



REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency



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March 2019

How to Build the New Revolutionary Internationale?

PLUS: India – Bangladesh: 'Friendship' through barbed fence

Nigeria: The Mass Miseries of Capitalist Democracy

The USA as a Settler State * Archive: On the Iranian Revolution 1979

English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.16, March 2019

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Picture on the cover shows Trotsky and other leaders of the Communist International (Source: Color by KLIMBIM)

Revolutionary Communism is the monthly English-language journal published by the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT). The RCIT has sections and activists in Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka,, Bangladesh, Yemen, Israel / Occupied Palestine, Brazil, Mexico, Britain, Germany, and Austria. Furthermore, the RCIT has fraternal relations with the *Alkebulan School of Black Studies* (Kenya), the *Pan-Afrikan Consciousness Renaissance* (Nigeria), *Courant des Jeunes Penseurs Congolais* (Democratic Republic of Congo), the *Marxist Group ‘Class Politics’* (Russia) and *Smif Savaşı* (Turkey).

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India – Bangladesh: ‘Friendship’ through barbed fence

By Apu Sarwar, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 14 February 2019

Fulani was one of Bengali migrant workers who moved back and forth between Bangladesh and India. Indian Border Security Force (BSF) ruthlessly killed Felani while crossing the border on 7 January 2012. She had gotten stuck on the barbed when she was shot and remained stuck in the barbed fence for 5 hours until she bled to death. Felani’s body hanging on a barbed fence become a symbol of Indian Border Force brutality and Indian attitude to its neighbouring countries people. The images of Felani’s hanging body in the media created a big uproar among the people in Bangladesh. Since then some political and social organization observe 7 January as “*Felani Day*” – a symbol of protest against India.

The Indian government is continually building barbed fences across 4,222 km easily travelable India-Bangladesh border over 40 years in the name of security. Indo-Bangla Border snakes through plains, rivers, hills, and paddy fields, densely populated areas. The decision to build a fence was made in the 1980s when the issue of Bangladeshi migration turned politically explosive in the northeast Indian state of Assam. An eight-foot-high fence of barbed wire, intimidating structure, electrified in some stretches, runs along roughly 70 percent of this border. The border between Bangladesh and India has long been a source of contention between the two countries. It is the fifth-longest land border in the world.

Bangladesh, a country of South Asia, is surrounded by

India on three sides and Myanmar to the Southeast. The Southern coastline is shaped by the Bay of Bengal. Once Indian barbed fences project will be finished, it will be the longest border fence in the world and Bangladesh will be a ‘unique’ country sounded by barbed fences!

Every year, thousands of unemployed youth Bangladeshi cross the India – Bangladesh border illegally in search of work. The people on both sides of the border share similar ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics. The youth unemployment has increased significantly over the years. However, Bangladesh government always denies the existence of massive unemployment in the country as well as the presence of Bangladeshi workers in various cities of India.

The easily travelable border with India is also one of the contributing factors for the trafficking of women and children not only as the site of destination but also as the transit country. Consequently, about 200-400 young women and children are being a victim of trafficking every month in Bangladesh.

Who was Felani

Felani Khatun was a 15 years old Bangladeshi migrant worker who was living with her parents in New Delhi as an undocumented worker. The girls’ parents were living and working in India since about 10 years. The family

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan.
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting analyses the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, EU, Russia, and Japan. He shows that the diplomatic rows, sanctions, trade wars, and military tensions between these Great Powers are not accidental or caused by a mad man in the White House. They are rather rooted in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. This rivalry is a key feature of the current historic period and could, ultimately, result in major wars between these Great Powers.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is crucial for assessing the character of the current inter-imperialist rivalry.

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting critically discusses the analysis of modern imperialism by a number of left-wing parties (left social democrats, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others). He demon-

strates that most of these organizations fail to understand the nature of the Great Power rivalry and, consequently, are not able to take an internationalist and revolutionary stance.

The author elaborates the approach of leading Marxist figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg to the problems of Great Power rivalry and imperialist aggression against oppressed peoples. He outlines a Marxist program for the current period which is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

The book contains an introduction and 29 chapters plus an appendix (412 pages) and includes 61 figures and tables. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry
between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and
an Outline of the Marxist Perspective



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

never lost contact with their home in Bangladesh. Some Bangladeshi migrants try to go home once a year. Such "once a year go home" of migrant workers ensures regular income for the whole family. The girl was returning to Bangladesh from New Delhi with her father. Apparently, Felani was coming to Bangladesh to get married.

Child marriage remains high and widespread in Bangladesh. Girls are disproportionately the most affected by child marriage and can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation.

Why migrate to India

Most youth from rural and semi-rural areas often find no prospect of getting work in the country. Chronic poverty, favoritism, poor quality of training, natural disaster and gender inequality, internally displacement are a too common problem in Bangladesh. A portion of this youth often moves to various Indian cities for work in hope of – as a popular saying goes – that "the grass is greener on the other side". Migrating to India is not free but rather cost a reasonable amount. Migrating to an unknown land for a 'better' future is a common desire and means to escape from poverty in Bangladeshi youth. People with middle-class background often migrate to America, UK, Canada or Australia. The poorer sectors of the population move as migrant workers to the Middle East and the people of bottom often try their luck in India.

Birth of Bangladesh and India

Indian and Pakistani ruling classes often portrait the birth of Bangladesh as a consequence of a nine months war between the Pakistani Army and Bengali Liberation forces backed by India firepower. (1) This bird view wilfully ignores the history of a quarter-century lasting people's movement from 1948 to 1971 in the then East Pakistan. India seized the opportunity to train Bengali liberation fighters, gave shelter to millions of refugees and finally entered the war to abruptly end it war and to 'liberate' East Bengal. In a nutshell, India was the forefront of 'birth' of Bangladesh. In fact, behind of Indian humanitarian and military assistance in the Bangladesh liberation war 1971, India had politico-economic and strategic considerations.

During the Bangladeshi liberation war Indian Army launched a covert massive attack against national minorities of North-East India, in the states of Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland. These groups took refuge in Bangladesh territory Chittagong Hill Tracts. Separationist movements are continuing in the above Indian states since 1947. The demands of these separationist movements vary from full independence from India to regional autonomy. The Indian offensive did not get almost any attention as Bangladesh was celebrating the victory over Pakistan.

Another reason why India entered in the war as it wanted to stop the spreading of ethnic-linguistic movements across India and wanted to make sure that Bangladeshi liberation forces arms do not fall into the hands of the Indian Naxalist movements.

The Indian army received a warm welcome from the general public of Bangladesh after 16 December 1971. However, this good relation lasted only an unexpectedly

short time. Soon after the defeat of the Pakistani army, the Indian army started looting abandoned arms and ammunition, factory machines, and gold from banks. This was a visible instance of the tension between the Indian army and some section of Bangladeshi freedom fighters.

India factor in Bangladesh politic nowadays

India has enormous political interest and influence on Bangladesh politic. There exist mainly two streams of thought among the main bosses' parties. The *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) projects itself as being pro-nationalist and this with Islam and anti-Indian nationalism. Various brands of Islamic parties often rallies behind BNP. The Awami League presents itself as a 'secular' force which accommodates a friendly relationship with India. The third, moribund, streams are left socialists. They are vocal against Indian hegemony but their programs lack clarity.

Since the Awami League, headed by Sheikh Hasina, took over the government in 2001, there has been a radical change in relations with India. The two states have signed contracts, exchange of territorial enclaves, transit of India to the road, permission to use sea ports, India-Bangladesh Defense Agreement and many others. Bangladesh's helped in countering and wiping out the separatists outposts from Indo-Bengal border area. In the event of a military conflict between India and China, the India-Bangladesh Defense Agreement allows India to get access to the country.

As the events in summer 2017 demonstrated, military tensions between India and China can take the form of war at any moment. (2) India-Bangla military agreement can be utilised to transport troops and war equipment's within a short time to protect the Siliguri Corridor and North East Indian states.

The Siliguri Corridor, or Chicken's Neck, is a narrow stretch of land of 200-km stretch with width varying from 17 to 60 km. It is located in the Indian state of West Bengal and the region has no access to the sea. The narrow Siliguri Corridor is the only getaway between the northeaster part of India and the rest of the country. A Chinese military advance around 120 kilometres will separate seven north eastern Indian states from rest of India and occupied state Sikkim.

The left in Bangladesh were by and large in disarray during the Bangladesh liberation war and the Indian intervention in the war 1971. In our opinion revolutionaries should have supported the National Liberation War of the Bangladeshi people and their struggle for independence from the Pakistani state. At the same time, they could not lend any support to the intervention of the Indian army.

Likewise, revolutionaries in India have to support today the struggle of national minorities for self-determination (including the right to form a separate state). Such an approach is highly relevant for Kashmir as well as for a number of other national minorities in India.

Why border fence

US President Donald Trump has ordered the construction of a wall along the 3200-km long border between the United States and Mexico. In Europe Austria and Hungary have built fences and Israel's barrier with Egypt incorporates

cameras and motion sensors. Saudi Arabia has built a fence at the Saudi-Yemen border. Globally, more barriers between countries now exist than at any other time in modern history. There are around 70 small and big border fences around the globe.

Why are fences getting more popular among ruling bosses? In a nutshell, the capitalist system is in crisis, unemployment, poverty is rising, banks collapse, bursting of the housing bubble – these are only some on the long list of capitalism's crisis. Capitalist bosses need scapegoats and these are the migrants. Peoples from another land are often a useful tool to distract people from real problems. It is xenophobia.

Border killing and justice

The killing of Felani got wide attention in Bangladesh and India. The Indian administration arranged the trial of Felani's killing in order to mitigate public anger on the both sides of the fence. However, judge, jury and witness were all from Indian border forces. After 8 years juggling between court to court, all accused were acquitted. Justice in the Felani case could have been a departure point for justice in all other such cases that happened and continue to happen.

In the last ten years more than thousand people were killed at the Bangladesh-India border, most of them are Bangladeshi. In many cases Indian authority have even not given back the dead bodies. There are a couple of instances where both sides carried slain bodies of Border Forces or of civilians tied to a pole and carried like an animal corpse.

Cattle trade

The Indian authorities link the border killings to preventive measures of stop cow smuggling. As religious Hindus do not consume beef, they consider slaughtering of cows as a sin. The informal trade between Bangladesh and India is gigantic and often it goes one way – from India to Bangladesh. The estimated value of this informal trade is around one billion dollars. India treats Bangladesh for commodity purpose as one of its states.

The question is why does the Indian state try to stop this informal trade now after tolerating it for decades? The reason is that protecting 'holy' cows is one of the sensitive issues in Indian electoral politics. The currently ruling party in India, the BJP, and Hindu fundamentalists often use the 'protecting the holy cow' card. BJP and it's allies want to be savor of the 'holy cow'. Several innocent Indian persons were lynched to death by the mobs in the name of 'protecting cow'.

Trying to stop smuggling cows in Bangladesh does not necessarily mean that India has stopped slaughtering cow all together. Australia has been tightening cattle export in the past years due to public opinion against cruel condition of live animal exports. As consequence, the Middle Eastern countries are inclined to import cows from India and Brazil, due to lack of animal welfare regulations. India has seized the opportunity of this situation, became second largest combined beef and live cow exporter in the world.

India has tightened the Bangladesh border to meet the Middle Eastern demand. Most of the Indian cattle sellers through smugglers in Bangladesh, are small farmers, they sell cattle as they need. However, force to selling cattle to multinational is an altogether different game.

What is to be done?

Communal attacks on the Indian Muslims played an important role in the politics of Bangladesh and Pakistan. Similarly, violence against Hindus in Bangladesh played in the hands of Indian ruling bosses. Various kinds of oppression of religious minorities on the both sides of barbed fence fuelled nationalism and religious superiority sentiments in both nations. Only the ruling bosses are benefiting from such sentiments.

United front initiatives are needed to build solidarity across the border between people and among secular social and political organisations within in the respective countries. Only people's solidarity and unity can build an effective resistance against communalism, discrimination, oppression, border killing and anti-human activities in the people's interest beyond the borders.

Footnotes

1) See on this e.g. Theses on capitalism and class struggle in Bangladesh. Joint Theses of the International Secretariat of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) and the Revolutionary Workers Organization (RCIT Section in Pakistan), November 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/theses-on-bangladesh/>

2) See on this the RCIT's pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: The China-India Conflict: Its Causes and Consequences. What are the background and the nature of the tensions between China and India in the Sikkim border region? What should be the tactical conclusions for Socialists and Activists of the Liberation Movements? 18 August 2017, Revolutionary Communism No. 71, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-india-rivalry/>

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Nigeria: The Mass Miseries of Capitalist Democracy

By Obafemi Sodunola, *Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard (Sympathizing RCIT Section in Nigeria)*, 14 February 2019

* IN NIGERIA'S CASE, IT IS BRUTALLY ORCHESTRATED BY THE REPRESSIVELY NEO LIBERAL POLICIES OF PDP AND APC, THE SAME CAPITALIST PARTY

* HENCE THE NEED FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY

As the year 2018 ended with 90.8 million people living in extreme poverty in Nigeria the stakes begin to rise at a most rapid rate for the disturbance of the status quo at the individual level and all social levels and viewpoints the effects of which come to a head or is even bolstered further by the coming 2019 elections.

The severe devaluation of the naira which breeds the economic hardship currently faced by Nigerians felt ever more excruciatingly since the inception of the Buhari/APC government has stemmed dispositions and reactions adverse to the system but as Trotsky pointed out in his classical work on the history of the Russian Revolution that in a time of general crises the people first seek the path of least resistance, that is why bulwark of discontented Nigerians will pull their resources into procuring nostrums to the many maladies they face as Nigerians in the 2019 general elections.

This is not to say that there are no genuinely visible movements spurred by the marginalization of Nigerians at large even before the end of 2018 examples of which include the MASSOB/IPOB secessionist movement and the "Our mumu don do" demonstrations most of which reached a zenith when president Muhammadu Buhari was spending months at a stretch out of the country for medical checkups without relinquishing the office for the vice-president and it shows how quick people want alternative to the exploiting ruling class hegemony.

A close verification of the facts surrounding the 2019 election shows that it is only a precursor to a more thoroughgoing reconstruction of the social and political order.

At first, a whooping additional 14 million people have registered to take part in the coming elections which when added to the original number of 69.7 million from 2015 general elections one would arrive at a figure of 84 million. This comes as a surprise since in 2015 less people registered to vote than they did four years earlier (in 2011 the number of registered was 74.5 million while in 2015 it was 69.7 million). This shows to extent the Nigerian people have lost confidence in the capitalist democracy.

The number of political parties or groups which drew substantial stakes and provoked recognition among the rank and file of the electorate has more than quadrupled from a staggering 15 political parties in 2011 to a beaming 70 political parties. Even if there is a likelihood that some of these parties are puppet structures set-up by the two major bourgeois parties—the *All Progressives Congress* (APC) and the *People's Democratic Party* (PDP) to thin down the radical organization of the electorate in this political parties and to distract people with their less popular subordinates, from whatever point you look at it there is a general political awakening amongst the Nigerian polity.

More interesting is the fact that more left leaning political parties are beginning to hold sway in the media and political space.

Although it is only sincere that the level of apathy towards the whole political process has been exacerbated by the failure of the Buhari presidency to deliver on its promises and meet the expectations of the people, yet this is a plus in the preparation for a revolution for it only shows that the masses are becoming more weary of the bourgeois state. This weariness is spelt out more clearly by the slow collection of PVC's by some eight million Nigerians.

While some see this as a cause to abandon the whole electioneering process or to seek solutions in setting up new parties as opposed to the already existing ones we cannot but make recourse to Karl Marx's insight when he made some remarks about the plebiscite in the Paris Commune— that universal suffrage could at best serve as a barometer to measure the consciousness of the working class, it could not by itself inform the reorganization of society upon socialist terms, for this reason we participate in and engage the progressive movements that were birthed or given considerable impetus by the election, such as *#takeit-back* movement, in a bid to sustain them beyond the voting, and final announcements of the result as they will no doubt form vital sections of the force of opposition to the twin bourgeois parties of the APC and PDP.

By all indications it is clear that a revolutionary force is in preparation, first by the plethora of strikes surrounding the campaign period, most notable is the industrial action of the *Nigeria Labour Congress* (NLC) and *Trade Union Commission* (TUC) for an increased minimum wage which was stifled in vain by the attempt of the treacherous leadership of this very unions. These leaderships who are members of the APC and PDP parties tried to delay the demonstration for increment in minimum wage till the later end of the campaigns so as to give credit to the APC government as a means of influencing public opinion in favour of president Buhari but the process was not without hiccups for the underlying agitation of the masses always force the leaderships of these unions to reluctantly antagonize their party members in the ruling class and to finally force them to increase, albeit tersely, the minimum wage.

Again, the strike by the *Academic Staff Union Universities* (ASUU) is another pointer to fact that the people see the general elections as a means to bargain for better living conditions with the government on revolutionary terms.

ASUU alongside other educational Workers' Unions like COEASU, ASUP and even workers in the health sector who now threaten with a strike show that the Nigerian working class is far closer to embarking on an outright class struggle against the barbarity of the Nigerian capitalist class yet this struggle will come with militant fervour as the President and his aides were stoned in Ogun state by residents during his campaign in that area. This lot will represent the radical militancy even after the close of the elections.

It must be highlighted that at this point the behaviour of the ruling class towards these radical tendencies will fan up the flames for the collapse of the bourgeois order through a proletarian and peasant revolution.

During the struggle for the increment in minimum wage the Buhari administration made several threats to the un-

dying thirst of the people for change in which the government said the workers should expect mass retrenchment if the minimum wage was to be increased but the workers due to the absence of proper class and economic orientation were amongst themselves ambivalent about the effects of increment in wages because most of them were deluded that it will lead to inflation yet they had no other choice but to press on for the increase even though they became more cautious and finally capitulated to an increment from 18,000 naira to 30,000 naira instead of the original 56,000 naira. The work of revolutionaries become clearer in this light; to provide ample education to the rank and file the Nigerian people which will liberate their outburst against the reprobate and threatening ruling class.

It was also pointed earlier that a certain proportion of the populace are disenchanted by the politics of the state. This lot will only help to accelerate the advent of a profound revolution for what other alternative is left in a marred system that is clearly exposed by the absolute failure of its state, so a heightened crime rate in form of cybercrime, human trafficking, etc is the result of this trend yet the government continues to crack down aggressively on these crimes giving impulse to a rethink of the capitalist order.

As the elections commence and come to a conclusion in the next couple of days the effects of foreign capital and imperialist interest will be revealed through the milage of national debt and reconfigurations in global alliances and markets. What is most important is that all unions use the period to strengthen class consciousness; to enlighten the proletarian and peasant ranks of the Nigerian people towards the class struggle, the crux of which is the formation of a formidable left opposition with clear cut programs to strengthen workers' unions; revitalize and embolden labour laws while placing all labour regulations under full time dispensation of the workers; and finally enriching this opposition with the necessary enlightenment for it to take up the socialist revolution. Mass organizations such as *Alliance of Nigerian Students Against Neo liberal Attacks (ANSA)*, *Joint Action Front (JAF)* #takeitback movement, etc,

will largely be instrumental in achieving this aim of organizing workers, students, petty traders.

Of course we recognize the progressive activities and campaign programs of the #TAKEITBACK MOVEMENT/ AFRICA ACTION CONGRESS (AAC) as led by Omoyele Sowore the Presidential candidate of the party in building political consciousness of the masses to resist the status quo in this 2019 election. This is laudable albeit we are fully aware that Sowore stands for a revolutionary and not a revolutionary socialist program. We cannot deny the fact that AAC has told Nigerian workers why they deserve 100,000 naira as living wage, free education at all levels, free health care and openly kicks against privatization and casualization of workers

We have been engaging #TAKEITBACK MOVEMENT through our participation in it since it is a mass organization where mass of people who are discontented with the capitalist economic system are, and pushing our argument for the AAC to fully take ideological stand.

Obviously, 2019 election unlike the 2015 election should be a contestation between the capitalist ruling parties and the dictatorship of the Nigerian workers and poor peasants as a step into building socialist revolution. However, as a matter of fact, at this election no candidate stands with a revolutionary socialist program and the *Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard* does not see any candidate for which it could call to vote for.

We therefore once again reiterate that it is only a revolutionary workers' party with socialist programs that can produce democracy that will make our social lives free from capital oppression and prioritize free housing, free health care, free and quality education etc to the people and the need of society as a whole in sharp contrast to capitalist democracy of profit over people.

To this end, we enjoin youths, students and workers not to abhor illusion in this capitalist ruling party but organize under a revolutionary party and continue in their mass to stage united struggles for this radical alternative.



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

USA: War rages on the Southern Border

By Robert Gibbs, U.S. Correspondent of the RCIT, 05 February 2019

War rages on the Southern Border. Class war. In addition to the recent scandal of family separation introduced by the now resigned Attorney General, Jefferson Beauregard Sessions (Jefferson Davis was the President of the Confederacy and P.G.T. Beauregard was one of his Civil War generals), an even darker dimension of America's experimentation with fascist methodologies is the recent, January 18 conviction of four women volunteers who left water in the Arizona Cabeza Prieta desert bordering Mexico for crossing migrant workers and their children. Being a good Samaritan is now against the law.

The crime that the four members of a volunteer organization, No More Deaths, committed? Entering the protected nature reserve without a permit and littering.

Peak daytime temperatures at the time of their summer 2017 arrest were routinely 110 degrees Fahrenheit. It is estimated that 7,000 migrants have died of heat stroke making the journey through the wilderness area when they run out of water.

The women: Natalie Hoffman, Oona Holcomb, Madeline Huse and Zaachila Orozco-McCormick – remain to be sentenced and are facing up to six months in jail. Anyone who directly shelters migrants could be looking at decades of jail time and recent additional arrests have been made.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bernardo Velasco rendered his verdict saying that the women violated "*the national decision to maintain the (Cabeza Prieta) Refuge in its pristine nature.*" The judge reportedly ignored the fact that part of the "pristine nature preserve" are numerous human, skeletal remains.

Video of U.S. Border Patrol agents emptying jugs of water left by the four women for migrants frequently facing life and death conditions on their perilous journey is available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/20/they-left-food-water-migrants-desert-now-they-might-go-prison/?utm_term=.a05af5ea956a.

The volunteer activity is not restricted to Arizona. Virtually every section of the border stretching from California in the west to Texas in the east has both volunteer organizations and lone individuals who take it upon themselves to place water and even erect flagpoles that are then despoiled and torn down by Border Patrol agents and racist vigilantes.

The famous invocation at the base of the Statue of Liberty: "*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*" does not apply, in the words of President Trump, if you come from what he considers to be a "shit-hole country".

This has not kept the Trump Corporation from turning a blind eye to hiring undocumented workers to make the beds, clean the toilets, and cut the grass at Donald Trump's numerous private golf courses and other holdings throughout the United States. Over a dozen of these low wage employees at Trump's golf clubs in Westchester County, N.Y. and Bedminster, N.J. recently resigned their positions in protest. Some of them had reportedly worked at the clubs for almost 15 years.

It should be noted that one of the "shit-hole countries" that Mr. Trump called out by name, Haiti, played a signal role in the development of the United States. This took place in 1803 when the Haitian Revolution under the leadership of Dessalines defeated Napoleon's attempt to reintroduce slavery into the island republic. The former slaves defeated an expeditionary force of 40,000 led by Napoleon's brother-in-law. The French had plans to supply reestablished slave sugar plantations with food to be grown in their North American colony, Louisiana.

The first successful slave rebellion (1791) in world history had deprived France of the colonial jewel whose riches had built Versailles (and indeed partially funded French intervention on behalf of the American Revolution).

The Haitian Revolution's successful defense in 1803 immediately opened the door to Napoleon selling the Louisiana Territory to the United States government. This, in turn, permitted US expansion across the entire North American continent in the years to come. Immediately related to this was Spain's follow-on agreement to forfeit its Gulf Coast colonies in the area of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

At that time the US Army numbered a few thousand. The French army, by comparison? Counting citizens available for call up – around two million. The US government was in no position to seize Louisiana or, then, Florida.

How did Haiti, in turn, become a "shit-hole country"? Poverty in Haiti is directly related to a threatened French embargo and the related, punishing billions of dollars of "reparations" the Haitians were forced to pay for the liberation of slave "property" that lasted from 1825 until 1947. In addition there were repeated US military occupations that supported and maintained local, criminal client regimes including the infamous Duvalier family that did American bidding.

The flow of migrants from Central America and Mexico into the United States has been driven by the inability of these largely agricultural workers to compete in their home areas with imports of cheap American corn as a result of NAFTA. The economic dislocations have been compounded by the severe political conditions arising directly from CIA intrigue beginning with the overthrow of the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, in 1954.

The criminalization of efforts to prevent these poor migrants from dying in their desert crossings is merely a new chapter in a long history of regional, imperialist oppression.

The USA as a Settler Nation

By Robert Gibbs, U.S. Correspondent of the RCIT, 27 January 2019

At the center of the tug-of-war currently raging in the United States between Donald Trump and the Democratic Party is America's legacy as a settler nation. The irony, of course, is that the Democrats are posturing as the anti to Trump's pro.

Given this week's decisive plummet in the President's ratings as a direct result of the government shutdown and the disastrous impact this was having on large sections of the world's "richest" nation that live one or two paychecks away from financial hardship – the President blinked Friday in agreeing to a three-week resumption of government services.

His Scylla was Nancy Pelosi, Democratic Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and his Charybdis included Ann Coulter – the ferociously xenophobic political commentator. Coulter immediately offered the taunt, "Good news for George Herbert Walker Bush: As of today, he is no longer the biggest wimp ever to serve as President of the United States."

Beleaguered with mounting legal woes and political challenges Trump is anxious to retain his base of support among American nativists with the dwindling hope that his re-election in 2020 would insulate him from potential prosecution as a sitting president.

All of this merely begs the question – what should American immigration policy consist of? Neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party can address that with any insight more profound than varying degrees of brutal repression heavily colored with racial animus.

Contrary to the rhetoric, statistics prove that "illegal" immigrants are much less likely to break the law than US citizens yet Donald Trump kicked his 2016 election campaign off by referring to Mexicans as rapists and continues to beat that ragged drum by constantly inveighing against gang violence (MS13) that was authored by American meddling in El Salvador to begin with.

The *Mexican Migration Project* (MMP) was created in 1982

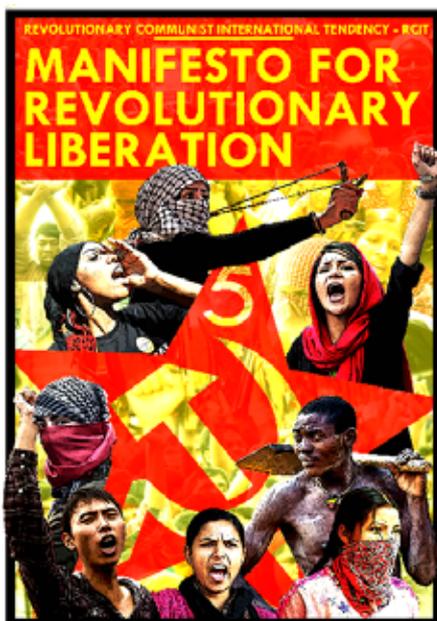
by an interdisciplinary team of researchers at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico) and Princeton University (US). That study has now concluded that the traditional cross-border movement of Mexican workers going back to the 19th Century seeking seasonal employment in the United States became, in the last thirty years, permanent residence... as a direct result of mounting legal barriers. In previous years immigrant workers naturally returned home to their families. Contrary to the xenophobes' claims – the increasingly repressive legal structure has, in effect, permanently trapped these previously migrant workers in the United States.

Not to mention, of course, that the labor they perform is an integral, necessary, and highly profitable part of the American economy – particularly under the conditions of an aging, native demographic.

The historical backdrop to this is the predatory Mexican-American War of 1846-48 that stole most of what is now the American Southwest from a newly independent Mexican nation. This was a war fomented by Southern planters seeking to expand the realm of ante-bellum slave cotton, rice, and sugar production into an area of the continent where slavery (under the Mexican Guerrero decree of 1829) had been outlawed.

And the caravans, the immigration from Central America, are a direct result of the political and economic dislocations produced by decades of CIA-sponsored intervention in that area of the Western Hemisphere.

There is only one way that the working class of the United States can square this history of a settler nation and that is with a policy of open borders. People seeking employment, educational opportunities, or anything else should be free to emigrate where they please and the current social tension over the difficulties arising from a government shutdown must be raised to that level of historic understanding.



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

A RCIT Pamphlet, 36 pages, A5 Format

Our Next Steps

A Proposal for Building a New Revolutionary International

A contribution to a highly important debate among Marxists

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 11.02.2019

All serious Marxists recognize that the crucial problem of our time is the profound crisis of leadership. Humanity experienced in the 20th Century (and continuing into the 21st) an unprecedented bourgeoisification of the workers movement and, equally, a degeneration of the official Marxist organizations. The working class and the oppressed fight and revolt again and again, but they are continuously misled by reformist and populist leaderships. The role of the centrists is opportunist adaptation. As a result, our class has suffered a succession of defeats and setbacks for an entire historical period.

Some of the worst enemies of the working class and the oppressed camouflage themselves today as “communists” (e.g. the Stalinist-capitalist dictatorship in China). Furthermore, it is an obscene, tragicomic contradiction that numerous so-called “Marxists” – e.g. Stalinist and former Stalinist, Bolivarian and various other “left-wing” forces – lend open or concealed support to Chinese, Russian, European or Japanese imperialism or reactionary capitalist regimes like Assad in Syria.¹

At the same time, one has to recognize the bitter truth that authentic revolutionaries represent much smaller forces than these diluters and corrupters of “Marxism”.

However, this is only one part of the picture. At the same time, the decay of capitalism and the evident crisis of the bourgeois order, the acceleration of the rivalry between the Great Powers and the eruptions of class struggles and revolutionary upheavals in numerous countries around the world – all of this offers tremendous opportunities for authentic Marxists to overcome this crisis of leadership. Overcoming this crisis means building a new International or, to use the language of Leon Trotsky, a *World Party of Socialist Revolution*.

In order to exploit those opportunities for rebuilding a revolutionary International, Marxists must, following the advice of the Jewish-Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza, “neither laugh nor weep but understand.”

In the following article we will focus on the ongoing discussion among Trotskyists on how to overcome this crisis of leadership. At this point we will not discuss our assessment of the world situation or the strategic and tactical conclusions following from it as the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* has elaborated on these in detail in numerous available documents.² We will rather limit ourselves to discussing some principles and lessons that, in our opinion, are crucial for the next steps towards building a revolutionary International.

The RCIT clearly understands that the historic task of building a new International will be neither easy nor achieved in a single day. However, we have to emphasize that this must not delay the energetic commencement of such an effort. We must start *now* and not wait for better times. Just the opposite. We are called upon to recognize the central role that our interventions must play in transforming the inevitable opportunities... into real advances! We do not start from zero in such an endeavor. We can

build upon a rich accumulation of experience in building a Revolutionary World Party – in particular the lessons of the work towards building the *Communist International* by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the *Zimmerwald Movement* and, later, the lessons from building the *Fourth International* by Trotsky and his comrades-in-arms. Furthermore, we can build upon our experiences of several decades of international party building without ignoring their limitations.³

While implementing these lessons does not guarantee automatic success in the building of a revolutionary world party (as this also depends on related objective circumstances), *refusal* to proceed based on these lessons and their derivative principles can only *ensure failure*.

What are the lessons and principles that the RCIT consider as essential for the next steps in building a Revolutionary World Party? We summarize them as follows:

- 1) *We must begin on a clear programmatic basis.*
- 2) *Agreement in words is not enough – that agreement must be applied to the class struggle today.*
- 3) *Every single step towards building the Revolutionary World Party must begin on the basis of internationalism.*
- 4) *The process of building the World Party must be advanced with neither ultimatism nor delay.*
- 5) *Building the new International must not be limited to self-proclaimed Trotskyists.*

Let us elaborate on these principles and lessons in more detail.

1) The process of building the Revolutionary World Party must start on a clear programmatic basis

The party – nationally as well as internationally, in its first pre-party stages as well as later as a fully developed party – is an organizational instrument to fight for a program. The US-American Trotskyist, John G. Wright, the chief translator of Trotsky’s writings in the 1930s and 1940s, reported: “One of Trotsky’s favorite sayings was: “It is not the party that makes the program; it is the program that makes the party.””⁴

Such a program encompasses the historic lessons of the class struggle as well as the main strategies and tactics for the tasks of a given historic period. Without such a program, a party cannot fight for the historic interests of the working class.

Trotsky always emphasized the importance of such a program: “Now, what is the party? In what does the cohesion consist? This cohesion is a common understanding of the events, of the tasks, and this common understanding – that is the program of the party. Just as modern workers more than the barbarian cannot work without tools so in the party the program is the instrument. Without the program every worker must improvise his tool, find improvised tools, and one contradicts another. Only when we have the vanguard organized upon the basis of common conceptions then we can act.”⁵

Hence, the formation process of revolutionary organiza-

tions was always accompanied with programmatic clarifications. To name a few examples we refer to the elaboration and the struggle for the program by the Russian Marxists in the Iskra period 1901-03, the programmatic documents of the *Zimmerwald Left* in 1915-17, the elaboration of the platform of the *Left Opposition* in 1927, the 11 Points adopted by the *International Left Opposition* in 1933, the Platform of the *Bloc of Four* later in the same year, the *Open Letter for the Fourth International* in 1935 and, finally, the *Transitional Program* of 1938 – these documents all underline the crucial role of a clear programmatic basis in the process of building a party, nationally as well as internationally.

It is therefore absolutely wrong to start the process of unification on the basis of organizational maneuvers and superficial agreements about general principles. Such superficial agreements are dangerous because behind such “agreements” substantial differences can remain hidden. For example, one can agree “in principle” on the necessity of anti-imperialism. However, such agreement is not worth anything if this principle is not translated in concrete tactics in the current world situation – i.e. advocating the *defeat of an imperialist power* which is occupying a semi-colonial country and the *military victory of the resistance* of the oppressed people (e.g. in Palestine, Afghanistan, etc.). Hence, any merging of forces must be based on a programmatic basis that applies the shared principles to the current world situation and to the main challenges of the international class struggle. Without such an agreement, any fusion must end in failure.

The RCIT has summarized in its 6 POINTS document those issues that it considers as the most important for such a joint programmatic basis today.⁶ We propose these 6 POINTS as the basis for joining forces in the construction of the new International. However, as we have stated in the past, we are open to discussing alternate proposals.

2) Agreement on general principles is not enough – they must be applied to the class struggle today

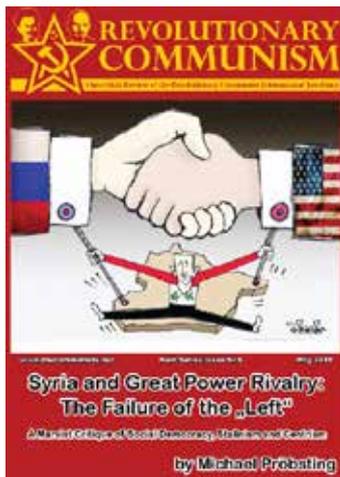
There is a tendency among Trotskyists to focus on agreement on very general principles or on the assessment of the history of the Trotskyist movement. We do not deny the importance of such issues and we have published various works on them.⁷

However, we think that the focus of any discussion about joining forces in the struggle for a new International must be on the *tasks of the international class struggle today* and not *exclusively* on historical issues. This was also the method with which Trotsky operated. When he was building the International Left Opposition in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he focused on the most important class struggle events at that time. Trotsky wrote in 1929:

*“There are, in my opinion, three classic questions which provide a decisive criterion for appraising the tendencies of world communism. These questions are: (1) The policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee, (2) The course of the Chinese Revolution, (3) The economic policy of the USSR in connection with the theory of socialism in one country.”*⁸

Later in the 1930s, other issues came to the forefront (e.g. the dangers of fascism and the popular front exemplified by France and Spain, the looming imperialist war and the issues of defeatism and defencism, the national liberation struggles in Ethiopia and China). In all these situations, Trotsky was never content with “general agreements” but always related them to the concrete issues of the world situation of his time. Hence, all programmatic documents of this era (which we mentioned before) related the Marxist principles concretely to the major class struggles of the day.

The same method is valid today. Sometimes Trotskyists deny the necessity of elaborating a program for the current world situation and claim that it is sufficient to refer to Trotsky’s *Transitional Program* of 1938. They consider



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

the changes of the past 80 years as irrelevant. For them the program is a set of abstract principles and not a guide to action for the current period. We judge such an approach as absolutely wrong.

The revolutionary program must apply the method of the *Transitional Program* to the major issues of the international class struggle today. We have elaborated in the RCIT's program our approach.⁹

The discussion about a joint program should focus on those crucial questions that constitute axes around which the revolutionary line is defined. They relate, as we have pointed out in the 6 POINTS, to the analysis and the programmatic conclusions of the Great Power rivalry, the liberation struggles of the workers and oppressed against imperialist aggressors and their local proxies, the issue of the united front tactic to the non-revolutionary forces which currently dominate the vanguard in the mass struggles, etc.

3) Building the Revolutionary World Party must take place from the beginning on the basis of Internationalism

It is a widespread misconception among revolutionaries to prioritize building the national party over building the International. Usually, this is not openly expressed or these comrades are even not aware of this. But there are a number of unmistakable signs of such national-Trotskyism. If, for example, an organization exists purely on a national basis over a longer period or if its leadership (and publications) devotes 90% of its time and energy to national issues, then we can recognize unmistakable signs of such national-centeredness. There can also be the situation that organizations formally belong to some kind of interna-

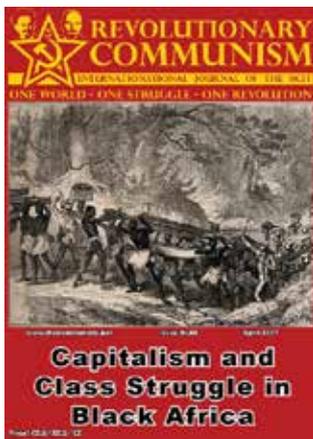
tional affiliate. But if such an international entity rarely issues statements as an international collective, if it does not have an international leadership which regularly meets and discusses about and decides on the joint work, if it does not have a leadership with an international composition, than such "internationalism" is only a cover for the national-centered nature of the organizations involved. At the times of Trotsky, the so-called "*International Revolutionary Marxist Centre*" (usually known as *London Bureau*) – a loose federation of national centrist parties – was a prime example for such pseudo-internationalism. Today, forces like the Cliffite IST or the PO/CRFI are similar examples.

However, without an international organization and an internationalist policy from the very beginning, any national organization is doomed to degenerate if it does not overcome such a situation soon. Trotsky once rightly remarked: "*Marxist policies 'in one country' are as impossible as the construction of a socialist society 'in one country'.*"¹⁰

Such a conception is true for both a party and a pre-party organization, as Trotsky explained in numerous articles and letters:

"From its very first steps the Opposition must therefore act as an international faction – as did the Communists in the days of the publication of the Communist Manifesto, or in the Zimmerwald Left at the beginning of the war. In all these cases the groups were for the most part small numerically or it was a matter of isolated individuals; but they nevertheless acted as an international organization. In the epoch of imperialism such a position is a hundred times more imperative than in the days of Marx.

Those who believe that the International Left will someday take shape as a simple sum of national groups, and that therefore the international unification can be postponed indefinitely until the



PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT

Theses on Capitalism and Class Struggle in Black Africa

An Analysis of Imperialist Exploitation and Oppression and the Perspectives of the Liberation Struggle

A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format

Introduction * Some Background Notes on Black Africa's Modern History: How Colonial Plunder and Oppression Blocked Independent Development * Popular Struggles against Colonialism Led to Formal Independence * Formal Independence as Disguised Imperialist Dependency * The Reactionary Role of White Settlers * Is Capitalist Black Africa Rising? * Africa in the Grip of Imperialism * China as a new Imperialist Great Power Challenging the Western Domination * The Working Class and the Oppressed * Rising Class Struggle * Key Lessons for a Revolutionary Strategy in Black Africa * Imperialist Domination and Authoritarian Regimes Remain in Place despite Formal Changes * Breaking the Capitalist Chain – The Program of Permanent Revolution * The Revolutionary Struggle against Imperialism * Imperialist Chauvinism and the Anti-Imperialist Patriotism of the Oppressed * The Independence of the Working Class and the Struggle against the Popular Front * The Struggle for Pan-African Unity * The Revolutionary World Party and its African Sections * Footnotes

national groups “grow strong,” attribute only a secondary importance to the international factor and by this very reason take the path of national opportunism.

It is undeniable that each country has greatest peculiarities of its own; but in our epoch these peculiarities can be assayed and exploited in a revolutionary way only from an internationalist point of view. On the other hand, only an international organization can be the bearer of an international ideology.

Can anyone seriously believe that isolated Oppositional national groups, divided among themselves and left to their own resources, are capable of finding the correct road by themselves? No, this is a certain path to national degeneration, sectarianism, and ruin. The tasks facing the International Opposition are enormously difficult. Only by being indissolubly tied together, only by working out answers jointly to all current problems, only by creating their international platform, only by mutually verifying each one of their steps, that is, only by uniting in a single international body, will the national groups of the Opposition be able to carry out their historic task.”¹¹

History has proven that international and internationalist unity is far superior than national-centeredness. As is well known, there existed a number of centrist organizations in the 1930s. While they were often formally part of the London Bureau, they were basically national parties. Several of them – like the German SAP, the Norwegian NAP, the Spanish POUM, the Swedish SKP led by Karl Kilbom, later the French PSOP led by Marceau Pivert – were all larger organizations than the whole international Trotskyist organization (in terms of membership numbers). However, they lacked a clear programmatic basis and a cadre united on this basis. As a result, their political positions zigzagged and they collapsed organizationally when faced with major political upheavals (like the approaching World War II). On the other hand, the Fourth International, as with its

predecessor organizations, passed these difficult tests and survived organizationally (despite the murder of Trotsky in 1940).

Overcoming national-centeredness is particularly important for organizations located in the old imperialist countries in Western Europe, North America and Japan. The global capitalist production process has changed dramatically and today – in contrast to the times of Lenin and Trotsky – the huge majority of the world working class (about 85%) resides in the South. New imperialist powers, such as China, exemplify that fact. Any serious revolutionary organization must build an International which has a special focus on these emerged, emerging, and powerful sectors of the world proletariat. It is crucial that a revolutionary organization orientates towards the mass of the working class and not to its most privileged, aristocratic elements or to the middle class.

Finally, we want to emphasize that *Democratic Centralism* is a crucial organizational method and principle which is essential not only for national but equally for international parties, not only for fully developed parties but also for smaller pre-party organizations. We saw the application of such an organizational conception in the Third and the Fourth International. Likewise, Marxist pre-party organizations were also built on such a basis as the examples of the Trotskyist formations before the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938 (e.g. the ILO, the ICL, and the MFI) demonstrate. Such an application of democratic centralism is no less relevant today. We can state, from our own experience in the RCIT, that such international democratic centralism is both possible as well as essential for international and national work.

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.

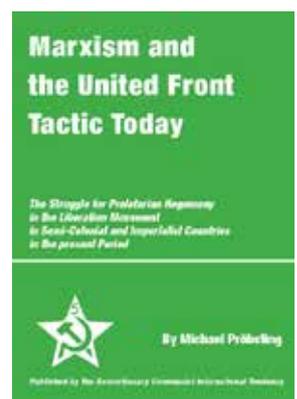
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

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.



4) Building the World Party must advance with neither ultimatism nor delay

The building of the world party is determined by both objective and subjective circumstances. It would be ultimatic to suppose that the alternative is all or nothing. This process has to be advanced as energetically as possible without hasty organizational maneuvers resulting in superficial agreement which will not stand the test of the class struggle.

We believe this can be done by opening a process of serious discussion and collaboration between revolutionary forces. Advancing such a process and testing possible areas of agreement could be done by working on joint statements on crucial issues of the international class struggle, by having regular meetings (physically or via internet communication), by issuing common journals for debate, and by undertaking joint interventions in international class struggle events.

It is likely that some forces will be prepared to move forward faster in such a unification process and others at a slower pace. This is no tragedy in itself. As long as the slower forces move forward in the right direction and are seriously willing to overcome the obstacles, it would be utter nonsense to erect arbitrary barriers. However, it would be equally wrong if those forces willing to move forward at a faster pace would delay such progress in order to wait for the slower ones.

If different forces are seriously willing to work together for the building of a new International but, at the same time, still need time to clarify various differences, it can be useful to begin with the creation of a bloc – like the *Bloc of Four* initiated by Trotsky in 1933. Such a project could be an instrument in advancing a process of discussion and collaboration.

5) Towards which forces should revolutionaries orient in the process of building a new International?

In our opinion it would be a serious mistake to limit such efforts exclusively towards the Trotskyist milieu. Why? As a matter of fact, the huge majority of the vanguard of the working class and the oppressed, not to speak about the proletarian masses themselves, have nothing to do with Trotskyist organizations. In most cases they do not even know about their existence. Trotskyism – in the form of self-proclaimed Trotskyist organizations – does not even exist in most countries of Asia, the Middle East and Africa (or, at best, only as extremely miniscule groups like in India or Bangladesh). This is because of the state repression (e.g. in China and Vietnam ruled by Stalinist-capitalist dictatorships) and other, related, historical reasons. However, these are the regions that now contain the vast majority of the international working class. And even in countries where Trotskyist organizations have a certain tradition (Latin America and Western Europe), these forces usually represent only a small minority of the workers vanguard.

In most cases the vanguard of the working class and the oppressed is dominated either by Stalinist, Maoist or petty-bourgeois populist forces (Bolivarians, Pan-Africanists, nationalists – sometimes mixed with religion – of oppressed peoples, etc.) This is the reality revolutionaries have to face instead of dreaming about an important role

for the various fragments of so-called Trotskyism.

In other words, limiting our efforts in building the new International to those Trotskyist organizations would be a serious mistake and cut revolutionaries off from the workers vanguard in most countries in the world.

It is worth pointing out that this has also never been the method of Lenin and Trotsky. As it is well-known, the Communist International not only tried to win the left opposition of the Second International after World War I, but also engaged leftward moving forces coming from the anarcho-syndicalist tradition (like the French syndicalists, the IWW or the Spanish CNT) as well as from petty-bourgeois nationalism (like the Indian nationalists around M.N. Roy or the *African Blood Brotherhood* in the U.S.). It should be noted that some of the later leaders of the Trotskyist movement like Alfred Rosmer or Andrés Nin came from such a background.

Likewise did the Trotskyist movement not limit itself to winning adherents from among the Stalinist Third International despite the fact that this organization encompassed the majority of the international workers vanguard and the fact that Trotskyists even worked as a faction inside the Comintern in the years 1923 till 1933. Nevertheless, the Trotskyists won important forces (or tried to win such) from organizations coming from a social democratic background (the whole *Bloc of Four* tactic and later the entryism tactic was based on this) or from leftward moving petty-bourgeois nationalists (e.g. Tạ Thu Thâu and the original core of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, CLR James).

Today, there are also numerous vanguard forces outside of the ranks of the established Trotskyist organizations. The RCIT has made the experience that it is possible and useful to work together and to draw closer revolutionary forces from non-Trotskyist backgrounds.

Let us conclude by restating that we are fully aware about the incomplete nature of the above list of principles and lessons. However, we are convinced that these lessons will be crucial in working towards the most important task of the current historic period – the construction of a new World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Footnotes

1 Here is not the place to expand on the numerous strands of treacherous pseudo-Marxism. We refer readers for a detailed study of this problem to a number of documents of the RCIT which have been published on our website. In particular we refer to the following works:

Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors Behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019; this new book can be read online or downloaded as a pdf for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>

Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013; this book can also be read online or downloaded as a pdf for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/great-robbery-of-the-south/>

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/>

2 See on this e.g., in addition to the above-mentioned book *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*, our work *World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2018; this book can also be read online or downloaded as a pdf for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>

3 On the RCIT's analysis of the revolutionary party see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice. Looking Back and Ahead after 25 Years of Organized Struggle for Bolshevism, RCIT Books, Vienna 2014; this book can also be read online or downloaded as a pdf for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/rcit-party-building/>

4 John G. Wright: Trotsky's Struggle for the Fourth International (1946), in: *Towards a History of the Fourth International (Part II)*, Pathfinder Press, New York 1973, p. 6

5 Leon Trotsky: Discussions with Trotsky On the Transitional Program (1938); Fourth International [New York], Vol.7 No.2 (Whole No.63), February 1946, pp.53-59, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/tpdiscuss.htm>

6 RCIT: Open Letter: Great Tasks demand Great Initiative! A Call to All Revolutionary Organizations and Ac-

tivists to Fulfill Our Responsibility in this Historic Time! 7 January 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/open-letter-great-tasks-demand-great-initiative/>

7 See e.g. Workers Power (the precursor of the RCIT): *The Death Agony of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Trotskyists Today* (1983); this book can also be read online or downloaded as a pdf for free at <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/death-agonny-of-the-fourth-international-1983/>; 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", <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/healy-and-fourth-international/> There are also critical assessments of various so-called Trotskyist organizations in our above-mentioned books *The Great Robbery of the South* (Chapter 13) and *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry*.

8 Leon Trotsky: The Groupings in the Communist Opposition, 31 March 1929, in: *Trotsky Writings 1929*, pp. 80-85, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1929/03/commopp.htm>

9 See the RCIT's central programmatic documents: "*The Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*" (2012) and the "*Manifesto for Revolutionary Liberation*" (2016). Both can be read online or downloaded at our website at <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/> and <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-program-2016/>.

10 Leon Trotsky: *Unifying the Left Opposition* (1930); in: *Writings 1930*, p. 99

11 Leon Trotsky: *An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund* (1930); in: *Writings 1930*, pp. 91-92

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

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Iranian Workers must make the revolution permanent! (1979)

From our Archive: Originally published by Workers Power, January 1979

The prolonged revolutionary situation in Iran holds enormous potential for destabilising Western imperialism economically and politically. Carter and Owen, those sermonisers on 'human' rights and Christian values, know that there are serious interests at stake in hand. Serious enough for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Shah as he sheds rivers of blood to preserve the most savage tyranny on the planet. For this reason, the Shah's 4,000-strong army has 1,200 military and 7,500 civilian American 'advisors'. The notorious Savak, set up in 1957 and reconstructed after the 1963 upheavals, has between thirty and sixty thousand men. It was 'advised' at all stages by the FBI and the CIA who have 50 top agents in Savak.

This enormous apparatus of repression was built up by the US and Britain to serve their economic and strategic interests. Iran yields massive super profits. One British businessman is reported as saying that he 'makes 40% more profit there than in Britain'. At the heart of these interests is the oil industry. It supplies 13% of American and 17% of UK imports. Although formally nationalised, the consortium which controls it is 40% British and 40% UK in composition. These are the 'British and Western interests' that Dr David Owen talks about defending.

Even more important than the oil wealth and investments of Iran is its strategic position. Groomed by the United States and Britain to play the role of policeman of the Gulf area in the 'indirect' or 'neo colonial' system which replaced the direct British military presence after 1968, the Shah's forces have seen service against the liberation forces in Oman.

The overthrow of this regime holds incalculable consequences for imperialism, hence the flood of telegrams of support for the Shah from the White House and Whitehall.

Much of the Iranian Left refers to the Shah's regime as 'fascist'. This is incorrect. The restoration of the Shah in 1953, by a military coup assisted by the CIA, initiated a military Bonapartist tyranny of unusual severity. This regime represented the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the feudal landowning class in the interests of preserving capitalism in the interests of imperialism and against the working class. The Shah's regime rests upon imperialism externally, and internally upon an artificially induced impasse in the class struggle.

The Shah has given, in a deformed way, certain social concessions to the various classes, land reform to the peasants, industrial development to the bourgeoisie. Political rights and expressions were, however, totally forbidden. The massive apparatus of repression is a testimony to the lack of a solid social base for the Shah's regime. It is this social basis which real fascism possesses in the enraged reactionary petit bourgeoisie and Lumpen-proletariat. Both these classes are, however, in the forefront of the opposition movement. They figure amongst those most bitterly opposed to the present regime.

Since the sixties there has been a considerable growth of industry, petrochemicals, steel, car, truck and bus production and assembly, electronics and machine tools. As a result the Iranian industrial proletariat has grown in size (2.5

million in 1977).

Yet despite all this the Iranian economy found itself in deep crisis by 1977. Partly this was the effect of the world capitalist crisis, partly the accumulation of contradictions engendered in Iran's mode of industrialisation.

Firstly the Agrarian Reform the Shah had imposed after 1962 was typical of a 'revolution from above' of Bonapartist land reforms which whilst it weakens the old landowning class and opens agriculture to capitalism, in fact swindles the vast majority of the peasantry leaving them landless (50%) or with tiny plots (30%). The reform was designed to strengthen those peasants who already owned land, implements and draught animals.

The net result has been the creation of two 'new' classes in the countryside, capitalist landowners and landless labourers. However the result has not been a rapid capitalisation and modernisation of agriculture. Land has been abandoned, villages deserted and the result has been rocketing imports of foodstuffs plus a flooding into the cities of the rural unemployed.

Secondly, there has been a tendency for the effects of the political regime to siphon off an increasing proportion of the oil revenue towards arms and military spending and corruption. The failure to develop a skilled labour force also places severe limits on Iran's development.

The crisis of 1977 took the form of escalating inflation, food prices and rents in particular soaring. This affected the whole urban population.

The Bazaar

The bazaar was, until the 1950s and 60s, the centre of urban economic life. Dominated by very wealthy merchants but consisting of its overwhelming bulk of one and a half million shopkeepers, money tenders, traders, craftsmen and artisans, it had in the past funded trade and been the centre of much production and nearly all exchange.

The foreign banks, the industrial production of consumer goods, the large stores have all undermined and threatened the traditional way of life and culture of the bazaar. This traditional culture is deeply Moslem. Its ideologists and leaders are the mullahs, its cultural and political centre the mosque. Shia Islam represents a unifying ideology, one that in 1963 and 1978 has spearheaded mass resistance to the Shah's regime. Shia Islam has its origins in resistance to the constituted state authority, founded as it is on allegiance to the deposed and martyred son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali. Its most sacred figure after the prophet is the Imam Hossein murdered by the tyrannical Caliph Yazid - an event commemorated by the 'days of mourning' of early December (Moharram). It also has a pronounced millenarian aspect. Believers expect the 'return' of the twelfth Imam who will institute a pure Islamic order. Shia is much less attuned in the state than Sunni Islam indeed it is headed by a powerful and independent caste of mullahs (180,000 of them) with a hierarchy of Ayatollahs the leader of whom Khomeini, was elected in 1962.

The reality of the Religious Opposition leaders is at variance with the Carter/Owen picture of them as reactionary

fanatics who want to take Iran back to the seventh century. Khomeini insists that "I have always called strongly for economic and social development in my country" and espouses what he calls 'the principles of democracy and freedom'. By this he appears to mean a republic based on universal suffrage and with freedom for political parties. The Marxists will be free to express themselves because we are convinced that Islam contains the answer to the peoples' needs. Our faith is capable of standing up against their ideology.' (Le Monde, Paris, May 6th 1978). Khomeini can sum up his aim thus: "As soon as the Shah goes we want the creation of an Islamic republic based on the popular vote." (Le Monde, November 8th, 1978). It is precisely the 'Islamic' nature of this state that holds the greatest dangers.

Shiite veto

Whilst Khomeini has made it clear that he is not thinking of a regime like Saudi Arabia or Pakistan he obviously intends to install in a future constitution provisions which give the Shia hierarchy a veto on legislation similar to that embodied in the 1906 Constitution. The non Persian nationalities, the non Shia religious minorities and women could expect little that is 'liberal' or 'democratic' in such a regime.

What Khomeini does loudly and vociferously attack is American Imperialism. He declares his support for the Palestinians. All these factors suggest that a Khomeini influenced regime would be of a populist Islamic nationalist type. To draw parallels with Pakistan or Indonesia is a mistake. Both these dictatorships were established in the defeat of a popular upsurge where the working class were unable to seize power.

Islamic ideology is Janus Faced. It can justify anti-imperi-

alism, resistance to the foreign powers seeking to exploit or dismember the states of the Middle East. It can also justify black reaction the suppression of the working class and poor peasantry. The inner connection is that like all religions it defends private property. As long as the possessing classes of the imperialised nation feel the major threat to their property to lie with imperialism then they can play a vigorous role in the struggle against it. Islamic ideology will then have a 'progressive' populist colouration and orientation. When the working class or small peasants become a serious threat not only to imperialism but to the native larger property owners it can become a cloak for a Bonapartist military dictatorship or even fascist reaction (as in Turkey).

Khomeini's movement can therefore not be defined by adding up progressive democratic points as against reactionary points. The USFI and the International Spartacist Tendency both use this method but get different answers to the sum. The USFI gets the answer that Khomeini is a 'progressive force', a democrat. The Spartacists find that he is a 'black reactionary'. One plays into the hands of the mullahs, the other into the hands of the Carter and Owen propaganda for the Shah. Neither is of use to Iranian revolutionary communists who have to win the masses now under religious leadership or influence, to the perspective of proletarian revolution. For those who see all evil as lying in the religious ideology of the opposition, the secular 'Union of National Front Forces' led by Karim Sanjabi might seem to be a 'democratic' force of the sort Marxists could fight alongside of. This party of the large bazaar merchants, some industrialists and the professional middle class cloaks itself in the bourgeois nationalist mantle of Mossadeq, the prime minister overthrown by

Books of the RCIT

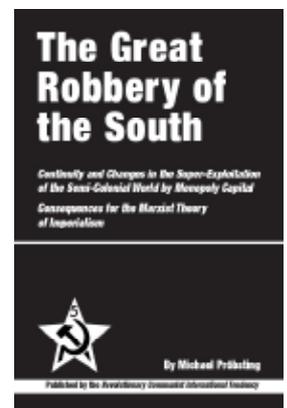
Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. The Great Robbery of the South shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions. *The Great Robbery of the South* demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before

has such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future. Order your copy NOW! \$20 / £13 / €15 plus p+p (21\$ for US and international, £9 for UK, €10 for Europe)



the CIA in 1953. But it is the most compromised and half hearted force in the opposition. It remains irresolute and torn between Khomeini and the Shah. Its leader's names figure largely on the 'list of 80 names' the Shah has been pondering over as candidates to a government of 'national reconciliation'. Sanjabi is one of the three politicians most frequently closeted with the Shah. The religious oppositionists know their measure. The Ayatollah of Abadan commented "Sanjabi and Bazargan at heart want to negotiate with the Shah. These men are bourgeois. We only have confidence in Khomeini for only he really wants the Shah to go." (Le Monde, November 6th, 1978)

The aspirations and mentality of the Iranian bourgeoisie is well expressed in the statement of a business man to the Le Monde correspondent, "But where is the intransigence of the Ayatollah Khomeini going to lead? The Shah is on his knees. The Ayatollah should take advantage of it to impose on him respect for, and consolidation of, the constitution we obtained from Sharif Emani's government and which General Azhari's cabinet is in the process of taking back." It is obvious that the 'democratic rights' these gentlemen desperately want are the posts of imperial ministers for themselves.

However as with the religious leaders it is not merely their class or caste interest or personal inclination which has determined actions. The mass mobilisations have kept Sanjabi out of office just as they have radicalised the mullahs.

If the first wave of the Iran revolution was spearheaded by intellectuals, writers and students and centred on the universities, the second wave, starting with the demonstrations and massacre in Qom on January 9th 1978, marked the passage of the movement to the phase of religious leaders, then October and November of 1978 showed the emergence of the Iranian proletariat as the key force capable of toppling the Shah.

The proletariat

The Iranian proletariat has a history of militant trade union and socialist organisation. The first unions in Iran were set up by workers returning from the Baku oilfields in Russia after the defeat of the 1905 revolution. The new labour movement participated in the 1907-09 revolution in Iran. After the war a communist party was formed and some of the trade unions affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions in 1921. The Pahlavi dictatorship crushed all independent workers organisations in 1928.

In 1944 an Iranian TUC was formed under communist influence. By 1946 it had a membership of 400,000; fifty thousand workers celebrated May Day in Teheran in 1946. But the slavishly pro-Soviet politics of the Communist Party (Tudeh), which had 25,000 members, ruined this movement. They held back the strike wave while the Soviet Union was haggling with the British and Americans over the Kurdistan and Azerbaijan republics which had been set up in the North. Stalin traded these republics for oil and gas concessions in Iran.

The Tudeh was initially hostile to Mossadeq (from the right, because his policies threatened to upset the Soviet Imperialist status quo), but it moved to a full popular frontist tailing of his bourgeois nationalism. It missed the crucial opportunity of mounting resistance to the coup of Au-

gust 1953 and witnessed the immediate smashing of the trade unions and in 1955 the uncovering of its illegal and military organisations. The Tudeh was almost completely obliterated by Savak.

Only in September of 1978 did a section of the party decide to reconstitute a 'party of the interior'. According to Le Monde (December 6th 1978), "they admit that the reconstruction of the apparatus and the setting up of a serious organisation will take several years." Though this statement speaks volumes for Stalinist bureaucratism and inertia it also bears witness to the decay into which Tudeh has fallen. An added reason for such modest perspectives is that Moscow has by no means given the go ahead for full-blooded participation in the overthrow of the Shah. Brezhnev's non-aggression pact with the Shah and his imperialist backers cripples the Tudeh as a party of the insurgent proletariat.

Yet despite the bankruptcy and destruction of the historic leaders, the Iranian proletariat has started to play an ever more decisive role. The atrocity of the cinema fire in Abadan revealed the depths of savagery of the Shah's regime to the oil workers and started their self-organisation.

The strike movement in the oil fields bears all the marks of the spontaneous revolutionising of the workers. On October 23rd the 12,000 workers at the Oil Refinery in Abadan came out on strike for economic demands. These were conceded in 3 days. After the return to work, mass meetings ensued, students being present at the discussion of political questions. On the 29th, mass meetings formulated political demands;

"Abolition of Martial law, freeing of political prisoners, the disbandment of Savak, the departure of American advisors, a fight against corruption, the conviction of all those who have committed crimes against the people."

The strike has ebbed and flowed since then with thousands of troops driving workers at gun point into the refineries. Those inside have slowed production to a snail's pace. BBC correspondents in late December report the formation of factory or plant committees. In Teheran the bank workers have not only struck but begun to exercise elements of inspection. They have revealed for example a list of 180 named persons prominent to the regime who had transferred 4.2 billion dollars out of Iran. The newspaper workers have fought bitter battles for the freedom to report the events of the autumn.

Mutinies

The working class is participating wholeheartedly in the struggle to bring down the Shah. Indeed, it alone has the economic strength and social cohesion to do this. The mass strike wave has put the noose around the Shah's neck and is tightening it. Strike committees are springing up in the struggle. They must, at the earliest opportunity, be generalised into city wide workers' councils. The morale of the army is already weakened. In Tabriz on 18th December, a unit downed arms and joined demonstrators with their armoured cars. The formation, and arming of a workers' militia as army discipline breaks down is crucial, as is the creation of barrack committees and soldiers' councils.

Iranian revolutionary communists must develop the strategy and tactics which the working class must employ to overthrow the Shah and smash the monstrous machin-

ery of repression. This means marching alongside the 'religious opposition'. It's central and most deeply felt immediate demands, the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, the smashing of Savak, the release of all political prisoners, free elections and freedom of political parties and the nationalisation of British and American monopolies are national revolutionary and bourgeois democratic demands that the proletariat must support. To this extent an anti-imperialist united front is possible. However, the religious leaders are, and will prove themselves to be, uncertain and treacherous allies. Khomeini has declared himself against any co-operation with communists, 'even to bring down the Shah.' His 'democratic' programme would enshrine a religious obscurantism in a new constitution. Should the working class appear to threaten Iranian, Moslem private property (including the massive riches of the mosques) but prove unable to draw the non proletarian masses behind it and seize power, then Khomeini or another religious leader could use the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen-proletariat as fascist terror squads against the workers. Alternatively the Ulema could sanctify a new military dictatorship. At the moment, however, these masses, with all their religious prejudices, have democratic aspirations, that is, they believe that democratic rights will alleviate their social needs. If Khomeini reconciled himself to an 'Islamic' military dictatorship immediately the Shah fell, he would undoubtedly lose his mass following rapidly.

It is illusions in the anti-imperialist and democratic credentials of Khomeini end the mullahs that revolutionaries must challenge. To do this means participation by Iranian Trotskyists in the struggles launched by those leaders, under clear, independent slogans with full warnings about the religious leaders. Democratic demands have enormous importance. Correctly and fully posed they can win first the proletariat and then other oppressed strata away from the religious and bourgeois leadership. The working class is, and can be, the only consistently democratic force. The demands that they fight for must include freedom of speech, assembly and the press, legality for trade unions and political parties and the right to strike. The question of Iran's national minorities must not be forgotten, the Shah's empire is a 'prison house of nationalities'. Only 50% of Iran's population speak Farsi (Persian) though another two related languages make up another 11%. The rest belong to distinct national ethnic groups, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Baluchis and Arabs. The right to self determination, up to and including separation, must be defended by the Iranian proletariat. They must support any national uprising of these peoples.

Likewise Iranian revolutionaries must fight for the full democratic rights of women and their emancipation from

the age-old restrictions imposed by religion as well as the State. The right to own and dispose of property, entry to all occupations, equal rights in the family, in real, full legal equality in all spheres. Women have been active participants in the movement against the Shah. The religious leaders have tried to limit them to propagating the idea of a full return to the veil and the full rigours of Islamic law. Women must be won to the side of the only class capable of gaining not only their equal rights but, via the destruction of capitalism, achieving their full social emancipation. A clear majority of Iran's population is rural, consisting of landless or small land owning peasants. The proletariat must raise the slogan 'the land to those who till it'. Part of the reason for the stability of the Pahlavi dynasty and for the effectiveness of the army as an instrument of repression, is the quiescence of the peasantry. In early December, the Shah is reported to have anxiously asked a visitor, 'But are the peasants also against me?' (Le Monde 6.12.78). The workers must encourage peasant seizure of large estates belonging to the old aristocracy, the Imperial family, the court clique and the foreign agricultural enterprises. Whether an individual or a collective form of land ownership prevails will depend on the time scale of the proletarian seizure of power.

There are numerous religious minorities in Iran; Sunni Moslems, Armenians, Jews, Baha'is etc. A Shi'ite republic would be oppressive to them as well as to women and the working class. Therefore, the demand for complete secularisation, the separation of Mosque and State is vital. The proletariat does not seek to trample on the religious scruples of any grouping where these affect only believers and do not violate the democratic rights of others.

All these democratic demands culminate in the demand for a constituent assembly, elected by full suffrage and with full powers, that is with no committee of Ulema's to veto its actions. These demands, consistently and vigorously fought for, would enable the vanguard of the proletariat to rally behind it the social forces to ensure that the revolutionary process which has opened up in Iran is not aborted in the form of an Islamic military Bonapartism or of an inherently unstable bourgeois democracy with enormous concessions to Shi'ite theocracy. The Iranian revolution, if it is to accomplish even its anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, must become proletarian. However, the 'revolution in permanence' of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky is not an unconscious or automatic process. It necessitates a Bolshevik vanguard party which has won the leadership of an armed working class organised in Soviets. To this task Iranian revolutionaries must devote themselves. British communists must render them every possible assistance.

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