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A Response to Those who Abandon the Barricades

See No Revolution, Hear No Revolution, Make No Revolution: In Defense of Permanent Revolution in Syria

Regular readers of the press of the Liaison Committee of Communists (LCC) could well wonder what two of our members were up to attending the recent Permanent Revolution Collective (CoReP) conference in Paris in March. This would be the correct question if we had known that CoReP considers the Syrian Revolution to be over, crushed and defeated by Assad and Islamists in 2012. We of the LCC did not know this definitively until the actual conference and we saw our duty then to defend the Syrian Revolution, which we did.

The working class demands that those who make claims to leadership try to develop its historic program and theory and make sincere efforts to pursue a principled unity of revolutionists. A number of militants internationally pointed out the appearance of a methodological identity between ourselves (the LCC) and CoReP, another current identified with Trotskyism with organizations in Peru, Austria and France and with members in other countries. Leading LCC members began exploring this question which principally concerns the agreement that China and Russia have become new imperialist powers following the exceptional circumstances of the triumph of capitalist restoration in each case. Both groups recognize the exceptional character of the transformation was based on the foundation of networks and efficiencies bequeathed to Russian and Chinese capitalists by the workers states. We did not anticipate finding the CoReP method was empiricist, and because of other points of agreement and a general agreement with their Draft Program, we would not have guessed how empiricist their method would turn out to be. In fact, it is an empiricism driven by the influence of national chauvinism, which results in their own model of social imperialism. Discovering this was a great disappointment for us.

In the Fall of 2015 we received their Draft Program for a new

international with great interest. We did not expect completely concentric takes on every historical question or political tactic with a grouping that had an altogether different organizational genealogy. We took exception to their employment of the term Islamo-fascism and suspected that their response to the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine was reflective of an excessive "Laicite," an overboard secularism which is a cover in liberal circles for hysteria about an Islamization of France and Europe. We direct our readers to "Our Objection, Our Worries and Hesitation Explained." Little did we know that



[Demonstration in Maaret Al-Numan on April 4, 2016.](#) They are still demanding for the end of authoritarian policies of Jabhat Al-Nusra and the liberation of the prisoners in Nusra's jails.

behind the objectionable terminology we would find a serious gulf existing between our understandings of what constitutes a revolution. A revolution is not a checklist to be completed with only an approved cast of historical actors. The real masses participate in a revolution, on one side of the barricades or the other, without exceptions (even refugees actively flee it.) As we say below, revolutionary organizations that do not recognize a revolution are out of business, and in this case, due to a national chauvinism hiding in their revulsion at a perceived Islamo-fascism.

The empiricist method turns social revolution into a schema. For the empiricist if the working class does not take the proper action according to their plan the masses are not involved in social revolution. However social revolution does not unfold according to a plan. Any well-trained academic can lay out a stepwise plan for social change. Unfortunately for the schematists social reality unfolds according to its own dialectic. When conditions no longer allow the masses to remain passive the learning process begins to unfold with each step the masses take towards achieving their understanding of both the change necessary and how to accomplish it. The masses will always look for a reform road, a pacifist road, a legislative road, before coming to the conclusion that the armed revolution is the only solution. Indeed they may even embark on the path of

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armed revolt without all of the tools in place and they may have to retreat in the face of superior armed force but as we see today in Syria after a few years of retreat during the respite that the ceasefire provided the masses quickly stepped forward to make their intention clear. As observers from afar and participants in defense of social revolution we do not turn our back on the masses while they are in retreat. Where the empiricist declare the revolution dead or stillborn the dialectic declares the masses are in their learning curve.

Two Liaison Committee of Communists (LCC) representatives attended the 3rd Permanent Revolution Collective (CoReP) conference in Paris from March 25th-27th, 2016. The LCC found much common formal political agreement between our organizations, particularly over the rise of Russian and Chinese imperialism. In the run-up to the conference, the LCC submitted a document, “*Our Objection, Our Worries and Hesitation Explained*”¹ detailing two major political differences. The first difference was over the characterization of reactionary clerical Islamism as Islamo-fascism. The other was the Syrian Revolution, which the LCC considers to still be alive, while CoReP considers it crushed, except in “*the north that the Assad government has conceded to Kurdish nationalism.*”² It is the Syrian question that is the more serious of the two. The conference also revealed a third difference which we hope does not signify a methodological problem. Except in certain countries (for instance, Greece and Brazil,) as they say, CoReP claims that world capitalism has stabilized since the 2008 crisis.

CoReP responded to the LCC document “*Our Objection, Our Worries and Hesitation Explained*”³ on March 18th. Fundamentally, CoReP’s position is as quoted below from their reply of March 18th that the Syrian Revolution ended in 2012:

“*A democratic revolution started in 2011 but was crushed by 2012. As in other countries in North Africa and West Asia, youth and workers have rebelled against a torture and police state. As there was no revolutionary workers’ party and the working class could not take the lead, the revolution was defeated under the pressure of two counter-revolutionaries forces: the bourgeois state supported by the Iran and Russia; Islamofascism of ISIS and al-Nosra (al-Qaeda) supported by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey. The theory of permanent revolution was confirmed, but negatively.*

The Baath regime has not fallen yet, not only because

the Russian state, Hezbollah from Lebanon, the “Revolutionary Guards” from Iran (this designation shows that we should not word for everyone speak of “revolution”) have strengthened militarily, but also for political reasons. A part of the population, not just the great bourgeoisie, preferred the Baath regime to that of ISIS or al-Qaida.

The regime and the imperialist powers (USA, Russia, France, Great Britain ...) bombed and devastated much of Syria. According to the United Nations for Refugees (UNCHR), about 23 million Syrians, four fled to neighboring countries and Europe, 6.5 million have fled within the country. How to believe that in such a situation, a revolution can grow?

The only significant area of the country that escapes the tyranny of the Baath, al-Nosra (al-Qaeda) or ISIS is the north that the Assad government has conceded to Kurdish nationalism. The PYD-YPG could maintain and extend its position with the help of the US military.

The Free Syrian Army has been marginalized since 2011 and it controls in March 2016 only a small fraction of the territory. On the ground, the difference between the jihadists and FSA has never been clear. It is doubtful that the foreign states which supported it finance and arm a social revolution. Since its birth, the FSA recognized the authority of bourgeois SNC. The SNC is notoriously dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement that led the against-revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, which is close to the AKP / Turkey enclosing journalists and murders the Kurds.” – CoReP reply to the LCC, March 18th

The LCC did not submit a formal written response since there simply wasn’t time before the conference. There was an informal three hour International meeting with the CoReP International Bureau members on Friday, March 26th. The LCC responded to CoReP’s position on Syria in a statement during the International discussion at the conference on Saturday, March 27th. The unedited written speech is reproduced at the end of this document.⁴

The LCC wanted to shake CoReP up. We didn’t come thousands of miles to call people names; our presentation at the conference was based upon our own internal discussions. We went to the CoReP conference because we agree on Russian/Chinese imperialism and because CoReP doesn’t subscribe to the universal Russophile or Robertsonian view that China is still today a deformed workers state. This is a fundamental dividing line. CoReP’s analysis of Libya and their polemic with Gerry Downing gave us hope of methodological agreement. So it was a tremendous shock to us that they don’t recognize the Syrian Revolution. The LCC has no inclination to forming an international on a dishonest basis where the official line would deny existence of the Syrian Revolution and we would be required to abide by discipline that would muzzle us.

A revolutionary tendency that does not recognize a living revolution is out of business. Many organizations exist solely on

their independent organizational dynamic and when revolution comes calling in their own countries they get swept into the dustbin of history. Furthermore, we believe no good can come of trying to build an international on two divergent political lines. This is not the method of Bolshevism, it is the method of Mensheviks and Manicheans. The LCC still has hope that CoReP will snap out of this funk.

The LCC polemic against CoReP's Syria position was blunt, honest and to the point:

*"We think the path CoReP is on away from the Syrian revolution is non-internationalism; in the real circumstance it is as bad practically as the absurd "revolutionaries" and "Trotskyists" who support Assad. This is a surprise given the analysis CoReP made of events in Libya when you polemicized with and cleaned the clock of Gerry Downing's pro-Ghaddafi neo-Healyism. The majority of the comrades in the CWG were in the nowadays defunct Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRS) at the time and supported comrade Couthon's analysis (and still do), which we intended to publish before Dave Winter's radical position reversal."*⁵

But that is a formal position only because CoReP does not concretely defend the Syrian Revolution which is fighting IS etc., and explains why we can't actually defend it [IS, ed.] from imperialism any more than we can defend Assad. Moreover while the Syrian revolution is fighting on three fronts (imperialism, Assad, and the various hostile militias) it also has to combat the fourth front which is the 'imperialist left'. CoReP's position on Syria puts it in the category of the 'imperialist left'. Why? Because it adopts phony arguments to pronounce permanent revolution dead.

Was it dead by 2012? How to explain the survival of a revolution (effectively denied heavy weapons by imperialism and its proxies) until today requiring the intervention of the Russian bloc to stop it overthrowing Assad? In Aleppo there is an armed resistance coexisting with popular (workers, professionals, traders, etc.) self-administration. How is this Aleppo Commune still alive and kicking?"

It was the statement "CoReP's position on Syria puts it in the category of the 'imperialist left'" that forced the issue, with CoReP asking the LCC representatives to renounce this statement, which they termed an accusation of "social imperialism", in order to carry on further discussion. The political discussion degenerated into "we think, whereas you think...show us proof..." that the Syrian Revolution lives. The LCC finds it pretty difficult to argue with an organization that touts bourgeois media sources, and at the same time states that recent Syrian demonstrations were staged by CNN, all the while denigrating legitimate independent sources, both independent and partisan, on the Syrian Revolution.

It is clear that differences exist in CoReP as one comrade had a closer position to ours, who, completely independent of the LCC, arrived at his position. The lawfulness of the appearance of this position within their ranks ought to give the CoReP leadership pause. CoReP may not realize that denying the Syrian Revolution is a concrete expression of social imperialism, not least of all because the Syria on the map was a French invention.

Having a wrong position on Syria is not conjunctural or tactical, but is methodologically empiricist. For CoReP the revolution in Syria is dead and to say that the Permanent Revolution is "confirmed in the negative" means the Permanent Revolution has been negated. Presumably, this is what the evidence they employ means to them -- evidence we do not dispute -- where they cite the many millions of dislocated Syrians and ask, "How to believe that in such a situation, a revolution can grow?"

For the LCC the Syrian Revolution is palpable and gives us evidence daily that it is the leading edge of the Permanent Revolution in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a popular armed uprising. Now sustained for five years, it has had the Assad regime in retreat during much of that time, preparing conditions for and opening the road to revolutions in the rest of MENA. If CoReP looks at the same evidence and maintains that the Permanent Revolution in Syria is dead, then it is also dead in MENA. And if it is dead in MENA then we can draw the conclusion that CoReP is an ultra-left social imperialist cover for imperialism because they require a revolution to pass a checklist test of accomplishments, i.e., if a revolution within one country is not immediately a socialist revolution, it is no revolution at all. This is not a new historical deviation. And if true, it is only the ultra-left flip side of the Stalinist right-centrist position that a revolution must begin as a bourgeois democratic revolution in a confined and historically separated stage. When CoReP says that the capitalist system has established stability again in all but a few countries, we have to ask if they mean a political stabilization. And further, we wonder what tea leaves they are reading because even most bourgeois economists are wringing their hands and warning of an impending stock market crash with much more dire consequences for the capitalist world market than the 2008 world crisis.

Was it too far of a stretch to equate abstention with support in practice for Assad and imperialism? Historically it has been shown that organizations that do not recognize and defend workers' gains will end up capitulating to "their" ruling class. Schachtman's Third Camp renunciation of defense of the Soviet workers state led inexorably to State Department socialism.

If continuing discussions lead us closer, then we will have them. The LCC certainly agrees with much of CoReP's draft program.

The Syrian Revolution

The Revolution in Syria is an advanced revolutionary process where the fight against a dictator who bombards tortures and kills millions of people today has the largest imperialist powers intervening to defend their own specific interests. The Syrian Revolution is indissolubly linked by thousands of connections to the broader unfinished Arab national revolution and its latest conjunctural rise in the Arab Spring. The revolutionary Syrians, their advocates, activists and militants who five years ago started the fight against the tyranny of Assad, and then the imperialist blocs of the U.S. and China and against ISIS in turn, have had to defend the revolution also against the "imperialist left" as well, or the western "left" that was either positioned directly with the counterrevolution or who simply do not recognize the revolution, which amounts to the same thing.

The Syrian people being massacred have shown that they have

not to lost hope in the victory of their revolution and that they will not cease to fight. As Trotskyists, we do not lose faith in mobilizing the support of the working class around the world (and their organizations) and we do not cease to fight for it. Class struggle militants must defend the Syrian Revolution. Victory of revolution in Syria and/or the world requires the revolutionary party, but it is not going to be built by abandoning the masses through abstention.

Street by street and town by town, the masses have tough decisions to make and abstention is not an option. Or is only an option for the refugees. To stay is to fight, and to fight alongside whatever grouping your neighbors have joined in the fight against Assad. This doesn't decide the political question for an epoch or even a year, but only for now, for the moment. Revolutionary processes have trajectories, as do the tendencies who play their parts. It is only from our own vantage of Marxist training that we can immediately recognize the reactionary characteristic of this or that Islamist group. When it is time to fight, Sunnis may believe that ISIS is the coming of Joan of Arc when they arrive and have to be disabused of this impression by their own experience

Consider the following from an article "[How the Syrian Revolt Became Armed](#)":

"Still, abstract criticisms of the revolution's militarization miss the point. Syria's revolutionaries didn't make a formal collective decision to pick up arms—quite the opposite; rather, a million individual decisions were made under fire. Yassin Swehat puts it like this: "It wasn't a choice. Look at Homs. When thousands are praying in a square, peaceful, unarmed, and they are shot at, murdered—What do you expect to happen next?"

CoReP in their response to the LCC derided those who defend the Syrian Revolution as opportunist and engaging in class collaboration. For our own part, we insufficiently appreciated CoReP's charge of "class collaboration" clearly aimed at us, made in the last days before the conference. But we are some tough monkeys brought up in the Cannon school so the rough and tumble of factional struggle does not throw us. CoReP argued that:

"Opportunism talk of a metaphysics "revolution" in Syria to cover class collaboration. It divides only on how to surrender to the bourgeoisie.

Opportunism differs according to the strata of the bourgeoisie with which it tries to unite and in whose support it attempts to enlist the proletariat. (Lukacs, Lenin, 1924, ch. 4)

- **Most of them support the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democrats who apparently oppose the regime and Jihadism;**
 - *Some support the official Syrian regime arguing this one is "anti-imperialist";*
 - *Others support jihadists in Syria and Iraq under the same pretext."*
- (emphasis added, CoReP 03/18/2016 Reply to LCC)

So CoReP does not advance military support to neighborhood militias, local fighters or democratic elements in Syria who oppose the regime, while at the same time opposing the Jihadists and imperialism? In countering the CoReP position our representatives told the conference:

"The 400-700 LCCs [Local Coordinating Committees, ed.] identified by some as petty bourgeois intellectuals and pacifists are more than that. Is there revolutionary workers party? No. Are they workers councils? No! Do they unite across class lines as did the soviets? Yes! Despite a leadership that for a time made close alliance with the FSA, despite some leadership elements that make claim to pacifism, the LCC's [Local Coordinating Committees, ed.] are more than their leaders. And as Marxists know, class consciousness can change very rapidly.

The Bolsheviks had to combat both obsequious compradors, pacifists and anarchists in the soviets. The comrades abandon that fight inside the Local Coordinating Committees (LCC) and among the secular and multi-ethnic and multi religious brigades that are the youth of Syria in rebellion against Assad and the two imperialist blocs. In the soviets the Bolsheviks had to win the workers to class independent action to expose the sellout leaderships and alien class forces, this is the fight in the LCCs [Local Coordinating Committees, ed.]."

Military vs. Political Support

As we wrote three years ago:

"Here it is important to clarify and emphasize the difference between political support for and military support for the rebels fighting against the Assad regime: Political support means taking the position that the establishment of a pro-imperialist or Islamic government would be a progressive, advantageous first step in the revolutionary struggle. By contrast, military support means attempting to achieve only military coordination between all forces fighting against the Syrian army, without ceasing a political struggle against the various rebel leaderships, the goal being the taking of power by the working class, and not the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie.

We want to bring down Assad, but do not want a pro-imperialist or Islamist regime in his place. Anyone who knows history knows that this was the line taken by the Bolsheviks in 1917, when they formed a joint military front with the Kerensky government against the revolt led by Kornilov, without giving any political support to the Kerensky government. Immediately after revolutionary forces defeated Kornilov, the Bolsheviks toppled the regime of Kerensky and his pro-imperialist partners in the October Revolution." – [Class Warrior, Volume 1 Number 2, Summer 2013](#)

Various Class Forces in the National Revolution, or, How Do Real Revolutions Take Shape?

When Lenin wrote about the Irish Easter uprising of 1916, he challenged those who schematically imposed a mechanical, preconceived conception of the revolutionary process on history:

“...Whoever calls such a rebellion a “putsch” is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

*To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.-to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. **So one army lines up in one place and says, “We are for socialism”, and another, somewhere else and says, “We are for imperialism”, and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a “putsch.”...***

...Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is...

...The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But objectively, the mass movement was breaking the shackles of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it—without such participation, mass struggle is impossible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for difficult reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately “purge” itself of petty-bourgeois slag.”

- (emphasis added, “[The Discussion On Self-Determination Summed Up](#)”, Lenin, 1916)

The Irish revolution (and others of course) show that the revolution is not linear and it draws to it all the sectors of the mass with a gripe against the oppressive conditions and exploitation of capitalism and of imperialism (in the semi-colonies). Trotsky also wrote:

*“The alternative, socialism or fascism, merely signifies, and that is enough, that the Spanish revolution can be victorious only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. But that does not at all mean that its victory is assured in advance. **The problem still remains, and therein lies the whole political task, to transform this hybrid, confused, half-blind and half-dead revolution into a socialist revolution.**” – (emphasis added, “[Ultralefts in General and Incurable Ultralefts in Particular](#)”, Trotsky)*

In [Class Struggle 116](#), our New Zealand comrades wrote:

“Today, in Syria most of the Western left deny that a civil war exists. They are by default on the side of the fascist regime. Trotsky said that Stalinism without workers property would be a kind of fascism. With the end of workers property Putin inherited Stalin’s mantle. So the crypto-Stalinists today claim there is no popular insurrection in Syria.

They buy Assad’s lies that the US created militias to bring about ‘regime change’ and that most of those militias have been overrun by the IS itself a US proxy. There is no revolution and no side to support in Syria for these crypto-Stalinists except Russia as the only force capable of wiping out IS.

Others prefer to back peace talks in the hope that the war can be stopped. Neither will talk to the Syrian people about their struggle for survival. The Syrian people may as well not exist.

There is a third alternative that has been deliberately suppressed by the Western ‘Russia Today’ (RT) left and that is the reality of the popular uprising against Assad. Aleppo shows it is a lie to reduce this to a CIA project or to Saudi arms when both (and Turkey) have conspired to stop the arming of the opposition.

That is why for all the talk of the US and its proxies, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, arming the rebels, none have provided the only weapons capable of decisively defeating Assad’s planes, Surface to Air Missiles (SAMS).

Aleppo (the largest commercial city) shows it is a lie to claim that Assad is the legitimate ruler with majority support. Until Russia began its bombing of the opposition militias 4 months ago, Assad was losing. Not to the IS but to the many local popular militias such as that which held Aleppo for years.

How can anyone claim Assad has legitimacy after his gas attacks and barrel bombing of civilians? After half a million deaths and 4 million in exile? Why if Assad has legitimacy does he now need Russia to blast Aleppo into the European dark ages?” – Class Struggle 116, pg. 3

Our Opponents: Non-Internationalism Rejecting Dialectics

For the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) and Norden's Internationalist Group, there is no process, never mind revolution in Syria. What they have, as always, is a "camp" theory and no dialectics at all. This is the "method" Robertson learned at Schachtman's knee. When Murray Weiss recruited Robertson away from Schachtman in 1957, this shortcoming was either overlooked or thought to be unimportant. This is a conclusion derived from reading the historical materials. As is the understanding that Cannon seldom worried himself about dialectics after 1940. Why do we bring this up?

Because process matters to us. For Trotsky, and for us, the Spanish revolution began in 1931⁶ when the masses caused Alfonso XIII to abdicate. Spain had workers' parties, and Socialist Party (UGT) and Anarchist (CNT) labor federations, and yet at the outset the masses "...most of them support(ed) the bourgeois and petty bourgeois democrats..."⁷ Now in Syria under conditions of the inconsistent cease fire, the masses have again hit the streets with their own demands after cutting the SNC loose and rejecting Al Nusra (Al Qaeda in Syria.)⁸ Without a revolutionary party functioning as popularizer of the revolutionary program and perspective, without the class memory of the party, the masses have to learn all their lessons from their own painful experiences. And this under fire.

If all the regime has been fighting are forces subordinated to the various bourgeois democrat strata and their political projects, why has it turned out to be so impossible for Assad to win? Why has he needed the Russian air force? And the United Nation's affirmation of his 'legitimacy'? Is CoReP saying there is a wing of the bourgeoisie that has the material strength and class fortitude to fight the Assad army to a standstill for five years without the street level muscle of the working class and oppressed masses? This conclusion challenges the entire foundation of Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.

In Defense of the Syrian Revolution

The revolution is objectively necessary to end the reign of capital imposed by imperialism, imposed via a sliding scale of tyranny. As in MENA generally and Syria in 2011, the revolution emerges on the broadest demands that unite the masses. The masses face the fact of the unfinished democratic revolution and raise minimal and democratic demands with expectations their

experience has not prepared them to fulfill. ***This is the crisis of leadership.*** The revolution emerges at its own time, but the working class is not prepared for its tasks. The class lacks both the knowledge and the tools to overcome the resistance of the array of capitalist forces. To become a class for itself intent upon the conquest of all power at the head of all the oppressed social strata, the working class must grasp its historic program and build its revolutionary party and its revolutionary international party. This is how the crisis of revolutionary leadership has been solved historically and this crisis of leadership faces the Syrian workers today.

In the semi-colonies, the comprador bourgeoisie has claimed a nationalist mantle of anti-imperialism, denying agency for the democratic revolution to the masses. The ideology of the comprador bourgeoisie is taught in school, through the media, and in cultural institutions. Joining the chorus are the Stalinists, Maoists and Healyites who love echoing the truth that imperialism is the enemy and then poisoning that truth by lying to the masses, injecting the Menshevik two stage theory, saying that the tyrants in power, the thugs of the comprador bourgeoisie (Gaddafi, Assad, Zuma, Mugabe, Raul Castro, Rousseff) are busy confronting imperialism on the masses behalf. The World

Social Forum (WSF) lines up to sing the praises of these worthies, rejecting Permanent Revolution and the Democratic Centralism of the revolutionary party, which it also rejects as of another era.

The national and comprador bourgeoisie strike the pose that they are naturally the best equipped social group in the country to confront the imperialists; that they are best educated and the natural leaders of the 'bloc of four classes' to express the anti-imperialist aspirations of the masses and the nation. And any revolutionary upsurge against oppression and tyranny is proof that those involved are no longer part of the anti-imperialist national mass. The democratic insurgents

have sided with imperialism, so the theory goes, and are thus objectively, counter-revolutionary running dogs of imperialism. These "counterrevolutionary running dogs" then become the justification for the state of siege, and in turn calls forth repression of the opposition. This script has been staged across MENA, with variations in Libya and Syria.

The Stalinist theory of Socialism in One Country tied historically to the Menshevik two stage theory of revolution, found its material basis in the self-interest of the bureaucracies of the Deformed and Degenerated Workers' States (DWS). Stalinism surrendered the revolutionary workers party's historical role in favor of the 'anti-imperialist bloc of four classes'. Its influence in world affairs has sustained tin-pot-dictatorships around the globe against the aspirations of the people. The latter-day emergence of China and Russia as imperialisms, is masked by the lies of the



Assad already has the blessings of the World Social Forum, the Bloc of 21st Century Socialism, the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Cuban Communist Party leadership, Zuma and neo-Stalinists like the PSL and WWP in the U.S.A. and all the forces of the modern popular front.

Stalinists, Stalinophiles and others who put Russia and China in the camp of the semi-colonies and peg them as leaders of a progressive anti-imperialist bloc. This trick transforms the old Cold War bloc around the DWS's (which, tied to social property, maintained an objectively progressive and defensible character,) into the new Russia/China bloc, embracing the BRICS and SCO, which are based on capitalist property relations. This bloc is fully integrated into imperialist global structures and is objectively counterrevolutionary and in no wise defensible. This alignment of forces kept Assad in the Russia bloc and with that support he could sustain his power.

With Assad chiefly depending on one imperialist bloc to sustain his power, the masses' anti-imperialist revolution expresses itself in the ongoing uprisings against Assad, while the masses are trapped between the two imperialist blocs as the proxy war unfolds with imperialist bombs from both blocs raining down upon them. Their revolutionary aspirations and actions of 2011 were objectively anti-imperialist uprisings against the bogus roadblock to the anti-imperialist democratic revolution, the Assad-led popular front. Assad's popular front incorporates the Syrian Communist Party (SCP), with what they style their 'anti-imperialist united front' bloc with Russia/China. Taking Assad's side as he wages war on the Syrian masses, the SCP inadvertently exposes the regime's fake anti-imperialism and its own Stalinist lies to the masses.

Into the vacuum of leadership steps every form of reactionary Islamists with a ready supply of anti-imperialist propaganda readied on the one side and coddling sectors of the "democratic" comprador bourgeoisie on the other. Together, via the Free Syrian Army/Syrian National Council (FSA/SNC), some have tied themselves to the U.S./western imperialist bloc. Wary of the intent of the masses, the U.S./NATO coalition deny them advanced weaponry and anti-aircraft missiles, thus they condemned the masses to the "anti-imperialism" and treacherous shelter of al Qaeda, al Nusra, and IS. Today the U.S. celebrates the victory of Assad over IS in Palmyra as the greater good, further exposing its long-term ambivalence toward the butcher Assad. Ultimately U.S. imperialism's goal is to lure Iran out of the orbit of the SCO and the fate of Assad is a secondary question. In the estimation of U.S. interests, therefore, the U.S. confines its military struggle, if we are to believe them, to its battle against IS. It justifies this with the barbaric behavior of IS even while the identical behavior of its Saudi allies draws no objection from "Foggy Bottom" (the U.S. State Department.)

That the masses took arms where they could get them, FSA, al Nusra, IS, Assad's forces, (see Trotsky, "[Learn to Think](#)") the argument that their revolution was defeated in 2012 ignores both the international dynamic of Syria and the fluidity of the historic fabrication of states and borders by imperialism in 1919. The Sunni masses in Iraq, super-oppressed by the Shiite leadership in Baghdad, rose up against their oppression. In the absence of revolutionary leadership, the armed struggle against the Baghdad regime was assumed by a constellation of ex-Hussein military figures and Islamists of the al Qaeda in Iraq formation. The latter were driven from Iraq and into Syria. The al Qaeda international leadership under al Zawahiri told them that they had no business operating in Syria where the al Nusra front was the recognized al Qaeda organization. Thus the split of IS from al Qaeda and the promulgation of the "New Caliphate," encompassing Iraq, Syria

and in its plans, a good deal of Eurasia besides. IS sees itself as the liberator of the Sunni faithful and the conqueror of every sort of infidel, be they democratic, Zionists or imperialists of whichever bloc. They project this image and attract recruits both alienated westerners and diaspora youth to arms under this false pretext. This is fantastic religious lunacy but it has great cultural appeal that the masses have to overcome and so far without the tutelage of a revolutionary workers international. This Sunni uprising is the democratic national anti-imperialist revolution captured by the counter-revolution, which in the guise of IS is itself incapable of meeting the democratic, anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist aspirations of the masses.

On the street level, block by block, in areas contested and occupied by the competing forces, the masses have very basic needs including food, shelter, water, and self-defense. Until areas are completely bombed out and made uninhabitable and until the millions are forced to flee, the logic and necessity of the Local Coordinating Committees gave birth to between 400-700 of them nation-wide. As the society is massive and heterogeneous it is to be expected that these LCCs are both fluid and heterogeneous as their makeup is an expression of the various neighborhoods, cities and towns and factions therein. They may be recruiting grounds for the Islamists and the FSA but they are not subordinated to or particularly led by them. The LCCs and the multitude of small armed detachments and networks of local people are the living expression of the democratic revolution. We asked in our address to the conference, "*Are they workers soviets? No.*" But they represent the democratic expression of the masses in their attempt to meet basic needs and oppose the dictatorship.

On the Marxist Method

Academics love to make abstractions out of Marxist method and then speculate on what various quotations mean. We are workers and for us the Marxist method is always concrete and is as concrete as the content and the subject, which is the class for itself. So when the CoReP leadership dismisses the Syrian Revolution, employing a comparison with the revolutionary events of 1936-37 in Spain, we say that revolutions take their own time to develop and that the 1936-37 developments followed five years of mass struggle that held Trotsky's attention at every moment. No empiricism for Trotsky; not comparative dismissal but a microscope examination of the masses' activities. Trotsky examined every ebb and flood tide of the masses' struggle while tracing the arc of the entire revolution. We reference the very sharp comment of 1932 as evidence.

"We recalled at that time that the orbit of the revolution admit of ups and downs. The art of leadership consists among other things in not ordering the offensive at the moment of ebb-tide and not retreating at the flood. For this it is necessary above all not to identify the fluctuations of the particular "conjuncture" of the revolution with its fundamental orbit.

With the defeat of the general strike of January, it was evident that we had to deal with a partial retreat of the revolution in Spain. Only chatterboxes and adventurers can fail to take account of the ebb. But to speak of the liquidation of the revolution in relation to a partial abatement, can be done only by cowards and deserters. Revolutionists are the last

to leave the field of battle. Anyone who wants to bury the revolution alive deserves to get the firing squad himself.”

– “*The Spanish ‘Kornilovs’ and ‘Stalinists’*”, Leon Trotsky, (September 1932)

Trotsky, in the moment, has no patience left for those who cannot acknowledge the revolution and give it unreserved support. In conditions obtaining now in 2016, with the international vanguard atomized and in disarray, we have to have more patience than Trotsky had in 1932, but to be true to the Marxist method, our patience can’t be inexhaustible.

Proof the Revolution Lives

<https://www.facebook.com/kafrev/>

<http://www.syriauk.org/2016/03/on-february-27th-syria-solidarity-uk.html>

<https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/solidaysyria/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RadioFreeSyria/>

<https://www.facebook.com/syriasolidaritymovement/>

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/op-eds/2016/03/9868/syrian-revolution-lives/?lang=>

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/former-isis-hostage-we-need-new-narrative/>

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/07/5861/syrian-civil-society-strives-rebuild-communities/>

<http://www.juancole.com/2016/03/how-not-to-talk-about-muslims-after-a-fringe-terrorist-group-attacks.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/solidaysyria/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RadioFreeSyria/>

<https://www.facebook.com/syriasolidaritymovement/>

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/op-eds/2016/03/9868/syrian-revolution-lives/?lang=>

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/former-isis-hostage-we-need-new-narrative/>

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/07/5861/syrian-civil-society-strives-rebuild-communities/>

<http://www.juancole.com/2016/03/how-not-to-talk-about-muslims-after-a-fringe-terrorist-group-attacks.html>

Appended Documents

This is the document from the Liaison Committee of Communists that was submitted prior to the CoReP conference for discussion:

Since we wrote this last week [February 28th, ed.], there have been mass demonstrations across Syria and even in places nominally controlled by Assad and the masses are saying in no uncertain terms that the revolution is not over, that it continues. We submit the following for discussion hoping to undo a grave error before it is adopted and made that much more difficult to correct.

For the LCC, comradely,
Dan Cahill
Charles Rachlis
Christopher Clark

Our Objection, Our Worries and Hesitation Explained

We do **not agree** that the Syrian revolution has been crushed! This is the whole object of the imperialist interventions, which have had to follow the preceding interventions of their proxies and are now joined also by the loose cannon local powers with their own goals, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. As we write we find a miserable “cease fire” deal in place that allows Russia to go on bombing, obviously to prevent a wholesale regional war, where Turkish and Saudi troops clash directly with Russian forces. So we see the imperialists’ kitchen cooking up poison for the rest of us, as even in spite of their intentions they fail to crush a revolution and instead take humanity to the brink of a world war. While this danger mushrooms, the power of the revolution grows; the Local Coordinating Committees (see <https://mkaradjis.wordpress.com/2015/11/26/the-ongoing-civil-uprising-in-syria> and also <http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-lcc-group-quits-opposition-bloc-201711220.html>) have assumed and exercise more powers than before and exercise them in defiance of the armed Islamist groups, each of which also vie with the imperialist forces and their proxies and with Hezbollah and Iran, for the prizes of suppressing the revolution and either guaranteeing or destroying the Assad dictatorship.

We oppose all the Islamist groups, even as we recognize how the righteous rebellion of the Sunni masses of Iraq was hijacked by the “New Caliphate” of ISIS with the promise of a reactionary utopia. We recognize in ISIS features that resemble historical fascism, but in surveying the region the name fascist is earned by the Assad regime in the first place, and secondarily by survivals with ties to historical fascism, such as the Lebanese Falange. Therefore we want to explain why the adoption of the term “Islamofascism” disturbs us and why we feel it can become an impediment to our revolutionary work among the members of organizations that arise in Islamic communities and that can be called “Islamic groups.”

Perhaps Comrades on other continents do not know how the term “Islamofascism” entered American parlance from the lips of George W. Bush. When it is remembered, it is remembered in the context of the pretexts for the “War on Terror” quagmire, as part of that big lie, along with the ostensible ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, the presence in Iraq of “WMDs”, and Bush’s “mission accomplished” stunt. Real fascism has nothing to do with any of that except in the sense of U.S. imperialism’s war crimes and “wars of aggression,” as defined by the Nuremberg Tribunals. Historical fascism has been characterized by national movements and while they sometimes pose as defenders of the faith, it is not the practice of scientific socialism to call Mussolini’s movement “Catholic fascism” or Hitler’s movement as “Lutheran/Catholic fascism” or the Ku Klux Klan as “Protestant fundamentalist fascism”. And so we ask, wherefore the term “Islamofascism” in Communist discussions and propaganda?

We Need an Answer

We agree with Trotsky’s definition in *“Fascism, What It Is and How To Fight It,”* and we ask comrades to either explain some fundamental identity between particular Islamist groups and historical fascism or explain why we need a new, expanded definition that takes particular Islamist groups into account. If you have done so, we have not seen it.

We know the major points of the history of the region. We do know about the short-lived Rashid Ali regime in Iraq and its sponsors and the battle for the wellhead at the end of the Habbaniya-Haifa pipeline. We know about the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and his partnership with Hitler, his Bosnian SS Legion and his connections to the rise of Baathism. What we don’t see is Bush’s equation of Al Qaeda with the Hitler/Mussolini alliance, we don’t see a necessity to associate Islam with fascism, and we don’t see a historical fascism which by definition is a mass militarized movement of the petty-bourgeoisie for the rescue of capitalism from the workers’ movement. Neither do we see it apply to Al Nusra Front nor to ISIS/Daesh, as any fact established by our scientific method.

This matters because our tendency and our program have an audience of some hundreds among Arabs and other people culturally defined as Muslims. On Facebook they are our ‘biggest fans.’ We have already earned a reputation as defenders of political prisoners such as Rasmeah Odeh and of the Arab Spring and their national-democratic revolution, and there are already quite a few who understand that only the Permanent Revolution offers any way out of oppression by one imperialist power or another. Similarly, we work in some senses alongside groups like “Al Awda,” the Palestinian Right to Return Organization, the Students for Justice in Palestine, the MENA Solidarity Network and others. We have established in the minds of some vanguard activists that we are not the pro-Assad and/or ‘orientalist’ U.S. leftists and that we are an international tendency who defend their aspirations. We worry that we could ruin this patient work if we got a reputation-by-association with anyone guilty of overboard “Laicite.”

We are anticlericals, as Marxists should be, but we are not ultralefts. It is our business to unite our social class internationally DESPITE the influence of religions and all types of reactionary

survivals of the past. Thus we reject both the crocodile tears about the freedom of the press that played into Hollande’s parade of democratic killers in the aftermath of the “Charlie Hebdo” attack, AND the ridiculous opportunist adaptation to Islamism of the Munzerite FLTI where it denounced the magazine as a Zionist front. We see overboard “Laicite” as at least part of the explanation for why the European workers’ movement did not develop a layer of exile revolutionists with a sufficient implantation in the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan and Syrian struggles of recent years. To say this is not to deny the immense guilt of Stalinism, Social-Democracy and pseudo-Trotskyism in support of bourgeois forces, leaders and projects. In fact, this guilt of the pseudo-Trotskyists derives from historical adaptations we know as Pabloism, and which the Draft Program describes.

02/28/2016

This is the translated (by the GMI) reply of CoReP to the above submitted LCC document:



Collectif Révolution Permanente

Date: March 18, 2016

To: LCC

Copy to: CWG / US CWG / New Zealand, GKK / Austria, GMI / France, LCT / Argentina MaS / Russia, PCO / Argentina, RP / Peru RMG / Zimbabwe, TMI / Brazil ...

Subject: Cahill-Clark-Rachlis contribution of February 28, 2016

Dear comrades

The Bureau of the Permanent Revolution Collective made proposals twice to the Liaison Committee of Communists (November 30, 2015, February 9, 2016, each time in English)

and submitted (in English which is not the mother tongue of any member of the Collective) a draft international platform. He received March 6 a contribution (in English) from Dan Cahill, Christopher Clark and Charles Rachlis on behalf of the LCC, on two issues: the situation in Syria is supposed to be revolutionary (1); it would be wrong and dangerous to talk of Islamofascism (2).

1. Syria

Permanent revolution is a strategy

The SR / Egypt, one of the few organizations that claim to be Trotskyist in the region, surrendered successively to the Muslim Brotherhood and the staff, both counter-revolutionary forces that blocked the beginning of democratic revolution in Egypt, repressed the whole labor movement and restored the former despotism of Mubarak. SR justified their zigzags invoking the permanent revolution, as all revisionists since 1949.

For the masses have proven anew that their revolutionary energy is endless, that their revolution is truly a permanent revolution. (Revolutionary Socialists, Egypt: Four days that shook the world, 5 July 2013)

Permanent revolution is not a simple historical prognosis that history should fulfil automatically. It is above all a conscious strategy requiring that the proletariat takes the lead of the oppressed, which he can do only through a workers' party (a communist, revolutionary, internationalist party).

No matter what the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realization of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletariat vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution. (Trotsky, What is the Permanent Revolution? Basic Postulates, 1929)

Opportunism talk of a metaphysics "revolution" in Syria to cover class collaboration. It divides only on how to surrender to the bourgeoisie.

Opportunism differs according to the strata of the bourgeoisie with which it tries to unite and in whose support it attempts to enlist the proletariat. (Lukacs, Lenin, 1924, ch. 4)

- Most of them support the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democrats who apparently oppose the regime and Jihadism;
- Some support the official Syrian regime arguing this one is "anti-imperialist";
- Others support jihadists in Syria and Iraq under the

same pretext.

What is the nature of a "revolution growing" for 5 years?

If a revolution has occurred in Syria for 5 years, which is a very long time for a revolution, it would have deepened; it would have become a social revolution. If there was a social revolution in Syria, the whole world would know.

There is currently no social revolution in Syria (or Iraq), contrary to what was happening in much of Spain in 1936-37 thanks to the mobilization of workers and peasants, workers' control and seizures of land, the existence of armed workers' organizations (CNT, POUM) who supported then the arming the people and expropriations.

The revolutionary-military measures were accompanied by revolutionary-economic measures against fascism... Especially was this true in Catalonia where, within a week from July 19, transport and industry was almost entirely in the hands of CNT workers' committees, or where workers belonged to both, CNT-UGT joint committees... The peasants needed no urging to take the land. (Felix Morrow, Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain, 1938, ch. 3)

The contribution of Charles, Christopher & Dan argues that "the revolution in Syria has not been crushed". But instead of a real concrete analysis of the concrete situation, they asserted it.

The power of the revolution grows; the Local Coordinating Committees have assumed and exercise more powers than before...

The only proof is the jive of the "Coordination of Local Committees."

What is the Coordination of Local Committees?

Local Committees of Syria are not Soviets.

The LCCs started from a group of activists, journalists, legal experts and politicians. (Amer Abu Hamed, Syria's Local Coordination Committees, the Dynamo of a Hijacked Revolution, May 2014, p. 7)

They have not strengthened but faded after 2011.

The LCCs have been considerably weakened due to repression from both the regime and jihadi groups. (Amer Abu Hamed, Syria's Local Coordination Committees, the Dynamo of a Hijacked Revolution, May 2014, p. 6)

The Syria of 2014 is very different to the Syria of 2011 when the revolution started. (p. 13)

The leadership of "Local Committees" is pacifist, nonviolent. It was even willing to compromise with the Baath regime.

The LCCs have a membership office for groups wanting to establish an LCC-affiliated Coordination Committee in a certain area... Omar Edelbi, an LCC spokesperson, explains that: 'the task of the membership office is to

verify... this person's and this group's belief in peaceful revolution, non-violence'... (Amer Abu Hamed, Syria's Local Coordination Committees, the Dynamo of a Hijacked Revolution, May 2014, p. 8)

'The Vision of LCCs for the Political Future of Syria' was issued in June 2011 ... According to this paper, the only way out of the crisis is a peaceful negotiation with the regime. (p. 12)

No matter what the outcome of the conflict, the role of LCCs and other peaceful revolutionary youth groups will be crucial in rebuilding Syria. (p. 13)

A group that does not want to overthrow the regime, which claims to be pacifist, nonviolent, so leaving the monopoly of arms to the bourgeoisie (Baathist or Islamist) is not revolutionary.

A bourgeoisie armed against the proletariat is one of the biggest fundamental and cardinal facts of modern capitalist society. And in face of this fact, revolutionary Social-Democrats are urged to "demand" "disarmament"! That is tantamount of complete abandonment of the class-struggle point of view, to renunciation of all thought of revolution. (Lenin, The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution, September 1916, II)

In addition, these "Local Committees" belonged for four years -from July 2011 to July 2015- to the bourgeois SNC supported since its inception by Saudi, Qatar, Kuwait, Turkey, the USA, Great Britain and France. Obviously, they did not withdraw to defend the interests of the proletariat.

A major Syrian anti-regime group, the Local Coordination Committees, announced Saturday it had quit the opposition in exile ... In a letter to the Syrian National Coalition, the LCC denounced what it termed the SNC's transformation into "blocs linked to foreign forces", referring to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. "We wish to inform you that the LCC has decided to withdraw officially from the coalition. We had hoped that this political grouping, of which we are one of the founders, would realise the aspirations of the people and the principles of the revolution for which it has paid an unimaginable price. Unfortunately, we have on several occasions noted its inability to undertake this mission"... The LCC denounced what it called "non-institutional" working methods and the creation of "blocs related to factors and external forces, which was the main reason for the outbreak of internal conflict over the personal ambitions of some members of the Coalition". (AFP, Syrian LCC group quits opposition bloc, August 1, 2015)

The revolution against the Syrian regime and Islamofascism

A democratic revolution started in 2011 but was crushed by 2012. As in other countries in North Africa and West Asia, youth and workers have rebelled against a torture and police state. As there was no revolutionary workers' party and the working class could not take the lead, the revolution

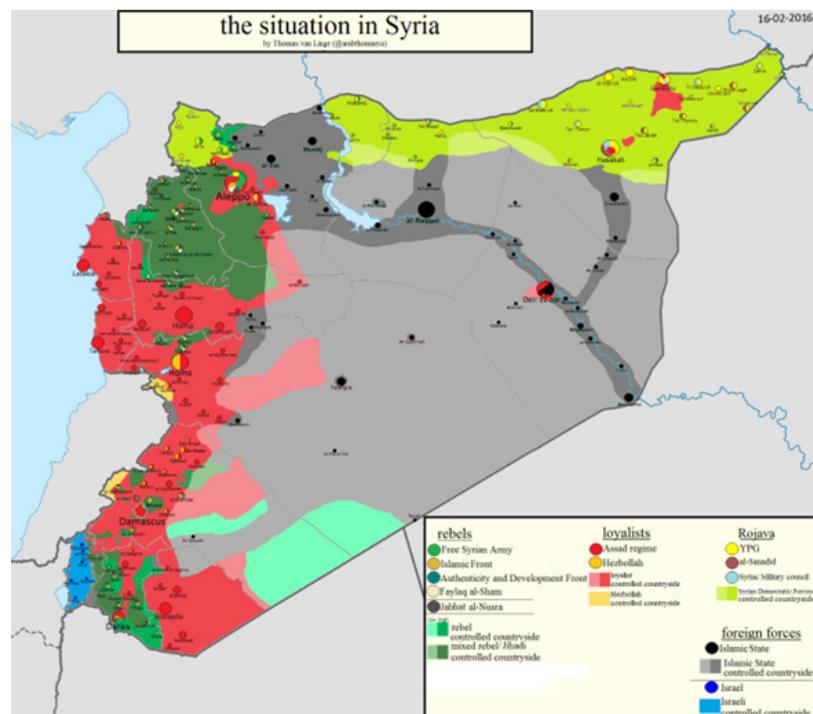
was defeated under the pressure of two counter-revolutionaries forces: the bourgeois state supported by the Iran and Russia; Islamofascism of ISIS and al-Nosra (al-Qaeda) supported by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey. The theory of permanent revolution was confirmed, but negatively.

The Baath regime has not fallen yet, not only because the Russian state, Hezbollah from Lebanon, the "Revolutionary Guards" from Iran (this designation shows that we should not word for everyone speak of "revolution") have strengthened militarily, but also for political reasons. A part of the population, not just the great bourgeoisie, preferred the Baath regime to that of ISIS or al-Qaida.

The regime and the imperialist powers (USA, Russia, France, Great Britain ...) bombed and devastated much of Syria. According to the United Nations for Refugees (UNCHR), about 23 million Syrians, four fled to neighboring countries and Europe, 6.5 million have fled within the country. How to believe that in such a situation, a revolution can grow?

The only significant area of the country that escapes the tyranny of the Baath, al-Nosra (al-Qaeda) or ISIS is the north that the Assad government has conceded to Kurdish nationalism. The PYD-YPG could maintain and extend its position with the help of the US military.

The Free Syrian Army has been marginalized since 2011 and it controls in March 2016 only a small fraction of the territory. On the ground, the difference between the jihadists and FSA has never been clear. It is doubtful that the foreign states which supported it finance and arm a social revolution. Since its birth, the FSA recognized the authority of bourgeois SNC. The SNC is notoriously dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement that led the against-revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, which is close to the AKP / Turkey enclosing journalists and murders the Kurds.



2. Islamism

LCC contribution considers the CoReP yielded to “*overboard Laïcité*” and uses the vocabulary of former President Bush Jr. These two deviations may reject the Middle East “*vanguard activists*”.

This matters because our tendency and our program have an audience of some hundreds among Arabs and other people culturally defined as Muslims. On Facebook they are our ‘biggest fans.’ We have already earned a reputation as defenders of political prisoners such as Rasmeh Odeh and of the Arab Spring and their national-democratic revolution, and there are already quite a few who understand that only the Permanent Revolution offers any way out of oppression by one imperialist power or another. Similarly, we work in some senses alongside groups like “Al Awda,” the Palestinian Right to Return Organization, the Students for Justice in Palestine, the MENA Solidarity Network and others. We have established in the minds of some vanguard activists that we are not the pro-Assad and/or ‘orientalist’ U.S. leftists and that we are an international tendency who defend their aspirations. We worry that we could ruin this patient work if we got a reputation-by-association with anyone guilty of overboard “Laïcité.”

Again, there is no quote of the draft international platform submitted by the Bureau of the CoReP or previous Collective’ statements.

The so-called “overboard Laïcité”

For Charles, Christopher & Dan, the European labour movement is too secular. The comrades do not explain what they mean by “*overboard Laïcité*”.

We see overboard Laïcité as at least part of the explanation for why the European workers’ movement did not develop a layer exile revolutionists with a sufficient implantation in the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan and Syrian struggles of recent years.

The comrades are wrong to embark upon this line of thinking:

1. The world is not too secular, but not secular enough. Nationalism and religion are everywhere exasperated by the decadent bourgeoisie. Religious fundamentalism and sectarianism lobby governments and, sometimes, start plain totalitarianism. Women, youth, religious minorities, atheists, teachers, artists, homosexuals ... have everything to gain that religions and the priests of all kinds are driven back into the private sphere.
2. A serious danger in Europe is the division of the workers ranks and the weakening of the labour movement by xenophobic and fascist parties. These parties campaign against the European Union and national minorities or foreigners. Obviously, in the USA, Trump cannot use Christianity against Mexican immigration. But in Europe, racist Islamophobic campaigns often take forms of discrimination against a particular religion (Islam)

that of the minority, whose believers are of foreign origin.

3. The defense of religious minorities and atheists, the separation of religion and state were always our program.

Complete separation of church and state. (Marx and Engels, Demands of the Communist Party in Germany, March 1848)

The workers’ party endeavors to liberate the conscience from the witchery of religion. (Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875, IV)

Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen’s religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. (Lenin, Socialism and Religion, December 3, 1905)

4. The inability of present-day leadership of the working class to unify the workers’ ranks, to refute xenophobes and racists, to fight fascism does not come from their “overboard Laïcité”.

- The global labor movement has always included a clerical component. For example, the Catholic Church has played a role inside the PT / Brazil since its foundation in 1980 as a bourgeois workers party. In Europe, the Labour Party was created in 1900 by Christians. Solidarnosc was created in Poland with the help of the Catholic Church in 1980; Christian unions also exist in Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania ...

- The currents of Marxist origin (social democracy and Stalinism) have generally abandoned the secular program that had been part of the minimum program for decades. For example, Brazilian government headed by PT prohibits abortion; French state led by the PS finances the Catholic Church; German state co-led by the SPD finances Christian cults.

- In Britain, the largest centrist organization, the SWP gave up anticlericalism. His electoral coalition Respect refused in 2004 to defend the right to abortion. The SWP chose the alliance with a Christian Labourist (George Galloway) and a clerical group linked to the Muslim Brotherhood (Muslim Association of Britain) against the rights of women workers (including Pakistani). There is something to learn.

5. In fact, the ‘reformists’ in imperialist countries push back the migrant workers and the proletarian revolutionaries refugees by:

- Their social imperialism (their own nation above all)
- Their government politics (immigration restrictions)
- Their links with the labor aristocracy (so they neglect the most exploited layers).



The term “Islamofascism” is not an invention of Bush

The first argument of the contribution of Charles, Christopher & Dan is that George W. Bush introduced the term “Islamofascism” in the United States.

What we don't see is Bush's equation of Al Qaeda with the Hitler/Mussolini alliance, we don't see a necessity to associate Islam with fascism, and we don't see a historical fascism which by definition is a mass militarized movement of the petty-bourgeoisie for the rescue of capitalism from the workers' movement. Neither do we see it apply to Al Nusra Front nor to ISIS/Daesh, as any fact established by our scientific method.

True, Bush used the term in 2005. However, it seems to have been invented in 1990, 15 years before, by the Irish journalist Malise Ruthven.

Italian fascism used the term “totalitarianism” but this did not prevent Trotsky's use to the regime of the bureaucracy of the USSR after 1933.

A totalitarian régime, whether of Stalinist or Fascist type, by its very essence can be only a temporary transitional régime. (Trotsky, The USSR in War, September 1939, 'Totalitarian Dictatorship')

Trotsky has not experienced against Islamist revolution

The second argument of Charles, Christopher & Dan is that Islamism is foreign to Trotsky's conception of fascism (they dispense with this definition).

We agree with Trotsky's definition in “Fascism, What It Is and How To Fight It,” and we ask comrades to either explain some fundamental identity between particular

Islamist groups and historical fascism or explain why we need a new, expanded definition that takes particular Islamist groups into account. If you have done so, we have not seen it.

No Communist has said the last word on every topic. For example, the Communist International analyzed Russia as a workers' state led by the working class. That did not stop the Fourth International to analyze it -15 years later- as a degenerated workers' state led by the bureaucracy. That FI analyzed Russia as non-capitalist has not prevented the HWRS / USA and the CWG / New Zealand to analyze -50 years later- as a capitalist and imperialist country.

The Communist League, the International Workingmen's Association and the Workers' International did not anticipate fascism.

The Communist International supported the alliance with the bourgeoisie in the dominated countries, while denouncing Islamism.

The need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc. (Lenin, Theses on National and Colonial Questions For The Second Congress Of The Communist International, 1920, th. 11)

True, during his life, Trotsky could know only imperialist fascism. But he considered that religious ideology could be fueled by imperialism.

Mussolini, the atheist, will do all in his power to fan the religious passions of the Muslims. (Trotsky, A Fresh Lesson: On the Character of the Coming War, October 1938, 'Once Again on Democracy and Fascism')

Islamism is counter-revolutionary and the Caliphate is totalitarian

Islamofascism is a late fascism in dominated countries. It grew up from the inability of the national bourgeoisie (“socialist” in words, but already clerical) of the first generation (pan-Arab, Persian, Afghan ...) to overcome the imperialist powers (and the State Zionist colonizer) and develop national capitalism.

Fascism appeared at the decadence of capitalism, in imperialist era. Has the proletarian revolution be victorious in the 1st World War, there would have been no fascism in European countries. Without defeats after the 2nd World War, Bonapartist regimes and fascist movements in the dominated countries did not make history.

The bottom line is that Islam began as fascist surrogate forces of a particular imperialist power (Bosnia, 1943, Iran 1953; Indonesia 1965, Afghanistan 1973 ...). Then, for lack of proletarian revolution, pan-Islamism has emerged on its own as a form of anti-imperialism but its actual content is counter-revolution (Iran, 1979; Afghanistan, 1992; Egypt, 2011; Iraq, 2012; Syria,

2012 ...).

The Collective tried to describe it in August 2014.

In North Africa and the Middle East, Islam served as a refuge for the oppressed masses against foreign penetration. That is why the bourgeois nationalist leaders in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's colored their anti-imperialism of this belief, even those who relied on the USSR (Nasser, Bourguiba, Ben Bella, Arafat, Hussein, Assad, Gaddafi ...), while others claimed squarely Islamic political doctrine and a Sharia legal regime (the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, the Muslim Brotherhood, Iranian ayatollahs ...). Muslim fundamentalism ideology asserted itself as Stalinism discredited in the 20th century communism throughout the region and as bourgeois nationalism "progressive" (Nasserism, Baath, Fatah ...) failed miserably.

Bakr al-Baghdadi claims to revive the caliphate of the origins of the expansion of Islam. But the wheel of history can not be turned back. All religious political movements today are primarily marked by the decay of capitalist mode of production in the imperialist stage, very different conditions that were for the appearance of the great religions. Indeed capitalism came into decay, which feeds the reaction, irrationalism, obscurantism, clericalism, complotisme ... including in advanced countries.

In Asia and Africa, Jihadists economically connect to the global capitalist mafia networks (kidnapping, international traffic of oil, weapons, drugs ...), to the parasitic regional bourgeoisie that live on the oil and rent and exports to imperialist countries (in the case of ISIS, initial funding came from Qatar and Saudi Arabia). In the name of Sharia, Boko Haram federated criminals from Nigeria and Cameroon. The ISIS attracted hundreds of offenders from Iraq, Syria and even Europe who can steal and murder with a religious justification, as well as hundreds of young rebels who believe that "Holy War" will settle accounts of the oppressors in the region, including Syria and Palestine. But, like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists represent the interests of local ruling classes (landowners and banking, industrial or commercial bourgeoisie) ...

As an expression of capitalism in the imperialist era, anti-imperialism of bearded Islamists is powerless, as their claim to overthrow the Zionist colonization. In fact, Al-Baghdadi limits its pan-Islamist project to Syria and Iraq. He carefully left Mecca to the Saudi monarchy linked to the US and he is careful not to confront the Israeli army that controls the other sacred city of Islam, Jerusalem. He prefers to launch his fascist and mafia gangs against Shia Muslims and religious minorities defenseless Christians and Yazidis (non-Muslim Kurds). More than 500,000 civilians have fled, adding to the millions of refugees caused by Zionist colonization, persecution of Kurds in Turkey, the US intervention in Iraq, the civil war in Syria ... (CoReP, Neither imperialist intervention in Iraq, nor Islamic Caliphate! August 24, 2014, available in Spanish)

Analogy with 1920's and 1930's (imperialist) fascism is striking:

1. The leaders are adventurers,

2. It fanatizes its basis with an archaic ideology (religion, which was already used by the Spanish Falange and Austrofascism Dollfuss)
3. It brings together unemployed soldiers and officers, offenders and traditional petty-bourgeois,
4. It targets democracy, labour movement and minorities.

The CoReP defends the rights of all religious minorities, especially in places where religious minorities and homosexuals risk their lives. It is on the side of the pan-Islamists when they actually face (which is exceptional) an imperialist power or the Zionist state. But CoReP considers that, as a bourgeois fraction, it cannot be effectively anti-imperialist. It is primarily a counter-revolutionary movement, a barbaric expression of the decay of capitalism and a price to pay for the delay of the proletarian world revolution and the accentuation of crisis of the leadership of the world proletariat. We must begin to resolve this crisis of leadership to restart the world socialist revolution.

The GKK / Austria and GMI / France, when they distribute the statements of the CoReP among the contingents of Turkish and Kurdish workers, do not encounter hostility.

The draft international platform does not use the word "Islamofascism". If the comrades of the CLC analyze the movement led by the ayatollahs in Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists in Egypt, the Jihadism of Iraq and Syria as counter-revolutionaries groups, there is no significant difference.

How to move forwards?

The international communist program does not start from religious or political backwardness.

The slogans of the workers' class conscious vanguard are one thing, while the spontaneous demands of the masses are something quite different. (Lenin, The Question of peace, August 1915)

Our resolutions are not designed for broad masses. (Lenin, Closing speech at the 7th Conference of the RSDLP, May 12, 1917)

Everywhere I ask what should we do? Make our program fit the objective situation or the mentality of the workers? And I believe That this matter must be put before every comrade who says That this program is not made for the American situation. This program is a scientific program. It is based on objective analysis year of the objective situation. It can not be Understood by the workers as a whole. (Trotsky, Discussions with the SWP on the Transitional Program, June 1938)

LCC' E-mail of March 6 -which sent the contribution- has the subject: *Draft Program*. What is unexpected is that the contribution never mentions the draft (which does not approach the concrete situation in Syria, nor use the term *Islamofascism*).

The LCC the CoReP and groups without international affiliation who claim to be revolutionary communists have heavy responsibilities. They must unite to actually reach the proletarian vanguard and begin to organize it in their countries and beyond. Until now, they are not able to achieve this end because of their size, their dispersion and the discrediting of “Trotskyism” subordinating either to the imperialist bourgeoisie, either to the bourgeoisies of the dominated countries (including the most despotic regimes like Assad or ISIS).

To move forwards, we have to:

- Start from the historical interests of the world proletariat,
- Study platform projects or resolutions and respond really (amendments, alternative draft),
- Distinguish the (political) differences and (semantic) terminology problems that increase with the use of several languages,
- Distinguish the differences are acceptable, even inevitable and necessary within the same international organization with those that delineate the internationalist from social-patriots.

Indeed, it is not enough to share a scientific theory (historical materialism analysis of the capitalist mode of production) or method (dialectical materialism) to settle all the new phenomena, to deal with strategy, much less tactics.

The different aspects of a revolutionary movement, as a homogeneous historical process and generally as a development possessing survival value, are neither uniform nor harmonious in content or movement. (Trotsky, Stalin, ch. 4)

If there is a global disagreement with the platform draft, Charles, Christopher & Dan must write another draft international platform.

If there is a global agreement, then the LCC and the internationalist communist groups have to amend the draft, adopt joint statements and prepare together an international conference as soon as possible.

The LCC makes a great effort by sending a delegation of two militants to the 3rd Conference of the GMI / France. We hope that this meeting will help to gather the internationalist Communists.

International Bureau of the CoReP
(rough English version by the GMI)

This is the speech presented at the CoReP conference by an LCC delegate. It should be noted that since this was a speech, not originally intended to be a published statement, that has only slightly been edited for grammar/punctuation. Also, the “Greetings” section was not presented in the interest of time.

Greetings

I am a member of the Communist Workers Group, the American section of the Liaison Committee of Communists. I wish to extend international greetings to the comrades here. I believe, (and if not, NOW is the time to hear it!.) that we support the general line of the declaration “Down With Fortress Europe.”

We would like to see more on dialectics and its existence in the life of the program and its role in the development of the revolutionary party. This work is a current project of the LCC and we will have a major piece for discussion before long. The discourse is in its advanced stage of formulation.

(2.) We have been warning of the increased World War 3 danger in our press. We have not had a full scale discussion in the LCC about how soon it might land on us all, and consequently, we see no point in disputing at this time the idea expressed in the Draft Program that the “conditions are not yet present” for its outbreak. We would just wish to posit one caution. The imperialists are capable of blundering into collisions that escape their control. They have many things on their minds, including the likelihood of a “double dip” recession, this time without the Chinese cushion but with currency deflation as the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall strikes the world capitalist economy everywhere at once. Meanwhile their arms buildups and deployments accelerate.

(3a.) We would want some amplifications in the Draft Program, and not because we see it as flawed. We would like to see more discussion of the WSF, the BRICS bloc, Bolivarianism and “21st Century Socialism.”

(3.b) Even if comrades don’t see the need to expand about the international sectology of Castro, Morales, Chavez, Mandela, etc. adherents and cheering squads, we still wind up with a pressing need to speak to where Venezuela, Cuba, South Africa and Iran are going and what those vectors mean for the international workers’ struggle.

In the discussion of history of the Fourth International we have remarked in our own discussions that while we might not have written the section in exactly the same way, we come to the same conclusion. We would have referenced the work of Jose Vila as a footnoted source, because we should be able to conclude together that proof that the degeneration of the FI was completed is to be found in the advice of BOTH the I.S. and the I.C. factions to the Bolivian P.O.R. in 1952-53. This was applied Pabloism and proof that the I.C. break with it was only organizational and NOT methodological. Without any lengthy digression at all, this understanding could be encapsulated for the education of future recruits to revolutionary Marxism in just a few lines.

I wish to address the response submitted by the GMI to the LCC's critique of Islamo-Fascism and the perspective on Syria.

Islam-Fascism and Excessive Laicite

We think of the bourgeois hypocrites who hosted the Iranian Prime Minister and preposterously took him to an art museum where the nude sculptures were covered in shrouds, head to foot! And clearly, the world does need more secularism when a teenager can have his head chopped off by Daesh for listening to rock and roll. Without digressing into a long explanation of dialectical unities of opposites we will still want to be able to say why we want a secular world and how to get it.

We are anti-clerical. We come by it honestly. In our prehistory in the Internationalist Tendency of the (Barnes) SWP in the seventies, we already adhered to most of Fraserism and said so. Fraser, as early as 1955 saw the SWP abandoning the contest for the leadership of the revived Black civil rights movement to preachers, ministers and the petty bourgeoisie. The SWP had real and considerable historical credentials from fighting on Black workers' behalf, but wound up junking it all, on the one hand adopting the Breitman line in support of Black nationalism (a non-class, sectoralist line, the first of a list of these opportunist adaptations,) while in its practice it cheered on the preachers and adopted their Ghandian pacifism, making a fetish of "single issue mass action" and even calling it a "strategy for revolution."

The disgusting anti-Muslim Donald Trump act on the U.S. electoral stage would not have been possible without Hollande's march of the "democratic" killers after the "Charlie Hebdo" attacks and the subsequent U.S. media orchestration of pro-France sentiment when Hollande added the Armee de l'Air to the U.S. imperialist air war coalition. When one remembers that it was G.W. Bush who introduced the U.S. public to the term "islamo fascism" in his early motivations for his "war on terror," the present is no time for Trotskyists to try to inject this term with a historical materialist content which we dispute in any case. Who would understand us as correctly anticlerical if we did use it?

We mentioned the unity of opposites. Because we oppose all religion as anti-scientific falsehood worse than treating disease with leeches, we face our concrete problems as they really are. One cannot hope to employ the method of the Transitional Program or the program itself otherwise. In Yugoslavia in the '90s and in Syria today we call for multi-ethnic and intercommunal workers councils and militias, and in the obtaining conditions where the various imperialists and their proxies foster sectarian division and ethnic cleansing --- beginning with George Bush senior in 1991 in collusion with Saddam Hussein-- we have to explain that we are for the greatest freedom of religion as a precondition. This is only a contradiction for formal logic.

Syrian Revolution Is Alive

Now I want to address the issue of the Syrian revolution, as brought up in the Liaison Committee of Communist's (LCC) document "*Our Objection, Our Worries and Hesitation Explained*" that was submitted to the conference for discussion, as well as the response submitted by the comrades of the Groupe

Marxiste Internationaliste (GMI). The LCC thinks that the Syrian struggle still lives, although obviously under heavy attack from all sides. The democratic aspirations of the masses has not been quelled, as is witnessed by the recent mass demonstrations. Do the street demonstrations against Assad during the 'ceasefire' look like defeat!!!(?)

The massive outpouring of anti-Assad demonstrations, the resistance in Homs, Aleppo, Rojava were not passive and were not all dependent on the armies of the reactionary clerical Islamists. The victories of DAESH are the consequence of the lack of the revolutionary international to combat the backward forces at the head of the anti-Assad masses.

I encourage everyone here to watch the recent videos by Syria Solidarity UK, where Robin Yassin-Kassab speaks. The FLTI's organized Leon Sedov Brigade, who have performed an heroic internationalist duty, are still manning the barricades.

The 400-700 LCCs identified by some as petty bourgeois intellectuals and pacifists are more than that. Is there revolutionary workers party? No. Are they workers councils? No! Do they unite across class lines as did the soviets? Yes! Despite a leadership that for a time made close alliance with the FSA, despite some leadership elements that make claim to pacifism, the LCC's are more than their leaders. And as Marxists know, class consciousness can change very rapidly.

The Bolsheviks had to combat both obsequious compradors, pacifists and anarchists in the soviets. The comrades abandon that fight inside the Local Coordinating Committees (LCC) and among the secular and multi-ethnic and multi religious brigades that are the youth of Syria in rebellion against Assad and the two imperialist blocs. In the soviets the Bolsheviks had to win the workers to class independent action to expose the sellout leaderships and alien class forces, this is the fight in the LCCs [*Local Coordinating Committees, ed.*]. The LCCs refusal to participate in Geneva II was a victory over those siding with the imperialists. And that was accomplished without a party. But the party is necessary to take the lessons and unite the class to break the unionized sectors from the Red/Brown semi-fascist popular front initiated by Assad the elder and the Stalinist Communist Party of Syria.

The LCCs are pacifist and have illusions in imperialist bourgeois 'democracy'? Well what do we expect? The majority against Assad have illusions in Western 'democracy,' just like most of the U.S., the EU, etc. populations which have the benefit of a 'democracy' bought and paid for by superprofits.

And there are always Gandhian pacifist illusions in every struggle. The American Civil Rights Movement in the struggle against Jim Crow segregation was steeped in pacifism, but there were militant groups that also formed in the face of racist KKK and police terror, notably the Deacons for Defense and the Black Panther Party. That this struggle could have been pushed further had there been a Leninist-Trotskyist party with a base in the masses and with a revolutionary program, is a given. Even today, the Black Lives Matters movement is politically contradictory, with illusions in bourgeois 'democracy.' There are sections supporting the Democratic Party, and yet others, such as in the state of Alabama, [are] organizing on the ground

for armed self-defense against the racist police and fascist terror. The LCC does not think the last word has been heard from Black Lives Matter, despite the liberal illusions in the capitalist state and the Democratic Party. We are not going to throw our hands up in defeat and go home. For that matter, in the rare case that there is a labor strike in the United States, the treacherous union bureaucracy do their best to make certain that the picket lines are not going to be defended. That doesn't make a labor strike stand outside of the class struggle.

Most Syrian oppositionists are not armed but the armed minority certainly is fighting a guerilla war. If Paris had LCCs coexisting with armed militias fighting a fascist regime today we would be talking about a new Paris Commune. Like Marx we would be worrying about the absence of a Marxist party and program but at least we would support the Commune to the death.

Revolutions are not initiated on our schedule. The masses have no other option but to revolt and the party, the international may or may not be ready. The fact that we are not ready does not mean the revolution, the self-organization of the masses, is not proceeding under fire of competing imperialist blocs, regional powers and communal divisions fostered by agents of imperialism both overt and covert. Under fire of 16 competing armies, the masses' struggle to survive is the revolution.

The Vietnamese revolution lasted for decades, first against the French colonialists, then the Japanese, again against the French until they finally achieved their social revolution through the defeat of U.S. imperialism. Other social revolutions such as the struggle to abolish chattel slavery in the United States, to the Chinese Revolution to Yugoslavia took years and decades. Even the Russian Revolution did not advance linearly, but witnessed rapid advances as well as setbacks.

Moreover in the oppressed countries the decay of imperialism is extreme. The organized working class barely exists and the vanguard is missing. The Syrian revolution does not follow a blueprint where it has to satisfy an imperiocentric timeline and be led by an imperiocentric Trotskyist international.

The Left

We think the path CoReP is on away from the Syrian revolution is non-internationalism; in the real circumstance it is as bad practically as the absurd "revolutionaries" and "Trotskyists" who support Assad. This is a surprise given the analysis CoReP made of events in Libya when you polemicized with and cleaned the clock of Gerry Downing's pro-Ghaddafi neo-Healyism. The majority of the comrades in the CWG were in the nowadays defunct Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRs) at the time and supported comrade Couthon's analysis (and still do), which we intended to publish before Dave Winter's radical position reversal.

But that is a formal position only because CoReP does not concretely defend the Syrian revolution which is fighting IS etc., and explains why we can't actually defend it from imperialism any more than we can defend Assad. Moreover while the Syrian revolution is fighting on three fronts (imperialism, Assad, and the various hostile militias) it also has to combat the fourth front which is the 'imperialist left'. CoRePs position on Syria puts it

in the category of the 'imperialist left.' Why? Because it adopts phony arguments to pronounce permanent revolution dead.

Was it dead by 2012? How to explain the survival of a revolution (effectively denied heavy weapons by imperialism and its proxies) until today requiring the intervention of the Russian bloc to stop it overthrowing Assad? In Aleppo there is an armed resistance coexisting with popular (workers, professionals, traders, etc.) self-administration. How is this Aleppo Commune still alive and kicking?

The Russian blitzkrieg is worse than Guernica, the Spanish city destroyed by fascist bombers during the civil war. In Spain the Republic was attacked by Franco's fascists with the support of the Western imperialist powers. Around the world the labor movement and the Stalinist Communist Parties rallied to the Republican side in the civil war and many travelled to Spain to form international brigades. Today, in Syria most of the Western left deny that a civil war exists. They are by default on the side of the fascist regime. Trotsky said that Stalinism without workers property would be a kind of fascism. With the end of workers property Putin inherited Stalin's mantle. So the crypto-Stalinists today claim there is no popular insurrection in Syria. They buy Assad's lies that the US created militias to bring about 'regime change' and that most of those militias have been overrun by the IS itself a US proxy. There is no revolution and no side to support in Syria for these crypto-Stalinists except Russia as the only force capable of wiping out ISIS. Others prefer to back peace talks in the hope that the war can be stopped. Neither will talk to the Syrian people about their struggle for survival. The Syrian people may as well not exist.

Permanent Revolution

The "Arab Spring" erupted in response to the unfinished tasks of the Arab national democratic revolution intersecting with the inability of the semi-colonial comprador bourgeois regimes to placate the masses under the conditions of the general crisis of international capitalism and the austerity it demands. The expression and fight for basic democratic rights is tied in a Gordian knot to the economic struggle of the workers which has exploded in a ring of fire around the Mediterranean. The popular and proletarian character of these uprisings lies not only in their origins (which are multi-class) and the strikes and general strikes that followed, but in the fact that the semi-colonial governments cannot protect the masses from imperialist plunder. Indeed they have joined in greedily!

Syria is a democratic revolution that still fights to survive, and which if it had international material aid from the Western left, including Trotskyist brigades, would be capable of continuing the permanent revolution against international counter-revolution. One can only say that the permanent revolution has been proven in the negative if one is ignorant of the actual revolution taking place. If the Bolshevik vanguard barely exists in the imperialist countries, then arguing that it has to exist before the democratic revolution can be reopened in the semi-colonies is to miss the revolution (only to find it in the pub at home.) Revolutions begin without a Bolshevik vanguard and sometimes are more advanced than the vanguard which may catch up (as in Russia) or miss the boat (as in Germany). We do not want to be in the camp of those who judge revolutions by their own schematics.

Necessity For A Revolutionary Party and Revolutionary Workers International

The only solution to the difficult problems in Syria *is a Socialist Revolution*: Unless the working class assumes leadership of the Syrian masses in revolt, the revolution cannot be won. The current petty bourgeois rebel leaderships, with no program, strategy or tactics, are obviously unable to mobilize the whole working class and peasants irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation against the Assad dictatorship. But without such a broad mobilization and organization in popular councils and militias, it is impossible to defeat the Assad regime and replace it with a truly popular, workers' and peasants government. To achieve this, the working class needs a revolutionary leadership, i.e. a revolutionary party. And that means standing on the side of the Syrian masses who are under the gun of NATO and U.S. imperialism, Russian/Chinese imperialism and reactionary clerical Islamists such as Daesh.

In concrete terms an internationalist labor defense of the Syrian masses needs to materially confront imperialism in Syria. In Russia and China this means workers must unite to oppose their own government's support for Assad including taking labor actions to stop arms shipments to the regime. The key tasks of a united front in the U.S. and EU is for workers to organize and provide military aid to the revolution. Without man portable surface to air missiles and other SAMs the masses are at the mercy of Assad's air force. From the United States to Spain to South Africa to China and Syria, the working class is under all-out assault by capital. Build independent working class opposition to the brutal dictatorship in Syria and to the imperialist paymasters who subject the masses to slaughter. Build this as the defense of our class as a whole.

Defend the Syrian masses! Form up local committees, link them nationally and internationally and take action to provide assistance to the secular and independent working class fighters.

Down with Geneva 2, imperialist scheme to rob the masses of every revolutionary gain!

For organizations of workers councils and their class political independence from Syrian bourgeois political forces in the opposition, be they in country or exile. Only working class political independence will permit defense of the revolution against all its enemies of today and tomorrow.

For Permanent Revolution! For a Revolutionary Socialist Federation of the Middle East! For a revolutionary workers international!

The following is reprinted from the [Class Struggle #116](#), the journal of the Communist Workers Group - New Zealand/Aotearoa (CWG-NZ)

From Guernica to Aleppo

If anyone wanted conclusive proof that Syria has become the battleground between the two main imperialist blocs collaborating to smash the Syrian revolution all they have to do is look at the fate of Aleppo. A native of Aleppo recently wrote of his terrible decision to finally leave that city because of the Russian [blitzkrieg](#).

"I didn't ever expect this time would come, but I have to give up. I am leaving for a place I am not sure even exists."

Dear Rabi,

You ask about Aleppo, let me tell you about the city where we grew up together.

We haven't seen a good day in years. The shelling never stops, even for an hour or two. Life has changed, all the places you remember are gone: forget them, it is too painful. The bombs dropped by the regime are indiscriminate, destroying everything in their path. Everything is changed, destroyed or deserted, without life.

Even in our dreams we no longer know what "safety" means. Every time you open your eyes you don't know if it the last time you will see your kids. The people you used to know are not here anymore. People from the surrounding towns and villages have moved to the city in the past few years, hoping to find safety. Aleppo was always seen as a safe place. But many of them had to move on. People keep trying to find safer places, so they keep coming and going. We are happy to help, but it is hard and we get tired.

Aleppo is not fully besieged yet. But moving around our city has become very difficult. People are living day by day; their hope has died along with their city and, many times, their loved ones. The simplest things in life have become very hard. To buy food, bread or water for your family you have to wait in a long, long line—and then keep waiting. You spend all the time looking around, paying attention to every noise, as if you could hear whether you are the next one that will be hit by a strike. The remaining time, you think about your family: will they be still alive when you get home? Will your home still be there? In the end you may get what you came for. If you are lucky you get home safely, without being killed by a bomb from a plane.

It is not just fighting on the front lines, it's not just the continuous bombing. There are snipers hidden in every corner on the way out of the city. We are constantly adapting our lives. Schools have had to move underground, and medical centers have to manage with limited supplies. We tried to build new democratic institutions: we elected new leaders. Everything has been a struggle.

We tried to go north to different neighborhoods, but bombs were falling there. We could see the planes flying above us, they sometimes display Syrian flags, sometimes Russian, sometimes

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we don't even know. It feels like they are following us everywhere we go.

The surrounding communities of Anadan, Marah, Tal Refat, Hretan, Bynoon, Azaz are also suffering. These towns and villages started a peaceful revolution. They stood with Aleppo when Syrian government forces attacked civilians in the city. They took in people fleeing the bombs and the shelling. But what happened to them? They were bombed, every single day. People do not know who the planes are aiming for and whether they will be next to die. Tens of air strikes per day, for the last 120 days.

And now it is time to leave. I didn't ever expect this time would come, but I have to give up. I am leaving for a place I am not sure even exists. Many friends of mine are already waiting along the Turkish border. It is an open, cold space, crowded with 70,000 people, where the temperature is freezing. But my heart will always remain here.

Aleppo stands in front of a big war machine armed only with small weapons. It is not just a geographical target. Aleppo is karama, it is dignity, it is the revolution against injustice. Good-bye Aleppo; my hometown, the place where I spent my childhood, where all my memories are. I hope to see you there again one day, my friend.

Your childhood companion,

S.

Editor's note: This letter was sent to and translated by Rabi Bana, a human rights activist born in Aleppo in 1984, who left Syria in late 2012. He works in Beirut and Turkey for an international NGO that supports Syrian civil society. Born in Aleppo in 1980, S. has been involved in peaceful protest demanding freedom and democracy from the beginning of the uprising in 2011. He is a founder of the Aleppo Media Center and works in education for the city government.

From Guernica to Aleppo

This Russian blitzkrieg on Aleppo is worse than Guernica the Basque town destroyed by Nazi German bombers during the Spanish civil war. In Spain the Republic was attacked by Franco's fascists with the support of the Western imperialist powers. Around the world the labor movement and the Stalinist Communist Parties rallied to the Republican side in the civil war and many travelled to Spain to form international brigades.

Today, most of the [Western left](#) deny that a civil war exists in Syria. They are by default on the side of the fascist regime. Trotsky said that Stalinism without workers property would be a kind of fascism. With the end of workers property Putin inherited Stalin's mantle.

So the crypto-Stalinists claim there is no popular insurrection in Syria. They buy Assad's lies that the US created militias to bring about 'regime change' and that most of those militias have been overrun by the IS itself a US proxy. There is no revolution and no side to support in Syria for these crypto-Stalinists except Russia as the only force capable of wiping out IS. Others prefer to back peace talks in the hope that the war can be stopped. None will

talk to the Syrian people about their struggle for survival. The Syrian people may as well not exist.

There is a third alternative that has been deliberately suppressed by the [Western 'RT left'](#) and that is the reality of the popular uprising against Assad. Aleppo shows it is a lie to reduce this to a CIA project or to Saudi arms when both (and Turkey) have conspired to stop the arming of the opposition. That is why for all the talk of the US and its proxies, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, arming the rebels, none have provided the only weapons capable of decisively defeating Assad's planes, Surface to Air Missiles (SAMS).

Aleppo (the largest commercial city) shows it is a lie to claim that Assad is the legitimate ruler with majority support. Until Russia began its bombing of the opposition militias 5 months ago, [Assad was losing](#). Not to the IS but to the many local popular militias such as that which held Aleppo for years.

How can anyone claim Assad has legitimacy after his gas attacks and barrel bombing of civilians? After half a million deaths and 4 million in exile? Why if Assad has legitimacy does he now need Russia to blast Aleppo into the European dark ages?

The socialist and anarchist left that buys this ruling class shit is no better than the bourgeois filth who unleash genocide on the Syrians. Why? Because they have turned their backs on their duty to mobilise worker support for the Syrian (and any other) revolution despite and because of the apparently unwinnable prospect of defeating the class enemy on 4 fronts -

(1) The imperialist US and its NATO partners plus the Russia/China bloc who will kill millions for the last drop of oil.

(2) Assad and his mercenaries who will complete the genocide of the people and razing of the cities before they surrender to 'terrorism', that is, democracy.

(3) The IS and other jihadis who are opportunists attempting to insert themselves into the vacuum caused by the unresolved civil war and who are useful as armed thugs against the revolution.

(4) The Western crypto Stalinist left which sits on the sidelines indulging in geopolitical handwashing as the counter-revolutionary armies compete on bodycount and [oilwells](#), tut tutting about how it is all so gruesome and uncivilised.

Fortunately for the fate of humanity, when the working people rise up they see clearly that there isn't a hell of a lot of difference between Russian bombs, Hezbollah and RT 'socialist' lies when you count the dead children.

While the Syrian revolutionaries fight on the first three fronts, it's up to us in the rest of the world to fight on the fourth front to expose and defeat the crypto-Stalinist left that acts as a 'fifth column' in the workers movements, and campaign for material aid to the revolutionary militias.

No more Guernicas! No more Aleppos!

For the workers of the world to live, capitalism must die!

What we Fight For

We fight to overthrow Capitalism

Historically, capitalism expanded world-wide to free much of humanity from the bonds of feudal or tribal society, and developed the economy, society and culture to a new higher level. But it could only do this by exploiting the labour of the productive classes to make its profits. To survive, capitalism became increasingly destructive of “nature” and humanity. In the early 20th century it entered the epoch of imperialism in which successive crises unleashed wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. Today we fight to end capitalism’s wars, famine, oppression and injustice, by mobilising workers to overthrow their own ruling classes and bring to an end the rotten, exploitative and oppressive society that has exceeded its use-by date.

We fight for Socialism.

By the 20th century, capitalism had created the pre-conditions for socialism –a world-wide working class and modern industry capable of meeting all our basic needs. The potential to eliminate poverty, starvation, disease and war has long existed. The October Revolution proved this to be true, bringing peace, bread and land to millions. But it became the victim of the combined assault of imperialism and Stalinism. After 1924 the USSR , along with its deformed offspring in Europe, degenerated back towards capitalism. In the absence of a workers political revolution, capitalism was restored between 1990 and 1992. Vietnam and China then followed. In the 21st century only North Korea survives as a degenerated workers state. We unconditionally defend the DPRK against capitalism and fight for political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy as part of a world socialist revolution.

We fight to defend Marxism

While the economic conditions for socialism exist today, standing between the working class and socialism are political, social and cultural barriers. They are the capitalist state and bourgeois ideology and its agents. These agents claim that Marxism is dead and capitalism need not be exploitative. We say that Marxism is a living science that explains both capitalism’s continued exploitation and its attempts to hide class exploitation behind the appearance of individual “freedom” and “equality”. It reveals how and why the reformist, Stalinist and centrist misleaders of the working class tie workers to bourgeois ideas of nationalism, racism, sexism and equality. Such false beliefs will be exploded when the struggle against the inequality, injustice, anarchy and barbarism of capitalism in crisis, led by a revolutionary Marxist party, produces a revolutionary class-consciousness.

We fight for a Revolutionary Party

The bourgeoisie and its agents condemn the Marxist party as totalitarian. We say that without a democratic and a centrally organised party there can be no revolution. We base our beliefs on the revolutionary tradition of Bolshevism and Trotskyism. Such a party, armed with a transitional program, forms a bridge that joins the daily fight to defend all the past and present gains won from capitalism to the victorious socialist revolution. Defensive struggles for bourgeois rights and freedoms, for decent wages and conditions, will link up the struggles of workers of all nationalities, genders, ethnicities and sexual orientations, bringing about movements for workers control, political strikes and the arming of the working class, as necessary steps to workers’ power and the smashing of the bourgeois state. Along the way, workers will learn that each new step is one of many in a long march to revolutionize every barrier put in the path to their victorious revolution.

We fight for Communism.

Communism stands for the creation of a classless, stateless society beyond socialism that is capable of meeting all human needs. Against the ruling class lies that capitalism can be made “fair” for all, that nature can be “conserved”, that socialism and communism are “dead”, we raise the red flag of communism to keep alive the revolutionary tradition of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, the Third Communist International until 1924, and the revolutionary Fourth International up to its collapse into centrism, with the closing of the International Center. We fight to build a new Communist International, as a world party of socialism capable of leading workers to a victorious struggle for socialism.

Join us:

Where overthrowing capitalism is all in a days work !!!

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