



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

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80 years Ago: Founding of the Fourth International

PLUS: Syria: Towards the Final Battle in Idlib

Nigeria: Marxism and the Biafra Question - A Discussion

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Syria: Towards the Final Battle in Idlib - Assad, Russia, Iran and Turkey prepare for the final onslaught on the last Citadel of the Syrian Revolution	p.3
Nigeria: Marxism and the Biafra Question	p.11
On The Biafra Question - A Marxist Analysis	p.13
80 years Ago: Founding of the Fourth International	p.15
RCIT What We Stand For	p.23

The picture on the cover shows Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik Soviet Leaders on the Red Square in Moscow celebrating the second anniversary of the October Revolution on 7 November 1919

Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:19191107-lenin_second_anniversary_october_revolution_moscow.jpg

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Syria: Towards the Final Battle in Idlib

Assad, Russia, Iran and Turkey prepare for the final onslaught on the last Citadel of the Syrian Revolution

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 04.08.2018

The forces of counter-revolution are negotiating on the details. But they have already reached agreement on the fundamental features of their devil plan. They are determined to smash the remaining forces which are determined to continue the heroic liberation struggle of the Syrian people which started in March 2011. Their goal is to pacify Idlib, the last remaining liberated area where 2.5-3 million Syrians, half of them refugees, are living.

This is the result of the negotiations which took place at the latest meeting of the head of states of Russia, Iran and Turkey – the “guarantee powers” of the so-called Astana process – in Sochi on 30-31 July 2018. Another important meeting took place prior to the Sochi conference when Russia’s Presidential Special Envoy to Syria Alexander Lavrentyev – accompanied by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin and Defense Ministry officials – visited Ankara and met with Turkish diplomats and military and intelligence authorities to discuss available options for Idlib. (1)

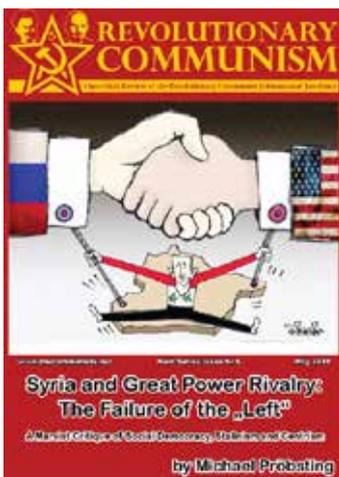
Putin, Rouhani and Erdoğan agree in Sochi to Smash the last Citadel of the Syrian Revolution

The very first sentence of the Sochi statement reads: “The Parties reaffirmed their determination to fight against terrorism in Syria in order to ultimately eliminate DAESH/ISIL, Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and

entities associated with Al-Qaeda or DAESH/ISIL as designated by the UN Security Council.” (2)

This is the Assadist-imperialist language to justify an onslaught on *Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS) and their allies. These petty-bourgeois Islamist movements control most of the north-western part of Syria. In opposite to a number of pro-Turkish FSA factions, HTS has never participated in the treacherous Astana talks and has always denounced those rebel factions which supported this process. Likewise, HTS issued a public statement condemning the Sochi conference and its results. They warned against the government offensive in Idlib and stressed the combat readiness of their fighters: “Idlib gathered the lions of the East, cougars of the North and pumas of the South, the very best of Mujahideen and Ansar.” (3)

Irrespective of our political rejection of the petty-bourgeois Islamist ideology of HTS and similar organizations, we take into account that they represent the most significant and determined forces of the ongoing popular struggle against the capitalist dictatorship of Assad. This is why HTS and their allies have become the main enemies of the tyrannical Assad regime, of Russian and U.S. imperialism as well as of the whole bunch of the pro-Assad pseudo-left around the globe. This is why we side with the anti-Astana forces in their efforts to continue the liberation struggle against the butchers Assad, Rouhani and Putin without lending any political support to their leadership. (4)



Publications of the RCIT

Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“

By Michael Pröbsting, April 2018

The bleeding Syrian Revolution and the recent Escalation of Inter-Imperialist Rivalry between the US and Russia – A Marxist Critique of Social Democracy, Stalinism and Centrism

Introduction * The liberation struggle of the Syrian people against Assad retains its just character * Against all imperialist aggressors! * Old and new Great Powers * The Ex-Stalinist turned social democrats: “God save the United Nations” * The Stalinists (and some caricatures in Trotskyist camouflage): social-imperialist servants of Assad and Putin * The Morenoite LIT, UIT and FLTI: the heart on the right place but not their brains * CWI and FT: failure to understand the imperialist nature of China and Russia * CWI / SWP(UK) / FT: refusing to support the Syrian Revolution * Conclusion * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

Astana Process – Traacherous Conspiracy from the Beginning

As the RCIT has always pointed out, the so-called Astana talks – organized by Russia, Iran and Turkey and supported by the Assad regime and treacherous parts of the rebel's leadership – have aimed since the beginning in January 2017 for the liquidation of the Syrian Revolution. (5)

It is this Astana conspiracy which is responsible for the sell-out of the liberation struggle which we saw in the last few months. As it is well know, Russia, Iran and Turkey formally agreed in Astana in September 2017 to create four so-called “de-escalation zones” – in Ghouta, northern Homs, Deraa, and Idlib.

In fact, these were agreements to pacify the liberation struggle and to allow the Assad regime to prepare its aggression. When Assad had finished his preparations, his army – with the military support of the Russian and Iranian forces and with the tacit agreement of Erdoğan – attacked and smashed one liberated enclave after the other. Ghouta was defeated in April this year. The Rastan pocket in Homs collapsed in May. And in June came the turn of Deraa.

Western and Israeli Support for the Assad Regime

Turkey didn't raise a finger at any of these betrayals. Neither did the West despite the fact that the U.S. was formally a guarantee power of the Deraa “de-escalation zone”. (6) In fact, all capitalist powers – despite their rivalry between each other – are happy to see an end of the revolutionary process in Syria and to accept the bloody Assad regime. (7) As we have pointed out repeatedly, this is also true for U.S. imperialism as well as Israel. Contrary to the foolish leftists who claimed that the Syrian rebels were “agents of the U.S.” this was never the case for the huge majority of the fighters. In the first years of the uprising, Washington gave tacit, mainly diplomatic, support for the pro-Western sectors of the rebels in order to create problems in Moscow's empire. However, when it turned out that Washington could not bring the country into its sphere of influence via a coup against Assad from within the Baathist state apparatus, they reconciled themselves with the prospect of Assad staying in power. (8)

As a consequence U.S. imperialism has always hunted down the most determined sectors of the anti-Assad rebels. Recently, it classified HTS once more as a “terrorist organization”. (9)

Likewise does Israel prefer a continuation of the Assad regime instead of a “revolutionary chaos”. True, they are not happy that Assad is a close ally of Iran – one of Israel's arch-enemies. However, faced with the alternative of a revolutionary people coming to power, they unwavering prefer the Assad regime. In the end, Israel had a peaceful co-existence with Assad father and son for more than four decades.

Israel's extreme right-wing Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman made the Zionist state's positive assessment of the Assad regime very clear in statement on 2 August: “In Syria, as far as we are concerned, the situation is returning to the previous one before the civil war, meaning there is a clear address, there is responsibility and there is a central

government,” Lieberman told journalists while visiting Israeli air defences.” (10)

A List of Assad's Torture Victims

We remark as a side-note the ironic-tragic fact that right now, at the same time as all Great Powers agree in accepting the Assad tyranny as legitimate government of Syria, more and more details become public about the barbaric nature of this regime. Recently, the website *Zaman al-Wasl* published a list of 7,953 people who died in Syrian regime prisons over the past seven years. This list is based on official death notices of the regime served to the families of detainees. These victims have been most likely tortured to death by the Assadist security services. (11)

The list of these 8,000 martyrs is certainly only the tip of the iceberg as there have been at least 104,000 people have been arrested or forcibly-disappeared by the regime since 2011, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Other sources speak about up to 200,000 people imprisoned by the barbaric Assad regime. The fate of many of these is unknown and one has to fear that the regime has already killed many of them. (12)

The Plan to Smash Liberated Idlib

Naturally, the Assad regime would like to simply attack and conquer Idlib. In a recent interview with Russian media, Assad said: ““Now we have liberated Ghouta, we will finish the liberation of the south-western part of Syria. (...) Now Idlib is our goal, but not just Idlib.” (13)

However, the regime can't do so without Moscow's approval. Without the decisive support of the Russian Air Force, the Assadist army would have no chance to defeat the rebel forces.

The Putin regime, however, wants to keep its alliance with Erdoğan as Turkey is an important regional power. This would not only advance Russia's goal to expand its influence in the Middle East. (14) Drawing Ankara into Moscow's orbit would be also a major blow to the Western imperialist powers. (15)

In the past, the Erdoğan government gave some tacit support to sectors of Syria's rebels. However, this has changed since the fall of Aleppo in December 2016 and since then Ankara is interested in bringing the Syrian Revolution to an end as well as to keep the Kurdish forces away from the borders.

Ankara strongly opposes a full-blown attack of Assad's army against Idlib. Such an attack would likely propel many of the Syrian civilians currently residing in Idlib to seek refuge in Turkey. The United Nations has already warned of a humanitarian catastrophe. (16)

This would create a massive dilemma for the Erdoğan regime as a commentator of *The New York Review of Books* explains: “Whether Turkey will continue to keep its border closed to newcomers if thousands of Syrians are being slaughtered on the other side remains to be seen. But if Turkey were to experience a large new influx of asylum-seekers, few of whom would be eager to return to life under the Assad government, Ankara could face pressure from inside the country, where anti-refugee sentiment is growing, to suspend the deal it made with the European Union to curtail the flow of asylum-seekers across the Aegean Sea to Greece. Preventing a massacre in Idlib to

begin with is a far better option.” (17)

Moreover a regime takeover of Idlib would endanger Turkey’s control over Afrin, Jarablus and al-Bab further in the north of Syria.

For all these reasons Moscow, Teheran, Ankara and Damascus seem to have agreed to the following procedure.

First, Assad’s army, with Russian and Syrian support, will attack and try to conquer sectors of the rebel-controlled areas in north Latakia, northern Hama and Jisr al-Shughour. (18) This is particular important for Moscow as this area is close to Russia’s Air Base in Hmeimim and it faced already several attacks by drones launched by rebel forces. Such an attack is also crucial for the Assadist forces as the area around Jisr al-Shugour and the al-Ghaab Plain is controlled by the *Turkestan Islamic Party*, a highly disciplined Islamist force which is largely based on exiled Uyghurs (an important Muslim minority people which faces severe oppression in imperialist China). (19)

In addition, the regime is determined to bring the strategically important M5 highway under its control as it connects the country’s most important cities – Damascus and Aleppo. (20)

Pro-Astana Factions under Turkish Command

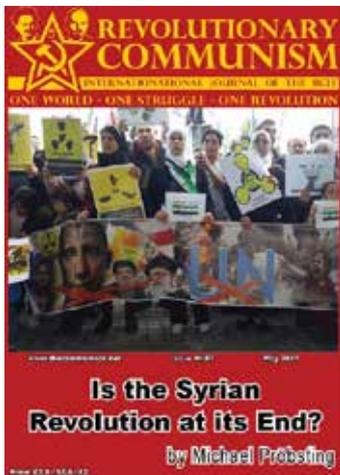
At the same time, Turkey will organize a massive clampdown – and if necessary a bloody civil war – in Idlib in order to force into capitulation or smash HTS, TIP and other liberation forces which oppose the Astana betrayal. For this purpose they are currently uniting and arming various pro-Astana factions which have traded the

struggle against the Assad tyranny for (paid) services for the Erdoğan regime. This latest “unification” project of the pro-Astana factions is called *Jabhat al-Wataniya lil-Tahrir* (JWT, National Front for Liberation). (21) It unites those treacherous factions which have already served Turkey in the past like Ankara’s Euphrates Shield operation in 2016/17, the conquest of Afrin in January/February 2018 and finally the bloody (but failed) assault of the JTS forces against HTS in February-April 2018. (22)

True, the JWT leadership claims that its goal is to “*block all attempts by the regime to advance*” towards rebel areas. (23) But given the history of the Astana factions and the current agreement between Russia, Iran and Turkey – that the later purges the anti-Astana force itself –, it is much more likely the purpose of the recent unification of the pro-Astana faction is to prepare for a large-scale counter-revolutionary *Night of the Long Knives*. We have already seen in the past months a never-ending series of insidious assassinations against HTS militants, including a number of commanders. (24) These assassinations seem to have been organized by Daesh/ISIS, agents of Assad as well as agents of Turkey’s secret service MIT. (25)

The *Middle East Eye*, a well informed source, reports about Turkey’s determination to finish off the anti-Astana liberation forces:

“Turkey is working to clear al-Qaeda and Islamic State-affiliated groups from Idlib, staving off a major offensive by Damascus against the last rebel-held stronghold in Syria. According to a Turkish diplomatic source who has been working on Syria for six years, Ankara is working with other opposition groups in Idlib to eliminate the militants. Most of Idlib is controlled



Publications of the RCIT

Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?

By Michael Pröbsting, April 2017

An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution

Introduction * The Nature of the Local Coordination Councils in Syria * The Contradictory Nature of the Petty-Bourgeois Rebel Factions * A note on the adjectival juxtaposition of “progressive” to liberal democrats versus “reactionary” to Islamists * Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham and Other Islamist Militias * The Role of Religion in Democratic and National Liberation Struggles * Some Arguments on the Ongoing Progressive Character of the Syrian Revolution * Have the Rebels Become Agents of US Imperialism and Regional Powers? * On Foreign Powers’ Support for Liberation Movements p* Lenin and Trotsky on Liberation Struggles and Imperialist Interference * What Did Lenin and Trotsky Say about Getting Support from Imperialists? * Imagining Two Different Scenarios of the Revolution’s Success & Failure * A Period of Defeats and Retreats: What Are the Reasons? * Some Thoughts on the Future Prospects of the Arab Revolution * The Urgent Need for a Revolutionary Party * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria. Delegates from Turkey, Iran and Russia gathered in Sochi on Monday for two days of talks aiming to resolve the situation in northern Syria. A Syrian opposition commander, who spoke to the Middle East Eye on condition of anonymity, said that Russia and Iran were also prioritising removing the militants from Idlib, rather than planning an all-out assault, despite threats by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to retake the territory. The commander added that the US was happy with Russia and Turkey's Idlib plan, since it meant the Turkish-backed opposition would be in control of the city instead of Iran and Syrian government-backed forces." (26)

Putin Wants to Eliminate Also the Northern Caucasus Militants

Furthermore, such a civil war in Idlib against the anti-Astana forces would allow the Assadist-Russian aggressors to liquidate the Northern Caucasus militants who were forced to flee Russia with their families because of the severe repression of the national minorities by the Putin regime and its local lackeys like Kadyrov. Today many of these fighters continue their struggle against Russian imperialism in Syria and support the liberation struggle of their brothers and sisters in Idlib. (27)

Naturally, socialists support the right of national self-determination of the oppressed national minorities in North Caucasus and struggle their liberation struggles. (28) Hence, we side with the Northern Caucasus militants against the Assadist and Russian butchers.

Putin and Erdoğan have an Agreement

In short, Putin, Rouhani, Erdoğan and Assad, with the support of the pro-Astana rebel leaders, have reached an agreement to pacify Idlib as the last citadel of the Syrian Revolution. While Assad's army will take some sectors, Turkey and its pro-Astana "rebels" will assault the remaining liberation forces from within. The goal is to liquidate any meaningful opposition against the Astana process so that the Syrian Revolution can be liquidated. Turkey and its lackeys would administer Idlib in a way that it would no longer serve as a launching platform for attacks against the Assad regime. If the province will be handed over to Assad later or not, will be subject of future negotiations and dirty deals.

This agreement is the background for recent statements of leading representatives of imperialist Russia. Russia's TASS news agency quoted Alexander Lavrentyev saying on 31 July: "I'd rather refrain from speaking about the city's [Lavrentyev is referring to Idlib City, the capita of the province, Ed.] storming or a pending operation. There are too many rumors and they are unfounded. Any large-scale operation [pay attention to the wording: this does not exclude a "small-scale" operation by the Assadist-Russian forces, Ed.] in Idlib is out of the question. (...) We still hope that both the moderate opposition and our Turkish partners who assumed commitments on stabilizing this area will eventually manage this." (29)

The usually well-informed Al-Monitor website quoted a source in the Russian Foreign Ministry: "A certain level of understanding has been reached with Turkey that there should be no offensive on Idlib in the immediate term. We took into account the concerns our Turkish partners have regarding a

possible outburst of refugees. Based on earlier discussions and talks in Sochi, we'll be cooperating in fighting terrorists there and will see what happens." (30)

Can They Succeed?

Now, this is the counter-revolutionary plan of Russia, Iran, Turkey and Iran with the pro-Astana rebels collaborating. However, it is a plan which will definitely face massive challenges. Most importantly, the pro-Astana traitors first have to succeed in smashing the HTS forces. It would be naive to exclude such an outcome. As a matter of fact, the liberation forces, fighting since more than seven years, are exhausted. They have suffered a number of defeats. They have been betrayed by Turkey. All Great Powers and all regional powers are determined to finish off the Syrian Revolution.

Furthermore, HTS and its allies have faced a series of backstabbing assaults and assassination campaigns by the Astana lackeys in recent months. While they still number several tens of thousands of militants they are certainly weakened.

In addition, we take it for granted that Ankara will try to bribe off sectors of the HTS leadership. In protest against this, there have been already several splits of more hard-line groupings which led to the formation of the pro-Al-Qaida groupings like *Tanẓīm ʿurrās ad-Dīn*. They criticise any compromise with Turkey. It would be naive to exclude the possibility of a capitulation of a sector of the HTS leadership.

However, it is also possible that anti-Astana factions succeed again in repulsing such an attack – as they did a few months ago against the JTS traitors. What will happen then? It is possible that Turkey might directly intervene and send its army to smash HTS. Or they could also agree to open the roads for Assad's army and the Russian Air Force so that there will be a bloody final showdown. Or we see some kind of combination of these two scenarios.

Kurdish YPG/SDF: Mercenaries of many Masters

Another possibility is that the Assad regime makes use of the battle-hardened Kurdish YPG/SDF militias – which is the Syrian branch of the petty-bourgeois nationalist PKK in Turkey led by Abdullah Öcalan. As has been widely reported, the YPG/SDF leadership is currently negotiating with Damascus in order to get a deal. (31) This is hardly surprising as the YPG leadership has never supported the uprising of the Syrian people since its beginning in 2011.

As part of these negotiations, it has offered Assad to join its assault on Idlib and help out in smashing the last citadel of the Revolution. Salih Muslim, a key leader of the YPG/SDF, announced the Kurdish forces readiness to support the counterrevolution: *Kurdistan 24*, a broadcast news station controlled by the YPG, reported about an interview with this leader: "On military operations against Turkish-backed militants in Idlib and Afrin, Muslim stressed that "wherever there are terrorists, we ready to fight them, as we fought them in Serikani, Raqqa, and many other parts of Syria." He said militant groups in Idlib are not different from those in Afrin. "Fighting in Idlib or Afrin is our duty and responsibility, and when we fight in Idlib, it will be our decision as we are not tools in the hands of others," he said." (32)

Amberin Zaman, a journalist who served as *The Economist's* Turkey correspondent for many years, reports that the US, which the YPG has served in recent years, is not opposed to their latest turn to the Assad regime:

"Contrary to the conventional view that Washington is unhappy with the YPG's recent overtures to the regime, it is actually encouraging them, with the initial objective being to persuade the regime to help restore services in areas held by the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces and where US special forces are currently based. It's seen as a vital piece of stabilization efforts in the swath of northeastern Syria that was liberated from the Islamic State and crucial to ensuring that it remains so." (33)

It is worth reminding that the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the YPG have been praised for years by many pseudo-leftist forces in the West as well as in Russia. In fact, the YPG leadership has acted as servant of U.S. imperialism in order to conquer the North and East of Syria. Now, when the Trump Administration seems to be willing to give up Syria, the so-called "socialist" and "anti-imperialist" leadership of the YPG is looking for a new master. As Assad seems to win the civil war, the YPG is offering its service to the butcher of the Syrian people. They even volunteer to help him killing the tens of thousands of liberation fighters which are trapped in Idlib! What a shame! Contrary to the idiotic myth spread by the Stalinist, Anarchist and pseudo-Trotskyist left, the YPG are not socialists but rather pro-imperialist mercenaries and political prostitutes! Yes, the master might change – but the corrupted and reactionary nature of the YPG leadership remains the same!

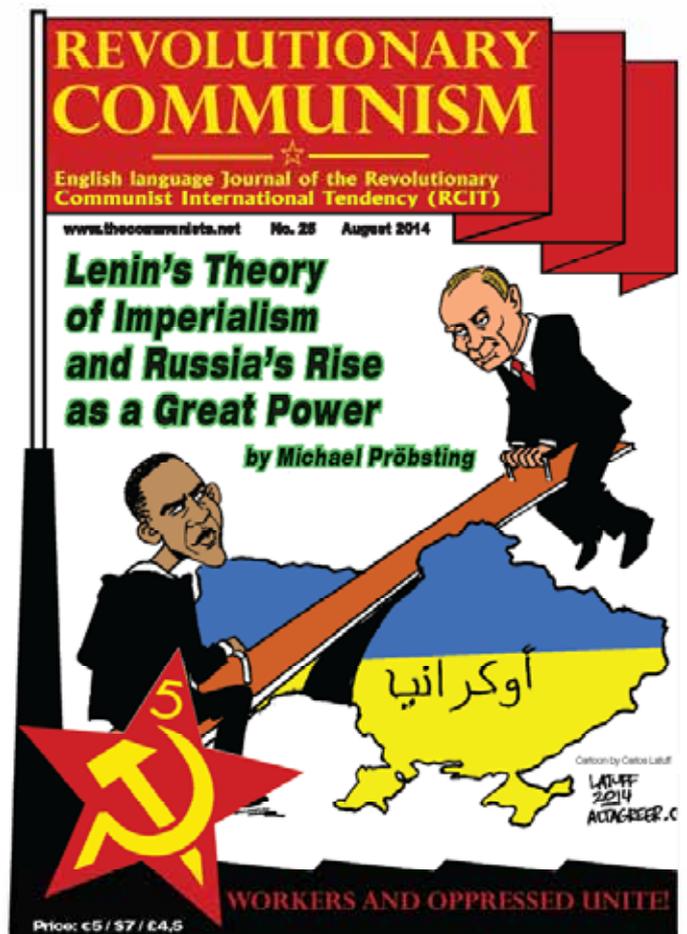
Conclusion

Let us finally repeat, that faced with the final onslaught on Idlib, the last citadel of the Syrian Revolution, no honest revolutionary, no socialist, no democrat can remain neutral. Too many leftists who initially supported the Syrian Revolution have cowardly deserted it in the last years (e.g. Peter Taffees CWI, Alan Woods IMT, the PTS/FT, the L5I and various others). Those who have remained loyal to the liberation struggle must now stand with the fighters who refuse to capitulate!

All those who support the Syrian Revolution must reject the reactionary Astana conspiracy, must support the continuation of the liberation struggle and, hence, must side with those forces who are ready to fight against the sell-out. We re-emphasize the RCIT's call for a united front of all anti-capitulationist liberation forces. The basis for such a united front is very simple as it is centered on the immediate tasks of the hour:

- * *Defend Idlib against an attack by the Assadist forces and its Russian and Iranian masters!*
 - * *Defend Idlib also against an insidious assault by the Turkish-led pro-Astana "rebel" forces!*
 - * *No to the counter-revolutionary Astana deal!*
 - * *Continue the struggle against the Assad tyranny and its Russian and Iranian masters!*
 - * *All foreign powers – Russia, US, Iran, Turkey – out of Syria!*
- Naturally, such a platform is very limited. It is certainly no replacement for a positive revolutionary program. (34) But

RCIT PUBLICATIONS ON RUSSIA AND IMPERIALISM



such a platform could represent a starting point to push back the reactionary offensive aimed at the liquidation of the Syrian Revolution.

Footnotes

(1) See e.g. Maxim A. Suchkov: Russia, Turkey seek peaceful solutions to 'imminent' Idlib battle, August 1, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/russia-turkey-syria-idlib-solutions.html>

(2) Final statement by Iran, Russia and Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria, Sochi, July 30-31, 2018, <https://southfront.org/final-statement-by-iran-russia-and-turkey-after-negotiations-on-syrian-conflict-in-sochi/>

(3) 31. Juli 2018 <https://twitter.com/smmsyria/status/1024196673227120640>

(4) See on this e.g. RCIT: Denounce the US terror listing of Syria's Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham! The Trump Administration delivers another blow to the Syrian Revolution. Continue the Solidarity with the liberation struggle of the Syrian people! 03.06.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/denounce-the-us-terror-listing-of-syria-s-hts/>

(5) See on this various statements which are collected in a special section of our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>. In particular we refer to Michael Pröbsting: Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified? An essay on the organs of popular power in the liberated area of Syria, on the character of the different sectors of the Syrian rebels, and on the failure of those leftists who deserted the Syrian Revolution, 5 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/> and chapter V of Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings, February 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/worldperspectives-2018/chapter-v/>.

(6) The following, rather glumly, comments on the West's betrayal of its allies in Deraa from the viewpoint of a pro-imperialist British journalist, are worth quoting in length:

"In theory, Deraa should have been an immense challenge [for Assad's army, Ed.]. The rebels had resisted far more successfully than their northern brethren infiltration by the jihadists and coalesced into a unified structure, the Southern Front, under U.S. guidance, a model of what the United States could have done to bolster its allies and defeat the radicals in Syria had it so chosen. Israel also supported some of these rebel factions and their civilian supporters.

Yet Deraa buckled quickly. After an merciless aerial campaign in the eastern countryside, Deraa city itself fell two weeks ago to the pro-Assad coalition, and Israel evacuated many of the Syrian Civil Defence "White Helmets", the medical first-responders. Several scattered rebel outposts remain along the Israeli and Jordanian borders, plus an ISIS-held enclave.

The rebels in southern Syria had long been restrained by their purported backers in Jordan and the United States from fighting Assad and Washington cut off supplies last year. Demoralised, starved of resources, and infiltrated by government spies, there was no way the Southern Front could hold out for long on its own.

It might have been expected that the United States would step in, however. The United States had been a guarantor of the "de-escalation zone" since June 2017 and as the regime coalition was preparing the offensive, Washington said on three separate occasions that it would protect the ceasefire in the area. The United States then changed its mind and said the rebels were on their own.

Israel's decision to stand aside is even more perplexing. Russia promised that Iranian troops would not enter the area, but Russia's weak position and the nature of the Assad regime, shattered and entangled with Iran's Shia militias, meant this was not a credible promise. Even had Iran's appendages been kept out of the offensive itself Iran would have occupied the space afterwards. In the event, Iran did not even wait that long." (Kyle Orton: Russia to pick apart NATO allies to reconquer

all of Syria, Jul 31 2018, <https://ahvalnews.com/idlib/russia-pick-apart-nato-allies-reconquer-all-syria/>)

(7) See on this e.g. our pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: Syria and Great Power Rivalry: The Failure of the „Left“. The bleeding Syrian Revolution and the recent Escalation of Inter-Imperialist Rivalry between the US and Russia – A Marxist Critique of Social Democracy, Stalinism and Centrism, 21 April 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syria-great-power-rivalry-and-the-failure-of-the-left/>; see also Warmongering in the Middle East: Down with all Imperialist Great Powers and Capitalist Dictatorships! Joint Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), Alkebulan School of Black Studies (Kenya), Pacesetters Movement (Nigeria), Pan-Afrikan Consciousness Renaissance (Nigeria), Marxist Group 'Class Politics' (Russia), and Sınıf Savaşı (Turkey), 13 May 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/joint-statement-warmongering-in-the-middle-east/>; Global Trade War: No to Great Power Jingoism in West and East! Neither Imperialist Globalization nor Imperialist Protectionism! For International Solidarity and Joint Struggle of the Working Class and Oppressed People! Joint Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), Marxist Group 'Class Politics' (Russia), Alkebulan School of Black Studies (Kenya), Pan-Afrikan Consciousness Renaissance (Nigeria), Courant des Jeunes Penseurs Congolais (Democratic Republic of Congo), and Sınıf Savaşı (Turkey), 4 July 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/joint-statement-on-the-looming-global-trade-war/>

(8) See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Syria: Assad's Massacre in East Ghouta and the Western Hypercritics, 23.02.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/assad-s-massacre-in-east-ghouta-and-the-western-hypercritics/>; Michael Pröbsting: Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?

(9) U.S. Department of State: Amendments to the Terrorist Designations of al-Nusrah Front, Media Note, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC, May 31, 2018, https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/05/282880.htm#_WxB2IEv4KuA.twitter; see on this our statement RCIT: Denounce the US terror listing of Syria's Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham!

(10) AFP : Israel Sees Advantages in Assad Victory in Syria, 08/03/2018 <https://www.juancole.com/2018/08/israel-advantages-victory.html>

(11) Zaman al-Wasl: Check names of 8000 detainees tortured to death: lists, 2018-07-29, <https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/36478/>

(12) See e.g. Names released of 8,000 Syrians 'tortured to death' in regime jails, 30 July, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/7/30/names-released-of-8-000-syrians-tortured-to-death>; Reuters: Flurry Of Syrian Death Notices Shows Fate Of Government Detainees, 31.7.2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-detainees/flurry-of-syrian-death-notices-shows-fate-of-government-detainees-idUSKBN1KL2PA>

(13) Next priority is retaking Idlib, Assad tells Russian media, 28 July 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1346796/middle-east>

(14) On the RCIT's analysis of Russia as an imperialist power see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer to Michael Pröbsting: Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>

(15) See e.g. Semih Idiz: Is a storm brewing for Turkey in Idlib? July 31, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/turkey-syria-russia-can-putin-afford-disregard-ankara.html>; Tom Perry: For buoyant Assad, Syrian war enters tricky phase, July 30, 2018 / <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-assad-analysis/for-buoyant-assad-syrian-war-enters-tricky-phase-idUSKBN1KK1XC>

(16) Patrick Wintour: UN warns Idlib could be next Syrian disaster zone in 'marathon of pain', 25 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/25/top-un-officials-voice-fears-of-new-aleppo-in-syrias-idlib-province>

(17) Kenneth Roth: Russia's Responsibility in the Syrian Reconquest of Idlib, July 24, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/07/24/russias-responsibility-in-the-syrian-reconquest-of-idlib/>

(18) Amberin Zaman: Ankara's eyes on Idlib as Astana group gathers in Sochi, July 31, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/turkey-russia-iran-meet-sochi.html>

(19) Ece Goksedef: Turkey to clear Idlib of militants to prevent Syrian government assault, 1 August 2018 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-happy-russia-and-turkey-s-idlib-plans-2118571356>

(20) Mona Alami: The coming battle for Idlib, August 2, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/syria-idlib-battle-regime-rebels-russia.html>

(21) See on this e.g. Syria rebels announce new coalition in Idlib, 2 August, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/8/2/syria-rebels-announce-new-coalition-in-idlib>; Nedaa Syria: Revolutionary factions of northern Syria preparing to repel the Russian attack with central operations room & 1000s of fighters, 29 Jul, 2018 <http://nedaa-sy.com/en/reports/153>; Charles Lister, a US expert on the Middle East, commented on Twitter: "*BREAKING - #JTS (Ahrar al-Sham & #Zinki) have merged into the #FSA-run National Liberation Front (NLF), alongside Suqor al-Sham, Jaish al-Ahrar & Tajamu Dimashq. #Turkey cements its influence in #Idlib yet further - as non-#HTS armed opposition groups seek to deter regime.*" (https://twitter.com/Charles_Lister/status/1024706551066624001)

(22) Our assessment of the Turkish invasion in Afrin is summarized in RCIT: Syria: No to Turkey's Attack on Afrin! Defend the Syrian Revolution against Annihilation! The Syrian Revolution must reject sectarianism and strive to create multinational unity among Arabs, Turks and Kurds! Rally all forces against the Assadist-Iranian-Russian Aggression in Idlib! 22.01.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/>

[africa-and-middle-east/no-to-turkey-s-attack-on-afrin/](https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-idlib-the-attack-of-the-astana-conspirators-could-be-repelled-thus-far/); Michael Pröbsting: Syria/Idlib: The Attack of the Astana Conspirators could be repelled thus far. Turkey's allies Nour al-Din al-Zenki and Ahrar al-Sham continue their aggression against Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham. This represents a mortal danger for the Syrian Revolution! 05.03.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/syria-idlib-the-attack-of-the-astana-conspirators-could-be-repelled-thus-far/>; Michael Pröbsting: Syria: Turkey's hidden war against HTS in Idlib. On the character of the military offensive of Nour al-Din al-Zenki and Ahrar al-Sham against Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham, 25.02.2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/turkey-s-hidden-war-against-hts-in-idlib/>

(23) Syria rebels announce new coalition in Idlib, 2 August, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/8/2/syria-rebels-announce-new-coalition-in-idlib>

(24) Even pro-Assad sources have to admit that HTS suffers the brunt of these assassinations. (See e.g. Leith Aboufadel: Jihadists suffer heavy losses in ranks after more assassinations take place in Idlib, 2018-05-25, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/jihadists-suffer-heavy-losses-in-ranks-after-more-assassinations-take-place-in-idlib/>)

(25) Shamefully, the leadership of the Ahrar al Sham continues to defend its participation in and support for the Astana sell-out. See e.g. the statement of Omran Muhammad, spokesman of Ahrar al Sham in a recently published interview: "*It is not true to consider Astana meeting as a failure. You have to look at it as a step or a trial to risk you what is remaining of the liberated areas. Once the Astana meetings started, you know that the three countries Iran, Turkey and Russia wanted to stop the fighting and declare a ceasefire, because each of these countries have goals and benefits of ending the fight. This was the main reason of Astana. The main reason of collapsing of those areas like Ghouta and northern Homs is that they were already under siege and away from friends of those areas like rebels and Turkey. So it was not hard to fall down.*" (Special Interview: Media Relation responsible of Ahrar al Sham Omran Muhammad, Suriye Gündemi, 30 July 2018 <http://en.suriyegundemi.com/special-interview-media>

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018 -

A World Pregnant With Wars And Popular Uprisings

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – WORLD PERSPECTIVES 2018: A WORLD PREGNANT WITH WARS AND POPULAR UPRISINGS. The book's subtitle is: Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries.

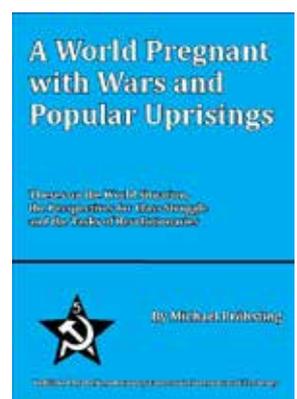
This book is a major contribution of our organization to keep the Marxists' analysis of the world situation and its accelerating contradictions updated. As we emphasize in the document, we consider it as crucial for revolutionaries to understand the nature and the inner dynamics of the current historic period. Without such an understanding it is impossible for socialists, indeed for all liberation fighters, to possess the necessary political compass on which they can base their program, strategy and tactics.

Since several years does the RCIT publish annual studies on the world situation in which it analysis its most important developments and changes. This book updates the Marxist analysis of the state of the world economy, of the relations between the Great Powers, of the struggle between the classes and the tactics of revolutionaries. We also deal in depth with new issues respectively extend our theoretical analysis on several questions. In particular we have deepened in this book,

among others, our understanding of the nature respectively the transitional character of the present world political phase, of the nature of different types of wars and the tactical conclusions arriving from this, of the complex nature of the conflicts in the Middle East, of the capitalist restoration in North Korea and, finally, we have elaborated a new proposal for an international platform for the unification of revolutionary forces in the present phase.

The book contains a preface, introduction and seven eight chapters plus an appendix (118 pages) and includes 23 figures, 9 tables and 2 maps. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>



[relation-responsible-ahrar-al-sham-omran-muhammed/](#))

An even worse example of treachery is the case of several ex-rebel units in the Southwest of Syria. The leaderships of these pro-Western, FSA-type factions are ready to reconcile with the bloody Assad regime and to become its servants! Several articles report about their integration into Assad's army. See e.g. Alsouria Net: A Recruitment Race Starts in Southern Syria. The regime and its allied militias are racing to conscript rebel fighters, that agreed to reconciliation deals, to their ranks, July 26th, 2018, http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/34545/A_Recruitment_Race_Starts_Southern_Syria/; Haid Haid: Joining the Enemy: How the Syrian Regime Reintegrates Former Rebel Fighters, July 2018, <https://syria.chathamhouse.org/research/joining-the-enemy-how-the-syrian-regime-reintegrates-former-rebel-fighters>

(26) Ece Goksedef: Turkey to clear Idlib of militants to prevent Syrian government assault, 1 August 2018 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-happy-russia-and-turkey-s-idlib-plans-2118571356>

(27) "Another important factor is that all the anti-Russia Northern Caucasus fighters have assembled in Idlib. Russia was hoping from the outset to settle its accounts with these homegrown enemies away from home territory." (Fehim Tastekin: Syria's Idlib emerges as Achilles heel in Russia-Turkey partnership, July 30, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/turkey-russia-syria-astana-on-verge-of-collapse-due-to-idlib.html>)

(28) On the RCIT's analysis of and position on the oppression of national minorities in imperialist Russia see e.g. RCIT: Solidarity with the Liberation Struggle of the Chechen People! February 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/solidarity-with-the-liberation-struggle-of-the-chechen-people/>; Freedom for the Chechen People! Down with Putin and Kadyrov! Report (with Pictures and Videos) from the RKO BEFREIUNG (Austrian Section of the RCIT), 26 February 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/chechnya-solidarity-feb-2017/>; Michael Pröbsting: Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. (Chapter III)

(29) TASS: Large-scale operation in Syria's Idlib out of question, says Russia's chief negotiator, 31 July 2018, <http://tass.com/politics/1015572>; No major assault planned on Syria's Idlib: Moscow, 1 August, 2018 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/8/1/no-major-assault-planned-on-syrias-idlib-moscow>

(30) Maxim A. Suchkov: Russia, Turkey seek peaceful solutions to 'imminent' Idlib battle, August 1, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/russia-turkey-syria-idlib-solutions.html>

[monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/08/russia-turkey-syria-idlib-solutions.html](#)

(31) See also Wladimir van Wilgenburg: Syrian official says Damascus will retake Idlib, accuses Turkey of occupying Afrin, 31.7.2018, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/b43c33ca-ffcd-4139-993c-02a89d08cf9d>; Reuters: Syrian Kurds say they will 'chart roadmap to decentralized Syria' with Damascus, July 28, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds/syrian-kurds-say-they-will-chart-roadmap-to-decentralized-syria-with-damascus-idUSKBN1KI05I>; Syrian Kurds say plotting path to decentralisation with Assad government, MEE and agencies 28 July 2018, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syrian-kurdish-group-says-it-and-government-form-committees-end-violence-1801170266>; Tom Perry: Syrian Kurdish-backed council holds talks in Damascus, July 27, 2018 / <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-talks/syrian-kurdish-backed-council-holds-talks-in-damascus-idUSKBN1KH0Q9>; Mohammad Bassiki: Why Syria's Kurds are inclined to negotiate with Damascus, July 26, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/syria-regime-kurds-north-east-negotiations.html>; Ellen Francis: Wary of U.S. ally, Syrian Kurds look to Damascus for talks, July 25, 2018 / <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds/wary-of-u-s-ally-syrian-kurds-look-to-damascus-for-talks-idUSKBN1KF2NN>; Fehim Tastekin: As conditions shift in Syria, Kurds open to talks with Damascus, June 21, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/turkey-syria-what-pushes-kurds-deal-with-regime.html>

(32) Helbast Shekhani: Kurdish leader reveals details of first meeting with Syrian government, July 30-2018, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/54d92d6a-2f82-457f-a8da-5b5b579ef70c>

(33) Amberin Zaman: Ankara's eyes on Idlib as Astana group gathers in Sochi, July 31, 2018 <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/turkey-russia-iran-meet-sochi.html>

(34) The RCIT' analysis of the Syrian Revolution and our political strategy can be read in numerous documents and articles which are collected in a special section of our website <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>. Our latest comprehensive analysis can be read in the recently published book by Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018, Chapter V. Middle East and North Africa: Reactionary Offensive, Wars and Popular Uprisings; see also Michael Pröbsting: Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstentionism Justified?



RCIT AFRICA PROGRAM

Manifesto for the Revolutionary Liberation of Black Africa

Adopted at the 2nd World Congress of the RCIT in November 2017

Introduction * Foreign Exploiters – Out of Africa! * The Wealth to Those Who Create It! Economic Freedom Now! * Down with the Capitalist Dictatorships and Corrupt Pseudo-Democracies! * Organize the Workers and Oppressed for the Mass Struggle! * For a Government of Workers and Poor Peasants! For a Socialist Revolution! * For Pan-African Unity! For the United Socialist States of Africa! * For a United Front of Struggle! Overcome the Crisis of Leadership – Build a Revolutionary Party Nationally and Internationally! * Appendix

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A5 Format

Nigeria: Marxism and the Biafra Question

Comments of the RCIT to the Article of the Pacesetters Movement on the Biafra Question

Below we republish a document of Sanyaolu Juwon on the Biafra Question in Nigeria. (“*On The Biafra Question – A Marxist Analysis*”) Comrade Sanyaolu Juwon is the Organising Secretary of the *Pacesetters Movement* in Nigeria with which the RCIT has fraternal relations. He has also been the long-time spokesperson of the *Alliance of Nigerian Students Against Neoliberal Attacks* (ANSA) until recently.

We republish this article as it outlines an excellent analysis of the Biafra question, an important issue of politics in Nigeria. While we are not in a position to judge about every detail given our lack of detailed knowledge about Nigeria, the document as a whole makes a very strong impression. It serves every reader to deepen his or her understanding of the economic, social and political history of Nigeria.

In this preface we wish to make a few comments on issues raised in this article.

First, while we agree with the authors’ rejection of tribalism and separatism driven by the elite of this or that ethnic minority, we think that it is important for Marxists to outline a revolutionary democratic program for the national question. This seems important to us also because of the particular character of the national question in Africa. We wrote on this in an analytical document: “*Africa’s modern history is characterized by colonial occupation and imperialist plunder. The legacy of this has been the creation of artificial borders between the states and the fostering of tensions and divisions between ethnic tribes (e.g., the tensions between Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda, between the Xhosa and the Zulu in South Africa, or between the Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe). The ongoing imperialist policy of ‘divide et impera’ as well as the reactionary policy of bourgeois African leaders looking for factional support along tribal lines has been a huge obstacle for the formation of modern nations. While this process is unevenly developed in different countries, it remains a crucial issue in black Africa, as is reflected by the fact that between 1,200 and 3,000 languages are spoken on the continent.*” (RCIT: *Theses on Capitalism and Class Struggle in Black Africa*, Part 4, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/africa-theses/>)

The solution to this peculiar situation seems to us to fight for a positive program for the national question as it was elaborated by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. This means, basically, to combine a centralist conception of the state with strong emphasis of local self-government and to combine full equality for all national and ethnic groups with striving for total unity of the working class of all different national and ethnic groups.

„*The national programme of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language; the solution of the problem of the political self-determination of nations, that is, their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods; the promulgation of a law for the whole state by virtue of which any measure (rural, urban or communal, etc., etc.) introducing any privilege of any kind for one of the nations and militating against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority, shall be declared illegal and ineffective, and any citizen of the state shall have the right to demand that such a measure be annulled as*

unconstitutional, and that those who attempt to put it into effect be punished. Working-class democracy contraposes to the nationalist wrangling of the various bourgeois parties over questions of language, etc., the demand for the unconditional unity and complete amalgamation of workers of all nationalities in all working-class organisations—trade union, co-operative, consumers’, educational and all others—in contradistinction to any kind of bourgeois nationalism. Only this type of unity and amalgamation can uphold democracy and defend the interests of the workers against capital—which is already international and is becoming more so—and promote the development of mankind towards a new way of life that is alien to all privileges and all exploitation.” (V. I. Lenin: *Critical Remarks on the National Question* (1913); in: LCW 20, p. 22, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/crmq/index.htm>)

„*Local self-government on a broad scale; regional self-government in localities where the composition of the population and living and social conditions are of a specific nature; the abolition of all state-appointed local and regional authorities.*” (V. I. Lenin: *Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Programme* (1917), in: LCW 24, p. 472)

In the RCIT’s founding program – *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto* – we proposed, among others, the following demands as part of a program for the national question:

“*Equal rights and equal pay! (...)*”

* *For a public employment and education programme under the control of representatives of national minorities and the workers movement - paid for by the capitalists profits!*

* *For the abolition of the official state languages! Equal treatment and equal supply of languages of national minorities in the schools, courts, public administration and in the media!*

* *For extensive regional autonomy and self-government of regions with specific national composition! Defining the borders of self-governing territories by the local population themselves!*

* *No to the nationalism of the (petty) bourgeois forces in the oppressed nations! Against the policy of isolation of communities from each other and for the closest possible union of workers of different nationalities!*

* *For the right to self-determination of oppressed peoples including the right to form their own state, if they wish so! Wherever oppressed people have already clearly stated their desire for a separate state, we support this and combine this with the slogan for a workers ‘and peasants’ republic.”*

(RCIT: *The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*, 2012, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>)

It seems to us that a positive program against any discrimination of ethnic and religious groups would be crucial for Nigerian Marxists in order to combat both bureaucratic oppression of minorities as well as nationalism wiped-up by local elites. This would, for example, include giving equal rights to the different languages of the ethnic groups, equal access to public administration, etc. Naturally, the details of such a national program have to be discussed and elaborated by the Nigerian Marxists.

Secondly, it seems to us, that the last paragraph contains some formulations which are not sufficiently clear. The author writes: “*We do not however support right to self-determination should it be pursued mechanically any more*

than we advocate mechanical unity under the bourgeois state. We would only support the Unity of the working masses of Igbo for a right to self determination under socialist programs. Only the united struggle of the working people of Igbo under socialist programs can guarantee a real victory for the generality of the Igbo lest it becomes the interest of few privileged Igbo bureaucrats. This however is not to mechanically conclude that the struggle of the working Igbo people is totally different from the plight of the general Nigerian masses, neither is it the illusion that the needed victory of a Biafra workers state is independent of the united struggle of the Nigerian workers as it would be tantamount to total daydreaming. Only a workers Unity can guarantee a country we can all be proud of and a world free of socio-economic violence."

Of course, we fully agree with the program of fighting against the bourgeoisie of the Igbo (or any other ethnic minority). Likewise, we wish, like the author, to unite the masses of different tribes on the basis of a socialist program.

However, unfortunately it is often the case that the working people of national minorities, because of their oppression and because of their political inexperience, follow not a socialist program but rather a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leadership. Marxists must not deal with such a situation in an ultimatum way but should support the right of national self-determination of an oppressed people even if they are still led by (petty-)bourgeois forces. If they do not so, they, involuntary, lend support the oppressor nation and, as a result, they will find it difficult to gain the trust of the working masses of the oppressed nationality. But, and this is the decisive point, Marxists can only successfully fight against the influence of the bourgeois elite among the working people of an oppressed nation, if they succeed in gaining the trust of these working people.

This was effectively the main issue in the debate between Lenin and the ultra-left wing inside the Bolshevik Party led by Bukharin, Pjatakov and Bosh after 1914. Bukharin and his supporters proposed to speak in the party program only about the right of national self-determination of the working people but not of the nation. Lenin strongly opposed this:

"Our programme must not speak of the self-determination of the working people, because that would be wrong. It must speak of what actually exists. Since nations are at different stages on the road from medievalism to bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy, this thesis of our programme is absolutely correct. With us there have been very many zigzags on this road. Every nation must obtain the right to self-determination, and that will make the self-determination of the working people easier. In Finland the process of separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie is remarkably clear, forceful and deep. At any rate, things will not proceed there as they do in our country. If we were to declare that we do not recognise any Finnish nation, but only the working people, that would be sheer nonsense. We cannot refuse to recognise what actually exists; it will itself compel us to recognise it. The demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is proceeding in different countries in their own specific ways. Here we must act with utmost caution. We must be particularly cautious with regard to the various nations, for there is nothing worse than lack of confidence on the part of a nation." (V. I. Lenin: Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) March 18-23, 1919, Report On The Party Programme; in: LCW 29, p. 174, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/rcp8th/03.htm>)

We wish to finish our comments by reemphasizing that these critical observations do not minimize our strong appreciation of comrade Sanyaolu Juwon's document! We do not doubt that it will certainly play an important role in the construction of a revolutionary party in Nigeria.

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Marxism and the United Front Tactic Today The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today.

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new English-language book – MARXISM AND THE UNITED FRONT TACTIC TODAY. The book's subtitle is: The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony in the Liberation Movement and the United Front Tactic Today. On the Application of the Marxist United Front Tactic in Semi-Colonial and Imperialist Countries in the Present Period. It contains eight chapters plus an appendix (172 pages) and includes 9 tables and 5 figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

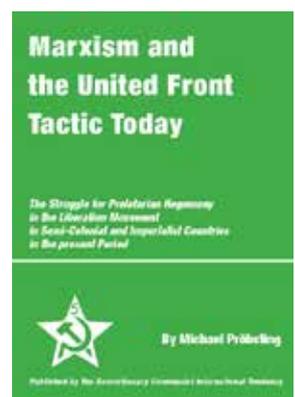
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

The united front tactic is a crucial instrument for revolutionaries under today's circumstances in which the mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed are dominated by social democratic, Stalinist and petty-bourgeois-populist forces.

The purpose of this document is both to summarize the main ideas of the Marxist united front tactic while at the same time explaining its development and modification which have become necessary due to political changes which have transpired in the

working class liberation movement since the tactic's original formulation.

In this book we initially summarize the main characteristics of the united front tactic and elaborate the approach of the Marxist classics to this issue. We then outline important social developments in the working class and the popular masses as well as in their political formations in recent decades. From there we will discuss how the united front tactic should be applied in light of a number of new developments (the rise of petty-bourgeois populist parties, the decline of the classic reformist parties, the role of national minorities and migrants in imperialist countries, etc.). The eight chapters of the book are accompanied by nine tables and five figures.



On The Biafra Question - A Marxist Analysis

By Sanyaolu Oluwajuwon

Years after the outrageously bloody Biafra war which took place between 1967 and 1970, the remnants of the ruthless civil war remains as fetters of the Nigerian history and its lightly obscene legacies are consciously handed over to able bodied young men and women whom one could have just concluded are busy playing into the greedy whims of some bureaucratic profiteers whose only hope of being the new set of oppressors lies in secession. This conclusion however is in no way an hasty sentiment against the historical secessionist civil war but a call to a rather dialectical comparison of the conditions of the Nigerian masses between the years of the civil war and the 21st century Nigerian masses in the year 2015 viz the role of the working people in this most critical historical epoch which might be better tagged as the last days of capitalism.

The Biafra question was once again after a very long while brought into the public spectacle when one of the leaders of Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was arrested on the 20th of October 2015. Our attention at this period is not in fact in the arrest but in answering a major question which I term here as "the Biafra Question". Should we as Marxists support the demand of this group of secessionist Micro Sect? Or rather what position should we maintain which with no doubt must not have any detriment in advancing the cause of the working people but must rather strengthen it.

Nigeria with no doubt is a conglomeration of diverse ethno religious group; to deny this is to intentionally wreck the most wicked havoc on history and that in fact friends is not at all scientific and by consequence not Marxian. We must however not confuse this necessary difference for the real reason for outbreak of the civil war but on the contrary see it as a cunningly exploited factor with which the ruling elites used and is still using in dividing the oppressed rank and file while bettering the lots of their own class; the ruling class or if you must, the national Bourgeoisie; the watch dog of the International Capitalist class-The imperialists. It was the latter who colonized Nigeria just like it did the rest of Africa. To them Africa is far from being an inferior race, obviously not, all they could perceive of the continent is a new market to explore, easy profits, cheap labor, the natural resources to control. In short it was far from being a spectre of racial superiority, it was a question of class supremacy. This was the brutish interest that made the colonial fraudsters to merge the hitherto known ethnic groups into ONE BIG MARKET that would later be called Nigeria. What happened years after in Nigeria and the rest of the British dominated Africa, Asia etc vindicated Lenin's conclusion which characterized imperialism as an "Epoch of Wars and Revolutions".

World War2 (1939-1945) forged a new super power which imperatively ousted the hegemony of the British colonial rule that will afterwards be replaced with neo-colonialism of the US. This however is not to say that the British relinquishment of power in Nigeria was not without strong agitations else Lenin might have been misguidedly Judged wrong in maintaining the afore mentioned assertion. Between 1940 and 1945, there were countless labor strikes in Nigeria; the most notable was that of 1944/45 where the

centre of demand is what it has always been even till date; The demand for increased wages and humane working condition. This was the period our resources-human and capital- are being used in fighting the greedy imperial war; the scramble for which capitalist class gains control of the international market. The capital created by the working masses instead of being used in the interest of the latter becomes that which enslaves and impoverishes them. It is this capital that is used in fighting these brutal wars. These hostile condition created by the avaricious greed of the Bourgeoisie surged up the political consciousness of the Nigerian working masses. This consciousness unlike the 1917 Russia couldn't overthrow the Bourgeoisie but was deceitfully maneuvered and exploited by the emerging Nigerian ruling /bourgeois class-The AWOLOWOS- who as at that moment could only be referred not as part of the working class, no way! But as the petty bourgeoisie; there class nomenclature is in no way a function of their life style neither does it lie in the strength of their Bank account rather a function of their position as the only privileged of the British rule to receive oversea University education which would prepare them in being the administrators of the oppressed. This Nigerian petty bourgeoisie- just like it happened in the French 1789 revolution- rode on the limitation of the working class consciousness to take power thus presented themselves as the genuine voice of the workers and the class to look up to for the liberation of the Nigerian masses from British colonial rule. The intention of this intrepid petty bourgeois class is obviously far from national liberation but class liberation, that is, they hope to constitute themselves as the new exploiters of labor, the new bourgeoisie, in summary the new oppressor and they would stop at nothing to achieve that.

With the apparent independence of Nigeria in 1960, the new ruling elite seemed divided on the bases of ethno ideological differences but the real bases for the exploitation of this ethnic sentiment was material interest. The early argument for regionalism, federalism, confederalism and what have you has nothing to do with national interest i.e. the interest of the masses. This people (Awolowo, Azikiwe, Tafawa Balewa, Ahmadu Bello etc) exploited the ethnic sentiment of the poor uneducated but politically conscious masses to advance their material interest. Every other perceived socio-political insurrections ranging from coup to pogroms all followed the material bases of class interest.

The Biafra war which broke out in 1967 shortly after the first Nigerian coup of 1966 came as a manifestation of conflicting class interest. The common reason for the war was said to be a piling hostility against the role of the Igbo in the 1966 coup. The excuse for the coup was the extent of corruption of the civilian elites. The fact that the coup paved way for the most corrupt and brutal dispensation of military rule has undoubtedly mocked the hypocritical excuse. The mass onslaught of the Igbo people came immediately after another coup that unseated Igbo dictator Aguiyi Ironsi(a representative of the Igbo elite) and replaced him with the northern elite candidate Yakubu Gowon. The question however is "who were the

master minders of the vicious killing of the Igbos"? We must at this point understand how economically anti-poor hostile condition created by the material interest of the bourgeoisie could be capable of setting even the oppressed class against each other. We have witnessed the popular xenophobia crisis in south Africa where the South African nationals erroneously concluded that their disdainful economic predicament was caused by the presence of non nationals, we have seen the Ghana must go slogan in Nigeria where Nigerians made similar conclusion of the Ghanians, we have equally encountered racial wars between the white and black American citizens which was based on similar problems as the previous. In fact Fashola in 2010 almost hoodwink the Lagos based Yoruba into believing that the presence of other ethnic groups in the state constituted the gory economic dilemma of Lagos State. In every of this crisis, the victims of this catastrophic upheaval erroneously perceives the other party as the villain of their misery in the same vain the aggrieved subject of the violence sees the objects of this sadistic brutality as his economic nemesis. It was capitalism's ideology of privatization that concentrated excessive wealth in the hands of minority through the excessive impoverishment of majority. The idea of imperialism is outsourcing for cheap labor which could be via relocation of industries to those countries that have been impoverished through neo-colonialism, encouraging migration of citizens from impoverished state to imperial capitals such as US with big multinationals through fraudulent programs such as the study work scheme for international students, visa lottery etc. In short, imperialism's development of the urban region by under-developing the rural areas in the name of profit accumulation serve as the basis of the intra class war of the oppressed majority. The truth however remains that neither of the oppressed class are enemies of the other in reality and neither is the bane of another's misfortune rather, both are porn in the hands of a common oppressor.

This was obviously the case even in the 1967 Nigeria; more Igbo were perceived to be in the higher administrative position, some felt the Igbos were taking their Jobs and most northerners were barely educated. These factors were enough to cloak the masses in an ethno religious sentimental robe and provided with it the necessary recipe for ethnic conflict. One may on the other hand recall that the same mass of people fought shoulder to shoulder in the 1944/1945 labor strikes on the bases of collective demand and class interest and they did this despite their respective religious and ethnic differences. The interest of the working class, the poor Nigerian masses for increased wage, better working and living condition-regardless of ethno religious origin- is one that is irreconcilable with that of the profit driven Nigerian ruling elite either in 1945, 1967 or 2015.

Could the secession have translated into a better living condition for the common Igbo? Definitely not, The declaration of secession was in no way a pro common Igbo people response to the elite created economic crisis in the form of pogrom but a reaction to the bureaucratic marginalization of the Igbo elite who have seen themselves as the Nigerian emerging layers of exploiters of labor.

We must understand at this point that the interest of whether Gowon, Awolowo or Ojukwu is inalienably the

same. To maintain otherwise is to ignorantly conclude that the Putin led Russian elite intervention in the Syrian crisis was based on the interest of the common Syrian populace and this interest is different from that of the US. That is a total illusion and misconception of history and motive. The basis of the apparent division of both powers was the competition for the oil rich Syria and the entire Middle East. Russia had to ensure Al-Assad remains in power to meet this aim while it profits the US to unseat him. Whichever side becomes victorious does not nullify that public resources-such as oil-under the control of handful private elites whether national or international rather than a national democratic management of the workers would only benefit the interest of the former at the expense of the working masses. This is as well similar to why both powers are equally at logger head in Ukraine. Just like the Biafra war, scores of lives are being sacrificed to meet the greedy ends of these handful capitalist elites. The creation of the Biafra State will for the elite give them what they have always wanted, to become the new set of bourgeoisie, the uncontested ruling elite, appropriators and expropriators of national wealth. No sooner than the average Igbo will come to realize that the disguised ethnic liberation was in the real sense class liberation; the liberation of the petty bourgeoisie. The interest of the UK/US in the war couldn't be more obvious; to keep that oil rich large market under single united rule of pro west government.

Is this however to say that as Marxist we are opposed to right of self determination? Absolutely not, for us, we believe that the working people in every bourgeois epoch have no national identity, neither have they any identity other than working class identity which must dispassionately overthrow its nemesis; the bourgeoisie. The mere fact that the working people must be subjugated for the privileged handful to appropriate national wealth (proceeds of labor) and nature's resources have further justified this assertion. National identity can under no circumstance be substituted for national existence rather must be characterized by economic equality i.e. equal opportunities to appropriate the product of the society without subjugation of the labor of others else it becomes class identity.

We do not however support right to self determination should it be pursued mechanically any more than we advocate mechanical unity under the bourgeois state. We would only support the Unity of the working masses of Igbo for a right to self determination under socialist programs. Only the united struggle of the working people of Igbo under socialist programs can guarantee a real victory for the generality of the Igbo lest it becomes the interest of few privileged Igbo bureaucrats. This however is not to mechanically conclude that the struggle of the working Igbo people is totally different from the plight of the general Nigerian masses, neither is it the illusion that the needed victory of a Biafra workers state is independent of the united struggle of the Nigerian workers as it would be tantamount to total daydreaming. Only a workers Unity can guarantee a country we can all be proud of and a world free of socio-economic violence.

80 years Ago: Founding of the Fourth International

A Document of Workers Power (Britain) published in 1983

(with a Preface of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency)

This month, we celebrate the 80-years anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International. The construction of the Fourth International has been one of the two most important achievements of Leon Trotsky (the other was the organizing and defending of the Russia Revolution in 1917 and the following years of civil war).

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a Trotskyist organization and hence stands in the tradition of Trotsky's Fourth International. We defend the revolutionary legacy of the Fourth International until its degeneration in 1948-52 under the leadership of the epigones. (i)

In order to provide our readers with an overview of the history of the creation of the Fourth International in 1933-40, we republish below the first chapter of an important book of our movement. This book (*"The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today"*) has been published by our predecessor organization, Workers Power (Britain), in 1983.

In order to defend our revolutionary legacy, we had to fight against the subsequent degeneration of this organization into centrism for which we were bureaucratically expelled by the majority of its leadership in April 2011. (ii)

The struggle for a revolutionary future is impossible without defending the revolutionary gains of the past. This is both true for theoretical as well as practical achievements. In this spirit we recommend readers to study the follow-

ing document and to join the RCIT in fighting for building a Revolutionary World Party!

Footnotes

(i) See on this e.g. Workers Power's book *"The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today"*; see also Michael Pröbsting: *Healy's Pupils Fail to Break with their Master*. The revolutionary tradition of the Fourth International and the centrist tradition of its Epigones Gerry Healy and the "International Committee", October 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/healy-and-fourth-international/>; Yossi Schwartz: *The Lambertists - Road to Nowhere*. The Pseudo-Marxism of the so-called "Fourth International" founded by Pierre Lambert and its historical background, November 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-lambertist-road-to-nowhere/>

(ii) We refer readers for a historical assessment of our predecessor organization and an overview of the political and organizational background of the RCIT to the following book: Michael Pröbsting: *Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice*. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism, RCIT Books, December 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>

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Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice

Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*. The book's subtitle is: *Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*. The book is in English-language. It contains four chapters on 148 pages and includes 42 pictures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

A few months ago, our movement commemorated its 25th anniversary. In the summer of 1989 our predecessor organization, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) was founded as a democratic-centralist international tendency based on an elaborated program. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) continues the revolutionary tradition of the LRCI. Below we give an overview of our history, an evaluation of its achievements as well as mistakes, and a summary of the lessons for the struggles ahead. This book summarizes our theoretical and practical experience of the past

25 years.

In Chapter I we outline a summary of the Bolshevik-Communists' theoretical conception of the role of the revolutionary party and its relation to the working class. In Chapter II we elaborate on the essential characteristics of revolutionary party respective of the pre-party organization. In Chapter III we deal with the history of our movement – the RCIT and its predecessor organization. Finally, in Chapter IV we outline the main lessons of our 25 years of organized struggle for building a Bolshevik party and their meaning for our future work.

You can find the contents and download the book for free at <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/> ■

**Building the
Revolutionary Party
in Theory
and Practice**

*Looking Back and Ahead after
25 Years of organized Struggle for Bolshevism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

At its foundation in 1938, the Fourth International was the only consistent revolutionary communist tendency in the world. Other tendencies emerging from the degenerating Comintern either collapsed into reformism like the Right Opposition (Bukharin, Brandler, Maurin, Lovestone), or locked themselves up in ossified sectarianism (Urbahns, Bordiga). Many of the leading figures of the International Left Opposition - prominent founders of Comintern sections - failed to resist the pressures arising from the terrible defeats of the working class in the 1930s.

The defeats in Germany, Spain, France and above all the bloody triumph of Stalin's bonapartist clique in the USSR, propelled Left Oppositionists such as Nin, Sneevliet and Rosmer into centrist waverings. This included an unwillingness to support Trotsky's struggle to found a new International. Trotsky had hoped and expected to rally wider forces and a broader spectrum of historic communist leaders from the Leninist period of the Comintern into the new International. It was not to be. The International Communist League (ICL), and then the Movement for the Fourth International (MFI), alone held to the fundamental principles and tactics of the first four congresses of the Comintern. They alone developed these principles and tactics to face the enormous challenge of the 1930s.

The bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution had immediate repercussions beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. In the Comintern its negative effects were felt over the question of the KPD's failure to lead an insurrection in 1923. Under Zinoviev's leadership it went on to commit a series of disastrous ultra-left errors (e.g. the rising in Estonia). The Comintern sections were heavily bureaucratised under the slogan of "Bolshevisation". National leaderships were selected on the basis of their loyalty to the leading faction of the CPSU.

With the ascendancy of the Stalin-Bukharin bloc, the Comintern swung rapidly into I right opportunism in its relations to the British Trade Union bureaucracy. The bloc with them - the Anglo-Russian Committee - was maintained despite the betrayal of 1926 by the TUC. Then, in 1927, after a policy of liquidating the Chinese CP into the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang led to a catastrophe in Shanghai, the Comintern veered left again. It launched the Canton Commune. This ill-prepared rising was brutally suppressed by the former honorary member of the Comintern, Chiang Kai Shek. In Russia itself the emerging bureaucratic caste - headed by Stalin - crushed party democracy, used police methods against all oppositions and vacillated wildly in its economic policies.

On all of these issues, the Left Opposition, led by Leon Trotsky, waged a determined struggle to return the Comintern to the revolutionary course it had followed at its first four congresses. Originating in the Russian Party, the Left Opposition, after Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union, established itself as an International (external) Faction of the Comintern, with the expressed aim of reforming the International, its sections, and the one state where a section held power - the Soviet Union.

The positions of the International Left Opposition on the Soviet Union, Germany 1923, Britain 1926 and China 1927, were based on the programmatic gains of the Bolshevik party and the Theses and Resolutions passed by the first four congresses of the Comintern.

The Comintern, built in the post-war revolutionary period of 1919-1923, developed an organisation and a political method that stand as models for communists to this day. Its Congresses were democratic forums where the best communist leaders of the day could debate their tactics. Its Executive Committee (ECCI) and its network of agents were the centralised structure through which the decisions taken at those Congresses could be effectively implemented internationally.

The Comintern systematised the method of democratic centralism as the form of organisation for revolutionary combat parties and the world party of communist revolution. It drew a sharp line between communism and reformism by generalising from the experience of the Russian Revolution, and making its goal the revolutionary conquest of power by the proletariat and the internationalisation of the revolution. Not content with a mere declaration of aims, the Comintern sought to build up a number of strong active sections, capable of achieving these aims through the use of revolutionary tactics.

To this end the Comintern from 1919-22 subjected the ever changing world political and economic situation and the balance of class forces thus engendered, to constant scrutiny. It operated with an understanding of the imperialist epoch as one of capitalist decay, wars and revolutions. But it also understood the importance of periods within this epoch - revolutionary or pre-revolutionary periods, periods of stability or retreat, counter-revolutionary periods, etc. On the basis of its understanding of perspectives as a guide to action, it was able to re-focus its programme and adjust its tactical line as different periods opened up after the war.

Thus at the first two congresses the principal slogans were rightly directed at the formation of Soviets and the struggle for power. The victory of the Russian Revolution, the upheavals in Germany, the Hungarian events all pointed to the viability of this line of advance.

However, with the defeats of 1919-20 in Germany, Hungary and Italy, thanks to the treachery of the Second International parties and the vacillation of the centrist USPD and PSI, the Comintern immediately re-examined its perspectives. At the Third Congress in June 1921 these defeats, their impact on the working class and the temporary respite they gave to the principal capitalist governments were acknowledged.

The line of advance was changed from the immediate conquest of power to "conquest of the masses". The sections utilised the method employed by the Bolsheviks in February to September 1917 - the method of the united front with reformist parties and the demand that they break with the bourgeoisie and base themselves on the masses.

This method led directly to the "workers' government" slogan and to transitional demands as a means of winning the masses to communist leadership. These positions were embodied in the Third Congress' Theses on Tactics. They were elaborated further in the Fourth Congress' Theses on Tactics (December 1922), the Programme of Action in the Unions (Third Congress) and the Theses on the United Front (Fourth Congress).

In addition to its general tactical and programmatic guidelines, the Comintern developed positions on a whole range of specific questions. On the National Question, and later the Anti-Imperialist United Front, its Theses pointed

to the progressive nature of national liberation struggles, and the duty of communists to support them against imperialism. But at the same time it stressed the centrality of maintaining the independence of the working class in the oppressed nations.

National liberation for the Comintern was not the end goal. It was a component part of the struggle for proletarian revolution.

Work amongst the oppressed masses - women, youth, blacks, the unemployed, the peasantry - was stressed by the Comintern as obligatory for Communists. In this the Comintern broke resolutely with the labour aristocratic aloofness of the Second International which had given scant attention to the colonial masses and the oppressed nationalities.

At the centre of all of the Comintern's positions lay two fundamental principles - the political independence of the working class, that is to say, of its programme; and the use of tactics like the united front as a means to win the masses to the communist goal, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The first condition of a tactical compromise was that the Communists publicly express their strategic positions and retain the freedom to criticise their temporary allies.

The Comintern never completed its work of re-elaborating the Marxist programme. The bloc of restorationists and bureaucratic centrists under Bukharin and Stalin eventually enshrined their reactionary slogan of "socialism in one country" in the Comintern's degenerate programme.

The failure of the Comintern to complete its tasks of programmatic re-elaboration and re-focusing was to be of enormous significance to those communists who fought to refound a communist international after the degeneration of the Comintern.

All of these principles were sacrificed by the Stalinised Comintern.

In Britain the Trade Union leaders were praised, not fought in, 1926; in China the banner of the proletariat was pulled down by the communists while that of the bourgeois nationalists was hoisted up.

In the ultra-left "Third Period" the Comintern committed opposite, but equally disastrous errors. The programme of the Sixth Congress in 1928 infused with the theory and practice of "Socialism in One Country", abandoned the internationalism of the early Comintern.

Sections became pawns of Stalin's foreign policy. The united front was rejected in favour of the Red Front, of "United Front from below" a tactic predicated on the idea that Social Democracy and Fascism were twins. The programme itself was confined to abstract generalities about capitalism. It failed, as the positions of the early Comintern had not, to base itself on the most recent vital experiences of the international class struggle.

The Sixth Congress highlighted the thoroughgoing Stalinisation of the Comintern. The rotten fruit of this process was finally borne in 1933 when the pride of the Communist International, the KPD, was destroyed by fascism without a fight. It was not primarily the guns and knives of the fascists that defeated the German working class.

It was the treachery of the Social Democracy and the ultra-left politics of the KPD. Their abandonment of the united front led directly to the defeat in Germany. This event was decisive. It exposed the criminal policies of Stalinism. Yet not one single Comintern section acknowledged this.

Stalin's line on Germany was endorsed retrospectively by all of them.

The Comintern thus proved definitively incapable of learning from its errors. It was dead for revolution.

Trotsky and the left Opposition held a position that, up to 1933, the German defeat and its aftermath, the Comintern could have been reformed. The International Left Opposition repeatedly requested to be re-admitted to the Comintern as a faction. This in no way hindered the International Left Opposition from raising its position on Britain, China and later on Germany and the rise of fascism. Trotsky was clear that the Comintern had abandoned the revolutionary programme at its Sixth Congress, when it adopted Bukharin's programme.

Thus the programme of the Comintern was not decisive for Trotsky's reform perspective. At the same time the definitive class collaborationist turn (crossing of class lines) of the Comintern did not come until 1935 with the Stalin-Llval pact and the turn to the Popular Front policy in France, and later internationally.

For Trotsky, what was decisive in the reform perspective was that during its revolutionary period, the Comintern had, in certain key countries, organised a mass revolutionary vanguard. The existence of this vanguard, particularly in Germany where the fate of Europe was being decided, was seen by the International Left Opposition as a potential lever of reform in the Comintern. It was potentially a very powerful force that could be turned against the Stalin clique. But the condition of this was that it could remove its leaders before their policy led to its own destruction at the hands of fascism. This consideration, the existence of a mass vanguard, determined the Left Opposition's orientation up to 1933. The destruction of the mass KPD and the failure of any other section to respond correctly to this event, undermined the basis of the reform perspective.

The other communist parties had, themselves, withered under the impact of the policies of the "Third Period". The loss of membership was dramatic, reducing many of the parties to small sects. In France the PCF, which in 1924 claimed 110,000 members against the SFIO's 35,000 was down to a claimed membership of 30,000 in 1932, with probably no more than half of that number being active members. In Britain the same process, on a smaller scale, was evident. By 1930 party membership had slumped to 2,500, less than half the number claimed in 1922. It was a relatively huge drop in numbers from the 1926 highpoint of 10,000 members.

The perspective of reform had to be changed. Max Shachtman, a leading member of the International Left Opposition in 1933, spelled this out in his foreword to "The History and Principles of the Left Opposition". "The collapse of the German Communist Party removes from the dwindling ranks of the Communist International the last of its sections possessing any mass following or influence...Suffice it to say that the German events, and the bureaucratic self contentment and unconcern, deepening of the errors and disintegration of Stalinism and its parties which have followed them bring us to the ineluctable conclusion: That the Communist International has been strangled by Stalinism, is bankrupt, is beyond recovery or restoration on Marxist foundations". (1)

Thus it was the ability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to strangle the Comintern and the masses grouped within

it, that proved that those masses were not, and could not become, a lever for reform. Henceforth the Trotskyists set out to rebuild new parties and a new International.

The task became one of breaking the masses from the Comintern, social democracy and all forms of centrism, and winning them to a new International. In a period of defeats (the 1930s), this proved enormously difficult. However, the ILO/ICL/MFI forces kept alive the traditions, methods and theoretical conquests of the communist movement. As such their struggle was a pledge for their future. Trotsky himself realised the importance of this achievement, limited as it may seem to those who, impatient to become leaders of the masses, end up regarding communism as an obstacle between them and the masses:

“How the new International will take form, through what stages it will pass, what final shape it will assume - this no-one can foretell today.

And indeed there is no need to do so: historical events will show us.

But it is necessary to begin by proclaiming a programme that meets the tasks of our epoch. On the basis of this programme it is necessary to mobilise co-thinkers, the pioneers of the new International. No other road is possible”.

(2)

Under Trotsky's guidance the International Left Opposition and its descendants (ICL/MFI) had correctly analysed the class nature, role and dynamic of fascism - a mass movement based on the petit-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat, whose service to finance capital was to crush into atoms the proletariat's organisations. The revolutionary tactical answer to this threat was the anti-fascist workers' united front.

Such a tactic could have allowed the communists to expose the bankruptcy of the reformist leaders without jeopardising the united struggle of the working class. It could have crushed fascism, allowed the communists to win the leadership of the working class and thereby enabled them to go forward to the seizure of power. The Trotskyists analysed the degenerative process in the USSR. The isolation of the Soviet state and the extreme material and cultural backwardness of Russian society at the time of the revolution had provided fertile soil for the growth of a vast parasitic bureaucracy. This caste, headed by the Stalin faction, had usurped political power from the working class, terrorising and annihilating its vanguard.

The Trotskyists explained this degeneration at each stage and formulated the strategy of political revolution against the bureaucracy as the only means of restoring proletarian political power in the degenerated workers' state. At the same time, the ICL/MFI correctly maintained a policy of unconditional defence of the remaining gains of the October Revolution (statified industry, monopoly of foreign trade, planning) against the capitalist restorationist efforts of the imperialists.

In France and Spain, the Trotskyists analysed and fought the Stalinist and Social Democratic class collaborationist policy of the Popular Front, which subordinated the organisations and interests of the working class to the policy of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Trotsky guided the small groups of the Fourth International movement in the use of tactics adapted to conditions in the more stable imperialist democracies Britain and the USA. In these countries and in France he developed “entryism” as a short or medium

term tactical manoeuvre aimed at placing revolutionaries at the head of vanguard elements of the proletariat unwilling (temporarily) to break with the mass reformist organisations.

This tactic involved the creation of a revolutionary communist wing and a sharp ‘struggle against left centrist “revolutionary” opposition as well as the right-wing bureaucratic leadership. Whilst the development of centrist tendencies by the reformist parties was the context of entry, in no sense was it the task of Trotskyists to create such a centrist bloc or themselves to advance centrist policies. No inevitable stage of centrist leaderships or parties was envisaged, let alone advocated, by the Fourth Internationalists.

Trotsky also developed the tactic of splits and fusions in relation to leftward moving centrist organisations, on the basis of winning them to a clear revolutionary programme. In the colonial and semi-colonial countries (Asia, Latin America, Africa), the Trotskyist movement, even where it participated in the Anti-Imperialist United Front with non proletarian elements, fought for the programme of proletarian, permanent revolution, against the “stages theory” - a Menshevik theory resurrected by Stalin, which subordinated the independent interests of the proletariat to the national (bourgeois) revolution.

By 1938, with the second imperialist world war imminent, Trotsky drew together the fundamental doctrines and method of the communist tradition (from Marx to the first four Congresses of the Comintern) extending, developing and enriching them with the lessons learnt by the Trotskyists since 1923. This resulted in the production of a programme ‘The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International’ - the Transitional Programme. (3) The FI was founded on the basis of this programme. We affirm the absolute correctness of the FI's formation in 1938.

Indeed, had the FI not been founded in 1938, there would undoubtedly have been an even greater dispersion and weakening of revolutionary forces during the war and even less possibility for the voice of revolutionary internationalism to be heard. Neither the organisation nor the ‘internationalism’ of the centrists (British ILP, French PSOP, Spanish POUM etc) stood the test of war. In no way can the later disintegration be attributed to the FI's ‘premature’ formation.

We also reject the linked error that only mass national parties with deep roots in the proletariat of their respective countries can form an International. This conception is a thoroughly nationalist, Second Internationalist one.

Faced with the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals and the hesitations of the centrists, the internationalist revolutionary programme of the Trotskyists required an international party. The centrists who argued against the founding of the FI had themselves set up national parties. This double standard showed how, for the centrists, an international party was a luxury, thus betraying their nationalism. If the party is the programme then this applies also to the World Party.

As soon as a developed international programme exists, as soon as a stable international leadership, united around this programme has been established, then there can be no cause for delay. This was the case in 1938. Even though the political leadership of the FI existed mainly in the person of Leon Trotsky, this was initially sufficient in the period

of the FI's formation. He was, in many respects, an embodiment of the FI's continuity with Bolshevism.

The FI was an "International" which unlike the First, Second and Third did not consist of mass workers' organisations. It comprised in most countries propaganda groups struggling to escape the isolation that their numbers and the murderous hostility of the Stalinists forced on them. Partial exceptions were the USA where the SWP had developed systematic agitation in the blue collar unions and led sections of workers on a local basis (Minneapolis), and the deep roots of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in the proletariat of Saigon.

But, if the Fourth International was weak in numbers it was in Trotsky's words "strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Trotsky's perspective was that the national sections of the FI and the international itself were posed to develop rapidly into a serious force within the proletariat. In the proletariat's crisis of leadership which the imperialist war would immeasurably sharpen, the FI would, given the correct programme and a firm and seasoned international leadership, develop into a decisive mass force capable of resolving the crisis. That this perspective did not materialise in no way invalidates in our view the decision to found the FI in 1938. Trotsky's FI, its programme, its theses and its cadres, despite the later degeneration, saved and communicated to a later generation the precious heritage of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

We stand in the tradition of the FI founded by Trotsky. Its programme, the Transitional Programme, represented the culmination of the programmatic work of previous generations of revolutionary Marxists. It was developed on the shoulders of all previous Marxist programmes - the Communist Manifesto, the programmatic declaration of the Bolshevik Party, and above all, on the principles and tactics developed by the revolutionary Comintern.

It represented a transcending of the old Social Democratic programme, divided into minimum and maximum demands, which in the imperialist epoch enshrined the reformist practice of the Second International, and developed instead, on the basis of work already started in the programmatic debates of the revolutionary Comintern, a

system of transitional demands.

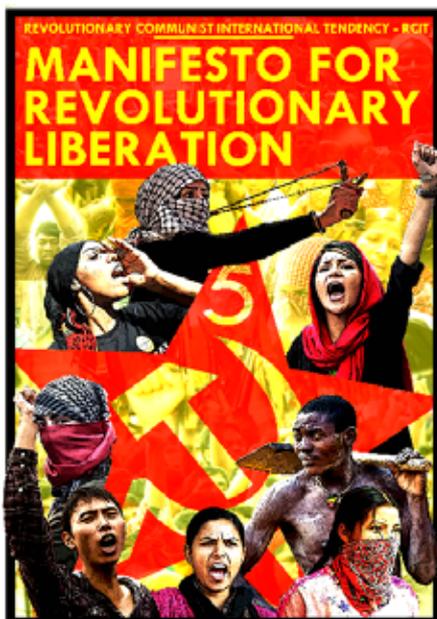
The Transitional Programme was, after Trotsky's death, both misused and misunderstood by his supposed disciples. As we shall see it was eventually liquidated as an operative programme and worshipped as a lifeless idol. Unlike the Third International, the Fourth had no proletarian masses grouped beneath its banner. Its integrity and its ability to survive was concentrated in the scientific correctness of its programme and in its cadres' ability to win the' proletarian vanguard to it.

Defence of the programme against its vastly stronger opponents; utilisation in the class struggle; the development and re-elaboration of it to meet new situations and new tasks, were heavy responsibilities for a cadre weak in numbers with limited class struggle experience and with few theoreticians of stature. A correct understanding of the Transitional Programme - its nature, doctrine and method is thus vital to Trotskyists who seek to rediscover and re-appropriate these historic gains - long distorted and obscured by the 'theory' and practice of Trotsky's epigones.

Trotsky's programme marked the successful resolution of programmatic problems that originated with the Erfurt Programme of 1891. It represented the programmatic resolution of the problem of the disjuncture between the struggle over immediate and partial demands and the struggle for power.

The old minimum programme was limited to demands within the framework of capitalism. These included demands for the amelioration of the proletariat's conditions - the 8 hour day, measures of social welfare, improvement of wages, and a series of democratic demands universal suffrage and a sovereign assembly, an elected judiciary, the dissolution of the standing army and the creation of a people's militia etc. These demands did not transcend the concessions possible within the framework of bourgeois society though in many countries the most militant, indeed revolutionary, methods of struggle would be necessary to win them.

In the early 1890s, Engels, who supported the Erfurt Programme with reservations, hoped that the mobilisation of the masses by parliamentary and trade union means to



PROGRAM OF THE RCIT

Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation

Adopted at the 1st World Congress of the RCIT in October 2016

Introduction * I. Decaying Capitalism * II. Today's Worldwide Historic Revolutionary Period * III. The Reactionary Offensive of the Ruling Class * IV. A Program for Socialist Revolution to Halt Humanity's Collapse into Barbarism * V. The Crisis of Leadership and the Construction of a Revolutionary World Party * VI. Work in Mass Organizations and the United Front Tactic * VII. The Semi-Colonial South * VIII. The Emerging Imperialist Great Powers of the East: China and Russia * IX. The Old Imperialist Great Powers: The EU, North America and Japan * X. Conclusion

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fight for these goals would result in a decisive struggle that would crack the framework of the capitalist state and the bureaucratic, semi-absolutist regimes of many continental states, opening the road to proletarian power. Engels' successors (Kautsky, Bernstein, Bebel etc) transformed this perspective into one of peaceful evolutionary growth in the present, combined with an inevitable collapse or catastrophe for capitalism at some time in the distant future. They thus falsified Engels' perspective and the strategic and tactical methods of the founders of Marxism.

In practice, in a period of capitalist expansion (the opening phase" of the imperialist epoch) significant concessions were made to the working class simply on the basis of the threat posed by the growth (in numbers and in votes gained) by the workers' parties and in response to trade union action. The leaders of the social democracy, for their part, were content to achieve piecemeal reforms and build up the parties and unions - ie to struggle for reforms outside and apart from the perspective of proletarian power. The latter became a distant 'final goal', the subject of abstract propaganda. The strategy of the conquest of power was replaced by the isolated tactic of social reform.

Thus a chasm opened between the maximum and minimum programme. Bernstein, the father of revisionism argued that this contradiction should be resolved by Social Democracy daring to appear as what it was - a democratic party of social reform. The 'final goal' was nothing, the 'movement' was everything.

The radical left of Social Democracy, especially Lenin and Luxemburg, argued for revolutionary tactics in pursuit of the major demands of the minimum programme (ie mass strike, armed insurrection etc to attain the democratic republic). They fought to purge the ranks of the workers' parties of the revisionists and reformists. They noted and analysed the gathering forces within modern capitalism making for reaction at home and wars abroad (Imperialism).

In a partial manner the prewar Social Democratic Left posed the necessity of transcending the Erfurt style programme and the associated parliamentary and pure trade union tactics. They raised the 'final goal' as the strategic object of revolutionary tactics. Within the left, Trotsky, despite a series of vacillating positions, particularly on the question of the Party and Bolshevik/Menshevik unity, came nearest to completely transcending the minimum/maximum divide. The theory of Permanent Revolution, at that time applied only to Russia by Trotsky, raised as the immediate goal of the proletariat (with the mass strike and insurrection to achieve it) a proletarian revolution and a workers' government that would not stop at solving the democratic tasks, but would press on, to fulfil the tasks of a socialist revolution. In a backward country like Russia, made up predominantly of peasants, Trotsky recognised that the proletarian revolution would have to win the support of the peasants and would have to be linked to the internationalisation of the revolution. However even Trotsky did not develop a fully rounded programmatic alternative to the Erfurt programme.

The "Marxist Centre" of Social Democracy, represented by Bebel and Kautsky, refused to unite theory and practice as Bernstein and Luxemburg, in different ways, wished. They defended an increasingly abstract inevitabilist Marxism against Bernstein. They defended parliamentary and

trade union cretinism against Luxemburg.

The sharpening crises, economic and political, of the pre-war period, heralded an epoch of wars and revolutions, that made the Erfurt synthesis a disguise for the rise of a conservative, counter-revolutionary bureaucracy within the workers' organisations. The Second International, under pressure from the proletariat and the Left, was committed to opposing any European war (which it defined in advance as imperialist on the part of all the major powers) and of transforming any such war into the occasion for struggling to overthrow capitalism. In August 1914, the voting of war credits by the German SPD indicated the renunciation by the leaders of that party (and they were soon followed by all the major parties of the Second International) of their formal Marxism, in favour of social chauvinism.

The Bolsheviks were the only major party to carry out their pre-war promises and obligations via the policy of revolutionary defeatism ("Turn the imperialist war into a civil war"; "Defeat of one's own country is the lesser evil"). Elsewhere minorities fought the social chauvinists (Liebknecht - "The main enemy is at home"). Bolshevism developed an understanding of the real roots of the war in the theory of imperialism as a new epoch of capitalist crisis, war and revolution.

The Bolsheviks also developed revolutionary methods of struggle for power - the united front, the mass strike, armed insurrection - and an understanding of the nature of proletarian state power - the smashing of the bourgeois bureaucratic military state machine and its replacement with soviet power, the commune-type state etc. These theoretical and practical conquests made Bolshevism by 1917, the crucible for the creation of a new programme - a programme dominated by the posing of the need for the proletariat to seize power as an immediate task.

This did not obliterate the need to raise immediate and partial demands, but it posed the question of revolutionary methods of struggle, and of demands which met vital and immediate needs (war, famine, unemployment, inflation, economic chaos - all caused by the convulsive crises of imperialism). The struggle for such demands organised and directed workers towards the struggle for power. These transitional demands utilised by the Bolsheviks in 1917 (see Lenin's programmatic pamphlet "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat it") became part of the international proletariat's armoury as a result of the work of the Comintern between 1919 and 1923.

In the Third and Fourth Congresses the CI systematised the United Front tactic, the action programme of immediate and transitional demands, the workers' government as means of overcoming the ideological subjective weakness of the proletariat evidenced by the existence of reformist leaderships, in order to facilitate its struggle for the conquest of power.

The CI broke resolutely from the Kautskyian heritage of the Second International. First of all it recognised the nature of the epoch as transitional - transitional between capitalism and socialism. This was not an objective process. It existed thanks to objective conditions, but its resolution depended on a struggle between parties and classes. From this analysis the CI concluded: "The character of the transitional epoch makes it obligatory for all communist parties to raise to the utmost their readiness for struggle.

Any struggle may turn into a struggle for power. Thus, in the imperialist epoch, where immediate demands clashed with capitalist priorities, direct action for such demands posed the possibility of developing into a struggle for power. Therefore, revolutionaries has to stress the inter-linked nature of all proletarian demands, and the need to fight for all demands and to organise itself at every level for this. Because this confronted capitalism it was necessary to state the consequence: destroy capitalism to defend ourselves.

"The communist parties do not put forward any minimum programme to strengthen and improve the tottering structure 'of capitalism. The destruction of that structure remains their guiding aim and their immediate mission. But to carry out this mission the communist parties must put forward demands whose fulfilment is an immediate and urgent working class need, and they must fight for these demands in mass struggle, regardless of whether they are compatible with the profit economy of the capitalist class or not." (6) And again, "If the demands correspond to the vital needs of the broad proletarian masses and if these masses feel they cannot exist unless these demands are met, then the struggle for these demands will become the starting point of the struggle for power.

In place of the minimum programme, of the reformists and centrists, the Communist International puts the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for a system of demands which in their totality disintegrate the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat, represent stages in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and each of which expresses in itself the need of the broadest masses, even if the masses themselves are not yet consciously in favour of the proletarian dictatorship." (7)

The Comintern developed the idea of a bridge to facilitate the transition from the struggle within capitalism to the struggle against capitalism. Clearly this bridge, this system of demands, this programme, had to correspond to objective conditions - the state of the economy, the actual needs of the masses, the nature of the period, the recent experiences of the international class struggle and their impact on the masses. These considerations guided, for example, the various action programmes developed by the CI.

However, by the time that the CI came to debate its programme the authors of the Theses on Tactics - the CI's "Transitional Programme" had been expelled. The "scholastic" Bukharin, acting as hired scribe for the bureaucratic philistine Stalin, drew up the programme. In order to cover over the Comintern's errors and justify the reactionary theory and practice of "Socialism in One Country" the programme was reduced to being an abstract, redundant document. The transitional method was gone. The need to relate the programme to objective conditions went with it. Trotsky in his critique of Bukharin's document defended and developed the Comintern's earlier position:

"But a programme of revolutionary action naturally cannot be approached as a bare collection of abstract propositions without any relation to all that has occurred during these epoch-making years. A programme cannot, of course, go into a description of the events of the past, but it must proceed from these events, base itself upon them, encompass them, and relate to them. A programme by the position it takes, must make it possible to understand all

the major facts of the struggle of the proletariat, and all the important facts relating to the ideological struggle within the Comintern. If this is true with regard to the programme as a whole, then it is all the truer with regard to that part of it which is specifically devoted to the question of strategy and tactics. Here, in the words of Lenin, in addition to what has been conquered there must also be registered that which has been lost which can be transformed into a 'conquest' if it has been understood and assimilated. The proletarian vanguard needs not a catalogue of truisms but a manual of action." (8)

Confronting the task of developing a new International, Trotsky had to develop a Transitional Programme. The fundamental features of the 1938 programme, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" embodied the lessons of the Comintern and its collapse. In the first place it was a programme that corresponded to the objective situation - acute economic crisis, impending war, the rise of fascism, the collapse of the Communist International.

It was sharply focused towards resolving the crisis of leadership within the pre-revolutionary situation that these factors were bound to create. Those who accuse this programme of "catastrophism" should consider the magnitude of the catastrophe - the war - that followed its publication. Like Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto, it anticipated a sharp crisis and tried to orient the working class towards a revolutionary outcome. In this sense it was not fatalist, but imbued with the spirit of revolutionary optimism and the will to triumph over the most daunting obstacles.

It proceeded from the experience of the class struggle over the preceding ten years. Unlike Bukharin, Trotsky had nothing to hide in his programme. The lessons of the German defeat, the Popular Front in France and Spain, the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, the anti imperialist struggle in China were all encompassed in the programme.

Its slogans flowed from the experience - positive and negative - of these momentous events.

The programme was an international programme. The impending war pointed to the urgent need for an international line of march. Trotsky provided it, drawing on the experience of the MFI's sections, analysing the contradictions and inter-connections within the world capitalist system and the USSR. In the Transitional Programme is a codification of Permanent Revolution. That is, the revolution must internationalise itself or go down to defeat. In backward countries the tasks of the democratic revolution can only be solved by proletarian revolution.

This whole strategy can only be fulfilled if the crisis of leadership is resolved by revolutionary communist parties winning the loyalty of the masses and leading them into permanent revolution against imperialism.

Most important, the Transitional Programme was - like the famous Section Two in the Communist Manifesto, the Theses on Tactics of the Comintern, the "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It" of the Bolsheviks - an action programme, focused towards the tasks of the period ahead. It was truly a guide to action. In the "Review of the Founding Conference" in 1938, the FI recognised this crucial aspect of the programme: "What a contrast it offers to the vague generalisations and deceptive abstractions

which the official leaderships of the working class offer as guides to action in the present tumultuous world situation!

It is not, or rather is not so much, the basic programme of the Fourth International, as it is its programme of action for the immediate period in which we live" (9)

Its programme of action for the proletariat was transitional. Its demands were interlinked and allied to the same goal - the seizure of state power by the proletariat. For this reason every demand designed to meet the needs of the masses (against unemployment, for example), is linked to the struggle for workers' control, the formation of factory committees, mass action, factory occupations, etc. These fighting organs of the proletariat culminate in the keystone of the programme, the call for Soviets as organs of struggle against the capitalist regime.

The demands for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for the opening of the books, etc, expose the anarchy of capitalism, pose the essence of the planned economy and create the organised forces both to win and exercise the state power necessary to effect a transition to a fully planned economy.

Only such a programme allows the fight for socialist revolution to be linked to the everyday struggles of the proletariat. Trotsky spelt this out in the programme itself: "The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism, but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie. However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even small and partial, questions of tactics. All sections of the proletariat - all its layers, occupations and groups - should be drawn into the revolutionary movement. The present epoch is distinguished not because it frees the revolutionary party from day to day work but because it permits this work to be carried out indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution". (10)

The means for doing this was the system of transitional demands, demands which start with today's needs (not today's mentality of the workers, a fact Trotsky repeated to SWP (US) members) and lead to the revolution. Since Trotsky's death, many avowed Trotskyists have used individual demands, plucked from the system of transitional demands, either as isolated trade union demands or as part of a programme for reforming the institutions of the capitalist state (Ernest Mandel of the USFI put them forward in the 1960s as a series of "structural reforms").

Others like the British "Militant" group advance them as a trick - "fight for these demands now" is what they shout; "and later we'll reveal that they're directed against capitalism" is what they whisper amongst themselves. Both views lead inevitably to opportunism. Trotsky himself was clear that Transitional Demands were neither reforms nor tricks, not one of our demands will be realised under capitalism. That is why we are calling them transitional demands.

It creates a bridge to the mentality of the workers and then a material bridge to the socialist revolution. The whole question is how to mobilise the masses for struggle...The revolutionaries always consider that the reforms and acquisitions are only a by-product of revolutionary struggle. If we say that we will only demand what they can give, the ruling class will only give one tenth or more of what

we demand.

When we demand more and can improve our demands, the capitalists are compelled to give the maximum. The more extended and militant the spirit of the workers, the more is demanded and won. They are not sterile slogans; they are a means of pressure on the bourgeoisie, and will give the greatest possible material results immediately". (11)

Thus they are both a means of winning real concessions and a means of mobilising the masses on the basis of their own needs against capitalism in a struggle that can easily turn into a struggle for power.

Of course the use of the Transitional Programme and its demands inevitably varies in different circumstances. The emphasis on particular demands, the refocusing of the programme itself, will depend on the state of the class struggle, the state of the economy, the state of political life and so on. But what remains valid, in periods of boom as well as crisis, periods of retreat as well as of advance, in backward countries and in advanced ones, is precisely the method lodged within the Transitional Programme - that the goal of revolutionaries is to take workers across the "transitional bridge" from their present situation to the socialist revolution. All of these features were embodied within the Transitional Programme. This programme was not the invention of Trotsky. In his words: "It is the summation of the collective work up until today". (12)

After Trotsky's murder in 1940, preceded by the Stalinists' extermination of his closest collaborators (his son Sedov, Rudolf Klement, Erwin Wolf etc), and the desertion of leading members of the International (Serge, Leonetti, Muste, Zeller, Fischer, Naville, Rous, Shachtman, etc), the central leadership of the FI effectively ceased to exist. The Trotskyists were responsible for acts of unparalleled heroism during the war, but as an international organisation the FI disintegrated.

This collapse, exacerbated by war-time dislocation, might be the fate of any revolutionary organisation without mass parties or state resources at its disposal. Initially the sections had the Transitional Programme and the FI's declarations on the war and other issues, as their basis for unity. However the sections soon began to diverge from these positions and from each other.

Footnotes

1. M.Shachtman, Ten Years - History and Principles of the Left Opposition (New York,1974) p.5.
2. L Trotsky, Writings 1935-36 (New York,1977) p.159.
3. This will be referred to hereafter as The Transitional Programme. All references are to L Trotsky, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International (New York, 1977).
4. *ibid.*, p.152.
5. Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943 (London,1971) Vol 1, p.250.
6. *ibid.*, pp. 248-9 7. *ibid.*, p 249 (our emphasis) 8. L Trotsky The Third International After Lenin (New York,1970), p.79.
9. Documents of the Fourth International 1933-1940 (New York,1973), p.161.
10. L Trotsky, The Transitional Programme, *op.cit.*, p.114.
11. L Trotsky, "The Political Backwardness of the American Workers" in *ibid.*, pp159-160.
12. L Trotsky, "Completing the Programme and Putting it to Work", in *ibid.*, p.112

What the RCIT Stands 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 led 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 (e.g. U.S., China, EU, Russia, Japan) 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 led 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 program! Join the RCIT!

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

