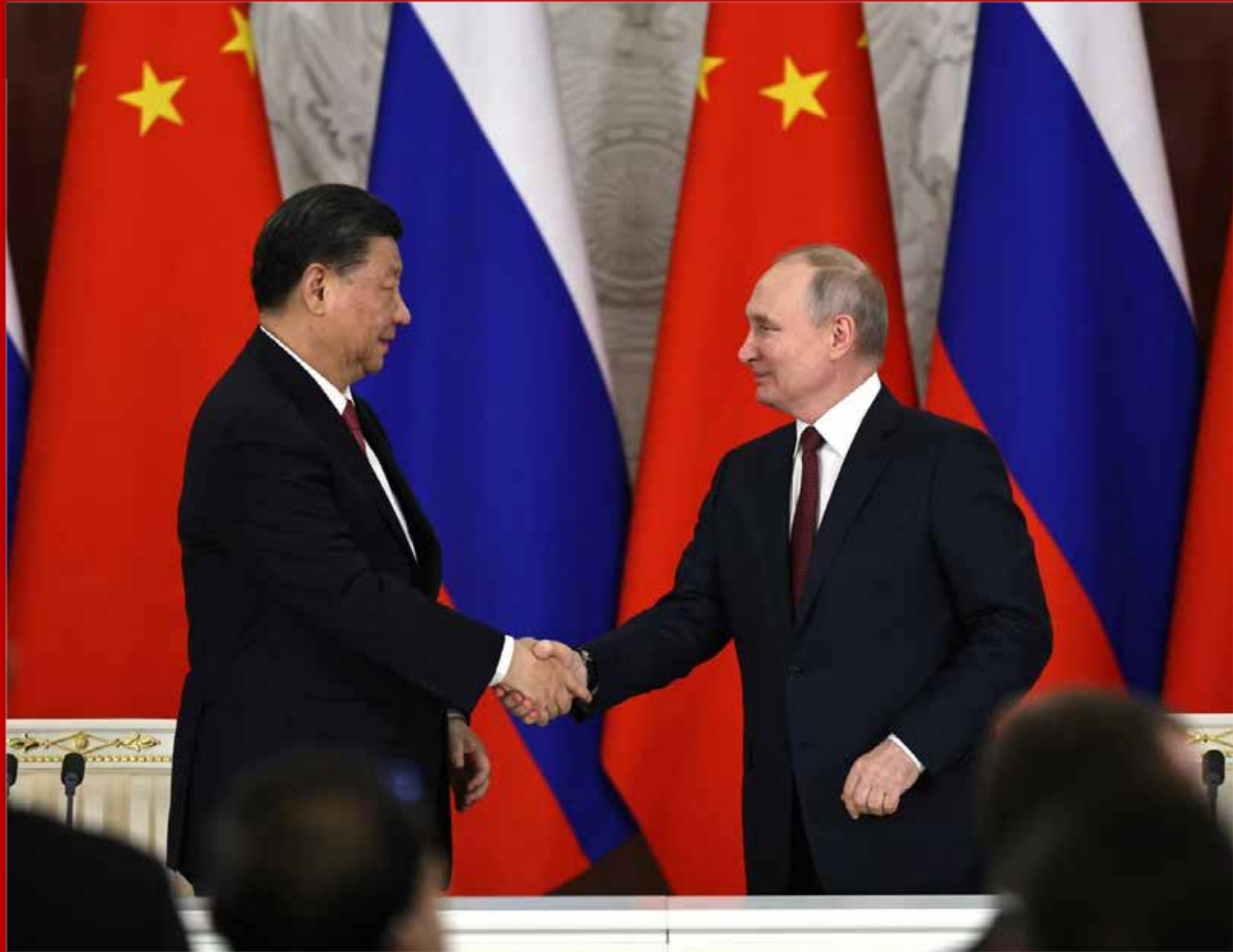




REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency



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May 2023

Russian Imperialism, Ukraine War and Great Power Rivalry

Translation Error in Trotsky's Transitional Program

Excess Mortality & COVID-19 * Zionism & Bourgeois State

English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.89, May 2023

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Picture on the cover: Putin-Xi press conference in March 2023 (Source: Wikipedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/Putin-Xi_press_conference_%282023%29.jpg)

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Zionism and the Bourgeois State

by Yossi Schwartz, ISL (RCIT section in Israel/Occupied Palestine), 27.03.2023

The huge demonstrations against Netanyahu's government with chants of "Democracy" and "No to the dictatorships" raise the questions: What is Democracy? What is the relationship between Democracy and Dictatorship? What do they mean when they chant: "We want Democracy", while Israel is an apartheid state?

It is even more interesting when we observe that a large part of the big capitalists finance this movement and that generals, internal security service(!), air force pilots, settlers from the West Bank, and different war criminals are leading this crowd.

That Netanyahu's government is the most right-wing government in the history of Israel is a fact. However, the counter-movement is not much better. Today the Histadrut has joined the protests. However, in spite of the high cost of living it does not raise demands of higher salaries nor of solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians as it would conflict with the support of the capitalists and the generals.

Anyone familiar with Israel knows that Israel does not have a constitution, that Aaron Barak as the president of the Supreme Court declared two basic laws to be elements of a constitution. Also, the government controls the Zionist parliament, and the power of the Supreme Court limits the power of the Parliament (Knesset).

Anyone who watches the demonstrations can observe that the bulk of the demonstrators is middle-class Ashkenazi (Europeans).

The focus of the demonstrations is the demand not to weaken the Supreme Court. Right-wing settler Avigdor Liberman, the leader of "Israel is our home", demands

a constitution. Such a constitution can take into account only the citizens of Israel and declares the entire Palestine a Jewish state and that the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza are not citizens.

According to the bourgeois ideology parliamentary sovereignty refers to a representative democracy where the parliament is ultimately sovereign, with neither the executive power nor the judiciary. This is of course fiction as the government controls Parliament. And indeed, how can Israel be considered to have parliamentary sovereignty when the government controls the Parliament and the Supreme court has the power to declare that laws are illegal?

Another relevant fact is that from the establishment of the Zionist state until today, 7 judges of Eastern origin (Arabs or North African Jews) have served in the Supreme Court, out of a total number of 82 supreme judges. There has never been a Supreme Court president of Eastern origin. In the current composition, out of 15 judges, only one is Eastern.

Until Shai Nitzan there were 12 state prosecutors, all of Ashkenazi origin. In the position of Attorney General, the ratio is 14 Ashkenazim against one Mizrahi, Meni Mazuz, who held the position of Chief Justice.

A close ally of newly returned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Levin presented a planned judicial overhaul that would drastically limit the authority of the High Court of Justice to block legislation and government decisions deemed discriminatory and/or undemocratic, abolish "reasonableness" as a test by which justices can weigh legality, give the government control over judicial selection, and eliminate ministry legal advisers appointed by

Books of the RCIT

Yossi Schwartz: Palestine and Zionism

The History of Oppression of the Palestinian People.

A Critical Account of the Myths of Zionism

In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz provides a critical analysis of numerous Zionist myths about the Jews as well as about the Palestinians. He demonstrates that the Zionist claim that Palestine is the historic homeland of the Jews lacks any serious basis. *Palestine and Zionism* shows that the history of Zionism in the 20th century is a history of colonialism in the service of the Great Powers and directed against the native population – the Arabs. In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz deals with key events – the "Nakba" in 1948, the wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973, more recent events like the Lebanon War, etc. – which were decisive for the expulsion of most Palestinians from their homeland.

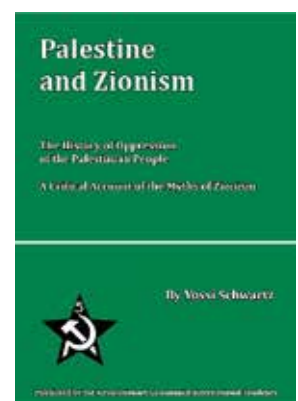
Yossi Schwartz also shows that the Palestinian people have heroically resisted against the occupation resulting in two Intifadas as well as the successful defense of Gaza against the Israeli aggression in three wars (2008/09, 2012, 2014). The author also analysis the shameful betrayal by the PLO leadership by signing the Oslo Agreement in 1993.

In *Palestine and Zionism* Yossi Schwartz defends the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian people and outlines

a socialist perspective. He emphasizes that the only solution is the right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and to replace the Zionist entity with one democratic state from the river to the sea – a *Free Red Palestine* with equal civil rights to the Arabs and the Israeli Jews.

The book contains an introduction and 7 chapters (112 pages) and includes 7 Tables and 3 Maps. The author of the book is Yossi Schwartz, a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency and its section in Israel / Occupied Palestine..

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



the attorney general. This reform will increase the number of Eastern Jewish judges in the SC.

While in the abstract reducing the power of the Supreme Court is justified in Parliamentary Democracy, considering the nature of the government it is wrong. On the other hand, considering the political nature of the demonstrations, it is impossible to support them as they demand democracy for European Jews only.

Thus, this is a struggle between two reactionary blocks that cannot be supported. It brings to mind WWII which was a war between two imperialist camps fighting to control and exploit the working and poor people and destroy the forces of production. The U.S. and Britain claimed that the war was for democracy. Revolutionary Marxists were for the revolutionary defeat of both imperialist blocks while defending only Stalinist Russia which was not a capitalist state.

We should always take positions that advance the interests of the international working class, not the illusions and delusions of the ruling class or the middle class.

Class society and class rule

The increase in agricultural production and technological advancements during the Agricultural revolution 10,000-13,000 years ago contributed to unprecedented population growth and new agricultural practices, triggering such phenomena as rural-to-urban migration, the development of a coherent and loosely regulated agricultural market, and the emergence of class society. The first fully developed class society was slave societies that reached their peak in Greece and Rome.

The Britannica defines democracy, as literally, ruled by the people. The term is derived from the Greek *dēmokratia*, which was coined from *dēmos* (“people”) and *kratos* (“rule”) in the middle of the 5th century BCE to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states, notably Athens[1].

But who are the people? In ancient Athens, there were an estimated 60,000–80,000 slaves during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, with each household having an average of three or four enslaved people attached to it[2]. These are not part of the people and for them, the democracy for the masters was a dictatorship.

In the Feudal society the ruling class was the nobility and the peasants tied to the lands were exploited by the Nobles and the Church.

The Feudal system was overthrown by the capitalists beginning in Switzerland, the English capitalists led by Oliver Cromwell in the revolution of 1640, the American war of independence of 1763–1783, and the French revolution of 1789.

The ideologues of the capitalist class associate the separation of power with democracy. They claim that the basis for today’s notion of separation of powers was laid with the functional understanding that democracy and the rule of law require both the division of powers and mutual checks and balances. The main proponents of this idea were John Locke (1632–1704), Charles Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) and James Madison (1751–1836). Namely a state in which political power is restricted in various ways and in which the Constitution serves as the standard for the legitimate exercise of public power. It is

interesting that Locke saw the Judicial functioning as part of the executive.

For the ideologues of the capitalists, constitutional restrictions on public power may be both procedural and substantive. The focus of substantive restrictions is an entrenched and justiciable bill of rights and a commitment to certain foundational values, such as the rule of law. The separation of powers falls on the procedural side, although its purpose is related to substantive interests: it is a means to ensure the protection of individual rights by way of the distribution of political power between different institutional roles and includes mechanisms to ensure that such power is not unduly exercised. The idea behind the separation of powers is that a concentration of power will most likely lead to self-interested action and abuse of power for personal gain... Separation of powers is the basis for an institutional, procedural, and structural division of public power to create conditions that so the ideologues claim place human rights at the center of society. The most important right is the protection of private property. Which is the property of the capitalists as the working class has only personal property. Both from an institutional and structural point of view, such a constitutional principle is an essential aspect of promoting and securing the entrenchment of constitutional democracy. Separation of powers — as well as democracy and the rule of law — are therefore claimed to be linked to the constitutional project of creating a society founded on the recognition of human rights, peaceful co-existence, and development opportunities for all. The objective of the separation of powers is to curtail the exercise of political power to prevent its abuse — meaning the violation of human rights. This instrumental function of the separation of powers as an institutional mechanism alleged to protect the human rights of all citizens and residents and supposedly the reason why the combination of these two ideas (separation of powers and human rights) has been called the ‘core of constitutionalism’.

The Smoke Screen

However, the entire argument is no more than a smoke screen hiding the real exploiting ruling class—the capitalist class of the imperialist states. The individual with human rights is capitalist. How do we know it? The basic principle that governed voting in colonial America was that voters should have a “stake in society.” Leading colonists associated democracy with disorder and mob rule, and believed that the vote should be restricted to those who owned property or paid taxes. Only these people, in their view, were committed members of the community and were sufficiently independent to vote. Each of the thirteen colonies required voters either to own a certain amount of land or personal property or to pay a specified amount in taxes.

In Britain in 1884 for the first time, a majority of men (about 60%) could vote. However, not all men had the right to vote until 1918. Only in 1928 all women in Britain were allowed to vote at the age of 21 (the same as men).

The examination of the history of the apartheid in South Africa, the U.S., France and other states, proves that while they are republics with a constitution and separation of powers they have been states with a history of cruel and

inhuman oppressive regimes.

On 3 August 1960, the National Party government of South Africa announced a referendum would be held in October of that year so that voters might weigh in on the question of whether the Union of South Africa should become a republic. The vote was restricted to white South Africans. More than 90% of eligible voters participated in the referendum, and 52.3% of votes were in favor of “a Republic” for the Union.

The structure of the government of the Republic under the 1961 constitution was a system very similar to that of the Union under the South Africa Act of 1909, except that the Queen and the appointed Governor-General were replaced by a State President elected by Parliament.

The history of the U.S shows a similar picture. By 1787, the union between the states was unraveling. Delegates from 12 states met in Philadelphia and, with George Washington presiding, created a new form of government.

The American Constitution was enshrined at a time of slavery. Though the word “slavery” does not appear in the Constitution, the issue was central to the debates over commerce and representation. The “Three-Fifths Compromise” provided that three-fifths (60%) of enslaved people in each state would count toward congressional representation, which greatly increased the number of congressional seats in several states, particularly in the South.

The Convention also debated whether to allow the new federal government to ban the importation of enslaved people from outside of the United States, including directly from Africa. They ultimately agreed to allow Congress to ban it, should it choose, but not before twenty years had passed. Remarkably, it was one of the only clauses of the Constitution that could not be amended. Only in 1808 did the United States formally prohibit the international slave trade [3]. The US constitution also mandates the return of

fugitive slaves, as well as the suppression of slave revolts.

The French revolution that was the most advanced bourgeois revolution shows that capitalism, constitution, partition of powers and slavery can go together.

“The French West India Company had tobacco plantations in French colonies. The company had a monopoly on the slave trade from Senegal, which since 1658, belonged to the Company of Cape Verde and Senegal. The slave trade continued under the operation of the Compagnie du Sénégal from 1658 to 1709. The company traded slaves with the Hausa Kingdoms, Mali, and the Moors in Mauritania.

As of 1778, the French were trafficking approximately 13,000 African people as slaves to the French West Indies each year. By 1750, two thirds of the enslaved peoples in New France were indigenous, and by 1834, most enslaved people were black.

In February 1794, slavery was abolished in all French colonies, during the first elected Assembly of the First Republic (1792–1804), under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre who abolished slavery in law in France and its colonies. The first article of the law stated that “Slavery was abolished” in the French colonies, while the second article stated that “slave-owners would be indemnified” with financial compensation for the value of their slaves. Here we see the full meaning of the so-called human rights under capitalism. The French constitution passed in 1795 included a declaration of the rights of man, which abolishes slavery.

Napoleon reintroduced slavery in sugarcane-growing colonies through the Law of 20 May 1802. It lasted 13 years. In 1818, the slave trade was banned in France. On July 18–19, 1845, the Mackau Laws were passed, which paved the way to end slavery. On April 27, 1848, the Proclamation of the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies was made. The effective abolition was enacted with the Decree abolishing Slavery on the same day.” [4]

Thus, there is no reason from the Zionist perspective to enshrine a constitution that annexes the West Bank and

Books of the RCIT

Yossi Schwartz: The Zionist Wars

A History of the Zionist Movement and Imperialist Wars

In *The Zionist Wars* Yossi Schwartz gives an overview about the process of Zionist colonialization of Palestine as well as the resistance of the indigenous Arab population. He deals in detail with the popular struggles of the Palestinians against their expulsion by the Zionists. *The Zionist Wars* elaborates in detail the character of Israel’s military campaigns in 1948 and the following decades which resulted in the expulsion of large parts of the Palestinian population. These wars were also crucial to implement the imperialist subjugation of the Arab countries.

However, as Yossi Schwartz elaborates, the Zionist state has passed its peak already some time ago which has been demonstrated by its failed military campaigns in Lebanon as well as in Gaza.

In *The Zionist Wars* the author also discusses in much detail the program of the communist movement on the Palestinian question. He shows the adaptation and finally capitulation of Stalinism to the Zionist project – culminating in massive arms shipments for the Israeli forces during the War of 1948.

In this book Yossi Schwartz elaborates the analyses and conclusions of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International for the libera-

tion of Palestine. He also discusses the strength and weakness of his successors in dealing with the Zionist state and the Arab liberation struggle against it.

In *The Zionist Wars* Yossi Schwartz defends the national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people and outlines a socialist perspective.

The book contains an introduction and 20 chapters (136 pages) and includes 2 Tables and 4 Maps. The author of the book is Yossi Schwartz, a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency and its section in Israel / Occupied Palestine..

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



Gaza and excludes the Palestinians from being citizens of the Zionist apartheid. What the Zionists cannot do, is write a democratic constitution based on the assumptions that all men are by nature free and equal and that legitimate governments are those which have the consent of the people. For the Zionists the Palestinians are simply not human.

The Palestinians are "...beasts walking on two legs." [5]

"When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about it will be to scurry around like drugged cockroaches in a bottle." [6]

"We must expel Arabs and take their places." [7]

"Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country. We shall not achieve our goal if the Arabs are in this small country. There is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to neighboring countries – all of them. Not one village, not one tribe should be left." [8]

Instead of an imperialist apartheid state the only solution is a Palestinian workers state with equal civil rights for the Jews as part of the Socialist Federation of the Middle East. We turn to Lenin's State and revolution to explain what is socialist democracy or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin quote Marx:

"The Commune," Marx wrote, "was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time... "Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [ver- and zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business.

Lenin goes on and wrote: "To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary- constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics"... "The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into "working" bodies. "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time."

"A working, not a parliamentary body"—this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarian country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth"... "The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results

achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system"... We, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid "foremen and accountants"... To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than "a workman's wage", all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat—that is our immediate aim. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie's prostitution of these institutions"... He (Marx) did not at all oppose the view that the state would disappear when classes disappeared, or that it would be abolished when classes were abolished. What he did oppose was the proposition that the workers should renounce the use of arms, organized violence, that is, the state, which is to serve to "crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie" [8]

To say it in a different way, a system of workers councils and the central committee of the Supreme council is the government that combines executive and legislative functions, including elected judges. All of them paid the salary of an average industrial worker and can be replaced in a very short time if they do not fit.

Endnotes

[1] <https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy>

[2] <https://www.historyextra.com/period/ancient-greece/slavery-ancient-greece-life-society/>

[3] <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/constitutional-convention/issues-of-the-constitutional-convention/>

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_France

[5] Menahim Begin, speech to the Knesset, quoted in Amnon Kapeliouk, 'Begin and the "Beasts' ', New Statesman, 25 June 1982.

[6] Raphael Eitan, Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Forces, New York Times, 14 April 1983.

[7] David Ben Gurion, future Prime Minister of Israel, 1937, Ben Gurion and the Palestine Arabs, Oxford University Press, 1985.

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[9] Lenin: The State and Revolution August – September, 1917 Source: Collected Works, Volume 25, p. 381-492



Publications of the RCIT

The Origins of the Jews

By Yossi Schwartz, July 2015

Chapter I: What are the origins of the Jews?

Chapter II: The Rise of Anti-Semitism

Chapter III: Anti-Semitism and Zionism

Chapter IV: The Russian Revolution:

Bolshevism, the Bund, and Stalinism

A New Study on Excess Mortality in the Period of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Sweden's had the lowest excess mortality of all European countries in 2020-22. This is another confirmation of the Marxist's opposition against the Lockdown policy.

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 23.3.2023

The Swedish statistical office SCB has recently published a new study about the excess mortality in Europe during the period 2020–2022, i.e. in the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is based on official data from Eurostat (the EU's statistical office) and the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control. While the study, to our knowledge, has not been widely discussed in English-language media until now, it has been recognized in mainstream media in Germany and Scandinavia as a serious challenge to the official COVID policy of the past three years.¹

The authors of the study take the mortality rate of 2017–19 – the three years before Corona – and compare it with those figures for the years 2020–22. Excess mortality is considered by many scientists as a much better benchmark to compare the consequences of the COVID policy in different countries than the official figures of COVID deaths. This is because, first, different countries use different methods to calculate the number of people who died of the virus.

Secondly, looking at the data of excess mortality allows to take into account also the development of mortality caused by other factors than COVID. This is important since many measures of the bourgeois Lockdown and Green Pass policy had severe consequences for vulnerable people who suffered from other illnesses than the virus.

And, thirdly, taking the whole period 2020–22 allows to analyse the long-term effects of the official policy. A policy which might have minimised the number of deaths in the short-term could provoke a larger number of deaths in the longer term (e.g. because of lack of treatment of non-COVID illnesses or because of delay of the inevitable contact with the virus). In fact, as Figure 2 indicates, this seems to have been the case in other Scandinavian countries which had in 2020 a lower rate of the mortality rate than Sweden but a significant higher rate in the two following years.

The figures of the new SCB study demonstrate beyond doubt that Sweden had by far the lowest excess mortality rate in Europe in the "COVID years". Compared to 2017–19, the mortality rate in Sweden had increased in 2020–22 by 4,4%, in Norway by 5,0%, followed by Luxembourg and Denmark with 5.4%. Other countries had much higher rates of excess mortality: Germany (8,6%), Finland (8,7%), Austria (9,8%), Spain and Portugal (each 11,3%), and Italy (12,3%). The highest rates of excess mortality were in poorer semi-colonial countries in Eastern Europe: Poland (17,7%), Slovakia (18,7%) and Bulgaria (19,8%). (See Figure 1 in the Appendix)

The findings are in line with another study published by *The Lancet* in March 2022 which analysed the development of excess mortality in the years 2020 and 2021. This study also demonstrated that Sweden had one of the lowest rates of excess mortality in the world in that period.² The same

result is also indicated by official figures of excess mortality published by the OECD.³

What does this tell about the Lockdown policy?

The findings of the new SCB study are a powerful confirmation of the position which the RCIT and other authentic Marxists (like *Convergencia Socialista* in Argentina which later joined the RCIT) have defended from the very beginning. We recognized that the policy of Lockdown and emergency regimes represented a reactionary attack of the ruling class. We explained that the authoritarian policy of capitalist governments was not primarily motivated by considerations of public health but rather an instrument to expand chauvinism and state bonapartist control over the population.

Hence, in contrast to numerous reformist and centrist organisations, the RCIT characterized the reactionary Lockdown policy as *COVID Counterrevolution* and opposed it from early February 2020 onwards. We advocated a health-orientated socialist response to the pandemic⁴ and a strategy of popular uprising in defence of social and democratic rights.⁵

Furthermore, we explained that from a scientific point of view such Lockdown policy had no justification. We argued that the public hysteria provoked by the bourgeois governments was an instrument in order to instil fear among the population and make them succumb to the authoritarian Lockdown policy.

Sweden was one of the few countries in the world which did not impose any lockdown (nor any other enforcement measures). As a result, it became a target of attack both by the global bourgeoisie as well as by the Lockdown Left, i.e. the "left-wing" supporters of the bonapartist policy.

Of course, our opposition against the policy of state-chauvinist bonapartism was basically motivated by our socialist principles defending democratic rights. However, we also emphasised that our approach was also correct from a medical point of view. We pointed out that it was no accident that such a Lockdown policy could not be motivated by public health reasons since this had never been before applied in similar cases of pandemics.

From early on, we therefore referred in a number of articles to the example of Sweden and explained, based on the official data publicly available at that time, that this country's refusal to impose an anti-democratic Lockdown policy proves our arguments. Our opponents among the Lockdown Left did not accept our findings and claimed that Sweden would show the catastrophic results of opposition to the Lockdown policy. The new study (and similar findings in other studies) confirms once and for all that the RCIT was correct in its analysis.⁶

Will the Lockdown Left learn from its mistakes?

Unsurprisingly, our numerous opponents claimed that the Lockdown policy and other enforcement measures were the best way to fight the pandemic (and would therefore justify the attack on democratic rights). If our opponents would have been right, Sweden – one of the very few countries which did not impose such anti-democratic attacks – would have seen much higher rates of excess mortality than other countries. But exactly the opposite is the case – Sweden has the lowest rate of excess mortality!

All this indicates that the Lockdown policy and other enforcement measures were either not effective or rather worsened the consequences of the pandemic!

As it is well-known, many of the reformist and centrist left have supported the official policy of the ruling class or even called for an escalation (e.g. the notorious “Zero COVID” policy with China as a model). When the popular masses in China rebelled against the draconic Lockdown and Green Pass policy, many of these opportunists passed over their past position in silence and expressed support for these protests.⁷

However, such opportunist zig-zags and a dishonest approach to their past mistakes make sure that such left-wing organisations will repeat such treacherous support for the ruling class when there is another “catastrophe” with the media spreading hysteria and panic. In order to prepare themselves for such future events – which will take place without doubt – it is urgent that such left-wing organisations open a honest discussion about their policy in the period of the COVID Counterrevolution. Because, as a well-known saying of Marxists goes, “*those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.*”

Footnotes

1 SCB: Olika mått på överdödlighet ger liknande resultat för Sverige, 22.3.2023, <https://scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2023/olika-matt-pa-overdodlighet-ger-liknande-resultat-for-sverige/>; for a discussion in mainstream media see e.g. Oliver Klein: Übersterblichkeit in der EU : War Schwedens Corona-Sonderweg doch richtig? ZDF, 09.03.2023, https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/corona-uebersterblichkeit-schweden-100.html?utm_source=pocket-newtab-global-de-DE, Reinhard Wolff: Übersterblichkeit in den Corona-Jahren: Lockdownfrei und Erfolg dabei. War Schwedens Weg, weitgehend auf Schutzmaßnahmen gegen Corona zu verzichten, der bessere? Eine Studie zur Übersterblichkeit in der EU legt das nahe, TAZ, 7.3.2023, <https://taz.de/Uebersterblichkeit-in-den-Corona-Jahren/!5920764/>; Therese Bergstedt: Anders Tegnell: “Gillar inte ordet ‘revansch’”. Sveriges överdödlighet under pandemin är lägst i EU och Norden, enligt nya beräkningar från SCB, 7.3.2023, <https://www.svd.se/a/IQvVnj/anders-tegnell-efter-pandemin-overdodlighet-ger-inte-hela-svaret>; an English-language media, which has taken note of the SCB study and which reproduces some figures from it, is the conservative The Spectator: Michael Simmons: Sweden, Covid and ‘excess deaths’: a look at the data, 10 March 2023, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/sweden-covid-and-excess-deaths-a-look-at-the-data/>.

2 Wang, Haidong; Paulson, Katherine R.; Pease, Spencer A.; Watson, Stefanie; Comfort, Haley; Zheng, Peng; Aravkin, Aleksandr Y.; Bisignano, Catherine; Barber, Ryan M.; Alam, Tahiya; Fuller, John E. (10 March 2022). “Estimating excess mortality due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic analysis of COVID-19-related mortality, 2020–21”. *The Lancet*. 399 (10334): 1513–1536. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02796-3

3 OECD Data, <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=104676>

4 RCIT: A Revolutionary Action Program to fight COVID-19! Workers and Oppressed: Don’t trust the State of the Rich and Powerful! Trust only Yourself! April 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/rcit/health-program-covid19/>; see also: ALS: A Marxist approach to the international mobilizations against the authoritarian health restrictions, February 2022, https://www.thecommunists.net/home/espac%C3%B1ol/una-aproximaci%C3%B3n-marxista-a-las-movilizaciones-internacionales-contras-las-restricciones-sanitarias-autoritarias/#anker_1

5 The RCIT has published more than 100 pamphlets, essays, articles and statements plus a book on the COVID Counterrevolution 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 two RCIT Manifestos: 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/>; “Green Pass” & Compulsory Vaccinations: A New Stage in the COVID Counterrevolution. Down with the chauvinist-bonapartist police & surveillance state – defend democratic rights! No to health policy in the service of the capitalist monopolies – expand the public health sector under workers and popular control! 29 July 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/green-pass-compulsory-vaccinations-a-new-stage-in-the-covid-counterrevolution/>; In addition, we draw attention to 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/>.

6 For our articles on Sweden’s COVID policy see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: COVID-19: Sweden’s Total Mortality in 2020. Once again, the figures demonstrate that this is a serious but not unprecedented pandemic, 23 January 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-sweden-s-total-mortality-in-2020-compared-with-past-years/>; by the same author: COVID-19: A Comparison of Historical Data. An analysis of the COVID-19 death figures and those of past pandemics and climate disasters based on data from the World Bank, 19 January 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-a-comparison-of-historical-data/>; COVID-19: How Severe is the Pandemic in Sweden Really? Once again, a comparison demonstrates that the mortality rate in 2020 is barely larger than in 2018, 8 December 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-how-severe-is-the-pandemic-in-sweden-really/>; COVID-19: Revealing Figures from Sweden. A comparison of the mortality rates of the first 9 months in 2020 with previous years confirm that this is a serious but not unprecedented pandemic, 23 November 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/covid-19-revealing-figures-from-sweden/>.

7 The RCIT has published the following documents on the recent mass protests in China: Popular Rebellion against Lockdowns and “Zero COVID”, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-popular-rebellion-against-lockdowns-and-zero-covid/>; COVID-19: What Did Authentic Marxists Say about China’s Lockdown Policy in Spring 2020? In contrast to the Lockdown Left, the RCIT opposed chauvinist state bonapartism from the very beginning, 22 December 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/covid-19-what-did-authentic-marxists-say-about-china-s-lockdown-policy-in-spring-2020/>; Protests against “Zero COVID” in China: An Embarrassment for the Lockdown Left, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/china-protests-and-lockdown-left/>; China Protests: The Anti-Lockdown Program of the University Students in Beijing, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/china-protests-university-students-against-lockdowns/>; Que el FITu y otros partidos de izquierda pongan en pie un Comité de Solidaridad con el pueblo chino que lucha contra la dictadura del PCCh, <https://convergenciadecombate.blogspot.com/2022/12/que-el-fitu-y-otros-partidos-de.html>; Defensores de cuarentenas y pases sanitarios apoyan la lucha de chinos contra cuarentenas ¿Doble vara o una realidad que liquidó sus argumentos?, <https://convergenciadecombate.blogspot.com/2022/11/defensores-de-cuarentenas-y-pases.html>

8 The figures in the graph are based on the above-mentioned SCB study. The graph itself has been taken from Facebook, Jörgen Astonson, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=786101612879205&set=a.670922847730416>

9 SCB: Olika mått på överdödlighet ger liknande resultat för Sverige, 22.3.2023, <https://scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2023/olika-matt-pa-overdodlighet-ger-liknande-resultat-for-sverige/>

Figure 1: Excess Mortality in Europe in 2020-2022 ⁸

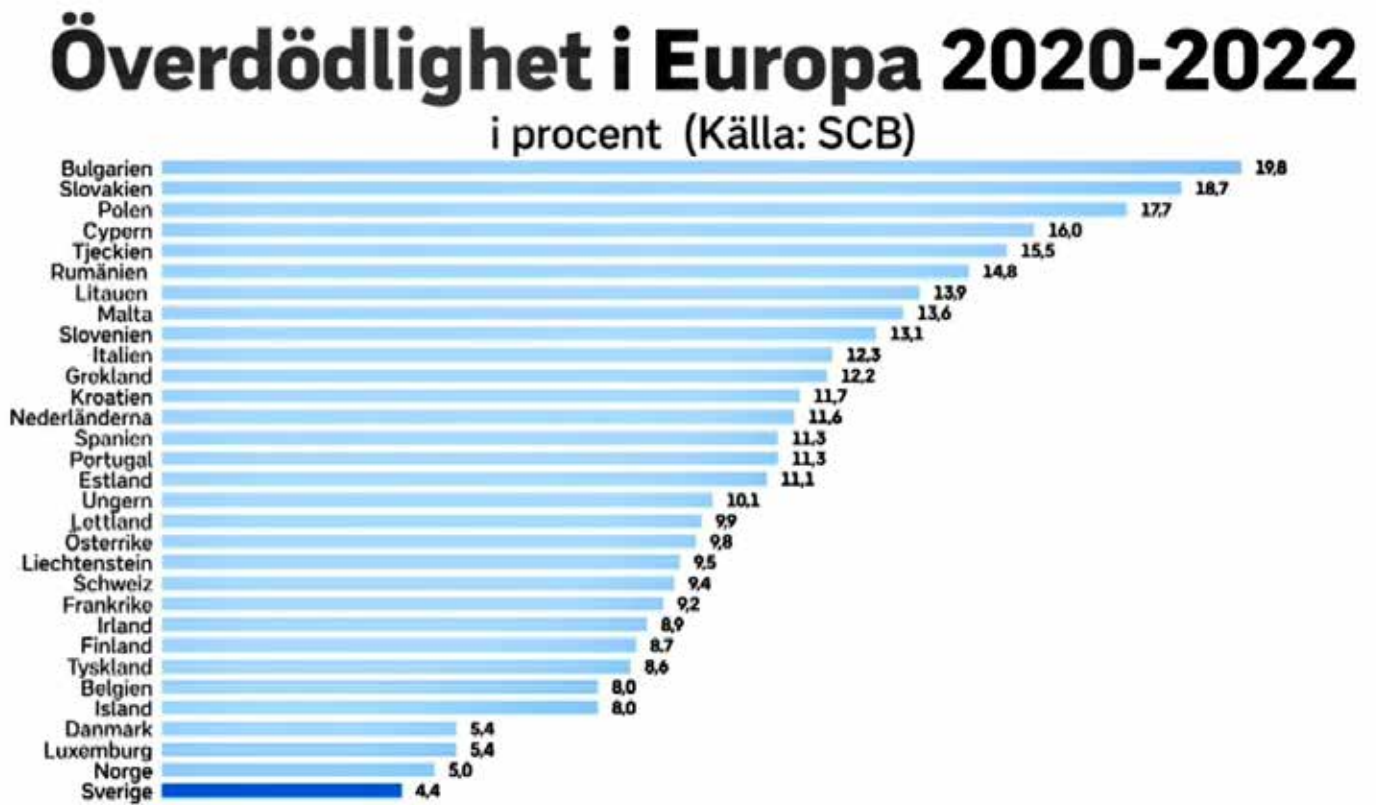
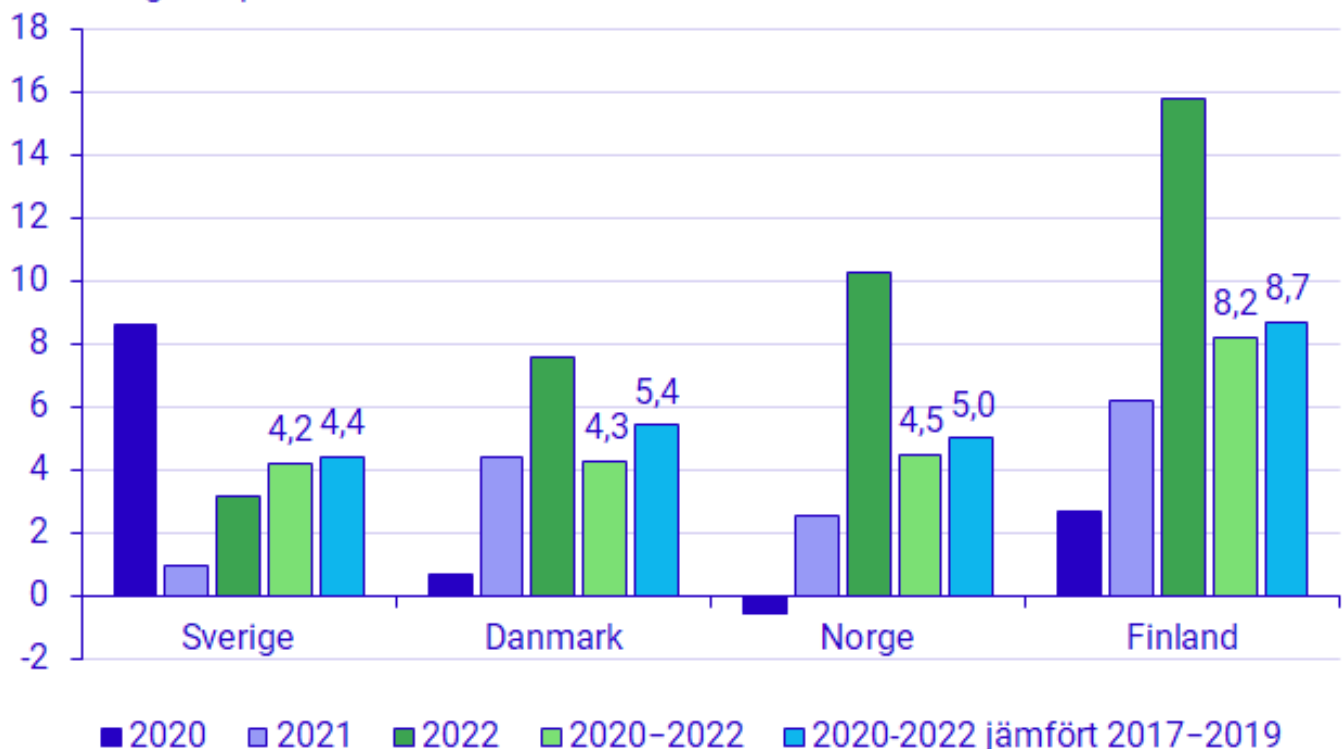


Figure 2: Excess Mortality in Northern Europe in 2020-2022 ⁹

Överdödlighet i procent



Is US aid to Ukraine really ‘unprecedented’?

New studies destroy the myth propagated by supporters of Western and Russian imperialism

Michael Pröbsting, 04 April 2023 (first published by the Australia-based socialist journal LINKS)

Politicians of Western governments never tire of asserting that aid from the US and EU for Ukraine is “unprecedented”. Supporters of Russian president Vladimir Putin basically say the same, albeit for different reasons, as they use such assertions to substantiate their claim that Ukraine is a “proxy” of Washington and Brussels.

While the US and Western Europe have sent military and economic aid to Ukraine to weaken their Eastern rival, it has always been wrong to assume that Ukraine’s war of national defense is a struggle “in the service of Western imperialism”. Ukraine is an oppressed country and its people are fighting, first and foremost, for their right of national self-determination.[1] This is a struggle that socialists should support. At the same time, however, they must keep a strict policy of intransigent opposition against all imperialist powers – in the West as well as in the East. [2]

In any case, the assertion of “unprecedented” Western aid for Ukraine is completely wrong. This has been confirmed by two recently published documents. One is a statement by Michael McCaul, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives. The second is a detailed study published by the *Kiel Institute for the World Economy*.

Only 20% goes to the Ukraine

Michael McCaul initiated a “hearing with the Inspectors General of the State Department, USAID, and Department of Defense on the transparency & accountability mechanisms for U.S. assistance to Ukraine.”[3] While McCaul is a Republican, he is not a Trumpian moron and remains fully committed to Washington’s Great Power policy against its rivals: “It’s been a year since Vladimir Putin launched his unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine. And in response, Europe has provided significant aid, but must continue to do more to keep the Government of Ukraine from defaulting, and ensure it is able to prosecute this war. Additionally, Congress has also provided a significant amount of assistance to Ukraine to ensure Putin’s aggression is stopped at Ukraine’s border – and that a NATO ally is not next. I have supported U.S. assistance, because a victory by Putin in Ukraine would further embolden America’s adversaries, from Chairman Xi in Beijing to the Ayatollah in Tehran to Kim Jong Un in North Korea.”

It is all the more remarkable that even such an unwavering advocate of military aid to Ukraine reveals the following facts: “Of the 113 billion dollars appropriated across four supplementals, approximately 60 percent is going to American troops, American workers, and to modernizing American stockpiles. In fact, only 20 percent of the funding is going directly to the Ukrainian government in the form of direct budgetary assistance.”

In other words, only 1/5 of U.S. aid for Ukraine actually goes directly to Ukraine, while 3/5 goes to the Pentagon

and other US institutions. Hence, Ukraine aid is first and foremost “aid” for US imperialism, or to be more precise, subsidies from the US public budget to US monopolies and the Pentagon.

Revealing historical comparisons

However, even if one takes aid to Ukraine as a whole (and not only the share which actually goes to Kyiv), Western aid is not as unprecedented as its leading politicians boast. A few weeks ago, the German-based Kiel Institute for the World Economy published a comprehensive study which analyzes Western aid to Ukraine in detail and makes interesting historical comparisons.[4]

According to the authors, aid to Ukraine – calculated as total bilateral commitments plus refugee costs – is very uneven between Western countries when measured as a share of their GDP. While Eastern European countries make sizable contributions of 1-2% of their GDP, rich imperialist states are much more restrained. The US, Germany, France and Britain contribute no more than 0.31 to 0.37% of their GDP.

In terms of military aid, the study also reveals some interesting information. The authors show that Russia’s pre-war stock of heavy weapons was much larger than that of Ukraine (about three times). Newly committed heavy weapons by Western countries “amount to less than half of Ukraine’s pre-war stocks and only a fraction of Russia’s pre-war stocks.” Such weapons also constitute only a small fraction of NATO weapon stocks: “In aggregate, NATO countries have thus far committed about 3% of their tanks, 6% of their howitzers, and 5% of their MLRS to Ukraine.”

Another highly interesting finding of the study is the historical comparisons of Western aid to Ukraine with those in the Spanish Civil War as well as during World War II. The USSR, for example, received about 11,000 combat aircraft and about 7,500 tanks from the US during WWII. The authors conclude: “The difference in the scale of weapons committed is drastic. During 1941-45, the US sent more than 25,000 tanks and more than 15,000 airplanes to Great Britain alone. The USSR and France also received thousands of heavy weapons through the US Lend-Lease program. Compared to that, the total number of heavy weapons to Ukraine are just a fraction - less than 500 tanks and howitzers, respectively, and less than 100 MRLS. Also, the tally of weapons sent by foreign powers during the Spanish Civil War clearly outnumber that sent to Ukraine.”

The huge difference is also revealed when such military aid is measured as a share of GDP. The so-called Lend-Lease program of the US – as such military aid was called during World War II – to Britain corresponded “to 14.2% in total, or 3.2% of US GDP when averaged by year. Next comes the USSR, which received Lend-Lease support in the magnitude of 5.6% of US GDP in total, or 1.4% when averaging per year. The annual averages are significantly higher than the total support of the US or the UK commit-

ted to Ukraine in 2022 (0.21% and 0.18% of GDP, respectively)."

The authors also compare U.S. aid to Ukraine with its contributions in other wars after 1945. They conclude that "estimates suggest that the US expenses for the Korean war (2.8% of GDP per year) were more than 13 times higher than the amount committed to Ukraine in 2022 (0.21%). Similarly, the yearly expense numbers were almost 5 times higher in Vietnam, 3 times higher in Iraq, after 2003, and similar to expenditures in Afghanistan (0.25%)."

The difference is also huge if one compares Western contributions to Ukraine with those during the Gulf War 1990/91: "Germany has committed bilateral aid worth 0.17% of its GDP to Ukraine, but it has committed three times as much to liberate Kuwait in 1990/91 (0.55% of German GDP in 1991). The gap is even larger for Japan and South Korea, which thus far have given only limited bilateral aid to Ukraine, especially when compared to the sizable commitments in the context of the Gulf War (0.02% and 0.01%, respectively)."

Conclusions

Well-known English historian Adam Tooze, who is a professor at Columbia University, commented "that the Kiel data reveal a vast gap between the declared intentions of the United States and Europe in backing Ukraine and what they are actually delivering. So what explains this shortfall? This raises the questions with which we began this newsletter. Are the Western powers cynical in promising to stand by Ukraine? Are they implicitly steering towards a stalemate? Do they actually favor a Ukrainian victory, but incompetence and "friction" causes them to fall short in matching the necessary means to the desired ends? Or are they struggling with a "reality gap" - failing to grasp the scale of what might be needed and what on other occasions and for other purposes they have been able to deliver? Personally, I think it is a mixture of all three." [5]

What is true is that Western imperialism has never been a serious supporter of Ukraine's war efforts. It tries to tactically utilize its struggle to weaken Russian imperialism – a long-standing rival of Washington and Brussels. [6] Furthermore, there exists a growing trend within the leading circles of Western imperialism to push Ukraine to bring the war to a close and accept a stalemate with Russia; that is, to accept Putin's occupation of several regions in the South and East of their country. [7]

In summary, we can arrive at the following conclusions.

1. Governments of Western imperialist powers boast about their support for Ukraine. Yet such support is not particularly large compared with other wars.

2. Actually delivered aid by Western governments is substantially smaller than the amount of money and weapons that has been promised.

3. Only a small proportion of aid goes to Ukraine directly. Three-fifths of US aid "for Ukraine" actually goes to US monopolies and the Pentagon.

4. Socialists need to denounce the propaganda of Putinists and semi-Putinists that claim Western aid to Ukraine is "unprecedented" and that Ukraine is a "proxy" of US and EU imperialism. In fact, the Ukrainian people are fighting, first and foremost, for their right of national self-determination.

5. Socialists should support the right of Ukraine to get material aid (including weapons) from wherever possible. They should oppose any political conditions attached to such aid by Western governments.

Footnotes

[1] For an analysis of the Ukraine I refer readers to a recently published pamphlet: Michael Pröbsting: *Ukraine: A Capitalist Semi-Colony. On the exploitation and deformation of Ukraine's economy by imperialist monopolies and oligarchs since capitalist restoration in 1991*, January 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-a-capitalist-semi-colony/>; see also by the same author: "The gigantic destruction of Ukrainian society", 15 December 2022, <https://links.org.au/gigantic-destruction-ukrainian-society>

[2] I have elaborated such a position – together with my comrades in the RCIT – in a number of documents which are compiled at <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>.

[3] McCaul Delivers Opening Remarks at Full Committee Hearing on Ukraine Oversight and Accountability, Press Release, 29.03.2023, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-release/mc-caul-delivers-opening-remarks-at-full-committee-hearing-on-ukraine-oversight-and-accountability/>. All quotes in this chapter are from this statement if not indicated otherwise.

[4] Kiel Institute for the World Economy: "The Ukraine Support Tracker: Which countries help Ukraine and how?" Working Paper No. 2218, February 2023. All figures and quotes in this chapter, if not indicated otherwise, are from this study resp. the attached data file.

[5] Adam Tooze: "Chartbook #197: The Ukraine-Aid Reality Gap", 25 February 2023, <https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-197-the-ukraine-aid-reality>

[6] For an analysis of Russian imperialism see e.g. Michael Pröbsting: "Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies", in: *New Politics* Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/ (the same essay has been republished by *International Viewpoint*, 21. April 2022, <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7618>); by the same author: "Russia: An Imperialist Power or a 'Non-Hegemonic Empire in Gestation'? (Reply to Claudio Katz)", *New Politics*, <https://newpol.org/russia-an-imperialist-power-or-a-non-hegemonic-empire-in-gestation-a-reply-to-the-argentinian-economist-claudio-katz-an-essay-with-8-tables/>; "'Empire-ism' vs a Marxist analysis of imperialism: Continuing the debate with Argentinian economist Claudio Katz on Great Power rivalry, Russian imperialism and the Ukraine War", 03 March 2023, <https://links.org.au/empire-ism-vs-marxist-analysis-imperialism-continuing-debate-argentinian-economist-claudio-katz/>; "Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power", August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; "Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire", 18 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>

[7] See on this e.g. "Towards a Turning Point in the Ukraine War? The tasks of socialists in the light of possible lines of development of the war of national defence in combination with the inter-imperialist Great Power rivalry", 11 March 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/towards-a-turning-point-in-the-ukraine-war/>

Where is Russia hiding its money?

Why EU authorities claim they can not find most of Russia's foreign assets

Michael Pröbsting, 16 April 2023 (first published by the Australia-based socialist journal LINKS)

Several news outlets have published reports in recent weeks about the status of Russia's foreign assets. According to these reports, EU authorities are not able to locate most of the Russian money stored in European financial institutes, real estates and enterprises. Since these news agencies are based in different countries and have a serious reputation, there is no doubt about the accuracy of their findings.[1]

It's a matter of common knowledge that Western governments imposed massive sanctions on Russia at the start of Russian president Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As a result, about \$300 billion in foreign reserves belonging to the Central Bank of Russia (CBR) were frozen but not seized by European governments. This was a severe blow for the Kremlin, since this sum represented about half of the CBR's gross international reserves.

In addition, Western governments have also frozen assets belonging to oligarchs and other Russian nationals, albeit there are conflicting reports about the amount. The so-called "Russian Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs" taskforce claims that the sum is about \$58 billion, while other reports put the number much lower at about \$20 billion.

However, experts believe the amount of oligarchs' money in Europe is an order of magnitude higher and most of it remains untouched. Just the London homes of the top five oligarchs are worth more than \$1 billion alone. In general, Russia's total foreign direct investment stock in the EU is estimated to be €136 billion, according to *Bloomberg*.

There is a growing tendency among Western governments to want to bring the war to a close by pushing Ukraine to accept a kind of compromise with the Kremlin. [2] EU authorities are also considering seizing Russian assets to cover the costs of a post-war settlement. This is all the more important since Ukraine – a semi-colonial capitalist country – has been completely destroyed by Putin's war of aggression and, at the same time, finds itself deep in debt.[3] While Western governments have lent limited support to Ukraine's war of national defence, they are determined to get as much money out of it as possible. Since Kyiv is hardly in a position to pay for reconstruction and arms purchases, Western governments would like to cover their costs with Russian money.

However, the head of the EU taskforce, Swedish career diplomat Anders Ahnlied, admitted in a recent interview that Brussels faces huge difficulties in locating most Russian foreign assets. Until now, the taskforce could identify only a small portion of the frozen £300 billion. There are conflicting reports on how much Russian cash has been frozen – some reports claim that it is about \$37 billion, while other unspecified EU authorities speak about only \$22 billion, according to *Bloomberg*. The rest is mysteriously missing. At the same time, efforts to identify and freeze sanctioned Russian oligarch money are also going slowly and so far, only a total of \$22 billion has been identified.

Are Western governments really ignorant?

How can this be explained? The EU taskforce says that the problem is partly to do with the complexity of the way the CBR reports its overseas holdings. But it also said that the actual amount of CBR money in Europe could be significantly less than \$300 billion. In addition, since a pan-EU bank holding reporting system is just now being set up, the taskforce depends on the reporting of individual nation states.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to believe that the concrete location of hundreds of billions of CBR foreign reserves is a mystery for the EU authorities. This is not money belonging to an oligarch who has an understandable interest in hiding the amount of their wealth. A crucial purpose of foreign reserves of a central bank is to use such assets as "guarantees" for international trade and financial transactions. This requires a certain transparency of such foreign assets – the opposite of secretly hiding it at an unknown location.

Furthermore, as the recent Pentagon leaks show, the CIA (and most likely other intelligence agencies) are usually well-informed about all kinds of state secrets. If such agencies are able to intercept discussions within the Russian or South Korean government, if they know about Mossad's intervention in domestic politics and Egypt's plans to sell weapons to Putin, how on Earth could they be ignorant about the location of the CBR's foreign reserves which has been accumulated over a number of years?

In addition, if *Bloomberg* knows about Russia's total foreign direct investment stock in the EU, how could European authorities be ignorant about their location?

Contradictory political and economic interests

There is a much more likely explanation for the ignorance of the EU taskforce, which is related to the contradictory political and economic interests of Western governments. As long as they want to get their money back for their "unselfish" aid to Ukraine, they have an impetus to seize Russian foreign assets and hand such money over to Ukraine so that Kyiv can immediately pass it back to Western states and corporations.

On the other hand, individual Western governments also have other, opposite interests. First, individual banks and financial institutes might prefer to keep the money for themselves (don't forget, private capitalists are, first and foremost, "patriots" of their own moneybag, not of their country).

Second, Russia is an imperialist power, and it will remain so irrespective of how the Ukraine War ends.[4] North American and European states will have to deal with the Kremlin in the future. Not seizing Russian foreign assets might be helpful to re-establish political and economic relations in the future in whatever form.

There is also another reason. Private property is sacrosanct in capitalism. *IntelliNews* notes: "Under EU law assets can easily be frozen, but they can only be seized if

there is a criminal conviction of the owner. In the case of state-owned assets, those can only be legally seized if the two countries are officially at war."

This is not only a legal issue but, more importantly, a political and economic issue. Anders Ahnliid, the head of the EU taskforce, hinted at this when he said: "It is a challenge to find legal means that are acceptable." Seizing Russian foreign assets would have global and long-term repercussions. It would scare other foreign states and capitalists from transferring their money to European countries in the future. It could mean an end to Europe as a financial centre – at least for non-European investors. Western governments must break a sweat about such a nightmare scenario.

For all these reasons, European governments are thinking twice before seizing Russian foreign assets.

Some lessons

There are a few lessons that can be drawn from the strange difficulties of EU authorities to locate Russia's foreign assets. First, it's capitalism, baby! Slogans like "Justice for Ukraine" and "International solidarity" reflect the honest position of authentic socialists. But such words are pure hypocrisy when they come from imperialist governments in Europe and North America.

European governments are sitting on hundreds of billions of Russian foreign assets – both private and state-owned. But they are, at least until now, effectively paralysed by their contradictory interests. On one hand, they want to seize the money and pocket it for themselves (albeit disguised as "aid for Ukraine"). On the other hand, they fear that such a move would have negative long-term repercussions for their relations with Russia and foreign capitalists in general.

For these reasons socialists have no reason to support the (reluctant) efforts of European governments to seize Russian foreign assets. Why should we subscribe to a Great Power policy where one robber takes money from another robber?

However, this does not mean that socialists should be indifferent about the financial and economic needs of Ukraine – a country the Putin regime wants to eradicate as an independent state and is already destroying with brute force.[5]

Consequently, our Russian comrades, who have sided with the liberation struggle of Ukrainian people since the beginning of Putin's invasion, support "the direct transfer of Russian assets to the Ukraine without any conditions or any intermediate force. The Ukrainian state should send representatives to Western countries in order to facilitate such a transfer. (...) Such assets should be used to cover the military expenses of the Ukraine as well as the costs of rebuilding the country. However, they must not be used to repay any debts. Quite the opposite: socialists in Western countries should call for the immediate cancellation of all debts of the Ukraine." [6]

Of course, it would be foolish to have any trust in the bourgeois and pro-NATO government of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. Socialists should advocate that Ukrainian workers and the popular masses take all transferred assets and aid under their control. The same applies to all military and non-military deliveries from abroad. As long as the Zelensky government remains in power, there

should be public transparency of all financial transactions and spending so that the entire people of Ukraine can see it.

Such an approach concerning Russian foreign assets is best placed to take into account both the necessity to strengthen Ukraine's legitimate war of national defence against Putin's invasion as well as the principle of intransigent opposition against all imperialist powers (Russia as well as NATO).

Notes

[1] See Intellinews: "Western efforts to freeze and seize Russian oligarch money going poorly", 10 March 2023, <https://www.intellinews.com/western-efforts-to-freeze-and-seize-russian-oligarch-money-going-poorly-272448/?source=russia>; AFP: "'Not easy' to seize Russia assets, says EU task force head", 25 March 2023, <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/not-easy-to-seize-russia-assets-says-eu-task-force-head>; Stefan Beutelsbacher: "Europas heikle Jagd auf Russlands Staatsschatz", WELT, 13.04.2023, <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/plus244756304/Geld-fuer-Wiederaufbau-der-Ukraine-Europas-heikle-Jagd-auf-Russlands-Staatsschatz.html>. All figures are drawn from these articles if not indicated otherwise.

[2] See RCIT: *Towards a Turning Point in the Ukraine War? The tasks of socialists in the light of possible lines of development of the war of national defence in combination with the inter-imperialist Great Power rivalry*, 11 March 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/towards-a-turning-point-in-the-ukraine-war/>

[3] See Michael Pröbsting: "The Gigantic Destruction of the Ukrainian Society", LINKS, 15 December 2022, <http://links.org.au/gigantic-destruction-ukrainian-society>. For a political and economic analysis of Ukraine, see Michael Pröbsting: *Ukraine: A Capitalist Semi-Colony. On the exploitation and deformation of Ukraine's economy by imperialist monopolies and oligarchs since capitalist restoration in 1991*, January 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-a-capitalist-semi-colony/>

[4] See Michael Pröbsting: *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory*, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character*, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics*, 18 March 2014 (this pamphlet contains a document written in 2001 in which we established for the first time our characterisation of Russia as imperialist), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; see also these essays by the same author: "Russia: An Imperialist Power or a 'Non-Hegemonic Empire in Gestation'? A reply to the Argentinean economist Claudio Katz", in: *New Politics*, 11 August 2022, at <https://newpol.org/russia-an-imperialist-power-or-a-non-hegemonic-empire-in-gestation-a-reply-to-the-argentinean-economist-claudio-katz-an-essay-with-8-tables/>; "Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies", in: *New Politics* Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/; "Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics). A rebuttal of a theory which claims that Russia is not an imperialist state but would be rather 'comparable to Brazil and Iran'", 30 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/once-again-on-russian-imperialism-reply-to-critics/>.

[5] Michael Pröbsting: "Medvedev claims: 'We need a Big Great Russia'. Putin's hatchet man calls for Ukraine 'to cease to exist'", 13 April 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/medvedev-claims-we-need-a-big-great-russia/>

[6] Alexey Sedov, Nao Hong (she/they) and Michael Pröbsting: "Socialists Should Support the Transfer of Russian State and Oligarchs Assets into Ukrainian Hands! Contribution to a discussion among socialists on how to strengthen the Ukrainian resistance against Putin's invasion without lending support to Western imperialism", 15 December 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/russian-state-and-oligarchs-assets-into-ukrainian-hands/> and <https://www.socialisttendency.com/post/socialist-sanctions-oligarch-requisition>.

Trotsky's Transitional Program: A Strange Translation Error

Notes on a mistake in the English-language translation of Trotsky's Transitional Program which is distorting its meaning concerning imperialist wars

By Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 8 April 2023

It is not uncommonly that mistakes can be made in translations which are distorting the meaning of the original text. However, it is remarkable if such an error occurs in the most important programmatic document of the international Trotskyist movement – the so-called *Transitional Program*. And it is even more remarkable if such a mistake is repeated in all republications of this document until today and not noticed by any of its numerous publishers!

We are talking about the following paragraph in the chapter “*The Struggle Against Imperialism and War*” in the program whose full title is “*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*”. It was drafted by Leon Trotsky and adopted at the foundation congress of the Fourth International in 1938. In this chapter, the author talks about the case of a colonial country or a workers state which wages a just war against an imperialist aggressor while, at the same time, being in an alliance with another imperialist state.

“The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government, no matter what might be the diplomatic and military relations between the two countries at a given moment. If the governments find themselves in a temporary and, by the very essence of the matter, unreliable alliance, then the proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the non-imperialist “ally” through its own methods, i.e., through the methods of the international class struggle (agitation not only against their perfidious allies, but also in favor of a workers’ state in a colonial country; boycott, strikes, in one case; rejection of boycott and strikes in another case, etc.)”

The translation error is in the last sentence of this paragraph. The official English-language translation reads: “*agitation not only against their perfidious allies, but also in favor of a workers’ state in a colonial country*”.

However, the correct translation of this sentence is: “*agitation in favor of a workers’ state and of a colonial country not only against their enemies but also against their perfidious allies*”.

The difference between the two versions is obvious. The wrong official translation suggests that socialists should have two goals in their agitation:

- a) “*against their perfidious allies*” and
- b) “*in favor of a workers’ state in a colonial country*”.

In contrast, the correct version says:

- i) that socialists should agitate in support of the workers’ state *as well as* of the colonial country;
- ii) that socialists should do such agitation in a way that it is directed both against the direct enemies (i.e. the imperialist aggressors) as well as against the “*perfidious allies*”, i.e. the imperialist allies of the workers’ state respectively of the colonial country.

We see that the wrong translation implies two mistakes:

- A) It leaves out the agitation against the imperialist en-

emy; furthermore, the formulation is confused as it does not make clear about the “*perfidious allies*” of whom it is talking about (i.e. those of the workers’ state respectively of the colonial country).

B) It wrongly speaks only about a very specific case – that is to say a workers state which is created in a colonial country – instead of speaking about both a workers’ state as well as about a colonial country. This translation error is all the more absurd since such a state, a workers state in a colonial country, did not exist at the time when the *Transitional Program* was discussed and adopted in the late 1930s. In other words, the official translation talks about a fictitious possible scenario in the future instead of the existing workers’ state (the USSR) respectively the various (semi-)colonial countries which at that time were enmeshed in military conflicts with imperialist powers.

How can we proof our thesis?

Why are we convinced that the version of the English translation which we presented above is the correct one?

1) First, in contrast to the official translation, our version makes sense. The whole chapter “*The Struggle Against Imperialism and War*” talks about *two different types* of countries which could wage a liberation war under such conditions: a) the USSR and b) a (semi-)colonial country.

The very paragraph before the paragraph quoted above reads as follows: “*But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary, the majority are victims of imperialism. Some of the colonial or semi-colonial countries will undoubtedly attempt to utilize the war in order to east off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating. It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed countries in their war against oppressors. The same duty applies in regard to aiding the USSR, or whatever other workers’ government might arise before the war or during the war. The defeat of every imperialist government in the struggle with the workers’ state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil.*”

And the subsequent paragraph after the paragraph quoted above reads as follows: “*In supporting the colonial country or the USSR in a war, the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize either with the bourgeois government of the colonial country or with the Thermidorian bureaucracy of the USSR.*”

In contrast, the official version of the disputed sentence wrongly mixes together *two different types* of countries and reduced them to a very specific case – a workers state in a colonial country. As mentioned above, such a state did not even exist at that time since the USSR was the only existing (degenerated) workers state which was created in 1917 on the territory of most of the Russian Empire. Russia was, before the socialist October Revolution, an imperialist power.¹

2) Second, our version is identical with the original Russian-language draft of the *Transitional Program* written by

Trotsky.²

3) Finally, our version is identical with the nearly all publications of the *Transitional Program* in other important languages at that time like French, German, Russian, and Spanish language.³

All these factors make it pretty evident that the official English-language translation of the sentence discussed above is wrong.

What is the political relevance of this issue?

The problem of the mistaken translation is not one of grammar or typing error. The whole political meaning of Trotsky's approach on this issue has been to explain the necessity for the international working-class vanguard to side with a country (a workers state, a colonial country or, we add, a progressive camp in a civil war) which is waging a war against an imperialist resp. a reactionary aggressor. Such support was legitimate irrespective of the fact that such a country/camp might be in an alliance with another imperialist state.

This was not a fictional scenario – as the wording of “a workers state in a colonial country” would suggest – but a situation which really existed at that time. As we did already discuss on several occasions – in drawing historical analogies with the ongoing Ukraine War – the Trotskyists supported Ethiopia against Italy in 1935/36, China against Japan in 1937-45 or Republican Spain against Franco in 1936-39. Shortly after the publication of the *Transitional Program* the USSR was engaged in a gigantic war against

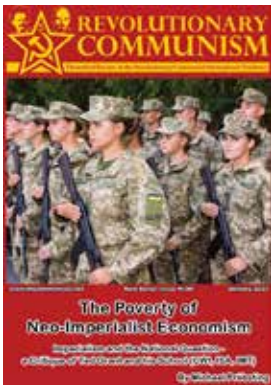
Nazi-Germany in 1941-45. In all these cases, the progressive camp was (half-heartedly) supported by this or that Western imperialist power.⁴

At the same time, the mistaken translation distorts – or at least confuses – Trotsky's insistence of political class independence of the proletariat which is expressed in the formulation that socialists have to make agitation against the imperialist aggressor as well as against the “perfidious allies” of the workers state or colonial country.

The translation which we propose is also in line with other programmatic writings of Trotsky and the Fourth International about the problem of imperialist wars. See e.g. Trotsky's theses “*War and the Fourth International*” which were adopted and published by International Secretariat of the ICL (the predecessor organization of the Fourth International) in 1934.

“43. In the existing situation, an alliance of the USSR with an imperialist state or with one imperialist combination against another, in case of war, cannot at all be considered as excluded. Under the pressure of circumstances, a temporary alliance of this kind may become an iron necessity, without ceasing, however, because of it, to be of the greatest danger both to the USSR and to the world revolution.

The international proletariat will not decline to defend the USSR even if the latter should find itself forced into a military alliance with some imperialists against others. But in this case, even more than in any other, the international proletariat must safeguard its complete political independence from Soviet diplomacy and, thereby, also from the bureaucracy of the Third International.



Publications of the RCIT

The Poverty of Neo-Imperialist Economism

Imperialism and the National Question -
a Critique of Ted Grant and his School (CWI, ISA, IMT)

By Michael Pröbsting, January 2023

Introduction * Part I. The Grantites' main flaws on imperialism and national oppression * 1. Confusion on imperialism and the class character of states * 2. Failure to recognise the nature of national oppression * 3. Refusal to support liberation struggles as they take place * Part II. The class basis and the theoretical tradition of Grantite revisionism * 4. Strategic orientation to the labour bureaucracy, Sanders, Chavez, etc. * 5. The Grantites' utopia: reforming the capitalist state and the peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism * 6. Are the police “workers in uniform”? * 7. Woods against Lenin's concept of revolutionary defeatism * 8. The Marxist theory of antagonistic contradictions and the inevitability of their violent explosion (and their gradualist distortion by Grantism) * 9. Excuse: Comparing imperialist economism in the past and present (Bukharin/Pjatakov/Radek versus Grant/Woods/Taaffe) * Part III. Some objections and Marxist answers * 10. Undermining the unity of the working class? * 11. “The workers would not understand this” * 12. “But the national question can not be solved under capitalism!” * 13. Are national liberation wars doomed to become “proxy wars” in the age of inter-imperialist Cold War? * Conclusions * Footnotes

A RCIT Pamphlet, 28 pages, A4 Format

44. *Remaining the determined and devoted defender of the workers' state in the struggle with imperialism, the international proletariat will not, however, become an ally of the imperialist allies of the USSR. The proletariat of a capitalist country that finds itself in an alliance with the USSR must retain fully and completely its irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country. In this sense, its policy will not differ from that of the proletariat in a country fighting against the USSR. But in the nature of practical actions, considerable differences may arise depending on the concrete war situation. For instance, it would be absurd and criminal in case of war between the USSR and Japan for the American proletariat to sabotage the sending of American munition to the USSR. But the proletariat of a country fighting against the USSR would be absolutely obliged to resort to actions of this sort – strikes, sabotage, etc.*

45. *Intransigent proletarian opposition to the imperialist ally of the USSR must develop, on the one hand, on the basis of international class policy, on the other, on the basis of the imperialist aims of the given government, the treacherous character of this "alliance," its speculation on capitalist overturn in the USSR, etc. The policy of a proletarian party in an "allied" as well as an enemy imperialist country should therefore be directed towards the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of power. Only in this way can a real alliance with the USSR be created and the first workers' state be saved from disaster."*⁵

The same approach was also elaborated in a programmatic article published by Rudolf Klement, a young German revolutionary who worked as secretary of Trotsky and later as the Administrative Secretary of the international leadership of the Trotskyist movement.⁶ Klement was murdered in Paris by the Stalinist GPU shortly before the foundation congress of the Fourth International took place in September 1938.⁷

Klement's article, which was highly praised by Trotsky, was published during the period of preparation of the foundation congress of the Fourth International.⁸ In it, the young German revolutionary elaborates on tactics of Marxists in wars involving a progressive camp (a workers state, a colonial country or in a civil war) and where imperialist states are involved on both sides. In such conflicts, socialists must combine support for the progressive camp without lending support to any imperialist power. At the same time, Klement explained, socialists in such rivalling imperialist states would be obligated to advocate different concrete tactics in order to support the military struggle of the progressive camp (like "boycott, strikes, in one case; rejection of boycott and strikes in another case" as the above-mentioned sentence of the *Transitional Program* mentions).⁹

It is evident to the informed reader that this whole debate was not only important to the Trotskyist movement in the 1930s and 1940s. It is also highly relevant today as the Ukraine War is still raging. This conflict has, as we explained repeatedly, a *dual character*: it is a national liberation war of the Ukraine but, at the same time, it is *also* linked with the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist powers. Hence, the RCIT and all authentic socialists advocate a *dual tactic*. Socialists are obliged to defend the Ukraine – a semi-colonial capitalist country¹⁰ – against Russian imperialism.¹¹ At the same time, they must lend no support whatsoever for the chauvinist and militarist policy of any Great Power against their rivals. Hence, it is impermissible to support economic sanctions or similar

Great Power measures. The RCIT has summarised such a consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist approach in the slogan: *Defend the Ukraine against Putin's invasion! Beware of NATO and Zelensky – transform the resistance against the Russian occupation into a Popular War! Against Russian and against NATO imperialism!*¹²

What has been the cause for this error?

How did such a translation error occur? It is evident that the mistake has been committed since the very beginning of the English translation. Already the first publication of English-language translation of the *Transitional Program* shortly after its adoption by the foundation congress – in *Socialist Appeal* (the weekly organ of the SWP, the U.S. Section of the Fourth International) – contains the erroneous sentence.¹³ The same formulation was kept in the first edition of the program as a pamphlet in January 1939 as well as in the second, which was published in 1946.¹⁴ All later publications of the *Transitional Program*, of which we are aware, retain this erroneous translation.¹⁵

There can be two explanations for this mistake. It can either be a deliberate distortion on behalf of the original translator resp. the publishers. Or it was simply a mistake of slovenliness. We have no reason to assume that this was a deliberate distortion. Leaving aside that the leading cadres of the U.S. American SWP, which was responsible for the first English-language translation, were loyal followers of Trotsky, there have also been no political differences on this issue at that time between the Cannon-Shachtman leadership and Trotsky. For all these reasons, we can exclude a bad intention. Hence, we believe that this was simply a result of sloppiness.

However, the amazing thing is not that such a mistake did happen. It is rather astonishing that nobody among the English-language Trotskyists ever bothered to correct this mistake. It has been certainly not helpful that the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie never encouraged people to learn foreign languages. As a result, 99% of English-language people (including Trotskyists) know only their native tongue. Hence, nearly all English-language Trotskyists are most likely unaware that the above-discussed formulation of the English-language version of *Transitional Program* differs from the Russian-language original as well as from the French, German and Spanish version (and probably also in other languages of which the author of these lines is not aware).

It is to be hoped – as we are nearing the 85th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International and, hence, also of the adoption of the *Transitional Program* – that, finally, this translation error is corrected!

Footnotes

1 For our analysis of Russian imperialism before 1917 see e.g. chapter 7 of our book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019, <https://www.thecomunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>; see also a pamphlet by the same author: *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperial-*

ism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>.

2 This has been already pointed out by the comrades of the IBT; see The Transitional Program, Footnote 19, <https://bolshheviktendency.org/part-i-the-transitional-program/>

3 The French translation of the respective sentence reads: "agitation en faveur de l'État ouvrier et du pays colonial, non seulement contre ses ennemis, mais aussi contre ses alliés perfides : boycott et grève dans certains cas, renoncement au boycott et à la grève dans d'autres, etc.)" (see: Léon Trotsky: Programme de Transition, <https://www.marxists.org/francais/trotsky/livres/trans/tran12.html>; <https://lesmaterialistes.com/trotsky-programme-transition-1938>)

The German translation of the respective sentence reads: „Agitation zugunsten des Arbeiterstaates und des Koloniallandes nicht nur gegenüber seinen Feinden, sondern auch gegenüber seinen falschen Verbündeten: Boykott und Streik in bestimmten Fällen, Verzicht auf Streik und Boykott in anderen usw.“ (see: Leo Trotzki: Der Todeskampf des Kapitalismus und die Aufgaben der 4. Internationale (Das Übergangsprogramm), Arbeiterpresse Verlag, Essen 1997, p. 107; Verlag Ergebnisse und Perspektiven, Essen 1972, p. 24; Intarlit, Wolfgang Dröge Verlag, p. 55; Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/trotzki/1938/uebergang/ueberg1.htm>. We should mention that there exists one version of the German-language translation which is obviously based on the English version and which contains the same, above-mentioned, erroneous translation (Die Kommunistische Alternative: Texte der Linken Opposition und der IV. Internationale, 1935-85, ISP-Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., p. 81)

The Russian translation of the respective sentence reads: "агитация в пользу рабочего государства и колониальной страны не только против их врагов, но и против их вероломных союзников; бойкот и стачка в одних случаях, отказ от бойкота и стачки в других, и пр.)" (see: Л.Д.Троцкий: Переходная программа IV интернационала, Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/russkij/trotsky/1938/agonia.htm>; <https://www.1917.com/Marxism/Trotsky/SA/Trotsky-IV/Trotsky-Agonia.html#12>)

The Spanish translation of the respective sentence reads: "agitación en favor del estado obrero y del país colonial, no solamente contra sus enemigos, sino también contra sus aliados pérfidos; boicot y huelga en ciertos casos, renuncia al boicot y la huelga en otros, etc...." (see: Leon Trotsky: Programa de transición. La agonía del capitalismo y las tareas de la IV. Internacional, Fundación Federico Engels, Colección Clásicos del Marxismo, Madrid 2008, p. 50; Programa de transición, p. 13, <https://docplayer.es/31810484-Programa-de-transicion.html>; Leon Trotsky: El programa de transición. La agonía del capitalismo y las tareas de la IV Internacional, Traducción: Julio Rodríguez Arambarri & Javier Maestro, Editor digital: Titivillus, <https://docer.com.ar/doc/c081s11>; Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/trotsky/1938/prog-trans.htm>) We should mention that we are aware of one version of the Spanish-language translation which contains a combination of the above-mentioned, erroneous translation and the correct one: "agitation not only against their disloyal allies, but also in favor of the workers' state or the colonial country." (PSOCA: Cuaderno No 2 de El Socialista Centroamericano, 2010, p. 29)

4 See on this e.g. Michael Pröbsting: A Marxist Slogan and its Caricature. On the social-imperialist distortion of the slogan "The Main Enemy Is At Home" in the context of the Ukraine War and the Taiwan Strait Crisis, 17 August 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/the-marxist-slogan-the-main-enemy-is-at-home-and-its-social-imperialist-distortion/>; by the same author: The Ukraine War and the Second Sino-Japanese War: A Historical Analogy. The dual tactic of Marxists in the Ukraine War today draws on the approach of their predecessors in the war between China and Japan in 1937-41, 10 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/ukraine-war-second-sino-japanese-war-a-historical-analogy/>

5 Leon Trotsky: War and the Fourth International (1934), in: Trotsky Writings 1933-34, pp. 315-316; see also Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1934/06/warfi.htm>

Books of the RCIT

Michael Pröbsting: Building the Revolutionary Party in Theory and Practice

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

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

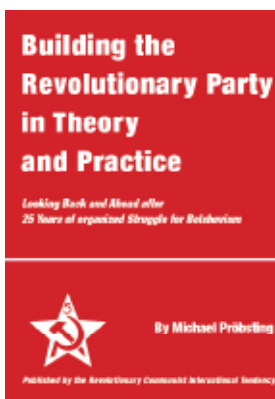
The following paragraphs are the back cover text of the book which give an overview of its content.

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

25 years.

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

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



6 Rudolf Klement: Principles and Tactics in War, in: The New International, May 1938, Theoretical Journal of the Socialist Workers Party (U.S. Section of the Fourth International), <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/klement-war/>

7 For some biographical information about Rudolf Klement see e.g. Helmut Dahmer: Erinnerung an Rudolf Klement, 15.01.2021, <https://intersoz.org/erinnerung-an-rudolf-klement/>; a short text by Pierre Broué: Rudolf Klement, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol1/no1/klement.html>; see also the revealing notes about his murder in the autobiography of a leading Stalinist NKVD official: Pavel A. Sudoplatov and Anatoli P. Sudoplatov, Jerrold L. Schecter and Leona P. Schecter: Special Tasks. The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness— A Soviet Spymaster, Little, Brown and Company, New York 1994, p. 48

8 See Leon Trotsky: An Excellent Article on Defeatism (1938), in: Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38, Pathfinder Press, New York 1970, pp. 153-154.

9 See on e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Dialectics and Wars in the Present Period. Preface to Rudolf Klement's Principles and Tactics in War, June 2017, https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/klement-war/#anker_1

10 For a political and economic analysis of the Ukraine see e.g. the pamphlet by Michael Pröbsting: Ukraine: A Capitalist Semi-Colony. On the exploitation and deformation of Ukraine's economy by imperialist monopolies and oligarchs since capitalist restoration in 1991, January 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/ukraine-a-capitalist-semi-colony/>

11 The RCIT has published numerous documents about capitalism in Russia and its rise to an imperialist power. The most important ones are several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; by the same author: Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics, 18 March 2014 (this pamphlet contains a document written in 2001 in which we established for the first time our characterisation of Russia as imperialist), <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>; see also these essays by the same author: Russia: An Imperialist Power or a "Non-Hegemonic Empire in Gestation"? A reply to the Argentinean economist Claudio Katz, in: New Politics, 11 August 2022, at <https://newpol.org/russia-an-imperialist-power-or-a-non-hegemonic-empire-in-gestation-a-reply-to-the-argentinean-economist-claudio-katz-an-essay-with-8-tables/>; "Empire-ism" vs a Marxist analysis of imperialism. Continuing the debate with Argentinean economist Claudio Katz on Great Power rivalry, Russian imperialism and the Ukraine War, LINKS (Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal), 3 March 2023, <https://links.org.au/empire-ism-vs->

[marxist-analysis-imperialism-continuing-debate-argentinean-economist-claudio-katz](https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/socialist-appeal-1938/v2n46-sect-2-oct-22-1938-SA.pdf); Russian Imperialism and Its Monopolies, in: New Politics Vol. XVIII No. 4, Whole Number 72, Winter 2022, https://newpol.org/issue_post/russian-imperialism-and-its-monopolies/; Once Again on Russian Imperialism (Reply to Critics). A rebuttal of a theory which claims that Russia is not an imperialist state but would be rather "comparable to Brazil and Iran", 30 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/once-again-on-russian-imperialism-reply-to-critics/>. See various other RCIT documents on this issue at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.

12 We refer readers to a special page on our website where more than 160 RCIT documents on the Ukraine War and the current NATO-Russia conflict are compiled: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/compilation-of-documents-on-nato-russia-conflict/>. In particular we refer to the RCIT Manifesto: Ukraine War: A Turning Point of World Historic Significance. Socialists must combine the revolutionary defense of the Ukraine against Putin's invasion with the internationalist struggle against Russian as well as NATO and EU imperialism, 1 March 2022, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-ukraine-war-a-turning-point-of-world-historic-significance/>; see also: Manifesto on the First Anniversary of the Ukraine War. Victory to the heroic Ukrainian people! Defeat Russian imperialism! No support whatsoever for NATO imperialism! 10 February 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/manifesto-on-first-anniversary-of-ukraine-war/>; RCIT: Towards a Turning Point in the Ukraine War? The tasks of socialists in the light of possible lines of development of the war of national defence in combination with the inter-imperialist Great Power rivalry, 11 March 2023, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/global/towards-a-turning-point-in-the-ukraine-war/>

13 Socialist Appeal, Vol. II No. 46, 22 October 1938, p. 9, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/themilitant/socialist-appeal-1938/v2n46-sect-2-oct-22-1938-SA.pdf>

14 SWP: The Foundation Conference of the Fourth International (World Party of Socialist revolution). Program and Resolutions, New York 1939, p. 35; The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, Pioneer Publishers, New York 1946, p. 33

15 Leon Trotsky: The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution. With Introductory Essays by Joseph Hansen and George Novack, Pathfinder Press, New York 1973, p. 132 (the erroneous formation is also kept in all later editions of the Pathfinder version); The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Mobilization of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power (The Transitional Program); in: Documents of the Fourth International. The Formative Years (1933-40), New York 1973, p. 200; Leon Trotsky: The Transitional Program & the Struggle for Socialism, Resistance Books, 1999, p. 39; WRP: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the 4th International, London 1975, p. 35; Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/tp-text.htm#w>

Comunismo Revolucionario

Spanish-language Journal of the RCIT

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What the RCIT Stands for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We work inside the trade unions and advocate class struggle, socialism and workers' democracy. But trade unions and social democracy are controlled by a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is a layer which is connected with the state and capital via jobs and privileges. It is far from the interests and

living circumstances of the members. This bureaucracy's basis rests mainly on the top, privileged layers of the working class - the workers' aristocracy. The struggle for the liberation of the working class must be based on the broad mass of the proletariat rather than their upper strata.

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

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

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

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

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

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

For new, revolutionary workers' parties in all countries! For a 5th Workers International on a revolutionary program! Join the RCIT!

No future without socialism!

No socialism without a revolution!

No revolution without a revolutionary party!

