

## Confirmation by the Class Enemy

*A new IMF report discusses the global class struggle and its relationship to the COVID-19 crisis*

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 14 October 2020, [www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net)

The latest edition of the *World Economic Outlook*, which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) publishes twice a year, contains some highly interesting material. <sup>1</sup> As is well known, the IMF is one of the key institutions of global capitalism. Hence, its statements and ideas are quite representative for the political thinking within the imperialist monopoly bourgeoisie.

Usually, the publications of the IMF focus on the analysis of the state of the world economy, its short- and long-term trends as well as on proposals for reforms – naturally all from the point of view of capitalism. However, the latest edition of the *World Economic Outlook* contains also a section which does not deal so much with economic issues but rather with the international class struggle. Titled “*Social Unrest during COVID-19*”, the IMF authors discuss the development of global mass protests before the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the consequences which the later had and has of the class struggle as well as future prospects. <sup>2</sup>

*“Social unrest has decreased in recent months as mobility has declined. This is consistent with past experience immediately following epidemics. However, unrest was high and rising before the COVID-19 crisis started. As the crisis passes, unrest may yet reemerge in countries where progress on underlying social and political issues has stalled and where the crisis exposes or exacerbates preexisting problems. Social unrest has fallen markedly as lockdowns and social distancing have been introduced. The Reported Social Unrest Index (RSUI), which counts media reports of social unrest, has fallen dramatically since March 2020. The frequency of major unrest events – defined by country-specific spikes in the RSUI – fell to its lowest in almost five years. The decline in social unrest corresponds closely with a generalized decline in mobility driven by regulations, such as shelter-in-place orders and voluntary social distancing. (...) Notable exceptions include the United States, where protests against police violence grew rapidly at the start of June and Lebanon. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, unrest had been rising for several years. Late 2019 and early 2020 saw major protests, most notably in the Middle East and South America but also elsewhere, including in Belarus, Bolivia, Chile, France, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, India, Iran, and Iraq. This was the continuation of a longer trend since 2016, which itself reversed a gradual decline in unrest following a peak after the Arab Spring of 2011.”*

To underline their theses the IMF authors also reproduce two graphs. (See the Appendix below) One demonstrates the rise of global class struggle in the years 2016-19 as well as the abrupt and dramatic decline in spring 2020 with the beginning of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution and the Lockdown policy. The second graph shows the explosion of mass protests in the U.S. since early June 2020 after the brutal killing of George Floyd by the police.

These statements by a leading imperialist institution are in several aspects a powerful confirmation of the analysis which the RCIT has elaborated in the recent past. We have repeatedly pointed out in our

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<sup>1</sup> International Monetary Fund: *World Economic Outlook: A Long and Difficult Ascent*. Washington, DC, October 2020

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 40-41

works that the current historic period which began in 2008 has a “revolutionary” character. In summary, it is a period distinguished by the decay of capitalism which inevitably provokes economic crises, political instability and the incessant danger of war. Such conditions continually generate mass protests, popular uprisings and revolutionary situations as well as counterrevolutionary dangers. In other words, this historic period lacks any equilibrium on the world stage.<sup>3</sup>

### Three dramatic shifts in the world situation in the past 12 months

In October 2019, the RCIT recognized a dramatic upsurge in the global class struggle which opened a global pre-revolutionary situation.<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that the IMF authors – in their own words – also

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. chapter 14 in Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <http://www.great-robbery-of-the-south.net/>. See also the annual World Perspective documents which the RCIT has published in the past years: RCIT: World Perspectives 2020: A Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 8 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2020/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2019: Heading Towards a Volcanic Political Eruption. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, 2 March 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2019/>; Michael Pröbsting: World Perspectives 2018: A World Pregnant with Wars and Popular Uprisings. Theses on the World Situation, the Perspectives for Class Struggle and the Tasks of Revolutionaries, RCIT Books, Vienna 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2018/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2017: The Struggle against the Reactionary Offensive in the Era of Trumpism, 18 December 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2017/>; RCIT: World Perspectives 2016: Advancing Counterrevolution and Acceleration of Class Contradictions Mark the Opening of a New Political Phase, 23 January 2016, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-perspectives-2016/>; RCIT: Perspectives for the Class Struggle in Light of the Deepening Crisis in the Imperialist World Economy and Politics, 11 January 2015, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-january-2015/>; RCIT: Escalation of Inner-Imperialist Rivalry Marks the Opening of a New Phase of World Politics. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, April 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* (English-language Journal of the RCIT) No. 22, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-april-2014/>; RCIT: Aggravation of Contradictions, Deepening of Crisis of Leadership. Theses on Recent Major Developments in the World Situation Adopted by the RCIT's International Executive Committee, 9.9.2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 15, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-september2013/>; RCIT: The World Situation and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Communists. Theses of the International Executive Committee of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, March 2013, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 8, [www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013](http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/world-situation-march-2013). See also Michael Pröbsting: A Powerful Confirmation. A bourgeois study on the revolutionary character of the current historic period, 12 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/confirmation-of-revolutionary-character-of-historic-period/>.

For an assessment of the revolutionary character of the current historic period from a bourgeois point of view see e.g. Samuel Brannen, Christian Stirling Haig, Katherine Schmidt: *The Age of Mass Protests, Understanding an Escalating Global Trend*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., March 2020; *The Economist*: Political protests have become more widespread and more frequent. The rising trend in global unrest is likely to continue, 10 March 2020, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/03/10/political-protests-have-become-more-widespread-and-more-frequent>.

<sup>4</sup> See on this, in addition to the above-mentioned RCIT document “World Perspectives 2020”, the essay by Michael Pröbsting: Are We Nearing a New “68 Moment”? A massive upsurge of global class struggle in the midst of a dramatic shift in the world situation 22 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/are-we-nearing-a-new-68-moment/>

recognize this development. This explosion of popular uprisings went hand in hand with the beginning of the global recession in late 2019.<sup>5</sup>

The above-mentioned quotes from the new IMF report also show that this imperialist institution confirms another key thesis of the RCIT: that the COVID-19 crisis and the policy of Lockdowns had dramatic negative consequences for the global class struggle. It ended – with one stroke – the wave of popular uprisings. This is why we speak about the *COVID-19 Counterrevolution* and the massive *reactionary character* of the Lockdown policy.<sup>6</sup>

We immediately recognized the consequences of this crisis and the desire of the ruling class to utilize it for their reactionary political and economic goals. In the RCIT Manifesto, published in March this year, we stated that the “*global COVID-19 crisis is a major turning point in the world situation*” which “*means that the pre-revolutionary world situation has ended for now and a global counter-revolutionary situation has opened up.*”<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the IMF reports also confirms the RCIT analysis that the explosion of mass protests in the U.S. in early June – under the slogan “*Black Lives Matter*” – has provoked another shift in the world situation. As we elaborated in various documents, this popular uprising in the heart of the imperialist beast brought the global counterrevolutionary situation to an end and opened a new phase of

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<sup>5</sup> See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Another Great Recession of the Capitalist World Economy Has Begun. The economic crisis is an important factor in the current dramatic shift in the world situation, 19 October 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/another-great-recession-of-the-capitalist-world-economy-has-begun/>; see also chapter “*Another Great Recession has begun*” in the above-mentioned RCIT document “World Perspectives 2020” as well as chapter I of our book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>; Michael Pröbsting: No, the Corona Virus is not the Main Cause of the Global Economic Slump! Bourgeois Media Officially Recognize the Beginning of another Great Recession, 3 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/corona-virus-is-not-the-main-cause-of-global-economic-slump/>.

<sup>6</sup> The RCIT has analyzed the COVID-19 counterrevolution extensively since its beginning. Starting from 2 February we have published more than fifty documents which are all compiled at a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/collection-of-articles-on-the-2019-corona-virus/>. In particular we refer readers to the RCIT Manifesto: COVID-19: A Cover for a Major Global Counterrevolutionary Offensive. We are at a turning point in the world situation as the ruling classes provoke a war-like atmosphere in order to legitimize the build-up of chauvinist state-bonapartist regimes, 21 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-a-cover-for-a-major-global-counterrevolutionary-offensive/>. In addition, we draw attention to our very first article on this issue by Almedina Gunić: Coronavirus: “I am not a Virus”... but WE will be the Cure! The chauvinist campaign behind the “Wuhan Coronavirus” hysteria and the revolutionary answer, 2 February 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/wuhan-virus/>; see also our above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. See also the following essays by the same author: The Second Wave of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution. On the ruling class strategy in the current conjuncture, its inner contradictions and the perspectives of the workers and popular resistance, 20 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-second-wave-of-the-covid-19-counterrevolution/>; The Police and Surveillance State in the Post-Lockdown Phase. A global review of the ruling class’s plans of expanding the bonapartist state machinery amidst the COVID-19 crisis, 21 May 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/police-and-surveillance-state-in-post-lockdown-phase/>.

<sup>7</sup> RCIT Manifesto: COVID-19: A Cover for a Major Global Counterrevolutionary Offensive.

struggle. However, the global class struggle has not yet reached the level of late 2019 and early 2020, i.e. before the beginning of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution.<sup>8</sup>

### **Short- and long-term prospects of the global class struggle**

Finally, it is noteworthy, how the IMF assesses the short- and long-term consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for the global class struggle. In the short term, the authors estimate that there will be no massive surge in the mass protests. They cite historical studies for their – from the imperialist point of view – optimistic outlook. *“The results (of the IMF’s analysis, Ed.) show very weak statistical evidence of a higher likelihood of unrest following epidemics. On the contrary, in any given country, the likelihood of social unrest drops slightly following epidemics.”*

However, in the longer term, the imperialist analysts are not so confident. They fear that there will be another upsurge of mass struggles since the COVID-19 crisis not only did not remove the social and economic hardship for the masses but rather massively worsened their living conditions. *“Unrest is likely to reemerge as the pandemic eases. This analysis shows that unrest was elevated before the COVID-19 crisis began but has declined as the crisis has continued. It is reasonable to expect that, as the crisis fades, unrest may reemerge in locations where it previously existed, not because of the COVID-19 crisis per se, but simply because underlying social and political issues have not been tackled. The threats may also be bigger where the crisis exposes or exacerbates problems, such as a lack of trust in institutions, poor governance, poverty, or inequality.”*

In other words, the IMF analysts hope that there will be no repetition of the global wave of popular uprisings – similar to the situation in late 2019 – in the near future. However, they are worried that such developments will occur in the longer term as it is impossible to overcome the capitalist crisis with all the dramatic social consequences for the popular masses.

It is evident that the IMF – as a leading institution of global imperialism – does not study issues like the global class struggle and the consequences which the COVID-19 crisis has on it for purely academic reasons. The leaders of the IMF are appointed by the governments of the Great Powers. The academics who elaborate studies for the IMF are selected and paid by these leaders. They want to see results for such investments. Only the most naïve observer could ignore that the IMF is highly worried by an upsurge of popular uprisings and, on the other hand, observes with relief any downturn of such mass movements.

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<sup>8</sup> See the RCIT statement: The Global Popular Uprising against Racism and Police Violence. This is a turning point ending the global counterrevolutionary situation. But workers and oppressed need to prepare for an ongoing reactionary offensive of the ruling class! 8 June 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-global-popular-uprising-against-racism-and-police-violence/>; See also numerous statements and articles of the RCIT on the Black Lives Matter protests since early June which have been compiled on a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/north-america/articles-on-uprising-after-murder-of-george-floyd/>.

## How can the Lockdown Left continue denying the counterrevolutionary nature of the COVID-19 policy?!

As we have repeatedly pointed out in our works, the organizations of the social democratic, Bolivarian, Stalinist and centrist left shamefully were nearly unanimously united in their support for the counterrevolutionary lockdown policy of the ruling class. They all jumped the wagon of the bourgeois propaganda that COVID-19 would constitute *“the worst pandemic in modern history”* and denied – and continue denying – the reactionary nature of these attacks on democratic rights.<sup>9</sup>

At this point we will not repeat our analysis of the pandemic which is – as we elaborated in detail in our works – neither a *“hoax”* nor an *“unprecedented catastrophe”* which could in any way justify the extremely anti-democratic and socially destructive Lockdown policy.<sup>10</sup> Here, we will rather limit ourselves to ask the *“left-wing”* supporters of the Lockdown policy to consider the following.

1) Is it not telling that the Lockdown policy (including the banning of larger demonstrations and meetings) provoked a collapse of the global mass struggles?! For a Marxists, this is clearly a reactionary – and not a progressive – consequence!

2) Is it not telling that the clever analysts of the bourgeoisie – like those in the IMF staff – are fully aware of such reactionary consequences of the Lockdown policy?! Can anyone seriously believe that the ruling class did not think about such consequences already in spring this year when they imposed the Lockdown policy?! We remind those – who still have doubts – to the statement of a former IMF adviser in mid March who said, referring to the COVID-19 crisis: *“Only in a crisis are governments able to rally people to accept necessary but painful reforms. Every crisis is also an opportunity.”*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See on this e.g. chapter V of our book by Michael Pröbsting: *The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution: What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle*, RCIT Books, April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-covid-19-global-counterrevolution/>; see also by the same author the last chapters in the above mentioned essay: *The Second Wave of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution; COVID-19 and the Lockdown Left: The Example of PODEMOS and Stalinism in Spain*, 24 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-lockdown-left-podemos-and-stalinism-in-spain/>; *Social-Bonapartism in Argentina. The Partido Obrero (Tendencia) of Jorge Altamira supports the State of Emergency*, 29 April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/social-bonapartism-in-argentina/>; *When Ultra-Leftism marries Social-Bonapartism and Gives Birth to “Post-Marxist” Obscurantism. A reply to the CWG/ILTT*, 5 May 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-when-ultra-leftism-marries-social-bonapartism/>; *Brazil: Social-Bonapartism of the Lockdown Left in Practice. How the leaderships of the trade unions, PT, PCdoB, the pseudo-Trotskyist PSTU and PSOL sabotage the struggle against the Bolsonaro government*, 10 June 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/brazil-social-bonapartism-of-the-lockdown-left-in-practice/>; in addition we also refer to the joint statement of RCIT and CEP: *FIT (Argentina): A Scandalous Betrayal of the Heroic Palestinian Masses!* 2 July 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/fit-argentina-a-scandalous-betrayal-of-the-heroic-palestinian-masses/>

<sup>10</sup> We have analyzed the real nature of the COVID-19 pandemic in numerous documents compiled at the above-mentioned special sub-page on our website. Our latest essay on this issue is Michael Pröbsting: *COVID-19: The Great Barrington Declaration is indeed Great! Numerous medical scientists protest against the reactionary lockdown policy*, 11 October 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-the-great-barrington-declaration-is-indeed-great/>.

<sup>11</sup> Bloomberg: *The worldwide coronavirus pandemic will change the way we shop, travel and work for years to come. History shows us how*, 15 Mar, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-13/coronavirus-will-change-how-we-shop-travel-and-work-for-years?srnd=premium-europe>; see also Michael Pröbsting: *Ex-IMF*

3) Is it not telling that, as a leading medical scientist pointed out, nearly all governments deliberately ignored the existing pandemic plans which had been prepared for years and instead opted for the authoritarian Lockdown policy which had been newly invented by the Stalinist-capitalist regime in China?! <sup>12</sup> In other words, this is a policy which had been invented not for public health reasons but for from political reasons.

As long as the so-called “left” is incapable to understand the real nature of the COVID-19 Counterrevolution and does not break completely with their social-bonapartist support for the bourgeois Lockdown policy, as long it is doomed to play a reactionary role in the class struggle. We appeal to all authentic socialists to break with such a policy and to join us in the struggle for a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism – a system which inevitable pushes humanity into economic, social, health and ecological collapse!

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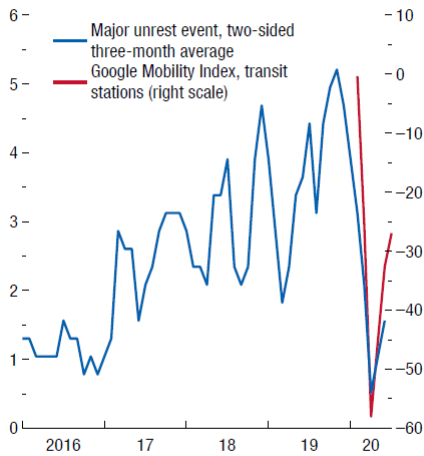
Advisor: “Corona Virus Crisis is also an Opportunity”. How the ruling classes try to utilize COVID-19 to overcome their crisis, 16 March 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ex-imf-advisor-corona-virus-crisis-is-also-an-opportunity/>

<sup>12</sup> “Lockdown is a new invention of 2020. Every European country had prepared pandemic plans. We knew one was going to come along. Except for Sweden, all the countries threw it out of the window when Covid-19 arrived. Of course, we don’t know the specific nature of the next pandemic so the plans have to be adjusted accordingly. But basic public health practice was ignored.” (Alastair Benn: We are throwing the working class under the bus – an interview with Professor Martin Kulldorff, 2 October 2020, <https://reaction.life/we-are-throwing-the-working-class-under-the-bus-an-interview-with-professor-martin-kulldorff/>).

## Appendix

**Figure 1.4.1. Monthly Share of Countries Experiencing Unrest Implied by the Reported Social Unrest Index**

(Percent; percent deviation from baseline on right scale)

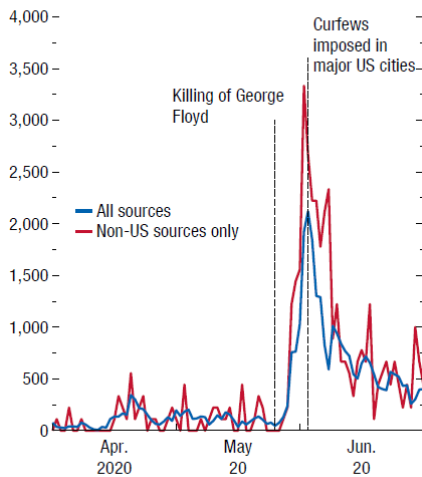


Sources: Factiva; Google Community Mobility Reports; and IMF staff calculations.

Note: The Google mobility index is a simple average of all countries' transit mobility deviation from baseline, expressed monthly.

**Figure 1.4.2. Daily Protest Articles for the United States, April–June 2020**

(Index, April 2020 = 100)



Sources: Factiva; and IMF staff calculations.