

# communist program

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**ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY**

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**WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY:** The political continuity which goes from Marx and Engels to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy; the class struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, the struggle against the theory of "socialism in one country" and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of all popular fronts and national resistance blocs; the struggle against the principles and practice of bourgeois democracy, against interclassism and political and trade-union class collaboration, against any form of opportunism and nationalism; the difficult task of restoring the Marxist doctrine and the revolutionary organ par excellence - the class party - closely linked with the working class, and its daily struggle in opposition to capitalism and bourgeois oppression; the struggle against personal and electoral politics, against any form of indifferentism, of tailism, of movementism or the adventurist practice of "armed struggle"; the support of any proletarian struggle which breaks with social peace and rejects the discipline of interclassist collaborationism; the support of all efforts towards proletarian class reorganisation on the basis of economic associationism, with the perspective of a large scale resumption of the class struggle, proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary anticapitalist struggle.

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# Forty Years of Reconstituting the Class Party

*Forty years have passed since October 1982 when our old Party faced a series of shocks that eventually shattered it. We do not want to gloss over this dramatic event because we can learn from all the mistakes, missteps and deviations from the right line that contributed to the blowing apart of the Party organization, which in 1952, after the inevitable split, was reassembled on organically coherent and homogeneous theoretical, political, tactical, and organizational foundations. That is why we return to this subject, in order to defend the political struggle we waged at that time, so that, despite this heated crisis, it would be possible to reassemble forces that are homogeneous and in line with the whole corpus of class battles that characterized the Italian Communist Left and our party at that time.*

During this explosive crisis of 1982–1984, the different groups of militants, into which the party had fragmented and who wanted to continue in political activity, took different paths. In France/Switzerland, a small group was formed from comrades in Paris, Strasbourg, Lyon and Lausanne, which continued to publish the newspaper *Le prolétaire*. Contacts with comrades in Spain, Germany, Belgium and many other French sections were broken; contacts with the former centre in Milan were maintained until June 1983, but efforts at international reorganization were very weak and confused. In a coup by the self-proclaimed “Central Committee”, formed by the representatives of the most important Italian sections (Milan, Mestre, Naples, Rome, Catania), it was declared that the former centre had lost its functions and it was replaced by this Central Committee. Initially, the intention of the new party leadership was to reorganize the remaining forces while formally preserving the theoretical-programmatic corpus that had characterized the party; but at the same time it made a radical reversal of the political, tactical, and, of course, organizational line that had guided the party up to the general crisis.

The new political line consisted of challenging the previous political line, which was deemed unable to meet the requirements of the new situations that arose after the general crisis of world capitalism in 1975, with the emergence of new union-type organizations outside the traditional structures of trade unions such as the CGIL, CISL and UIL, and with new workers’ struggles waged at the local level and in isolation by unemployed, precarious labour and non-unionised workers. The new leadership of the party based its action primarily on intervention in these new workers’ bodies (factory committees, coordination, social circles, etc. ) and on formulating the party’s political propaganda in such a way as to make it more attractive and comprehensible to the masses, to make it simpler and based on less uncompromising attitudes and conduct, and to make

it more open to taking on practical tasks on terrains that had not been entered into before (the struggle for housing, against illegal work, against repression, etc.). The passage from the neglect of the tasks that the party had always set itself in the field of the permanent appropriation of theory to the “discovery” of the cause of the party’s lagging behind and failure to influence the working masses, in a so-called “inherent defect” of the Italian Communist Left (consisting in an atavistic theoreticism and an inability to “do politics”) was very rapid. For the new leadership, “doing politics” meant using all means, including practical and tactical ones, to increase in a short time its influence on the proletariat and, as a consequence, to expand the number of militants of the party. One of the means used to accelerate the process of influencing the masses was entering into new proletarian organs, which were born both out of the need of the most militant proletarians to organize outside the traditional trade unions, and out of their need to organize at the social level and territorially around issues related to housing, repression, the struggle against national armaments and the sending of Italian troops abroad, the struggle against nuclear energy, the support of anti-imperialist struggles in countries on the periphery of imperialism, etc., to take over their leadership and attach them to the party organization.

In reality, these areas of intervention had already been considered in the party during the 1970s, so they were not new to the militants; but the novelty layed in the practical approach and the objectives set for the activity of the party. That is to say, a practical approach conditioned by the objective of achieving immediate results and expanding the party’s numerical strength. The general evaluation which justified this “change of course” consisted of the following points: 1) the groups of proletarians organizing outside the traditional trade unions demonstrate that these trade union organizations are losing their influence on the proletariat, 2) the struggles of oppressed peoples such as the Palestinians, the Kurds,

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etc., are weakening the influence of the imperialist powers that oppress them, 3) the prolonged crisis of capitalism following the great world crisis of 1975 has not been overcome, as in previous periods, as demonstrated, for example, by the struggles of the Polish proletariat, and therefore this may be a favourable terrain for the resumption of the classist struggle of the proletariat as class and thus for its revolutionary struggle. It was therefore about overcoming the lag of the party in its function of guiding the most militant proletarian layers by accelerating its interventions among the masses with the intention of demonstrating that it has the capacity to become the guide of their struggles on the immediate terrain, and, with this transitory characteristic, that it has the capacity to become the guide of the future revolution.

This sudden “change of course” and “change of central leadership” was opposed both by militants in Italy – in fact a minority – who rightly rejected the thesis of an “inherent defect” of the current of the Communist Left of Italy and defended the theoretical-political integrity of the party held for thirty years, and also opposed the idea that by expanding practical interventions in proletarian struggles and base committees the party could contribute to accelerating the resumption of the class struggle, and were against the reorganization of the party through the self-election of a “central committee” replacing the former centre which defended the organizational criteria of organic centralism against democratic centralism; and by militants who did not accept this “change of course” and “change of central leadership” but expressed a complete loss of faith that the party could return to the right path, even with a small number of forces, after the shocks dealt to it by the general internal crisis in 1982 and the subsequent crisis in Italy in 1983, and therefore abandoned it and left politics. The newspaper title under which the party had been known for thirty years, not only in Italy, “*Il programma comunista*”, fell into the hands of the new “central committee”, which also controlled the party treasury, and so the newspaper from July 1983 represented exclusively the new political line.

When we presented the newspaper title “*Il programma comunista*” among the old party publications on our website, we wrote:

*«In the crisis of 1982–1984, the theoretical conception and the position taken throughout history by the Communist Left of Italy and the party that had represented it in formal party form for more than thirty years were evidently departed from, first by the so-called liquidators of 1982 according to whom the party “had failed” and therefore had to dissolve and merge with rebellious social movements, and then, in 1983–1984, by liquidators of a different kind: they pretended that by a “democratic” centralism they were remedying the “centralism” that was no longer functioning; and because even their “democratic” centralism did not offer “guarantees” of discipline and unity, they then came to the point of theorizing an*

*“inherent defect” of the Italian Communist Left, which was to lie in the fact that it did not know how to “do politics”, that it did not know how to “politically lead” either the party or the masses (we refer here to the group that called itself “Combat”). To blame their own political inability to understand what the tasks of a class party actually were (in the revolutionary situation of the past, the counter-revolutionary situation of today, and the resumption of the class struggle in the future) on some particular hidden malady that was supposed to have attacked the Italian Communist Left seemed to them the best way out of the impasse which lead them in short time to self-dissolution. In the face of these concentrated attacks against the party and its theoretical and historical legacy, the group that in 1984 regained possession of the newspaper “Il programma comunista” through a legal action totally similar to the one waged against the party in 1952 by the group around Damen, was characterized not only by this shameful action but also by the total absence of political struggle within the party organization, which remained alive and active despite the explosive crisis of 1982; this group provided no theoretical, programmatic or political point of reference to the comrades in Italy and abroad who were completely disoriented by this dismemberment of the party. It resorted to sentimentality towards the party and to the legal action, entrusting to the bourgeois court the “decision” as to which political group had the “right” to be presented by the newspaper “Il programma comunista”. By virtue of bourgeois law and the control of the commercial property of the newspaper, this group claims to be recognized as the “continuator” of yesterday’s party, the International Communist Party, the party for which it did not wage any political struggle during the crisis that finally shattered it to pieces; the bourgeois court acted for it, and that is why the same words we wrote in 1952 about the group around Damen and bourgeois law apply: those who have used it will never be able to go back to the ground of the revolutionary party. In fact, for us, just as the newspaper “Battaglia Comunista”, together with the review “Prometeo”, were the voice of the party until 1952, so too was the newspaper “Il programma Comunista” the voice of the party, which represented it for more than thirty years, even internationally, until the end of 1983 when its publication was discontinued as a result of the legal actions of the group that to this day possesses its “proprietorship”».*

Forty years on, it is worth recalling that since June 1983, when the aforementioned Central Committee was installed by a coup at the Party’s General Meeting, «a new internal political struggle broke out between some of the comrades who took part in the initiative to take back in court the newspaper *Il Programma Comunista*, and some other comrades who, opposing both the “new course” instituted through the self-proclaimed Central Committee and the judicial initiative of the latter group of comrades, tried to wrest

as many comrades as possible from the influence of the multiple deviations that had affected the party and completely convulsed it. This last-mentioned group of comrades, fighting within what remained of the International Communist Party after the explosive crisis of 1982 and as long as it was given the practical possibility of being politically active in it – that is to say, until the end of 1984 – and fighting at the same time against the withdrawal of the two groups already mentioned to the interior of Italy's borders, would bring into existence from May 1983 a new title, “*Il Comunista*”; and from February 1985, together with the Franco-Swiss comrades of “*Le prolétaire*”, they began the reconstitution of the party on the basis of the vital political balance of the crises that had affected it since its birth after the Second World War – a balance sheet that was firmly based on the theoretical, programmatic, political, tactical and organizational foundations that have always characterised the Communist Left of Italy and our party of yesterday, and with an internationalist and international vision that is equally vital for a party that wants to be communist and revolutionary.

At that time, we were reminding not only of the correct position taken by the party in 1952 when the group around Damen conducted a legal dispute in order to seize the title “*Battaglia Comunista*” but also of the fact that the formal functions imposed by bourgeois law (the “commercial ownership” of the press title and the editorial responsibility of the “editor-in-chief”, who must be a member of the professional journalistic organization *Ordine dei giornalisti*) did not imply for the comrades who were forced to perform them, a kind of political privilege within the Party, nor did it confer them a role as the prime and unquestioned representatives of the Party's positions vis-à-vis the Party itself and externally. For the Party, these were and are merely bureaucratic functions that must be performed in order to legally publish the party press, nothing more. Indeed, the comrades who were formally the “commercial owners” and “responsible chief editors” of the party newspaper did not necessarily share the party's positions. This was true both of the issues of “*Il Programma Comunista*” from 7 July 1983 to 11 January 1984 and of the later “*Combat*” from February to December 1984 (a paper whose line we never shared)».

Well, there were two basic positions that separated us from the group that had taken possession of the title “*Il Programma Comunista*”: the political struggle within the party to establish at international level a theoretically, programmatically and politically solid point of reference, and the work on the political balance sheet of the party's crisis. We insisted on the fundamental necessity of these two positions; those who shared the opposite position, i.e. no political struggle within the party and no balance sheet of the crises, justified this by claiming that the party had fallen into the hands of a kind of clique of liquidators with whom there was no sense in waging a “political” struggle, but against

whom it was simply necessary to launch a legal case in order to regain full control of the party's historic paper; and that a balance sheet of the party's crises was not necessary because, once the clique was removed, it was only a question of “resuming the course”, which had unfortunately been interrupted for a year and a half.

Moreover, the group that took possession of “*Il Programma Comunista*” closed itself within the borders of Italy with the idea of consolidating itself, above all, in their country, with the aim of following the same process of development that the comrades of the Communist Left of Italy had followed after the Second World War, and claimed to be the sole representatives of the theoretical-political and organizational continuity of the party. In fact, this approach – considering that this group was organized around an ancient representative of the party centre – was considered by the comrades of “*Le prolétaire*”, who were still active as sections of the party in France and Switzerland, as abandoning the foreign comrades to their fate. Something that a party which defined itself as international and claimed to represent even the organizational continuity of the old organization, could never have done. This closure within the borders of Italy, however, was part of their innate refusal to combat within the party positions that they considered to be a deviation from the line. All in all, it was natural that those who have entrusted to a bourgeois court the decision to be recognized as the “true” representatives of the International Communist Party would take such an approach.

The publication of “*Il Comunista*” at a very early stage, in 1983–1984, that is in the midst of the crisis of the Italian section of the party, was part of the party's project, decided in a central meeting in 1982, to publish this new publication in order to provide the organization with a more specific political and interventionist paper, and to give the historical publication “*Il Programma Comunista*” the status of the theoretical party review in Italian, as it had already been in French, Spanish, German, English and Greek. For more on this issue, see the presentation of “*Il Comunista*” on the party's website [www.pcint.org](http://www.pcint.org).

From 1985 onwards, after another political struggle within what was left of the party in Italy (“*Combat*”), and after the re-establishment of links with the comrades of “*Le Prolétaire*”, “*Il Comunista*” represented the reconstitution of the party organization in Italy and clearly differentiated itself from both the new “*Il Programma Comunista*” and “*Combat*” groups, which represented the new liquidators of the party.

The cited presentation of our newspaper concluded as follows:

«Sure to continue a party work which is never bound to the lifetime of individual comrades, let alone to the lifetime of the leaders, but proceeds on the basis of the dialectical interconnection of the ever more acute contradictions of capitalist society and in the internationalist and international dimension of the class political struggle undertaken by the most conscious ele-

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ments organizing themselves into a party, we, as Lenin put it in “What Is To Be Done?”, “are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all side by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighbouring marsh”.

We know well, as the Italian Communist Left and Lenin taught us, that this neighbouring marsh consists of conciliation between the classes, collaboration between the classes, democracy and all the gilts that the “democratic life” of this decaying society has invented. The crises that affected the International Communist Party – just as, on the other hand, the crises that affected much stronger and more robust parties such as the Bolshevik Party and the German Communist Party – were crises of “growth” and “degeneration” as happens in nature to every organic body. The strength of the class party, which combines “consciousness” (theory) and “will” (party action), lies in the defence, the struggle to maintain and reconquer the line that leads from Marx to Lenin, to the founding of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy, to fight against every opportunist degeneration – whatever such opportunism may be called –, against every demand for the enrichment of Marxism or the elaboration of new and more “innovative” theories, and against every concession to the individualist and personal character, that is, against every democratic and libertarian illusion.

The perspective of the proletarian and communist revolution is not for us an ideal that hovers elusively in the world of ideas and hopes, it is not a moral consolation in the face of an precarious and unsatisfactory individual life: it is a historical certainty to which dialectical materialism has taught us to conform our practical action in concrete everyday life, but within the framework of the historical course of development that binds us to the future society of the human species, to communism. Like every human group, we are part of a passing generation which the progressive development of the productive forces, though in its strong contradictions caused by the class divided society, organically binds to past and future generations. Our task is not only to struggle theoretically and politically, but also practically, for the revolutionary class par excellence, the proletariat, to reconquer its strength through the class struggle, so that this historical leap which humanity will necessarily make from mercantile and capitalist society to socialist society and finally to full communism will finally become a reality».

We can only strongly reiterate what we said then, and continue our work of reconnecting with the history of the Communist Left and reassimilating the enormous theoretical and political heritage of revolutionary communism, and in doing so hold firmly to the course already set out – as we recalled in *What Dis-*

*tinguishes Our Party:*

«The political continuity which goes from Marx and Engels to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy; the class struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, the struggle against the theory of “socialism in one country” and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of all popular fronts and national resistance blocs; the struggle against the principles and practice of bourgeois democracy, against intermediatism, interclassism and political and trade-union class collaboration, against any form of opportunism and nationalism; the difficult task of restoring the Marxist doctrine and the revolutionary organ par excellence – the class party – closely linked with the working class, and its daily struggle in opposition to capitalism and bourgeois oppression; the struggle against personal and electoral politics, against any form of indifferentism, of tailism, of movementism or the adventurist practice of “armed struggle”; the support of any proletarian struggle which breaks with social peace and rejects the discipline of interclassist collaborationism; the support of all efforts towards proletarian class reorganisation on the basis of economic associationism, with the perspective of a large scale resumption of the class struggle, proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary anti-capitalist struggle.»

In the forty years that have passed since the explosive crisis of the old party, we have developed our work in such a way that, given the still very bleak situation of the class struggles, we were forced to give priority to publications and propaganda. While “*Le prolétaire*” continued to be published during the crisis of 1982–1984 (after a brief interruption due to the crisis that broke out at the international meeting in Paris in October 1982, issue 367 was published in December and then resumed regular publication), “*Il Comunista*” (after the first series published in 1983–1984) was published regularly from February 1985 as the Italian press organ of the party. The perspective we gave ourselves was to publish, as soon as forces and finances permitted, theoretical journals, in French “*Programme Communiste*” and in Spanish “*El Programa Comunista*”; by 1982 88 issues of the former and 40 issues of the latter had been published. “*Programme Communiste*” began to appear in May 1987 with issue 89, “*El Programa Comunista*” in September 1992 with issue 41. In February 2002, thank to our English-speaking comrades, we published the first issue of *Proletarian*, and in August of the same year we published a “*Venezuela supplement*”. In May 2010, we began publishing a “*Supplement dedicated to Spain*” which was replaced in December 2012 by *El Proletario*, thank to the work of the Spanish section, which was restored a few years ago. In February 2022, we resumed the publication of the English-language journal *Communist Program*, which will henceforth be published regularly every year or year and a half. As

far as the Spanish language is concerned, the crisis that hit the Spanish section drove out of the Party practically all the comrades who, a few years later, came out with their own newspaper, to which they gave the name of the old Party newspaper "*El Comunista*", as the press organ of the *Partido Comunista Internacional*, although they too had been liquidators of the Party on syndicalist and theoretic positions. When we decided to publish a Spanish-language periodical, in order to avoid further confusion due to the same name of the party, we opted for "*El Proletario*" as the name of the paper, to complement the already existing review "*El Programa Comunista*".

The resumption of the class struggle is unfortunately still far off, but the economic and political contradictions of the imperialist powers are bringing even closer the point of social rupture which will inexorably put the great historical dilemma on the agenda: war or revolution. Since the end of the Second Imperialist World War, the imperialisms have been preparing themselves to withstand a third world war; the numerous world conferences and the flattering declarations of peace by all the chancellery of the world certainly cannot conceal this. The countless so-called local wars in which the most powerful imperialists in the world have always intervened directly or indirectly, from the Korean War in 1950 to the present Russian-Ukrainian war, have not been followed and will not be followed by a period of peace: capitalism, in its latest historical stage of development, imperialism, is doomed to keep itself alive and develop exclusively through wars, bourgeoisie against bourgeoisie, power against power, imperialist blocs against imperialist blocs, because its economy cyclically produces not only expansion and development, but above all crises, ever sharper, deeper and worldwide crises.

The only social class in this society which has the historical potential to put an end to the exploitation of man by man, to the destruction of the productive forces and the environment, to all kinds of oppression and war, is the proletarian class, the class of wage-labourers. This class has an enormous advantage over the other social classes: it is absolutely the most numerous, it is the class which produces through its work the economic and social wealth of every country, and it is the class which has historically the task of breaking all the social, economic and political shackles by which the bourgeois classes of every country control it. And it has one more fundamental characteristic: the proletarians, the wage-workers, are subjected to the same oppression, the same conditions of existence and life, regardless of the country in which they were born or in which country they work or to which they emigrate; it is objectively an *international* class, because there is no country in which it is not oppressed, exploited, duped, suppressed and massacred. But it has an equally strong disadvantage: without a firm, solid, conscious, disciplined and organized revolutionary leadership, the proletariat is a mere puppet in the hands of the puppet masters in office. The proletarians can

rely on indisputable material reality: as an oppressed, exploited, massacred class in the workplaces and in the wars, it is driven to revolt against its status as a wage slave; in doing so, it exerts a strike force, an effort to organize itself on the immediate terrain and to mobilize solidarity to proletarians from other factories and other countries; but it is constantly restrained, diverted, defeated by the competition between proletarians, which the bourgeoisie feeds with full force, and is therefore blinded and usually unable to identify goals beyond the immediate struggle. A class-divided society is an extremely contradictory organism, and in the development of the productive forces, including wage labour, it pushes the ruling classes towards ever greater oppression and exploitation of workers in an attempt to combat the tendency of the falling rate of profit that chronically plagues the capitalist economy, and to overcome the crises of overproduction that are now occurring with increasing frequency. The bourgeoisie has no other means of confronting the crises of its economic and social system and of trying to overcome them than by creating the conditions for even more acute, even more destructive crises; and in order to deal with them it cannot but raise the level of the conflict between the classes from the purely economic and immediate plane to the political plane, thus bringing the proletariat back to intervene also on this political plane. Only that the proletariat still strongly influenced by inter-class collaboration and electoral politicking, carries out these interventions not any longer by the revolutionary means to which the proletarian and peasant masses were trained by the revolutionary and anti-feudal bourgeoisie in its first historical period for its class revolution, but by the political and propagandist means of an entirely conservative and reactionary democracy, which are directly provided to it by the imperialist bourgeoisie.

In the historical course of class struggles, every class-divided society has experienced the passing through an initial *revolutionary* period, the aim of which was to overthrow the old economic and social structure so that the productive forces already developed in the old society could be developed to the maximum, subsequently; a period of *consolidation* of the dominion of the new ruling class (the period of social *reforms*); and a *reactionary* period characterized by the maintenance of political and socio-economic power by a policy aimed at forcibly hindering the objective development of the productive forces within the relations of production and property relations which no longer correspond to the objective needs of the general development of society.

Capitalist imperialism corresponds to this last period, in which, after the fading out of the national-revolutionary upsurge of the emergent bourgeois classes in practically all corners of the world, national revolutions led by a national and revolutionary bourgeoisie capable of dragging the urban proletarian masses and the great masses of peasants behind it are no longer on the agenda, revolutions which inevitably clashed not only with the old powers of feudalism and despotism, but also and above all with the imperialist powers, i.e. the top re-

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representatives of capitalist development – as was the case after the First World War and especially after the Second World War.

This does not mean that all the countries of the world are developed in the same manner; on the contrary, the uneven world development of capitalism, precisely by virtue of imperialist development, tends to widen the disparities between the imperialist countries and the rest of the world, which in this way, despite the “decolonization” of the 1960s and 1970s, is subordinated by financial and military forces to the interests of the big imperialist countries and the big trusts that dominate the international market.

All that remains in perspective is the class struggle of the proletariat in each country against the bourgeois ruling classes, starting in its own homeland. And it is for this struggle, objectively international, that the class party, the revolutionary communist party, has been preparing and must prepare since the *Manifesto* of Marx and Engels was written in 1848. The historical period of wars and revolutions is not dictated by the will of oligarchic forces or great leaders; it is dictated by the material development of social contradictions and the maturation of the objective and subjective factors of the class and revolutionary struggle. It is in this perspective, and on the basis of the lessons of past revolutions, and especially counter-revolutions, that the party for which we work will have to meet its revolutionary task at the historical moment of the great social crisis that will inevitably arise – as it did in Europe in 1848, in Paris in 1871, in Russia in 1917 and in Europe in 1919/1920 – and thus the solution to this crisis could take the direction of the proletarian revolution and not bourgeois counter-revolution.

Of course, the explosive crisis that caused the old organization to fall apart inevitably reduced the militant forces of the party, reducing our group to a handful of militants. This was not the first time this had happened in the history of the proletarian party; it happened with the First International, which was destroyed by anarchist and immediatist opportunist tendencies, and then with the Second International, which was brought to collapse by reformist, social-democratic and chauvinist tendencies; this happened in spite of the great victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 and the formation of the Third International as a result of the anti-centralist, nationalist and, for the umpteenth time, chauvinist tendencies of the great European proletarian parties. However in spite of the victory of the

bourgeois class, with its direct counter-revolution and also the “indirect” one that was Stalinism, the factors objectively favourable to the proletarian revolution have begun to revive at the international level; although they still do not manifest themselves in full, they still continue to operate and slowly dismantle the capitalist economic and social structure, little by little they are taking off the mask of the supposed socialism that was to be realized in Russia, in its satellite countries and in China, and also the mask of democracy, which has long since ceased to be liberal and has become more and more a fascist democracy.

This is in no way to say that the party’s activity has been facilitated; the intoxication with democratism and individualism within the proletariat caused by the ideology, propaganda and actions of the bourgeois classes is so strong that to reawaken the proletarians to the struggle for their existence on the class terrain – i.e. on the terrain where exclusively proletarian class interests are defended –, a great economic and social upheaval is needed, as a result of which will be reborn in the proletariat the will to fight against the ruling bourgeois class, recognised as its arch-enemy, the will to organise itself again independently not only of the ruling bourgeoisie but also of the petty bourgeoisie, and to seek leadership not only to win the struggles on the immediate terrain but also to fight and win on the general political terrain.

This leadership can be nothing other than the class party, the revolutionary communist party, which represents in the present the future of the proletarian struggles, which represents in the present the historical tasks of the proletarian class at the world level, because it possesses the theory of revolutionary communism, because it knows the overall historical course of the class struggles and, more particularly, of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, because it condenses the experience of the proletarian struggles and the struggles of the international communist movement and draws the necessary lessons from the defeats so as not to fall into the same errors again.

It is for this party that we work, outside and against all manoeuvring politics, outside and against all opportunist concessions, wielding theoretical-programmatic intransigence as the only weapon with which to pursue the correct political and tactical line in the situations that arise, to correctly evaluate the balance of forces and the tasks not only of the party but also of the proletarian class.



# About the Russian-Ukrainian War Against the War, on Both Sides, while the War Goes On

The position of the revolutionary communists regarding imperialist wars – whether they are fought locally or globally – has never changed: the interests of the proletarians of all countries involved in a war are first and foremost anti-bourgeois, i.e. in clear opposition to the interests of the national bourgeoisie of each country, and therefore anti-imperialist, i.e. against any interest of domination by their own or foreign imperialism. However, it is neither a pacifist position, nor one calling for general disarmament, nor a neutral position; and it holds for both revolutionary communists and conscious proletarians of countries which, because of specific interests of their bourgeois ruling class, do not actively engage in the conflict and do not support one side or the other in the war.

In every country the proletarian class is the class against which a relentless daily struggle is waged on the part of the bourgeoisie to subordinate it and keep it subjugated, exploited and enslaved. The reason is simple: it is only from the exploitation of wage labor that the bourgeoisie in every country extracts surplus value, i.e. the real valorization of every capital invested, which the capitalists' pocket in full and then divide into profits and rents. Just as each bourgeoisie cannot do without the extensive and intensive exploitation of wage labor and the sacrifice of ever larger masses of proletarians to the god of profit, so it cannot do without the sacrifice of ever larger masses of proletarians in the military conflicts to which each bourgeoisie is driven by international competition. The imperialist development of capitalism does not mitigate its contradictions, but increases their explosive economic and social potential. Since the outbreak of the First World Imperialist War, capitalism has entered its final stage of development: it can no longer stop, it can no longer go back, it must become ever more concentrated and centralized. And in this process of development, war – that is, foreign policy pursued by other means, namely military means – becomes *inevitable*. Just as economic and financial crises are part of the historical course of capitalism, so is war, which is no more than the culmination, in certain historical situations, of the socio-economic crisis of the most developed capitalisms. Just as the bourgeoisie seeks to resolve the crisis of its economic structure by adopting economic and political factors which inevitably counteract the interests of the

competing bourgeoisies (conquest of new markets, more intensive exploitation of existing markets, ever more intense exploitation of its own proletariat and the proletariat of weaker countries), so it seeks to “resolve” the war conflict by establishing a peace which is nothing more than an interlude between one war and another.

Every bourgeoisie has always been aware of this, and has been preparing itself for the inevitable outcome into a military confrontation with the bourgeoisie that opposes it. That is why, in addition to the ever-increasing development of armaments and military technology and the strengthening of existing alliances or establishing new ones, it is unleashing a massive nationalist campaign to involve (in one way or another) the proletarian masses in the defense of the national economy, the fatherland and, hear, hear!, peace!

It is precisely this involvement that the proletarians must oppose; they must fight not for the interests of the national economy or of a fatherland that was never theirs, but for their own class interests, which are antagonistic to those of their own bourgeoisie as much as to those of any other bourgeoisie.

The class interests of the proletariat are extremely concrete and form the material basis of its struggle and class solidarity. When the bourgeois declare that they have “common” interests with those of the proletarians (such as saving the enterprise from competition, saving the national economy, saving the fatherland), they are not only declaring an untruth, they are not only trying to deceive the workers in order to subordinate them even more to the demands of capital and capitalist profit; they set up an ideological construct based on the fundamental blackmail which is the basis of the capitalist relation of production: it is the capitalist who “gives work” to the proletarian – that is why he calls himself “employer” – and the proletarian either works for this or that capitalist or starves to death. The capitalist is the owner of the means of production and of production itself; the proletarian is the owner of nothing but his own physical labor-power. The social force of capital has subordinated labor-power to its own laws and is interested in maintaining this domination. But labor force can only transform itself into social force if it struggles against the social force represented by capital, i.e. against the capitalists, and only if it unites its own physical labor-

power with the physical labor-power of all other proletarians. Such a union has a very concrete material basis: the conditions of the workers subject to wage labor, i.e. to a work provided or not provided in this society only by the capitalists. The struggle for better working and living conditions was and is part of the day-to-day life of every proletarian. If the interests of the capitalist and the proletarian were truly “common”, i.e., if the interests they both would share equally consisted in having the same opportunities to live, to laze, to travel, to learn, the same opportunities to follow their inclinations and desires, the class division of society would be meaningless; there would be no capitalist owning everything and no proletarian owning nothing. In fact, bourgeois society has never been and will never be a society where liberty, equality and fraternity are finally a fulfilled reality. Bourgeois society is the opposite of a society of equals; it is the society in which social inequalities have reached levels that previous societies never reached. Bourgeois society is based on relations of production and property which both express and reinforce the domination of the bourgeois class over the other classes, particularly the proletariat. And it is precisely these bourgeois relations of production and property that create the antagonism between the bourgeois and proletarian interests. An antagonism which benefit the bourgeois class only insofar as the class of the proletariat does not recognize that it form an unbridgeable gulf between the two main classes of today’s society.

One of the advantages, and not a secondary one, which the bourgeois class has acquired – thanks to the tireless work of the most shameful opportunism of the self-proclaimed representatives of the proletariat, both in the trade union field and in the political field – is precisely that it has induced the proletarian masses to sacrifice their lives in peace and in war in favor of capitalist and bourgeois domination over society, thereby strengthening the shackles which bind them to the fate of capitalism.

To break these shackles means to recognize oneself as a social class that is independent of and antagonistic to the bourgeois class, as a social class that has its own objectives, not only *immediate* (unity of proletarian forces, class solidarity and better living conditions in this society) but also *historical* (emancipation from wage labor, i.e. from capitalism, and thus from the class divided society). The proletariat, as Marx and Engels’ *Manifesto* declared one hundred and seventy-four years ago, has a whole world to win. But it cannot achieve this as long as its struggle is paralyzed by opportunism and inter-class collaborationism, as long as its struggle does not break with social peace and put the *class struggle* at the forefront of its demands, accepting the same terrain of struggle on which the bourgeoisie is forced to set out to defend its class interests by all means.

The proletarians have the potential strength to oppose the bourgeois war as a class; but as long as they remain under the influence of the collaborationist, nationalist and social-chauvinist policies that led them to shed blood

in the first and second world imperialist wars and in all the wars the bourgeoisie has waged since then, they will never escape the fate of being cannon fodder in peace as in war.

And the current Russo-Ukrainian war proves this for the umpteenth time, all the more so because it is not a local war, notwithstanding the geographical fact that it is so far confined to Ukraine, but a war in which the Euro-American and Russian imperialist powers are clashing on the Ukrainian theatre of war with the aim of establishing a new order on the continent and with a view to a future new world order that will inevitably require a world war, the third one.

The proletariat not only of the Ukraine and Russia, but of all countries, and in particular of Europe and America, has for the umpteenth time before it the prospect of whether it will continue to allow itself to be slaughtered by labor and toil, as well as on the war fronts, or whether it will finally rise up and take its fate into its own hands by declaring class war against the imperialist war.

### RUSSIA’S BANDITRY AGAINST EURO-AMERICAN BANDITRY AND ITS UKRAINIAN VASSAL

The “special military operation” that Russia had claimed to “demilitarize” and “denazify” Ukraine (in reality, to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, to annex Donbas after doing so with Crimea, and to subordinate Ukraine to its imperialist interests), which was supposed to take place within a few months according to Russian intentions, turned out to be a long-term war. The duration of the war is mainly determined by the fact that Great Britain, Germany, Italy... and European Union and, above all, the United States are supplying Kiev with arms and billions to continue the war, supporting Zelensky’s propaganda under the slogan “let’s fight until we get back Donbas and Crimea”, and the European/US propaganda of economic sanctions that will “put Russia down for a long time”. The anti-Russian sanctions have undoubtedly plunged the Russian economy into a crisis, which, if prolonged, could have political repercussions on the stability of Putin’s government and could even cause social tensions. However, given the real dependence of the German, Italian and, in general, European economies on Russia for gas, oil and other raw materials, Germany, Poland and, to some extent, Italy, as well as Bulgaria and the Baltic States, have also begun to fall into economic crisis. The Netherlands and Denmark appear to be approaching zero Russian gas supplies as well. In fact, the dependence of the European economy, particularly on Russian gas, has put Europe in a state of unprecedented vulnerability, all the more so as winter approaches (a period that normally requires twice the average consumption; in fact, according to the latest figures, the EU’s average consumption from April to September is 130 billion cubic meters and from October to March 270 billion cubic meters). The problem for the Europeans is that they are unable

to replace Russian gas supplies, as they pompously proclaimed, except within a few years; in the meantime, gas has become enormously more expensive, giving speculators an unexpected advantage and giving Russia itself a boost, which for its part has secured supplies, albeit at low prices, to China, India and Turkey. It has to be said that Russia has not cut off gas supplies going to Ukraine – it has retained this weapon as a potential final “coup de grâce” – and is making the Kiev treasury pay a fortune for it, while it in turn is being fed with Euro/US billions... On the other hand, resorting to coal again, as Germany and to a lesser extent Italy have done, notwithstanding the denial of all promises to decarbonize industry in favor of renewables, does not solve the energy problem of the super-industrialized European countries; nor does the resort to liquefied natural gas (of which the United States immediately turned out to be the most important supplier) solve much, since, in addition to being much more expensive than gas supplied through pipelines, it requires an extensive network of regasification plants to convert it back into a gaseous state, which does not yet exist in Europe. It is obvious that the general economic difficulties are leading European countries to pass the costs on to the proletarian masses, as they have always done; except that it is happening after two years of pandemic and economic recession; moreover, for this very reason the factors of contrasts between European countries themselves will intensify and sharpen. The case of Orbán’s Hungary may not be an isolated one, all the more so if we connect it with the case of Erdogan’s Turkey, which for its own state reasons continues to balance itself between NATO/US and Russia with the aim of becoming an indispensable strategic partner in the inter-imperialist relations between the NATO powers and Russia, Iran and other medium-sized powers of the Middle East. The Russia-Ukraine war has caused enormous destruction and will cause much more, as it will plunge Ukraine into an unprecedented economic and social crisis in a short time. It has prompted almost 10 million Ukrainians to leave their towns and homes, and their flight could go nowhere but to Western European countries. Notwithstanding the hypocritical humanitarian propaganda of European governments, it is partly inevitable that this huge influx of people will sooner or later cause social problems in coexistence, especially with the native working masses and the masses of legal or illegal immigrants from African and Asian countries, thereby increasing rivalry between them (deliberately, by local state policies). While immigration from African and Asian countries has long been and still is made up primarily of men and boys, the Ukrainian refugee population is overwhelmingly made up of women and minors, as adult males have been forbidden to leave the country, forcing them to fight to “defend the fatherland”. For this reason, and also because of the humanitarian propaganda that Western European countries are skillfully spreading, Ukrainian women and their children are much better received than im-

migrants from Africa and Asia were and are: Ukrainian refugees are not forced to cross deserts, forests or barbed wire barriers, as migrants in Europe or the United States have had to do up to now, and they do not have to experience the martyrdom and violence of concentration camps like those in Libya before crossing the sea in the hope of landing in Italy or Spain.

As for destruction, for capitalism, it represents an enormous business for all companies, both domestic and foreign, which are eager to take a bite out of the profits that foreign capitalists are now pocketing, mainly from the arms industries and their allied sectors.

### NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY AND WAR ARE ALWAYS INEXTRICABLY LINKED

As we have already written in our articles in the press, the great problems of the Ukrainian and Russian proletariat – and consequently also of the proletariat of the countries which have lined up in support of the two war fronts – revolve around *nationalism*, which serves as a binder of the class collaboration, that is the policy systematically applied by all capitalist states. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Russian empire and the bloody wars in Yugoslavia, the propaganda of false socialism in the variants of “people’s democracy”, “self-management” and “economic planning” has completely lost its effectiveness. It has moved more and more towards the propagandistic juxtaposition of “democracy” and “totalitarianism” (or “fascism”), while constantly at various junctures harping on the usual mix of “freedom” and “authoritarianism”, “defense of sacred borders” and “legitimate response to external aggression”.

The fact that socialism is no longer brought up, as it was in the days of Stalin and post-Stalinism, to cover up capitalist reality and bourgeois class interests is objectively positive. It does not in itself clear the terrain of bourgeois mystifications which, no matter how much bourgeois propagandists or those paid by the bourgeoisie try to “innovate”, always revolve around the same ideological concepts: democracy-totalitarianism, freedom-authoritarianism.

In the “*Prospettive del dopoguerra*” of 1946, we wrote:

*«Although Western democracies progressively evolve towards totalitarian and fascist forms, they will be able for many reasons, which are a direct consequence of their social base and position in the world (especially the United States), to play comedy for the defense of all freedoms for a long time to come. [...] That there is nothing of formal democracy in Russia (the one, as a matter of fact, is everywhere a chimera) and of a representative system of liberal stamp, has always been known, but it was convenient for the anti Hitler propaganda for many years to pretend its belief in the democratization of the Russian regime. We are seeing and shall see how this thesis is step by step transforming into the opposite one, and how the oligarchic*

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*and oppressive character and the overbearing and cruel methods which have hitherto been reproached to the Nazi beasts by these lambs of the parliamentary democracies are being reproached to the Russian governmental apparatus.”*

We are well aware that Stalin’s Soviet regime and the regime after Stalin were considered by the lambs of parliamentary democracies to be no different from fascism, so much so that they equated fascism and communism. After the collapse of the USSR, the world media hailed the fall of “communism” and the victory of “democracy”, but the very evolution of Western democracies has amply demonstrated our 1946 thesis: totalitarian and fascist forms – albeit disguised to some extent by “formal democracy” – have increasingly characterized the bourgeois regimes of the industrial countries, that is, not only America and Europe, but also Russia and China, the last imperialist power to appear on the world stage in time, which for reasons of the convenience of its propaganda insists on presenting its regime as one ruled by the “Communist Party”. It will probably not be long before China is labeled as the new “fascism” to be fought against; Tibet, Hong Kong and Taiwan constitute stages on the road to annexation (or to the restoration of national unity, as the Chinese claim), which China has been pursuing for a long time.

The increasingly acute economic and financial competition in the bourgeois world *commands* that the two great opposing myths should once again manifest themselves: democracy versus totalitarianism, democracy versus fascism. Hence the ever more pressing campaign for the defense of the national economy by each state needs to be “ennobled” through a revived and ever more vigorous nationalism and the assertion of the “values” of its own “history”, its own “culture”, its own “civilization”. The bourgeoisie in each country, in the development of its political and social domination, has destroyed the “values” of its own country’s previous history, culture and civilization in order to impose the values of the new capitalist economy, the new bourgeois power, the new religion of capitalist profit, in order to influence more powerfully the dominated masses – the proletarians, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie – and thus prepare them to sacrifice themselves in local wars, and even more so in the world war; and has no choice but to combine its oppressive and repressive methods with what it proclaimed itself in the course of its development to be “expired commodity”, “a commodity of no value”: the culture, civilization and history of previous societies, and repackages them again, presenting them as a “commodity” of such high value that it demands, for its “defense”, the very lives of the dominated masses. The means of propaganda in the hands of the bourgeoisie, however, can only be the product of its own society, in which mercantile relations prevail, in which everything is a commodity, including the life of every human being, and in which the prospect of the future is nothing but a re-edition, moreover a

worsened one, of the present oppressive and repressive society.

### FALSE ALTERNATIVES: DEMOCRACY OR TOTALITARIANISM

World imperialism has its roots in capitalism itself, thus in the laws of economic, financial, political and military competition, just like any national capitalism; alliances, “unions” and the various “pacts of cooperation” between states are nothing more than a manifestation of the fact that every national capitalism must equip itself as best it can at the highest and state level in order to defeat the competition on a market that has long been global and which, precisely because of this – as between local and national firms – must be countered with more force, with more weapons at its disposal. Capitalist concentration, monopoly, trusts arise out of capitalist development itself, out of the need to extend the scope of intervention in markets, and thus to secure and widen the sources of profit. Economic warfare is an inherent part of the very DNA of capitalism, and it entails political organization in order to control the productive forces from which surplus value is extracted, and hence profit; it entails the strengthening of the central organs of the state in order to impose social control, through which capitalists protect themselves against the economic crises of their economic system and the social tensions that the exploitation of the proletariat inevitably provokes. Alliances between states are necessary to counter the action and aggression of other states (and the capitalists they represent) on the world market. Of course, like any contract between merchants and between robbers, any alliance can last for a longer or shorter period of time depending on the actual benefits to the members of such alliance. And Italy has been a master at breaking the alliances to which it belongs. In fact, every state, every bourgeois regime – no matter whether “democratic” or “totalitarian” – cannot limit itself to repressive means in order to mobilize the masses to defend the national economy and to defend the regime itself; it must motivate them ideologically, as well as economically and socially, so that they take an active part in that defense.

At the time of the First World Imperialist War, the mobilization of democratic regimes was motivated by defense against the aggression of autocratic regimes, the Central Powers; autocratic regimes mobilized their masses to defend their history, their civilization, their order against democratic regimes that would invade the markets and destroy the existing world order. At the time of the Second Imperialist World War, democratic regimes mobilized their masses in defense of freedom, democracy and civil rights against the totalitarianism represented by fascism, Nazism and the “modern” Asian despotism represented by Hirohito’s Japan. After the end of the First World War and the Second World War, the world, finally “brought to peace” – according to bourgeois propaganda – was to develop without further wars and, thanks to the

extraordinary development of technical and technological innovation and the victory over Nazism Fascism, to distribute economic and social wealth among all the peoples of the world. But already with the Korean War in 1950, the possibility of a third world war loomed on the horizon, bringing about a conflict between two opposing imperialist blocs whose superpowers had been allies in the war against Nazi-Fascism only a few years before. After the military defeat of Nazi-Fascism, the victorious powers inherited from fascism one of the most effective social policies ever adopted by the bourgeoisie, thanks also to the decisive contribution of the opportunist forces of false socialism and the deceptive representation of the immediate interests of the proletariat: the *institutionalization of collaboration between the classes*. However, peace between states, and therefore between nations, was not and could not be the result of the policy of class collaboration, because such a policy always and in every case corresponds to the interests of individual national capitalisms and does not eliminate the fundamental antagonism between wage labor and capital. The post-war peace has served the bourgeoisie in all countries, victorious and defeated, to rebuild, to put the whole capitalist mechanism of production back into operation, to consolidate the dominant positions won by victory in the war, and to once again weave the network of national capitalist interests in the countries that emerged defeated from the war. Peace, as Lenin repeatedly emphasized, is but an interlude between imperialist wars, whether at the world or regional level.

The bourgeois relations of production and property have not altered with the change from fascist to democratic regimes, just as they did not alter before with the change from democratic to fascist regimes: they are the backbone of the entire capitalist economy, whatever the bourgeois regime. Thus, if on the one hand bourgeois relations of production and ownership, imposed all over the world, form the basis of the economy of every country, on the other hand they reassert the laws of capitalism, which provoke ever deeper, sharper and more extensive contrasts, but without contradicting the general historical trajectory of capitalism which leads to open centralization and open totalitarianism.

For our part, we acknowledged the characteristics of capitalism, not socialism, in the economic and social structure of Stalin's Russia, and so we reaffirmed that in the historical phase that emerged from the Second World Imperialist War, «*the Russian regime is not a proletarian regime and the Moscow state has become one of the components of capitalist imperialism*»; yet we went on to say that «*its centralized and totalitarian form appears to be more modern than the obsolete and moribund form of parliamentary democracy*» (still from "Le prospettive del dopoguerra", 1946). And it is precisely thanks to this centralization and totalitarianism (in fact, inherited from the proletarian Soviet regime established with the October Revolution and after that regime was destroyed) that capitalist Russia (i.e., the

USSR) for a little more than sixty years blazed the trail of capitalist/imperialist development. Which, albeit with not proletarian but bourgeois revolutionary upheaval, was also undertaken in China during the 1950s.

### THE PROLETARIAT EITHER FIGHTS FOR ITSELF OR REMAINS SLAVE OF THE BOURGEOISIE IN TIMES OF PEACE AS IN TIMES OF WAR

And so the dilemma facing the proletariat at that time with respect to a possible Third World War – to fight alongside the United States and its allied powers in defense of "democracy against totalitarianism", or to fight alongside Russia and its satellites "for socialism against capitalism" – was resolved by our party by following the classical Marxist line: *Neither with Truman nor with Stalin*; this is how our position of revolutionary defeatism towards both imperialist blocs was succinctly summed up. Today it is no longer enough to say neither with Biden nor with Putin, because many other actors have appeared on the stage, in the first line as Xi Jinping, in the second as Macron and Scholtz, or in the third as Draghi. The substance, however, does not change: against any national bourgeoisie, whether or not it is involved in a war conflict.

The link with the positions of Marx and Engels can be found in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" itself: the proletariat fights its own bourgeoisie at first, and in order to make itself the *ruling class*, as did the Paris Commune, it fights for the conquest of political power against all its adversaries, even if these adversaries wage war against each other. In what else did Lenin's revolutionary defeatism consist before, during and after the October Revolution if not in the uncompromising application of this Marxist directive? And it was not only with the defeatist interventions within the army during the war; it was also the case in the aftermath of the seizure of power, in the case of the Brest-Litovsk peace, when the main objective of the proletarian and communist power was to end the imperialist war, even at the cost of paying a high price in terms of territorial losses, as indeed it did, and to prepare with its own proletarian army to defend the conquered power against both the domestic White Guard forces and the imperialist powers attacking from outside.

Revolutionary defeatism does not mean disarmament, but it means the disorganization of the war production and military forces of the bourgeoisie in order to weaken it, to show the other strata of the common people that we are against imperialist war and its tragic consequences, to show the proletarians of the other belligerent powers that we do not want to participate in their massacres, perpetrated by the bourgeois powers, and to prepare and organize in the meantime (in the army and in society) the own proletarian armed forces, both in view of the inevitable repression by the bourgeois state and in view of the inevitable attack by the existing imperialist states once the revolution has won. Revolutionary defeatism is part of the tactics of the programme of the revolutionary commu-

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nist party, applied particularly in the pre-war and war period, i.e. in the period when it assumes the role of a decisive tactic.

Yet none of this happened before, nor is it happening during the Russian-Ukrainian war itself. Russian and Ukrainian proletarians did not express any *class* opposition to the war. But a class opposition to war is not born overnight; it is the result of a social opposition that is born over a long period of time, out of the classist struggle in which the proletarians gain experience of struggle, of organization, verify the strength and weakness of their own claims and their class solidarity and the strength of the bourgeoisie, get to know those who act in support of their struggle and those who obstruct it, sabotage it or openly oppose it by working alongside and in favor of the bourgeois forces. As, indeed, the German ruling Social Democracy did during the 1918–1919 revolution, and as the forces of “people’s democracy” did before, during and after the Second Imperialist World War, and which even today succeed in paralyzing the proletariat. It is clear, therefore, that if there has been any resistance at all by the proletarians in Russia and Ukraine so far to the Russo Ukrainian war, it has not been on the fertile soil of the class struggle, but out of a more than justified fear of going to die for a cause they do not share, or out of an immediate interest in saving their families; motives which are more than “natural”, but far from being vehicles for the revival of the class. Of course, the more the general conditions of the proletarians in the industrial countries deteriorate, the more the factors of social crisis accumulate, and the more easily anger and struggles can erupt, out of which can arise concrete experiences and needs for a orientation that is more solid and classist, for future struggles. And it is in these situations that the party, if it is present with its militants, can intervene, can be recognized as a useful if not indispensable subject for the establishment of the class orientation necessary to ensure that the lessons and experiences of the struggles, once over, are not dissipated and forgotten, but may form a basis for classist connection with struggles in other parts of the country or in other countries.

What has been happening for some time now is the accumulation of not insignificant crisis factors that trigger explosions of social anger and struggles, most easily in countries on the periphery of imperialism, as recently in Sri Lanka or as at the time of the “Arab Spring” (2010–2014). Struggles which, because they cannot count on an organized proletariat on the class terrain, are inevitably influenced and directed by the forces of inter-class collaboration and are doomed to exhaust their energies in the fetid labyrinths of collaborationism.

### OUR TASKS

This in no way detracts from our task of reiterating and disseminating, however little our means of propaganda are listened to, concrete assessments of the

situation, and thus indicating the class line which the proletariat will have to adopt – even in times that are not imminent – in order to become once again a social force with its own objectives, its own watchwords, its own criteria of organization. Our primary task today is still that which the comrades of the Communist Left set themselves after the Second imperialist World War: to assimilate Marxist theory, to revive the lessons of the counter-revolutions, to adhere firmly to the programmatic and political foundations laid down by the party at that time, and to do so, if possible, with even greater intransigence than that which characterized the entire course of the Italian Communist Left.

As a result of the tenacious and brutal work of opportunism and collaborationism in their various variants, today’s (and future) proletarian generations have been deprived of the living, material connection that the comrades of the Communist Left during the forties and fifties still maintained with the class struggles of the Communist Party of Italy and the international communism of the 1920s, and which they sought to pass on to younger generations of proletarians.

This physical, material connection, which the proletariat in every country has lost, actually lives on in the party we represent, even if only embryonically; the viability and continuity of the party depends on the firmness with which we can maintain the political line that the party has set out from 1945–1946 onwards, and on the profound conviction of the historical course on which our activity is based, an activity which, even in the few elements that we are today, could and can only come from the real confirmations of Marxism.

The economic and social contradictions that permeate capitalism are historically destined to erupt periodically, sometimes locally, sometimes globally, unleashing social forces in the inevitable clash of class struggle. The problem is that the class struggle, for the time being, has only one protagonist: the bourgeois ruling class, which never ceases to wage its struggle against the proletariat in all spheres, from the economic and social to the ideological-political, cultural and religious, attacks against which the proletarians have usually so far presented themselves as defenseless.

The certainty of the resumption of the class struggle by the proletariat – even if not in the immediate future – lies, according to the perspective already defined by Marxism, precisely in the historical course of capitalism and its contradictions. It was this certainty that has provided the comrades of the Communist Left of Italy with the strength not to succumb in time, despite their modest numbers and the fact that they found themselves alone in the world fighting against the giant oppressive and repressive machinery of the bourgeoisie and Stalinism, united above all against the world proletariat and, of course, against the indomitable representatives of revolutionary Marxism, the tenacious defenders of the political line followed by Lenin and the Communist Left of Italy.

We today are not the heirs of those magnificent class battles; we have not been given a “natural” right, much less a “legal and administrative” right, to the theoretical

and political, tactical and organizational heritage of the party of yesterday. After the counter-revolution had pronounced its verdict on the Bolshevik Party of Lenin, on the Communist International, on the Communist Party of Italy, it tried in every possible way to do away with the International Communist Party, which had been reconstituting itself between 1945 and 1952 and had been functioning as a homogeneous organization since 1952; however, with the explosive crisis of 1982–1984, the counter-revolution succeeded in its intent: that party no longer exists.

Since 1985, we have undertaken the task of reconstituting the party organization that could become the International Communist Party of 1952, if it would develop without succumbing to the influences of various variants of opportunism. But the party, as we have always understood it, is a living, acting organism that for a very long time struggles against forces and tendencies based on powerful economic and material forces that the counter-revolution has intensified over time. It was therefore conceivable that our “yesterday’s” party would degenerate, just as the Communist International and its member parties degenerated.

But what the counter-revolution could not and cannot do away with are the material contradictions of capitalism, in which a volcanic magma is formed that after reaching a very high social temperature inexorably pushes with unstoppable force against the social bulwarks – the bourgeois forms of production and exchange – until it unleashes that fiery mass constituted by the social power of the proletariat, which historically has an alternative:

- either to burst into social reality without defined historical perspectives and, with the passing of the powerful outburst of that true “natural” force which is the productive forces, to forfeit its strength and vitality, to exhaust itself, to cool down and return to being only class for capital;

- or under the leadership of the class party – which is the only political organ that has a clear knowledge of the historical movement of the proletarian class struggle – get organized and directed towards the historical goals set out by Marxism, both on the pre-revolutionary terrain of the class struggle and on the revolutionary terrain of the conquest of political power, or on the terrain of the already conquered political power establishing the class dictatorship exercised by the party.

In order to be such class party, it is necessary to work politically in the long term on the line already laid down by our yesterday’s party and which we have the task not only of reaffirming – the bare minimum for revolutionary communists – but also of bringing it to life by consistent and continuous party activity, while maintaining a close link with the theory from which every possible step forward in the direction of future victory derives.

We have said it many times, and it is worth emphasizing again: *«For us Marxists, that knowledge is there before the process is enough; but not universally so, not in the masses, not in the majority (a term without a deterministic meaning) of the class, but in even a small minority of it, at a certain point even in a tiny group, and even – be scandalized, activists! – in a momentarily forgotten writings. But groups, schools, movements, texts, theses form a continuum in the long course of time that is nothing but the party, impersonal, organic, unique precisely because of this pre-existing knowledge of revolutionary development»* (“Sul filo del tempo: Danza di fantocci, dalla coscienza alla cultura”, 1953).

Our activity is part of this *continuity*, which has been formed in the long course of time by groups, schools, movements, texts, theses, and which is nothing but the party, impersonal, organic, unique precisely because of this pre-existing knowledge of revolutionary development.

What kind of epoch are we living in?

In 1953 the same article from the “Sul filo del tempo” (“on the thread of times”) series read: *«The epoch under way is unfavorable for the proletarian class, the revolution and the revolutionary party. But when the time comes, all three will rise again together»*.

What is the difference between this epoch and ours?

There is no doubt that it is still unfavorable, but today there is a positive political reality: the counter-revolutionary grip of the false socialism represented by Stalinism – and post-Stalinism – has come to an end. The bourgeois counter-revolution is increasingly presenting itself with the face of democracy; the “great confession” that we were expecting from the Stalinists regarding the economic and social structure of Russia took place first on the economic and social level, then, with gnashing of teeth, on the ideological-political level.

This does not mean that the task of the revolutionaries is easier today than yesterday, because opportunism, which found its greatest anti-proletarian force in Stalinism and post-Stalinism, will renew itself in other guises simply because capitalism, bourgeois society, provides it with its material base, and as long as capitalism and the bourgeoisie are on their feet, opportunism will always have fertile ground in which to take root. Therefore, the struggle against opportunism, which we can historically relate to through the texts, theses and works of Lenin and the Communist Left of Italy, is a struggle that must never cease. Our political task is therefore also to recognize opportunist tendencies early on.

In fact there is no better way to create political antidotes than by drawing on the struggles against various forms of opportunism waged by our great predecessors, starting with Marx, Engels and Lenin.

# Theses Project Presented by the Left to the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy ( *Lyon Theses* )

## Introduction

The *Lyon Theses* appeared at such a crucial juncture in the history of the communist movement that they might justifiably be considered both a point of arrival and a point of departure in the difficult and hard-won genesis of the world party of the working class.

The Left leadership of the Italian Communist Party that emerged from the Congresses of Leghorn and Rome was replaced on a provisional basis following the arrest of Bordiga and other leaders in February 1923, and permanently after their acquittal in October of the same year. After some initial resistance (mainly by Terracini but also by Togliatti), the new “centrist” leadership gradually aligned itself with the positions of the International, despite the fact that at the national conference in Como (May 1924), they were still only in a minority compared to the bulk of the party, which, almost unanimously, stood firm on its initial positions. Despite this situation, the Left would adopt the same standpoint as it would later at the 5th Congress of the Communist International, that is; it would not only not press its claim to the leadership, but it would assert that such an eventuality depended on a decisive and unequivocal change in the politics emerging from Moscow. Thus, in the draft theses presented by the “Left” at the above-mentioned conference at Como we read: *«If the leadership of the party and the International remains opposed to what we have outlined here, if it remains as indeterminate and imprecise as it has been up to now, the duty imposed upon the Italian Left will become one of criticism and verification, with a calm but firm rejection of the artificial solutions arrived at by means of lists of executive committees and various concessions and compromises, these being, for the most part, demagogic cloaks for that much vaunted and abused word unity»*. In the same vein, Bordiga not only turned down the offer of the vice-presidency of the International at its 5th congress, but also refused to take any part in the leadership of the Italian Communist party.

Meanwhile, the Italian leadership orientated itself more and more in the direction wished for by Moscow, a process defended by the right wing Tasca-Graziadei current.

The theses, drawn up by the left current of the Italian Communist Party to oppose those of the already semi-stalinized centre, were presented to the 3rd party Congress held at Lyon in January 1926. They therefore appear a few months after the 13th congress of the Russian party; the congress at which Kamenev and Zinoviev would launch a rebellion which would see virtually the entire Bolshevik old guard rise up in protest, as passionate as it was unexpected, directed against the “embellishment of the NEP”; the “peasants enrich yourself” slogan of Bukharin and the “red professors”; and against the stifling regime installed by Stalin within the party. The theses also appear scarcely a month before the 6th Enlarged Executive of the Communist International; which would turn the big guns of bureaucratic oratory on the one international force, the “Italian” Left to be precise, which had stood up and denounced the profound crisis in the Comintern, and thereby pave the way for the later stigmatisation of the Russian Opposition in November and December.

The international Communist movement had reached a fatal crossroads. At the 14th congress of the Russian Communist Party, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Krupskaya became aware that they were involved in a struggle inside the Russian State, and were speaking on behalf of one set of *social and material forces* against another; forces which were a thousand times more powerful than the particular individuals which took their turns at the rostrum, for hadn’t they themselves, until very immediately before, been co-responsible with the rest of the leadership for the collective policies? In this context, the Italian Left knew that the body of theses it was drawing up (which as usual, overstepped the narrow confines of the “Italian Question” and examined the entire, global field of communist tactics)



expressed a *historic trajectory*, which in the space of a few months would manifest itself in China and, due to a rare and for many years unique convergence of objective circumstances, England; in other words both within a semi-colonial country and within the epitomy of an imperialist metropolis.

The year of the supreme test was 1926, and in the final analysis, the outcome of the titanic struggles fought by the Chinese workers and peasants and the British proletariat would determine the destiny of both Soviet Russia and the Communist International. During 1926 the Russian Opposition would sense the terrible urgency of unravelling the tangled knots building up in the toothcomb of history, and Trotsky and Zinoviev would smooth over past differences in order to form a desperate coalition against the looming peril of the counter-revolutionary forces. Trotsky in particular would put up a remarkable fight, and emerge defeated only towards the end of 1927. The defeat of the Russian Opposition, the failure of the Chinese revolution, and the defeat of the General Strike in England would mark the destruction of the entire international communist movement. The last battle of those two years of proletarian Internationalism would be fought out in Moscow, in a hand-to-hand combat against the encircling army of “socialism in one country”, and it is a battle which remains forever inscribed in indelible characters in a chapter destined to inspire future generations of the marxist vanguard.

The Russian Opposition, however, didn’t manage to bequeath a *general* balance-sheet of this course of historical developments, which in fact had got underway long before 1926, and nor did it see the extreme debacle of that year as the product of earlier events. It could denounce the evil but could not *root it out*. This it could not do because the Opposition itself had been co-responsible, and sponsor, for this very course, and Stalin and Bukharin were able to continually nail the Opposition to the cross of co-responsibility with their mean-minded polemics, well aware that their great antagonist was caught prisoner in a web which both sides had helped to weave.

The same cannot be said of the “Italian” Left. Even if weak in the international stakes, it was still the only section of the International that grasped the situation correctly. After years of sounding the alarm about the objective consequences of the tactical eclecticism of the Comintern (henceforth imposed by a welter of organisational restrictions, “ideological terror”, and pressure from the State power) only the Left had the *capacity* (rather than the “right”) to draw the *global* lessons from the last five years. Indeed all the pre-congress discussions in Italy had hinged on these issues back in 1925. Thus the Left would recognize in the *fait accompli* a situation it had *already predicted*. At the 6th Enlarged Executive of the Communist International the Italian Left took a lone stance against the rest, with Zinoviev as the main antagonist. It was the Left alone who requested that the “Russian question” (the question of “socialism in one country” and the officious disciplinary regime which had been imposed

by Stalin on every party in the Comintern) should be placed on the agenda of an *emergency* international conference. The upshot of this request, had it been granted, would have been that the monopoly on discussions and decisions regarding Russia would have been removed from the Bolshevik Party. The request was devolved to the presidium who decided to “post-pone” any debate until the highly orchestrated Enlarged Executive held in November/December – at which time it was consigned to the archives. The next congress of the International would eventually take place two years later, by which time the remaining revolutionary opposition was in ruins and the Left’s request wouldn’t even get a passing mention. But the Left did not see the Russian Question as an isolated issue. By offering to the international movement a body of theses as a platform on which to build an *organic* and *complete* solution to tactical problems, set within the framework of a vision just as organic and complete in terms of its programmatic postulates, the Left was already treating the vital Russian question as just *one* link within a chain of life and death questions for the International. And in so doing, the Left was hoping to lay the basis for the International to return to its initial positions on a firmer foundation than ever before.

During the meeting of the 7th Enlarged Executive, Trotsky would have a thousand and one reasons for stating that the Bolshevik party, if it staked everything on the world revolution, could remain firmly entrenched in power for not one, but fifty years. But would such a stupendous “gambit” be possible without – as the Left put it – “inverting the pyramid”? Which consisted of the Comintern balancing unsteadily on top of the crisis-ridden Russian party. Would such a gambit pay off without first totally overhauling, from top to bottom, the Comintern’s internal regime, and, without, most importantly of all, ruthlessly re-evaluating the tactics whose many unpredictable and unexpected twists and turns had been the cause of so many disasters? To these questions Trotsky was never really able to provide satisfactory answers, or let’s say that in a hybrid conjunction with the dazzling demand for permanent revolution, his solutions consisted of treading the same unreliable path to “flexible” manoeuvres as his adversaries.

We emphasise we weren’t trying to defend “democracy” when we urged that the pyramid should be inverted. But rather than contrasting the vile decentralisation of the “national ways” to the necessity of centralisation, we demanded a transposition onto the international scale of our vision of “*organic* centralism”. This conception sees the summit linked to the base of the pyramid by one single and uninterrupted thread of doctrine and programme; from which it both receives and synthesises the impulses or else collapses. And it is simply pointless to say that the West was unable to provide Bolshevik Russia and the Comintern with the vital oxygen it needed (in ever increasing quantities) because at the time it was too busy laying the basis for an all-powerful all-pervading democratism. What the Left was defending was a principle, valid *always and everywhere* even

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if not of immediate realisation for contingent reasons, the principle, that is, that conceived of the International as culminating in *one single* party of the revolutionary proletariat, with “national” sections still in existence if deemed necessary. The last and final step would be the victorious proletarian State, which would be most vulnerable of all due to the isolated nature of its victory (especially in economically backward countries like Russia). Therefore, the coercive power of this State should, indeed must, never be used (as forcefully established by the Left at the 6th Enlarged Executive) to “resolve” disciplinary questions within the International, or within the party at the head of the class dictatorship.

The solutions to these problems we find instead in the section of the *Lyon Theses* devoted to general Questions (and in the related section on International Questions), and because they really do represent a *general* solution, they have to be either accepted or rejected, and accepted or rejected *as a whole*. There is no middle path.

The Left, by continuing to defend their analysis, certainly ran the risk of being crushed by the hostile forces which were beginning to gain the upper hand, and indeed this is precisely what happened, but it is equally certain that their analysis laid the only basis on which a regroupment of forces was possible; only on the basis of a global, rather than a partial, settlement of tactical and programmatic questions would an international *resurgence* of the proletarian revolution, and its party, become a real possibility.

The *Lyon Theses* are therefore not only a point of departure both for the present and for the future, but also sum up the history of the stormy years between 1919 and 1926. What they emphatically are not is the result of the cerebral outpourings of any particular individual. They constitute the dynamic balance-sheet of real forces which struggled in the arena of class struggle during a period in which the revolutionary battles of an entire century were compressed; battles which tested to the utmost the resolve with which communist parties would keep to their faith without deviating from its teachings. And Marxism would be nothing if it didn't know – like Marx and Lenin themselves – how to convert even defeat into a premise of victory. From this derives the profound significance and relevance of the 1926 theses.

It is therefore important to clarify how the many threads, which run through the Left's long battle fought inside the International, converge and are resolved in the *Lyon Theses*, and how we can use the theses to retrace our steps back to 1920, and uncover the connection between this battle and the series of historical events, of which it is both the dynamic summation, and the anticipator of future developments.

As the first two volumes of our *Storia della Sinistra* prove, it is an incontestable fact that the Left was the only section of the international socialist movement which adopted the same positions of *principle* towards the world war so ardently defended by Lenin and the small vanguard of the “Zimmerwald Left”. This meant

that at the time of the October Revolution, and for a couple of years after, only the Italian Left adhered to the Bolshevik dictatorship and its organ of leadership, the Russian party. Its support was also a lot deeper and more principled than the formalistic adhesion, inspired by casual enthusiasm, which followed the sudden conversion of the majority of the French Socialist Party; or the sudden rapprochement of International centrism, which even if we credit their “leaders” with sincerity – the most generous hypothesis – was demagogic and confused. Furthermore, it was the only section to assert, from the end of 1918 onward, that an irrevocable rupture was needed not only with the socialist right but also with even more treacherous centre, and that the formation of communist parties on the basis later set out at the 2nd Congress of the International in 1920 constituted the *essential conditions* for a revolutionary solution to the post-war crisis.

The stance taken by the Italian Left at the 2nd Congress (and remember it was participating without an official mandate as a mere “current” of the PSI) will therefore hardly surprise us. Not only did the Left support the main theses outlined at the congress, namely: on the role of the party within the revolutionary proletariat; on the conditions for the constitution of soviets; on the national and colonial questions, and on the union and agrarian questions, but it backed none of the official PSI delegation's objections to these theses (some of which would be resurrected later on in Italy or at future world congresses). The Left also made an important contribution to the formulation of the vitally important Conditions for Admission to the Communist International by insisting that they should be made even stricter, and above all safeguarded against the dangerous temptation of adapting them to “local” situations.

It is indeed true that at this congress Lenin and the Left disagreed about “revolutionary parliamentarism”, as the historiography of opportunism with its servile concoction of lies, omissions and distortions will never cease to remind us. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that the disagreement by no means marked a fundamental difference since the common objective was to get rid of democratic and parliamentary institutions by means of the revolutionary violence of the proletariat. Indeed, Lenin and Bukharin, in their theses on the use of the “electoral and parliamentary tribune”, clearly show that they considered such tactics as subordinate and temporary, and the disagreement revolved rather on a different evaluation of the effects of such a use: whilst Lenin considered it useful, the Left saw such a tactical measure as undermining the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat in the countries of fully developed capitalism, since it was bound to reinforce the, alas, deeply ingrained democratic tradition.

In fact, within the framework of this collective battle to erect within the International “insurmountable barriers” against reformism, the directives which the left proposed to the *entire* movement, whether concerning the programme or organisational methods of member

parties, already had the global perspective, the “decided once and for all” quality, which would later find definitive, lapidary expression in the *Lyon Theses*.

We emphasise that the Left’s perspective had not been shaped in the brain of any particular individual, but originated from the accumulated experience derived from the proletarian battles which had taken place in the West in countries with fully democratic regimes, with the inevitable corollaries reformism and centrism. And if it found expression as vigorous polemics against the leadership of the International, this was not out of a predilection for “theoretical luxuries”, or due to any scruples about moral integrity or aesthetic perfection, but was due to exquisitely “practical” motives – though let it be well understood that for Marxism, theory and action are dialectically inseparable. The Left’s attitude was shaped by a healthy preoccupation not so much with the present – that is with a historic phase which was far from having exhausted its revolutionary possibilities – but with the future Western and central Europe was at the heart of this preoccupation, since this area was considered with good cause as the keystone of communist global strategy, but the maturation of the subjective conditions for the revolution – above all the party – was lagging behind the development of the *objective* conditions since the historical situation tended to favour theoretical confusion, inefficiency and disorganisation. The *immediate* problem then for the proletarian movement of the time was the pressing necessity for a centralised, global leadership. In the firm grip of the party of Lenin and Trotsky the gaps that existed in the relatively “open” and “flexible” formulations could be seen as perhaps inevitable calculated risks. But what if *later* the gigantic revolutionary wave were to recede, the prospect of a rapid offensive faded, and the danger of “social-democratic recidivism” – as Trotsky put it – arose; a danger far more serious for a movement in retreat than on the eve of an insurrection? What would prevent the reformist scum, neither expelled from the parties nor incorporated into them, from rising to the top and corrupting the movement? With the war over, and with the prospect of revolution fading, it was easy enough for the Cachins and the Crispiens to accept the International’s theses on “power to the Soviets”; “dictatorship of the proletariat” and “the red terror”, and accept them with the same ease and impromptu haste as they had previously embraced the cause of national defence and imperialist war six years before. But surely once the objective pressures, which had produced this unconscious reaction on their part, were no longer there; the fissure separating them from genuine communists would widen once again to a chasm? And would even the International, leaving aside the external pressures that weighed on it as a result of inauspicious circumstances, be protected from what the *Lyon Theses* called “the repercussions the means of action have on the party in the dialectical play of cause and effect”?

There is an unbroken thread then which runs between 1920 and 1926, and this explains how the *Lyon Theses* were able to take up contemporary issues, draw les-

sons from them, and place them within a definitive general framework in such a way that they are still relevant to the new generations charged with the *real* balance-sheet of their practical realisation. The links in our dialectical chain then are already forged: doctrine, programme and system of tactical norms must form a united whole, be known to all, and binding on all, and the organisation must be homogeneous, disciplined and efficient. Once the party has mastered these conditions on which its very existence depends, it is capable of preparing itself and the proletariat for a revolutionary solution to the crises of capitalist society without jeopardising the possibility of rebuilding the revolutionary movement in periods of reaction. When the links in the chain start to slacken off, and once this slackening is justified on a theoretical level then all is lost; both the possibility of victory in mounting revolutionary situations, and the possibility of resurgence in periods of reaction. The party itself is then destroyed, for it can only be the organ of the revolution *insofar* as it has *anticipated*, thanks to consistent theory and practice, «*how a certain process will turn out when certain conditions have been realised*» (“*Lenin on the Path of the Revolution*”, 1924) and «*what we should do given various possible hypotheses on how objective situations might turn out*» (“*Lyon Theses*” - General section).

The history of the International is unfortunately also a history of a gradual departure from these cardinal principals; a history of *how the party was unintentionally destroyed* whilst trying to save it. 1926 is the year of “Socialism in One Country” and everything that necessarily goes with it (like “bolshhevization” and the crushing of the left opposition under the stifling rule of discipline for discipline’s sake) and the significance of this cursed formula is nothing other than the assassination of the world party. It is the year in which the Comintern really died and what followed was just a macabre dance around its coffin.

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The collapse would occur on three levels (kept separate merely for ease of exposition although in fact they overlap) which would finally converge and destroy the *genuine* unity of the international communist movement, and replace it, in 1926-27, with a merely superficial unity founded on authoritarianism, which was good merely to disguise, and endorse in advance, the complete freedom with which the central authority was wiping out every last trace of the original programme. Later on, when external pressure from the party “apparatus” and the Russian State power had finally ceased, a new purpose would be found for this merely formal “unity”; that of providing justification for a thousand and one “national roads” to an unrecognisable “socialism”. Let us then recall step-by-step how this tragedy unfolded.

We had persistently demanded that the communist parties, or, more precisely, the International as *one single* world communist party, should be constituted on the basis of a definite once-and-for-all, take-it-or-leave-it,

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theoretical and programmatic platform – something along the lines of the synthetic proclamation made in the first point of the *Lyon Theses* (General questions). This theoretical and programmatic platform would have to rigorously exclude not only ruling class doctrines: whether spiritualistic, religious and idealistic in philosophy, and reactionary in politics; or positivistic, Voltairean and free-thinking in philosophy, and masonic, anti-clerical and democratic in politics, but also other schools of thought which enjoyed a certain following in the working-class, namely: reformism, which is pacifist and gradualist; syndicalism, which devalues working-class political action and the necessity for the party as supreme revolutionary organ; anarchism, which repudiates the principle of the historical necessity for the State and of the dictatorship of the proletariat as means of transforming the social order and suppressing class divisions, and finally the spurious and ambiguous “Centrism”; which synthesises and condenses deviations analogous to the above under the cover of pseudo-revolutionary phraseology.

Despite the necessity for such a theoretical and programmatic barrier, it wouldn’t materialise. The French party – deaf to the union struggle, rotten to the core with the democratic and parliamentary virus, and even occasionally verging on the chauvinist (the Ruhr, Algeria) – was quick to take advantage of this state of affairs. It soon discovered that the famous “particular conditions in each country” was a very convenient basis on which to continually take issue with the central authority. Thus, through the breach opened up by the absence of a theoretical barrier stepped masonic and populist Jacobinism (Frossard! Cachin!). Meanwhile, the Scandinavian parties were busily engaged with their theory of “religion as a private affair”, and in 1923, with the last revolutionary tremor in Germany only a few months away, the entire Enlarged Executive Committee felt the obscure need to scratch this same itch – precisely when there was a pressing necessity to concentrate all forces on a potentially revolutionary outcome to the German crisis, whose negative or positive shockwaves would affect the entire movement. As a reaction against the prevailing gradualist and parliamentary atmosphere, the dormant syndicalism in the French party and the workerism in the German party would be revived and strengthened and encourage minimalist and democratic sentiments. And soon the mixture of Sorelianism and Idealism à la Benedetto Croce, advocated by the Ordine Nuovo current, would also be given the green light. The Ordine Nuovo, or “New Order” current, which had been kept severely “in line” when the International had stood firm on its initial positions and when the Italian party was led by the Left, would be given free rein when the tables were turned, and they arrived at the helm of the party under Moscow’s sponsorship. Finally, as though it was the industrial bourgeoisie announcing its latest product, the deadly theory of Socialism in One Country was launched in a blaze of publicity. This supreme insult to Marx, Engels and Lenin and a century of proletarian internationalism having been accomplished,

it was now a case of *anything goes* because nothing was *ruled out* by a clear, unvarying definition of doctrine and programme.

By providing a framework for the question of the relations between economic determinism and political will, between theory and action, and between class and party, the “General section” of the *Lyon Theses* would lay the foundations for a future rebirth of the movement by avoiding the stumbling-blocks of inert pacifism on the one hand, and frantic voluntarism on the other; and the orgy of so-called “bolshevization”, and the depressing saturnalias of “the building of socialism”, were but simply new versions of these mistaken responses.

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The Left had asked (and we now arrive at the *second* main feature of the International Party’s collapse) that even at the cost of a certain schematisation, one unique and binding set of tactical norms should be established which were firmly anchored to principles, and then – on this secure footing – linked to the forecast of a range of alternative possibilities which might emerge from the dynamic clash between the classes. To demand such a thing might appear tainted with abstraction, a metaphysical formula even, but events, the harsh events of the next forty years would prove that it was – to use a controversial adjective that stills causes much gnashing of teeth – a *very concrete* demand. We had seen how necessary it was when the “Conquest of the Masses” slogan was issued, then that of the “Political United Front”, and then the “Workers’ Government” slogan, and we had observed the main *organisational* repercussions which occurred as a result of the tortuous manoeuvres to win over reformist groups and even entire reformist and centrist party wings. Words, as well as slanderous statements, and especially watchwords and slogans, have their own peculiar destiny. The 4th Congress met on the cusp of a year of bitter failures (1922) and the equally agonised year of 1923 during which the first serious internal crisis, without Lenin’s steel resolve to resolve it, would shake the great Russian party (the *Letters to the Congress* of that year show how committed the great revolutionary was to steering the Executive Committee in a very different direction). Nevertheless new waves of proletarian struggles sweeps through Germany, Bulgaria and Estonia, and the first flames of revolt are ignited in the Orient. And yet within this setting of light and shade the guiding thread of great principles would gradually get lost, yielding to a tactical eclecticism that was completely unable to take advantage of the last chances which that historical phase was still providing.

This in its turn hastened the decline of the Bolshevik party, and thus the International. The events of those times show, as never before, to what extent unstable tactics react on principles and provoke a *chain reaction* at all levels. In the second section of the *Lyon Theses*, which deals with International Questions, the unfortunately inexorable process which would lead the Inter-

national from its years of glory to a state of complete degeneration is referred to, but it is nevertheless worth going into further detail.

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Whilst the events we referred to earlier were taking place, the fascists had come to power in Italy and launched an offensive against the communist movement. In 1923 the main leaders of the Left wing of the Communist Party of Italy were arrested and prevented from speaking out in that crucial year. Meanwhile in Germany, there was an immense crash of the Mark; the French occupation of the Ruhr; generalised turmoil amongst all social strata, and the appearance on the scene of the first nucleus of the nazi party (NSDAP). The Communist party in Germany, after common action by the brother parties on either side of the Rhine had failed to materialise, would be faced with the thankless task of “choosing” which of the many possible interpretations of the United Front and “workers’ government” most conformed to the theses of the 4th Congress and to the German situation. Faced with this dilemma, the “two spirits” which co-existed in the party (and which had done so since its formation) disagreed on both issues. As regards the united front, the question was; should unity be brought about “from above” – a viewpoint defended and recommended by the leaders – or “from below”, as defended and preached by a wavering and fluctuating “left-wing”? As for the question of “workers’ government”, the leaders took this to mean parliamentary support for a social democratic government (though in the sense of a social-democratic/communist government coalition), and, because of the ruling bourgeois government’s policy of promoting passive resistance to the heavy blows inflicted by the allied forces, there was a policy of benevolent neutrality towards them. But did not “workers’ government” really mean *«the general mobilisation of the masses towards a revolutionary taking of power»*? This latter position was the one defended, though in an undefined way, by the “left-wing” minority.

Disagreements weren’t however confined to these two relatively recent issues. New questions had arisen after masses of frequently armed workers, particularly in the Ruhr and Rhineland, began attacking *both* the occupying forces *and* the bourgeois national government, giving corporeal form to the spectres of the 1921 “March Action”: should these courageous actions be considered merely as examples of infantile “adventurism” and stopped (the leadership’s position, who pleading the unpreparedness of the masses, and pointing to the over-optimistic estimation of the balance of forces made by the “left” current, would defend their position by seeking refuge on the slippery slope to “legalitarianism” which they would noisily proclaim towards the middle of the year) or, on the contrary, should efforts be made to co-ordinate the struggles, and provide leadership and discipline, as the Left maintained – correct in line of principle, but in a rather

rhetorical and activist way rather than being the result of careful consideration?

The confusion and disarray which this criss-crossing of contradictory directives was causing in the party, precisely at a time when the social and political atmosphere was hotting up, prompted the Comintern Executive to organise a “reconciliation conference” in April 1923 to remedy the situation. Here the leadership’s tactics were condemned, on the one hand, as showing a tendency towards “adaption of the communist party to the reformist leaders”, whilst on the other hand the minority’s impatience and calls for “immediate revolution” were curbed. But gangrene was already infecting the wound and conferences alone were not enough to effect a cure – even if they were of the “reconciliation” variety. As Moscow went on to issue increasingly contradictory instructions, as fast as one wound was patched up, another would open. And worse was yet to come.

At first tentatively, then increasingly explicitly, the way was being cleared in the ruling circles of the party for a much more elastic interpretation of the “conquest of the majority” slogan. Rather than the formula being restricted to the sense of conquest of the broadest strata of the proletariat, its meaning would be extended to include the conquest of “the people”, understood in a generic and imprecise sense, in general. In order to accomplish this, so the leaders said, it was necessary to address an appeal to the afflicted petty-bourgeois masses, who were victims both of the devaluation of the Mark, and of nightmarish visions of revamped nationalism. Attracting this layer of society would only be possible by attempting to show them (proclaimed the leadership on May 17th) that they could *«only defend themselves and the future of Germany by allying themselves with the communists against the real (?) bourgeoisie»* and entrusting the guardianship of “German national values” to the party organisation. A slogan that had been fiercely stigmatised in 1921 when a small workerist group proclaimed it – “National Bolshevism” – now resurfaced again, but this time the International didn’t respond. Such a highly erroneous notion as this was the horrible fruit of two monumental deviations from Marxism. The first consisted in more or less explicitly equating the national question in the colonies or semi-colonies, with the national question in a country in the highest phase of capitalism (the Enlarged Executive of June 12-23 wouldn’t hesitate in declaring: *«strong insistence on the national element in Germany is AS MUCH a revolutionary fact as insistence on the national element in the colonies»*; and as if this wasn’t bad enough, Radek would now declare in the notorious “Schlageter Address” that, *«what is known as German nationalism isn’t just nationalism; it is a large national movement with significant revolutionary content»*). And as for Zinoviev, in his closing speech to the Executive he would rejoice at the fact that a bourgeois newspaper had recognised the finally assumed character of the KPD as “national-bolshevik”, and see this as proof that the party had finally acquired a mass “psychology”).

The Left, for the reasons given previously, wasn’t

able to make itself heard during this dramatic turn of events, and would have to wait until the eve of the 5th Congress to declare that: *«We deny that it is possible to justify a rapprochement in Germany between the communist movement and the national and patriotic movement on the basis alluded to [the theses of the 2nd Congress on national and colonial questions]. Despite the pressure exerted by the Entente powers on Germany, acute and oppressive though it is, we mustn't allow ourselves to conclude that Germany is to be equated with a small country with an undeveloped capitalism. Germany is still an extremely large country, formidably equipped in the capitalist sense, and with a proletariat which politically and socially is more than advanced [...] It is a terrible minimisation of the great German proletariat to restrict its' task to mere national emancipation. This proletariat and its' revolutionary party is expected to win not for itself, but in order to safeguard the existence and economic evolution of Russia and the Soviets; to engulf the western fortresses of capital in the deluge of the World revolution [...] Thus, forgetting that communist political solutions originate from principles can lead to political solutions being applied when the conditions that prompted them aren't there, under the pretext that any expedient, no matter how complicated it be, can be useful»*. (A. Bordiga, "Il Comunismo e la Questione Nazionale", article in Prometeo, No. 4 - April 15th, 1924). For our interpretation of fascism, see the two reports given by Bordiga to the 4th and 5th congresses of the Communist International. This text appears in Italian in "Comunismo" no 12, and in French in "La Gauche Communiste" no 7.

The second deviation from marxism resided in more or less explicitly condoning the notion that an autonomous revolutionary potential existed in the petty bourgeoisie (citing Radek again: the KPD must show itself to be not only *«the party which struggles for the industrial workers' bread, but the party of the proletarianised fighting for their liberty, a liberty coinciding with the liberty of the entire people, with the liberty of all who labour and suffer in Germany»*). It is a short step from this to interpreting fascism as *against* big capital – when in fact the opposite is the case, i.e., fascism is the mobilisation of the petty-bourgeoisie at the instigation of and in the interests of big capital *against* the proletariat.

As part of its drive to attract the petty-bourgeois "vagabonds in the void", the KPD would masquerade as fellow travellers of the nazi NSPD; and with speakers from both groups alternating on the same platforms to fulminate against Versailles and Poincare, it would cause consternation and dismay even amongst the Czech party! This "honeymoon period" would only last, it is true, for a few months in 1923, but, to the shame of the KPD, the de facto break in the "alliance" was instigated not by them but by the nazis!

An inexorable chain of events had therefore been set in motion. During the meeting of the Enlarged Executive in June there was no serious discussion about the increasingly explosive German situation, and it was

decided instead to agonise over such issues as Norwegian "federalism"; the Swedish party's "neutralism" towards matters of religion; and the umpteenth attempt at a merger between the Italian Communist and Socialist parties – despite the high price demanded by the latter... not to merge at all. By not making firm decisions, the Enlarged Executive endorsed the theses of the leadership of the KPD that it should become a pole of attraction for the proletarianized petty-bourgeois masses by nurturing their dreams of national redemption.

And yet the German problem in 1923 was in fact an exquisitely *international* issue, and the "nationalist programme of revolution" was the worst of solutions since it would have the inevitably damaging repercussions of stoking up conservative and counter-revolutionary tendencies amongst the French and British petty-bourgeoisie, thus cancelling out any hypothetical advantages that "conquering" the petty bourgeoisie, on *such* bastard terrain, might confer in the Weimar republic. None of the resolutions made by the Executive betray the least hint of these dangers. In fact, using a parallel logic, the Executive decided to extend the application of the slogan "Workers' Government", and, entranced by the proliferation of peasant parties, not just in the Balkans but also in the United States (La Follette), the new slogan would become "workers' and Peasants' government" *in all countries*, including Germany! It is true that the theses certainly warn against a parliamentary and social revolutionary interpretation of the new tactical recipe; but the first interpretation was, as we have seen, authorised by the indeterminacy and possibilisms of the 4th Congress, whilst the second derived from a mechanical and crude transplantation of the slogan "Workers and Peasants Dictatorship" from countries on the eve of a double revolution, to countries of ultra-developed capitalism. Yet another defining feature which had always distinguished the revolutionary marxist party from all other parties had now been discarded.

Less and less anchored on firm principles, the International allowed itself to be blinded yet again by contingency and the fear of being overtaken by social democracy in "conquering the masses". The vitally important issue of a forceful push towards the poor peasantry was now presented in terms of a manoeuvre, which in the space of a few years would be theorised into an *autonomous global* role for the peasant class: a theory which fails to consider the peasant class in terms of its varied and contradictory components, or to make any precise characterisation of its relations with the industrial and agrarian proletariat, both in the highly developed capitalist countries and in the immense colonial and semi-colonial areas, especially Asia. This theorisation will be carried out by Bukharin in particular from the time of the 5th Enlarged Executive in March 1925 (this matter is referred to in part 2 of the *Lyon Theses*).

And yet the *pivotal* point in that decisively important year of 1923 was nevertheless still Germany. In fact we can say that the tactical oscillations and eclecticism of the Comintern in response to the German situation

in the 2nd half of 1923 (worse even than the bungling in Bulgaria and Estonia, episodes we won't deal with here), mark the disastrous turning-point which prepared the way to the defeats in China and England, and for the fatal crisis which would beset the Russian party, and therefore the International, in the ensuing years.

Moscow had for a long time adopted a passive stance towards events in Germany, perhaps because of the lack of consistency and homogeneity of the KPD, but suddenly, in July 1923, the International decided to sound the alarm about the fascist peril and express its conviction (whether well-founded or not is another issue) that a pre-revolutionary cycle was about to start up. Yet nevertheless the directives remained cautious and vague for a long time to come. When Moscow sanctioned the cancellation, following a government ban, of the great "anti-fascist day" previously fixed for 23 July, it had the knock-on effect of rekindling the disagreements between the leadership and the German left; between red-hot Berlin and the sleepy provinces; between an already mobilised proletariat and the sluggish "labour aristocracy". At the beginning of August, with the Cuno government clearly in its death throes, the leadership of the KPD decided the time had come to mobilise the masses under the watchword "Workers' and Peasants' Government", whilst from its Berlin stronghold the "Left-wing" decided that *«the intermediate phase of the workers' government is becoming, in practice, ever more unlikely»*. With a new wave of impressive strikes breaking out everywhere, and in the confusion caused by this bewildering succession of conflicting instructions, big capital, having definitely decided to liquidate the campaign of "passive resistance" against the occupation of the Ruhr (which had failed anyway) and reconcile itself to the Entente, and particularly with England – installed Stresemann in power.

The reaction from Moscow was by now almost predictable. Suddenly, its earlier wait-and-see policy, which was fundamentally pessimistic, was transformed into the most frenetic optimism: *«Revolution is knocking at the doors of Germany – wrote the organ of the Profintern in September – it is only a matter of months»*. Amidst generalised confusion, and with the entire general staff of the KPD in attendance, Moscow decided that preparations for the storming of power should be made immediately, and even a date was fixed. But what was the basis for this decision? On that score there was no doubt, it was because the 4th Congress supported it, which in their turn had been backed by the 3rd Enlarged Executive. On October 1st, at the very peak of the economic and social crisis, Zinoviev advised Brandler, the secretary of the German party, that he reckoned *«the decisive moment would be within four, five or six weeks»*, and that it was therefore *«necessary [...] to pose in concrete form the problem of our entry into the Saxon government [dominated by social-democrats] on condition that Zeigner [the president of the reformist council] and his followers are really disposed to defend Saxony against Bavaria and the fascists»*. Thus despite the betrayals of 1918, 1919, and 1921,

faith is entrusted in the social democrats' "will" to renounce being... themselves! In the short pamphlet entitled *Problems of the German Revolution* written at this precise juncture by the President of the International, Zinoviev correctly declared that *«the next German revolution would be a classical proletarian revolution»* (that is "pure"). However his estimation of the level of discipline of the German Proletariat and of their general organisational ability was wildly optimistic, for along with the German worker's undoubted talent for organisation went an obsession with it which both Rosa Luxemburg in 1918, and Trotsky in 1920, had discerned as one of the causes of failure in the crucial test of war – in the absence of strong leadership from the party. Wildly optimistic too was Zinoviev's appraisal of the German workers' "culture" (the other face of a large labour aristocracy) and he would also attribute a revolutionary role *«to the petty-bourgeois city-dwellers, minor and middle-ranking officials, small traders etc.»*, and end up hypothesizing that *«the role played in the Russian Revolution by the war-weary peasantry, will be assumed, up to a point, in the German Revolution by the large petty-bourgeois masses in the cities, propelled by the development of capitalism to the brink of disaster and the economic precipice»* !!

In this incredible evaluation a shadow lurks nonetheless. Whilst according to Zinoviev there was no doubt that the united front had achieved the desired aim of drawing into the struggle *«the most backward strata of the working class, bringing them closer to the revolutionary vanguard»*; and that *«the time when the enormous majority of German workers, who today still place their hopes in Social-democracy, will finally convince themselves that the decisive struggle must be conducted without and against both the right and left wings of the SPD is drawing near»*, nevertheless, still the hour had not yet sounded. For it to sound, a whole new "round" of further experiences was necessary, and not only of the political united front, but also of "workers'" coalition governments, and that was why communists should enter the Saxon Government, with the dual aim of *«1) helping the revolutionary vanguard of Saxony to find its feet and to occupy a fixed area, making it the launching pad for future battles, and; 2) giving left-wing social-democrats the chance to expose their politics in practice, thus disappointing and dispelling the last illusions of social-democratic proletarians»*!! On the other hand, the experiment of Government involvement, which could happen only *«with the agreement of the Comintern»* makes sense *«only if it offers firm guarantees that the State apparatus is starting to genuinely serve the interests of the working class, only if hundreds of thousands of workers are armed for the struggle against Bavarian and German fascism in general, and only if, not only in words but in facts, mass expulsions of bourgeois functionaries from the State apparatus commenced... and that economic measures of a revolutionary character be introduced without delay such as to hit the bourgeoisie in a decisive way»*. Put in another way, according to the famous telegram from Zinoviev to Brandler of the 1st October, it was nec-

essary to «arm 50 to 60 thousand men in Saxony immediately..., and the same in Thuringia».

At this point everything is contradictory: there is the announcement of a revolutionary situation which is allegedly “favoured” by the intervention of the great petty-bourgeois masses in a subversive capacity – although it is stated that it will take place within a parliamentary-governmental framework; praises are heaped on the successes of the united front for drawing the greater part of the working class towards the party – although this will mean submitting to a coalition with the most discredited of the World’s social-democracies; there are sermons about “the conquest of power” by classical revolutionary means – though a government with a social-democratic majority is supposed to implement the measures of arming the proletariat, expelling bourgeois officials and introducing dictatorial measures against the bourgeoisie; it is resolved to “unmask” the SPD by such means – when in fact all that’s achieved is that the communists end up erasing all the distinguishing features of *their own* party; there is the claim by the KPD that by revealing the SPD’s failure it «would use facts to convince the majority of the German working class that they were not just a vanguard, as in 1919-21, but had millions of workers behind them» – although they present the latter with the humiliating and shameful *reality* of a government alliance in which three communist ministers, including the party secretary Brandler, are bound hand and foot to the social-democratic ministers, the murderers of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

Moreover, at a time when «they have millions and millions of proletarians behind them», they don’t call on them to take power, but to wait patiently and trust to their reformist accomplices to supply a few guns! In other words a coalition is proclaimed on the eve of the insurrection! The scorn which Trotsky heaped on such a relapse into (even worse) capitulatory hesitations by the Bolshevik minority when faced with the conquest of power in October 1917 was certainly justified, even if, evading the main question, he didn’t see that this “social democratic recidivism” was the direct *result* of the “elastic” tactics of the united front and “worker’s government”, which he himself had supported and defended both before and after 1925. Trotsky expected to utilise and then immediately after surmount the “algebraic formulae” of the “united front” and the “workers’ government”, in order to put the question of the revolutionary conquest of power in its full magnitude and urgency. A brilliant analysis of Trotsky’s audacious interpretation, along with our criticisms, appeared in an article called “La politica dell’Internazionale”, published in issue no.15 of “L’Unità” in October, 1925. This text analyses very clearly the process of involution of the C.I. and was an essential contribution to the ongoing revolutionary battle. It has been republished in our Italian review *Comunismo*, no. 15, in our “History of the Left” series.

The date of the insurrection in Germany is then fixed... to be launched from the springboard of a social-democratic/communist government, then the German

party HQ exert their influence to have it postponed; everything happens as though revolution was a *technical* matter, not the result of a very timely and precise objective situation and of adequate subjective preparation by the party (which in fact for months had been preaching to proletarians about the virtues of semi-legal methods, of steering the party towards this or that group, and about trusting to governmental and quasi-governmental solutions). The party is cautioned to make sure that «in today’s Germany, which has reached a turbulent boiling point, and where today or tomorrow the vanguard will launch the decisive conflict drawing the proletarian heavy infantry behind it, the correct tactic of the united front isn’t converted into its exact opposite». However, everything is done to ensure that precisely such an eventuality arises, and in one or two of the regional States, isolated in the great ocean of Germany (whose central power is completely in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the more or less regular troops of Bavaria, eternal reserve of the German counter-revolution) the party policy is to chain itself to the cart of a social-democracy with a proven record of betrayal. It is proclaimed that: «In Germany on the eve of revolution, the general formula of the “Peasants’ and Workers’ government” is already inadequate... and we must, not only by propaganda but by mass agitation, show and make clear, not only to the vanguard but also to the masses, that it is a matter of nothing less than the proletarian dictatorship, or the dictatorship of the workers in the cities and the fields», and all this can be achieved, it is claimed, whilst remaining in a social democratic Government which specifically *excludes* dictatorship and terror both in its programme and in its traditions.

The epilogue to the whole sorry affair is played out a few days later. On 20th October, the central government of the Reich dispatched an ultimatum to the government of Saxony calling for the immediate dissolution of the still tiny workers’ militias, threatening that if not obeyed the Reichswehr would be put on standby. The party decides to declare a general strike throughout Germany, but, lacking confidence both in itself and uncertain of getting support from proletarians disorientated by the conflicting instructions and contradictory objectives, Brandler thinks he should first “consult” the masses – represented by a meeting of workers, political functionaries and unions at Chemnitz – and then, convinced it was no longer the best moment, the order to cease work is cancelled. One Reichswehr detachment is enough to depose the Saxon Government, but a delay in the notice of cancellation of the strike to the Hamburg proletariat means that there is an isolated strike there which is crushed by force within 24 hours. Instead of the proletariat marching under the leadership of the party the marching would be left to the army, led by the Kaiserist generals retained in their posts by Ebert and Scheidemann. Any focus of resistance would be rapidly stifled: the German episode of 1923 was over.

It would be easy in the course of the following months, particularly for the Plenum of the Moscow



Executive of 8-12 January 1924, to blame the disaster on the insufficiencies, errors and weaknesses of the German leadership. But it would be just as easy for the latter to respond that, small errors apart, they had in fact been abiding by Comintern directives, themselves conforming to the resolutions of the 4th Congress. In order to salvage the salvageable, namely the “unity” of a chronically divided party, the leadership would be reshuffled and the “culprits” condemned, though the latter would be retained as a suspect minority in the new “left-wing” leadership; a leadership which a year later would be recognised as... a lot worse than the one before. But worst of all, accompanying all this was the umpteenth global scale “tactical switch”.

Henceforth, there was to be *no more united front from above* – as had been practised by various parties, particularly the German party, because of “a mistaken interpretation” of the resolutions of the 4th Congress – instead *united front from below* was to be the order of the day: *«The moment has come to openly proclaim that we are renouncing all negotiations with the Central Committee of German social-democracy and the central leadership of the German trade-unions; we have nothing to discuss with the representatives of social-democracy. Unity from below, that is our watchword. The united front from below, already in part accomplished, is now feasible even in opposition to the aforementioned gentlemen»*. There was to be *no more* subtle distinctions between right and left wing social-democrats: *«the social-democrats of the right are open traitors; those of the left, on the other hand, only conceal the counter-revolutionary actions of the Eberts, Noskes and Scheidemanns under phrases. The KPD rejects any negotiations not only with the leadership of the SPD but also with the leaders of the “left-wing”, at least until these heroes find the courage to break with the counter-revolutionary gang led by the social-democratic party»* [the front door is closed but the back door left open].

The interpretation according to which the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government was *«a Government within the framework of bourgeois democracy, as a political alliance with social-democracy»* was held no longer possible: *«the slogan of the workers’ and peasants’ Government, translated into revolutionary language, is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat... it is never, in any case, a tactic of agreement and parliamentary trans-action with the social-democrats. Quite the contrary, even the parliamentary activity of communists mustno more opposing «better governments» to «worse Governments»: «fascism and social-democracy are the right and left hand of contemporary capitalism»*.

The 5th Congress of the Communist International, taking place between 17th June - 8th July 1924, on the one hand reflected the profound confusion of the various parties after two disastrous years of abrupt tactical about-turns and ambiguous edicts; even Togliatti asked for it to be clearly stated *exactly* what one was supposed to be doing! And on the other, reaffirmed the practice of crucifying the leaders of the national sections on the altar of the Executive’s infallibility. Once

again, the Left raised its *lone* voice, firmly but calmly shunning local and personal fripperies. If it had ever been in the habit of congratulating itself on the correctness of its predictions, the proletarian blood spilled in vain being the terrible proof of it; or of calling for the heads of “guilty” and “corrupt” leaders to roll to make way for more “innocent” and “incorruptible” heads, then this was the moment.

But that wasn’t what the Left asked for or wanted: what it asked for and wanted was for the scalpel to be courageously applied, to surgically remove those deviations from principle of which those “errors” were the inevitable product and the “heads” merely the chance expression. “United front from below”? Fine: *on condition* that the loophole of the “exceptions” put forward in the initial proposal was closed, and on condition that an unequivocal statement was made to the effect that the United Front *«could never be founded on a block of political parties... but only founded on working-class organisations, of no matter what type as long as their constitutions were such that communists would be able to conquer the leading positions»*. No invitations to join the united front then to other political organisations, like the left and right social-democrats, who *were unable «to struggle on the final road to world communist revolution»* or *«even uphold the day-to-day interests of the working class»*, and to whom it would have been criminal *«for us to appear to be giving a certificate of revolutionary capacity, thus throwing away all our principles, all our work preparing the working class»*. Struggle against social democracy “the third bourgeois party”? Certainly; but how then to justify, in that case, the new “bombshell” of the proposed fusion between the International Red Union and the hated Trade-Union International of Amsterdam? Workers’ Government *«synonymous with dictatorship of the proletariat»*? We had paid too dearly for employing just one ambiguous phrase: we called for *«a third-class funeral not only for the tactic of Workers’ Government, but even for the very expression itself»*. We called for this because *«dictatorship of the proletariat, this tells you: the proletarian power will be exercised without giving any power of representation to the bourgeoisie. This also tells you that proletarian power can be conquered only by revolutionary action, through armed insurrection of the masses. When you say Workers’ Government, it can also be understood (if one so wishes) to mean the same thing; but, if you choose not to interpret it in that way, you can take it to mean (Germany! Germany!) another type of government, one characterised neither by the exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the organs of political representation, nor one achieved through the conquest of power by revolutionary means (rather than by legal means)»*. But isn’t the formula of “workers’ government” more easily understood by the masses, came the response? To which we replied: *«How can a simple peasant or worker understand the concept of the Workers’ Government, when, after three years, we, the leaders of the workers’ movement, haven’t even managed to understand it and define it in a satisfactory way ourselves?»*.

## Lyon Theses - Introduction

But the problem went deeper still. The International veering “to the left” in 1925 might have brought us some comfort, if we had posed the problem in terms of a petty revenge. But we didn’t see it that way: *«What we have actually criticised in the International’s method of work is the tendency to sway from left to right to suit particular situations, or to suit various interpretations of these situations. As long as the problems of flexibility, and a highly questionable eclecticism are not discussed in depth, as long as this flexibility continues and new oscillations take place, a swing to the left inevitably makes one fear an even bigger swing to the right (need we add that precisely that happened in ensuing years?). In the current situation it isn’t a swing to the left we need, but a total rectification of the instructions issuing from the International: this rectifying might not be done in the way we suggest but do it nonetheless, and in a clear-cut way. We want to know where we are heading».*

And finally: it is us, the Left, who want global centralisation and discipline more than anyone; but such discipline *«can’t be entrusted to the good will of this or that comrade, who after twenty meetings or so signs an agreement in which the Left and Right are finally united».* It is *«in reality, in action, in leading the proletarian revolutionary movement towards global unity»* that this discipline can be achieved, and to achieve that *«we need clear tactics and organisations constituted on a coherent basis, with clear boundaries set between other parties and ourselves».* The Left dared to announce to this congress (which scarcely touched on the Russian question, as though it were a dangerous taboo) that the “assurance” against a relapse into opportunism shouldn’t be sought any longer in the Russian party alone, because it was the Russian party which needed, urgent need, of us, and in us searches for the “assurance” which we, in vain, require of it. *«The time has come for the world proletariat’s International to render to the Russian CP some of the innumerable services it has received from it.* From the point of view of the revisionist danger, the latter finds itself in the most dangerous situation of all, and the other parties must help bolster it against this danger. It is from the International that it must draw most of the strength it will require to get through the extremely difficult situation with which it is grappling» (All these quotations are from a speech made by the Left’s representative at the 5th Congress of the International. They are drawn from the German account of the conference, pp.394-406. The Italian account which appeared in Nos. 7-8, 1924 of *Stato Operaio* is incomplete, whilst the French account is scandalously mutilated).

A great battle, a lost battle! The internal crisis in the Bolshevik Party would be accentuated by the debacle of the German October. The reflux of the revolution in the West and the opportunist theorisations concocted to explain it would spawn the monstrosity of “socialism in one country”. United front “from below” gave way to renewed enthusiasm for united front from above, and in Germany there were even waltzings with bour-

geois radicalism. In Italy, during the Matteotti crisis, there was Gramsci’s disastrous proposal, to the “oppositions”, of constituting an anti-parliament, a proposal that again attributed an autonomous role to the petty-bourgeoisie and paved the way to the “popular fronts” against fascism. There was the ignoble doctrine of “the means justify the end”, vouched for by a scholasticised “Marxism-Leninism” which had sunk to relying on vulgar Machiavellian formulas, and so on and so forth. To each of these falsehoods there is a reply in the general part of the *Lyon Theses* (the International and Italian parts which sum up the “historical background” we don’t stress quite as much). What followed is well known: the emasculated international became a pliable instrument of Russian foreign policy and abandoned every one of its principles. Eventually the Comintern itself would be dissolved in order to obtain a war alliance with the “democracies”; and to clear the way to all the ignominies of the post-war period.

\* \* \*

We have seen – and we now arrive at the third aspect of the *debacle* – that running in parallel with the tactical manoeuvres (in fact anticipating them to a certain extent), and in the continued false belief that it was possible to speed up the concentration of large proletarian forces around the Party, a process had got underway of gradually abandoning the rigorous organisational criteria which the *Twenty-one Points* had vindicated as the necessary premise for constituting the International on a sound and consistent basis. The idea began to gain hold, opposed by us, that there was still possibly room for manoeuvre, with a view to recognising “national peculiarities”, within the draconian “conditions of admission”. It was precisely in homage to such “peculiarities” that the International accepted virtually the entire French ex-Socialist party as members with the only outcome being that one was increasingly obliged to admit, as each new session of the International went by, that one was faced with the badly disguised spectre of the same old parliamentarist, and even chauvinist, social-democracy. Earlier still, the International had endorsed the fusion of the KPD with the “left-wing” Independents, and here again the only outcome was the spectacle of the latter edging themselves out again after having caused widespread contamination in the party and aggravating the original ailments. The International was practising at the summit precisely that “federalism”, i.e. towards the Italian Socialist Party, which the Norwegian and Danish parties were reproached for in 1923, and the same thing would happen in each country every time there arose the vaguest possibility of recruiting *numerically* greater forces. Eventually alongside the communist parties, self-styled sympathiser parties would be welcomed on a virtually equal footing into the ranks of the revolutionary international.

Now that a whole series of tactical innovations was being reeled off and breathing life into the centrifugal currents which lay dormant within every party, with

the string of sudden changes generating confusion and disillusionment amongst even the most hardened militants, the question of “discipline” was inevitably posed not as the natural and organic product of a prior theoretical homogeneity and a healthy convergence of practical action, but as a sick reflection of the operational discontinuity and the lack of doctrinal harmony. To the same degree that errors, deviations and capitulations were identified, and attempts made to remedy them by rearranging Central Committees and Executives, the “iron fist” was also applied, and idealized as the standard method within the Comintern and its sections; and used as a highly effective antidote not against adversaries and false friends, but against fellow comrades. The era of the infernal merry-go-round of trials against... *ourselves*, had begun, which the Left would describe at the 6th Enlarged Executive, as: “the sport of humiliation and ideological terrorism” (often instigated by “humiliated ex-opponents”): and you don’t get trials without gaolers.

Discipline towards the programme in its original, clear and precise form was no longer observed; it was said that any confusion arising from this lack of discipline could be prevented by recreating “genuine Bolshevik parties” *in vitro*. And we all know how these caricatures of Lenin’s party turned out under Stalin’s heel. At the 4th Congress they warned: “Discipline can be guaranteed only by defining the boundaries within which our methods are applicable, by clearly defining our programmes and fundamental tactical resolutions, and through our organisational measures”. At the 5th Congress we repeated that it was pointless pursuing dreams of a trouble free discipline if clarity and accuracy was lacking in the fields on which all discipline and organisational homogeneity depended; that indulging in dreams of a single world party would be in vain if the continuity and the prestige of the international organ was continually being destroyed by conceding, not only to the periphery but to the leaders, the “freedom to choose” the principles which determined practical action and therefore action itself; and that it was hypocritical to invoke the idea of “bolshevisation” if it didn’t signify intransigent ends, and adherence of the means to these ends.

Since a military style discipline was still not considered enough, a new organisational recipe was unearthed: the parties would be *reconstructed* (only five years after their formation!) on the basis of the factory cell considered as a model deriving from the historical patrimony of Bolshevism. A *form*, then, was supposed to solve the definitively revolutionary problem of *force*. We responded that a formula which was suitable for pre-1917 Russia and *never* promoted as an immutable dogma by Lenin couldn’t just be transposed to the West, and that to apply it mechanically would mean a clear break with the principles which govern the formation, and the real genesis and development, of the revolutionary party. What it in fact meant was a relapse into “labourism” (6th Enlarged Executive), since the Marxist party isn’t definable simply in terms of the social composition of its members, but by the direction it takes.

The party is that much more vital and alive precisely insofar as it avoids becoming imprisoned within the narrow and corporative horizons of the factory-gaol. We demonstrated how this “revision”, vaunted as an antidote to bureaucratisation, would, on the contrary, result in a hypertrophy of officialdom since all that remained to link cell to cell and factory to factory was precisely... officialdom.

We extended the question to include a much wider and more general problem which in 1925-26 incorporated all the questions destined to consume the Russian Party during its internal struggle, we denounced – before it was too late – the frantic and manic “struggle against factionalism”; the witch-hunt that would celebrate its saturnalias during the ignoble campaign against the Russian Left in 1926-28, a witch-hunt which had been shunned by the Bolshevik party in its glorious heyday, *even against* the open enemy (destroyed if necessary, but not subjected to the cowardly act of mud-slinging) and which, spreading beyond the borders of the Russian State, would produce first the obscene figure of the public prosecutor, then the professional informer, and finally the executioner. Just as the proletarian revolution is bountiful, so the counter-revolution is cannibalistic (Marx’s words). The first sign of the counter-revolutionary “star” in the ascendant – sign, not cause will be the ferocious, slimy, hypocritical cannibalism of “Leninist” phraseology, and no-one will practise it with more zeal than the Johnny-come-lately recruits, the “converted” mensheviks, the sackcloth-and-ashes social patriots and the inevitable “yes” men who gathered in the encroaching gloom, they who had been “no” men, or at most “maybe” men, in the great light which we thought would never be blotted out again.

From here on we would expand on the even more burning issue of salvaging the October Revolution in the crucial year of 1926. We launched a last appeal, despite all the prohibitions and the threatened sanctions (which were anything but metaphorical) calling on all parties and their world congresses to discuss the crisis in the Russian party: «*since the Russian Revolution is the first big step towards World Revolution, it is also our revolution, its problems are our problems, and every member of the revolutionary International has not only the right but the duty to contribute towards resolving it*» (6th Enlarged Executive). We knew only too well that it was *a crisis in the Communist International* which was at issue. Broaching a subject which today’s historians have turned topsy-turvy (it’s their job!) we would recall that the greatness of the Russian party lay in their application of a strategy and tactics forecast for the fully evolved capitalisms to a backward country, within the framework of a *global* vision of the October Revolution. In order to build a solid foundation to combat rehearsed opportunism, the International should «*seek solutions to the strategic questions*» (especially those concerning the relations between the victorious dictatorship of the Russian proletariat and the struggling proletariat in the rest of the world, between the State and the Party and, very importantly, between the State

and the Communist International and also concerning the immense arc of the world revolutionary strategy and associated tactics) *«solutions which aren't circumscribed by the Russian experience»*. We appealed not for a plastering over of the cracks but for a *radical change* in the *modus operandi* of the International. There is no such thing as a perfect party, and in the case of the Russian party in 1926 the “subjective” guarantee of non-corruption – inevitably uncertain and relative – had become irrelevant in any case since it was not secondary matters but central questions of principle which divided this stupendous organ of theoretical and practical battle which had once been the party of Red October. If that powerful bulwark of the world revolution of the passionate post-war years were to be saved from the impending menace of a “veer to the right” *now or never!*

The meeting of the 6th Enlarged Executive in February 1926 marked the end of the C.I as the International Communist Party. It was the last time the Left put in an official appearance. See the Left's report on this meeting in “Comunismo” no 1; there is also the Protokoll Erweiterte Exekutive, etc, Moskau, 17 Februar bis 15 Marz 1926, pp. 122-144, 283-289, 517, 577, 609-611 and *passim*.

As the Left had urged in vain at each successive Congress, the communist proletarian movement had to be reconstructed from top to bottom on the basis of the “lessons of October”, and a frank and fearless appraisal of the action of the Communist International. The *Lyon Theses* and the associated commentary presented to the Enlarged Executive of February-March 1926, were meant to bring this to the attention of an endangered revolutionary Russia as a contribution from the international movement. We were gagged and dispersed: but even if our appeal, our contribution, would fall on deaf ears, it is relevant for the present and future generations.

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It would be non-marxist to seek the sole explanation for a catastrophe that is still sending out shock-waves today in the deviations of the Comintern from 1922 to 1926. Too many factors had converged, too

many objective determinations had ensured that the course of history was, and was bound to be precisely as it was. The party's actions are nevertheless an objective element, and, in given circumstances, a crucial element. Recognising the origins of opportunism, we said at the 4th Enlarged Executive, didn't mean, nor could it mean, accepting opportunism as an inevitable, historically necessary fact: *«even if the economic situation and future prospects are unfavourable to us, or relatively unfavourable, we shouldn't accept opportunist deviations in a spirit of resignation, or justify them under the pretext that their causes reside in the objective situation, and if, despite everything an internal crisis does occur»*, we declared at the 4th Enlarged Executive, *«its causes and the means to cure it must be sought elsewhere, that is, in the work and the politics of the party»*. A curious deduction: in the eyes of an International whose congresses had eventually ended up as shabby trials where parties, groups and individuals would be called to account for the tragic setbacks in Europe and the World, which all came to be explained as the product of “unfavourable circumstances” and “adverse” situations.

In fact it wasn't trials which were needed but a radical critical revision based on impersonal facts which aimed to uncover the infinitely complex play of cause and effect between objective and subjective factors, and which showed that although the influence of party on these objective facts – considered for a moment in themselves independently of our collective action – was limited, it was still in our power to safeguard, even at the price of unpopularity and lack of immediate successes, the sole conditions under which the subjective factors would be enabled to influence history and stimulate it to bear fruit.

The party would be nothing if it weren't, objectively and subjectively, both for its militants and the undifferentiated working class, the uninterrupted conducting thread which remains intact through the flux and reflux of varying circumstances, or, even if broken, which remains *unaltered*. The struggle to keep the thread from breaking, the struggle to keep it intact during the long years of victorious stalinism, the struggle to preserve it and reconstruct the World Party of the Proletariat around it, therein lies the meaning of our battle.

# Lyon Theses

With a document like this it is difficult to avoid a certain disproportion between the different parts, inasmuch as ongoing discussions have rendered certain points and certain arguments more topical, whilst others, of equal importance, have been cast in a minor light. In order to give as full an idea as possible of the thinking of the group of comrades responsible for the present theses, it is worth providing references to some texts, which, although well known, are nowadays rather difficult to find. We believe it therefore useful to precede the present text with references to some documents relevant to the same line that is reasserted and defended here.

*Rome Theses* – voted on at the 2<sup>nd</sup> congress of the Communist Party of Italy on March 26, 1922. The text presented at the congress is published in *Comunista*, no.67, 31/12/1921; in *Ordine Nuovo*, no.2, 3/1/1922; in the *Lavoratore*, No. 4960; in *Rassegna Comunista*, No.17 on the 30/1/1922. The few changes made to the first text at the congress are published in: *Comunista*, No.95, 4/4/1922; the *Lavoratore*, No.5014, 5/4/1922; in *Ordine Nuovo*, No.96, 6/4/1922; in *Rassegna Comunista*, No.26, 31/7/1922.

*Theses on Tactics of the Communist International* – presented at the 4th congress of the Communist International. Published in No. 16 of the *Stato Operaio* on 6/3/1924.

*Programme of Action of the Communist Party of Italy* – presented at the 4th congress of the Communist International. Published in the above-mentioned issue of *Stato Operaio*.

*Motions and Theses* approved at the national (consultative) conference of the Communist Party of Italy in May 1924, published in *Stato Operaio*, No.16 on 18/3/1924.

*Theses on Tactics of the Communist International* – presented at the 5th World Congress. Published (in French and German) in the Congress Bulletin, No.20, 8/7/1924.

## I. General Questions

### 1. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNISM

The key doctrines of the communist party are founded on Marxism, which the struggle against opportunist deviations reinstated and set in place as the cornerstones of the 3rd International. These consist of: Dialectical Materialism as the method of conceiving of the world and human history; the fundamental doctrines contained in Marx's "Capital" as method of interpretation of present-day capitalist economy; the programmatic formulations of "The Communist Manifesto" as the historical and political plan of emancipation of the world working class. The magnificent victorious experience of the Russian revolution, and the work of its leader Lenin, master of international communism, constitute the confirmation, the restoration and the consequent development of this system of principles and methods. It is not possible to be a communist or to militate in the ranks of the International if even one part of this is rejected.

Consequently, the communist party rejects and condemns the doctrines of the dominant class, which range from spiritualistic and religious theories – idealist in philosophy and reactionary in politics – to those which are positivist and of a free-thinking Voltairian variety – and anti-clerical and democratic

in the realm of politics.

It likewise condemns certain political schools which have a following amongst the working-class: social-democratic reformism, which cherishes peaceful transition, without armed struggle, from capitalist to workers' power, invoking class collaboration; syndicalism, which depreciates the political activity of the working class and the need for the party as supreme revolutionary organ; anarchism, which denies the historical necessity of the State and of the proletarian dictatorship as the means whereby the social order is transformed and class divisions suppressed. The communist party likewise opposes the many manifestations of spurious revolutionism which aim to resuscitate such tendencies by mingling them with communist theses – a danger that is designated by the now well-known term "centrism".

### 2. NATURE OF THE PARTY

The historical course of the proletariat's emancipation and the foundation of a new social order derives from the existence of the class struggle. Every class struggle is a political struggle; that is to say, it has the

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(Note: Part One of the Lyon Theses, the "General Questions", appeared in "L'Unità" on the 12, 14, 23 & 26 January; the complete text as a pamphlet with the title "Theses for the 3rd Congress", Rome 1926).

tendency to end up as a struggle for the conquest of political power and control of the new State organism. *Consequently, the organ which leads the class struggle to its final victory is the class political party, which is the sole possible instrument firstly of revolutionary insurrection and then of government.* From these simple but brilliant assertions of Marx, brought into maximum relief by Lenin, arises the definition of the party as an organisation of all those who are conscious of the system of opinions in which is summed up the historical task of the revolutionary class and who have decided to work for the victory of this class. Thanks to the party, the working class acquires the knowledge of the way forward and the will to take it. *Historically, the party therefore represents the class in the successive stages of the struggle, even if only a greater or smaller part of the class is regrouped in its ranks.* This equates with how Lenin defined the party at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress.

Marx and Lenin's conception of the party stands in sharp contrast to the typically opportunist conception of the labourist or workerist party to whom all those individuals who are proletarian in terms of their social condition are admitted by right. Within such a party, even if exhibiting an apparent numerical strength, there may, and indeed in certain conditions there will, prevail the direct counter-revolutionary influence of the dominant class; a class represented by the dictatorship of the organisers and leaders who as individuals can derive just as well from the proletariat as from other classes. This is why Marx and Lenin fought against this fatal theoretical error, and never hesitated to break up false proletarian unity in practice in order to ensure, even during moments when the social activity of the proletariat was eclipsed, and even by way of small political groups of adherents of the revolutionary programme, that there would be continuity of the political function of the party in preparation for the subsequent tasks of the proletariat. This is the only possible way to achieve in the future the concentration of the greatest possible section of workers around the leadership and under the banner of a communist party capable of fighting and winning.

An *immediate* organisation of all workers on an economic basis cannot take on political – that is revolutionary – tasks since the separate and localised professional groups feel impelled to satisfy only the partial demands that arise as a direct consequence of capitalist exploitation. Only with the direct intervention at the head of the working-class of a political party, defined by the *political* adherence of its members, do we find the progressive synthesis of these particular impulses into a common vision and activity, whereby individuals and groups are enabled to go beyond all particularism and accept difficulties and sacrifices for the final and general triumph of the working-class cause. The definition of the party as class party of the working class has a final and historical value for Marx and Lenin – not a vulgarly statistical and constitutional one.

Any conception of the problems of internal organisation that leads to the error of the labourist concep-

tion of the party reveals a serious theoretical deviation, inasmuch as it substitutes a democratic vision for a revolutionary one, and attributes more importance to utopian schemes for designing new organisations than to the dialectical reality of the collision of forces between the two opposed classes. In other words, it represents the danger of relapsing into opportunism. As regards the perils of degeneration of the revolutionary movement, and of the means to guarantee the required continuity of the political line in its leaders and members, these dangers can't be eradicated with organisational formulae. Less still is it possible to eliminate them with the formula which states that only authentic workers can be communist, a position contradicted in our own experience by the vast majority of examples, relating to both individuals and parties. The aforementioned guarantee must be sought elsewhere if we don't wish to contradict the fundamental marxist postulate; "*the revolution isn't a question of forms of organisation*"; a postulate in which are summed up all the conquests achieved by scientific socialism with respect to the first rantings of utopianism.

Our resolution to the current problems regarding the internal organisation of the International and the party set out from these conceptions on the nature of the class party.

### 3. PARTY TACTICS AND PARTY ACTION

The way the party operates in response to specific situations, and relates to other groups, organisations, and institutions of the society in which it moves, constitute its' tactics. The general elements of this question must be defined in relation to our overall principles; it is then possible, on a secondary level, to establish concrete norms of action in relation to different types of practical problems and the successive phases of historical development.

By assigning to the revolutionary party its place and its role in the genesis of a new society, the marxist doctrine provides the most brilliant of resolutions to the question of freedom and determination in the activity of mankind. When extended to the abstract "individual" however, the question will continue to furnish material for the metaphysical lucubrations of the philosophers of the ruling and decadent class for years to come. Marxism on the other hand situates the problem in the correct light of a scientific and objective conception of society and history. The idea that the individual – and indeed one individual – can act on the outside world and shape it and mould it at will as though the power of initiative partook of some kind of divine inspiration is a million miles from our view. We equally condemn the voluntarist conception of the party according to which a small group of men, after having forged for themselves a profession of faith, proceed to spread and impose it by a gigantic effort of will, activity and heroism.

It would, on the other hand, be a stupid and aberrant conception of marxism to believe that the course of history and revolution proceed according to fixed laws, with nothing remaining for us to do apart from dis-

covering what these laws might be through objective research and attempting to formulate predictions about the future whilst attempting nothing in the domain of action; The upshot of this fatalist conception is to annul the function of the party and indeed its very existence.

Marxist determinism doesn't attempt to find a solution halfway between these two solutions but in its powerful originality rises above them both. Because it is dialectical and historical, it rejects all apriorisms and doesn't claim to be able to apply, regardless of the historical epoch or the human groupings under consideration, one abstract solution to every problem. If the current development of the sciences does not allow for a complete investigation of what induces the individual to act, starting with physical and biological facts to arrive at a science of psychological activity, it is nevertheless possible to resolve the problem in the field of sociology by applying to the problem, like Marx, the methods of investigation appropriate to experimental and positive science fully inherited by socialism and which are quite different from the self-styled materialistic and positivist philosophy adopted during the historical advance of the bourgeois class. By taking rational account of the reciprocal influences between individuals, through the critical study of economy and history, after having cleared the decks of every prejudice contained in the traditional ideologies, we can in a certain sense remove indeterminacy from the processes operating within each individual. With this as its point of departure, marxism has been able to establish an ideological system that isn't an immutable and fixed gospel, but a living instrument that enables the laws of the historical process to be followed and recognised. By means of the economic determinism discovered by Marx, which forms the basis of this system, the study of economic forms and relationships, and the development of the technical means of production, provides us with an objective platform on which to make soundly based enunciations about the laws of social life, and, to a certain degree, make predictions about its subsequent development. With this duly recorded, we must emphasise that the final solution doesn't mean we can say that having discovered the universal key, we may let economic phenomena follow their own immanent law and a predictable and established series of political facts will inevitably take place.

Undoubtedly our critique is tantamount as completely and definitely devoiding of any meaning the aims and perspectives individuals had in historical events, even when such individuals are considered protagonists of historical deeds, although this does not completely apply to their actions. This, however, does not imply that a collective organism, such as the class party, could not, and should not, express initiatives of its own or have its own will. The solution we get to is countless times expressed in our fundamental texts.

Humanity, and its most powerful groupings such as classes, parties and States, have moved almost as if they were playthings in the grip of economic laws, up to now almost entirely unknown to them. These groupings at the same time have lacked theoretical

awareness of the economic process, and the possibility of managing and controlling it. However, the class that appears in the present historical epoch, the proletariat, and the political groupings, which inevitably emanate from it -the party and the State – for them the problem, is modified. This is because the proletariat is the first class that isn't driven to base its rise to power on the consolidation of social privileges and class divisions, the first not to subject and exploit another class anew, whilst at the same time, it is the first that manages to shape a doctrine of the social and historical development of the economy – in other words: Marxist Communism.

For the first time then, a class fights for the suppression of classes in general and the suppression of private property in the means of production in general, rather than fighting for the mere transformation of the social forms of property.

The proletariat's programme, together with its emancipation from the present dominant and privileged classes, is the emancipation of the human collectivity from bondage to the laws of economy, which once understood, can be dominated within an economy which is finally rational and scientific, and which is subject to the direct intervention of Man. This is what Engels meant when he wrote that the proletarian revolution marks the passage from the world of necessity to the world of freedom.

This does not mean that we resuscitate the illusory myth of individualism, which wishes to liberate the human "ego" from external influences, especially since these influences tend to become ever more complex and the life of the individual ever more an indistinguishable part of a collective life. On the contrary, the parameters of the problem are changed, with will and freedom attributed to a class, a class destined to become the unitary human grouping itself, a grouping which one day will struggle against the adverse forces of the external physical world alone.

Whilst only proletarian humanity (still in the future for us) will be free and capable of a will isn't sentimental illusion but the capacity to organise and master the economy in the broadest sense of the word; and whilst it is true that the proletarian class today still has the extent of its activity *determined* by influences external to it (though less so than other classes), the organ in which, on the contrary, is summed up the full extent of volitional possibilities and initiative in all fields of activity is the political party. Not just any old party though, but the party of the proletarian class, the communist party, linked as though by an unbroken thread to the ultimate goals in the future. The party's power of volition, as well as its consciousness and theoretical knowledge are functions that are exquisitely collective. Marxism explains that the leaders in the party itself are given their job because they are considered as instruments and operators who best manifest the capacity to comprehend and explain facts and to lead and will action, with such capacities nevertheless maintaining their origin in the existence and character of the collective organ. By way of these considerations, the marxist conception of the party and its activity, as we

have stated, thus shuns fatalism, which would have us remain passive spectators of phenomena into which no direct intervention is felt possible.

Likewise, it rejects every voluntarist conception, as regards individuals, according to which the qualities of the theoretical preparation, force of will, and the spirit of sacrifice – in short, a special type of moral figure and a requisite level of “purity” – set the required standards for every single party militant without exception, reducing the latter to an elite, distinct and superior to the rest of the elements that compose the working class. The fatalist and passivistic error, though it might not necessarily lead to negating the function and the utility of the party, at the very least would certainly involve adapting the party to a proletarian class that is understood merely in a statistical and economic sense. We can sum up the conclusions touched on in the preceding theses as the condemnation of both the workerist conception, and that of an elite of an intellectual and moral character. Both these tendencies are aberrations from marxism which end up converging on the slippery slope to opportunism.

In resolving the general question of tactics on the same terrain as that of the nature of party, the marxist solution must be distinguished both from that doctrinal estrangement from the reality of the class struggle which contents itself with abstract lucubrations, whilst negating concrete activity, and from sentimental aestheticism; which aspires, with the noisy gestures and heroic posturing of tiny minorities, to bring about new situations and historical movements. Also, it must be distinguished from opportunism, which neglects the link with principles, i.e. with the general scope of the movement, and, keeping in view only an immediate and apparent success, is content to clamour for isolated and limited demands without bothering about whether these contradict the necessity of preparing for the supreme conquests of the working class. The mistake of Anarchist politics derives both from a doctrinal sterility, in its incapacity to comprehend the dialectical stages of real historical evolution, and from its voluntarist illusions, which cherish the fond hope of being able to speed up social processes by the force of example, and of sacrifices made by the one or the many. The mistake of social-democratic politics derives as much from a false conception of marxism in holding that the revolution will mature slowly of its own accord, without a revolutionary insurrection willed by the proletariat, as it does from a voluntarist pragmatism, which, unable to relinquish the immediate results of its day to day initiatives and interventions, is happy to struggle for objectives which are of only superficial interest to proletarian groups. For once obtained, these objectives merely become parts of the game of conserving the dominant class rather than serving as preparation for the victory of the proletariat: such objectives are the partial reforms, concessions and advantages, both political and economic, obtained from the bosses and the bourgeois State.

The artificial introduction into the class movement of the theoretical dictates of “modern” voluntarist

and pragmatist philosophy (Bergson, Gentile, Croce) based on idealism, can only but prepare the opportunist affirmation of new waves of reformism. It cannot be passed off as reaction to reformism just because it demonstrates a superficial liking for bourgeois positivism.

The party cannot and must not restrict its activity either to conserving the purity of theoretical principles and of the organizational collective, or to achieving immediate successes and numerical popularity regardless of the cost. At all times and in all situations, this activity must incorporate the following three points:

a) Defence and clarification of the fundamental programmatic postulates in the light of new facts as they arise, that is to say of the theoretical consciousness of the working class;

b) Assurance of the continuity of the party’s organizational unity and efficiency, and its defence against contamination by extraneous influences that are opposed to the revolutionary interests of the proletariat;

c) Active participation in all of the struggles of the working class, including those arising from partial and limited interests, in order to encourage their development, but constantly highlighting their connection with the final revolutionary objectives and presenting the conquests of the class struggle as a bridge of passage to the indispensable struggles to come, by denouncing the danger of settling for partial achievements as if they were ends in themselves, to be bartered in exchange for the conditions of proletarian class activity and combativity, such as the autonomy and independence of its ideology and of its own organizations, the party being first and foremost among these.

The supreme purpose of this complex party activity is the creation of the subjective conditions for the proletariat’s readiness, so that it is in a position to profit from revolutionary possibilities as soon as history presents them, and so that it emerges from the struggle victor rather than vanquished.

All this is the point of departure for responding to the questions of the relations between the party and the proletarian masses, the party and other political parties, and the proletariat and other social classes. We must consider the following tactical formulation wrong: all true communist parties should *in all situations* strive to be mass parties, that is to say, always be organizations with huge memberships and a very widespread influence over the proletariat such as to at least exceed that of the other self-styled workers’ parties. Such a proposal is a caricature of Lenin’s practical, relevant and eminently appropriate watchword of 1921, namely: in order to conquer power, it isn’t sufficient to form “genuine” communist parties and launch them into the insurrectionary offensive because what is needed are numerically powerful parties with a predominating influence over the proletariat. In other words, before the conquest of power, and in the period leading up to it, the party must have the masses with it; must first of all conquer the masses. Such a formulation only becomes rather dangerous when used in conjunction with the notion of the *majority* of the masses, since



it lends itself amongst “chapter and verse” leninists, now as in the past, to the danger of a social-democratic interpretation of theory and tactics; for although expressing the perfectly correct idea that the dangerous practice of engaging in *reckless* actions with insufficient forces, or when the moment isn’t ripe, must be avoided, the unspecificness about how the majority is to be measured i.e. whether in the parties, the unions or other organs, gives rise to the opposite danger of being diverted from action when it is both possible and appropriate; that is, at times when truly “leninist” resolution and initiative is required.

The formula which states that the party must have the masses with it on the eve of the struggle has now become a typically opportunist formula in the facile interpretation of today’s pseudo-leninists when they assert that the party must in “all situations” be a mass party. There are objective situations when the balance of forces are unfavourable to revolution (although perhaps closer to the revolution in time than others – marxism teaches us that historical evolution takes place at very different rates), in these situations, the wish to be the majority party of the masses and enjoy an overriding political influence at all costs, can only at such times be achieved by renouncing communist principles and methods and engaging in social-democratic and petty-bourgeois politics instead.

It must be clearly stated that in certain situations, past, present and future, the majority of the proletariat has adopted, does, and inevitably will adopt a non-revolutionary stance, either through inertia or collaboration with the enemy as the case may be. Nevertheless, despite everything, the proletariat everywhere and always remains the potentially revolutionary class entrusted with the revolutionary counter-attack; but only insofar as within it there exists the communist party and where, without ever renouncing coherent interventions when appropriate, this party knows how to avoid taking paths, which although apparently the easiest way to instant popularity, would divert it from its task and thereby remove the essential point of support for ensuring the proletariat’s recovery. On dialectical and Marxist grounds such as these (and never on aesthetic and sentimental grounds) we reject the bestial expression of opportunism, which maintains that a communist party is free to adopt all means and all methods. It is said by some that precisely because the party is truly communist, sound in principles and organization, it can indulge in the most acrobatic of political manoeuvrings, but what this assertion forgets is that the party itself is both factor and product of historical development, and the even more malleable proletariat is yet more so. The proletariat will not be influenced by the contorted justifications for such “manoeuvres” offered by party leaders but by actual results, and the party must know how to anticipate these results, mainly by using the experience of past mistakes. It is not just by theoretical credos and organizational sanctions that the party will be guaranteed against degeneration, but by acting correctly in the field of tactics, and by making a

determined effort to block off false paths with precise and respected rules of action.

Within the tactical sphere there is another error which clearly leads back to the classical opportunist positions dismantled by Marx and Lenin. This consists in asserting that in the case of struggles between classes and political organisations which take place outside the party’s specific terrain, the party must choose the side which represents the development of the situation most favourable to general historical evolution, and should more or less openly support and coalesce with it. The pretext for this is that the conditions for a complete proletarian revolution (to be set in motion by the party when the time comes) will have arrived solely when there has been a sufficient maturation and evolution of political and social forms.

For a start, the very presuppositions that lie behind such politics are at fault: the typical scheme of a social and political evolution, fixed down to the smallest detail, as allegedly providing the best preparation for the final advent of communism belongs to the opportunist brand of “marxism”, and is the basis on which the various Kautskys set about defaming the Russian Revolution and the present Communist movement. It isn’t even possible to establish in a general way that the most propitious conditions for communist party work to bear fruit are to be found under certain types of bourgeois regime, e.g. the most democratic. For whilst it is true that the reactionary and “right-wing” measures of bourgeois governments have often obstructed the proletariat, it is no less true, and in fact occurs far more often, that the liberal and left-wing politics of bourgeois governments have also stifled the class struggle and diverted the working-class from taking decisive action. A more accurate evaluation, truly conforming with Marxism’s breaking of the democratic, evolutionist and progressive spell, maintains that the bourgeoisie attempts, and often succeeds, in alternating its methods and parties in government according to its counter-revolutionary interests. All our experience shows us that whenever the proletariat gets enthusiastic about the vicissitudes of bourgeois politics, opportunism triumphs.

Secondly, even if it were true that certain changes of government within the present regime made the further development of proletarian action easier, there is clear evidence that this would depend on one express condition: the existence of a party which had issued timely warnings to the masses about the disappointment which would inevitably follow what had appeared to be an immediate success; indeed not just the existence of the party, but its capacity to take action, even before the struggle to which we refer, in a manner which is clearly perceived as autonomous by proletarians, who follow the party not on the basis of schemes which it might be convenient to adopt at an official level but because of the party’s down-to-earth attitude. When faced with struggles unable to culminate in the definitive proletarian victory, the party doesn’t turn itself into a manager of transitional demands and accomplishments which are not of direct interest to the class it represents, and neither does it

barter away its specific character and autonomous activity in order to become a kind of insurance society for all the political “renewal” movements or political systems and governments under threat from an allegedly “worse government”.

The requirements of this line of action are often falsified by invoking both Marx’s formulation that «communists support any movement directed against existing social conditions», and the whole of Lenin’s doctrine directed against “the infantile disorder of Communism”. The speculations attempted on these declarations of Marx and Lenin within our movement are substantially similar to analogous speculations continually indulged in by the revisionists and centrists of the Bernstein and Nenni stamp, who in the name of Marx and Lenin have mocked revolutionary marxism.

We must make two observations; first of all, Marx’s and Lenin’s positions have a contingent historical value since they refer in Marx’s case to a pre-bourgeois Germany, and in Lenin’s case, as illustrated in Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, to the Bolshevik experience in Tsarist Russia. We shouldn’t base our resolution of tactical questions under classical conditions, i.e. the proletariat in conflict with a fully developed capitalist bourgeoisie, on these foundations alone. Secondly, the support to which Marx refers, and Lenin’s “compromises” (Lenin as a great marxist dialectician and champion of real, non-formal intransigence, aimed and directed at an immutable goal, liked to “flirt” with such terms) are support and compromises with movements still forced to clear the way forward with their insurrection against past social formations, even if this does contradict their ideology and the long-term aims of their leaders.

The intervention of the Communist party therefore occurs as an intervention in the setting of a civil war, and this explains Lenin’s positions on the peasant and the national question, during the Kornilov affair and in a hundred other cases. These two key observations aside, neither Lenin’s criticism of infantilism, nor any marxist text on the suppleness of revolutionary politics, was ever meant to undermine the barrier deliberately erected against opportunism; defined by Engels, and later by Lenin, as “absence of principles”, or obliviousness of the final goal.

To construct communist tactics with a formalist rather than a dialectical method would be a repudiation of Marx and Lenin. It would, therefore, be a major error to assert that the means should correspond to the ends not by way of their historical and dialectical succession in the process of development, but depending on similarities and analogous aspects that means and ends may assume in a certain immediate sense and which we might call ethical, psychological and aesthetic. We don’t need to make in the realm of tactics the mistake made by anarchists and reformists in the realm of principle, for whom it seems absurd that the suppression of both classes and State power is prepared via the domination of the proletarian class and its dictatorship, and that the abolition of all social violence is realised by em-

ploying both offensive and defensive revolutionary violence; revolutionary to overthrow the existing power and conservative to maintain the proletarian power.

And it would be equally mistaken to make the following assertions: that a revolutionary party must struggle at all times without taking into account the strength of friends and foes; that in the case of a strike, for example, the communist must always insist it be continue to the bitter end; that a communist must shun certain means of dissimulation, trickery, espionage, etc., because they aren’t particularly noble or pleasant. Marxism and Lenin’s critique of the superficial pseudo-revolutionism that fouls the path of the proletariat consists of attempts to eliminate these stupid and sentimental criteria as ways of resolving the problem of tactics. This critique is a definitively acquired part of the communist movement’s experience.

One tactical error that this critique allows us to avoid is the following: that since communists aim for a political split with the opportunists, we should therefore support splitting off from trade unions led by supporters of the yellow Amsterdam union. It is merely polemical trickery that has misrepresented the Italian left as basing its conclusions on notions like “it is undignified to meet the opportunist leaders in person”, and so on.

But this critique of “infantilism” doesn’t however mean that indeterminacy, chaos and arbitrariness must govern tactics, or that “all means” are appropriate to achieve our aims. To say that the guarantee of the co-ordination of the means with the ends resides in the revolutionary nature acquired by the party and in the contributions that eminent men or groups backed up by a brilliant tradition will bring to its decision-making, is just a non-Marxist play on words, because it doesn’t take into account the repercussions that its means of action themselves have on the party within the dialectical play of cause and effect, and the fact that we ascribe no value whatsoever to the “intentions” which dictate individual or group initiatives; let alone our “suspiciousness”, without meaning to give offence, about such intentions, which the bloody experience of the past means we can never set aside entirely.

In his pamphlet on infantilism, Lenin wrote that the tactical means must be chosen in advance in order to fulfil the final revolutionary objective and be governed by a clear historical vision of the proletarian struggle and its final goal. He showed it would be absurd to reject some tactical expedient just because it appeared “unpleasant” or was deserving of the definition “compromise”: what was necessary instead was to decide whether or not it was a means corresponding with the final goal. The collective activity of the party and the Communist International poses and will continue to pose this formidable task. If in matters of theoretical principle we can say that Marx and Lenin have bequeathed us a sound heritage, although that is not to say there are no new tasks of theoretical research for communism to accomplish, the same cannot be said as regards tactical matters, not even after the Russian revolution and the experience of the first years of the life of the new International, which was deprived of Lenin all too

soon. The question of tactics is much too complex to be resolved by the simplistic and sentimental answers of the “infantiles”, and it requires in-depth contributions from the whole of the international communist movement in the light of its experience, old and new. Marx and Lenin aren’t being contradicted if we state that in order to resolve this question, rules of conduct must be followed which, whilst not as vital and fundamental as principles, are nevertheless binding both on party members and the leading organs of the movement, who should forecast the different ways in which situations may develop so as to plan with the greatest possible degree of accuracy how the party should act when one of these hypothetical scenarios assumes specific dimensions.

Situations must be studied and understood before tactical decisions can be taken, because this signals to the movement that the time has come for an action that has already been anticipated to the greatest extent possible; they should not lead, at the arbitrary decisions of the leaders, to “improvisations” and “surprises. To deny the possibility of predicting tactics in their broad outlines – not of predicting situations, which is possible with even less certainty, but of predicting what we should do in the various hypothetical scenarios based on the progression of objective situations – is to deny the party’s task, and to reject the sole guarantee we can give that the party members and the masses will respond, in any eventuality, to the orders of the centre.

In this sense the party is not an army, nor even a state apparatus, that is to say an organ in which hierarchical authority prevails and voluntary adhesion counts for nothing; it is obvious that for the party member there always remains an option of not executing the orders, which doesn’t involve material sanctions: leaving the party. A good tactic is one which, should the situations change and the centre not have time to consult the party and still less the masses, does not lead to unexpected repercussions within the party itself and within the proletariat which could pull in the opposite direction to the success of the revolutionary campaign. The art of predicting how the party will react to orders, and which orders will obtain a good response, is the art of revolutionary tactics: this can only be entrusted to the collective use of the experience gained from past action, summarized in clear rules of action; by entrusting to leaders the fulfilment of these tasks, militants ensure that these leaders will not betray their mandate, and they undertake substantially, and not just apparently, to carry out the orders of the movement productively and decisively. Given that the party is perfectible and not perfect, we do not hesitate to say that much has to be sacrificed to the clarity and to the power of persuasion of the tactical guidelines, even if this involves a certain schematization: should our tactical schemes break down under the weight of circumstances, we will not remedy this by falling back into opportunism and eclecticism; rather, we will have to make renewed efforts to bring tactics back into line with the party’s tasks. It is not

just the good party that makes good tactics, but good tactics that make the good party, and good tactics can only be those understood and chosen by everyone in their fundamentals.

Basically, what we oppose is that the party’s collective work of defining its tactical guidelines should be stifled by demands for unconditional obedience to one man, one committee, or one particular party of the International and its traditional ruling apparatus.

The party’s activity takes on a strategic aspect at crucial moments in the struggle for power, at which point it assumes an essentially military character. In the preceding situations the party’s action is not restricted, however, to its purely ideological, propagandistic and organizational functions, but consists, as we’ve already stated, of active participation in the individual struggles initiated by the proletariat. This being so, the system of tactical guidelines must therefore be constructed with the precise aim of establishing under what conditions the intervention of the party and its activity within such movements, its agitation at the heart of the proletarian struggle, connects with the ultimate and revolutionary objective whilst simultaneously guaranteeing the advantageous progress of ideological, organizational and tactical preparation.

In the next part, we will take particular problems and examine how our elaboration of the particular norms of communist activity relates to the present stage of development of the revolutionary movement.

## II. International Questions

### 1. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

The crisis in the 2<sup>nd</sup> International caused by the world war has, with the constitution of the Communist International, been completely and definitively resolved as far as the restoration of revolutionary doctrine is concerned, whereas, from the organisational and tactical point of view, despite the formation of the Comintern certainly constituting an immense historical victory, the crisis in the proletarian movement has not been resolved to the same extent.

A fundamental factor in the formation of the new International was the Russian Revolution, first glorious victory of the world proletariat. However, owing to the social conditions in Russia, the Russian revolution hasn’t provided the general historical model for revolutions in other countries on the tactical side. In it, in the transition from feudal autocratic power to the proletarian dictatorship, there was no epoch of political dominion by the bourgeois class, organised in its own exclusive and stable State apparatus.

It is precisely for this reason that the historical

confirmation of the conceptions of the Marxist programme in the Russian revolution has been of such enormous significance, and of such great use in routing social democratic revisionism in the realm of principles. In the organisational field, however, the struggle against the 2<sup>nd</sup> International – an integral part of the struggle against global capitalism – hasn't met with the same decisive success, and a multitude of errors has been committed which have resulted in the Communist parties not being as effective as objective conditions would have allowed.

The same has to be said as regards the field of tactics, where many problems have not been resolved, and still haven't been properly resolved today, in the sector where figure: bourgeoisie, modern bourgeois parliamentary state with a historically stable apparatus, proletariat; and the communist parties have not always derived all they could have from the proletarian offensive against capitalism and from the liquidation of the social democratic parties, i.e. the political organs of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

### 2. WORLD ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

The international situation today appears less favourable to the proletariat than in the immediate post-war years. From the economic point of view, we witness a partial restabilisation of capitalism. However, we understand this stabilization only to mean only that certain parts of the economic structure have been contained, and not that a state of affairs has arisen which excludes the possibility, even in the immediate future, of new disturbances.

There is still a marked capitalist crisis and its definitive worsening is inevitable. In the political sphere, we witness a weakening of the revolutionary movement in almost every advanced country, counter-balanced, happily, by the consolidation of soviet Russia and by the struggles of the colonial peoples against the capitalist powers.

Such a situation presents a double danger however. In the first place, by pursuing the erroneous method of situationism, a certain tendency towards Menshevism arises in the way the problems of proletarian action are evaluated. Secondly, if the pressure from genuine classist actions diminishes, the conditions which Lenin saw as necessary for a correct application of tactics in the national and peasant question risk being misapplied within the overall politics of the Comintern.

The post-war proletarian offensive was followed by an employers' offensive against proletarian positions, to which the Comintern replied with the watchword of the United Front. There then arose the problem of the rise in various countries of democratic-pacifist situations, which comrade Trotsky correctly denounced as representing a danger of degeneration for our movement. We must avoid all interpretations of situations which present as a vital question for the proletariat the struggle between two parts of the bourgeoisie, the right and the left, and the too strict identifi-

cation of these with socially distinct groups.

The correct interpretation is that the dominant class possesses several governmental methods that are in essence reduced to two: the reactionary fascist method, and the liberal democratic method.

Setting out from an analysis of economy, Lenin's theses have already reliably proved that the most modern strata of the bourgeoisie tend to unify not only the productive mechanism, but also their political defences into the most decisive forms.

It is therefore false to state that as a general rule the road to communism must pass through a stage of left-wing bourgeois government. If nevertheless such a case arose, the condition for proletarian victory would reside in a party tactic of marshalling against the illusions generated by the accession of such a left-wing government and continuous opposition, even during periods of reaction, to political democratic formations.

### 3. THE INTERNATIONAL'S METHOD OF WORK

One of the Communist International's most important tasks has been dispelling the proletariat's mistrust of political action, which arose as a result of the parliamentary degeneracies of opportunism.

Marxism doesn't interpret politics as the art of using cunning techniques in parliamentary and diplomatic intrigues, to be used by all parties in pursuit of their special ends. Proletarian politics rejects the bourgeois method of politics and anticipates higher forms of relations culminating in the art of revolutionary insurrection. This rejection, which we will not present in greater theoretical detail here, is the vital condition both for the effective linking up of the revolutionary proletariat with its communist leadership, and for ensuring effective selection of personnel for the latter.

The working methods of the International fly in the face of this revolutionary necessity. In the relations between the different organs of the communist movement a two-faced politics frequently gains the upper hand, and a subordination of theoretical rationale to fortuitous motives, and a system of treaties and pacts between persons which fails to faithfully convey the relations between the parties and the masses, has led to bitter disappointments.

Improvisation, surprises, and theatrical scene changes, are factors that are entering all too easily into the major and fundamental decisions of the International, disorientating both comrades and the proletariat alike.

For example, the majority of internal party questions are resolved in international organs and congresses by a series of unwieldy arrangements which make them acceptable to the various leadership groups but add nothing useful to the real process of party growth.

### 4. ORGANISATIONAL QUESTIONS

During the founding of the Comintern, the view that it was necessary to establish a vast concentration of revolutionary forces carried a lot of weight because it

was predicted at the time that objective conditions would develop much more rapidly than they did. Nevertheless, in retrospect we can see that it would have been preferable to establish organisational criteria which were more rigorous. The formation of parties and the conquest of the masses has been favoured neither by making concessions to anarchist and syndicalist groups, nor by the small compromises made with the centrists allowed for in the 21 conditions; neither by organic fusions with parties or fractions of parties as a result of political 'infiltration', nor by tolerating in some countries a dual communist organisation alongside sympathiser parties. The watchword of organising the party on the basis of factory cells, launched after the 5<sup>th</sup> congress, hasn't achieved its aim of remedying the glaring defects concordantly observed in the various sections of the International.

Once applied as a general rule, especially in the way the Italian leadership has interpreted it, this watchword lends itself to serious errors and to deviation both from the marxist postulate that revolution isn't a question of forms of organisation, and from the Leninist thesis that an organic solution can never be valid for all times and all places.

For parties operating in bourgeois countries with a stable parliamentary regime, organisation on a factory cell basis is less suitable than territorial units. It is also a theoretical error to assert that whilst parties organised on a territorial basis are social-democratic parties, those based on cells are genuine communist parties. In practice, the cell type of organisation makes it even more difficult to carry out the party's task of unification amongst proletarians in trade and industry groups; a task that is all the more important the more unfavourable the situation is and the more the possibilities of proletarian organisation are reduced. Various drawbacks of a practical nature are connected with the proposal to organise the party on the exclusive basis of factory cells. In tsarist Russia, the issue appeared in a different context: relations between the owners of industry and the State were different and the obligation of posing the central question of power rendered the corporatist danger less acute.

The factory cell system does not increase workers' influence in the party since the key links in the network all consist of the non-worker and ex-worker elements which constitute the official party apparatus. Given the faulty working methods of the International, the watchword "bolshevization", from the organisational point of view, manifests as a pedestrian and inadequate application of the Russian experience, which has in many countries already prompted a paralysis, albeit unintentional, of spontaneous initiatives and proletarian and classist energies by means of an apparatus whose selection and functions are for the most part artificial.

Keeping the organisation of the party on a territorial basis doesn't mean having to relinquish party organs in the factories: indeed there must be communist groups there, linked to the party and subject to party discipline, in order to form its trade-union framework. This meth-

od establishes a much better connection with the masses and keeps the party's main organisation less visible.

## 5. DISCIPLINE AND FRACTIONS

Another aspect of the watchword "Bolshevisation" is entrusting the guarantee of the party's effectiveness to centralised discipline and a strict prohibition of fractionism.

The final court of appeal for all controversial questions is the international central organ, with hegemony being attributed, if not hierarchically, at least politically, to the Russian Communist Party.

Such a guarantee doesn't actually exist, and the whole approach to the problem is inadequate. The fact of the matter is that the spread of fractionism within the International hasn't been avoided but has been encouraged instead to assume masked and hypocritical forms. Besides which, from a historical point of view, the overcoming of fractions in the Russian party wasn't an expedient or a magical recipe applied on statutory grounds, but was the outcome, and the expression of, a sound approach to the questions of doctrine and political action.

Disciplinary sanctions are one of the elements that prevent degeneration, but on the understanding they are only applied in exceptional cases, and do not become the norm and become almost the ideal of how the party should function.

The solution doesn't reside in a useless increase in hierarchical authoritarianism, whose initial investiture is lacking both because of the incompleteness of the historical experiences in Russia, impressive though they are, and because even within the Old Guard, the custodian of the Bolshevik traditions, disagreements have been resolved in ways which cannot be considered as a priori the best ones. But neither does the solution lie in the systematic application of the principles of formal democracy, which for marxism have no other function than as organisational practices which can be occasionally convenient.

The communist parties must achieve an organic centralism, which, whilst including as much consultation with the base as possible, ensures the spontaneous elimination of any grouping which starts to differentiate itself. This cannot be achieved by means of the formal and mechanical prescriptions of a hierarchy, but, as Lenin says, by means of correct revolutionary politics.

The repression of factionalism isn't a fundamental aspect of the evolution of the party, although preventing it is.

Since it is fruitless and absurd, not to say extremely dangerous, to claim that the party and the International are somehow mysteriously ensured against any relapse or tendency to relapse into opportunism, which could just as well depend on changing circumstances or on the playing out of residual social-democratic traditions, then we must admit that every difference of opinion not reducible to cases of conscience or personal defeatism could well develop a useful function in the resolution of our problems and serve to

protect the party, and the proletariat in general, from the risk of serious danger.

If these dangers accentuate then differentiation will inevitably, but usefully, take on the fractionist form, and this could lead to schisms; not however for the childish reason of a lack of repressive energy on the part of the leaders, but only in the awful hypothesis that the party fails and becomes subject to counter-revolutionary influences.

We have an example of the wrong method in the artificial solutions applied to the plight of the German party after the opportunist crisis in 1923, when whilst these artifices failed to eliminate fractionism they at the same time hindered the spontaneous determination within the ranks of the highly advanced German proletariat of the correct classist and revolutionary response to the degeneration of the party.

Historically the peril of bourgeois influence on the class party doesn't appear as the organisation of fractions but rather as a shrewd penetration which stokes up unitary demagoguery and operates as a dictatorship from above, immobilising initiatives by the proletarian vanguard.

The identification and elimination of such a defeatist factor is achieved not by posing the issue of discipline against fractionist initiatives, but rather by managing to orientate the party and the proletariat against such an insidious danger when it takes on the aspect not just of a doctrinal revision, but of an express proposal for an important political manoeuvre with anti-classist consequences.

One negative effect of so-called bolshevization has been the replacing of conscious and thoroughgoing political elaboration inside the party, corresponding to significant progress towards a really compact centralism, with superficial and noisy agitation for mechanical formulas of unity for unity's sake, and discipline for discipline's sake.

The consequence of this method is damaging both to the party and to the proletariat and delays the attainment of the "true" communist party. This method, applied in several sections of the International, is in itself a serious indication of a latent opportunism. At the moment, there doesn't appear to be any international left opposition within the Comintern, but if the unfavourable factors we have mentioned worsen, the formation of such an opposition will be at the same time both a revolutionary necessity and a spontaneous reflex to the situation.

### 6. TACTICAL QUESTIONS UP TO THE 5th CONGRESS

Mistaken decisions have been made in the way the tactical problems posed by the previously mentioned international situations were settled. Like analogous mistakes made in the organisational sphere, they derive from the claim that everything can be deduced from problems previously faced by the Russian Communist party.

The united front tactic shouldn't be interpreted as

a political coalition with other so-called workers' parties, but as a utilisation of immediate demands in particular situations to increase the communist party's influence over the masses without compromising its autonomous position.

The basis for the United Front must therefore be sought in the proletarian organisations which workers join because of their social position and independently of their political faith or affiliation to an organised party. The reason is two-fold: firstly, communists aren't prevented from criticising other parties, or gradually recruiting new members who used to be dependant on these other parties into the ranks of the communist party, and secondly, it ensures that the masses will understand the party when it eventually calls on them to mobilise behind its programme and under its exclusive leadership.

Experience has shown us countless times that the only way of ensuring a revolutionary application of the united front lies in rejecting political coalitions, whether permanent or temporary, along with committees which include representatives of different political parties as means of directing the struggle; also there should be no negotiations, proposals for common action and open letters to other parties from the communist party.

Practical experience has proved how fruitless these methods are, and even any initial effect has been discredited by the abuses to which they have been put.

The political united front based on the central demand of the seizure of the State becomes the "workers' government" tactic. Here we have not only an erroneous tactic, but also a blatant contradiction of the principles of communism. Once the party issues the call for the assumption of power by the proletariat through the representative organisms of the bourgeois State apparatus, or even merely refrains from explicitly condemning such an eventuality, then it has abandoned and rejected the communist programme not only vis-à-vis proletarian ideology, with all the inevitable damaging consequences, but because the party itself would be establishing and accrediting this ideological formulation. The revision to this tactic made at the 5th Congress, after the defeat in Germany, hasn't proved satisfactory and the latest developments in the realm of tactical experimentation justify calls for the abandonment of even the expression: "workers' government".

As far as the central problem of the State is concerned, the party should issue the call for the dictatorship of the proletariat and that alone. There is no other "Workers' Government".

The slogan "Workers' Government" leads to opportunism, and to opportunism alone, i.e. support for, or participation in, self-styled "pro-worker" governments of the bourgeois class.

None of this contradicts the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets" and to soviet type organisms (representative bodies elected by workers), even when opportunist parties predominate in them. The opportunist parties oppose the assumption of power by proletarian organisations since this is precisely the proletarian

dictatorship (exclusion of non-workers from the elective organs and power) which the communist party alone will be able to accomplish.

Suffice to say the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat has one synonym and one alone: “the government of the communist party”.

## 7. THE QUESTION OF THE “NEW TACTICS”

The united front and the workers’ government used to be justified on the following grounds: that just having communist parties wasn’t enough to achieve victory since it was necessary to conquer the masses, and in order to conquer the masses, the influence of the social-democrats had to be fought on the terrain of those demands which are understood by all workers.

Today, a second step has been taken, and a perilous question is posed: to ensure our victory, they say, we must first ensure that the bourgeoisie is governing in a tolerant and compliant way, or, that classes intermediate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat should govern, allowing us to make preparations. This latter position, by admitting the possibility of a government originating from the middle classes, sinks to the total revision of Marx’s doctrine and is equivalent to the counter revolutionary platform of reformism.

The first position aims to refer solely to the objective utility of conditions insofar as they allow propaganda, agitation and organisation to be better carried out. But as we have already pointed out with regard to particular situations, both are equally dangerous.

Everything leads us to predict that liberalism and bourgeois democracy, whether in antithesis or in synthesis with the “fascist” method, will evolve in such a way as to exclude the communist party from their juridical guarantees – for what little they’re worth – since it places itself outside them by negating such guarantees in its program. Such an evolution in no way contradicts the principles of bourgeois democracy, and in any case, it has real precedents in the work of all the so-called left-wing governments, and, for example, in the programme of the Italian Aventine Parliament. Any “freedom” given to the proletariat will just mean substantially greater freedom for counter-revolutionary agents to agitate and organise within its ranks. The only freedom for the proletariat lies in its dictatorship.

We have already mentioned that even if a left-wing government created conditions that we found useful, they could only be exploited if the party had consistently held to clearly autonomous positions. It isn’t a matter of attributing diabolical cleverness to the bourgeoisie, but of holding on to the certainty – without which it is possible to call oneself a communist! – that during the final struggle the conquests of the proletariat will come up against a united front of the bourgeois forces, be they personified by Hindenburg, Macdonald, Mussolini or Noske.

To habituate the proletariat to picking out voluntary or involuntary supporters from within this bourgeois front would be to introduce a factor of defeat, even

if any intrinsic weakness of any part of this front will clearly be a factor of victory.

In Germany after the election of Hindenburg, an electoral alliance with social-democracy and with other “republican” parties, i.e. bourgeois parties, such as the parliamentary alliance in the Prussian Landtag, was proclaimed in order to avoid a right-wing government; in France, support was given to the Cartel des gauches in the last municipal elections (the Clichy tactic). For the reasons given above such tactical methods must be declared unacceptable. Even the theses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the C.I. on revolutionary parliamentarism impose on the communist party the duty of only operating on electoral terrain on the basis of rigorously independent positions.

The examples of recent tactics indicated above show a clear, though not complete, historical affinity with the traditional methods of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International: electoral blocs and collaborationism which were also justified by laying claim to a marxist interpretation.

Such methods represent a real danger to the principles and organisation of the International. Incidentally, no international congresses have passed resolutions which authorise them, and that includes the tactical theses presented at the 5th Congress.

## 8. THE UNION QUESTION

On the global level, the International has successively modified its conception of the relationship between political and economic organisms. Herein lies a remarkable example of the method which, rather than having particular actions derive from principles, prefers to improvise various new theories to justify actions chosen because of their apparent ease of execution and their likelihood of producing quick results.

The International originally supported the admission of unions to the Communist International, then it formed a Red International Labour Union. It was held that, since the unions were the best point of contact with the masses, each communist party should struggle for trade-union unity and therefore not create its own unions through scissions from unions led by the yellows, nevertheless on the International level the Bureau of the Amsterdam International was to be considered and treated not as an organisation of the proletarian masses, but as a counter-revolutionary political organ of the League of Nations.

At a certain point, based on considerations which were certainly very important, but limited mainly to a project for using the left-wing of the English union movement, it was announced that the Red International Labour Union should be abandoned in order to effect an organic unity, on an international scale, with the Amsterdam Bureau.

No amount of conjecture about changing circumstances can justify such a major policy shift since the question of the relations between international political organisations and trade unions is one of principle, inasmuch as it boils down to that of the relations between party and class for the revolutionary mobilisation.

Internal statutory guarantees weren't respected either since this decision was presented to the relevant international organs as a fait accompli.

The retention of "Moscow against Amsterdam" as our watchword hasn't prevented the struggle for trade-union unity in each nation and nor will it: in fact the liquidation of separatist tendencies in the unions (Germany and Italy) was only made possible by addressing the separatists' argument that the proletariat was being prevented from freeing itself from the influence of the Amsterdam International.

On the other hand, the apparent enthusiasm with which our party in France adhered to the proposition of world trade-union unity didn't prevent it from demonstrating an absolute incapacity to deal de facto with the problem of trade-union unity at a national level in a non-scissionist way.

The utility of a united front tactic on a world basis isn't however ruled out, even with union organisations that belong to the Amsterdam International.

The left wing of the Italian party has always supported and struggled for proletarian unity in the trade-unions, and this serves to distinguish it from the profoundly syndicalist and voluntarist pseudo-lefts which were fought by Lenin. Furthermore, the Left in Italy has a thoroughly Leninist conception of the problem of the relations between trade unions and factory councils. On the basis of the Russian experience and of the relevant theses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress, the Left rejects the serious deviation from principle which consists of depriving the trade unions, based on voluntary membership, of any revolutionary importance in order to substitute the utopian and reactionary concept of a constitutional apparatus with obligatory membership which extends organically over the entire area of the system of capitalist production. In practice, this error is expressed by an overestimation of the role of the factory councils to the extent of effectively boycotting the trade union.

### 9. THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

The agrarian question has been defined by Lenin's theses at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the International. The main aim of these theses was to restore the problem of agricultural production to its historic place in the marxist system, and show that in an epoch where the premisses for the socialisation of enterprises had already matured in the industrial economy, they were still lacking in the agricultural economy.

Far from delaying the proletarian revolution (which alone will create these premisses), this state of affairs renders the problems of the poor peasants insoluble within the framework of industrial economy and bourgeois power. This allows the proletariat to link up its own struggle with freeing the poor peasant from a system of exploitation by the landed proprietors and the bourgeoisie, even if freeing the peasants doesn't coincide with a general change in the rural productive economy.

Large-scale landed property, deemed as such in law,

is technically speaking composed of tiny productive enterprises. When the legal superstructure that holds it together is destroyed, we witness a redivision of land amongst the peasants. In reality, this is nothing other than the freeing of these small productive enterprises already separated from a collective exploitation. This can only happen if the property relations are broken up in a revolutionary way, but the protagonist of this rupture can only be the industrial proletariat. The reason for this is that the proletariat, as distinct from the peasant, isn't merely a victim of the relations of bourgeois production but is the historical product of its maturity, condemning it to clear the path to a new, different system of production. The proletariat will therefore find precious reinforcements in the revolt of the poor peasant. The essential elements in Lenin's tactical conclusions are, firstly, that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the proletariat's relations with the peasant class, and its relations with the reactionary middle strata of the urban economy (mainly represented by the social-democratic parties); and secondly, there is the definitive principle of the pre-eminence and hegemony of the working class as leader of the revolution.

The peasant therefore appears at the moment of the conquest of power as a revolutionary factor, but if during the revolution his ideology is modified as regards the old forms of authority and legality, it doesn't change much with regard to the relations of production which remain the traditional ones of isolated family farms in mutual competition with one another. Thus the peasant still represents a threat to the construction of the Socialist economy, and only the large-scale development of productive capacity and agricultural technology is likely to interest him.

On the tactical and organisational plane the landless agricultural proletariat (day-labourers) must be considered, in Lenin's view, the same as the rest of the proletariat, and be incorporated into the same framework; the policy of proletarian alliance with the poor peasants – working alone on their plots of land on whatever level of sufficiency – becomes a policy of mere neutralisation with regard to the middle peasant, who is characterised as being both a victim of certain capitalist relations and an exploiter of labour. Finally, there is the wealthy peasant who is generally an exploiter of labour and the direct enemy of the revolution.

In the field of agrarian tactics, the International must avoid those mistaken applications already discernible for instance in the policies of the French party, which is drawn to the idea of a new type of peasant revolution to be considered on the same level as the worker's revolution, or to the belief that the revolutionary movement of the workers may be determined by an insurrection in the countryside, whilst in fact the actual relationship is the other way around.

The peasant, once won over to the communist programme, and therefore accessible to political organisation, should become a member of the communist party; this is the only way to combat the rise of parties composed solely of peasants inevitably prey to counter-revolutionary influences.



The Krestintern (Peasants' International) must incorporate the peasant organisations of all countries characterised, like workers' trade-unions, by the fact of accepting as members all those who have the same immediate economic interests. Also the tactics of political negotiations, the united front, or constitution of fractions within the peasant parties – even with the intention of breaking them up – must be rejected.

This tactical norm is not at odds with the relations established between the Bolsheviks and the social-revolutionaries during the civil war period when the new representative organisations of the proletariat and the peasants already existed.

## 10. THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Lenin has also produced a fundamental clarification of the theory of the popular movements in colonial countries and in certain exceptionally backward countries. Even though internal economic development and the expansion of foreign capital hasn't provided a mature basis for modern class struggle in these countries, demands are being made which can only be resolved by insurrectional struggle and the defeat of world imperialism.

In the epoch of struggle for proletarian revolution in the metropolises, the complete realisation of these two conditions will allow the launching of a struggle which, nevertheless, will take on locally the aspects of a conflict not of class but of races and nationalities.

The fundamental tenets of the Leninist conception nevertheless still remain that the world struggle will be directed by organs of the revolutionary proletariat, and that the indigenous class struggle, and the independent development of local communist parties, must be encouraged, and never held back or stifled.

The extension, however, of these considerations to countries in which the capitalist regime and the bourgeois State apparatus has been established for a long time constitutes a danger, insofar as here the national question and patriotic ideology become counter-revolutionary devices, and serve only to disarm the proletariat as a class. Such deviations appear, for example, in the concessions made by Radek with regard to the German nationalists fighting against the inter-allied occupation.

The International must also call for the stamping out in Czechoslovakia of any nationalist and dualist reaction within the proletarian organisations since the two races are at the same historical level and their common economic environment is completely evolved.

To elevate the struggle of the national minorities, per se to the level of a matter of principle is therefore to distort the communist conception, since altogether different criteria are required to discern whether such struggles offer revolutionary possibilities or reactionary developments.

## 11. RUSSIAN QUESTIONS

The new political economy of the Russian State,

based mainly on Lenin's 1921 speech on the tax in kind and Trotsky's report to the 4th World Congress, is evidently an important matter for the Communist International. Given the condition of the Russian economy, and the fact that the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other countries, marxists couldn't have presented otherwise the prospects for the development of the world revolution, and the construction of the Socialist economy.

The serious political difficulties that the internal relations of social forces, and the problems of productive technology and foreign relations have caused the Russian State, have led to a series of divergences within the Russian Communist Party; and it is really deplorable that the international communist movement hasn't found a way of making more soundly based and authoritative pronouncements on the matter.

In the first discussion with Trotsky, his considerations on the internal life of the party and its new course were undoubtedly correct, and his observations on the development of the State's political economy were also, on the whole, clearly revolutionary and proletarian. In the second discussion he was no less justified when he remarked on the International's mistakes, and demonstrated that the best traditions of the Bolsheviks did not militate in favour of the way the Comintern was being led.

The way the party reacted to this internal debate was inadequate and contrived, due to the well-known method of relying on anti-fractionist, and even worse, anti-bonapartist intimidation based on absolutely nothing of substance. As to the latest discussion, it must above all be realised that it revolves around problems of an international nature, and just because the majority of the Russian Communist Party has pronounced on the issue, there is no reason why the International cannot discuss and pronounce on it in its turn; the question still stands even if has ceased to be asked by the defeated Opposition.

As has often happened, questions of procedure and discipline have stifled really essential questions. What is at issue here is not the defence of the rights of a minority, whose leaders at least are co-responsible for numerous errors committed on the international level, but rather questions of vital importance for the world movement.

The Russian question must be brought before the International for an in-depth study. The following features must be taken into account: today the Russian economy is composed, according to Lenin, of elements that are pre-bourgeois, bourgeois, State-capitalist and socialist. State-controlled large-scale industry is socialist insofar as it is production organised by, and in the hands of a politically proletarian State. The distribution of the products derived from this industry operates however under a capitalist form, namely, through a competitive free-market mechanism.

One cannot deny in principle that workers will not only be kept in less than brilliant economic circumstances by this system (in fact that is the case) even if they do accept it because of the revolutionary conscious-

ness they have acquired, but that it will also evolve in the direction of an increased extraction of surplus value by means of the price paid by the worker for foodstuffs, and the prices paid by the State for its purchases, as well as the conditions it obtains in concessions, commerce and in all its relations with foreign capitalism. It is therefore necessary to ask whether the socialist elements in the Russian economy are increasing or decreasing, a problem that also means taking into account the degree of technical efficiency and how well the State industries are organised.

The building of full socialism extended to production and distribution, to industry and agriculture, is impossible in just one country, but the progressive development of the socialist elements in the Russian economy can nevertheless be achieved by thwarting the plans of the counter-revolutionaries; supported inside Russia by the rich peasants, new bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, and outside the country by the imperialist powers. Whether such counter-revolutionary plotting takes the form of internal or external aggression, or of a progressive sabotage and influencing of Russian social and State life such as to force a progressive involution and deproletarianisation of its main features, it is a fundamental condition for success that all parties belonging to the International collaborate with each other and are able to make their contribution.

Above all, it is a matter of assuring the Russian proletariat and the Russian Communist Party of the active support of the proletarian vanguard, especially in the imperialist countries. Not only must aggression be prevented and pressure is exerted against the bourgeois States as regards their relations with Russia, but most importantly of all, the Russian party needs to be helped by its brother parties to resolve its problems. Whilst these other parties, it is true, do not possess direct experience of governmental problems, nonetheless they can help resolve them by acting as a classist and revolutionary coefficient, with experience derived directly from the real class struggles taking place in their respective countries.

As we have shown above, the internal relationships of the International do not lend themselves to this task. Urgent changes therefore need to be made in order to redress the problems in the realm of politics and in the tactical and organisational spheres that have been exacerbated by "bolshevization".

### III. Italian Questions

#### 1. THE ITALIAN SITUATION

Evaluations of the Italian situation that attribute decisive value to the insufficient development of industrial capitalism are wrong.

The weak expansion of industry in a quantitative sense, along with its relatively late historical appear-

ance, were counterbalanced by a set of other circumstances which allowed the bourgeoisie to completely entrench itself politically during the period of the Risorgimento and develop an extremely rich and complex tradition of government.

The political polarities that historically characterise conflicting parties – such as the old Left and Right division, clericalism and masonry, and democracy and fascism – cannot be automatically identified with the social differences which exist between landed proprietors and capitalists, and the big and petty bourgeoisie.

The fascist movement must be understood as the attempt to politically unify the conflicting interests of various bourgeois groups under the banner of counter-revolution. Fascism, created and directly fostered by the entire upper classes (landowners, industrialists, commercial sectors, bankers, supported by the traditional State apparatus, the monarchy, the Church, and masonry) pursued this aim by mobilising elements within the disintegrating middle classes which, in close alliance with the bourgeoisie as a whole, it has managed to deploy against the proletariat.

What has taken place in Italy shouldn't be interpreted as the arrival in power of a new social strata, as the formation of a new State apparatus with a new programme and ideology, nor as the defeat of part of the bourgeoisie, whose interests would be better served by the adoption of liberal and parliamentary methods. The Democrats and the Liberals, the Nittis and the Giolittis, are the protagonists of a phase of counter-revolutionary struggle which is dialectically linked to the fascist phase and just as decisive in effecting the proletarian defeat. In fact it was precisely their concessionary politics, with the complicity of reformists and maximalists, which allowed the bourgeoisie to resist the pressure from the proletariat and head it off during the post-war period of demobilisation, at precisely a time when every component of the dominant class was unprepared for a frontal attack.

Directly favoured in this period by governments, the bureaucracy, the police, judiciary, army etc., Fascism has since gone on to completely replace the bourgeoisie's old political personnel. However, we shouldn't be fooled by this and neither should it serve as a reason for rehabilitating parties and groups who were removed not because they achieved better conditions for the working class, but because for the time being they had completed their anti-proletarian task.

#### 2. POLITICAL POSITIONS OF THE COMMUNIST LEFT

As the above situation was taking shape, the group which formed the Communist Party set out with these criteria: a break from the illusory dualisms of the bourgeois and parliamentary political scene and an affirmation of the revolutionary antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; propaganda amongst the proletariat aimed at destroying the illusion that the middle classes were capable of producing a political general staff, of taking power and clearing the way for pro-

letarian victories; instilling confidence in the proletariat in its own historic task through propaganda based on a series of critical, political and tactical positions which were original and autonomous, and solidly linked through successive situations.

The tradition of this political current goes back to the left wing of the Socialist party before the war. Whilst a majority capable of struggling both against the errors of the reformists and the syndicalists (the latter having personified the proletarian left until then) was formed at the congresses of Reggio Emilia (1912) and Ancona (1914), an extreme left aspiring to even more radical classist solutions also emerged within this majority. Important problems for the working class were correctly resolved during this period, namely with regard to the questions of electoral tactics, links with the trade-unions, colonial war and freemasonry.

During the World War, virtually the entire party opposed the union sacrée politics, and at successive meetings and Congresses (Bologna, May 1915; Rome, February 1917; Florence, November 1917; Rome, 1918), its extreme Left-wing, now clearly differentiated, defended the following Leninist positions: the rejection of national defence and defeatism; exploitation of military defeat to pose the question of power; and unceasing struggle against the opportunist trade-union and parliamentary leaders along with the call for their expulsion from the party.

Immediately after the war, *Il Soviet* became the mouthpiece of the Extreme Left, and the first newspaper to support the policies of the Russian revolution and to confront anti-marxist, opportunist, syndicalist, and anarchistic misinterpretations. It correctly set out the essential problems of the proletarian dictatorship and the party's tasks, and from the very start defended the necessity of a split in the Socialist Party.

This same group supported electoral abstentionism but the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the International would dismiss its conclusions. Its abstentionism however didn't derive from the anti-marxist theoretical errors of the anarcho-syndicalist type, as its' resolute polemics against the anarchist press have shown. The application of the abstentionist tactic was recommended above all for fully developed parliamentary democracies, because this political environment creates particular obstacles to the winning over of the masses to an accurate understanding of the word "dictatorship"; difficulties which, in our opinion, continue to be underestimated by the International.

In the second place, abstentionism was proposed at a time when huge struggles were setting even hugger mass movements into motion (unfortunately not the case today), and not as a tactic applicable for all times and all places.

With the 1919 elections, the bourgeois Nitti government opened up an immense safety valve to the revolutionary pressure, and diverted the proletarian offensive and the attention of the party by exploiting its tradition of unbridled electoralism. "*Il Soviet's*" abstentionism was then entirely correct, in that it responded to the true causes of the proletarian disaster

that ensued.

At the subsequent Bologna Conference (October 1919), only the abstentionist minority posed correctly the question of a split with the reformists, but it sought in vain to come to an agreement with a section of the maximalists on this point, even after abstentionism had been renounced in order to achieve it. The attempt having failed, the abstentionist fraction remained the only section of the party which, up until the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress, worked on a national scale for the formation of the communist party.

This was therefore the group which represented the spontaneous adherence, setting out from its own experiences and traditions, of the left of the Italian proletariat to the policies of Lenin and Bolshevism which had lately emerged victorious with the Russian revolution.

### 3. THE WORK OF THE PARTY'S LEFT LEADERSHIP

Within the new communist party, constituted at Leghorn in January 1921, the abstentionists made every effort to forge solid links with other groupings in the party. But whilst for some of these groups it was international relations alone which necessitated the split from the opportunists, for the abstentionists (who for discipline's sake had expressly renounced their positions on elections) and indeed for many other elements besides, it was because the theses of the International and the lessons of recent political struggles were completely consistent with each other.

In its work, the interpretation of the Italian situation and the tasks of the proletariat mentioned earlier inspired the party leadership. With hindsight it is clear that the delay in the formation of the revolutionary Party (for which the other groups were responsible) made the subsequent proletarian retreat inevitable.

In order to place the proletariat in the best position during the ensuing battles, the leadership took the stance that although the greatest efforts should be made to use the traditional apparatus of the Red organisations, it was also necessary to warn the proletariat not to count on anything from the maximalists and reformists, who would even go so far as accepting a peace treaty with fascism.

From its very inception, the party defended the principle of trade-union unity, going on to propose the central postulate of a united front which culminated in the formation of the Labour Alliance. Whatever opinions one might have about the political united front, the fact is that the situation in Italy in 1921-22 made it impossible; in fact the party never received any invitation to attend any meetings aimed at founding an alliance of parties. The party didn't intervene at the meeting to constitute the trade-union alliance called by the railway workers because it didn't want to lend itself to manoeuvres which might have compromised the alliance itself, and which might have been blamed on the party; it had already shown beforehand though that it approved of the initiative by stating that all communist workers

within the new organisation would observe discipline towards it.

Certain contacts between political groups would eventually take place; the communist party wouldn't refuse to take part but they would come to nothing, demonstrating both the impossibility of arriving at an understanding on the terrain of political action, and the defeatism of every other group. During the retreat, the leadership was able to preserve the confidence of the workers in their own class, and raise the political consciousness of the vanguard, by heading off the traditional manoeuvrings of pseudo-revolutionary groups and parties within the proletariat. Despite the efforts of the party, it was not until later, August 1922, that a generalised mobilisation took place; but proletarian defeat was inevitable and from then on fascism, openly supported in their violent campaigns by the forces of a declaredly *liberal democratic* State, became master of the country. The "March on Rome" which happened afterwards merely legitimised fascism's predomination in a formal sense.

Even now, despite reduced proletarian activity, the party's influence still predominated over the maximalists and reformists, its progress having already been demonstrated by the 1921 election results and the extensive consultations that took place within the Confederation of Labour.

#### 4. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ITALIAN LEFT AND THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The Rome Congress, held in March 1922, crystallized a theoretical divergence between the Italian Left and the majority of the International. It was a divergence which had been expressed before, rather badly, by our delegations to the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress and the Enlarged Executive of February 1922, where, especially on the first occasion, some errors of the infantile variety were certainly committed. The Rome Theses would constitute the happy theoretical and political liquidation of any peril of left-wing opportunism in the Italian Party.

As far as Party practice was concerned the only divergence with the international was over what tactic to adopt towards the maximalists, but such divergences appeared resolved by the unitary results which emerged from the socialist Congress in October 1921.

The Rome Theses were adopted as a contribution by the party to the International's decision-making and not as an immediate line of action; this was confirmed by the party directorate at the Enlarged Executive of 1922, and we didn't embark on a theoretical debate precisely out of discipline to the International and its ruling against it.

In August 1922, however, the International didn't interpret the various factors in the same way as the Party directorate, but reckoned that the Italian situation was unstable in the sense of the State's weakened resistance and thought of reinforcing the party on the basis of a fusion with the maximalists considering as

the decisive factor not the lessons learnt during the vast strike manoeuvre in August, but the split between the maximalists and the Unitarians.

It is from this moment that the two political lines diverge in a definitive way. At the 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress in December 1922, the old Directorate opposed the majority thesis and, on their return to Italy, the delegates would pass the matter over to the merger Commission, unanimously declining to take any responsibility for the decision, though of course retaining their administrative functions.

Then came the arrests in February 1923 and the big offensive against the party; finally during the Enlarged Executive meeting in June 1923 the old executive was deposed and completely replaced and several party leaders would simply resign as a logical consequence. In May 1924, a party consultative conference would still give the Left an overwhelming majority over the Centre and the Right and thus it would attend the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress in 1924.

#### 5. THE "ORDINOVIST" TRADITION OF THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP

The "Ordine Nuovo" group was formed in Turin by a group of intellectuals, who established contacts with the proletarian masses in industry at a time when the abstentionist fraction in Turin already had a large following. The volatile ideology of this group is mainly derived from philosophical conceptions of a bourgeois and idealist nature partly inherited from Benedetto Croce. This group aligned itself with communist directives very late in the day, and would always display residual errors linked to its origins. It understood the significance of the Russian revolution too late to be able to apply it usefully to the proletarian struggle in Italy. In November 1917, comrade Gramsci published an article in *Avanti!* asserting that the Russian revolution had given the lie to Marx's historical materialism and the theories in "Capital", and gave an essentially idealist explanation. The extreme left current that the youth federation belonged to responded immediately to this article.

The subsequent ideological development of the "Ordinivist" group, as their publication *Ordine Nuovo* shows, has led to a non-marxist and non-Leninist interpretation of the workers' movement. The questions of the role of the unions and the party, armed struggle and conquest of power, and the construction of socialism are not posed correctly in their theory, and they have evolved instead the conception of a systematic organisation of the labouring classes which was "necessary" rather than "voluntary", and strictly bound up with the mechanism of capitalist industrial production.

Setting out from the internal commissions, this system was supposed to culminate simultaneously in the proletarian and Communist International, in the Soviets and in the workers' State by way of the factory councils, which were held to embody the latter even before the collapse of capitalist power.

And what is more, even during the bourgeois epoch, this system was supposed to assume the function of

constructing the new economy by calling for and exercising workers' control over production.

Later on, all the non-marxist aspects of "Ordinovist" ideology - utopianism, Proudhon inspired syndicalism, and economic gradualism before the conquest of power, i.e., reformism - were apparently dropped in order to be gradually substituted with the entirely different theories of Leninism. However, the fact that this substitution took place on a superficial and fictitious level could only have been avoided if the "Ordinovists" hadn't split from and opposed the Left; a group whose traditions, rather than converging with the Bolsheviks in an entirely impulsive way, represented a serious contribution, derived not from academic and bookish dissertations on bourgeois tomes but from proletarian class experience. Certainly the "Ordinovists" hadn't been prevented from learning and improving within the strictly collaborative framework which was lacking later on. As it turned out, we greeted the announcements of the "Ordinovist" leaders with a certain tinge of irony when they announced that they were bolshevising the very people who had actually set them on the road to Bolshevik positions by serious and marxist means, rather than by chattering about mechanistic and bureaucratic procedures.

Up until shortly before the 1920 World Congress, the "Ordinovists" were opposed to a split in the old party, and they posed all trade-union questions incorrectly. The International's representative in Italy had to polemicise against them on the questions of the factory councils and the premature constitution of the Soviets.

In April 1920, the Turin Section approved the famous Ordine Nuovo theses, which were drawn up by comrade Gramsci and adopted by a committee composed of both "Ordinovists" and Abstentionists. These theses, cited in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress's resolution, in fact expressed, despite disagreements about elections, the common thinking of the nascent communist fraction; they weren't distinctly "Ordinovist" positions, but consisted of points already clarified and accepted by the party's left-wing long before.

The "Ordinovists" would rally around the Left's positions on the International for a while, but the thinking expressed in the Rome Theses was essentially different from theirs, even if they considered it opportune to vote for them.

The true precursor of "Ordinovism's" present adherence to the tactics and general line of the International was really comrade Tasca and his opposition to the Left at the Rome Congress.

Given, on the one hand, the "Ordinovist" group's characteristic particularism and its taste for the concrete inherited from idealistic bourgeois positions, and, on the other hand, the superficial and therefore incomplete adherences allowed for by the International's leadership, we are forced to conclude, despite all their loud protestations of orthodoxy, that the theoretical adherence (of decisive importance in terms of providing a basis for actual policies) of the Ordinovists to Leninism is about as worthless as their adherence to the Rome Theses.

## 6. THE POLITICAL WORK OF THE PRESENT PARTY LEADERSHIP

From 1923 until now, the work of the Party leadership, which we must bear in mind took place in difficult circumstances, has led to mistakes which are essentially similar to those pointed out apropos the international question, but which have been severely aggravated at least partly by the initial Ordinovist deviations.

Participating in the 1924 elections was a very fortunate political act, but one cannot say the same about the proposal for joint action with the socialist parties nor of the way it was labelled "proletarian unity". Just as deplorable was the excessive tolerance shown towards some of the "Terzini's" electoral manoeuvres. But the most serious problems are posed apropos the open crisis that followed Matteotti's assassination.

The leadership's policies were based on the absurd view that the weakening of fascism would propel the middle classes into action first, and then the proletariat. This implied on the one hand a lack of faith in the capacity of the proletariat to act as a class, despite its continued alertness under the suffocating strictures of fascism, and on the other, an over-estimation of the initiative of the middle-class. In fact, even without referring to the clear marxist theoretical positions on this matter, the central lesson to draw from the Italian experience has been that the intermediary layers will passively tail along behind the strongest and may therefore back either side. Thus in 1919-1920 they backed the proletariat, then between 1921-22-23 they went behind fascism, and now, after a significant period of major upheaval in 1924-25, they are backing fascism again.

The leadership were mistaken in abandoning parliament and participating in the first meetings of the Aventine when they should have remained in Parliament, launched a political attack on the government, and immediately taken up a position opposed to the moral and constitutional prejudices of the Aventine, which would determine the outcome of the crisis in fascism's favour. This wouldn't have prevented the communists from making the decision to abandon parliament, and would have allowed them to do so whilst keeping their specific identity intact, and allowed them to leave at the only appropriate time, i.e. when the situation was ripe to call on the masses to take direct action. It was one of those crucial moments which affect how future situations will turn out; the error was therefore a fundamental one, a decisive test of the leadership's capabilities, and it led to a highly unfavourable utilisation by the working class both of the weakening of fascism and the resounding failure of the Aventine.

The Return to Parliament in November 1924 and the statement issued by Repossi were beneficial, as the wave of proletarian consensus showed, but they came too late. The leadership wavered for a long time, and only finally made a decision under pressure from the party and the Left. The preparation of the Party was made on the basis of dreary directives and a fantastically erroneous assessment of the situation's latent possibilities (report by Gramsci to the Central Committee,

August 1924). The preparation of the masses, which leant towards supporting the Aventine rather than wishing for its collapse, was in any case made worse when the party proposed to the opposition parties that they set up their own Anti-parliament. This tactic in any case conflicted with the decisions of the International, which never envisaged proposals being made to parties which were clearly bourgeois; worse still, it lay totally outside the domain of communist principles and tactics, and outside the marxist conception of history. Any possible explanation that the leadership might have had for this tactic aside – an explanation which was doomed to have very limited repercussions anyway – there is no doubt that it presented the masses with an illusory Anti-State, opposed to and warring against the traditional State apparatus, whilst in the historical perspective of our programme, there is no basis for an Anti-State other than the representation of the one productive class, namely, the Soviet.

To call for an Anti-parliament, relying in the country on the support of the workers' and peasants' committees, meant entrusting the leadership of the proletariat to representatives of groups that are socially capitalist, like Amendola, Agnelli, Albertini, etc.

Besides the certainty that such a situation won't arise, a situation which could only be described as a betrayal anyway, just putting it forward in the first place as a point of view derived from a communist proposal involves a betrayal of principles and a weakening of the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat.

Other aspects of the work of the leadership also lend themselves to criticism. There has been a welter of watchwords that correspond neither to any genuine possibility of realisation, nor to any visible signs of agitation outside the party machine. The core demand for workers and peasants committees, justified in a confusing and contradictory way, has been neither understood nor abided by.

### 7. THE PARTY'S TRADE-UNION ACTIVITY

During the March 1925 metalworkers strike another serious mistake was made. The leadership should have predicted that the proletariat's disillusionment with the Aventine would propel it into class actions and a wave of strikes. If the leadership had foreseen this, it might have been possible to push the F.I.O.M. into a national strike (just as it had managed to get it to take part in the strike initiated by the fascists) by setting up a metalworkers agitation committee based on the local organisations, which throughout the country had been highly supportive of the strike.

The stance the leadership has taken on the trade unions hasn't corresponded clearly with the watchword of trade-union unification inside the Confederation; a watchword that should still be adhered to despite the organisational decomposition of the latter. The party's directives on the unions have shown evidence of Ordinovist errors as regards action in the factories: not only has it created, or is proposing to create, a multitude of conflicting organisms in the factories, but it

has frequently issued watchwords which depreciate trade-unions and the idea of their necessity as organs of proletarian struggle.

A consequence of this error was the paltry settlement with FIAT in Turin; as was the confusion surrounding the factory elections, where the criteria for choosing between classist or party lists of candidates, that is on trade-union terrain, wasn't posed correctly.

### 8. PARTY ACTIVITY IN AGRARIAN AND NATIONAL MATTERS

It is quite correct to have issued the call for the formation of peasant defence associations, but this work has been conducted too exclusively from on high by a party bureau.

Despite the situation's inherent difficulties, it is necessary to declare that viewing our tasks in this area in a bureaucratic way is dangerous, indeed the same goes for every other party activity.

A correct relationship between peasant associations and workers' unions must be clearly established along the following lines: whilst agricultural wage labourers must form a federation which adheres to the Confederazione del Lavoro, a strict alliance must exist between the latter and the peasant defence associations at both the central and local levels.

All regionalist, and particularly "southernist", conceptions (and there is already some evidence of this) must be avoided when dealing with the agrarian question. This is equally true with regard to the demands for regional autonomy which have been advanced by certain new parties; who we must fight openly as reactionaries, instead of sitting around the table with them engaging in pointless negotiations.

The tactic of seeking an alliance with the left wing of the Popular Party (Miglioli) and the peasant's party has not given favourable results.

Once again concessions have been made to politicians who are outside any classist tradition; without obtaining the expected shift in the masses this has, on the contrary, often disorientated parts of our organisation. It is equally wrong to overestimate the significance of the manoeuvres amongst the peasantry for a hypothetical political campaign against the influence of the Vatican; the problem certainly exists but it won't be resolved adequately by such means.

### 9. THE LEADERSHIP'S ORGANISATIONAL WORK

There is no doubt that the work of reorganising the party after the fascist storm has produced some excellent results. However, it has retained an overly technical character; instead of ensuring centralisation by means of clear and uniform statutory norms applicable to every comrade and local committee, the attempt was made to enforce it solely by means of interventions by the central apparatus. It would have been a major step forward to have allowed the base organisations to return to electing their own committees, especially during the

periods when the circumstances most favoured it.

Regarding the increase, then the subsequent decrease, in the party's membership, not to mention the departure of elements recruited during the Matteotti crisis who are leaving with the same facility as they arrived, it goes to show how matters such as these depend on changing circumstances rather than on any hypothetical advantages that a general change of direction might have.

The effects and advantages of the month-long campaign of recruitment have been exaggerated. As for organisation at the level of the cell, evidently the leadership must put into effect the Comintern's general resolutions, a matter we have already referred to elsewhere. However, it has been done in an irregular and uneven fashion involving a host of contradictions, and only after much pressure from the rank-and-file has a certain accommodation been reached.

It would be better if the system of inter-regional secretaries was substituted with a Corp of inspectors, thereby establishing direct links which were political rather than technical between the leadership and the traditional rank-and-file organisations of the party i.e., the provincial federations. The principal duty of the inspectors should be to actively intervene when the fundamental party organisation needs to be rebuilt, and then look after and assist it until normal functioning is established.

## 10. THE LEADERSHIP AND THE QUESTION OF FRACTIONISM

The campaign which culminated in the preparations for our 3rd Congress was deliberately launched after the 5th World Congress not as a work of propaganda and elaboration of the directives of the International throughout the party, with the aim of creating a really collective and advanced consciousness, but as an agitation aiming to get comrades to renounce their adherence to the opinions of the Left as quickly as possible and with minimum effort. No thought was given to whether this would be useful or damaging to the party with regard to its effectiveness toward the external enemy, the only objective was to attain this internal objective by any means.

We have spoken elsewhere, from a historical and theoretical perspective, about the delusion of repressing fractionism from above. The 5th Congress, in the case of Italy, accepted that the Left were refraining from working as an opposition although still participating in all aspects of party work, except within the political leadership, and it therefore agreed that pressure on them from above should be stopped. This agreement was however broken by the leadership in a campaign which consisted not of ideological postulates and tactics, but of disciplinary accusations towards individual comrades who were brought before federal congresses and focused on in a one-sided way.

On the announcement of the Congress, an "Entente Committee" was spontaneously constituted with the aim of preventing individuals and groups from reacting by

leaving the party, and in order to channel the action of all the Left comrades into a common and responsible line, within the strict limits of discipline, with the proviso that the rights of all comrades to be involved in party consultations was guaranteed. This action was seized on by the leadership who launched a campaign which portrayed the comrades of the Left as fractionists and scissionists, whose right to defend themselves was withdrawn and against whom votes were obtained from the federal committees by exerting pressure from above.

This campaign continued with a fractionist revision of the party apparatus and of the local cadres, through the way in which written contributions to the discussion were presented, and by the refusal to allow representatives of the Left to participate in the federal congresses. Crowning it all there was the unheard of system of automatically attributing the votes of all those absent from conference to the theses of the leadership.

Whatever the effect of such measures may be in terms of producing a simple numerical majority, in fact rather than enhancing the ideological consciousness of the party and its prestige amongst the masses they have damaged it. If the worst consequences have been avoided this is due to the moderation of the comrades of the Left; who have put up with such a hammering not because they believed it to be in the least bit justified, but solely because they are devoted to the party cause.

## 11. DRAFT PROGRAMME OF PARTY WORK

The premises from which, in the Left's view, the general and particular duties of the party should spring, are defined in the preceding theses. It is evident, however, that the question can only be tackled on the basis of international decisions. The Left can therefore only outline a draft programme of action as a proposal to the International about how the tasks of its Italian section might best be realised.

The party must prepare the proletariat for a revival of its classist activity and for the struggle against fascism by drawing on the harsh experiences of recent times. At the same time, we need to disenchant the proletariat of the notion that there is anything to be gained from a change in bourgeois politics, or that any help will be forthcoming from the urban middle classes. The experiences of the liberal-democratic period can be used to prevent the re-emergence of these pacifistic illusions.

The party will address no proposals for joint actions to the parties of the anti-fascist opposition, neither will it engage in politics aimed at detaching a left-wing from this opposition, and nor will it attempt to push so-called left-wing parties "further to the left".

In order to mobilise the masses around its programme, the party will subscribe to the tactic of the united front from below and will keep an attentive eye on the economic situation in order to formulate immediate demands. The party will refrain from advocating as a central political demand the accession of a government that concedes guarantees of liberty; it will not

put forward “liberty for all” as an objective of class conquest, but will emphasise on the contrary that freedom for the workers will entail infringing the liberties of the exploiters and the bourgeoisie.

Faced today with the grave problem of a weakening of the class unions and of the other immediate organs of the proletariat, the party will call for the defence of the traditional red unions and for the necessity of their rebirth. In its work in the factories, it will avoid creating organs if they tend to undermine this rebuilding of the trade unions. Taking the present situation into account, the party will work towards getting the unions to operate within the framework of “union factory sections”; which representing a strong union tradition, are the appropriate bodies for leading workers’ struggles insofar as today it is precisely in the factories where opportunities for struggle exist. We will attempt to get the illegal internal commissions elected through the union factory section, with the reservation that, as soon as it is possible (it isn’t at present) the committees be elected by an assembly of the factory personnel.

As regards the question of organisation in the countryside, reference can be made to what we have said regarding the agrarian situation.

Once all the possibilities for proletarian groups to organise have been utilised to the maximum, we may resort to the watchword “workers’ and peasants’ committees” observing the following criteria:

a) The watchword of constituting workers’ and peasants’ committees must not be launched in a casual and intermittent way, but set forth in an energetic campaign when a changing situation has made the need for a new framework clear to the masses, that is: when the watchword can be identified not just as a call to organise, but as a definite call to action;

b) The nucleus of the committee s will have to be constituted by representatives from the traditional mass organisations, such as the unions and analogous organisms, despite these having been mutilated by reaction. It must not include convocations of political delegates;

c) At a later date we’ll be able to call on the committees to have elections, but we will have to clarify beforehand that these are not Soviets i.e. organs of proletarian government, but expressions of a local and national alliance of all the exploited for their joint defence.

Regarding relations with fascist unions: inasmuch as today the latter don’t present themselves even in

a formal sense as voluntary associations of the masses, there must be an overall rejection of the call to penetrate these unions in order to break them up. The watchword of the rebuilding the Red unions must be issued in conjunction with the denunciation of the fascist unions.

The organisational measures that should be adopted inside the party have been indicated in part. Under present conditions, it is necessary to co-ordinate such measures with requirements that we can’t go into here (clandestinity). It is nevertheless an urgent necessity that they are systematised and formulated as clear statutory norms binding on all in order to avoid confusing healthy centralism with blind obedience to arbitrary and conflicting instructions; a method which puts genuine party unity in jeopardy.

## 12. ON PARTY’S INTERNAL SITUATION

The internal political and organisational problems which our party faces cannot be resolved in a definitive way within the national framework, as the solution depends on the working out of the internal situation and on the politics of the International as a whole. It would be a serious and shameful mistake if the national and international leaders continue to deploy the stupid method of exerting pressure from above against the Left and the reduction of complex problems of Party politics and ideology to cases of personal conduct.

Since the Left is going to stick to its opinions, those comrades who have no intention of renouncing them should be allowed, in an atmosphere free of scheming and mutual recriminations, to carry out the loyal commitment they have given, that is; to abide by the decisions of the party organs and to renounce all oppositional work, whilst being exempted from the requirement of participating in the leadership. Evidently this proposal shows that the situation is far from perfect, but it would be dangerous to delude the party that these internal difficulties can be eliminated by simply applying mechanical measures to organisational problems, or by taking up personal positions. To spread such an illusion would be tantamount to making a severe attack on the party.

Only by abandoning this small-minded approach, appreciating the true magnitude of the problem, and placing it before the party and the international, will we truly achieve the aim of avoiding a poisoning of the party atmosphere and move on to tackle all the difficulties which the party is called on to face today.



# Iran

## Arrests, Torture, Murders, Disappearances and Secret Burials: the Fundamentalist Religious Regime Uses an Iron Fist to Keep itself on its Feet

Demonstrations and struggles against the Ayatollahs' regime, which have been taking place in waves, have characterized the last two decades, a period when the pressure of a relatively young capitalism to rapidly develop has further exacerbated the contradictions in a country that is striving hard to break away from the religious traditions with which the new Iranian bourgeoisie had established itself to the detriment of the old regime of the Shah, thanks to massive demonstrations and large-scale workers' strikes against the Shah. A capitalism that is developing cannot but increase ever more the mass of the toilers, the proletariat, from whose intense exploitation it extracts all the wealth it produces.

On the other hand, the development of capitalism can only continue with the intensification of international trade, and therefore with the most modern means of communication (radio, television, internet) and education, which are necessary for the development not only of trade, but also of industrial production in all sectors (petrochemical, steel, automotive, metallurgical, machinery, textiles) and especially in engineering and nuclear power.

An idea of what Iran looks like today, which on the other hand is subjected to rather harsh sanctions by the US and its Western allies, can be gained from a few figures. 75% of the population lives in cities, but 30% of the population still lives on agriculture on land that is only 10% cultivated (mainly pistachios and cotton, of which it is an exporter to the whole world, as well as cereals, barley, tobacco, beet, sugar cane) and livestock farming (cattle, sheep and goats); on the other hand, the country is still characterised by a considerable fragmentation of land ownership. The economically active population (2021 data) is 26.5 million people (of which the female workforce accounts for only 17%), representing 32% of the total population, and unemployment in 2019 was no less than 20% (more than 5 million people). The economic and social crisis hits, as in any country, mainly the working and poor classes (inflation seems to have reached 50%), and the increasingly oppressive conditions imposed by the clerical regime, first of Khomeini and then of Khamenei, have a direct impact on the younger generations and especially on women. Most of the pro-

ductive activities are controlled by religious foundations (*bonyad*) and the army Iranian Revolutionary Guards (*pāsdārān*), so it is inevitably women who suffer the harshest and most brutal oppression, especially if they rebel, as has happened since last September.

And while young Iranian women and workers striking in solidarity show the world that they are fighting and rebelling against the social oppression that characterises not only Iran but all modern societies, whether democratic, totalitarian, religious or otherwise, without fear of repercussions, the proletarians of the opulent European West look on as if what is happening there does not concern them. They look at their own navel, at their own narrow immediate interests, as if there were insurmountable walls separating their lives from those of the proletarians in the countries on the periphery of imperialism. As if every bourgeoisie in the West were not also responsible for the living conditions of proletarians in every other country in the world; a world which the imperialist bourgeoisies divided up during the Second World War and which they are now trying to re-divide – by warring among themselves, and not only in Ukraine – on a different basis from that established in previous decades.

The Iranian regime's social policy is partly trying to resemble that of Western countries, naturally with much more limited financial resources. Successive presidents of the Republic have periodically tried to keep social tensions under control by reducing the prices of basic necessities and providing subsidies to the poorest strata of the population. But these means, as we know, are never decisive, and when the economy gets stuck and goes into crisis, with millions of people unable to find work and inflation rapidly reducing the purchasing power of the masses, then the tensions that have been simmering beneath the surface explode. The most recent phenomenon we are witnessing is the rebellion against the atmosphere of social oppression by women in particular, specifically young women, who were later joined by young men, starting with university students.

On 13 September, as everyone already knows, Mahsa Jina Amini, a 22-year-old young Kurdish woman, was arrested for violating a regulation on the wearing of the head veil imposed on women. It took three days from her arrest to her torture and murder. The fact that she

was Kurdish has probably had an additional negative impact, because the Kurdish population in general is systematically oppressed, not only by Iranians, but also by Turks, Iraqis and Syrians. This episode was the fuse that set off a storm in Iran; since September and up to the present day, albeit in a weakening phase, the protest demonstrations have continued unabated, and it is no coincidence that the heart of these demonstrations has always been women, especially young women. The demonstrations have reached more than 160 cities and more than 20 000 people have been arrested so far; there have been more than 500 deaths in the demonstrations so far (and no more than 62 among the police, it seems); the death sentences that have already been carried out have, as far as we know, hit 10 of the arrested protesters (1). The religious regime has reacted to these protests with extremely harsh repression, in the face of which the courage of young women has emerged, who, despite knowing that they were at risk of arrest, beatings and death, have continued to express an indomitable spirit of rebellion. And it is this rebellious spirit that the regime in Tehran is afraid of, because it can be very contagious and can engulf the working class in particular.

Following the murder of Mahsa Amini, there were reports on 13 October of a crackdown by security forces on the “Shahed” girls’ high school in Ardabil, inhabited mostly by Azeris – another Sunni ethnic minority disliked by Shia Iranians – because a group of female students refused to sing a hymn praising the Ayatollah; 16-year-old Asra Panahi died as a result of beatings by security forces and many other injured female students ended up in hospital (2). The regime has responded with extreme violence against the defenceless masses, even to the extent of sentencing to death the disabled, pregnant women and minors (3), no matter whether they set fire to a car tyre, a picture of Khomeini or the veil (the *hijab*, which covers the hair, forehead, ears and nape and falls over the shoulders), or whether they cut their hair in public.

But there is actually much more behind these protests. The dire economic situation has for years seriously plagued the livelihoods of the broad masses, so much so that every protest ranges from rebellion against strict religious regulations, to the imprisonment of most women between the four walls of the home, the suffocating control by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdaran*) and pro-government militias (*Basij*) in the streets, schools and universities, has the character of a virus that continues to spread in all other sectors of society, from market traders to factory workers. It is no coincidence that the protests first broke out in Iranian Kurdistan, where Mahsa Amini comes from, and from there they spread throughout the country, from north to south, and even involved Qom, the Shi’ite spiritual centre, the bastion of moral and religious authority of the Islamic regime. The demands concern personal freedoms, civil rights, freedom of assembly and organization, and alongside these are more specific workers’ demands concerning the freedom to organize independent unions, as well as classical economic

demands concerning wages and working conditions. Everything is called into question, and when cries of “*death to the dictator*” are heard in the streets from the demonstrating masses, cries addressed to Ayatollah Khamenei, from the masses who also receive solidarity in workers’ strikes, it is clear that the regime takes these cries as an excuse to accuse every protest of waging a “*war against God*” and of being in the service of the West’s enemies.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iran has been shaken several times by large-scale protest movements: in 1999, Tehran university students rebelled against the closure of the reformist *Salaam* newspaper and against the crackdown by members of the Pasdaran, the “Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution” (literal translation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Farsi) on the university campus, in which three students were killed; further protests by university students took place in 2003 and 2006. In 2009, at the time of the presidential elections, the protests against electoral fraud that brought former Tehran mayor Ahmadinejad to the presidency under Supreme Leader Khamenei were characterized by the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie, who hoped that their interests would be better protected by the reformist President Rouhani. Between December 2017 and June 2018, by contrast, the protagonists were not only students and ordinary people who demonstrated against the high cost of living, the suffocating clerical regime and youth unemployment, which reached 40 per cent, and for women’s rights, but also workers’ strikes. Strikes that fought against the consequences of the economic crisis that had hit the country, a crisis that was aggravated by the fact that the Rouhani government, following the harsh US sanctions (and, gradually, also those of the US’s European allies), had imposed crackdown on wages and made working conditions more difficult. These sanctions were decided by Trump after he broke the nuclear agreement with Tehran, signed by Obama in 2015 (4). In 2019, another protest movement broke out, triggered by the excessive increase in fuel prices, in which very large sections of traders participated. The power of the mullahs (Muslim clerics), which relies not only on historical religious influence, but also and above all on the economic power that is largely concentrated in their hands, and the military power that results from it, has always responded with harsh repression. How many decades can such a power, which relies in its domination of society on the systematic suppression of any protest, last?

Increasingly broader strata of the population, the urban bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, peasants, workers, are constantly being tormented by the effects of the economic and social crisis as well as the blows of repression. In this situation, given the trade and communication contacts with the world, there is almost a natural urge to get rid of the trappings and restrictions that the fundamentalist social climate has imposed for decades. And given the worldwide ideological influence of conceptions of democracy permanently disseminated with “free trade”, free “private property” and “per-

sonal freedom”, it is obvious that popular protest movements generally claim freedom and entrust themselves to reformism – even when dressed in religious garb – as the key to solving social problems.

Many commentators on the demonstrations of recent months argue that they are different from those of the past because, although they were triggered by a specific event – the brutal murder of a twenty-two-year-old girl for reasons of no great significance – in fact, all strata of the population and the whole country quickly became involved, something that had not happened before. Nevertheless, the wish of the major media and the vast majority of Western intellectuals is that these protest movements, which have become so widespread and in which a large part of the population has become involved, should resemble the movements that in 2011 in Tunisia and then in all Arab countries brought down the major dictators such as Ben Ali and Mubarak, opening the door of the country to the longed-for democracy (5)... and to Western capital. A democracy which, as we easily predicted, did not solve any social problems, because “*bourgeois democracy cannot but re-propose the prospect of a bourgeois regime that should transform its repressive attitude by expanding the spaces of ‘freedom’ in everyday life and by granting some sort of social reforms that would in no way undermine profit-oriented capitalist production; bourgeois democracy is nothing but the parliamentary and electoral guise of the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is this in a more cultivated form in the older capitalist countries, it is this in a cruder form in the newer capitalist countries, but in reality it can never give the working masses any other prospect than that of greater exploitation, greater misery, greater hunger and greater repression.*” (6) Just look at what happened not only in Tunisia after the fall of Ben Ali, but also in Egypt, where al-Sisi is undoubtedly no better than Mubarak, and in Libya, which is divided between three or four local potentates who are acting as repressive and bloody as Gaddafi, if not even more so, or in Lebanon, a country completely destroyed by feuds between clans in the service of various regional powers sold out to this or that imperialism, or in Algeria, where the bourgeois regime is more solid but no less exploitative and repressive than the other bourgeois regimes.

### PROLETARIAT AND THE PROTEST MOVEMENT

One of the characteristics of this latest wave of protest demonstrations concerns workers, and especially workers in the energy sector. Although they are treated better than workers in other sectors of the economy, and although they are not organized in independent national unions, which are banned (just as independent political parties are banned by the current government), in October “*oil workers in Assaluyeh in Bushehr province*” went on strike, and in the following weeks, from late October to mid-November, “*teachers and workers began to organize sit-ins and local strikes*

*in Tehran, Isfahan, Abadan and other places in Iranian Kurdistan*” (7).

On 17 December, workers went on strike again in several cities, “*including Assaluyeh, Mahshahr, Ahvaz and Gachsaran*”, and were joined by “*oil sector firefighters on Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf*” (8). This was not a national strike in the true sense of the word, but it was so large compared to previous strikes that it prompted the organizing committees to propose again a further three-day strike a week later (24, 25 and 26 December). These strikes, like the previous ones, are organized by local committees and union activists who are in contact with each other through social media, and usually involve precarious workers, temporary workers and day labourers. Even inmates in Karaj prison rioted after one of them was taken to death row and awaiting hanging. The workers’ protest, although fragmented and generally disconnected at the national level, stems from particularly difficult economic conditions, not just from today. Ninety per cent of contracts are fixed-term, so the general precariousness prevails; moreover, labour relations are mediated by state-controlled employment agencies, while the regime is increasing the salaries of police and armed forces by up to 20 % (9). However, once a certain threshold of tolerance has been exceeded, the pressure from below is such that, despite the various waves of repression against strikers over the last few years, initiatives to organize independent union organizations have continued to take place, as in the case of the bus drivers at Sherkat-e Vahed in Tehran or the workers at the Haft Tapeh sugar factory in Iran’s Khuzestan (10). And given the general atmosphere of social repression, protests against the repression of street demonstrations, women’s demonstrations and against executions also emerged during the workers’ strikes.

From the point of view of the living and working conditions of the workers, the very history of the relations between the working class and the bourgeois class teaches us that workers, even in a country where their independent organization is forbidden, sooner or later manage to organize themselves, and that it is the movement of struggle itself, with its strong pressure that can achieve a positive result, namely union organization, not only at the level of the category but also at the national level. The bourgeoisie also knows this very well, and this is why, especially after the Second World Imperialist War – in line with the experience of fascism and Nazism – it has supported and financed the formation of collaborationist unions, unions institutionalised in the state. The bourgeoisie is aware that in order to avoid their social proletarian power organizing itself and standing on the ground of open class struggle with its own and revolutionary aims, the workers must be organized by the bourgeoisie itself, naturally using means and methods that correspond to the defense of its general interests. There are basically two ways to achieve this: the democratic way and the openly totalitarian (fascist, militarist, fundamentalist) way. In the democratic way, the bourgeoisie tries to achieve collaboration between the classes with the active par-

ticipation of the working masses; the illusion of democracy (with its tail of electoralism, parliamentarism, freedom of organization and assembly, etc.) in fact leads the proletarian masses to believe that they can achieve by democratic means, an improvement in their living and working conditions without having to struggle systematically, but by virtue of the law, through “dialogue between the social partners” and “negotiation”. In the way of open dictatorship, which is generally established through the democratic method and in the face of a strong mass movement tending to overthrow the existing institutions, the bourgeoisie, in order to win the collaboration of the working class – after having repressed and shackled it in compulsory social and political structures beneficial to the ruling class – must provide certain guarantees (those famous social shock absorbers) in the economic field (which is the basis of life). Obviously, the richer, more powerful and more dominant a country is in the international market, the more resources it can allocate to satisfy the basic needs of life of the broad masses, precisely thanks to these social shock absorbers; the weaker it is economically and in international relations compared to its competitors, the fewer resources it has at its disposal, and therefore it tends to favour workers in economic sectors considered strategic (energy, armaments, armed forces), a practice that in turn has long been practiced in the richest countries. This is happening in Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Brazil and dozens of other countries. However, when it comes to repressing movements that escape the control of the ruling bourgeoisie, the democratically run state and the dictatorially run state use exactly the same means and methods (police forces, specially organized militias, the army), differing only in the justification for the use of these means and methods: in the first case against subversion and terrorism, in the second case against attacks on national sovereignty by foreign powers, if not outright to eliminate those waging a “war against God”.

In our statement of 25. September 2022 (11) we wrote: *“Bourgeois power can change its method of social management if the mass mobilizations – as was the case in the famous ‘Arab springs’ – are so massive that they endanger its hold; but it will not change until it experiences all the forms of repression at its disposal, even the bloodiest ones ; and in any case, it will always tend to throw out of the throne the figure that no longer has the charisma of yesteryear and replace him with other representatives, perhaps even democratically elected, so as to carry out a changing of the guard, in order to keep the political, economic and social power. The Egypt of Mubarak first, and then of Al Sisi, is a demonstration of this.”*

As for the proletarian masses, if they continue their struggles and strikes and coordinate them at the national level, they will become, overtly, the main target of state repression, because they will be accused of endangering the country’s economy and aiding foreign attacks on its “stability”. The workers’ struggle at this point will either take the direction of independent organization, starting from the sphere of the immediate

defence of economic conditions as well as the struggle itself, or it will be stifled for the umpteenth time by being channelled into the labyrinths of local and sectoral bargaining, isolated and fragmented after eventually allowing categories considered specifically strategic – such as the oil and gas industry – to organize themselves according to the rules laid down by law and in any case within the traditional limits of defending the national economy. Proletarians cannot hope that the bourgeois ruling class – whether it wears religious or secular garb – will completely change its ways. Already during the great movements of 1978–1979, the massive demonstrations and general strikes that overthrew the Shah’s power, popular and working-class Iran believed and hoped that, thanks to a religious bourgeoisie, its general position would improve and that the economic “wealth” derived from the large quantities of exported oil could be distributed among all strata of the population. The Shah’s regime, certainly pro-Western and in any case repressive, was replaced by the religious regime of first Khomeini and then Khamenei. The regime, not yet deeply entrenched, had already in 1980 thrown its best young men into the war against Iraq, which lasted for eight long years, to defend its “sacred frontiers”; into a war which, moreover, could have ended much sooner, given that in 1982 Iraq withdrew from the Shatt al-Arab areas it had invaded and unilaterally ceased fire, but was kept alive by Khomeini’s regime in order to launch a counter-attack aimed at Basra. But at the same time, the other objective was to break its proletariat, which had been reduced to a catastrophic state after so many years of war. Saddam Hussein’s regime was a warmongering one, Khomeini’s regime was also a warmongering one, and both were in complete agreement with the warmongering policies of the US and its mutual allies.

Thus, the perspective of the proletariat in Iran is either **class-based** or remains shaped by the interests of the ruling bourgeoisie, which even today protects itself behind Shia confessionalism, but which could one day, in the context of international power relations and under pressure from further large mass movements, change its coat and even adopt the symbols of Western democracy.

The proletarian class perspective is based on the defence of exclusive workers’ interests and is therefore opposed to bourgeois interests, both in the immediate and even more so in the general political field. The alternative to bourgeois domination, whether in religious or secular guise, can never be parliamentary democracy, but is and will be the path of class struggle, a struggle that aims at proletarian revolution. However difficult and remote this path may seem today, it is the only one that can lead the proletariat to become the protagonist of its own future, of its own history. The proletariat is the wage labour force which produces all the wealth in every country; the bourgeoisie is today the ruling class which appropriates all the wealth produced and can continue to do so on condition that it keeps the proletariat in wage slavery. It is against this slavery that the modern slaves, that is, the proletarians, must fight in Iran as in any other country, starting, of

course, with the struggle for the defence of economic interests, but with the aim of extending it to the whole proletariat of the country and the proletarians of all other countries, with the aim of overthrowing bourgeois power and building on its ruins a new society, the society that will no longer depend on capital, market, money, violence and the dictatorship of imperialism.

January 31st, 2023

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(1) See [www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/5-grafici-capire-le-proteste-iran-36790](http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/5-grafici-capire-le-proteste-iran-36790) of 11 January 2023 and [www.lifegate.it/condannati-morte-iran](http://www.lifegate.it/condannati-morte-iran) of 13 December 2022.

(2) See [luce.lanazione.it/actualities/asra-panahi-16-years-beaten-to-death-not-sung-into-ayatollah/](http://luce.lanazione.it/actualities/asra-panahi-16-years-beaten-to-death-not-sung-into-ayatollah/).

(3) See *Tgcom24*, 5 and 26 January 2023.

(4) See [www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione-iran-la-stanchezza-di-una-rivoluzione-19393](http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione-iran-la-stanchezza-di-una-rivoluzione-19393) of 6.1.2018; <https://ricerca.repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1999/07/11/iran-studenti-in-rivolta-dopo-il-venerdi.html> of 11.7.1999. See also *Il Medio Oriente, arena degli scontri borghesi e imperialisti* (Il comunista, No 154, July 2018); *Iran: la collera operaia sfida la dittatura sanguinaria dei mollahs* (Il comunista, No 155, September 2018).

(5) In Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, on 17 December 2010, police seized the fruit and vegetable cart of an unemployed young man “without street vendor’s licence”. In desperation, the unemployed young man, who had been deprived of the only means, albeit meagre, of supporting himself and his family, set himself on fire in front of the government building. He died the following 5 January. “It is the spark that ignites the dust,” we wrote in our statement *Viva la rivolta della gioventù proletaria!*, of 11 January 2011. See also *Rivolte nei paesi arabi e imperialismo*, in the Supplement to “Il comunista”, No 119, April 2011.

(6) See *Tunisi, Algeri, Il Cairo...* “Il comunista” no. 119, Dec. 2010–Jan. 2011.

(7) [www.rivistailmulino.it/a/iran-la-rivoluzione-dei-lavoratori](http://www.rivistailmulino.it/a/iran-la-rivoluzione-dei-lavoratori) of 8 December 2022.

(8) See [www.radiondaurto.org/2022/12/17/iran-quarto-mese-di-rivolta-inizia-con-lo-sciopero-dei-lavoratori-dellindustria-petroliera/](http://www.radiondaurto.org/2022/12/17/iran-quarto-mese-di-rivolta-inizia-con-lo-sciopero-dei-lavoratori-dellindustria-petroliera/)

(9) See [www.operaicontra.it/2022/12/13/iran-la-forza-al-lavoro](http://www.operaicontra.it/2022/12/13/iran-la-forza-al-lavoro) and [www.operaicontra.it/2022/12/19/iran-dalla-lotta-di-strada-agli-scioperi-operai/](http://www.operaicontra.it/2022/12/19/iran-dalla-lotta-di-strada-agli-scioperi-operai/).

(10) See footnote 7.

(11) See *Iran. Iran: from bread demonstrations to harsh protests after 22-year-old girl arrested, beaten and killed by religious police for not wearing her veil “according to the rules”*, PCInt, 25 September 2022, [www.pcint.org](http://www.pcint.org)

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- Iran: from bread demonstrations to harsh protests after 22-year-old girl arrested, beaten and killed by religious police for not wearing her veil "according to the rules"
- Great Britain. In spite of all the difficulties and obstacles - the brutality of the conservatives, the hostility of the Labour Party, the unions betrayal - the proletarians mobilize to defend their interests
- Bordiga Amadeo: Socialism and the "Defense of the Nation" (Avanti!, December 21, 1914)
- **Imperialist War in Ukraine:** No to the Imperialist Mobilization around the War in Ukraine! / The Ukrainian Government at War with the Proletarians / Bourgeois War and Propaganda of Horror / In its Confrontation with American and European Imperialisms, Russian Imperialism launches its Troops to the Territorial Conquest of Strategic Areas of Ukraine

- Against the Economic and Social War which the Bourgeoisie is Waging in all Countries against the Male and Female Proletariat, and against the War which Imperialism is Unable to Stop
- Kazakhstan: Strikes and Riots Teeter the Regime
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Organ of the International Communist Party

**Nr 19**

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## Summary

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*Great Britain :*

In spite of all the difficulties and obstacles - the brutality of the conservatives, the hostility of the Labour Party, the unions betrayal - the proletarians mobilize to defend their interests

**THE CRADLE OF CAPITALISM  
HIT HARD  
BY THE GLOBAL CRISIS**

The state of tension into which world capitalism has entered in recent

1975, with as a background not the end of the general economic crisis of the 1930s, by *glorious* by the bourgeois economists, but the beginning of a much more gloomy period where the armed and imperialist war succeeded the accelerated

Great Britain, with its "past and present liberal capitalism to prosper and flourish, unshaken by adversity and change, as it would have caused it to lose 3 or 4% of its income in 1918, whereas others received the full force of the effects of the crisis leading to a rise in

**Amadeo Bordiga**  
**Socialism and the Defense of the Nation**  
(*Avanti!*, December 21, 1914)

This article attracted very lively discussion among Italian radicals, and reflecting the attitudes of the party's left in its position. Whilst before Italy entered the war, it denounces any support for war in the name of "defending the nation" against an aggressor, accepting the thesis as did Mussolini, a former figure on the left expelled from the Italian Socialist Party because of his position in favor of war, and also some of the quotations of all three appear in this article by the young Sandro (leader of the Socialist Youth) as fundamentally on the same positions of "revolutionary defection" defended by Lenin — although they were then unknown in Italy.

Among those who present dogmatic formulations... that those who, fortunately for them and for society, for a long or short time are living outside our ranks, would like to foster among our youth like a volcano, is that of the inferiority of the negroes.

International Communist Party («programme communiste»)

# ***The Tragedy of the german Proletariat after the First World War***



## The Tragedy of the german Proletariat after the First World War

(Brochure A5, 60 pages, January 2010, Price: 2 € : £ 2 : \$ 2,5 : 4 CHF)

In this brochure we are publishing the text of a report at the General Meeting of the party on February 12 and 13, 1972, "The tragedy of the German proletariat after World War One", which produced a synthesis of former studies. We added an article more particularly devoted to the aforementioned "November Revolution" of 1918, along with one of the correspondences of 1920 by Amadeo Bordiga in "Il Soviet", the organ of the Abstentionist Communist Fraction. Bordiga who had gone to Berlin en route

to Moscow where II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist International was to be held, took the opportunity to meet the leaders not only of the KPD, but also of the KAPD, its “leftist” fraction which had been expelled by Levi. The assessments he gives are particularly interesting.

## Table of contents:

- Introduction
- Germany 1918-1919: the tragic retard of the party («le prolétaire», No. 491, Nov. - Dec. 2008 / Jan. 2009)
- The tragedy of the German proletariat after the first World War (Report to a general meeting of the party - 1972)  
The situation in Germany and the communist movement («Il Soviet», No 18, 11 July 1920.)
- Postscript: Berlin 5 January 1919

# The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Marxist Communism in the Doctrine and in the History of the International Proletarian Struggle

(Brochure A5, 60 pages, November 2010, Price: 2 € ; £ 2 ; \$ 2.5 ; 4 CHF)

The “Fundamentals of revolutionary marxist communism...”, text of a report given by Amadeo Bordiga during the general meeting of the party held in Paris June 8th, and 9th 1957, has been out of print for years.

A republication of this text, with its power intact after more a half-century, was essential because it is the demolition of the false alternatives, deformations and

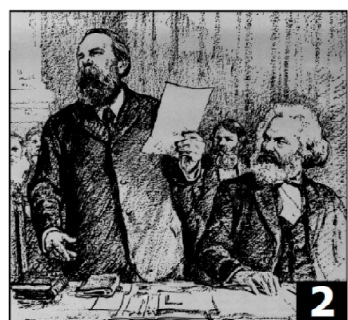
revisions which, in the name of "enrichment" or of the "development" of Marxism for supposedly drawing a reckoning of the lessons of history; disavow the fundamental elements of the communist program on the questions of the party, and of the State

## Table of contents:

- Presentation
- Premise
- **Part one:** Party and class state, essential forms of the communist revolution
- **Part two:** The economic organizations of the proletariat are nothing but substitutes for the revolutionary party
- **Part three:** Petty-bourgeois distortions of the characteristics of communist society in the "syndicalist" and "enterprise socialist" conceptions
- Conclusion

International Communist Party («programme communiste»)

## The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism





# PROGRAM OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

**The International Communist Party is constituted on the basis of the following principles established at Leghorn in 1921 on the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) :**

1. In the present capitalist social regime there develops an increasing contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, giving rise to the antithesis of interests and to the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

2. The present day production relations are protected by the power of the bourgeois State, that, whatever the form of representative system and the use of elective democracy, constitutes the organ for the defense of the interests of the capitalist class.

3. The proletariat can neither crush or modify the mechanism of capitalist production relations from which its exploitation derives, without the violent destruction of the bourgeois power.

4. The indispensable organ of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is the class party. The Communist Party consists of the most advanced and resolute part of the proletariat; it unites the efforts of the working masses transforming their struggles for group interests and contingent issues into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. It is up to the Party to propagate revolutionary theory among the masses, to organize the material means of action, to lead the working class during its struggle, securing the historical continuity and the international unity of the movement.

5. After it has smashed the power of the capitalist State, the proletariat must completely destroy the old State apparatus in order to organize itself as the ruling class and set up its own dictatorship; meanwhile depriving the bourgeoisie and members of the bourgeois class of all political rights and functions as long as they survive socially, founding the organs of the new regime exclusively on the productive class. Such is the program that the Communist Party sets itself and which characterizes it. It is this party therefore which exclusively represents, organizes and directs the proletarian dictatorship. The requisite defence of the proletarian state against all counter-revolutionary initiatives can only be assured by depriving the bourgeoisie and parties which are enemies of the proletarian dictatorship of all means of agitation and political propaganda and by equipping the proletariat with an armed organization in order to repel all interior and exterior attacks.

6. Only the force of the proletarian State will be able to systematically put into effect the necessary measures for intervening in the relations of the social economy, by means of which the collective administration of production and distribution will take the place of the capitalist system.

7. This transformation of the economy and consequently of the whole social life will lead to the gradual elimination of the necessity for the political State, which will progressively give way to the rational administration of human activities.

\* \* \*

**Faced with the situation in the capitalist world and the workers' movement following the Second World War the position of the Party is the following :**

8. In the course of the first half of the twentieth century the capitalist social system has been developing, in the economic field, creating monopolistic trusts among the employers, and trying to control and manage production and ex-

change according to central plans with State management of whole sectors of production. In the political field, there has been an increase of the police and military potential of the State, with governments adopting a more totalitarian form. All these are neither new sorts of social organizations in transition from capitalism to socialism, nor revivals of pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of a more and more direct and exclusive management of power and the State by the most developed forces of capital.

This course excludes the progressive, pacifist interpretations of the evolution of the bourgeois regime, and confirms the Marxist prevision of the concentration and the antagonistic array of class forces. So that the proletariat may confront its enemies' growing potential with strengthened revolutionary energy, it must reject the illusory revival of democratic liberalism and constitutional guarantees. The Party must not even accept this as a means of agitation ; it must finish historically once and for all with the practice of alliances, even for transitory issues, with the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois parties, or with pseudo-workers' parties with a reformist program.

9. The global imperialist wars show that the crisis of disintegration of capitalism is inevitable because it has entered the phase when its expansion, instead of signifying a continual increment of the productive forces, is conditioned by repeated and ever-growing destruction. These wars have caused repeated deep crises in the global workers' organizations because the dominant classes could impose on them military and national solidarity with one or the other of the belligerents. The opposing historical solution for which we fight, is the awakening of the class struggle, leading to civil war, the destruction of all international coalitions by the reconstitution of the International Communist Party as an autonomous force independent of any existing political or military power.

10. The proletarian State, to the extent that its apparatus is an instrument and a weapon of struggle in a historical epoch of transition does not derive its organizational strength from constitutional rules nor from representative schemas whatsoever. The most complete historical example of such a State up to the present is that of the Soviets (workers' councils) which were created during the October 1917 revolution, when the working class armed itself under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. The Constituent Assembly having been dissolved, they became the exclusive organs of power repelling the attacks by foreign bourgeois governments and, inside the country, stamping out the rebellion of the vanquished classes and of the middle and petit-bourgeois layers and of the opportunist parties which, in the decisive phases, are inevitably allied with the counter-revolution

11. The defense of the proletarian regime against the dangers of degeneration inherent in the failures and possible retreats in the work of economic and social transformation – whose integral realization is inconceivable within the limits of only one country – can only be assured by the constant coordination between the policy the workers' State and the united international struggle, incessant in times of peace as in times of war, of the proletariat of each country against its bourgeoisie and its State and military apparatus. This co-ordination can only be secured by means of the political and programmatic control of the world communist party over the State apparatus where the working class has seized power.

