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**Capitalism & Class  
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**WORKERS AND OPPRESSED UNITE!**

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# Revolutionary Communism

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**[www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net) - [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)  
Füchselhofgasse 6, 1120 Vienna, Austria**

# Saudi Arabia: Solidarity with the Migrant Workers!

## Against Racism, Islamophobia, Imperialism and Zionism – For Socialist Revolution!

*Statement of the Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT Section in Occupied Palestine/Israel, 14.11.2013)*

**D**uring the past week, the Saudi government has begun a criminally violent crackdown against African illegal immigrants, mostly from Ethiopia, residing in the poor areas of the Saudi capital Riyadh. So far, at least 3 Ethiopian workers were killed and 68 injured in clashes between the police and migrant workers resisting or protesting their arrest. According to reports from Arab newspapers, about 20.000 migrants have been arrested until now, half of them women. Some reports suggest Saudi civilians armed with knives and iron bars have joined the onslaught, claiming to protect their property from the rioters.[1] [2]

This campaign was started by the government after a 7 month amnesty period, during which all illegal migrant workers were required to either get sponsorship from a local employer or leave the country. Many migrant workers failed to comply with this demand due to bureaucratic obstacles, or refusing to subject themselves to employer extortion in exchange for said sponsorship.

The Internationalist Socialist League (ISL) – the Israeli/Palestinian section of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT) wishes to strongly denounce the reactionary Saudi regime for this criminal attack on African workers, whose only crime was the desire to work and ensure the survival their families back in Africa.

The Saudi regime has been, ever since its inception, a close ally to the interests of the enemies of the Arab working masses in particular and humanity in general, from the British to US imperialism (as of late the Saudis have expressed great discontent over the US's refusal to launch a strike against Syria, and its overtures towards Iran[3]), Zionism[4] and even the Egyptian Military criminal regime.[5] This is neither its first nor its last crime against the working masses, unless the Arab spring will eventually be turned into a socialist revolution – the only solution to most forms of human oppression.

While Saudi-Arabia is not an imperialist country, it is an extremely rich and parasitic semi-colony which lives from a huge oil-rent and its close relationship with US imperialism. The Saudi capitalist class lives from the super-exploited labor of the migrants: about nine million migrant workers – mostly coming from poorer Arab and African countries as well as from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – constitute the majority of the labor force in the country.

Under today's capitalism, migration as a source of cheap labor is a natural and essential part of the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world by monopoly capitalism. Since the beginning of the crisis-ridden development of capitalism in the early 1970s and then particularly with the onset of globalization, migration has increased substantially.

Revolutionary Communists consider migrant workers a nationally oppressed layer of working class which is super-exploited. An attack against them is an attack against every working man, woman or youth. Therefore, we must all unite in action and do the best that we can to stop this

one.

The international workers movement and migrant organization need to build a solidarity campaign with the oppressed migrants in Saudi-Arabia. We are willing to collaborate in action with any individual or group who's willing to fight for the one or more of the following demands:

- \* Down with the Saudi campaign of barbarity against our African and Asian working brothers and sisters!
- \* Full citizenship rights for all immigrants – regardless of what passport they hold and whether they are Saudi citizens or not!
- \* Immediate legalization of all who are living illegal in Saudi Arabia and the immediate release of all detainees! Immediate removal of all legal sections for right to stay!
- \* For equal pay for equal work and equality in the workplace! Abolition of all special laws for migrants!
- \* Forward to an international working class solidarity campaign with our African and Asian migrant brothers and sisters!

[1] Al Jazeera: Saudi police clash with foreign workers, 10.11.2013.

[2] Day 5 – Ethiopians in Saudi Arabia – Dozens injured, 10.11.2013.

[3] Al Jazeera: Saudi to reassess relations with US, 23.10.2013.

[4] The Arab Peace Initiative, 2002. Official translation of the full text of a Saudi-inspired peace plan adopted by the Arab summit in Beirut, 2002.

[5] Khaled al-Dakhil: Riyadh Rushes to Support Egypt's New Military Rulers, Al-Monitor, 17.7.2013. ■



# The Myth of Assad's Syria as an Anti-Imperialist Regime

by Yossi Schwartz, Internationalist Socialist League (RCIT-Section in Israel/Occupied Palestine), 14.11.2013

Western imperialists and some Arab states — the so-called “Friends of Syria,” which include the US, France, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates — would like to impose a transitional government composed of the pro-Western groups in the opposition as well as participation of the Baathist regime (with or without Assad himself); the Islamists oppose the entire idea of the Geneva conference aimed at achieving such a transitional government.

On October 27 this year, we read in *Al Jazeera*:

*“Members of the Syrian National Coalition maintain sitting down with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would make them traitors to the revolution. Their leader, Ahmad al-Jarba laid down tough demands if his group is even to consider attending the Geneva II talks.”* (1)

Najib Ghadban, the representative of the Syrian National Coalition at the UN, adds:

*We are in favor of Geneva II. But we want clarity on the framework and the basis of these negotiations. The base of this is to implement the Geneva communiqué, which in fact impels the creation of a national transitional government with full executive authorities including those security and military powers that in fact entrusted with the Assad regime. In that kind of understanding we really don't see any role for Assad. From our point the other side hasn't accepted that basis nor in fact some of its friends. So unless we have that clarity through an invitation letter from Mr Ibrahim [UN and Arab League Envoy to Syria] I don't see any prospect of Geneva II.”* (2)

At the same time, according to CNN (October 27):

*“Nineteen Syrian rebel groups have spurned participation in peace talks and rattled a saber toward those who decide to engage with Bashar al-Assad's regime. ‘We consider participation in Geneva II and negotiating with the regime is trading the blood of martyrs and treason, and those will be held accountable in our courts,’ the coalition said in a video statement Sunday.”* (3)

## Are the Syrian Rebels “CIA-Agents”?

As we have read, it would be a mistake to assume that Saudi Arabia is simply an agent of the US. Saudi Arabia has its own agenda that, to some degree, is in conflict with that of the US.

*“Upset at President Barack Obama's policies on Iran and Syria, members of Saudi Arabia's ruling family are threatening a rift with the United States that could take the alliance between Washington and the kingdom to its lowest point in years. Saudi Arabia's intelligence chief is vowing that the kingdom will make a ‘major shift’ in relations with the United States to protest perceived American inaction over Syria's civil war as well as recent U.S. overtures to Iran, a source close to Saudi policy said on Tuesday.”* (4)

Clearly, at this time, the 19 groups that are close to Saudi Arabia cannot be considered an arm of the US. Still, there are left-wing parties and groups that claim this is the case. Worse, they also claim that the Assad regime is fighting an anti-imperialist war and that the rebels fighting the butch-

er are an arm of the imperialists. This is based on evidence that the US and Turkey provide the Free Syrian Army light weapons and Saudi Arabia and Qatar are supplying the Islamic opposition with light weapons.

Some of these left wing forces that support Assad rely on Russian and Chinese official sources. For example the new British Communist party, which is really an old Stalinist formation writes:

*“This week Russian Chief of Staff, Nikolai Makarov, told the Russian media that the Nato-backed rebels are now being supplied with state-of the art equipment. General Makarov said he had “reliable” information that the rebels have obtained shoulder-launched missiles including US-made Stingers. “The Americans are in denial, saying they have not supplied anything to the rebels,” General Makarov told reporters on Wednesday... “But we have reliable information that the militias fighting against the Syrian government forces have portable anti-aircraft missile systems from several states, including Stingers made in the United States. We still need to find out who has delivered them,” he said adding that it was possible that these and other weapons could have been delivered to the rebels from abroad by several means of transport, ‘including passenger planes’.”* (5)

Quoting a Russian chief of the army in order to prove that the rebels are CIA agents is really grotesque for two reasons:

1. Russia is itself an imperialist state.
2. Russia is supplying the Assad regime with weapons.

The information that Russia provides Assad with heavy weapon can be easily confirmed. For example:

*“Russia's massive arms trade with Syria was thrust into the spotlight this week after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accused Russia of sending attack helicopters to its longtime ally, which has recently stepped up its use of such weapons in attacks that have claimed civilian lives. Russia angrily denied the claims, saying its existing arms contracts with Syria “relate exclusively to air defense. “If true, the helicopter transfer illustrates why the United States and other Western countries have blamed Russia for contributing to the violence in Syria. Russia has repeatedly blocked efforts to impose an arms embargo on Syria and reports have surfaced linking Russia to arms shipments arriving in Syrian ports. According to one recent study, Russia has provided the Assad regime with over three quarters of its major weapons over the past five years.”* (6)

Furthermore the US is very reluctant to supply weapons to the pro-imperialist elements because of its fear that these weapons will find their way to the hands of the Islamists:

*“The U.S. government has long been concerned about extremists in the ranks of the opposition movement, a concern that factored into the decision not to provide more direct assistance to the rebels. Advocates for a more robust intervention say the U.S. decision to hold back has weakened moderates and strengthened radicals. Assad has long charged that the insurgency aiming to oust his government masks an effort by Islamic militants to seize control. The latest setback for U.S. interests came Sept. 24 when 11 of the largest armed factions in Syria distanced themselves from the U.S.-backed coalition and formed an alliance dedicated to creating an Islamic state.”* (7)

According to Reuters (Sept 10, 2013):

*The United States has begun distributing some weapons to the Syrian rebels, a spokesman for the Syrian Coalition of groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad said on Tuesday, after months of reported delays. White House officials suggested in June that President Barack Obama had decided to provide military aid to the Syrian rebels, but in the months since, rebel leaders and U.S. lawmakers have said no lethal assistance has arrived. The U.S. is distributing non-lethal aid and ... some lethal assistance as well to the SMC (Supreme Military Council)."* Saleh told a news conference, referring to the council that oversees operations of rebels loyal to General Salim Idriss. *The United States is providing lethal assistance "because they are sure that the mechanisms that the SMC has established are well tested and they will be sure that the weapons are not falling into the wrong hands," Saleh said. He apparently referred to Washington's concerns that U.S. arms could end up benefiting radical Islamist groups, such as the al Nusra Front, active in northern Syria."* (8)

This does not prevent Stalinists but also some centrists (who happen to mistakenly call themselves Trotskyists), in particular from the Gerry Healy school, like the *International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI)*, from arguing that the opposition to Assad is an arm of the CIA. In their Web site, WSWS they wrote:

*"As Kerry was extolling the democratic virtues of the "rebels" on Wednesday, jihadist militias were laying siege to the Christian village of Maalula, north of Damascus, seizing high ground and shelling defenseless civilian neighborhoods and churches and threatening to unleash a sectarian bloodbath. This is but the latest of countless atrocities carried out by the US-backed Islamist militias, which were funneled into Syria along with arms and funding from Washington and its allies with the aim of toppling the Assad regime and redrawing the political map of the Middle East. The main reason for the rush to direct US military intervention is the disintegration of this effort in the face of defeats on the battlefield as well as mounting popular hostility and revulsion on the part of the Syrian people."* (9)

Any one who can read English understands that Kerry is praising the smaller pro-Western fraction among the rebels, not the Islamist majority organizations. The line of the WSWS is no more than perverting simple facts.

Unfortunately, it is not only the WSWS which is spreading such nonsense, but, as we shall see later, also politically more honest organization like *Socialist Fight* and its *Liaison Committee for the Fourth International* whose leaders were politically educated in the same school of the ICFI. (The ICFI was led for many years by the political bandit, Gerry Healy).

At this point, we just want to ask these brilliant thinkers, "How do you explain the fact that US imperialism killed Osama bin Laden if Al-Qaeda is an arm of the US today?"

Another group, the *Humanist Workers for*

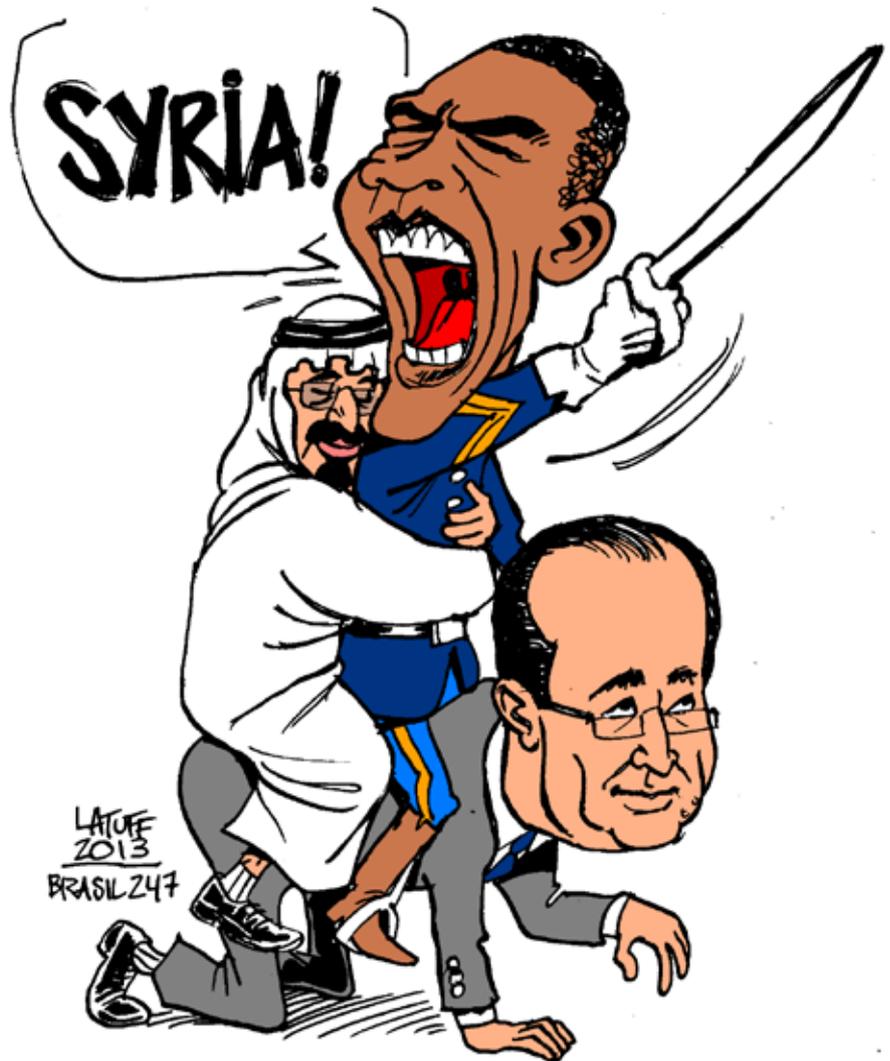
*Revolutionary Socialism (USA)* refuses to take a side in the Syrian Revolution. In a recently published polemic against us it claims: *"The RCIT is the most important centrist organization leading the opportunist chorus that argues for support of the rebels. (...) It spouts a lot of good revolutionary rhetoric, but it tends to capitulate to imperialism when it comes to concrete acid tests."* (10)

Clearly those of us who live in the imperialist states and oppose imperialism must do everything we can to prevent them from military intervention in Syria as our main enemy is at home. This however is not only true for the Western imperialist states but also for imperialist China and Russia.

Concerning the claims that the Western imperialist are intervening in Syria, one has to say clearly, that military intervention is sending the imperialist planes, warships, and troops, not a few weapons.

The fact is that unlike in Libya, Western imperialists do not intervene militarily in Syria, but push for a political accord similar to the Oslo agreement that serves their interests in controlling the region.

*"The United States hopes to bring moderate elements of the Syrian opposition together with the government at a peace conference tentatively expected next month in Geneva to try to end a two-and-a-half year civil war in which more than 100,000 people*



Cartoon from Carlos Latuff

have died." (11)

Revolutionary Marxists do not oppose sending weapons, even from imperialist states, to the rebels as long as the rebels do not politically subordinate themselves to the imperialists. Needless to say, we do not oppose non-imperialist states sending weapons. This point should be clear at least to those who claim to be Trotskyists.

In his article "Learn to Think," Trotsky wrote in 1938:

*Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against a democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism. Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favor of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise they would be no more than wretched trade unionists – not proletarian revolutionists. At the same time, the French maritime workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism.*

*Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fascism renders "aid" to the Algerians only in order to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous "ally" and at the same time continue their own irreconcilable struggle against fascism, "the main enemy in their own country". Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their own revolutionary position." (12)*

Sometimes Israel, which is accused by these great minds of also being behind the Islamists, speaks with two voices. One of them is that Israel prefers Assad, rather than the Islamists.

The Times of London reports:

*"According to Israeli intelligence officer quoted in report, weakened but intact Syria under President Bashar Assad is better for Israel and region than takeover by Islamist rebels." (13)*

This was denied the next day by the Israeli PM. (14) However, this denial contradicts Israel's actual position in the last two years. According to the Israeli paper *Globs*, Israel prefers Assad in power:

*"Israel's quiet support of Assad has no partners in the US and the EU, who are hesitantly seeking ways to weaken him, and brings Israel into tacit alliance with Hezbollah." (15)*

As we will demonstrate, Israel indeed has reasons to prefer the victory of Assad rather than the Islamists, for the same reason it prefers the Palestinian authority over Hamas. But to do this we have to review the relations of the Assad regime (the father) and Israel. We will begin by reviewing Israel's politics in Lebanon.

## Israel, Lebanon, and Syria

Laura Zittrain Eisenberg wrote in a book on the history of Zionism: *"Until the end of the First World Imperialist War, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria were not separate states. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, led to the partition of the Levant into zones, and it marked a Palestine-Lebanon border. British imperialism got Palestine while the French got Syria and Lebanon. A few Zionist colonies in Lebanon found themselves under French rule, as did the entire Litani river. The Zionists appealed to the British, saying that the existence of the Galilee depended on the water resources of the Litani and that the 1918 line of demarcation deprived Palestine of water. The Zionist Aaron Aaronsohn, who was an agronomist, surveyed the northern part of Palestine and concluded that the Litani River was essential for the irrigation and cultivation of the Galilee. The independent engineering firm of Fox and Partners, commissioned by the Zionist Organization to survey the economic potential of Palestine, confirmed his claim." (16)*

Awyn R. Rouyer explained in an article on the Water Policy of Israel: *"In the proposals submitted to the Paris 'Peace conference' of 1919 the Zionist Organization stated that control over the region's rivers (Litani and Jordan) was the primary goal of any boundary agreement and an absolute necessity for the survival of a Jewish national home in Palestine". (17)*

Israel's interest in Lebanon continued. As Laura Zittrain Eisenberg reports: *"Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, occasionally expressed a passing interest in Lebanon's Maronites and the hope that one day Israel would enjoy an alliance with a strong Christian state in Lebanon." (18)*

The diaries of Moshe Sharett, an Israeli prime minister during the mid-1950s, reveal that Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, chief of staff and defense minister, were strong advocates of Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon to the Litani River. (19)

Israel eventually did establish close relations with the right-wing Maronites of Lebanon: *"The patriarchs of Lebanon's Christian community, particularly Pierre Jumayyil and Camille Shamun, were tempted by Israeli offers of assistance, but they nevertheless resisted entrusting the security of the Maronites to Israel and abjured close contact with Israel. But in 1976, threatened by the escalating Civil War, a new generation of Lebanese Christian leaders turned to Israel for military support against the ascendant PLO and the Muslim left. After a series of clandestine meetings between Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence agency, and militia leaders Bashir Jumayyil and Dani Shamun, Israel began supplying US\$50 million per year to arm and equip the Christian fighters." (20)*

Palestinian refugees settled in Lebanon after the Nakba of 1948, when around 900,000 Palestinians were removed from their land and homes. However, the PLO fighters arrived in Lebanon after King Hussein of Jordan expelled the PLO from Jordan in 1970, an event that entered history as "Black September."

The PLO was an ally of the Lebanese left during the 1976 civil war, and formed a state within a state in Lebanon. The pro-imperialist government of Lebanon was more than happy to see the invasion of the country by Israel.

On October 14, 1976, Lebanese Ambassador Edward Ghorra told the UN General Assembly the PLO was bringing ruin upon his country. Palestinian elements belonging to various splinter organizations resorted to kidnapping Lebanese and sometimes foreigners, holding them prison-

er, questioning them, and even sometimes killing them. This line was promoted by the Western propaganda. Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak declared after touring south Lebanon and Beirut that the facts “tend to support Israel’s claim that the PLO has become permeated by thugs and adventurers.” (21) Countless Lebanese told harrowing tales of rape, mutilation and murders committed by PLO forces.

Anyone who is familiar with the Western propaganda knows that this is a standard line of imperialism to justify imperialist military intervention. Recently we saw it in Mali and now we hear the same line about the Islamist opposition in Syria

On June 6, the Israeli state invaded Lebanon in what is known in Israel as “Operation Peace for Galilee” and throughout the rest of the world as the “First Lebanese War.”

Israel was backed by American imperialism. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger defended the Israeli operation: “No sovereign state can tolerate indefinitely the buildup along its borders of a military force dedicated to its destruction and implementing its objectives by periodic shellings and raids.” (22)

While initially Israel claimed that the war was launched to create a security zone of 40 km, the real objective was to expel the PLO from Lebanon and force Lebanese leaders to sign a surrender treaty. In 1983 Lebanon’s President, Amin Gemayel, signed such a treaty with Israel.

When the Zionist army captured Beirut, it inflicted real suffering on the civilian population of Beirut which was justified by Israel on the grounds that the PLO refused to surrender and was hiding behind the civilian population. “The Israelis bombed buildings, innocent looking on the outside, where their intelligence told them that PLO offices were hidden,” wrote Middle East analyst Joshua Muravchik. (23)

Israel has, time and again, used the same excuse in Lebanon and in Gaza. By mid-June, an American diplomat, Ambassador Philip Habib, mediated the PLO withdrawal from Lebanon.

In numerous instances, the media around the world reported that Israel was hitting civilian areas where there were no military targets nearby. On one night in July, Israeli shells hit seven embassies in Beirut. NBC aired a report that appeared to lend credence to PLO claims that it had no military positions in the area. “Israel,” Muravchik noted, “soon released reconnaissance photos showing the embassy area honeycombed with tanks, mortars, heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft positions.”

The Lebanon war provoked large demonstrations in Israel itself. Prime Minister Menachem Begin eventually resigned as demands for an end to the fighting grew daily. However, Israel remained in Lebanon until the year 2000 when it was forced to flee under Hezbollah attacks. In that year, Israel pulled all its troops out of southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000, ending a 22-year military presence there.

The barbarism of Israel and its Christian allies was exposed in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila. The following is taken from an accurate description of the event as reported last year by the International Middle East Media Center.

“On September 16 1982, after the Israeli occupation army, led by Ariel Sharon, surrounded the refugee camp after invading Beirut, and granted access to the Phalanges to enter the camp to

slaughter its refugees. The massacre lasted for three days (16, 17 and 18 of September 1982), approximately 3500-8000 persons, including children, infants, women and elderly were slaughtered and murdered in this horrific and gruesome massacre perpetrated by the Israeli army and its allied criminal militia.

Israeli soldiers, led by Sharon and Chief of Staff, Rafael Eitan, made sure their forces are surrounding the refugee camp, isolated it from its surrounding, and allowed the Phalanges to invade it and murder thousands of innocent refugees using white weapons.

Following the massacre, Israel’s Supreme Court ordered the formation of a committee to investigate the circumstances that led to this ugly crime against thousands of helpless refugees.

In 1983, the Cahan Commission announced the results of what it called an “investigation” of the massacre, and decided that Sharon is “indirectly responsible” as he ignored the possibility of it taking place, ignored the danger of bloodshed and revenge. Sharon continued his political career, to become Prime Minister and held various important positions until he suffered stroke on January 4 2006, and has been in a permanent vegetative state since then.

The massacre was not the first, nor the last, as Israeli soldiers carried out numerous massacres against the Palestinian people in different places including Deir Yassin, Qibya, Tantour, Jenin, Jerusalem, Hebron and so many areas.

Not a single Israeli official, commander or soldier was ever held accountable for the ugly crimes, and massacres, against the Palestinian people.” (24)

### The Role of Syria in Jordan and Lebanon

While Assad the father always claimed that he was pro-Palestinian, in reality, in 1970, as the Syrian Minister of Defense, he allowed King Hussein to carry out “Black September.”

“In September 1970—the “Black September” of Arab in retrospect—Salah Jadid sent more than a hundred Syrian tanks into Jordan in support of Palestinian forces then under attack by the Jordanian forces. Assad, then minister of defense, grounded the Syrian Air Force, allowing the Syrian tanks to be mauled by the Jordanian Air Force. “Badly defeated by the Jordanian forces, the Syrian tanks began to withdraw from Jordan on September 23–24 leaving a large number of vehicles destroyed or captured by Jordanian forces.” (25)

In 1975, during the civil war between the right-wing Phalangists and the left-leaning Moslem forces, Assad the father backed the right-wing. According to the Council of Foreign Affairs:

“Full-scale civil war broke out in April 1975 between the Maronite Christian groups of the Lebanese Front and the Lebanese National Movement, which was made up of left-leaning Muslims who wanted a greater share of political power. Fighting was intense, and in June 1976 the Maronite-dominated government asked for support from Syria.

Syria had previously mounted several failed diplomatic efforts to stop the war. For then-Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad -- the current president’s father -- the Lebanese conflict presented a range of possibilities, all of them unappealing: sectarian strife spilling over into Syria, which had its own Christian-Muslim tensions; an Israeli invasion of Lebanon; or the establishment of a radical, left-wing Muslim state, if the Lebanese National Movement won. Assad sent in troops to strengthen the Maronite government, which he calculated he could manipulate,

many Mideast analysts say. Assad's move earned the wrath of the Muslim world, because he backed the Christian side. Still, small contingents of troops from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Sudan later joined the Syrian-dominated Arab Deterrent Force. The war lasted 15 years." (26)

The tacit agreements of red lines between Israel and Syria (and Egypt) helped Israel to carry out its invasion of Lebanon. According to Michael Eisenstad and David Schenker of the Washington Institute:

"Since the 1973 war, Syria and Israel have established 'well-understood rules of the game' consisting of a series of unwritten agreements that have limited the scope and duration of the clashes that have sometimes occurred between the two parties and prevented a full-scale war.

The Golan understanding. For more than three decades, Syrian-Israeli relations in the Golan have been governed by the May 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement, which provides for an indefinite ceasefire and a separation and thinning out of forces on both sides of the disengagement line. Israel's ratification of the agreement was predicated on an unwritten, unacknowledged commitment by Syria not to permit terrorist infiltration through the Golan, which Damascus largely observed.

Lebanon "red lines. Syria's military intervention in Lebanon led to a new set of tacit arrangements between Syria and Israel. From March 1976 until the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005, Syrian-Israeli relations in Lebanon were governed by a series of tacit understandings, loosely defined "red lines" demarcating Israeli and Syrian spheres of influence, deployments, and activities." (27)

### Hafez Al-Assad in Support of an Imperialist War

In the 1991 Gulf war Syria joined the coalition led by US imperialism:

"Despite the lack of consensus, the Egyptians and Saudis mustered a majority of 12 states behind Arab League Resolution 195. Its operative parts denounced Iraq's 'threats' to the GCC states and its concentration of troops on the Saudi border and then expressed support for the steps taken on behalf of Saudi Arabia's 'right of legitimate defense,' namely, the request for foreign forces to be stationed in Saudi Arabia. This right was anchored in the Arab League's Joint Defense Pact of 1950, Article 51 of the UN Charter, and Security Council Resolution 661 adopted four days earlier. In addition, clause six of the resolution declared the summit members' intent to comply with the request from Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states to dispatch Arab forces to help them defend their territories "against any foreign aggression. The 12 states favoring resolution 195 were: Egypt, the six GCC states, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Somalia, and Djibouti. Three participants voted against - Iraq, Libya and the PLO (which on the following day changed its vote to one of abstention); Algeria and Yemen abstained, and Jordan, Sudan and Mauritania expressed reservations. Tunisia had already expressed its position by not attending." (28)

Another article reports:

"The United States and Syria found common ground when Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait in August of 1990. Syria was included in the American-led coalition that liberated Kuwait. After the war, Syrian and American officials met in various negotiations with Israel and other Arab countries in hopes of resolving the Golan Heights issue but with no positive result." (29)

### Bashar Al-Assad and Privatization

If during Hafez al-Assad's rule Syria was a regime of state capitalism which the nationalist Baath party called "socialism," when Bashar al-Assad came to power, he entirely opened Syria's economy to the imperialists:

"The gradual increase of neo-liberal policies and privatization exaggerated the inequality between the poor and the rich, which was especially felt in middle-class areas, and mid-sized and large cities. While a small portion of the crony capitalists and loyalists to Assad were able to benefit from these policies, the vast majority of the population was disenfranchised. The uprising in the Arab world (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya) in 2011 also sparked the revolution against Bashar, who was still perceived as an inept leader." (30)

Even the Syrian Communist Party, a strong supporter of Assad against the revolution, has to admit:

"When we evaluate the 10-year period before the aggression toward Syria, we see that the Syrian government made grave mistakes in the economic area. By choosing neoliberal economic policies, it opened the Syrian market to foreign imports, especially Turkish and Qatari products. As a result, hundreds of factories and workshops shut down and millions of workers lost their jobs.

In fact, there was not a substantial change in these neoliberal policies when the imperialist intervention started. As the Syrian CP, we think that the adoption of these neoliberal economic policies was a fatal mistake. We believe that the solution needs to start by putting an end to these policies.

In addition, a war is going on in Syria. We are facing multifaceted and serious problems. It is important to realize that it is not only the Syrian army that is resisting against the imperialist-backed foreign forces. Ordinary Syrians are also fighting. It would not have been possible for the army to resist for two years against such an assault otherwise.

With this in mind, it is critical that the government support the people through economic policies in order for the popular resistance to be able to survive. But, unfortunately, it is difficult to say that the government realizes this fact even now. They more or less continue with the neoliberal policies. As the Syrian CP, we believe the biggest risk factor for the Syrian resistance is the economy." (31)

Yet the Syrian Communist Party's position, as well many of the so called Communist parties throughout the world, support Assad the butcher on the ground that the civil war in Syria is under an imperialist attack on Syria:

"You know that our country- Syria- has been being exposed for more than twenty months, to a war lunched against it by scores of imperialist states, besides other countries that move round them as satellites. Their aim is to destroy the Syrian state that stands as an obstacle on the road of those trying to impose the plan of a "greater Middle East", after breaking down the states in the region and replacing them with small entities fighting one another, to impose absolute domination on the oil and gas resources; to eliminate the Palestinian problem in a way extremely opposite to the interests of the Palestinian people." (32)

Similarly Britain's Communist Party writes:

"END IMPERIALIST INTERFERENCE IN SYRIA, BEGIN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY PROCESS' URGE BRITAIN'S COMMUNISTS

"Britain's Communist Party has declared that the war currently taking place in Syria is not one for democracy or for the rights of the Syrian people. Instead, the party declares in a state-

ment today (September 20) the conflict is about the 'strategic interests of US imperialism' and those of Britain, France and the European Union.

"The removal of the Syrian government has been part of the long-term strategy of imperialism from the time of President Reagan onwards', accuses the Communist Party of Britain's political committee, noting that the Damascus regime was one of three added by senior US officials to the original 'axis of evil' countries (Iraq, Iran and North Korea). The other two were Libya and Cuba.

"In all six cases, their governments were to be removed, by force if necessary, in order to further US global strategic interests.'

"Syria, strategically positioned in the region, is an obstacle to the strategic interests of imperialism, whereas toppling the Bashar al-Assad government will tip the balance in favour of US and Western interests,' according to Britain's communists...

"The CPB political committee argues that the Damascus regime is an obstacle not only to imperialism's strategic plans but also to those of Israel and reactionary Arab states.

"The brutal autocracies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar have no scruples about using the most backward, mediaevalist Islamic forces, including Al-Qa'ida, to undermine the al-Assad administration, even at the cost of fanning anti-Muslim prejudice and hatred in Europe and the United States,' Mr Foster pointed out.

"In the Communist Party's view, Turkey is now also fully compliant with the interests of imperialism in the region, as demonstrated by its central role in arming and sustaining the foreign Islamist jihadists who are playing a pivotal role in the struggle to overthrow the Syrian government." (33)

### The same Argument as in 1948

This position on the part of the Stalinist counter-revolutionary parties is not a great surprise. These parties already crossed the Rubicon into the camp of the counter-revolution in the mid-1930s, with their commitment to the popular front governments – supporting the subordination of the working class to the capitalist class. Among the results of this policy was their support to the creation of Israel in 1948 with very similar argument they use in Syria. The Zionist struggle, aimed at expelling the Palestinians in order to create a Zionist state with a Jewish majority, was portrayed as an anti imperialist struggle. As Avi Schlam has written:

"The birth of the State of Israel in 1948 coincided with the onset of the Cold War between East and West. In 1947, as the struggle for Palestine entered its critical phase, the United States and the Soviet Union came out in support of the establishment of an independent Jewish state. Both superpowers voted in favour of the UN resolution for the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state in what was one of the rare occasions of agreement between them during the Cold War. This was followed up with political support, diplomatic recognition, and, in the case of the Soviet Union, the supply of vital military aid to the fledgling state. Israel thus came into the world under uniquely propitious international circumstances: it enjoyed the support of both East and West in its struggle for independence." (34)

An article published in the Egyptian paper *Al-Ahram* in 2008 detailed the Soviet diplomatic strategy:

"Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko was instructed to present the new line. For the first time the USSR advocated the creation of a Jewish state. The new line was duly

presented to the General Assembly on 29 November 1947 in the historic vote to partition Palestine. A two-thirds majority was needed and here the role of the USSR was again decisive when it pressured Byelorussia, Ukraine, Poland and Czechoslovakia to also vote 'Yes'. Therefore, it needs to be stressed that if the USSR had adhered to its earlier position of opposing the partition of Palestine, it is highly improbable that Israel would have been created in May 1948. Indeed, the likely outcome would have been a unified Palestine under UN trusteeship.

"However, after the expected opposition of Arab states and with violence in Palestine itself, the US began to have doubts. On 19 March 1948, the US ambassador to the UN argued for a provisional trusteeship that had been the USSR's original plan. Gromyko countered this in an uncompromising, *de facto* Zionist, speech at the 30 March meeting of the UN Security Council that secured partition: '... the only way to reduce bloodshed is the prompt and effective creation of two states in Palestine. If the United States and some other states block the implementation of the partition and regard Palestine as an element in their economic and military- strategic considerations, then any decision on the future of Palestine, including the establishment of a trusteeship regime, will mean the transformation of Palestine into a field of strife and dissension between the Arabs and the Jews and will only increase the number of victims."

"Moreover, despite a UN weapons embargo on Palestine, Czech weapons were sold, with Soviet knowledge, to Zionists in Palestine that facilitated the expulsion of some 750,000 Palestinians from their land. The rest, as they say, is history. As Rucker summarizes in his insightful paper, 'Moscow provided political, military, and demographic support to Israel' for the absurd reason that the only means of weakening Britain's power in the Middle East was by supporting the Zionist movement. It didn't take long for this policy to unravel. The various communist parties in Arab states immediately suffered a hemorrhage of members as the USSR's reputation and influence in the Arab world was severely damaged; whilst the new state of Israel unequivocally joined the Western camp. Britain's influence did decline but rather than divisions arising, Britain remained firmly wedded to the US, helped by Marshall Aid reconstruction funds. Moreover, without demurring, it settled into its new role as the US's junior partner. The net effect of the USSR's policy turn was, therefore, precisely the opposite of what had been intended. The Zionists had played a brilliant hand as they cleverly finessed Stalin and his cohorts.

"The truly shocking fact in this version of the 'Great Game' is that the victims were contemptuously ignored, as if they were mere cattle. It is my contention that the Soviet Union's role in the creation of Israel and the Nakba should be accorded greater significance than the Balfour Declaration of 1917; yet it is the latter that attracts far more attention." (35)

Norman Berdichevsky has described the CP-USA's about-face regarding Palestine following the new Soviet strategy:

"A 1947 CP-USA resolution entitled 'Work Among the Jewish Masses' berated the Party's previous stand and proclaimed that 'Jewish Marxists have not always displayed a positive attitude to the rights and interests of the Jewish People, to the special needs and problems of our own American Jewish national group and to the interests and rights of the Jewish Community in Palestine.' The new reality that had been created in Palestine was a 'Hebrew nation' that deserved the right to self-determination. Remarkably, the Soviet propaganda machine even praised the far right underground groups of the Irgun and 'Stern Gang' for

*their campaign of violence against the British authorities. Today's media never attempt to explain how it was Soviet and East Block aid and not American support that was the crucial factor in newborn Israeli state."* (36)

Today *Socialist Fight* and the *Liaison Committee for the Fourth International* led by Gerry Downing are echoing the Stalinist line on Syria, a position which is based on the nonsensical belief that the forces fighting against Assad are simply tools of the imperialists.

A website close to the SF/LCFI, VOAG (Voice of Anti-Capitalism in Guildford), published an interview with Gerry Downing and asked "What is the correct position to take on the Syria question?"

VOAG: "...for the defeat of the rebels and Imperialism whilst giving no political support to Assad against the Syrian working class..." what does this mean in practice?"

GD: "It means that you are for the victory of the Syrian National Army over the rebels and Imperialism and you would work for that politically and in whatever practical way you could. But you would not seek to hide the crimes of Assad against the working class and his and his father's previous history of collaborating with Zionism and the US against the Palestinians, for instance. You would prepare for his overthrow at a later stage by the organized working class. But right now the main enemy is Imperialism and its allies and proxies in Syria..."

"Of course Assad is an enemy of the Syrian and global working class, but right now he is a secondary enemy and the Anti-Imperialist United Front means a temporary alliance with him today against Imperialism and its proxies, the main and immediately threatening enemy, in order to prepare for his overthrow by the revolutionary working class after the defeat of Imperialism. Such revolutionaries as exist in Syria must have that as their goal, maintaining their political independence in this way." (37)

The problem with this position is not only that it is wrong with regard to the specific situation, but that, even if it were true that Assad is fighting imperialism, it is dangerous close to the line maintained by the Stalinists in Spain during the Spanish revolution. Consistent with the reformist two-stage theory, the Stalinists position was that in the first stage we must fight Franco's fascism and then, after the victory, we will carry out a socialist revolution. The problem with this position was that, in order to win the civil war against Franco, whose forces were backed by Hitler and Mussolini, a working class revolution was needed.

Revolutionary workers must understand how the Bolsheviks defeated the right wing rebellion led by Kornilov and against Kerensky. In August 1917, Kornilov announced that he was bringing troops into Petrograd to protect the provisional government and overthrow the Petrograd Soviet. The Bolsheviks called the workers to mobilize for the defeat of the Kornilov coup and thus forming a military united front with Kerensky. Kerensky was forced to give weapons to all those who would defend the city. He released and armed all Bolsheviks from prison. A total of 25,000 Bolsheviks formed a militia to defend Petrograd. Railway workers refused to transport Kornilov's troops into the city. The cavalry refused to attack the city's defenders. The soldiers refused to obey Kornilov's commands.

Thus, in 1917, when Kornilov tried to overthrow Kerensky government the Bolsheviks formed a military united front with Kerensky army but prepared the overthrow of Kerensky. The Bolsheviks led workers militias and revolu-

tionary agitation and propaganda to split and disarm the Kornilov forces and as soon as Kornilov was defeated the Bolsheviks that became the leaders of the revolution took power. The Bolsheviks under Lenin did not call for first the victory of Kerensky and only then they would fight against the Kerensky regime.

Those who are in doubt as to the Leninist position should read Lenin himself who wrote:

*"It is my conviction that those who become unprincipled are people who (like Volodarsky) slide into defencism or (like other Bolsheviks) into a bloc with the S.R.s, into supporting the Provisional Government. Their attitude is absolutely wrong and unprincipled. We shall become defencists only after the transfer of power to the proletariat, after a peace offer, after the secret treaties and ties with the banks have been broken—only afterwards. Neither the capture of Riga nor the capture of Petrograd will make us defencists. (I should very much like Volodarsky to read this.) Until then we stand for a proletarian revolution, we are against the war, and we are no defencists.*

*"Even now we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing Line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events.*

*"We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten.*

*"What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?"*

*"We are changing the form of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must take into account the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting against him in a different way, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) "Kerensky's weakness and vacillation. That has been done in the past as well. Now, however, it has become the all-important thing and this constitutes the change.*

*"The change, further, is that the all-important thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of "partial demands" to be presented to Kerensky: arrest Milyukov, arm the Petrograd workers, summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, dissolve the Duma, arrest Rodzyanko, legalise the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over grain and factories, etc., etc. We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by the course of the struggle against Kornilov. We must keep up their enthusiasm, encourage them to deal with the generals and officers who have declared for Kornilov, urge them to demand the immediate transfer of land to the peasants, suggest to them that it is necessary to arrest Rodzyanko and Milyukov, dissolve the Duma, close down Rech and other bourgeois papers, and institute investigations against them. The "Left" S.R.s must be especially urged on in this direction."* (38)

The result of the Stalinist policy in Spain was, naturally enough, the defeat of the Spanish Revolution and the vic-

tory of Franco.

If it were true that Syria is under attack of imperialism and that Assad is fighting against imperialism, revolutionaries would form a military united front with the Assad army, while preparing to overthrow the regime and the capitalist state as soon as possible. However, we cannot trust the Assad regime's wining a war against imperialism, because what it fears most is a socialist revolution... Furthermore, were Assad fighting against imperialism, we as revolutionaries would have to demand the arming of workers' militias, the taking over of lands by the peasants, the occupation of the factories; by no means trust "Kerensky" to defeat the right wing rebellion and then...

But this is entirely moot speculation as in reality Assad is not fighting against imperialism but against the Syrian revolution. And he is launching the civil war against the popular masses with the full support of Russian and Chinese imperialism and with Western imperialism vacillating between tactical, limited support for a minority sector of the rebels and tacit approval for the continuation of the Baath party regime.

Since we have already written extensively about the Syrian revolution, here we will only point out the main problems with the position of those who support Assad. (39)

1. It is not true that the imperialists really support the opposition. In September of this year, Assad was accused of using chemical weapons against the civilian population. Ostensibly, this could have been used by the US and European imperialists as a pretext to intervene militarily in Syria. Yet they have chosen *not* to intervene militarily.

2. Secondly, there is clear evidence that the US provides very little military aid to the rebels, and only to a small section of them.

3. The US currently supports an agreement between a section of the opposition and Assad's regime that will not involve toppling the regime.

4. It is clear that the Gulf States, which are *not* imperialist states, *do* provide weapons to the rebels

5. Russia and China, which both provide Assad with weapons and political support, *are* imperialist states.

To conclude, the revolutionary position is to establish a military united front with those forces that not only oppose Assad but also who themselves are not subordinate to the imperialists, whether American, European or Russian and Chinese. This opposition to the imperialists must be to any such manifestation of their involvement: be it military intervention, or a so-called political solution like the Geneva conference, which is not likely to get off the ground in any case.

At the same time, we do not give the opposition to Assad, whether secular or Islamist, any political support and point out to the working class the revolutionary position: a socialist revolution lead by the working class, poor peasants and urban poor. For this to happen, it is necessary to begin forming the nucleus of a revolutionary working class party.

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## Austria: Successful School Student Strike on 6. December 2013!

Report from Red\*REVOLUTION (Youth Organization affiliated with the Austrian Section of the RCIT), 6.12.2013

Between 700-800 Viennese school students braved rain, snow and stormy wind as well as repression by the school administration and joined a demonstration organized by Red\*REVOLUTION (Youth Organization affiliated with the Austrian Section of the RCIT). This successful demonstration is remarkable not only because of the awful weather conditions and the repression but also because the official school student "trade union" – dominated by the conservative party and the social democratic party – called the school students not to join our strike. (The centrists ignored it too but this had no relevance for the demonstration given their isolation from the youth).

The demonstration was the high point of a school student strike which we called for that day. We chanted militant slogans against cuts in education, against social cuts and against the government as well as for joint struggle of workers and school students. The banners of Red\*REVOLUTION made clear why we are on the streets: "Zentralmatura (the name of the new attack on education, Ed.) is unjust – SCHOOLSTRIKE against education cuts!", "STRIKE!" and "Cuts in Education, Unemployment, Racism – CAPITALISM DESTROYS OUR FUTURE!" (See links to pictures and videos below)

After the demonstration Red\*REVOLUTION hold a successful meeting in our centre with 50 activists to discuss the next steps in our struggle against the cuts in education. Tomorrow we will have another meeting.

Marc Hangler, spokesperson of Red\*REVOLUTION, also gave a number of interview to radio and TV stations in which explained our viewpoints.

The central task now is to build more committees of action to organize the militant school students in order to advance the struggle against the government plans. They are equally important to bring together young revolutionary activists. Furthermore they can also create the conditions to link the youth struggle with the struggle against the coming austerity package which is currently discussed in the negotiations for the new government.

Various media reported about the demonstration albeit the tried to play down its size. (See links below)

You can find more reports and articles in German language on our website.

### Reports, Videos and Photos:

W24 (a private TV channel) invited Marc Hangler for a live interview on 6.12.2013. You can view the interview at the following link (go to minute 14:00): <http://www.w24.at/Guten-Abend-Wien/795375>

The school student strike organized by Red\*REVOLUTION has been mentioned by most daily papers as well as the central state broadcasting ORF:

HEUTE: "Red Revolution" plant Schülerstreik zu Nikolaus, 5.12.2013, <http://www.heute.at/news/politik/art23660,963076>

ORF: Zentralmatura: 150 Teilnehmer bei Demo, 2013-12-06, <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2618881/>

ÖSTERREICH: 150 Schüler demonstrieren gegen Zentralmatura. „Eins, zwei, drei, vier, die Zentralmatura stoppen wir“ hieß es am Stephansplatz, 06. Dezember 2013 <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/150-Schueler-demonstrieren-gegen-Zentralmatura/124026571>

DER STANDARD: Zentralmatura: Rote Revolutionäre streikten fast alleine, 6. Dezember 2013, <http://derstandard.at/1385170097727/Zentralmatura-Rote-Revolutionaere-streikten-fast-alleine>

APA: Zentralmatura: Rote Revolutionäre streikten fast alleine, 06.12.2013, [http://science.apa.at/rubrik/bildung/Zentralmatura\\_Rote\\_Revolutionaere\\_streikten\\_fast\\_alleine/SCI\\_20131206\\_SCI815935468](http://science.apa.at/rubrik/bildung/Zentralmatura_Rote_Revolutionaere_streikten_fast_alleine/SCI_20131206_SCI815935468)

NEWS: Zentralmatura: Schüler wollen über Streik entscheiden. Sozialistische Splittergruppe plant schon am Nikolotag Protest am Stephansplatz, 5.12.2013, <http://www.news.at/a/zentralmatura-schueler-streik-moeglich>

WIENER ZEITUNG: Lehrerdienstrecht. Lehrer bringen Rute mit, 5.12.2013, [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/592084\\_Lehrer-bringen-Rute-mit.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/592084_Lehrer-bringen-Rute-mit.html)

Videos and photos from the school strike demonstration can be viewed at the Red\*REVOLUTION website: <http://www.redrevolution.at/inland/fotos-und-video-6-12/> ■



Marc Hangler, leader of Red\*REVOLUTION at a press conference in Vienna 4.12.2013

## Austria: Red\*REVOLUTION calls for 2nd School Student Strike

*Report from Red\*REVOLUTION, 10.12.2013*

The struggle against cuts in education continues after the successful first school student strike on December 6 in Vienna which was organized by Red\*REVOLUTION (Youth Organization affiliated with the Austrian Section of the RCIT). (1)

On Monday, December 9, the official leadership of the school students announced that it has reached a compromise with the government. This however turned out to be a complete capitulation. In reality nothing has changed for the school students. As a result Red\*REVOLUTION decided – after consultations with school student committees in many schools – to call for a second school student strike on December 12 in order to continue the struggle against the education cuts.

The pressure from the school students and our organized and dynamic campaign, which we have conducted successfully in the past weeks, have pushed the left reformists and centrists to jump the bandwagon. The school student organization of the social democratic party in Vienna as well as several centrist groups have now agreed to join our second school student strike.

The campaign has led to a massive increase in political interest amongst the vanguard of the school students and many ask to join Red\*REVOLUTION. In parallel, school student committees are built in a growing number of schools. Without doubt, this struggle is an excellent political school for many youth – much more fruitful than the bourgeois education system!

You can find more reports and articles in German language on our website.

### Footnotes

(1) See our reports in English language: Austria: School Students protest against attack on education rights! 25.11.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/austrian-school-students-protest/>; Austria: School Students go on strike for their education rights! 5.12.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/austria-school-student-strike/>; Austria: Successful School Student Strike on 6. December 2013! 6.12.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/austria-successful-school-student-strike/>; For more reports in German language go to the website of Red\*REVOLUTION at: <http://www.redrevolution.at> ■



Red\*REVOLUTION (Youth Organization affiliated with the Austrian RCIT Section)

## Austria: School Students protest against education cuts!

Report from Red\*REVOLUTION, 25.11.2013

**A**ustrian school students are facing a new attack on their education rights. The government has introduced a massive tightening of the final exams in all higher schools. It basically means that much more students will fail the final exams. In many classes 2/3 or 4/5 didn't pass the homeworks in recent weeks.

This has caused a massive and wide-spread outrage amongst school students. The youth organization Red\*REVOLUTION, affiliated with the RKOB (Austrian section of the RCIT) has been active in the last week and helped to organize a number of school student committees in various schools. Red\*REVOLUTION also organized a conference of activists on 24.11. where a resolution was unanimously adopted.

In this resolution activists rejected the attack on education rights and called for a broad school student strike in the next weeks. They also expressed their solidarity with the protests of teachers against the government attacks on their rights. Finally the resolution called for joined resistance of workers and youth against the looming new austerity package which is currently discussed between the social democratic and conservative party as part of their negotiations to renew their coalition government after the recent national elections.

As a first action of our resistance we organized a media

action in front of one of the schools where school students have formed a committee. More than 60 school students left the school – despite massive pressure of reactionary teachers – to hold a small rally in front of the school. Marc, a leader of the Red\*REVOLUTION, addressed the crowd as did Katharina, one of the school students activists. Several representatives of the media were present and the rally was widely reported in the national media (see links below).

Red\*REVOLUTION will continue the resistance together with the school student committees and work to organize a city-wide school student strike!

### Reports, Videos and Photos:

ATV (the biggest private TV channel in Austria) reported in its news on 25.11.2013. It can be viewed at: <http://atv.at/contentset/3178347-atv-aktuell> (at minute 3.08).

In addition, the radio stations Ö3 and KRONEHIT reported in its news as well as the daily paper Kurier.

Videos from the rally can be viewed at the YouTube Channel of the RKOB:

Speech from Marc: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qz2YvreAnvY&feature=youtu.be>

Photos: <http://www.redrevolution.at/inland-1/medienaktion-marchettigasse-25-11-2013/> ■



at the School Strike Demonstration at 6.12.2013 in Vienna

## Red\*REVOLUTION's Press Conference well attended by Media

*Report from Red\*REVOLUTION, 5.12.2013*

As we already reported, the youth organization *Red\*REVOLUTION*, affiliated with the RKOB (Austrian section of the RCIT), has been active in the last weeks in order to organize a school student strike against cuts in education. (1) We are mobilizing school students to resist against a massive tightening of the final exams in all higher schools.

*Red\*REVOLUTION* is calling together with a number of action committees in various schools for a school student strike on 6<sup>th</sup> December.

The education department of the regional government in Vienna has reacted with threats against the school students. It sent out a letter to all school administrators in which it emphasized that the school students have no right to hold a strike and will face penalization. After wide-spread outrage it has to backpedal now.

Yesterday we hold a press conference with 10 activists from several schools. Marc Hangler, spokesperson of *Red\*REVOLUTION*, and a number of school student representatives, explained to the media the reasons for the strike and their determination to hold on their plans despite the government's repression.

Our press conference was well attended by representatives of the media. News on it and the strike as well as interviews with Marc Hangler are now spreading in the TV, Radio and daily papers. (See links to TV and daily paper reports below.)

You can find more reports and articles in German language on our website.

### Reports, Videos and Photos:

ORF (the public broadcast service in Austria like the BBC in Britain) brought a report in its news on 4.12.2013. It can be viewed at: (<http://tvthek.orf.at/program/Wien-heute/70018/Wien-heute/7201322/Warum-duerfen-SchuelerInnen-nicht-streiken/7203481>). Bear in mind that the link will only work for a few days.

Puls 4 (a private TV channel) reported brought a report in its news on 4.12.2013. It can be viewed at: (<http://www.puls4.com/video/guten-abend-oesterreich/play/2284137>). Bear in mind that the link will only work for a few days.

In addition, there have been reports on *Red\*REVOLUTION* and the school student strike:

ORF: Schülerstreiks: Präsidentin gibt Tipps gegen Verbot, 2013-12-04, <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2618612/>

DER STANDARD (one of the big national daily papers): Rote Revolutionäre machen mobil gegen „diese“ Zentralmatura, 2.12.2013, <http://derstandard.at/1385169611896/Rote-Revolutionaere-machen-mobil-gegen-diese-Zentralmatura>

ÖSTERREICH (one of two biggest national daily papers): Tausende bei Demo gegen neue Matura, 5.12.2013 (this link will only work today), <http://file.oe24.at/epaper/#3/z>

Videos and photos from the press conference on 4.12.2013 can be viewed at the YouTube Channel of the RKOB soon

### Footnotes

(1) Austria: School Students protest against attack on education rights! Report from the youth organization *Red\*REVOLUTION*, 25.11.2013, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/austrian-school-students-protest/> ■



Red\*REVOLUTION (Youth Organization affiliated with the Austrian RCIT Section)

## Brazil: Speech at Teacher's Trade Union Congress

*Speech from J.Evangelista (RCIT Brazil) at the national congress of SINPEEM in Brazil, November 2013*

Below we publish the speech of comrade J. Evangelista, a member of *Corrente Comunista Revolucionária* (RCIT Brazil) at the recent 24<sup>th</sup> national congress of the teacher's trade union SINPEEM. Evangelista participated at the congress as an elected delegate and is also a member of the leadership of a local trade union branch in São Paulo.

He introduced an amendment for a resolution which denounced the bureaucracy for their role in selling out the recent teachers struggle. His amendment and the speech defending it received a lot of support amongst the 3.000 delegates present. Responding to this the union bureaucracy rallied all forces against his amendment and they managed to it. Nevertheless 30% of the delegates voted for his amendment which shows a considerable strength of a militant wing amongst the rank and file despite the huge power of the bureaucratic apparatus. You can hear this speech as an audio file at the RCIT website.

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My name is J. Evangelista. I will start with an evaluation of the situation at the beginning of February. Mayor Haddad (mayor of São Paulo and a member of Haddad of the governing PT of Lula da Silva / Dilma Rouseff, Ed.) did not

implement the promises he made during his election campaign. In fact he cut the two references in our career plan. Nevertheless our leadership trusted in the so-called "forum of negotiation" that is better call "*Sistema de Enrolação Permanente*" (system of permanently beating around the bush, Ed.).

But instead it was necessary to call all the rank-and-file teachers to mobilize for actions. However the leadership called for closed meetings on Saturdays and they continued to trust the "*Sistema de Enrolação Permanente*".

As this process failed, the rank and file teachers pushed the leaders to call a strike. We – the rank and file – massively participated in the strike.

But in the end strike was finished when the union leaders and the mayor made promises which however were never fulfilled. And what was the base for this? The "*Sistema de Enrolação Permanente*". The leaders also said that "*we are not enemies of the government*". If the "*Sistema de Enrolação Permanente*" continues it will better be called "*Sistema de Humilhação Permanente*" ("system of permanent humiliation")! And the leaders still continued to say "Let's wait, let's wait". But the attacks have already happened! It is time to go to the streets! Let's go to the struggle, compañeros, and strike, strike, strike! ■



at the School Strike Demonstration at 6.12.2013 in Vienna

# Thailand: Defeat the looming reactionary Coup D'état!

## Mobilize the Working Class and Poor Peasants as an independent force against the "Yellow Shirts", Army Command and Monarchy!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 4.12.2013*

1. Thailand's main opposition force, the misnamed *Democrat Party*, is organizing reactionary demonstrations aimed at overthrowing the government. These so-called "Yellow Shirts" are stirring up an atmosphere which could lead to another military coup d'état. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* considers these demonstrations as a reactionary maneuver by the traditional political elite of Thailand. The working class and the poor peasants must organize mass counter-mobilizations without giving any political support and confidence in the government of Yingluck Shinawatra. To overcome the social and political misery, the working class must build an independent workers party based on a revolutionary program which leads the popular masses towards social revolution.

2. Since mid-November, the "Yellow Shirts," led by former deputy prime minister Suthep Thaugsuban, have organized demonstrations and tried to storm government buildings. The Democrat Party is the traditional representative of the reactionary political elite which is composed of the army command, the upper echelons of the state bureaucracy, the majority of Thai's big business and – as their figurehead – King Bhumibol. It is a neoliberal, royalist, big business party which has its main support base amongst the urban middle class of Bangkok. While it has participated in the government many times, it has usually gained this position via the regularly occurring coup d'état's and interference from the military, and has never won a parliamentary election.

3. The reactionary demonstrations of the "Yellow Shirts" have the obvious tacit approval of the army command and the king. This is why the police and army offer only lukewarm resistance against the attempts of the "Yellow Shirts" to storm government buildings.

4. What triggered the current escalation by the "Yellow Shirts" were two bills initiated by the Yingluck government. The first was an amendment to the constitution which was imposed by the army command in 2007. It would have allowed that all senators be elected while, under the military constitution, half of them are appointed. However, while the bill was adopted by a majority in parliament, the military-appointed Constitutional Court ruled that parliament could not amend the constitution! Revolutionary communists are consistent democrats; therefore we recognize the importance of issues concerning democracy, and consider a senate elected in bourgeois-democratic elections more democratic than a senate which is half-appointed by the political elite.

5. The second bill introduced by the Yingluck government is an amnesty bill. In itself, this bill included disastrous concessions to the old elite. It offered amnesty not only to convicted activists of the popular protest movement as well as the deposed and exiled former prime min-

ister Thaksin Shinawatra (brother of the current prime minister), but also to the army command and Democrat Party leaders Abhisit Vejjajiva and Suthep Thaugsuban. The latter were responsible for the military coup d'état in 2006, as well as the massacre against the "Red Shirts" protests in 2010. Hence the bill was justifiably opposed by the militant sectors of the "Red Shirts" who have the support of the urban working class as well as the rural poor peasantry. However, the traditional elite were enraged by the possibility of the return of the exiled former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. Albeit the Yingluck government withdrew the bill after wide protests, the reactionary "Yellow Shirts" movement attempts to utilize the political crisis in order to finish off the government and to reconstitute a government which is closely controlled by the army command and the majority faction of big business.

6. If the Democrat Party and the "Yellow Shirts" succeed in their attempts to overthrow the government, this will strengthen the grip of the traditional elite on political life, reduce democratic rights, and encourage an intensification of the attacks against the working class and the poor peasantry. This is why it is urgent to mobilize the working class and the poor peasants for the defeat of the reactionary "Yellow Shirts." Such an independent mass mobilization would create favorable conditions to break both workers and peasants away from the bourgeois leadership of the Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra and their bourgeois populist *Pheu Thai Party* and to fight against their government.

7. However the decisive problem currently is the continuing political subordination of the working class and the poor peasants under the Thaksin leadership. Thaksin is a multi-millionaire and wants to build a "modern" capitalist Thailand. The *Pheu Thai Party* leadership has no intention to abolish the monarchy or to substantially cut down the powerful position of the army command, the military-imposed constitutional court, etc., not to speak of implementing any meaningful social reforms. In fact its whole policy in the past years has demonstrated that it is willing to compromise with the traditional elite, and it attempts to demobilize its workers and peasants supporters as much as possible. Thus the *Pheu Thai Party* is a bourgeois-populist party which represents a minority faction of the capitalist class but which, however, has to rely on the support of the workers and peasants in order to hold power.

8. Nevertheless Thaksin and his party are despised by the elite because it is a party whose strength is based on the support of the masses of workers and peasants who have repeatedly intervened in the political life of Thailand during the last decade by militant mass mobilizations. Thaksin's party (initially called *Thai Rak Thai party*) won the majority of votes in the 2001 elections, as the first par-

ty outside the traditional establishment. Thaksin achieved this by promising social and democratic reforms for which he could rally mass support amongst the working class and the poor peasantry. With this support base, he was re-elected in 2005. However, after the Democratic Party failed to drive him out by parliamentary elections, the military staged a coup d'état in 2006 and deposed Thaksin. The army command banned his party and Thaksin was forced into exile. After this, the army command imposed an extraordinarily undemocratic constitution. Nevertheless, the next elections, held in December 2007, were won by the *Phak Palang Prachachon* (People's Power Party) which, in fact, acted as the reincarnation of Thaksin's banned party. This, however, did not prevent the army command from deposing the PPP government a few months later, and banning the party. It was only through such blatant interference of the military that the Democratic (!) Party could reenter the government. This provoked a new series of militant mass protests in March-May 2010, when hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants occupied parts of Bangkok, and heroically fought off the army and police. The army sent in its soldiers, backed by armored personnel carriers, and fired at the protestors with live ammunition. Altogether, during these weeks, at least 85 people were killed and 1,378 wounded. When the reactionary government was forced to hold general election on July 3, 2011, again the Pheu Thai Party, led by Yingluck Shinawatra (Thaksin's sister), won an outright majority. This short overview demonstrates that the current mobilizations of the "Yellow Shirts" are a continuation of the repeated attempts of the old establishment to prevent any government which is not under its complete control.

9. As we have said, the main problem is the political subordination of the workers and peasants in the "Red Shirts" movement to Thaksin's leadership. At the moment, a central challenge is to fight against the ambitions of the reactionary army command, the "Yellow Shirts," the King, etc., to smash the limited democratic achievements and launch another coup d'état. Such a struggle necessitates the mass mobilization and militant organizing of the workers and peasants who have been demobilized by the bourgeois Yingluck government, since the latter is hoping for another compromise with the army command. Such a struggle will include temporary blocs and united front actions with the "Red Shirts" movement, and even with those in the bourgeois-populist Pheu Thai Party who are willing to mobilize on the streets against the coup d'état.

10. The goal must be to split the working class away from the Thaksin leadership and to organize them in an independent workers' party. The RCIT believes that such a party must raise the program of permanent revolution, i.e., the intermeshing of the democratic and socialist revolutions, which will lead to an armed uprising of the workers and poor peasants in order to overthrow capitalism and build a workers' and peasants' republic.

11. Such a program must include the struggle for a democratic revolution. An important part of this will be the abolishment of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic, as well as a struggle against the powerful position of the army command and its constitutional court. It should also unconditionally support the right of national self-determination for the Muslim people of Patani (the three southernmost provinces of the country which the

Thai state created after it destroyed the Patani sultanate.) The majority of the populations in these provinces are Malay Muslims, with their own language and culture, and who are fighting against the central Thai state.

12. Against the reactionary constitution and the permanently-rigged process of writing and amending the constitution, authentic socialists have to fight for a Revolutionary Constitutional Assembly. Such an assembly must not be controlled by the reactionary ruling class. It must be the outcome of a mass uprising. It must be controlled by armed mass organizations of the workers and peasants, and its delegates must be controlled and recallable by their voters. The assembly's only purpose would be to draw up a new constitution. In such an assembly, Socialists have to argue for the program of a workers and peasants republic.

13. A revolutionary program also has to include the expropriation of big business and the nationalization of the banks, as well as place the large industrial and service enterprises under workers' control. It also must nationalize the media under workers' control. Such a revolutionary workers' party could rally the poor peasants for a program that expropriates the big landowners and foments an agrarian revolution. However, in doing so, it must patiently explain to the workers and poor peasants that sustainable democratic reform and social improvement can only be achieved if the working class takes power and creates a government of workers and poor peasants, based on councils and popular militias of armed masses. Its purpose must be to build the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would suppress the old ruling class and ensure freedom for the popular masses.

14. Such a revolutionary workers party must be built from the beginning, in conjunction with the efforts to create a new World Party of Socialist Revolution which, in our opinion, will be the Fifth Workers' International. The RCIT looks forward to discussing these matters and collaborating with revolutionaries in Thailand and Asia, in order to advance the formation of such a revolutionary organization.

*International Secretariat of the RCIT* ■



# Philippines after the Typhoon: For International Workers Aid!

*Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 14.11.2013*

Typhoon Yolanda, also known as “Haiyan”, that hit the Philippines in the last days has caused a disaster for the people. Officials say that the death toll could be at least 10,000 people. About 70-80% of houses and structures along the typhoon’s path were destroyed. Most of the people are small peasants, fishermen, workers and poor. People are waiting desperately for aid as has been promised by the capitalist government of President Aquino. Instead of aid the government sends the army to shoot “looters” (who are often simply survivors looking for clean water and food in the remains of shops) and to protect big business. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT)* calls for International Workers Aid to help the Philippine people. The RCIT points out that the capitalist climate crisis is the final cause for this disaster. This climate crisis is caused by profit-driven world economy which is under the control of the imperialist monopolies. This worsening climate crisis can only be fought by the revolutionary struggle of the working class and the oppressed culminating in the overthrow capitalism and the building of a global socialist society.

The BBC says that more than nine million people are affected, in the Philippines alone. According to UNICEF 40% of the people affected are children, many of them already or soon-to-be orphans. On Monday the 11th, Philippine military already counted 942 fatalities in the typhoon’s aftermath. The sudden destruction of many hygiene and health centers, as well as the starting food and water crisis is a basis for a severe epidemic. Infections like cholera already start to spread.

The mass starvation of hundreds of thousands Filipinos, the ongoing search of children, searching for their parents, next to decaying corpses on the street, and the ongoing flight of thousands of homeless people are deeply touching everyone’s hearts. Who is responsible for this disaster?

## Why did this catastrophe happen?

Natural disasters are not new phenomena. In history, the Philippines had been hit by many natural disasters. But as the climate crisis is deepening, they are becoming more and more regular as well as disastrous. Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) is said to have been the strongest typhoon ever to hit the Philippines.

It is the imperialist states and their monopolies – in North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and also emerging imperialist China – which are plundering and destroying the environment. They are responsible for the climate crisis which increasingly endangers the future of humankind. Most notably the USA is responsible for 25% of all greenhouse gases. The imperialist states and monopolies emit much more carbon to the atmosphere than the semi-colonial countries (the so-called Third World). They are producing increasing volumes of greenhouse gases which drive global temperature to rise. As a result we see dramatic changes of the climate like warmer and rising

sea levels and which eventually lead to the formation of super-typhoons like Yolanda (Haiyan).

Capitalism which is in a period of decay is incapable of overcoming the climate crisis. In fact, worse is to come. According to the sixth annual release of *Maplecroft’s Climate Change and Environmental Risk Atlas*, “31% of global economic output will be based in countries facing ‘high’ or ‘extreme risks’ from the impacts of climate change by the year 2025 – a 50% increase on current levels and more than double since the company began researching the issue in 2008.”

The poor countries are those under biggest danger. The report names as the countries under most risk Bangladesh (1st and most at risk), Guinea-Bissau (2nd), Sierra Leone (3rd), Haiti (4th), South Sudan (5th), Nigeria (6th), DR Congo (7th), Cambodia (8th), Philippines (9th) and Ethiopia (10th). But also other big semi-colonies are under increasing risk like India (20th), Pakistan (24th), Viet Nam (26th) and Indonesia (38th). (China is also a “high risk” country, ranked as 61st.)

This shows that climate change is a class issue. The richest capitalist classes – the imperialist states and their monopolies – are causing the climate crisis. And the huge majority of the working class, peasants and poor – living in the semi-colonial world – are the first and most to pay the price for it. (This fact is so obvious that even the Editorial of the bourgeois British daily paper “The Guardian” on 11.11.2013 had to mention it.)

In addition one has to state that it is possible to prepare against natural disasters. As various progressive organizations in the Philippines have pointed out, both civil bureaucracy and military forces of the Aquino regime did not give timely and adequate warning to the people about the grave dangers of the super typhoon and the storm surges from the sea. They did not prepare evacuation centers. And they did not guide the people to move to relatively safe areas before the super typhoon struck. Here again, one has to say that climate change is a class issue. It is the workers, peasants and poor who live in substandard housing and who are most exposed to the effects of the natural disasters.

## International Workers Aid is the answer

Despite the fact that typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) was already spotted on 6./7.11, several aid campaigns in the rich countries have only started now. This hypocritical act of relief comes already too late to prevent the worst. Nevertheless, something is better than nothing.

However, this is obviously not enough. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* calls the international workers movement – the big trade unions, the working class parties, migrant organizations etc. - to organize a global solidarity campaigns for the workers and poor in the Philippines.

There are already initiatives organized by progressive popular organizations in the Philippines. The *Partido ng Manggagawa* (Labor Party-Philippines) has already orga-

nized a caravan to bring food and clothes to the people on the the islands stricken. Organizations with a Maoist background like BAYAN organize together with other organizations the initiative Balsa to help the people.

However what is lacking are concentrated efforts by the international workers movement, in particular in the rich imperialist countries. An *International Workers Aid* campaign – led by Filipino and international mass organizations of the workers, peasants and poor – is highly overdue.

Such an *International Workers Aid* campaign must closely collaborate with workers and popular organizations in the Philippines, not the bureaucrats of the corrupt state apparatus. Just as a repairman is the only one who can professionally fix water damages at everybody's home, the workers and the peasants are the only ones who are really capable of fixing the damages in the country in a sustained manner. The millions of Filipino workers and peasants that are affected by the typhoon are those, who have the qualification and who will play a leading role in the rebuilding of the cities and villages of the country.

An *International Workers Aid* has the purpose to collect money, food, water, medicine, devices of hygiene and all other sorts of supplies that are necessary to manage life in the short-term. This initiative should approach workers and migrants associations in all countries worldwide. All supplies should be sent to the Filipino workers movement and popular organizations so that they can help the people and rebuild the country.

We warn against any reliance on the bourgeois states and their sponsored aid organizations. We say: *"No trust in so-called humanitarian organizations, like the Red Cross, which collaborate with those imperialist and corrupt states, which are responsible for the consequences of the climate change. For workers' and popular control of all goods that are collected for the Philippine people!"* The workers movement has to prepare and watch for any chance to gain control of supplies that are sent by the imperialist and corrupt states, to make sure that they are used for a reasonable purpose. Also it has to make sure, that the looting of shops, done by some of the victims, does not impair other victims. Anyway, looting is not the solution. What is necessary is the formation of emergency committees of the workers and oppressed to take over the control in the areas, to confiscate goods whenever necessary and to supervise their distribution. Finally, the workers and popular organizations have to protest against the massive presence of the Philippine army in the areas affected by the typhoon. Their main purpose is not to organize aid to the people as it has already become obvious to more and more people. The army's main purpose is rather to protect the premises of big business against the hungry people and to suppress any self-organized efforts of the people to confiscate whatever is necessary for survival.

### **For an International Emergency Plan!**

The climate crisis is deepening and urgently needs an answer from the international workers movement. The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* calls for an *International Emergency Plan*, elaborated by the mass organizations of the working class and the oppressed and implemented under their control. The costs of such an emer-

gency plan have to be paid by all those enterprises and states, which are responsible for the climate change and its impacts. These great robbers preyed upon the workers and the poor, the small peasants, the fishermen, so it is high time that they pay for what they did!

To save our planet, the machinery and technologies in the industries responsible for the pollution of the environment need to be modified or abolished. For this, the enterprises must be put under workers' control to avoid that the profit orientated capitalists, the owners, politicians and managers derail our efforts.

### **Revolution and Socialism is the only solution**

This is not the first and certainly not the last natural disaster on this earth! The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* is aware that the only sustaining solution is a worldwide system that works for the benefit of the majority of humankind and looks after the social and democratic issues like the ongoing climate change. We call this system socialism! The system today, capitalism, is in its death agony, but it is strong enough to cause the death of millions and the exploitation of billions every year. In fact, the necessity for a new socialist system is increasing day-by-day and eventually becomes a question of survival. We are also aware that this system will not come automatically, but only by the struggle of our class, the working class, and under the leadership of its vanguard organized in a revolutionary world party. The RCIT is an organization which is fighting to build such a new International which will be the *Fifth Workers International*. Our goal is to rally all those, who are willing to fight for a bright socialist future, without exploitation, oppression and natural disasters. If you are willing to fight together with us, join us!

The RCIT demands:

- \* *For International Workers Aid! The international workers movement needs to organize an initiative to make sure that the help goes straight to all those who are mostly affected in the Philippines.*
- \* *Down with the repressive army! For self-organized emergency committees of the workers and oppressed to take over the control in the areas, to confiscate goods whenever necessary and to supervise their distribution.*
- \* *Nationalisation under workers' control of all energy companies and all companies that are responsible for basic supplies such as water, agriculture and airlines, ship and rail facilities!*
- \* *For an emergency plan to convert the energy and transport system and for a global phasing out of fossil fuels and nuclear energy production connected to a public employment programme! For the massive exploration and use of alternative forms of energy such as wind, tidal and solar power! For a global reforestation program of the woods! Radical expansion of public transport to push back individual car traffic!*
- \* *Force the imperialist corporations and states, to pay compensation to the semi-colonial countries for the environmental destruction caused by them! No emissions trade and "ecological points" system!*
- \* *Abolition of commercial secrecy in clean technology and energy sectors! Bring together the knowledge for the creation of effective alternatives!*

*International Secretariat of the RCIT* ■

# 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*

1. Bangladesh has a population of 152.4 million people (2012). Other sources speak of 161.1 million people. It is the 8<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world. Its capital city, Dhaka, ranks as the 9<sup>th</sup> largest city in the world with 14.6 Million people. 31.6% of its population lives in cities (2011). (1) Nearly all (98%) people in Bangladesh belong to the Bengali nation. The rest are from tribal ethnic groups. About 89% of Bangladeshis are Muslims, followed by Hindus (8%), Buddhists (1%) and Christians (0.5%).

## **Poor Capitalist Semi-Colony with an important Textile Industry**

2. Bangladesh is a poor capitalist semi-colony. 43.3% of the population has to live on less than \$1.25 a day. (2) It has a GDP per capita of only PPP \$ 1,568 (3) and is ranked by the IMF as only Number 154 amongst 187 countries around the world. The proportion of urban population living in slum area is nearly two third (61.6%). (4) 43.2% of its adult population is illiterate. (5)

3. It is, however, a highly unevenly developed country. On one hand the country is not only very poor but has also a high proportion of poor peasants. Out of a total Labor Force of 73.9 Millions, 31.97 Millions (=43.3%) are employed in agriculture. (6) 70% of the peasants are landless. Its share of industry in national output is below other countries in South Asia. (See Graph 1). At the same time it has a growing and important manufacturing industry. Its share of manufacturing value added in GDP was 17.3% in 2009. (7) It is the largest manufacturer among the so-called "least developed countries" with a share of world manufacturing exports of 0.11% (2009) which is similar to Bulgaria or Columbia. 91.76% of Bangladesh's exports are manufactures (2009), (8) of which textiles, clothing, and ready-made garments account for about three fourths of the country's total exports. (9) Bangladesh is – second only to China – the world's second-largest apparel exporter of western brands.

4. Bangladesh is a capitalist semi-colony which is highly exploited by the imperialist monopolies. Foreign Direct Investment has grown to over \$7 billion in 2012 (See Table 1). Given the low level of wages, imperialist monopolies can squeeze a rate of return of 22% from Bangladeshi workers. This is one of the highest profit rates in the world for foreign corporations! (See Graph 2)

5. However one of the main forms of imperialist super-exploitation – the value transfer via unequal exchange – is particularly relevant for Bangladesh. (10) Formally, most of the textile production is controlled by local capitalist (only 5% of textile factories are owned by foreign investors). However nearly all of the produced value is appropriated by the imperialist monopolies. Less than 2% of the total value of shirts produced in Bangladesh are received by the direct producers as wages. The profit by local companies is equivalent to about 1% of total value. The rest goes into the pockets of the imperialist capitalists.

(11)

6. As nearly all semi-colonial countries in the world, Bangladesh has substantial debts to the imperialist financial institutions. Its external debt stocks are 27 Billion US-Dollar (2011) which is the equivalent of 22.6% of its Gross National Income. As a result 5.5% of its annual income from exports goes as debt service into the pockets of the imperialist banks and financial institutions. (12)

7. Bangladesh is the number one country in the world with the highest risk of the effects of the dramatic climate crisis which is caused by the imperialist states and their monopolies. Their plunder and destruction of the environment is responsible for the climate crisis which increasingly endangers the future of humankind. Bangladesh is particularly at risk of the consequences of warmer and rising sea levels and which inevitably leads to disastrous floods. Such floods have already happened in the past years in increasing frequency. Bangladesh is at risk of losing significant parts of its population and land in the next decades as a result of the rising sea level. This means nothing less than millions of Bangladeshi workers and peasants are threatened with extinction as a result of the capitalist climate crisis!

## **Brief Overview of the Working Class**

8. The Bangladeshi working class is large and growing and at the same time highly super-exploited. About 87% of the labor force is employed in the informal sector (2010). Amongst female workers even 92.3% are employed in the informal sector. About 20% are day laborers, 41% are self-employed without employees and 22% working as unpaid family workers. The informal sector contributes with a low 40% to GDP compared to its employment. The majority of formal jobs are in semi- to high skilled professions, whereas informal jobs are concentrated among the 62% of jobs with low skills and low productivity. (13) (See also Table 2) Only 20% of the total work force are covered by the Labour Law.

9. Unsurprisingly imperialist institutions like the World Bank praise Bangladesh as a paradise for monopolies. According to a recent World Bank report on Bangladesh the country "has the potential to capture at least 15 million jobs in the next ten years. Recent reports (e.g., McKinsey/USAID) have shown that the productivity of Bangladeshi workers is on par with Chinese workers in well-managed firms with their wages being five times lower than those of their Chinese counterparts (half those in Vietnam). Bangladesh's unique competitive position comes at a time when China is in the process of outsourcing 80 million jobs from labor-intensive industries." (14) (For a comparison of the minimum wages in Asian countries see Graph 3.)

10. The Bangladeshi working class and semi-proletarian layers are mostly working in small enterprises or are self-employed. 88% of those employed in the informal sector work in the enterprises with less than 10 persons (See for more details Table 3 and 4).

11. Women Workers are an important part of the Bangladeshi working class and the oppressed classes. There are about 12.5 million female workers which are 24.54% of the total labor force. (15)

12. Given the extreme poverty many Bangladeshi leave the country to work as migrant workers abroad and to support their families at home. Over 5 million Bangladeshis migrated to work in the Gulf States between 1976 and 2009. About 3.2 million work in India today. Over the past decades the rate of migration has substantially increased. In 2010 3.5% of the whole population was working as migrants abroad where they are super-exploited as cheap labor forces. Their remittances are essential not only for their families but for the whole economy since it represent 10.8 of the country's GDP. (16)

13. The core of the Bangladeshi working class is without doubt the textile industry with about 4 million employees in 5,000 factories. The textile workers – most of them women – account for 45% of all industrial employed. Their extremely low wages – some earn only \$38 a month – and the well-known horrible working conditions have provoked even someone like Pope Francis to compare them to “slave labor”. (17) According to a report, the minimum wage represents only 4.1% of value added per worker (2012) which gives an indication of the huge extra-profits which the capitalists make. (18)

14. The trade union movement is relatively weak in Bangladesh. It is confined mainly to state-owned enterprises, with little presence in the private sector. According to official data, the trade unions had 2.2 million workers in June 2009. (19) There are about 5,242 Basic Unions which organize 4.44% of the employed and 33 National Trade Union Federations. (These National Federations organize 2.83% of the employed, since not all Basic Unions are part of national federations.) (20) At this point it is important to bear in mind that the Bangladeshi labor force has a huge sector of either workers who are formally not waged workers or toilers who are rather semi-proletarians or small petty bourgeois. The trade unions do not organize only waged workers but also these semi-proletarian lay-

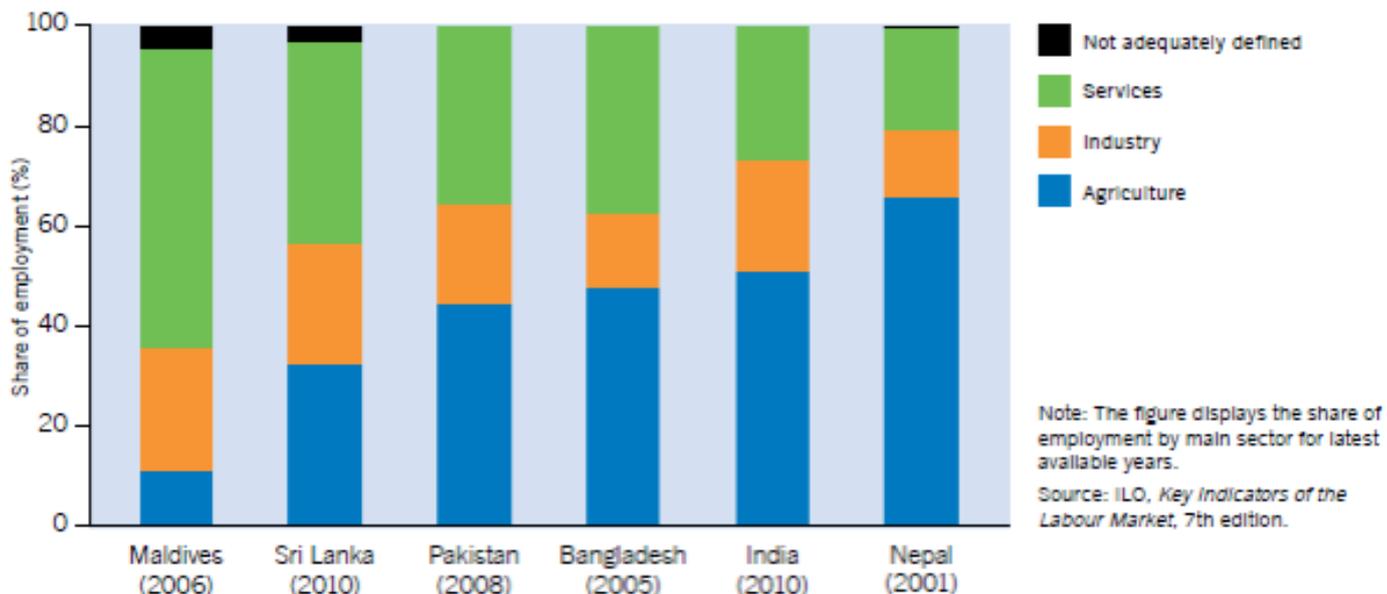
ers. As a result we have the situation that while the trade unions organize only 3-4% of the labor force, 22 % of the waged workers are trade union members. (21)

15. Women constitute 14.4% of the trade union members (2009). While most trade union federations have a lower share, three unions – the Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote (43%), the Jatiya Sramik Federation (32.9%, this union is close to the Awami League) (22) and the Mukto Sramik Federation (31.7%) – have much higher shares since they are located in female workers dominated sectors like garments, tea garden and manufacturing. (23) In the most important sector both for the working class and the female proletariat – the textile sector – there exist 26 union federations and 5,242 basic trade unions in the garment sector. Out of the 3.5 to 4 million textile workers, mostly young women, only around 63,000 are unionized. (24)

16. The reason for the highly fragmented character of the trade union movement is two-fold. First, as we have shown above, the workers and semi-proletarian layers are mostly employed in small enterprises or self-employed. This strengthens the tendency for fragmentation and local unions. Secondly, the trade unions are highly politicized. Many unions are linked to political parties who use them as pressure groups.

17. Irrespective of the weak trade unions, Bangladesh is one of the world's countries with the highest number of mass or general strikes (called *hartals* in South Asia). Leaving aside the national liberation war with numerous hartals in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the mass uprising in 1990, it saw in the last decade particularly massive strikes in 2002, 2007 and 2010. (25) This year has seen another upswing of strikes. According to the Commerce Ministry, there have been 36 nationwide shutdowns this year, compared with 29 last year and 17 in 2009 to 2011. More than 80 people have died in hartal-related bloodshed since January, while protesters have torched hundreds of buses and cars. “The strikes have cost the country more than \$7 billion this year, or more than \$200 million for each day of strikes, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry estimates.” (26)

Graph 1 Share of employment in South Asia (48)

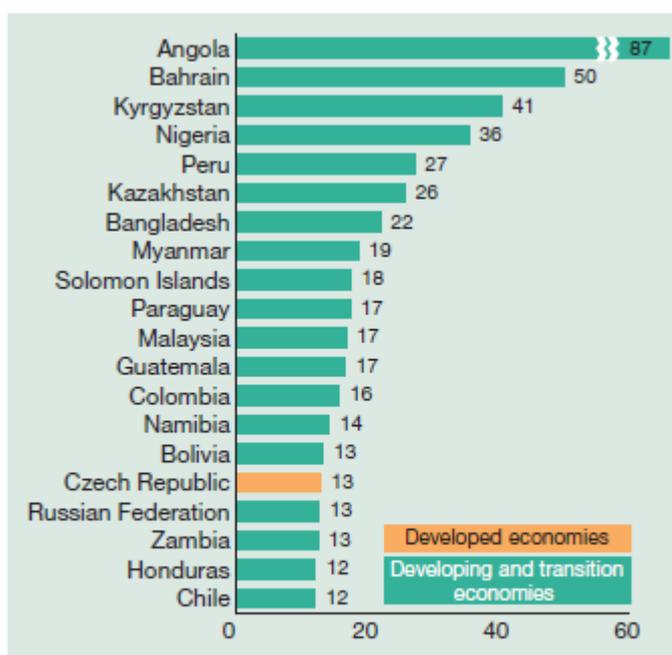


18. However one has to be aware that such hartals are not necessarily the same as a general strike known in other countries. It is often a shutdown of business by militant demonstrations and street violence by organized supporters of this or that party or union which causes business and schools to close. For example the Awami League – the current government party – called more than 170 days of strikes when it was in opposition from 2001 to 2006 (i.e. about one hartal every one or two weeks in average!). (27)

### The National Liberation War in 1971 and it's Betrayal by the Bourgeois Nationalist Awami League in alliance with Stalinism

19. When the Pakistan state was created in 1948 as a result of reactionary communalist war and expulsion of millions of Indian Muslims and Hindus, Bangladesh was part of Pakistan (called East Pakistan). (28) This partition was particularly horrible for the Bengal people because it split them into a Muslim territory (East Pakistan) and a Hindu territory (West-Bengal in India). Two million Bengalis were slaughtered in this reactionary partition war in 1947/48. This was a genocide inspired by the British imperialists and executed by the bourgeois Indian Congress Party and the Muslim League. As a side-note we remark that such a division of the Bengal people was always the desire of the British imperialists. The two previous attempts to achieve this – in 1905 and 1908 – were defeated by the joint Muslim and Hindu Bengal resistance. The hymn “*O amar Sonar Bangla*” – created during this struggles – is the national anthem of Bangladesh today. The British fought the Bengalis particularly strong because there were in the forefront of the anti-colonial liberation struggle. The Indian National Congress was founded there in 1885 and most

**Graph 2 Top 20 economies with highest inward FDI rates of return, 2011 (in percent): (49)**



Source: UNCTAD, based on data from the IMF Balance of Payments database.

leaders of the liberation movement were Bengalis.

20. East Pakistan was oppressed in this state from the beginning. Between 1948 and 1951, 130 million Rupees were sanctioned for development. Of this only 22 percent were allocated to East Pakistan despite the fact that it inhabited more than half of the population. For more than 20 years West Pakistani capital extracted Rs 3 billion annually from the east. West Pakistan dominated Eastern Pakistan policy in many ways. For example while East Pakistan could elect an assembly, the more powerful governor was appointing by the West. Furthermore the ruling class tried to eliminate the Bengali language by imposing the dominant language of the West – Urdu – to public life in East Pakistan. As we have explained in our documents on Pakistan, this was the result of the reactionary character of the Pakistani state which was dominated from the beginning by the ethnically Urdu-speaking elite of big land owners, army leaders and capitalists and which ruled the country for most of the time via a military dictatorship.

21. The Bengali people in East Pakistan resisted the West Pakistan “colonialism” from the beginning. This struggle was led by the *Awami League* led by of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This was a bourgeois nationalist party with strong roots amongst the popular masses. Whenever the ruling class allowed elections in East Pakistan, the Awami League won with a huge majority of the votes. However as a bourgeois party it tried to contain the mass struggle and use it only as a pressure tool for negotiations. It also developed pro-imperialist positions. As a result opposition grew in the party against Rahman’s policy. Finally the Awami League split in 1957 when a left wing – led by Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani (called the “*Red Maulana*”) – formed the *National Awami Party*. This was a petty-bourgeois nationalist party with sympathies for Maoist China. In general, Maoism became a strong and popular current at this time. (29)

22. The national liberation struggle of the people of Bangladesh expressed itself in numerous mass demonstrations, hartals, campaign of civil disobedience, etc. When a revolutionary period opened in the whole of Pakistan in 1968, the Bengali struggle culminated in a mass uprising and a guerilla war. The Pakistani ruling class tried to suppress this uprising with the most brutal means. As a side-note we remark that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his Pakistan People’s Party – which is admired by Alan Wood’s and Lal Khan’s IMT as a “revolutionary” and “socialist” – supported this reactionary war of oppression against the Bengali people in 1968-1971.

23. During this national liberation struggle – led by the left wing of the *Mukti Bahini* (the Bengali Liberation Army) and the *Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal* (a radical left spit from the National Awami Party) – the masses created *punchayats* (soviets) in the liberated territories. A central force amongst the left wing of the Mukti Bahini was the Maoist *Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party* (Proletarian Party of East Bengal) led by Siraj Sikder. This was the only Maoist force which supported the liberation struggle and indeed played a central and heroic role. After gaining independence the PBSP denounced the “false freedom,” led an armed struggle, and called for a “socialist revolution” against the Awami League-led regime. It finally became the most important opposition force against the government and organized a successful two-day hartal in December 1974. Weeks later

it was brutally crushed by the regime which had become a one-party dictatorship and Siraj Sikder – who has become a kind of national hero since then – was killed in prison. (30)

24. The National Liberation War led to another traumatic experience for the Bangladeshi people – the second genocide in little more than two decades! . The Pakistani army waged a war of annihilation against the people. It used paramilitary death squads – amongst which the Jamaat-e-Islami played a central role – which organized numerous massacres. As a result three million people were killed, ten million people had to flee to India, and between 200,000 and 400,000 women were raped. According to a UN report, 70% of all villages were destroyed by the Pakistan army and its local death squads. Nevertheless the Pakistani army could not suppress the revolution and – in December 1971 – the Indian army invaded the country and finally defeated the Pakistani army in 13 days. The main reason for the Indian invasion was to pacify the ongoing revolution and to stop the spread of soviets in their neighboring country. This was particularly important for the Indian ruling class also because at the same time – on the other side of the border – a mass rebellion of the peasants in West Bengal was going on. (the *Naxalite movement*). (31) US imperialism, worried by the revolutionary events, sent the Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal. In the end, Bangladesh became independent in December 1971. However, due to this unfinished national liberation war, the country has been since then a capitalist semi-colony, dependent of imperialist powers and India.

25. The Awami League took over power and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – with the support of the pro-Moscow Stalinists – turned to smash the growing left-wing oppositional forces. The regime allied itself with Moscow. At the same time US imperialism imposed a grain-embargo on Bangladesh which provoked the Bengal famine of 1974 in which 100,000 people died. The regime became more and more unpopular and in 1975 Rahman created the *Bangladesh Krishok Sramik Awami League* (BAKSAL, Bangladesh Farmers and Workers Awami League) which incorporated the Communist Party. All other parties were banned. On 15 August 1975 a sector of the army killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and nearly all his family members.

26. The Revolution was defeated because of the betrayal of bourgeois and Stalinist forces. The Awami League always played a hesitant role in the liberation struggle and – after coming to power – defended capitalism and suppressed the working class struggle. The National Awami

Party was more radical and *Red Maulana* was a sincere petty-bourgeois leader. But when Mao Tse-tung told him in 1969 not to support the independence struggle, the National Awami Party stopped its active role in the liberation struggle. (Maoist China always had an alliance with the Pakistani military dictatorships against India and instructed its international supporters to subordinate their struggle to its foreign policy calculations.) After independence it became a critical opposition party against the government but refused to launch any serious struggle. The pro-Moscow Stalinists – implementing their treacherous popular front policy – fully supported the Awami Party and its dictatorship and joined the struggle against the left-wing rebellion in 1972-75. (32) The Maoist forces – with the important exception of Siraj Sikder’s *Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party* – either supported the Pakistani army or took a neutral stand. And the *Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party* – despite taking the correct side in the national liberation war and against the Awami League government – undermined the struggle by choosing the guerrilla struggle instead of a Bolshevik orientation towards mass work in the enterprises and the cities in order to prepare a general strike and an armed uprising.

**Brief History from 1975 until today**

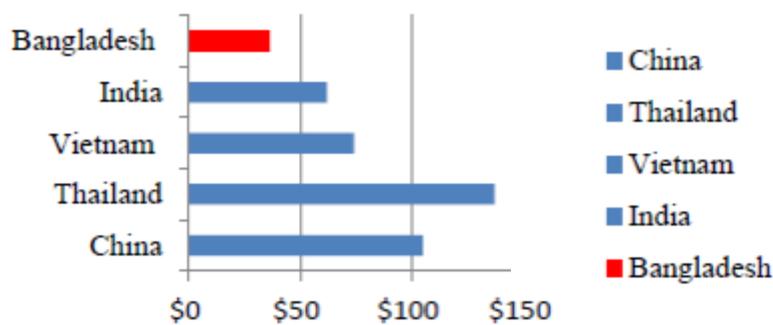
27. After the killing of Rahman several coup d’états and counter-coups were staged and finally Major General Zia-ur Rahman became the new military dictator in November 1975. He founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and got himself elected as president in rigged elections in May 1979. He initiated a slow re-orientation towards Western imperialism. He was killed in May 1981. After a brief period in which his deputy president, Abdus Sattar ruled, another military coup d’état in March 1982 brought General Ershad to power who ruled until December 1990. While several elections took place in this period (1979, 1981, 1986 and 1988), they were completely rigged and boycotted by the masses (only about 5-8% of the population participated in them). The highly corrupt regime of General Ershad enforced a policy of opening Bangladesh’s economy to imperialist capital (liberalization of trade, privatization of public enterprises, etc.). Finally it was overthrown by a mass uprising in November 1990 in which nearly all parties - from the left-wing parties, the Awami League, and the BNP to the Jamaat-e-Islami - participated.

28. The parliamentary elections in February 1991

**Table 1 Bangladesh FDI stock (Millions of dollars) (47)**

	1990	2000	2012
FDI stock	477	2.162	7.156

**Graph 3 Minimum Wages in Selected Asian Countries (in US-Dollar): (50)**



resulted in a victory for the conservative BNP led by Khaleda Zia, General Zia-ur Rahman's widow. The BNP had formed an alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami and was also aligned with the army command. Since then Bangladesh has seen a regular switch between a government of Khaleda Zia's BNP and a government of Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Hence the BNP ruled in 1991-1996 and 2001-2006 and the Awami League was in office in 1996 to 2001 as well as from December 2008 until today (see Table 5 for the percentage in votes for the major parties). In 2007 and 2008 another military-led regime usurped power via a coup d'état. Since 1991 these two parties acted in government as semi-colonial lackeys for imperialist capital, they privatized its public enterprises, opened the domestic market for foreign corporations, and built a textile industry which serves imperialism as a cheap resource for extra-profits.

29. Both – the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party – are bourgeois parties dominated by a family dynasty. While there is no qualitative difference between the two – they both share the same class character as capitalist parties – several differences exist between them. These are related to their different historical formations. The Awami League – founded in 1949 – has its historic roots in the Bengal nationalist movement for more national rights, autonomy and finally independence. This nationalist policy – in opposite to the reactionary Islamist regime of West Pakistan – pushed it towards a secular and verbally socialist agenda. (As a result, by the way, Bangladesh is still called a "*People's Republic*"). Naturally, this "socialism" was always hypocritical and was dropped for "free-market" rhetoric after 1991. However it was always marked strongly by a middle-class nationalism which was related to a just national liberation struggle. As a result of its more secular character, the Awami League gains particularly strong support amongst the countries minorities. (33) Another result of the Awami League's history is its traditional alliance with the Communist Party and other petty-bourgeois progressive forces. This is an important reason why the army officer corps – which always hated the liberation struggle – throughout the whole history of the country had an ambivalent relationship towards the Awami League. The army was traditionally dominated by the old Pakistani military bureaucracy: In 1975, out of the 36,000 men in the armed forces, 28,000 were repatriated from West Pakistan. (34) The Awami League leadership also did not really trust the army command so, between 1971 and 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman built his own paramilitary units – the *Jatiya Rakshi Bahini* which were directly under the command of the Prime Minister's Office and trained by the Indian Army. Naturally this annoyed the army command and was an important reason for its coup d'état in August 1975. The Awami League is particularly rooted in the industrial heart of country - the Dhaka region - where it always became the strongest party in the elections even when it lost them nationally.

30. The conservative BNP on the other hand is more closely related to the capitalist class and the army officer corps of the country. (35) This is not surprising since it was created by the military dictator General Zia-ur Rahman. For the same reason it has repeatedly formed – as it also does today – alliances with several right-wing Islamist parties like Jamaat-e-Islami.

31. There are strong similarities between Bangladesh and other South Asian countries. As we noted of the two main bourgeois parties in Bangladesh one (the Awami League) is linked to the liberation struggle and has a history of a left-leaning (in words, at least) militant petty-bourgeois rank and file while the other (the Bangladesh Nationalist Party) was a conservative reaction against this. This dichotomy has a strong similarity to the situation in Sri Lanka, where there are the *Sri Lankan Freedom Party* – which had a radical nationalist, anti-imperialist rhetoric in the past – and the more conservative *United National Party*. Similar too, to a certain degree, is the situation in India, with the bourgeois Indian National Congress of the Gandhi clan and the right-wing Hindu-chauvinist BJP. Or take, on the one hand, the bourgeois Pakistan Peoples Party of the Bhutto clan, which used some "socialist" populist as well as pro-democracy rhetoric in the past, while on the other hand there is the more conservative *Pakistan Muslim League*. All these parties are bourgeois forces which revolutionaries would never support politically. This however must not make Marxists blind to different histories and different appeals to the masses which such parties can possess.

32. Since the country must be characterized as a poor capitalist semi-colony, it has neither a strong bourgeoisie nor a large and relatively wealthy middle class which could form the basis for a relatively stable bourgeois democracy. Therefore the ruling class has always been in a relatively weak position in relation to the popular classes – which, one must not forget, have gone through a partially successful liberation war. As a result, the bourgeoisie had to resort repeatedly to the rule via a military dictatorship (1975-1990, 2007-08). Add to this the first years of independence, 1971-75, which were marked by an escalating civil war. In general, the army plays a central role in Bangladesh's politics. It has grown substantially towards nearly half a million personal if one includes the paramilitary border guards. It has built – similar to the Pakistani, Egypt, or the Cuban military – a significant economic empire which gives it relative autonomy from the successive governments and increases its power. A study on the Bangladeshi army concludes: "*According to an estimate, SKS' gross turnover was nearly 2 billion BTK in 1995 when it owned 15 industrial and two commercial units, five sales outlets and 15 real estates. Since then the SKS' empire has grown significantly, so has its turnover. Today it fully owns nine industries and two commercial units. In addition, it owns four sales promotion offices, 28 real estates ventures and holds shares in three internationally reputed enterprises.*" (36) Even when the country has a parliamentary elected government, the political situation is often very unstable and marked by series of hartals against the ruling party. This makes the army a safety net for the capitalist class, essential as underlined by its recent coup in early 2007 as well as two smaller attempted coups in 2009 and 2012.

33. As noted above the Bangladeshi army has been largely reconstructed via the old state apparatus from the time when the country was part of Pakistan. Only a few liberation fighters of the independence war have been integrated into its ranks (this is similar to South Africa after 1994.) This, however, is an additional factor why the army command and the ruling class have an interest to rebuild and reintegrate pro-Pakistani political forces, Islamists,

and reactionary death squads. This is also the reason that the army command and the ruling class have avoided any serious investigations and trials against the reactionary mass murder.

34. Finally, we re-emphasize that Bangladesh has gone through a tumultuous history in the past 130 years or so, replete with liberation struggles, wars, and genocide. Bengal was the heart of the anti-colonial resistance against the British imperialists. When it successfully drove out the British in 1947/48, it paid for the unfinished national democratic revolution with genocide. Two decades later, the Bengali workers and peasants started another liberation struggle – this time against the Punjabi bourgeoisie and army command of West Pakistan. Again, it won independence but it had to pay for it once more with genocide. And after they won independence, the workers and peasants recognized that this was a “dirty independence” full of hunger and empty of freedom. Since then the Bangladeshi masses have expressed their revolutionary energy in another mass uprising in 1990 and an innumerable number of hartals. The Bangladeshi working class and poor peasants have a remarkable history of revolution and sacrifice which is equaled only by a very few peoples around the

world. As a result there is a strong tradition of “revolutionary Marxism” in Bangladesh, unfortunately mostly under the banner of Maoism and Stalinism. (37)

### The Social and Political Crisis in Bangladesh Today

35. Since the Awami League retook power in 2008 the social and political crisis has sharpened. The crisis of world capitalism which started in 2008 naturally had massive effects on a country like Bangladesh which is so massively exposed to the iron laws of the imperialist-dominated world market. Even the state bureaucracy has to admit that poverty and unemployment figures have increased in the last years. This social crisis has been combined with the well-known catastrophes in the textile industry – most tragically the collapse of a garment factory in the Rana Plaza complex on April 24, 2013 in which at least 1,045 textile workers were killed. This was a highly political tragedy since the complacency of the state bureaucracy with the factory owners is well-known and, in this specific case, because the owner of the collapsed textile factory, Sohel Rana, is associated with the ruling Awami League.

36. Against the background of the crisis, the mostly

**Table 2** Shift in Status of Employment 2002-03 to 2010 (in millions) (51)

Employment status	2002-03	2005-06	2010
Self employed	19.8	19.9	22.0
Employer	0.2	0.1	0.1
Employee	6.1	6.6	9.4
Unpaid family helper	8.1	10.3	11.8
Day labourers	8.9	8.6	10.6
Household aid	1.2	1.9	1.4
Total	44.3	47.4	54.1

**Table 3:** Employment by Employment Status and Type of Production Unit (in percent) (52)

Type of Worker	Formal Enterprise	Informal Enterprise	Household
Employee	84.4	11.8	0.0
Employer	1.1	0.1	0.5
Self-employed in agriculture	2.3	8.9	57.2
Self-employed in non-agriculture	4.0	12.5	26.4
Unpaid family worker	0.0	31.7	0.0
Casual/irregular paid worker	4.5	3.7	0.0
Day labor in agriculture	1.3	17.0	0.0
Day labor in non-agriculture	2.3	14.3	0.0
Domestic worker in private household	0.0	0.0	15.9
All	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 4:** Employment by Employment Size of Establishment and Type of Production Unit (in percent) (53)

Employment Size	Formal Enterprise	Informal Enterprise	Household
Less than 10 workers	37.1	88.4	95.1
10–49	26.4	5.6	3.7
50–149	12.9	2.8	0.0
150 and more	23.6	3.3	0.0
All	100.0	100.0	100.0

female textile workers have initiated a series of strikes in the past years. Between 19 and 23 June, 2010, 800,000 workers went on strike to demand a wage increase. In July and August, nearly 700 factories were affected by strike waves, again on the question of wages. In December, new mobilizations took place to obtain the payment of the wage increase that had been won in August and had still not been paid by November. Since then there have been a series of strikes. In April 2013, after the collapse of a factory in the Rana Plaza complex, hundreds of thousands of garment workers stopped work. And recently, in September 2013, 200,000 textile workers ceased work and demonstrated on the streets where they fought with the police.

37. It is not surprisingly that the government of Sheikh Hasina has become increasingly unpopular. To counter this trend and in order to avoid defeat at the upcoming parliamentary elections in early 2014, the Awami League tries to present itself as a consistent fighter against those involved in the genocide of 1971 – i.e. the reactionary anti-democratic forces in the army and the extreme right-wing Islamist forces like Jamaat-e-Islami. Soon after it came to power, Hasina's government restored the four fundamental secular principles of the constitution enacted by her father. This provoked many Islamist parties and, in February 2009, the national border guards – a particularly ferocious and notorious paramilitary unit known as the Bangladesh Rifles – staged a mutiny in which some 70 people, including 57 army officers, were killed. Today one of the main issues of the Islamist fundamentalist forces is the change of the constitution and the imposition of Sharia law.

38. The Hasina government also banned 12 Islamist fundamentalist organizations with links to terrorist organizations (like Jamaat-ul Mujahideen, which was supposed to have links to the banned Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Toiba). (38) It initiated the so-called International Crimes Tribunal (it is not international but a tribunal of the Bangladeshi state) and brought a number of politicians and army officers who were involved in the genocide to court. This included a number of army officers who were involved in the slaughter of Sheikh Mujibur and his family in 1975 and which were now executed. It also includes leading politicians of the right wing Jamaat-e-Islami, like its former chief Golam Azam or Abdul Quader Mollah. Recently in September 2013, Mollah was sentenced to death for crimes against humanity during the nation's 1971 independence war against Pakistan. (39) The government is also considering banning Jamaat-e-Islami. In August, the Bangladesh High Court deregistered Jamaat-e-Islami), thereby banning it from participating in future elections. To stop the persecution of army officers, some forces in the army officer corps - which was supposed to have links with the outlawed right-wing Islamist fundamentalist Hizbut-Tahrir - planned a coup d'état in January 2013 which was foiled. Islamist fundamentalist forces like Jamaat-e-Islami have already called the army command to intervene, i.e. to overthrow the Awami League government.

39. Against the background of this growing class polarization and the increasing conflict between a government which supposedly wants to advance the democratic struggle against the reactionary anti-liberation forces and sectors of the army and the Islamist fundamentalist, a new mass movement has emerged – the *Gano Jagaran Mancha*

(Mass Awakening Platform) or also called the *Shahbagh Awakening* because of the name of the main square where it assembled. This mass movement emerged spontaneously in January 2013 and mobilized several hundreds of thousands of people for about one month. Similarly to the Arab Spring, the people occupied the Shahbagh square. Similarly to the Occupy movement, it was spontaneous, without a leadership and dominated by middle class youth and university students. Also similarly, they refused to allow political parties to take the stage. Instead, freedom fighters and activists are invited to speak. The movement protested against the violent offensive of the Islamist fundamentalists who have launched a series of violent attacks against the left and progressive forces. A particular provocation was the murder of the protest activist and blogger, Ahmed Rajib Haider, who was brutally slaughtered outside his home in Dhaka, allegedly by Jamaat activists. The movement opposes the Islamist fundamentalists' offensive for Sharia law and defends the secular constitution. It also demands the death penalty for those who participated in the genocide in 1971 as well as a ban of the Islamist fundamentalist parties. In addition, the Awakening calls for social boycott and government actions against banks, businesses and social service providers linked with Jamaat. While its agenda coincided with the Awami League, the movement was not a government tool (they didn't allow Awami League politicians to speak) but reflected the spontaneous democratic radicalization of the urban middle class youth. (40)

40. In short the Shahbagh movement was a progressive petty-bourgeois democratic movement which insisted on a consistent democratic purge of the army and the political parties against the open counter-revolutionary elements which participated in the genocide of 1971 and which attack the left and workers movement since then. However, the program and the methods of their democratic program are petty-bourgeois and wrong.

41. So let us summarize the situation: the Awami League government defends the capitalist order which – faced with the new crisis period of the world economy – brings more and more misery to the Bangladeshi popular masses. The number of strikes is increasing and the government becomes more and more unpopular. It tries to deflect attention from its political bankruptcy by advancing the democratic issue – in a bourgeois way via state repression – of purging the army and the political life from the counter-revolutionary pro-genocide forces. The Awami League calculates that with such a policy it can on one hand weaken its opponent, the BNP which is allied with the Islamist fundamentalist, and at the same time win some popular support for the incoming elections. Naturally, from the side of the Awami leaders this is nothing but a cynical populist maneuver: Why did they not raise the issue of war tribunals when they were in power in the past, but only now?! In addition, why did they collaborate with Jamaat-e-Islami on several occasions in the past?! However, political issues are not limited to the intentions of one side. What is important is what this or that policy objectively represents and what the masses think.

42. The objective meaning for the class struggle becomes clear if we take into account that Bangladesh is characterized by an unfinished national and democratic revolution. It is unfinished because the country remains

a semi-colony of imperialism and because the anti-democratic institutions (the army and the counter-revolutionary Islamist fundamentalists) still play a central role the political life. In addition to this the workers are still struggling for the 8 hour working day and the poor peasants demand land. The struggle against the army command as well as the reactionary Islamists is therefore a central issue of the class struggle in Bangladesh.

43. However revolutionaries have a different approach than the bourgeois and corrupt Awami politicians as well as that of the honest middle class youth. While they want to defeat the counter-revolution with the help of the bourgeois state machinery, revolutionaries have a different program. We call for class struggle methods. We call for mass mobilizations and armed workers and poor peasant militias to defeat the reactionary Islamists. We call for Workers and Peasant Tribunals to investigate the crimes of the accused politicians and army officers. We call for the combination of the democratic struggle and the ongoing workers struggles – particularly in the textile industry – in order to advance the struggle.

44. At the same time revolutionaries must warn against the sinister calculations of the ruling Awami League. They want – under the cover of the democratic struggle against the counter-revolutionaries – to limit democratic rights by banning a number of right-wing Islamist parties. We have seen in the 1971-75 period that the Awami League is not at all a democratic party. The class conscious workers and poor would be blinded if they believe that the ban of these parties is a progress for the class struggle. In fact it

will only strengthen the state apparatus. We are opposed to such bans as we are opposed to bourgeois courts investigating and ruling on these reactionary army officers and Islamist politicians. We call for Workers and Peasant Tribunals and the smashing of such parties via mass mobilizations and armed workers and peasant militias.

#### History and Class Character of Jamaat-e-Islami

45. Let us finally elaborate a characterization of Jamaat-e-Islami. Throughout its entire history, this party has always played an active force on the side of the counter-revolution. With the brief exception of the mass uprising in November 1990 (in which *all* parties participated) it never joined the progressive democratic and class struggles but – quite the opposite – it joined the counter-revolutionary side. During the decades of the Pakistani state, it fully supported the military dictatorship in Islamabad and even opposed equal rights of the Bengali language. During the Liberation War it supported the genocide of the Pakistani army and was actively involved in organizing death squads.

46. This concrete history – not the ideology – differentiates Jamaat-e-Islami from several other Islamist parties in the international arena. Irrespective of their Islamist agenda, forces like Hamas have remained for many years at the top of the Palestinian national resistance. Hezbollah has led heroic national liberation wars against Zionism and its agents. The Muslim Brotherhood was suppressed by the dictatorship for decades and when the Revolution started in January 2011 it joined it, albeit belatedly. Al-

**Table 5** Electoral Performance of Major Political Parties (1991-2008) (54)

	1991		1996		2001		2008*	
	% Vote	Polled seats						
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	30.8	140	33.6	116	42.7	198	32.74	30
Awami League (AL)	30.1	88	37.4	146	40.2	62	49.02	230
Jatiya Party (JP)	11.9	35	16.4	32	6.99	14	6.65	27
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	12.1	18	8.61	03	4.62	18	4.55	2
Total Number of Seats	-	300	-	299	-	300	-	299

**Table 6** Jamaat-e-Islami at parliamentary Elections 1970-2008 (55)

Election	% of Votes	Number of Seats (of 300)
1970*	6	1
1979**	4	6
1986	5	10
1991	12	18
1996	8	3
2001***	4	17
2008***	4	2

(Note: \*Provincial assembly, Jamaat failed to win any of 162 East Pakistan seats in the national assembly. \*\*As Islamic Democratic League. \*\*\*In alliance with BNP.)

Nusra in Syria is part of the revolutionary civil war against the Assad dictatorship. Even the reactionary Taliban are different from Jamaat-e-Islami since they have stood at the top of national liberation struggle for more than a decade. Even in Western imperialist countries one can have the situation that Islamists represent important segments of the oppressed migrants. Because of this historic difference, Jamaat-e-Islami never became a mass party, while the other parties mentioned above did. According to a recent opinion poll in January, Jamaat's support was only 1%. It is because of this specific situation when Islamists are involved in a just democratic struggle, revolutionaries will consider the application of the united front tactic. However if an Islamist force is never part of a just struggle, this is neither possible nor desirable.

47. In the 1980s, Jamaat-e-Islami started to remodel itself and become a more respectable parliamentary party. It is a right-wing bourgeois Islamist fundamentalist party. It made tactical alliance with each major political party in the country in the decades since. In 1991, Jamaat-e-Islami supported the BNP government. By the mid-1990s, the Jamaat-e-Islami collaborated with the Awami League in street protests against the BNP government. It reconciled with BNP ahead of the parliamentary election of 2001 and has kept this alliance since then.

48. Jamaat-e-Islami is a small party which gained at the two elections in the last ten years only about 4.5% of the votes (see Table 6). The party has no support amongst the working class and does not even try to achieve it. According to an observer: "*In the urban seats around Dhaka that usually swings in every election, the Jamaat's support is virtually non-existent.*" (41) It always contests a small number of districts at the elections (about 50 of 300). These districts are rural areas close to the border with India where they try to win votes amongst the peasants with a rabid anti-India chauvinist demagogy. The only two members of parliament it currently holds have been elected in the backward province of Chittagong Division which has a literacy rate is 22.08% and where one can buy and manipulate votes with the help of the state and the big land owners.

49. However despite its small size, Jamaat-e-Islami is an important party in Bangladeshi politics. First it is a king maker for the BNP. Therefore the BNP supports it now and helps it to organize demonstrations against the Awami League government. Secondly, through its support for BNP government's in the past it got access to important positions in the state apparatus and business. During the BNP government in 2001-06 it received the ministry of social welfare which helped the party to substantially finance a number of its social service institutions as well as madrasses. It also brought the Islami Bank under its control which has become the third largest bank in the country. It also receives financial support from several regimes in the Gulf. (42) Like all parties, it has a trade union wing called "Bangladesh Sramik Kallayan" but this seems to be very small (it might have some basis amongst the auto-rickshaw drivers.) However, given their financial resources and clear Islamist fundamentalist agenda, it has a large and ideologically motivated cadre base.

50. The reactionary character of the Jamaat-e-Islami and their Islamist allies also becomes visible from the fact that while it ignores the textile workers protests it currently campaigns for the so-called *13 Point Demands*. These

demands are a completely reactionary attack against the secular constitution, the democratic rights of women, progressive forces and religious minorities. (See the full list of the 13 demands below.) (43) While this campaign has been initiated by the Islamist fundamentalist group *Hefazate Islam Bangladesh* it has been joined by Jamaat-e-Islami, BNP and Ersahd's Jatiyo Party.

### Tactics in the Struggle against Jamaat-e-Islami

51. So let us summarize our conclusions and tactics. In our document "*Thesis on Islamism*" we have explained that Marxist do not judge Islamist forces primarily by its ideology but rather what is their position in a concrete situation of given relations and struggles between the classes. From which classes do they get their support, against which classes are they fighting. Are they involved in a progressive massive struggle (usually these are either anti-imperialist, national liberation, or anti-dictatorship struggles) or are they rather opposing or even oppressing it. (44) With this method we give critical support to those Islamists who are involved in just struggles of the workers, peasants and lower middle classes. At the same time we make clear that their program is a reactionary utopia and that the workers must fight independently under their own program. Where Islamist forces are not part of a progressive struggle there is no basis for critical support. Where they are part of the active counter-revolution, revolutionaries must call the working class to fight them mercilessly. Of course, we fight them with proletarian methods – mass mobilizations, workers and peasant tribunal, etc. – and not by calling the bourgeois state or even imperialism to intervene.

52. In the concrete case of Bangladesh, we see Jamaat-e-Islami as an extreme right wing, bourgeois Islamist force which has played during its entire history of more than six decades a thoroughly reactionary role as a murderous enemy of the working class and the oppressed. It is not nor has it ever been in the past six decades (with the brief exception of November 1990) part of any just struggle of the popular masses. Quite the opposite, it joined the genocidal war in 1971 and slaughtered many people. It has been a central party to bring the conservative BNP to power. Today it has joined as a central force a vicious campaign to abolish the secular constitution and to suppress the democratic rights of women, youth, etc. It is not with them and their supporters but with the textile workers and the urban middle class and students of the *Shahbagh movement* towards which revolutionaries must align. These forces have to be won for a program of transitional demands which helps them both to fight against the right-wing Islamist threat as well as against the ruling Awami government.

53. But at the same time the RCIT warns against the wrong, bourgeois methods with which the Awami League tries to suppress the right-wing Islamists. We oppose their policy of banning those parties and of putting the war criminals to a bourgeois court. We warn the workers that the Awami government could use the struggle against the Islamist fundamentalist as a pretext for attacking democratic rights and creating an authoritarian regime. We call for Workers and Peasants Tribunals to bring the war criminals to justice. We call for mass mobilizations to smash those Islamist fundamentalist which are a physical threat to the

workers movement and democratic rights in general. We call for the transformation of the textile workers strike for higher wages into a general strike and for the combination with the struggle against the right-wing threat of Islamist fundamentalism. The perspective of such a struggle must be the overthrow of the government and the creation of a workers' government with the support of the poor peasants and the urban poor, based on *punchayats* (soviets) and peasant armed workers and peasant militias.

**For Working Class Independence! For a Revolutionary Party as part of the Fifth Workers' International!**

54. Despite all the heroic efforts of the Bangladeshi working class, it still lacks a central precondition to liberate itself and all oppressed: *mass organizations which are independent from the bourgeoisie and its lackeys*. The trade union federations are dominated by corrupt bureaucrats and mostly affiliated with bourgeois parties. There is no mass workers party. The Stalinist Communist Party not only played a shameful role in supporting the bourgeois regime against the popular mass protests in 1971-75, but is until today in a strategic alliance with the bourgeois Awami League in line with the notorious popular front policy. The remaining Maoist groups are trapped in ultra-left adventurism and opportunist maneuvers.

55. The heroic struggle of the female textile workers is an excellent opportunity to overcome the tremendous weakness of the trade unions. It is decisive to overcome the divisions of the union movement in many small unions. For united fronts of the unions in common struggles as a first step towards the formation of *broad, mass unions* which organise the workers in the whole industrial branch! Given the fact that most of the Bangladeshi working class are not unionised, a broad recruitment campaign to build mass unions on a democratic basis is urgent. Defend the unions against state repression! Against all laws which limit and restrict the rights of trade unions.

56. The trade unions must be purged from the grip by the bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is out of touch with the interests and living circumstances of the ordinary members. For a *rank and file movement inside the unions* against the bureaucracy! In each struggle it is important to advance the building of *mass rank and file Action Committees* which strive to integrate all activists and workers independent if they are member of a union or not. The goal of such Action Committees must be to transform themselves into broad, comprehensive combat organizations at the work place. This orientation is not in contradiction to the work within the existing mass organizations (trade unions, etc.), but rather complement to these activities. The regular work within the unions at the grassroots against the bureaucracy improves the possibility of the independent organization of the working class. The support of each opportunity to build broad committees of struggle in turn strengthens a grassroots movement inside the unions.

57. The liberation of the Bangladeshi popular masses can only succeed if the struggle is led by the working class and its vanguard organized in a combat party. However to achieve this, the working class must rally the poor peasants and the urban poor. It must help the poor peasants

as well as the urban poor to build militant Action Committees. For a revolutionary peasant movement in alliance with and under the leadership of the working class!

58. Most importantly, the working class lacks its own party. Revolutionary socialists should support practical initiatives from sectors of the working class – in the unions, in other mass organizations etc. – to build a new, *independent Workers' Party*. While they should advocate a revolutionary program they should not make acceptance of it to a pre-condition from participation. They should would rather work inside such a new workers party as a revolutionary wing, fighting for a Marxist program under all circumstances and try to win the majority of the party for it. Such a Workers Party must refuse any political alliance – including electoral support – with bourgeois forces (like the Communist Party had done with the Awami Party).

59. Such a Workers' Party might be a possible but not necessary road to form the one and only instrument which can lead the working class to victory: a *revolutionary combat party*, based on the lessons and experiences of the Bolsheviks who organised under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky the first successful seizure of power of the workers and peasants. In an article on the tasks of the Revolution in India, Trotsky compared the conditions for the revolutionary struggle with those in Russia in 1917. He concluded that the central difference is the lack of a Bolshevik party: "...all those social peculiarities which made possible and unavoidable the October revolution are present in India in a still sharper form. In this country of poor peasants, the hegemony of the city has no less a clear character than in czarist Russia. The concentration of industrial, commercial and banking power in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, primarily the foreign bourgeoisie, on the one hand; a swift growth of a sharply defined proletariat, on the other, exclude the possibility of an independent role of the petty bourgeoisie of the city and to an extent the intellectual and transform by this the political mechanics of the revolution into a struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the peasant masses. So far there is "only" one condition missing: a Bolshevik Party. And that is where the problem lies now." (45) Unfortunately, this is also true in Bangladesh today.

60. As there can be no "socialism in one country", neither can there exist a "revolutionary party in one country". Leon Trotsky emphasised this basic truth repeatedly. In a reply to a critique he elaborated: "*Your conception of internationalism appears to me erroneous. In the final analysis, you take the International as a sum of national sections or as a product of the mutual influence of national sections. This is, at least, a one-sided, undialectical and, therefore, wrong conception of the International. If the Communist Left throughout the world consisted of only five individuals, they would have nonetheless been obliged to build an international organization simultaneously with the building of one or more national organizations. It is wrong to view a national organization as the foundation and the international as a roof. The interrelation here is of an entirely different type. Marx and Engels started the communist movement in 1847 with an international document and with the creation of an international organization. The same thing was repeated in the creation of the First International. The very same path was followed by the Zimmerwald Left in preparation for the Third International. Today this road is dictated far more imperiously than in the days of Marx. It is, of course, possible in the*

*epoch of imperialism for a revolutionary proletarian tendency to arise in one or another country, but it cannot thrive and develop in one isolated country; on the very next day after its formation it must seek for or create international ties, an international platform, an international organization. Because a guarantee of the correctness of the national policy can be found only along this road. A tendency which remains shut-in nationally over a stretch of years, condemns itself irrevocably to degeneration."* (46) A revolutionary party today has to be built in close accordance with building a revolutionary world party, the *Fifth Workers' International*. As long as such a Bolshevik party does not exist, the heroic struggles of the masses can not successfully win liberation. This is why the RCIT urges revolutionaries in Bangladesh to form a revolutionary Bolshevik organization as part of building a revolutionary international tendency to advance the formation of such a party based on a program for socialist revolution. The RCIT is looking forward to collaborate with Bangladeshi revolutionaries in this historic mission.

### **For a Program of Socialist Revolution!**

61. The RCIT considers the elaboration of a revolutionary Action Program as a necessary precondition for the formation of a Bolshevik organization in Bangladesh. Such a program has to be based on the Marxist scientific understanding that there can be no liberation of the working class and the oppressed without the overthrow of capitalism. Such a revolution will take place neither peacefully nor gradually or via the parliament but only by an armed insurrection of the working class in alliance with the poor peasants and the urban poor and under the leadership of a revolutionary party. Such a revolution will combine the democratic tasks – minimum economic demands for workers, distribution of the land to the peasants, struggle against the authoritarian state apparatus, liberation of women and youth, etc. – with the socialist tasks of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the nationalization of the banks and industry under workers control. This is only possible via the proletarian conquest of power and the smashing of the bourgeois state machinery and its replacement with the organs of the working class' dictatorship. At the same time the revolutionary struggle in Bangladesh must be understood as part of the international struggle for socialism in South Asia and worldwide. In short, the program of the revolution in Bangladesh is the program of *Permanent Revolution* which links the democratic tasks with the goal of socialist revolution and the national with the international class struggle.

### **Defend the workers' rights through consistent struggle against the capitalists!**

\* Support the textile workers demand for higher minimum wages! For an obligatory minimum wage for all workers set by the trade unions and worker representatives! For coordinated campaigns of the unions in all branches for substantial wage increases for all workers!

\* To protect workers' wages against inflation a sliding scale of wages linked to a workers and poor people's cost of living index is needed! Build price control committees to stop the inflation!

\* Jobs for all! For a public employment program financed by higher taxes for the rich!

\* Full support for the Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad! For international trade union solidarity to fight against the discrimination of migrants!

\* Open the books of the enterprises so that people can control the accounts of the capitalists and land owners and see their huge wealth!

\* Stop all privatisation of public enterprises! Re-nationalisation of the enterprises privatised in the past decades!

\* Workers control in the enterprises so that workers can veto the management's decisions!

\* No payment of any interests to the banks! Cancellation of all debts – both to domestic and foreign financial institutions!

\* Nationalisation of all banks and fusion to one central state bank under workers control!

\* Expropriation of the big business capitalists and big land-owners! Nationalisation of their property under control of the producers, i.e. the workers and peasants!

### **Liberate the poor peasants!**

\* *Expropriate the Joteder (big land owners)! The land must be in the hands of the state under the control of workers and poor peasants! The land to those who cultivate it! The local democratic actions council representatives of the poor and landless peasants have to decide the question of the allocation and use of the land! Promotion of voluntary agricultural cooperatives and the formation of larger state production units!*

\* *Cancel all debts of the peasants! For interest-free loans for small peasants!*

\* *For a program of agricultural development elaborated under the control of the workers and the poor peasants! For a radical change of direction in the agricultural economy! Away from the monoculture! For sustainable cultivation methods in agriculture! As much international transport of agricultural product as necessary to supply the world's population as necessary and as much supplies of locally produced agricultural goods as possible!*

### **International Emergency Plan against the capitalist Climate Crisis!**

\* *For an international emergency plan against the climate crisis! For a plan to convert the energy and transport system and for a global phasing out of fossil fuels and nuclear energy production connected to a public employment programme! For the massive exploration and use of alternative forms of energy such as wind, tidal and solar power! For a global reforestation program of the woods! Radical expansion of public transport to push back individual car traffic!*

\* *Nationalization under workers' control of all energy companies and all companies that are responsible for basic supplies such as water, agriculture and airlines, ship and rail facilities!*

\* *Force the imperialist corporations and states to pay compensation to the semi-colonial countries for the environmental destruction caused by them! No emissions trade and "ecological points" system!*

### **Fight oppression of women and youth!**

\* *Equal pay for equal work! Abolish child labour!*

\* *For a public employment program to create the conditions for the socialization of housework and simultaneously eliminate unemployment among women! For the massive construction of free, well-equipped 24-hour child-care facilities! For a wide range supply of affordable and high-quality public restaurants*

and laundry facilities!

\* Free access to free contraception and for the right of abortion!

\* Fight against violence against women! For the expansion of public women safe houses, controlled by women's organizations! For the formation of self-defence units by the workers' and women's movement against sexist violence!

\* Public education for all youth financed by taxes on the rich! For a massive public investment program to build schools close to the villages and plantation where the people live! For massive recruitment of more teachers to reduce the number of school students in each class!

\* For the building of a revolutionary women's movement! For the right to caucus for women in the mass organizations of workers and oppressed! For a revolutionary youth movement!

### **Revolutionary Struggle for Democracy! Down with the all-powerful military!**

\* Down with all-powerful Military! For a radical purge of the state apparatus! For the complete screening of all state officials and their actions - especially police, army, intelligence, administration, legal, enterprise directors, etc. - under the control of workers and peasants councils! Abolish the presidency!

\* No to police and surveillance state! Against expanding the powers of police and courts! For the replacement of the apparatus of repression by workers' and people's militia!

\* Defence of the right to strike, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of political and union organizing, as well as the freedom to make use of all communication and information media!

\* Radical democratization of the administration and jurisdiction: election and possibility to recall of the entire administrative apparatus by the people!

\* For Workers and Peasants Tribunals to bring the war criminals to justice!

\* For the separation of state and religion! No privileges for religious institutions (taxes, religious education at schools etc.)! For the transfer of the property of the clergy into the public hands to serve the needs of the people!

\* For a revolutionary Constitutional Assembly! Such an assembly must not convened by the ruling class but by the workers, poor peasants and urban poor! It will emerge as a result of an armed uprising and be protected by workers and peasants armed units! In such a Constitutional Assembly Marxists will fight for a revolutionary program.

### **For a workers' government, based on the poor peasants and the urban poor**

The working class and the oppressed will never get anything if they are not fighting for it themselves. This is why they must resort to mass actions like strikes, demonstrations, occupations, general strikes and armed insurrection. For this they must organise themselves in action councils and workers' and peoples' militias.

The goal of the struggle is the creation of a workers' government, based on the poor peasants and the urban poor. Such a government must make a decisive break with the capitalist class.

\* Nationalization of banks and fusion into a single central bank, nationalization of large companies, large wholesale trade and transport, social, health, education and communication sector without compensation and under workers' control! Introduction of a foreign trade monopoly!

\* Expropriation of the capitalist class and especially the banks, corporations and speculators!

\* For a workers' government, based on the poor peasants and the urban poor, on the basis of councils in the enterprises and neighbourhoods as well as armed militias! Their representatives are under the direct election and recall-ability by the workers and receive not more than an average skilled workers salary!

\* For a socialist federation of workers and peasant republics in South Asia and beyond!

### **Footnotes:**

- (1) UNCTAD: Handbook of Statistics 2012, p. 462
- (2) UNDP: Human Development Report 2013, p. 160
- (3) UNDP: Human Development Report 2013, p. 164
- (4) UN-HABITAT: State of the World's Cities 2012/2013, p. 124
- (5) UNDP: Human Development Report 2013, p. 172
- (6) UNCTAD: Handbook of Statistics 2012, p. 462
- (7) UNIDO: Industrial Development Report 2011, p. 192-193
- (8) UNIDO: Industrial Development Report 2011, p. 169
- (9) UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2013, pp. 50-51
- (10) On the issue of value transfer via unequal exchange see the RCIT's book by Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South, chapter 6-8, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net>
- (11) Herbert Jauch: Globalisation and Labour, Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI), Prepared for the Regional Labour Symposium, Windhoek, 6.12.2005, p. 5
- (12) See The World Bank: International Debt Statistics 2013, p. 66
- (13) Ulanddsekretariatet LO/FTF: Bangladesh Labour Market Profile 2013, p. 12
- (14) World Bank: Bangladesh Development Update, April 2013, p. 24
- (15) Abu Ahsanul Habib and Rafiqul Islam: Country Report -Bangladesh, 2013
- (16) See World Bank: World Development Report 2013, p. 372; Nazli Kibria: Working Hard for the Money: Bangladesh Faces Challenges of Large-Scale Labor Migration, Boston University, August 2011, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=848>;
- (17) Ruma Paul and Serajul Quadir: Bangladesh urges no harsh EU measures over factory deaths, May 4, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/04/us-bangladesh-factory-idUSBRE94304420130504>
- (18) Ulanddsekretariatet LO/FTF: Bangladesh Labour Market Profile 2013, p. 8
- (19) International Labour Organization: Bangladesh Country Report: Trade and Employment, 2013, p. 50
- (20) Abu Ahsanul Habib and Rafiqul Islam: Country Report -Bangladesh, 2013
- (21) Ulanddsekretariatet LO/FTF: Bangladesh Labour Market Profile 2013, p. 3
- (22) Balasundaram Nimalathan and Abu Taher: Situation Analysis of Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Bangladesh: A Country Profile
- (23) Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies: Women's Participation in Trade Unions in Bangladesh: Status, Barriers and Overcoming Strategies, 2009, p. 8
- (24) Ulanddsekretariatet LO/FTF: Bangladesh Labour Market Profile 2013, p. 3
- (25) Strike wave signals global shift, October 21, 2010, <http://newunionism.wordpress.com/2010/10/21/strikes/>
- (26) Patrick Barta and Syed Zain Al-Mahmood: Culture of Mass Strikes Suffocates Bangladesh's Economy. 'Hartals' occurring at a time when Bangladesh is already struggling to rebuild its reputation with apparel companies, Wall Street Journal, August 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323971204578628043063823914.html>

- (27) Patrick Barta and Syed Zain Al-Mahmood: Culture of Mass Strikes Suffocates Bangladesh's Economy. 'Hartals' occurring at a time when Bangladesh is already struggling to rebuild its reputation with apparel companies, Wall Street Journal, August 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323971204578628043063823914.html>
- (28) For the RCIT's assessment of the creation of Pakistan see Chapter 2 of the Pakistani Sections' Action Program in Revolutionary Communism No. 3 or [www.thecommunists.net/world-wide/asia/pakistan-is-a-prison-house](http://www.thecommunists.net/world-wide/asia/pakistan-is-a-prison-house).
- (29) For a general analysis of Maoism see Michael Pröbsting: Theses on Maoism, in: Revolutionary Communism No. 5, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/thesis-on-maoism/>
- (30) See e.g. Naeem Mohaiemen: 'Kothai Aj Shei Shiraj Sikder (Where Today Is that Shiraj Sikder)?' Terrorists or Guerrillas in the Mist; in: Sarai Reader 2006: Turbulence, Delhi 2006, pp. 302-303
- (31) By the way: this is another example of a liberation war with a contradictory character as we outlined in our document Michael Pröbsting: 'Liberation struggles and imperialist interference' (Revolutionary Communism No. 5, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/liberation-struggle-and-imperialism/>). While communists naturally supported the national liberation war, they opposed the Indian army's intervention. This reactionary intervention however did not lead communists to drop their support for the liberation struggle.
- (32) See on this e.g. Gonotantrik Mazdur Party: Anatomy of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, 1 August 2001, [www.marxist.com/communist-party-bangladesh110801.htm](http://www.marxist.com/communist-party-bangladesh110801.htm)
- (33) Joyeeta Bhattacharjee: Bangladesh: Political Trends and Key Players; in: Strategic Trends, South Asia Series Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2011, pp. 9-11
- (34) Joyeeta Bhattacharjee: The Bangladesh Army: Documenting its Corporate Interests, Observer Research Foundation, Occasional Paper #17, October 2010, p. 3
- (35) Joyeeta Bhattacharjee: Bangladesh: Political Trends and Key Players; in: Strategic Trends, South Asia Series Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2011, p. 15
- (36) Joyeeta Bhattacharjee: The Bangladesh Army: Documenting its Corporate Interests, Observer Research Foundation, Occasional Paper #17, October 2010, p. 19
- (37) Leaving aside the old Communist Party and its splits – who usually ally themselves with the Awami League – a number of centrist organizations are undertaking mass work. The Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) – which comes from a Maoist background but has now become a permanent observer within the Mandelbrite "Fourth International" – claims: "On the ground, in spite of its divisions and its numerical weakness, the radical Bangladeshi left remains strong. Thanks to a long tradition of struggle, it has won mass support among workers and peasants. Most of the political parties of the radical left have built mass organizations which have made possible the development of spectacular struggles, with significant results. For example, the CPB-ML leads the Krishok and Kishani Sabha federations, two peasant organizations which represent Via Campesina in Bangladesh and have two million members. Several political parties, such as the Revolutionary Workers' Party and the Revolutionary Democratic Party, have built trade unions in the textile industry. The parties of the radical Left have also developed work and built mass organizations aimed at students and women." (Danielle Sabai: The left and social movement struggles in Bangladesh, 9 November 2011, <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2372>)
- (38) Naimul Haq: Coup bid reveals extremism within, 26 February 2012, <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2504>
- (39) Mohammad Hossain: A travesty of justice in Bangladesh, 20.9.2013, [http://atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/SOU-03-200913.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/SOU-03-200913.html)
- (40) See e.g. Tahmima Anam: Shahbag protesters versus the Butcher of Mirpur, The Guardian, 13 February 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/13/shahbag-protest-bangladesh-quader-mollah> and Nazmul Sultan: Situating the Shahbag Movement: Re-founding the National?, Radical Notes, February 22, 2013, <http://radicalnotes.com/tag/bangladesh/>
- (41) See Jyoti Rehman: The Jamaat factor in Bangladesh politics, March 13, 2013, <http://kafila.org/2013/03/13/the-jamaat-factor-in-bangladesh-politics-jyoti-rehman/>
- (42) See Jyoti Rehman: The Jamaat factor in Bangladesh politics, March 13, 2013, <http://kafila.org/2013/03/13/the-jamaat-factor-in-bangladesh-politics-jyoti-rehman/>
- (43) The 13 points:
- \* Reinstating the phrase "Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" in the constitution as one of the fundamental principles of state policy.
  - \* Law providing death penalty for blasphemy.
  - \* Punish the 'atheist' leaders of Shahbagh, bloggers and anti-Islamists who make "derogatory comments" about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
  - \* Stop killing, attacking and shooting scholars and Madrassa students.
  - \* Lift restrictions on mosques and remove obstacles to holding religious programmes
  - \* Free all arrested Islamic scholars and Madrasa students.
  - \* Stop threatening teachers and students of Qawmi Madrassas, Islamic scholars, imams and khatibs.
  - \* Stop creating hatred against Muslims among young generation by misrepresentation of Islamic culture in the media.
  - \* Qadiyanis (Ahmadiyas) be declared non-Muslims.
  - \* Ban all foreign culture including free mixing between members of opposite gender and candle light vigils.
  - \* Stop setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities across the country.
  - \* Make Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels; scrap education and women's policies.
  - \* Stop anti-Islam activities by NGOs, 'evil attempts' by Qadiyanis and conversion by Christian missionaries in CHT and elsewhere in country. (See What The World Needs To Know About Hefazate Islam, April 7, 2013 <http://bdlawpolgov.wordpress.com/2013/04/07/what-the-world-needs-to-know-about-hefazate-islam/>)
- (44) See Michael Pröbsting and Simon Hardy: Theses on Islamism (2011), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-islamism/>
- (45) Leon Trotsky: The Revolution in India. Its Tasks and its Dangers (1930), in Trotsky Writings 1930, p. 246, <http://marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/05/india.htm>
- (46) Leo Trotzki: To the Editorial Board of Prometeo (1930); in: Writings 1930, S. 285f.
- (47) UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2013, p. 218
- (48) ILO: Global Employment Trends 2013, p. 78
- (49) UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2013, p. 33
- (50) World Bank: Bangladesh Development Update, April 2013, p. 24
- (51) International Labour Organization: Bangladesh Country Report: Trade and Employment, 2013, p. 43
- (52) Asian Development Bank: The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Bangladesh, 2012, p. 20
- (53) Asian Development Bank: The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Bangladesh, 2012, p. 20
- (54) Joyeeta Bhattacharjee: Bangladesh: Political Trends and Key Players; in: Strategic Trends, South Asia Series Volume 1 Issue 2, November 2011, p. 18
- (55) Jyoti Rehman: The Jamaat factor in Bangladesh politics, March 13, 2013, <http://kafila.org/2013/03/13/the-jamaat-factor-in-bangladesh-politics-jyoti-rehman/> ■

# Revolutionary and Centrist Tactics against the ANC's orchestrated Democratic Counterrevolution in 1994

## A Reply to Socialist Fight and the Liaison Committee for the Fourth International

By Michael Pröbsting, Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 7.11.2013

**S**ocialist Fight and its Liaison Committee for the Fourth International (SF/LCFI) have recently published several documents in which they attack the RCIT and its revolutionary tradition. As part of this effort, they have republished a lengthy polemic against our movement written in 1995 by a short-lived centrist sect called "*Revolutionary Internationalist League*" (RIL). In a short preface to this old document, SF/LCFI expresses its support for the RIL critique of our movement: "...it has very valuable insights on the politics of Workers Power and the RCIT today." (1) The character of the document matches its authors in terms of lack of seriousness and is not worth a detailed response. (2) However it contains an important issue which SF/LCFI emphasizes as relevant for South African Trotskyists today. SF/LCFI holds up the old position of RIL and their then-comrades of the *Committee for a Workers Government* (South Africa) that revolutionaries should have given critical support for the *African National Congress* (ANC) in the elections in 1994 and should even have joined the ANC for years of entry work. SF/LCFI attack the position of our predecessor organization – the *League for a Revolutionary Communist International* and its British section *Workers Power* – as we renounced giving electoral support for the ANC since it was a popular front which engineered together with the white monopoly capitalists the democratic counter-revolution at that time. In this document we will focus on this issue and its lessons for revolutionary tactics in the present period.

### SF/LCFI/RIL arguments for advocating "critical" support for the ANC when it was orchestrating the democratic counter-revolution

Let us first reprint the criticism which the SF/LCFI comrades so enthusiastically approve:

"This has been particularly clear over questions of electoral support. An early example was the initial refusal of *Workers Power* and the *Irish Workers Group* to call for a vote to Sinn Fein in the north of Ireland elections in the early 80s, despite the importance of the Republican military struggle against British imperialism, let alone the clear indications of the strength of its base among the most oppressed and militant sections of the nationalist working class. Subsequently they changed their position, merely commenting that they had not realised that Sinn Fein would get so many votes, as though it was just the number of crosses on ballot papers!

Much more recently we have seen a similar example of this sectarianism in the South African elections though without any possible excuse that they did not know the ANC would get so many votes.

Trotskyists have to fight to break the workers and the masses from the ANC. In the elections it was essential to fight for independent working class organisation and action, including defence to expose the treachery of the ANC, and to call for the

unions and mass organisations to build a Workers Party, all of which was the position taken by the ITC. But this fight had to be taken into the living experience of the masses, who saw a vote for the ANC as constituting themselves as a nation, voting for social change and defending 'their' elections against sabotage. That is why we understood that on that basis and as part of that strategy (and not for any other reasons) consistent Trotskyists had to be in favour of a vote for the ANC.

Not Workers Power though. They could not bring themselves to vote for the ANC. They can vote for any bunch of counterrevolutionary social democrats on the basis that they are a bourgeois workers party. But the ANC and Sinn Fern are not bourgeois workers' parties. They are petit bourgeois or bourgeois nationalists and the ANC, moreover, is a popular front. That is how political arguments are settled by Workers Power: it is just a matter finding the right label. We are not quarrelling with the labels here, we are disagreeing with the LRCL's un-Marxist method of settling questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics, put a movement in the right category and up pops the appropriate response. This is a sectarian method which ignores the real questions of the movement and consciousness of the masses and of the advanced sections of the working class and youth, of their relationships to the various organisations and leaders, and of finding the most effective and dynamic way to intervene in their struggles and change the consciousness of the advanced workers.

So in the South African elections the LRCL ended up calling for a vote for the Workers List Party, an electoral front for a small centrist sect which got less than 1% of the vote. Moreover they knew perfectly well that this group actually opposed fighting for the unions to form a Workers Party, and that their electoral adventure was part of their sabotage of the Committee for a Workers Party. But never mind - they were not nationalists and they were not a popular front!

In both cases the opportunism towards reactionary bourgeois forces and the sectarianism towards the masses, mechanical formulae have replaced Marxist analysis and revolutionary strategy." (3)

In another recently published document Gerry Downing – the central leader of SF/LCFI – reiterates their support for the RIL/CWG line of support for the ANC in 1994. In addition he develops this line further by advocating an entry of South African Trotskyists into the ANC in 1994 and the years afterwards.

"It is likely that entryism in the ANC by a serious grouping would not have lasted more than a few years but it may well have saved the CWG as a political current. (...) a properly thought out and co-ordinated entry faction of the CWG might have produced good results. It was the logic of the call for the vote for them in 1994." (4)

### What was the Position of the Bolshevik-Communists?

Let us first state and explain our position on this issue. From the 1980s onwards we warned of the dangers of the

betrayal of the Stalinist/nationalist leadership of the ANC and the embedded *South African Communist Party* (SACP). The middle class leadership and the labor bureaucracy who dominated the ANC/SACP movement were determined to derail the revolutionary class struggle against the Apartheid regime in the 1980s and to find a place in the ruling class of a post-Apartheid capitalist South Africa. In order to cover this betrayal it propagated the well-known Stalinist stagiest conception of focusing first on a “national democratic revolution” – together with sectors of the bourgeoisie and by retaining capitalism – and after a long period they promised to fight for a socialist revolution. The predictable result was that the ANC developed into a fully-fledged popular front government which saved capitalism and kept the deep social and national/racial contradictions while at the same time implementing some limited democratic reforms. The ANC – in alliance with the bureaucracies of the SACP as well as of the trade union COSATU – has governed South African capitalism for 19 years and continues to safeguard the profits for its monopoly capital. It has helped to create a small black bourgeoisie, middle class and labor aristocracy and fully participates in the super-exploitation of the huge majority of the black working class.

Our movement explained already in 1986 that the ANC/SACP leadership aims not for a working class revolution but for the creation of a “democratic”, “non-racist” capitalism.

*“As Mandela explains, the demands of the Charter do not aim to break the power of the capitalists and establish a socialist state in South Africa, rather their purpose is to establish a black capitalist class alongside the white capitalists. (...) Thus the Freedom Charter is the programme for the popular front which aims to mobilise all classes, including the nascent black bourgeoisie, around a programme to establish a more ‘democratic capitalism’. For all their talk about ‘uninterrupted’ revolution, this is the programme the SACP endorses and fights for. The South African CP seeks to divert all democratic struggles into a self-contained ‘democratic stage’, a distinct bourgeois revolution. This means doing violence to the manifold objective connections between all democratic issues and the overthrow of capitalism in South Africa. It means intervention to put a brake on and interrupt the dynamic of the struggle against Apartheid.”* (5)

We warned that the ANC/SACP strategy the danger of aborting the South African revolution.

*“If this strategy is victorious inside the black trade unions and opposition movement, it could tie the working class into a fatal alliance with their present exploiters. In this way, the ANC/SACP, for all their talk of destroying ‘apartheid capitalism’, could actually abort the South African revolution.”* (6)

When the white monopoly capitalists and the Botha Apartheid regime as their political executive agreed to a negotiated settlement with the ANC, we immediately pointed to its consequences for the ANC. We explained that such a process would mean the transformation of the ANC from a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement into a bourgeois formation and – given its strategic alliance with the Stalinist SACP – a popular front formation which would oversee the maintenance of South African imperialism and the super-exploitation of the black working class.

*“If the ANC agrees to a slow and peaceful dismantling of grand apartheid and the whites’ exclusive hold on political power then it will clearly have become a bourgeois formation. This process*

*will involve the dispersal of its exiled cadres, many of whom are subjective petit bourgeois revolutionists, into broad mass organisations (township, youth, women and trade union). The result will be the interposition of a party and union bureaucracy between the masses and the leaders. This will free the leaders to ditch their past anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist promises and direct the whole mass movement into a strategic compromise – a multi racial imperialist capitalism based on the super-exploitation of the black and coloured masses, and perhaps even a small section of poor whites.”* (7)

We emphasized that it was the elementary duty of revolutionary Marxists to warn the masses against the ongoing betrayal of the ANC/SACP and to call the organizations of the workers movement – the trade unions but also a bourgeois workers party like the SACP – to break their popular front alliance with the bourgeois ANC.

We criticized the then-comrades of the RIL – the *Comrades for a Workers’ Government* – for their failure to understand the character of the ANC and their adaption to the popular front by giving it electoral support in 1994.

*“Qina Msebensi (QM), the organ of Comrades for a Workers’ Government, the South African section of the LTT, stands clearly to the left of the MWT. It raises the revolutionary slogans of workers’ councils and armed defence squads, a revolutionary constituent assembly, the overthrow of apartheid capitalist tyranny and a workers’ government.*

*It has drawn up a programme of action embodying these demands. But there remain elements of serious confusion in its slogans. Its call for a “revolutionary interim government” deliberately confuses the call for a revolutionary workers’ government with the ANC’s interim government proposals.*

*Why is an interim government needed at all? Before elections to a constituent assembly any provisional government would be an instrument of delay, compromise and democratic counter-revolution. Interim to what? What class character would this government have? Is the ANC to be in it? And COSATU too?*

*QM also continues to place demands on the ANC as if it was a reformist workers’ party. They call on the ANC to “organise the masses to take power”, and want to extend critical electoral support to the ANC, including its bourgeois elements, in the full knowledge of the economic attacks that will rain down on the black toilers by such a government.*

*QM refers to the ANC leaders as petit bourgeois reformists. But it is not a workers’ party or even a radical anti-imperialist petit bourgeois movement. The ANC is a popular front; it is a class collaborationist bloc between workers’ organisations and bourgeois nationalists in which the latter call the tune.*

*The correct class tactics would be to call on the leaders of the workers’ organisations, COSATU and the SACP, to break with their bourgeois strategy designed to meet the needs of a pro-IMF black neo-liberal bourgeoisie and their white capitalist allies. They should mobilise the masses for the immediate and unconditional calling of elections for a sovereign constituent assembly and take up the struggle for a workers’ government.”* (8)

#### **The Key Issues which SF/LCFI/RIL/CWG failed and still fail to understand**

One of the key problems of the SF/LCFI policy is its incomprehension of the nature of the popular front and the appropriate tactics against it. This becomes evident from their approval for the nonsensical comparison of Sinn Fein and the ANC in the lengthy RIL quote above. They completely

confuse two things: one is a petty-bourgeois nationalist (or populist) movement which is engaged in a mass struggle against oppression and exploitation. This was clearly the case with Sinn Fein when it was centrally involved in the national liberation struggle in Northern Ireland against the British occupation. This was also the case with the ANC when it was a leading force in the militant Anti-Apartheid struggle in the 1980s (and also before).

The situation was very different when the ANC started negotiations with the Apartheid regime in 1990 which opened the doors to the disastrous democratic counter-revolution in 1994. This treacherous development can be rather compared with the sell-out of the Irish national liberation struggle by the Sinn Fein leadership when it joined the negotiations with the British Blair government leading to the so-called *Good Friday Agreement* of 10 April 1998.

The RIL muddle-heads – and SF/LCFI blindly following them – however compare the ANC selling out the revolutionary mass struggles with Sinn Fein still part of an ongoing mass struggle against the British occupation. It is not surprising that they therefore are astonished that the Bolshevik-Communists applied different tactics to different situations. We gave critical support to the petty-bourgeois nationalist Sinn Fein (including at elections) which was at that time engaged in an ongoing liberation struggle. This was part of our tactic of the anti-imperialist united front. Similarly we applied the united front tactic to the ANC when it was engaged in the heroic mass struggles of the Black working class and youth (albeit not at elections since the ANC was banned and couldn't participate at elections). We stopped giving critical support to Sinn Fein (including at elections) when its leadership sold out the mass struggle and became part of an imperialist settlement. Applying the same method one could not give critical support to the ANC when it settled for a reactionary settlement with the white monopoly capitalists and thus openly betrayed the black working class and youth which fought so heroically against the Apartheid regime.

SF/LCFI can't see the decisive and qualitative difference between a potentially treacherous leadership which however is still engaged in mass struggles and thus under the pressure from below and an openly and actually betraying leadership which joins hand with the capitalist or even imperialist state apparatus and monopoly capital and actively derails the revolutionary masses. It is a well-known law of dialectics that quantitative changes in the end lead to qualitative transformations. It is however equally important for a Marxist to recognize when such a qualitative transformation takes place. Otherwise such a Marxist is doomed to master the recognition of the various aspects and different shades of the development with similar precision as a color-blind person manages to recognize the multifaceted colorfulness of a rainbow.

It is certainly true that Marxists in 1994 who refused to give electoral support for the ANC were a pretty small minority and became relatively isolated amongst the mass of the black workers and youth. However in a situation where the masses stop fighting, are retreating and passively hoping for a solution via the counter-revolution, Marxists can not support their illusion by calling to bring the ANC as the leading force of the "democratic" counter-revolution to power. In such a situation, when the class struggle ebbs and the working class faces a strategic defeat, Marxists are

often forced to remain an isolated minority. But this is the politically principled and hence only possible alternative compared to giving electoral support to the ANC which means nothing else than supporting the party which is the chief agent of this historic betrayal of 1994.

Naturally, even then there could have been developments which could have created new features in the situation. Let us assume the fascists of Eugene Terreblanche's *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* would have started a civil war against the ANC in 1994. In such a civil war Marxists obviously would have defended the ANC in order to smash the fascists (but still could not give it electoral support). However this obviously was not the main feature of the situation in the early 1990s.

The key task of Marxists in this period was to agitate in the workers movement for a break with the ANC and the formation of an independent Workers Party. The RIL laughs about the small number of votes for such an attempt at the 1994 elections (the *Workers List Party*) and our support for this. But we were aware that the betrayal of the ANC leadership would sooner or later lead to divisions and splits and hence would open the possibility for revolutionaries to advance the struggle for political working class independence. We see such developments in the recent year. Revolutionaries who have denounced the ANC sell-out from the beginning and did not support this historic betrayal in 1994 by voting for the chief party of the betrayal were certainly in a better position when the first illusions of the masses have mitigated.

The SF/LCFI comrades' advice that Marxists should have entered the ANC in 1994 "for several years" is undoubtedly the highpoint of their popular frontist jumble. It certainly can be possible and necessary to enter a reformist party or – under specific circumstances – even a petty-bourgeois or bourgeois mass party when it is engaged in mass struggles and when there is a potential for an inner-party polarization.

However to join a bourgeois popular front party in a situation of strategic defeat where the mass struggle is in full retreat, where the masses move to the right and where the black bourgeois and middle class strengthen its grip over the ANC, is nothing but criminal nonsense! It can mean nothing else than voluntarily liquidating a Trotskyist organization into a bourgeois-led party which is moving fast to the right. This can only lead to demoralization and dissolution of a Trotskyist organization.

### The Relevance for Today

The issue of the correct tactic in 1994 is certainly not only of historic interest. With the heroic Marikana strike in August 2012 a new period has opened in South Africa full of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary possibilities. There are strong indications for this as the creation of the *Workers and Socialist Party* (WASP) with roots amongst the militant miners vanguard as well as of the petty-bourgeois populist *Economic Freedom Fighters* (EFF) of ex-ANC youth leader Julius Malema, which is very popular amongst militant workers and youth, show.

Entryism in such political formations against the context of the new class struggle period is perfectly reasonable. The WASP and the EFF are political formations which have arisen against the background of great class struggles and

which are related to them by their support for them. On the other hand, the ANC in 1994 was actually calling off the class struggle and orchestrated a historic betrayal of the decades of mass struggles.

The SF/LCFI lacks any clarity in political understanding when they are advising entry tactics by comparing the situations of 1994 and 2012/13.

The failure to differentiate a Sinn Fein or an ANC engaged in mass struggles and a Sinn Fein or an ANC orchestrating a historic betrayal of working class and oppressed, demonstrates once more a fundamental lack of political compass. Their failure to see the difference between an actual counter-revolution and a mass struggle (in which petty-bourgeois forces are of course preparing a counter-revolutionary deal) leads them to utter confusion when faced with the problems of the current Arab Revolution. Failing to see the difference between counter-revolution and mass liberation struggles causes them to consider the counter-revolutionary capitalist dictatorships of Gaddafi and Assad (supported by Russian and Chinese imperialism) as "progressive camps" while the democratic mass uprisings in Libya and Syria are denounced as "*pro-imperialist counter-revolutions*" because of limited or mostly rhetorical Western imperialist support. (9) It is only logical that they join the counter-revolutionary camp in Libya and Syria.

The SF/LCFI comrades confuse counter-revolution and liberation struggle in the case of South Africa and they do it faced with the Arab Revolution. This is however unavoidable given their lack of a revolutionary program and their semi-critical attachment to the rotten centrist tradition of Gerry Healy.

Revolutionary organizations are tested in historical situations when central issues of the class struggle arise and force each and everyone to take a position. We judge organizations and activists not only by the theoretical position – as important as they are – but also by their concrete stand in central political issues of the liberation struggles of the workers and the oppressed and which lessons they learn from it.

This is why the RCIT considers theoretical clarity and a principled program as essential for revolutionaries who are dedicated to building revolutionary vanguard parties nationally as well as internationally. Clarity on issues like the popular front, on the nature of the democratic counter-revolution in South Africa including the possibilities for advancing the formation of revolutionary party in this country today, on the Arab Revolution, etc. are central in this context. The RCIT is dedicated to contributing to the discussion amongst South African revolutionaries in order to support the elaboration of a revolutionary action program for the coming period. Such a task requires not only collective work but also the centralization of revolutionary cadres in a joint homogenous national and international Bolshevik organization.

## Footnotes:

(1) The Revolutionary Internationalist League On Workers Power (1995), republished by Socialist Fight / Liaison Committee for the Fourth International, 18.10.2013, <http://socialistfight.com/2013/10/18/the-revolutionary-internationalist-league-on-workers-power/>

(2) The document reflects the crass combination of sectarianism and opportunism of the RIL. It invents all strange forms of distortions and accusations against our movement. However, despite

its considerable length (more than 15.000 words) it fails to reproduce a single quote from the organization it is criticizing! The RIL functioned as the British satellite of the US group RWP around the cult leader Leland Sanderson which, in addition to its political failures, was well-known for a psycho-cultish internal regime it up-hold. (See on this e.g. Letter by the IBT's Jason Wright documenting his leaving the Revolutionary Workers League, [http://www.regroupment.org/main/page\\_appendix\\_3.html](http://www.regroupment.org/main/page_appendix_3.html)) The RIL document is full of sneering arrogance against the "irrelevant sect Workers Power and LRCI" and boasts about the superiority of the RIL's theory and practice in leading movements. However, history was cruel to them and one or two years after they published this "scathing criticism" of our movement ... they dissolved themselves and disappeared! Their US masters dissolved soon after. RIL/RWL was one of those sects which come and go without tradition and without leaving any heritage for the revolutionary Trotskyist movement. Why do the SF/LCFI comrades have to base their historic critique of our movement on such a flash in the pan? Can it be the case that the comrades themselves lack a continuity of tradition and program and therefore have to rely on a hotchpotch of various political groupings?! For a fundamental critique of the SF/LCFI's political support for the tradition of the British centrist Gerry Healy and his "International committee" see our document 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" – A Reply from the RCIT to "Socialist Fight", October 2013 (<http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/healy-and-fourth-international/>).

In opposite to them, our movement has existed for decades and continues to defend the revolutionary program in words and deeds. Evolving around the British group Workers Power from the mid-1970s onwards, the predecessor organization of the RCIT were initially called "*Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International*" (1984-89). We renamed ourselves in "*League for a Revolutionary Communist International*" (1989-2003) and later "*League for the Fifth International*" (2003-2011). When the majority of the LFI started to degenerate into centrism, the founding cadres of the RCIT fought against it but remained a minority and were finally expelled in April 2011. Since then we are combining the preservation of the revolutionary heritage of our movement – which the LFI majority has given up by now – with refining our theory and program. (On the issues of our expulsion by the LFI majority see RCIT: Where is the LFI drifting? A Letter from the RCIT to the LFI comrades, 11.5.2012, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/centrist-degeneration-of-lfi/>)

(3) The Revolutionary Internationalist League On Workers Power (1995), republished by Socialist Fight / Liaison Committee for the Fourth International, 18.10.2013, <http://socialistfight.com/2013/10/18/the-revolutionary-internationalist-league-on-workers-power/>

(4) Gerry Downing (SF/LCFI): On the Differences in the Revolutionary Marxist Group, 4.11.2013, pp. 13-14, <http://socialistfight.com/2013/10/30/on-the-differences-in-the-revolutionary-marxist-group/> and <http://lcligacomunista.blogspot.co.at/2013/11/the-struggle-for-revolutionary-party-in.html>. The SF/LCFI comrades later took this document from their website without any explanation.

(5) Workers Power/Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International: The Crisis of leadership, in: South Africa Special: Apartheid: from Resistance to Revolution (Permanent Revolution No. 4), 1986, p. 25, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/crisis-of-leadership-south-africa-1986/>

(6) WP/MRCI: The Crisis of leadership, in: South Africa Special: Apartheid: from Resistance to Revolution (Permanent Revolution No. 4), 1986, p. 29, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/crisis-of-leadership-south-africa-1986/>

(7) LRCI: South Africa: No to a negotiated settlement! Fight ANC betrayal! in: Trotskyist International No. 4 (Spring 1990), p. 50,



## Announcement of a new Book from the RCIT

# Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South

## Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

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

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. *The Great Robbery of the South* shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions.

*The Great Robbery of the South* elaborates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before has such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

### The Author

Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 30 years. He is the author of many articles and pamphlets in German and English language. He published books or contributed to books on *Rosa Luxemburg* (1999), on the *World Economy* (2008), on *Migration* (2010) and the *Arab Revolution* (2011). He is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

You can view more details of the book as well as excerpts at the special website which we have created for this book:

[www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net](http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net)

Order your copy NOW! \$20 / £13 / €15 plus p+p (21\$ for US and international, £9 for UK, €10 for Europe)

To order: [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)

## The Great Robbery of the South

*Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital*

*Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

# Announcement of a new Book from the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?

### The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a new book. It's called *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?*. The book's subtitle is: *The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism*. The book is in English-language. It has 5 chapters plus an appendix, 108 pages and includes 19 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who is the *International Secretary* of the RCIT.

In *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* Michael Pröbsting analyses the character of the Cuban Revolution 1959-61, its bureaucratic degeneration, and the recent march of the Castro leadership towards capitalism.

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

*Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* describes in detail how a number of relatively recent political, economic, and social measures were purposely taken by the Cuban government to open the road back to capitalism. Pröbsting elaborates the key role of the world's new great imperialist power, China, in Cuba's state policy as exemplified in the June 2011 Sino-Cuban agreement for a first Five-Year Plan of cooperation between these two states.

*Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?* examines these developments from the viewpoint of Marxist theory, the nature of the

ruling bureaucracy in Stalinist states, and the process of restoration of capitalism under such regimes.

In conclusion, the book proposes a socialist program for political and social revolution in Cuba to halt the advance of capitalism and to eradicate the country's bureaucratic dictatorship.

You can view more details of the book as well as excerpts at the RCIT website:

[www.thecommunists.net/theory/new-book-on-cuba](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/new-book-on-cuba)

You can order the book via

\* our contact address [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net),

\* online via the RCIT's website [www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net)

\* the special website for the book

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

#### The Author

Michael Pröbsting is a revolutionary activist since 30 years. He is the author of many articles and pamphlets in German and English language. He published books or contributed to books on *Rosa Luxemburg* (1999), on the *World Economy* (2008), on *Migration* (2010) and the *Arab Revolution* (2011). His latest book, *The Great Robbery of the South* (published in 2013), analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He is the *International Secretary* of the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*.

# Cuba's Revolution Sold Out?

*The Road from  
the Revolution to the  
Restoration of Capitalism*



By Michael Pröbsting

Published by the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency*

# Revolutionary Communist International Tendency:

## What does the RCIT stand for?

The *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) is a fighting organisation for the liberation of the working class and all oppressed. It has national sections in various countries. The working class is the class of all those (and their families) who are forced to sell their labour power as wage earners to the capitalists. The RCIT stands on the theory and practice of the revolutionary workers' movement associated with the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Capitalism endangers our lives and the future of humanity. Unemployment, war, environmental disasters, hunger, exploitation, are part of everyday life under capitalism as are the national oppression of migrants and nations and the oppression of women, young people and homosexuals. Therefore, we want to eliminate capitalism.

The liberation of the working class and all oppressed is possible only in a classless society without exploitation and oppression. Such a society can only be established internationally.

Therefore, the RCIT is fighting for a socialist revolution at home and around the world.

This revolution must be carried out and lead by the working class, for she is the only class that has nothing to lose but their chains.

The revolution can not proceed peacefully because never before has a ruling class voluntarily surrendered their power. The road to liberation includes necessarily the armed rebellion and civil war against the capitalists.

The RCIT is fighting for the establishment of workers' and peasant republics, where the oppressed organize themselves in rank and file meetings in factories, neighbourhoods and schools – in councils. These councils elect and control the government and all other authorities and can always replace them.

Real socialism and communism has nothing to do with the so-called "real existing socialism" in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or Eastern Europe. In these countries, a bureaucracy dominated and oppressed the proletariat.

The RCIT supports all efforts to improve the living conditions of workers and the oppressed. We combine this with a perspective of the overthrow of capitalism.

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

The RCIT strives for unity in action with other organizations. However, we are aware that the policy of social democracy and the pseudo-revolutionary groups is dangerous and they ultimately represent an obstacle to the

emancipation of the working class.

We fight for the expropriation of the big land owners as well as for the nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the poor and landless peasants. We fight for the independent organisation of the rural workers.

We support national liberation movements against oppression. We also support the anti-imperialist struggles of oppressed peoples against the great powers. Within these movements we advocate a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to nationalist or reformist forces.

In a war between imperialist states we take a revolutionary defeatist position, i.e. we don't support neither side and advocate the transformation of the war into a civil war against the ruling class. In a war between an imperialist power (or its stooge) and a semi-colonial country we stand for the defeat of the former and the victory of the oppressed country.

The struggle against national and social oppression (women, youth, sexual minorities etc.) must be lead by the working class. We fight for revolutionary movements of the oppressed (women, youth, migrants etc.) based on the working class. We oppose the leadership of petty-bourgeois forces (feminism, nationalism, Islamism etc.) and strive to replace them by a revolutionary communist leadership.

Only with a revolutionary party fighting as its leadership can the working class win. The construction of such a party and the conduct of a successful revolution as it was demonstrated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky in Russia are a model for the revolutionary parties and revolutions also in the 21 Century.

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries!  
For a 5<sup>th</sup> Workers International on a revolutionary basis!  
Join the RCIT!

*No future without socialism! No socialism without a revolution!  
No revolution without a revolutionary party! ■*





