

No to the pro-imperialist mobilization around Kurdistan!

For weeks, the fate of Syrian Kurds has become one of the most important justifications for the imperialist intervention under way in the region; international media have focused attention around Syrian Kurdistan (*Kurdistana Rojava*, Western Kurdistan, in Kurdish) and the city of Kobané attacked by forces of a group called the "Islamic State" (better known by the acronyms in English or Arabic: ISIS or Daech).

Syrian Kurdistan, consists of three border areas with Turkey, including that of Kobané, with 2 million inhabitants (roughly one tenth of the total population of Syria); but hundreds of thousands of Kurds are living and working in major Syrian cities, including Aleppo and Damascus.

By attacking Kobané ISIS probably wants to unify the territories it dominates; but above all it wants to ensure control of the border with Turkey: the city is a vital transit route for oil from Rakka, the provincial capital which it grabbed by chasing out the Al Nusra Front. In fact the various rebel factions are struggling not just against the regime in Damascus; they are also infighting amongst themselves to carve out the fiefdoms that they administer on behalf of their sponsors. The strength of ISIS is that it has managed through various means, including, but not limited to, the most brutal violence, to federate around itself more of these bourgeois interests than its rivals.

In addition to statements by UN officials and bourgeois political leaders in favor of the Kurds of Kobané, appeals to the usual democratic personalities, in addition to the international mobilization of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and its allies as well as other Kurdish groups, in many countries there has been set in motion the active participation of left-wing forces, in the name of the fight against ISIS obscurantism and the urgency to avoid a "massacre" of civilians in Kobane. This involvement by the allegedly revolutionary "far left" serves, ultimately, only to vouch for the imperialist intervention in the eyes of the proletarians outraged by the actions perpetrated by the Islamists of ISIS.

We cite, for example, extracts of a leaflet by a libertarian organization active in the campaign in France, the OCL (Libertarian Communist Organization), which "explained" its position thus:

"If we call to mobilize and amplify solidarity with the resistance of Kobané and more generally with the struggle of the Kurdish people, it is primarily because there is an emergency and every day, every hour counts. And if the emergency affects us, it is because the liberation movement of Kurdistan – with its on the whole positive characteristics as well as others that are questionable and objectionable – appears to us today, in this region, as the main force not only to counteract the double barbarism of the Islamists and the regimes in place, but also to introduce in the Kurdish zones and many areas beyond, sufficient elements of transformation and rupture from which it becomes at least possible – and conceivable – to postulate forms of equality, of openness for these autonomous political spaces [?] appropriation of these in common [?], and advance intelligible and audible perspectives of social and political liberation. This is the one condition not sufficient but necessary to inflict a setback against the barbarians through action, to again make the air breathable and this world habitable here too" (1).

What is not *audible* in the leaflet of the OCL attacking the "dictatorships in Damascus and Baghdad," "jihadists" and "oil monarchies" is an open denunciation of imperialism. The tract critiques primarily the lack of effectiveness of US bombing (deemed "laughable" by the military experts of the OCL), and affirmed only that the imperialist coalition "*claims to be fighting to eliminate jihadists*", i.e. that it does not really fight! It is true that if we really thought that we were in

the midst of a struggle against “barbarism” (George Bush would have said against the “evil empire”), we might well wish the victory of the cruise missiles and fighter-bombers “civilization”!

The OCL has probably been satisfied with the growing intensification of the US intervention over the following days.

This is certainly the view of the French Trotskyist NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party); in a statement of 19 October entitled “*Total and unconditional support to the women and men freedom fighters of Kobanê*” (2) they do not hesitate to write: “*The NPA welcomes the effectiveness of US Air Force strikes in the last 4 days.*” And saluting also “*the decision of the US staff to integrate a commander of the YPG [Kurdish militias linked to the PKK] at the headquarters of the airstrikes*” and welcoming in advance a “*shouting match with Turkey at [a meeting of] NATO*”, the NPA “*denounced the spinelessness and hypocrisy of the [French] Government and the European Union*” who remain spectators to the events!

WANT DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST? CALL ON IMPERIALISM!

A “global” day of solidarity with Kobanê was organized on November 1. In the official call that day, it was said: “*If the world wants democracy in the Middle East, it should support the Kurdish resistance in Kobanê*” (3). Who is “the world”? The appeal, a little lower, more accurately speaks of “global players”: “*It is high time to give the global players the reasons to change their minds.*” And to dispel any ambiguity about who the “players” are who should change their minds: “*The so-called international coalition to fight the ISIS, have not helped Kurdish resistance effectively despite witnessing the ongoing genocide committed against Kobanê. They have not fulfilled their real international legal obligations*”. We see that it is indeed an appeal to imperialism (or a pressure put on it) for a stronger military intervention in the Middle East, advancing the usual disgusting bourgeois arguments: democracy, international law, “humanity”, “ongoing genocide”, etc., which have always been used to justify wars.

“International legal regulations” are the set of rules that codify the relationship between bourgeois states; based on the balance of power, this international right is not respected by those, if they have the force, that it encumbers, as evidenced by the history of international relations.

“Democracy” is the system of peaceful bourgeois domination that is based on class collaboration; it is possible when capitalism is prosperous enough to buy social peace through the corruption of large areas of “labor aristocracy” and the rest of the workers of some through the concession of benefits that are only crumbs off the masses of profits accrued.

In countries where capitalism is too weak and where social tensions are very high due to the need to extract every last drop of surplus value from the masses, the bourgeois domination inevitably takes a brutal, violent, terrorist turn. The terror of the Syrian Islamists is only the counterpart to the terrorism of the state and Syrian capitalism that has been exercised without restraint for decades. ISIS crimes pale before the crimes of the regime, even today, with its murder, massacres and torture on a wide scale (as the nearly 2,000 prisoners who were murdered, often tortured to death in the jails of the regime since the beginning of the year) (4).

While the supporters of the Kurdish combatants mobilized themselves and agitated, while they demanded weapons and urged the removal of the PKK from the list of “terrorist organizations” (which registered organizations and parties who are in open struggle with imperialism and the bourgeois western states), these serious “international actors”, acted on the terrain – and in the direction desired by them!

The American bombings have continued to increase (over a hundred in mid-October) and contact

with the PYD (name of organization PKK in Syria) and the United States have been made public. The international press has revealed that secret and difficult negotiations were ongoing in recent weeks, (even though the Turkish government bloodily suppressed Kurdish demonstrations in support of Kobané – over 30 people dead) between Turkey, the United States, the PYD and Iraqi Kurdish organizations to coordinate the defense of the city and to come to an agreement between Kurdish factions (5).

The PKK/PYD obtained, mainly due to the battle of Kobané, what it wanted: recognition by US imperialism and Western imperialism, which approved its *de facto* integration in the international coalition led by the United States. He even got the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) Barzani who heads the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, abandons his local supporters of CNK (Syrian Kurdish National Council, which accused the PKK/PYD his refusal to participate in the fight against Damascus) and recognizes its leadership in the Syrian Kurdish areas. Turkey, which, in the shadow of the Kurdish Iraqi oil, maintains close relations with the PDK (6) made a gesture by agreeing to pass through his territory *peshmergas* (fighters) to strengthen the KDP fighters in Kobané.

However, as a sign of the fragility of the union of the Kurdish factions, the PKK/PYD has accepted the arrival of only one hundred KDP fighters, stating they would be confined to the rear: it doesn't want to share the direction of the fighting with anyone.

RESTRUCTURING IN PROGRESS ON THE BASIS OF RIVAL INTERESTS

We have seen that the negotiations between Turkey, the US and Kurdish factions were, and still are, difficult. Although it is part of NATO and it joined the coalition, Turkey is reluctant to let the Americans use its airfields to attack ISIS. It asked as a prerequisite to any military engagement that it be given the creation along its border with Syria, the creation of a "buffer zone" which would also be a "no fly zone" (area prohibited to Syrian aviation). But the Americans refuse as this may lead to a conflict ... with Damascus!

Since the summer of 2013, in fact, US imperialism has concluded that the overthrow of Bashar Assad could lead to an uncontrollable situation in Syria, given the failure to establish an opposition force strong and reliable enough: the Libyan example shows the difficulties in reconstituting a state apparatus in a country fragmented into multiple bourgeois rival factions. The Americans are officially set with the task of forming a "moderate" Islamist opposition force to the Syrian regime, warning that the task would take "months and years"; this leaves plenty of time to negotiate with the regime and its sponsors, Iran and Russia...

Meanwhile the risk of collapse of the Iraqi regime made them see ISIS as the real enemy to be defeated. But the bombing of Syria, where the ISIS bases are, requires a minimum of agreement with the Assad regime, which has an air force and sophisticated air defenses. Although officially denied, the US imperialists have therefore resumed contacts with the hated Syrian regime, leaving it to even intensify its attacks against insurgent groups! Similarly, Paris, still strongly stating its opposition to Damascus, has quietly approached, like, it seems, other European capitals, with Syrian Security forces to ask for their help in combatting hundreds of young French people who went to fight in the Islamist ranks (7). The attempt failed because the Syrian authorities have made a condition to their collaboration, the reopening of the French Embassy in Damascus, but the fact is significant of a turning point in western imperialist politics.

By focusing attention on the fighting in Kobane, the international media, responding obediently to the *desiderata* of US imperialism, have **hidden** the fact of the attacks of the regime against the rebels in Aleppo, Homs and elsewhere; according to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, no less than

553 bombings were carried out by the Syrian air force against the rebels just in the period from October 20 to 25 (8): in a well-crowded Syrian sky, US aircraft and cruise missiles and Syrian planes are not fighting, but share the task ...

For Turkey's Erdogan, conversely, the designated enemy is the Syrian regime and the various Islamist rebel factions are at least potential allies. So he bitterly criticized the United States for not attacking the forces of Damascus and renouncing the fight to make the regime of Bashar al-Assad fall. While Erdogan continues to maintain, for reasons of nationalist propaganda, the dream of the lost Ottoman Empire, Turkey nurtures real regional imperialist ambitions, and it does not want to sacrifice those to American interests. Concerned about the impact of the unrest in Syria (tens of thousands of Syrian refugees on its territory), the Turkish government further fears the creation of an independent Kurdish state, which could stir secessionist aspirations among Turkish Kurds.

Turkey gets along very well with the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan mainly led by the KDP of Barzani, because of the oil of course, but also because they have claimed to be hostile to independence. But their differences with the Baghdad government are constantly growing and the ISIS thrust has changed the situation. While they theoretically number in the tens of thousands and are heavily armed, the Kurdish Peshmerga have not lifted a finger to rescue the regular Iraqi army when it was attacked by ISIS; they quietly waited for its stampede to enlarge their territory by seizing the city of Kirkuk and its oil-rich surrounding region. And in late June, after Israeli authorities stepped up sensational statements in favor of an independent Kurdish state (9), Barzani told the BBC that he would hold a referendum on the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan. We have not heard such talk again, but Iraqi Kurdistan, armed by various Western imperialisms, today enjoys *de facto* independence.

THE PKK, BOURGEOIS NATIONALIST PARTY

Created in the late 70s, the PKK is a Kurdish nationalist organization in Turkey, also present in the Turkish emigration to Europe, which commenced operations in the mid-80s for independence of Turkish Kurdistan in the Maoist guerrilla mode. It has succeeded in large part in channeling to its advantage the anger of the Kurds who have always been subject to the very tangible oppression by the authorities in Ankara (long banned from speaking Kurdish, even in private, repression of any attempts towards Kurdish organization, etc.), while they make up about a fifth of the population of Turkey. In the mid-90s, the PKK abandoned its platonic references to Marxism and replaced them with references to Islam; it also gave up any demand to independence and replaced it with a call for autonomy. It now puts forward an ideology worthy of a purely democratic parliamentary party. Early in 2013 it called on his supporters to lay down their arms after the opening up of a "peace process" with the government.

For years the PKK, protected by the regime of Hafez Assad (father of the current Syrian president), had constituted a rear staging base in the Kurdish regions of Syria; its opponents accuse it of having collaborated with the Syrian intelligence services during this period in order to suppress any opposition to the regime. But a few years later a rapprochement between Syria and Turkey led to the expulsion of the PKK militants, which led to the arrest of their leader, Ocalan, now serving a life sentence in Turkey.

The deterioration of relations with Turkey since the outbreak of civil war in Syria has led to a new rapprochement of the PKK and its organization in Syria (PYD) with the Damascus regime. In 2012 the regime withdrew its soldiers and police from Rojava as it had an urgent need to resist the insurgency, in practice handing over the keys to the region to the PKK/PYD: unlike other Syrian

Kurdish parties and organizations it has indeed always refused to join the revolt against the regime and has maintained contacts with the Syrian authorities. It even waged bloody battles with the insurgents, both with the Islamist Al-Nusra Front, and the “moderate” pro-American Free Syrian Army to defend the borders of his territory; and inside it, it did not hesitate to suppress its political opponents: such was the case in the city of Amouda where the repression of a peaceful demonstration by the PYD in June 2013 caused several deaths and ended with the kidnapping of several opposition activists; in protest, demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes were held in several places requiring the return of abductees (10).

The PKK/PYD boasts of having made, according to the new precepts of Ocalan, a “revolution” in Rojava in establishing a territorial organization ... on the Swiss model! According to him this revolution has transcended the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions because of its democratic character...

In fact, the PKK/PYD is an anti-proletarian bourgeois nationalist party, which is not only unable to lead a revolution, but also to defend the interests of the exploited class: it has never hesitated to seek the support from the bourgeoisies of any State or any imperialism; its recognition by US imperialism is a further demonstration.

Contrary to what its propaganda says, relayed without batting an eyelid by its European supporters such as the so-called libertarian communists whom we mentioned at the beginning of this article, the PKK/PYD **does not** call for “*no confidence in the states and the regimes in place*”! It **does not** exhort “*the population (...). to engage directly in the resistance, to struggle, to organize themselves, to arm themselves militarily and politically, to defend themselves socially, to coordinate their popular militias, to rely only on their own strengths and mobilize to protect their territory and their lives and repel the jihadists*” (11). As a matter of fact the population of Kobane, far from involving itself in the resistance, has fled to Turkey (12), demonstrating that the current war is not its war.

ONLY ONE ISSUE: THE PROLETARIAN CLASS PERSPECTIVE

How could it be otherwise? This would require that there be a real revolution in motion, not a democratic pseudo-revolution à la Switzerland, but a social revolution made by the exploited and oppressed masses. In bourgeois Syria, where capitalism is the dominant mode of production, historically there is no room for another revolution other than a proletarian one, a socialist revolution.

But such a revolution could not have as its arena an area such as a small agricultural region; it should be based on a powerful class movement in large urban centers where the workers of all nationalities are concentrated; the aim of such a revolution would not be to “protect the territory” of a region, but to expand first to the whole country and then internationally to all countries; it would no longer coordinate “popular” militias, but build a class army, not just to defend itself against the reactionary jihadists, but to undermine their power by inspiring the unleashing of the class struggle within their territory. It would not create a more democratic and secular regime, but rather smash the bourgeois state and replace it with the dictatorship of the oppressed, the dictatorship of the proletariat essential to extirpate capitalism. Obviously such a revolution could not think of begging for the support of imperialism which on the contrary it must call on the proletariat to revolt against! And this revolution cannot be led by a national or nationalist party, but only by the international and internationalist proletarian party.

It is because nothing of this sort exists, that the revolt in Syria has escalated into bloody battles in which the various bourgeois forces confront each other, more or less supported by foreign sponsors; and to maintain or strengthen their grip over their partisans and the masses they have no alternative

but to make maximum use of the most dominant reactionary ideology: religion.

As stated by Amadeo Bordiga, even the most serious crises of the bourgeois order can lead to a counter-revolutionary situation in the absence of the class party (13), because this absence means that the proletariat is unable to act as an independent force: the bourgeoisie then has the discretion to overcome the crisis in its own manner.

But, it will be said, if there is no class party, no independent proletarian movement, at least one should oppose the most reactionary forces and support the most democratic? And if the American and other imperialist militaries may offer an obstacle to “barbarism” or “obscurantism” should we not support them, in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere?

This is a classic argument – choose the “lesser evil”, the least bad bourgeois camp – which has been used countless times, in times of war as in time of peace, to bind the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, to prevent the emergence or strengthening of class organizations; its only result is always to deliver the workers defenseless to their executioners.

Not only it is impossible to help the oppressed masses by joining in one way or another the imperialism which is plundering and ravaging the planet, exploiting and massacring these masses around the world; but in doing so, we can only strengthen it, we can only increase the power of capitalism and weaken the most elementary resistance struggles of the proletariat. The number one enemy of the proletariat is their own bourgeoisie; to ally with it, whatever the pretext, is a **betrayal** of the proletariat.

It is not possible to actually oppose the reactionary forces, Islamist or not, by repeating bourgeois democratic programs and perspectives and accordingly to ally with bourgeois forces; but only by putting forward a program with an anti-democratic outlook, that is to say, classist, anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois, and to seek a union on this basis with the workers and the exploited masses of all nationalities and of all countries.

The Communists had established this Golden Rule in 1920: *"The Communist International has the duty of supporting the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the backward countries only with object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties – who will be truly Communists and not only in name- in all the backward countries and educating them to a consciousness of their special task, namely, that to fight against the bourgeois-democratic trend in their own nation "*(14).

90 years later, at a time when there is no longer a Communist International to rely on, the watchwords must be complied with even greater application since the International itself, in its degenerating, quickly forgot them. The proletariat must oppose without hesitation not only all military operations of “their” state; but any “solidarity” with the suffering people or struggles, which is outside of class positions, whether on humanitarian, democratic, nationalist or other bases, must be denounced as **anti-proletarian**. Paraphrasing what was said by the Polish revolutionary socialist Warynski about the independence of Poland (15), we could say: “there is in the world a people more unfortunate than the Kurdish people – it is the proletarians.”

This does not mean that the workers should be indifferent to the fate of the Kurds and other nationalities whose right to self-determination they must fully recognize; but it does mean that they must always defend their class interests first; and in the fight against all forms of oppression, including national oppression, against all reactionaries, including Islamists, they should never compromise on the absolute necessity of class independence and class organization, and of the unity of the proletariat over all national ethnic, religious or other divisions.

Real solidarity, not only with the Kurdish masses of Rojava, but with the proletarianized masses in Syria crushed under the reign of fire of the bombardment, or condemned by the millions to a

miserable existence as refugees, is to work, here, in the heart of the imperialist metropolises, for the recuperation of the class struggle, revolutionary and internationalist, against capitalism and imperialism, and the reconstruction of its organ, the international class party.

And the essential first step is the refusal to be indoctrinated in pro-imperialist demonstrations, refusal to support non-proletarian forces and parties, refusal to adhere to non-classist perspectives.

(1) Leaflet 10/3/ 2014

(2) [http:// www. npa31.org/ actualite- politique- internationale/ urgence-kobane/ declaration-du-npa-31-a-manifestation-samedi-18-octobre.html](http://www.npa31.org/actualite-politique-internationale/urgence-kobane/declaration-du-npa-31-a-manifestation-samedi-18-octobre.html)4

(3) [http:// peaceinkurdistancampaign. com /2014/ 10/ 21/ urgent-call-for-action-global-rally-against-isis-for-kobane-for-humanity](http://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/2014/10/21/urgent-call-for-action-global-rally-against-isis-for-kobane-for-humanity) Among the signatories of the appeal (various bourgeois personalities, artists, intellectuals, etc.) we find second on the list Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the same one who had blessed the transition from apartheid to a democratic regime to perpetuate the slave-like exploitation of the South African proletariat. His signature is sufficient to characterize the appeal ...

(4) [http:// syriahr.com/ en/ 2014/ 11/ nearly-2000-detainees- killed- inside-the-regimes-detention-facilities/](http://syriahr.com/en/2014/11/nearly-2000-detainees-killed-inside-the-regimes-detention-facilities/)

(5) See the detailed *Financial Times* 10/24/14 article.

(6) The two main bourgeois parties in Iraqi Kurdistan, which have fought with weapons in their hands for years, are the Barzani KDP and PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) of Talabani formed by the merger of various parties including the former "Marxist-Leninist" Komala; Talabani has been president of Iraq since 2006 (honorary position without political power) and vice-president of the Socialist International. The PUK is close to the Iranian authorities and therefore favorable to the regime in Damascus. The Barzani clan who head the KDP has a long history of good relations with Western imperialism and Israel; it has forged close ties with Turkey and supports the opposition to the Syrian regime. In 2011 the KDP has constituted the CNK, which includes supporters of Syrian Kurdish parties in rebellion against Damascus. The PYD / PKK accuses the CNK of having abandoned the claim to autonomy of Rojava to ally with the rebels (who are hostile to it); and accuses it of being under the orders of Turkey. Various tentative agreements, never really implemented, took place between the PYD / PKK dominating the terrain because of its military organization, and the CNK.

(7) see *Le Monde*, 09/07/2014

(8) <http://syriahr.com/en/2014/10/553-air-strikes-by-regime-warplanes-around-syria/>

(9) <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/07/iraq-crisis-israel-welcome-kurdish-state-us-turkey.html>

(10) See the press release of the TCK (Kurdish Youth Movement) which called for a "revolution" against the PYD: [https:// syriafreedomforever. wordpress. com/ 2013/ 06/ 23/ statement- by- the-kurdish- youth- movement- tck-about- the- latest- events-in-the-city-of-amouda-and- videos- and-pictures- from-the-protests-and-sit-ins/](https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/06/23/statement-by-the-kurdish-youth-movement-tck-about-the-latest-events-in-the-city-of-amouda-and-videos-and-pictures-from-the-protests-and-sit-ins/)

(11) OCL leaflet 10/03/14.

(12) According to *Le Monde* 10/12-13/2014, there were at this time only 7-800 civilians left in Kobané out of an initial population of about 50,000.

(13) see "Activism" *Battaglia Comunista* No. 7/1952

(14) see "Theses on the National and Colonial Question," Second Congress of the Comintern, Moscow, July 1920. Jane Degras, *The Communist International*, vol 1, p. 143, 144

(15) see Jacques Droz, "General History of Socialism", PUF 1977, Volume 3, p. 324.

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