

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM



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

www.thecommunists.net

No. 19

March 2014



**Bosnia: Victory
to the Revolution!**

**plus: Balkan Wars 1991-95, Women's Day,
Ukraine, Venezuela, Syria, Argentina etc.**

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!

Price: €5 / \$7 / £4,5

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No. 19, March 2014

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Published by the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)*. The RCIT has sections and activists in Pakistan (*Revolutionary Workers Organisation, RWO*), Sri Lanka (*United Lankan Workers Party, ULWP*), Brazil (*Corrente Comunista Revolucionária, CCR*), Israel/Occupied Palestine (*Internationalist Socialist League, ISL*), USA (*Revolutionary Workers Collective, RWC*) and Austria (*Revolutionary Communist Organisation for Liberation, RKOB*). In addition the RCIT is collaborating with the "*Movement to Socialism*" (Russia).

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Call for the World Women's Day on March 8

Forward to a Militant March 8! Violence against Women – We Strike Back!

by the RKOB (Austrian section of the RCIT) and the youth organization RED*REVOLUTION, 7.2.2014

Oppression of women is an inherent part of capitalism. In Austria, for example, on the average women receive 25% less pay than men for the same work. Housework and child-care remain primarily the responsibility of women. One in four women has been involved in a relationship in which they have repeatedly experienced violence.

For more than 100 years now, women of our class, the working class, have celebrated – shoulder to shoulder with the most advanced of their class brothers – March 8 as a day of struggle for the liberation of workers and full equality for women. The organization of women in revolutionary movements is an important step towards the overthrow of capitalism and the abolishment of women's oppression. This year, the annual, international proletarian day of struggle for the liberation of women is also an opportunity to march for the following demands:

Down with all forms of violence against women! For massive, governmental investment for the creation of self-managed women centers that are able to accommodate all victims of violence! For the formation of self-defense units, supported by the workers' movement, to defend these facilities against attack!

For regular meetings of women in places of work, schools, and neighborhoods to exchange personal experiences involving violence and to spot in time any form of violence against women, as well as the organization of a collective effort against it!

For the complete equality of women in all areas of the society! Above all: Equal Pay for Equal Work!

For the socialization of housework! For the creation of public, comprehensive, and free laundries, canteens, and child-care facilities! In this way, housework will no longer be a private burden, but will be a recognized form of social labor. Only in this way will the yoke of unpaid housework and child-care be removed from the shoulders of women! In order to finance the socialization of housework, we call for the expropriation of the super-rich and the nationalization of large corporations and banks under the control of the workers!

Multi-national corporations from the imperialist countries exploit the workers of semi-colonial countries – but, in particular, proletarian women. Many are beaten regularly and sexually abused. For the expropriation of large multi-national corporations and their placement under workers' control! For the immediate annulment of the debts of all semi-colonial countries to the imperialist parasites! For the formation of female workers collectives, supported by the labor movements, to defend against any attack on female workers both in and outside places of work!

For the liberation of women from the yoke of prostitution! No to any discrimination against prostitutes! For free social security and regular medical care for prostitutes! For the widespread creation of training centers where every pros-

titute can receive alternative job training with pay! For the organization of prostitutes in trade unions! The abolition of prostitution is a goal of socialism! Only under socialism does a ban on prostitution mean punishment for pimps as well as clients and more opportunities and rights for (former) prostitute! However, under capitalism any ban on prostitution should be rejected, because all such capitalist bans target primarily the prostitutes themselves!

For a revolutionary women's movement! For the right of women to caucus in trade unions, workers' parties, and every other proletarian organization! Only a revolutionary, Fifth Workers International with a strong female profile can lead the way forward to the overthrow of capitalism and the abolishment of women's oppression!

Forward to a revolutionary, proletarian March 8! ■

**GEGEN GEWALT
AN FRAUEN!
DEMO AM WELTFRAUENTAG**

**WANN: Samstag 8. März, 15:00
WO: Philadelphiabrücke
(U6 Bahnhof Meidling)**



www.rkob.net

www.redrevolution.at

Victory to the Bosnian Revolution!

Workers and Youth: Form Popular Councils and Take the Power! Spread the Revolution to the whole Balkan! For a Socialist Federation of the Balkan People!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 9.2.2014

1. The worldwide wave of popular uprisings and revolutions has reached Bosnia since February 5. The protesters themselves call it the "Bosnian Spring" referring to the "Arab Spring". We send our warmest greetings of solidarity to the heroic Bosnian workers and youth who are fighting on the streets against the greedy capitalists and corrupt politicians! Bosnia has been plundered for nearly two decades by imperialist corporations and sleazy native entrepreneurs. They have been assisted by the corrupt caste of politicians which dominate all parties of the Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian communities. The country is occupied by Western imperialists who treat it like a colony. The task is now to transform the spontaneous uprising into an organized revolution. This means that the workers and peasants should overthrow the ruling class and take the power in their own hands. To avoid a derail of the revolution it is urgent that the political advanced workers and youth form a workers' party based on a revolutionary program.

A brief Overview of the Historical Background

2. In the 1980s the Stalinist system in Yugoslavia entered a terminal crisis. Against this background, the ruling bureaucratic castes of the different republics like Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia were striving to transform themselves into ruling capitalist classes. To keep popular support for this goal, the camouflaged their policy with nationalism. In this, the Serbian bourgeois regime of Slobodan Milošević was the driving force and by the late 1980s it controlled the Yugoslavian federal institutions. It intensified the oppression of the Kosovar Albanians (which were always suppressed by Serbia since their annexation in 1913). It started to oppress also other people of the Yugoslav republic. The Croatian bourgeois regime of Franjo Tuđman copied Milošević's reactionary chauvinism. Beside the Kosovar Albanians, the Bosnians were the most effected victims of the Serbian (and Croatian) chauvinism.

3. The RCIT (respectively our predecessor organization) always defended the Bosnian people against the genocidal war which was started by the Serbian (and Croatian) nationalist forces in 1992. This war brought unspeakable suffering for the Bosnian Muslims and those Serbs and Croats who resisted the nationalist partition of Bosnia by the Serbian and Croatian chauvinists. According to a report about the war 1992-95 by the head of the Bosnian Delegation to the United Nations in 2008, 200,000 people were killed, 12,000 of them children, up to 50,000 women were raped, and 2.2 million were forced to flee their homes (in a country of about 4 million people)! We denounced the reactionary Bosnian government of Alija Izetbegović which – like the bureaucracies of the other republics – was striving to restore capitalism and which failed to defend

the Bosnian people against the chauvinist aggressors. We called for international support for the national liberation war of the Bosnian people and combined this with the perspective of a multi-national workers republic in Bosnia as part of a socialist Balkan federation. We denounced the US and EU imperialists who strangled the Bosnian resistance with an arms embargo and whose UN troops collaborated with the Serbian chauvinists when the butcher General Mladić organized the mass murder of 8,000 Muslim men in Srebrenica in July 1995. We were part of the *International Workers Aid* campaign delivering medicine, clothes, etc. for the workers in Tuzla and other places. We called for arms and international volunteer brigades for the Bosnian resistance and denounced the NATO bombing campaign in summer 1995 which stopped the Bosnian national liberation forces when they were starting to advance and to take back the areas which they had lost in the first war years. In short, the RCIT stood – in contrast to many pseudo-Marxist groups – for the victory of the Bosnian people and the defeat of reactionary Serbian chauvinists and combined this with the perspective of a socialist Balkan federation.

4. The US and EU imperialists enforced the reactionary Dayton Accord in 1995 on the Bosnians. This accord installed the so-called *High Representative* and the *Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina* which transformed Bosnia into a colony of the US and the EU. It left 49% of the country under the control of Serbian chauvinist forces. Today the Western imperialists have stationed 900 soldiers (*European Union Force Althea*) amongst which Austrian imperialism provides the biggest contingent of 300 troops. The RCIT opposed the imperialist interference in Bosnia from the beginning. We call for the expulsion of all imperialist troops and the immediate dissolution of the so-called *High Representative* and all other foreign institutions which restrict Bosnian's sovereignty.

5. The colonialization of Bosnia by the imperialist powers is also obvious in the so-called International Criminal Court in The Hague. The Great Powers enforce Bosnia since years to extradite war criminals or alleged war criminals. The RCIT denounces this imperialist colonialism and calls for workers and peasant tribunals in Bosnia – composed of the families and friends of the victims in the genocidal war – to judge over the war criminals.

The Capitalists plundered Bosnia with the help of corrupt Politicians

6. Since then the country has been plundered and impoverished by native and foreign capitalists who were actively helped by corrupt politicians. Today more than 44% of the Bosnians are without a job. About 100,000 old people don't receive their pensions – including for war veterans who risked their life in the liberation war. The av-

erage income for Bosnian workers is 420 Euro per month which is the level of Albania or Namibia. Many live below the official poverty line and suffer from hunger. In many factories, which are the heart of the present uprising, workers have not received their wages for many months or even years. Factories have closed and their owners left the country with full pockets after their workers spent their savings to buy a significant share of "their" enterprise. At the same time many privatizations of state enterprises turn out to be criminal schemas for quick enrichment of greedy capitalists. In this they are helped by the politicians of all parties who enrich themselves in manifold ways. In addition the people are suffering from the "petty corruption" like the policemen or the little bureaucrats who hold out their hand at every opportunity.

7. Unsurprisingly anger and unrest have simmered for long amongst the Bosnian people. For many years they were held back to take mass actions because their rulers asked them for more time given the devastating effects of the war. But people have seen now that the more time they give their rulers, the worse the situation becomes. The latest wave of privatizations of state enterprises was the trigger for the revolution. The mass strikes and demonstrations started from the Tuzla enterprises Polihem (acid and alkali), DITA (washing powder), Konjuh (wood processor) and Resod-Guming (chemical product makers). The workers there have not received their wages for more than one year and had no health insurance. After these enterprises have been privatized, the owners want to close them now and sack 10.000 workers. The government plans further privatizations of many other state enterprises like *Energopetrol*, tobacco enterprise *FDS* in Sarajevo, *Bosnalijek*, *Sarajevo-Insurance*, *Alumnij* in Mostar, *Energoinvest* and the *Steel Factory Zenica*. After the workers gave so many sacrifices for years in the hope for a better future, they are now forced to recognize that the bosses and their government destroy the future for the workers and only fill their own pockets. This was the final straw which triggered the up-

rising. In other words, this is a popular revolution against the effects of the restoration of capitalism in the 1990s.

The Character of Popular Uprising

8. The Bosnian Revolution started in Tuzla. This city of 120,000 people has always been the industrial heart of Bosnia and is the center of the Bosnian working class. It has a multi-ethnic composition. It has a long and proud tradition of class struggle and internationalism. During the Great Miner Strike in Britain in 1984/85 the miners of Tuzla collected money and sent it to their brothers and sisters. British miners returned this favor by initiating the *International Workers Aid* campaign in 1993. Tuzla was also the heart of the multi-ethnic Bosnian working class resistance against the Serbian chauvinist forces during the liberation war in 1992-95.

9. The Bosnian popular uprising is multi-national, working class, youth and militant. It is multi-national because it encompasses Bosnian Muslim, Serbian and Croatian workers and youth. True, the majority of the workers are Bosnian Muslims. But this is hardly surprising since this community is the biggest in Bosnia (officially 48%) as well as the most urban and proletarian. (The Serbian and Croatian communities have a more rural character.) While its main leader is the Bosnian Muslim worker Aldin Sira-novic, the movement has also a Serbian spokeswoman, the economist Svetlana Cenic. The Revolution has already reached Serbian towns like Prijedor. The youth plays a central role in the uprising – similar to all other authentic revolutions. Like in Egypt Revolution and the Turkish Gezi park movement, football fan clubs play an important role in the protests. The movement has also a very militant character as one can see from numerous reports and Youtube videos. The workers and youth have stormed the governmental buildings in many towns and burned them, as well as numerous police cars, down. In Zenica they pushed the cars of the bureaucrats into the river.

Austria: Report from Solidarity Rally with Bosnia

Revolutionary Communist Organization LIBERATION (Austrian Section of the RCIT), 12.2.2014

About 150 Bosnian migrants participated at a rally in Vienna on 11.2.2014 to show their solidarity with the uprising of the Bosnian workers and youth.

The rally was organized by a Facebook group and the organization "Srebrenica Platform in Vienna/Austria". The migrants expressed their hatred for corrupt politicians, their rejection of the imperialist Dayton accord and their solidarity with the revolution on various placards.

Activists of the RKOB joined the rally. We distributed the extensive statement of our international organization, the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (<http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/bosnian-revolution/>). We also had the chance to discuss with many brothers and sisters about the perspective of

the uprising and about joint activities.

Michael Pröbsting, international secretary of the RCIT, hold a speech in which he expressed his solidarity with the uprising in Bosnia, the necessity for the workers to take power and against any imperialist intervention by the EU and Austria. His speech was well received by the Bosnian migrants.

The next rally will take place on Saturday in front of the Bosnian embassy.

Pictures of the Rally: <http://www.rkob.net/multimedia/bilder-videos-bosnien-kundgebung-11-2-2014/>
Video from Michael Pröbsting's speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFnUYmQDd64&feature=c4-o-erview&list=UUCSUT4RYehM3d6by9il4AIw> ■

10. The movement raises a number of progressive social and democratic demands. They call for the halt of all privatizations and the renationalization of the enterprises which have been already privatized. They call for the payment of their outstanding wages. They demand the punishment of criminal entrepreneurs and corrupt politicians. They call for a limitation of politician's salaries to 1250 Euro and an end to their parliamentary immunity. They call for the abolishment of the cantonal system.

11. However, as a result of lack of experience and deep hatred against all political parties, they also wrongly call for a "government of experts without party-affiliation" and for "independent courts". The RCIT draws the attention of the Bosnian workers and youth to the experience of other countries. In Italy for example we saw a "government of experts without party-affiliation" just recently. Such a government might not be dependent of parties but it is deeply in the pocket of the big corporations and the powerful circles of the ruling class. In Italy such a government was the driving force in massive cuts in the social system. Similarly, courts can only be independent of the ruling class and the bourgeois state which pays their salary if they are elected and controlled by the people.

12. The Bosnian Revolution faces the danger of an imperialist intervention. Valentin Inzko, an Austrian diplomat, who is currently serving as the "High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina", already threatened to send the EU occupation troops against the workers in case the protests turn violent and threaten foreign property. This makes it urgent that the European and international workers movement supports the Bosnian workers and youth and call for the immediate withdrawal of the imperialist occupation forces from Bosnia. It is in this spirit that the RCIT calls for solidarity actions in European cities.

A Program for the Bosnian Revolution

13. The Bosnian Revolution faces several dangers. It is highly spontaneous and lacks the formation of mass organizations to ensure a sustainable character of the movement. Hence there is the danger that the movement might lose steam and retreat soon. Secondly there exists the danger that reactionary politicians might try to divide the movement via inciting nationalist feelings. This is a real danger given the fact that there nearly all Bosnian families have a living memory of the genocidal war. Thirdly it lacks a clear program for power and an authentic communist party prepared for the revolution. The Bosnian masses already saw the terrible effects of such a lack of program and revolutionary leadership in early April 1992: then, hundreds of thousands people of all ethnic origins demonstrated in Sarajevo and stormed the parliament to protest against the threat of a chauvinist war. They had the power in their hands but didn't know what to do with it. Several days later, the Serbian chauvinists started the genocidal war.

14. The RCIT suggests the following program to the Bosnian workers and youth. It is urgent to form *popular councils in the factories and neighborhoods* which meet daily. These councils should decide on the urgent issues of the struggle and elect delegates. These delegates should meet for a national congress to decide about the perspective of the uprising. The movement must call for an *indefinite gen-*

eral strike to prepare taking the power. The workers should *occupy the factories and governmental buildings* and take over the production and administration. The factory and neighborhood councils – with the youth in the forefront – should form *self-defense units* which can later be transformed into *popular militias* in order to defend the masses against the repressive state apparatus and a possible intervention of the EU occupation troops. It is urgent to stress the multinational character of the movement and to organize multi-ethnic leadership committees and self-defense units on the basis of open and explicit anti-chauvinism and equality of all Balkan people.

15. Naturally most democratic and social demands deserve the full support of socialists. But the program of the Bosnian Revolution must go further because otherwise the workers and youth will not succeed in their goals. The RCIT proposes that the movement fights for the *nationalization of all bigger enterprises – both native and foreign – and banks under the control of the workers* in order to avoid any influence by the corrupt politicians. It should demand a *public employment and infrastructure program* to abolish unemployment and to rebuild the country. In order to finance the rebuilding of the country the masses have to *expropriate the small elite of rich capitalists*. To counter the politician's plans for a new constitution, the movement should call for a sovereign Constituent Assembly whose delegates are under control of the electorate. The goal of the uprising should be the overthrow of the capitalist ruling class and the formation of a *government of the workers and peasants, based on councils and popular militias of armed masses*. Such a government could open the door to a *Bosnian Workers and Peasant Republic* which could rebuild the country on the basis of a democratically elaborated economic plan.

16. It is urgent to spread the revolution to Bosnia's neighboring countries and the whole Balkan. In Serbia there have been already calls to join the protests. In Greece the masses are fighting against the capitalist austerity policy since years. In Romania and Bulgaria the masses have also fought on the streets in the recent years. The widespread poverty – a result of the historic crisis of world capitalism – forms the objective basis to unite the struggles of the exploited and oppressed and to fight for a joint future free of imperialist banks and corporations, native capitalists and genocidal generals. This is why the RCIT raises the call for a *Socialist Federation of the Balkan People*.

17. It is equally important to link the struggle in Bosnia with the world-wide mass protests and revolutions against the imperialist exploiters and reactionary dictators. Bosnia is another link in the chain of just struggles and revolutionary uprisings like the Egyptian masses fighting against the dictatorship of General Sisi, the Palestinian people resisting against the continuous Zionist aggression, the Syrian workers and peasants fighting against the butcher Assad, the South African black workers who launched mass strikes for a living wage or the Brazilian workers and youth fighting against the greedy capitalists and corrupt politicians.

18. Such a program can only be achieved by the organized struggle of the working class, led by a revolutionary workers party in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. From the very start, creating such a party must be done in conjunction with the efforts to establish a new World Party of Socialist Revolution. In our opinion, such a new party will

be the *Fifth Workers' International*. The RCIT calls revolutionaries in Bosnia to unite in an authentic revolutionary organization based on an internationalist and communist program. We look forward to discussing these issues and

collaborating with revolutionaries in Bosnia and the whole Balkan, in order to advance the formation of such a revolutionary organization. ■



Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_map_without_streets.png

Bosnia: Never forget Srebrenica - Learn the Lessons for Today!

By Almedina "Nina" Gunić, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), August 2012

The massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995 is seen today as the most serious war crime in Europe since 1945. Approximately 8.000 Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) were executed in the most brutal way in Srebrenica and buried in mass graves. Many of the bodies were not found until today.

If one is dealing with the events in Srebrenica (and in particular if one has lost relatives from the family and friends), the atrocities seem unimaginable and it is hard to control a wave of grief and rage. Srebrenica has become the highest expression of the atrocities against our people and leaves no one indifferent. But as justified as it is to have such feelings, and as important as it is to be in solidarity with all those affected, regardless of one's own background: In order to prevent events such as the massacre in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina in the future, it is necessary to understand why it happened and what lessons can be learned from this for the future.

On the events in Srebrenica

Srebrenica is a town in the east of Bosnia and Herzegovina (close to Serbia). In 1991, more than three-quarters of the residents were Bosniaks. At the beginning of the war in Bosnia in 1992 Srebrenica was attacked on 17th April by Serbian nationalist militias (led by the so-called "Tiger", which were under the command of the criminal Željko Ražnatović called Arkan). Arkan's Tigers were feared because they stood for the highest brutality against civilians as well as mass rape and who employed particularly humiliating methods.

After Arkan's troops had invaded, they were in a short time driven back by the Bosnian militia under the command of Naser Orić. But the success was short-lived, as Srebrenica was then encircled and besieged by Serb forces. The city was systematically starved, for almost a whole year no relief supplies arrived.

Orić - a Bosnian hero?

Orić is regarded as a hero by many Bosnians, who organized resistance against the threatening massacre. In reality, Naser Orić is a sad symbol of the weaknesses of the opposition and anything but a hero. He was trained as a police officer of the Serbian police unit. Bad enough but worse, he was then stationed in Kosovo where he was to conduct raids and racist acts against the oppressed Kosovo Albanians on behalf of the Serbian Ministry of Interior (up to 1991). Orić even made career to become a bodyguard of Slobodan Milošević, the bourgeois-nationalist Serbian President, who was responsible for the chauvinist wars of conquest of Serbia against the other former Yugoslav republics (and also for the slaughter of Bosniaks in Srebrenica in 1995).

Orić broke with Milosevic in 1992 and fought on the Bosnian side. In Srebrenica, he preached three years the resistance forces would never abandon the city. However,

shortly before the mass murders took place, he escaped in a helicopter! Now, an orderly retreat can actually be a necessary step in the resistance. But such a retreat should not mean to deliver the masses to the butcher. And certainly such a retreat should not lead to a total surrender and retreat into private life, as it was the case with Orić.

This example of a "hero" demonstrates that the real heroes, the fighting working class masses, themselves must create their heroes. It also shows what it means to have a resistance militia led by a revolutionary party that embodies the experience and the courage of the revolutionary struggle, and which can put under pressure by the soldiers of the militia. Such a revolutionary party must be able to apply the right tactics in the struggle. Likewise, it must also make sure to replace bad leaders of the militias quickly. A revolutionary party would have provided political commissars who checked every officer, every militia leader and all other commanders. Especially those political commissars, chosen by the revolutionary party, are extremely important to be able to make immediately known and prevent any betrayal of the revolutionary line by military officials.

What would a revolutionary party have done?

The resistance in Srebrenica reflects the impact of the extremely late development of Bosnian nationality. Certain nationalities in the former Yugoslavia had already developed fully (including the Serbian and Croatian) or developed over such a long period of time due to the massive national oppression (such as the Kosovo Albanians).

In contrast, the national identity of Bosniaks existed at best only in embryonic form before the outbreak of war. In former Yugoslavia, religion had a very low priority among the Bosniaks (which only later, in the course of the war, became the main criterion of the Bosniak identity). Bosnia was one of the countries with an extremely strong mixing of the three main nationalities (Bosniak, Croatian, Serbian). Accordingly, the Bosniaks had no organized army to the extent as the Croats or Serbs had, since the two sides had the support by the respective states and their armies.

At the same time, the resistance against the attack of the Bosnian Serb army was not a purely Bosniak resistance. While Croatian and Serbian militias were strictly national character, the militia of the Bosnian resistance was multinational. Their multinational character was clearly one of the most impressive strengths of the Bosnian resistance.

But the Bosnian resistance suffered from the fact that at its head stood the bourgeois government of President Izetbegovic. This government wanted to reintroduce capitalism and turn the country into a semi-colony of the Western imperialist powers. So instead of building a workers and peasants' army and lead the just war of liberation to success, Izetbegovic disorganized the resistance, sold shortly before the war countless weapons to the Serb nationalist militias (!) and hoped for the support of the EU. These bourgeois politics of the Bosnian government disarmed

the resistance politically and militarily.

Due to the completely false hope of protection by the West, the leadership of the resistance in Srebrenica agreed tragically to hand over voluntarily all their heavy weapons (!) when in 1993 UN peacekeepers demanded this in return for the promise to protect the city. What a tragic mistake! As widely known, the UN troops in Srebrenica didn't raise a finger to defend the people. Instead, the UN troops were engaged on the black market and used Bosnian women as prostitutes. A symbolic expression of the imperialist and sexist arrogance of these UN parasites was the graffiti of a famous Dutch soldier in Srebrenica: „No teeth ...? A mustache ...? Stinks like shit ...? A Bosnian girl!“ (see also the popular poster of Bosnian artist Šejla Kamerić). When the Serbian nationalist forces of General Ratko Mladić finally invaded Srebrenica, the UN soldiers helped them in the separation of the Bosnian population by gender, so that they could easily kill the men and rape the women. A famous example is also the photo, where the commander in chief of the Dutch UN troops, Thom Karremans, is toasting Mladić and sipping champagne. Srebrenica teaches us that oppressed people should never rely on the imperialist powers, and that the UN is a useless puppet of the great powers.

The complete surrender of Bosnian resistance forces in Srebrenica with the flight of their leaders shortly before the massacre was a continuation of treason not only to the interests but to the lives of the inhabitants of Srebrenica.

A revolutionary party in Bosnia would have organized the masses in the exact opposite direction. They had already equipped them from the beginning of the war with the right tactics. It would have put the focus on the immediate construction of armed militias, as multinational as possible. This would have been a militia of the workers and peasants, which would have put into practice what

developed slowly and “naturally” during the course of the Bosnian War: The organization not only of men but also of women and youth in the armed militias.

A revolutionary party would have fought by politically means against the false and treacherous, petty-bourgeois leadership of the resistance under Orić & Co. without sacrificing any necessary tactical and military support to the existing forces in place. They would have to fight to convince every male and female resistance fighter. How? By systematic propaganda and agitation, as well as by their exemplary practice in the defense of Bosnia and the fight for a multinational workers' and peasants republic as part of a socialist federation of the Balkans.

National Identity and Religion

In various referendums the Bosnians declared themselves to a disproportional high degree by Yugoslavs. In no regional republic of Yugoslavia was the proportion of people who designated themselves as Yugoslavs as large as in Bosnia. Likewise, the Bosniaks were disproportionately high represented among the urban and proletarian population, while Serbs and Croats were more heavily represented among the rural population.

Despite these significantly lower development of the Bosnian national identity, the massive nationalist propaganda of the Belgrade government and the outbreak of the Serbian war of conquest, led to a reduction of the sympathy for a multinational Bosnia among the Bosniaks. They set the stage for a initially weak, but during the war rising, Bosniak nationalism in close connection with a massive upsurge of religiosity among the Bosnians in general and the Bosniaks in particular.

The national identity was defined more and more on the basis of religion. This was to a large extent due to the fact



The Butcher Mladić and UN-General Karremans. Source: Daily Telegraph, http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02049/Bosnia_2049889c.jpg

that several states, whose official religion was Islam, stood on the side of the Bosnian resistance. Secondly, this was a reaction to the way, how Serbian nationalists recognized and selected the Bosniaks in the mixed Bosnia. For an example one of the methods of the Serbian nationalist militias for "proper recognition" of Bosniaks - which was also used during the mass murder at Srebrenica - to force all men and boys, regardless of their name (which is usually an indication of Bosniak roots) to take off their pants and underpants. Those who were circumcised were massacred (because Muslim men, as is also customary in Judaism, undergo circumcision).

The stronger the Bosniaks were suppressed due to any alleged or actual affiliation to Islam, the more many Bosniaks developed a real identification with religion.

What a revolutionary party would not have done

In such a situation a revolutionary party would have fought vehemently against emphasizing the religion in the war, as did the nationalist leaderships. It would rather have paid special attention to keep the troops multinational, especially since there such a natural tendency existed already. It would have undertaken a conscious recruitment campaigns among the non-Bosniak parts of Bosnia, which to a large extent opposed the war as well. It would not have said Yes and Amin * to religious propaganda and it would have opposed that the leaders of the resistance present themselves as the best Muslims of all Muslims.

A revolutionary party would rather have made propaganda for a correct understanding of class and oppression lines. It would be advocated to nationalize the economy and place it under the control of the workers. It would have checkmated the black market profiteers and war profiteers. It would have organized the resistance on class lines, i.e. it would have put the focus on the organization of proletarian brigades and would emphasize that the officers are mainly simple workers and peasants respectively are under their control.

A revolutionary party would have fought to mobilize the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat neighbors in support of the Bosnian resistance forces and making them more receptive to the need for recognition and equality of the Bosniak national identity. It would have made it clear that any nationalism ultimately can only be defeated if the oppression systematically accumulated over years and decades is banished to the graveyard of history.

A revolutionary party had also never even asked for a second NATO, UN or other imperialist institutions to intervene. Utilizing the food or the weapons that come across the border for tactical reasons and because of a certain necessity - that is one thing and completely legitimate. But every revolutionary force in this war would have refused out of principle to demand the end of the war by an intervention of the imperialists.

Indeed the ultimately result of the NATO/UN intervention was that Bosnia emerged as a torn country from the war, marked with absurd borders and helpless at the mercy of the imperialist parasites.

A revolutionary party would have fought against the restoration of capitalism. It would, however, not called for the old Yugoslavia of Tito as an alternative, because that was a dictatorship by a layer of bureaucrats. It would rather

advocated a multinational workers and peasants republic as part of a socialist federation of the Balkans.

Learning for Today

Srebrenica is the largest memorial for every male and female Bosnian workers, as well as Bosnian peasant - regardless of their nationality. It's a cruel scar in our history, which reminds us not to repeat past mistakes. No confidence for Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist leaderships, but building our own party, a revolutionary party. A party, that is organized amongst the masses of our class and the oppressed. A party, that draws the right lessons from the events. The war was a historic event that threw back not only our class brothers and sisters in Bosnia, but also in Serbia and Croatia. It made difficult for so many years and decades to mobilize for strikes, but also for mass mobilizations against the government, against the imperialist troops and other enemies. A traumatized working class, a weariness to fight against the real enemy, the ruling class - all this is part of the scar Srebrenica.

All this has to be overcome thoroughly today. Our class must rise like a phoenix from the ashes of her past and fight to make judgment of the real culprits, the real criminals of war: These are not those of our neighbors who didn't want the war but were intimidated and had no real opportunity to organize against it. It is rather the leading politicians of all sections of the ruling class - the super-rich and big entrepreneurs, not only Serbian, but also Croatian and Bosnian. Especially the Bosnian politicians, especially Alija Izetbegovic made more than one prostration to the imperialist powers and betrayed the resistance even before it really started.

It also means not to fight for bringing the war criminals perpetrators to the bourgeois tribunal in The Hague which might meet discuss for many years and decades. They should be rather brought to a workers' Tribunal of male and female Bosnians. Such a workers Tribunal can make a fair judgment on the war criminals and make steps to break up the still existing hostile mood and mistrust among the people of Bosnia. It can help to make the step towards a united, multinational Bosnia, without torn absurd limits. It would be a Bosnia of all the workers and peasants on an equal and free basis: A socialist Bosnian federation as part of a socialist federation of the Balkans. Not a false pseudo-unity as it was the case in the time of the former Yugoslavia. But a federation based on workers' and peasants' councils, built via the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class through a socialist revolution. For such a future of freedom and true peace among themselves, it is necessary to organize now! Never forget means to make it happen never again!

* Amin is the equivalent in Islam to the Christian Amen

http://www.zeit.de/2005/28/Srebrenica_Head/seite-2
<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/jahre-nach-beginn-des-bosnien-kriegs-europa-lebt-oder-stirbt-in-sarajevo-1.1326821-2>

http://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/gesellschaft/Niemand_wird_Srebrenica_je_vergessen_koennen.html?cid=32510686 ■

International Workers Aid: Our Solidarity Work with the Liberation Struggle of Bosnia in 1992-95

Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 11.2.2014

In our resolution "Victory to the Bosnian Revolution!" we summarized our position during the Bosnia war in 1992-95. "The RCIT (respectively our predecessor organization) always defended the Bosnian people against the genocidal war which was started by the Serbian (and Croatian) nationalist forces in 1992. This war brought unspeakable suffering for the Bosnian Muslims and those Serbs and Croats who resisted the nationalist partition of Bosnia by the Serbian and Croatian chauvinists. According to a report about the war 1992-95 by the head of the Bosnian Delegation to the United Nations in 2008, 200,000 people were killed, 12,000 of them children, up to 50,000 women were raped, and 2.2 million were forced to flee their homes (in a country of about 4 million people)! We denounced the reactionary Bosnian government of Alija Izetbegović which – like the bureaucracies of the other republics – was striving to restore capitalism and which failed to defend the Bosnian people against the chauvinist aggressors. We called for international support for the national liberation war of the Bosnian people and combined this with the perspective of a multi-national workers republic in Bosnia as part of a socialist Balkan federation. We denounced the US and EU imperialists who strangled the Bosnian resistance with an arms embargo and whose UN troops collaborated with the Serbian chauvinists when the butcher General Mladić organized the mass murder of 8.000 Muslim men in Srebrenica in July 1995. We were part of the "International Workers Aid" campaign delivering medicine, clothes, etc. for the workers in Tuzla and other places. We called for arms and international volunteer brigades for the Bosnian resistance and denounced the NATO bombing campaign in summer 1995 which stopped the Bosnian national liberation forces when they were starting to advance and to take back the areas which they had lost in the first war years. In short, the RCIT stood – in contrast to many pseudo-Marxist groups – for the victory of the Bosnian people and the defeat of reactionary Serbian chauvinists and combined this with the perspective of a socialist Balkan federation." (RCIT: Victory to the Bosnian Revolution! Workers and Youth: Form Popular Councils and Take the Power! Spread the Revolution to the whole Balkan! For a Socialist Federation of the Balkan People!, 9.2.2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/bosnian-revolution/>)

In this short article we will briefly report about our activities in the *International Workers Aid* (IWA) campaign in 1993-95. This campaign was a broad campaign of trade unionists and left-wing organizations which started in summer 1993. We collected food, medicine and clothes and brought them with trucks to Tuzla which was the heart of the multi-ethnic Bosnian working class resistance against the Serbian chauvinist forces during the liberation war in 1992-95. At this time 140,000 inhabitants plus 70,000 refugees lived in Tuzla. The campaign was started in Scotland and was established in 11 countries, including Scandinavian countries, Austria and Italy.

The predecessor organization of the RCIT (the "League for a Revolutionary Communist International") was part of IWA from the beginning in several European countries. The

author of this article was the coordinator of the campaign in Austria.

The campaign received broad support from many trade unions. In Britain the union of the printers, the oil workers, the transport workers, the miners, the Dockers and of the journalists supported the campaign. The Belgian metal workers union, the French CGT, various local and small unions in Germany and Austria, the *Autonomous Trade Union Federation* in Croatia as well as Slovenian trade unions were also part of the campaign.

The first IWA convoy got to Tuzla on November 7 1993 and brought about 18 tonnes of aid. While this was not a lot given the terrible circumstances, it gave a lot of encouragement for the people in Tuzla.

We do not want to hide that there were also political weaknesses in the platform of the IWA campaign. It lacked a clear political internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective. At an international conference in autumn 1993 in Manchester I participated as the delegate for the Austrian IWA committee. While some of our proposals were adopted, the following two were rejected. I proposed to add the slogans 'Lift the Arms-Embargo against Bosnia!' and 'UN-troops out of Bosnia!'. We recognized that the Bosnian resistance suffered most from the imperialist arms embargo and desperately needed arms to resist the genocidal war of the Serbian (and Croatian) chauvinists. And we had no illusions about the reactionary role of the UN troops as it became so obvious in Srebrenica and other places.

Nevertheless the *International Workers Aid* campaign was a powerful example of international working class solidarity for the Bosnian people who faced the worst genocide in Europe since World War II. The RCIT is proud that it had been part of this campaign. ■



Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, Austrian Coordinator of the International Workers Aid Campaign in 1993-95

Report from Solidarity Rallies on February 15 and 22 in Vienna

On Saturday, February 15, 2014 more than hundred people – mostly Bosnian migrants – demonstrated in Vienna to show their solidarity with the uprising of the workers and youth of Bosnia. We marched to the Bosnian embassy. During our very vocal protest we raised slogans like “Long live the International Solidarity!” and “Freedom for Bosnia!”. Particularly popular slogan was our slogan “Bosna, Bosna - Revolucija!”.

The RKOB and the youth organization RED*REVOLUTION joined this protest as we did already on February 11. (See our report at <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/bosnia-solidarity-rally-11-2-14/>) Our newspaper “LIBERATION” (with its special issue on the Bosnian Revolution “OSLOBOĐENJE”) was completely sold out within a short time. Our contingent played an important role to express the militant mood of the Bosnian activists. There were several speeches by Bosnian activists. Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of RCIT, addressed the demonstration too. His speech was interrupted several times by applause and cheers. He said: “The people of

Bosnia are fighting for the right to life. This is denied them by the corrupt politicians, by the capitalists and the police officers who all think only of their money.” Comrade Pröbsting was also interrupted by applause when he said: “What is necessary is a revolution, a Revolucija! What is a Revolucija? Revolucija means that no longer rule the politicians over the people. It means that the workers, the youth and the peasants themselves take power into their own hands and decide on the economy and politics!”

The recent protests in Vienna were an important symbol of solidarity, as well as the next rally which is planned for next Saturday February 22. However, this is not certainly enough. The Bosnian Revolution needs international support in as many countries as possible. This is not only in the interests of Bosnian workers, the youth and farmers. It is also in the interest of all the oppressed in Europe and beyond.

For the Liberation of Bosnia! Victory to the Bosnian Revolution! Jedna Solucija - Revolucija! ■

* * *

A bit less than 100 people demonstrated on Saturday 22 in solidarity with the Bosnian Revolution in front of the local embassy. The beginning of the demonstration was marked by attempts of some bourgeois-liberal and Stalinist forces to monopolize the rally. They had started already in the days before an internet campaign against the RKOB. The reasons are their hostility against our positions:

* *Solidarity with the Bosnian liberation struggle 1992-95!*

* *Resistance against the NATO and EU rule over Bosnia!*

* *Victory to the Bosnian Revolution! For a Workers and Peasants Republic Bosnia-Herzegovina!*

These group of bourgeois-liberal and Stalinist people wanted to dictate what could be said and what could not be said at the demonstration. In concrete they stated that speeches are not allowed:

* which mention the liberation war of 1992-95

* which oppose the mass murders Milošević, Mladić or Karadžić

* which oppose the NATO and EU rule over Bosnia

For these reasons they tried to monopolize the speeches for themselves. When Almedina „Nina“ Gunić, spokeswoman of the RKOB, addressed the rally and dared to mention our opposition against the mass murders Milošević and Karadžić they immediately took away the microphone from her. But many Bosnian migrants present opposed this and expressed her support for Gunić’s speech.

As a result the bourgeois-liberal and Stalinist organizers withdrew to the background. Comrade Gunić could continue her speech – now with the megaphone of the RKOB. Also another Bosnian speaker addressed the rally. As one can see in the video, the liberal and Stalinist organizers tried to interrupt the rally and get the support of the police to stop it (without success).

After this we started the demonstration which was called by the RKOB and which was joined by the majority of the participants. During the demonstration we raised slogans like “Long live the International Solidarity!”, “Freedom for Bosnia!” and “Revolucija - Jedina Solucija!”.

The final rally was addressed by the RKOB spokespersons Almedina „Nina“ Gunić und Michael Pröbsting as well as by a Bosnian migrant speaker.

For the Liberation of Bosnia! Victory to the Bosnian Revolution! Jedna Solucija - Revolucija! ■



Almedina “Nina” Gunić, Bosnian Migrant and RCIT Leader

Are the Bosnian Muslims a Nation?

Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), March 1994

Introduction:

We reprint here an essay which was originally published by the predecessor organization of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (the League for a Revolutionary Communist International), in *Trotskyist International* No. 13/14 (1994). While the general analysis made in this document has proved to be correct, we draw attention to two errors which the essay contains. First, when the essay was first written in March 1994, we erroneously held the view that capitalism had still not been restored in the states of the former Yugoslavia. Subsequently, we became aware of our error and recognized that the restoration of capitalism in these states had already taken place in 1991/92.

In addition, we only belatedly recognized some months later that the war in Bosnia was a genocidal war from its start.

In addition we also recognized some months belated that the Bosnian war was a genocidal war from the beginning. We had a defeatist position in the first few months after April 1992 and defended the Bosnian side from autumn 1992 onwards. This was a mistake and we should have had defended the Bosnian side against the Serbian (and Croatian) chauvinists from the beginning. Michael Pröbsting, the author of this essay and a leading member of the LRCI at that time, argued together with other comrades for a correction of the LRCI's line. At an international leadership meeting in July 1995 comrade Pröbsting proposed the following statement:

"The main weakness of our position in that period was that the terrible situation of a genocide was not created after the autumn but most major conquest of Muslim territory-um by the Bosnian Serbs happened in this period. Therefore we started to defend the Muslims when they had already suffered the most serious defeats. When we changed our tactic in November 1992 we mentioned two decisive facts: i) the breakup of the Muslims-Croats alliance and ii) the decision of imperialism not to make a full-scale military intervention. Both reasons were not sufficient to create a qualitative new situation.

The breakup of the alliance with the Croats, important as it was, should not have been decisive for our defensist position because this alliance in itself did not (in this first period) and does not (since its renewal in March 1994) change the situation of genocide against the Muslims. Despite the existence of this alliance the Muslims (and also the Croats) have been wiped out of many parts of the country between April and November 1992. This alliance was not strong enough to counter the offensive by the Karadziz-Chauvinists. The abandoning of a full-scale imperialist military intervention should also not have been decisive for our tactic. We know that the main reasons for the war were in the inner-Yugoslavian and inner-Bosnian relation of forces. While we should have changed our tactic immediately in the case of a imperialist intervention it was not correct to argue that the possibility of such an intervention was enough not to defend the Muslims and the multi-ethnic Bosnians."

However the line of this position only got the support of a

substantial minority and hence was defeated.

To make the document more accessible for readers, we have introduced a number of subheadings.

* * *

The proposed settlement over the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina is a big blow against the longstanding multi-ethnic character of the old republic in former Yugoslavia. For centuries economic and political developments have combined to prevent the Bosnian Muslims, in particular, from attaining a national consciousness.

Many people, despairing of the ethnic war in ex-Yugoslavia, have ceased to root the conflict in the real history of relations between the different communities. Yet it is the interweaving of class and religious ties that underpins the consciousness of all those involved in the current war. In particular the history of the Bosnian Muslims reflects in the sharpest way the national and social complexities of relations between the Balkan peoples.

Historical Background of the Islamization of Bosnia

The Bosnian Muslims emerged out of a local heretic movement, the Krstjani, which split away from the Roman Church at the start of the thirteenth century. This "Bosnian Church" constituted, like other heretic sects in this period (the Bogomils, the Cathars), a rebellion against the domination of the parasitic Papacy. The latter responded with such savage military repression that Pope Pius II was able to boast in 1460 that, "about twelve thousand have been baptized, forty or a bit more fled." (1)

But this triumph was short lived. The Ottoman Turks were steadily conquering the Balkans. Several contemporary reports indicate that the Krstjani greeted them as liberators.



(2) Identification with the tyrannical Roman Church was so weak that the population underwent a mass conversion to Islam and *“at the end of the sixteenth century 80% of the Bosnian population were Muslims.”* (3) This conversion enabled the traditional Bosnian aristocracy to hold onto their social power. In time the Muslims developed a class of big landowners—the Begs. (4)

For the next three hundred years this may have been an advantage for the new Muslims in comparison with the other conquered Slavic peoples of the Balkans. In time it was to prove a major obstacle to the development of a modern bourgeois class and therefore to the formation of a nation.

Things worked in the reverse direction as far as the Serbs were concerned. Serbia was a powerful monarchy throughout the middle ages. Conquest and occupation by the Ottomans in the fourteenth century threw Serbia back to a patriarchal peasant collectivism in landed property—the *zadruga*—which was similar to the Russian *“mir”*.

The destruction of Serbia’s ruling classes was the general pattern of Ottoman conquest in the Balkans. These regular rounds of exterminations and expulsions contributed to the misery and historic backwardness of the Balkans and explain the eventual chronic weakness of capitalist development. An extremely atomised peasantry made a more economically productive utilisation of the land almost impossible. It led in turn to rural over-population and a very weak development of industry by the nineteenth century. (5) According to one economic historian, GDP per head declined between 1860-1910, during the very period of the most dramatic and widespread capitalist growth in Western Europe. (6)

Serbia stagnated for centuries along with the rest of the region. Yet because there was no strong ruling class integrated into the upper political and social echelons of the Ottoman Empire in Serbia, it gave birth, albeit slowly and belatedly, to a predominantly merchant bourgeois class. This led to a national movement against Ottoman rule. With the aid of Tsarist Russia this achieved autonomy in 1830 and later (1867) complete independence.

The fate of the Muslim population in Bosnia was quite different. Their aristocracy held on to their social position by converting to Islam and by integrating themselves into the military and administrative elite of the Ottoman state. Consequently, during its long decline—dominated by the Asiatic mode of production—the Muslim Begs were hostile to any modernisation. When the Sultans cautiously tried to reform the empire in the nineteenth century the Bosnian Begs launched separatist uprisings, which were put down only with difficulty.

Austro-Hungarian Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

After an initial resistance to the 1878 Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina the Begs came to terms with the Habsburgs. The Austro-Hungarian bourgeoisie and the Begs shared common interests. Both wanted to suppress the unrest of the Serbian peasants and tenant farmers and to restrain Serbian expansion which, after 1903, was the main threat to the Habsburgs in the Balkans.

One important result of this whole history was that the Muslims did not join in the nation-building process in the

Balkans during the nineteenth century. Because of the different development of their propertied classes the Serbs and the Croats were both able to build nations:

“According to the 1910 census, Muslims made up 91.15% of all landlords whose lands were tilled by customary tenants... But according to the same census, 73.92% of all (serfs) were Orthodox, and 21.49% were Catholic.” (7)

The absence of the developed and differentiated classes, which make up bourgeois society held back the development of a Muslim nation. While such social differentiation was equally absent for Croats and Serbs in Bosnia they came under the influence of the more developed bourgeois classes in Croatia and Serbia.

By contrast the only “motherland” for the Muslims was the Ottoman Empire which was in terminal decline and from which they were cut off after 1878. Moreover, the Muslims in Bosnia were scattered, without a compact territory of their own. This certainly hindered them becoming a nation.

This different line of development became explosive because the confessional line coincided with a class divide—a crucial factor in understanding the deep roots of nationalism in the Balkans. (8)

Bosnian Muslims Confronted with Serbian and Croatian nationalism

Failing to build a nation of their own the Muslims became the target of rising Serbian and Croatian nationalism from the end of the nineteenth century. Once again for reasons specific to their historic development Serbian and Croatian nationalism proved incapable of achieving a progressive solution to the national question in the Balkans.

Because of its belated arrival on the stage of history Serbian nationalism always showed a pronounced tendency to subordinate itself to one or other of the two dynastic powers vying for control of the Balkans power, Habsburg Austria or Romanov Russia. In the mid-nineteenth century it looked to the Tsar to achieve its liberation from the Ottomans. Then it turned to the Austro-Hungarian Empire; after 1903 it became Russia again and during the First World War Russia’s allies France and Britain.

As a result Serbian nationalism sought to “solve” its contradictions not in a struggle with imperialism but rather at the expense of the weaker nationalities and ethnic communities of the region; the Albanians, Croats, Muslims and Macedonians.

The record of Croatian nationalism is in no way superior. While Serbian nationalism at least originated in wars of liberation against Ottoman rule, Croatian nationalism never transcended the role of handmaiden to the Habsburgs. In 1848 Croatian units provided shock troops to crush the bourgeois democratic revolution in Vienna.

Afterwards Croatian nationalism staked everything on the protection of the Emperor in Vienna, refusing to join in the growing liberation movements of the oppressed nationalities throughout the Empire. The reactionary role of Croatian nationalism was to culminate in the “Independent” Ustasha State (NDH) of 1941-1945.

Both Serbian and Croatian nationalism attempted, from the end of the last century to integrate, or more precisely, to assimilate the Muslims. They argued that the Muslims were “islamicised” Croats or Serbs who must come back

into the fold of their “true” motherland. Indeed Bosnia-Herzegovina had been the core of the short-lived medieval state which Croatian nationalists chose as the origin of the nation. Thus the founder of Croatian nationalism went so far as to suggest that the Muslims were “*the better Croats*”. The reaction of the Muslim classes to this pressure was not uniform. On the one hand, the Begs were sympathetic to the Croats. But at the same time they had no interest in giving up their politico-religious leading role in the Muslim community under the Habsburgs.

They felt they would lose out in any process of integration into bigger and more developed bourgeois class societies, like those of the Croats or the Serbs. Moreover, the big landowners succeeded in keeping the mass of the Muslim population behind it. Hence, “*Catholic felt as Croats, Orthodox as Serbs. In contrast the Muslims saw themselves as part of the—supranational—people of the Ottoman empire.*” (9) Or as another historian states, “*The overwhelming majority of ordinary Muslims shunned any process of ‘nationalisation’.*” (10) However, the small, but growing, modern intelligentsia fell increasingly under the influence of the nation building process which ran through the Balkans, most of them considering themselves as Croats. (11)

This Croatophilia was due to several factors. First, Serbian nationalism’s liberation struggle against the Ottomans always contained a strong dose of Islamophobia. In contrast, the Croatian propertied classes shared with their Muslim counterparts political conservatism and loyalty to the Habsburgs. This Croatophilia was strengthened once again during the 1920s and 1930s because both Croats and Bosnians suffered national oppression within the Yugoslav kingdom, which was essentially an expanded Serbia. Nearly every Bosnian Muslim parliamentary deputy held Croatian nationality and the bourgeois Muslim party, JMO (12), even collaborated with the Ustasha state. Today’s most radical right wing Croatian nationalist leader, Dobroslav Paraga, advocates a “historic Croatia” which includes the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina and from the outset of the present war he recruited Muslims for his HOS-militias, with some success.

Yet these pro-Croat sympathies could never be transformed into integration into the Croat nation. In the Balkans, and especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, religion was a very important element in the nation building process. This was due to the Ottoman millet-system, which gave the non-Islamic churches a central administrative function over their respective ethnic groups. (13)

On the other hand, loyalty to Islam was the key to a career in the military and bureaucratic apparatus. So religion became a decisive component of ethnic and later national identity.

Croatian nationalism only ever accepted the Muslims as subordinate partners—never as equals. So when the Muslims fought for religious-educational autonomy between 1899 and 1908 the Croats resisted strongly. Ultimately, there emerged a powerful current inside Croatian nationalism which characterised the Muslims as “national enemies”, rather than “better Croats”. This sentiment was, and is, especially strong in the peasant dominated Western Herzegovina.

Finally, the Muslims also feared that to openly embrace either the Croats or the Serbs would inevitably draw them into the Serbo-Croatian firing line, with dire consequences

for them. They felt, rightly, that they could only survive in a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Although the Bosnian Muslims did not become a nation during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century this is not to say that they were just an amorphous mass. They understood themselves to be a specific cultural entity, different from the other nationalities. Their development from an ethnicity, mainly defined by their religion, towards nationhood was blocked in two ways by their specific social conditions.

Muslim society did not develop strong modern bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes or an intelligentsia that could lead such a development. Nor did the Muslims occupy a contiguous and ethnically homogeneous territory. But neither could Muslims be integrated into the Croat or Serb nations.

Due to the continuing political hegemony of the reactionary Begs the Muslims remained outside the South Slav (Yugoslav) unity movement of the early 1900s which was rooted mainly in the Serbian and Croatian communities. Indeed reactionary Muslim leaders used the ferocious Austrian anti-Serb propaganda, at the beginning of the First World War, to organise riots and pogroms against Bosnian Serbs. The Yugoslav movement might have been a step towards solving the national antagonisms in the Balkans.

But Slav unity alone could not complete this process. Indeed pan-(south) Slavism held chauvinist dangers vis-à-vis the non-Slav peoples of the Balkans. For this reason the revolutionary social-democratic parties, particularly in Serbia and Bulgaria, developed the slogan of a “*democratic Federation of the Balkans*”, which was later developed by the Communist International as the “*Socialist Federation of the Balkans*”.

But the Muslim leaders’ abstention from the Yugoslav movement was justified in the eyes of the Muslim masses by its actual outcome, the Yugoslav kingdom, a nationally oppressive and viciously anti-working class bonapartist regime. This outcome proved a central Trotskyist thesis; namely, that the bourgeoisie is unable to resolve either progressively or permanently the national question in the imperialist epoch.

Bosnian Muslims in the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes”

From the beginning, the “*Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*” (14) was characterised by Serbian dominance over the other nationalities. Serbian nationalism succeeded in conflating the class hatred of Serbian tenants against the Muslim Begs with anti-Muslim chauvinism. This was especially strong in 1918 when the whole country was engulfed in peasant riots.

There were, however, important multinational class struggles, such as the heroic Bosnian miners’ strike of December 1920 led by the Communist Party. In “*one of the best known and biggest class struggles in Yugoslavia*” (15) 4,800 miners — mainly Croats but joined by Slovenes, Muslims and Serbs — fought for social demands against the government. Government forces, together with Serbian nationalist militias, brutally smashed the strike wave. (16) This defeat for multinational working class action resulted in strengthening anti-Serb feelings.

The immaturity of the young CP and the resurgent Serb

nationalism were important factors in cementing an all-Muslim cross-class unity. The bourgeois JMO succeeded in getting 98% of all Muslim votes in the 1920 elections for the Constituent Assembly. (17)

The JMO was dominated by the reactionary interests of the big semi-feudal land owners. In the decisive vote on the constitution in 1921 the JMO voted in favour of the reactionary and nationally oppressive constitution. In return they got a promise from the Serbian dominated Belgrade government not to implement agrarian reform in Bosnia which would have threatened the social wealth of the Begs.

The reactionary Begs continued to sell-out the struggle for Muslim rights. After the coup d'état by King Alexander and the establishment of a monarchist military dictatorship the JMO failed to mobilise any resistance and, together with other bourgeois opposition parties, conducted a tug of war with the monarchy.

For a period the JMO even entered the government and served the Serbian monarchy in the interest of "stability". In 1939, Serbian and Croatian nationalists agreed upon the "sporazum". (18) This was an agreement between the central (Serbian) government and Macek, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, to give Croatia more autonomy and to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina between "*Croatian Banovina*" and "*Serbian territories*". The JMO leader, Dzafar Kulenovic, supported this despite its reactionary consequences for the Muslims. Worse the JMO supported the fascist Ustasha regime of Ante Pavelic in 1941.

As Marxists we reject Serbian nationalist claims, often shared by Stalinophile leftists, that the Croats and Muslims are reactionary peoples in contrast to the Serbs, who fought against the Ottomans and then German fascism.

Firstly, it should be noted that after 1941 there existed a strong monarchist and chauvinist Cetnik Movement, whose main activity, particularly in Bosnia, was ethnic cleansing of Croats and Muslims (19) and fighting against the Partisans. They collaborated from the beginning with the Italian fascist army. Later they did the same with the Nazi occupation forces and in some areas even with the Ustashi! (20)

Additionally, it is understandable that an oppressed people does not usually rally to the defence of their national oppressors. They are very likely to develop naïve and false hopes in any "liberator" that attacks their oppressors. Today, the Muslims have developed similar illusions in United States and European Union imperialism.

Of course, these are crippling illusions and Marxists denounce the leaders of the community for spreading them. Nevertheless, we must understand the reasons for these if we are to break them. In any case, history is the biggest teacher and those Croats and Muslims who had illusions in the Ustasha/Nazi state quickly lost them. (21)

Titoism and the National Question in Yugoslavia

The Second World War was a watershed for inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While some bourgeois Muslim forces collaborated with the fascist NDH and a Muslim 13th SS-Division was even created, the vast majority of the Bosnian Muslims suffered terribly at the fascists hands. The chauvinist pogroms carried out by the Cetnik bands and by the new Ustasha state demonstrated to them

the necessity of a sharp struggle against nationalism. According to several studies the Muslims faced genocide.

There are estimates that up to 100,000 Muslims, approximately 8% of the population, were killed. (22) Whilst many Muslims joined the Partisans in Herzegovina soon after the Partisan liberation war started, the general participation of Muslims in the Partisan movement dates only from 1943. But this common experience of a struggle comprising Serbs, Muslims and Croats against chauvinism and occupation, was very important in forging a multinational Bosnian identity.

In Stalinist Yugoslavia the national question was posed anew under changed conditions. The Titoite bureaucracy understood well that there could be no real stability in Yugoslavia without the elimination of national conflict, particularly between the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Serbs were (and are) too weak to enforce a system of stable national oppression in the whole of Yugoslavia. In 1948 they comprised 41.5% of the Yugoslav population. In 1971 this was down to 39.7%. (23)

The bureaucracy exercised its political dictatorship partly on the basis of balancing between, and arbitrating between, the various nationalities. The denial of free political expression to any forces outside the League of Yugoslav communists suppressed open nationalist agitation. Nevertheless this took on a disguised expression within the party and the cultural intelligentsia. Repeated re-adjustments had to be made in the political balance of power, culminating in the 1974 constitution.

The only important exception to this inclusive system was the Kosovo Albanians, who were simply oppressed. This was because the right of national self-determination for the Albanians would probably have resulted in the creation a separate republic or even a union with Albania. This would have provoked Serbian nationalism into frenzy.

It's founding historical myth centres on the heroic defeat of the Serbs at the hands of the Ottomans in Kosovo in 1389, an act of redemptive crucifixion, which led eventually to national resurrection. The "field of Kosovo" is regarded as the Calvary of the Serb nation. Unfortunately this region is not, and has not been for centuries, inhabited by Serbs.

Its extreme poverty and backwardness have failed to make it attractive to them. Any moves to grant the Albanians their rights to self-determination would have thus endangered internal stability. In addition they would have changed the balance of forces in the Balkans in favour of Tito's Albanian rival Stalinist, Enver Hoxa.

Bosnia in Tito's Yugoslavia

This strategy of building a balance of power between the nations was the main reason why the Stalinist bureaucracy declared the Bosnian Muslims a nation in 1963. A secondary reason was that it aided Tito's sponsorship of the non-aligned movement, in which several Islamic states played an important role. (24)

The practical fruit of this new status was an increasing share of party, state and economic positions for Muslims (the important exception was the military). There are also indications that religious affiliation declined in Bosnia. According to one poll in 1985 only 17% were religious believers, compared with 19% in Macedonia, 26% in Slovenia, 33% in Croatia and 44% in Kosovo. (25)

The industrialisation process in the Yugoslav degenerate workers' state also led to the development of a significant Muslim working class. As a consequence Muslims became the most urbanised ethnic group in Bosnia.

While there was no systematic national oppression of Muslims under Tito several forms of discrimination existed. All the positive economic indices cannot hide the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina was, before the present war, still an underdeveloped part of Yugoslavia.

According to official statistics Bosnia's per capita income grew by 201% between 1947 and 1962; yet the average for Yugoslavia was 235% while Slovenia's grew by 282%. (26) In the late 1980s the relative per capita social product in Bosnia was 80, while the average for Yugoslavia was 100 and in Slovenia 179. (27)

In 1945 several leading Stalinists, including Milovan Djilas, actually opposed the formation of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. An organisation called "*Young Muslims*" was founded at the end of the war to defend the Muslims against attacks and banned as "*terrorist group*". (28) In 1983 the Stalinists put Alia Izetbegovic and 13 others on trial, accusing them of "*Islamic fundamentalism*". While they undoubtedly professed bourgeois religious ideas, it was an absurd slander to accuse them of fundamentalism. Many Muslims correctly grasped that this reactionary trial was an attack on them as an ethnic group.

How then should we characterise the "*Muslim*" national question under the Stalinist bureaucracy? Essentially, the Muslim ethnic community remained a "*half way house*"; it neither developed fully into an independent nationality nor was it absorbed into another one. The agrarian reform

of 1945 liquidated the Begs as a class of semi-feudal landowners, while the overthrow of capitalism in 1946/47 prevented the formation of a Muslim urban bourgeoisie.

The creation of a degenerate workers' state after the expropriation of the semi-feudal landed aristocracy, meant the bourgeois dynamo of nation-building was never started up. Meanwhile, the working class had no class interest in the formation of a nation.

Bosnia and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1980s

When a society is flung into deep crises that threaten its very existence it is possible to go forward or backward. To go forward society must look to the working class and a political leadership which represents its fundamental interests—a revolutionary communist party. To go backward requires simply that society falls under the leadership of bourgeois forces. All currents in between are forced to vacillate between these two poles. If they are not able to find their way to the path of proletarian revolution they are doomed to serve reaction.

This is exactly what has happened in Bosnia. The death agony of Stalinism hurled the whole country into convulsions. The pattern of established economic ties was forcibly torn up. The Stalinist bureaucracy, losing all faith in its own system, embarked on the restoration of capitalism. But since it was discredited in its "*socialist*" guise it could only hope to lead this process by donning the "*traditional*" and outlandish costumes of nationalism. Rival bureaucrats outdid one another in demagogic excesses in



Map: Sarajevo under siege

the hope of getting the people to forget the bureaucracy's own recent past.

Nationalism was the only radicalism with deep historical roots which could outdistance the growing working class radicalism in the years 1986-88. However the strike waves which could have been the harbingers of political revolution lacked any clear class political leadership. Thus a wing of the Serbian bureaucracy under Slobodan Milosevic, fanned chauvinist flames.

He claimed that all the Serbian workers' economic problems were due, not to the bureaucracy's mismanagement and disruption of the planned economy, but to the so-called privileges of the other nationalities. Moreover, the Slovenian and Croatian bureaucrats wanted to get rid of the more backward parts of Yugoslavia. Nationalism and capitalist restoration would help this.

It is obvious from all that has been said before that there existed a basis, a popular "historical memory", which the bureaucrats were able to exploit to achieve their goals. But such ideologies are open to being contested, refuted and replaced. The ex-Yugoslav peoples were not doomed, as though by some genetic imprint, to hate each other because of these resurrected memories, part real, part myth. A revolutionary internationalist party can shatter these mythologised "memories" with new experiences, above all, with the experience of multinational class war against the fomentors of national carnage. But this party does not exist today and this is the key to understanding the depth of the current tragedy.

When the various bureaucracies launched their campaign of national hatred the Bosnian working class resisted particularly strongly. After war broke out between Serbia and Croatia in 1991 tens of thousands of Muslim, Croatian and Serbian workers marched in Sarajevo against nationalism and war.

The Catastrophe of 1992

The climax of this desperate struggle to avert catastrophe was the mass demonstration of April 1992, in Sarajevo. Hundreds of thousands of workers from all around Bosnia occupied the inner city for three days. They stormed parliament, demanding the resignation of Izetbegovic and the immediate cessation of the war moves.

They saw clearly that the responsibility for the war lay, in large measure, with their reactionary government. Tragically, this movement was betrayed by the leaders of the liberal and reformist parties who were seeking a compromise and to this end disarmed the masses. The crowd was unprotected in the face of sniper attacks by the Serbian militias. (29)

The deliberate diversion of the class struggle into national conflict strengthened bourgeois forces in all three communities in Bosnia: the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party), the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community) and the Muslim SDA (Party of Democratic Action). The SDA was founded in May 1990 by Izetbegovic.

The party became a bourgeois, pro-capitalist party which claimed to represent the Muslim community. (30) Undoubtedly, the SDA succeeded in this project (as did the HDZ and the SDS among the Croats and Serbs). Of the 240 seats in the two chambers of parliament the SDA held 86, the SDS 72 and the HDZ 44 seats. In all there were 99

Muslim seats, 85 Serb, 49 Croat and seven declaring themselves as "Yugoslavs". (31)

Whilst the SDA does have an Islamic fundamentalist wing, which is becoming stronger, it would be wrong to characterise the SDA in its entirety as a fundamentalist party. The Bosnian Muslims lacked the essential basis for the creation of an Islamic state. According to one 1991 poll, the Muslims counted for 43.7% of the Bosnian population, Serbs 31.4% and Croats 17.4% (5.5% are "Yugoslavs"). (32)

The structural faultlines made the project of either a confessional or a national state utopian; namely, territorial dispersal and under-representation in the military apparatus and the greater degree of secularisation amongst them than in the Croat or Serb communities. The SDA strategy was therefore to preserve a multinational Bosnia, but to establish a Muslim hegemony and seek from west European imperialism guarantees for the independence of Bosnia.

This project implied neither ethnic cleansing, nor systematic persecution of the other minorities. It was formally democratic since the Muslims constituted a plurality on their own and a majority, with the Croats, for Bosnian independence. Nevertheless, the inherent dynamic of this policy seemed a serious threat to the Serbs, who it converted into a national minority, severed by the new state borders from their fellow Serbs to the east and the north.

To carry out this strategy the SDA leadership was obliged to form an alliance with the Croatian HDZ. They also sought to avoid provoking the Yugoslav army (JNA) and to this end totally failed to prepare themselves militarily for the coming war. They placed all their hopes on recognition and support from European imperialism which urged them along this suicidal course. This was the aim the referendum in February 1992, which was boycotted by the Serbian minority.

The Muslims had no intention of splitting the republic because they would thereby atomise themselves. Certainly, there were differences between the outlook of the rural and the urban population. While multinational feelings were very strong in the cities they were weaker in the more backward countryside. But the huge demonstrations in April 1992 clearly revealed the strength of multi-nationalism.

While the SDA leadership may have had a strategic plan for Muslim hegemony it did not dare to campaign for it openly precisely because this would have been violently unpopular with the Muslim population. The latter felt, correctly, they could only survive in a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Therefore SDA propaganda focused on slogans such as, "*For an equal representation of the Muslims in a multinational Bosnia*" (33)

As we have said from the outset of the conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina can only survive as a multinational entity — not as a cantonised State or a Confederation of three republics. The Bosnian peoples were so intermixed that such a "solution" could only be brought about by mass expulsions of population which could only be achieved by terror.

Nation Formation under Conditions of a Genocidal War

The war has achieved in great measure exactly this arch-reactionary objective. The European Union, having encouraged a Bosnian declaration of independence, did not rush to Bosnia's assistance when the Yugoslav army and

the Serb militias launched their attacks. Indeed the imperialists imposed an arms' embargo which kept the Bosnian state forces virtually disarmed as the Serbs deployed tanks and heavy artillery to pound the Muslim communities.

Itzetbegovic received a brutal lesson in what comes from trusting imperialism. After the break-up of the Muslim-Croat alliance and the agreement of the perfidious EU to partition Bosnia-Herzegovina in the second half of 1992, the war turned into a genocidal one against the Muslims. In November 1992 we outlined the possibility of the formation of a Bosnian Muslim nation precisely as a result of the terrible experience of war and ethnic cleansing by Serb and Croat forces. This could lead to the establishment of an identifiable majority in a compact area. (34) A sense of national identity for the Muslims would be forged out of the shared experience of persecution and resistance.

How far has this process gone? Although there has been massive ethnic cleansing against the Muslims there are still tens of thousands of Muslims living in areas under the control of the Serbs or Croats. (35)

Nevertheless, in a small part of Bosnia, probably 10%, the Muslims undoubtedly make up the overwhelming majority. Because of this national experience, hatred for the Serbs and Croats has intensified. In the Bosnian popular newspapers such as *Lilja*, or *Nova Bosna* growing Muslim "nationalism" is evident.

Unsurprisingly the Muslim nationalists have drawn the conclusion that living together with Serbs and Croats is impossible. The absence of a consistent internationalist party helps them to drum this idea into the brains of many Muslims. The right wing in the SDA and the genuine fundamentalist forces, which dominate the unelected Muslim Assembly, have an open project of fighting for a bigger piece of Bosnia so as to create a Muslim state there.

But it would be wrong to identify a continuing process with the final result, or to accept that this process is irreversible. There are important countervailing tendencies. While in the central Bosnian region, around Zenica, Muslim "nationalism" and fundamentalism is quite strong, multi-ethnicity still dominates in central urban areas such as Sarajevo and Tuzla. (36)

Furthermore, the army is still multinational, especially the Second Corps around Tuzla, which still has a multinational officer corps. But even in Sarajevo there are still HVO units in the army (37) as well as Serbs. Approximately 10% of the government army is non-Muslim.

There is still a multinational elected parliament and state presidium. There are multinational parties like the *Liberals* or the *Reformist Party* and also Croatian and Serbian parties like the *Croatian Citizen Party*, the *Croatian Peasant Party* and the recently founded "*Serbian Assemblies*". (38)

A strong mood still prevails in the Muslim and mixed population areas against partition and for a multi-ethnic solution. Even the 17th Brigade, which is composed of Muslim refugees from the Banja Luka region, strongly favours a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Some months ago Itzetbegovic admitted at an SDA conference that the Muslims still have no national identity or national consciousness. This multi-ethnic mood forces the SDA leaders to continue to deploy multinational rhetoric. Itzetbegovic regularly speaks about the heroic multi-ethnic Partisan tradition in the Second World War and repeatedly underlines his commitment to a multinational Bosnia-Herzegovina. (39) The official Radio and

TV condemns pogromist action by Muslim fundamentalist forces in Central Bosnia. This is unimaginable in Serbia or in Croatia

To this picture we have to add that a majority of the Croats do not live in Western Herzegovina and many Croats (and possibly the majority in Croatia itself) are still opposed to partition. Finally, there is evidence of continued multinational sentiments in the territories occupied by Serbs.

In the uprising of Serbian soldiers in Banja Luka and Prijedor in September 1993, it was reported that they accused Karadjic of being a Cetnik and of favouring the destruction of the multinational communities; they hailed the multi-ethnic Partisan tradition. (40)

In early March 1994 an agreement was signed between the Bosnian-Muslim government, the Bosnian Croat nationalist leaders and the Croatian government. It sketched out a plan to form a Bosnian Muslim-Croatian federation and a confederation between this and Croatia. Strong pressure is being exerted on the Serbs to join this peace process. This agreement will have to withstand the pressures of continuing military action in central Bosnia.

It is unlikely that this "settlement", even if it is achieved, will hold for long. It will be founded on a massive injustice against the Muslims the largest community in Bosnia. If the SDA backs it to the hilt then it is likely that the Islamic fundamentalists will grow in strength amongst the displaced peasant masses and resume armed struggle as soon as it is possible. No peace settlement can be founded upon such a basis of felt wrongs.

The Struggle for a Multinational Bosnian Workers' Republic

Will a Muslim nation emerge in these conditions? This still depends on establishing a contiguous, compact territory as well as a strong and lasting national consciousness. A federation between the Muslims and the Bosnian Croats could certainly lead to the formation of such an area, even if it contained a small minority of Croats.

If capitalist restoration succeeded in Bosnia (41) this would involve the emergence of a Muslim bourgeoisie, the leader of any future nation building project. The development of a national consciousness, on the other hand, is linked to the outcome of the war. A prolonged struggle against the Serbs would strengthen the alliance with the Croats and therefore slow down the formation of a specifically Muslim national identity. (42) The more restricted the war, the less will be the collaboration with the Croats. This would probably strengthen a distinct national consciousness.

National consciousness among the Bosnian Muslims has significantly increased over the last year and a half. A large part of the Muslim leadership orients towards the building of a Muslim state in a compact area in central Bosnia. But they still face major obstacles. Firstly, the evident unviability of the present area they control. Secondly, the strong remnants of a multinational tradition among many Muslims, Serbs, Croats and "Yugoslavs" run counter to the leadership's project. And these forces have a significant presence in parts of the army.

The main problem here is that these forces only have a utopian, bourgeois multinational perspective. In practice they are incapable of leading a resolute opposition to the plans of the leading SDA figures.

On the contrary, they subordinate themselves to them. Hence, the biggest danger now is that if the war drags on without hope of a decisive victory against the Serbian and Croatian nationalists the progressive forces within the Bosnian masses will become resigned to an ethnic solution.

The Muslim leaders would step forward as "realists" and win approval for the building of a nation state. In sum, the nation building process of the Bosnian-Muslims has made significant advances in the last period but it is neither complete nor irreversible.

The goal of socialists must remain as before— a multinational workers' republic in Bosnia. There is still no objective reason to advance the slogan of an independent Muslim workers' state. Only when a majority of the Muslims clearly embrace the perspective of building of a Bosnian-Muslim nation state should socialists change their point of view.

The present tragedy in Bosnia demonstrates that capitalism and Stalinism are condemned, by their very nature, to promote national chauvinism which in circumstances of the crisis of both can result only in genocidal war.

The real solution lies in the building of revolutionary communist parties throughout the Balkans, resurrecting the legacy of both the revolutionary Social Democratic and Communist movements at the beginning of this century.

The principles that guided their actions also illuminate the path ahead:

"The Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation declares in consequence that nothing but the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat with its organisations of the councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Red Army deputies, will liberate the Balkan nations from all oppression and will afford the possibility of self-determination, uniting them all into one Balkan Socialist Soviet Republic." (43)

Notes

(1) Cited in Srečko M. Dzaja, "Bosnien-Herzegowina", in M Weithmann (Hrsg.), *Der ruhelose Balkan*, Munich 1993, p. 154-5.

(2) The Serbs on the other hand fought a heroic but in the end unsuccessful battle against the Ottomans at Amsfeld in 1389.

(3) Alojz Ivanisevic, "Das Pulverfasz Bosnien—Zum historischen Hintergrund der gegenwaertigen Tragodie", *Sudosteuropamitteilungen* 3/1993 Munich, p. 217.

(4) In Serbia, however, the propertied classes fled or were wiped out.

(5) According to the official statistics there existed in 1899 barely 1,735 factory workers in Serbia. See Mirka Bogdanovic, *The Serbian Labour Movement in the period 1903-1914*, Amsterdam, 1988, p. 48

(6) Sandor Gyimesi, "Motive und Probleme der Industrialisierung in den Staaten Suedosteuropas bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg", *Suedosteuropa-Studie 42: Industrialisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Suedosteuropa*, Munich, 1989, p. 13.

(7) Ivo Banac, *The national question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, New York, 1992, p367. According to the same author Muslim smallholders represented half of Bosnia's free peasants.

(8) This class/confessional antagonism was already manifest in the 1875 uprising by mainly Serbian peasants. It was brutally suppressed by the Ottoman forces and 156,000 people fled abroad. See L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans 1815-1914*, Chicago 1963, p. 64

(9) S M Dzaja, op cit, p. 159

(10) I Banac op cit, p. 366

(11) *ibid*

(12) Yugoslav Muslim Organisation

(13) E Hoesch, *Geschichte der Balkanlaender*, Munich 1988, pp. 97-104

(14) This remained the official name of the state until 1929. Then it was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

(15) Rodoljub Colakovic, *Kazivanje o jednom pokoljenju*, Zagreb 1964, p. 137

(16) Enver Redzic, "Der Streik der bosnischen Bergarbeiter im Dezember 1920 und das Verbot der Kommunistischen Partei Jugoslawiens", *Oesterreichische Osthefte* 3/1988, pp. 220-226

(17) By and large the JMO was able to maintain its hegemony in the elections.

(18) This literally means "balance".

(19) According to a close collaborator of the Cetnik leader, Mihailovic, the Cetniks killed forty thousand Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegowina and Sandzak by the end of 1943. See J. Milazzo, *The Cetnik Movement & the Yugoslav resistance*, Baltimore, 1975, p. 103

(20) *ibid*, pp. 78-79

(21) The German Ambassador in Zagreb, Glaise-Horstenau, wrote in February 1942 to the German Army General Command: "The whole people with very few exceptions are united in their complete rejection of the Ustasha movement as the ruling party. Hatred of them is extremely strong." Sundhaussen, op cit, p. 121

(22) L Bryant, *The Betrayal of Bosnia*, London, 1993, p. 16

(23) F Singleton, *Twentieth-Century Yugoslavia*, London, 1976, p. 221

(24) A Ivanisevic op cit, p. 219

(25) H Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in conflict*, London, 1991, p. 43

(26) F Singleton, op cit p. 254

(27) Branka Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, London, 1993, p. 191

(28) H Poulton, op cit, p. 41

(29) For a report by a participant see Lee Bryant, *YugoFax*, May 1992

(30) Therefore they built Party branches in Sandzak and Macedonia. In reality these local SDA units are more or less independent today.

(31) H Poulton, op cit, p44

(32) "The National Composition of Yugoslavia Population, 1991", *Yugoslav Survey* Vol.XXXIII No. 1, 1992, Belgrade, p4

(33) Also the Bosnian Croatian HDZ was for a longer time divided with a wing around Stepan Klujic who was in favour of a multi-national Bosnia-Herzegowina.

(34) "Stop the annihilation of the Bosnian Muslims!", *Trotskyist Bulletin* 3, 1993, p16

(35) There are still 40,000 Muslims living around Banja Luka, for example, terrorised by Serbian chauvinists.

(36) *The Economist* 4.9.93. One must also differentiate between the peasant refugees and the more multinational urban/work-class Muslims

(37) BBC Summary of World Broadcasting, 18.12.93

(38) According to Nova Bosna, 1.3.94, a Bosnian Muslim newspaper

(39) For example, Izetbegovics speech to army officers on 14.12.93, in BBC Summary of World Broadcasting, 18.12.93

(40) *ArbeiterInnenStandpunkt* (paper of the Austrian section of the LRCI), 56, November 1993

(41) For the moment Bosnia-Herzegowina is still, like Serbia and Croatia, a degenerate workers' state.

(42) Although a federation with the Croats could lead to national oppression against the Muslims by the Zagreb government and by this route strengthen Muslim national consciousness.

(43) "Resolution of the Balkan Communist Conference", Sofia, January 1920, in: L S Stavrianos, *Balkan Federation; a history of the 'movement toward Balkan Unity in modern times*, Connecticut 1964, p. 304 ■

The Breakup of Yugoslavia

League for a Revolutionary Communist International (predecessor organization of the RCIT), February 1999

Introduction

We refer readers to the introduction to our essay "*Are the Bosnian Muslims a Nation?*" where we explain the correction of our line in the first few months in the Bosnian War in 1992

Imperialism has played, and continues to play a destructive and reactionary role in the Balkans and in the breakup of former Yugoslavia. But no revolutionary socialist can neglect to point the finger of blame at Stalinism too.

For forty years the "Communist" rulers of Yugoslavia, under the leadership of Tito, held the country in a bureaucratic vice. The working class was excluded from political power and economic decision making. Stalinist policies fuelled national hatreds and helped fuel the murderous wars that have tormented the region throughout the 1990s.

And rival nationalist bureaucracies built up power bases from which, after the death of Tito, they launched attacks on each other. They prepared the battleground. They are anti-working class criminals.

Yugoslavia under Tito: A Variant of Stalinism

Yugoslavia, after the Tito-Stalin split, experienced decades of the "market socialism" and economic decentralisation that Gorbachev vainly tried to introduce in Russia from 1985 onwards.

Indeed Yugoslavia was the pioneer of "market socialism". The Yugoslav economic stagnation and breakdown, which became critical in the mid-1980s, was a crisis of this system in extremis, rather than of the old Soviet model of "command planning".

Heavily in debt to western financial institutions, Yugoslavia witnessed a deep economic crisis in 1985. The debt totaled one third of the nation's gross material production. Between 1979 and 1984 real earnings fell by 30 per cent. At the same time inflation spiraled up to 200 per cent by 1988. Mass unemployment meant further misery for the impoverished masses.

The Yugoslav federation had become virtually a confederation after 1974, though with Tito as final arbiter. The bureaucracies of each republic were able to thwart and obstruct any centrally decided measures which harmed them.

Tito's system could not survive his death because no bonapartist arbiter could replace him. Indeed, a cumbersome revolving "collective presidency" was his legacy. This was a recipe for complete paralysis. Yugoslavia, like many "third world" countries, had been lured into heavy debt by the western banks throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. In the mid-1980s the IMF decided it was pay-back time.

The monetarist recipe for Yugoslavia - as everywhere else - was austerity and "economic reform" (i.e. privatisations, closures, opening to western trade). Thus, when the federal bureaucracy was pressured by the IMF to adopt

just such a package of "reforms", this led to waves of mass strikes and demonstrations by industrial workers both in 1987 and 1989. The response of the Serbian bureaucracy was to play the nationalist card.

The rise to power of Gorbachev in the USSR, and the deepening of the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika in 1987 had its influence in Yugoslavia too. In Croatia and Slovenia, existing dissident movements came into the open demanding democratisation.

Milošević and Serbian Chauvinism

Within Serbia itself, democratisation manifested itself primarily in militant demands by the Albanian minority for full republican status within the Yugoslav federation. The response amongst Serbs was the famous memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences inspired, if not written by the father of the Serbian nationalist revival, Dobrica Cosic.

Cosic had specialised in presenting the Serbs as the victims of genocide, of a hysterical and self-pitying rhetoric which confused the real genocide carried out against Serbs by the Nazis and the Croatian Ustashe regime in the Second World War with the largely economically motivated movement of Serbs out of Kosova.

"*The Serb is the new Jew, the Jew at the end of the twentieth century*", Cosic repeated again and again. Cosic was only the foremost of a whole wave of nationalist writers who presented the Serbs as the victims of a conspiracy to rob them of their historic lands, of their statehood and eventually of their very existence as a nation.

But the only hard evidence they offered was the autonomy of the provinces of Vojvodina, which had large Hungarian and Romanian minorities, and Kosova, which had a



huge Albanian majority. They also blamed Serbia's economic backwardness relative to Slovenia and Croatia on an anti-Serb alliance between all the other federal states, Vojvodina and Kosova.

The upsurge of nationalism amongst the Serb intelligentsia was skillfully utilised by a former bank official and then party chief in Belgrade, Slobodan Milošević. Beginning in 1986, he rose to power in the *League of Communists of Serbia*, stabbing in the back his former patron Stambolic and his clique.

After a famous visit to Kosova, where the Serb nationalists had started to organise mass demonstrations by busing in Serbs from Serbia proper, Milošević realised that these demagogic mobilisations, with the implied (and sometimes actual) threats of street violence against his opponents, were the way to oust the old Titoite bureaucrats, grown fat on the plunder of the collective property.

He used demagogic calls for an "anti-bureaucratic revolution" against them. He was able also to criticise the federal liberalisation programme - although he did support economic liberalisation, albeit at a slower pace.

To the demands of the autonomous provinces for republican status in 1990 he responded with measures that abolished the provinces' existing limited autonomy in all but name.

When pressure mounted to hold multi-party elections in December 1990, he called a snap election with tight control of the media. The League of Communists was renamed the *Socialist Party of Serbia* (SPS) and, shamelessly using nationalist demagoguery, took 194 of the 250 seats in the *Skupština* (parliament).

But the opposition, tied to the IMF policies which would lead to mass unemployment, could not reach beyond the white collar and intellectual strata who valued "democracy" above social security and jobs because they assumed theirs were safe.

Through iron control over the media, thuggish police methods, and an astute playing off of extreme nationalist and liberal democratic forces within the opposition, Milošević ensured that no effective electoral rivals emerged.

Whenever discontent with the regime reached boiling point and spilled over onto the streets, Milošević stepped up or initiated a crisis which enabled him to play the national-chauvinist card.

And since all the major forces in the opposition, whether on the fascist right (the Radical Party of Vojeslav Seselj) or the supposedly pluralist "left" (the Serbian Renewal Movement of Vuk Draskovic), also banged the nationalist drum, chauvinism began to poison large swathes of Serbian society.

Milošević's resistance to a multi-party political system in Serbia and at a federal level stopped the latter re-legitimising itself by national elections.

The Collapse of Yugoslavia

The federal government thus had no mandate for its economic reforms. In a tit-for-tat action the other republican leaders refused to sanction Serbian repression in Kosova. Deepening divisions along these lines led to the collapse of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in January 1990 and, over the next 12 months, the federation too, as the republics declared sovereignty and forced the withdrawal

of the federal army - because of its predominantly Serbian character.

In Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, what in the rest of East and Central Europe developed into an anti-bureaucratic democratic revolution was transformed, or rather subsumed, into struggles for national independence and/or the extension of dominance over other nationalities. In Serbia mass strike waves by workers resisting the first attempts at restorationist reforms were headed off by Milošević's national chauvinist course.

In November 1988 Workers Power wrote:

"... the Serbian Communist Party has embarked on a pogromist crusade to end the partial autonomy of both Kosova and Vojvodina. At its forefront has been Serbian party leader Slobodan Milošević . . . [who] has authorised a series of anti-Albanian and Greater Serbian demonstrations in Kosova, Montenegro, Vojvodina and Macedonia. He is campaigning for Kosova and Vojvodina to be brought back under direct Serbian control on the road to building a Greater Serbia within Yugoslavia. His politics are quasi-fascist."

This proved prescient. Within a matter of a few years Milošević's chauvinism inflamed rival nationalisms in Croatia and Bosnia - rivalries which effectively destroyed the Yugoslav Federation and started the wars between and within its successor states.

Milošević's preventative counter-revolution and its rapid imitation by Franjo Tudjman in Croatia (albeit with an overt anti-communist coloration) aborted the unfolding of a political revolutionary crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

Instead, the masses were lined up behind the nationalist leaders and used as cannon fodder in the wars of the Yugoslav succession. While the "war" with Slovenia proved to be a farce, the following wars were tragedies.

Imperialist Powers: Rivalry and Joint Goals

Most importantly, they opened the door to direct imperialist involvement in the Balkans. Once again the rival imperialists saw the opportunity to use the Balkan nations for their own purposes.

The newly strengthened and assertive German imperialism, supported by Austria, had a different perspective to the US and to its major European partners.

With historic links and aspirations in Slovenia and Croatia, Germany encouraged Croat and Slovene separatism. Surreptitiously they armed the Croats, hoping to cut away these economically advanced regions and to bring them into a relationship with the German-led Europe as semi-colonies.

In contrast, up to June 1991, the US and its British shield-bearer tried hard to preserve the federation and blocked recognition of the seceding republics. So too did French imperialism, fearful of seeing the new German giant flexing its muscles so soon after unification. But the tide of developments was on the side of German strategy.

The Serbian Stalinist bureaucracy was not so intransigent and obdurate because it was defending the workers' historic gains, but because its survival in Serbia now depended on its espousal of the most extreme Serb nationalist claims and objectives.

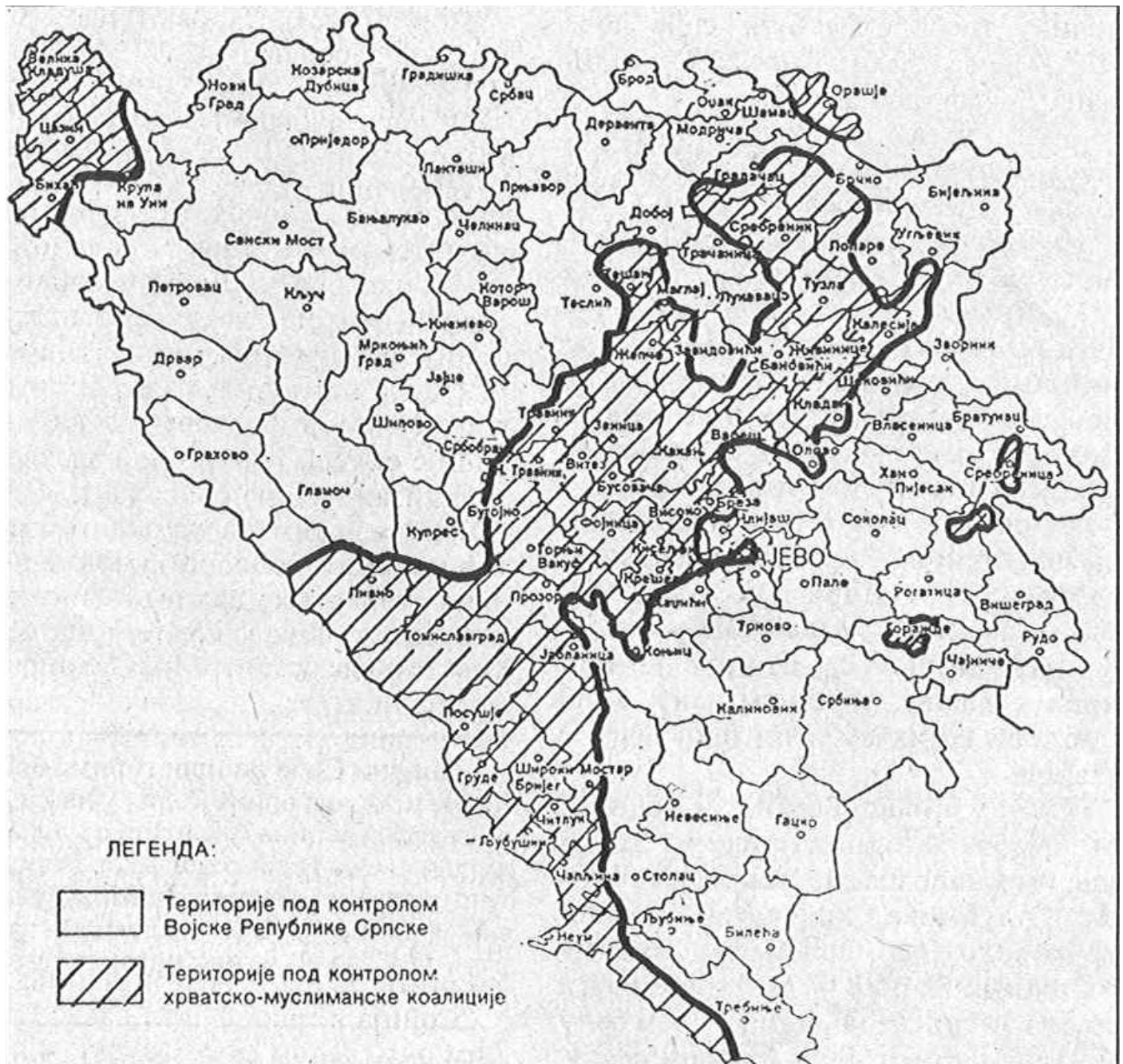
The war between Serbia and Croatia ensured that Croatia became independent of Yugoslavia. But it left unresolved the problem of control of the Serbian enclaves in Croatia

and Bosnia. Milošević's credibility hinged on his ability to impose Serbian control of these enclaves. And war was the only way in which this could be achieved. The war with Croatia, therefore, was the prelude to the savage conflict in Bosnia. Milošević's goal was always the expansion of Serbia and the consolidation of its power. To win, he had to do more than just fight. He had to clear whole areas of their existing populations so as to ensure total Serbian domination over them. The grim and criminal process of ethnic cleansing began. Milošević's characteristic obduracy eventually convinced the US-Franco-British bloc that their unitary-state strategy was bankrupt and that there was no alternative to supporting the division of Yugoslavia. They adopted the German plan to ensure the completion of the restoration process, first in Slovenia and then in a larger and economically viable Croatia. This meant sealing off backward Serbia and awaiting the effects of economic crisis which they trusted would even-

tually bring the downfall of Milošević and the installation of a more pliable regime. They hoped to get a "democratic" fast-track restorationist regime that will do imperialism's bidding. The Serbs' major crime in the imperialists' eyes was not that of the horrors committed by the Chetnik butchers or the army bombardments. It was their control over the rump of the Federal army, which enabled them to seize most of the Muslim-dominated buffer zone that the US and EC imperialists hoped to place between Croatia and Serbia.

The Genocidal War in Bosnia 1992-95

The break up of the Yugoslav Federation made a terrible war in Bosnia virtually certain, since it was a republic where each of the three main nationalities was a "minority" vis-a-vis the other two. The only force that could have prevented it was the Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian pro-



Bosnia in 1992 at the beginning of the war. The dashed areas were those under Bosnian-Croatian control

letariat.

Indeed, in the years 1989-91, the vanguard elements of the working class, together with the progressive intelligentsia and youth tried to do just this in the form of peace movements in all three countries. The final and tragic attempt was the great demonstration of 1992 in Sarajevo.

What this revealed was that pacifism alone, no matter how honourable its intentions are as against the chauvinist warmongers, is too limited and reactive. To stop war it was necessary to drive the warmongers from power.

A revolution was needed in all three republics to remove the Miloševićs, Tudjmans and Izetbegovics (the leader of the Muslim party in Bosnia). Its aim could only have been achieved by ensuring a voluntary and equal federation with full rights for all minorities and the preservation of a planned economy, but this time under the democratic control of the working class.

Instead of this Bosnia was plunged into war. All three forces – Serb, Croat and Bosnian Muslim – sought to enforce a reactionary nationalist settlement on minorities that had no wish to be incorporated.

The Bosnian Muslim leader Alia Izetbegovic's aim was to preserve the unity of the Bosnian state in an alliance with the Croat nationalists, backed by imperialism, who extended diplomatic recognition to the republic. Such a unitary state included the Serb minority against their wishes, and so threatened them with national oppression.

But a sudden shift in US imperialism's strategy towards accepting the German plan for the break up of Yugoslavia, a turn by the Croatian government against the Bosnian Muslims in order to carve out a "historic Croatia", and a ferocious campaign of ethnic cleansing of Muslims in eastern Bosnia by the "Yugoslav Army" and Serbian irregulars transformed the conflict into a reactionary war of annihilation against the Muslim people of Bosnia by the Serbs and Croats.

By August 1992 there were 50,000 dead and 2 million refugees. Where the working class was strongest - in cities like Tuzla and Sarajevo - multi-ethnic militia fought the pogromists in an alliance with the Bosnian army.

Milošević's objective of a Greater Serbia meshed with Tudjman's project for a "historic" Croatia. Indeed there is considerable evidence that the Bosnian War was a joint effort, once fighting had ceased in Slavonia and Krajina.

This clashed with imperialism's plans to stabilise the Balkans since they saw beyond this a further war in Kosovo and maybe in Macedonia too. This held the danger of Greek, Bulgarian and even Turkish intervention a real pan-Balkan war involving NATO allies on opposite sides. Between 1991 and the end of 1994 the number killed in Croatia and Bosnia was anything between 200,000 and 400,000 people, with 2.7 million people turned into refugees. Late in the war the uselessness of the United Nations Protection Force (Unprofor) was demonstrated in the UN "safe haven" of Srebrenica.

When the Serbs attacked, the Dutch Unprofor "protectors" pressured the Bosnian forces to surrender and then withdrew allowing the city to fall. Thirty thousand women, old men and children made their way by bus and on foot to Tuzla. But some 10,000 young men were rounded up and "disappeared".

Then the Serb forces under Ratko Mladić started an intensified bombardment of the besieged capital of Bosnia,

Sarajevo. The prospect of its fall finally persuaded the US and the EU to undertake some (thoroughly useless) bombing of Serb artillery sites. They scored a direct hit on some tents and one armoured car!

The reactionary Dayton Agreement

What really ended the war was a massive Croatian offensive on the Krajina and a simultaneous, coordinated offensive by the Bosnian forces. Milošević and the Bosnian Serbs – for the first time in a position of strategic weakness were now willing to consider the western plans for partition that a series of international figures such as David Owen had submitted over the past three years.

The Bosnian war ended with the cease-fire of 10 October 1995 and the Dayton peace accords on 20 December. Sonorous pledges to a "united and sovereign Bosnia" were made; freedom of movement for civilians, a reversal of "ethnic cleansing" and the return of refugees to their homes were all promised. In fact only about 250,000 of the 2.5 million displaced Bosnians have returned to their homes.

The largest groups of displaced population, the Bosniaks of Eastern Bosnia, the Serbs of the Krajina and the Croats of northern Bosnia stand no chance of being allowed to resettle.

Two entities were recognised at Dayton; the Republica Srpska and the Bosnian Muslim-Bosnian Croat Federation (formed under US pressure in Washington in March 1994).

But the two parts of the federation are not one state. The federation army, trained and equipped by the Americans is strictly divided into three Muslim and two Croat divisions. In Mostar, despite repeated attempts, the Croat chauvinists will not allow freedom of movement for Muslims.

The International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague has only managed to indict 74 people, arrest eight and try one. The Republica Srpska has a new president but behind the scenes Karadžić still has considerable power.

Their only substantive concession has been withdrawal from the Serb suburbs of Sarajevo in February 1996, but true to their principle that Serbs can only live under a Serb government they emptied these districts of their entire Serb population. As one historian observed:

"The Dayton agreement stopped the war before any of the three warring parties had achieved their political goals. It recognised the nationalist goals of all three governing parties, legitimised the ethnic principle of rule and completed the aim of the war to change the geographical distribution of the population to make national control over territory irreversible."

Only one of the direct parties to the war - the Bosnian Muslims under Alia Izetbegovic - actually signed Dayton. The Croats of Herzeg-Bosna and the Serbs of the Republica Srpska both refused to sign. They were "signed for" by Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milošević.

The minimal carrying through of Dayton on the Bosnian Serb and Croat sides is totally dependent on Milošević and Tudjman. Hence imperialism's tacit support for Milošević and Tudjman will last as long as both are needed to implement Dayton.

Misery after the War

The post-war situation in Serbia was a dire one. There was 60% unemployment and inflation was running at 50% per month. The gross external debt was \$9bn. There were 700,000 war refugees from Krajina, Slavonia and Bosnia. Milošević's old slogan "All Serbs in One State" was coming true but in a way the Serb population had never dreamed of. In Milošević's ten years of power the average income had more than halved in real terms.

The local elections held on 17 November 1996 were won by the opposition coalition Zajedno (Together) in Belgrade and fourteen other towns - among them Nis, the second city in Serbia. Protests were initiated by the students of Belgrade and the masses responded.

There were daily demonstrations of up to 200,000 in Belgrade and in Nis and other major towns. But according to western commentators "noticeable was the absence from the streets of Serbia's workers, of organised labour".

The reasons for this were clear. Zajedno was a coalition of human rights activists, reactionary anti-communist nationalists and advocates of fast track restoration. Such a programme cannot win the organic support of all the students, let alone draw in the Serbian working class.

But at the same time it was clear that Milošević could no longer mobilise the workers against the opposition either. On 24 December the Serbian Socialist Party tried to stage a rival rally at the same time and in the same place as Zajedno.

It had boasted that 500,000 would turn out. In the event

only 40,000 showed up. An OSCE mission of investigation, agreed to by Milošević, found in favour of the opposition in 14 out of the 15 results challenged. Milošević pledged 1997 as "a year of reforms" that would take Serbia towards a market economy and see "huge investments".

Promise of foreign investments, however, came at a price. In his last months as Britain's foreign secretary, Malcolm Rifkind persuaded Milošević to accept the Zajedno leaders into the government.

Vojeslav Seselj was made deputy president and Vuk Draskovic appointed deputy prime minister. Even Zoran Djindjic - who is linked with Radovan Karadžić, the bloody butcher of Bosnia - has been brought into Milošević's inner circle.

The shoring up of the Serbian government was necessary to head off workers' strikes and demonstrations over wages, jobs and conditions. Inevitably, however, it brought war with Kosova closer. In spring 1998 the Yugoslav Army moved into Kosova to flush out the UCK units.

After some initial setbacks, the war took a turn in late summer through to the cease-fire in October 1998, with the Serbian forces going on an ethnic cleansing offensive to clear out the north and east of Kosova - where the mineral-rich mining towns and all the major cities are.

By January 1999, Milošević, now accompanied by all the nationalist oppositionists as well as the major genocidists from the Bosnian war, the notorious fascist Arkan and the destroyer of Srebrenica, Ratko Mladić, was ready to restart the war. This time, his aim was to drive the Albanian majority out of Kosova once and for all. ■



RKOB and RED*REVOLUTION at the demonstration for Bosnia on 22.2.2014. The banner reads "Solidarity with the Liberation Struggle of the Oppressed"

Ukraine: Right-Wing Forces Take Power!

Mobilize the Working Class against the New Government!

Joint Statement of the RCIT and the Movement to Socialism (MAS, Russia), 25.2.2014

1. A coalition of pro-EU right-wing and fascist parties has overthrown the government of President Viktor Yanukovich. This represents a clear victory for EU imperialism and a setback for Russian imperialism which traditionally has massive influence in the Ukraine. In addition, this right-wing victory goes hand-in-hand with a substantial strengthening of fascist forces like the *Svoboda* party of Oleg Tyagnibok, the “*Pravy Sektor*,” (Right Sector) and others.

2. The right-wing forces and fascists have already started by banning the Communist Party (KPU) in a number of regions. (See MAS: No to the Terror of the Bandera-Fascists! Stop the Repression against the Communists of Ukraine!, 22.2.2014, <http://www.nuevomas.blogspot.co.at/2014/02/no-to-terror-of-bandera-fascists-stop.html>) On February 23, the parliament abolished the “*Law on Regional Languages*” which entitled any local language spoken by at least 10% of the population of that region to be declared an official language within that region. Thus the right-wing nationalists have once again made Ukrainian the sole state language at all levels. This is an attack on the rights of the Russian-speaking population in the East and Southeast regions of the Ukraine.

3. Western media, as well as numerous left-liberal, reformist, and centrist forces, have depicted the “*Maidan*” opposition as a democratic and progressive force. From the beginning of this protest movement, this has been completely untrue. The protests were initiated by the pro-EU right-wing parties (the *Fatherland Party* of Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Yulia Tymoshenko and the *Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform* led by Vitali Klitschko) and the fascists. Their immediate goal was to force President Yanukovich’s to sign an *Association Agreement* with the European Union, which meant nothing but intensified colonialization of the Ukraine by EU imperialism. There has always been a strong presence of openly fascist forces in the Ukraine, and the Maidan protests have always been under the control of these fascist forces and other right-wing parties (while, of course, being rivals of one other).

4. At the same time, revolutionaries clearly could not support the reactionary government of President Yanukovich. The latter was a government of super-rich capitalists (the so-called *oligarchs*) and collaborated closely with Russian imperialism.

5. For these reasons the RCIT stated in its resolution from December 18 2013: “*The RCIT maintains that class conscious workers and socialists must support neither the pro-EU nor the pro-Russian faction of the capitalist class. The present mobilizations don’t represent an independent organization of workers and youth to advance their interests, but rather the attempt of the right-wing and fascist faction of the bourgeoisie to bring down the equally reactionary Yanukovich government.*” (See RCIT: Ukraine: Neither Brussels nor Moscow! For an independent Workers’ Republic! 18.12.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/ukraine-neither-brussels-nor-moscow/>)

6. We note that various socialist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations – like *Borotba* or the *Autonomous Workers’ Union* – in the Ukraine correctly refused to support either of the two reactionary camps. At the same time, others did support the right-wing-led Maidan protests (like the “*Vpered*” group of the Mandelite “*Fourth International*” headed by Ilya Budraitskis, and the so-called “*Left Opposition Collective*”). On the other hand, the Stalinist KPU and others supported the reactionary Yanukovich government. Various international centrist forces have also supported the Maidan protests as a “*progressive*” and “*democratic*” movement (e.g., the CWI, IMT, the Morenoite LIT-CI, various Cliffite groups like the ISO [USA] or the British RS21). Such support once more emphasizes how, without correct revolutionary communist theory and a program derived from such, left-wing groups are doomed to vacillate in the class struggle and to accommodate themselves to bourgeois forces.

7. The central task now is to mobilize the workers’ movement against the new right-wing government and their pro-EU agenda, without making any accommodations to Russian imperialism or the old pro-Yanukovich regime. It is urgent to call for *mass assemblies in workplaces and neighborhoods* so the working class can discuss its next steps and elect delegates. These delegates should meet for an *emergency congress* to agree upon a plan to fight against the coming attacks of the new right-wing government. Socialists must explain that accession to the EU will bring about rapid increases in prices (+40% for gas) and massive attacks on social security. They must call for the workers’ movement to form *defense squads to fight against the fascists*. They have to argue for a Ukraine in which *no national and ethnic group is discriminated against in its national rights* (for example, using its language in public administration and in schools). They must call for a Ukraine in which the economy is no longer controlled by oligarchs and in which the *large banks and enterprises are nationalized and placed under control of the workers*. In short, socialists should fight for a *workers’ government based on working class councils and militias*. The task of such a government is to transform the Ukraine into an *independent workers’ republic which is neither a colony of Brussels or Moscow*.

8. This task can only be achieved by an organized struggle of the working class, led by a revolutionary party in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. The RCIT and MAS call for revolutionaries in the Ukraine to unite in a Bolshevik organization based on an internationalist and communist program.

International Secretariat of the RCIT and Editors of the Bulletin “*Movement to Socialism*” (MAS) ■

Announcement of Collaboration between the RCIT and the Movement Towards Socialism (Russia)

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 19.2.2014

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) has started collaboration with the *движение к социализму* (Movement Towards Socialism, MAS) in Russia. Together we want to advance the struggle for a new World Party of Socialist Revolution – the revolutionary Fifth Workers International.

The website of MAS is www.nuevomas.blogspot.com

We are glad to expand – jointly with MAS - the RCIT's efforts to spread revolutionary ideas and building a revolutionary organization in Russia, a major country of the international class struggle. For communists it is especially important to be able to reach workers and youth in the former heartland of the world revolution, the country which first saw a successful working class revolution in 1917 led by the Bolshevik revolutionaries Lenin and Trotsky. Stalinism impelled the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and led the country finally to the collapse in 1991. Stalinism's horrible legacy makes the struggle for authentic communism even more urgent today!

In doing so, the RCIT continues the revolutionary tradition of the LRCI/LFI before its centrist degeneration in 2011. We also continue the revolutionary positions which were defended by the revolutionary LRCI/LFI forces in Russia around the journal *Rabochaya Vlast* in the early 1990s and by MAS in the last years.

The collaboration between the RCIT and MAS is built on our joint assessment of Russia as an imperialist power, ruled by the bourgeois-bonapartist regime led by Vladimir Putin. The strategic task is to build new Bolshevik party which can lead the working class towards a socialist revolution. This is the only road to liberate the working class and the oppressed. We state our support for the struggle of the oppressed nations in Caucasus and other areas for national self-determination as well as for the rights of the migrants. We denounce the reactionary bigotry offensive of the regime against homosexuals and other oppressed groups. We support the struggle for democratic rights

while at the same time we denounce the bourgeois forces at the top of the protest movements against the Putin in the last years. The struggle of the revolutionary Trotskyists in Russia against their "own" imperialist ruling class – as the struggle of all revolutionaries against "their" imperialist rulers – is as an essential part of the international task to build the Fifth Workers International on a revolutionary basis.

In the Ukraine we can already see an actual example of the efforts both of Russian and EU imperialism to intervene in the country's political life in order to subjugate the Ukraine under their control. Authentic revolutionaries must not give any support neither to the bourgeois government of President Viktor Yanukovich (to which the Stalinist KPU allies itself) nor for the right-wing and fascist led opposition movement. The task is to build an independent pole of the working class fighting for an Ukraine workers' republic!

We see the collaboration between the RCIT and MAS as an important contribution to advance the struggle for the revolutionary Fifth Workers International. Such a joint effort is of particularly urgency given the explosive character of the present historic period. This period which opened in 2008 has a revolutionary character, i.e. the contradictions and the struggles between the capitalists and the working class, between the imperialist states and the semi-colonial people as well as the rivalry between the Great Powers reach such a sharpness that they will result repeatedly in wars and (pre-)revolutionary situations. In such a historic period it is of particularly urgency to build a stronger, united international revolutionary combat organization which orientates to the 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. Forward to the revolutionary Fifth Workers International! Join the RCIT! ■

No to the Terror of the Bandera-Fascists! Stop the Repression against the Communists of Ukraine!

Statement by the editors of the bulletin "Movement to Socialism» (MAS), 22.12.2014

During the present crisis of the Ukrainian bourgeois state various Nazi, fascist, pro-Bandera and other right-wing nationalist organizations have unleashed a wave of white terror against the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU).

Fascist gangs are attacking the offices of the Communist Party, steal office equipment and party documents – including lists of party members. In several regions of Ukraine Communist Party is officially banned. Fascist vandals are destroying monuments of Lenin.

Trotskyists in Russia have always denounced the Communist Party not only as a Stalinist organization, but also as an accomplice of the colonial policy of Russian imperialism in Ukraine. However, faced with today's fascist terror, we express our full and unconditional solidarity with the Ukrainian Communists and call the world proletariat and all communists and socialists to support their comrades in Ukraine.

Fascism will not win! Workers of all countries, unite! ■

Venezuela: For Independent Working Class Mobilizations against the Semi-Fascist Provocateurs!

No political support for the Maduro government!

For a new workers' party based on a revolutionary program!

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 20.2.2014

1. In Venezuela, the right-wing extremist sector of the bourgeois opposition centered around Maria Machado, Antonio Ledezma, and Leopoldo Lopez has started a wave of provocations. Right-wing middle-class university students are attacking government buildings and blockading roads. Their goal is to destabilize the government and gain hegemony in the ranks of the opposition. Until now, the opposition has been led by the more moderate bourgeois presidential candidate, Henrique Capriles Radonski. Undoubtedly, in one way or another, US imperialism is involved in these provocations. As a result of the riots fomented by these semi-fascist provocateurs, a number of people have been shot and wounded. The main tactic of the Maduro government is to send the police against the provocateurs in order to quell the riots.

2. In this situation, the main task of the workers vanguard is to mobilize the working class to defeat the semi-fascist provocateurs. To do so, revolutionaries must apply the united front tactic to the mass organizations in Venezuela which represent the working class and poor – including those led by the Bolivarian forces. Even if, currently, the reactionary extremists are not strong enough to organize a coup d'état, they must not be allowed to gain any confidence and become stronger. The working class must organize a general strike, form its own independent popular militias, and smash the semi-fascist scum.

3. The working class must not rely on the Maduro government whose true character is not socialist but bourgeois-populist. While the Bolivarian government continues to enjoy support from among sectors of the working class and the urban poor precisely because of its populist policies, in reality this government defends the system of capitalist exploitation, and so its core bastion of support is the army, sectors of the state bureaucracy, and the "Boli-

varian bourgeoisie." Let us not forget that, between 1998 and 2008, the private sector's share of the economy grew at the expense of the public sector from 64.7% to 70.9%. Let us also not forget that nearly 70% of public sector workers are reported to earn only the minimum wage. Furthermore, workers in the informal sector of the economy constitute approximately one half of the country's entire workforce.

4. Consequently, the working class must not place any confidence in the Maduro government. True, the most dangerous enemy at this moment in time is the force of semi-fascist provocateurs led by Machado, Ledezma, and Lopez. Nevertheless, the workers' vanguard and the socialist organizations in Venezuela must not be tempted to lend political support to this government which so assiduously defends capitalism and its bourgeois masters, but instead fight to win over the working class to an independent, class-based perspective. In short, for Venezuela's workers and oppressed, Bolivarianism is nothing but a bourgeois trap.

5. Most importantly, the workers' vanguard must take the initiative to build an independent workers' party based on a revolutionary program. Such a party will prove vital in forging true working class solidarity and power, and will draw together class-conscious workers, including many who still may harbor illusions about the nature and role of the Bolivarian PSUV. Inside an independent workers' party, revolutionaries will fight for a program of socialist revolution thereby focusing the struggle on the true goal: establishment of a workers' government based on workers' and popular councils and armed militias, which will expropriate the bourgeoisie, smash its state, and open the road to socialism.

International Secretariat of the RCIT ■

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Argentina: Petition in Solidarity with the Oil Workers in Las Heras

Introduction:

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) supports the petition below. The prosecution of the oil workers in Las Heras is a scandal which demands the unconditional support of the international workers movement!

* * * *

For the acquittal of the workers of the Las Heras Oil Refinery We, the undersigned, condemn the sentences handed out to nine workers of the Las Heras oil refinery in Santa Cruz province, Argentina by the Caleta Olivia Criminal Court on December 13.

Four of them, one of whom was a minor at the time, have been sentenced to life imprisonment after being found guilty of killing police officer Jorge Sayago in 2006. The remaining five have been sentenced to five years, charged with 'aggravated coercion'. No evidence of their guilt was produced at the trial and they were convicted on the basis of false testimonies obtained by methods that violate human rights. Sayago died during the wave of protests in Santa Cruz against the additional tax on incomes and for better working conditions and salaries.

We demand the acquittal of the workers on the basis that the trial was a travesty of justice. Despite constant intimidation from the judges, the defence team was able to prove that there was no evidence linking the workers to Sayago's death. In fact, the only thing that was incontestable was

that the oil workers were subjected to torture, unlawful coercion, ill treatment and threats at the hands of the provincial police force during the three years that they were in custody, to make them incriminate themselves. These methods remind us of those used under the military dictatorship. To everyone's amazement, the prosecuting attorney even justified the ill treatment, saying that "a bag over the head and a couple of slaps on the face" could not be called torture.

We condemn the treatment of the accused and the practices of the Caleta Olivia Criminal Court. The large number of complaints presented by the defence team during the proceedings – supported by hundreds of human rights groups, political organisations, campaigns and trade unions – forced the Secretary of State for Human Rights to request an enquiry into the trial. The harsh sentences received by the workers are amongst the worst since the return to democracy in 1983. They are aimed at preventing workers from standing up to the big oil companies and other large corporations. Moreover, they establish a precedent for the justice system to rely on confessions obtained under torture in the future. On February 5, an appeal will be presented to the High Court in Río Gallegos, the capital of Santa Cruz province, asking for the annulment of the sentences. We demand the immediate and unconditional acquittal of the oil workers of Las Heras

<https://www.facebook.com/Solidarity.Las.Heras.workers?fref=ts> ■



Cartoon by Carlos Latuff

Syria, Israel and the Palestinians

Free Abdel Qader Altlitha! Free all Palestinian Political Prisoners!

Palestinians fight on both sides of the civil war in Syria

by Yossi Schwartz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel/Occupied Palestine), February 2014

On Monday, Feb 10, Lod District Court sentenced Abdel Qader Altlitha, a Palestinian resident of the town of Taiibe (inside Israel's 1967 borders), to 15 months in prison for attempting to join the Syrian rebel forces Nusra Front.

"In her ruling, Judge Shira Ben Shlomo noted the danger inherent in Arab Israelis volunteering for jihadist groups in Syria, where they 'receive ideological and military training which could then be used for carrying out attacks on Israeli targets.'" (1)

No doubt Palestinians who receive military training are in a position to fight the racist state of Israel. Such training can be crucial in a revolutionary situation fomented by armed masses.

This court ruling raises two issues: (a) exactly on which side of the civil war in Syria is Israel? and (b) the hypocrisy of Israel regarding Palestinians not serving in the Israeli army.

Israel prefers Assad to smash the Islamist opposition:

"Israel's preference is for President Bashar Assad to remain in power rather than see radical Islamist forces take control in Syria, the former military chief of staff is quoted in Wednesday's edition of the daily tabloid Ma'ariv as saying. Dan Halutz, who served as IDF chief of staff during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, told a gathering in Moscow that the prospect of al-Qaida-affiliated elements ruling Damascus in place of the Assad regime would be more problematic from Jerusalem's standpoint." (2)

"It's hard to get a straight answer to those questions in Jerusalem. Direct calls for Assad's ouster vanished from the Israeli lexicon a few months ago. In 2013, MK (as he was then) Avigdor Lieberman, Strategic and Intelligence Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz and then-ambassador to the United States Michael Oren declared that a change of regime was needed in Damascus. But the events of the past few months in Syria, notably the take-over by organizations identified with Al-Qaida of large swaths of opposition activity in the country, changed the Israeli approach, as it did that of Washington and European capitals. At the same time, the Assad regime has clung to power with ferocious tenacity. If the choice is between Assad and Al-Qaida, Israel prefers the continuation of the fighting (while issuing empty statements of empathy for the victims)." (3)

According to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in Israel, namely an institution that supports Israel state terrorism:

"In our assessment, so far about 20 Israeli Arabs have joined the ranks of the rebels in Syria, as well as 30 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and a few from Judea and Samaria. There are also several dozen Palestinians from the refugee camps in Lebanon who have joined the rebels (especially from Ein al-Hilweh near Sidon) and Palestinians from Syria and Jordan. Most of them are apparently Salafi-jihadists who join organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad." (4)

But while the Amit Center does not mention that some Druze have joined Assad, we learn from other sources:

"While it has been known for months that some Israeli Arab men have entered Syria to join rebel armies, Walla news is now reporting that several Druze men have infiltrated into Syria as well, to fight alongside President Bashar Assad's forces." (5)

In spite of this, there are no reports in the press that Israeli Druze who have joined up with Assad's forces are facing trials. Israel's systematic discrimination against the Palestinians is rationalized by Israel.

Israel: The Last Remaining Apartheid State

Israel, the last remaining apartheid state, denies that Palestinians are discriminated against in Israel, a claim that is no more than an empty, meaningless phrase.

Yet one of the official reasons actually acknowledged by the Zionists for discrimination against Palestinians citizens of Israel is the fact that the Palestinians, especially Muslims, are not conscripted into the Israeli army is because Israel is afraid of Arabs getting military training.

The pro -Israel propagandists Mitchell Bard has written: *The sole legal distinction between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel is that the latter are not required to serve in the Israeli army. This was to spare Arab citizens the need to take up arms against their brethren. Nevertheless, many Arabs have volunteered for military duty and the Druze and Circassian communities are subject to the draft. Some economic and social gaps between Israeli Jews and Arabs result from the latter not serving in the military. Veterans qualify for many benefits and jobs not available to non-veterans. Moreover, the army aids in the socialization process. On the other hand, Arabs do have an advantage obtaining some jobs during the years Israelis are in the military. In addition, industries like construction and trucking have come to be dominated by Israeli Arabs." (6)*

It is absolutely untrue that the sole legal distinction between Jewish and Palestinians citizens of Israel is that Arabs are not required to serve in the army. In the ethnically-cleansed Palestinian land now known as "Israel," there are at least 30 laws that discriminate against non-Jews. Israel is defined by its rulers as a "Jewish and Democratic state." This is absurd: a Jewish state that rules over the Palestinian nation *cannot* be democratic. If the US were defined as a Christian Democratic state, the Zionist lobby would raise cries of anti-Semitism, and for very good reasons.

Unfortunately, most Jewish Israeli workers and other sections of the Jewish population support the racist nature of Israel, which they recognize as the defender of their relative privileges compared to the Arabs. So long as these groups will not break politically with Zionism, they will be unable to develop any serious economic or political struggle that will allow them to develop a revolutionary consciousness and fight against this racist, capitalist state. This has been proved time and again in the history of the State of Israel.

The latest event that attests to this is the Jewish Israeli protest movement of 2011 that eventually fell apart because it refused to defend the Palestinian struggle for freedom, and instead accepted the racist propaganda slogan of “sharing the burden,” namely that Arabs and ultra-orthodox Jews must serve the state. In the case of Arabs, the Israeli state is attempting to establish legislation whereby Christian Arabs will serve in the army, while Muslims will have to volunteer for one year national service to prove their loyalty to the state that oppresses them.

All Racist States Share the Same Fear: The Oppressed

In this respect, Israel is no different than the South African Apartheid State that existed until 1994, where blacks were not conscripted into the army because the racist state feared blacks receiving military training.

“The balance of power in South Africa was massively tilted in favor of the white minority population. They controlled 87% percent of the land and earned more than 10 times the amount that a black worker could expect to earn (Southall 1984). Not only economically, but the political systems was entirely composed of whites and the military was formed with white troops loyal to the government.” (7)

The same was true for blacks in America before the civil war, and changed, only to a certain degree, during the civil war. The reluctant capitalists of the North were afraid of blacks receiving military training:

“In 1862, President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation opened the door for African Americans to enlist in the Union Army. Although many had wanted to join the war effort earlier, they were prohibited from enlisting by a federal law dating back to 1792. President Lincoln had also feared that if he authorized their recruitment, border states would secede from the Union. By the end of the war, approximately 180,000 African-American soldiers had joined the fight. In addition to the problems of war faced by all soldiers, African-American soldiers faced additional difficulties created by racial prejudice. Although many served in the infantry and artillery they served mostly as cooks laborers and teamsters. And they were paid less than the white soldiers.” (8)

The Different Kinds of Discrimination in Israel based on Military Service

In Israel, the law for the Absorption of Discharged Soldiers, for example, provides housing and educational grants to former soldiers. Under the law, *“a married couple in a poor socio-economic situation, each of whom has completed full military service, receives NIS 124,500 (about \$30,000) more towards their home mortgage,”* according to Adalah, a human rights organization in Israel, in its 2011 “Inequality Report.” (9)

According to this report, in 2010 Israel announced it would provide rent subsidies and land allocations to career soldiers that relocate with their families to the country’s southern Negev region. The government grants larger budgets to high schools that draft relatively high numbers of students to elite army units, while Israeli universities give preference to former soldiers, or reserve soldiers, when it comes to allocating scholarships and dorm rooms.

Recently, due to the growing tension between the US and Israel, the US State Department has “out of the blue” dis-

covered that Israel practices “institutional discrimination” against its Palestinian citizens, especially with regard to accessing housing and employment:

“Citizens who do not perform military service enjoy fewer societal and economic benefits and are sometimes discriminated against in hiring practices. Citizens generally were ineligible to work in companies with defense contracts or in security-related fields if they had not served in the military,” the Department stated in a report on Israel’s human rights record.” (10)

Yet the real reason for the discrimination of Arabs citizens of Israel is not rooted in the fact that Arabs do not serve in the army or volunteer for national service, but in the inherent nature of Israel as an “ethnically-based” state. The question of the privileges of those serving in the army is merely a manifestation of the racist nature of Israel. We can confirm this from the discrimination of Druze who have actually served in the army.

Mandatory military service for Druze men is the result of a 1956 agreement in which the community’s leaders sought to improve conditions for the tiny minority, while the Israeli government sought to control Palestinians by creating strife between different groups of Palestinians. This, in fact, is the same sectarian policy that prevails in Syria.

However, growing numbers of Druze refuse to serve in the Israeli army because of the discrimination that the Druze, like other Palestinians, encounter in Israel.

“For the most part, we face all the same economic and political barriers as the rest of the Palestinian minority in Israel, al-Sakleh said. ‘We are mostly poor, and our villages, often shared with Christian and Muslim Palestinians, lack sufficient infrastructure’ as a result of the government’s unwillingness to invest in non-Jewish areas. ‘The state has subjected Druze refuseniks to harsh punishment. Nonetheless, ‘a growing number of us understand that we identify as Palestinians — more than five or ten years ago, for sure,’ said al-Sakleh.” (11)

On which Side of the Military Conflict?

We in the ISL and RCIT oppose the murderous regime of Assad which is responsible for the death of over 130,000 people, and for the displacement of around two million Syrian refugees. We stand together with the fighting opposition in the military aspect of the civil war, *without giving it any political support.* The more dangerous enemy at this time is Assad’s army. Those on the left especially the centrist organizations who call themselves “Trotskyists” – like the CWI or the IMT, whose leadership refuses to take the side of the Islamists in the military struggle on the ground – in fact espouse a reactionary positions. We refer them to what Trotsky wrote on the rebellion of Abdel-Krim, also known as the *Rif rebellion.*

Prior to WWII, Morocco was ruled in part by the French, and in part by Spain. French and Spanish farmers had incomes that were much higher than the average of Moroccan farmers, and they looked upon their Muslim neighbors as racially inferior. In 1920, a rebellion broke out among mountain tribes in that part of Morocco controlled by Spain. The rebellion was led by Mohammed ben Abel Krim. In 1922, Krim announced the creation of an Islamic republic. He received aid from abroad, mostly Muslim volunteers.

During the rebellion, atrocities were committed by both Krim’s forces and the Spanish, including indiscriminate

Spanish bombing of the Moroccans. In 1925, Krim's forces advanced into tribal areas governed by France. A joint French-Spanish force united their large and well-equipped forces against Krim. This included artillery barrages, aerial bombardment, and the use of gasoline bombs from a volunteer air force commanded by an American mechanic, Charles Sweeney. Krim and a party of twenty-seven surrendered to the French in May 1926, and were exiled to French islands in the Indian Ocean.

While, today, reformist Communists claim that Assad is fighting against imperialism and many centrists have refused to back the Syrian rebels, in the 1920s, the Communist International and the early Communist Party of France, which at the time was a truly revolutionary party, stood alongside Krim, and even got him support from the Soviet Union. As the author of *Islam and Communism* has written:

"In 1924-25, the CI encountered its first important ally from the Arab world in the person of Abd el-Krim (c. 1882-1963), the Berber leader of resistance in the Moroccan Rif to Spanish and French imperialism." (12)

When relating to the Sino-Japanese war, Trotsky wrote:

"We do not and never have put all wars on the same plane. Marx and Engels supported the revolutionary struggle of the Irish against Great Britain, of the Poles against the tsar, even though in these two nationalist wars the leaders were, for the most part, members of the bourgeoisie and even at times of the feudal aristocracy . . . at all events, Catholic reactionaries. When Abdel-Krim rose up against France, the democrats and Social Democrats spoke with hate of the struggle of a "savage tyrant" against the "democracy." The party of Leon Blum supported this point of view. But we, Marxists and Bolsheviks, considered the struggle of the Riffians against imperialist domination as a progressive war. Lenin wrote hundreds of pages demonstrating the primary necessity of distinguishing between imperialist nations and the colonial and semi-colonial nations which comprise the great majority of humanity. To speak of "revolutionary defeatism" in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists." (13)

Western and Eastern Imperialist Powers

The Islamist opposition movement in Syria is not battling against an imperialist state: Syria is a semi-colony. However the armed conflict is result of Assad's attacks on the unfinished democratic revolution and, at present, cannot be seen as a conflict between two equal evils. During the Palestinian Authority military attack on Hamas in 2007, we in the ISL stood with Hamas against the PA backed by Israel but *without* giving Hamas any *political* support. Hamas is a reactionary organization, but the PA is a collaborator with Israel and is therefore more dangerous than Hamas. The very same leftist groups that refuse to side in the military front with the Muslim opposition in Syria refused to stand with Hamas.

Assad is supported by both Russian and Chinese imperialism while Western imperialism supports (mostly only rhetorically) the pro-imperialist opposition groups termed "moderate." Those groups which claim they represent the moderate opposition have no influence whatsoever on the ground. The actual warfare against Assad is being con-

ducted by Islamist forces whom no imperialists support in any way, shape, or form, as was proven by the failure of Geneva II conference and by the statement of Chuck Hagel, US Secretary of Defense.

"Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel says the U.S. will continue to support the moderate opposition in Syria, but non-lethal aid will be suspended until the U.S. can get a clear assessment on the status of warehouses of military equipment seized by extremist Islamic militants. Hagel says the seizure is a big problem and the U.S., along with moderate opposition leaders, is going to have to work through it. He says it reflects the unpredictable situation there where it's not "an easy choice between the good guys and the bad guys." (14)

While without doubt the Islamist opposition is reactionary, Assad is smashing the *democratic revolution* that cannot be completed without a working class revolution. The latter begins with a democratic struggle, but must ultimately combine the democratic revolution with a socialist revolution to achieve a true victory. This is the application of the working class revolutionary strategy – the permanent revolution – to Syria. At present, the Syrian working-class movement is weak: independent unions are illegal; most of the Syrian so-called "left" (i.e. the Stalinist parties) support Assad, and a revolutionary party does not exist in Syria.

For now, the focus of the revolutionary struggle has shifted to other places, like Bosnia, a struggle that is known as the "Bosnian Spring" after the Arab Spring, in which the multi-ethnic working class is leading the struggle. The urgent tasks in Bosnia are to organize workers' councils, to lead a general strike, and, most importantly, to found a revolutionary workers' party. Successful revolutionary victories in Bosnia can have a great influence on the working class in Syria.

***Release Abdel Qader Atlitha and all political prisoners!
Victory to the permanent revolution in Syria and Bosnia!***

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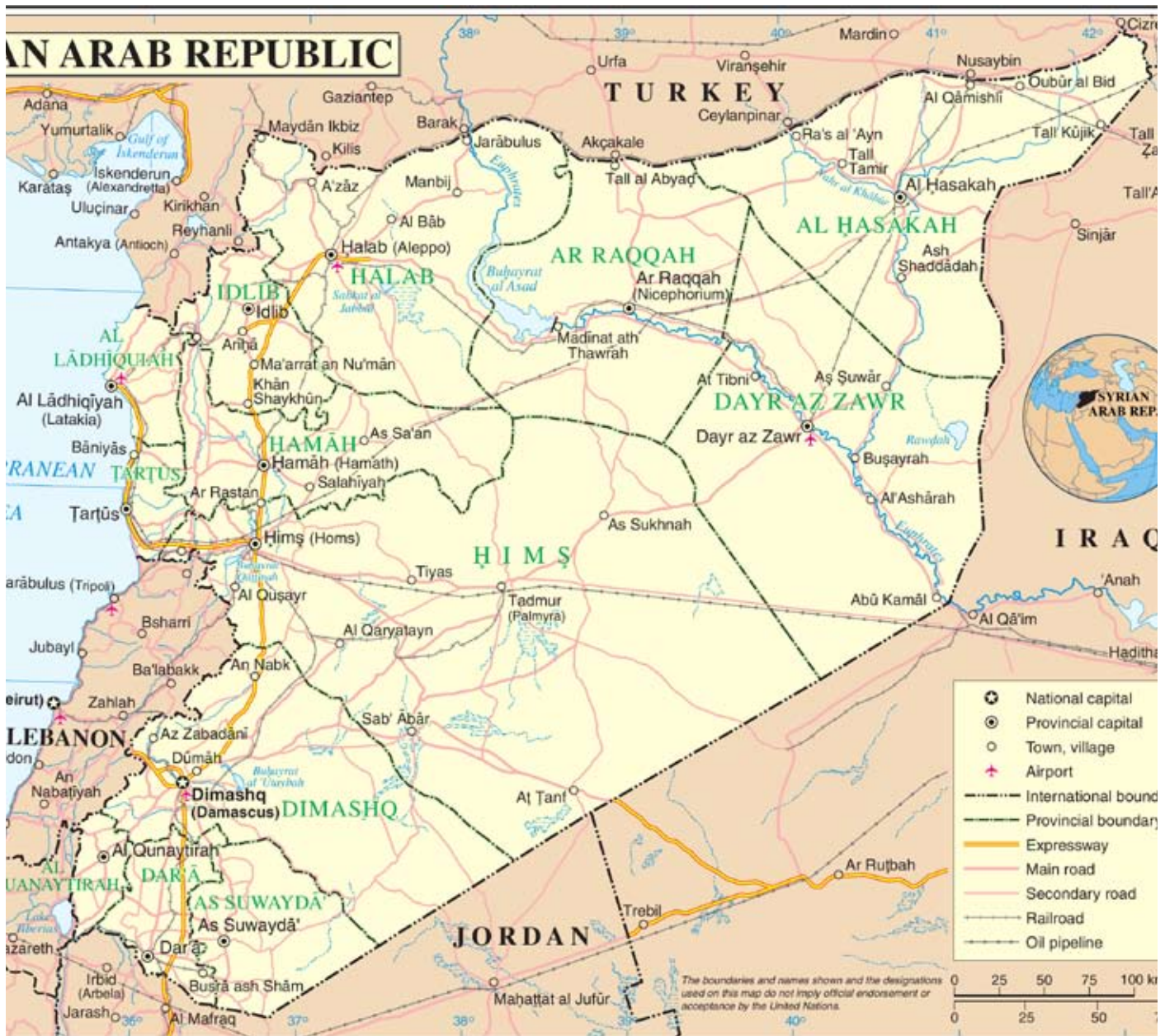
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Map of Syria; Source: Wikipedia, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Un-syria.png>

The Fear of the Ruling Class

Notes on the Changing Mood inside the Capitalist Class

By Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 31.1.2014

During the past few weeks a number of articles and reports have been published which reflect the growing insecurity and fear of the ruling class about the coming crises and upheavals of their capitalist system. These strategists all recognize a massive increase of social inequality, as well as the growing resentment of the rich and their fake democracies, behind which lurks the authoritarian repression state.

Let us examine a few examples. The *Financial Times* – one of the most prestigious newspapers of the imperialist bourgeoisie – published an article about the World Economic Forum (WEF). The World Economic Forum is a gathering of the political and economic global elite which takes place annually at Davos (Switzerland). The *Financial Times* reports:

“In 2014, however, the sense that something is wrong with the way the rewards of globalisation are distributed has entered mainstream debate. One common trend in recent years – linking the rich economies of the west, with the emerging powers – has been outbreaks of large-scale social protest, highlighting inequality and corruption. The examples keep piling up: the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ movement, the Indignados in Madrid, the anti-corruption protests in Delhi, the mass demonstrations in Brazilian cities last summer, the Gezi Park movement in Turkey and the rallies that followed last year’s coup in Egypt – all seem to demonstrate how quickly anti-establishment sentiment can be fanned in the age of social media. Since the WEF is, essentially, a gathering of the global elite, its delegates will be concerned by evidence that ‘populism’ (to use a favourite Davos term) is on the rise.” (1)

Here we will not deal with the senselessness of the term “populism” as used by the bourgeoisie, which conflates so-called “left-wing” and “right-wing” extremist ideologies and movements. The essential point here is that the ruling class understands that the masses are progressively

losing their trust in the capitalist order and are looking for radical alternatives.

The British journal *The Economist*, another mouthpiece of the super-rich, reported discussions at this year’s World Economic Forum. In one session, 64% of the audience said wealth concentration was “*corroding democracy*”. (2) When the people at Davos speak about democracy, of course they don’t mean democracy for the popular masses but rather bourgeois democracy – i.e., parliamentary democracy which camouflages the rule of a small group of monopoly capitalists. In other words, capitalists fear that their bourgeois-parliamentary democracy may collapse due to popular hatred.

The World’s 85 Ultra Super-Rich

This is hardly surprising given the obvious inability of the capitalists to run a system which serves popular needs. In a recent study which received great attention not only at Davos but around the world, the British NGO think-tank OXFAM stated: “*Global elites are increasingly becoming richer*”. It found out that “*the wealth of the one percent richest people in the world amounts to \$110 trillion.*” At the same time poverty and hunger are increasing. Global inequality has now reached such proportions that “*the bottom half of the world’s population owns less than the richest 85 people in the world.*” (3) In other words, the world’s 85 biggest and most greedy parasites have more wealth than the poorest 3.5 billion of the world population!

It is beyond the scope of these brief notes to analyze this development more closely, as we have done in our book *The Great Robbery of the South*. (4) However, we draw the reader’s attention to the fact that this massive increase of inequality is the result of both the increasing exploitation of the working class in all countries as well as of the in-

Table 1: Growth Rate of Industrial Production in USA, Japan and EU-15, 1961-2010 (in % p.a.)

	USA	Japan	EU-15
1961-1970	+4.9%	+13.5%	+5.2%
1971-1980	+3.0%	+4.1%	+2.3%
1981-1990	+2.2%	+3.9%	+1.7%
1991-2000	+4.1%	+0.2%	+1.6%
2001-2010	-0.3%	-0.4%	-0.3%

Table 2: Growth Rate of Gross Fixed Capital Formation in USA, Japan and EU-15, 1961-2010 (in % p.a.)

	USA	Japan	EU-15
1961-1970	+4.7%	+15.7%	+5.9%
1971-1980	+3.9%	+3.5%	+1.8%
1981-1990	+3.0%	+5.7%	+2.7%
1991-2000	+6.4%	-0.6%	+2.2%
2001-2010	-1.1%	-1.9%	+0.3%

creasing super-exploitation of the semi-colonial countries (the so-called “Third World”) by the imperialist monopolies and Great Powers. (5) The capitalist class – to be more precise, the monopoly capitalists, who are the dominating layer among the bourgeoisie – have raised the rate of accumulation of surplus value at the expense of the workers in all countries *and* have increased the value transferred from the semi-colonial peoples to the imperialist metropolitan centers.

For Marxists these developments are surprising. Karl Marx himself already explained in *Capital* Volume I that the laws of capitalist accumulation unavoidable create mass impoverishment:

“It establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.” (6)

Fear of Revolution

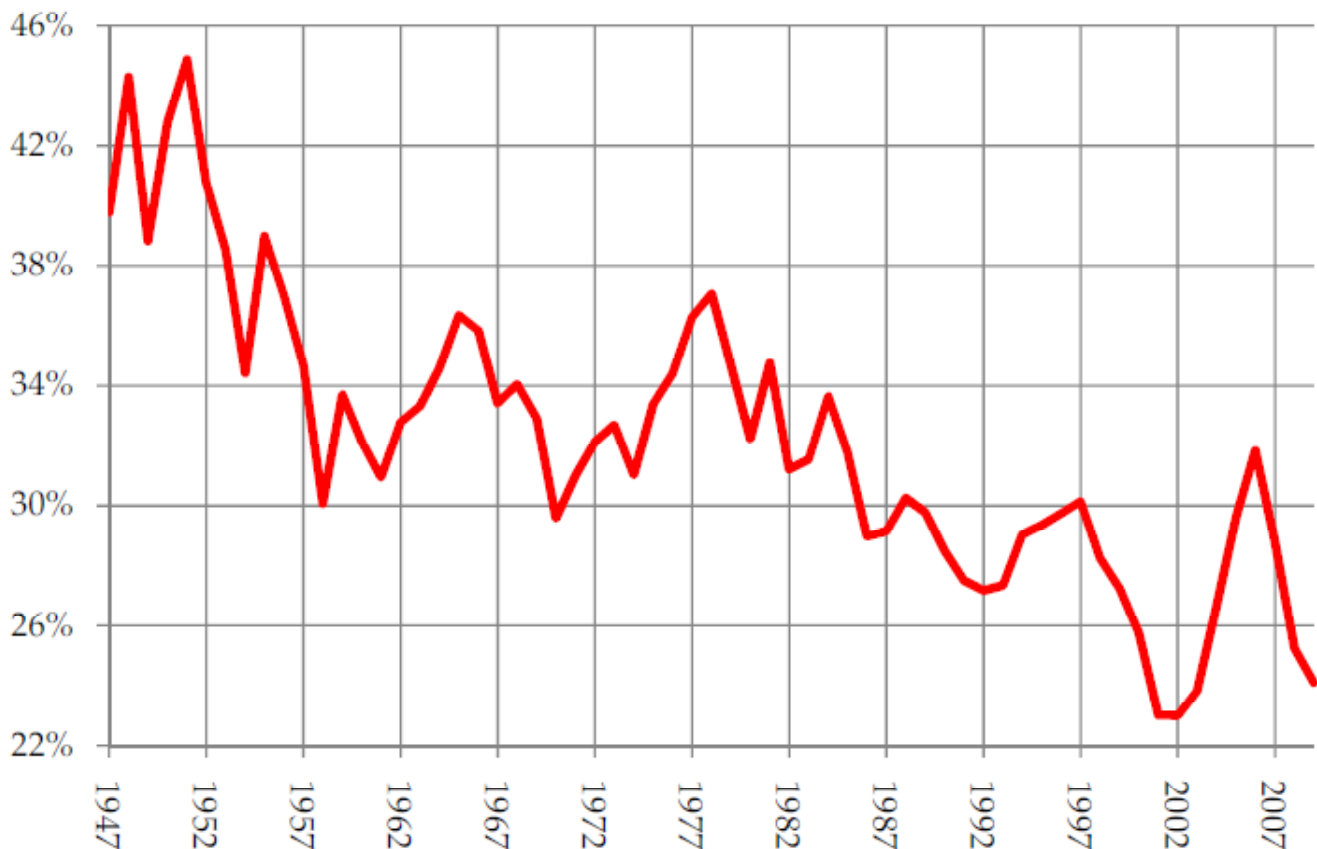
As revolutionaries, we have been aware of the increasing potential for revolutionary developments in this new historic period for a number of years. (7)

The bourgeois strategists are aware that the growing inequality increases the dangers of uprisings and revolutions. In one of the major studies conducted in preparation of this year’s conference in Davos, bourgeois analysts warn about the threats to the bourgeois order: *“Widening wealth disparity affects every part of our lives. It’s impacting social stability within countries and threatening security on a global scale”* (8)

As it is commonly known, the youth is particularly affected by the decay of the capitalist world economy. In a number of countries, about half of the youth are unemployed. Another study prepared for the super-rich at Davos warns that a whole generation may be “lost,” which clearly fuels mass protests as we have seen in Turkey, Brazil, and the Arab world. It warns: *“The generation coming of age in the 2010s faces high unemployment and precarious job situations, hampering their efforts to build a future and raising the risk of social unrest.”* (9)

Another example for this fear is a study by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a sister company of the *The Economist*. According to the EIU, 65 countries (43% of the 150 countries analyzed) will be *“at a high or very high risk of social unrest in 2014”*. For 54 countries the risk of instability is medium, and for the remaining 31 countries it is low or very low. Among those countries at *“high or very high risk”*

Graph: Rate of Profit of US Corporations, 1947-2009



are many in the Middle East and North Africa, eastern and southern Europe including the Balkans, the countries that formerly composed the Soviet Union, a number of African countries, and China. *The Economist* concludes:

“From anti-austerity movements to middle-class revolts, in rich countries and in poor, social unrest has been on the rise around the world. The reasons for the protests vary. Some are direct responses to economic distress (in Greece and Spain, for example). Others are revolts against dictatorship (especially in the Middle East). A number also express the aspirations of new middle classes in fast-growing emerging markets (whether in Turkey or Brazil). But they share some underlying features. The common backdrop is the 2008-09 financial crisis and its aftermath. Economic distress is almost a necessary condition for serious social or political instability, but it is not a sufficient one. Declines in income and high unemployment are not always followed by unrest. Only when economic trouble is accompanied by other elements of vulnerability is there a high risk of instability. Such factors include wide income-inequality, poor government, low levels of social provision, ethnic tensions and a history of unrest. Of particular importance in sparking unrest in recent times appears to have been an erosion of trust in governments and institutions: a crisis of democracy.” (10)

Some bourgeois commentators even go so far to see a validation of the Marxist dictum that the working class struggle is inherently international. The bourgeois-liberal US-journal *Foreign Policy* recently published an article entitled *“Marx Is Back – The global working class is starting to unite”*. It predicted: *“In fact, it is exactly because the rich and poor will look increasingly similar in Lagos and London that it’s more likely that the workers of the world in 2030 will unite.”* (11)

A Historic Period of Revolutions and Wars

In the past few years we have repeatedly pointed out that the decline of the capitalist system reached a watershed with the Great Recession of 2008/09. Since then, productive forces have and continue to decline, and political and economic instability has greatly accelerated. This is why the RCIT and its forerunners have characterized the period which opened at end of the last decade as a *world-wide historic revolutionary period*, one marked by an historic crisis of the capitalist system. It is a period in which the inner contradictions of this system are so acutely faced-off against one another that they unavoidably provoke pre-revolutionary and revolutionary, as well as counter-revolutionary situations. This is why *The Economist* has pessimistically warned that in nearly half of the world’s countries, unrest and social explosions are likely in the near future.

For revolutionary communists, the further aggravation of class contradictions will culminate in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary developments; or, in other words, it will pose the question of power – which class rules society – more than in earlier periods. For this reason, the present period is one in which the destruction of capitalism and the historical leap forward to socialism is definitely on the agenda. (12)

The historic task is to replace the current leadership of the masses, a leadership which has proved, time and again, that it can lead the working class to nowhere. As Lenin often stated, the working class cannot spontaneously reach a revolutionary consciousness. To transmit the revolution-

ary program to the working class, and to fight treacherous leadership, a combative communist organization is *the* necessary pre-requisite. Such an organization will be a collective of revolutionary workers, as well as activists from other classes who have broken with their class origins, all of whom will completely dedicate themselves to the struggle for working class liberation. The RCIT is dedicated to build a revolutionary International which understands the programmatic and practical lessons of the new historic period. Such a new International – which, in our opinion, will be the Fifth Workers International – must fight for a Transitional Program which combines struggles for everyday economic demands as well as issues of democratic and national liberation, with the strategy for achieving working class power in the state and its economic enterprises.

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New Books 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.

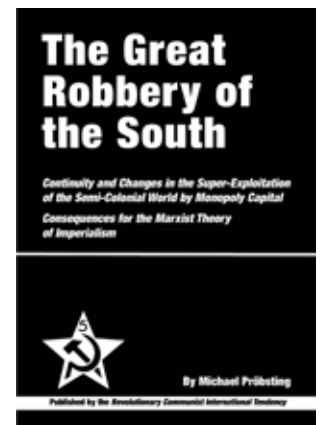
In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and 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.

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Michael Pröbsting: Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?

The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new book. It's called *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?*. The book's subtitle is: *The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism*. The book is in English-language. It has 5 chapters plus an appendix, 108 pages and includes 19 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the *International Secretary* of the RCIT. In *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* Michael Pröbsting analyses the character of the Cuban Revolution 1959-61, its bureaucratic degeneration, and the recent march of the Castro leadership towards capitalism.

The author demonstrates how the Cuban Revolution, despite the initial modest intentions of its leaders, was spurred forward to more radical policies by grass roots struggles of Cuban workers and peasants. In fact, the very abolishment of capitalism by the Cuban regime was no part of the original game plan of either Castro's Movimiento 26 de Julio or of the official Cuban communist party (PSP), but rather was a product of precisely such pressures from below.

Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? describes in detail how a number of relatively recent political, economic, and social measures were purposely taken by the Cuban government to open the road back

to capitalism. Pröbsting elaborates the key role of the world's new great imperialist power, China, in Cuba's state policy as exemplified in the June 2011 Sino-Cuban agreement for a first Five-Year Plan of cooperation between these two states.

Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? examines these developments from the viewpoint of Marxist theory, the nature of the ruling bureaucracy in Stalinist states, and the process of restoration of capitalism under such regimes. In conclusion, the book proposes a socialist program for political and social revolution in Cuba to halt the advance of capitalism and to eradicate the country's bureaucratic dictatorship.

Price: 8 Euro / 12 US-Dollars / 7 British Pound (plus delivery charges) ■



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). His latest book, *The Great Robbery of the South* (published in 2013), 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 is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.

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! ■*



