

**SOLIDARITY IS  
SOMETHING  
YOU CAN HOLD  
IN YOUR HANDS**



**Selected Writings of Manifest-Kommunistisk  
Arbejdsgruppe**

*...in 1974, we published a book, in which guerilla fighters from Angola told their stories. It was called “Victory or Death.” That was not our reality. We could always make choices. Your socialization always catches up with you. Today I like to say that I can feel neoliberalism running in my blood, too...*

*-Torkil Lauesen*



Arghiri Emmanuel and Torkil Lauesen, 1983

This pamphlet collects a selection of theoretical writings by Manifest-Kommunistisk Arbejdsgruppe (M-KA), along with an abridged introduction to the group by Klaus Viehmann, former member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June Movement.

This pamphlet ends with extracts from a 2013 interview conducted with two former members of M-KA and the Blekingegade Group, Torkil Lauesen and Jan Weimann, relating to the present global situation.

# Introduction to the Blekingegade Group

by Klaus Viehmann

*[abridged from the preface to “Turning Money into Rebellion–The Unlikely Story of Denmark's Revolutionary Bank Robbers”, Kersplebedeb and PM Press, 2014]*

The essence of the Blekingegade Group [the illegal structure within Manifest-Kommunistisk Arbejdsgruppe] was international solidarity. A solidarity that “you can hold in your hands.” Concretely, money. Lots of money. Acquired in robberies in the metropolitan North and passed on to the tricontinental South. For many years. Respect!

The Blekingegade Group was a child of the late 1960s. Its members were Marxists-Leninists, even if of a special kind. The persistency with which they supported ‘national liberation movements’ and refugee camps for almost twenty years distinguished their practice from the kind of solidarity whizzing across the globe: Vietnam, Palestine, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Chile, Portugal, Spain, Nicaragua... The group’s members were more determined than the proletarian impersonators of the 1970s who soon retreated to the “alternative middle class.”

As far as we know, no other Marxist-Leninist group has maintained a clandestine infrastructure for illegal actions and the acquisition of money for so long. And no other has propagated the so-called “parasite state theory,” which, essentially, brought together two theses: first, the (“Maoist”) one expressed in Che Guevara’s speech at the Tricontinental Conference, with the “Third World” being the engine of world revolution and “villages encircling cities.” This view became particularly popular

following the period of decolonization and the defeat of the USA in Vietnam. The second thesis contended that the working class in the metropole had been “muted” and pacified by the imperialist bourgeoisie, which handed to the metropolitan workers a portion of the superprofits from the exploitation of human and natural resources in the tricont. This resulted in a “labor aristocracy” (Lenin) that had already rallied around the concept of the “nation” during World War I and showed the same reaction in the global context of the 1970s. “Social Partnership” was more important than solidarity with working-class peers in the tricont.

The Blekingegade Group's strategy derived from combining these two assumptions. Any attempt by a revolutionary minority to mobilize the “masses” in the metropole was considered futile as long as the superprofits were flowing in. Hence, the flow needed to be stopped, which required strengthening movements in the tricont and enabling them to win. This is the reason for the Blekingegade Group turning its attention to such movements in the early 1970s, particularly in the Middle East and in Southern Africa, and for supplying them with money and material for years.

The Blekingegade Group was no urban guerilla. Its revolutionary subject was located in the tricont, not in the neighbourhood or the factory. The group did not attack the state, it issued no communiqués, and it disguised its robberies as criminal actions. It never had to justify its political practice to the left or to the wider public. It wasn't looking for, and didn't need, a broad base. Going public would have only meant danger; it had no propagandistic value.

## **Why We Support LIBERATION?**

*[Originally published in Liberation, no. 6, November/December 1986, pp. 19-24.]*

*Liberation was published in Dar es Salam to inform about the anti-imperialist struggle in the Third World, serving as a forum for exchanging of ideas. The magazine was printed and distributed by Manifest Press, a publishing house and printshop organised by Manifest–Communist Working Group.*

Manifest–Communist Working Group contributes to the publication of “Liberation” by undertaking all practical work with the periodical from finished manuscript stage to distribution.

It may, on the face of it, appear strange that a political organisation in Denmark should support the publication of a periodical in Tanzania—a periodical, moreover, which addresses itself to readers in the Third World. Why do we not concentrate our efforts on political work in our own part of the world and publish a periodical aimed at the Danish Working class? Why do liberation movements and socialist forces in the Third World command the major part of our attention? This choice of priorities is the outcome of certain fundamental political considerations.

### **The Present World Order**

Let us take a brief look at what characterizes the present world order. The capitalist system still dominates the world economically, politically and militarily. Capitalist countries produce 2/3 of the world's commodities and totally dominate the world market. They also have the strongest military apparatus at their disposal. The socialist countries are still the weakest party—although their military and economic strength is increasing.

Indeed, the imperialist system is not so much threatened by the socialist/planned-economy states as by conflicts within the capitalist system itself.

The capitalist world system is in point of fact characterized by a sharp division into wealthy developed countries (North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand) and poor underdeveloped countries—the Third World. Centuries of plunder and exploitation of human and natural resources in Asia, Africa and Latin America have led to affluence and development in the imperialist countries, and corresponding misery and underdevelopment in the exploited countries. This division of the capitalist world into imperialist and exploited countries has been—and still is—a necessary precondition for the development of the system; but at the same time, this division also gives rise to social conflicts which threaten to disintegrate the system.

### **The Third World is the Focal Point**

A retrospective view of developments during the past 30-40 years will show that it is first and foremost areas in the Third World that have constituted the focal point in the struggle against imperialism for socialism.

The Communists' victory in China, the struggle against Dutch colonialism in Asia, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the other conflicts in South East Asia, the Algerian liberation struggle, the struggle against Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, the liberation of Zimbabwe from the settler regime, the liberation struggle in Namibia and South

Africa, the numerous wars and conflicts around the settler state of Israel, the victorious struggle for Cuba and Nicaragua, the struggle in El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile—are mere examples from a long series of events which have brought the people's struggle in the Third World into focus.

It is no accident that the Third World is the focal point for the struggle against imperialism. The exploitation of the Third World's population and resources constitutes the very foundation of the existing capitalist world order. The dynamism of the imperialist system brings about a constant tapping of the life blood of the Third World. By virtue of unequal exchange, values to the tune of hundreds of billions of US-dollars are transferred annually. The result of this exploitation is a life in misery and poverty for the population of the Third World, the likes of which is unknown in the imperialist countries. These circumstances have led to a demand for change on the part of the exploited masses. A demand which the imperialist countries and their local allies seek to suppress with all the means in their power. This is the main cause of the constant unrest in the Third World.

On the other hand, the exploitation and underdevelopment of Asia, Africa and Latin America has been a precondition for the rapid development of capitalism in USA, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. It has likewise been an essential precondition for the economic progress and social security which by and large the whole working class in the imperialist countries has won for itself. It is this division of the capitalist system into poor and wealthy countries which is a

prerequisite for the development of the system, which forms the background for the so-called North-South Conflict.

## **The Anti-Imperialist Forces**

The Communist Movement, more or less regardless of which part of the movement one cares to consider, has traditionally divided the anti-imperialist forces into three categories:

- a) The socialist countries,
- b) The working class and other progressive elements in the developed capitalist countries,
- c) National liberation movements and other socialist forces in the Third World.

Let us consider what role these various categories play in today's anti-imperialist struggle.

### **a) The Socialist Countries**

It is hardly accidental that the “socialist countries” are always mentioned first in publications issued in these countries. The fact of the matter is that these countries consider themselves to be the leading force in the anti-imperialist struggle. The correctness of this assertion is, however, very much open to question. As mentioned earlier, a concrete examination of the past 40 years' anti-imperialist struggle will show that it has mainly been the liberation movements and the socialist forces of the Third World that have been the spearhead in the confrontation with imperialism. Nor is it such that these movements are a product of, or have been exported from the Soviet Union or the other socialist



countries, as the USA is especially fond of claiming. There may well be grounds for arguing that, for example, the revolution in Nicaragua has sought inspiration and experience from Cuba or other socialist countries and movements, but the origin, development and success of the Sandinista revolution is first and foremost a result of circumstances in Nicaragua itself.

It is correct that the Soviet Union especially has often played an important role for the success of revolutionary movements. The military balance of power between East and West, which the Soviet Union has succeeded in achieving in the course of the 1970s, has limited USA's possibilities for unrestrained aggression in the Third World, and has increased the socialist countries' ability to provide struggling movements and newly established progressive states with material and political support, thereby increasing their chances of victory and survival.

It is also true that the Soviet Union has increased its global influence through this involvement in the Third World, but the reason that the Soviet Union has been able to play this role lies beyond Soviet control, insofar as it lies in the economic/political development in the Third World itself.

Because of the imperialist countries' economic and military strength, the socialist countries have been in a permanently difficult position. Right from the establishment of the first socialist state in 1917, the developed capitalist countries have exerted enormous economic, military and political pressure on the planned economy states, partly in the hope that they might collapse, partly to prevent them from providing support to the anti-imperialist

struggle in other parts of the world. In order to survive, the socialist countries have consequently been forced to give top priority to their own defence. The primary concern of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries has always been the defence and development of “existing socialism”. They have supported the anti-imperialist struggle in the Third World to the extent that this did not conflict with their own short-term security interests, which means first and foremost—as long as this did not have the effect of provoking the imperialist countries. The liberation movements and socialist forces in the Third World, on the other hand, give highest priority to direct confrontation with imperialism and its local flunkies, which is only natural. They have nothing to lose.

The fact that the socialist countries and progressive movements in the Third World face a common enemy and have the same goals makes them potential allies. They both have the strategic goal of conquering imperialism and replacing capitalist exploitation with a socialist world order. For the Third World, this is a necessary prerequisite for a solution of the enormous social problems with which they are faced—and the socialist countries cannot feel secure, and their economic development will be hampered, as long as imperialism exists. But the developed socialist states and the movements of the Third World often adopt differing tactical positions in their confrontations with imperialism.

One might speak of a tactically offensive and a tactically defensive position. The liberation movements and the socialistically oriented movements in the Third World are in the

front line, in a strategic and tactical offensive. They have everything to win and nothing to lose. The socialist countries, on the other hand, occupy a tactically defensive position. As long as the imperialist system retains its present strength, they must constantly defend their dearly-won independence. There is thus nothing directly treacherous in this defensive policy, though on occasions it might appear somewhat opportunist.

MPLA, FRELIMO or Nicaragua's Sandinists were offensive, uncompromising movements as long as they were fighting for state power. Today, having achieved state power, they have to use a considerable part of their resources to defend themselves against enemies within and from outside. Such as the relative distribution of power is in the world of today countries such as Nicaragua, Angola or Mozambique cannot support revolutionary movements in neighbouring countries without encountering considerable problems. They have to carefully assess the relative distribution of power regionally and internationally, together with the nature and extent of their support in order not to jeopardize their own revolution. Revolutionaries must therefore rely first and foremost on their own strength.

### **b) The Working Class in the Developed Capitalist Countries**

In keeping with the traditional categorization, the second part of the anti-imperialist front is said to constitute the working class in the imperialist countries. Let us take a closer look at the role that this class has actually played in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle.

The spreading of capitalism over the whole world at the end of the

last century led partly to the creation of one integral economic system—one world market, but partly also to a division of the capitalist system into an exploited and an exploiting part. In the previous century, the living conditions of the proletariat in Europe and in the colonies were by and large equally miserable. From around the turn of the century, however, this state of things began to change. The working class in the imperialist countries succeeded, slowly but surely, in securing increased wages and an extension of their political rights. During the first half of the 19th century, the capitalist system had been unable to meet, let alone fulfil the proletariat's demands for better living conditions. This was beyond what the capitalist system could provide at this point in history. But this state of affairs changed decisively with the onset of imperialism. Colonial profits made it possible for the ruling class to meet the demands of the working class without jeopardizing the existence of the system itself. Rising wages, improved working conditions and the extension of political rights served also to strengthen working-class belief in the possibilities of reformism, which in turn made it possible for the bourgeoisie to extend political rights and so forth. The rising wage-level—financed through imperialism's exploitation of Asia, Africa and Latin America—led more-over to a steadily growing domestic market in the imperialist countries and thus to a dynamic development, which in turn resulted in stable social and political conditions.

The development of the welfare states in the imperialist countries resulted in a change in the nature of the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie. A class struggle does, of

course, still exist. Regardless of whether wages are high or low, the social product under capitalism consists of two inversely proportional parts, namely the wages of the working class and the profit of the capitalists. An increase in one of these elements results in a corresponding decrease in the other. Therefore the contradiction still exists. But when the national exploitation to which the working class is subjected constantly diminishes when compared with the advantages the class enjoys by belonging to a rich privileged nation, then there comes a point when the increase in the national affluence becomes more important than the struggle against capital. It is not only the bourgeoisie, but also the working class in the imperialist countries that benefits from the low wages in the Third World and the resultant low prices of the products from these countries. Cheap raw materials from the Third World for industry and agriculture in the imperialist countries leads to cheap finished products when measured in relation to the relatively high wages in the wealthy countries. If wages in the Third World were raised to a Western European level, then products such as copper, tin, chromium, zinc, coffee, tea, cocoa etc. would become several hundred percent more expensive. Also cheap finished products such as textiles and electronics are produced in the Third World. At the same time, the high wage level in the imperialist countries means that commodities from these countries are beyond the means of workers from the Third World with their poor wages.

Thus, imperialism has meant that the working class in the imperialist countries and the proletariat in the exploited countries do not at the present time share the same interests. In practice this

has also proved to be the case. One would have great difficulty finding an example of the English working class having supported the anti-colonial struggle that took place within the Empire. By and large, it has supported the changing governments' colonial policies throughout the past 100 years, from Ireland to Southern Africa, from India to the Falkland Islands. Nor indeed can the French working class boast of having supported Vietnam's, Algeria's or Syria's struggle for independence—far from it. Generally speaking, the working class of USA has also rallied around the imperialist and anti-socialist policy of this country throughout the world. When the people of USA nevertheless did eventually turn against the Vietnam War, they did so not in solidarity with the Vietnamese people, but because the war was beginning to cost too many US-American lives. Generally speaking, the workers of the Western World are pro-Israeli and consider the Palestinians to be terrorists. The working class of the imperialist world does not favour Apartheid, yet they certainly do not wish to have a socialist South Africa either. Anti-communism has increased in the Western World in recent years. The microscopic Left, which does after all exist in the imperialist countries, has never wished to face these facts, but has instead always excused the working class. “The workers have been indoctrinated by schools, TV, radio and the bourgeois press—they do not know any better.” But to explain decades of consistent opportunism as the result of Social Democratic betrayal is to bid farewell to historical materialism. The working class has not been misled, but pursues policies which are consistent with the interests and goals of the working class. To claim that the

bourgeoisification of the working class is the result of indoctrination and the propaganda of the mass media is an equally shoddy excuse. Why, one might well ask, is the proletariat of the Third World, which is exposed to reactionary propaganda in at least equal measure, not equally bourgeoisified—and why is the imperialist working class so receptive to bourgeois and anti-socialist propaganda? No—the attitude of the working class in the Western World towards the anti-imperialist struggle is rooted first and foremost in economic facts. The working class do not want a new world order which will involve it having to forfeit privileges. It will be naive of the liberation movements and socialists of the Third World to count on the active support of the working class in the Western World for a radical transformation of the present world order.

### **c) The Liberation Movements and Socialist Forces of the Third World**

It is thus our conviction that the Third World constitutes the most important front in the anti-imperialist struggle. Anti-imperialism is, however, a broad concept. It may cover nationally-minded capitalists who wish to protect their own industry and domestic market against foreign competition, or religious fundamentalists who wish to fight “foreign” cultural and religious influence, or yet again petit-bourgeois strata in the armed forces and administration who wish to pursue particular national goals. Finally, there are the liberation movements and socialists who, in addition to national and cultural liberation, also fight for economic liberation.

Since World War II the countries in the Third World, with a few

exceptions, have achieved formal national independence. This process has not, however, injured imperialism in any decisive way or led to any general solution of the economic and social problems facing the Third World. We are of the opinion that only the socialist forces of the Third World will be in a position to undertake an effective continuation of the anti-imperialist struggle.

This struggle must be carried out on two planes: the national and the international. On the national plane, this means a struggle against capitalist exploitation and the constructing of a socialist national order, which by means of a planned economy can ensure an optimal use of human and material resources for an economic and politically democratic development of the country. On the international plane—a struggle for a new economic world order, which can put an end to international exploitation. Poverty in the Third World is closely bound up with these countries' connection with the capitalist world market. Even if e.g. Zaire carried out a socialist revolution tomorrow, the price of their most important source of income, copper, would not rise. Neither does Nicaragua get more for its coffee or bananas because it has had a socialist upheaval. Regardless of the economic policy which has been in force in the now independent countries, they have had to learn through experience of how their individual efforts to develop their economies have been hampered by the conditions that prevail on the world market. The struggle against the present economic world order is therefore a very important element in the liberation of the Third World. Only through a national revolution combined with international solidarity between the countries of the Third World will it be possible to back up the demand for a new economic



world order with sufficient force. It is first and foremost the socialists in the Third World who are the guarantors for this political strategy. In the present situation, where a wave of anti-communism is sweeping from the USA over the world, and where the Western European Left stands irresolute and declares that “Marxism is in a crisis”, it is very important to strengthen and support the spread of socialist ideas and marxist analysis in the Third World in particular, which is where the struggle is taking place. It is this task which “LIBERATION” can help to accomplish. It is “LIBERATION”'s goal to inform about the anti-imperialist struggle throughout the Third World and to serve as a forum for the exchange of experience and ideas. In the first leading article of “LIBERATION” this was expressed as follows:

“Knowledge of each others struggles will not only inspire, bring closer, but also foster amongst freedom fighters that internationalist outlook where they would see their own struggle as an intergral part of a global movement against imperialism and advancing the cause of world revolution”.

It is this process to which we hope to contribute by supporting the publication of “LIBERATION”.

Manifest–Communist Working Group  
Denmark

# **The Effects of Unequal Exchange on the International Solidarity**

*[Originally published in Unequal Exchange and the prospects of Socialism – Communist Working Group. Manifest Press, 1986]*

The effects of imperialist exploitation on the national policy of the exploiting countries did at the same time influence international questions. The policy of the working class of the imperialist countries became still more nationalistic, as the prosperity of the country was the prosperity of the working class.

As already described, this did not mean that the class struggle stopped in the imperialist countries. Whether the wages are high or low, whether the social product is big or small, the wages of the working class and the profit of the bourgeoisie are two amounts which are inversely proportional, and, therefore, the object of continuous struggles.

But when the relative size of the value created by the working classes of the imperialist countries continuously falls compared with the values they receive by way of unequal exchange, and when they appropriate more value than they create because of the low prices of commodities from the exploited countries, then the increase in the national product becomes more important than international solidarity with the members of their own class in the exploited countries. These are the material and economic realities behind the lack of solidarity between the workers of the imperialist countries and the workers of the exploited countries.

Below, a number of concrete examples are given. They illustrate the bloom of chauvinism and the withering of the international

solidarity of the working class in some of the countries which participate in the international exploitation. As early as in the latter half of the nineteenth century this chauvinism played a prominent part in the attitude of the British working class to Ireland and the Irish working class. In a letter to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 Marx writes on this attitude:

And most important of all! Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland.

... This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power...

...Therefore to hasten the social revolution in England is the most important object of the International Workingmen's Association. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.

Hence it is the task of the International everywhere to put

the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. And this is the special task of the Central Council in London to awaken a consciousness in the English workers that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the first condition of their own social emancipation.

(MESCS, pp: 236-7.)

The Central Council of the First International did not succeed in "provoking" the British working class to be aware of the conditions in the oppressed countries or to be aware of the fact that the emancipation of these countries was a prerequisite of their own emancipation. On the contrary the defence of the colonial empire by the British working class was cemented in the following years.

On the attitude of the British working class to the fight for the emancipation of the oppressed countries Lenin writes:

I would also like to emphasise the importance of revolutionary work by the Communist parties, not only in their own, but also in the colonial countries, and particularly among the troops employed by the exploiting nations to keep the colonial peoples in subjection.

Comrade Quelch of The British Socialist Party spoke of this in our commission. He said that the rank-and-file British worker would consider it treasonable to help the enslaved nations in their uprisings against British rule. True, the jingoist and chauvinist-minded labour aristocrats of Britain and America present a very great danger to socialism, and are a bulwark of the Second International.

Here we are confronted with the greatest treachery on the part of leaders and workers belonging to this bourgeois International... The parties of the Second International have pledged themselves to revolutionary action, but they have given no sign of genuine revolutionary work or of assistance to the exploited and dependent nations in their revolt against the oppressor nations. This, I think, applies also to most of the parties that have withdrawn from the Second International and wish to join the Third International. We must proclaim this publicly for all to hear, and it is irrefutable. We shall see if any attempt is made to deny it.

(Lenin, The Second Congress, p. 245.)

At the same congress Lenin says about the British Labour Party:

The comrades have emphasized that the labour aristocracy is stronger in Britain than in any other country. That is true. After all, the labour aristocracy has existed in Britain, not for decades but for centuries... This stratum is thoroughly imbued with bourgeois prejudices and pursues a definitely bourgeois reformist policy. In Ireland, for instance, there are two hundred thousand British soldiers who are applying ferocious terror methods to suppress the Irish. The British Socialists are not conducting any revolutionary propaganda among these soldiers, though our resolutions clearly state that we can accept into the Communist International only those British parties that conduct genuinely revolutionary propaganda among the British workers and soldiers.

(Ibid., p. 261.)

The resolutions of the Third International about the importance of the emancipation of the colonial countries to the world revolution

were not followed up. The West European parties were not at all interested in the question.

Ho Chi Minh, who later became the president of the Vietnamese Communist Party, was in Europe at that time. He attended the 5th congress of the Third International (COMINTERN) in 1924, where he severely criticized the West European communist parties, particularly the French for its chauvinist attitude towards the colonial question.

Thus, nine countries with an aggregate population of 320,657,000 and a total area of 11,407,600 square kilometres, are exploiting colonies with a total population of 560,193,000 and covering areas adding up to 55,637,000 square kilometres. The total area of the colonies is five times that of the metropolitan countries whose total population amounts to less than three fifths of that of the colonies...

Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that so long as the French and British Communist Parties do not apply a really, active policy with regard to the colonies, and do not come into contact with the colonial peoples, their vast programmes will remain ineffective, and this, because they go counter to Leninism....

According to Lenin, the victory of the revolution in Western Europe depends on its close contact with the national-liberation movement against imperialism in the colonies and dependent countries; the national question, as Lenin taught us, forms a part of the general problem of proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship.

Later, Comrade Stalin condemned the counter-

revolutionary viewpoint which held that the European proletariat could achieve success without a direct alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies.

However, if we base our theoretical examination on facts, we are entitled to say that our major proletarian parties, except the Russian Party, still hold to the above-mentioned viewpoint because they are doing nothing in this matter...

As for our Communist Parties in Great Britain, Holland, Belgium and other countries whose bourgeoisie have invaded the colonies, what have they done? What have they done since the day they assimilated Lenin's theses in order to educate the proletariat of their countries in the spirit of genuine proletarian internationalism and close contact with the toiling masses in the colonies? What our Parties have done in this domain amounts to almost nothing. As for me, born in a French colony and a member of the French Communist Party, I am sorry to say that our Party has done very little for the colonies.

(Ho Chi Minh, Report, pp. 30-32.)

Ho Chi Minh's criticism was never understood, even less observed by the communist parties of the imperialist countries. They upheld their half-hearted attitude towards the colonial question. But worse than that, the Social Democratic parties, which by then represented the majority of the working class in the West European countries, turned out to be directly pro-imperialist.

At the 6th Congress of the Comintern, July-September 1928, Palmiro Togliatti, who later became the leader of the Italian Communist Party, presented a detailed report on the Social Democratic movement in Western Europe and its attitude towards

the colonial question. After the Second World War Togliatti himself represented a policy which hardly differed from that of the Social Democrats, but at the congress in 1928 he gave a thorough description of the pro-imperialist policy of the Social Democratic parties. Social Democracy, he said, had always had a colonial policy

which consisted in allying itself with or directly participating in the colonial enterprises of the bourgeoisie... the Social Democrats have become colonial politicians. They recognise the possession of colonies as something which their countries could never renounce and that, when their country has no colony it is up to them to demand a colony for it in a more or less open manner. In this field there is not a single Social Democratic Party which is an exception.

(Togliatti, "Social Democracy and the Colonial Question", speech at the 6th congress of the Comintern

– quoted from Edwards, *Labour Aristocracy*, pp. 36-7.)

In his report Togliatti gives a large number of examples of the pro-imperialist policy of the Social Democrats in proof of his statement.

In France the Socialist Party had always voted in favour of colonial projects. In December 1927 at the congress of the French Socialist Party it was declared that "the post-war problems cannot be solved without the colonies". Similarly, the party voted in favour of military appropriations to be used for the suppression of nationalist riots in Syria, when the French troops massacred the population of Damascus.



In Holland the Socialist Party did not even discuss the need for colonies. They were only interested in the methods of government in the colonies. The Dutch Socialist Party warned its government that a revolt was in the offing in Indonesia. When it broke out in 1926 in Western Sumatra and Java under the leadership of the Indonesian Communist Party, it got no support whatsoever from the Dutch socialists. On the contrary, they condemned the revolutionaries in strong terms, "whether they originated from Moscow or Canton". When the revolt was suppressed by mass executions, the Dutch socialists dissociated themselves from there. Only the labourers and the peasants "who were the cause" of the revolt should be executed!

At its conference in 1919 in Germany the Social Democratic Party protested against the fact that Germany had been deprived of her colonies. At the Marseille congress R. Hilferding demanded on the part of the Social Democratic Party colonies for Germany. This demand was repeated in 1928.

In Italy in 1928 the Social Democratic Party passed a resolution protesting against the distribution of colonies after the First World War according to the Treaty of Versailles. They demanded a new agreement about the colonial problem, which considered the Italian capitalism.

In the British Labour Party programme of 1918 it appears that they are against the decolonization of the British empire, because the Labour Party considered it its duty to "defend the rights of British citizens who have overseas interests". And finally,

as for this community of races and peoples of different

colours, religions and different stages of civilization which is called the British Empire, the Labour Party is in favour of its maintenance.

(Ibid., p. 39.)

Until 1934 the parties of the Third International attacked vigorously this Social Democratic opportunism, chauvinism, and pro-imperialism. But under the impact of Fascism they turned to the strategy of the popular front in the middle of the 30s, which meant co-operation with the Social Democrats.

At the end of the Second World War the last remnants of internationalism were disappearing from the West European and American labour movement. Concurrently with the bourgeoisification, the slogan "the proletariat has no native country" lost its importance to the working class of the Western World completely. It had got somewhat more than its "chains" to lose.

Generally, the British working class, has been behind the imperialist policy of the changing British governments. The Labour government under Ramsey MacDonald (1929-31) refused all demands from the Egyptian government for the withdrawal of British soldiers, and politico economic "advisers", and for the independence of the Suez Canal.

The Labour government under Clement Atlee (1945-51) undertook several dirty tricks to suppress the labour and peasant riots in the British colonies. The Labour government sent its men-of-war to Sudan "to do anything to maintain peace and order". In Kenya the government of Clement Atlee was responsible for the

suppression of labour troubles at the end of the 1940s. In 1947 in Mombasa, The African Workers' Federation and The Railway Staff Union called a general strike. Workers within catering and business as well as servants joined the strike for higher wages and lower rent.

The Colonial Office under the Labour Government acted with the same ruthlessness as under any Tory Government. Police and troops were called in, the strike was suppressed, and the President of the African Workers' Federation, Chege Kibachia, was banished without trial to a remote village in Northern Kenya.

(Ibid. p. 33.)

During a strike later in the same year police shot at the strikers and killed three. During 1949-50 legislation was passed in Kenya which was to stop the labour riots. Wage freezes and forced labour at starvation wages were used. Strikes were made illegal and emergency legislation was introduced. The emergency legislation gave the British governor the right to deport troublemakers. This legislation was passed and introduced by a Labour Government, elected and supported by the majority of the British working class. In the then British colony of Nigeria the coal miners in Enugu were on strike in 1949 demanding higher wages—a completely normal Social Democratic demand. But in the colonies it was not supported by the Social Democratic government, but was met by arms. The result was 21 dead and 50 injured miners. During the war over the Falkland islands in 1982 an almost united British labour movement supported the imperialist war by the Conservative Government against the Argentine.

The French labour movement does not differ from the British as regards lack of solidarity with the proletariat of the Third World and pro-imperialist tendencies. When the Algerian liberation movement FLN fought for a free Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, it found only little sympathy within the French labour movement. The French Communist Party behaved like a racist party, which must be considered in connection with the fact that it had many members among the European workers in Algeria, who were paid far better than the Algerians—just like the Whites in South Africa today—because they were Europeans. An independent Algeria would mean that they lost their privileges, and, therefore, they fought desperately for a French Algeria: It was also among these that the terror organization OAS found its assassins. The OAS fought for a French Algeria even after the French Government had given up. It should also be mentioned that the future "socialist" president Mitterand was one of those responsible for the violent attack on the Algerian people in the late 1950s, when he was Minister for Algeria under a Social Democratic government.

The author Simone de Beauvoir writes about the attitude of the French people towards the Algerian liberation struggle:

It (the French Communist Party) made no effort to combat the racism of the French workers, who considered the 400,000 North Africans settled in France as both intruders doing them out of jobs and as a subproletariat worthy only of contempt... What is certain is that by the end of June (1955) all resistance to the war had ceased... the entire population of the country—workers and employers, farmers and professional people, civilians and soldiers—were caught up in a great tide of chauvinism and racism...

What did appal me was to see the vast majority of the French people turn chauvinist and to realize the depth of their racist attitude.

(Ibid, p. 195.)

The American working class has supported American imperialism in general. The American settlers began by putting the original population out of the way, and expanded towards the South on account of Mexico. The African slaves in the South did not meet with any solidarity on the part of the white labourers; on the contrary, the white American working class developed an undisguised racism. The white working class feared that the abolition of slavery would result in a fall in their wages as a consequence of the competition from the emancipated slaves.

As regards the foreign policy of the United States, the American working class has by and large supported it. The dominant position of the United States in the world was a prerequisite of its economic development and therefore of the greatest importance to the labour movement. As part of the fight against "World Communism", the American unions have supported the policy of the United States in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

It was students, intellectuals, and Liberals who were behind the demonstrations against the Vietnam war in the 1960s, not the American working class. To the extent that parts of the working class criticized the war at all—and this applied also to the other parts of the population—it was because they did not want to lose "their sons" in the war. The unions even took an active part in the support of the war against the NLF and North Vietnam.

In May 1967 the American seamen's union, the dock labourers, the mechanics, the masons, and several other unions arranged a "Support the Boys" march along the 5th Avenue in New York. They carried bills with the wording "Bomb Moscow", "Bomb Peking", "Throw the H-bomb on Hanoi". Now and then union members left the demonstration to thrash the onlookers who expressed their disapproval. (Jack Scott, *Yankee Union Go Home*, p. 261.)

The American union support of the Vietnam war could also be seen at the union congresses. At 13 union congresses in 10 American states in October and November 1967 attended by a total of 3542 delegates, 1448 voted for a continuation of the policy of the government, 1368 were for an escalation of the war, 471 found that the war efforts should be scaled down, and only 235, less than 7 per cent, advocated a complete withdrawal (Ibid., p. 262.)

In the months of April and May 1970 when the Nixon administration intensified the bombing of North Vietnam and invaded Cambodia and 12 students were killed in anti-war demonstrations in the United States, the unions reacted by escalating their support of the war. J. Beirne, vice-president of the AFL-CIO explained in a speech that opposition to the war was against the interest of the American working class. A termination of the war would lead to unemployment. J. Beirne said among other things:

Suppose last night, instead of escalating into Cambodia, President Nixon said we are pulling every man out in the

quickest manner, with airplanes and ships; if he had said that last night, this morning the Pentagon would have notified thousands of companies and said,—“Your contract is cancelled”—by tomorrow millions would be laid off. The effect of our war, while it is going on, is to keep an economic pipeline loaded with a turnover of dollars because people are employed in manufacturing the things of war. If you ended that tomorrow these same people wouldn’t start making houses.

(Ibid., p. 265.)

George Meany, who was for many years president of the AFL-CIO, announced his unconditional support of Nixon's escalation of the war. The grateful Nixon visited the union headquarters to express his pleasure of the support of the unions. As Meany gave his full support to Nixon, he said: "In this crucial hour, he should have the full support of the American people. He certainly has ours." (Ibidem)

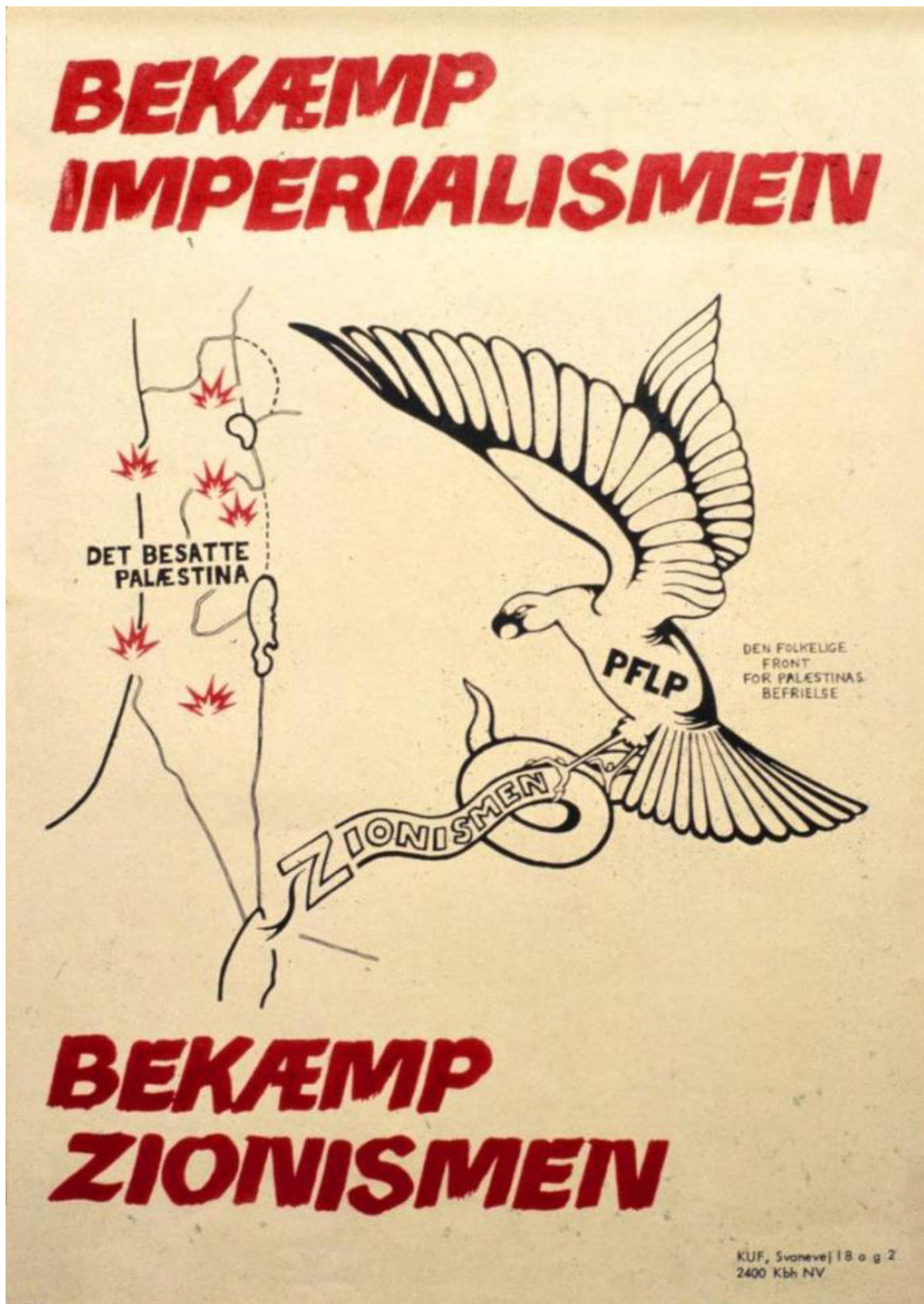
On the 8th of May 1970 the "Hard Hats" (the construction workers) began a hunt for anti-war demonstrators. Anti-war demonstrations were attacked by workers wearing their hard hats and armed with lead pipes and crowbars. Several hundred demonstrators were injured in the following weeks. The police remained totally passive and not one single "Hard Hat" was arrested. The demonstration on the 20th of May proved that it was not a question of a few extremists. An amalgamation of several of the biggest unions in the New York area mobilized more than 100,000 workers for a demonstration in support of Nixon's policy in Indochina. Nixon expressed his gratitude for this "meaningful

manifestation of support", and in return he was given a hard hat marked Commander in Chief.

The Danish working class was not immediately in favour of the Vietnam war, but in general it was not against it either: they were more or less indifferent: It was not involved in the same way as the American. However, the then Communist-led seamen's association did not refuse to transport supplies to the regime in Saigon, if they got their war risk allowance according to the tariff! (Ny Tid, April 1969—the Danish seamen's paper). Just like in other places in Europe, the opposition against the Vietnam war came mainly from young people, students, and intellectuals. Any solidarity of importance with liberation movements of other places in the world has not been seen during recent years. Thus, support of the Palestinian liberation movement by the Danish labour movement has been extremely poor. On the contrary, both the Danish Social Democratic Party and the Socialist People's Party have backed the State of Israel massively. The struggles in South Africa have not been favoured by the working class either. In spite of numerous requests to the Danish labour movement from the South African liberation movements and the Front Line States for a boycott of trade with South Africa, the Danish Social Democratic Government continued to allow the importation of South African coal and other commodities. These cheap products were more important than the solidarity. In September 1981, when the Angolan ambassador to Scandinavia asked Danish dock labourers to refuse to unload South African vessels because of a South African attack on southern Angola, she received a lot of excuses and a "No". The Latin American anti-imperialist struggle



is treated in much the same way by the unions. The solidarity of the Danish working class with the oppressed people of the Third World is certainly not up to much.



## **What can Communists in the Imperialist Countries do?**

*[Originally published in Unequal Exchange and the prospects of Socialism – Communist Working Group. Manifest Press, 1986]*

As inhabitants of one of the richest countries in the world, our possibilities of promoting socialism are limited because of very special conditions. In the richest imperialist countries there are no classes today which are objectively interested in overthrowing the imperialist system, because all classes in these countries profit by this system. Any social movement in the rich imperialist countries must be seen in the light of this fact. A mass movement has only a socialist perspective if it is directed against imperialism. Such a mass movement does not exist in the imperialist countries.

For decades left-wing parties in Western Europe and North America have set themselves the task of leading the struggle of the working class for higher wages, improved conditions, etc. This practice has been followed irrespective of the special position of the working class in the imperialist countries. Therefore they are reformists, no matter what international ideals they have had, whether they were pro-Soviet, -Chinese, or -Albanian, and regardless of their names. It cannot be the task of the Communists to lead the struggle of the labour aristocracy and thus to maintain or increase its privileges.

### **Support the Anti-Imperialist Movements in the Exploited Countries!**

As anti-imperialist mass movements are only found where imperialism means exploitation and impoverishment, the task of the Communists is to support the movements there. The most

effectual practice of Communists in an imperialist country today is to support the anti-imperialist liberation movements in the Third World who fight against capitalism and international exploitation and for socialism. By supporting movements who pursue an anti-imperialist policy and who have the necessary political strength because of a mass basis, or who have the possibilities of developing such a strength, we can do our share towards impairing imperialism.

We support the national revolutionary movements in the underdeveloped countries because these social movements represent the biggest possible social improvement in their countries; because, through a revolution, they have the possibilities of liberating enormous productive forces, especially in the form of human labour power; because, through the efforts of establishing a socialist society in their own country, they take a step towards the establishment of socialism in the whole world, also if these countries are not in a situation in which they can establish a socialist society immediately. There is no direct or easy way from an underdeveloped and exploited economy to socialism. In spite of this, the national movements in these countries represent the greatest threat to the imperialist system today. They do their share towards creating crises in imperialism. These crises are of crucial importance, if a revolutionary situation ever is to arise in the rich part of the world.

Unlike the capital and the labour aristocracy, the Communists are interested in crises in capitalism. Therefore, when the crises arise, it is not the task of the Communists to defend the privileged

position of the labour aristocracy by making plans to protect the capitalist system against crises. Communists in the imperialist countries should not try to reduce the extent of such crises and their consequences such as unemployment, decreases in wages, etc. Even today, when the economic crisis has meant only a comparatively small decrease in the standard of living of the population in the rich countries, the "fear of crisis" is widespread. The left-wing parties, from the Social Democratic party to the extreme left wing, compete with the right-wing parties to suggest the most efficient methods of solving the problems of capitalism. To them it is first and foremost a question of defending the standard of living achieved. The revolutionary perspective of the crisis has been completely forgotten. From a revolutionary point of view, crises are necessary. When the crisis is really felt, the Communists must oppose chauvinism, racism and hatred towards immigrant workers, and support anti-imperialist movements and progressive states in the Third World.

In the long view, the crises can only be removed by an elimination of capitalism through a global revolutionary socialist development. It is however evident that only the economic development itself can convince the labour aristocracy of this. The labour aristocracy, which helps to administer imperialism, cannot be transformed into a revolutionary class exclusively by means of agitation and propaganda. It is primarily the economic development that determines the policy of a class.

## **Support the Liberation Movements Materially!**

The way in which Communists of imperialist countries can support the liberation movements is of course specific from country to country. However, one thing is sure: if the support is to be of any importance, it must primarily be of a material nature. At the end of the 1960s, members of our organization participated in and tried to influence the big demonstrations directed against the warfare of the United States in Vietnam. But even though much was written about it and there were many discussions, and even though thousands of people were engaged in the work even in a small country like Denmark, the material support to the Vietnamese liberation movement was surprisingly small.

During this period the left wing devoted quite some time to liberation movements all over the world, but there was a striking disproportion between the often very militant and uncompromising slogans and the minimal value it had to the liberation movements and their struggle. The majority of the left wing did not concern themselves with the liberation movements with the primary aim of supporting them, but rather because they hoped to mobilize more people. People whom they could engage in their work for the labour aristocracy in Denmark with the illusory purpose of leading its wage struggle in a socialist direction. In the 1970s this became even more obvious. It was not possible to transfer the few anti-imperialist forces from the Vietnam work to the support of the liberation struggle in the Southern Africa, Palestine, etc. Other questions have caught the main interest of the left wing. Anti-EEC and anti-nuclear power

campaigns, pollution problems, environmental questions, unemployment problems *etc.* Anti-imperialism is no longer an important aspect of the political activity of the left wing. It is a very limited number of people that can be mobilized for anti-imperialist work in Denmark today.

However, it is positive that here and there in the imperialist countries there are supporting groups which attach the greatest importance to material support. By this work, the possibilities of the liberation movements for defeating imperialism are improved. Talks with representatives of the liberation movements and visits to the movements have confirmed that it is of use to offer material support, as they often lack the most elementary things to be able to carry on their struggle and to be able to mitigate the hardships of the masses.

### **What do We Work for?**

It is our aim to gather anti-imperialists in order to support the struggle against the suppression and exploitation of the Third World. As things are now it must be a matter of individuals, as there is no objective basis for mass movements with anti-imperialist views in Denmark today.

The solidarity for which we work is not based on pity or bourgeois humanitarianism, but on the awareness that the emancipation of the proletariat, in the exploited countries is a condition of the destruction of the imperialist system and the introduction of socialism in Denmark.

We regard the two aspects of the political struggle, theory and

practice, as inseparable. It is necessary continuously to investigate the economic and political conditions in the world in our endeavours to increase and improve our support, and to find new ways in which we can give this support. We have to study which contradictions are the most important, so that our efforts are concentrated on the areas which will be of most benefit to the struggle for socialism. We shall communicate our views to the anti-imperialist movements and states in the Third World and to anti-imperialist groups and organizations in all countries. In particular, we shall discuss our opinion of imperialism and the economic and political conditions in Western Europe. For a long time the left wing has passed on its illusions about the conditions in Europe and the solidarity of the working class with the liberation movements. We shall continue to tell the liberation movements not to count on an active support of their struggle on the part of the labour aristocracy. On the contrary, they must expect opposition, and this is not due to ignorance or lack of information about the struggle, but to the position of the working class of the imperialist countries as a labour aristocracy—a global upper class.

**The Starving and Exploited Masses shall be Victorious!**

## **Revolutionary Perspectives Then and Now**

*Extracts for an interview with Torkil Lauesen and Jan Weimann  
conducted by Gabriel Kuhn in Copenhagen, spring 2013.*

*[This interview was printed in full in “Turning Money into Rebellion–The Unlikely Story of  
Denmark’s Revolutionary Bank Robbers”, Kersplebedeb and PM Press, 2014]*

***During the past you criticized most leftist organizations very harshly. Do you still have the same criticism?***

**Torkil:** in terms of focusing on the relative privileges of the working class in Western Europe I don’t think much has changed. The agenda at the main left-wing parties and trade unions remains the same. Today, they are focused on the defense of the welfare state within a national and capitalist framework. This is not a struggle that aids or supplements the struggle in the Third World. it is not a struggle for socialism. Even the old communist parties have lost any internationalist perspective. if workers vote for them it is not because they want socialism, but because they believe that these parties are better able to secure their wages than the Social Democrats. The whole political spectrum has moved to the right, and the interests of the Western working class are still tied to the interests of capital.

In today's Europe. we are witnessing three major strategies to gain the political support of the working class:

1. Neoliberal Social Democracy: The old workers' parties have become almost indistinguishable from other neoliberal parties. They stress the need to train a national labor force in order to occupy key functions within the new international division of



labor. This shall guarantee the protection of the labor force's privileges. The Social Democrats and other social-liberal parties also try to create the best possible framework for this: the right infrastructure, taxation, *etc.* There is no class perspective left, and the focus lies exclusively on national interests. All nations are doing the same, which leads to a neoliberal rat race, in which national working classes are trying to avoid ending up at the bottom.

2. Right-wing nationalism: Forces on the right end of the political spectrum use nationalism as a tool to fight globalization, which they portray as the main threat to the Western working class's privileges. The right promises to defend jobs by implementing strict immigration laws and militarizing national borders. Today, right-wing nationalist parties are often the biggest workers' parties. The left explains this as a result of "false consciousness" and "political naiveté." Nothing could be further from the truth. The right-wing parties profit from very conscious class politics. Their success has to be understood in the context of the global class structure created by imperialism.

3. The defense of the social welfare state: This is the strategy that the old communist parties have inherited from the Social Democrats. It indicates a clear goodbye to any radical approach and the final compromise with reformist parliamentarianism. To speak of revolution or the abolition of private property always leads left-wing parliamentarians to argue that this will "scare away the voters." In the 1970s, some of these parties might have still seen themselves as the parliamentary voice of the

extraparliamentary left. Today, all they are interested in are sociological studies helping them to optimize their votes and to win over disgruntled Social Democrats.

It is easy to point out that the right-wing arguments are false. They claim that we have to protect our riches because we have created them with our own sweat and tears, while poverty in the Third World is the result of cultural backwardness and laziness. Of course the opposite is true: it is the Third World that has created our riches. It was Europeans who plundered South America, transported millions of slaves to North America, and who colonized Africa and Asia.

However, the approach of the left-wing parties is also wrong, or, in any case, short-sighted. If the Western working classes do not want to compete with the workers of China or Brazil (a competition they might very well lose), then they must develop a global perspective and fight the racial and cultural hierarchy of nations as well as the enormous gaps in living standards. The way forward, the way towards socialism, lies in a struggle against global inequality, not in narrow nationalism. Let me quote something from an address prepared by Marx for the 1867 congress of the First International. Speaking about the situation in England, he stated: “In order to oppose their Workers, the employers either bring in workers from abroad or else transfer manufacture to countries where there is a cheap labor force. Given this state of affairs, if the working class wishes to continue its struggle with some chance of success, the national organizations must become international.” Marx knew how important wage

differences were—and, at the time, they were significantly smaller than they are today.

Marx's quote still holds true. What socialist politics demand today is an uncompromising global perspective. I understand that this might not bring many votes. That, however, can't be the measure of socialist politics. Sometimes, I miss the radicalism and the global perspective that were part of the left in the 1970s. Not because of nostalgia, but because these aspects seem more necessary than ever if we want another world.

***As you've stated, the revolutionary hopes of the 1970's remained largely unfulfilled. Where does revolutionary hope come from today?***

**Torkil:** One has to understand what a revolutionary situation is. This has always been the key question. The collaboration between KAK and China ended in 1969, because China saw a revolutionary situation in Western Europe and we didn't. For a revolutionary situation, it is not enough that the masses want a different society. The ruling class must also be unable to maintain and defend the status quo. The masses must no longer want to follow the same path, and the ruling class must no longer be able to.

**Jan:** During the October Revolution, the masses didn't want 'socialism.' they wanted bread. They were in the middle of an imperialist war and famine. They were destitute. The revolution became a question of survival. it succeeded because the old regime could no longer defend itself.

In Germany, the situation was similar, but the ruling class managed to hand power to the Social Democrats, who crushed the radical currents under the banner of socialist development. That was a brilliant move on the part of the ruling class and it prevented a true revolution.

**Torkil:** Others on the left have accused us of propagating the “immiseration thesis.” However, this needs a bit of historical context. The term ‘immiseration thesis’ was introduced by Eduard Bernstein, the father of reformist socialism, in the late nineteenth century. Bernstein rejected Marx’s claim that capitalism led to increasing wealth for the few and increasing poverty for the many. According to Bernstein, the struggles for higher wages and social reforms had increased the living standard of the German working class significantly, which proved that Marx was wrong and that reformism was the way forward. However, Bernstein acknowledged neither the growing gap between the bourgeoisie and the working class nor the pauperization of those on the periphery of capitalist development, mainly the people in the colonies, but also in Russia. By focusing exclusively on the relative increase of living standards among German workers, Bernstein failed to see the essential truth in Marx's analysis.

When we insisted that Marx was right, we didn’t simply mean that “things have to get worse in order to get better.” This is nothing that Marx or Engels would mean. The point is therefore not to argue that things have to get worse. The point is to define moments of possibility for radical change. In an 1885 article about the situation in England, Engels wrote that socialism will return when the

country's industrial monopoly ends and the English working class finds itself on equal terms with the working classes of other nations.” We are talking about classical Marxist questions: What are the objective conditions for social change? Who has an objective interest in social change? What is the state of capitalism? Will capitalism be able to solve its crisis, or will the crisis escalate?

**Ian:** The basis of your theory has to be material reality. This hasn't changed. If your theory is not based on material reality, you become a dreamer, and fantasy replaces theory. As a dreamer, you can proclaim whatever you want. But transforming society has nothing to do with wishful thinking. Useful theory must be based on the analysis of the actual material conditions.

**Torkil:** I believe that the key aspect in the current situation is the industrialization of the Third World and the emergence of a new working class, a new industrial proletariat. Just as the European working class did in the nineteenth century, the new working classes of China, India, Vietnam, Brazil, and Mexico will demand social justice. There will be new social conflicts, and they will be framed in economic terms, not in the cultural and national terms of the 1970s. The first round of anti-imperialist struggles was mainly nationalist. The next round will be mainly anti-capitalist.

***Why are you so certain that the struggles will no longer be framed in nationalist terms? Because the role of the nation state has been weakened? That doesn't necessarily weaken nationalistic sentiments, does it? Sometimes, the opposite seems***

*true.*

**Jan:** It's a complex issue. The nation state will continue to be evoked as a bulwark of defense against "foreign influence" of all sorts. But I think there are two strong indications that the national aspect will be weaker in upcoming struggles. One is indeed the shift in global politics and the global economy. The role of the nation state has, in fact, been weakened. This also means that the front lines of social struggles have shifted. The other indication is that many new independent countries have emerged over the last decades. These include former colonies in the Third World as well as former Soviet and Yugoslav republics, and others. The process has made the "national question" less urgent overall-even if some struggles, for example the Palestinian one, are still very much framed in such terms.

**Torkil:** As I've said before, I don't think there is any reason to bemoan the fact that the nation state has lost significance. This development opens up new possibilities. But in order to seize them, we must really think beyond the national framework and develop a global consciousness. I believe we are heading the right way. In the 1970s, the oil crisis already made it very clear how dependant we have become on one another, and in recent decades, the environmental movement has contributed in many ways to widening this understanding. Meanwhile, activists have been organizing World Social Forums, and migration has become one of the most important political issues globally. The changes are also expressed on the legal level. Take the International Court of

Justice in The Hague, for example. Nation states refusing to submit themselves to such institutions meet with increasingly strong criticism. Even the USA is not exempt—the Guantanamo prison camp, for example, is condemned almost universally. This is encouraging, even if the true “pariah states” are still those in opposition to Western interests.

The consequences of these developments is not necessarily stronger global solidarity, but the developments are a precondition for stronger global solidarity—as well as for more democracy in global affairs.

Yes, there will be nationalistic backlashes. For many, nationalism remains an easy answer to complex problems. It is therefore crucial for the left not to fall into the trap of using nationalist sentiments to oppose global capital and its institutions. Otherwise, our resistance won’t differ much from that of the right.

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Pamphlet compiled and made pretty by Melissa for **t H E r H i z z o n E** pamphlet factory thraed

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**Feb 2017**

*“even though we're miles apart a computer screen connects our hearts”*

## **FURTHER READING**

### **On Manifest-Kommunistisk Arbejdsgruppe (M-KA) and the Blekingegade Group**

**Turning Money into Rebellion** – Gabriel Kuhn (ed.), 2014

### **Theoretical works of M-KA**

**Unequal Exchange and the Prospects of Socialism**–Communist  
Working Group, 1986

### **On Imperialism, Eurocentricism and Neocolonialism**

**Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism**–V. I. Lenin, 1916

**V.I. Lenin: On Imperialism and Opportunism: Extracts from  
articles and speeches 1899-1923**–with introduction by Gotfred  
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**Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade**–  
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**Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat**–J. Sakai,  
1983

**Divided World, Divided Class**–Zak Cope, 2012

**Eurocentricism and the Communist Movement**–Robert Biel,  
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**Imperialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**–John Smith, 2016