

communist program

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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What distinguishes our party

1926–1952: DISTINGUISHING ONESELF FROM STALINISM, FIRST OF ALL

The text **Distingue il nostro partito** (What distinguishes our party) was written for the first time after the crisis of the Internationalist communist party (Partito comunista internazionalista, PCInt) in 1951–1952, which resulted in a split between a faction that continued its activities with the old newspaper *Battaglia comunista* and another that gave birth to a new organisation (also called Internationalist communist party) with a new newspaper, *Il programma comunista*; this text was placed permanently beside the title of the party newspaper in order to better characterise its political position not only in relation to the other newspaper, but in general. From then on, the "What distinguishes us" was thus an integral part of the party's official presentation which, through its press organs – the newspaper first of all, and then the other periodicals and magazines – openly declared its historical position, its origins and characteristic positions.

That text, originally more condensed, stated that what distinguishes our party was "*the political continuity which goes back from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Third International, to Leghorn 1921, to the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of Moscow, to the rejection of the popular fronts and the partisan blocs; the hard work of restoration of the doctrine and the revolutionary organ, in contact with the working class, outside of personal and electoral politicking*". It was published for the first time in *Battaglia comunista*, no. 5, 6–20 March 1952, after a meeting of the then central organ of the party (which was still called the Central Committee), had decided to publish in the newspaper a communiqué and the text "Base per l'organizzazione 1952" (1).

At that time, those who were involved in political activity generally knew that claiming "Leghorn of 1921" meant claiming the foundation of the **Communist Party of Italy (section of the Communist International; PCd'I)** in this town, and its intransigent line led by the Communist Left (Amadeo Bordiga, Umberto Terracini, Bruno Fortichiari, Ruggero Grieco, to name but a few well-known comrades), and not by Gramsci who made no substantial contribution to the founding theses of the PCd'I. On the contrary, when someone was referring to Gramsci, it intended without doubt to refer to the **Italian Communist Party** (Partito comunista italiano; PCI) to which Gramsci made his decisive contribution, especially in the theses presented at the 1926 Congress of the PCd'I held in Lyon (theses completely in line with Stalinism and opposed to those presented by the Left), a party led afterwards by

Togliatti completely dependent on Moscow, i.e. on the now stalinized Bolshevik party; he was referring to the party that had embraced the theses of democracy (as if the bourgeoisie had not at that time forever abandoned the method of democratic government in favour of the fascist one, and the task of the proletariat would first of all be to "lift up from the mud" the flag of democracy discarded by the bourgeoisie); he was referring to the party that had promoted the Popular Fronts, the national blocs in the partisan resistance struggle against Nazi-Fascism so that democracy could be re-established (which, for the authentic Marxists was never "neutral", but only "bourgeois"). When the official historiography was dealing of the origins of the Communist Party of Italy, in the rare cases in which it spoke of the Communist Left (Bordiga, etc.) it was with the aim to condemn it as an "extremist" and "sectarian" current that "fortunately" had been beaten by the Gramsci's current and Stalinism, falsely presented as the "continuers of Leninism".

At the time, when someone spoke of "degeneration of Moscow", it was clear that he was referring to the Third International, which had its headquarters in Moscow, and to what the Communist Left considered a political degeneration started with a series of tactical and political concessions that got through formulae believed to be "more receptive" by the great masses of the international and above all European proletariat, such as the "workers' government" (instead of "dictatorship of the proletariat", a formula considered too dry and *harsh* for workers accustomed to democra-

(1) Following the Florence Meeting of December 1951, a text entitled "Base per l'Organizzazione 1952" was presented and circulated. In issue no. 5, 6–20 March 1952 of *Battaglia comunista*, after many acts of indiscipline and factionism had occurred in the party, three texts were published simultaneously:

- *Distingue il nostro partito* (What distinguishes our party)
- *Comunicato del Comitato Centrale* (Communiqué from the Central Committee)
- *Base per l'organizzazione 1952* (Basis for organization 1952)

The texts are as follows:

"WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY: The line from Marx, to Lenin, to Leghorn of 1921, to the struggle of the Left against the degeneration of Moscow, to
(Continuation of note 1 on page 2)

What distinguishes

cy), the "political" United Front in the illusion of being able to drag on the revolutionary front reformist currents and parties which had amply demonstrated by their positions and actions to be congenitally anti-revolutionary, with transient tactical lines to satisfy the supposedly different "situations" in different countries, etc. up to the anti-marxist theory of "socialism in one country".

The class battles of the Communist Left, especially in Italy and in European countries where Italian militants of the Communist Left had taken refuge to escape fascist repression, despite the fierce and more than twenty years of Stalinist propaganda against them, were still alive in the memory and in the ranks of the proletariat in the 1950s and 1960s. It was well known that the left communists, the "*Bordigists*", as the those who defended and followed the founding theses of the Communist International and the PCd'I were already then called, had constantly waged a theoretical and political uncompromising fight against all yielding to the principle and practice of democracy, against any yield to workers' spontaneity or intellectual sectarianism, and therefore against any degeneration of the party, and even more so of the International, both on the tactical level (political fronts, parliamentarianism, etc.), on the political level (workers' government, democratic anti-fascism, etc.), on the organisational level ("sympathizing" parties, etc.) and on the theoretical level (socialism in one country, offensive theory, etc.).

In 1925–1926, the Italian Communist Left was practically alone in claiming that in Russia it was not socialism which was built, but capitalism; and that the theory of "socialism in one country" was nothing but the fruit of the bourgeois counter-revolutionary offen-

sive which saw in Stalinism the deadly third opportunistic wave that would destroy the Bolshevik party of Lenin, the Communist International and any possible revolutionary revival of the international workers' movement for a long time. Which then happened. We were known for those who affirmed that "*Russia isn't socialist*"; and as those who affirmed that Stalin, with the complicity of the theoretical yielding of the greatest representatives of the Bolshevik old guard, but above all on the basis of the defeat of the class and revolutionary movement in Western Europe, of which the history of the German party is emblematic, had distorted Marxist theory by twisting its concepts and terminology to the needs of capitalist development in Russia and to the reasons of its state by mystifying the dictatorship of capital in Russia as the dictatorship of the "proletariat". All that Stalinist propaganda passed off as "Marxism-Leninism" was nothing but the distortion of Marxist theory in an attempt to pass Stalin off as the only true continuer of Lenin. Nothing could be further from the truth, and time has shown that the Stalinist counter-revolution was nothing but the most far-reaching and profound bourgeois counter-revolution at the international level, and in its fierce repression of the whole Bolshevik old guard in Russia and outside Russia (even to the point of getting rid of the indomitable Trotsky for fear that he might to somehow put a spoke in the wheel of the war alliances that Stalin was drawing up in view of the Second World Imperialist War) more cannibalistic than that of Thiers against the defeated Parisian communards of 1871.

The Communist Left, Italian in particular, after having launched multiple warnings in the international arena against the danger of degeneration of the Inter-

(*Continuation of note 1*)

the rejection of the partisan blocs; the hard work of restoration of the doctrine and the revolutionary organ, in contact with the working class, outside of personal and electoral politicking."

"**COMMUNIQUÉ** from the Central Committee. This decision, taken unanimously by the CC on 24-02-1952, fulfils the need to put the Party's organisation and activities in order at the end of a period of repeated and serious acts of indiscipline and open disintegration, which must absolutely be considered over.

The decision was adopted by the CC also as a result of a series of contacts, meetings and consultations with many comrades and groups in the organisation, who agreed to it without the slightest exception or reservation.

The adherence of all comrades is regarded as having been achieved through their membership for the year 1952, which is already in course in accordance with the cornerstones and the elaborations referred to here.

The Party with all its organs and adherents undertakes to work on the basis of the results of the study meetings that took place in 1951 in Rome, Naples and Florence, as well as on the basis of the Statute-Pro-

gramme and the political platforms previously drawn up and published.

With special reference to the practical tasks and actions in the current harsh and difficult period for the proletarian movement, the party's activity hinges on the text presented in Florence in December 1951 and already circulated within its ranks as the "Base per l'Organizzazione 1952", which has the character (after recalling the fundamental principles of the movement) of delimiting the scope and extension in the current situation of the party.

The points of this elaboration state that, without passing over in silence or forgetting any aspect of the integral task of the class party, today the tasks of the theoretical rearrangement, of organizational reconstitution with the greatest possible development, of proselytism and propaganda, are pre-eminent, in conviction that the never-abandoned agitation among the masses and with the masses will in the not too distant future reach its ampleness and potency.

The Party never loses contact with the concrete and physical manifestations of the class struggle; it prevents from being confused with movements of a coldly intellectual and sectarian character; it continues its activity and its work according to the points of Part

national itself, and of the Bolshevik party in particular, both on the tactical level – through equivocal and fundamentally wrong formulas such as that of the United Political Front, the acceptance of "national" ways of revolution – and on the organisational level – through the acceptance of membership of "sympathizing parties" to the Communist International, and above all through the organisational and ideological terrorism imposed by Stalinism in defence of Russian "reasons of State" – brought its main battle against the theory of "socialism in one country" which in 1926 historically marked the complete break of Stalinism with Marxism, with the theory of the proletarian and communist revolution; and the break between the Communist Left and the Gramscian leadership of the Communist Party of Italy.

Since then, the Communists adhering to the Left current, and sheltered abroad to escape fascist repression, reorganised themselves in the so-called "Frazione all'estero" (Frazione del Partito comunista italiano; Fraction abroad, Fraction of the Italian Communist Party) with which they made every effort to remain closely connected to the Leghorn 1921 programme and to the texts of the Left coherently coincident until the 1926 Lyon Congress, and to the constitutive theses of the Communist International of 1919 and 1920. The second imperialist slaughterhouse blew up every potential inter-imperialist equilibrium, and faced anew the few remaining revolutionary forces still connected with the struggles of the Russian October revolutionary cycle, and the formation of the Communist International, with the drama and at the same time the political need to regain the theoretical heritage of Marxism, distorted and torn by the forces of the counter-revolution.

IV of the quoted text which is going to be published in the Party press (*Battaglia Comunista*, no. 5, 1952).

The central organs of the Party remain in Milan and their functioning is remitted by the C.C. to the executive office entrusted to comrade Bruno Maffi who, for the distribution of the work of the various sectors (organisation, press – *Battaglia comunista* and *Pro-meteo*, administration) will make use of the work of other comrades of the C.C. or, for specific tasks, of other people in the organisation.

Every manifestation, activity and publication carried out outside these precise guidelines and this organizational framework must be considered extraneous to the Party.

The CC, 24 February 1952"

With regard to the "**Base per l'organizzazione 1952**", in no. 5 of *Battaglia comunista* only points "III. Tattica ed azione del Partito" and "IV. Azione del Partito in Italia e altri Paesi al 1952" were published in full, while points "I. Dottrina" and "II. Compito generale del Partito di classe" were only summarised. The full publication of these "Basic points for joining the Party" was made in *Il programma comunista* ten years later, in 1962.

In the work of theoretical restoration of Marxism and in the effort to reconstitute the class party, after the end of the deepest counter-revolutionary cycle with the participation in national and partisan blocs of the ex-communist parties in the second world imperialist slaughter and in the post-war economic reconstruction, as early as 1943 and then especially in the first period after the Second World War, the *Italian Communist Left*, was the only one current remaining anchored to revolutionary Marxism and being capable, in fact, to draw up a general balance sheet of the revolutions and counter-revolutions; it resumed its activities, organising itself into a party (at the time, the "Internationalist communist party") and, in 1952, reappeared on the historical scene on clear, definite theoretical and programmatic bases, in perfect continuity with the line that goes from Marx-Engels to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy.

Stalinism was, and would be for a long time to come, the main enemy that the proletarian and communist movement has ever encountered in its historical path, because of its double role: as a major opportunist force coming from the degeneration of the revolutionary communist parties and in continuity with social democracy, and as a bourgeois, state force, based on the accelerated capitalist development of Russia. Distinguishing oneself from Stalinism, i.e. from the national-communist interpretation of Marxism, and the consequent interclassist complicity, and fighting against it was not only indispensable for any coherently Marxist communist, but **vital**.

Among the various efforts of political reorganization, immediately after the end of the war, there is also the "*Appello per la riorganizzazione internazionale del movimento rivoluzionario marxista*" (Appeal for the international reorganization of the revolutionary Marxist movement) (2), written in French in 1949 as a draft of programmatic manifesto for international dissemination and addressed to all forces claiming to be revolutionary Marxist and willing "to accept and make their own the hard lessons of long decades of degeneration of the world communist movement first, then of the falling into the abyss of the 'Stalinist' counter-revolution".

(2) *L'Appello per la riorganizzazione internazionale del movimento rivoluzionario marxista* (Appeal for the International Reorganisation of the Revolutionary Marxist Movement), written in 1949 in French, was republished in Italian in the *Il programma comunista* no. 18 of 1957. The preface to this republication stated that «it served as a basis for the work to restore links between the groups of the Marxist communist left in various countries. But above all, it was useful within our small party in Italy to determine clearer programmatic orientations and a better organisational selection of elements that were misguided or hesitant on basic points. (...) It is clear that what is said in
(Continuation of note 2 on page 4)

What distinguishes

Indeed, the criticism of Stalinism, coming from various groups at that time, and often artfully encouraged and directed by democratic bourgeois forces linked to the Western imperialist powers, was not sufficient for the Communist Left. It was necessary to draw out all the lessons of the counter-revolutions and to regain the correct theoretical and programmatic bases of unadulterated revolutionary Marxism. To this end, the Appeal, after clarifying the tremendous crisis of the international proletarian movement, and taking into account the first symptoms of a reaction to Stalinism, insisted to firmly establish some key points: claiming of the weapons of revolution – violence, dictatorship, terror; complete rupture with the tradition of war alliances, partisan and national Liberation Fronts; historical negation of defencism ["defencism" consists in the claim that the proletariat, while remaining a subordinate class in the present social system, nevertheless runs the risk of seeing its conditions worsen if certain institutions of the present social order, e.g. representative system, parliamentarism, etc.], pacifism and federalism between states; condemnation of common social programmes and political fronts with the non-salaried classes; proclamation of the capitalist character of the Russian social structure; negation of all support for Russian imperial militarism, open defeatism against the American one.

We are in 1949, four years after the end of the second imperialist slaughter, at the height of Stalinism and anti-fascist resistantism, at a time when all the "communist" parties linked to and subsidised by Moscow, had sworn eternal loyalty to the ideological, political and social framework of the Stalinist counter-revolution, each carving out for itself their own "national path to socialism" in accordance with the degenerate theoretical thesis of socialism in one country. The lessons of the counter-revolutions were drawn only by the genuine forces of the Communist Left, particularly in its Italian component; neither Trotskyism, certainly anti-Stalinist, nor the thousand varieties of spontaneist and immediatist groups were able to draw decisive lessons: they were unable to do it given their theoretical and ideological baggage. All of them, in one way or another, were linked to the ideology of democratic and anti-fascist resistance, even though they used terminology and concepts that could recall Marxism, and were prisoners of the myth of democracy: some wanted it "direct" and not "parliamentary",

(Continuation of note 2)

the 'Appeal' about Stalinism is all the more valid for that inferior by-product which is so-called post-Stalinism; in turn, the criticism of the small groups of the false left and their inevitable indecisive hesitancy has had a series of evident confirmations in this seven-year period, in Italy and abroad, and in the painful events of the Hungarian movement of 1956". This text was later included in a publication entitled *The Party's Programme*, also available on our website www.pcint.org.

some wanted it "proletarian" and not "bourgeois", some wanted it "progressive" and not "conservative", some wanted it "popular" and not "class", some wanted it "new" and not "old", some wanted it "economic" in addition to "political", others wanted it "national" and not "imperialist"; but always, irretrievably they wanted democracy.

DEMOCRACY: THE BASIS OF PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE OF OPPORTUNISM

Another important point to distinguish the line of the party from that of all the other "left-wing" and "extreme left-wing" parties has always been, for the Communist Left, that of democracy in general, elections, parliamentarism.

In 1919 the question of parliamentarism in the international arena had been posed by Zinoviev, and then by Lenin (who with Bucharin drew up the theses on the question, presented, argued and defended at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, 1920) in the form of the tactic of *revolutionary parliamentarism*. The aim of that tactic was common to all communists of the time: to destroy the bourgeois parliament, and thus parliamentarism with all its corollary of parties representing the various interest groups in the country, from the bourgeois to the monarchists to the social democrats. Parliamentary democracy is not a method of government that facilitates the assertion of the interests of the majority of the population (which is proletarian, peasant and underclass), but it is a method of bourgeois government that deludes the majority of the population in the field of rights and interests while, in reality, it only covers up the strenuous defence of the interests of the bourgeois industrial, commercial and financial groups that from time to time – in their unstoppable motion of competition – secure the leadership of governments and the state. As Lenin puts it bluntly in *"State and Revolution"*, bourgeois democracy gives the majority of the population of a country the opportunity, from time to time, to elect those who will oppress them until the next election.

The contrast between the abstentionism of the Italian Communist Left and the revolutionary parliamentarism of Lenin and Bucharin was never a contraposition of principle, but of *tactics*. In principle, Bordiga and Lenin were perfectly consistent in destroying the bourgeois State and all its institutions (including parliament) by replacing it with the proletarian State, thus contrasting the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the communist party alone with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie exercised by its various parties (and the spectrum of parties at the service of the defence of capitalism and the ruling bourgeois class has always been broad, from liberal parties to monarchical constitutional parties, to opportunist parties – bourgeois workers, Lenin defines them – to fascist parties).

The different tactical evaluation of the use of elections and parliamentarism, especially in Western Europe, consisted of this. According to the Italian Communist Left, in Western Europe bourgeois democracy had already amply demonstrated its very high degree of

intoxication of the workers' parties and its deviating force from the sure revolutionary course. The abstentionism of the Italian Communist Left was not a passive tactic, waiting for the proletarian movement in its imagined progressive development to impose new forms of representation and government on society, nor was it determined by a phobia of "power", of the use of the state as a coercive force, a phobia characteristic of anarchism. It was an **active** tactic, in other words: instead of continuing to nurture in the proletarian ranks the illusion that through the means of electoralism and parliamentarianism one could actually achieve not only improvements in the social field but even the complete change of society, and instead of devoting the bulk of the forces of the revolutionary party, and wasting them, in the field of parliamentarianism, one had to fight not only ideologically but also practically against the illusions of bourgeois democracy, hence outside the democratic institutions of which parliament is the highest expression. It was necessary to nurture in the proletarian ranks the idea that the means and methods of the revolution, in order to be consistent with the objectives of the revolution (violent overthrow of the bourgeois state, conquest of central political power, establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, prohibition of the organisation of the bourgeois forces which had been defeated in both the political and economic spheres, etc.), were completely at odds with the means and methods of bourgeois democracy; that the means and methods of the proletarian revolution were based on the organisation of proletarian forces completely independent of any other social, and especially bourgeois, force; and that, instead of wasting in the bourgeois parliament precious energies and forces for revolutionary preparation, all the forces of the Communist Party should be dedicated, precisely, to the revolutionary preparation of both the party and the proletariat, intervening on all occasions of proletarian struggle in exclusive defence not only of living and working conditions but also of the proletarian struggle organisations themselves (trade unions, labour chambers, peasant leagues, cooperatives, etc.), of their newspapers, party headquarters. The party also had to devote its energies and forces to military training (as the Bolshevik party did, and as the Communist party of Italy did) in order to defend itself with weapons in hand against the attacks of the various legal and illegal forces of the bourgeoisie and to be able, in the future, to organise the insurrection and the conquest of political power in an appropriate way (3).

The very experience of the left-wing current of the PSI first and then of the Communist Party of Italy in its early years, against the anti-proletarian offensive, first democratic and then fascist, proves that this is what was the decisive field in the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and certainly not parliament. History has also shown that Bordiga's warning at the congress of the Communist International regarding the question of "revolutionary parliamentarianism" was more than well-founded: the tactic of parliamentarianism did not facilitate the progress of the revolutionary struggle of the prole-

tariat in Western Europe, but was an increasingly heavy hindrance, contributing to the political degeneration of the international movement itself.

Opportunism, beaten by Lenin even on the terrain of bourgeois democracy in Russia – where, given the tasks of the double revolution, the use of democratic means and methods was historically more justified, at least for a first stage of the revolution – did not have such a difficult life in the bourgeois and democratic West as in Russia in the years of the October revolution; it could continue to rely on the grip of bourgeois propaganda and its democratic ideology, continuing to delude the proletarian masses that the "conquest" of the municipalities and seats in the national parliament would facilitate the revolutionary task of conquering power. Bourgeois democracy, according to the opportunists in the style of Turati and Kautsky, could be used to achieve socialism *gradually*, little by little, a bit at a time, without armed confrontation; they nurtured the idea that it was the best social and political environment in which the proletariat could fulfil its aims; they nurtured the idea that it was a method of government and a general practice so useful to every social class, and therefore also to the proletariat, that they had to defend it against every violent attack inside or outside their country.

The opportunism of the traditional reformist currents (in the style of Turati, to be clear) had already taken root in the new Stalinist opportunist wave: for each country "its" national socialism, for each proletariat its fight 'against dictatorship' – as if dictatorship were synonymous with a step backwards in history –, for each people its "popular democracy".

The reference in the "**what distinguishes us**" to the rejection of partisan and national blocs, to the rejection of popular fronts, and to party work outside of personal and electoral politicking, is a fundamental, indispensable reference. The history of the degeneration of the international communist movement passes through a cursed series of slips into the field of bourgeois democracy, of interclassism; the more the boundaries between the clear and uncompromising revolutionary course and bourgeois democracy blur, the more bourgeois democracy swallows into its quagmire the tactics, methods, means, practices, organisations of the proletariat, transforming everything into weapons of social conservation, into weapons of defence of the bourgeois order. Democratic anti-fascism is the most obvious example. With the victory

(3) On the specific issue of parliamentarianism, see in particular the party pamphlet entitled *O preparazione rivoluzionaria, o preparazione elettorale* (Either revolutionary preparation or electoral preparation), which contains articles and speeches by Lenin, Bordiga, Trotsky, Repposi, etc.. See also the party pamphlet of 1976 entitled *Le ragioni del nostro astensionismo* (The reasons for our abstentionism), long out of print and which we republished in issues 92, 96 and 99 of *Il comunista*.

What distinguishes

of democracy over fascism, no progress was made towards socialism, far from it: on the contrary, the political and social power of the bourgeois ruling classes was strengthened, paving them the way – unhindered – for a real fascisation of society.

CONTINUITY OF THE COMMUNIST LEFT IN TIME

For the generations of the 1960s and 1970s, amid the continuing efforts of mystification of Marxism and the history of the international communist movement under the domination of the democratic (and naturally "anti-fascist") bourgeoisie, and thus with the full ideological and political domination of Stalinist-type opportunism (and its variants such as Maoism) and the thousand different forms of spontaneism over the proletariat, the references outlined in our complementary commentary alongside the title of the party press could no longer be so clear and distinct. It was necessary to make them clear so that in the uncontrollable dances of extra-parliamentary and "left-wing" groups that were born and died out in the space of a few years, if not a few months, the younger ones could have a less impenetrable insight into the historical and political position of our current. Thus, there was the first intervention in the text of the "*what distinguishes us*", announced at the general party meeting, which replaced the previous one starting with issue 16 of 28 August 1975 of "*Il programma comunista*", but not yet definitively. From issue no. 1 of 9 January 1976, we began to publish the text that until now we use in our press. In the following issue no. 8 of 23 April 1976, an article was published which explained the reason for the new formulation (but with same substance) of our newspaper *manchette* and emphasised the constant reaffirmation of the theses and political positions which were the basis of these formulations (4).

The Communist Left, particularly in Italy, has analysed and given the only accurate and coherently Marxist historical and political assessment of the Stalinist counter-revolution: and this was only possible thanks to a combination of several indispensable factors:

- no theoretical abandonment of Marxism, and no alleged "updating";
- coherence and intransigence in the programmatic and political theses of the foundation of the Communist International and the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy;
- continuity in the time (5) with the class struggles of the international communist Left, and therefore not only the "Italian" one;
- the strenuous and intransigent defense of Marxist theory throughout the historical period in which the Stalinist counterrevolution took place (right up to the participation from the imperialist standpoint in the second imperialist war and in the subsequent new imperialist partitioning of the world);
- the restoration of party political work on the basis

of the founding programme of the Communist Party of Italy (the only communist party in Western Europe founded "Bolshevik-style") and in close connection with the class struggles of the Communist Left on the most diverse fronts, from theoretical questions about the state the dictatorship of the proletariat, the economy, the party and its relations to the class, to the most pressing political questions such as democracy, anti-fascism, multiple revolutions, workers' economic and trade union associationism, etc.

All this made possible the "*hard work of restoration of the doctrine and of the revolutionary organ*", which was precisely the task that the forces that had reorganised themselves in the Internationalist communist party since 1943 considered a priority and which, since 1952, after the great split with the "*Battaglia comunista*" (6), those organised themselves around the "*Il programma comunista*" took it as vital, which led them to take decisive steps without which we would not have today, and would not have in the future, the indispensable foundations for bringing this objective to fruition. If Lenin, between 1895 and 1924, was the great restorer of Marxism and fought in particular against the second wave of opportunism represented by the Second International and especially Kautsky-

(4) From no. 16 to no. 24 of 1975 of *Il programma comunista*, the content of this newspaper *manchette* is as follows: "*What distinguishes our party: the political continuity from Marx to Lenin, to the Leghorn 1921 programme, to the foundation of the Communist International and its defense against degeneration, to the struggle against the theory of socialism in one country and the Stalinist counterrevolution; to the rejection of the popular fronts and the partisan and national blocs; the hard work of the restoration of the doctrine and of the revolutionary organ, in contact with the working class, outside of personal and electoral politicking*". In no. 8 of 1976, a text explaining "What distinguishes us" is published under the title: "*Distingue il nostro partito*", later separately reproduced in a pamphlet.

(5) *Temporal continuity, temporal continuous* (ital. *filotempismo, filotempista*), terms coined from scratch by our party to denote the continuity in time and space of authentic Marxist positions, outside of any supposed updating, revision, adaptation of programmatic and theoretical theses to supposedly new and unforeseen situations. "*Sul filo del tempo*" was the title of a series of articles written by Amadeo Bordiga between 1949 and 1953, published until the split in 1952 on *Battaglia comunista* and then in *Il programma comunista*, with which he intended to link the historical facts and programmatic and political theses of the Marxist movement between *past* and the *present* and to demonstrate the validity of the theoretical and political continuity of the Communist left; articles whose aim was above all to combat the opportunism of the past, today and tomorrow.

ism, then Amadeo Bordiga, between 1926 and 1970, when he died, was the same restorer and fought in particular against the third historical wave of opportunism represented by Stalinism and its variants.

A lot of work that the party carried out in this perspective, these "semi-finished works" – as Amadeo Bordiga used to call them – then found their place in texts and volumes that put them together according to themes and arguments. Among them, a text that can be considered as a balance-sheet of the Stalinist counter-revolution – "*Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi*" (The Economic and social structure of Russia today), and others that we consider as basic texts, such as: "*Elements of Marxist Orientation – Fundamental Theses of the Party – The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism*", "*Party and Class*", "*La sinistra comunista in Italia sulla linea marxista di Lenin (Lenin nel cammino della rivoluzione; „La sinistra comunista in Italia sulla linea marxista di Lenin: Lenin nel cammino della rivoluzione; L'Estremismo, condanna dei futuri rinnegati*" (The Communist Left in Italy on the Marxist line of Lenin: Lenin on the path of the revolution; Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder – condemnation of the renegades to come), "*Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle*", "*Dialogato con Stalin*" (Dialogue with Stalin; on the alleged socialism in Russia), "*Dialogato coi Morti*" (Dialog with the Dead; on XX congress of the CPSU), "*In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*" (In defence of the continuity of the communist programme; the theses of the Communist Left, from the Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Fraction of 1920 to the 1965–1966 theses of the International Communist Party–II programma comunista).

A great deal of other work – for example, a very long series of articles entitled "*Sul filo del tempo*" and

published regularly in the party newspapers, from 1949 until the split in 1952, in *Battaglia comunista* and then until 1954 in *Il programma comunista*, material published in the magazine *Prometeo* from 1946 to 1950, the written reports of the presentations made at the numerous general party meetings – through which the party put back on its feet all the various theoretical questions (Marxist economics, the agrarian question, the question of imperialism, the national and colonial question, the trade union question, the military question, the party question, the question of revolution and dictatorship, the question of the state, etc.) through the method of reconnecting historical questions, doctrine and programme with the dynamics of the historical cycles of the proletarian class movement and opportunism. This enormous work has not always been published into useful and easy to find booklets and volumes (which still remains the party's task), but it remains accessible, either as party texts or as texts published in their day by Edizioni Iskra or Edizioni sociali, or as articles in party newspapers and magazines.

As for the structure of Russia, from an economic point of view, once it was established that in Russia there was not socialism but capitalism – and more precisely, given the dictatorial political centralisation and the need to overcome the century-long delay of the bourgeois revolution, **state industrialism** (7) – it was declared that there had been enormous progress compared to Asian despotism, feudalism, and even subsistence economy that characterised much of the Russian economy in the 1920s. From a social point of view, it was impossible not to welcome the necessary transformation of a large part of the Russian peasantry into a factory proletariat, the future social force of the resumption of class and revolutionary

(6) We have dealt with the split that occurred in the Internationalist Communist Party in 1952 several times, especially in our work on the crisis of the party. For example, in "*Bollettino interno no. 3*" of February 1975, which we took up in our balance-sheet work carried out from 1982 onwards, and which was published in *Il comunista* no. 25–26, 27 and 28 of 1991; and in the article "*La portée de la scissione de 1952 dans le Partito Comunista Internazionalista*" (The significance of the 1952 split in the Partito Comunista Internazionalista) published in no. 93 (May 1993) of our journal *Programme Communiste*.

(7) On state industrialism, see the polemic between Bordiga and Damen on "state capitalism" in Russia during the years of the end of World War II and after. In this polemic, Bordiga contrasts Damen's simple and superficial formulation of the Russian economy as already "state capitalism" with a more complex and dialectical formulation: In Russia, the economy is moving towards capitalism, and the state functions as an accelerator given the power it concentrates in its hands, while what is spreading in Russia, is

industrialism, the very process that accelerates the spread of the capitalist economy by virtue of the existing capitalist potential that historically has not yet been fully developed. It is moving towards capitalism from two sides: the first – historically progressive – from a subsistence and pre-capitalist economy, especially in agriculture, towards capitalism; the second – historically reactionary – from the sectors of lower phase of socialism imposed by virtue of the revolutionary victory (free urban transport, train passes, etc.) towards a pure system based on commodities and money (everything is paid for with money). "State capitalism" is to be understood as meaning that all economic activities (in industry, agriculture, services, i.e., both production and distribution) are so developed that they can be centralized in the hands of the state and directed by it (as in fascism); this does not mean that private enterprise no longer exists, but that the state (the ultimate expression of the defense of the general interests of capitalism, not the sum of the interests of individual capitalists), is able to directly control the economy of the country even in the function as an entrepreneur.

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struggle on a world scale. From the theoretical point of view, as has already been said, the struggle against the mystification of socialism in one country and the bourgeois degeneration of the international communist movement has always been unapologetic, open, unyielding, total. From the political point of view, therefore, the struggle against the degeneration of the Communist International and its member parties has never wavered, not even when the blows of the murderous Stalinist repression went hand in hand with the blows of bourgeois repression both in its fascist and then Nazi form in Europe and in their democratic form in the United States and after the end of the war in Europe.

Although the current of the Communist Left was reduced to a minimum, persecuted politically and physically, slandered and accused of the worst betrayal (like Trotsky and many other communist militants loyal to Lenin's International), such as selling out to fascism, it continued its political and theoretical struggle even in exile, even though it was an extremely difficult effort of Marxist reorientation. The "Frazione di sinistra del PCI all'estero" (Left fraction of the PCI abroad), constituted in Paris in 1928, (8) attempted an extraordinary defense of Marxism and of the theoretical and programmatic premises indispensable for the reconstitution of the class party, fighting in a resistance, even physical, so that an organised nucleus of militants, which strictly adhered to the revolutionary tradition of October 1917 and the first years of the existence of the International and the Communist Party of Italy, could live on and await the resumption of the class struggle and the historical possibility of reconstituting the class party on those theoretical, programmatic, political, tactical and organisational foundations which had previously made possible the formation of Lenin's Bolshevik party and the Communist Party of Italy.

The party, which in 1952 took a homogeneous and coherent form, was strongly linked to the balance sheet of the counterrevolution, and although it recognised the tenacious resistance to Stalinism of the comrades fleeing abroad after 1921 and organising their work and their resistance against the Stalinist degeneration of the International and its parties in the "Frazione del PCI", it never recognised itself as the "continuator" of the Frazione all'estero, which, moreover, had many theoretical ambiguities; just as it never recognised itself as the "continuator" of the exclusive "Italian" current of the Left in the international communist movement. Just as Marxist theory is a universal whole that cannot be trapped in a national framework, so the Communist Left to which we refer, and to which the party of the past has always referred, is in principle and in fact international. In fact, the theoretical, programmatic, and political continuity of the Communist Left goes from Marx-Engels to Lenin to Bordiga – to use the names of the great revolutionaries that the international class movement of the proletariat has produced throughout history and who have summed up the historical outcome of the struggle between classes better than others – and it is along this line of continuity that we find contributions, given to the struggle for communism

by all those who have even been, if only for part of their individual lives, possessed by the Marxian "demon of revolution", from the non "Kautskyist" Kautsky of the "Agrarian Question" to the non "Trotskyist" Trotsky of the "Terrorism and Communism".

THE STALINIST COUNTERREVOLUTION IS BOURGEOIS COUNTERREVOLUTION

As in previous historical events characterized by great defeats of the proletarian class movement, the revival of the class movement, and in particular the recovery of forces capable of constituting the class party on a coherently Marxist basis, could not have been so rapid and straightforward. The counterrevolutionary cycle, which we have called Stalinist because Stalin – the victorious leader of the Bolshevik party and of the International in the struggle for power in Russia – led the bourgeois counterrevolutionary movement in Russia and the world, had to take its course historically; in other words, it had to arrive at the ultimate necessary material consequences, this as the result of the distortion of revolutionary politics, and therefore of revolutionary theory which made possible the victory in Russia in October 1917, the establishment of the first complete dictatorship of the proletariat in the world, the establishment of the Communist International and the revolutionary victory in the long civil war in Russia against the Russian White Army, organized, sponsored and supported by all the imperialist countries of the world. The material consequences which, because of the strength of the proletarian revolution, manifest themselves as the defeat of the revolution not on the field of war but as a slow but inexorable degeneration of the revolutionary forces, starting with the parties which led them, and which drove the theoretically and politically strongest class party (the Bolshevik party) to an ever greater deviation, to the point of abandoning its own original positions and revolutionary Marxist traditions. The same fate befell the Communist Party of Italy and all the parties belonging to the Communist International.

The lack of revolutionary victory in Western Europe, and in particular in the countries where the proletariat was most advanced in terms of the class movement (Germany, Italy; just remember Lenin's famous image of "two unconnected halves of socialism": Russia with the established dictatorship of the proletariat but with a very backward economy; Germany, with a very advanced economy and a proletariat that demonstrated unbridled militancy during and after World War I; and the class movement in Italy, which produced the only "Bolshevik"

(8) On the "Frazione all'estero" see the report given at the general party meeting of November 1980 and published in the first series of *Il comunista* in no. 7, 8, 9 and 10 in 1984 as "*Storia della Frazione comunista all'estero*" and in *Programme Communiste* no. 97 and 98.

Communist Party in Western Europe, i.e. founded on theoretical and political intransigence and Marxist coherence, and which was the first to measure itself up with fascism, which subsequently became the bourgeois method of government par excellence), placed the young proletarian Bolshevik dictatorship in the most critical situation as regards the maintenance of power in Russia and the firm and strong leadership of the Communist International.

The material conditions of the Russia's economic and social backwardness and the parallel difficulties – from a political and theoretical point of view – of the class proletarian movement in the countries of Western Europe forced the Bolshevik party to bear the full weight of power in Russia and of the revolutionary tasks of the International. And, regrettably, at the same time they facilitated the adoption of the indecisive, uncertain, zigzagging and ultimately opportunist positions of the Western Communist Parties, especially the German party, which decisively influenced the policy of the International and, through it, the policy of the Bolshevik party, to the point of completely destroying its Marxist roots. The tactical and organisational failures of the Communist International, especially in the years from 1922 to 1926, inexorably produced disastrous errors in the programmatic and theoretical field, up to the elaboration of the theory of socialism in one country, the real and definitive renunciation of Marxist theory (9).

The political struggle against any deviation from the revolutionary programme that had been at the birth of the International, launched by the currents of the Left of the various member parties (including the Bolsheviks) in the decisive years of 1923–1926, did not win out in the end; the currents of the Left were overwhelmed by the currents of the right, and above all by the so-called "centrists", who, with Stalin, managed to break the political, tactical, theoretical, and therefore organisational, continuity of the original leading groups. The "degeneration of Moscow" simultaneously affected Soviet Russia and all the countries of the world, and was characterised by a general retreat into the national borders of Russia (a great push for the development of national capitalism, passed off as the "construction of socialism in one country") and a general abandonment of the revolutionary and internationalist tasks of the Communist International. A symptomatic example is the case of the great revolutionary movement in China in 1927, which, at the same time that the biggest strike of the British dockers was taking place, once again provided the world class and revolutionary movement another historic opportunity for revolutionary revival, and which was instead directed by the Stalinist leadership of the International into the clutches of the Chinese nationalism of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, which enabled the latter to massacre the proletarians in Shanghai and Canton, after incorporating the Communist Party of China into Kuomintang, effectively forcing it to disappear, while in England the strike movement was defeated and crushed in the most hideous isolation, virtually wiping out the young and fragile English Communist Party.

In the political struggle that broke out between the various currents into which Russian Bolshevism had divided, the right and centre currents once again supported each other, until they stifled the Left current, in which Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and many others found themselves for a short time, and which together opposed what had already in 1923–1924 (see e.g. the "Georgian affair") could be labelled "Stalinism", that is, a political current which more than the others embodied the historical, as well as the immediate, interests of the rising great Russian capitalism, hence the political current which, with respect to pre-capitalist Russia, was revolutionary but bourgeois and therefore anti-proletarian and anti-communist.

After the defeat of the class movement in Germany and Italy (1918–1924), the counterrevolutionary currents in Russia gained even more vigour, yet their mystified "proletarian and revolutionary" guise found greater appeal thanks to the appearance on the historical scene of fascism, i.e. that new method of government developed by the bourgeoisie to destroy the proletarian class movement, which was not giving up and which – despite the defeats it suffered during and after the first imperialist war – could subsequently regain strength by challenging bourgeois domination over society. Fascism is the open dictatorship of capital, proclaimed by counter-revolution on the part of the ruling bourgeoisie; but in order to have maximum effectiveness both in the immediate future and in the course of time, it had to confront a proletariat that was already subjugated, half-defeated, disorganised, and politically disoriented. This specific task of subjugating, disorienting and disorganising the proletariat was carried out by the forces of democracy, both in the form of reformist workers' parties (known at the time as Social Democrats) and popular bourgeois parties.

The Stalinist counter-revolution in the Western European countries has historically performed on a double task: to divert the international communist movement from the revolutionary and Marxist path, thereby placing it in conditions in which it will certainly be defeated, and to channel the proletarian movement, not only Russian but also the international one, into the confines of the defence of the national bourgeois order, in Russia it was a historic revolutionary task, given the Asian and feudal backwardness of the great country (but counterrevolutionary given the revolutionary movement of October 1917), but in the other European countries, where the proletarian revolution no longer had any bourgeois tasks historically to solve, this was its primary counterrevolutionary task. In this way Stalinism inherited the social and political function of social democracy which, had already caused

(9) To the year 1926 was devoted a special study of the Party, the result of which was fourth issue of the *Quaderni del Programma Comunista* published in April 1980, entitled "*La crisi del 1926 nel partito e nell'Internazionale*" (The 1926 Crisis in the Party and the International), which is still available.

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enormous ideological and political devastation in the proletarian ranks in the context of the first great imperialist war in the previous opportunist wave, and had subordinated the proletariat of the countries concerned to the warlike and imperialist demands to the respective national bourgeoisies.

In fact, Stalinism not only inherited the social and political function of the old social democracy, but amplified its effects of deviation and paralysis on the proletariat throughout the world, causing the proletarian class struggle to retreat for many decades.

FASCISM AND DEMOCRATIC ANTI-FASCISM, DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE SAME IMPERIALIST BOURGEOIS COIN

The struggle for democracy against fascism, as if the return to the methods of democratic governments were the most fruitful way to "facilitate" the development of a class and revolutionary proletarian movement, that is, the "anti-fascist democratic" struggle was – as Bordiga continually affirmed (10) – the worst and most insidious product of fascism itself. The proletarian movement, defeated, in the mid-1920s, on the class front in the revolutionary period that opened with the outbreak of the first world imperialist war and the extraordinary revolutionary victory in Russia, was subjugated by social democracy and Stalinism to the needs of national defence of the various capitalist states, "under a foreign flag", that is, under the flag of democracy, and handed over to bourgeois repression in a state of the greatest weakness.

From the ideological point of view, this violent submission to the demands of capital was carried out in Russia through the most gigantic mystification that opportunism has historically been able to build (the development of capitalism passed off as "building socialism"); in Germany and Japan it was through the participation in the imperialist development of German and Japanese capitalism based on their respective wounded national prides and their irrepressible industrial and financial urge to transcend the limits of their own national borders; in the United States through the democratic "New Deal"; in France, England, and other European countries through the democratic inter-class cooperation within the popular fronts: in Spain in the civil war of 1936–1939 it constituted the deadliest proletarian defeat and the further demonstration of the definitive passage of the Stalinist parties into the camp of the imperialist democracies; and particularly in Italy and France it paved the way for the passage of the Stalinist parties into the Allied imperialist war camp – so much for the revolutionary defeatism of Lenin's legacy! – justifying the second imperialist slaughter with the theory of democratic anti-fascism and of the "partisan resistance".

From the economic point of view, and from the point of view of the need for the bourgeois powers to obtain lasting complicity of the proletariat (after having duly slaughtered it in the imperialist war and in the repression of its revolutionary attempts), the fascist ruling bourgeoisies showed to all the democrat-

ic ruling bourgeoisies that the iron fist of the open dictatorship of capital nevertheless had an ace up its sleeve: the implementation of part of the social reforms that the trade unions and workers' reformist parties had long been calling for. Thus were born the *social shock absorbers* (sickness insurance, severance pay, pensions, etc.), which the post-fascist democracies of the most industrialised countries of the world adopted after the fall of fascism as an excellent instrument of social control, in order to continue to keep their respective proletariat shackled to the fate of national capitalism through the activity of the bourgeois workers' parties and the class-collaborationist trade unions that were born at the end of the Second World War (fascism had already done the favour of destroying the existing class unions).

From the political point of view, the Stalinist parties, indispensable for getting the proletariat to be massacred in the war without attempting to revolt against the established bourgeois order, and the class-collaborationist trade unions, were the fundamental instruments for keeping the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries firmly tied to the machinery of the ruling bourgeoisies; and they proved to be even more vital for the preservation of the bourgeois during and especially after the end of the war, as indispensable to keep the proletariat bound to their respective na-

(10) Amadeo Bordiga, in his famous interview of 1970, shortly before his death, gave a written answer to one of the questions put to him by his interviewers: "In contrast to the theories developed by Gramsci and the centrists of the Italian party, we contested that fascism could be explained as a conflict between the agrarian, landowning bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie profiting in the field of real estate and the newer industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. The agrarian bourgeoisie can undoubtedly be identified with Italian right-wing movements such as the Catholics or the clerical political centre, while the industrial bourgeoisie can be considered closer to the parties of the political left, which we have come to call secular. The fascist movement was certainly not oriented against either of these two polarities, but aimed to prevent the revival of the revolutionary proletariat through the struggle for the preservation of all social forms of private economy. Many years ago we declared without any hesitation that the arch-enemy and the greatest danger would not be fascism, or even worse the person of Mussolini, but that the greatest evil would be the "anti-fascism" which fascism itself, with its infamies and iniquities, provokes; an "anti-fascism" which would give the historical existence of a toxic monster in the form of a broad bloc comprising all shades of capitalist exploitation and its beneficiaries, from the influential members of the wealthy ruling class, all the way down to the ridiculous ranks of the semi-bourgeoisie, intellectuals and ordinary people", see "*Comunismo e fascismo*", edizioni Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1994, pp. 320

tional bourgeoisies, "no matter what happened to them during the war", and ready to slaughter themselves with fatigue in the period of post-war reconstruction.

The struggle against the "degeneration of Moscow", against the theory and practice of Stalinism and therefore against any theorisation of the participation of the various classes, including the proletariat, in the defence of the immediate and future interests of the ruling bourgeoisie – that is, against all democratic, electoral and parliamentary illusions – was not an ideological bias of the "purists" of the Communist Left, it was not a "sectarian" attitude of their intransigent leaders, and it was certainly not an "incapacity to do politics" of our current (which some latter-day movementists wanted to describe as a "congenital malformation" of the Italian Left). It was the *raison d'être* of the proletarian and revolutionary class movement; it was – and still is – the indispensable theoretical and political basis for the orientation of the class party, and therefore the workers' movement itself, towards revolutionary goals and objectives.

Any deviation from the Marxist line has always been justified by opportunists as an "easier" way to get to power and to socialism. We saw how that turned out! **"The fundamental characteristic of the phenomenon which Lenin called and branded with the term adopted from Marx and Engels, opportunism, is the preference for a shorter, more comfortable and less arduous path over a longer, more difficult and harsh one, on which alone can be attained the full conjunction of the affirmation of our principal points and programmes, i.e. of our highest aims, and the carrying out of immediate and direct practical action in the concrete situation of the moment"**, so reads the 1966 Party Theses (11). The history of the various historical waves of opportunism and its myriad variants demonstrates exactly what Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bordiga, in short what unadulterated Marxism has always advocated: insofar as the proletarian party, the communist party, adopts in its programme, in its objectives, in its means and methods of activity, in its practice, principles and praxis characteristic of the bourgeois ruling classes and of the defence of their class interests, that party is destined to degenerate, to destroy its own class bases and pass over to the adversary.

Democracy as a principle and as a practice represented and still represents the most effective intoxication of the proletariat by the bourgeois ruling classes. On the basis of a formal false "equality" (in the style of "the law is the same for all", every individual is "equal" with others with respect to democratic institutions, and if individual differences of opinion are existent, then it is granted that "the majority wins", etc.), which in fact covers up real social inequality and contradictions, democracy bases its ideological and practical success on material bases, which Marxism has well expounded from its origins. The economic domination with which the capitalist mode of production imposed itself on every previous mode of production (feudal, Asiatic, natural economy, etc.), destroying the very basis of the survival of the human

communities that had based their social organisation on these modes of production, "*liberated*" Man from the medieval and backward shackles of servitude and feudal isolation, but at the same time made him, especially the majority of the peasantry, completely dependent on the new mode of production and the market by depriving him of his means of existence. At this point, the majority of the population, harassed and repressed by the aristocratic classes, which was the master of its only "*labour power*", could not but accept democracy as the only political means that profoundly undermined the power of the "few" and replaced it with the power of the "many". Manufacturers, artisans, merchants and intellectuals, relying on the uprisings of the peasant masses in the countryside and the proletarian masses in the cities, violently overthrew the power of the kings, the clergy and the nobility and reorganized the whole of society according to the demands of the new capitalist mode of production and its development.

Liberty, equality, fraternity, those magic words of the Great French bourgeois revolution, under whose cry the monarchy was overthrown, until the beheading of the king. But even then they contained the characteristic contradiction of capitalism: liberty for what class, equality with respect to what, fraternity between what classes? That is because the bourgeois revolution definitively subverted previous modes of production and pre-capitalist social organisations, but it did not resolve the division of human society into opposing classes. The bourgeois class, certainly more numerous than the aristocratic classes and the clergy, and certainly more industrious than those, took power, simplified social relations by virtue of a mode of production that made all men equally dependent on the market, created the laws that in the first place defend the new bourgeois power against the previous ones, and placed private property at the centre of everything. Democracy allows every man, no one excluded in principle, to be the "owner" of something, even if only of his own labour power and his own misery, into which bourgeois society itself plunges him. From a political point of view, democracy allows the subordinate classes, the classes that have no other source of livelihood but their own arms, to elect from time to time

(11) See "*Tesi supplementari sul compito storico, l'azione e la struttura del partito comunista mondiale*" (Supplementary Theses on the Historical Task, Action and Structure of the World Communist Party), April 1966. These theses are also known as the "*Tesi di Milano*" (Milan Theses) because they were presented at the general party meeting held in Milan on April 2–3 of the same year; they were published in *Il programma comunista* No. 7 of 1966. Later collected and published in a volume entitled "*In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*", vol. 2 in the series "I testi del partito comunista internazionale", Florence, June 1970. The quotation is from point 5, page 184.

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those who would systematically exploit them (Lenin). There was a period when democracy played a positive role vis-à-vis the peasant and proletarian classes, despite the intentions and interests of the ruling bourgeois classes: it opened the way for them to social struggle, to armed struggle, to education, to even very elementary knowledge, to politics. The bourgeois revolutionary cycle could not take place without involving all classes of society, and it had to put the peasant and proletarian classes in a position that made it possible to fight against and defeat the armies of the aristocracy. The democratic participation of all classes subordinated to the old feudal society under the banner of the revolutionary bourgeoisie was a highly revolutionary act; the bourgeoisie would never have succeeded alone.

However, once the revolutionary phase and the iron revolutionary dictatorship of the bourgeois class had passed and the bourgeois mode of production had sufficiently developed in the countries of Europe and America and freed itself from the constraints of the enclosed feudal and pre-capitalist society, the historical course of capitalism passed into a reformist phase, towards the "stabilisation" of the national market and the conquest of the international market under the banner of the widest and "freest" competition. But it was precisely because of the economic development of capitalism worldwide that the bourgeois democracies of the big capitalist countries began, for reasons of market and competition, to impede democratic and capitalist development in all the other countries of the world, which instead became "economic territories" to conquest (raw materials and sales markets). The uneven development of capitalism conditions the uneven development of democracy (i.e. the civil and social freedoms and rights that are enshrined in the letter of democracy); the democracy of "free competition" increasingly becomes the democracy of monopolies, of imperialism. With intensifying competition between the large capitalist countries and, in parallel, between the large industrial and financial groups (trusts), the gap separating the economic and social – and therefore political – development of the capitalist backward countries from that of the industrial countries is widening more and more, and is destined to become ever wider, forcing most of the countries of the world to depend on the economic fortunes and competitive struggles of a small group of large imperialist states.

Bourgeois democracy, from the reformist phase to the imperialist phase of the development of capitalism, thus proves to be incapable of stimulating and assisting the economic and social progress of the vast majority of the countries of the world. On the other hand, imperialism, i. e. the most developed stage of capitalism possible, is the representation of the power of a small number of trusts (multinationals, as they are called today) and of the states of their respective countries of origin, which impose their interests on the rest of the world, i. e. on the vast majority of peoples and countries, and which, in order to defend these interests, unscrupulously plunge entire populations and vast territories into famine, misery, destruction, pollution, environmental degradation and war.

The historical phase of modern imperialism is characterized by the monopolistic concentration of the economy, the birth of capitalist *trusts*, the predominance of financial capital over industrial and commercial capital, and large-scale economic planning directed by the state headquarters (albeit such planning was given the name "Five-Year Plan" as in the Stalinist tradition). ***"The bourgeois economy is being transformed and is losing the characteristics of classical liberalism whereby each enterprise owner was autonomous in his economic choices and in his exchange relations"*** – states our basic text of 1946, entitled "Tracciato d'impostazione" (Elements of Marxist Orientation) (12) – ***"An ever stricter regulation of production and distribution is being introduced; economic indicators are no longer the result of free competition, but of the influence of the associations among capitalists in the first place, then of the subjects of concentration of banking and finance, and finally of the State itself. The political state, which in the Marxist sense was the committee of the interests of the bourgeois class and protected them as an organ of government and police, became more and more the organ of control and even management of the economy. This concentration of economic powers in the hands of the state can only be mistaken for a transition from a private to a collective economy if one deliberately ignores the fact that the contemporary state expresses exclusively the interests of a minority and that any nationalization carried out within the framework of mercantile forms leads to a capitalist concentration that reinforces, not weakens, the capitalist character of the economy."***

To this historical phase of economic progress corresponds a historical phase of the life of the parties of the bourgeois class. Proceeding from the "Tracciato" just quoted, we repeat that ***"The political course of the parties of the bourgeois class in this contemporary phase, as Lenin clearly stated in his critique of modern imperialism, leads to forms of intensified oppression and their manifestations have surfaced in the rise of regimes which are called totalitarian and fascist. These regimes constitute the most modern political type of bourgeois society, and the process of their spread will become increasingly evident throughout the world. A concomitant aspect of this political concentration is the absolute predominance of a few very big states to the detriment of the autonomy of medium-sized and smaller states"***.

On the part of the opportunists, fascism has always been presented as a "step backwards" in history, and

(12) Cf. "Tracciato d'impostazione" (Elements of Marxist Orientation), published in No. 1 of July 1946 of *Prometeo*, the theoretical journal of the Partito comunista internazionale, later included in a small volume published by the Party in November 1974 as No. 1 in the series "I testi del Partito comunista internazionale". The quotation is found on pp. 17–18 of the latter publication.

therefore as a regime to be fought against in order to "reconquer" democracy, which is then presented as a progressive social and political environment most favourable to the advancement of proletarian demands and to the class struggle. The bourgeois phase of totalitarianism (of which fascism and Nazism were undoubtedly manifestations) has always been presented by opportunist forces – and by the bourgeois democratic forces themselves – as a phase in which class oppression and repression is greatest, and in which the violence of the ruling class is most and most extensively exercised.

The theses of the Communist Left, based unreservedly on Marxism, maintain that the totalitarian phase of capitalist development (hence the phase in which Mussolini's fascism and Hitler's Nazism manifested themselves) is not a "step backwards" in history, but a step forward, the logical consequence of the imperialist development of capitalism at the level of the political power of the bourgeois ruling class, which in this way fully reveals the true class and totalitarian nature of political power. **"Fascism undoubtedly unleashes a greater mass of police and repressive violence, including bloody repression"** – as may be read in another of our basic party texts – **"but this aspect of kinetic energy primarily and gravely affects the very few authentic leaders and revolutionary militants of the working class movement, together with a stratum of middle bourgeois professional politicians who pretend to be progressive and friends of the working class, but who are nothing but the militia specially trained by the capitalists for use in the periods of the parliamentary comedy. Those who do not change their style and their costume in time are ousted with a kick in the ass – which is the main reason for their outcries"** (13). For Marxism, the totalitarian phase of the bourgeois regime is not a surprise, far from it: it is a phase foreseen and expected. Capitalism will not die without going through all its possible variants: **"To fight to postpone this unmasking of the energies of the antagonistic social classes,"** – we reiterate from the text just quoted – **"to carry out a vain and rhetorical propaganda inspired by a stupid horror of dictatorship in principle, all this work can only favor the survival of the capitalist regime and the prolonged subjection and oppression of the working class."** (14)

One aspect of the effectiveness of the totalitarian method of bourgeois rule lies in the maximum concentration of the economic forces of society, thanks to which the bourgeois regime is able to intervene in all spheres of social life, and especially in the economic sphere, by adopting methods of planning that are more suited for containing the conflicts between the classes and at the same time for intensely nurturing collaboration between them. Let us look at another passage from the quoted text: **"The new method introducing planning in the management of capitalist economy – which in relation to the antiquated unlimited classical liberalism of the past constitutes a form of self-limitation of capitalism – leads to a levelling of the extortion of surplus value around an average.**

The reformist measures which the right-wing socialists had advocated for many decades are adopted. In such a way the sharpest and extreme edges of capitalist exploitation are eased, while forms of public assistance develop. All this aims at delaying the crises of class conflicts and the contradictions of the capitalist method of production. But undoubtedly it would be impossible to reach this aim without having succeeded in reconciling, to a certain degree, the open repression against the revolutionary vanguards with a relief of the most pressing economic needs of the great masses. (...) Therefore, even though bourgeois class oppression, in the totalitarian phase, increases the proportion of the kinetic use of violence with respect to the potential one, the total pressure on the proletariat does not increase but diminishes." Hence the materialist deduction: **"It is precisely for this reason that the final crisis of the class struggle historically undergoes a delay."** (15)

It cannot be concluded: democracy is class collaboration in talk, fascism is class collaboration in fact; either way, the death of the revolutionary forces lies in the collaboration between the classes. (16)

Bourgeois democracy in an imperialist and, if you like, "post-fascist" epoch does not prevent mankind from ever more acute inequalities, fratricidal struggles, wars and devastation; apart from the chatter about the

(13) Cf. the text *"Forza violenza dittatura nella lotta di classe"* (Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle), originally published in five instalments in the magazine *Prometeo* between 1946 and 1948. The quotation is from the English translation of the text, from its third part in *Communist Program*, No. 3, 1977.

(14) Ibid.

(15) Ibid.

(16) On the subject of democracy and fascism, see also *"Rapporto Bordiga sul Fascismo"* (Bordiga Report on Fascism) at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, in *Il comunista*, no. 42 (1994); A. Bordiga's article of 1921 entitled *"Che cosa è il fascismo"* (What is Fascism) in *Il comunista*, nos. 43–44 (1995); the report of the party's general meeting of 1994 entitled *"Democrazia e fascismo: quale lotta per il proletariato?"* (Democracy and fascism: what fight for the proletariat?) published in *Il comunista*, no. 48, 49–50, 56; we also recommend reading some of the texts such as *"Communisme et fascisme"* (Communism and fascism), published by the party in 1970 and republished in 2002 containing a series of articles by A. Bordiga from 1921–1923, the Bordiga's report on fascism at the 1922 and 1924 CI congresses, and Gramsci's 1924 report to the PCI Central Committee; *"Relazione del partito comunista d'Italia al IV congresso dell'IC, novembre 1922"*, Edizioni Iskra, 1976, and a small volume *"Comunismo e fascismo"* containing a number of texts by the Communist Left on fascism from 1921–1926, published by the *Quaderni internazionalisti*, Turin, 1994.

What distinguishes

"common" interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie – on which the propaganda construction of class collaboration is erected – democracy works for the benefit of whom? A handful of mammoth trusts and state behemoths that suck the blood and sweat out of nine-tenths of the world's population for the exclusive benefit of capitalist profit. To believe still today that the principle and method of democracy are the "only" political solution to the deadly contradictions that tear the bourgeois world apart is to be in thrall to an electoral and parliamentary cretinism that facilitates only a primitive subservience to the economic interests and privileges of the 500 trusts that govern the world.

In this sense, post-fascist democracy has actually become *fascized*, its repressive apparatus has become more and more monstrous, less and less liberal even for many petty-bourgeois and bourgeois stratas. "Another world is possible", sing the new choristers of class conciliation, who believe that they can mitigate the bloodiest and most brutal aspects of capitalism by giving more space to goods from industrially backward countries, by giving more space in the market to supposedly organic, biodynamic and non-GMO production. In fact, it is the market itself that exposes this deception: a commodity is a commodity, whether it is a concentrate of poisons or an expression of traditional cultivation, whether it is the product of "Chinese-style" brutal slave exploitation or the product of a milder exploitation, as in certain areas of Kyrgyzstan or Nepal. The laws of the market leave no way out: the mineral resources of Kyrgyzstan or certain Nepalese mountain passes are destined to become the object of interest for neighbouring countries, trusts and imperialist powers, and then the exploitation of wage labour, which today is still mild compared to that of China, will undergo the inevitable process of "Chineseisation".

PARTY AND CLASS

The class party is the revolutionary organ par excellence; it represents in the present the future of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, it represents the class consciousness of the proletariat as historical class, and therefore only the party possesses the theory of the proletarian revolution, the theory of communism, and therefore the general perspective of the class revolution up to the final historical outcome, which is the communist society. The communist party is therefore the international guide of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, and since it knows the historical path that the struggling classes are materialistically forced to take, it knows in advance the development of the struggle between the classes. On the basis of this knowledge, the party knows that the class struggle, if it is to develop its revolutionary potential to the maximum, must transcend the terrain of economic, social and political demands compatible with the bourgeois and capitalist society and move on to the terrain of more general and political objectives which go beyond the limits of compatibility with capitalism and which represent the political, economic and social

solution of all the contradictions of capitalism.

The communist party is a purely political organ whose aim is the consistent and uncompromising struggle for the pursuit of the general interests of the proletarian class against the general interests of the bourgeois classes, both on the immediate terrain of struggles of economic nature and on the wider and more general terrain of struggles of political nature. The communist party differs from any other proletarian organization (economic associations, trade unions, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, soviets, parties, or others) in that its priority and historical tasks derive directly from the ends associated with communist society, the achievement of which requires bringing the anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle to its end (the proletarian revolution, the insurrection and overthrow of bourgeois political power and its state, the installation of a proletarian state and class dictatorship, the world revolution, the transformation of the capitalist economy into socialist economy). These tasks define the communist party as the indispensable organ of the proletarian revolution and dictate attitudes, behaviour, practices, tactics and actions that are consistent with them. This is further specified in one of the basic texts of our current: *"The indispensable task of the party therefore is presented in two ways, that is first as a factor of consciousness and then as a factor of will. The first results in the theoretical conception of the revolutionary process that must be shared by all its adherents; the second brings a precise discipline which secures the co-ordination and thus the success of the action"* (17).

Every other proletarian organization, independent of the apparatuses and politics of inter-class collaborationism, has tasks inherent in the defence of proletarian conditions of life, work and struggle, which concern all proletarians regardless of their ideological, political or religious affiliation; the communist party, on the other hand, is adhered to by only a minority of the proletarian class, the most advanced, the most conscious, the most sensitive to the ultimate cause of the proletariat, and it can only be a minority of the class, since the party – having a general vision of the path which the proletariat must take in order to be effectively liberated from wage-slavery – defends at all times and in every partial workers' struggle the interests of the whole proletarian class. The communist party is adhered individually by members not only from the proletarian class but also from other social classes, by these famous defectors, as Lenin called them, who accept the goal of communism from a more intellectual point of view and in the course of time transform it – though not many succeed in doing so – into an adherence to the proletariat materially based on pro-

(17) See *"Party and Class Action"* (*Partito e azione di classe*), A. Bordiga, originally in *Rassegna Comunista* vol. I, No. 4, 31 May 1921; published in English in *Communist Program*, No. 2, 1976; the quotation is on p. 33.

letarian living and working conditions.

The communist party is not an organizer of unions, of independent and classist immediate proletarian organizations of struggle; but it supports the rebirth of economic and immediate **classist** associations, and through its militants collaborates in their formation and classist orientation, always defending their nature as immediate proletarian organizations, independent of the bourgeois and opportunist apparatus, able to organize the greatest possible mass of workers. It sets itself the task of influencing them and directing their actions to correspond as closely as possible to the development of the class struggle, with a view to influencing the majority of the proletariat in its struggle for emancipation; however, it does not impede itself from working through its militants also in the unions or similar immediate organizations of the proletariat which even have reactionary characteristics – in so far as their completely independent intervention is possible – because the objective is to influence the proletarians towards the correct and coherent class struggle, and not to make a "career" in the trade union apparatus.

Point 4 of the party programme (which we regularly publish in every issue of our papers and reviews) states unequivocally: *"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"* (18).

On the basis of the lessons of the history of the international communist movement, we know that without a decisive influence on the proletariat and its immediate organizations of struggle, the Communist Party will have no chance to effectively and victoriously lead the workers' movement to the revolutionary outcome; and we also know that shortcuts and tricks (such as the constitution of special-purpose "communist" or "revolutionary" unions) are not the way to achieve this result, but the constant, patient and tenacious work of intervention in the workers' struggles in close contact with the exigencies, problems and contradictions of these struggles, without ever losing the classist and revolutionary perspective.

At a party meeting in 1951 (19), the basic concepts of the relationship between the *party and economical action* were reaffirmed in the form of thesis; there have been no such major changes in the general situation since 1951 as to make it necessary to "rewrite" the factors which formed the basis for setting down these points, which we now recall; point 8 reads:

"Apart from the problem of time of whether participating or not to the work of given types of unions for the revolutionary communist party, the

elements of the question so far resumed lead to the conclusion that in every perspective of every general revolutionary movement must be present these fundamental factors: 1) a numerous and widespread proletariat of pure wage-earners; 2) a big movement of associations with an economical content, involving a large part of the proletariat; 3) a strong, revolutionary class party in which militates a minority of workers, but which in the course of the struggle has had the chance to set against that of the bourgeois power, his own influence on the union movement.

The factors which led to establish the need of each and every one of these three conditions that usefully combining themselves will determine the outcome of the struggle were settled: a) by the right statement of the theory of historical materialism which links the elemental economic need of the individual to the dynamics of great social revolutions; b) by the correct perspective of the proletarian revolution with reference to the problems of the economy, of the politics and the State; c) by the lessons of the history of all organised movements of the working class, either in their greatness and their victory, or in their corruptions and defeats. The general line of prospective we have developed does not deny that the most varied circumstances can occur in the course of the modifying, the dissolving and the reforming of workers' unions; that is to say, those associations which in various countries appear either tied to the traditional organisations which declared to base themselves on the method of class struggle or more or less tied to the most various social methods and tendencies, even conservative."

The tasks of the class party, on the other hand, cannot be "delegated" to the economic and immediate associations of the proletariat even in a favourable revolutionary situation, because the fields of action of these workers' associations are historically limited by the existence of the capitalist mode of production, i.e. by the existence of the working class as *class for*

(18) See the program of the International Communist Party in any issue of our papers.

(19) See the report of the Rome meeting of the Party of April 1, 1951, published in *"Bolletino interno"*, No. 1, September 10, 1951, which contained two texts: *"Il rovesciamento della prassi nella teoria marxista"* (The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory) and *"Revolutionary Party and Economical Action"* (Partito rivoluzionario e azione economica). The latter was published together with "The Programme of the Party", "On the Track of the Great Marxist Tradition", "For the Restoration of the Revolutionary Marxist Theory", "Reconstruction of the Communist Party on a Worldwide Scale" and "Appeal for the International Reorganisation of the Revolutionary Marxist Movement" in the Party's English-language publication "The Party's Programme"; the publication is available on our website www.pcint.org.

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capital, class belonging to capitalist society. These classist associations of the proletariat base their actions and the reasons for their existence on the fact that the proletarians – as wage-earners – are generally organized via homogeneous professional groups, and must defend their interests as wage-earners, as individuals and as groups, against the bosses and employers' organizations and against the apparatuses and institutions of public administration, as these defend both the partial and the general interests of the bosses and capitalists.

On the contrary, the Communist Party, precisely because it represents in the **present** the **future** of the class movement (the general interests of the working class, the general interests of the proletarian revolution, and the historical movement which, by overthrowing capitalist power, opens the way to the transformation of society into society no longer divided into classes, and thus to the extinction of every class, including the proletariat), defines its historical tasks in the historical dialectic of a struggle, which is *class* struggle insofar as the proletarian class fights as *class* against the other *classes* in this society, but which historically **aims** at overcoming the limits of antagonisms between classes as the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is victorious internationally and is thus able – under the leadership of the communist party – to intervene in the economy and transform it from mercantile and capitalist economy into socialist and ultimately communist economy. Throughout this entire period of history, which moves from the class struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois power and the establishment of proletarian power to the struggle for the transformation of the capitalist economy into socialist economy, the Communist Party performs the task of international leadership of the anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois revolution, that is, the task of advancing the general interests of the wage-earning working classes against the *general* and specific interests of all other existing social classes, modern or remnants of previous societies. And already in this respect the Communist Party is clearly distinguished from the unions and every other immediate proletarian organization which are known from historical experience or which will be known in the future.

But there's more. The Communist Party, given that the Marxist theory of which it is the guardian represents the historical leap between the *class-divided society* and the *classless society*, between capitalism and communism, is destined not only to carry out the role of being the guide of the international proletarian revolution and the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship, but also to subsequently transform itself into the administrative organ of the communist society, in which – after the disappearance of all traces of division into classes and coercive apparatuses of power – it will be necessary to administer in centrally appropriate forms the production and distribution for the whole of human society, which will finally be devoted to a joyful life, knowledge and art and will no longer be determined by the exigencies of the "market", "valor-

isation of capital" and "competition", but by the real needs of the human life of the present and future generations. Moreover, a party text from 1953 (20) states that in a sense the party "*never ceases to exist, even after the extinction of the classes, because it becomes the organ for studying and organizing the struggle between the human species and natural conditions.*" It is clear that the party, as formal organization of revolutionary militants, faces and fulfils different tasks at different historical stages: it is one thing to lead the proletarian insurrection to seize power, to exercise the class dictatorship and wage revolutionary war against the bourgeois armies united in counter-revolution, and another to administer production and distribution in the society in which the social classes will no longer exist.

CLASS : MOVEMENT AND COMBAT

The proletarian class, the class of wage-laborers, comprises all those individuals who, in capitalist society, are without reserves and are therefore forced to sell their labour power for livelihood to other individuals who in capitalist society are owners, who possess a certain amount of wealth in goods, means of production, capital, wealth which enables them to exploit for their own and private benefit the labour power provided by those without reserves. The mass of proletarians which the very development of capitalism creates, insofar as it survives under the yoke of capitalist exploitation of wage labor, constitutes what we have called *class for capital*, i.e. that part of capitalist society which is not only subjugated to the domination of capital and the class which represents it – the bourgeoisie – but which contributes decisively by its labor to the production of the social wealth that capitalists appropriate to themselves in the form of private property.

With Marxism, which is a social science and a theory of revolution, the word "**class**" takes on a completely different meaning from the one generally given to it by sociology. "***As a socio historical entity, it was originally introduced by Marxism, although it had been used before. The word is of Latin origin, but it should be noted that classis was for the Romans the fleet, the war naval squadron: the concept thus represents a set of units acting together, going in the same direction, facing the same enemy. The essence of the concept is therefore movement and combat, not... classification, which***

(20) See the article in the "Sul filo del tempo" series entitled "*Gracidamento della prassi*" (The Croaking about Praxis), published in No. 11 of *Il programma comunista* of 1953, then included with other "Sul filo del tempo" articles and other material in the pamphlet "*Classe, partito, Stato nella teoria marxista*" (Class, Party, State in Marxist Theory), published by the Party in 1972, from which the quotation is taken (pp. 45-46).

later took on a static sense." (21)

Thus, for the communists to speak of *proletarian class*, of *class party*, of *class dictatorship*, is to apply to their own political positions the essential concept of movement and combat: movement unifying the proletarians of every country or nationality, acting in the same direction, facing the same enemy and for a common purpose; combat of the units of the proletariat as a whole, acting both on the level of defense against the attacks of the class enemies and on the level of attack on the positions and status of the class enemies. The class is not the total sum of all proletarians existing in the world and it is not the total sum of the interests of each individual proletarian; the proletarian class is a movement moving in the same direction in historical reality and is driven by unifying, general interests in which it recognizes itself beyond any specific and immediate differences between individual proletariats and between individual proletarians. But the proletariat, for the purpose of struggle in defense of its living and working conditions, organizes itself, organizes its forces, unites them; and in the struggle the fact emerges that the real fruit of the workers' struggle is the unification of the workers and its extension, because the ups and downs in the balance of forces between the classes mean that victories in the struggle in defense of living and working conditions are entirely transitory. *This organization of the proletarians into class and thus into political party* (the *Manifesto* of 1848) is a historical fact, determined by the movement of the proletariat in struggle against the other social classes; it is a historical, impersonal, international result that transcends the boundaries of space and time. The political party referred to in the *Manifesto* of 1848 is the **communist party** –, without national adjectives – in which the historical experience of class struggles, revolutions and counterrevolutions is condensed. *The class is class insofar as it has its party*, states our texts (22), which affirm that the proletariat is represented in its general and historical interests by a well defined organ, which is precisely the **class party**, the **international** communist party, and by no other.

The class struggle is therefore the struggle which the proletariat wages on the terrain of confrontation with the bourgeois classes and through which it *objectively* poses the question of political power. The proletariat arrives at this level of struggle not by its own will, or even by its own "consciousness", but by the objective impulse of its economic and immediate interests, for the sake of which it unites in organizations capable of defending those interests. The "political" level of the struggle is determined by the emergence of the antagonism which pits the proletariat against all other classes in society, and the consequences which the clash between the classes produces on both sides. Insofar as the class party influences and directs the struggle of the proletariat on openly anti capitalist terrain, the "political" level of the struggle becomes more and more determinative until it takes over from the "immediate" level of the struggle over wages; in this process of development, by no means linear and gradual, but

teeming with advances and retreats, the struggle in defense of proletarian living and working conditions is overcome and transforms itself into the general struggle of the proletarian class against the bourgeois class, into the revolutionary struggle. *Every class struggle is a political struggle*, states again the *Manifesto* of 1848; more precisely, if it is *class* in character, i.e., if it has as its objective the general interests of the proletariat, it can only be *political*, since the general interests of the proletariat cannot be represented by any but the political class party, i.e., the Communist Party. In the absence of the intervention and influence of the Communist Party on the proletariat in its anti-capitalist struggle, the proletarian class objectively loses the unifying perspective of its struggle against the bourgeois classes and inevitably succumbs to the influence of the bourgeoisie and retreats to the confines of possibilism, of collaboration between the classes.

The party's intervention in the ranks of the proletariat and on the terrain of the immediate defense of its living and working conditions is aimed at influencing, orienting and leading the proletarian movement on class basis. But this does not detract from the fact that on the immediate terrain the party, through its militants, must also contribute to the classist organization of the proletariat, without ever renouncing the importation of Marxist theory into the proletarian ranks, of the objectives for which the struggle of the proletariat must develop, of the defense of the general interests of the class, of the revolutionary critique of every opportunist tendency, of every collaborationist practice and politics. Developing and entrenching the classist attitudes in the proletariat, even in the elementary forms that are produced in the partial struggles, is the task of the vanguards, and therefore of the communists, because it is through these attitudes, these experiences, these classist practices – that is, those that put before everything else the exclusive defense of the immediate interests of the wage workers, whether employed or unemployed – the most militant and "conscious" elements of the proletariat are pushed with greater strength and conviction to break not only "ideologically" but also practically with patriotic trade unionism, with collaboration between the classes, and to give life to workers' associations which are finally *class based* and suitable for the defense of exclusively proletarian interests.

(21) See other article in the series "Sul filo del tempo" compiled in the booklet "*Classe, partito, stato nella teoria marxista*" (Class, party, state in Marxist theory); the quotation is from the article "*Danza di fantocci: dalla coscienza alla cultura*" (Dance of Puppets: From Consciousness to Culture), originally published in *Il programma comunista*, No. 12 of 1953; the quotation is from page 55 of that booklet.

(22) See "*Gracidamento della prassi*" (The Croaking about Praxis); quoted from the booklet "*Classe, partito, stato nella teoria marxista*", from p. 54.

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The party's constant intervention on the terrain of proletarian struggle also serves to make the party known to the proletariat – especially its most advanced elements and strata – so that they can appreciate and hence follow it. The party appeals to all proletarians in general, but it is well aware that only the most advanced proletarians can perceive and make its instructions, its watchwords, their own, because these instructions, these watchwords require to a certain extent a qualitatively higher level of class sensitivity than is common in the proletariat – a level conditioned by the daily struggle for survival and the pressure of both the bosses and opportunism –; the party therefore cannot expect all proletarians to react in the same way, with the same class orientation and with the same energy at certain moments of high social tension; it cannot expect the proletarian masses to move *to* the party *spontaneously*. This means that the work of the party does not only consist in giving the proletariat correct class instructions, but must be carried out by putting these class instructions into life *in the struggle, alongside the struggling proletarians, and struggling together* on the immediate terrain. Without ever succumbing, that's clear, to the temptation to abandon the typically political and theoretical terrain – because it is "harder to digest" and harder to get through to the ranks of the proletarians – in favor of the immediate economic terrain. The main task of the party, as Lenin recalls, is to **import** revolutionary theory into the class of the proletariat, not to "represent", better than others, the immediate demands of the proletariat or its "majority".

How do consistent communists distinguish themselves in the activity of intervention on the terrain of immediate struggles? In the fact that **acceptance** of the class instructions which the party propounds to the proletarians ***does not imply adherence to the particular political theses of the Communist Party, but corresponds only to the demands of the common action of the entire proletariat, drawn up in such a way that neither communists, nor socialists, nor anarchists, nor, in general, workers of any political creed can be prejudiced against them***", as is well expressed in Communiqué of the Executive Committee and the Central Trade Union Committee of the Communist Party of Italy in March 1922, at the time when the "Alleanza del Lavoro" ("Alliance of Labor", coalition of the three main Italian unions) was constituted on the initiative of the Railway men's Union (23). The class party in fact acts for the unification of the proletariat on the terrain of the class struggle, it acts so that the proletariat actually takes in hand, directly, as protagonist, its own struggle and its own development, and so that those famous *sparks of class consciousness* – of which Lenin speaks in his "What is to be done?" –, which arise from the resistance struggles of the proletariat against the pressure and oppression of the bosses and the bourgeoisie, meet the party in its multifaceted activity and thus make possible the merging of the proletarian needs of immediate defense with the general interests of the class struggle and of these general interests with the ultimate

revolutionary objectives.

* * *

Although the Communist Left has been forgotten, falsified, slandered, its thesis, its program, its class battles document the intransigent continuity and theoretical coherence that has historically characterized it, and demonstrate the material effort in different situations to sustain organizational continuity – even if in given periods it was or is, as today, very few in number –, in order to hand over to the resumption of the class struggle of the proletariat the "revolutionary organ" based on solid theoretical and programmatic foundations.

In this spirit, and in continuing to work towards this objective, our organization believes that it must return to these arguments in order to draw all the necessary lessons from the balance sheet of the crises and defeats of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary party itself, so that it will always be possible to subsequently re establish the theoretical and programmatic continuity of Marxism through "***a work of party character***", for if the defeat of the proletariat would be ever so dramatic that even the small physical core of revolutionary communists consistently and intransigently linked to Marxist orthodoxy disappeared, the rebirth of the class and revolutionary movement would be even more distant in time.

A MORE SOLID DEPICTION OF WHAT DISTINGUISHES US

In 1976, the party returned to the content of our complementary commentary alongside the title of the party press ("What Distinguishes Our Party" ["Distingue il nostro partito"]) and tried to formulate it in a more comprehensible way for those who made closer contact with the party, especially in countries where the Italian Communist Left was not so well known (referring to "Leghorn 1921", in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, for example, it was known at the time that this was a reference to the founding of the Communist Party of Italy by the Communist Left) and for whom some of the condensed references might not say much or might be misunderstood; we limited ourselves to making these references clearer while keeping them very concise (24). In fact, our complementary commentary alongside the title of the party

(23) The above mentioned communiqué was published in *Il comunista* of 19 March 1922 and later became part of the article "*Il senso della nostra azione 'esterna'*" (The meaning of our 'external' action) published in *Il programma comunista*, Nos. 2 and 3 of 1976.

(24) The text of the new version of our complementary commentary alongside the title of the party press has been published since the first issue of *Il programma comunista* of 1976.

press confirmed what distinguishes us: **the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundations of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy; the 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 difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organ, closely linked with the working class, outside personal and electoral politics.**

There is nothing wrong with this text even today. The only thing is that in the period following the great capitalist crisis of 1974–1975 and in the course of the development of the party itself, the various partial crises that led to our general crisis of 1982–1984 revolved around questions of great relevance both in terms of tactics and organization (closure of the cycle of multiple revolutions, systematic attack on the union and social conquests of previous workers' struggles, formation and constant transformation of far-left and extra-parliamentary political groups, formation of armed struggle groups such as the Red Brigades (BR) in Italy, massacres committed by fascists, state repression in the form of increasingly repressive democracy, etc.). And for the umpteenth time, the great mishap of history called **democracy** has hovered over everything. The question of "transitional demands" intersected with "anti-fascist" mobilization, the question of the evaluation of extra-parliamentary groups intersected with the question of workers' distrust of class-collaborationist trade union confederations, the question of violence and terrorism intersected with the defense on the proletarian terrain against repressive attacks by the state and, at the level of party organization, with the need to preserve organizational continuity against possible police repression.

If it has always been necessary to make a balance sheet of every crisis of the party (whether it was a crisis of "growth" or a degenerative crisis) – the contributions of the Communist Left prove this, starting with its theses on the constitution of the Communist Party of Italy, through its theses on international tactics, the contributions on the evaluation of fascism and the theses of 1926, to the balance sheet of the Stalinist counter-revolution and the degeneration of the Communist International – it was even more true with regard to the internal crises of the reconstituted class party after the Second World War, to the explosive crisis of 1982–1984 which shattered our party of that time.

Balancing the party's crises: on this issue, we clashed not only with the liquidators of the first and second waves (the *movementists* of 1982 and the *combatists* of 1983), but also with a group of comrades who had fallen into the opposite liquidationism of the party (the model of *wait-and-see*), which was characterized by a combination of equally defeatist attitudes, since they were linked to organizational and personal formalism, which was inevitably reflected in the search for formal and bureaucratic expedients (such

as demanding the presence of the comrades who had previously formed the centre of the party in the new governing body called the "Central Committee", the "right" of the "proprietor" to express in writing and publicly his disagreement with the new line adopted by the Central Committee, the "right" to publish articles that contradicted the new line of the Central Committee, etc.). And the most odious expedient could not have been missed, the legal action taken by the "proprietor" of the party newspaper ("Il programma comunista") to regain control of the newspaper, a legal action in which the court could not but "give justice" to this "proprietor" by restoring to him the exclusive use of the newspaper. "Tactical" and organizational expedients, as opposed to political struggle, were the only things that could be done for those with a wait-and-see position. Meanwhile, the claimed ideological and organizational "continuity" of the party was entrusted to the bourgeois justice. Moreover, the same group of liquidators theoretically formulated two facts which were of extreme gravity for those who claimed to be "continuator of the Communist Left": 1) there was no need to make a balance sheet of the party's crisis, and certainly not of the last one, since they considered it a crisis caused by the incursion of a "clique" that wanted to ruin the party, so it was enough to regain control of the party newspaper, get rid of that "clique" and... "to continue on the course"; 2) to reorganize as a party first and foremost in Italy, where they could count on a certain number of adherents, while comrades in other countries would be left to their fate and contacts with abroad would be postponed until the core in Italy was strengthened. Thus, in addition to assessing the crisis of the party as an unfortunate incident (sooner or later there is always a "clique" that works "against"), this group closed itself within the "sacred borders" of Italy, in contradiction to internationalism and the history of the current of the Communist Left, which it claimed – and still claims – to be its "true continuator".

The need for a thorough analysis of the issues at the heart of this crisis characterized our approach and work during the crisis itself. In principle, the party does not have to face – except in historical situations of great social and political upheaval – "new", "unknown" questions. The social and political situation changes, the power relations between the classes change, but in principle the central questions of the programme of revolutionary communism do not change, and therefore there is no need to constantly re-argue and "update" the communist party programme. In general, the questions where the factors of a possible crisis of the Party are at work always relate to the two main areas of its activity: the area of tactics and the area of organization. The evaluation of situations, the consideration of the forces at work, the prospects of lesser or greater success in the short or immediate term: these are aspects of the general approach to tactics to be followed, and the corresponding adaptation of the organization of the party's forces. Well, if these evaluations, these considerations, these perspectives are wrong, the tactics pursued and the organizational models

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applied are inevitably completely wrong. The problem of activity and action in the union field, and on the immediate terrain in general, has always been a hard nut to crack, and has always brought many headaches at some point in the development of party activity. The problem of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles has also been a difficult and indigestible problem for many good comrades. The problem of the use of democratic mechanisms inside and/or outside the party resurfaces from time to time, as if it were **the** problem of all problems, once solved, everything would then run more smoothly.

In the period between 1979 and 1982, a series of crises took place in the party, culminating finally in the break-up in October 1982, with subsequent aftershocks until 1984, when the comrades gathered around the papers "*Il comunista*" and "*Le prolétaire*" reunited their forces and reconstituted the core of the party that we still represent to this day. It was evident that it was necessary and urgent to work on the balance sheet of the party's crises and to tackle openly the tactical and organizational problems that were the detonators of these crises; on the other hand, we knew that every tactical problem and every organizational problem inevitably leads to theoretical and programmatic points. It was necessary and indispensable to draw up a balance sheet precisely because the outbreak of an internal crisis, and one as virulent as the 1982 crisis, put on the table not "*marginal*" and *peripheral* questions – not affecting the theoretical and programmatic points on which everyone could show that they were in agreement and on the same side – but central questions such as the conception of the party, the relationship between the party and the class, the question of the party's political and organizational independence from all other political formations, etc.

The forty years that separate us from that crisis have not diminished the value and weight of that balance sheet, on the contrary. The situation in which the proletariat finds itself, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, where its dependence on reformism and interclass collaborationism is still very strong, to the point of paralysing it even on the elementary terrain of the defence of living and working conditions, does not give us the possibility, to demonstrate to the proletarian masses, with the help of important actual facts, that we are on the right path, that we have waged a legitimate political struggle against the various lapses which have characterized and still characterize the political groups which, like us, refer to the Communist Left. We cannot refer to the important facts of the class struggle to prove to the proletariat, and especially to its most militant and most sensitive to the cause of the class struggle sectors, that we represent the class party in its theoretical, programmatic, political, tactical and organizational continuity. These facts are not there, except in such episodic forms that the great mass of proletarians perceive them only as facts concerning *someone else*, other categories, other proletarians, far from common feeling. We are forced to refer to the examples brought about by the class struggle in the past, because the permanent and large-scale resump-

tion of the class struggle in these more than seventy years of bourgeois counter-revolution is not yet on the horizon.

But the party is aware that it can go through a period, even a very long one, when the proletarians don't perceive the rightness of its valuations, its instructions, the necessity of its action. But this is no reason to lock itself up in its "ivory tower"; it is no reason to evade the effort to carry out its activity in close link with the working class and with the problems of its classist struggle. The time will come when this work will prove important and vital, when the proletariat, having once again raised its head, will take the fate of its struggle back into its own hands.

We know, therefore, that the "monotonous" and, for most, "unknown" work we do in an effort to remain firmly connected to the Marxist and revolutionary "*thread that weaves through history*" is indispensable work for the future. The history of class movements has taught us that "objectively revolutionary" situations can occur even at a very accelerated pace, as if they happened "out of the blue" – in the sense that the proletariat can be, in a rush of social tension, in a very short time, pushed onto the terrain of class confrontation with the ruling classes by accepting a life-and-death clash – but it also taught us that the victory of the proletarian revolution will never be possible without the presence of a solid, strong, prepared, influential class party at the head of the revolutionary proletarian movement. And this party cannot be created without prior preparation; it must be prepared at length, especially in terms of theory and its correct application, even inevitably in a period of deep counter-revolution such as the present one.

Working on the formation of the party as the leading organ of the proletarian and communist revolution of tomorrow, in the light of all the historical events that have marked the life and death of formal party organizations in the more than 150-year history of the international proletarian and communist movement, would be without effect – and in fact impossible – if we were to detach ourselves from the theoretical, programmatic and political continuity of the international communist movement. For the Communist Left, and therefore for us, the theoretical, programmatic and political continuity constitutes the fundamental core of the class party's existence. We reject the notion that Marxist theory needs to *be updated* and that we should take new and different paths from the revolutionary course already historically set out by the international communist movement, which reached its peak with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the founding of the Communist International. We also reject the idea that we should separate the sphere of the party's theory and political programme from the sphere of its practical activity on the pretext that the objective situation places the party in a situation where *new* tactical and organizational solutions must be sought. We affirm that only the theoretical, programmatic and political *continuity* of the class party can enable the party itself to change tactics if necessary, even within 24 hours (as Trotsky recalls in the context of the Bol-

shevik Party during the civil war in Russia in 1918-1921), because only this continuity gives the party the possibility to intervene in changing situations in order to transform them in its favour, and not to be carried away by these situations and thus transform itself.

This continuity can be found in the classical texts of Marxism, in the founding theses of the Communist International and in the theses of the Communist Left *before and after* the Second World War. But in order for this continuity to become a weapon of the Marxist critique – waiting to serve as a real basis for the critique of weapons in the revolutionary period – a work of *party character* is needed, and in particular a work of re-acquiring the theoretical and programmatic, political and tactical heritage of revolutionary Marxism. Without a thorough historical and political balance sheet of the crises and defeats of the revolutionary movement, without drawing lessons from the counter-revolutions and lessons from the history of the revolutionary party itself, the party organization will never be able to effectively adopt Marxist critique, will never be able to deal with Marxist theory with confidence and calm; therefore, it will never be able to successfully lead the proletarian movement on the path of anti-capitalist revolution. The great historical balance sheet of revolutions and counter-revolutions has been made by our former party, and this is illustrated by the texts and theses of the Communist Left which we have mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. However, it is not automatic that the militant forces that make up the party will always be able to consistently realize all the instructions and tasks that result from the program and balance sheet of revolutions and counter-revolutions. In the party, precisely because it is not an entity detached from the social reality in which it operates, the effort to act in perfect coherence with its program is constantly unfolding, and this effort turns in different situations into a struggle for coherence, a struggle against opportunist attitudes, positions and theses, a struggle against deviations or degenerations.

That is why, in the face of the explosive party crisis of 1982–1984, we stubbornly insisted on the work of balancing the party crisis. It was a matter of following exactly the same method that the party had previously followed in the face of the internal crises that marked its development, the same method that the Communist Party of Italy had followed in relation to the PSI and the currents of gradualist and maximalist opportunism, which in the 1920s obstructed the path of the class and revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, the same method followed by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in relation to the crises of the Russian and international revolutionary political movement. We did not invent *new* "ways" to reconstitute the class party; we did not adopt a different method and standard for evaluating internal crises than those handed down to us by the history of the Communist Left itself. The balance sheet of proletarian and communist defeats – because the explosive crisis of the former party is a defeat not only of the communists but also of the international proletarian movement – is carried out by returning to the theoretical and programmatic foundations of revolu-

tionary communism, which history has confirmed and which we therefore define as **immutable, invariant**; foundations summarized in the classical texts of Marxism and in the theses we mentioned above.

The explosive party crisis of 1982–1984 took on different and contradictory characteristics. The strong *activist* and *movementist* impetus provoked an *academic, wait-and-see*, essentially indifferentist reaction; the wall that went up between theory and practice pushed to the extreme tendencies that had always existed in the history of the proletarian and communist movement and against which the Communist Left always had to fight and will always have to fight, identifying them from time to time under the various masks taken on at different periods in the history of the struggles between the classes. Activist and indifferentist tendencies have always stood in the way of the proletarian movement; in order to gain a foothold in the proletarian class parties, opportunist tendencies have used – and use – a very efficient anti-communist vector: the vector of *democracy*. Democracy conceived in a thousand and one different versions, but always inexorably and dramatically lethal to the Communist Party. Democracy, defeated by Marxism on the level of theory and principles, can re-enter through the window by means of tactics and organizational practice, thus for the umpteenth time erecting a wall between theory and practice and thus bringing the party to disintegration.

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY : OUR MOST INSIDIOUS ENEMY

There is an endless series of tactical and organizational patterns tied to the democratic principle, which the party has considered throughout its history whether or not to adopt, with what limitations, in what area and at what time, and in a way that would not contradict its set out principles and political program. There were times when bourgeois democracy also represented an important political advantage also for the proletariat because it trained it to participate in the political life of the country. It was the time when bourgeois democracy corresponded to the revolutionary phase of the new society which was about to revolutionize the old feudal society. But as the representation of the economic, social and political freedoms of the bourgeoisie and all its layers and factions, bourgeois democracy could not, beyond a certain point, respond to the economic, social and political needs of the working class, because of the social antagonism that existed in bourgeois society and which became increasingly acute with the development of capitalism itself. First the Paris Commune of 1871 and later the First World War of 1914–1918 demonstrate historically how in the advanced capitalist countries democracy – both in principle and in political and tactical aspects – became an obstacle to the proletariat in its revolutionary class struggle; what is more, it has become a bourgeois weapon to turn the proletariat away from the course which the class struggle historically takes, when carried to its extreme, to the violent conquest of political power and the establishment of the proletarian and commu-

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nist dictatorship. But the matter was different in the case of the underdeveloped capitalist countries, where the agenda was not the "simple", anti-capitalist revolution, but the "double" revolution, the revolution containing two historical tasks: the overthrow of pre-capitalist power and at the same time the accomplishment of tasks of a capitalist character, but under the iron and dictatorial power of the proletariat in connection with the international revolutionary proletarian movement and in anticipation of the economic contribution of the proletarian dictatorships established in one or more advanced capitalist countries. This "double" revolution was precisely the revolutionary programme of the Bolsheviks in Russia and of the Communist International for all colonial and semi-colonial countries subjected to the fierce subjugation of the imperialist states. In the developed West, history put on the agenda the "simple" anti-capitalist proletarian revolution to destroy bourgeois political power, its state and all its institutions even in the most democratic republics. In the backward East and in all the countries of the world where capitalism was not yet firmly established economically and politically, the directive was: "double" (or, to borrow a term close to Trotsky and used by Marx, "*permanent*") revolution, i.e., revolution with bourgeois economic tasks, but directed and led politically and militarily by the revolutionary proletariat and its class party within the framework of the international proletarian revolution.

However, the Western European proletariat proved to be still very much influenced by the ideology and practice of bourgeois, representative and parliamentary democracy. And it proved to be very difficult to fight and win against this real social disease; and this is still true today.

One of the fundamental concepts of bourgeois democracy is that of numerical majority and minority; it is a democratic concept due to the fact that bourgeois ideology assigns to every single element of the numerical total considered, and existing at a given moment, a *value "x"* which equals every other element of that numerical total. The dynamic expression of this value results – in accordance with the democratic principle – in the vote of single individuals, to whom bourgeois ideology ascribes an individual specific "*consciousness*", separate and distinct from the "*consciousness*" of every other individual, due to which each individual makes a "*choice*". At the end of the voting cycle, the "*choices*" made by each individual element of the numerical total considered and existing at that moment are numerically counted, and a numerical result emerges: there is a majority, a minority, whose numerical distances from each other may be slight or very significant, or may be completely absent, leading to a tie. However, the democratic principle is based on the "*victory*" of one side over the other, of the majority over the minority, and establishes arbitrarily that the majority is to be considered such by virtue of the result of a vote with 50% of the voters + 1 *single vote*. In this way, according to the bourgeois principle of democracy, quantity is transformed into quality: the *majority* wins and the minority submits and

adapts to the decisions of the majority.

The glaring contradiction lies not only in the fact that the "vote" should involve all the components of society concerned, thus including the dead and the unborn, and not only those living of a certain age and existing at a *specific moment* – bourgeois democracy does not even solve this problem quantitatively, nor qualitatively – but above all in the fact that it is held up as a general theory, according to which the needle of the scale depends on the +1 vote which ultimately decides which of the two sides wins over the other. The "*majority*" of bourgeois democracy is thus at the mercy of this 1+ or 1". And since bourgeois society is based on the most unbridled mercantilism, it is natural that this +1 is worth much more than the individual components of the 50%; hence the lie about the equality of every vote, a lie that is accompanied by haggling over each vote, with the characteristic that this +1 will be "paid" much more dearly than each vote that is part of the 50%. Just as in a market where the most sought-after commodity costs more than the others; it is not known who will buy it and when, and at what final price, but it is known that it costs more. Bourgeois democracy cannot apply any other system for its decision-making structures than the one it knows and on which it actually depends: the system of exchange, of exchange value, in short, the market. How many times have we heard model democrats proclaim that the outcome of elections depends on whether *undecided* people will opt for one side or the other? The *undecided* thus become the part of the likely voters in the electoral market on which more resources are spent to influence: in short, they *cost* much more than votes that are "assured"!

What duration and what value can the "decisions" taken by the "majority" in the places deputed by the bourgeois society for this particular market of votes have? Whether it is a parliament, a municipal, provincial or regional council, a company board, a neighbourhood committee or any other institution responsible for "applying" bourgeois democratic rules, the democratic method cannot avoid its inherent contradictions. Not only is it not a perfect method, and not only is it incapable of taking into account the needs of each "voter", but it systematically obscures a reality that is anything but egalitarian.

Society is divided into classes, the ruling class and the subordinate classes; into a class that appropriates the entire wealth produced by society – the bourgeois capitalist class – and classes from whose labour the bourgeoisie extracts social wealth and appropriates it. The numerical majority, understood as the sum of individuals, is not of the bourgeois capitalist class, but of the working classes: if the concept of majority were to be truly applied, it would not be the dominant classes but the dominated ones that would rule. But this is not the case. What makes the disparity is not the method, not the number, but the social position and function: those who wield political, economic and therefore military power dictate the rules. Who has the power wins. Bourgeois democracy obscures more or less well the reality of social relations between classes and of

the balance of power between classes. And as long as this mode of government ensures that the ruling bourgeoisie retains political power (with the attendant participation and consensus of society, which are useful to ease the most acute tensions), it has no need to change it. However, as time goes on, the mechanisms of democracy also wear out, so that they need to be "innovated", changed, replaced or simply jettisoned when they prove too much of an obstacle to bourgeois business.

That democracy does not respond to the real life needs of people is evident today, as the "majority" of people living on this planet live in abject poverty or on the edge of survival. But this does not detract from the fact that it continues to exert a decisive influence on the proletariat, even though it is systematically subordinated not to the interests of the majority of people who make up the working classes, but to the interests of the minority of people who form the ruling classes. It is thus the interest groups (economic and/or political interests) that act so that the democratic "majority" will give them formal "consent", so that their advantages, their privileges will be preserved, extended, guaranteed; hence their greatest efforts tend to be concentrated on that *+1* of the 50 %. In this way, the structure of contradictions and deceptions constituted by democracy applying it to politics, economy and society can continue to play its true role, which is not that it "guarantees justice", that it "allows everyone" to have their "choice" taken into account, but that it conceals the real interests that govern the decisions of the ruling classes, the power groups.

On the other hand, the "secret" voting rule contributes both to feeding the illusion that each individual "chooses" who or what to vote for, without directly facing the possible consequences from "opponents" that a non-secret vote might provoke, and to the mystification of so-called privacy, which can only make sense in a society in which every aspect of each person's life can be used by others to their advantage.

But a completely different function is played by voting in the immediate independent organs of the proletariat, such as the soviets in the revolutionary period in Russia or the workers' assemblies and factory councils in the era of class unions. In these proletarian organs of struggle, the voting on motions was a practical demonstration in a completely open and direct manner that there are no ulterior motives in the use of the ballot, and that the will to struggle against the class enemies is not called into question if the ballot favours this or that motion, this or that demand. All proletarians could – because no one had anything to hide – directly verify, face to face, not only how many were in favour of this or that solution, but also who was in favour of which solution and with what motivation. Only in this way could *democratic* participation achieve the maximum real involvement of the proletarians in the struggle; and it will be able to do so in the future when the proletarian organs of immediate struggle independent of trade union and political collaborationism are reborn. But this can only happen, without in itself constituting a deviation in the

opportunist sense, only on the terrain of the immediate struggle, only in the presence of organisms that are genuinely of class, and in the presence of the real activity of the class party within them in order to constantly orient them towards class objectives and the use of class means and methods, and to maintain their classist orientation.

In a society in which everything is commodity, everything is market, everything is traded, and everyone's life depends on the economic – and therefore political and social – power of a very specific ruling class, the bourgeoisie, it is logical that the self-proclaimed "*sovereign people*", to whom bourgeois democracy entrusts what seems to be the "last word", the "final judgment", should feel that at least once in a while – for example, through elections – they "decide" how to regulate social life. The history of bourgeois society is imbued with democracy subordinated to the particular interests, and in any case wholly inherent to the privileges of the propertied classes; but it is at the same time characterized by the struggle between the classes, in which the fate of this struggle is decided not by an abstract "right", nor by a "vote" cast in the ballot box, but by the real, material, kinetic power that the antagonistic classes use to advance their interests. If the means of *struggle* used by the proletarian classes are exclusively for the preservation of bourgeois society – and the means of democracy are such – these means lose the semblance of struggle which is artificially attributed to them, and show their uselessness and, what is more, their anti-proletarian function. The maximum result which the bourgeoisie can achieve in its daily struggle against the proletariat is that it is the proletariat itself which damages its own interests, *believing* that it uses effective means and methods to defend them. The practice of democracy, promoted and supported by opportunists of all stripes, leads to precisely this result. And one can understand why the bourgeois ruling classes, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, spend colossal sums of money to maintain an endless tangle of organs, institutions and mechanisms for the promotion, practice and bureaucratic machinery of democracy. As long as the proletariat largely brings itself to its knees on the way to struggle for the defense of its immediate and future class interests, the bourgeois ruling class will use this enormous advantage against the proletariat itself, both in peace and in war, both in terms of the ever-increasing exploitation of labour power and in terms of the growing insecurity of life for the proletarian classes; and both in terms of competition with rivals on the world market, and in terms of competition between proletarians over wages and jobs. **More democracy means for the proletariat more intense subjugation to the interests of capital.**

To be communist is not only to stand on the side of the interests of the wage-earning classes and to fight for their advancement against the ruling classes, but also to reveal the reality of the antagonistic relations that characterize all class-divided societies, and bourgeois society in particular. Combating the mystification of bourgeois democracy is therefore the consist-

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ent position of communists in every time and place, all the more so in view of the fact that the democratic myth (every man has the same "rights" as others, e.g. to live decently and in peace) – like religious superstition – has a very strong influence on the working classes, diverting their material drive to open and direct confrontation with the ruling classes towards conciliation, negotiation leading to the acceptance of solutions that are only apparently egalitarian but only advantageous to the classes that actually hold the power, the force. If the wage-earning classes have achieved that the ruling classes or the bosses have finally accepted and implemented some of their demands, they have achieved this only after the systematic application of forceful actions, and not through the application of "voting". The ten-hour law in the time of Marx and Engels in England, and later the eight-hour law, are examples for all. But is it not true that the existential exigencies of the majority of proletarians and poor peasants force them to work much longer hours than the eight-hour law? And this is due to the very simple relationship of social forces, whereby the bourgeois classes, by their economic and social pressure on society, tend to reduce the "price of labour" – the wage – in order to maximize the share of unpaid labour – surplus value – that goes to the benefit of their profits. However, everything happens according to the laws of the "labour market", agreed upon and accepted by all classes through parliamentary votes. It is no coincidence that Lenin, in his work *The State and Revolution*, in agreement with Marx, reiterates what bourgeois democracy consists of: "*To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament – this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics*" (25).

The Communist Party, from its first appearance in history through Marx and Engels' 1848 *Manifesto*, has well identified the contradictions and lies contained in bourgeois democracy. And a fundamental historical lesson came out of the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, as Marx and with him Lenin recall. In the course of its development, the international communist movement has developed the thesis that bourgeois democracy is the method of government that is best able to deceive the proletariat and to instill in it the illusion that it is the best method of government not only for the bourgeois class but *also* for the proletarian class.

But the deception lies not only in the method, in the practice of democracy, but in the economic and political foundations of bourgeois society. In fact, in periods of deep crisis of the bourgeois state, and therefore of all democratic institutions, and in the presence of consistent upsurge of the proletarian movement on the path of class struggle towards direct confrontation with the political power of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois ruling class tends to abandon the parliamentary democratic method and to act quite openly, showing even on the political level the face of its effective *dictatorship* over the whole of society.

The social situation within a country and the international political situation did not always "demand" the destruction of democracy through the restoration of pre-capitalist powers; after 1789 in France and 1848 in Europe, the victory of capitalism, not only economically but also politically in Western Europe, definitively paved the way; the pre-capitalist classes definitively lost the possibility of their own "restoration". The subsequent suppression of liberal democracy as a method of government was not due to the comeback of pre-capitalist forces (as in the imaginations of Gramscism and Stalinism, which regarded fascism as a *step backwards* in history), but to the imperative demands of the political and economic centralization of advanced capitalism, of imperialism. The implementation of fascism and Nazism in the 1920s and 1930s corresponded to the needs of the bourgeois ruling classes faced with the real revolutionary danger: in those years, the proletariat triumphed in Russia, in Western Europe it struggled to seize power in Hungary, Poland, Germany, also in Italy, and all over the world the peasant and proletarian masses were in a great ferment to revolutionize the existing social orders. The fear of the bourgeois ruling classes, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, was such that in order to save themselves from the rising red tide they had to come up with a *new method of government*, given that the democratic method had failed to deter the proletarian masses from their revolutionary path. This new method of government turned out to be *fascism*, *avowedly anti-proletarian*, and not before letting the rogue "workers" Social-Democracy finish its work of disarming, repressing and disorganizing the proletariat, which it was still influencing and directing.

Fascism was *a posteriori* (after-the-fact) reaction of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists vis-à-vis the proletarian classes, which had already demonstrated during the First World War that they had the vigour, combativity, energy and leadership capable of seriously threatening the bourgeois powers. What lessons did the bourgeois classes draw from that fear? That they would do everything in their power not to find themselves again in a similar situation with a proletariat so socially and politically strong as to pose a real danger of a definitive demise for the bourgeoisie and capitalism.

The bourgeois, confronted with social situations of great tension that could have opened the way to the resumption of the class and revolutionary struggle, arrived at the thesis that their reaction must no longer be *a posteriori*, but *preventive*; and it must concern all levels, whether political, economic and social, ideological and cultural, or military. Therefore, where economic resources existed and where the proletariat was more connected to the class and revolutionary tradition, "*anti-fascist*" *democracy* had to marry with

(25) See Lenin, *State and Revolution*, in Lenin Collected Works, vol. 25, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 427–428.

the social consensus obtained through the application of reforms and economic "guarantees" (those famous *social shock absorbers*), without neglecting the repressive armed intervention of the state (in the case of Italy, from the Portella delle Ginestre massacre to the farm workers killed in the strikes in Avolio, Battipaglia, the demonstrators killed in June and July 1960 to the young people murdered in Rome and Milan in 1969–1970) and massacres, commanded by illegal bourgeois forces (in Italy, the bombing of the Piazza Fontana in Milan, the Piazza della Loggia in Brescia, to the attack on the Bologna train station in 1980). Where economic resources were not so abundant and the proletariat did not have a long tradition of class and revolutionary struggle or was dramatically diverted from it by Stalinism, then "anti-fascist" and "popular" democracy, when faced with a socially very tense situation, had to make way for open military repression (in Berlin in 1953, in Budapest in 1956, and then the colonels' junta in Greece, the generals' junta in Argentina, Pinochet in Chile, the Sukarno regime in Indonesia, etc.) Military dictatorship thus became a *preventive* response to proletarian mobilization, while "anti-fascist" democracy became increasingly fascized.

The degeneration of liberal democracy, after fascism and the Second World Imperialist War, inevitably makes way for imperialist democracy, that is, fascized, armed, in short, "more modern" democracy. It shows increasingly more evident signs of being deceitful towards the oppressed population and the proletariat itself. In spite of this, in spite of the thousands of demonstrations in which it has acted decisively against the "general" interests of the people – while declaring itself the best way of representing their interests and demands vis-à-vis them – democracy still has a strong appeal for the proletariat: it is a superstition that will die hard. All the more reason why communists worthy of the name should fight against it at all levels, from the theoretical, programmatic and ideological to the political and tactical.

THE CLASS PARTY, EVEN FOR ITS INTERNAL LIFE, DRAWS A LESSON FROM HISTORY: IT EXCLUDES THE USE OF THE DEMOCRATIC MECHANISM.

Why should the revolutionary communist party, after the countless demonstrations provided by the history of proletarian struggles and revolutionary struggle, use the democratic mechanism, even if only from the organizational point of view?

It is well known that the parties that joined the Communist International adopted the organizational formula of *democratic centralism*. This basically meant that the members of the Communist Party were bound to be governed by the directives issued by the *central* organs and to apply them in all foreseen situations using the methods defined centrally, but these directives were based on the positions, programs, resolutions, theses which were discussed at appropriate congresses and on which the participants (delegates of all the adhering parties) were called to *vote*. The majority formally passed

to adopt such a position, such a thesis, such a resolution, etc., and nothing was to be changed until the next congress. Democratic centralism was undoubtedly a step forward compared to the previously existing "separation of powers" where, for example, the parliamentary group had its autonomy over the decisions of the central organs of the socialist party, as did the socialist leaders in the trade unions. By placing emphasis on the substantive *centralism*, the autonomous mode of action of the different parts of the party, that is, autonomy which in fact represented opportunist attitudes, positions and practices, was decisively cut off. Bourgeois democracy had become the axis around which the decisions and powers of the socialist parties revolved, to the extent that it was often the parliamentary group that dictated the line to be followed by the party. What remained was the adjective *democratic*, derived from the earlier history of the proletarian and socialist movement, by which was meant to emphasize the practice of the involvement and participation of all party comrades in all party activities, including the drafting of resolutions, theses, etc., and ultimately the voting on them. However, the ambiguity of the term "democratic" did not disappear, even though the meaning that the communists attributed to it at the time was not to mystify about the fictitious equality between leaders and rank-and-file, between governing bodies and the basic organizations, but precisely to emphasize that no party comrade was prevented, in principle or by the statutes, from carrying out any activity within the party. Through democratic functioning, however, the tendency to set thesis against thesis, proposal against proposal, opinion against opinion, was constantly returning to the communist party, instilling a practice which proved to be fundamentally anti-centralist, through which the directives issued by the central organs could be constantly questioned to such an extent that a "personally justified" reason for not applying them was found; from this point of view, that democratic "participation", that democratic "involvement", instead of helping to unify and make the party structure united in thought and action, was a fictitious, ridiculous imitation of it. In this way the party inevitably lost the unity of its action and unified vision and opened itself up to the formation of factions, currents, "parties" within the party. Instead of constituting a firm, decisive, unambiguous, compact, reliable, secure leadership of the revolutionary proletarian movement, aimed at the main historical goal of revolutionary preparation and management, it could be transformed – imperceptibly at first and then more and more evidently – into a "bourgeois" party, at the service not of the proletarian revolution but of democracy, thus at the service of the ruling bourgeoisie.

Just as we attribute no intrinsic virtue to the forms of organization and representation of the immediate and mass proletarian organizations, so we attribute no intrinsic virtue to certain forms of party organization. If the Marxist thesis that the revolution is not a problem of forms of organization, but a problem of content ("*the movement and action of revolutionary forces in an unending process*", as we can read in A. Bordiga's

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1922 essay *The Democratic Principle*) is valid, this is also true for the communist party, whose historical aim is to prepare, to lead the proletarian revolution to the final and international victory over capitalism and bourgeois classes. Even for the class political party, the problem is primarily one of content, that is, the theory and program from which the political, tactical and organizational lines are derived. "*The party may or may not be suited to its task of leading the revolutionary action of a class; it is not any political party but a precise one, namely the communist party, that can assume this task, and not even the communist party is immune to the numerous dangers of degeneration and dissolution*" – wrote Bordiga in the article now referred to, taking care, however, to clarify at once that "*what makes the party equal to its task is not its statutes or mere internal organizational measures. It is the positive characteristics which develop within the party because it participates in the struggle as an organization possessing a single orientation which derives from its conception of the historical process, from a fundamental program which has been translated into a collective consciousness and at the same time from a secure organizational discipline*" (26). It is decisively reiterated that the criteria of organization – all the more so the criteria of internal organization – are not valid in themselves but insofar as they are brought into line with the objectives of the party's revolutionary struggle. The aims of the communist party's revolutionary struggle do not include the defense, preservation or eventual improvement (assuming, without admitting, that this can be achieved) of the methods and mechanisms of democracy; on the contrary, they include the destruction of bourgeois democracy with all its apparatuses and its replacement not by the so-called proletarian democracy, but by the declared and open formation of the proletarian state, i.e., a class state that organizes the proletarian class against all other classes that must be stripped of their economic, political and social privileges. *The proletarian state is a real historical force which adapts itself to the goal it pursues, that is, to the necessities which gave birth to it* (cf. *The Democratic Principle*, op. cit.), and for this reason, in the long process of proletarian dictatorship, revolutionary struggle and war against the bourgeois classes worldwide, "*at certain moments its impulses may come from either broad mass consultations or from the action of very restricted executive organs endowed with full powers. What is essential is to give this organization of proletarian power the means and weapons to destroy bourgeois economic privilege and the political and military resistance of the bourgeoisie, in a way that prepares for the subsequent disappearance of classes themselves, and for the more and more profound modifications of the tasks and structure of the proletarian state*".

The proletarian state, as the Russian experience demonstrates in a wealth of edifying details, continues the text now cited, "*imposes on the proletarian state constitutional characteristics which are in open contradiction to the canons of bourgeois democracy. Supporters of bourgeois democracy howl about the*

violation of liberties, whereas it is only a matter of unmasking the philistine prejudices which have always allowed demagogues to ensure power to the privileged". In the revolutionary perspective of Marxism, the proletarian state will wither away and make way for the organs of administration and organization of society that will no longer be divided into antagonistic classes but will be of the human species. And the communist party, which is the sole and exclusive guide of the proletarian dictatorship, and therefore of the proletarian state, will have to be the factor most in accord with the revolutionary ends of the struggle between the classes, which, taken to its very end, can only place before history the decisive denouement: either capitalism or communism, either capitalist and bourgeois dictatorship or proletarian and communist dictatorship. But the accordance with the revolutionary ends does not lie in bourgeois democracy, neither in its principles nor in its practical and organizational mechanisms: it lies in the continuity of the revolutionary struggle until the world and final victory over capitalism and all the privileged classes who derive privileges and benefits from capitalism and bourgeois regimes to the detriment of the proletarian and unprivileged classes of the world.

The Italian Communist Left, from its beginnings, has fought a consistent Marxist battle against democracy "in general" and against democratic functioning in particular, thus finding itself in complete agreement with Lenin, who – in *What is to be done?* in 1903 – stated that the bourgeois regime, even the most democratic one, does neither overcome nor abrogate the regime of the wage-exploitation of the proletariat, but confirms it, mystifying it under the guise of the "participation" of the people, and therefore of the proletariat that constitutes its majority, through regularly held democratic elections.

The development of the workers' movement and its class struggle, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, has shown that bourgeois democracy and its practice have neither resolved the social contradictions of capitalism nor overcome the class antagonisms between the ruling bourgeoisie and the dominated proletariat. The rate of exploitation of wage labor has increased over time, the gap between the accumulation of wealth on the one hand and sinking into poverty on the other has widened more and more, inexorably confirming the Marxist theory of growing misery. The democratic system is therefore ineffective with respect to the ruthless economic laws of capitalism: the law of value cannot be tamed by civil codes or texts of constitutions, even the most democratic ones. Democ-

(26) Cf. the text "*The Democratic Principle*", by A. Bordiga, originally published in *Rassegna Comunista*, n. 18, 28 February 1922, later published in a set in volume 4 entitled "*Partito e classe*" of the series "I testi del partito comunista internazionale"; the quotations are from *Communist Program*, n. 7, 1981, page 58.

racy masks, as a cloak, the true face of capitalism, its actual economic and social dictatorship. And there is perhaps nothing better to demonstrate that this economic and social dictatorship determines its own development and tends towards ever greater concentration and centralization of capital than the emergence of economic crises into which the capitalist mode of production inevitably and periodically plunges; tendency that obviously conditions the whole of society and the social relations between the classes, and hence the political administration of bourgeois society, leading it towards an authoritarian as well as centralist regime. Fascism is the most obvious example of this tendency, which in fact, precisely because it expresses the profound economic tendencies of capitalism at the political level, constitutes a phase in the political development of the bourgeois class from which the latter can no longer retreat. At the formal level, the series of obligations and imposed alternatives can also be represented by a series of so-called democratic "rights" – as was the case with the military collapse of the fascist regimes during the Second World War – but at the substantive level the centralist, authoritarian, "fascist" phase has not changed; on the contrary, it has become increasingly accentuated, as evidenced by inter-state relations, for example, between the United States and its European "allies" with respect to the recent wars in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The democratic mechanism was re-established after the fall of fascism, but in a society which had already developed its imperialism to a large extent economically, and in which, therefore, a strong contradiction between the external facade of unrealized and unrealizable democracy and the internal imperialist and dictatorial content of its economy was increasingly apparent. The network of interests that characterizes the bourgeois ruling classes is merely the representation of the movements of capitals at the level of the economy, especially in its financial sphere. In such movements, stronger capital devours weaker capital, the concentration of capitals defeats the fragmentation of capitals in the competitive struggle, large trusts dominate the international market and condition the "life" of smaller capitals. At the political level, such movements are expressed by parties and states whose aim is to defend the interests of these extremely concentrated capitals, to facilitate their penetration into the most diverse markets, to extend their reach and to enlarge their size. The clash of interests on the world market is *natural* for capital, and this clash takes place at all levels, although not necessarily simultaneously: at the economic and financial level, at the diplomatic level, at the political and military level. The more intense the clash, the more the concentration of forces is necessary; the greater the representation on the world market, the more the states prepare, including by breaking old alliances and forging new ones, ready to be broken again when the balance of power changes between the big trusts and the big states, to defend the network of interests of which they are the expression.

The democratic mechanism becomes a hindrance

at this level of competitive struggle. It is not at all a coincidence that for decades, fundamental decisions in both economics and politics have been taken not in parliaments but in the boardrooms of the so-called "strong powers". Democracy, were it not for the problem of the bourgeoisie to influence, direct and organize the social forces of the proletariat according to its ruling class interests, would be of no use, and the bourgeoisie itself would quietly throw it in the rubbish.

The bourgeois ruling class, however, cannot lose sight of the proletariat, because the proletariat has shown in its long class history that it is capable of opposing the bourgeois classes throughout the world, not only with *brute force*, the force of the social mass in movement, which tends to explode when a certain degree of pressure is exceeded, but also with the force of a political program derived from a scientific theory – Marxism – capable of interpreting the social reality of the human organizations, and to foresee the historical course of the development of bourgeois society by positioning the proletariat as the modern social class at the centre of the historical movement of social classes fighting among themselves for a completely different social organization from those that had assumed the characteristics of class societies, in which progress, further development, could only be a society divided into classes with an increasingly modern, simplified, economically more powerful and socially more universal mode of production.

In fact, the power of the revolutionary theory of Marxism lies not only in its materialist, historical and dialectical interpretation of the history of human societies: at the same time it is a revolutionary guidance for general and fundamental change of society. It is precisely this force that the bourgeois classes have had to confront in various historical situations, but essentially as part of one great historical passage from capitalist and bourgeois society as the last class-divided society to communist society as the community of the human species, and somehow to become familiar with it. From 1848 and 1871 in Europe to 1905 in Russia and 1917–1921 worldwide, the bourgeois classes were able to test – scared to death – what historical revolutionary force the proletarian class is endowed with. Naturally they resorted to defense, using all their economic and military strength, their class acumen and all their experience of social and political domination to prevent the revolutionary proletariat from completing the revolutionary process it had begun. And up to now they have recorded triumphs, as in the case of the old aristocratic and feudal ruling classes, in the struggles against the revolutionary bourgeois classes that began their historical march in 1640 with Cromwell, to be definitively ended more than two hundred years later in Europe in 1871.

We do not know whether even the final revolutionary victory over the old and decaying capitalist society will take more than two hundred years from 1848, the year in which history first confronted modern society with its inevitable revolutionary outcome: the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; after the proletariat made a decisive contribution to the revolutionary victory of

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the bourgeois classes over the old feudal classes, and in which the historical unfolding suddenly gave birth to the Marxist theory of the proletarian revolution as the only revolution capable of moving social organization from the last class-divided society (bourgeois society) to the classless society (communist society), from the prehistory of human society to the actual history of human society. We know that capitalist society has sealed its historical fate, for it has already long been unable to ensure that social organization moves forward. From an economic point of view, capitalism no longer has any chance of developing the social life except under the conditions of sharpening the difference between the minority groups of capitalists, who concentrate in their hands the vast majority of economic, financial and natural resources, and the vast majority of people who instead live in poverty, starvation, in the daily uncertainty of life; a difference which only intensifies the class antagonism between the ruling bourgeois classes and the dominated classes, especially the proletariat. From a political point of view, capitalism has created an endless series of governmental "solutions", alliances, counter-maneuvers, in order to reconcile the interests of the accumulation and valorization of capital with the interests of the survival of the majority of the human population; these "solutions" are always inexorably directed towards the preservation and defense of the political and social domination of the bourgeois classes. The bourgeoisie has been and is capable of spawning political parties of all kinds, ready to represent the interests of even very small groups, thereby responding to the law of competition that dominates social life under capitalism; but as the development of capitalist competition has demonstrated, the economic tendency towards concentration and centralization has repercussions on the political level as well, compelling the bourgeoisie to form centralist, "single", authoritarian parties, while having to retain the symbols, practices and apparatuses of democracy almost exclusively for the purpose of deceiving the broad masses.

As for the proletarian and communist party, representing in bourgeois society the revolutionary struggle for the definitive overthrow of bourgeois political power and the economic and social transformation of the whole of society, it corresponds in a certain sense to a kind of general staff of the proletarian revolution, and for that very reason it cannot be organized otherwise but with a pyramidal, centralist structure, whose efficiency is given by the coherence of its actions and its organization with the ends of the revolutionary communist program. Unlike the army, of course, the "general staff-party" is not only an effective instrument of the proletarian revolution, but it is at the same time the guide and the representation of the historical ends, as well as an organization which presupposes the voluntary and conscious adherence of its militants. In this perspective, historically, the proletarian party, even in its formal organization, could not but tend towards the most organic centralization, since its objectives are not conditioned by competing and conflicting interest groups, but by the sole classist outcome, which is the

overthrow of bourgeois power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is as much authoritarian, centralist and strictly disciplined as it can be. Can such a party with these tasks depend in its decisions, in its actions, in its daily practice, on technical mechanisms such as democratic consultations? No, since technical mechanisms do not determine the rightness or wrongness of the party's political program, but are used and applicable in accordance with the content of the political program and the ends of party activity. When, in 1921, the Italian Communist Left, through Amadeo Bordiga, developed its critique of the model of democratic centralism – which was the organizing principle of the communist parties at the time – it focused as the focal point of the issue not the problem of organization, but the problem of the content, and thus of the continuity of party activity in space and time. In the article, which we have already quoted many times, we indeed read the following: "*The democratic criterion has been for us so far a material and incidental factor in the construction of our internal organization and the formulation of our party statutes; it is not an indispensable platform for them. Therefore we will not raise the organizational formula known as 'democratic centralism' to the level of a principle. Democracy cannot be a principle for us. Centralism is indisputably one, since the essential characteristics of party organization must be unity of structure and action. The term **centralism** is sufficient to express the continuity of party structure in space; in order to introduce the essential idea of continuity in time, the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances towards the same goal, and in order to combine these two essential ideas of unity in the same formula, we would propose that the communist party base its organization on '**organic centralism**'.*" The fact that this theme had already been raised in 1921, thus in the most intense period of the revolutionary struggle, which at that time could count on the victorious proletarian and communist power in Russia and the foundation of the Communist International, demonstrates that lessons, which the class party is bound to draw from history and from the course of the struggle between the classes are much more fruitful and stable in the long run if their foundations lie in the most fertile terrain of the living revolutionary struggle, in the period of the peak of historical development. It has never been a question of terminology, and it has never been a question of finding a liking for a formula: no party of that time, and no force that declared itself communist later on, has been able to achieve such dialectical clarity up to the present day as the Italian Communist Left has. The goal towards which the party aims, the direction in which it proceeds, the unity of structure and actions, these are the basic elements for deriving the political formulas that shape the action and activity of the class party in a compact way.

The democratic mechanism was justified at that time not only with respect to the need to involve the entire membership of the party down to the last militant in all different situations, but also with respect

to the emergence of divergences, of different points of view, and thus of its organized formation. In reality, as it happens in the political life of all bourgeois parties, democratic mechanisms are ineffective in preventing possible divergences: they merely register them and set up their expression, their debate and their "management" in an attempt to prevent the disintegration of the party organization whenever divergent points of view arise within it. In the Theses of the Left at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy, in Lyon in 1926, the Left responded to the problem of factionalism and opportunist danger within the party with the statement: "*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 factionist 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.*" (27)

In the balance-sheet which we have made of the crises of our yesterday's party, we have pointed out that all the different tendencies which clashed in the various internal party crises had one common characteristic, that of an exaggeration of certain formalisms or a denial of their function and usefulness. Another mistake here would be to believe that the correct position is "in the middle", when on the contrary the problem is again primarily political. Formal discipline arises in respect of the party's central directives not because they come into the internal party network from a central body, but because they are politically consistent with the program and the political and tactical line that the party has given itself and that, by joining the party, every militant accepts and shares. The fact that directives need to be issued by the party centre responds first and foremost to the political need for unity of action and movement of the party; and unity of action and movement is better ensured by a central body than by many territorially dispersed and "independent" diverse bodies. However, since we do not

ascribe to certain party mechanisms or structures a kind of "intrinsic virtue", we can declare without fear of being accused of centralism in words and anti-centralism in deeds that for us not even the central organ of the party as such is endowed with intrinsic virtue, and that the discipline which arises towards it is in any case always derived from a conscious and voluntary political acceptance of the party's strategies-guidance. The exaggeration of formalisms denotes the presence of a tendency to use organizational and disciplinary means in an attempt to solve political problems. There are formalisms that are never adopted in the party, and the very fact of their adoption automatically puts those who use them out of the party. One example: the recourse to the courts made by the leaders of the new *Il Programma Comunista* in order to regain control of the party newspaper was a technical expedient by which they purposed to be recognized once again as the "true" and "authentic" political heirs of the Italian Communist Left; an expedient that in any case should never – not even exceptionally – be used, even in the absence of an unresolved debate and political struggle over the party's political and tactical lines. There are formalisms whose overuse demonstrates that there is a disruption in the party of the organizational methods that allow for a consistent and correct party activity at different levels and in different areas. The method of disciplinary sanctions, striking off from membership and expulsion – adopted on a few occasions in the yesterday's party, particularly after the death of Amadeo Bordiga – is itself an exceptional method, but "*if disciplinary crises multiply to the point that they become the rule*", as has happened in the years from 1923 onwards in the parties and in the International, and as it happened with due historical proportions in our yesterday's party from 1979 to 1982, "*this means that something is not right in the general running of the party, and that the problem has to be studied*" (28). And this very way of posing the problem already shows that there are no constitutive norms or statutes in the party whose application will "solve" the internal crises; the prevention of deviations and degenerations cannot be other than political, based on the constant recall of the theoretical and programmatic points on which the class party is founded, and on the historical and political balance

(27) Cf. "*Theses Project Presented by the Left to the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy – Lyon Theses*", 1926, in *Communist Program*, n. 9, February 2022, point 5 (Discipline and Fractions) of the second chapter "International Questions", p. 35–36.

(28) Cf. the "*Theses on the Historical Task, Action and Structure of the World Communist Party, according to the positions that have been the historical patrimony of the Communist Left for over half a century*", also called "Theses of Naples", delivered at the General Meeting of the Party in Naples on 17–18 July 1965, in *Communist Program* n.10, September 2024.

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sheet that the party has made of revolutions and counter-revolutions. There are no other guarantees, let alone those that are often demanded under the influence of opportunism with the aim of spreading internal democracy in the party whereby the decision on whether to follow one path or another is shifted to the opinion of rank-and-file militants (and their numerical representation).

We do not attribute *"the degeneration which took place in the Communist Party to the fact that the assemblies and congresses of the militants had little voice with respect to the initiatives taken by the center"*, although we recognize that *"at many historical turning points we have seen the rank and file smothered by the center for counter-revolutionary purposes. To this end even the instruments of the state machine, including the most brutal, have been employed"* (29), as was the case, for example, during the Stalin era. *"But all this"* – the quoted party text continues – *"is not the origin of the degeneration of the party but an inevitable manifestation of it, a sign that the party has yielded to counter-revolutionary influences"*. Militants affiliate themselves to the party individually, and thus express their will to throw their energies and abilities into the service of the overall activity of the party. With this commitment, discipline towards the central organs of the party is expected, a discipline that is not exclusively formal but inherently political, hence with full consciousness. In the quoted text we can again read another interesting passage: *"At the base of the relationship between the militant and the party there is an obligation which, in order to rid ourselves of the undesirable adjective 'contractual', we can simply call a dialectical obligation. The relationship is double and flows in two directions: from the center to the base and from the base to the center. If the action of the center goes in accordance with the good functioning of the dialectical relationship, it is met by healthy responses from the base."*

On the other hand, organizational discipline is not a secondary cause, not least because each militant, whether or not he has central responsibilities, does not have the right to decide on his own whether, when and in what form he will apply the party's directives. Let us proceed again with the quoted text: *"The celebrated problem of discipline thus consists in establishing a system of limits for the base which is the proper reflection of the limits set for the action of the leadership. Consequently we have always maintained that the leadership must not have the right, in the great turning points in the political situation, to discover, invent and impose pretended new principles, new formulations and new guidelines for the action of the party. These sudden shifts make up the history of opportunism. When such a crisis occurs (and this can happen precisely because the party is not an immediate and automatic organization) it is followed by an internal struggle, the formation of tendencies, and splits. In such a case these are useful developments, just as a fever, for freeing an organism of disease. Nevertheless, 'constitutionally' they cannot be accept-*

ed, encouraged or tolerated."

The party, on the other hand, has every interest in preparing itself in advance against possible deviations and degenerations, and if it cannot do so by constitutive norms or statutes, by specific regulations or rules, then how?

As usual, there are political conditions deriving from the balance sheet of the experiences of the proletarian and revolutionary struggle of so many decades, of which *"the research, the defense and the realization must be the constant task for our movement"*. The main political conditions, proceeding again from some of our basic texts, can be summarized as follows (30):

1) The party must defend and affirm the utmost clarity and continuity in the communist doctrine as it has been gradually unfolded in the course of its application to historical development, and must not allow proclamations of principles which are even partially at variance with its theoretical foundations. The party therefore prohibits personal freedom to develop and elaborate new schemes and interpretations of the contemporary social world, prohibits personal freedom to produce analyses, critiques, and perspectives even for the most intellectually prepared of its adherents, and defends the immutability of theory, which is not a phenomenon of blind faith, but the content of the science of the proletarian class, constructed on the basis of centuries of material, not on the basis of the ideas of men, but on the basis of the force of material facts which are reflected in the historical consciousness of a revolutionary class and crystallized in its party.

2) The party must, in every historical situation, openly proclaim the full content of its program as regards the economic, social and political aspects of its implementation, and especially as regards the question of power, its conquest by armed force and its exercise by dictatorship.

3) The party must implement a strict organizational rigor in the sense that it would not allow itself to grow through compromises with groups or clusters, or worse still, would engage in wheeling and dealing through concessions to supposed leaders and leading figures

(29) Cf. the text *"Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle"* by Amadeo Bordiga, originally published in the review *Prometeo* in 1946–1948, then in English in the party press *Communist Program*, n. 1, 3–5, 1975, 1977–1979; the passages quoted are on p. 49 from n. 5 of *Communist Program*.

(30) The texts from which we have taken some passages are as follows: *"Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle"*, *"Revolutionary Party and Economical Action"*, *"Considerations on the Party's Organic Activity When the General Situation is Historically Unfavorable"*, all already quoted in this article.

to win new rank-and-file members.

4) The party must strive for a clear historical understanding of the antagonistic direction of the struggle. Communists claim to initiate an attack on the whole world of established orders and traditions, they know that they constitute a danger to all the privileged, and they call on the masses to fight offensively, not defensively, against the alleged danger of losing vaunted advantages and progress won in the capitalist world. Communists do not cede and put their party at the service of defending causes that are foreign to them and non-proletarian goals such as freedom, homeland, democracy and other such lies.

5) The communists are renouncing the whole range of tactical expedients which tend to be resorted to under the pretext of accelerating the process of ideological adhesion of broad layers of the masses around the revolutionary program. Such expedient means are political compromises, alliances with other parties, united front, all sorts of verbal turns of phrase about the state used as a substitute for the dictatorship of the proletariat – e.g., workers' and peasants' government, peoples' government, progressive democracy. Communists have historically seen the application of such tactical means as one of the main conditions for the dissolution of the proletarian movement and the Soviet communist regime, and regard those who deplore the opportunist character of the Stalinist movement and at the same time advocate these tactical means as more dangerous enemies than the Stalinists themselves.

6) The organizational base of the communist party is territorial units, not enterprise-based cells, groups or similar sectoral bodies. In the territorial grouping, workers of all professions and employees of all kinds of bosses are equated from the beginning, and with them all other militants from social groups which are not strictly proletarian and which the party openly recognizes as its adherents, and as such it must in any case accept them and, if necessary, keep them in greater "quarantine" than it eventually charges them with organizational functions.

7) The Communist Left's conception of party organization replaces the silly majority criterion mimicking bourgeois democracy with a dialectical criterion at a much higher level that makes everything depend on the militants' and leaders' solid link to the commitment to strict continuity of theory, program and tactics.

8) The party considers the unions, or rather the economic associations of the proletariat, as an indispensable organ for the mobilization of the class at the political and revolutionary level, which is carried out with the presence and penetration of the Communist Party in the class economic organizations. In these difficult stages which the formation of economic associations entails, the associations which prove to be

suitable for the work of the party are those which comprise only proletarians and which join them spontaneously, without being obliged to profess given religious and social political views. This character is lost in those organizations that are strictly ideologically profiled and compulsory or those that have become an integral part of the state apparatus (as, in fact, today's class-collaborationist trade unions).

9) The party will never adopt the method of forming partial economic organizations comprising only those workers who accept the principles and direction of the Communist Party. However, the party is unreservedly conscious that not only the situation prior to the insurrectionary struggle, but also any phase of decisive growth of the party's influence among the masses cannot take shape without the formation of a layer of organizations between it and the class which have immediate economic objectives and in which a large number of people participate, and within which there is a network emanating from the party (communist union nuclei, groups and fractions).

10) The task of the party in unfavorable periods and in periods of passivity of the proletarian class is to foresee for the immediate struggle the forms and to encourage the formation of organizations with economic purpose, which in the future may take on completely new aspects, following such well-known examples as the trade league, industrial union, works council, etc. The party always encourages forms of organization that facilitate contact and common action between workers of different localities and professions and rejects closed forms.

11) Since the character of the degeneration of society as a whole has had and has its greatest manifestation in the falsification and destruction of the theory and the correct doctrine, it is obvious that for the present small party the restoration and defense of the meaning of the doctrine's principles is still of the highest priority; unfortunately, the generally favorable situation in which Lenin did so after the catastrophe of the First World War is lacking. But even so, for this reason we do not erect a barrier between theory and practical action, for to do so would at a certain level destroy ourselves and all our principled foundations. We therefore claim all the forms of activity characteristic of the favorable periods, in so far as the real relations of forces permit, and the party therefore loses no opportunity to enter every rift, every breach, in the full knowledge that there will be no resumption of the class until this sector of society has greatly strengthened and become dominant.

12) Parliamentarism is gradually losing its significance in the wake of the development of the capitalist state, which is manifestly assuming the form of dictatorship that Marxism pointed out from the very beginning. Even the apparent survivals of the elective parliamentary institutions of the traditional bourgeoisie are increasingly fading away, remaining mere phrase-

What distinguishes

ology and, in moments of social crisis, underlining the dictatorial form of the state as the capitalism's last resort against which the violence of the revolutionary proletariat must be exercised. Thus, under the prevailing state of affairs and the current power relations, the party disregards democratic elections of all kinds and does not carry out its activity in this field. In the face of democratic elections, therefore, the party manifests this non-activity in the electoral and parliamentary field in the form of revolutionary abstentionism, i.e., it devotes its energies to the general activity of study, propaganda, agitation and proselytism in the context of the anti-capitalist struggle, and hence against democracy and its mechanisms of deception and delusion of proletarian minds, and for the classist orientation of the proletariat.

13) There are no ready-made recipes to accelerate the resumption of the class struggle. There are no maneuvers and stratagems to make the proletarians listen to the voice of the class; such maneuvers and stratagems would, in fact, make the party appear not as it really is, but would mean a distortion of its function, to the detriment and prejudice of the effective resumption of the revolutionary movement, which is based on real maturity of facts and the correspondingly adequate setting up of the party, for which it can only be equipped by the intransigence of its doctrine and politics.

* * *

Many more interesting points could still be made, but also for reasons of length we will postpone them

for later occasions to revisit the issues that the new text in the header of our press refers to.

It is necessary, and we point this out, even though it is evidently self-evident, to refer to the work of balancing the crises that we have carried out over all these years, and in particular to certain texts, such as the following articles, published in 1981–1982 in *Il Programma Comunista*: "La capacità del partito di interrogarsi sulla strada percorsa, presupposto per andare avanti sulla strada della rivoluzione proletaria" (General Meeting November 1981, n. 10, 11 a 12 from 1981), "Le questioni poste dalla crisi del nostro partito" (GM October 1982, n. 20 from 1982); and published in the years 1985–1987 in *Il Comunista*: "Propaganda comunista, fattore essenziale della preparazione rivoluzionaria" and "In difesa del programma comunista" (n. 2, April 1985), "Punti sulla questione della lotta immediata e degli organismi proletari indipendenti" (n. 3–4, 5 and 6, July–December 1985), "Che cosa significa fare il bilancio della crisi di partito?" (n. 6, November 1986), "La riconquista del patrimonio teorico e politico della Sinistra comunista passa anche attraverso la riacquisizione della corretta prassi di partito" (n. 8, 9–10, August–December 1987), "Rapport du centre international à la Réunion général du parti", July 1982 (in *Programme Communiste*, n. 89, 1987); further: "La critica senza l'errore non nuoce nemmeno la millesima parte di quanto nuoce l'errore senza la critica" ("Il Comunista", n. 45, April 1995) and "Sulla questione della formazione del partito dopo la crisi esplosiva del 1982–84 del 'partito comunista internazionale-programma comunista', in Italia e in altri paesi" (*Il Comunista*, n. 56, 1997; 57–58, 1998; and 62, 1998). ●

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

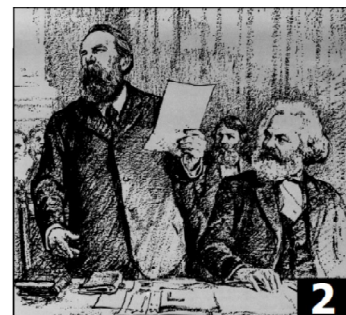
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Proletarian

International Communist Party («programme communiste»)

The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism



Revolutionary Anti-militarism (1)

*“Militarism dominates and is swallowing Europe. But this militarism also bears within itself the seed of its own destruction. Competition among the individual states forces them, on the one hand, to spend more money each year on the army and navy, artillery, etc., thus more and more hastening their financial collapse; and, on the other hand, to resort to universal compulsory military service more and more extensively, thus in the long run making the whole people familiar with the use of arms, and therefore enabling them at a given moment to make their will prevail against the warlords in command. And this moment will arrive as soon as the mass of the people—town and country workers and peasants—will have a will. At this point the armies of the princes become transformed into armies of the people; the machine refuses to work and militarism collapses by the dialectics of its own evolution... And this will mean the bursting asunder **from within** of militarism and with it of all standing armies” (1).*

From 1878, when Engels wrote the crystal-clear pages of *Anti-Dühring*, down to the present day, the imperialist bourgeoisie has increased its military expenditure a hundredfold, so that it now reaches unbelievable proportions, and the plague of militarism, which at the end of the last century was confined solely to Europe, has by now seized the entire world. Lenin wrote that imperialism by its very nature tends to militarise the whole of society; and in periods of the sharpest economic and social crisis this phenomenon reaches its peak. Today, as the world once again finds itself on the brink of a global conflict – the only real “solution” that allows the bourgeoisie to emerge from the crisis and revive that infernal cycle of the production and reproduction of capital, which is, after all, the sole *raison d’être* of the existing mode of production – militarism grows more acute by the day and rapidly asserts its dominance over the entire economic and social structure of all countries.

Thus once again the alternative is placed before the world proletariat: either *war or revolution* – which once more confirms what communism has always maintained: that capitalism, both in its young revolutionary phase and in its ageing imperialist phase, necessarily leads to war, and that the inter-war periods – that is, periods of imperialist “peace”, to be clear, dotted with dozens of local wars affecting millions of proletarians – are nothing other than periods of preparation for ever more colossal clashes (2).

But imperialism will explode only from within – this is the lesson handed down to us by Marx, Engels and the glorious October Revolution: it is the very machinery of imperialism that must grind to a halt under the action of proletarians rising up against the intolerable effects of militarism, who refuse to kill one another

merely because they wear different uniforms. And it is the task of the party of the world revolution to incite and lead the struggle to stop the imperialist war in the only way it can be stopped – that is, by transforming it into a civil war.

For the party to fulfil this task, it is necessary that it wages an unremitting struggle against all forms of opportunism, old and new, “right” and “left”, which inevitably strive to place or keep the proletariat in the service of the bourgeoisie, the nation, the state, the fatherland, democracy, and thus scrupulously avoid calling on it to fight for its own interests, for its final aim: the socialist revolution. In short, the party must “*arm the proletariat with the desire to arm itself*”. And it is in this perspective that one must view this work devoted to revolutionary anti-militarism, to the propaganda and agitation that the revolutionary party, relying on its theory and on the lessons of more than a century, must conduct *within the bourgeois army*, that is, within the anti-proletarian organisation par excellence.

1848–1871

In June 1848 the Parisian proletarians made their first attempt to “storm the heavens”; the bourgeoisie’s response was immediate: however hesitantly and cowardly it had waged the struggle against the remnants of the old world, the bourgeoisie proved all the

(1) Engels Friedrich, *Anti-Dühring (Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science)*, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 25, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 158.

(2) It should be recalled that what the communists have always denied, *in principle*, is not the possibility of preventing the imperialist war as such, but the possibility of preventing it by the peaceful means propagated by the bourgeoisie itself and by the reformists. In 1956 we wrote in *Dialogue with the Dead (Dialogato coi Morti)*: “We answer the thesis of the 20th Congress on the present avoidability of war not by claiming that war itself is absolutely *inevitable*, but by stating that it cannot be prevented by a vaguely ideological movement of proletarians and poor middle layers, a movement incapable of offering serious resistance and which a war would crush like a bulldozer. **General war is therefore historically avoidable, but only on condition that it is opposed by a movement of the pure wage-earning class, and that this movement does not await its outbreak in order to substitute for it peace, but in order to overthrow, together with the war in its infancy, the old, infamous capitalism.**”

Revolutionary Anti-militarism

more determined and merciless in suppressing the proletariat. Engels, analysing the final battle, notes that the clash could have had a different outcome had it been possible to carry out revolutionary activity within the bourgeois army. “*For four days 40,000 of them opposed forces four times their strength, and were within a hairbreadth of victory. They almost succeeded in gaining a footing in the centre of Paris, taking the Hôtel de Ville, forming a Provisional Government and doubling their number not only by people from the captured parts of the city joining them but also from the ranks of the mobile guard, who at that time needed but a slight impetus to make them go over to their side*” (3). Engels would repeat this same idea on several other occasions, especially in his so-called military writings.

In the years following the European revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels repeatedly returned to the question of armies and their reorganisation. On the one hand, it was a matter of exposing the futility of the sermons about disarmament, about peace and about the possibility of imposing it on the bourgeois states, since wars are a direct consequence of the capitalist mode of production, and therefore, as long as capitalism exists, war will not be eliminated; on the other hand, of showing how the proletariat can and must, for its revolution – *against* all the designs of the bourgeoisie – make use of the *objective* fact that the type of army based on universal conscription continually increases the number of workers trained in the handling of weapons and thus, from a military standpoint, technically prepared to confront the enemy class, and that such an army, composed in its overwhelming majority of proletarians, is in any case a double-edged sword, extremely dangerous for the ruling class at least in a pre-revolutionary period – especially if, in earlier phases, a skilful and intense work of infiltration and subversive propaganda has been carried out within its ranks.

“*In considering the struggle for existence and Dühring’s declamations against struggle and arms it should be emphasised that a revolutionary party must know also how to struggle... Hence the universal conscription is in our interest and should be taken advantage of by all to learn how to fight, but particularly by those whose education entitles them to acquire the training of an officer in one year’s voluntary service*” (4).

The introduction of conscription too forms part of the contradictory, dialectical and by no means linear development of the capitalist mode of production. Let us take the example of the French army. In 1818, France, which for more than twenty years had had a conscription-based army, created by the Gouvion-Saint-Cyr law a classic professional army (5). Only after the war with Prussia and the subsequent establishment and defeat of the Commune was a system of armed forces based on compulsory military service adopted. Logically speaking, on the basis of the experience of the Commune, it is not clear what immediate interest the French bourgeoisie could have had in reorganising its army: to call all citizens to arms, and therefore above all the proletarians of town and

countryside, for a longer or shorter period, means making permeable to the demands, needs and doctrine of the proletariat precisely that organism which above all others must maintain the status quo – that is, directly defend the interests of the bourgeoisie.

But it was precisely the Franco-Prussian War that closed one cycle and opened another: wars between states were replaced by wars between nations; wars between professional armies, which had touched the population of a particular nation only marginally, became *definitively* wars involving practically the whole population, and thus required mass conscription. Hence the bourgeoisie, which is theoretically interested in keeping the proletariat as far away from arms as possible for reasons of internal order, is compelled by its needs of external expansion to incorporate it *definitively* into the army, to teach it the use of the very weapons which will one day be turned against it and seal its death – which is only a further confirmation that the capitalist mode of production, like every other mode of production, through its own development generates the forces that determine its downfall.

THE CURRENT FALSE ALTERNATIVE : A PROFESSIONAL ARMY OR A CONSCRIPTION-BASED ARMY?

There is no shortage of those today who claim that the entire theoretical conception of Marxism concerning the army and war — and the resulting struggle which the communists waged against the army and within it — is no longer valid at all. The supposed reason is that professional armies would today, as a general tendency, be preferred by the warlords over armies based on conscription.

However, this is a false alternative. In reality, it is utterly inconceivable today that a world war could be fought by professional armies alone: this would mean a return to feudal wars, in which two armies confronted one another — literally — face to face in a very limited corner of the world, and the army that first showed its back to the enemy lost. Feudal war aimed essentially at defending the still extremely limited development of the productive forces. Imperialist war, on the contrary, owing to the enormous development of the productive forces, aims at the conquest of ever new markets for its commodities — which is also a

(3) Engels Friedrich, *The June Revolution, The Course of the Paris Uprising*, 1848, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 7, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 164.

(4) Engels Friedrich, *From Engels’ Preparatory Writings for Anti-Dühring*, Part Two, Ch. III, *The Party and Military Training*, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 25, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 609.

(5) Despite having a professional army, France was forced – since voluntary enlistment did not supply the required number of recruits – to introduce a limited form of compulsory conscription, which concerned about 40,000 men selected from the annual class subject to the call-up.

means of resolving the problems of overproduction typical of senile capitalism through the massive destruction of dead and living labour. To suppose, therefore, that modern wars can be waged solely with limited professional armies is to believe that imperialism can reduce its contradictions, that the various imperialisms can soften, if not indeed resolve, their mutual rivalry without having to resort to armed conflict and without making use of the military superiority afforded by the participation of the whole population in the direct clash. In other words, it means a return to Kautsky's positions on super-imperialism, which have been decisively refuted by the dialectical development of the present mode of production.

Something quite different is the creation, on the part of the bourgeoisie, of special units composed exclusively of mercenaries, which do not serve only in the event of an inter-imperialist conflict but above all for the maintenance of order and for counter-revolutionary repression within the individual countries. It is no accident that in periods when the thermometer of the class struggle is rising – and today we are seeing its first indications – there is a marked proliferation of precisely these special units. It is evident that the proletariat will find it very difficult to break up these formations from within, and will therefore have to confront them on a purely military level: at least in the most advanced capitalist countries, the revolution and the definitive establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat will certainly be preceded by a long and bloody civil war, and this will set against one another, on one side, the armed ranks of the proletariat led by its own party and – on the opposite side of the front – among the other instruments of bourgeois preservation, various infamous Freikorps, mobilised to suppress it.

With the year 1871, the cycle of the bourgeoisie's progressive wars comes definitively to a close for Europe, and revolutionary Marxism finds itself on the terrain of exclusively proletarian struggles against the bourgeoisie. *“That after the most tremendous war of modern times, the conquering and the conquered hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariat—this unparalleled event does indicate, not, as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society upheaving, but the crumbling into dust of bourgeois society. The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out into civil war. Class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national Governments are one as against the proletariat!”* (6).

After the phase of wars for national consolidation there follows a long period which, for the sake of simplicity, we have called the “idyllic interlude of the capitalist world”, and which lasts until 1914, that is, until the outbreak of the first world massacre. This period is characterised by the penetration of the capitalist mode of production throughout the globe and, on the military level, by the so-called Pax Britannica, a synonym for armed peace among the metropolises of capitalism and for continuous war against the

coloured peoples. And it is precisely in this period that militarism becomes the supporting axis of the economic and social life of capitalism and increasingly performs – in addition to its external work of conquest – an internal activity, no less important, namely the struggle against the proletariat, which, now freed from all obligations towards the bourgeois revolution, emerges as a completely autonomous class, with its own party and its own programme to be carried out: the destruction of the capitalist mode of production and the establishment of the dictatorship of class, the necessary path towards communism.

Militarism, now more than aware that its historical task is to defend and enforce the fundamental law of capitalism, namely profit, intervenes with increasing frequency and growing force against every attempt, however small, by the proletariat to defend its own interests.

The army, which is today everywhere based on conscription, is thus used to sabotage strikes and to suppress proletarian demonstrations. It is enough to recall the repression against the unemployed in January 1874 in New York, the suppression of the railway workers' strikes in July 1877 in Maryland, the massive deployment of the army against the general strike of Dutch railway workers in January 1903 and against that of Hungarian railway workers in 1904, and furthermore the massacre at Fourmies on 1 May 1891, at Chalon-sur-Saône in 1899 (in France), and in Trieste in 1902 — and the list could go on indefinitely.

A special mention must be made of the young Italian bourgeoisie, which particularly distinguished itself by liberally scattering “the king's bullets” at the proletariat. Here is a summary of the major massacres that took place in Italy between June 1901 and May 1906: *Berra*, 27 June 1901, 2 dead, 10 wounded; *Patrignano*, 4 May 1902, 1 dead, 7 wounded; *Cassano*, 5 August 1902, 1 dead, 3 wounded; *Candela*, 8 September 1902, 5 dead, 11 wounded; *Giarratana*, 13 October 1902, 2 dead, 12 wounded; *Galatina*, 20 April 1903, 2 dead, 1 wounded; *Piere*, 21 May 1903, 3 dead, 1 wounded; *Torre Annunziata*, 31 August 1903, 7 dead, 10 wounded; *Cerignola*, 17 May 1904, 5 dead, 40 wounded; *Bruggera*, 4 September 1904, 3 dead, 10 wounded; *Castelluzzo*, 11 September 1904, 1 dead, 12 wounded; *Sestri Ponente*, 15 September 1904, 2 dead, 2 wounded; *Foggia*, 18 April 1905, 7 dead, 20 wounded; *S. Elpidio*, 15 May 1905, 4 dead, 2 wounded; *Grammichele*, 16 August 1905, 18 dead, 20 wounded; *Scarano*, 21 March 1906, 1 dead, 9 wounded; *Muro*, 23 March 1906, 2 dead, 4 wounded; *Turin*, 4 April 1906, 1 dead, 6 wounded; *Calmiera*, 30 April 1906, 2 dead, 3 wounded; *Cagliari*, 12 May 1906, 2 dead,

(6) Marx Karl, *The Civil War in France*, 1871, in *MECW*, Vol. 22, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 353–354. For a more detailed analysis of the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent Commune, we refer to a series of articles on the *Military Question* published in *Il programma comunista* in the 1960s, in particular nos. 3, 4, 11, 12, 13 – 1966.

Revolutionary Anti-militarism

7 wounded; *Nebida*, 21 May 1906, 1 dead, 1 wounded; *Sonnezza*, 21 May 1906, 6 dead, 6 wounded; *Benventare*, 24 May 1906, 2 dead, 2 wounded (7).

In short, over the course of five years the Italian royal army carried out a total of 23 massacres of proletarians, in which it caused the death of 78 people and injured 199. The bourgeoisie of all advanced capitalist countries, for their part, routinely make use of militarism in order to keep the working class “quiet”: “*Modern armies, when not engaged in colonial plunder, serve exclusively to defend capitalist property*” (8).

The struggle against the internal enemy is just as important for the bourgeoisie as the struggle against the external one. The army, composed in its overwhelming majority of conscripts, of workers and poor peasants in uniform, serves precisely this purpose. And the young proletarian, who for a shorter or longer period serves the “fatherland”, is prepared for this task by the incredible barracks life, through the most aberrant methods, ranging from isolation to absolute discipline and obedience. The reaction of the international workers’ movement is immediate. At the Paris Congress (1891), as at the subsequent congresses, the International emphasises the features of militarism as a necessary consequence of capitalism, the indissoluble link between capitalism and war, and once again reaffirms the necessity of the conquest of power by the proletariat and the establishment of socialism as the only guarantee of peace.

It is only at the Paris Congress of 1900 that anti-militarism becomes part of the programme and is recognised as a form of class struggle. “*Socialist parties must everywhere undertake to educate and organise the youth for the purpose of the struggle against militarism, and must carry out this task with the greatest energy.*”

Anti-militarism is thus recognised as indispensable with the same weight as the daily defence of workers’ demands: it constitutes a fundamental component of proletarian self-defence against the bourgeois state. In all the Western countries newspapers, journals and leaflets that advocate anti-militarism arise. Alongside the youth federations of the social-democratic parties, the trade unions also operate in this direction, carrying out extensive agitation, as do the anarchist movements, which have made it rather their banner.

REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-MILITARISM AND ANARCHIST ANTI-MILITARISM

We have noted that the anarchists made a banner of the anti-militarist struggle, and it must be added that they succeeded in gaining no insignificant number of followers, often even more than the Marxist parties. Anarchist anti-militarism, however, is entirely different from the Marxist one. Anarchism regards militarism as a wholly autonomous phenomenon, conceives it essentially as an “evil” *in itself*, and sees the struggle against it as a series of individual acts determined by separate conscious wills. It is therefore ready to support and theorise any individual action regardless of the real relation of forces and the objective possibilities of the proletariat, and thus

ultimately reduces all its anti-militarist activity to empty pacifist appeals against any war, instead of to concrete actions directed towards the organisation of the proletariat in an anti-capitalist sense.

Lenin, polemicising with Hervé, one of the principal representatives of anarchistically tinged anti-militarism within the socialist movement, wrote in 1907: “*The notorious Hervé, who has made such a noise in France and Europe, advocated a semi-anarchist view by naïvely suggesting that every war be ‘answered’ by a strike and an uprising. He did not understand, on the one hand, that war is a necessary product of capitalism, and that the proletariat cannot renounce participation in revolutionary wars, for such wars are possible, and have indeed occurred in capitalist societies. He did not understand, on the other hand, that the possibility of ‘answering’ a war depends on the nature of the crisis created by that war. The choice of the means of struggle depends on these conditions; moreover, the struggle must consist (and here we have the third misconception, or shallow thinking of Hervéism) not simply in replacing war by peace, but in replacing capitalism by socialism. The essential thing is not merely to prevent war, but to utilise the crisis created by war in order to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. However, underlying all these semi-anarchist absurdities of Hervéism there was one sound and practical purpose: to spur the socialist movement so that it will not be restricted to parliamentary methods of struggle alone, so that the masses will realise the need for revolutionary action in connection with the crises which war inevitably involves, so that, lastly, a more lively understanding of international labour solidarity and of the falsity of bourgeois patriotism will be spread among the masses*” (9).

Thus, in contrast to the individual rejection of the use of arms, to pacifism at all times and in all places, and to the exaltation of the individual gesture characteristic of anarchism, the socialists counterpose the scientific conception of the capitalist mode of production and of its phenomenon, militarism, which can be eradicated only together with capitalism, that is, with the final social order founded upon class division. They direct their propaganda above all towards those classes which are by their very nature hostile to militarism, namely the industrial and agricultural proletariat, without, however, neglecting propaganda addressed to the small peasants and, in general, to the petty bourgeoisie; they regard the anti-militarist struggle not as an individual struggle but as a class struggle, and therefore recognise that individual acts of revolt—although they are not to be condemned a priori, since they are symptoms of social instability or courageous

(7) *Le mouvement socialiste*, May–June and August–September 1906. (Own translation).

(8) Lafargue Paul, in *L’Humanité*, October 9, 1906. (Own translation).

(9) Lenin V. I., *The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart*, 1907, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 13, Progress Publishers, 1978, Moscow, p. 79–80.

acts of refusal—cannot, nevertheless, be theoretically elevated to the status of means for abolishing militarism. The instrument with which the Marxists wage their struggle against capitalism in all its forms is the revolutionary party, the long revolutionary preparation: even such slogans as the general strike against war or the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war carry full weight only if, on the one hand, real situations of the disintegration of militarism exist, and, on the other, there stands behind them a revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat against the bourgeois state.

In his attacks on anarchism, Lenin spares not even that parliamentary, legalist and reformist socialism which holds that “*the vast economic and political organisations of the working class permeate and conquer the institutions by legal means, preparing a gradual transformation of the entire economic mechanism*”, and which was to lead the parties of the Second International to the great betrayal of 1914.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REFORMIST ANTI-MILITARISM

The struggle which the Marxist left wages against the opportunists is thus no less vehement than that which it wages against the anarchists. For the International, in its majority, is steadily sliding towards reformist and pacifist positions. The necessity of conquering power by violent means is gradually denied, and with it the very notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the political form of power proper to the working class is abandoned. Concepts which had seemed to have nothing more to do with the proletariat are fished out again and appropriated by the parties of the Second International. Thus the concept of the fatherland, definitively dead for the revolutionaries of 1848, is revived, and the powerful war-cry of Marx and Engels, “The workers have no fatherland”, is transformed by Jaurès into a mere theatrical bon mot: “*The proletariat does not stand outside the fatherland. When the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels in 1847 formulated the famous sentence, so often repeated and interpreted in every sense: ‘The workers have no fatherland’, it was nothing but a theatrical bon mot, a wholly paradoxical and moreover unhappy [sic!] rejoinder to the polemic of the bourgeois patriots who denounced communism as the destroyer of the fatherland [...] The Manifesto’s formula signifies the substitution of a series of abstract and artificial revolutions for that profound revolutionary evolution which Marx himself so often defined with such force.*” And further: “*A little internationalism takes one away from the fatherland; much internationalism brings one back to it. A little patriotism takes one away from the International; much patriotism leads one back to it*” (10).

From these positions it is then but a short step to asserting that the proletariat has the duty to defend the “fatherland” against any “aggression”. “*An army thus constituted has as its sole objective the defence, against any aggression, of the independence and the territory of the country. Every war is criminal unless it is manifestly and certainly defensive, unless the govern-*

ment of the country offers to the government of the foreign state with which it is in conflict to settle the conflict itself by arbitration” (11).

And it is Rosa Luxemburg who replies to these positions in an effort to restore the integral doctrine of Marxism against opportunist deviations: “*It is needless to point out that this excessive zeal in fulfilling the patriotic duty would impose an immense burden on the fighting organisations of the proletariat and would force upon them aims and tasks that are entirely and fundamentally alien to them, and which must therefore be categorically rejected in the interests of the class struggle.*” She then continues her discussion of the distinction between defensive and offensive war: “*Here we find, as the basis of this whole political orientation, that famous distinction between offensive and defensive war which has hitherto played a great role in the foreign policy of the socialist parties, but which — in the light of the experience of the last decades — ought to be simply and straightforwardly banned... To surrender to the illusion that juridical formulas can prevail over the interests and the power of capitalism is the most harmful policy the proletariat can pursue*” (12).

Not long before, Lenin had sharply attacked those German Social Democrats such as Vollmar and Noske, according to whom no specific anti-militarist activity was necessary, since wars are “*a necessary concomitant of capitalist development*”, and therefore the proletarians are obliged to take up arms just as the bourgeois do — in view of this development. “*(...) the attitude of Vollmar, Noske and those who think like them on the ‘Right wing’ is opportunist cowardice.*”

“*Since militarism is the offspring of capitalism, and will fall with it—they argued at Stuttgart and still more at Essen—no special anti-militarist agitation is needed: it should not exist. But a radical solution of the labour question and the women’s question, for example—was the reply given them at Stuttgart—is also impossible while the capitalist system exists; in spite of that, we fight for labour legislation, for extending the civil rights of women, etc. Special anti-militarist propaganda must be carried on all the more energetically because cases of interference in the struggle between labour and capital on the part of the military forces are becoming more frequent; and because the importance of militarism not only in the present struggle of the proletariat, but also in the future, at the time of the social revolution, is becoming more and more obvious*” (13).

The majority of the International, however, remained

(10) Jaurès Jean, *L’Armée nouvelle*, 1911. (Own translation).

(11) Jaurès Jean, *ibid.*

(12) Luxemburg Rosa, *Review of Jaurès’s L’Armée nouvelle*, in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, June 9, 1911. (Own translation).

(13) Lenin V. I., *Bellicose militarism and the anti-militarist tactics of social-democracy*, 1908, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 15, Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 196-197.

Revolutionary Anti-militarism

on Jaurèsian positions, that is, it sought only to “prevent” the outbreak of a general war, despite the positions of the left, which fought to make the war the starting spark of revolution. And the unrelenting effort of the left to reaffirm and defend Marxist orthodoxy against every right-wing deviation and against centrism was not without results. At the Stuttgart Congress of 1907, Lenin and Luxemburg succeeded in having inserted into the *Resolution on Militarism and the Conflicts between Nations* an amendment of the utmost importance: “in the event that war should break out, they [the socialists] have the duty to intervene so as to bring it to an end as quickly as possible, and to use with all their strength the economic and political crisis created by the war to agitate the broadest layers of the people and to hasten the fall of capitalist rule.” In the subsequent *Basel Manifesto* (1912) it was recalled that the proletarians would consider as criminal any participation in the imperialist war; that the war would inevitably bring about an enormous economic, political and social crisis; and that it was the duty of the socialist parties to use this crisis to overthrow capitalist domination.

However, despite the efforts of the Marxist left, the majority of the national sections — now entirely caught in the coils of centrism and opportunism — based their practical politics and daily activity increasingly on reformism.

THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE : 1905 – INSURRECTION AS AN ART

The great lesson of the Russian Revolution of 1905 lay in the fact that it fully demonstrated how the revolutionary party must prepare an insurrection both practically and politically: “[The] insurrection is an art and that the principal rule of this art is the waging of a desperately bold and irrevocably determined offensive” (14).

After this experience, the Bolshevik party constantly prepared itself — even in the years of the most ruthless Tsarist repression — “with a view to a general armed insurrection”, by establishing its own internal military organisation and by organising proletarians in uniform through antimilitarist propaganda and agitation. Prior to 1905, the antimilitarist activity of the RSDLP had not gone much beyond appeals addressed to the army “not to fire on the workers” during proletarian demonstrations such as those on May Day.

In 1905, however, after the defeat of the army and navy in the war against Japan and their subsequent disintegration, the party began intervening massively within their ranks and succeeded in creating an embryonic organisation there. Naturally, this work could unfold most fully in those branches, such as the artillery and the navy, composed predominantly of proletarians. Under the pressure of events — the disintegration of the army on the one hand and the advance of the revolution on the other — the Bolshevik party was thus able to produce more than one example of a real, even if in many respects insufficient, union between the proletarian masses and the troops, representing the first step toward the creation of the revolutionary army.

In the summer of 1905 an event of great importance took place: the uprising aboard the battleship Potemkin — in which the Bolsheviks played a leading role — in close connection with the contemporary uprising in Odessa. “*The armed uprising of the people is maturing and is organising itself before our very eyes under the impact of the spontaneous course of events. It was not so very long ago that the only manifestation of the people’s struggle against the autocracy was revolts—unconscious, unorganised, spontaneous, sometimes wild outbreaks. But the labour movement, as the movement of the most advanced class, the proletariat, rapidly outgrew this initial stage. The goal-conscious propaganda and agitation carried on by the Social-Democrats had their effect. (...) The struggle grew into an insurrection. Even the tsar’s troops gradually began to see that they were being made to play the shameful role of executioners of freedom, of henchmen of the police. And the army began to waver. At first isolated cases of insubordination, outbreaks among reservists, protests from officers, propaganda among the soldiers, refusal of some companies and regiments to shoot at their own brothers, the workers. Then—the siding of part of the army with the uprising. The tremendous significance of the recent events in Odessa lies precisely in the fact that, for the first time, an important unit of the armed force of tsarism—a battleship—has openly gone over to the side of the revolution*” (15).

The passage of the army — or at least of a part of it — to the side of the revolution is an extremely important fact, but still not sufficient. Lenin, in the same article, states that it is necessary to create an army of the revolution, for only with its own army can the revolution defeat the counter-revolutionary forces. “*The units of the revolutionary army are springing up out of the army itself. The task of these units is to proclaim the insurrection, to give the masses military leadership, as essential in civil war as in any other war; to create strong points for the open mass struggle; to spread the uprising to neighbouring districts; to establish complete political freedom, if only at first in a small part of the country; to embark on the revolutionary transformation of the decayed absolutist system; and to give full scope to the revolutionary creative activity of the masses, who participate but little in this activity in time of peace, but who come to the forefront in revolutionary epochs. Only by clearly understanding these new tasks, only by posing them boldly and broadly, can the units of the revolutionary army win complete victory and become the strong points of a revolutionary government. And a revolutionary government is as vitally essential at the present stage of the popular uprising as a revolutionary army. The revolutionary*

(14) Lenin V. I., *Lessons of the Moscow uprising*, 1906, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 11, Progress Publishers, 1972, p. 176.

(15) Lenin V.I., *Revolutionary army and revolutionary government*, 1905, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 8, Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 560–561.

*army is needed for military struggle and for military leadership of the masses against the remnants of the military forces of the autocracy. The revolutionary army is needed because great historical issues can be resolved only by force, and, in modern struggle, the **organisation of force** means military organisation” (16).*

Lenin therefore poses the question of insurrection as an immediate problem, to which the revolutionary party must provide an equally immediate answer. This task is by no means an easy one – not only because of the objective situation, but also owing to the activity of the opportunists, specifically the Mensheviks, who seek to lead the entire revolutionary movement back into the framework of conciliation with the bourgeoisie, not infrequently adopting extremist postures and asserting that it is necessary to “provide” new pretexts capable of provoking further uprisings. Lenin replies: “*What is lacking is not ‘new incentives’, my most esteemed Manilovs, but a military force, the military force of the revolutionary people (and not the people in general), consisting of 1) the armed proletariat and peasantry, 2) organised advance detachments of representatives of these classes, and 3) sections of the army that are prepared to come over to the side of the people. It is all this taken together that constitutes a **revolutionary army**. To talk of an uprising, of its force, of a natural transition to it, and to say nothing of a revolutionary army is folly and muddle-headedness—and the greater the degree of the counter-revolutionary army’s mobilisation, the more that is so (...)* The slogan of insurrection is a slogan for deciding the issue by material force, which in present-day European civilisation can only be military force. This slogan should not be put forward until the general prerequisites for revolution have matured, until the masses have definitely shown that they have been roused and are ready to act, until the external circumstances have led to an open crisis. But once such a slogan has been issued, it would be an arrant disgrace to retreat from it, back to moral force again, to one of the conditions that prepare the ground for an uprising, to a ‘possible transition’, etc., etc. No, once the die is cast, all subterfuges must be done with; it must be explained directly and openly to the masses what the practical conditions for a successful revolution are at the present time” (17).

Thus, a rejection of any putschist attitude, but at the same time a rejection of any action that tends to dampen the strength and the revolutionary impetus, and to arrive at a compromise with the class that holds power. And this reasoning – as Lenin himself emphasises – applies not only to Russia, where the democratic revolution has yet to triumph, but also to the rest of the European countries, now fully imperialist.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 reached its climax in December. The insurrection at that time swept through all the major cities, hundreds of thousands of workers joined it, and it also drew over to the side of the insurgents no small part of the army. And it was on this day that the fate of the revolution was decided: it was crushed because the forces of autocracy were able to rely on an army which, despite the revolutionary work carried out within its ranks, was

still sufficiently strong and organised.

And once again it is Lenin who summarises the lessons that the revolutionary party must draw from 1905 concerning its influence on the army and military preparation: “*Another lesson concerns the character of the uprising, the methods by which it is conducted, and the conditions which lead to the troops coming over to the side of the people. An extremely biased view on this latter point prevails in the Right wing of our Party. It is alleged that there is no possibility of fighting modern troops; the troops must become revolutionary. Of course, unless the revolution assumes a mass character and affects the troops, there can be no question of serious struggle. That we must work among the troops goes without saying. But we must not imagine that they will come over to our side at one stroke, as a result of persuasion or their own convictions. The Moscow uprising clearly demonstrated how stereotyped and lifeless this view is. As a matter of fact, the wavering of the troops, which is inevitable in every truly popular movement, leads to a real **fight for the troops** whenever the revolutionary struggle becomes acute. The Moscow uprising was precisely an example of the desperate, frantic struggle for the troops that takes place between the reaction and the revolution. Dubasov himself declared that of the fifteen thousand men of the Moscow garrison, only five thousand were reliable. The government restrained the waverers by the most diverse and desperate measures: they appealed to them, flattered them, bribed them, presented them with watches, money, etc.; they doped them with vodka, they lied to them, threatened them, confined them to barracks and disarmed them, and those who were suspected of being least reliable were removed by treachery and violence. And we must have the courage to confess, openly and unreservedly, that in this respect we lagged behind the government. We failed to utilise the forces at our disposal for such an active, bold, resourceful and aggressive fight for the wavering troops as that which the government waged and won. We have carried on work in the army and we will redouble our efforts in the future ideologically to ‘win over’ the troops. But we shall prove to be miserable pedants if we forget that at a time of uprising there must also be a physical struggle for the troops” (18).*

And it was precisely on the basis of these lessons that, after the February Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik Party was able to revive its military organisation and carry out that revolutionary work within the army which made October possible, along with the subsequent victory over the White armies.

(to be continued) ●

(16) Lenin, *ibid.*, pp. 562–563.

(17) Lenin V.I., *The latest in Iskra tactics*, 1905, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 366–367, 369.

(18) Lenin V.I., *Lessons of the Moscow uprising*, 1906, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 11, Progress Publishers, 1972, p. 174–175.

Elements of Marxist Orientation

— Introduction —

In order for a new historical cycle of the proletarian movement to emerge from the abyss of the counter-revolution, it must be characterized by the vigorous efforts of even a small communist vanguard to retie the thread joining theory, principles and program wherever the counter-revolution has severed it. This must happen before material pressures compel the working-class movement to align itself on a single battlefield.

This point can be illustrated historically. Rather than in the victory achieved in the course of the crisis unleashed in St. Petersburg by the effects of the imperialist war, the real, lasting significance of the *April Theses* lies in the complete restoration of the revolutionary, anti-democratic, anti-pacifist, authoritarian principles of Marxism which Lenin accomplished not on the basis of an inspired “revelation” or “discovery”, but through the confirmations and merciless lessons of the counter-revolution had given to the theory. When he admonished the party to put on a “clean shirt”, Lenin was not urging the party to adapt itself to the times, but exhorting it to return to its origins and resume the fight the Bolsheviks had relinquished when they succumbed to the temptation of an almost Menshevik adaptation to the fact of the February Revolution. Also on the basis of the re-assertion of the revolutionary essence of Marxist theory, during the world war Lenin had waged his gigantic solitary fight under the slogan “Turn the imperialist war into a civil war” against both overt social-chauvinism and, especially, a denatured, pale conception of the party’s principal tasks, i.e., the centrist conception. This theoretical and practical victory led to the successful “storming of heaven” by the Russian proletariat in October – even though this success later turned out not to be durable as it slipped into the swamp of opportunism and counter-revolution - and, transcending all contingent temporal and spatial problems, the rallying of the world proletariat to the instrument of its invariant doctrine.

Similarly, *The State and Revolution* restored all the elements of Marxist theory and swept away the distortions and attenuations that had accumulated during the so-called peaceful period of capitalism, which had brought with it a gradual and almost imperceptible adaptation of the proletariat to the laws of the capitalist system and its ideological justifications. On the basis

of an empirical distillation of colossal struggles between classes and an understanding of their world historical significance, Marxists discern an immutable, ineluctable necessity behind the apparently chaotic ebb and flow of immediate, phenomenal forms. If this were not the case, then the revolutionary theory without which there can be no revolutionary action would be completely open to falsification. This historical necessity manifests itself in the unbroken thread of a general theory of the historical trajectory, the final goal and obligatory struggle the last class in history must wage to emancipate itself and humanity, as well as the instruments it must wield to overthrow the last strongholds of bourgeois society. This necessity thus appears in the invariant edifice of principles, goals, programmatic demands and central tactical positions the party must hold to in the course of the class struggle and implement in the heat of battle without attempting to modernize or revise theory. To the extent the theory is embodied in the political party, the party assumes its historical character as the organ and instrument of the class. The historical party fights an unrelenting battle to become the formal party. Without this fight the party can never materialize.

During and after the second imperialist war the Communist Left worked to reconstitute the revolutionary proletarian world party – which cannot be arbitrarily “created”, but must be reconstituted with the cornerstones of the fully restored theory – on the basis of these doctrinal points. It would have been impossible to rebuild the party after its most terrible defeat had the brutal rupture of its doctrinal, organizational and tactical structure, the destruction of the class and its decay into a molecular aggregate, remained complicated by a confused groping about in search of an unknown direction or an unfamiliar reference point.

The most serious aspect of the worst counter-revolution in the history of the modern class struggle – the Stalinist counter-revolution – is the theoretical and programmatic disarming of the propertyless class, its total collapse into impotence in organizational and practical terms. This signifies its submission to both the physical yoke of the democratic dictatorship of capital and the only apparently immaterial weight of ideologies that constitute the indispensable support and

complement of this dictatorship, a submission that is demonstrated by the fact that the proletariat as a whole sees no other way out of its enslavement than to demand more democracy, or, what amounts to the same thing, an “other” democracy. Under such conditions the reconstitution of the proletarian world party is only possible when the doctrine, principles and program of orthodox Marxism have been re-established in their totality. This requires a comprehensive, unswerving application of the dialectical materialist conception of history in an analysis of the most recent historical phase the capitalist economy and the class rule of the bourgeoisie are traversing (i.e., imperialism, which Lenin called the “highest phase of capitalism”), in order to deduce from this investigation (precisely because it is no scholastic exercise, but political work in the context of the revolutionary party) the guidelines for action, the strategical and tactical apparatus that are indispensable to the only class capable of eradicating imperialism. It can only accomplish this task when it fights for itself, for its unmistakable historical interests with the weapons it can only receive from its party, from its invariant program. And like its program, these weapons are anti-democratic, revolutionary and dictatorial.

The text published below appeared in 1946 under the name : *Tracciato d'Impostazione*. It was originally published in Italian in our theoretical organ at the time, *Prometeo*, with a view to the reconstitution of the world communist party. This can only be a single party, unified in the homogeneity of its doctrine, objectives, principles, program and tactics. Precisely for this reason the party must openly proclaim and defend Marxist theory with all its strength.

The *Tracciato* presents a comprehensive restoration of the Marxist conception of the succession of historical modes of production and the corresponding forms of social organization, including the forms that determine the transition from one form to the next, up to the parabolic course of the capitalist mode of production through its explosive rise to its reformist reinforcement and on to its overthrow in the catastrophe of war between states and between classes.

It is based on the essential conclusions that constitute some of the characteristic features that differentiate our party from all the groups that fallaciously lay claim to Marxism. These characteristic positions may be summarized as follows:

a) The phase opened by the second world war is nothing other than the continuation of the historical phase Lenin referred to as imperialism and Marx, especially in the third volume of *Capital* (Engels in Anti-Duhring), had already fore seen in its essentials.

b) In this phase, after the ruling class had defeated and crushed the oppressed in the test of strength following the First World War, and after it had dragged the working class defenseless into the second world butchery, the bourgeoisie has been striving for increasingly centralized and totalitarian forms of economic, social, ideological and political organization. In relation

to the fact of centralization, the continued existence of a superstructure of democratic voting and decision-making mechanisms can only serve to delude the proletariat with the illusion that it can advance its solutions to the social questions through a peaceful exercise of universal suffrage.

The fascist apparatus, which the bourgeois class needed to prevent the re-emergence of the communist movement after it had been suppressed by the blows of democracy and, especially, social-democracy, was only dissolved in order to preserve and strengthen the basic structures of capitalism and its political, financial, military and police control over the entire globe.

c) Our assertion that the world war resulted in a defeat of the fascists but a victory for fascism concurs with our analysis of “totalitarianism”, which is characteristic of the present phase and is rooted in the irreversible process of capitalist concentration. In reality, fascism is capitalism’s ultimate attempt to limit and control itself in order to overcome the contradictory, incurable tendencies of economic phenomena through centralized discipline, and in order to oppose the inflammatory class forces threatening it from the social subsoil with its own unified political and military formation to this end the bourgeoisie must subdue its original psychology and ideology of unlimited autonomy and individualism and create a collective class consciousness for itself.

d) The third phase of the bourgeois economic and political cycle, which, even when superficially democratic, is essentially fascist, by no means constitutes a reversion to a reactionary, semi-feudal past; it is, on the contrary, the natural, unavoidable denouement of capitalism as a consequence of the absence of a victorious proletarian offensive in several countries: it is the critical point in capitalist development, not its death throes.

e) It is impossible to turn back from these strict forms of control over elemental, centrifugal forces, the continual reappearance of which can be postponed but not prevented by capitalism. It is therefore illusory to pursue the dream of a restoration of democracy, and it is anti-historical and reactionary to try to turn the clock back. Once it has emerged from its lethargy to resume and win the life and death struggle, the working class must not combat the capitalism that has evolved in this phase with the aim of defending the immortal principles of human and civil rights of 1789 (even when these are embellished with social reforms and a purported progressive character), but in order to conquer power by force, institute the dictatorship led by its world communist party and utilize the red terror in the unavoidable civil war and no less difficult and painstaking task of transforming the economy.

This absolutely anti-democratic, authoritarian demand can be found explicitly formulated in the Manifesto of 1848, and today more than ever it must be the single, immutable slogan of the world Marxist revolutionary party. The revolutionary movement has

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nothing to hide, just as the class it represents has nothing to lose but its chains.

f) These lessons of the present counter-revolution confirm and reinforce the tactical theses the Italian Communist Left defended during its long fight inside the International. These theses are today of principled character and cannot be separated from the program. In the nerve centers of the imperialist metropolises the proletariat must necessarily forge ahead alone, expose the shameful populist, democratic, legalistic and national temptations, and forever exclude the perspective of even a temporary collaboration with other classes or semi-classes. Also excluded, definitively, is any tactical application, for revolutionary purposes, of the parliamentary and electoral mechanism; the political united front; any common political action; the use of transitional slogans such as “workers’ government” or “workers’ and peasants’ government” (which were put forward as synonyms or substitutes for the proletarian dictatorship led by the party); any support, even “critical” or from outside, for alleged left regimes put forward as “better” alternatives to so-called center or right governments; any unconditional or – worse yet – conditional participation in resistance movements, either on a political or, in the perspective of a third world war, military basis.

The renunciation of the maneuvers the International, cramped by a rapidly deteriorating world revolutionary situation, believed it could implement, to the point that it lost sight of both appropriate means and

the goals themselves, is a striking confirmation of the fact there is an indissoluble connection between tactics and principles, and that all tactical slogans must be in agreement with the final aim in order to work toward it and contribute to their realization, thereby strengthening rather than denaturing the party. The United Front led irresistibly first to the Popular Front, and then to the National Liberation Front. The party simultaneously fell from the heights of revolutionary, authoritarian, dictatorial Marxism back down into the desolate swamp of a pre-Marxist, petty-bourgeois democratism.

*

The re-emerging world communist party must therefore take up the challenge of totalitarian capitalism, whether it is dressed in national colors or fascist brown. The equivalent anti-communist temptation of an American or Russian *pax socialis* – in the form of a western Jesuit, corporatist prosperity-cum-welfare-state or of a Russian “progressive” democracy supposedly defending the peoples’s or national interest – must be opposed by a tenacious revolutionary preparation with the single perspective and objective of the conquest of political power and the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship under the banner of class struggle and communism. Either the working class will find the thread of the *Manifesto* and tie the knot of “revolution in permanence” after years of struggle, or it will once again be crushed. ●

Elements of Marxist Orientation

MARXISM IS NOT A CHOICE BETWEEN DIFFERENT OPINIONS

For obvious reasons, this text does not prove what it asserts. Its object is to establish the principles of the revolutionary Marxist movement as clearly as possible. It only sets out the fundamental points in order to avoid any deliberate or inadvertent confusion or ambiguity.

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Before the reader can be convinced, it is necessary to explain clearly the position one is putting forward. Persuasion, propaganda and proselytism follow afterward. In our conception, opinions are not the product of the work of prophets, apostles or thinkers whose brains generate new truths to attract growing numbers of followers.

The process is completely different. It is the

impersonal work of a social vanguard that concentrates and expounds the theoretical positions to which their common living conditions lead the individuals long before they become aware of them. The method is thus anti-scholastic, anti-cultural and anti-illuminist. In the current theoretical void, which is a reflection of practical disorganization, it should be no surprise or shock if the exposition of our positions at first repel rather than attracts followers.

IN WHAT SENSE MARXISTS CONNECT WITH A HISTORICAL TRADITION

Every political movement that presents its theses lays claim to historical precedents and traditions remote or recent, whether of recent or distant past, whether national or international.

The movement of which this journal is the theoretical organ also claims to have clearly defined origins. But unlike other movements, its point of departure is not a revelation of divine origin, and it does not recognize the authority of immutable texts, nor does it admit juridical rules as points of reference for the study of each question, asserting in some way that they might be innate or immanent in the thought or nature of all humans.

*

This orientation may be called Marxism, socialism, communism or the political movement of the working class. Unfortunately, all these terms have been subjected to misuse. In 1917 Lenin considered that changing the name of the Party and returning to the term “communist” used in the 1848 *Manifesto* was a fundamental issue.

Today, the enormous abuse to which the name communist is subjected by parties that are outside any revolutionary or class tradition creates even greater confusion: movements that openly defend bourgeois institutions still dare to call themselves parties of the proletariat; the term Marxist is used to designate the most absurd conglomerations of parties, including even Spanish anti-Francoism.

The historical line we claim is as follows: the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 (precise title: *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, without mention of nationality); the fundamental texts of Marx and Engels; the classic restoration of revolutionary Marxism against all opportunist revisionists in conjunction with the revolutionary victory in Russia and the fundamental Leninist texts; the founding declarations of the Moscow International at the first and second congresses; the positions defended by the Left in the following congresses from 1922 on.

In Italy, the historical line is connected to the left of the Socialist Party during the 1914-1918 war, the formation of the Communist Party of Italy at Livorno in January 1921, its Rome congress in 1922, the manifestations of its left current, which led the party until the Lyon congress in 1926, and survived in exile outside the party and the Komintern.

This line does not correspond to that of the Trotskyist movement of the 4th International. Trotsky reacted late (and Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and other Russian groups in the Bolshevik tradition even later) to the erroneous tactic applied until 1924, and finally recognized that the deviation became exacerbated and destroyed the fundamental political principles of the movement. Today’s Trotskyists claim to have restored these principles, but they have not clearly rejected the dissolving elements of the “maneuverist” tactics that they incorrectly define as Bolshevik and Leninist.

BASIS OF THE MARXIST DIALECTICAL METHOD

All research must be based upon a consideration of the overall historical process up to the present and

an objective examination of current social phenomena. This method is claimed by many, but its application most often goes astray. The analysis is based upon an examination of the material means by which human groups satisfy their needs, i.e., the technology of production, and, in conjunction with its evolution, economic relationships. Through the various epochs, these factors determine the superstructure comprising legal, political or military institutions and ruling ideologies.

*

This method is defined by the expressions of historical materialism, dialectical materialism, economic determinism, scientific socialism, critical communism.

It is essential always to employ positive results supported by facts to expound and explain human phenomena, and not to postulate the intervention of myths or divinities, or principles of natural rights or “ethics” such as Justice, Equality, Fraternity and other abstractions devoid of meaning. It is even more important not to yield to the pressure of the ruling ideology by invoking these illusory postulates or others like them without noticing or admitting it, or by appealing to them precisely at the most crucial moments and in decisive conclusions.

The dialectical method is the only that overcomes the current contradiction between rigorous theoretical continuity and cohesiveness, on the one hand, and the ability to critically confront old conclusions based on formal terms and rules. Acceptance of the method is not a matter of faith or an impassioned position of a school or party.

THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND SOCIAL FORMS

The productive **forces**, comprising primarily of human beings fit for production, their combinations and the tools and mechanical means they employ, operate within the framework of **forms** of production. By **forms** we understand the organization and relations of dependence within which productive and social activity evolves. Within these **forms** are contained all the established hierarchies (familial, military, theocratic, political), the state and all its bodies, the law and the courts that apply it, the economic and legal rules and regulations that resist transgression.

A society is of a given kind as long as the productive forces are maintained within their productive forms. At a certain juncture in history, this equilibrium tends to be broken. Various factors, including technological progress, population growth, expanded communications, etc., increase the productive forces. These then enter into conflict with the traditional forms and tend to break out of them; when they succeed, a revolution occurs. The community then organizes itself according to new economic, social and legal relations, and new forms replace the old ones.

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The dialectical method discovers, applies and ver-

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ifies its solutions on the scale of major collective phenomena in a scientific, experimental manner (the method the thinkers of the bourgeois epoch applied to the natural world in a struggle that was the reflection of the revolutionary social struggle of their class against the theocratic and absolutist regimes, but which they were unable to extend to the social domain). From the results thereby obtained, it deduces solutions to problems of individual behavior, in contrast to the method employed by all opposed religious, legal, philosophical or economic schools, which construct norms for collective behavior on the inconsistent basis of the myth of the Individual, presented either as an individual and immortal soul, or as a juridical and civil subject, or as the immutable monad of economic praxis, etc. But today science has gone beyond the fertile hypotheses regarding indivisible material individuals, i.e., atoms; these are now defined as rich complexes and rather than reduce them to incorruptible monads, they are regarded as meeting points of lines of force radiating from an external energy field. It could even be said that the cosmos is not a function of its units, but that each unit is a function of the cosmos.

Anyone who believes in the individual and speaks of personality, dignity, freedom, and the responsibility of Man or Citizen have nothing to do with Marxist thought. Men are not set in motion by opinions, beliefs, or any phenomena of so-called thought that might inspire their will and action. They are compelled to act by their needs, which assume the form of interests when the same material impulses motivate whole groups at the same time. They are confronted with the limitations that the social environment and structure raise against the satisfaction of their needs. And they react individually and collectively in a direction which, on average, is necessarily determined before the action of stimuli and reactions can give rise in their brains to what are called feelings, thoughts or judgments.

This phenomenon is naturally very complex, and in certain cases may run against the general rule, which nonetheless remains intact.

In any case, anyone who invokes individual consciousness, moral principles, the opinions and decisions of individuals or citizens as the motive causes in the interplay of social and historical development has no right to call himself a Marxist.

CLASS, CLASS STRUGGLE, PARTY

The conflict between the productive forces and social forms manifests itself as a struggle between classes with opposed economic interests: in its final phases, this struggle becomes an armed struggle for the conquest of political power.

*

For Marxism, the class is not a cold statistical data, but an acting organic force. It manifests itself when the mere concordance of economic conditions and interests expands into a common action and struggle.

The movement is consequently guided by vanguard groups and bodies whose modern, and evolved form

is the political class party. The collectivity, whose action culminates in the action of a party, acts in history with an effectiveness and a real dynamic that cannot be achieved at the limited scale of the individual.

The party is able to arrive to a theoretical consciousness of the development of events and thus has an influence on their outcome, in the direction determined by the productive forces and their relations.

CONFORMISM, REFORMISM, ANTIFORMISM

Despite the difficulty and complexity of the issue, one cannot expound principles and guidelines without resorting to simplifying schemata. We therefore distinguish three types of political movement that enable a characterization of all of them.

Movements that fight to preserve in their entirety the forms and institutions in place, preventing any transformation and basing themselves on immutable principles, whether religious, philosophical or juridical, are **conformist**.

Movements which, not desiring a sudden and violent overthrow of traditional institutions, take note of the pressure exerted by the productive forces and advocate gradual and partial modifications to the existing order, are **reformist**.

Movements that defend and put into practice the assault on old forms, and, even before being able to theorize the features of the new regime, strive to smash the old one, bringing about the irresistible birth of new forms, are **revolutionary** (we shall provisionally adopt the term **antiformist**).

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Every schematism contains the danger of errors. One might ask whether the Marxist dialectic could also lead to constructing a general, artificial model of historical events by reducing their entire development to a series of ruling classes that are born revolutionary, become reformist and end up conservative. The advent of a classless society through the revolutionary victory of the proletarian class suggests an end to this development, which Marx called the end of the “**pre-history of humanity**”.

But this conclusion might appear to be another metaphysical construction, like that of the fallacious ideologies of the past. As Marx already showed, Hegel reduced his dialectical system to an absolute construction, thereby falling unconsciously into the metaphysics he had transcended in the destructive part of his critique, which was a philosophical reflection of the bourgeois revolutionary struggle.

As the culmination of the classical philosophy of German idealism and bourgeois thought, Hegel thus asserted the absurd thesis that the history of action and thought must finally be crystallized in a perfect system, in the conquest of the Absolute. The Marxist dialectic eliminates such a static conclusion.

In his classic exposition of scientific socialism (as a theory opposed to Utopianism, which entrusted the renewal of society to propaganda for the adoption of

a better social project proposed by an author or a sect), Engels might seem to admit a general rule or law of historical motion when he uses expressions such as “the forward march”, “the world advances”.

These vigorous propaganda formulae should not lead one to believe that a recipe has been discovered in which it is possible to encompass the infinite world of possible evolutions of human society, i.e., a recipe that would be the equivalent of the commonplace bourgeois abstractions of evolution, civilization, progress, etc.

The great advantage of the dialectical mode of research is itself also a revolutionary one: it appears in the relentless destruction of the innumerable theoretical systems which clothe the rule of successive privileged classes. We must replace this cemetery of broken idols not with a new myth, a new creed, or a new word, but with a realistic expression of actual conditions and the optimum development that can be predicted for them.

For example, the correct Marxist formulation is not “one day the proletariat will seize political power, destroy the capitalist social system and build the communist economy”, but, inversely, “only by organizing itself as a class, and consequently as a political party, and by erecting its armed dictatorship will the proletariat be able to destroy the capitalist power and economy and make possible a non-capitalist and non-mercantile economy”. From the scientific point of view, we cannot exclude a different fate for capitalist society, such as a return to barbarism, a world catastrophe due to modern weapons leading, for example, to a pathological degeneration of the species (a forewarning is offered by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims who were blinded or condemned to a radioactive disintegration of their tissue) or other forms that cannot be predicted today.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FEATURES OF THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL PERIOD DIALECTICAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PAST AND PRESENT SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

In this period of convulsions the revolutionary communist movement must be characterized not only by the theoretical destruction of all conformism and reformism in the modern world, but also by the practical and, generally speaking, **tactical** position that **there is no longer any common path** with any conformist or reformist movement even in limited sectors or for limited periods. It must be founded on the irrevocable historical fact that bourgeois capitalism has definitively exhausted its **antiformist** momentum and has no further general historical function in destroying pre-capitalist forms of resistance or threats of precapitalist restoration.

This is not to deny that as long as the powerful forces of capitalist growth, which accelerated the transformation of the world to an unprecedented tempo, continued to develop under such conditions the

proletarian class movement could and had to dialectically condemn it from the point of view of doctrine while supporting it in action.

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This is precisely one of the essential differences between the metaphysical method and the dialectical method. A given type of social and political institution and organization is not good or bad in itself, nor is it to be accepted or rejected after an examination of its characteristics on the basis of general rules or principles.

According to the dialectical interpretation of history, each institution has had, in turn, at first a revolutionary, then a progressive and finally a conservative role and effect. For each aspect of the problem, it is thus necessary to place the productive forces and social factors in the proper place in order to deduce the meaning of the political conflict that expresses their relationship.

It is metaphysical to pronounce oneself authoritarian or libertarian, royalist or republican, aristocratic or democratic on principle, and in polemics to refer to rules situated outside the historical context. In the first systematic attempt at a political science, Plato already surpassed the mystical absolutism of principles, and Aristotle followed him by distinguishing good and bad forms within the three types of power: power of an individual, of the few, of many – i.e., monarchy and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, democracy and demagoguery.

Modern analysis, especially since Marx, goes much deeper into the problem.

In the present historical phase almost all political propaganda forms utilize the worst traditional arguments culled from all sorts of religious, juridical and philosophical superstitions.

This chaos of ideas, a reflection of the chaos of interests of a decomposing society, must be opposed with a dialectical analysis of the current relationship of real forces.

To introduce this analysis it is necessary to undertake an analogous evaluation concerning the well-known relationships of earlier historical epochs.

DIALECTICAL EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL FORMS :

• ECONOMIC EXAMPLE: MARKET ECONOMY

In general there is no sense in declaring oneself a partisan of a community or private, liberal or monopolistic, individual or collective economy, and to praise the merits of each system for the common good welfare: doing so would lead to a utopia that is the diametrical opposite of the Marxist dialectic.

The classic example of Engels’ “negation of the negation” is well known as a definition of communism. The first forms of human production were communist, and private property, a much more complex and efficient system, appeared later. Human society then

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returns to communism, but this modern communism could not be realized if primitive communism had not been transcended, defeated and destroyed by the system of private property. Marxists consider this initial transformation to be an advantage. What is said of communism can also be applied to all other economic forms, such as slavery, serfdom, manufacturing, industrial and monopolist capitalism, etc.

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The market economy, in which objects aimed at satisfying human needs cease, with the dissolution of barbarism, to be directly acquired and consumed by the primitive producer and become objects of exchange, first through barter, then by means of a monetary equivalent, represented a great social revolution.

It made possible the assignment of various individuals to different productive functions, expanding and differentiating the features of social life enormously. These changes can be acknowledged even though we state that after a series of types of economic organization based upon the monetary principle, we are today tending toward a non-market economy. In other words, it is possible to simultaneously recognize the revolutionary character of the market economy and reject as currently conformist and reactionary the thesis that production would be impossible in the absence of the monetary exchange of commodities.

The abolition of the market economy can be defended today - and only today - because of the development of associated labor and the concentration of the productive forces. By bringing about this concentration and development, capitalism, the last of the market economies, makes it possible to burst the limits within which all use values circulate as commodities and human labor itself is treated as a commodity.

A century before this stage, a critique of the market system based upon general philosophical, juridical or moral arguments would have been pure madness.

• SOCIAL EXAMPLE: THE FAMILY

The various types of social aggregate that have appeared in history and through which collective life has been differentiated from primitive individualism, traversing an immense cycle in which the relationships within which the individual lives and acts have become increasingly complex cannot, taken individually, be judged favorable or unfavorable. They must be considered in relation to the historical development which has assigned them one role or another in different transformations and revolutions.

Each such institution emerges as a revolutionary conquest, develops and is reformed through long historical cycles, and finally becomes a reactionary and conformist obstacle.

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The institution of the family appears as the first social form once, in the human species, the bond between parents and their offspring is extended much longer than is physiologically necessary. The first form of authority thus arises, exercised by the mother, then by the father, over their descendants, even though these

may be physically developed and strong. This is nonetheless a revolutionary step, given that the first possibility of an organized collective existence appears and the basis is laid for a development that will result in the first form of organized society and state.

As social life becomes increasingly complex in further phases of this development, the authority of one person over another extends far beyond the boundaries of kinship and consanguinity. The new, broader social aggregate contains and disciplines the institution of the family, as is the case in the first cities, states and aristocratic regimes, and then in the bourgeois regime, though all are based upon the fetish of inheritance.

When the necessity of an economy that goes beyond the interplay of individual interests appears, the institution of the family, with its narrow limits, becomes an obstacle and a reactionary element in society.

Without denying the historical function of the family, modern communists, noting that the capitalist system has already deformed and desecrated this "holy" institution, openly combat it and intend to replace it.

• POLITICAL EXAMPLE: MONARCHY AND REPUBLIC

Various state forms, such as monarchy and republic, have followed in a complex succession throughout history, each representing, in different historical situations, either revolutionary, progressive or conservative energies. In general it can be admitted that, before disappearing, capitalism will succeed in liquidating the now obsolete dynastic regimes, but in this regard it is necessary not to proceed via absolute judgments situated outside space and time.

The first monarchies appeared as the political expression of the division of material tasks: certain elements of the primitive family or tribal aggregate undertook defense or pillage by arms against other groups or peoples; others devoted themselves to hunting, fishing, agricultural work or nascent crafts. The first warriors and kings thus based the principle of power on major risks. Here again, we see the emergence of more developed and complex social forms that were previously impossible, thus representing the path toward a revolution in social relations.

In subsequent epochs, the institution of monarchy enabled the establishment and development of vast national state organizations against satraps' and small nobility's federalism, and played an innovative and reforming role. Dante was the great monarchist reformer of the early Modern Times.

More recently, and in many countries, monarchy, but no less so republic, has taken the form of the strictest class power of the bourgeoisie.

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There may have been republican movements and parties that were revolutionary, others that were reformist, and others that were openly conservative.

To give some accessible, simplified examples: Brutus, "who kicked out Tarquinius", was a revolutionary; the Gracchi, who tried to give the aristocratic

republic a content in conformity with the interests of the plebs, were reformists; traditional republicans like Cato and Cicero, who fought against the great historical revolution represented by the expansion of the Roman empire and its juridical and social forms throughout the ancient world, were conformists and reactionaries. The question is completely distorted when one has recourse to commonplaces about Caesarism and tyranny or, conversely, to the principles of republican liberty and other rhetorical-literary themes.

Among more modern examples, the three French republics of 1793, 1848 and 1871 were respectively antiformalist, reformist and conformist.

• IDEOLOGICAL EXAMPLE: THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Crises occurring in economic forms are reflected not only in political and social institutions, but also in religious beliefs and philosophical opinions.

Juridical, confessional or philosophical positions must be considered in relation to historical situations and social crises. Each appears in turn as a revolutionary, progressive and conformist banner.

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The movement that bears the name of Christ was at first antiformalist and revolutionary.

The assertion that men possess a soul of divine origin and endowed with immortality, no matter what the individual's social or caste position, is equivalent to a revolutionary revolt against the oppressive slavery of the ancient Orient. As long as the law admitted that a human being may be a commodity, the object of transactions much like an animal, the equality of believers was a battle-cry that relentlessly tested the resistance of the theocratic organization of judges, aristocrats and the military of the states of antiquity.

After a long historical period and the abolition of slavery, Christianity became an official religion and a pillar of the state. It ran its reformist cycle in Europe of the modern era by fighting against the excessive tie between the church and the most privileged and oppressive social strata.

Today there can be no more conformist ideology than Christianity which, by the time of the French revolution, had become, in organization and doctrine, the most powerful weapon of the resistance of the old regimes.

The powerful network of the church and religious persuasion are nowadays reconciled and in full agreement with the capitalist regime and are used as a fundamental element of defense against the threat of the proletarian revolution.

It has long been established that in modern social relationships, each private individual represents an economic enterprise theoretically reducible to commercial assets and liabilities. The superstition that encloses each individual within the circle of the moral balance sheet of his actions and within the illusion of a life beyond the tomb determined by this reckoning is only the reflection in the minds of men of the very character of present bourgeois society based on private

economy.

It is therefore impossible to wage the struggle to burst the limits of an economy of private enterprises and individual balance sheets without openly adopting an anti-religious and anti-Christian position.

THE CAPITALIST CYCLE :

• REVOLUTIONARY PHASE

In the main countries the modern bourgeoisie has already exhibited three characteristic historical phases.

The bourgeoisie appeared as an openly revolutionary class and waged an armed struggle to break the chains with which feudal and clerical absolutism bound the productive forces of the peasants to the land and the artisans to mediaeval corporatism.

The need to be freed from these chains coincided with the development of the productive forces which, with the resources of modern technology, tended to concentrate the workers in large masses.

To allow these productive forces free development, the traditional regimes had to be overthrown by force. The bourgeois class both waged an insurrectional struggle and, after its first victory, instituted an iron dictatorship to prevent monarchs, feudal lords and ecclesiastical dignitaries to counter-attack.

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The bourgeois class appeared in history as an **antiformalist** force, and its imposing power helped it to break all material and ideological obstacles. Its thinkers overthrew the ancient canons and old beliefs in the most radical fashion.

They replaced the theories of divine authority and divine right with popular sovereignty, political equality and liberty, and proclaimed the necessity of representative institutions, claiming that through them power would be the expression of a freely exercised popular will.

The liberal, democratic principle appears as clearly revolutionary and antiformalist **in this phase**, especially since it was not applied through peaceful and legalitarian means, but through revolutionary violence and terror, and since the victorious class defends it against reactionary restorations through dictatorship.

• EVOLUTIONIST AND DEMOCRATIC PHASE

In its second phase, with the capitalist system now stabilized, the bourgeoisie proclaims itself the representative of the best development and the well-being of the entire social community and goes through a relatively peaceful phase of developing productive forces, subjecting the whole inhabited world to its own system, and intensifying the overall economic pace. This is the progressive and reformist phase of the capitalist cycle.

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In this phase, because the ruling class wanted

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its own organization to appear capable of representing and reflecting the interests and demands of the working classes, the democratic parliamentary mechanism worked in harmony with its reformist orientation. Its governments claimed to be able to satisfy these demands by means of economic and legislative measures, while leaving the juridical pillars of the bourgeois system intact. Parliamentarism and democracy no longer have the character of a revolutionary slogan, and instead assume a reformist content that ensures the development of the capitalist system by softening the violent clashes and explosions of the class struggle.

• IMPERIALIST AND FASCIST PHASE

The third phase, modern imperialism, is characterized by monopolist concentration of the economy, the formation of capitalist syndicates and trusts and major state planning.

The bourgeois economy is transformed and loses the features of classic liberalism in which each business owner was independent in his economic decisions and trading relationships. An increasingly strict discipline is imposed on production and distribution; economic indicators no longer result from the free play of competition, but from the influence of capitalist associations, in the first instance, secondly from bodies of financial and banking concentration, and finally, directly from the state. The political state, which in the Marxist definition was the executive committee of the bourgeois class and which, in both government and police functions, protected the interests of that class, now asserts itself more and more as an organ of economic control and even management.

This concentration of economic responsibilities in the hands of the state cannot be interpreted as an evolution of private economy toward collective economy. This would amount to ignoring the fact that the contemporary state expresses the interests of a minority only and that all nationalizations undertaken in the framework of mercantile forms of exchange lead to a concentration that strengthens the capitalist nature of the economy instead of weakening it. The political development of the parties of the capitalist class in the contemporary phase leads, as Lenin clearly showed in his critique of modern imperialism, to more rigid forms of oppression; this has been manifested in the advent of totalitarian and fascist regimes. These regimes constitute the most modern type of bourgeois society and they are currently developing, as will become increasingly evident, to spread over the globe. A parallel aspect of this political concentration resides in the absolute predominance of a few large states at the expense of small and middle-size states.

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The emergence of this third capitalist phase cannot be confused with the return of precapitalist institutions and forms, since it is accompanied by a truly vertiginous growth of industrial and financial dynamic which was both qualitatively and quantitatively unknown to the pre-bourgeois world.

Capitalism effectively rejects the democratic and representative system and establishes centers of government that are absolutely despotic. In a few countries it has already theorized and proclaimed the formation of the totalitarian single party and hierarchical centralization, and in others it continues to use democratic slogans now devoid of content, while marching inexorably in the same direction.

The following position is essential for a correct appreciation of the contemporary historical process: the epoch of liberalism and democracy is closed, and the democratic demands that once had a revolutionary, then progressive and reformist character, are today anachronistic and clearly conformist.

THE PROLETARIAN STRATEGY IN THE PHASE OF THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

The cycle of the proletarian movement corresponds to that of the capitalist world.

With the appearance of the large industrial proletariat, a critique of the economic, juridical and political formulations of the bourgeoisie begins to appear; it is discovered that the bourgeois class neither liberates nor emancipates mankind, but substitutes its own class rule and exploitation for those of previous classes, and this discovery is expressed as a theory.

However, the workers of all countries are compelled to fight alongside the bourgeoisie for the overthrow of feudal institutions, and they do not succumb to the temptation of a reactionary socialism which, holding up the specter of a new, merciless capitalist master, urges the workers into an alliance with the monarchical and agrarian ruling classes.

Even in the battles waged by young capitalist regimes to prevent reactionary restorations, the proletariat cannot refuse its support to the bourgeoisie.

The class strategy of the nascent proletariat called for the realization of anti-bourgeois movements on the impetus of the insurrectionary struggle waged alongside the bourgeoisie so as to arrive immediately at a simultaneous liberation from feudal oppression and capitalist exploitation.

An embryonic manifestation of this fact is represented by Babeuf's League of Equals at the time of the great French revolution. Theoretically the movement was by no means ripe, but the Jacobin bourgeoisie provided a rich historical lesson by bringing down a fierce repression on the workers that had fought for it and for its interests, after its victory. On the eve of the bourgeois national revolutionary wave of 1848, the theory of the class struggle had already been fully developed, and relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had become clear on the European and world scale.

In the **Communist Manifesto**, Marx projects an alliance with the bourgeoisie against the parties of monarchic restoration in France and of Prussian conservatism, coupled with immediate development

toward a revolution in which the working class would conquer power. In this historical phase as well, the workers' revolts are suppressed mercilessly, but the class doctrine and strategy corresponding to this phase remain firmly in the historical line of the Marxist method. The heroic offensive of the Paris Commune occurred in the same situation and is subject to the same historical evaluation. After overthrowing Bonaparte and ensuring the victory of the bourgeois republic, the French proletariat once again attempted to conquer power and offered the first historical example – even if only for a few months – of its class government.

What is most significant and instructive in this episode is the unconditional anti-proletarian alliance of bourgeois democrats with conservatives, and even with the victorious Prussian army to crush the first attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat.

TENDENCIES OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC, PACIFIST PHASE

In the second phase, when reforms to the framework of the bourgeois economy were accompanied by expanded use of the representative and parliamentary systems, the proletariat was faced with an alternative of historic significance. There arose the theoretical question of how to interpret the revolutionary doctrine as the critique of bourgeois institutions and all the ideologies that defended them.

Would the fall of capitalist rule and its replacement by a new economic order come about through a violent conflict, or will it be possible to achieve this through gradual change and the use of parliamentary legalism?

The practical question was posed concerning whether the party should ally itself, no longer with the bourgeoisie against pre-capitalist regime forces (these had disappeared), but at least with an advanced and progressive part of the bourgeoisie that was more inclined to reform its order.

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The revisionist currents of Marxism developed during the idyllic interlude of the capitalist world between 1871 and 1914. By falsifying the fundamental texts of the doctrine, they propounded a new strategy in which large economic and political organizations of the proletariat would prepare a gradual transformation of the entire capitalist machine by means of a penetration and legal conquest of political institutions.

The polemics that characterized this phase divided the proletarian movement into opposed tendencies. Even though in general the question of the insurrectional assault to smash bourgeois power was not posed, left Marxists vigorously resisted the excesses of the tactic of trade union and parliamentary collaboration, and the proposals to support bourgeois governments as well as participation by socialist parties in ministerial coalitions.

The serious crisis of the world socialist movement thus broke out in response to the imperialist war of 1914 and the passage of a majority of union and

parliamentary leaders into the camp of national collaboration and support for the war effort.

PROLETARIAN TACTICS IN THE PHASE OF IMPERIALIST CAPITALISM AND FASCISM

In the third phase, capitalism is faced with the double problem of continuing to develop the productive forces and preventing them from disrupting the equilibrium of its organization. It is thus obliged to renounce liberal and democratic methods, concentrating both economic life and its political rule in powerful state organs. In this phase also the workers' movement is faced with two alternatives.

From the point of view of theory, these stricter forms of capitalist class rule constitute a necessary, more evolved and more modern phase that capitalism will have to traverse to reach the end of its cycle and exhaust its historical possibilities. By no means do they constitute a transitory worsening of political and police methods, after which forms of so-called liberal tolerance can or must return.

From the point of view of tactics, it is false and illusory to imagine that the proletariat must undertake a fight to induce capitalism to return to liberal and democratic concessions, since the climate of political democracy is no longer necessary for the further development of capitalist productive energies, the indispensable foundation of the socialist economy.

In the first bourgeois revolutionary phase, history both posed and answered this question in a parallel struggle of the third and fourth estates, because an alliance between the two classes was an indispensable step on the road to socialism.

In the second phase, it was possible to pose legitimately the question of a parallel action between reformist democracy and socialist workers' parties. If history has justified the negative reply of the revolutionary Marxist left, the revisionist, reformist right cannot be considered a conformist movement before the fatal degeneration of 1914-1918. Though it believed it to be plausible that the wheel of history turned slowly, it did not yet attempt to make it turn backwards. This at least must be said in favor of Bebel, Jaures and Turati.

In the modern phase of greedy imperialism and vicious world wars, the question of a parallel action between the proletarian class and bourgeois democracy is no longer posed historically. Those who maintain the opposite no longer constitute an alternative, a version or a tendency of the workers' movement: they only attempt to disguise their total defection to conservative conformism.

The only alternative posed today – and which must be resolved – is completely different. The capitalist world and regime evolve and develop in a centralist, totalitarian and "fascist" direction: should the proletarian movement ally its forces to this movement, now the only **reformist** aspect of the rule of the bourgeois system? Can one hope to insert the birth of socialism in this inexorable advance of capitalist

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statism by helping to disperse the last traditional resistance, of free-traders and liberals, bourgeois conformists of the first order?

Or, on the other hand, should the workers' movement, severely shaken and dislocated because it was unable to establish its independence with class collaboration in the phase of two world wars, rebuild itself by rejecting such a method and the illusion that it might expect the historical appearance of a peaceful bourgeois organization susceptible to legal penetration, or at least more vulnerable to the assault of the masses (two equally dangerous forms of defeatism in relation to any revolutionary movement) ?

The dialectical method of Marxism points to a negative answer to the question of an alliance with new modern bourgeois form, for the same reasons that yesterday compelled it to combat any alliance with reformism in the democratic, peaceful phase.

Capitalism, the dialectical precondition of socialism, no longer has to be helped into being (by strengthening its revolutionary dictatorship) or to grow (in its liberal, democratic organization).

In the modern phase, it must inevitably concentrate its economic heritage and political form in a monstrous unity

Its transformism and reformism ensure both its development and its preservation.

The working-class movement can only avoid succumbing to its rule by leaving behind the terrain of assistance to even necessary phases of capitalist development, reorganizing its forces outside this obsolete perspective, ridding itself of the weight of old traditions and denouncing tactical agreements with any kind of reformism, even though it is already an entire historical epoch overdue.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION; ERRORS AND DEVIATIONS OF THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL; REGRESSION OF THE RUSSIAN PROLETARIAN REGIME

The most urgent historical problem at the end of the first world war was the crisis of the Czarist regime, that feudal state organization that remained intact in the epoch of Europe's full capitalist development.

The Marxist left (Lenin and the Bolsheviks) had established its position decades before with the strategic perspective of waging the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat alongside the struggle of anti-absolutist forces for the overthrow of the feudal empire.

The war made it possible to realize this grand plan, and to concentrate the passage of power from the hands of the dynasty, the aristocracy and the clergy to the proletariat into the short space of nine months, separated by a brief period of government by bourgeois democratic parties.

This great event provided illuminating answers to questions relating to the class struggle, the struggle for power and the strategy of the workers' revolution and gave an enormous impulse to the regrouping of rev-

olutionaries the world over.

In this brief period, the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party traversed all its phases: struggle alongside the bourgeoisie against the old regime; struggle against this same bourgeoisie when it tried to form its own state on the ruins of the old feudal state; rupture with and struggle against the reformist and gradualist parties of the workers' movement, up to the exclusive monopoly of power in the hands of the working class and the communist party.

The historical repercussion of these events on the workers' movement was a crushing defeat for the revisionist and collaborationist tendencies. Proletarian parties in all countries were impelled onto the terrain of armed struggle for power.

But misinterpretations led to the application of Russian tactics and strategy in other countries, where it was believed that a tactic of coalition would promote the establishment of a Kerensky-style regime, which would then be dealt with a fatal blow by the help of a bold political turn.

It was thus forgotten that the successive phases of the movement were intimately connected with the late formation of a capitalist state as such, whereas in the other countries, this state had been stabilized for a century, or at least for a few decades, and was stronger because its juridical structure was more definitively democratic and parliamentary.

It was not understood that the alliance between the Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks in insurrectionary battles and even at times in the struggle to put down attempts at feudal restoration were the last historical example of a specific relationship between political forces. For example, if the proletarian revolution had broken out in Germany after the crisis of 1848, as Marx expected, it would have followed the same tactical path as the Russian revolution; but in 1918, it could have won only if the revolutionary communist party had had sufficient strength to overcome the bloc of supporters of the Kaiser, the bourgeoisie, and the Social Democrats in power in the Weimar Republic

The international communist movement proved to have deviated completely from the correct revolutionary strategy when, with the first example of a totalitarian bourgeois government in Italy, it gave the proletariat the order to fight for liberty and constitutional guarantees in an anti-fascist coalition, a fundamentally incorrect strategical position.

Confusing Hitler and Mussolini, reformers of the capitalist regime in the most modern sense, with Kornilov or the forces of restoration in the Holy Alliance of 1815, was the International's greatest and worst error of appreciation, and it signaled a total abandonment of the revolutionary method.

Because the imperialist phase is economically mature in all modern countries, the fascist political form corresponding to it must appear in various countries of the world, though with a temporal order depending on contingent relationships of forces between states and between classes.

This development could be considered as a new opportunity for the proletarian revolutionary assault,

but this opportunity would not authorize us to align and waste the forces of the communist vanguard for the illusory goal of preventing the bourgeoisie from abandoning legal forms, or of demanding a restoration of the constitutional guarantees of the parliamentary system. On the contrary, it was necessary to accept the historical end of this instrument of bourgeois oppression and the invitation to fight outside the law in an attempt to break all the other apparatus—police, military, bureaucratic, and legal—of capitalist power and the state.

THE PROBLEM OF PROLETARIAN STRATEGY TODAY

The passage of communist parties to the strategy of the great anti-fascist bloc that led to slogans of national collaboration in the anti-German war of 1939, to the national Resistance, to the committees of national liberation, and even to the disgrace of ministerial collaboration – all this marks the second disastrous defeat of the world revolutionary movement.

This movement cannot reconstitute its theory and organization and undertake independent activity, unless it fights from outside against this policy, which is today common to the socialist parties and communist parties allied to Moscow. The new movement must be based on directives that are the exact opposite of the slogans propagated by these opportunist movements. In fact, if their propagandistic positions are presented as the standard of the world movement that identifies with anti-fascism, a dialectical critique reveals clearly that they are in fact fully in line with the fascist evolution of social organization.

The new revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the imperialist and fascist epoch bases itself on the following positions:

1) Rejection of the perspective that the defeat of Italy, Germany and Japan opened a phase of general return to democracy; on the contrary, the end of the war has been accompanied by a transformation in the

direction and with the methods of fascism among the bourgeois governments in the victorious countries, even and above all when reformist and labor parties participate in it. Refusal to present the illusory return to liberal forms as a demand that should interest the working class.

2) Affirmation that the present Russian regime lost its proletarian character, along with the abandonment of revolutionary positions by the 3rd International. A gradual regression led economic, social and political forms in Russia to assume a bourgeois character. This evolution must not be regarded as a return to the praetorian forms of autocratic or pre-bourgeois tyranny, but as the advent, by a different historical path, of the same type of evolved social organization presented by state capitalism in countries with totalitarian regimes in which large-scale plans pave the way to rapid development and give these countries a higher imperialist potential.

Consequently, we must not demand the return of Russia to the forms of parliamentary democracy that are undergoing dissolution in all modern countries; instead, we demand the re-constitution, in Russia also, of the revolutionary and totalitarian communist party.

3) Refusal of any invitation to the national solidarity of classes and parties that was recently advocated to overthrow so-called totalitarian regimes and to combat the Axis countries, and which is now advocated to rebuild the war-ravaged capitalist world through respect for law and order.

4) Refusal of the united front manoeuvre and tactic, i.e., the refusal to invite so-called socialist and communist parties – which have long since ceased to be proletarian parties – to leave government coalitions and create an alleged proletarian unity.

5) Relentless struggle against all ideological campaigns designed to mobilize the working class of various countries on patriotic fronts for a possible third imperialist war by asking them to fight for a red Russia against Anglo-Saxon capitalism, or to support Western democracy against Stalinist totalitarianism in a war presented as anti-fascist. ●

“Revolutionary Communist International”: Neither Communist, Nor Revolutionary!

A year ago, the “Revolutionary Communist International” was founded in Italy, presenting itself as the “world party of revolutionary communism.” This founding was preceded in various countries where the organisation is active by a marketing campaign titled “Are you a communist?” One of its leaders declared in the closing speech at the founding conference of the RCI: “*We are a revolutionary organisation, we have always been one and we will always remain one*” (1).

We will show that behind these bombastic declarations hides a thoroughly deceptive product...

ENTRYISM

The RCI is a reincarnation of the “International Marxist Tendency” (IMT), itself a continuation of the “Militant Tendency” (MT), a Trotskyist organisation based in the UK that practised “entryism” in the British Labour Party. Entryism was a tactic recommended by Trotsky in the 1930s to rapidly grow the ranks of revolutionary militants: it consisted of entering socialist parties to recruit from their left wings, taking advantage of internal rules that allowed for factional activity. After the war, entryism became a defining practice of Trotskyists – they did not hesitate to disguise themselves as social-democratic reformists or Stalinists, as long as the tactic served its purpose.

This practice is, in reality, a sign of the opportunist degeneration of the Trotskyist movement: if someone dresses as a reformist and acts like a reformist, he becomes a reformist – regardless of what reservations or ideas he may privately hold. Proletarian politics cannot be conducted through unprincipled manoeuvres, pretence, and concealment: proletarians, who must struggle against a world of lies and confusion, need above all clarity. Trotsky himself aptly formulated the question of tactical manoeuvres: “*The most important, best established, and most unalterable rule to apply in every maneuver reads: you must never dare to merge, mix, or combine your own party organization with an alien one, even though the latter be most ‘sympathetic’ today. Undertake no such steps as lead directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of your party to other parties, or to organizations of other classes, or constrict the freedom of your own agitation, or your responsibility, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, let alone kneel before another banner*”

“*It was not flexibility that served (nor should it serve today) as the basic trait of Bolshevism but rather granite hardness. It was precisely of this quality, for which its enemies and opponents reproached it, that Bolshevism was always justly proud. Not blissful*

“optimism” but intransigence, vigilance, revolutionary distrust, and the struggle for every hand’s breadth of independence’ these are the essential traits of Bolshevism” (2) This is a condemnation of the “flexible” manoeuvres that the Communist International imposed on the communist parties – and all the more so of entryism... (even if Trotsky himself later forgot it few years later).

The IMT and MT were undisputed champions of entryism – not only into the British Labour Party, but also into other reformist parties at the international level (such as Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, La France Insoumise in France, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, etc.), including outright bourgeois parties like the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) of the Bhutto family clan. Decades of unwavering attachment to the Labour Party – one of the two main parties of British imperialism alongside the Conservative (Tory) Party – could not help but leave their mark on the political orientation of this group. For example, during the Falklands War waged by Britain against Argentina in the summer of 1982, with the support of the Labour Party, they supported British imperialism and criticised the alleged incompetence of Margaret Thatcher’s government, stating: “*Using socialist methods, a Labour government could rapidly defeat the [Argentine, editor’s note] dictatorship.*” (3)

On the theoretical-programmatic level, the group openly professed its belief in democratism, stating for example: “*(...) The Conservative Party (Tory) should have more rights in a socialist Great Britain than the Labour Party has today (...). The Conservative Party should have the full right to exist in a socialist Great Britain.*” And after declaring that “*it has always been the capitalists – not the working class or the Marxists – who have tried to overthrow election results by force when their position was threatened,*” they concluded: “*Nevertheless, all the intrigues and conspiracies of the capitalists cannot succeed in the face of a bold socialist policy backed by the mass mobilisation of the workers’ movement. A completely peaceful socialist transformation of society is possible in Britain.*” (4)

Out of the hundreds of possible Marxist quotations, one will suffice – from Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*: “*The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with **this** and precisely **this** view of violent revolution lies at the root of the **entire** theory of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their theory by the now prevailing social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends expresses itself strikingly in both these trends ignoring **such** propaganda and agitation. The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution*” (5). By spreading

the idea of a “transformation” (sic! – a word that sounds more palatable than “revolution”) of society by peaceful means, the Militant Tendency merely revealed its betrayal of the entire Marxist doctrine – its opportunist, reformist, and non-revolutionary character.

In 1994, when the majority of the Militant Tendency (MT) decided to leave the Labour Party (and form the Socialist Party), the remaining members created the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) and continued their activity within the Labour Party – without, of course, changing their political orientation. Alan Woods, the leader of the IMT (and now of the RCI), wrote at the time: *“A peaceful transformation of society would be entirely possible if the trade union and reformist leaders were prepared to use the colossal power in their hands to change society. (...) Against the bourgeois and the reformists who always try to frighten the workers with the spectre of violence and civil war, and the sects who lose no opportunity to advertise their enthusiasm for ‘bloody revolution’, thereby rendering a great service to the bourgeois and the reformists, we insist that we stand for a peaceful transformation of society (...). We make it absolutely clear that we are in favour of a peaceful transformation of society, that we are prepared to fight for such a transformation”* (6).

Of course, he admits that this is not what Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution*; while Lenin was correct at the time, his stance was supposedly “concrete and dialectical, not formalistic and abstract”. In fact, Lenin and Trotsky themselves supposedly wanted a peaceful revolution in Russia! There are no fixed rules; the concrete forms and phases of the revolution – and even more so the specific tactics to be followed – allegedly cannot be memorised like a revolutionary cookbook: *“Such a manual does not exist, and, if it did, would do more harm than good to those who attempted to use it. The conditions in which the revolution unfolds will differ from one country to another, and from one period to another.”* (7) One might well wonder why the Communist International ever issued binding tactical guidelines and conditions for its parties – when, among other things, it stated that *“the class struggle (...) which inevitably turns into a civil war”* (8)!

In reality, the leader of the IMT adopts the classic argumentation not only of the Stalinists with their “national roads to socialism” – which allowed them to completely renounce the lessons of the Russian Revolution – but also of the entire reformist current, labelled “opportunist” precisely because it abandoned Marxist principles in an effort to adapt to bourgeois pressure. This line begins with the German socialist Bernstein, who at the end of the 19th century claimed that the positions of Marx and Engels were outdated: according to him, their so-called anti-democratic stance regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat and the violent seizure of power had to be abandoned, as these positions allegedly corresponded to a historical stage already left behind.

Similarly, Woods explains that the term “dictator-

ship of the proletariat,” which Marx used to refer to the transitional state between capitalism and socialism, *“has led to a serious misunderstanding (...). For Marx the word dictatorship came from the Roman Republic, where it meant a situation where in time of war, the normal rules were set aside for a temporary period (...). In reality Marx’s ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ is merely another term for the political rule of the working class or a workers’ democracy”* (9).

Although Woods cannot openly claim kinship with the “revisionist” Bernstein – whose theses were rejected by all Marxists – nor with Stalinism (as he identifies as a Trotskyist), his organisation fits fully within this same line. It is therefore no surprise that it had no problem enthusiastically supporting the so-called “Bolivarian Revolution” in Venezuela – and that Alan Woods even aspired to act as Chávez’s advisor (10).

“REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL”

For decades, the Militant Tendency (MT) and later the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) repeated their criticism of so-called “sectarians”, who allegedly have *“the inability to understand that the mass of the working class moves through its traditional mass organisations. (...) Despite the bankruptcy of the Labour leadership, the British working class does not throw away its organizations like a man changing his shirt. These organisations have been painfully built up over generations and will not be abandoned at the drop of a hat. The working class is not stupid and understands it is far easier to change an existing mass organisation, however bureaucratised, than to create a new one. Such have been the lessons of history for those who are prepared to learn of the last 100 years and more. (...) The Labour Party was fundamentally created by the trade unions to represent the interests of organized Labour in Parliament. In effect, despite its reformist leadership and programme, it was the political voice of the British trade unions”* (11).

Incidentally, according to this logic, Lenin would have to be counted among those “sectarians” – although he supported temporary affiliation with the Labour Party, he also explicitly rejected the claim that the party was “the political expression” of the trade union movement”. In his view, it was *“a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation or the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers”* (12). For MT and IMT, on the contrary, it is precisely the working class that can transform its mass organisations and push them to the left when the class struggle intensifies: *“When the working class enters into motion, it inevitably turns to its traditional organisations. This has been the historical experience of the last two hundred years in Britain – and elsewhere”* (13). And it is precisely this, they argue, that justifies remaining and struggling within these organisations.

The IMT, however, eventually decided to abandon

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this supposed historical experience, put an end to its entryism, and transform itself into the Revolutionary Communist International. According to the Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist International (14), there has been a “*change in consciousness*” of masses – and the proof offered is a public opinion poll in Britain (!). “*The change is most clearly expressed in the trend towards communist ideas among the youth. These young people call themselves communists, although many have never read the Communist Manifesto and have no knowledge of scientific socialism. (...) The best [of them] say, ‘we want communism. Only that and nothing less than that.’*”

Some even speak of a supposed “turn to the left”. The language has apparently changed – while the word “communist” used to be taboo in their publications, today it is said to appear everywhere. We are even told that more and more communists are emerging spontaneously. It all sounds impressive – but what does it actually mean? In their “Manifesto...” we read:

“*We are genuine communists – Bolshevik-Leninists – who were bureaucratically excluded from the ranks of the communist movement by Stalin. We have always fought to maintain the red banner of October and genuine Leninism, and now we must reclaim our rightful place as an integral part of the world communist movement. The time has come to open an honest discussion in the movement about the past (...)*”

For the RCI, the heirs of Stalinism – that is, the defenders of the capitalist order whose counterrevolutionary role is historically proven – are supposedly real communists!!! To claim membership in the same “movement” as these parties is, in reality, nothing more than an admission that one is just as far removed from genuine communism as they are.

The change in vocabulary and the abandonment (temporary?) of entryism is not accompanied by any change in the political orientation that has characterised this current from its inception; there is not the slightest hint of critical re-evaluation to be found. The Manifesto, the so-called “founding document” of the RCI, remains silent on this point. What stands out when reading this text is the fact that it says absolutely **nothing** about their conception of revolution – and the word revolution itself appears only a few times in the non-historical sections, and only in passing.

This silence is not innocent – especially not for an organisation that, until recently, defended the idea of a non-violent revolution. Although the Manifesto emphasises the “*expropriation of the bankers and capitalists*”, it offers no explanation as to whether this expropriation is the decisive factor in changing society – as MT and IMT used to claim – nor whether it could be achieved through electoral victory, as they also asserted. The failure to clarify this crucial point is nothing but a hypocritical way to reaffirm their thoroughly reformist perspective, which they have never abandoned despite their new “communist” rhetoric. The RCI may pretend to “return to Lenin” – but only in order to trample all the more thoroughly on everything Lenin taught!

In reality – as we have shown with several

examples – these people are neither communists nor revolutionaries, they never were, and they never will be ! ●

(1) *The Revolutionary Communist International has arrived!*. Available at: <https://communism.ie/the-revolutionary-communist-international-has-arrived/>.

(2) TROTSKY, Leon. *The Third International After Lenin* (1929), US edition. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/index.htm>

(3) *Militant International Review*, June 1982. Available at: <https://socialismtoday.org/archive/108/falklands.html>

(4) *What We Stand For*, Militant brochure, Militant, 1981, p. 25.

(5) LENIN, V. I. *State and Revolution* (1917), in *Collected Works*, vol. 25, p. 405. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974.

(6) WOODS, Alan. *Marxism and the State* (2008). Emphasis in the original. He explains in detail that such a peaceful revolution began in France in 1968 but was betrayed by the Stalinists who refused to take power. Available at: <https://marxist.com/marxism-and-the-state-part-one.htm>

(7) bid.

(8) *Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution*, adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920. Available at: https://pcint.org/15_Textes_Theses/07_03_en/1920-theses-role-party-com-international.htm

(9) WOODS, Alan. *The Role of the State and Social Democracy*, July 2017. Emphasis in the original. Available at: <https://marxist.com/role-state-and-social-democracy.htm>. Marx wrote: “What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.” See *Letter to J. Weydemeyer*, 5 March 1852

(10) WOODS, Alan. *Where is the Venezuelan Revolution Going? A Contribution to the Debate on Property and the Tasks of the Revolution*, October 2010. Available at: <https://marxist.com/where-is-the-venezuelan-revolution-going.htm>

(11) *Sectarianism is not the way forward for the British left*, May 2007. Available at: <https://communist.red/sectarianism-british-left-socialism-local-elections-campaign-new-workers-party-workers-movement>

(12) LENIN, V. I. *Speech on Affiliation to the British Labour Party*, 6 August 1920, in *Collected Works*, vol. 31, p. 258. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974.

(13) See “Sectarianism...”, op. cit.

(14) *Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist International*. Available at: <https://marxist.com/manifesto-of-the-revolutionary-communist-international.htm>

What is the future of Palestinians in Gaza?

Palestinians face systematic extermination, which is intended and organised by Israel with the consent and support of all imperialists, starting with the most democratic United States of America and European states.

After decades of failed attempts to constitute themselves as a nation and an independent state, on a par with others and above all with Israel, there seems to be no way out; however there is one way out, and that is the historical path of the resumption of the class struggle of the proletariat not only in the countries of the Middle East, but above all in the advanced capitalist countries, in the perspective of the international proletarian and communist revolution in Europe, America, Russia, the Far East, China and Japan; such a class struggle cannot fail to affect – from outside – even those countries where class collaboration between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has become so entrenched over the decades that it seems unshakeable, as is the case in Israel.

To many, this perspective may seem detached from reality, illusory and unachievable, just like the “reawakening” of the working classes in the countries of the Middle East.

The bourgeois ruling class – after more than two hundred years of enduring an endless series of economic, commercial and financial crises, social struggles and attempts by the proletariat to seize power, and even a revolution such as the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 with its temporary influence on Europe and the world; after surviving two world wars, one more devastating than the other, and their negative consequences; after further developing the industrial and capitalist economy and subjecting every corner of the world, even those geographically furthest from the major financial and imperialist centres, to its laws; and after binding every proletariat to the national interests of its own bourgeoisie, suppressing revolts and uprisings whenever they broke out, and continuing to wage wars throughout the world until it shook peaceful Europe to its foundations – after *all this*, what seems impossible is not the revolt, the uprising of the masses or of entire nations against the oppression to which they are constantly subjected by the great imperialist states, the great monopolies and world trusts, the big banks, but that these revolts and uprisings would be transformed into *organised class struggles*, as was the case in the 19th century and in the first thirty years of the 20th century.

So far, we have witnessed democratic states which, according to the immediate and future interests of their

bourgeoisie, unite or come into conflict with other democratic states or with authoritarian, totalitarian, but thoroughly bourgeois and anti-proletarian states; for decades, we have witnessed the ever-increasing militarisation of borders of every national, whether this militarisation is the work of the domestic bourgeoisie or of the bourgeoisie of other countries that have gained their rule through victory in wars. It has become increasingly clear, especially since the end of the Second Imperialist World War, that the competitive struggle between different national capitalisms has brought to the fore what the *Communist Manifesto*, *Capital*, *Imperialism* – in short, Marxism – predicted 180, 160 and 110 years ago: that bourgeois states, whether democratic, constitutionally monarchist or totalitarian, are in every country an instrument of capitalist domination over society; that they suck the sweat and blood from the wage labour of the proletarian masses, the sweat and blood of the poor peasant masses, solely for the purpose of strengthening the power of capitalism over every piece of land on the planet, over every sea and every sky. According to the bourgeoisie, not only large and small enterprises, large and small trade, every small and large property, and thus every country and every individual from birth to death, but also all future generations must submit to the laws of capital, and thus to the laws of the big capitalist bourgeoisie. If we imagine the future on the basis of what is happening in the present, it will not be one of the much-touted prosperity, the much-vaunted peace, the proclaimed freedom, equality and fraternity: the future that the ruling bourgeoisie is bringing about in every country is heralded by the mouths of guns, bombs raining from the sky, rockets fired from the ground, the sea and the sky. And if the guns do not fire, if the bombs and rockets do not kill and ruin entire cities, then hunger, malnutrition, thirst, famine and crime – which always thrive on the chaos generated by social crises and wars – will do it in their place. The bourgeoisie and criminality, although they fight each other, support each other; both are products of the capitalist mode of production and both worship money as the almighty god, to which they are willing to sacrifice everything, including entire peoples.

Against *this* world, against *this* future, there is no solution in the “good will” of the people, nor in “democracy” with its false “values of freedom and equality”. The bourgeoisie is not made up of people who care about human society, but of people who are instruments of capital, the hands of the god-capital, whose interests run counter to human society: when

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the interests of capital, money, commodities – that is, an economy that uses human labour exclusively for the valorisation of capital – are pursued instead of the interests of the social life of the human species, then any violence is permitted: the violence of capital, of its mercantile economy, is directly translated into the violence of the class that holds political, economic and military power in order to subjugate the whole of society to the interests of capitalism. To this end, this class not only appropriates all the wealth produced by human labour, concentrating it in its own hands, but also employs every form of violence to defend its power and extend it over ever wider territories.

The war – which the Israeli bourgeoisie has been waging for decades against all the peoples inhabiting the territories bordering what has always been considered the “Promised Land” (... promised by the God of Israel), starting with the Palestinian population, which has been present throughout the region for more than a thousand years, as it is also a Semitic people, just like the Jewish one – does not have its roots in the supposed anti-Semitism of the Palestinians: its origins lie in the interest and need of both peoples to dominate the other and control the shared territory, especially the fertile areas along the Jordan River; the thousand-year-old religious disputes are nothing more than an ideological justification for both sides. With the development of capitalism, and thus of the bourgeois classes within each of these peoples of the region, the conflicts inevitably took on the character of a permanent war, in which – after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled these territories for four centuries, and after their colonisation by the victorious imperialist powers of the First World War – Britain and France – the entire Near and Middle East was completely dismantled, starting with the ancient imperial order. Britain and France, in pursuit of their imperialist domination and concerned only with their imperialist interests, without regard for the traditions of the various ethnic groups and populations, created new national entities: Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

Naturally, the interests of the imperialist powers were not limited to dividing the territories of the former Ottoman Empire in the Near and Middle East into spheres of influence (hence Syria and Lebanon were assigned to France, while Jordan, Palestine/Israel, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia were assigned to Britain), in order to directly control communication routes, trade monopolies, and the revenues from oil fields, but also in fomenting divisions among various minorities (primarily the Kurdish minority, and later also the Jewish minority) against the Arab population. Following the end of the First World War, the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) established new borders, radically transforming the entire region of the Middle East. After the Second World War – following the defeat of the Axis states and the Arab powers that had supported them, and after the extermination of the Jews – the victorious imperialist *democracies*, which had triumphed for a second time over the imperialist *totalitarian* regimes, only further deepened the conflicts among the peoples of the Middle

East; it was particularly the case with the creation of the State of Israel, which in 1948 evolved from a “*Jewish homeland*” into an actual *state* on territory that the world’s imperialist powers, gathered within the United Nations since 1945, had intended to partition into two separate states, one Palestinian and one Jewish – something which never came to pass. That Britain, the United States, and France essentially sided with the Jewish population and not with the Arab population, was evident – despite repeated declarations regarding the Arab-Israeli conflicts and the formula of “two peoples, two states” – from the very outset of the violent establishment of the State of Israel, which caused for the Palestinians the first great catastrophe (in Arabic, *al-Nakba*), forcing them to flee to Lebanon and Jordan. Neither Britain nor France made any move to prevent the forced exodus of 700,000 Palestinians from their land, which had been militarily occupied by Israeli forces. The Jewish state served the interests of all the imperialist powers, as it could fulfil the role of their gendarme in a region that, after its complete disintegration, had become turbulent and difficult to control; and it also helped to assuage the guilty conscience of the imperialist democracies, which – despite being aware of the fate of millions of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps – did absolutely nothing to halt this long-announced genocide.

Thus, after the war, the victorious democracies facilitated the migration of hundreds of thousands of European Jews from Poland, Germany, Russia (thereby essentially effecting a massive ethnic cleansing in Central and Eastern Europe and effectively becoming the executors of the Nazi will to solve the ‘Jewish question’ in this part of Europe) and also from the Middle East itself to Israel, their new homeland. In this way, imperialism – whether under the guise of formal democracy or not – hoped to mitigate, if not outright pacify, the Middle East, which was instead emerging as a region where the ethnic, religious, political and economic conflicts between the peoples who had inhabited it for centuries would intersect and, with the added contradictions between various imperialist powers, become even more intense. Meanwhile, over the decades since 1948, Israel has become a highly advanced capitalist country with pronounced expansionist ambitions – ambitions that it can only realise by subjugating the entire Palestinian population so that it cannot in any way threaten Tel Aviv’s interests in seizing the entire territory of Palestine – even at the cost of exterminating the Palestinian people, as has in fact been happening in Gaza for more than 600 days.

Rebellions, uprisings and wars, in which Palestinians have been the main actors for more than sixty years, despite constant defeats and the need to fight not only against the Israeli army but also against the governments and armies of Arab countries that claimed in words to be supporters and friends of the “Palestinian cause”, have not led to a “resolution” of the “Palestinian question”. Despite they have repeatedly placed their trust in the influence and leadership of political groups and militias which, from the days of the PLO to the present-day Palestinian National Au-

thority and Hamas, have consistently demonstrated that they prioritise their own interests and privileges, exploiting the Palestinian proletarian and peasant masses and alternately placing themselves at the service of one regional or imperialist power or another; and despite that they have borne the most terrible consequences in the form of oppression, humiliation, torture and death – the Palestinian masses continue to resist and survive on the remnants of land that are increasingly being transformed into open-air cemeteries.

It is clear that all imperialist powers have an interest in maintaining favorable economic, trade, financial, and political relations with Israel; even after 8 October 2023, they continued to trade in all kinds of weaponry – with the leading actors in this trade being the United States, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, and even Spain. The latter, despite Pedro Sánchez’s recent recognition of the so-called “Palestinian state”, increased its arms imports from Israel after 7 October 2023, including new Spike missiles and Cardom mortars “*tested in combat*” in Gaza (1). These powers have done nothing to follow up their conciliatory words about “two peoples, two states” (which they know perfectly well will never be realised) with concrete actions, and they have done nothing to stop the systematic violence of the Israeli army and settlers against the Palestinian civilian population.

What, then, has their great political, economic, and military power served for? To protect the Palestinian civilian population? To intimidate the State of Israel with threats of harsh retaliatory measures if it does not stop its systematic violence against the defenceless Palestinian population? Certainly not – considering that after 600 days of bombardment, which is razing the Gaza Strip to the ground – with more than one hundred thousand dead, whether identified or buried under the rubble, and hundreds of thousands wounded, dying, starving, and sick without access to medical care – many rulers in suits and ties still dare to declare in front of the cameras that Israel is “going too far” that it has “crossed the line” (what line? how many civilian deaths are “acceptable” for these gentlemen after nearly two years of bombings that have hit schools, hospitals, civilian homes, refugee camps?), that it is time to “negotiate”... Negotiate with whom? With Hamas? Which is itself a co-responsible party in this war unleashed by Israel, and which, on the contrary, has an interest in seeing the population of Gaza continue to suffer all the atrocities that the Israeli army is capable of, so as to have yet another pretext to reorganise and regain its influence over at least part of the Palestinian population, and to continue serving as an extended arm of the regional powers (and not only Iran) that find it convenient keeping Israel fully engaged in the territory that was once Palestine?

And it is certainly not the so-called “humanitarian aid” – in the form of trucks loaded with food, medicine, clothing, and supplies that has arrived at the borders of Gaza and, since March 2, has been blocked under the scorching sun by the Israeli army, thereby preventing any assistance to a population that is being systematically bombed and tormented by hunger – that

is easing the survival of Palestinians in Gaza. After expelling the UN humanitarian organisation UNRWA, accused of terrorism by the terrorist Israeli government, and, in cooperation with the United States, establishing a new self-proclaimed humanitarian organisation, the *Alliance of Lawyers for Palestine* (ASAP), under the leadership of the so-called *Gaza Humanitarian Foundation* (GHF) – financed by Mossad and the Israeli Ministry of Defence, and in reality composed of American mercenaries and former CIA agents – Israel is rapidly advancing its plan to concentrate the majority of Palestinians from the Strip into its southern area. Here, near the border with Egypt, under the supervision of the United States, it has established four food distribution centres (compared to the previous 400 distribution centres previously operated by UNRWA throughout the Strip), while long and narrow corridors of barbed wire have been constructed and all those queuing for food are identified using the most advanced biometric technologies. After days and weeks of starvation, it is understandable that Palestinians crowd in order to secure at least a minimal amount of food. As was anticipated, in order to disperse the pressing crowd and force the Palestinians to line up in an orderly fashion within the specially prepared corridors, and to prevent any assault on the meagre food supplies available, American contractors and criminal militias organised by Palestinian clans in coordination with Netanyahu’s government (2) opened fire on the crowd, adding more dead and wounded to the tens of thousands already hit by Israeli attacks. In this way, Palestinians are being treated worse than prisoners in any concentration camp: behind the facade of “humanitarian aid” – which serves to soothe the guilty conscience of the imperialist countries – loom the barrels of machine guns and the cannons of tanks, turning the food distribution centres into deadly traps.

And while this long and bloody slaughter continues in the Gaza Strip, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan was planning, on Sunday, June 1, to meet with Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah, in the West Bank, to discuss what is supposed to become one day the much craved “Palestinian state”. For more than fifty years, no high-ranking representative of Saudi Arabia has set foot on Palestinian soil; for more than fifty years, Riyadh has remained silent about the tragedy of the Palestinian people. At the head of an Arab delegation composed of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, and other countries of the Arab League, Prince Faisal bin Farhan intended to launch an ini-

(1) Cfr. <https://contropiano.org/altro/2025/06/05/benefici-inconfessabili-la-compravendita-darmi-tra-la-spagna-e-israele-dopo-il-7-ottobre-0183806>

(2) Cfr. <https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/caos-aiuti-striscia>, 31 May 2025, about Yasser Abu Shabab, a member of a powerful family from Khan Yunis in the south of the Strip, who, in agreement with Israeli forces, organised the assaults on hundreds of UN World Food Programme trucks.

Future of Palestinians

tiative through which Saudi Arabia would like to once again play a key role in restoring inter-state relations between the Arab countries of the region and Israel – and, as befits an experienced merchant, on several fronts at once. First and foremost, through the normalisation of relations with Israel on the basis of the famous Abraham Accords, which were suspended following the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, and Israel’s extremely violent response in the Gaza Strip – accords that had already normalised relations between Israel and Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Morocco, and which could lead to the restorations of relations between Tel Aviv and Riyadh. Secondly, by restoring relations with the Palestinian National Authority, after they were severed, and by placing the “Palestinian question” back at the centre of attention – all in line with Macron’s France, with whom Riyadh has convened a UN conference for June 17–20 precisely to push once again for the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Thus, we are once again witnessing yet another theatrical performance in which the “Palestinian question” is being used – now by one power, now by another – as a lever to advance their own interests in the partition of a region that is systematically subjected to fundamentally irresolvable conflicts, and in which the regional powers – Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and, of course, Israel – have been trying for at least sixty years to assert their dominance over the other competitors. Behind them – or alongside them – operate the historic imperialist powers and as well as younger imperialisms, such as China, which are not so much interested in the “Palestinian cause” as in oil and the trade routes that pass through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Persian Gulf. In fact, this visit to Ramallah was thwarted by Israel and was naturally... postponed. Proof that the grand Israeli plan aims to reduce the number of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to a historic minimum can be seen in the continuous new settlement activities in the West Bank – and tomorrow, after the extermination in Gaza is completed, also in the Strip itself. It is certainly no coincidence that the visit of Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan to Ramallah was scheduled to take place exactly twenty-four hours after Netanyahu’s government approved another 22 settlements in the occupied West Bank – the largest settlement operation in the occupied territories, which are still illusorily designated for a future Palestinian state...

War in the turmoil-ridden Middle East has been, is, and will continue to be the normal state of affairs, because too many contradictions have accumulated and concentrated there over more than a century: they continue to generate further conflicts. The only historical answer to this situation of permanent war – to the constant bloodshed through which the regional and imperialist bourgeoisies repeatedly seek to impose their particular interests – can be the outbreak of the proletarian class struggle. Such a proletarian class struggle could erupt in Egypt as well as in Syria, Iran, Turkey or Saudi Arabia itself, Lebanon, Iraq, or directly in Palestine – and it could well possess the

force to rapidly engulf the entire region in the flames of class struggles.

Unfortunately, and not just today, any way out of oppression, massacres, and the ongoing extermination of the Palestinians is still completely denied. Under the guise of “Israel’s right to defend itself”, the bloody Jewish bourgeoisie – in the name of the “chosen people of God”, a God who demands absolute obedience and to whom even the most precious sacrifice – human life – must be offered – justifies “Israel’s right to defend itself” by any means, including the most violent and inhumane, conceived, planned and carried out against any other “godless” nation or nation considered an enemy. Based on this ancient religious belief, the “chosen people of God” have, over time and from generation to generation, forged a very close bond of solidarity among all their members – and among all Jewish communities that have been expelled from various countries since the Roman Empire. This bond has helped them survive throughout history, during which they were mainly engaged in trade and money lending, eventually becoming usurers and bankers, as they were prohibited by law from owning real estate and land. In reality, especially during the Middle Ages, the “chosen people of God” fulfilled an important social function in this way: as a non-member of the Christian community, it could engage in activities that Christians condemned yet needed – above all, usury. The development of trade and monetary circulation led to the expansion of usury, which contributed to the entrenchment of the early seeds of capitalism and the subsequent dissolution of feudal society. This, however, was not enough to protect Jewish communities from the massacres and pogroms that afflicted them from the Middle Ages onward in Germany, England, France, and especially Russia. The “chosen people of God” was persecuted by many other nations, particularly Christian ones, since – in the endless hypocrisy of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy – the discontent of the lower classes was deliberately directed against Jewish communities, which, due to their distinct characteristics, were easily identifiable and could be easily isolated into ghettos. Thus was born the resentment triggered by the competition that Jews represented for non-Jews, when – in addition to usury, and thanks to the money they had at their disposal — they turned to the classic petty-bourgeois professions (trade, the liberal professions, etc.). In this way, anti-Jewish sentiment (known as antisemitism) from the feudal era was taken up by the bourgeoisie, who turned the Jews into convenient scapegoats.

Centuries of persecution did not prevent a large part of the Jewish community from becoming wealthy through trade and usury – in a world where relations between different peoples, whether violent or less so, were intensifying and increasingly revealing the necessity of exchanging products, and later commodities. So much so that, when gold, silver, and eventually money became the standard of exchange, the commercial and usurious practices that Jews had perfected and developed over centuries secured them such a priv-

ileged position in society that they became the foremost representatives of capitalism.

The absence of class struggle in Israel, Europe, America, and the Arab countries of the Middle East prevents the Palestinian proletariat – and even more so the Palestinian population as a whole – from relying on the only concrete solidarity that could help it resist extermination and shake off the leeches in the form of the nationalist-bourgeois forces of Hamas, the Palestinian National Authority, and the various clans and politico-military formations; these forces, over the past decades, have represented not a “national and democratic solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the exploitation of the combativeness and indomitable resistance of the Palestinian proletariat to advance their own bourgeois class interests and privileges – at times through armed clashes with Israel and with this or that Arab state which proved just as repressive towards them as Israel, and at other times through the vilest and most cynical compromises with the ruling powers, whether represented by Israel, the Arab states, the United States, or the European powers.

The most recent Israeli offensive against the population of Gaza, following a false ceasefire agreed with Washington, has been named *Gideon's Chariots*. Every name Israel has given to its wars has always carried a strong symbolic meaning. In this case, it refers to the Bible, specifically to the *Book of Judges* and the deeds of Judge Gideon (11th–10th century BC), “chosen by God” to lead the Israelites back to faith in the God of Israel, after they had turned

away from God’s commandments and were oppressed by pagan peoples such as the Midianites and Amalekites. His actions can be summarised as a campaign of extermination, which Gideon organised through a surprise night attack on the Midianite camp; the element of surprise facilitated the victory of Gideon and his three hundred warriors. He personally executed the captured princes and ordered the extermination of the inhabitants of two villages, Succoth and Penuel, whose inhabitants were guilty of not supporting his army. Thus, according to the Bible, the law of the God of Israel was restored and control over the territory inhabited by the Israelites was secured – and Judge Gideon then ensured forty years of peace. In the New Testament, he was elevated as a model of faith for all Christians – a faith that in reality commanded the extermination of all who did not submit to the law of the God of Israel... and to the law of the God of the Christians...


And what else is it, if not an extermination organised down to the smallest details – precisely what has been taking place in Gaza since 8 October 2023, the day after Hamas’s attack on the Israeli kibbutzim bordering Gaza? An extermination carried out with the consent of all so-called civilised states – and for which they will one day be held accountable before the advancing revolutionary proletarian movement, which – driven by the ever sharper and more acute contradictions of global capitalism – will inevitably rise from the ashes.

June 5, 2025



Proletarian
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 IIInd 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.

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Gen Z Protests : it is not the “youth” that will overthrow capitalism, but the proletariat united behind its class party

Since the fall of 2025, the media cliché of a “Gen Z revolution” has been gaining ground, fueled by multiple uprisings from Nepal to Morocco, Madagascar to Indonesia, Peru to Kenya, shaking the rotten pillars of “peripheral” bourgeois societies, which are relatively young in their historical trajectory and whose means of democratic control are therefore far from matching the mystifying power of their elders. This has reached the point where in Nepal and Madagascar, as in Bangladesh in the summer of 2024, these revolts have succeeded in overthrowing the governments in power – not without the support of the army, which remains the real master of the game.

The proliferation of revolts and the radical nature of the means of action, with frequent insurrectionary struggles against the police and the burning of buildings symbolizing the hated power, have led certain so-called far-left groups (1), never the last when it comes to bourgeois opportunism, to claim that these revolts are the latest incarnation of the world socialist revolution. Even if they claim to welcome it, they are in fact doing everything possible to multiply the obstacles on the long road that will enable the proletariat, guided by its class party, to resume its historic struggle, the culmination of which is the violent conquest of political power and the destruction, through despotic measures, of the bourgeois state and society. As illusory as the prospects for immediate victory of these revolt movements may be, which at best can only lead to a change of leadership, their “virality” – to use a term popular among digital “specialists” – and the ease with which the means of action, slogans, and symbols circulate around the globe, they require Marxists not to be indifferent to them but to scrutinize them with the weapon of criticism.

SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH, INDONESIA, NEPAL, PERU, MOROCCO, MADAGASCAR : AN OVERVIEW OF “YOUTH REVOLTS”

According to the newspaper *Le Monde*, the sequence known as the “Gen Z revolts” began in 2022 before intensifying significantly in the fall of 2025 (2). Their first victory was achieved in **Sri Lanka** where, faced with economic mismanagement and corruption by the Rajapaksa government, economic crisis and inflation, daily power cuts and shortages of essential goods, tens of thousands of protesters, after several months of demonstrations, managed to force President Rajapaksa into exile, having first stormed the presidential palace. These interclassist protests, with a strong youth presence, whose demands were initially general and related to living and working conditions but eventually focused on democratic slogans, initiated a classic pattern that would henceforth be replicated almost identically in many countries.

Thus, in the summer of 2024 in **Bangladesh**, tens of thousands of students launched a series of mass protests following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s decision to increase quotas in the civil service for members of families who participated in the struggle for independence led by the Awami League (3), religious or ethnic minorities, under-represented districts, and disabled groups. This measure is denounced by students as an illustration of the nepotism and corruption that characterizes Bangladeshi power ; it is all the more controversial because it constitutes an obstacle to access to the civil service, the only professional outlet available to these middle-class students, as in many poor countries where states traditionally have great difficulty providing young graduates with jobs that match their qualifications. As in Sri Lanka, the protests turned into riots, forcing the army to intervene to prevent an escalation of disorder and anarchy, the traditional fear of any bourgeois regime whose stability relies more on the stick of repression than on the carrot of democracy. The military then unscrupulously sacrificed Prime Minister Hasina, the embodiment of the political class despised by young people, and brought the icon of the international petty bourgeoisie, economist and former Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, out of retirement, thus satisfying the protesters.

Since the end of summer 2025, this trend has accelerated worldwide. In **Indonesia**, increases in property and real estate taxes, combined with higher housing subsidies for members of parliament, sparked a series of protests that drew up to 100,000 demonstrators. The violent crackdown on the protests, which claimed the lives of a dozen people, including a motorcycle taxi driver, radicalized the movement to the point that several MPs’ homes and a regional parliament were set on fire, forcing the government to abandon the tax increases.

A few weeks later, **Nepal** faced a similar movement following the “communist” government’s decision to ban social media, while the Nepalese proletariat includes nearly 2 million immigrants (out of a population of 30 million), thus cutting off relations between breadwinners and their relatives who remained in the country. As in previous cases, the intensification of repression contributed to a hardening of the protests, which turned into riots that went as far as setting fire to the seat of Parliament. Once again, it was the army that took the lead, staging a change of government and entrusting executive power to a former chief justice of the Supreme Court, Sushila Karki.

From the end of September, **Madagascar** saw the so-called “Gen Z” take action on socio-economic and political demands : against water and electricity cuts ; an end to the deterioration of public services suffering from a lack of investment ; an end to corruption and abuse of power ; etc. The Rajoelina government’s decision, which has become customary, to use force

to suppress the movement, at the cost of some 20 deaths and hundreds of injuries, was as ineffective as in previous examples. Although aware of the need to rely on the army, the only force of stability in the country, which explains his choice to appoint a military man, Ruphin Zafisambo, as the new prime minister, Rajoelina was forced to flee, benefiting in these circumstances from the help of French imperialism. He was faced with the decision of part of the army to support the demonstrators and the mutiny of CAPSAT, whose commander, Michaël Randrianirina, proclaimed himself transitional president before being officially invested by the Constitutional Court. Once again, the example of Madagascar shows that the keys to the situation remain in the hands of the army, and therefore of the bourgeois order (4).

These movements are currently continuing in **Morocco**, where demonstrators, mostly young people and often from the working class, are protesting against disastrous economic and social conditions and facing massive repression from the government and the royal authorities, who are resorting to the arbitrary imprisonment of demonstrators (5). This is also the case in **Peru**, where young people are mobilizing against endemic corruption among the political class and rising insecurity, particularly in the most working-class neighborhoods of Lima. Taking the lead, the Peruvian bourgeoisie preferred to sacrifice its current puppet by removing the highly unpopular President Dina Boluarte, who was elected on a far-left ticket with former President Pedro Castillo, whom she then betrayed, in order to calm the protesters without having to respond to their main demands.

Based on this brief chronicle, which could also have mentioned similar movements that took place in **Kenya** in May-June 2024 against the finance bill ; in **Ecuador** in September-October 2025, following the removal of fuel subsidies ; and in the **Philippines** last September against corruption, particularly in relation to flood control projects, it is possible to highlight a number of common characteristics that enable revolutionaries to navigate seemingly diverse and unique situations and thus avoid the pitfall of immediatism that characterizes the “analyses” of the pseudo-far left.

A MARXIST AND CLASS-BASED ANALYSIS OF “YOUTH”

Where the media and bourgeois thinking see indistinct individuals or masses, such as the famous “Gen Z” that refers to people born between 1997 and 2012 who have been familiar with the use of new information and communication technologies since birth, Marxists see social forces with antagonistic interests, which we call classes. “Youth” is not a social class ; it is divided by class boundaries in the same way as “adults” are. Admittedly, it differs from the rest of the population in its greater propensity to mobilize and its apparent greater radicalism. This explains why, historically, the youth organizations of socialist or communist parties have often counted among their members particularly advanced elements, such as Karl Liebknecht in Germany, Amadeo Bordiga in Italy, and many of the future leaders of the Third International.

This is even more true of students, who are often the first to take up the struggle in times of crisis and instability, to the point of seeing themselves as a true vanguard. This was particularly evident in Leon Trotsky’s analysis of the fall of the Spanish monarchy, which was about to give birth to the Second Republic : *“When the bourgeoisie consciously and stubbornly refuses to solve the problems arising from the crisis of bourgeois society, and the proletariat is not yet ready to take on this task, it is often the students who take center stage. During the first Russian revolution, we observed this phenomenon many times. It has always been of great significance to us : this revolutionary or semi-revolutionary activity implies that bourgeois society is undergoing a profound crisis. The petty-bourgeois youth, sensing that an explosive force is building up among the masses, seeks in its own way to find a way out of this impasse by advancing the political situation.”* (6)

The absence of the proletariat as a class, reflected in particular by the absence of its party, thus opens the way for the petty-bourgeois youth to impose its methods of action and, even more so, its demands. In almost all countries facing such demonstrations, all of which belong to the “periphery” of global capitalism, it is mainly young people from the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie who have access to university education ; they find themselves confronted with the gap between, on the one hand, their professional aspirations in line with their qualifications and, on the other hand, the limited possibilities of their bourgeois societies to offer them jobs that match these aspirations. As a result, these young people find themselves facing the danger of proletarianization, which they seek to avoid at all costs, hence their insistence on fighting against the nepotism and corruption of the political and economic elites who block the already narrow paths to positions of responsibility in bourgeois society. It is therefore not surprising to see many young people from bourgeois backgrounds emerging as leaders or spokespersons in these struggles. This is particularly noticeable in Madagascar, where the main leaders of the movement all belong to the educated bourgeoisie and even include the son of a minister (!) (7).

These elements, due to their greater knowledge of political mechanisms and their greater willingness to organize and use social networks, logically place themselves at the head of protesters who, for the most part, are marginalized and condemned to precarious jobs and therefore belong to the proletariat. They thus manage to encompass the social and economic demands of the proletarian or impoverished masses in democratic and interclassist demands, with the sole consequence of relegating the original reasons for the anger to the bottom of the list.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEMANDS THAT MOBILIZE THE WORKING CLASS...

In the vast majority of cases, with the exception of Bangladesh and, to a lesser extent, Nepal, these movements are driven by genuine social anger. It is in response to the economic crisis, poor living

Gen Z Protests

and working conditions, dilapidated public services, and rising living costs due to anti-social government policies that marginalized young people from the proletariat or proletarianized middle classes take up the struggle. Although the spark is often a particularly controversial decision by the bourgeoisie, these struggles are often only the spontaneous and brutal expression of underlying social discontent, which has grown over the years, and in some cases, decades.

Furthermore, these simultaneous struggles on a global scale cannot be understood without first placing them in the context of the economic trajectory of contemporary capitalism. To escape the period of crisis that began in 2007-2008 with the Great Recession, all bourgeois states were forced to intensify their attacks on the working class so that increased exploitation could make production profitable again. As we already stated in our text on Morocco, “*The “return to normal” in business (normal and inevitable until the next crisis, of course) was obtained by placing the burden of “recovery” chiefly on the shoulders of wage workers, but also small farmers and others, who were devastated by international competition against which they could not fight, leaving them in dramatic circumstances.*” (8) Today, we are once again witnessing the beginnings of a new crisis, one that will be all the more violent because it has been delayed by a series of temporary and ineffective long-term remedies, with new attacks on the global proletariat looming. Young proletarians are therefore faced with a future where the only prospects are anti-worker attacks, climate disasters – particularly violent in a country like Bangladesh, for example (9) – and a Third World War that is becoming more certain every day.

The major problem is that these generous but vague demands can easily, in the absence of class-based organizations, be mixed up with other demands that are explicitly democratic, i.e., bourgeois.

... BUT WHICH ARE DROWNED OUT BY INTERCLASSIST AND BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC SLOGANS.

It is therefore unsurprising that demonstrations in all these countries have focused on interclassist slogans calling for an end to corruption, a change of government, or more socially oriented policies to strengthen public services. This predominance of democratic demands can be explained by the combination of two factors that feed off each other : on the one hand, proletarians who, as a result of more than a century of counterrevolution, do not recognize themselves as such and consider themselves “citizens” instead ; on the other, the predominant place occupied in these movements by elements from the educated petty bourgeoisie, who act as their spokespersons. Despite all their generous intentions, they inevitably carry with them the prejudices and illusions of their class of origin. Caught between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, they believe themselves to be above the classes. They are therefore convinced that they represent the interests of the entire people against a corrupt

oligarchy that must be overthrown, more or less peacefully – the degree of violence is irrelevant here – so that democracy can once again operate freely.

Karl Marx wrote masterful pages on the equally harmful and quixotic role of the petty bourgeoisie in popular movements in his work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte*, and even though this text is nearly 175 years old, for us, inveterate dogmatists, it has the same importance as if it had been written today. Thus, criticizing the Montagnards of 1848, those romantic “socialists” who claimed to represent the interests of the entire people and who failed miserably in their struggle against Prince-President Louis Napoleon, Marx writes : “*No party exaggerates its means more than the democratic, none deludes itself more light-mindedly over the situation. [...] the democrat, because he represents the petty bourgeoisie – that is, a transition class, in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously mutually blunted – imagines himself elevated above class antagonism generally. The democrats concede that a privileged class confronts them, but they, along with all the rest of the nation, form the people. What they represent is the people’s rights ; what interests them is the people’s interests. Accordingly, when a struggle is impending, they do not need to examine the interests and positions of the different classes. They do not need to weigh their own resources too critically. They have merely to give the signal and the people, with all its inexhaustible resources, will fall upon the oppressors. Now if in the performance their interests prove to be uninteresting and their potency impotence, then either the fault lies with pernicious sophists, who split the indivisible people into different hostile camps, or the army was too brutalized and blinded to comprehend that the pure aims of democracy are the best thing for it, or the whole thing has been wrecked by a detail in its execution, or else an unforeseen accident has this time spoiled the game. In any case, the democrat comes out of the most disgraceful defeat just as immaculate as he was innocent when he went into it, with the newly won conviction that he is bound to win, not that he himself and his party have to give up the old standpoint, but, on the contrary, that conditions have to ripen to suit him.*” (10)

The petty bourgeoisie thus appears as an eternal dupe, deceiving itself with its illusions but, even more seriously, dragging the proletariat down with it in its fall. Thus, his demands for good government ultimately depend not on his own strength but on the goodwill of the only actor who holds the key to the situation in these peripheral countries with poorly established foundations : the army.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN PERIPHERAL COUNTRIES

It is clear that in most countries facing “Gen Z revolts,” it was the intervention of the army that brought the protests to an end. This was the case in Bangladesh and Nepal, where the army, recognizing the weak foundation on which the ruling power was established,

took the lead by choosing the composition of the new government itself before officially stepping aside in favor of civilian rule. In reality, behind the facade of a civilian government of technocrats with no real legitimacy, it is the army that wields real power. This dynamic is even more visible in Madagascar, where it was the support of part of the army for the movement and the CAPSAT mutiny that caused Rajoelina's departure and the establishment of a transitional military government.

This fundamental political role of the army distinguishes the peripheral countries from the rich imperialist countries, where the tradition of democratic opium has been built up over several centuries. On the contrary, in peripheral countries, most of which gained formal independence after World War II, it was almost immediately the army that seized power in order to put an end to the fratricidal struggles between bourgeois clans and embody the general interest... bourgeois, needless to say. Only the military had sufficient strength to discipline the various bourgeois factions as well as the petty bourgeois and proletarian masses who, in some cases, had waged an insurrectionary struggle to overthrow colonial rule. In these countries, where democratic traditions are not deeply rooted, where coups d'état and grossly rigged elections are commonplace, delegitimizing the democratic myth, only **organized force**, i.e., the army, is capable of guaranteeing the country's stability and maintaining bourgeois order. As Ferdinand Lassalle, for once, accurately explained in "*What is a Constitution?*": "*The army [...] is organized, assembled at all times, perfectly disciplined, and ready to intervene at any moment; on the other hand, the force that lies within the nation, even though it is infinitely greater, is not organized, and the will of the nation, and in particular the degree of resolve that this will has reached, is not always easily discernible by its members; no one knows exactly how many companions they would find. Furthermore, the nation lacks the instruments of organized force, those foundations of a Constitution that we have already mentioned: cannons.*" (11)

This lesson, crystal clear to a Marxist, can never be understood by a petty bourgeois. This is what condemns him to eternal impotence, and the proletariat with him until it finds the strength to reconnect with its historical trajectory and set itself real goals. Before achieving its emancipation, the proletariat will have to follow a long path to rediscover its traditions, its forms of organization, in short, its internationalist and international class party, which, once reconstituted, will be able to guide it to final victory over the bourgeoisie. The current struggles of the so-called "Gen Z" are expressions of social anger; but they are still miles away from a genuine revolutionary struggle. While they are a symptom of the future resumption of the proletarian class struggle, they could only really contribute to the latter if the proletariat, taking advantage of the weakening of the bourgeois order, found the strength to enter into struggle for its own immediate interests.

This would be an important step towards its class-based reorganization, bringing closer the hour of the

true revolution that Bordiga, against the opportunism that saw in the student movement a new revolutionary subject, defined as "*plurinational, single-party, and single-class, that is to say, above all, without the worst interclassist rot: that of the so-called student youth*" (12). ●

(1) See, for example, the Revolutionary Communist International (*sic*), whose British newspaper, *The Communist*, ran the headline "Join the Gen Z Revolution" on its front page and claimed that "*From Bangladesh to Britain, 'Gen Z' are turning their backs on capitalism and embracing revolution (sic) and communism (resic).*" <https://communist.red/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Digital-The-Communist-Issue-35.pdf>; <https://communist.red/generation-revolution-fight-for-your-future-join-the-communists/>

(2) "Asia's Gen Z rises up against entrenched political elites", *Le Monde*, September 29, 2025: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/09/29/asia-gen-z-rises-up-against-entrenched-political-elites_6745909_4.html

(3) The Awami League is the organization that historically led the "struggle" for Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan, which was ruled by the Muslim League. Continuously in power between 2009 and 2024, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Bangladesh's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the party is notable for its high level of corruption and fierce repression of any dissent.

(4) See our statement "Social Explosion in Madagascar", dated October 7, 2025.

(5) See our statement "Revolts in Morocco. Popular discontent meets repression from the regime of Mohammed VI", dated October 2, 2025.

(6) Leon Trotsky, "The tasks of Communists in Spain. Letter to *Contra la Corriente*", May 25, 1930, French version available online on marxists.org: <https://www.marxists.org/francais/trotsky/oeuvres/1930/05/300525b.htm>. Underlined by us. Our translation.

(7) "A Madagascar, la Gen Z refuse de se voir confisquer sa victoire", *Le Monde*, October 16, 2025.

(8) "Revolts in Morocco", cited article.

(9) In 2022, Bangladesh faced a series of floods that impacted the lives of millions of people, causing dozens of injuries and displacing hundreds of thousands.

(10) Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1851, available online on marxists.org: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch03.htm>. Underlined in the original.

(11) Ferdinand Lassalle, *What is a Constitution?*, 1862, French version available online on marxists.org: <https://www.marxists.org/francais/general/lassalle/constitution.htm>. Underlined in the original. Our translation. A former member of the Communist League, Lassalle was a pioneer in organizing the proletariat in Germany in the 1860s, but he also embodied a whole series of deviations against which Marxists had to wage a long and difficult struggle.

(12) Amadeo Bordiga, *Letter to Umberto Terracini*, March, 4 1969, available online: https://www.quinternas.org/archivio/carteggi/19690304_bordiga_a_terracini.htm. Our translation.

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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.

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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.

