western Europe to send experts (doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, etc.) to Bulgaria and Eastern Europe to try to compensate the damage done by the imperialist corporations. For the destruction of the EU and its replacement by the United Socialist States of Europe!

Even if the bosses who live in our countries exploit and subordinate Eastern Europe, we will sooner or later go the common path of socialism with our class brothers and sisters.

Long live workers international solidarity! ■



No “Public Council“, but real Councils of the Workers and Poor all over Bulgaria!

By Michael Pröbsting, 6.3.2013

Developments in the last days have confirmed our assessment of the pre-revolutionary situation which is developing in Bulgaria. (1) Since several weeks mass demonstrations take place against the high electricity prices as well as against the corrupt political establishment itself. The mass protests already had a success by forcing the conservative government of Boiko Borissov to resign. In addition, the government had to cut electricity prices by an average of 7 percent and is revoking the license of Czech utility CEZ. CEZ, together with *Energo-Pro* and the Austrian multinational *EVN*, are the three foreign monopolies who are responsible for drastic rises of electricity prices recently which caused a number of deaths during the cold winter of people who couldn't pay the bill.

The capitalist system of private property of enterprises has allowed the multinational corporations to plunder the Bulgarian people. As a result of the latest increase of the retail price of electricity in Bulgaria on July 1st 2012, the Bulgarian households have paid the three foreign monopolies a total of three billion *levs*, which means that the increase has cost the people about 200 million *levs* (which is about 100 million Euro). (2)

The spontaneous mass movement – which according to polls has the support of 85% of the population – has shown an impressive perseverance. It is continuing its protests even after the resignation of the Borissov government and the announcement of new election which should take place on May 12 2013.

Three protestors have even set themselves on fire in protest at high fuel prices and low standards of living. Two of them died.

Popular Demands for Councils

Certainly the movement lacks a clear program and amongst its public leaders are figures like Angel Slavchev, a former member of the *Bulgarian Left Party*, ordinary activists like Lyudmila Manova, an unemployed woman from Blagoevrad, but also people like Anton Sirakov, a former member of the fascist *Ataka* and other dubious figures. (3)

Despite its obvious confusion and immaturity which allows various adventurists to gain influence, the movement demonstrates also a remarkable political learning process. The Bulgarian paper *Standart News* reports about the movements' activists demand:

“The Bulgarian MPs should be nominated not by political parties, but by the people - this is what the protesters will the president today, during the sitting of the so-called Public Council, including representatives of protesters, the business and the trade unions. The protesters suggest that each Bulgarian town or city should be able to nominate its representatives in Plenary Hall. The nominees for MPs must not have any political affiliations and must not join any party parliamentary group once they become MPs. (...) The protesters hope that President Plevneliev will prod the MPs to pass amendments to the election code before the Parliament disbands. The idea is that the Public Council

gathers weekly to check if the caretaker government observes the demands of the people, while the council's work will be discussed in the social networks. If the President refuses to cooperate with the representatives of the protesters, they will leave the sitting of the council.” (4)

These demands prove once more the Marxist position that authentic revolutionary mass movements tend to look for forms of democracy which are above the bourgeois parliamentary democracy. In his famous pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, Lenin emphasized the superiority of the soviet-type democracy compared with bourgeois democracy. Soviets – the Russian word for Councils – emerged during the Russian Revolution 1905 and in 1917 and since then they are a regular feature of revolutionary mass uprisings. Such Councils or Soviets are mass assemblies in enterprises and neighborhoods which meet regularly. They discuss the most important issues and elect delegates which are accountable to the assembly and recallable by it in case the people don't feel represented anymore by them. The delegates receive an average wage of a skilled worker.

The description from the Bulgarian *Standart News* shows that the masses do not already call for real Councils/Soviets. However, their demands for parliamentary candidates to be elected by mass assemblies and to punish them if they do not implement their elector's wishes are first steps in the right direction. They reflect a deep and fully justified mistrust of the workers towards the thoroughly corrupt bourgeois democracy.

Monitoring the Government?

The protesters demand of a Public Council which checks the government underlines the contradictory progress of the masses consciousness. As such the demand is completely insufficient. A similar demand emerged amongst the fighting masses in Egypt during the revolutionary events in spring 2011. As we explained at that time in our analysis of the Arab Revolution the demand for monitoring of a bourgeois government is a complete illusion or “*pure nonsense*” as Lenin put it in 1917. (5) Political and economic power remains in the hand of the ruling capitalist class. During the Arab Revolution various reformists and centrists – like the Hoxhaite PCOT and the Mandeliste Fourth International in Tunisia as well as the NPA of France – wrongly supported this demand.

However, while demands for Public Councils to control the government are a bankrupt policy, it reflects a progressive desire when it emerges from the mass movement. It shows that they don't trust the ruling power and that they consider it necessary to leave power not alone in the hands of the ruling politicians. As such the developments in Bulgaria reflect a step forward of the mass movement.

In addition revolutionaries have to warn the masses against the latest initiative of Bulgaria's President Plevneliev. He appointed recently a “*Public Council*” which is composed of various people who are supposed to represent the movement albeit they haven't been elected by

anybody. Such a *Public Council* is nothing but a distraction to give the masses the illusion that they can control the government.

As Lenin explained in 1917, the task must not be to advice or control the capitalist's government but to overthrow it by a workers revolution in order to move forward to socialism:

"We, however, shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight—not to "shift the balance of forces", but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." (6)

Build Councils of the Workers and Poor!

The task of the hour is to hold mass assemblies everywhere and to build real Councils/Soviets. They should discuss the most burning issues and elect delegates which are accountable and can be recalled. There should be a congress of such delegates representing the Councils all over the country.

Such Councils should lead the movement in order to check and remove any adventurists. Revolutionaries should intervene in the movement and argue for the councils to take power. They should call for the councils to form the basis for a *Workers Government* which is protected by *armed workers militias* and which takes up the task of *expropriating the bourgeoisie*.

The RCIT explained in its program – *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* – the urgent necessity of a strategy for the working class to build councils and to take power:

"We Bolshevik-Communists say that the spontaneous tendencies of many revolutions are great achievements. It is essential that such developments be expanded and organised. From sporadic rank and file committees we must build links and create a nationwide centralised coordination of the enterprise and districts-based councils. Only in this way can the basis be laid for a struggle, controlled by the working class itself towards an armed uprising against the ruling class and eventually the establishment of the power of the working class (the dictatorship of the

proletariat).

Such a "Soviet" strategy (the term "Soviet" means "Council" in Russian) – i.e. a strategy for the establishment and development of councils as a central pillar of the orientation – must be an integral part of the revolutionary programme of liberating the working class. It is an indispensable means of the working class and the oppressed to control the fight and the social transformation and to resist against the inevitable attempts of domination and oppression by the bureaucracy." (7)

In order to fight for such a strategy activists must join together and build a *revolutionary party* – as part of the *Fifth Workers International* – on the basis of a *Marxist program*. The RCIT is eager to discuss with activists in Bulgaria about such a perspective.

Long live the struggle of the Bulgarian Workers and Poor! Victory to the Bulgarian Revolution!

Footnotes:

(1) See Bulgaria: All Power to the Working Class! Down with the Imperialism of Austria, the EU and Russia! For the Permanent Revolution in Bulgaria, on the Balkans and in Eastern Europe! Resolution of the Revolutionary Communist Organization for Liberation (RKOB), 25.2.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/bulgaria-all-power-to-the-workers>

(2) Kristian Kosturkov: Electric Utilities Rob Bulgarians of BGN 200 M. The retail price of electricity drops further as of July 1st, 6.3.2013, <http://paper.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2013-03-06&article=41892>

(3) See Clive Leviev-Sawyer: Bulgaria's protesters in profile, March 5 2013, <http://sofiaglobe.com/2013/03/05/bulgarias-protesters-in-profile>

(4) Bulgarian President Gathers Protesters, Businessmen and Trade Union Representatives at a Round Table. The protesters are ready to nominate MPs from their ranks, 1.3.2013, <http://paper.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2013-03-01&article=41816>

(5) Michael Pröbsting: The reformist illusion of democratic control of bourgeois governments (2011). This text is the English-language translation of an excerpt from a German language book on the Arab Revolution ("The Half Revolution. Lessons and Perspectives of the Arab Uprising"), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/arab-revolution-and-reformist-illusion>

(6) V. I. Lenin: The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution (1917); in: Lenin Collected Works Vol. 25, p. 495

(7) RCIT: The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto (2011), p. 31

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N14: An important first step – but not enough!

From Protests to General Strikes across Europe!

Workers, Migrants and Youth: Prepare and Organize the Struggle for Power!

Statement of the RCIT on the European-wide Day of Action against the Austerity policy on 14th November, 13.11.2012

1. The European-wide Day of Action on 14th November against the anti-people austerity policy of the capitalist governments in all EU countries is an important first step. There will be one-day general strikes in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Malta and Cyprus. In addition there will be smaller protest actions in nearly all other EU countries. This is an important first step – but much more is necessary! This Day of Action shows the possibility for a European-wide coordination of the class struggle. Such a coordination is of highest urgency given the fact that all capitalist government – irrespective if they are right-wing parties, liberals, social democrats or so-called “communists” – attack the workers and peasants across the continent. However our struggle is hindered by the corrupt and selfish leaderships in the unions and in the parties of the workers movement. We must build new, revolutionary parties and renew the unions that can fight for our future. For this we need to know the enemy and we must have a plan for the struggle.

A program for struggle

2. In the past years the workers, migrants and youth have demonstrated numerous times that they are ready to resist against the onslaught of the ruling classes. Just remember the many general strikes in Greece but also in Spain and Portugal! Remember the mass demonstration in Britain and the violent *August Uprising* of the poor, migrants and youth in summer 2011! But we suffer nevertheless one defeat after the other. Why? Because the existing leaders of the trade union and reformist parties do everything in their power to limit and derail the struggle. Their main interest is to keep their privileges and positions for which they need to maintain their close alliance with the bosses and the capitalist state.

3. The working class needs a program of struggle and a plan to organize independent from the reformist bureaucrats. The RCIT considers the following slogans as highly important for a program of struggle since they give answers to the most burning questions of the present situation and tackle the question of capitalist power:

* *No lay-offs, no wage cuts! No social cuts!*

* *No privatization of public enterprises and social services! Nationalize all big enterprises under workers control!*

* *Immediate reduction of the working week to 35 hours as a first step towards the division of labor on all hands. This means that everyone should have a job and work with less hours at unchanged wages!*

* *No eviction from housing!*

* *For price control committees of the working class to fight inflation!*

* *Cancel all debts!*

* *Nationalize all banks under workers control and centralize them to one state bank!*

* *Expropriate the super-rich and utilize their wealth to finance an immediate program of public works to renew and extend the infrastructure, housing, social services etc.!*

* *Equal wage for women! Extend high-quality public child care under control of the working class parents!*

* *Equal rights for migrants! Open the borders!*

* *No cuts in education! Put the education system under control of the students, teachers and the workers movement!*

* *Down with the EU commission and council! For a pan-European revolutionary Constituent Assembly!*

* *For a workers government – respective a workers and peasant government in Eastern Europe – based on workers councils and an armed popular militia!*

4. Working class activists should put such demands on the reformist trade union and party leaders to pressurize them into action. However no one should have any illusion. These treacherous bureaucrats will only fight under massive pressure and even then they will sabotage the struggle from the first minute onwards. The working class must organize itself independently were it works, lives and undergo education – in *factory committees, neighbourhood committees* etc. Such committees must meet regularly, elect delegates and build a nation- and European-wide coordination. They must organize *armed self-defence* to resist against fascist thugs and police violence. Such organizational steps would lay the basis for an independent struggle of the workers and oppressed. For a *pan-European coordination of militant rank and file organizations, trade unions and progressive movements* to organize a continent-wide struggle!

5. To take our unions back from the control of the corrupt bureaucrats, we must revolutionize them. We must fight to *open the unions to the masses* – in particular the lower strata, the migrants, the poor and precarious workers. We must build a *rank and file movement* to organize the struggle against the bureaucrats.

6. When the bureaucrats cannot contain the class struggle, they call for limited one day general strikes. While such a strike can be useful as a starting point, it is a cul-day-sac as a strategy as the workers in Greece see since two years. The RCIT says that the workers movement must organize *indefinite general strikes*. Only such general strikes could – at least temporary – halt the bosses’ offensive.

7. While such an indefinite general strike would be a tremendous step forward, it only shows the way to a solution. But it is not the solution in itself. For this the class struggle must be transformed into an *armed insurrection* led by a revolutionary party rooted in the working class to overthrow and expropriate the ruling class and to smash the capitalist state apparatus.

It's capitalism, stupid!

8. The barbaric austerity policy of all governments in the EU drives millions in poverty and unemployment. It robs our future. However, we must not believe the reformist (social democrats, European Left Party, ATTAC etc.) and trade union leaders when they tell us that this policy could be replaced by electing a different government with a better, social and ecological, policy. This is nonsense! All governments under capitalism serve the capitalists – they help the banks and corporations to keep their huge wealth and let the working classes pay for the crisis.

9. Look at Cyprus: here we can see how the so-called Communist AKEL (affiliated with the European Left Party which unites most ex-Stalinist parties) helps the capitalists similar to all the other capitalist governments in Europe. AKEL is in power since 2008. Nevertheless the country is still a paradise for the super-rich, unemployment stands at 12.2%, and the state has huge public debts equal to 83.3% of the country's annual GDP. Currently the government negotiates with the EU troika and the IMF.

10. The RCIT says: A "social, democratic and peaceful Europe" and "fair re-distribution" via taxes for the rich – as the social democrats, ELP and ATTAC preach – is a utopia as long as capitalism exists. We can only escape the vicious cycle of poverty and crisis if we overthrow the capitalist system by a *socialist revolution*.

Down with the imperialist EU!

Forward to the United Socialist States of Europe!

11. The EU is an imperialist alliance. It is dominated by monopoly capital – the banks and corporations – and the imperialist states closely associated with them. They impose a coordinated offensive against the working class and the poor. Despite their conflicts and rivalry they strive – under the leadership of Germany and France – to build a closer economic, political and military union and a pan-European imperialist state apparatus. (see the recent fiscal and banking union, the ESM etc.) To bolster their rule they systematically build up a police state and the surveillance of the people.

12. The imperialist EU exploits not only the working class but also the oppressed people in the semi-colonial countries. This is true both for the semi-colonial countries which are members of the EU as well as those in the so-called South. The super-exploitation and national oppres-

sion of the migrants – who mostly come from these countries – is part of the imperialist system. In addition the ruling classes in the EU are also pressurizing its oppressed national minorities like the Basques and the Catalans in Spain.

13. The reformist trade union and party leaders support the discrimination of migrants and the negation of the national minorities rights of secession. In contrast to them the RCIT supports semi-colonial countries to leave respective not to join the imperialist EU as a step towards national liberation. We fight for full equal rights for migrants – including equal wages and equality of mother languages. We support the opening of the border for migrants. We support the oppressed national minorities struggle for self-determination (like in Basque country and Catalonia).

14. The left-wing social democrats, the ELP and the Greek SYRIZA claim that the EU can be reformed. Various petty-bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists like the Greek KKE on the other hand call for leaving the EU and a retreat to the capitalist national state. Both are wrong. The EU was an imperialist alliance from the beginning. The system of EU institutions cannot be transformed into an instrument of the working class. Neither is the backward-looking perspective to the "good-old" capitalist national state of any use.

15. The RCIT says: Neither imperialist EU nor capitalist national-state – our perspective can only be the *United Socialist States of Europe!* The road towards such a socialist Europe runs exclusively via the struggle for the socialist revolution with the goal of expropriation of the capitalist class and the construction of working class power. Only such a dictatorship of the proletariat will help us to suppress the resistance of the greedy rich. Such a revolution will most likely first succeed in one country and must then be spread towards other countries. *Permanent revolution* or degeneration and defeat – this is the lesson of the experience of Stalinist bureaucratic rule in the USSR!

16. The working class in Europe has shown in the past years that it is ready to fight against the bosses' offensive and the austerity packages. But they are repeatedly betrayed and sold out by the existing treacherous leaderships in the trade unions and the reformist parties. This is why building authentic *revolutionary workers parties* and a *Fifth Workers International* based on a communist programme is the major task ahead of all true revolutionaries. In Europe and around the world. Join the RCIT to meet this challenge! ■



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

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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

The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists

Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013

The goal of the following theses is to *summarize the main developments, contradictions and conclusions* of the present world situation as short as possible.

The Present Phase of the World Historic Revolutionary Period which opened in 2008

1. The present world situation can only be understood if it is seen in the context of the world historic period which opened in 2008. As we have repeatedly explained this long-term period bears a revolutionary character: the productive forces are in decline, the main contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the oppressed, between the imperialist monopolies and states and the semi-colonial people and between the imperialist robbers themselves – all these contradictions are intensifying to such a degree that they repeatedly throw the equilibrium out of balance. The inner contradictions of capitalism are posed in such a sharp way that they unavoidably provoke pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations, as well as – if these situations are not exploited to the advantage of the working class – counter-revolutionary developments. In other words, the aggravation of the class contradictions will pose the question of power – which class rules in the society – more often than in the past periods. The present period is therefore one in which the destruction of capitalism and the historical leap forward towards socialism is on the agenda. (“*Actuality of the Revolution*”)

2. The *first phase* of the revolutionary period in 2008-2010 was characterized by a certain *state of shock*. The crisis surprised and hit the bourgeoisie and, of course, the working class and the popular masses much more. The *second phase* – starting in late 2010 / early 2011 – was characterized by a *massive upswing of the class struggle*. Since then we have seen the beginning of the Arab Revolution, the Occupy movement, the series of general strikes in Greece and other Southern European countries, the August Uprising as well as one-day mass strikes and a university student movement in Britain, the Hunger Uprising in Argentina, the mass student movement in Chile and Quebec, the strengthening of the anti-imperialist struggle in Afghanistan, the victorious resistance of the Palestinian people in Gaza against Israel, etc. At the same time we have seen an aggravation of imperialist aggressiveness including the looming clash between Japanese and Chinese imperialism around the Senkaku/Diaoyu-islands or the French invasion in Mali, Israel against Gaza, etc.

3. However there has been a *certain change in the phase since 2011*. In the first stage – of the Arab Revolution, the general strikes, the occupation movement etc. – the masses had massive hopes and illusions in their existing or new leaderships. One could say that the revolution was in its “*innocent phase*”. This was reflected in the electoral victories of bourgeois forces with a reputation of having

opposed the dictatorships of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Gaddafi, etc.; the sensational rise of the left-reformist SYRIZA in Greece from 4.5% to 27% in a few months time, the naïve, spontaneous petty-bourgeois leaderships of the *Indignados/Occupy* movement, etc.

4. This has changed to a certain degree; the “*innocent phase*” is over. The elected leaderships in Tunisia (*Ennahda*), in Egypt (Mursi’s *Muslim Brotherhood*) are massively challenged by mass protests calling for a “*second revolution*”. The official leadership of the rebel movement in the Syrian Revolution around the FSA and the *Syrian National Coalition* is also increasingly challenged by the radical Islamist *Jabhat al-Nusra* as well as local committees. Naturally this process of disillusionment with the official leaderships is uneven. For example it is probably less true for SYRIZA since it remained in opposition to the ND-PASOK-DIMAR government and its brutal austerity attacks.

5. Nevertheless we can say that in general *the crisis of leadership has deepened*. It opens the road both for more radical, revolutionary forces as well as for reactionary forces. Therefore the most important challenge for the working class is to confront this crisis of leadership and to build new revolutionary workers parties nationally and worldwide – the revolutionary *Fifth Workers International*. *The task of the Bolshevik-Communists and hence of the RCIT is to rally both new radicalized fighters from the working class and the oppressed as well as activists from existing working class and oppressed organizations who are prepared to break with reformism, petty-bourgeois populism or centrism. We aim to organize the vanguard of the vanguard in order to jointly struggle for the building of such working class parties around a consistent revolutionary program and its application to the concrete issues of the class struggle.*

Capitalist World Economy: Vacillating between Stagnation and another Deep Recession

6. As we have already predicted in autumn 2009 the capitalist world economy has entered a long-term period of stagnation. The business cycle develops discontinuously and differently. There has been no definite upswing of the cycle. Rather, the emergence from the Great Recession in 2008/09 takes “*inevitably longer and assumes a more agonizing character*” – to speak in words of the Marxist economist Evgenij Preobrazhensky when he described the character of the cycle in the period of capitalism’s decline.¹ The capitalists have not solved a single problem of their system’s crisis. They averted a total breakdown of the system in 2008/09 by pumping extraordinary amounts of money into the economy. These debts however now weigh heavily on the shoulders of capital and will depress any serious growth for many years.

7. Let us summarize the facts which can be viewed more in detail in the appendix. Capital accumulation – expressed in the growth rate of Gross Fixed Capital Forma-

tion – was weak in the last years given the dramatic slump in 2008/09. While there has been some growth in the USA, there was even another year of de-accumulation in the EU-15 states in 2012. (See Table 1). Capital goods orders – which show the dynamic in the Department I (production means) – are growing less and less or even decline despite the fact that we are supposed to be in the upswing phase of the business cycle. (See Graph 1)

8. As a result industrial production is growing weakly (except in China) as Graph 2 demonstrates. In the USA industrial production level in January 2013 was still 1.4% below the pre-crisis level of 2007. ² Another expression of this over-accumulation is the fact that even in the so-called upswing phase a huge part of the production apparatus is unused. Capacity Utilization both of US and Euro Area Industry is around 78% which is ways below the level in the upswing phases of the cycles in the past decades.

9. While the production of capitalist value remains stagnant, the burden of debt has increased dramatically. The debt level of the old imperialist states exploded between 2007 and 2012 by 1/3 up to ½. The debt level of the USA rose from 67.5% of the GDP to 109.9%, Japan's from 183.0% to 240.6% and the EU-15's from 60.7% to 89.9%. (See Table 2).

10. While the old imperialist states – which dominate the world economy – are trapped in full stagnation, China and the semi-colonial countries see a more dynamic growth of capital accumulation. But the latter's growth cannot outdo the world economy's stagnation given the fact that the global capitalism is dominated by the imperialist monopolies which are mainly located in North America, Japan and Western Europe.

11. The fundamental reason for such a development of the cycle is the tendency of the profit rate to fall and the associated structural over-accumulation of capital – as we have shown in our new book *The Great Robbery of the South*. ³ Despite all their attacks on the working class and the oppressed since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, the global corporate profitability has still not even reached the pre-crisis level. Taking JP Morgan's calculation of the worldwide profitability – *Earnings Per Share* (EPS) which is not identical with a Marxist calculation of the profit rate but only an approximation – the socialist economist Mi-

chael Roberts shows that profitability “has fallen from near 9% before the Great Recession down to under 4% in the trough of 2009 before recovering to 8% in 2011. But in 2012, it has now declined again to 7%.” ⁴

12. What we see is a growing gap between the *accumulation of wealth* and the *accumulation of capital* – similar to a tendency which the Marxist economist Eugen Varga observed in the early 1920s. ⁵ Monopoly capital enriches itself by increasing the rate of exploitation of the working class as well as the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. They also raise their wealth by fictitious financial accumulation. However a decreasing proportion of the monopoly capitalists' wealth is reinvested into productive accumulation.

13. The imperialist monopoly capitalists try to avert a breakdown of their system by attacking the working class and the oppressed people and by employing a financial Keynesianism (which means printing and pumping billions of US-Dollar into the economy in order to revitalize demand and thus growth). This shall be financed by squeezing a growing extra-surplus out of the working class as well as the South. This however did not, does not and can not avert the continuation of the crisis and sooner or later another, probably even worse, Great Recession will erupt.

14. For all these reason the capitalist world economy can not escape stagnation and will vacillate in the next 1-2 years between continuous stagnation and another deep recession. These conditions will force the capitalist class all over the world to continuously attack the working class and the oppressed people in the semi-colonial world.

Increasing Aggressiveness of the Imperialist Great Powers

15. US and EU imperialism are about to suffer a defeat in Afghanistan by the hands of the petty-bourgeois Taliban-led popular resistance. This however will not mean the end of the Great Powers drive to increase their domination of the semi-colonial world. Quite the opposite, we can expect an increase of imperialist aggressiveness. They are forced to do this in order to counteract their decline. As a result we will see a widening of imperialist threats and wars on a global scale.

16. This became obvious with the invasion of Mali by French imperialism. US imperialism is also building up a military base for their murderous drones in Niger. These recent events indicate two important developments:

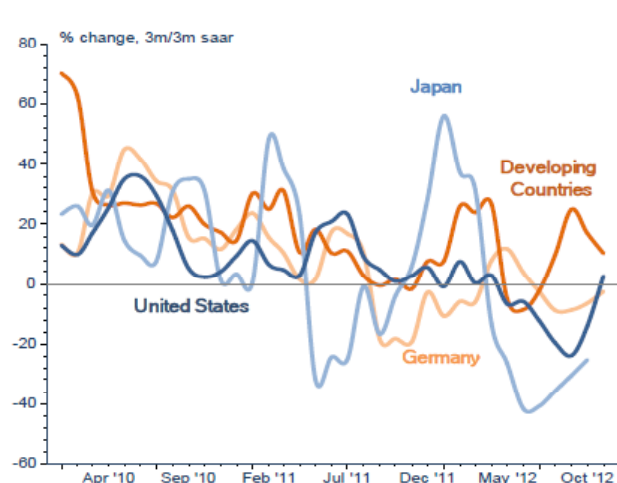
i) Conquering and controlling Western Africa has become a high priority for the imperialist powers because of its wealth of raw materials.

ii) European imperialism is now willing to invade a semi-colonial country alone and not – as it did until now – under the leadership of the USA.

17. Similarly an escalation of the threats by the old imperialist powers against North Korea is possible. This is also because threatening North Korea could be an instrument to bully emerging imperialist China. In addition there is also the remaining threat of an imperialist attack by the USA and/or by Israel against Iran as well as of another Zionist war against the Palestinian people.

18. In such conflicts Bolshevik-Communists take a clear and unambiguous stand: they are *for the defeat of the*

Graph 1: Capital goods orders in world regions
January 2010 - November 2012 ⁸



imperialist powers and the defense of the (semi-)colonial people in Mali, Afghanistan, Palestine or Iran and (the degenerated workers state) North-Korea. At the same time they warn against any illusions in the (petty-)bourgeois or Stalinist leaderships and call the workers and peasants to organize themselves independently. They have to defend their country even under the reactionary leadership of Islamism or Stalinism. But they do so with methods to advance the independent organization of the proletariat to prepare them for the future revolution against these leaderships and for the creation of their own regime of working class power. At the same time the RCIT calls the workers in the imperialist aggressor countries to wage all forms of class struggle resistance – demonstrations, strikes, sabotage etc. – in order to stop these reactionary colonial adventures and turn them into a defeat for the imperialist rulers. We unreservedly denounce the social-imperialist left-reformists (like the ex-Stalinist PCF in France – a leading party of the ELP) who openly support the imperialist wars in Mali. Equally we condemn the social-pacifist centrists like the French NPA, the CWI, the SWP/IST, the IMT or the LFI who all fail to combine their platonic denunciation of the war with taking the side of and supporting the resistance of the oppressed people against the imperialist invaders.

19. It is likely that the Great Power rivalry in East Asia will continue and could even escalate to limited military confrontations in the next years. Such conflicts between China and Japan and/or the USA over the control of the South China (or East) Sea are nearly unavoidable because of the increasing rivalry between these powers and the importance of the sea both as a trade route and as an area of important resources. As the RCIT already stated in the past, the workers should take no side in such conflicts and neither support US, Japanese or Chinese imperialism. They should follow the policy of Lenin and Liebknecht summarized in the slogans “The main enemy is at home!” and “Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!”.

The Revolution in Northern Africa and the Middle East

20. The first phase of the Arab Revolution ended with limited democratic victories like the overthrow of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Saleh and Gaddafi. In addition the Syrian workers and peasants are close to defeating the reactionary Assad dictatorship. Until now, the workers and peasants have succeeded in a number of countries to enlarge their democratic rights. Furthermore they built militant trade unions and other mass organizations (like the independent trade unions in Egypt or the left wing in the Tunisian UGTT). In Libya they partly succeeded in keeping their armed militias and in Syria there are many local mass committees and militias emerging.

21. However there are various threats to the revolution. The working class and the popular masses are still living in poverty, the capitalist class is still ruling, its state apparatus is still intact, the countries are still dominated by imperialism and the ruling class is trying to counter-strike and attack the working class. As a result the ruling *Ennahda* government tries to suppress the growing working class uprising by mobilizing Islamist thugs and by killing the left-wing politician Belaid. The Mursi regime mobilizes their forces against the growing mass protests and obviously the Assad dictatorship unleashes its murderous *Shabiha* gangs against the masses.

22. For obvious historic and geostrategic reasons, Palestine remains a most central issue of the Arab Revolution. Already in November 2012 we could see the strength of the Palestinian Resistance when it heroically defended the Gaza strip successfully against the Zionist army. Given the background of this political and military victory and strengthened by the wave of the Arab Revolution, it is possible that the Palestinian liberation struggle could culminate into a *new Intifada*.

23. All this demonstrates the unfinished character of the Arab Revolution. To be more precise, we are in the stage of an *unfinished democratic revolution*. As Trotsky

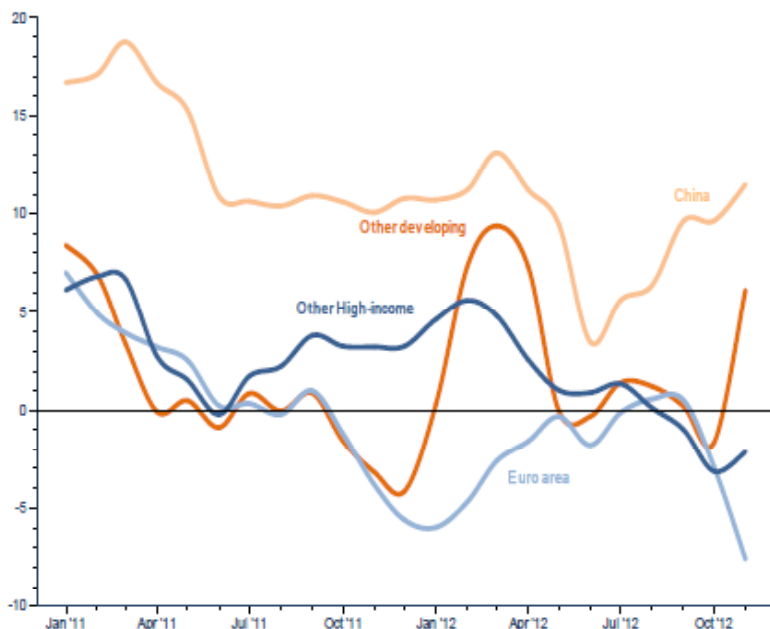
Table 1: Growth Rate of Gross Fixed Capital Formation in USA, Japan and EU-15, 2007-2012 (in % p.a.)⁷

	USA	Japan	EU-15
2007	-1.6%	+0.3%	+5.5%
2008	-5.8%	-4.1%	-1.9%
2009	-16.1%	-10.6%	-12.8%
2010	-0.5%	+0.1%	+0.4%
2011	+4.0%	+0.8%	+1.1%
2012	+5.7%	+3.2%	-2.5%

Table 2: Government Debt in USA, Japan and EU-15, 2007 and 2012 as Share of GDP¹³

	USA	Japan	EU-15
2007	67.5%	183.0%	60.7%
2012	109.9%	240.6%	89.9%

Graph 2: Industrial production in world regions January 2011 - November 2012⁹



elaborated in his theory of the *Permanent Revolution*, the democratic revolution – the tasks of eradicating imperialist domination, national liberation, equal rights for women and youth, secular republic, abolition of the bonapartist state apparatus, etc. – can only be finished in the form of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. In other words, the democratic revolution must be combined with the tasks of the *socialist revolution* – the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the smashing of the capitalist state apparatus – and the creation of a *workers government*, based on the poor peasants and the urban poor who are organized in workers and popular councils and militias.

24. The main obstacle for this is the terrible crisis of leadership of the working class. The workers and oppressed are often led by Islamist forces, by pro-Western liberals like al-Baradei or the Syrian National Coalition or by petty-bourgeois leftists like the left-Nasserist Hamdeen Sabahi in Egypt or the Hoxhaist PCOT in Tunisia. They all, in one way or another, shackle the working class to sectors of the bourgeoisie instead of driving forward the formation of independent councils and militias in order to prepare the masses for an armed insurrection to take power in their own hands.

Asia: The Proletarian Giant is Awakening

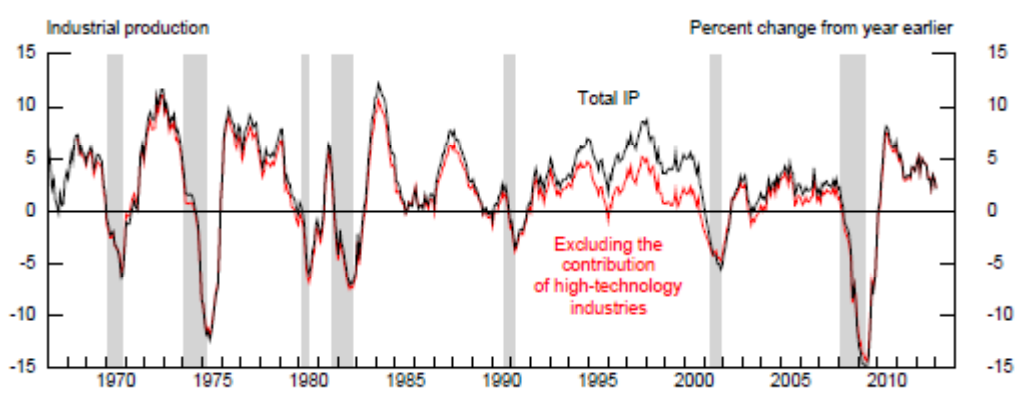
25. As we have stated repeatedly both the capitalist value production as well as the proletariat move to the South and this means in particular to Asia. It is therefore not surprising that we see an upswing of the class struggle in this region. In particular *India* has seen three major country-wide one-day and two-day general strikes in the last two and a half years with the participation of about

100 million workers each (September 2010, February 2012, and February 2013). This demonstrates the growing class consciousness and organizational strength of the Indian proletariat. In addition we saw a wave of militant demonstrations to protest the rape and murder of the 23-year-old woman Jyoti Singh Pandey as well as the patriarchal violence against women in general. The mass protests following this rape showed the possibility and urgency of building a *revolutionary women's movement*. There is also a continuing peasant struggle under the leadership of the Naxalite Maoists as well as national liberation struggles in the North (Kashmir!) and North-East of the country. And we saw also a general strike of about 50 million small shop-owners against the looming market entry and dominance of foreign supermarket-chains such as Walmart. The dominance of the trade unions by the CPI and CPM bureaucracy and the Maoist leadership amongst the peasants remains the central obstacle for a revolutionary class struggle perspective independent of the bourgeoisie.

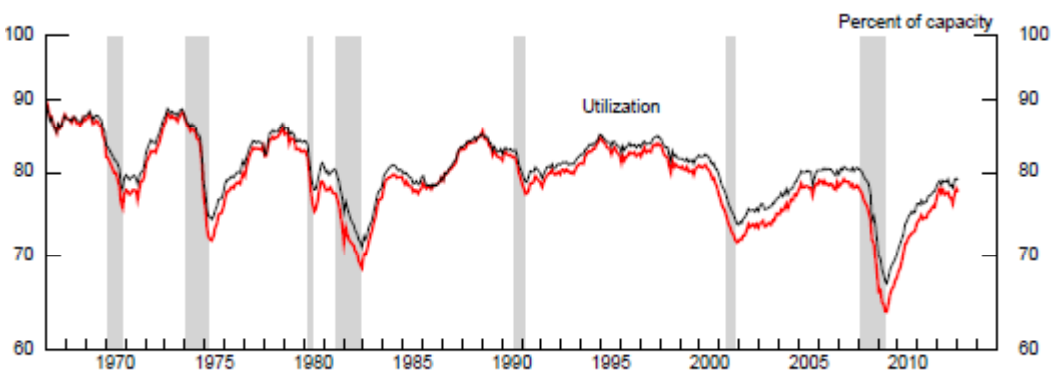
26. In *Pakistan* the workers movement is weaker but there too have been several struggles. In addition there have been important progressive movements against the sectarian killings of the Hazara community, the struggle of the young doctors, the national liberation movement in Balochistan and the anti-imperialist resistance against the murderous drone attacks of US imperialism. Here too the struggle of the workers and oppressed is impeded by the leaderships which are either close to the bourgeois PPP, the liberal Pakistan *Tehreek-e-Insaf* of Imran Khan, the Islamists or the left-reformist AWP.

27. In *Nepal* the Maoist UCPN(M) split in 2012 as a result of the total capitulation of Prachanda and his allies to the bourgeoisie. However the new CPN(M), while uniting

Graph 3: Industrial Production in USA 1967-2012 ¹⁰



Graph 4: Capacity Utilization of US Industry 1967-2012 ¹¹



thousands of honest fighters from the working class and the rural poor, has no new perspective instead of acting as parliamentary opposition, launching limited street actions to create pressure on the government or even to retreat from the cities towards a renewal of the rural guerilla struggle.

28. The working class movement and the Tamil national liberation movement in *Sri Lanka* still suffer from the historic defeat in 2009 when the Bonapartist regime of Rajapaksa slaughtered tens of thousands of Tamils and annihilated most of the LTTE cadre. Nevertheless Rajapaksa's shameless drive to increase his Bonapartist powers evermore combined with the impoverishment of the masses will provoke mass protests both amongst the Tamil as well as the Sinhala workers and poor.

29. In *Indonesia* there has been a massive upswing of workers strikes and demonstrations in the last period. In October 2012, the country saw the first general strike in 50 years in which more than 2 million workers, closing 1000 factories, participated. The government had to agree to raise the minimum wage by 44% to about \$200. But the protests are continuing with the demand that the government provides better health care and pensions.

30. The Asian proletariat is young, growing and increasingly militant. In opposite to Europe or North America it often faces an openly repressive ruling class. A program for the *renewal of the trade unions* – driving out the bureaucracy, independence from the state, rank & file movement, etc. – respectively the building of *new independent trade unions* are of vital importance. While there are two reformist bourgeois workers parties in India, the working class in Asia is mostly without any formal political workers party. The struggle for a *new Workers Party based on a revolutionary program* is therefore of decisive

importance. Bolshevik-Communists combine the call for such a party with the struggle for a program of Permanent Revolution which understands the huge importance of the democratic questions and integrates them in the program for the path of revolutionary workers power.

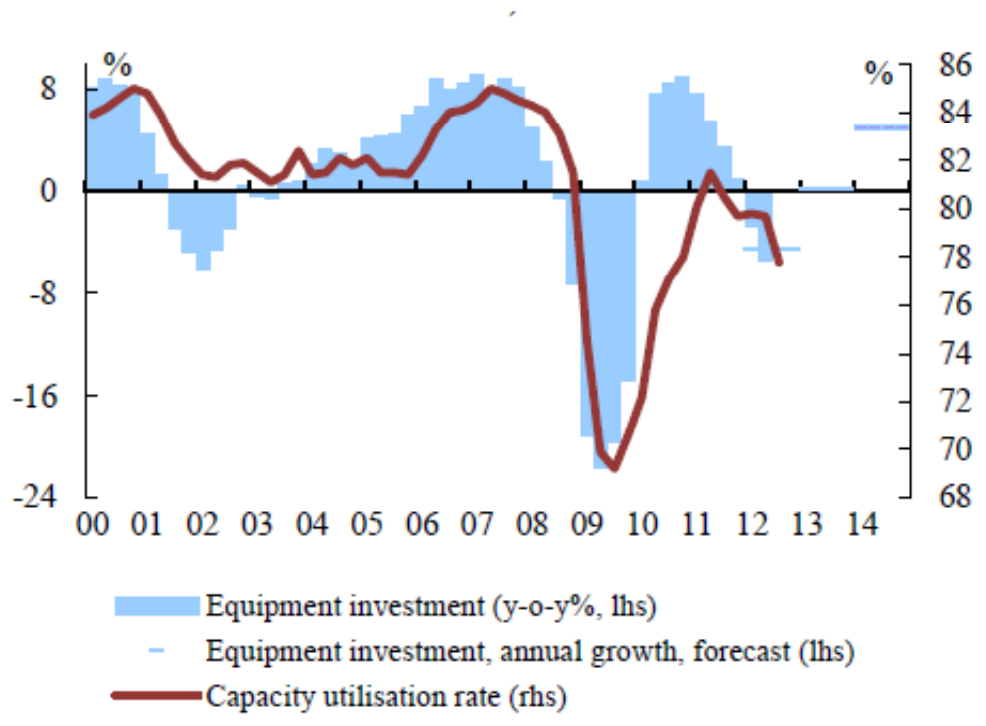
Chinese imperialism continues to gain strength

31. As we showed in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*, China is an emerging imperialist Great Power. ⁶ It has become a leading industrial producer and trading nation. Its monopoly capital increasingly plays a central role in the world economy: Already China is the Number 2 or Number 3 (depending on different methods of calculation) county of origin of the worlds' biggest capitalist corporations as well as amongst the globally richest capitalists. It has become a leading foreign investor in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Additionally China already has the second biggest military budget. It is also the fifth biggest nuclear power and the sixth-biggest arms-exporting country.

32. China's ruling class seems to have been able to resolve the recent faction struggle between a more state-capitalist orientated group around the former mayor of Chongqing official Bo Xilai and a more private capital orientated group around the Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao leadership. The conflict ended in favor of the latter as the selection of Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang as President and Premier, respectively, demonstrates.

33. The relative strength of China's ruling class rests mainly on the super-exploitation and oppression of the massively growing proletariat. Based on this, the capitalists – both Chinese and foreign – can extract an enormous surplus value for capital accumulation. While foreign imperialist monopolies profited from this super-exploitation

Graph 5: Equipment Investment and Capacity Utilization, Euro Area, 2000-2012 ¹²



of the working class, it was and is the Chinese bourgeoisie who is the main beneficiary.

34. It is therefore not surprising that mass protests both of the workers and of the rural people have substantially risen in the past years in China. Between 2006 and 2010 the number of so-called *mass incidents* tripled from 60.000 to 180.000. It culminated in the local mass Uprising in Wukan in late 2011. In addition to this the oppressed nations in East-Turkestan and Tibet continue to show resistance against the Han-dominated ruling class. The Stalinist-Capitalist regime continues to keep power. But sooner or later the massive strengthening of the proletariat, the increasing super-exploitation and the continuing open suppression by the regime will lead to revolutionary explosions. The struggle for *class struggle-orientated and democratic trade unions* which are independent of the Stalinist-capitalist regime as well as of the US social-imperialist AFL-CIO will be of particular importance.

Sub-Saharan Africa: The Working Class and Oppressed Fight Back

35. The young proletariat of this second biggest continent is of increasing importance for the international class struggle. This has been shown not only by the leading role of the workers and poor in Northern Africa when they initiated the Arab Revolution in early 2011. This has also become visible in the extraordinary heroic and militant strike of the *South African* miners in Marikana which scored a victory despite the brutal suppression by the murderous police. This strike also showed once more the true nature of the ANC Popular Front government and in particular the Stalinist CPSA. The Stalinists participate in the capitalist ANC government and play a leading role in the COSATU and NUM trade union which violently opposed the miner's strike. The independent organization of the working class in action committees, the struggle to break the unions from the popular front and the formation of an independent Workers Party based on a revolutionary program are indispensable parts of the revolutionary program in South Africa.

36. In *Zimbabwe* the reactionary Mugabe regime tries to stick to power by integrating the popular-frontist party MDC and handing over the post of Prime Minister to MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. This shows once more the reactionary nature both of the fake-"anti-imperialist" Mugabe regime (befriended by the Bolivarian "socialists" in Latin America) as well as of the MDC. Currently the ruling ZANU-PF and its minority partner MDC are mobilizing support for a new Constitution. This constitution, indeed the whole process of its creation, is a farce. Breaking the trade unions away from any support of bourgeois parties like the ZANU-PF or the MDC and winning them – against the resistance of the corrupt labor bureaucracy – for the foundation of an independent Workers Party based on a revolutionary program is a key question of revolutionaries in Zimbabwe.

37. Control over *Somalia* is an important issue for the imperialist powers given the geo-strategic position of the country on the Eastern corner of the African continent. US imperialism already tried to occupy the country in the early 1990's but suffered a humiliating defeat by Somali rebels which was made into a film in "*Black Hawk Down*".

Currently the imperialist powers have, on one hand sent a number of navy ships to the Somali coast, while on the other hand they ordered the imperialist puppet regime in Ethiopia and other states in the region to send their troops (called AMISOM) into Somalia in order to drive out the Islamist-led rebels and to stabilize Somalia's puppet-regime, the TFG. Their goal is to transform the country in a subjugated imperialist (semi-)colony. Revolutionaries call for the defeat of the imperialist forces and the local allies of the TFG and AMISOM and for the military victory of the rebels (mostly Islamist-led). At the same time they support all efforts to organize the working class, peasantry and the poor independently of the all bourgeois and reactionary forces (including the Islamist Al Shabaab rebels) to organize them for the struggle for socialism.

Class Struggle in Latin America and the Obstacle of Bolivarism

38. Latin America has been a continent where in the past decade the ideas of socialism and anti-imperialism gained huge popularity. Reformist (PT in Brazil) or left-bourgeois populist forces (Chavez, Correa, and Morales) won repeated elections and continue – via their bureaucratic control of the trade unions and mass organizations – to hold a (mostly passive) popular support. Challenges to these forces from the centrist left have remained weak (PSTU and PSOL in Brazil) or discredited themselves by their open collaboration with the bourgeoisie (Chirino/UIT in Venezuela). At the same time there are important developments which show the possibility for an upswing of class struggle like the general strike (led by the CGT-Moyano bureaucracy) and the Hunger Uprising in late 2012 in Argentina or the strong electoral results of revolutionary opposition lists amongst the miners in Huanuni in Bolivia. These developments show, among other things, the urgency for revolutionaries to fight for a strategy for the proletariat to rally the peasantry as well as the urban and rural poor in order to fight against the influence of reformist populism in the name of Bolivarism.

39. Given the weakening of US imperialism and the relative economic dynamic of the continent, the Latin American semi-colonial bourgeoisie were able, to a certain degree, to strengthen their position in the past decade. It could allow for certain concessions as part of the populist programs of the bourgeois Bolivarians Chavez (or now Maduro), Correa, or Morales. But sooner or later imperialism will attempt to increase its control over the continent and the Latin American bourgeoisie will also try to attack and drive back any limited social programs. Despite Bolivarism's bourgeois policy and its adaption to imperialism, this can lead to confrontations between imperialism and major sectors of the domestic bourgeoisie on one hand and left-bourgeois populist governments on the other hand. Why? Because the latter are under certain pressures from the popular masses. We have seen such confrontations already in the last years like the coup d'état in Honduras against Manuel Zelaya in 2009 or against Fernando Lugo in Paraguay in 2012. Another danger is imperialist warmongering as we have seen by Britain as it sends a nuclear submarine to the Malvinas Islands to deter Argentina. Britain also organized a charade referendum amongst its colonial settlers on the Malvinas in order to strengthen the

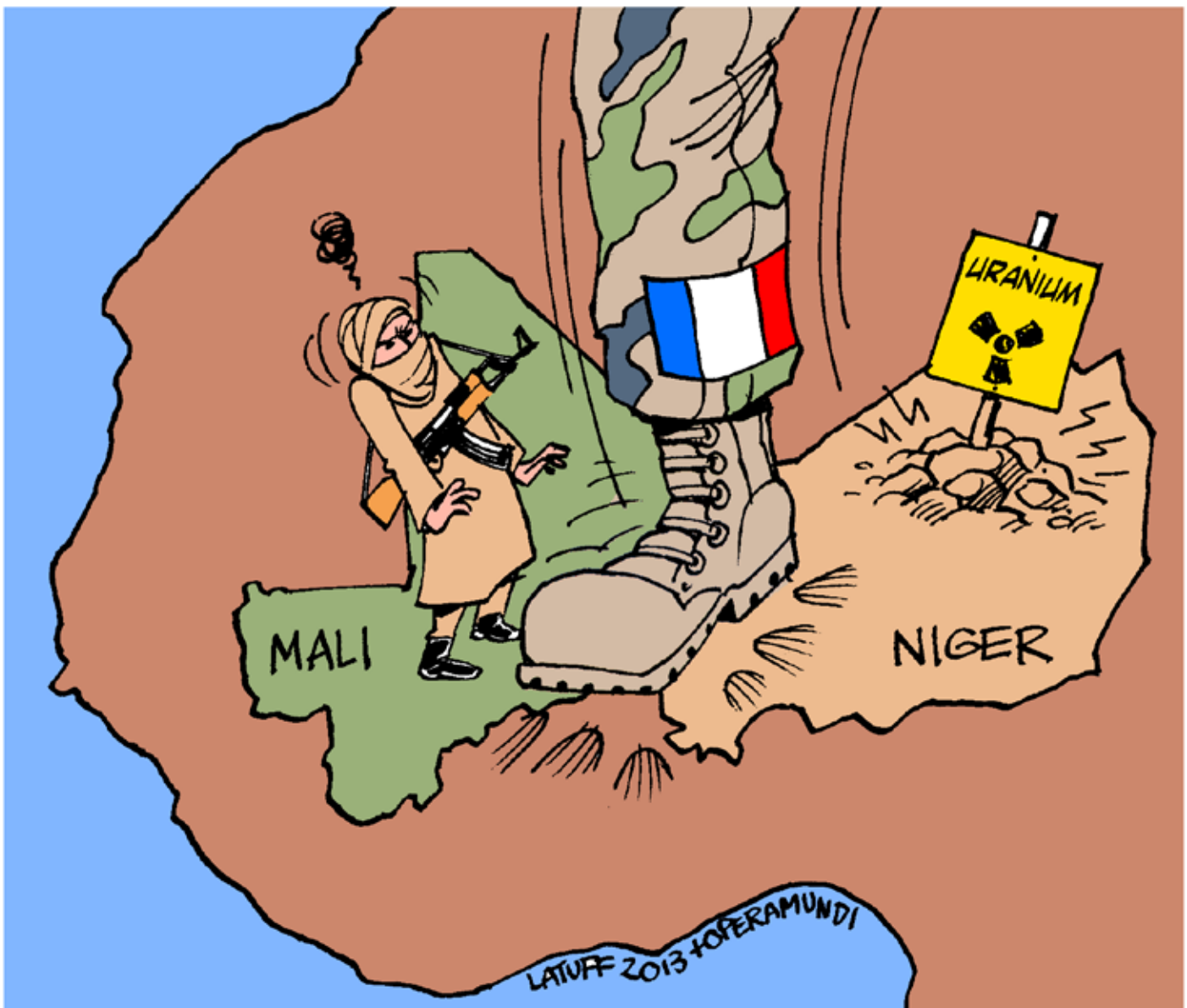
legitimacy of its hold on the islands. The real goal of British imperialism is to keep the Malvinas as an outpost in front of Latin America and in order to get access to the new found oil fields in front of the Argentine coast. In such situations Bolshevik-Communists call for mass struggles and a united front against imperialism and the local pro-imperialist forces to defeat them. At the same time they stress that the working class must not trust the bourgeois Bolivarian forces and must organize independently of them in order to take power in their own hands. Indeed the strategic task in Latin America is the formation of a revolutionary workers movement which is independent of the Bolivarians or any other sector of the bourgeoisie and which is based on independent working class and popular committees and militias.

Europe: Capitalists Wave of Attacks against the Working Class, Imperialist Drive to Super-State and rising Class Struggle

40. The imperialist European Union is marked by the economic and political effects of the capitalist crisis. The economic effects hit the weaker capitalist countries hardest. As a result the strongest monopolies and Great Powers try

to subordinate the weaker capitalist countries in Europe. At the same time these Great Powers – in particular Germany, France and Britain – increase their rivalry against each other. However the imperialist bourgeoisie is faced with the alternative to go down divided or to increase the exploitation of the workers and the semi-colonies by going forward towards a more pan-European imperialist super-state. Of course the latter can only be formed and exist under the leadership of Germany in alliance with France. This is why despite all the discussions over the end of the Euro, etc. the European governments continued to create various structures to Europeanize the fiscal, financial and economic policy in the past years. The need for a pan-European organization of the class struggle, of the revolutionary struggle *to smash the European Union* in order to replace it with the *United Socialist States of Europe* increase in importance evermore.

41. There is a certain unevenness in the class struggle development in Europe. While in 2009/10 there were mass movements of the workers and youth both in Western as well as in Southern Europe, this has changed in the last years. At present Greece, Spain and now Bulgaria are clearly at the forefront of the mass resistance against the capitalist crisis. *Greece* has already seen 20 general strikes



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

since 2010. In semi-colonial Greece the imperialist plundering of the country takes such proportions that the government might soon not be in a position to pay the salaries and pensions. The country might face a social explosion and elements of civil war. Already the government is losing trust in the reliability of its armed forces and starts to employ the notorious Blackwater mercenaries to prepare for a working class uprising. Clearly, Greece remains in a pre-revolutionary phase which could transform into a revolutionary situation.

42. *Spain*, an imperialist country albeit not of the first order, is also increasingly shaken by the capitalist crisis and the banks' desire to plunder the country. As a result there are an increasing number of class struggles – country-wide one-day general strikes, the heroic march of the miners of Asturias, the spontaneous mass demonstrations, the *indignados* movement etc. In addition there are major mass mobilizations in Catalonia and the Basque Country against national discrimination by the Spanish oppressor state. There are strong indications that the majority of the Basque and the Catalan people want to leave the Spanish State and form their own republics. When the majority of a nation wants to have its own state, the Bolshevik-Communists support their demand and combine it with the perspective of working class power. Under such circumstances the RCIT says “*For an independent Workers Republic of Catalonia and of the Basque Country!*” In semi-colonial countries like Greece and Bulgaria Bolshevik-Communists fight for the exit from the EU and combine this with the perspective of working class power.

43. In addition to these issues one should also take into account the increasing powers of the repressive state apparatus, the growing importance of migrants and the national oppression of them, etc. In the face of these developments it becomes obvious that the democratic questions and the program of Permanent Revolution are of vital importance not only for the semi-colonial countries but also for the imperialist countries.

44. The high electricity prices and the increasing impoverishment have led the working class in *Bulgaria* in February 2013 to launch mass protests against the conservative government of Boiko Borissov as well as against the foreign multinationals. The repeated street confrontations and the overthrow of the government have opened a pre-revolutionary situation. Such a development could spread to other Eastern European countries too.

45. The central problem remains that the workers movement remains under the control of the labor bureaucracy. The mass protests remain mostly under the leadership of the bureaucrats. There are various attempts to build local committees in Greece and other countries. There are even steps towards workers control or workers self-management (like *Vio.Me* in Greece). However such steps of rank and file organization are still few and locally isolated. Building and spreading action councils in enterprises, neighborhoods and schools as well as armed self-defense units are a central part of the revolutionary strategy in those countries. This must be connected with a merciless criticism but tactically flexible united front tactics towards the existing bureaucratic leaderships of the workers movement. Here one also has to differentiate between the old and dumb bureaucracy like PASOK in Greece or the PSOE in Spain on one hand and the verbally

more radical, left-reformist parties like SYRIZA (who rallied many workers electorally behind it) and the KKE in Greece or the *Izquierda Unida* in Spain. The latter can better delude the vanguard workers, which is why these parties are more dangerous and have to be fought consistently by revolutionaries (which includes the united front tactics and critical support at elections.)

Russia: Emerging Imperialist Power with a Bonapartist Regime

46. Russia emerged as an imperialist power around the beginning of the 2000s. While it is weaker than for example the USA or even China, it is certainly a serious rival for other Great Powers, particularly in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East (Syria!). Not dissimilar to the old Tsarist Russia, it brutally oppresses the national minorities in the Caucasus and tries to subordinate countries like the Ukraine or the Central Asian republics. It is also the home of big monopoly capitals like *Gazprom*, *Rosneft* or *RUSAL* who are global leading corporations in their fields (oil, gas, aluminum). Given its character as an *emerging* imperialist power – coming from a former Stalinist state – their rhythm of capital accumulation is not identical with the old imperialist powers. While it suffered a sharp recession in 2009, there was also a stronger upswing of industrial production and gross fixed capital formation since then. This whole development delivered the material basis for the creation and relative stability of the Bonapartist regime of Putin since it came into existence in 1999.

47. The combination of the historic defeats for the working class with the restoration of capitalism in 1991/92 as well as the massive oppression by the Putin regime has left the working class in Russia in a weak position. However since the end of 2011 there has been a new upsurge of mass protests against the regime. These protests are dominated by people from the middle class and led by mostly bourgeois politicians like Alexei Navalny or Boris Nemtsov albeit there are also more radical, semi-Stalinist elements like Sergei Udaltsov's AKM (“*Vanguard of Red Youth*”). Surely they also have the sympathy of some oligarchs who are dissatisfied with Putin as well as by Western imperialist powers. However, these protests are presently the only mass movement which opposes the increasingly authoritarian regime and the suppression of democratic rights. If the regime succeeds in clamping them down it will strengthen the rule of the “new tsar” Putin as it will weaken the working class and its democratic rights to organize and fight. Revolutionaries in Russia therefore should critically support these mass protests and participate in it as an independent, revolutionary force. They should however sharply denounce their leadership and fight for an independent strategy which is orientated towards the working class and which focuses on organizing workers and popular action committees in the enterprises, neighborhoods and schools. Revolutionaries fight for a program of socialist revolution. Such a program includes also a consistent anti-imperialist stand in solidarity with the right of national self-determination of the Caucasian people and their desire for national liberation. The RCIT supports the oppressed people's resistance against the Russian occupiers.

Class Contradictions in the heart of the Imperialist Beast: Japan and North America

48. The capitalist crisis has led to a massive impoverishment of the *US* working class but it also dramatically affected sectors of the middle class (housing crisis!). However, the working class' response was small because of the workers movements' dominance by the extremely corrupt labor bureaucracy. The *US* working class remains in a difficult situation. The trade union membership is continuously declining – it reached a new low in 2012 with 11.3%. At the same time we saw the dynamic *Occupy movement* which inspired many workers. And we also saw militant struggles like the longshoremen led by the ILWU Union. While there was a heroic Latino migrant workers movement in 2006 and afterwards, the labor bureaucracy kept them outside of the unions. At the same time the extreme right-wing forces – the so-called *Tea Party* – became an important reactionary grass roots movement. Faced with these maniacs and the dumb Republican presidential candidate Romney, many workers didn't vote at all or preferred Obama as "the lesser evil". Renewing the trade unions via an orientation to the lower-strata majority of the working class (in particular the black and the migrant workers) and a sharp struggle against the bureaucracy is of highest urgency. Of similar importance is the support for initiatives of the mass organizations of the Black, Latino and other oppressed communities. All such initiatives should fuse into the formation of a new *Workers Party based on a revolutionary program* in order to break the subordination of the workers movement towards the bourgeois Democratic Party.

49. In Quebec we saw an impressive militant student movement as well as an electoral upswing of the reformist NDP in the whole of *Canada*. Here too, the central task remains the building of a revolutionary workers party in order to avoid another sell-out and disorientation by the left-reformist leadership of the NDP.

50. The *Japanese* workers movement has gone through a long, difficult phase after the strategic defeats of the railway workers in the mid-1980s (similar to the effects of the defeat of the miners' strike in Britain in 1984/85). However there are several signs of a new upswing of the class struggle. In reaction to the criminal reckless and pro-nuclear policy of the government after the Fukushima catastrophe in spring 2011, there have been repeated mass demonstrations of up to 200.000 people. This is also reflected in the – albeit – small electoral progress of the only bourgeois workers party, the left-reformist Communist Party, which got 7.9% of the votes at the elections in December 2012.

The Crisis of Leadership in the Workers Movement and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists

51. Given the limited space of this document we are obliged to outline only the most important general developments of the state of the workers movement as well as the situation in a selected number of countries. It is obvious that the tempo of the class struggle accelerates much faster than the tempo of accumulation of class struggle-orientated workers organizations. Hence the class consciousness and the class organizations lag far behind the struggle. This is not surprising in itself since the transition to a higher level

of development passes through the destruction of the old historical forms of the workers movement. *We are still more in the destructive phase of this dialectical development than in the creation phase.*

52. This is first and foremost the result of the *still existing dominance of the workers movement* (trade unions, reformist parties etc.) *by the labor bureaucracy*. This caste is by its nature linked to capitalism and by its essence incapable to drive the class struggle forward. They do everything in their power to stop the workers and oppressed from building organs of self-organization (action councils, armed militias etc.). They desire to keep their privileged positions at the top of the workers movement as well as in the parasitic body of the bourgeois state apparatus. The continuing dominance of the workers movement by this bureaucracy is a chain which decisively hampers the working class struggle. The Bolshevik-Communists declare that the workers movement must liberate itself from this bureaucracy and oust them out from their ranks in order to liberate itself from capitalist exploitation and oppression. Revolutionaries must fight these bureaucrats with sharp and clear propaganda and agitation as well as a flexible application of united front tactics (which must include systematic work in the trade unions and can also include critical support at elections or even entryism in such parties.)

53. The advance of the capitalist crisis and of the class struggle have altered and improved the conditions for the working class to build its own organizations independent of the bureaucracy – above all a *revolutionary combat party*. The crisis massively shattered and weakened the credibility of the bureaucrats' policy in the eyes of the masses – its delusion of reforming capitalism and of a gradualist way towards equality and justice. On the other hand we see spontaneous local forms of self-organization as well as – often libertarian influenced – movements like the *indignados* and *Occupy* movement.

54. The accelerated crisis and class struggle in the new historic period also exposed the incapability of centrism to understand these developments, to elaborate a revolutionary program and to transmit this into the class struggle. Since centrism adapts itself to the labor bureaucracy, the latter's decline also massively affects centrism and throws it into crisis. This explains the seemingly contradictory phenomena that the centrist organizations – despite their revolutionary rhetoric – could not grow in the new revolutionary period but rather went into stagnation, crisis and decline. (See for example the recent crisis of the British SWP/IST or of the French NPA).

55. As a result of all this we have seen in the last years a new shift to the right of centrism and left-reformism. Historically speaking we see the *death agony of reformism and centrism*. This does however not mean that reformism and centrism will simply dissolve. The bureaucratic apparatus has a certain strength which can keep its position for quite some time if it is not consciously attacked and replaced by the revolutionary workers vanguard. Furthermore new forces of left-reformism or centrism can emerge which appear to sectors of the masses as something new and authentic (like SYRIZA in Greece did in 2012). Only the formation of a revolutionary mass workers party can eliminate the plague of reformism and centrism.

56. As a consequence the Bolshevik-Communists

have no hope in any self-healing power of the milieu of left-reformism or centrism. We therefore reject an orientation towards this milieu which is so strongly affected by the complacent, passive and aristocratic prejudices and modes of thinking. *The only possibility for a revolutionizing of the workers movement is the organization of new layers of the massively growing world proletariat.* This means first and foremost *the proletariat of the semi-colonial world and China as well as the lower strata of the proletariat in the old imperialist metropolises.* Only these lower and middle layers of the working class – in other words the *‘mass type’* and not the *‘aristocratic type’* of the workers – can provide the human material out of which new generations of revolutionary fighters can develop. The militant textile workers in Egypt’s Mahalla, the revolutionary militias in Misrata (Libya) and Syria, the Asturias miners, the impoverished public sector workers in Greece, the militant youth in the streets of Athens, Barcelona and on Cairo’s Tahrir Square, the migrant and poor workers revolting in Tottenham and Buenos Aires, the super-exploited workers in the Indian and Chinese factories etc. – these are the fighting layers which represent the face of the working class’ future. Therefore the Bolshevik-Communists orientate to those new, militant and growing layers of the working class instead of the old, agonizing sectors of the reformist or centrist left and their basis, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the labor aristocracy. We are determined to fight for a revolutionary program amongst these layers in order to organize them on such a basis.

57. It is because of its orientation to the labor bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie intelligentsia that the bulk of the centrist and left-reformist milieu is increasingly poisoned by pessimism, skepticism, moaning about the lack of “left unity”, hysterical renunciation of the “Leninist hyper-centralism” and the “vanguard party” concept as well as praising of liquidationism. Authentic revolutionaries however orientate towards the new, militant layers from the working class and the oppressed who are looking for a program and a strategy to fight against exploitation and oppression. This is where our optimism and firmness stems from. Those who wish to develop in a revolutionary direction must break from an orientation towards the centrist and left-reformist swamp and look for rooting themselves in the healthy, militant proletarian milieu.

58. This does not mean that revolutionaries should ignore the reformist parties or the centrist groups. The policy of the united front tactic remains in full force as well as the need for a hard struggle to remove these revisionists’ influence in the workers vanguard. But in the first line the RCIT orientates towards new militants and initiatives from the ranks of the workers and the oppressed. From these layers only, new promising forces and a new dynamic will come. And such developments might affect healthier elements from the ranks of left-reformism and centrism and help them to break with the revisionists’ rotten method.

59. Revolutionaries have to understand in depth that not only has capitalism entered a new historic period of massive instability and sharp turns, but the international workers movement has too. No stone is left unturned. Those forces, who don’t understand the character of the period and its corresponding tasks, are doomed to degenerate more and more and get pushed to the right. For those forces however, who are coming closer to an understand-

ing of the sharply antagonistic nature of the present period, who are willing to join the masses in their struggles – in particular the lower strata of the working class and the oppressed – without arrogantly sneering about their “backward consciousness” and who are at the same time determined to fight intransigently for the revolutionary program and who ruthlessly attack the reformist and centrist traitors – those forces can revolve themselves and play a healthy and utterly positive role in the struggle to build the new World Party of Socialist Revolution. Being aware of the limitations of historic analogies, one has to see that to a certain degree the present period bears similarities to the years after the outbreak of World War One in 1914. In this period the workers movement went through sharp crisis, splits and transformations. In this period the rottenness of the centrist majority of the Second International – which existed already before 1914 but was less obvious – came to full light. The orientation and tactics of Lenin and his supporters are highly instructive for the Bolshevik-Communists today.

60. The RCIT seeks to discuss and collaborate with all those organizations and activists who share such a general orientation. Indeed we consider it of utmost importance to rally those forces that show in words and deeds that they move into such a direction. Clearly there will be various differences which the RCIT might have with other organizations and activists. Similarly Lenin and the Bolsheviks had various differences inside the *Zimmerwald Left* and the early *Communist International* as Trotsky and the ICL did inside the *Bloc of Four* and indeed even inside the *Fourth International*. Such differences must be openly acknowledged and debated. They must however not constitute obstacles for serious attempts to move forward and to test in comradely discussion and joint practice the possibilities to fight in a common organization for the building of the *World Party of Socialist Revolution* (which will be the *Fifth Workers International* in our opinion). The RCIT will launch initiatives in order to accelerate such a process in order to build a stronger, authentic revolutionary international organization.

Footnotes

- (1) Evgenij Preobrazhensky: *The Decline of Capitalism* (1931); Translated by Richard Day (1983), p. 75
- (2) FEDERAL RESERVE statistical release: *Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization*, 15. February 2013, p. 10
- (3) See Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South* (2013), Chapter 3
- (4) See Michael Roberts: *Deleveraging and profitability again*, 25.2.2013, <http://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/deleveraging-and-profitability-again/>
- (5) See Eugen Varga: *Aufstieg oder Niedergang des Kapitalismus* (1924), pp. 17-20
- (6) See Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South* (2013), Chapter 10
- (7) European Commission: *Statistical Annex of European Economy*, Autumn 2012, p. 69
- (8) Worldbank: *Global Economic Prospects January 2013*, p. 9
- (9) Worldbank: *Global Economic Prospects January 2013*, p. 10
- (10) FEDERAL RESERVE statistical release: *Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization*, 15. February 2013, p. 7
- (11) FEDERAL RESERVE statistical release: *Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization*, 15. February 2013, p. 5
- (12) European Commission: *Economic Forecast Autumn 2012, EUROPEAN ECONOMY 7/2012*, p. 19
- (13) European Commission: *Statistical Annex of European Economy*, Autumn 2012, p. 185 ■

From the Archives of Marxism

George Plekhanov: Dialectic and Logic (1908)

Introduction from the Editorial Board:

The following article has been written by Georgi Plekhanov. It gives a useful outline of the materialistic conception of dialectics.

Plekhanov was rightly called the founder of Marxism in Russia and played a major role in defending, developing and applying Marxism as a *Weltanschauung* (world view). He was born in 1856 and died in 1918. Plekhanov was the leader of the *Group for the Emancipation of Labor* – the first Marxist organization in Russia.

As a political leader Plekhanov underwent a contradictory development which started as a revolutionary star and ended as a “*greatest tragedy*”, as Trotsky put it in his memorial address in 1918. He was a central leader – on the side of Lenin – in creating the cadre around the revolutionary paper *Iskra* (“Spark”) at the beginning of the 20th century. But after the split of the Russian Marxists into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903 he went to the side of the latter and successively degenerated – albeit not in a linear way. During World War One 1914-18 he became a defender of the imperialist fatherland and sharply opposed the October Revolution in 1917. It was symbolic that he died when a new epoch – the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat – had just opened.

However, this must not lead modern day Marxists to ignore the writings of Plekhanov in his revolutionary period and his theoretical and philosophical works in particular. They remain an important contribution to the Marxist arsenal. It was not by accident that Lenin formed a bloc with Plekhanov to defend Marxist philosophy against the Machists and other revisionists in 1908-1910. Plekhanov had a major influence on Marxist philosophers like Abram Deborin who became the *primus inter pares* amongst the dialectical materialist school in the USSR in the 1920s.

Surely, Plekhanov’s philosophical writings are not without weaknesses. In his article *On the Question of Dialectics*, written in 1915, Lenin remarked that Plekhanov had not paid sufficient attention towards understanding dialectics in regards to the theory of cognition.

Despite such weaknesses, Plekhanov as a philosopher stood clearly above the other Marxists of his time. In the debate with Bernstein in the German Social Democratic Party at the end of the 19th century, Plekhanov understood and intervened much better than Kautsky, for example. In a speech in 1921, Lenin – in outlining the concept of the materialist dialectic – stressed that all communists should study Plekhanov’s philosophical writings since they were the best on this issue: “*Let me add in parenthesis for the benefit of young Party members that you cannot hope to become a real, intelligent Communist without making a study—and I mean study—of all of Plekhanov’s philosophical writings, because nothing better has been written on Marxism anywhere in the world.*” (V. I. Lenin: *Once again on the Trade Unions, the current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and*

Bukharin (1921); in: LCW Vol. 32, p. 94)

Those, who later dismissed Plekhanov’s philosophical writings by referring to his political degeneration, usually ended up in the quagmire of idealism and mechanism like Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, Anton Pannekoek or – much worse – the muddle-heads of the so-called Frankfurt School.

The article was written by Plekhanov in 1908. It was published in the German language as an appendix to his book *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*. It was published in English by International Publishers, New York, in 1928. We have taken the text from the Marxist Internet Archive. <http://marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/xx/dialectic.htm>.

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The philosophy of Marx and Engels is not only a materialist philosophy, it is dialectical materialism. Two objections are, however, raised against this doctrine. We are told, first of all, that dialectic itself is not proof against criticism; and, secondly, that materialism is incompatible with dialectic. Let us examine these objections.

The reader will probably remember how Bernstein explained what he termed the “errors” of Marx and Engels. They were due, he said, to the disastrous influence of dialectic. Customary logic holds fast to the formula: “Yes is yes, and no is no”; whereas dialectic has a formula of a diametrically opposite kind: “Yes is no, and no is yes.” Detesting this latter formula, Bernstein declares that it leads us into temptation and involves us in the most dangerous errors.

Probably most readers who pass by the name of “educated” will agree with Bernstein, seeing that, on the face of it, the formula “Yes is no, and no is yes” is in flagrant contradiction with the fundamental and immutable laws of thought. That is the aspect of the question we have now to examine.

The fundamental laws of logic are three in number:

- (1) The law of identity;
- (2) The law of contradiction;
- (3) The law of the excluded middle.

The law of identity (*principium identitatis*) declares: A is A (*omne subjectum est praedicatum sui*), or A=A.

The law of contradiction, A is not not-A, is nothing more than the negative form of the first law.

According to the law of the excluded middle (*principium exclusi tertii*), two contradictory propositions, mutually exclusive, cannot both of them be true. In fact, either A is B, or else A is not B. If one of these propositions is true, the other is necessarily false; and conversely. There is not, and cannot be, any middle course here.

Ueberweg points out that the law of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle can be unified in the following logical rule: To every definite question, understood in a definite sense, as to whether a given characteristic attaches

to a given object, we must reply either yes or no; we cannot answer yes and no.

It is certainly hard to raise any objection to this. But if the statement is true, that implies that the formula "Yes is no, and no is yes" must be erroneous. Nothing will be left for us, then, but to laugh, like Bernstein, and to raise our hands to heaven, when we see that thinkers as profound as Heraclitus, Hegel and Marx have found it more satisfying than the formula "Yes is yes, and no is no," a formula solidly based upon the three fundamental laws of thought stated above.

This conclusion, fatal to dialectic, seems irrefutable. But, before we accept it, let's examine the matter more closely. The movement of matter underlies all the phenomena of nature. But what is movement? It is an obvious contradiction. Should any one ask you whether a body in motion is at a particular spot at a particular time, you will be unable, with the best will in the world, to answer. In accordance with Ueberweg's rule, that is to say in accordance with the formula, "Yes is yes, and no is no." A body in motion is at a given point, and at the same time it is not there. We can only consider it in accordance with the formula "Yes is no, and no is yes." This moving body thus presents itself as an irrefutable argument in favor of the "logic of contradiction"; and one who is unwilling to accept this logic will be forced to proclaim, with Zeno, that motion is merely an illusion of the senses.

But of all those who do not deny motion we shall ask: "What are we to think of this fundamental law of thought which conflicts with the fundamental fact of being? Must we not treat it with some circumspection?"

We seem to be between the horns of a dilemma. Either we must accept the fundamental laws of formal logic and deny motion; or else we must admit motion and deny these laws. The dilemma is certainly a disagreeable one. Let us see if there is no way of escaping it.

The movement of matter underlies all the phenomena of nature. But motion is a contradiction. We must consider the question dialectically, that is to say, as Bernstein would phrase it, in accordance with the formula "Yes is no, and no is yes." Hence, we are compelled to admit that as concerns this basis of all phenomena we are in the domain of the "logic of contradiction." But the molecules of matter in motion becoming conjoined one with another, form certain combinations; things, objects. Such combinations are distinguished by more or less marked solidity; they exist for a longer or shorter time, and then disappear, to be replaced by others. The only thing which is eternal is the movement of matter, matter itself, indestructible substance. But as soon as a particular temporary combination of matter has come into existence as a result of the eternal movement of matter, and as long as it has not yet disappeared owing to this same movement, the question of its existence must necessarily be solved in a positive sense. That is why, if anyone points out to us the planet of Venus and asks us "Does this planet exist?" we shall answer, unhesitatingly, "Yes." But if anyone asks us whether witches exist, we shall answer, no less unhesitatingly, "No." What does this mean? It means that when we are concerned with distinct objects we must, in our judgments about them, follow the above-mentioned rule of Ueberweg; and must, in general, conform to the fundamental laws of thought. In that domain there prevails the formula agreeable to Bern-

stein, "Yes is yes, and no is no."

Even there, however, the realm of this respectable formula is not unrestricted. When we are asked a question as to the reality of an object which already exists, we must give a positive answer. But when an object is as yet only in course of becoming, we may often have a good reason for hesitating as to our reply. When we see a man who has lost most of the hair from his cranium, we say that he is bald. But how are we to determine at what precise moment the loss of the hair of the head makes a man bald?

To every definite question as to whether an object has this characteristic or that, we must respond with a yes or a no. As to that there can be no doubt whatever. But how are we to answer when an object is undergoing a change, when it is in the act of losing a given characteristic or is only in course of acquiring it? A definite answer should, of course, be the rule in these cases likewise. But the answer will not be a definite one unless it is couched in accordance with the formula "Yes is no, and no is yes"; for it will be impossible to answer in accordance with the formula "Either yes or no," as recommended by Ueberweg.

The objection can, of course, be made that the characteristic which the object is in course of losing has not yet ceased to exist and that the one which it is in course of acquiring already exists, so that an answer couched in accordance with the formula "Either yes, or no" is possible, indeed obligatory, even when the object with which we have to do is undergoing change. But such a contention is erroneous. A youth on whose chin down is beginning to sprout is certainly growing a beard, but we cannot for that reason speak of him as bearded. Down on the chin is not a beard, although it gradually changes into a beard. If the change is to become qualitative, it must reach a quantitative limit. One who forgets this is unable to express a definite opinion concerning the qualities of objects.

"Everything is in a flux, everything changes," said of old, the philosopher of Ephesus. The combinations which we speak of as objects are permanently in a state of more or less rapid change. In proportion as such combinations remain the same combinations, we can judge them in accordance with the formula "Yes is yes, and no is no." But in proportion as they change to a degree in which they cease to exist as formerly, we must appeal to the logic of contradiction; we must, even at the risk of offending Bernstein and the whole tribe of metaphysicians, say "Yes and no, they exist and they do not exist."

Just as inertia is a special case of movement, so thought in conformity with the rules of formal logic (in conformity with the fundamental laws of thought) is a special case of dialectical thought. It is recorded of Cratylus, one of Plato's disciples, that he was not in agreement with Heraclitus, who had said: "We cannot go down the same river twice." Cratylus insisted that we could not do it even once, seeing that, while we were going down the river, it, was changing, was becoming another river. In the case of such judgments, the factor which constitutes the extant being is, so to say, over-ruled by the factor of becoming. But this is to misuse dialectic and not to make a proper use of it. Hegel remarks: "The something' is the first negation of negation."

Those of our critics who are not completely ignorant of philosophical literature are fond of referring to Trendelenburg, who is said to have refuted all the arguments in

favor of dialectic. But these gentlemen, obviously, have misread Trendelenburg, if they have read him at all. They have utterly forgotten (if they ever knew, which I doubt) one little matter. Trendelenburg declared that the law of contradiction is applicable, not to motion, but only to the objects created thereby. That is sound. But motion does not merely create objects. As I have already said, it is constantly modifying them. That is why the logic of movement (the "logic of contradiction") never forfeits its rights over the objects created by motion. That is why, moreover, even while we pay to the fundamental laws of formal logic the homage which is their due, we must remember that these laws are only valid within certain limits, within limits which leave us free to pay homage also to dialectic. It is thus that the law was really formulated by Trendelenburg, although he himself did not draw all the conclusions derivable from the principle he formulated – a principle of outstanding importance to the theory of cognition.

Let me add, in passing, that Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* contain a number of sound observations which do not tell against my view but in favor of it. This may seem strange, but can be explained very simply by the simple fact that Trendelenburg was really attacking idealist dialectic. Thus he saw the defeat of dialectic in so far as it affirms a movement inherent in and proper to the pure idea, a movement which is an autocreation of being. Certainly such affirmation involves a profound error. But who does not know that the fallacy attaches exclusively to idealist dialectic? Who does not know that when Marx set to work in order to put dialectic "on its feet," whereas it had been standing on its head, he began by correcting this primary error, which was the outcome of the old idealist foundation? Here is another instance. Trendelenburg says that as an actual fact, in Hegel's system, motion is the foundation of logic (which, it seems, does not require any premises upon which to base itself). This statement is also correct, but is once more an argument in favour of materialist dialectic. Now for a third example, the most interesting one of them all. Trendelenburg tells us it is wrong to imagine that, according to Hegel, nature is nothing more than applied logic. On the contrary, the logic of Hegel is nowise a creation of the pure idea; it is the outcome of an anticipatory abstraction from nature: In Hegel's dialectic, almost everything has been derived from experience; and if experience were to deprive dialectic of all that experience has lent, dialectic would be poor indeed. Perfectly true! But this is exactly what was said by those disciples of Hegel who rose in revolt against their master's idealism and went over to the materialist camp.

I could give plenty more examples, but they would take me away from my subject. All I wanted was to show our critics that, in their campaign against us, they would do well to avoid calling in the aid of Trendelenburg.

To continue: I have said that motion is a contradiction in action; and that, consequently, the fundamental laws of formal logic cannot be applied to it. I must explain this proposition lest it should be misunderstood. When we have to do with the passage from one kind of movement to another (let us say, with the passage from mechanical movement to heat), we must also reason in accordance with Ueberweg's fundamental rule. We must say: "This kind of motion is either heat, or else mechanical movement, or else..." and so on. That is obvious. But if so, it signifies

that the fundamental laws of formal logic are, within certain limits, applicable also to motion. The inference, once more, is that dialectic does not suppress formal logic, but merely deprives the laws of formal logic of the absolute value which metaphysicians have ascribed to them.

If the reader has paid careful attention to what was said above, he will have no difficulty in understanding how worthless is the contention so often put forward that dialectic is incompatible with materialism. On the contrary, our dialectic is based upon the materialist conception of nature. If the materialist conception of nature were to crumble into ruins, our dialectic would crumble with it. Conversely, without dialectic, the materialist theory of cognition is incomplete, one-sided; nay more, it is impossible.

In Hegel's system, dialectic coincides with metaphysics. For us, dialectic is buttressed upon the doctrine of nature. In Hegel's system, the demiurge [creator] of reality (to use Marx's phrase) is the absolute idea. For us, the absolute idea is only an abstraction from the motion by which all the combinations and all the states of matter are produced.

According to Hegel, thought progresses thanks to the discovery and the solution of contradictions contained in concepts. According to our materialist doctrine, the contradictions contained in concepts are only the reflection, the translation into the language of thought, of contradictions which exist in phenomena owing to the contradictory nature of their common foundation, namely movement.

According to Hegel, the march of things is determined by the march of ideas; according to us, the march of ideas is explained by the march of things, the march of thought by the march of life.

Materialism sets dialectic on its feet and thus strips from it the veil of mystification in which it was wrapped by Hegel. Furthermore, in doing so, it -displays the revolutionary character of dialectic.

"In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany because it seemed to elucidate the existing state of affairs. In its rational form, it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen because, while supplying a positive understanding of the existing state of things, it at the same time furnishes an understanding of the negation of that state of things and enables us to recognise that that state of things will inevitably break up; it is an abomination to them because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, as transient, because it lets nothing overawe it but is in its very nature critical and revolutionary." (From the preface to the second German edition to the first volume of *Capital*, 1873, new translation, 1928).

It is quite in order that the bourgeoisie, essentially reactionary, should regard materialist dialectic with horror. But that persons who sincerely sympathise with the revolutionary movement should disapprove of materialist doctrine is both ridiculous and sad – it is the climax of absurdity.

One more point has to be considered. We know already that Ueberweg was right, and we know how right he was, in demanding that those who think should think logically, and in demanding definite answers to definite questions as to whether this or that characteristic attaches to this or that object. Now, however, let us suppose that we have to do with an object which is not simple but complex and

has diametrically conflicting properties. Can the judgment demanded by Ueberweg be applied to such an object? No, Ueberweg himself, just as strenuously opposed as Trendelenburg to the Hegelian dialectic, considers that in this case we must judge in accordance with another rule, known in logic under the name of "*principium coincidentia oppositorum*" (the principle of the coincidence of opposites). Well now, the immense majority of the phenomena with which natural science and sociological science have to do come within the category of such objects. The simplest globule of protoplasm, the life of a society in the very earliest phase of evolution – one and the other exhibit diametrically conflicting properties. Manifestly, then, we must reserve for the dialectical method a very large place in natural science and in sociology. Since investigators have begun to do this, these sciences have advanced with rapid strides.

Would the reader like to know how dialectic has secured a recognised position in biology? Let him recall the discussions regarding the nature of species that were aroused by the promulgation of the theory of evolution. Darwin and his adherents declared that the various species of one and the same family of animals or plants are only the differentiated descendants of a single primitive form. Furthermore, according to the theory of evolution, all the genera of one order are likewise derived from a single primordial form; and the same must be said of all the orders belonging to a single class. On the other hand, according to Darwin's adversaries, all the species of animals and plants are completely independent one of another and only the individuals belonging to a single species can be said to derive from a common form. This latter conception of species had already been formulated by Linnaeus, who said: "There are as many species as the Supreme Being created in the beginning of things." That is a purely metaphysical conception, for the metaphysician regards things and concepts as "distinct, unchangeable, rigid objects, given once for all, to be examined one after another, each independently of the others." (Engels) The dialectician, on the contrary, Engels tells us, regards things and concepts "in their connection, their interlacement, their movement, their appearance and disappearance." This conception has made its way into biology with the spread of the Darwinian theory, and has come to stay, whatever rectifications may be made in the theory of evolution as science advances.

To underline the importance of dialectic for sociology, it will suffice to recall how socialism has developed from utopianism to science.



Georgi Plekhanov (1856 - 1918)

The utopian socialists regarded "human nature" from an abstract point of view and appraised social phenomena in accordance with the formula "Yes is yes, and no is no." Property either was or was not conformable to human nature; the monogamic family was or was not conformable to human nature; and so on. Regarding human nature as unchangeable, utopian socialists were justified in hoping that, among all possible systems of social organisation, there must be one which was more conformable than any other to that nature. Hence their wish to discover this best of all possible systems, the one most conformable to human nature. Every founder of a school believed that he had discovered it, and that is why he advocated the adoption of his particular utopia. Marx introduced the dialectical method into socialism, thus making of socialism a science and giving the death-blow to utopianism. Marx does not appeal to human nature; he does not know of any social institutions which either do or do not conform to human nature. Already in his *Misère de la Philosophie*, we find this significant and characteristic criticism of Proudhon; "Monsieur Proudhon is unaware that history in its entirety is nothing other than a continuous modification of human nature." (*Misère de la Philosophie*, Paris, 1896, p. 204)

In *Capital*, Marx says that man, by acting on nature outside himself and changing it, changes his own nature. This is a dialectical standpoint from which a new outlook on the problems of social life can be secured. Take, for instance, the question of private property. The utopists had written at great length" arguing with one another and with the economists, as to whether private property ought to exist, that is to say, as to whether private property was conformable to human nature. Marx put the question upon a concrete platform. According to his doctrine, the forms and relations of property are determined by the evolution of the forces of production. To one phase of evolution there corresponds a specific form of property; to another phase, another form; but there is no absolute solution, and cannot be one, for everything is in a flux, everything changes. "Wisdom becomes folly; pleasure, pain."

Hegel says: "Contradiction leads forward." In the class struggle, science finds a striking confirmation of this dialectical conception. Unless we take the class struggle into account, it is impossible to understand the evolution of social and mental life in a society divided into classes.

But this "logic of contradiction," which, as we have seen, is the reflection in the human brain of the eternal process of movement – why should it be called dialectic? I will not undertake a lengthy consideration of the question, and for answer I shall be content to quote Kuno Fischer:

Human life resembles a dialogue in this sense that, with age and experience, our views concerning persons and things undergo a gradual change, like the opinions of the interlocutors in the course of a lively and fruitful conversation. This involuntary and necessary change in our outlooks on life and the world is the very tissue of experience...That is why Hegel, when comparing the evolution of consciousness with that of a philosophical conversation, has given it the name of dialectic, or the dialectic movement. Plato, Aristotle, Kant, each of them employed this term in an important sense peculiar to himself; but in no philosophical system has it been given so comprehensive a meaning as in that of Hegel." ■

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! ■*



