

# **COVID-19: A Cover for a Major Global Counterrevolutionary Offensive**

*We are at a turning point in the world situation as the ruling classes provoke a war-like atmosphere in order to legitimize the build-up of chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes*

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## Introduction

Any organization claiming to defend the interests of the working class and the oppressed must base its strategy on a correct assessment of the fundamental dynamics in world politics. Without a realistic understanding of the relation of forces between the classes and states, it is impossible to find the correct way forward.

Throughout the history of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) resp. its predecessor, we have identified on several occasions important developments which we characterized as *major political turning points*. In the past two decades, such turning points were the 9/11 event in 2001, the Great Recession in 2008/09, the long process of the Arab Revolution (with all its ups and downs) or the rise of China as a major imperialist Great Power. Each of these events had important and long-term repercussions in world politics. Hence, these were crucial tests for any Marxist. Those organizations which failed to understand such events correctly were left politically confused and lost as a revolutionary force.

The current global COVID-19 crisis is a major event of similar historic magnitude. The RCIT has understood the political importance of this development from the very first days. In contrast to nearly all self-proclaimed Marxist organizations we immediately recognized the *political counter-revolutionary nature* of these events. We explained in a series of statements and articles since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis that the ruling classes utilize the panic to advance their political goals. We emphasized that the vanguard must respond to these events with a combined program in defense of democratic rights, the expansion of health care and against all austerity attacks. Recent events have fully confirmed our analysis as well as our programmatic response. (See the links to our documents in the appendix.) On the other side of the barricades, intelligent analysts of the ruling classes also recognized soon the meaning of the COVID-19 crisis. Tellingly, a bourgeois commentator of Bloomberg – a mouthpiece of the imperialist bourgeoisie – compared the historic significance of the current developments with World War I which “*inaugurate a turbulent new political and economic era.*”<sup>1</sup>

## The real political nature of COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is certainly a significant health crisis. However, things have to be seen in context. The influenza epidemics in the past decades have caused 290,000-650,000 death each year, without provoking any major political initiative by the ruling class.<sup>2</sup> The overall all-cause influenza-

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<sup>1</sup> „For the coronavirus signals a radical transformation, of the kind that occurs once in a century, shattering previous assumptions. In fact, the last such churning occurred almost exactly a century ago, and it altered the world so dramatically that a revolution in the arts, sciences and philosophy, not to mention the discipline of economics, was needed even to make sense of it.” (Pankaj Mishra: Get Ready, A Bigger Disruption Is Coming. The Covid-19 pandemic reflects a systemic crisis akin to the seminal crashes of the 20th century, 16. März 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-03-16/coronavirus-foreshadow-s-bigger-disruptions-in-future>)

<sup>2</sup> See on this e.g. WHO: Up to 650 000 people die of respiratory diseases linked to seasonal flu each year, 14 December 2017 <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/detail/14-12-2017-up-to-650-000-people-die-of-respiratory-diseases-linked-to-seasonal-flu-each-year>; Iuliano AD, Roguski KM, Chang HH, Muscatello DJ, Palekar R, Tempia

attributable mortality in the 2017/18 season was estimated to be about 152,000 deaths in Europe alone!  
<sup>3</sup> The Swine Flu Pandemic in 2009 has killed up to 203,000 people. Since the COVID-19 crisis has caused, until now, several thousand victims, it is evident that the global shut down which we are currently experiencing must have different causes.

These causes are first and foremost of political nature. As the RCIT has elaborated in its latest *World Perspective* document, global political developments in recent past have resulted in the emergence of a *pre-revolutionary world situation* opening up in autumn 2019. <sup>4</sup> The main features of this new global situation have been:

\* In the second half of last year the capitalist world economy entered the worst slump since 1929; <sup>5</sup>

\* A global wave of mass struggles in numerous countries on all continents; <sup>6</sup>

\* The tensions between the Great Powers have massively accelerated in the past years as the Global Trade War resp. the Cold War between the U.S. and China demonstrate. <sup>7</sup>

These are the conditions which make it necessary for the ruling class to adopt major steps in order to regain the initiative and to enforce its political control over the popular classes via massively expanding its state apparatus. In order to achieve this goal, they create the atmosphere of global panic and a state of emergency. They do so both on a national as well as on a global level.

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S, et al. Estimates of global seasonal influenza-associated respiratory mortality: a modelling study. *Lancet*. 2018;391:1285-300. Medline:29248255 doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(17)33293-2; Paget J, Spreuwenberg P, Charu V, et al. Global mortality associated with seasonal influenza epidemics: New burden estimates and predictors from the GLaMOR Project. *J Glob Health*. 2019;9(2):020421. doi:10.7189/jogh.09.020421

<sup>3</sup> J. Nielsen et al: European all-cause excess and influenza-attributable mortality in the 2017/18 season: should the burden of influenza B be reconsidered? in: *Clinical Microbiology and Infection* Volume 25, Issue 10 (October 2019), pp. 1266–1276

<sup>4</sup> RCIT: *World Perspectives 2020: A Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation*. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 8 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2020/>

<sup>5</sup> See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: No, the Corona Virus is not the Main Cause of the Global Economic Slump! Bourgeois Media Officially Recognize the Beginning of another Great Recession, 3 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/corona-virus-is-not-the-main-cause-of-global-economic-slump/>; Michael Pröbsting: Another Great Recession of the Capitalist World Economy Has Begun. The economic crisis is an important factor in the current dramatic shift in the world situation, 19 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/another-great-recession-of-the-capitalist-world-economy-has-begun/>; see also Michael Pröbsting: The Next Looming Great Recession. Observations on the Latest Stock Market Slump and the Structural Crisis of the Capitalist World Economy, 12 October 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-next-looming-great-recession/>

<sup>6</sup> For an overview and a characterization of these events see, in addition the relevant statements on the individual countries, Michael Pröbsting: Are We Nearing a New “68 Moment”? A massive upsurge of global class struggle in the midst of a dramatic shift in the world situation 22 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/are-we-nearing-a-new-68-moment/>

<sup>7</sup> See on this e.g. the numerous RCIT’s documents on the Global Trade War which have been collected at a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-global-trade-war/>; for a more fundamental analysis of the Great Power rivalry we refer to our book by 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, January 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>

Naturally, by this we don't suggest any silly conspiracy theory that the global bourgeoisie has "invented" the Corona Virus in order to find a cover for their counterrevolutionary attacks. Furthermore we reject the conspiracy theories about the creation of the virus by a laboratory in China which is a myth spread to fuel chauvinism. No, this health crisis took the global bourgeoisie by surprise and so it stumbled into this process. However, they quickly understood – some quicker than others (just think about the clown trio of Trump, Johnson and Bolsonaro) – that this *"crisis offers an opportunity"*. The Chinese regime started this process and a global chain reaction followed soon.

As mentioned above, we quickly recognized the political nature of the global COVID-19 crisis and developed and updated our analysis in series of articles and statements since the 2 February. Already in the RCIT statement of 5 February we identified as such goals of the bourgeoisie:

*"The RCIT emphasizes that the hysteria around the 2019 Corona Virus objectively serves the following objectives:*

*"a) The ruling classes in China as well as in many other countries exploit the hysteria in order to justify the vast expansion of surveillance and control of its population.*

*b) They also utilize this hysteria in order to wipe up patriotism and suspicion against "foreigners", people "from outside" or simple "others".*

*c) China's regime utilizes the hysteria also in order to create a climate of fear so that anxious people put all their hopes in the state forces.*

*d) The ruling classes in other imperialist states utilize the global hysteria in order to wipe up anti-Chinese chauvinism and to advance their stakes in the ongoing rivalry between the Great Powers. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross cynically suggested that the outbreak of the 2019 Corona Virus is an opportunity for the US.*

*e) Likewise, reactionary forces outside China exploit the crisis in order to foster suspicion and hatred against Chinese or, more generally, against Asian migrants.*

*f) The ruling class will exploit the 2019 Corona Virus (and subsequently China) in order to find a culprit for the Great Recession which has recently begun. In fact, while the global measures to supposedly contain the spreading of the virus deepen the slump, the capitalist world economy has entered a recession already in the second half of 2019. The truth is that the reasons for this Great Recession are the same like those for all the others in the past: the frantic drive for profit of the capitalist corporations provokes again and again in economic crashes of the world economy."*

Since these lines were published, global events have fully confirmed our warnings. The bourgeoisie all over the world has started a wave of mass sackings and wage cuts. Factories are stopping production and millions of workers either get unemployed or face dramatic worsening of labor conditions. Fundamental democratic rights are under attack, borders are closed and chauvinist attacks against migrants or against other states are rising.

The ruling classes soon understood that the COVID-19 crisis is a huge political opportunity. James Boughton, a well-known economist and historian who has served for decades at the International Monetary Fund, explicitly said so when he refers to past crises in South Korea and Indonesia which were catalysts for dramatic neoliberal attacks on the rights of the working class and the popular

masses. Referring to the COVID-19 crisis, he said a few days ago: *"Only in a crisis are governments able to rally people to accept necessary but painful reforms. Every crisis is also an opportunity."*<sup>8</sup>

While it is difficult to predict the course of the next events, it is likely that the ruling classes will keep the global state of emergency for weeks if not months. Their goal is to advance their counterrevolutionary attacks as much as possible in this time so that they can present the popular masses after this period with the implementation of radical political and economic changes as a fait accompli.

## **Chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes: the new Leviathan**

Characteristically, several state leaders compare the COVID-19 crisis with a state of war. China's President Xi called for a *"people's war"* against the virus.<sup>9</sup> And France's President Macron declared in a major speech on 16 March *"we are at war"*, adding: *"We're not up against another army or another nation. But the enemy is right there: invisible, elusive, but it is making progress."*<sup>10</sup> Various bourgeois media create a climate that *"we are under attack."*

Such belligerent rhetoric is necessary to justify drastic measures of the capitalist state to impose a lock down on millions of people and to massively increase the executive powers of the police and army. This is exactly what we are currently experiencing in China, Italy, France, Spain, Austria and now the whole of Europe. Similar developments have already begun in Latin America as well as the U.S. Macron sends 100,000 police to patrol the streets in France. In various countries governments mobilize the army to take over civilian tasks. "Suddenly", governments take it as granted to monitor the movements of its population via telecommunication. The Chinese Stalinist-capitalist regime boasts about its abilities to use Artificial Intelligence for surveillance of its population.<sup>11</sup> It deploys small mobile robots on the streets of Shenzhen which measure the temperature of pedestrians and warn them via loudspeaker to wear face masks and to follow the instructions of the authorities. It also deploys drones for such surveillance measures.<sup>12</sup> With one stroke, *"Big Brother"* is here, openly and without any attempt by the capitalist state to conceal it. The massive surveillance techniques will soon be the new normal worldwide.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Bloomberg: The worldwide coronavirus pandemic will change the way we shop, travel and work for years to come. History shows us how, 15 Mar, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-13/coronavirus-will-change-how-we-shop-travel-and-work-for-years?snd=premium-europe>

<sup>9</sup> Global Times: Fighting coronavirus is a people's war, 2020/2/5 22: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1178655.shtml>; Yew Lun Tian: In 'People's War' on coronavirus, Chinese propaganda faces pushback, March 13, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-propaganda-a/in-peoples-war-on-coronavirus-chinese-propaganda-faces-pushback-idUSKBN2100NA>

<sup>10</sup> Michel Rose, Richard Lough: 'We are at war': France imposes lockdown to combat virus, March 16, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-macron-restriction/we-are-at-war-france-imposes-lockdown-to-combat-virus-idUSKBN2133G5>

<sup>11</sup> See on this e.g. Zeng Yi and Sun Kang: Fighting COVID-19 with AI: efforts and lessons from China, Global Times 2020/3/7 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1181846.shtml>; Andy Chun: In a time of coronavirus, China's investment in AI is paying off in a big way, 18 March 2020 <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3075553/time-coronavirus-chinas-investment-ai-paying-big-way>

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Rebecca Fannin: The rush to deploy robots in China amid the coronavirus outbreak, March 2 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/02/the-rush-to-deploy-robots-in-china-amid-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Currently, these regimes pretend to focus on fighting a pandemic. Soon they will fight against various “*internal security threats*” as well as against other states. The war of words between the U.S. and China is a foretaste for future developments. President Trump and other officials of his Administration have repeatedly called the coronavirus the “*Wuhan virus*”, the “*Chinese virus*” or simply the “*foreign virus*”. In turn, China’s foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Twitter that “*it might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan*”.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, what is currently taking place is the build-up of *chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes* – of an “*all-powerful state*”, to put it in the words of a Bloomberg commentator.<sup>14</sup>

The current developments confirm with full clarity important theses which have been elaborated by Marxist theoreticians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such for example Lenin pointed out that “*imperialism is the negation of democracy*” – a statement which has been proven correct as the bloody history of the past century demonstrated. Today, the correctness of this statement is confirmed again as monopoly capital in all imperialist states becomes increasingly anti-democratic in light of the advancing decay of capitalism. The acceleration of the capitalist crisis leads to an acceleration of anti-democratic reaction – a fundamental dynamic which has been already in place for some time, as we have pointed out repeatedly.<sup>15</sup>

The current events confirm also another statement of Lenin. He emphasized that in the epoch of imperialism the capitalist state and the monopolies increasingly fuse which each other and characterized this as “*process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism.*”<sup>16</sup> This goes hand in hand with a “*an extraordinary strengthening of the “state machine” and an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest, republican countries.*”<sup>17</sup> And Nikolai Bukharin, a leading theoretician of the Bolshevik Party, concluded his analysis of the development of the capitalist state and its increasing role in the era of imperialism: “*This is the New Leviathan, beside which the fantasy of Thomas Hobbes looks like a child’s toy.*”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, such an imperialist Leviathan is now being built-up by the ruling class in full force – under the pretext of fighting a pandemic. The era of relatively extensive bourgeois democracy in the imperialist states will soon be over.

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Stepansky: Trump, coronavirus and the politics of a pandemic, 14 March 2020 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/trump-coronavirus-politics-pandemic-200313174546799.html>

<sup>14</sup> Pankaj Mishra: Coronavirus Will Revive an All-Powerful State. Much maligned in recent years, big government will come back—and with it, the potential for both greater good and evil, 17. März 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-03-17/coronavirus-will-revive-an-all-powerful-state>

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. the RCIT’s *Revolutionary Communist Manifesto*, adopted in 2012: „*On the top of the – by increasingly sharp contradictions marked – class society rises, like an octopus, a monstrous state apparatus, which manages in the interests of the capitalist class its political business and oppresses the proletariat (the working class) and the popular masses. This state machine - a true Leviathan of the bourgeoisie (a beast of the ruling class) - is merged with capital in many ways.*” (p. 9, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit-manifesto/>) See also the pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: *The Struggle for Democracy in the Imperialist Countries Today*, August 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/democracy-vs-imperialism/>

<sup>16</sup> V. I. Lenin: *The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution* (1917), in: LCW Vol. 25, p. 387

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 415

<sup>18</sup> Nikolai Bukharin: *Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State* (1915), in: Robert V. Daniel: *A Documentary History of Communism*, Vol. 1, Vintage Russian Library, Vintage Books, New York 1960, p. 85, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1915/state.htm>

As the RCIT has explained repeatedly, all this takes place against the background of the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers, marked by the historic decline of long-time hegemon like the U.S. and the European Union and the rise of China.<sup>19</sup> It becomes now obvious that these decadent bourgeois, pro-austerity pseudo-democracies of the West have caused a decline of their national healthcare systems which prove now to be unable to deal with the current epidemic. Furthermore, it has now become even more obvious that they are incapable to handle global crisis. Even the EU has failed to collectively respond to the epidemic and its member states rather close their national borders against each other. As a result of these developments it is indicative that many imperialist governments no longer look to the U.S. as a model but rather to China and its Stalinist-capitalist regime. They ask Beijing and not Washington for aid and advice.<sup>20</sup> This confirms once more the RCIT's long-standing analysis that China has become a leading imperialist Great Power. There can be also no doubt that such a decline of the old Great Powers will sooner or later encourage the oppressed people in the Global South to rebel against their imperialist long-time masters (similar to the wave of anti-colonial struggles against Britain and France after World War II).

### **South Korea: a certain exception**

The situation in South Korea has been somewhat different to other countries. The government of President Moon Jae-in reacted differently to the COVID-19 crisis in so far as it imposed much less state repression than China, Europe and now other countries. Most importantly, there was no large lock down of the population. At the same time they imposed mass testing for free as well as health care for free for those affected. These have been crucial measures in order to substantially limit the impact of the virus. As a result, South Korea has been much more successful in combating the Corona Virus than all other states which have been largely affected. This is a powerful confirmation of the RCIT's analysis that the mass lock down of the population in other countries is not a necessary instrument to fight against the COVID-19 epidemic but is rather politically motivated.

There have been several reasons for this different response. First, the people of South Korea have a strong memory about the horrendous time of the decades of military dictatorships before 1987. Hence, people are sensitive and not willing to accept reactionary measures like mass lock downs. In addition,

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<sup>19</sup> On the RCIT's analysis of the Great Power rivalry and China's rise as emerging imperialist powers see the literature mentioned in the special sub-section on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. In particular we refer to the book by 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, January 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>. See also, by the same author, *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/> The China Question and the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, December 2014, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/reply-to-csr-pco-on-china/>; China's transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4>.

<sup>20</sup> Joe Penney: As the U.S. Blames China for the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Rest of the World Asks China for Help, March 18 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-china-world-power/>

there is a strong tradition of militant class struggle albeit it has lost its dynamic since the early 2000s. For these reasons it would have been also pretty difficult to impose such measures, in particular given the fact that the Administration of President Moon is part of the bourgeois-liberal/"progressive" camp and state repression like mass lock downs would have provoked resistance among his basis. At the same time, the South Korean population behaves disciplined in its social behavior which is also a result of its sensitivity to such epidemics given the country's experience with SARS and MERS in recent times. In addition to all this, South Korea as a new imperialist state has the economic resources necessary for an adequate response to the COVID-19 epidemic.<sup>21</sup>

## **Consequences for the global class struggle and for the workers movement**

As we said above, the global COVID-19 crisis is a major turning point in the world situation. It has already resulted in a massive decline of the class struggles and popular uprisings which started in 2019. This does not mean an end of such struggles as various bold demonstrations of workers and youth in Chile, Iraq, Algeria, France and Hong Kong showed. The ongoing heroic liberation struggle of the Syrian people in Idlib against the Russian-Iranian-Assadist occupation forces is another example. But in general we have seen a massive decrease of these protests in the past weeks as the all-powerful capitalist state Leviathan is building up its forces.

This means that the pre-revolutionary world situation has ended for now and a *global counter-revolutionary situation* has opened up. However, it is clear that such a situation unfolds in an uneven way around the globe. In some countries the counter-revolutionary offensive with fundamental attacks on democratic rights has assumed a much more aggressive form (e.g. China, Europe, parts of North, Central and South America, Malaysia) than in others.

Of course, there are different types of counter-revolutionary situations. There can be a situation where the bourgeoisie smashes the workers and popular organizations and destroys whole layers of militants. Such was the case, for example, in Russia after the Stolypin coup in June 1907, in Germany 1933, in Chile 1973 or in Egypt after the military coup on 3 July 2013. These were counter-revolutionary attacks resulting in strategic or even historic defeats of the working class.

The current situation is very different. What we see is a major counter-revolutionary offensive which confuses large sectors of the workers and popular movements since it is masked as a response to a pandemic. It is characterized by a massive strengthening of the repressive state apparatus as well as a temporary decline of the global wave of the mass struggles. Hence, it is highly likely that this is a temporary setback of the class struggle resulting in the accumulation of massive contradictions which will sooner or later result in massive political explosions.

It is not possible to predict how long this situation will last. It might be a matter of only a few months. However, what is clear is that the counter-revolutionary offensive of the ruling classes will create

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<sup>21</sup> On the RCIT's analysis of South Korea see e.g. our pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: South Korea as an Imperialist Power. On the nature of South Korean monopoly capital and the ensuing programmatic tasks of the workers vanguard, December 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/study-on-south-korea-as-an-imperialist-power/>

explosive political contradictions. Sooner or later, it will be difficult for the state-bonapartist regimes to justify their massive attacks on democratic rights. It will become soon obvious that while they give billions of dollars to the big capitalists, many workers face unemployment and wage cuts. Some strikes in Italy or people under lockdown clapping and singing on the balconies are examples of promising albeit limited developments. Likewise, a massive increase of global tensions between the Great Powers is inevitable. In other words, the global counter-revolutionary offensive can only temporarily cover up the accelerating political and economic contradictions between the classes and the states. Sooner or later, this will result inevitable in new and massive political explosions, probably in the form of major domestic crisis, wars as well as revolutionary uprisings – in the Global South as well as in the imperialist states of the West and the East.

Why is it inevitable that the massive contradictions – which, for the moment, seem to have been pushed to the background by the overlaying everything COVID-19 crisis – will result in massive political explosions? The fundamental reason for this is that these developments take place within a *historic revolutionary period*. As the RCIT has elaborated extensively in a number of documents, this period opened up in 2008 and is characterized by the decay of capitalism. Such decay inevitable provokes economic crises, political instability and the incessant danger of war. Such conditions continually generate mass protests, popular uprisings and revolutionary situations as well as counterrevolutionary dangers. This fundamental lack of equilibrium on a world scale is the reason why the RCIT characterizes this historic period as "*revolutionary*." <sup>22</sup>

These fundamental contradictions have not and can not disappear because of an epidemic, public hysteria and state of emergency. The ruling classes have launched their counter-revolutionary offensive not because they are strong but rather because of desperation given the devastating crisis of

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<sup>22</sup> For the RCIT's analysis of current historic revolutionary period see e.g. chapter 14 in 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, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/>. See also the annual World Perspective documents which the RCIT has published in the past years: RCIT: World Perspectives 2020: A Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 8 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2020/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 2 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2019/>; Michael Pröbsting: 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, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013)

their system. The harder the bourgeoisie strikes now, the stronger will be the reaction and the greater the response from the workers and popular masses.

Another highly likely political consequence will be major splits and regroupement within the parties of the bourgeoisie. A new era characterized by a “strong state” will plunge old parties into ruin and create new forces.

Likewise, the current global events will provoke major shifts within the workers movement. The parallels to war-situations, which the ruling classes have drawn in past weeks, contain an element of truth. Indeed, they create a hysterical atmosphere of patriotic unity and chauvinism. Naturally, as it was the case in past major wars, such shift to chauvinism reinforces the social-patriotic nature of the reformist bureaucracy in the trade unions and in social democratic and Stalinist parties. We can assume – in fact we see it already – that these forces will jump on the bandwagon and support calls for “national unity” and “patriotic” sacrifices. They will agree to wage cuts and worsening of labor conditions. And all this will happen in the name of the struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic. It is quite likely that in some countries this will result in splits of reformist parties and fusion of its right wing – or maybe of the whole party – with open bourgeois forces (as it was the case in Italy after 1991).

It is also likely that the new era will provoke further crisis and divisions within the self-proclaimed Marxist milieu. Since these left-reformist and centrist organizations usually opportunistically adapt to the labor bureaucracy – and this bureaucracy is now massively shifting to the right – we can expect political capitulations and organizational splits and collapses. In short, the thorough crisis of the so-called left which could be already observed in the past years will accelerate. It is already clear by now that significant part of these organizations fail to oppose the counter-revolutionary offensive as they don't oppose the massive lock down in many countries. In fact, some even wholeheartedly support such anti-democratic attacks! Some have cancelled public meetings and rallies even before the state banned such gatherings. Some call people to stay at home and stop close interaction with others, praising the so-called “*social distancing*”. Their criticism is directed against individual capitalists who do not implement the lockdown measures in their companies but not against the anti-democratic lockdown policy of state, i.e. the ideal total capitalist. They often limit their criticism on insufficient measures by the governments in public health care. While such criticism is obviously correct, it ignores the fundamental *political* aspects of the COVID-19 crisis: the *anti-democratic and chauvinist offensive* of the ruling classes! Clearly such a pro-lockdown left is completely useless for the class struggle. It is part of the problem, not of the solution!

Effectively, these sectors of the left have joined the social-patriotic wave and support the most important instruments of the ruling class in the current situation of a brutal counterrevolutionary offensive. Objectively they are proponents of a policy of *class truce*, similar to the notorious “Burgfrieden”-policy of the opportunist social democrats in 1914.

In fact, an important characteristic of the specific current counter-revolutionary situation is that it is exactly the bourgeois-liberal, reformist and left-wing forces which constitute the whips of the state repression and lockdown policy. This is an important reason why many militants in the vanguard are confused and can't recognize the counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisies' political offensive.

At the same time, the militant vanguard – particularly those new layers which have emerged in the global wave of class struggles last year – will make new experiences. True, in the short term, the

global counter-revolutionary situation will mean a temporary setback. The activists will need some time to reconsider and discuss the new situation. Some might be confused for a certain period. But others will look for explanations and answers to the new political challenges. It is also likely that the crisis and regroupement within the centrist milieu will provoke splits and result in a progressive development of some sectors.

It is the task of revolutionaries to patiently explain the causes of the recent turns in world politics and to present a programmatic way forward. It is also our task to aid activists in understanding the authentic revolutionary spirit of Marxism. We will demonstrate that genuine Marxism has nothing to do with the pro-capitalist state policy of the Leviathan Left. The RCIT has offered since years a thorough analysis of the major global developments and outlined a revolutionary program. We will continue to do so in order to advance a process of unification of authentic revolutionary forces.

It is the task of revolutionaries all over the world to sharply denounce the Lockdown Left. Those, who support the suppression of fundamental rights in a period of gigantic political and economic attacks of the bourgeoisie, are nothing but supporters of class truce and, hence, they are objectively enemies of the working class struggle. The RCIT calls all revolutionaries who share our opposition to the Lockdown Left and who agree on the urgent necessity of a coordinated international response to the counter-revolutionary offensive to enter with us in serious discussion and collaboration.

## **Pillars of a revolutionary program against the global counter-revolutionary offensive**

The RCIT proposes the vanguard of the workers and popular masses to organize on the basis of a program of struggle for the current phase. This means a fighting program in order to oppose the current global counter-revolutionary offensive. Clearly any fundamental solution of the crisis is only possible via a world socialist revolution which expropriates the bourgeoisie and establishes a planned economy in the interest of the workers and popular masses.

However, in the short term, the vanguard will have to focus on organizing a defensive struggle against the counter-revolutionary attacks which take place under the cover of COVID-19. This means that the struggle has to focus on five pillars:

*\* Revolutionary democracy against the capitalist state Leviathan;*

*\* Anti-chauvinism against "patriotic unity" and xenophobia;*

*\* Radical expansion of the public health system – not under the control of the capitalist state but under workers and popular control;*

*\* Massive international aid for people of the Global South;*

*\* Stop the austerity offensive.*

These are the central five pillars on which the vanguard must prepare for the future mass struggles. Concretely, the RCIT propose and action program with the following central slogans:

- \* *No to the mass lockdown of people! Defend the democratic right to assembly and to demonstrate!*
- \* *Down with mass surveillance and police state! No deployment of the military in civilian service!*
- \* *Oppose travel ban and immigration control! Open borders for refugees!*
- \* *Down with chauvinism against migrants as well as against other states! No to anti-Chinese chauvinism!*
- \* *For systematic and complete health screening of all people who might have had contact with the virus. This screening must be free for all people but should be mandatory. The same is necessary for any potential treatment which should include quarantine if necessary.*
- \* *For health screens for all travelers and for immediate health care for free if any case of infection is detected.*
- \* *Create international teams of experts and medical staff in order to develop cure and preventive vaccination as soon as possible! All developments in this field must be accessible to the global public and have to be monitored and controlled by workers and popular organizations.*
- \* *Build additional public health care facilities and hospitals!*
- \* *Nationalization of the private health sector (hospitals, laboratories, etc.)!*
- \* *Put the whole health sector under the control of the workers and oppressed as well as health experts!*
- \* *All necessary projects in the struggle to protect public health must be financed by taxes of the rich!*
- \* *Nationalize the pharmaceutical corporations under workers control and utilize the resources in a centralized and effective way to develop drugs against widespread illnesses like corona virus, influenza, cholera, HIV/AIDS, etc.!*
- \* *For the immediate building of an international solidarity campaign to support semi-colonial countries to cope with the virus via free supply of medicine, medical equipment, food and hygiene products! For an international mobilization of volunteers, organized by the labor movement in order to support our brothers and sisters in these times!*
- \* *Formation of workers and popular committees for the control and supply of basic necessities (food, cleaning, medicine)!*
- \* *Cancel all public and household debts!*
- \* *No sacking, no wage cuts, no attacks on labor rights!*
- \* *Nationalization under workers control of all enterprises which shut down production!*

Comrades, brothers and sisters! Let us not lose time, let us act now! In the biblical myth God eventually smashed the monster Leviathan. In the world today, the working class and oppressed under the banner of a revolutionary world party will defeat the modern Leviathan. Join the RCIT in preparing for the further struggles on the basis of a revolutionary program!

*International Secretariat of the RCIT*

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*We refer readers to our articles and statement on the COVID-19 crisis:*

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Almedina Gunić: No, most likely it is not COVID-19 that is going to kill you. A manageable epidemic became public enemy number one distracting from the real killers, 16 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/no-most-likely-it-is-not-covid-19-that-is-going-to-kill-you/>

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Yossi Schwartz: The 2019 Corona Virus and the Decay of Capitalism, February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-and-decay-of-capitalism/>

Michael Pröbsting: 2019 Corona Virus: The Hypocrisy of Anti-Chinese Chauvinism in the West. A few facts about the rate of mortality of the COVID-19 pandemic in comparison with Influenza, 14 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/2019-corona-virus-the-hypocrisy-of-anti-chinese-chauvinism-in-the-west/>

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Michael Pröbsting: Ex-IMF Advisor: “Corona Virus Crisis is also an Opportunity”. How the ruling classes try to utilize COVID-19 to overcome their crisis, 16 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ex-imf-advisor-corona-virus-crisis-is-also-an-opportunity/>