

# communist program

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ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

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## Party and Class

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### WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY

*is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); 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 Popular Fronts and of the Resistance blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in link with the working class, against personal and electoral politics.*

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*Organ of the International Communist Party*

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## Introduction

In this booklet we have included the *Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution* which were adopted at the Second Congress of the Third International in 1920, and three documents of the Italian Communist Left on the same topic. The first two documents of the Left were written in 1921 when the Communist Party of Italy as a whole agreed with these positions; the last one was written following World War II once the Left had organized itself into a party *separate* and *opposed* to those organizations compromised by the irreparable stalinist degeneracy.

These four documents as declarations and political weapons are in complete harmony with each other. This agreement is clear even for one who does not know that the Italian Left had brought its unconditional support to the Second Congress of the Communist International.

All these documents emphasize the *fundamental* role of the Party not only in the preparation for the revolutionary conquest of power and during that conquest itself, but also in the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship. The role of the Party is just as decisive after the proletariat is in power because class warfare, far from subsiding, is intensified and spreads throughout the world.

These documents attack those movements of various natures and origins which deny this role of the party, as we will elaborate later on. In this denouncement the Italian Left continues the same line of struggle that Marx and Engels waged against Proudhonism and its inheritor Bakuninism (these being typical of the periodically recurring manifestations of those bastard intermediate classes acting in direct opposition to the objective historical development of the capitalist mode of production and, consequently, counteracting the necessity of surpassing its limits in a revolutionary way).

All these documents are in complete agreement in defining the nature and role of the party. They recognize the necessity of strict centralization; they deny the slightest autonomy to local party organizations and reject any claim that the immediate forms of the working

class movement (unions, factory councils, cooperatives, etc.) should remain politically neutral and independent from political parties.

The documents of the Left, however, are more explicit on the concepts of Party and Class and, consequently, on the definition of the Party's tasks as the organizing direction of the class.

First of all, in elaborating the incisive formula of the *Communist Manifesto* they affirm and develop the idea that the class *truly exists as a class only when* it has given birth to the Party or, as this idea was stated in the Manifesto, «the organization of the proletarians into a class and consequently into a political party». That is to say, the mass of individuals brought together by their identical or similar relationships to the productive process becomes a class only when it emerges as a single force, moving towards a final objective and conscious of the historical path leading to that aim. The same idea was expressed in this manner by the Abstentionist Communist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party, a few months before the Second Congress of the Communist International: «The decisive revolutionary struggle directly against the bourgeois state... is the clash of *the whole* proletarian class against *the whole* bourgeois class. Its *instrument* is the political class party, the Communist Party, which brings about the conscious organization of the proletarian vanguard aware of the necessity of unifying its actions *in space* —by surpassing the particular interests of groups, categories or nationalities— and *in time* —by subordinating to the realization of its final objective all partial conquests and advantages that do not strike at the essence of bourgeois society. *Consequently, it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat becomes a class fighting for its own emancipation*» (1). As Marx writes in *Poverty of Philosophy*, it becomes «a class no longer for capital but for itself».

It is with this understanding (an understanding also shared by the Bolsheviks) that the Left, from then on, defined the party as an «organ» of the working class instead of merely a «part» or even a vanguard «part» of it. This definition is far more satisfactory because it cannot imply a statistical interpretation of the party. It characterizes the party as a force *synthesizing* the innumerable revolutionary thrusts continually provoked by the material living conditions of the labor force in capitalist society. It defines the party as the actual form under which the proletariat constitutes itself first into a class, then into a ruling class through its rise to power and through the exercise of its dictatorship over the defeated class.

These distinctions were not doctrinaire academic scruples or subtle differences of terminology. However, the importance of them did not appear clear at first, when the whole International formed a

(1) From the *Theses of the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party* (1919). Full text (in Italian) in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, Edizioni Il Programma Comunista. French translation in *Défense de la continuité du programme communiste*, Editions Programme Communiste — See the list of publications at the end of this booklet.

homogeneous front in the theoretical and practical battle; it *did* appear clear later on as the force of the world revolutionary wave began to ebb, as opportunist elements began to infiltrate the international headquarters of the communist revolution, and as the powerful construction of the *Theses on the Role of the Party* was first questioned. It was first alleged that the party, being a «part» of the working class, would no longer be defined by its historical trajectory (that is, by its program, its strategy, and its view on tactical and organizational problems) but by its «proletarian» social composition in a mechanical and statistical sense. Next it was decided that the party, still as a «part», was to adapt itself to the vacillations of the «whole» and to the spontaneous reactions of the proletarians confronted with the ups and downs of class warfare. Thus, the party began to abandon its principles little by little. By adopting this first position the party was sinking back into the «workerist» conception that the Theses of 1920 had condemned when they rejected the formula of the «Party that must have a proletarian character». The second position leads to the subordination of the party to the actual or presumed «will of the great mass», even if that mass is temporarily influenced in a reactionary way by negative situations —it was in this very policy that the Theses of 1920 saw the origins of the capitulation of the parties of the Second International to the class enemy and its imperialist war.

These positions were not, we insist, those of Lenin and the glorious old Bolshevik guard, as is evident by every paragraph of the Theses. The Left, though, has always insisted that the theoretical elements as well as the practical slogans must be most clearly defined, even at the risk of simplification, in order to avoid any ambiguity or distortion. With this in mind, the Left constantly brought up the following point in its intervention in the International: the formulations of the party are not neutral or indifferent instruments in the struggle, they are real forces which condition the nature of the party itself; when they are correct they contribute in leading the party in the right direction and when they are wrong they become, or can become, *one* of the factors diverting it from its program, from the general class interests, and consequently from its historical role.

The Theses of 1920 defined this role of the Party, making a distinction between the party form and other *necessary though subordinate forms* of the working class movement; only the Party rises above the often contradictory ups and downs of the gigantic struggle with a consciousness of the historical mission of the proletariat and a general view of the path it *will have to follow*. The Theses drew from this conception —with full agreement of the Left— a set of organizational rules based on a maximum of centralization of the party apparatus. It was necessary for these rules and criteria to be established but, according to the Left, they were not enough «to give us the Party we need». Centralization and discipline are but one side of a whole in which the unity and invariability of a program comprise the other. The Left fought within the *world party* of the proletariat for many years in an effort to have the theory and program established *univocally* and *immutably* and to have the main tactical possibilities

(which *must* be known in advance) codified by the Party (2). The tactical solutions must be known by all and compulsory for all; they *must not and cannot* be left to chance or to the arbitrariness of national, local, contingent or personal «choices». Centralization and discipline of the Party are not mechanically or externally imposed, but are a living expression of a real force, the Party, moving as a *single* block towards a *single* aim—the key to this lies in a consideration for the dialectical link binding the center and the periphery of the Party, the leaders and the «rank and file» militants, the past, present and future generations of the communist movement, and the International and its «national» sections (3).

Once these links of the program are loosened, once the door has been left open to «local» choices of tactical means, and once makeshift expedients, which are not in strict agreement with the strategic objectives of the movement, are used to try to conquer the *necessary* influence on the largest possible strata of the working class (a danger which was pointed out by the Left in 1921 and which became a fact in 1922) then the very basis of genuine centralization and true discipline will be destroyed. Let another step be taken in this direction and the only means of reassembling the scattered pieces of a world party which is no longer homogeneous from a programmatic or from a tactical point of view, will be through the imposition of a formal and external «bureaucratic» discipline based on the physical punishments of a repressive state apparatus: there will no longer be discipline but disciplinary terror upon the party; no longer centralization but stalinist military rule.

Consequently, the party we must have to lead the revolution is not just *any* party enabled by severe discipline to defend any cause, but a party centralized and disciplined at the center as well as at the periphery, working in strict observance, defense and execution of

(2) For an example of such a «codification» of the Party's tactics in the great historical developments, see the *Theses of Rome* of the Communist Party of Italy, 1922. Original text (in Italian) in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, Edizioni Il Programma Comunista. French translation in *Défense de la continuité du programme communiste*, Editions Programme Communiste.

(3) Let us remark, by the way, that this is the solution given by the Left to the difficult problem of the organizational functioning of the Party in its indispensable vertical and hierarchic structure: this problem could not and still cannot be solved by the formula of «democratic centralism». The «guarantee»—if there is any—of the good functioning of the centralized organization of the Party does not lie in the election of upper bodies by lower bodies, or in the democratic consultation of the rank and file as a normal and current practice; it lies instead in the single uniform link that dialectically binds the centre as well as the rank and file to a program known by all and to the «closed» tactical implications of that program—these implications being binding for everyone, beyond all limits of space and time. Such is the meaning of the «organic centralism» as theorized by the Left since 1921: in this conception the spontaneous «discipline» and «confidence» of the peripheral organizations towards the centre of the Party are derived from the fact that this centre, far from embodying a superior «wisdom» or a capacity to «discover» original solutions for «new» problems, is the indispensable *technical* organ for the application of unitary and invariant fixed norms which are known by the rank and file.

a *preconceived* and *codified* plan of struggle (or in Lenin's own words, «that systematic plan of action, illuminated by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics») (4). This is precisely what Trotsky had in mind when he wrote in *Lessons of the Paris Commune* (1920): «It is only with the aid of the party, which rests upon the whole history of its past, which foresees theoretically the path of development, all its stages, and which extracts from it the necessary formula of action, that the proletariat frees itself from the need of always recommencing its history: its hesitations, its lack of decisions, its mistakes». The strength of the Russian Party itself depended on this foresight; it enabled it to continually strike at its objective «without hesitations, without misgivings, without falling back to errors of the past», and therefore with a maximum of centralization and discipline. The Left had to recall all this to the Bolsheviks themselves.

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The 1920 Theses of the Communist International were aimed at making a clear-cut distinction between the Communist positions on all the above issues and the positions of the revisionists, whether they were right-wing social democrats and laborist reformists, or left-wing revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists. These distinctions remain all the more historically fundamental today with the widespread diffusion of petty-bourgeois opportunism. The Theses stand fully in line with the great Marxist doctrinal tradition both as a weapon of struggle and as an instrument in theoretical polemics and political combat, as we will now briefly show.

The 1848 *Manifesto*, written one year after Marx demolished Proudhonism (that common matrix of all future varieties of petty-bourgeois and gradualist socialism), contains in its last section a detailed critique of all deviating «schools» and currents. Before reaching this point though, it reviews, in an impressive synthesis, the dialectical succession of the stages that the proletariat goes through on the tumultuous path of its organization as a class: from the earliest stage when «the workers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country and broken up by their mutual competition», to the stage when «the real fruit of their battles» (as distinct from their «immediate result») is to «centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national [then international] struggle between classes»; that is to say, from the economic struggles and immediate agitation to the open class conflict of the political struggle (as «*every class struggle is a political struggle*») and therefore to the «*organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party*».

It can already be clearly seen that an unbroken thread runs from the *Manifesto* to the Theses of 1920: it condemns all individualism

(4) Lenin, *Where to Begin* (1901), *Works*, vol. 5, p. 18.

and localism as well as all apoliticism and anti-party manifestations; it affirms that the proletariat really acts as a historical class only when it constitutes itself into a political party.

It is commonly known that the *Manifesto* does not use the word «dictatorship» although this concept is implicit both in the expression «ruling class» (which presupposes the existence of a ruled class) as well as the expression «the despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of bourgeois production» (which the proletarians will have to resort to once they have conquered political power in order «to entirely revolutionize the mode of production» even though those measures may at first «appear economically insufficient and untenable»). The concept of the «dictatorship of the proletariat» becomes more precise, however, in the great battles of 1848-1849 (5) and in the immediately following years. In 1852 Marx wrote his famous letter to Weydemeyer, which Lenin mentions in *State and Revolution* as being the keystone of the Marxist theory on the state; however, even before this he wrote the *Statutes of the Communist League* (April 1850) which contains this incisive formula in its first article: the aim of the League is the «overthrow of all privileged classes and their submission to the dictatorship of the proletarians, through which revolution becomes permanent until Communism is achieved». Two inseparable concepts are contained in this formulation: first, the necessity of the violent and dictatorial seizure of power, not as the ultimate result, but as the starting point of a class struggle which is to be more and more vast and extended in time and space, and second, the consequent necessity of an organ—the political party—to centralize and direct that struggle (6).

It is true that the second concept is not explicitly formulated. It will be, however, a short time later as a result of a long polemical struggle, this time not against the reformists and gradualists but against the anarchists. To close this period, at the Congress of the International Working Men's Association (The Hague, 1872), Marx

(5) Let us remember the magnificent war-cry of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* after the repression of the Vienna insurrection on November 7th, 1848: «The cannibalism of the counter-revolution itself... will convince the peoples that there is only one way of *shortening*, simplifying and concentrating the murderous death-pangs of the old-society, the bloody birth-pangs of the new, only *one way—revolutionary terrorism*».

(6) The same idea appears again in a different form in *The Class Struggles in France* (Third section, March 1850): «...the proletariat rallies more and more around *revolutionary socialism*, around *communism*, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This Socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the *class dictatorship* of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class differences generally, to the abolition of all the production relations on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these production relations, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.» And Marx will repeat in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (May 5th 1875): «Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*».

will add the fundamental article 7a to the *Statutes* of 1864: «In its struggle against the collective power of the propertied classes, the working class cannot act as a class, except by constituting *itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes.*» He then proceeds to explain: «This constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end—the *abolition of classes.*» The Theses of 1920 will say, in perfect harmony with this position: «The necessity of a political party of the proletariat can cease only with the complete abolition of classes» (7).

In 1873 Engels returned to the same question in a letter («On Authority») to the Italian sections of the International which were still influenced by the anti-state and anti-party formulations of Bakunin. Engels' formulation was unequivocal: «A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, and cannon—authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the *victorious party* does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries»—this is the lesson to be learned from the Paris Commune. Engels goes on to say: «Either the anti-authoritarians [who, let us not forget it, reject the state as well as the party] do not know what they are talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion, or they do know, and in that case they are *betraying* the movement of the proletariat. In either case, they serve the reaction» (8).

The upward succession of stages of the proletarian struggle is distinctly outlined by Marx and Engels; the historical confirmation achieved through the struggle that followed for more than 50 years only sharpened its relief. At first, the wage laborers are forced by

(7) Marxist theory is one invariant block from its origin to its final victory. The only thing it expects from history is to find itself more and more strictly applied and consequently *more and more deeply engraved with its invariant features* within the program of the class party. To confirm this invariance once more, let us recall that in his speech at the seventh anniversary of the First International (1871), Marx linked the principle of the proletarian dictatorship and, consequently, of terror to the necessity of a centralized direction of the class struggle transformed into an open war on world scale:

«But before such a change can be effected a proletarian dictatorship will become necessary, and the first condition of that is a proletarian army. The working classes will have to conquer the right to emancipate themselves on the battlefield. The task of the International is to organize and combine the forces of labour for the coming struggle.»

The Bolsheviks had to face the same problem in historical material terms and it is in line with the invariant Marxist doctrine that the birth of the Red Army caused indignant outcries to be raised by the reformists and anarchists.

(8) In a letter to G. Trier (December 18, 1889), Engels repeats with his usual clarity: «We are agreed on this: that the proletariat cannot conquer its political domination, the only door to the new society, without violent revolution. For the proletariat to be strong enough to win on the decisive day it must—and this Marx and I have been arguing ever since 1847—form a separate party distinct from all others and opposed to them, a conscious class party».

their immediate living conditions to struggle, but it is in a scattered, disorganized and local way; these immediate struggles are then transformed and centralized into generalized *class* and, consequently, *political* struggles on a national and international level; the proletariat constitutes itself into a class by the means of *the organ of this centralization*, the political party; the proletarian class constitutes itself into the *ruling class* through violent revolution, and maintains its rule by means of terror under the leadership of the party; and finally, the proletariat disappears as a class, implying the disappearance of the political party, as full communism is attained.

The great historical moment when the Marxist theoretical vision was materialized in the living history of the militant proletarian movement was October 1917. But October 1917 would not have been possible without Lenin's *What Is to Be Done*, which forms another link in the continuous chain of militant Marxism. This work vigorously shows that the passage from the stage where the proletariat is a class *in itself* (that is a class for capital) to the stage where the proletariat is a class *for itself* is a *qualitative leap*. The «organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party» and from there into a «ruling class», is not a *result* of the *immediate* economic struggles against capitalist exploitation or of an *allegedly spontaneous* transformation of those struggles into political struggles directed against the *political* power which enforces this exploitation; instead it is the result of *importing* socialist consciousness into the working class from without (an *organized consciousness*, of course). It is true that it would not be possible to import this socialist consciousness if the increasing extension and intensity of the economic struggles did not produce «sparks of political consciousness» among the workers; but neither would it be possible to import socialist consciousness nor to strengthen and deepen it without—in Marx's own words—the «*previous organization*» of the political party; and this «previous organization» can fulfill its role among the class, transforming its struggle and its aims, only if it has been prepared long in advance through an unceasing organic work of *theoretical* education and *active* militancy. If these conditions are not fulfilled, the immediate struggle, which is a material basis of revolution, can never go beyond trade-unionist consciousness, no matter how developed and widespread this consciousness is.

On the eve of the Revolution, fifteen years after *What Is to Be Done*, Lenin wrote:

«The theory of the class struggle, applied by Marx to the question of the state and the socialist revolution, leads as a matter of course to the recognition of the *political rule* of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., of undivided power directly backed by the armed force of the people. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organising *all* the working and exploited people for the new economic system.

«The proletariat needs state power, a centralised organisation of force, an organisation of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to *lead* the enormous mass of the population—the peasants, the petty-bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians—in the work of organising a socialist economy.

«By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organising the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organising their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie» (*The State and Revolution*, II,1).

Another three years went by, and in 1920 Lenin and Trotsky emerged from the furnace of the civil war and red terror with their polemics against Kautsky. «The exclusive role of the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution is quite comprehensible», Trotsky wrote. «The question is of the dictatorship of a class. In the composition of that class there enter various elements, heterogeneous moods, different levels of development. Yet the dictatorship pre-supposes unity of will, unity of direction, unity of action. By what other path then can they be attained? The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat pre-supposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of a party, with a clear programme of action and a faultless internal discipline [...]. We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party. It is thanks to the clarity of its theoretical vision and its strong revolutionary organization that the party has afforded to the Soviets the possibility of becoming transformed from shapeless parliaments of labor into the apparatus of the supremacy of labor» (*Terrorism and Communism*, ch. VIII).

Thirty years of history have given ample direct and *a contrario* evidence to support the Marxist theory of Revolution, State, and Party and it is for this reason (and not that of party pride) that we believe we can honor alongside these works our text *Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party* (1951). This document excellently develops these two concepts: first that the exercise of the dictatorship is delegated to the Party and second that the practice of the Party in the exercise of dictatorship cannot be bound by any rules or «codes».

★★

The preceding considerations explain why the publication of this booklet is important in completing the revival of the international Marxist movement on a solid basis. We are passing through a historical phase where the objective conditions for a general renewal of the class struggle are slowly maturing and where it is more necessary than ever to establish and consolidate the subjective bases for its victorious outcome.

The first manifestation of the crisis of the Third International was the progressive disintegration of the connective tissue in which (as developed in the theoretical construction above) the principles, program, tactics and organization of the class party, the world communist party, are indissolubly tied together. Retrospectively, it is not difficult today to understand why the solid bulwark of an organic and complete assimilation of these principles, programs, tactical deductions, organizational norms and their dialectical link could not be welded in time to oppose the material factors of an international order which influenced the glorious Communist International of 1919-1920 in an eventually catastrophic way (this danger, though, was pointed out by the Italian Left in 1920 and with more and more insistence in the following years). The International was born on the soundest theoretical basis, but it grew up and developed through a far too hasty convergence and affiliation of national organizations which were linked to very heterogeneous and often contradictory traditions. These organizations, far from being a result of a radical and relentless ideological maturation and selection, *imported* into the «world party of the working class» the only superficially retouched vestiges first of centrism, then those of social democracy, not to mention the relics of syndicalism, factory socialism and «workerism». In this way they contributed to the weakening of the International which was already undergoing the tremendous pressure of a quickly deteriorating situation in Russia and in the whole world.

This is a lesson that must not be forgotten in this period of arduous preparation for the international revival of the class struggle. Now even more than at that time, the petty-bourgeois and anarchist abhorrence of centralization, dictatorship and, above all, the party (which also means the program) is rising again as an instinctive but nevertheless erroneous reaction provoked by the devastations of stalinism: it is not directed against the centralization, the dictatorship and the party of *counter-revolution*, but against centralization, dictatorship, party and program *in general*. Today more than ever, the world communist party must be founded on a *theoretical* and *programmatical* base of absolute clarity and homogeneity; these are the indispensable conditions for its organizational efficiency and for a rigorous, not merely formal, discipline. The touchstone of this homogeneity and clarity is the clear consciousness of the nature, role and tasks of the party in the proletarian revolution and in the dictatorship, which must be upheld without any hesitation or attenuation against any attempt to devoid them of their genuine and immutable content. Therefore, as an antithesis to the correct Marxist conception outlined above, it is indispensable to recall this predominant tendency, denying centralization, the party and the dictatorship, which is as old as the working class movement itself. It was theorized after World War I by the false Left of the German Party, a party which had not been hardened enough to resist such theories itself. These theories led to the first split in the revolutionary movement in Central Europe — a *decisive* area for the future of communism in Russia and in the world. It diverted a part of the proletarian vanguard towards erroneous and objectively

liquidationist positions, opening the way for a possible comeback of those centrist tendencies in the Spartakus-Bund which had already offered the lives of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Leo Jogiches as a sacrifice to the World Revolution.

The working class movement in Germany was almost completely free of anarcho-syndicalist or revolutionary-syndicalist trends: these are the typical forms of the «immediatist» conception of the violent emancipation of the working class which deny the central and decisive role of the party in the proletarian revolution; they replace it with undifferentiated organs embracing the entire mass of the proletariat, modelled after the existing production structures of trade unions, factory councils, workshop committees and so on. However, in spite of this partial absence of an anarcho-syndicalist tradition (similar to the one which has infested the working class movement in the Latin countries since the last century and in the Anglo-Saxon countries during the first 20 years of this century), it was still very difficult to implant within the German revolutionary vanguard a true Marxist outlook on the Party, on its relationship to the class, and on its tasks during the violent seizure of power and the subsequent dictatorship.

This is particularly evident in the section of the German revolutionary movement which split from the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) to form the KAPD (Communist Labor Party of Germany), establishing very close relationships with the Dutch group «*De Tribune*» and even recognizing the leading members of that group (Pannekoek and Gorter) as the main theoreticians of its own movement. This current had fought with utmost energy against social-patriotism and reformism and was clearly conscious of the necessity of class violence and of the insurrectional assault of power, as formulated in the classical theses of the Third International. In apparent agreement with the Italian Left, it maintained that the tactical solutions adopted by the Bolsheviks in a backward and partly pre-capitalist Russia, could not be mechanically applied to the situation of the highly advanced capitalism of Western Europe. These apparent similarities however hid profound discrepancies: «Kapedists» and «Tribunists» were in fact closer to the syndicalist current of the revolutionary working class movement than to the genuinely Marxist one.

In the scheme of Gorter and of the other leaders of the KAPD, Western Europe was to be the scene of a revolution in which the proletariat would fight alone against the compact front of the upper and middle bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry. This was right insofar as it was intended to mean that the revolution in Western Europe could only be a proletarian one and would not follow the classical cycle of «double» revolutions. It became a vain abstraction though when it was meant to exclude from the revolutionary scene (and therefore from its tactical and strategic problems) the intervention of minor non-proletarian social strata under the hegemonic leadership of the working class, and the neutralization of other strata, principally the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie in general. The «pure» proletarian social character of the impending revolution, according to the

same scheme, was to be *in itself* the guarantee that the working class, armed with uncompromising and unhesitating determination as the only revolutionary protagonist, would seize power through revolutionary violence.

In this perspective, the tactical problem on the eve of the direct clash with the bourgeois power became, in Gorter's own words, «*first of all to liberate the spirit of the proletariat*» so that the proletariat would be able to organize itself and would be able to create the administrative and productive structures of its dictatorship *by its own means*, without any «external» discipline and centralization. That and only that was the task of the communists —a task of enlightening the «consciousness», not of actively and efficiently leading the actual forces unconsciously and even «anti-consciously» rising from the social underground. In the eyes of the «Kapedists», all forms of organization which have a clear view of the historical course and the final aims of the proletarian movement and which would pretend to «represent» the working class in its struggle to seize and exercise power, all organizations which did not exactly coincide with *the whole* of the wage-earning class and consequently were not its «*direct expression*», all these were considered to be *violating* and *corrupting* the genuineness of the movement for the emancipation of the working class.

The historical opposition proletariat vs. bourgeoisie (and communism vs. opportunism) was thus replaced by an utterly idealistic opposition between masses and parties, or even worse between masses and leaders. The pamphlet «*The Split in the Communist Party of Germany*» which incurred Lenin's scathing criticism, posed the question in these terms: «The Communist Party is the party of the most determined class struggle. [...] The question arises: who is to exercise the dictatorship: the Communist Party or the proletarian class? [...] Fundamentally, should we strive for a dictatorship of the Communist Party or for a dictatorship of the proletarian class?». And the answer was as follows: «Two Communist parties are now arrayed against each other: *one is a party of leaders*, which is out to organize the revolutionary struggle and to direct it from *above* [...] *the other is a mass party*, which expects an upsurge of the revolutionary struggle from *below*, which knows and applies a single method which clearly leads to the goal [...] the unconditional overthrow of the bourgeoisie, so as then to set up the proletarian class dictatorship for the accomplishment of socialism [...]. There —the dictatorship of leaders; here— the dictatorship of the masses! That is our slogan.»

The KAPD's refusal of «revolutionary parliamentarism» stemmed from this same reasoning; it had nothing to do with the Marxist argument given by the Italian Left at the Second Congress of the International in 1920. The Left had said in effect that such tactics, though valid in given historical and geographical conditions, would have had negative and even destructive effects in advanced capitalist countries with a long democratic tradition: by leading the proletarian class and party towards electoral competition, they would divert them from the pressing tasks of revolutionary organization and would finally cause

the abandonment of the revolutionary road to power. The KAPD, on the contrary, rejected «revolutionary parliamentarism» on the grounds, once again, that parliament and electoral politics are the classical playgrounds of «leaders» and «parties»: in short they are arenas of «authority» as opposed to «spontaneity» of the masses. This is an unintentional, but nonetheless obvious echo of the anarchist horror of «power» metaphysically conceived of as an evil in itself.

The rejection of traditional trade unions also follows from this conception. According to Lenin and the Left, communists must try to *politically* conquer trade unions even if they are directed by the *worst* reformist mandarins (as is most often the case); the trade unions must become «transmission belts» of the party bringing the communist doctrine and slogans to the wage earners of all trades and of all political and even religious affiliations. The KAPD advocated factory organisms instead, which it considered to be immune from corruption precisely because, and only because, they are *directly* controlled by the whole of their members. This resulted in a search for an immediate form of organization in which proletarians would find an implicit guarantee of revolutionary class orientation. It also resulted, in certain extreme cases, in a rejection of the economic struggle and even of the strike unless this is used as a weapon in the *direct* conquest of power.

It is obvious that the KAPD rejected the party as the real organ of revolution. However, it cannot be said that the Spartacus group, glorious as its struggle against reformism and social-patriotism may have been, ever clearly put the question of the party in its proper terms —and this failure was regretted by Lenin during the first World War. Everyone knows the very famous polemic of 1904 between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on centralism (which was repeatedly exploited by traitors) or pages of Luxemburg on the Russian Revolution (which were truncated, incomplete and posthumous anyway). To us, however, what most clearly shows the Spartacists' reluctance to accept the leading (but not in itself exclusive or decisive) role of the party in the proletarian revolution is especially their fatal hesitation to break their organizational ties with the SPD and then with the USPD. They waited to be commissioned for that undoubtedly painful and dramatic decision by the party's rank-and-file, instead of following the unequivocal order of the historical program of the revolutionary movement and fiercely defending this program against all traitors.

The same reluctance eventually resulted in Karl Liebknecht's and Rosa Luxemburg's tragic fate, not as actors in the uprising of January 1919, but as hostages in the hands of reformist and centrist opportunists who were nothing but objective and secret accomplices of the hired assassins of the bourgeoisie and the junkers. Our final example of this reluctance is in this explicit statement of the KPD at its founding congress —a congress so tragically lagging behind the violently moving course of history: «The Spartacus Union will never take over the power of government otherwise than by a clear manifestation of the unquestionable will of the proletarian mass of Germany. It will only take over the power of government by the *conscious*



approval by the mass of the workers of the principles, aims, and tactics of the Spartacus Union». Although this formulation was dictated by the legitimate desire to exclude the easy solution of hazardous putsches, it was already negating the historical role of the Party as the depository of the proletariat's *consciousness* and as the guide of its *will* through the vicissitudes of the struggle against capitalism.

The history of the German party in fact reveals a fatal tendency to tail the instinctive movement of the masses: with the ups and downs of the situation it alternately fell into semi-legalitary passivity (not without some nostalgia for reconstructing the unity with the USPD), which characterized Levi's leadership, or into a frantic activism with any new burst of activity from the indomitable German proletariat (as in the «March Action» of 1921, with the related theorization of the «offensive» at any cost by Talheimer or Maslow).

In the first case, the party's rigorous programmatic and organizational demarcation was sacrificed to the aspiration—which by itself is of course perfectly legitimate—of enlarging and extending the party's influence on the masses; the *numerical* increase of the political organ became to be considered *in itself* as the criterion for judging the *efficiency* and the *correctness* of its political orientation. In the second case, the model of the party's action was seen in the brusque passage from *pure* defensive action, combined with shifty manoeuvres of rapprochement with the rotten wings of the working class movement on the parliamentary and union level, to the *offensive at any cost*—an offensive action that was unprepared and consequently *disorganizing*, and that was not proportioned to the real balance of power. Thus the party repeatedly fell into putschist voluntarism, which was rightly condemned at the Third Congress of the International, only to fall again later on, disappointed and discouraged, into an even worse passivity and legalitarianism, as was the case in 1921-22 and in 1923.

The text *Party and Class Action* of 1921 was directed against those two dialectically linked and symmetrical mistakes. This document by itself would be enough to deny the legend of the «Italian Left» being allegedly closed into an aesthetic sectarianism with a paramount indifference for the difficult though vital problem of conquering an increasing influence on that class which the party is called to lead during the revolution and during the revolutionary preparation. Even if it can never be a question of drawing the whole class in the ranks of the party, even if the party consists of a nucleus which through the force of things will always be a minority, it does not make an ideal of its possible numerical weakness. This problem of the conquest of an influence on the class is a central and permanent problem of the class party. If the party is to maintain its course, never weakening throughout the vicissitudes and the ebbs and flows of the class struggle, then a clear and correct solution must be given to this problem. This problem is linked to another question on which we were in full agreement with the Third International: that is the refusal of the «theory» according to which the party, if it deserves to be called communist, should *always* be on the offensive even under unfavorable conditions. Simultaneously,

we refused the inverse but parallel theory according to which periods in which the party is forced on the defensive would exclude all partial attack or even all counter-attack, or even worse, would justify the abandonment—denounced at the Third Congress of the International as *treason*—of the *generally offensive* perspective of communism.

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It would be easy but vain to think that, had it not lost its best members in the winter and spring slaughter of 1919, the German Party would have attained a clear understanding on the question of the class party and its role and tactics, which events so far had not allowed it to achieve or propagate (and the lack of which had cast a fatal spell on the uprising of the Bavarian and Hungarian proletarians in that glorious and unfortunate year, 1919). What is sure though is that having reconstructed itself without a sound theoretical platform, the Communist Party of Germany showed in the following years that it could not resist the stampedes of individuals or of heterogeneous currents within its own ranks (see for instance Levi and Brandler); neither could it produce a left endowed with a general and continuous vision of the revolutionary process (in this it suffices to remember the frightening zigzags and the final collapse of the so-called left-wing current led by Fisher, Maslow and Korsch). Moreover, it showed that it was unable to become the international pivot of a homogeneous front against the degenerating course of the Communist International. These two historical factors—the ideological immaturity of the German Party which had been too hastily «unified» with the remnants of the USPD and the International's first deviations from the glorious path of its early years—combined together in 1921-1923 to mark the doom of the proletarian movement not only in Germany but in the world. This does not mean that, had it been otherwise, victory would have been certain; but it does mean that a defeat (which was the eventual result, even though a victorious outcome had seemed possible at one time) would not have been followed by a *theoretical* and *practical* surrender to the enemy. The proletarian movement then would have been able to derive the proper *lessons* from the temporarily victorious counter-revolution and would have been able to find sufficient strength to start moving again on its never abandoned path, instead of having to search for this road in the complete obscurity and dreadful difficulties of complete destruction.

May the future proletarian generations avoid the fate of those whose heroic attempts of revolt and emancipation were crushed by historical forces that were too strong to be fought and defeated within the bounds of a single nation. May they rise again from the awesome ordeal of the third opportunist wave of stalinism with a clear and straight vision of the path they must take. The vision of this path which we will give in the following pages is not an infallible recipe for victory but a warning of the dangers that are a constant threat in the struggle of that class which has nothing to lose in revolution but its chains.

## Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution

**Adopted by the Second Congress  
of the Communist International, 1920**

Decisive struggles confront the world proletariat. The epoch in which we are now living is the epoch of open civil wars. The decisive hour is approaching. In practically every country where there is a substantial labour movement the working class, arms in hand, is faced by a series of bitter struggles.

Now more than ever the working class needs a strong organization. It must work indefatigably to make itself ready for this decisive struggle without losing a single precious hour.

If at the time of the Paris Commune (1871) the working class had had a disciplined communist party, however small, the first heroic rising of the French proletariat would have had far greater weight, and many mistakes and weaknesses could have been avoided. The struggles which the proletariat is now facing, in a different historical situation, will be far more fateful than that of 1871.

Therefore the Second World Congress of the Communist International directs the attention of the revolutionary workers of the entire world to the following:

1. The Communist Party is a *part* of the working class, namely, the most advanced, most class-conscious, and hence most revolutionary part. By a process of natural selection the Communist Party is formed of the best, most class-conscious, most devoted and far-sighted workers. The Communist Party has no interests other than the interests of the working class as a whole. The Communist Party is differentiated from the working class as a whole by the fact that it has a clear view of the entire historical path of the working class in its totality and endeavours, at every bend in this road, to defend the interests not of separate groups or trades, but of the working class as a whole. The Communist Party is the organizational and political lever which the most advanced section of the working class uses to direct the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses along the right road.

2. Until the proletariat has seized state power and consolidated its rule once for all, and made it secure against a bourgeois restoration,

the Communist Party will have in its organized ranks only a minority of the workers. Before the seizure of power, and in the transition period, the Communist Party can, in favourable circumstances, exercise an undisputed *ideological* and *political* influence on all proletarian and semi-proletarian strata of the population, but it cannot unite them all organizationally in its ranks. Only after the proletarian dictatorship has deprived the bourgeoisie of such powerful means of exerting influence as the press, the schools, parliament, the church, the administrative machine, etc., only after the final defeat of the bourgeois order has become clear to everybody, only then will all or practically all the workers begin to enter the ranks of the Communist Party.

3. A sharp distinction must be made between the concepts of party and class. The members of the «Christian» and liberal trade unions of Germany, England, and other countries are undoubtedly parts of the working class. The more or less numerous groups of workers who still follow Scheidemann, Gompers, and their like, are undoubtedly part of the working class. In certain historical circumstances it is quite possible for the working class to include very numerous reactionary elements. It is the task of communism not to adapt itself to these backward sections of the working class but to raise the entire working class to the level of the communist vanguard. Confusion of these two concepts—party and class—can lead to the greatest mistakes and bewilderment. It is for example clear that in spite of the sentiments and prejudices of a certain section of the working class during the imperialist war, the workers' party had at all costs to combat those sentiments and prejudices by standing for the historical interests of the proletariat which required the proletarian party to declare war on the war.

Thus, on the outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914 the parties of the social-traitors in all countries, when they supported the bourgeoisie of their «own» countries, always explained that they were acting in accordance with the will of the working class. But they forgot that, even if that were true, it must be the task of the proletarian party in such a state of affairs to come out against the sentiments of the majority of the workers and to defend the historical interests of the proletariat in spite of all. In the same way, at the beginning of this century, the Russian mensheviks of that time (the so-called Economists) rejected open political struggle against Tsarism on the ground that the working class as a whole was not yet ripe for understanding the necessity of the political struggle.

In the same way the right wing of the German Independents always insist, when acting irresolutely and inadequately, on «the will of the masses», without understanding that the party exists precisely to lead the masses and show them the way.

4. The Communist International adheres unshakably to the conviction that the collapse of the old «social-democratic» parties of the Second International should in no circumstances be presented as the collapse of the proletarian parties in general. The epoch of direct

struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat brings a new world party of the proletariat to birth, the Communist Party.

5. The Communist International decisively rejects the view that the proletariat can accomplish its revolution without having an independent political party of its own. Every class struggle is a political struggle. The goal of this struggle, which inevitably turns into a civil war, is the conquest of political power. Political power cannot be seized, organized, and operated except through a political party. Only if the proletariat has as leader an organized and experienced party with clearly defined aims and a practical programme of immediate measures both for internal and external policy, will the conquest of political power turn out to be not an accidental episode, but the starting-point of an enduring communist structure of society built by the proletariat.

The same class struggle likewise demands the centralization and unified direction of the most varied forms of the proletarian movement (trade unions, co-operatives, factory councils, educational work, elections, etc.). Only a political party can be such a co-ordinating and guiding centre. The refusal to create and to strengthen such a party and to subordinate oneself to it implies the rejection of unity in the direction of the different fighting forces of the proletariat acting on the various fields of battle. The class struggle of the proletariat needs concentrated agitation which illuminates the various stages of the struggle from a single standpoint and directs the attention of the proletariat at each given moment to the definite tasks to be accomplished by the whole class. This cannot be done without a centralized political apparatus, i.e. without a political party.

The propaganda conducted by the revolutionary syndicalists and adherents of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) against the necessity for an independent workers' party therefore objectively helped and helps only to support the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary «social-democrats». In their propaganda against a communist party, which they want to replace by trade unions alone or by shapeless «general» workers' unions, the syndicalists and IWW come close to the avowed opportunists.

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution the Russian mensheviks for many years advocated the idea of a so-called workers' congress which was to replace the revolutionary party of the working class. The yellow «labourites» of every kind in England and America preach to the workers the creation of shapeless workers' unions or vague, purely parliamentary associations, to take the place of a political party, and at the same time put through a thoroughly bourgeois policy. The revolutionary syndicalists and IWW are anxious to fight against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, but do not know how. They do not see that without an independent political party the working class is a body without a head.

Revolutionary syndicalism and industrialism mark a step forward only in comparison with the old, musty, counter-revolutionary ideology

of the Second International. But in comparison with revolutionary Marxism, i.e. with communism, syndicalism and industrialism are a step backward. The declaration of the «Left» Communists of Germany (KAPD) at their founding congress in April, that they were founding a party, but «not a party in the traditional sense of the word», is an ideological surrender to these reactionary views of syndicalism and industrialism.

The working class cannot win victory over the bourgeoisie by the general strike alone, by the tactics of «folded arms». The proletariat must resort to armed insurrection. Whoever has grasped that must also understand that an organized political party is essential, that shapeless workers' unions are not enough.

The revolutionary syndicalists often speak of the great part that can be played by a determined revolutionary minority. A really determined minority of the working class, a minority that is communist, that wants to act, that has a programme, that is out to organize the struggle of the masses —that is precisely what the communist party is.

6. The most important task of a genuine communist party is to keep always in *closest touch* with the broadest masses of the proletariat. In order to do that, communists can and should also be active in associations which, though they are not party organizations, have large proletarian groups among their members, such as the associations of war invalids in various countries, the «Hands off Russia» committees in England, proletarian tenants' leagues, etc. The Russian example of the so-called «non-party» workers' and peasants' conferences is particularly important. These conferences are organized in practically every town, in every working-class district, and also in the countryside. The broadest masses of even the backward workers take part in the elections to these conferences. The most pressing questions are placed on the agenda —food supplies, housing, the military situation, schools, the current political tasks, etc. The communists exercise a most active influence on these «non-party» conferences, and with the greatest success for the party.

Communists consider it their most important task to carry on the work of organization and instruction in a systematic fashion within these wider workers' organizations. But in order to do this successfully, in order to prevent the enemies of the revolutionary proletariat from taking possession of these broad workers' organizations, the advanced communist workers must have their own independent tightly-knit communist party, which acts always in an organized way and which is able, at every turn of events and whatever form the movement takes, to look after the general interests of communism.

7. Communists do not by any means shun mass workers' organizations which have a non-party character, even when these are of an outright reactionary character (yellow or Christian unions, etc.); they do not shrink from taking part in them and using them. Within these organizations the Communist Party constantly carries on its propaganda and indefatigably persuades the workers that the idea of non-partisanship

as a principle is deliberately encouraged among the workers by the bourgeoisie and their lackeys in order to divert them from organized struggle for socialism.

8. The old «classic» division of the workers movement into three forms —party, trade union, and co-operative— is clearly obsolete. The proletarian revolution in Russia has created the basic form of the proletarian dictatorship, the soviets. The new division, which we are approaching everywhere, is: 1. party, 2. workers' councils (soviets), 3. producers' associations (trade unions). But both the councils and the revolutionary unions must be constantly and systematically guided by the party of the proletariat, that is, by the Communist Party. The organized vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party, which *must direct* the struggles of the entire working class in the economic and the political field, as well as in the sphere of education, must be the animating spirit within the unions and the workers' councils, as well as in every other kind of proletarian organization.

The rise of soviets as the historical basic form of the dictatorship of the proletariat does not in any way diminish the leading role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution. When the German «Left» communists say (see their appeal to the German proletariat of 14 April 1920, signed «Communist Labour Party of Germany») that «the party too must adapt itself more and more to the Soviet idea and assume a proletarian character» (*Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung* no. 54), that is a confused expression of the idea that the Communist Party should merge in the soviets, and that the soviets could replace the Communist Party. This idea is basically wrong and reactionary.

There was a period in the history of the Russian revolution when the soviets were opposed to the proletarian party and supported the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie. The same was true of Germany. The same is possible in other countries also.

In order that the soviets may be able to achieve their historical tasks, a strong Communist Party is essential, a party which does not simply «adapt» itself to the soviets, but is able to ensure that the soviets do not «adapt» themselves to the bourgeoisie and to white-guard social-democracy, a party which through its fractions in the soviets is able to make them follow it.

Whoever suggests that the Communist Party should «adapt» itself to the soviets, whoever sees in such an adaptation a strengthening of the «proletarian character» of the party, is doing both the party and the soviets a highly questionable service, and has failed to grasp the significance either of the party or of the soviets. The stronger the party that we create in any country, the sooner will the «Soviet idea» triumph. Many «independents» and even right-wing socialists now pay lip-service to the «Soviet idea». We shall be able to prevent these elements from distorting the Soviet idea only if we have a strong communist party which is able to exercise a decisive influence on the policy of the soviets and to lead them.

9. The Communist Party is necessary to the working class not only *before* the seizure of power, not only *during* the seizure of power, but also *after* the transfer of power to the working class. The history of the Communist Party of Russia, which has been in power nearly three years, shows that the role of the communist party after the working class has seized power does not diminish but, on the contrary, grows enormously.

10. On the morrow of the conquest of power by the proletariat its party remains, as before, only a part of the working class—but it is precisely that part of the working class which organized victory. For two decades in Russia, and for some years in Germany, the Communist Party has been fighting not only the bourgeoisie, but also those «socialists» who are the agents of the bourgeoisie among the proletariat; it took into its ranks the staunchest, most far-sighted, and most advanced fighters of the working class. Only if there is such a disciplined organization of the best part of the working class is it possible to surmount all the difficulties confronting the workers' dictatorship on the morrow of victory. In the organization of a new proletarian Red Army, in the real destruction of the bourgeois State apparatus and its replacement by the beginnings of a new proletarian State apparatus, in the fight against narrow craft tendencies among groups of workers, in the struggle against local and regional «patriotism», in clearing the way for the creation of a new labour discipline—in all these fields the Communist Party has the decisive word. By their own example its members must inspire and lead the majority of the working class.

11. The need for a political party of the proletariat disappears only with the complete abolition of classes. On the road to this final victory of communism it is possible that the historical importance of the three basic forms of proletarian organization today (party, soviet, producers' union) will change, and that gradually a single type of workers' organization will crystallize out. But the Communist Party will only *merge completely in the working class* when communism ceases to be a goal to be fought for and the entire working class has become communist.

12. The Second Congress of the Communist International not only reaffirms the historical mission of the Communist Party in general, but indicates to the international proletariat, although only in broad outline, what kind of communist party we need.

13. The Communist International is of the opinion that, particularly in the period of the proletarian dictatorship, the Communist Party must be built on foundations of iron proletarian centralism. In order to lead the working class successfully in the hard and prolonged civil war the Communist Party must establish iron military discipline in its own ranks. The experience of the Communist Party which for three years has led the working class in the Russian civil war has shown that without the strictest discipline, without complete centralization, and without the fullest comradesly confidence of all party organizations in the party centre, the victory of the workers is impossible.

14. The Communist Party must be built on the basis of democratic centralism. The basic principles of democratic centralism are that the higher party bodies shall be elected by the lower, that all instructions of the higher bodies are categorically and necessarily binding on the lower; and that there shall be a strong party centre whose authority is universally and unquestioningly recognized for all leading party comrades in the period between congresses.

15. A number of communist parties in Europe and America have been compelled, as a result of the «state of siege» decreed by the bourgeoisie against communists, to lead an illegal life. It must be borne in mind that in such a state of affairs the principle of election cannot be strictly observed and the leading party bodies must be given the right of co-opting members, as was done at one time in Russia. Under a «state of siege» the Communist Party is unable to make use of a democratic referendum about every serious question (as was proposed by a group of American Communists); instead it must give its central body the right in emergencies to take important decisions for all party members.

16. At the present time the advocacy of broad «autonomy» for the local party organizations only weakens the ranks of the Communist Party, undermines its capacity for action, and favours petty-bourgeois, anarchist and disruptive tendencies.

17. In countries in which the bourgeoisie or the counter-revolutionary social-democracy are still in power, the Communist Parties must learn to systematically combine legal and illegal activity. Legal work must always be under the practical supervision of the illegal party. The communist parliamentary fractions, in both central and local government institutions must be completely under the control of the party, regardless of whether the party is at the given moment legal or illegal. Deputies who refuse, in whatever manner, to subordinate themselves to the party must be expelled from the party.

The legal press (newspapers and publishing houses) must be completely and unconditionally subordinate to the entire party and its central committee. No concessions are admissible on this point.

18. The basis of the entire organizational activity of the communist party must be the creation of *communist cells* everywhere it finds proletarians and semi-proletarians, although even in small numbers. In every soviet, in every trade union, in every co-operative, in every factory, in every tenant's council, wherever there are even three people who sympathize with communism, a communist cell must be formed immediately. It is only the strict organization of the communists which enables the vanguard of the working class to be the leader of the whole class. All Communist Party cells working in non-party organizations must be unconditionally subordinate to the party organization as a whole, regardless of whether the party is at the given moment working legally or illegally. Communist cells of all kinds must be subordinate to each other in a strictly hierarchical order of rank as precisely as possible.

19. Almost everywhere the Communist Party arises as an *urban* party, a party of industrial workers living mainly in towns. To facilitate and hasten the victory of the working class the Communist Party must become the party not only of the towns, but also of the villages. The Communist Party must carry its propaganda and its organizing work to the agricultural workers and the small and medium peasants. The Communist Party must pay particular attention to organizing communist cells in the countryside.

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The international organization of the proletariat can be strong only if, in all countries where communists live and fight, the ideas about the role of the Communist Party here formulated take firm hold. The Communist International invites to its congress every trade union which recognizes its principles and is ready to break with the yellow International. The Communist International will organize an international section of red trade unions which acknowledge communist principles. The Communist International will not refuse to co-operate with any non-party workers' organization which is willing to wage a serious revolutionary *struggle against the bourgeoisie*. But at the same time the Communist International will never cease to emphasize to the workers of the whole world:

1. The Communist Party is the chief and primary weapon for the liberation of the working class. We must now have in every country not mere groups or tendencies, but a Communist Party.

2. In each country, there must be only one Communist Party.

3. The Communist Party must be built on the principle of the strictest centralization, and in the epoch of civil war military discipline must prevail in its ranks.

4. Wherever there are a dozen proletarians or semi-proletarians, the Communist Party must have an organized cell.

5. In every non-party organization there must be a Communist Party cell which is strictly subordinate to the party.

6. While adhering firmly and unyieldingly to the programme and revolutionary tactics of communism, the Communist Party must always be connected as closely as possible with the broad workers' organizations, and avoid sectarianism as much as lack of principles.

## Party and Class

The Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution approved by the Second Congress of the Communist International are genuinely and deeply rooted in the Marxist doctrine. These theses take the definition of the relations between *party* and *class* as a starting point and establish that the class party can include in its ranks only *a part* of the class itself, never the whole nor even perhaps the majority of it.

This obvious truth would have been better emphasized if it had been pointed out that one cannot even speak of a *class* unless a minority of this class tending to organize itself into a political party has come into existence.

What in fact is a social *class* according to our critical method? Can we possibly recognize it by the means of a purely objective external acknowledgement of the common economic and social conditions of a great number of individuals, and of their analogous positions in relationship to the productive process? That would not be enough. Our method does not amount to a mere description of the social structure as it exists at a given moment, nor does it merely draw an abstract line dividing all the individuals composing society into two groups, as is done in the scholastic classifications of the naturalists. The Marxist critique sees human society in its movement, in its development in time; it utilizes a fundamentally historical and dialectical criterion, that is to say, it studies the connection of events in their reciprocal interaction.

Instead of taking a snapshot of society at a given moment (like the old metaphysical method) and then studying it in order to distinguish the different categories into which the individuals composing it must be classified, the dialectical method sees history as a film unrolling its successive scenes; the *class* must be looked for and distinguished in the striking features of this movement.

In using the first method we would be the target of a thousand objections from pure statisticians and demographers (short-sighted

people if there ever were) who would re-examine our divisions and remark that there are not two classes, nor even three or four, but that there can be ten, a hundred or even a thousand classes separated by successive gradations and indefinable transition zones. With the second method, though, we make use of quite different criteria in order to distinguish that protagonist of historical tragedy, the class, and in order to define its characteristics, its actions and its objectives, which become concretized into obviously uniform features among a multitude of changing facts; meanwhile the poor photographer of statistics only records these as a cold series of lifeless data.

Therefore, in order to state that a class exists and acts at a given moment in history, it will not be enough to know, for instance, how many merchants there were in Paris under Louis XIV, or the number of English landlords in the Eighteenth Century, or the number of workers in the Belgian manufacturing industry at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Instead, we will have to submit an entire historical period to our logical investigations; we will have to make out a social, and therefore political, movement which searches for its way through the ups and downs, the errors and successes, all the while obviously adhering to the set of interests of a strata of people who have been placed in a particular situation by the mode of production and by its developments.

It is this method of analysis that Frederick Engels used in one of his first classical essays, where he drew the explanation of a series of political movements from the history of the English working class, and thus demonstrated the existence of a class struggle.

This dialectical concept of the class allows us to overcome the statistician's pale objections. He does not have the right any longer to view the opposed classes as being clearly divided on the scene of history as are the different choral groups on a theater scene. He cannot refute our conclusions by arguing that in the contact zone there are indefinable strata through which an osmosis of individuals takes place, because this fact does not alter the historical physiognomy of the classes aligned against each other.

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Therefore the concept of class must not suggest to us a static image, but instead a dynamic one. When we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, then we can recognize the existence of a class in the true sense of the word. But then the class party exists in a material if not yet in a formal way.

A party lives when there is the existence of a doctrine and a method of action. A party is a school of political thought and consequently an organization of struggle. The first characteristic is a fact of consciousness, the second is a fact of will, or more precisely of a striving towards a final end.

Without those two characteristics, we do not yet have the definition of a *class*. As we have already said, he who coldly records facts may

find affinities in the living conditions of more or less large strata, but no mark is engraved in history's development.

It is only within the class party that we can find these two characteristics condensed and concretized. The class forms itself as certain conditions and relationships brought about by the consolidation of new systems of production are developed — for instance the establishment of big factories hiring and training a large labour force; in the same way, the interests of such a collectivity gradually begin to materialize into a more precise consciousness, which begins to take shape in small groups of this collectivity. When the mass is thrust into action, only these first groups can foresee a final end, and it is they who support and lead the rest.

When referring to the modern proletarian class, we must conceive of this process not in relationship to a trade category but to the class as a whole. It can then be realized how a more precise consciousness of the identity of interests gradually makes its appearance; this consciousness, however, results from such a complexity of experiences and ideas, that it can be found only in limited groups composed of elements selected from every category. Indeed only an advanced minority can have the clear vision of a collective action which is directed towards general ends that concern the whole class and which has at its core the project of changing the whole social regime.

Those groups, those minorities, are nothing other than the party. When its formation (which of course never proceeds without standstills, crises and internal conflicts) has reached a certain stage, then we may say that we have a class in action. Although the party includes only a *part* of the class, only it can give the class its unity of action and movement, for it amalgamates those elements, beyond the limits of categories and localities, which are *sensitive* to the class and *represent* it.

This casts a light on the meaning of this basic fact: the party is only a part of the class. He who considers a static and abstract image of society, and sees the class as a zone with a small nucleus, the party, within it, might easily be led to the following conclusion: since the whole section of the class remaining outside the party is almost always the majority, it might have a greater weight and a greater *right*. However if it is only remembered that the individuals in that great remaining mass have neither class consciousness nor class will yet and live for their own selfish ends, or for their trade, their village, or their nation, then it will be realized that in order to secure the action of the class as a whole in the historical movement, it is necessary to have an organ which inspires, unites and heads it — in short which *officers* it; it will then be realized that the party actually is the vital nucleus without which there would be no reason to consider the whole remaining mass as a mobilization of forces.

The class presupposes the party, because to exist and to act in history it must possess a critical doctrine of history and an aim to attain in it.

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In the only true revolutionary conception, the direction of class action is delegated to the party. Doctrinal analysis, together with a number of historical experiences, allow us to easily reduce to petty bourgeois and anti-revolutionary ideologies, any tendency to deny the necessity and the predominance of the party's function.

If this denial is based on a democratic point of view, it must be subjected to the same criticism that Marxism uses to disprove the favorite theorems of bourgeois liberalism.

It is sufficient to recall that, if the consciousness of human beings is the result, not the cause of the characteristics of the surroundings in which they are compelled to live and act, then never as a rule will the exploited, the starved and the underfed be able to convince themselves of the necessity of overthrowing the well-fed satiated exploiter laden with every resource and capacity. This can only be the exception. Bourgeois electoral democracy seeks the vote of the masses, for it knows that the response of the majority will always be favourable to the privileged class and will readily delegate to that class the *right* to govern and to perpetuate exploitation.

It is not the addition or subtraction of the small minority of bourgeois *voters* that will alter the relationship. The bourgeoisie governs with the majority, not only of all the citizens, but also of the workers taken alone.

Therefore if the party called on the whole proletarian mass to judge the actions and initiatives of which the party alone has the responsibility, it would tie itself to a verdict that would almost certainly be favourable to the bourgeoisie. That verdict would always be less enlightened, less advanced, less revolutionary, and above all less dictated by a consciousness of the really collective interest of the workers and of the final result of the revolutionary struggle, than the advice coming from the ranks of the organized party alone.

The concept of the proletariat's *right* to command its own *class* action is only an abstraction devoid of any Marxist sense. It conceals a desire to lead the revolutionary party to enlarge itself by including less mature strata, since as this progressively occurs, the resulting decisions get nearer and nearer to the bourgeois and conservative conceptions.

If we looked for evidence not only through theoretical enquiry, but also in the experiences history has given us, our harvest would be abundant. Let us remember that it is a typical bourgeois cliché to oppose the good « common sense » of the masses to the « evil » of a « minority of agitators », and to pretend to be most favourably disposed towards the workers, while entertaining the most vehement hatred towards the party which is the only means the workers have to strike at the exploiters' interests. The right-wing currents of the workers' movement, the social-democratic school, whose reactionary tenets have been clearly shown by history, constantly oppose the masses to the party and pretend to be able to find the will of the class by polling a wider stratum than the limited bounds of the party. When they cannot

extend the party beyond all limits of doctrine and discipline in action, they try to establish that its main organs must not be those appointed by a limited number of militant members, but must be those which have been appointed for parliamentary duties by a larger body — actually, parliamentary groups always belong to the extreme right wing of the parties from which they come.

The degeneracy of the social-democratic parties of the Second International and the fact that they apparently became less revolutionary than the unorganized masses, are due to the fact that they gradually lost their specific party character precisely through workerist and « laborist » practices. That is, they no longer acted as the vanguard preceding the class but as its mechanical expression in an electoral and corporative system, where equal importance and influence is given to the strata that are the least conscious and the most dependent on egotistical claims of the proletarian class itself. As a reaction to this epidemic, even before the war, there developed a tendency, particularly in Italy, advocating internal party discipline, rejecting new recruits who were not yet welded to our revolutionary doctrine, opposing the autonomy of parliamentary groups and local organs, and recommending that the party should be purged of its false elements. This method has proved to be the real antidote for reformism, and forms the basis of the doctrine and practice of the Third International, which puts primary importance on the role of the party — that is a centralized, disciplined party with a clear orientation on the problems of principles and tactics. The same Third International judged that the « collapse of the social-democratic parties of the Second International was by no means the collapse of proletarian parties in general » but, if we may say so, the failure of organisms that had forgotten they were parties because they had stopped being parties.

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There is also a different category of objection to the communist concept of the party's role. These objections are linked to another form of critical and tactical reaction to the reformist degeneracy: they belong to the syndicalist school, which sees the class in the economic trade unions and pretends that these are the organs capable of leading the class in revolution.

Following the classical period of the French, Italian and American syndicalism, these apparently left-wing objections found new formulations in tendencies which are on the margins of the Third International. These too can be easily reduced to semi-bourgeois ideologies by a critique of their principles as well as by acknowledging the historical results they led to.

These tendencies would like to recognize the class within an organization of its own — certainly a characteristic and a most important one — that is, the craft or trade unions which arise before the political party, which gather much larger masses and therefore better correspond to the

whole of the working class. From an abstract point of view, however, the choice of such a criterion reveals an unconscious respect for that selfsame democratic lie which the bourgeoisie relies on to secure its power by the means of inviting the majority of the people to choose their government. In other theoretical viewpoints, such a method meets with bourgeois conceptions when it entrusts the trade unions with the organization of the new society and demands the autonomy and decentralisation of the productive functions, just as reactionary economists do. But our intention here is not to develop a complete critical analysis of the syndicalist doctrines. It is sufficient to remark, considering the result of historical experience, that the extreme right wing members of the proletarian movement have always advocated the same point of view, that is, the representation of the working class by trade unions; indeed they know that by doing so, they soften and diminish the movement's character, for the simple reasons that we have already mentioned. Today the bourgeoisie itself shows a sympathy and an inclination, which are by no means illogical, towards the unionization of the working class; indeed the more intelligent sections of the bourgeoisie would readily accept a reform of the state and representative apparatus in order to give a larger place to the « apolitical » unions and even to their claims to exercise control over the system of production. The bourgeoisie feels that, as long as the proletariat's action can be limited to the immediate economic demands that are raised trade by trade, it helps to safeguard the status-quo and to avoid the formation of the perilous « political » consciousness — that is, the only consciousness which is revolutionary for it aims at the enemy's vulnerable point, the possession of power.

Past and present syndicalists, however, have always been conscious of the fact that most trade unions are controlled by right wing elements and that the dictatorship of the petty bourgeois leaders over the masses is based on the union bureaucracy even more than on the electoral mechanism of the social-democratic pseudo-parties. Therefore the syndicalists, along with very numerous elements who were merely acting by reaction to the reformist practice, devoted themselves to the study of new forms of union organization and created new unions independent from the traditional ones. Such an expedient was theoretically wrong for it did not go beyond the fundamental criterion of the economic organization: that is, the automatic admission of all those who are placed in given conditions by the part they play in production, without demanding special political convictions or special pledges of actions which may require even the sacrifice of their lives. Moreover, in looking for the « producer » it could not go beyond the limits of the « trade », whereas the class party, by considering the « proletarian » in the vast range of his conditions and activities, is alone able to awaken the revolutionary spirit of the class. Therefore, that remedy which was wrong theoretically also proved inefficient in actuality.

In spite of everything, such recipes are constantly being sought for even today. A totally wrong interpretation of Marxist determinism and a limited conception of the part played by facts of *consciousness*



and *will* in the formation, under the original influence of economic factors, of the revolutionary forces, lead a great number of people to look for a «mechanical» system of organization that would almost automatically organize the masses according to each individual's part in production; according to these illusions, such a device by itself would be enough to make the mass ready to move towards revolution with the maximum revolutionary efficiency.

Thus the illusory solution reappears, which consists of thinking that the everyday satisfaction of economic needs can be reconciled with the final result of the overthrow of the social system by relying on an organizational form to solve the old antithesis between the limited and gradual conquests and the maximum revolutionary program. But — as was rightly said in one of the resolutions of the majority of the German Communist Party at a time when these questions (which later provoked the secession of the KAPD) were particularly acute in Germany — *revolution is not a question of the form of organization.*

Revolution requires an organisation of active and effective forces united by a doctrine and a final aim. Important strata and innumerable individuals will remain outside this organization even though they materially belong to the class in whose interest the revolution will triumph. But the class lives, struggles, progresses and wins thanks to the action of the forces it has engendered from its womb in the pains of history. The class originates from an immediate homogeneity of economic conditions which appear to us as the primary motive force of the tendency to destroy and go beyond the present mode of production. But in order to assume this great task, the class must have its own thought, its own critical method, its own will bent on the precise ends defined by research and criticism, and its own organization of struggle channelling and utilizing with the utmost efficiency its collective efforts and sacrifices. All this constitutes the Party.

## Party and Class Action

In a previous article where we elaborated certain fundamental theoretical concepts, we have shown not only that there is no contradiction in the fact that the political party of the working class, the indispensable instrument in the struggles for the emancipation of this class, includes in its ranks only a part, a minority, of the class, but we also have shown that we cannot speak of a class in historical movement without the existence of a party which has a precise consciousness of this movement and its aims, and which places itself at the vanguard of this movement in the struggle.

A more detailed examination of the historical tasks of the working class on its revolutionary course, both before and after the overthrow of the power of the exploiters, will only confirm the imperative necessity of a political party which must direct the whole struggle of the working class. In order to have a precise, tangible idea of the «technical» necessity of the party, we should first consider —even if it may seem illogical— the tasks that the proletariat must accomplish *after* having come to power and *after* having wrenched the control of the social machine from the bourgeoisie.

After having conquered control of the state the proletariat must undertake complex functions. In addition to replacing the bourgeoisie in the direction and administration of public matters, it must construct an entirely new and different administrative and governmental machinery, with immensely more complex aims than those comprising the «governmental art» of today. These functions require a regimentation of individuals capable of performing diverse functions, of studying various problems, and of applying certain criteria to the different sectors of collective life: these criteria are derived from the general revolutionary principles and correspond to the necessity which compels the proletarian class to break the bonds of the old regime in order to set up new social relationships.

It would be a fundamental mistake to believe that such a degree of preparation and specialization could be achieved merely by organizing the workers on a trade basis according to their traditional functions in the old regime. Our task will not be to eliminate the contribution of technical competence previously furnished by the capitalist or by elements closely linked to him in order to replace them, factory by factory, by the training and experience of the best workers. We will instead have to confront tasks of a much more complex nature which require a synthesis of political, administrative and military preparation. Such a preparation, which must exactly correspond to the precise historical tasks of the proletarian revolution, can be guaranteed only by the political party; in effect the political party is the only organism which possesses on one hand a general historical vision of the revolutionary process and of its necessities and on the other hand a strict organizational discipline ensuring the complete subordination of all its particular functions to the final general aim of the class.

A party is that collection of people who have the same general view of the development of history, who have a precise conception of the final aim of the class they represent, and who have prepared in advance a system of solutions to the various problems which the proletariat will have to confront when it becomes the ruling class. It is for this reason that the rule of the class can only be the rule of the party. After these brief considerations, which can very evidently be seen in even a superficial study of the Russian Revolution, we shall now consider the phase preceding the proletariat's rise to power in order to demonstrate that the revolutionary action of the class against bourgeois power can only be a party action.

It is first of all evident that the proletariat would not be mature enough to confront the extremely difficult problems of the period of its dictatorship, if the organ that is indispensable in solving these problems, the party, had not begun long before to constitute the body of its doctrine and experiences.

The party is the indispensable organ of all class action even if we consider the immediate necessities of the struggles which must culminate in the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie. In fact we cannot speak of a genuine class action (that is an action that goes beyond the trade interests and immediate concerns) unless there is a party action.

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Basically, the task of the proletarian party in the historical process is set forth as follows.

At all times the economic and social relationships in capitalist society are unbearable for the proletarians, who consequently are driven to try to overcome them. Through complex developments the victims of these relationships are brought to realize that, in their instinctive struggle against sufferings and hardships which are common to a multitude of people, individual resources are not enough. Hence they are led to experiment with collective forms of action in order to

increase, through their association, the extent of their influence on the social conditions imposed upon them. But the succession of these experiences all along the path of the development of the present capitalist social form leads to the inevitable conclusion that the workers will achieve no real influence on their own destinies until they have united their efforts beyond the limits of local, national and trade interests and until they have concentrated these efforts on a far-reaching and integral objective which is realized in the overthrow of bourgeois political power. This is so because as long as the present political apparatus remains in force, its function will be to annihilate all the efforts of the proletarian class to escape from capitalist exploitation.

The first groups of proletarians to attain this consciousness are those who take part in the movements of their class comrades and who, through a critical analysis of their efforts, of the results which follow, and of their mistakes and disillusion, bring an ever-growing number of proletarians onto the field of the common and final struggle which is a struggle for power, a political struggle, a revolutionary struggle.

Thus at first an ever-increasing number of workers become convinced that only the final revolutionary struggle can solve the problem of their living conditions. At the same time there are increasing numbers who are ready to accept the inevitable hardships and sacrifices of the struggle and who are ready to put themselves at the head of the masses incited to revolt by their suffering, all in order to rationally utilize their efforts and to assure their full effectiveness.

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.

Obviously this strengthening of the class energies has never been and can never be a securely progressive, continuous process. There are standstills, setbacks and disbandings. Proletarian parties often lose the essential characteristics which they were in the process of forming and their aptitude for fulfilling their historical tasks. In general, under the very influence of particular phenomena of the capitalist world, parties often abandon their principal function which is to concentrate and channel the impulses originating from the movement of the various groups, and to direct them towards the single final aim of the revolution. Such parties are satisfied with immediate and transitory solutions and satisfactions. They degenerate in their theory and practice to the point of admitting that the proletariat can find conditions of advantageous equilibrium within the capitalist regime, and they adopt as their political aim objectives which are merely partial and immediate, thereby beginning on their way towards class collaboration.

These phenomena of degeneration reached their peak with the great World War. After this a period of healthy reaction has followed: the

class parties inspired by revolutionary directives—which are the only parties that are truly class parties— have been reconstructed throughout the world and are organizing themselves into the Third International, whose doctrine and action are explicitly revolutionary and «maximalist».

Thus in this period, which everything indicates will be decisive, we can see again a movement of revolutionary unification of the masses, of organization of their forces for the final revolutionary action. But once again, far from having the immediate simplicity of a rule, this situation poses difficult tactical problems; it does not exclude partial or even serious failures, and it raises questions which so greatly impassion the militants of the world revolutionary organization.

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Now that the new International has systematized the framework of its doctrine it must still draw up a general plan of its tactical methods. In various countries a series of questions has arisen from the communist movement and tactical problems are on the order of the day. Once it has been established that the political party is an indispensable organ of the revolution; once it no longer can be a point of debate that the party can only be a part of the class (and this point has been settled in the theoretical resolutions of the Second World Congress, which formed the point of departure of the previous article) (1) then the following problem remains to be solved: we must know more precisely how large the party organization must be and what relationship it must have with the masses which it organizes and leads.

There exists—or there is said to exist—a trend which wishes to have perfectly pure «small parties» and which would almost take pleasure in moving away from contact with the great masses, accusing them of having little revolutionary consciousness and capabilities. This tendency is severely criticized and is defined as «left opportunism». This label however seems to us to be more demagogic than justified; it should rather be reserved for those tendencies that deny the function of the political party and pretend that the masses can be organized on a vast scale for revolution by means of purely economic and syndical forms of organization.

What we must deal with therefore is a more thorough examination of the relationship between the masses and the party. We have seen that the party is only a part of the working class, but how are we to determine the numerical size of this «proportion»? For us if there is a proof of «voluntarism» and therefore of typical anti-Marxist opportunism (and today opportunism can only mean heresy) it is the pretention of establishing such a numerical relationship as an *a priori* rule of organisation; that is to say of establishing that the communist party must have in its ranks, or as sympathizers, a certain number of

(1) *Party and Class — Ed.*

workers which is either greater or less than a particular given percentage of the proletarian mass.

It would be a ridiculous mistake to judge the process of formation of communist parties, which proceeds through splits and mergers, according to a numerical criterion, that is to say to cut down the size of the parties which are too large and to forcibly add to the numbers of the parties which are too small. This would be in effect not to understand that this formation must be guided instead by qualitative and political norms and that it develops in a very large part through the dialectical repercussions of history. It cannot be defined by organizational rules which would pretend that the parties should be moulded into what is considered to be desirable and appropriate dimensions.

What can be stated as an unquestionable basis for such a discussion on tactics is that it is preferable that the parties should be numerically as large as possible and that they should succeed in attracting around them the largest possible strata of the masses. No one among the communists ever laid down as a principle that the communist party should be composed of a small number of people shut up in an ivory tower of political purity. It is indisputable that the numerical force of the party and the enthusiasm of the proletariat to gather around the party are favorable revolutionary conditions; they are unmistakable signs of the maturity of the development of proletarian energies and nobody would ever wish that the communist parties should not progress in that way.

Therefore there is no definite or definable numerical relationship between the party membership and the great mass of the workers. Once it is established that the party assumes its function as a minority of the class, the inquiry as to whether this should be a large minority or a small minority is the ultimate in pedantry. It is certain that as long as the contradictions and internal conflicts of capitalist society, from which the revolutionary tendencies originate, are only in their first stage of development, as long as the revolution appears to be far away, then we must expect this situation: the class party, the communist party, will necessarily be composed of small vanguard groups who have a special capacity to understand the historical perspective, and that section of the masses who will understand and follow it cannot be very large. However, when the revolutionary crisis becomes imminent, when the bourgeois relations of production become more and more intolerable, the party will see an increase in its ranks and in the extent of its following within the proletariat.

If the present period is a revolutionary one, as all communists are firmly convinced, then it follows that we must have large parties which exercise a strong influence over broad sections of the proletariat in every country. But wherever this aim has not yet been realized in spite of undeniable proofs of the acuteness of the crisis and the imminence of its outburst, the causes of this deficiency are very complex; therefore it would be extremely frivolous to conclude that the party, when it is too small and with little influence, must be

artificially extended by fusing with other parties or fractions of parties which have members that are supposedly linked to the masses. The decision as to whether members of other organizations should be admitted into the ranks of the party, or on the contrary whether a party which is too large should eliminate part of its membership, cannot stem from arithmetical considerations or from a childish statistical disappointment.

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The formation of the communist parties, with the exception of the Russian Bolshevik Party, has grown at a very accelerated pace in Europe as well as outside of Europe because the war has opened the door, at a very accelerated rate, to a crisis of the system. The proletarian masses cannot attain a firm political consciousness in a gradual way; on the contrary they are driven here and there by the necessities of the revolutionary struggle, as if they were tossed by the waves of a stormy sea. There has continued to survive, on the other hand, the traditional influence of social-democratic methods, and the social-democratic parties themselves are still on the scene in order to sabotage the process of clarification, to the greatest advantage of the bourgeoisie.

When the problem of how to solve the crisis reaches the critical point and when the question of power is posed to the masses, the role of the social-democrats becomes extremely evident, for when the dilemma *proletarian dictatorship or bourgeois dictatorship* is posed and when choice can no longer be avoided, they choose complicity with the bourgeoisie. However when the situation is maturing but not yet fully developed, a considerable section of the masses remain under the influence of these social-traitors. And in those cases when the probability of revolution has the appearance, but only the appearance, of diminishing, or when the bourgeoisie unexpectedly begins to unfurl its forces of resistance, it is inevitable that the communist parties will temporarily lose ground in the field of organization and in their leadership of the masses.

Given the present unstable situation, it is possible that we will see such fluctuations in the generally secure process of development of the revolutionary International. It is unquestionable that communist tactics must try to face these unfavorable circumstances, but it is no less certain that it would be absurd to hope to eliminate them by mere tactical formulas, just as it would be excessive to draw pessimistic conclusions from these circumstances.

In the abstract hypothesis of the continuous development of the revolutionary energies of the masses, the party sees its numerical and political forces increase in a continuous way, quantitatively growing but remaining qualitatively the same, inasmuch as the number of communists rises in relation to the total number of proletarians. However

in the actual situation the diverse and continually changing factors of the social environment act upon the mood of the masses in a complex way; the communist party, which is made up of those who more clearly perceive and understand the characteristics of the historical development, nevertheless does not cease to be an effect of this development and thus it cannot escape fluctuations in the social atmosphere. Therefore, although it acts constantly as a factor of revolutionary acceleration, there is no method it can use, however refined it may be, which can force or reverse the situation in regards to its fundamental essence.

The worst remedy which could be used against unfavorable consequences of situations, however, would be to periodically put on trial the theoretical and organizational principles that are the very basis of the party, with the objective of enlarging its zone of contact with the masses. In situations where the revolutionary inclinations of the masses are weakening, this movement to «bring the party towards the masses», as some call it, is very often equivalent to changing the very nature of the party, thus depriving it of the very qualities that would enable it to be a catalyst capable of influencing the masses to resume their forward movement.

The conclusions in regard to the precise character of the revolutionary process, which are derived from the doctrine and historical experience, can only be international and thus result in international standards. Once the communist parties are solidly founded on these conclusions, then their organizational physiognomy must be considered to be established and it must be understood that their ability to attract the masses and to give them their full class power depends on their adherence to a strict discipline regarding the program and the internal organization.

The communist party possesses a theoretical consciousness confirmed by the movement's international experiences, which enables it to be prepared to confront the demands of revolutionary struggle. And because of this, even though the masses partially abandon it during certain phases of its life, it has a guarantee that their support will return when they are confronted with revolutionary problems for which there can be no other solution than that inscribed in the party's program. When the necessities of revolutionary action reveal the need for a centralized and disciplined organ of leadership, then the communist party, whose constitution will have obeyed these principles, will put itself at the head of the masses in movement.

The conclusion that we wish to draw is that the criteria which we must use as a basis to judge the efficiency of the communist parties must be quite different from an *a posteriori* estimate of their numerical forces as compared with those of the other parties which claim to represent the proletariat. The only criteria by which to judge this efficiency are the precisely defined theoretical bases of the party's program and the rigid internal discipline of all its organizational sections and of all its members; only such a discipline can guarantee the utilization of everyone's work for the greatest success of the

revolutionary cause. Any other form of intervention in the composition of the party which is not logically derived from the precise application of these principles can only lead to illusory results and would deprive the class party of its greatest revolutionary strength: this strength lies precisely in the doctrinal and organizational continuity of all its propaganda and all its action, in its ability «to state in advance» how the process of the final struggle between classes will develop and in its ability to give itself the type of organization which responds to the needs of this decisive phase.

During the war, this continuity was irretrievably lost throughout the world and the only thing to do was to start again from the beginning. The birth of the Communist International as a historical force has materialized, on the basis of a perfectly clear and decisive revolutionary experience, the lines on which the proletarian movement could reorganize itself. The first condition for a revolutionary victory for the world proletariat is consequently the attainment of the organizational stabilization of the International, which could give the masses throughout the world a feeling of determination and certitude, and which could win the support of the masses while making it possible to wait for them whenever it is indispensable that the development of the crisis still should act upon them, that is when it is unavoidable that they still experiment with the insidious advice of the social-democrats. There do not exist any better recipes for escaping this necessity.

The Second Congress of the Third International understood these necessities. At the beginning of a new epoch which must lead to revolution, it had to establish the points of departure of an international work of organization and revolutionary preparation. It would have perhaps been preferable for the Congress, instead of dealing with the different themes in the order that they were treated in the theses—all of which dealt with theory and tactics at the same time—to have established first the fundamental basis of the theoretical and programmatic conception of communism, since the organization of all adhering parties must be primarily based on the acceptance of these theses. The Congress then would have formulated the fundamental rules of action which all members must strictly observe on the trade-union, the agrarian, and the colonial questions and so on. However, all this is dealt with in the body of resolutions adopted by the Second Congress and is excellently summarized in the theses on the conditions of admission of the parties (2).

It is essential to consider the application of these conditions of admission as an initial constitutive and organizational act of the International, that is as an operation which must be accomplished once and for all in order to draw all organized or organizable forces out of the chaos into which the political proletarian movement had fallen, and to organize these forces into the new International.

(2) See *The Conditions of Admission to the Communist International* (in English) in *Programme Communiste* no. 65, December 1974.

All steps should be taken without further delay in order to organize the international movement on the basis of these obligatory international standards. For, as we have said before, the great strength which must guide the International in its task of propelling the revolutionary energies is the demonstration of the continuity of its thought and action towards a precise aim that will one day appear clearly in the eyes of the masses, polarizing them around the vanguard party, and providing the best chances for the victory of the revolution.

If, as a result of this initial—though organizationally decisive—systematization of the movement, parties in certain countries have an apparently small membership, then it can be very useful to study the causes of such a phenomenon. However it would be absurd to modify the established organizational standards and to redefine their application with the aim of obtaining a better numerical relationship of the Communist Party to the masses or to other parties. This would only annihilate all the work accomplished in the period of organization and would make it useless; it would necessitate beginning the work of preparation all over again, with the supplementary risk of several other starts. Thus this method would only result in losing time instead of saving it.

This is all the more true if the international consequences of this method are considered. The result of making the international organizational rules revocable and of creating precedents for accepting the «remoulding» of parties—as if a party was like a statue which could be recast after not turning out well the first time—would be to obliterate all the prestige and authority of the «conditions» that the International laid down for the parties and individuals that wished to join. This would also indefinitely delay the stabilization of the staff of the revolutionary army, since new officers could constantly aspire to enter while «retaining the privileges of their rank».

Therefore it is not necessary to be in favor of «large» or «small» parties; it is not necessary to advocate that the orientation of certain parties should be reversed, under the pretext that they are not «mass parties». On the contrary, we must demand that all communist parties be founded on sound organizational, programmatic, and tactical directives which crystalize the results of the best experiences of the revolutionary struggle on the international scale.

These conclusions, although it is difficult to make it evident without very long considerations and quotations of facts taken from the life of the proletarian movement, do not spring from an abstract and sterile desire to have pure, perfect and orthodox parties. Instead they originate from a desire to fulfill the revolutionary tasks of the class party in the most efficient and secure way.

The party will never find such a secure support from the masses, the masses will never find a more secure defender of their class consciousness and of their power, than when the past actions of the party have shown the continuity of its movement towards revolutionary aims, even without the masses or against them at certain unfavorable

moments. The support of the masses can be securely won only by a struggle *against* their opportunist leaders. This means that where non-communist parties still exert an influence among the masses, the masses must be won over by dismantling the organizational network of these parties and by absorbing their proletarian elements into the solid and well-defined organization of the Communist Party. This is the only method which can give useful solutions and can assure practical success. It corresponds exactly to Marx's and Engels' positions towards the dissident movement of the Lassalians.

That is why the Communist International must look with extreme mistrust at all groups and individuals who come to it with theoretical and tactical reservations. We may recognize that this mistrust cannot be absolutely uniform on the international level and that certain special conditions must be taken into account in countries where only limited forces actually place themselves on the true terrain of communism. It remains true, however, that no importance should be given to the numerical size of the party when it is a question of whether the conditions of admission should be made more lenient or more severe for individuals and, with still more reason, for groups who are more or less incompletely won over to the theses and methods of the International. The acquisition of these elements would not be the acquisition of positive forces; instead of bringing new masses to us, this would result in the risk of jeopardizing the clear process of winning them over to the cause of the party. Of course we must want this process to be as rapid as possible, but this wish must not urge us on to uncautious actions which might, on the contrary, delay the final solid and definitive success.

It is necessary to incorporate certain norms which have constantly proved to be very efficient into the tactics of the International, into the fundamental criteria which dictate the application of these tactics, and into the solution of the complex problems which arise in practice. These are: an absolutely uncompromising attitude towards other parties, even the closest ones, keeping in mind the future repercussions beyond immediate desires to hasten the development of certain situations; the discipline that is required of members, taking into consideration not only their present observance of this discipline but also their past actions, with the maximum mistrust in regard to political conversions; a consideration of the past accountability of individuals and groups, in place of recognizing their right to join or to leave the communist army whenever they please. All this, even if it may seem to enclose the party in too narrow a circle for the moment, is not a theoretical luxury but instead it is a tactical method which very securely ensures the future.

Countless examples would show that last-minute revolutionaries are out of place and useless in our ranks. Only yesterday they had reformist attitudes that were dictated by the special conditions of the period and today they have been led to follow the fundamental communist directive because they are influenced by their often too optimistic considerations about the imminence of the revolution. Any

new wavering in the situation—and in a war who can say how many advances and retreats would occur before the final victory—will be sufficient to cause them to return to their old opportunism, thus jeopardizing at the same time the contents of our organization.

The international communist movement must be composed of those who not only are firmly convinced of the necessity of revolution and are ready to struggle for it at the cost of any sacrifice, but who also are committed to act on the revolutionary terrain even when the difficulties of the struggle reveal that their aim is harder to reach and further away than they had believed.

At the moment of the intense revolutionary crisis we shall act on the sound base of our international organization, polarizing around us the elements who today are still hesitating, and defeating the social-democratic parties of various shades.

If the revolutionary possibilities are less immediate we will not run the risk, even for a single moment, of letting ourselves be distracted from our patient work of preparation in order to retreat to the mere solving of immediate problems, which would only benefit the bourgeoisie.

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Another aspect of the tactical problem which the communist parties must solve is that of choosing the moment at which the calls for action must be launched, whether it is a secondary action or the final one.

This is why the «tactics of the offensive» of communist parties are passionately discussed today; these consist of organizing and arming the party militants and the close sympathizers, and of maneuvering them at the opportune moment in offensive actions aiming at rousing the masses in a general movement, or even at accomplishing spectacular actions in response to the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie.

On this question too there are generally two opposing positions neither of which a communist would probably support.

No communist can harbor prejudices towards the use of armed actions, retaliations and even terror or deny that these actions, which require discipline and organization, must be directed by the communist party. Just as infantile is the conception that the use of violence and armed actions are reserved for the «Great Day» when the supreme struggle for the conquest of power will be launched. In the reality of the revolutionary development, bloody confrontations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are inevitable before the final struggle; they may originate not only from unsuccessful insurrectional attempts on the part of the proletariat, but also from inevitable, partial and transitory clashes between the forces of bourgeois defense and groups of proletarians who have been impelled to rise in arms, or between

bands of bourgeois «white guards» and workers who have been attacked and provoked by them. It is not correct either to say that communist parties must disavow all such actions and reserve all their force for the final moment, because all struggles necessitate a preparation and a period of training and it is in these preliminary actions that the revolutionary capacity of the party to lead and organize the masses must begin to be forged and tested.

It would be a mistake, however, to deduce from all these preceding considerations that the action of the political class party is merely that of a general staff which could by its mere will, determine the movement of the armed forces and their utilization. And it would be an imaginary tactical perspective to believe that the party, after having created a military organization, could launch an attack at a given moment when it would judge its strength to be sufficient to defeat the forces of bourgeois defence.

The offensive action of the party is conceivable only when the reality of the economic and social situation throws the masses into a movement aimed at solving the problems directly related, on the widest scale, to their conditions in life; this movement creates an unrest which can only develop in a truly revolutionary direction on the condition that the party intervenes by clearly establishing its general aims, and rationally and efficiently organizing its action, including the military technique. It is certain that the party's revolutionary preparation can begin to translate itself into planned actions even in the partial movements of the masses: thus retaliation against white terror—whose aims are to give the proletariat the feeling that it is definitively weaker than its adversaries and to make it abandon the revolutionary preparation—is an indispensable tactical means.

However it would be another voluntarist error—for which there cannot and must not be any room in the methods of the Marxist International—to believe that by utilizing such military forces, even though they may be extremely well organized on a broad scale, it is possible to change the situations and to provoke the starting of the general revolutionary struggle in the midst of a stagnating situation.

One can create neither parties nor revolutions: one leads the parties and the revolutions, by unifying all the useful international revolutionary experiences in order to secure the greatest chances of victory of the proletariat in the battle which is the inevitable outcome of the historical epoch in which we live. This is what seems to us to be the necessary conclusion.

The fundamental criteria which direct the action of the masses are expressed in the organizational and tactical rules which the International must fix for all member-parties. But these criteria cannot go as far as to directly reshape the parties with the illusion of giving them all the dimensions and characteristics that would guarantee the success of the revolution. They must, instead, be inspired by Marxist dialectics and based above all on the programmatic clarity and homogeneity on one hand, and on the centralizing tactical discipline on the other.

There are in our opinion two «opportunistic» deviations from the correct path. The first one consists of deducing the nature and characteristics of the party on the basis of whether or not it is possible, in a given situation, to regroup numerous forces: this amounts to having the party's organizational rules dictated by situations and to giving it, from the outside, a constitution different from that which it has attained in a particular situation. The second deviation consists of believing that a party, provided it is numerically large and has achieved a military preparation, can provoke revolutionary situations by giving an order to attack: this amounts to asserting that historical situations can be created by the will of the party.

Regardless of which deviation should be called «right wing» or «left wing» it is certain that both are far removed from the correct Marxist doctrine. The first deviation renounces what can and must be the legitimate intervention of the international movement with a systematic body of organizational and tactical rules; it renounces that degree of influence—which derives from a precise consciousness and historical experience—that our will can and must exercise on the development of the revolutionary process. The second deviation attributes an excessive and unreal importance to the will of the minorities, which results in the risk of leading to disastrous defeats.

Communist revolutionaries must be those who on the contrary have been collectively tempered by the experiences of the struggle against the degenerations of the proletarian movement, who firmly believe in the revolution, and who strongly desire it, but not like someone who would expect a payment and would sink into despair and discouragement if the due date was to be delayed for only one day.

# Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party

## I

*Every class struggle is a political struggle (Marx).*

A struggle which limits itself to obtaining a new distribution of economic gains is not yet a political struggle because it is not directed against the social structure of the production relations.

The disruption of the relations of production peculiar to a particular social epoch and the overthrow of the rule of a certain social class is the result of a long and often fluctuating political struggle. The key to this struggle is the question of the state: the problem of «who has power?» (Lenin).

The struggle of the modern proletariat manifests and extends itself as a political struggle with the formation and the action of the *class party*. The specific features of this party are to be found in the following thesis: the complete development of the industrial capitalist system and of bourgeois power which issued from the liberal and democratic revolutions, not only does not historically exclude but prepares and sharpens more and more the conflict of class interests and its development into civil war, into armed struggle.

## II

The communist party, as defined by this historical foresight and by this program, accomplishes the following tasks as long as the bourgeoisie maintains power:

a) it elaborates and propagates the theory of social development, of the economic laws which characterize the present social system of

production relations, of class conflicts which arise from it, of the state and of the revolution;

b) it assures the unity and historical persistence of the proletarian organization. *Unity* does not mean the material grouping of the working class and semi working class strata which, due to the very fact of the dominance of the exploiting class, are under the influence of discordant political leaderships and methods of action. It means instead the close international linking-up of the vanguard elements who are fully orientated on the integral revolutionary line. *Persistence* means the continuous claim of the unbroken dialectical line which binds together the positions of critique and struggle successively adopted by the movement during the course of changing conditions;

c) it prepares well in advance for the class mobilization and offensive by appropriately employing every possible means of propaganda, agitation and action, in all particular struggles triggered off by immediate interests. This action culminates in the organization of the illegal and insurrectional apparatus for the conquest of power.

When general conditions and the degree of organizational, political and tactical solidity of the class party reach a point where the general struggle for power is unleashed, the party which has led the revolutionary class to victory through the social war, leads it likewise in the fundamental task of breaking and demolishing all the military and administrative organs which compose the capitalist state. This demolition also strikes at the network of organs, whatever they may be, which pretend to represent the various opinions or interests through the intermediary of bodies of delegates. The bourgeois class state must be destroyed whether it presents itself as the mendacious interclassist expression of the majority of citizens or as the more or less open dictatorship wielded by a government apparatus which pretends to fulfill a national, racial or social-popular mission; if this does not take place, the revolution will be crushed.

## III

In the phase which follows the dismantling of the apparatus of capitalist domination, the task of the political party of the working class is as vital as ever because the class struggle—though dialectically inverted—continues.

Communist theory in regard to the state and the revolution is characterized above all by the fact that it excludes all possibility of adapting the legislative and executive mechanism of the bourgeois state to the socialist transformation of the economy (the social-democratic position). But it equally excludes the possibility of achieving by means of a brief violent crisis a destruction of the state and a transformation of the traditional economic relationships which the state defended up to the last moment (the anarchist position). It also denies that the constitution of a new productive organization can be



left to the spontaneous and scattered activity of groups of producers shop by shop or trade by trade (the syndicalist position).

Any social class whose power has been overthrown, even if it is by means of terror, survives for a long time within the texture of social organism. Far from abandoning its hopes of revenge, it seeks to politically reorganize itself and to reestablish its domination either in a violent or disguised way. It has turned from a ruling class into a defeated and dominated one, but it has not instantly disappeared.

The proletariat—which in its turn will disappear as a class alongside all other classes with the realization of communism—organizes itself as a ruling class (*the Manifesto*) in the first stage of the post-capitalist epoch. And after the destruction of the old state, the new proletarian state is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The precondition for going beyond the capitalist system is the overthrow of bourgeois power and the destruction of its state. The condition for bringing about the deep and radical social transformation which has to take place is a new proletarian state apparatus, capable of using force and coercion just as all other historical states.

The presence of such an apparatus does not characterize communist society but instead it characterizes the stage of its construction. Once this construction is secured, classes and class rule will no longer exist. But the essential organ of class rule is the state—and the state can be nothing else. Therefore communists do not advocate the proletarian state as a mystical creed, an *absolute* or an *ideal* but as a dialectical tool, a class weapon that will slowly wither away (Engels) through the very realization of its functions; this will take place gradually, through a long process, as the social organization is transformed from a system of coercion of men (as it has always been since the dawn of history) into a comprehensive, scientifically built network for the management of things and natural forces.

#### IV

After the victory of the proletariat, the role of the state in relationship to social classes and collective organizations exhibits many fundamental differences as compared with its role in the history of the regimes that spring from the bourgeois revolution.

a) Revolutionary bourgeois ideology, prior to its struggle and final victory, presented its future post-feudal state not as a class state but as a *people's state* based on the abolition of every inequality before the law, which it presented to be sufficient to assure freedom and equality for all members of society.

Proletarian theory openly asserts that its future state will be a class state, i.e. a tool wielded by *one* class as long as classes exist. The other classes will be excluded from the state and «outlawed» in fact

as well as in principle. The working class having achieved power «will share it with no one» (Lenin).

b) After the bourgeois political victory and in keeping with a tenacious ideological campaign, constitutional charters or declarations of principles were solemnly proclaimed in the different countries as a basis and foundation of the state. They were considered as being immutable in time, a definitive expression of the at last discovered immanent rules of social life. From then on, the entire interplay of political forces was supposed to take place within the insuperable framework of these statutes.

During the struggle against the existing regime, the proletarian state is not presented as a stable and fixed realization of a set of rules governing the social relationships inferred from an idealistic research into the nature of man and society. During its lifetime the working class state will continually evolve up to the point that it finally withers away: the nature of social organization, of human association, will radically change according to the development of technology and the forces of production, and man's nature will be equally subject to deep alterations always moving away more and more from the beast of burden and slave which he was. Anything such as a codified and permanent constitution to be proclaimed after the workers' revolution is nonsense, it has no place in the communist program. Technically, it will be convenient to adopt written rules which however will in no way be intangible and will retain an «instrumental» and temporary character, putting aside the facetiousnesses about social ethics and natural law.

c) Having conquered and even crushed the feudal apparatus of power, the victorious capitalist class did not hesitate to use the force of the state to repress the attempts of counter-revolution and restoration. However the most resolute terroristic measures were justified as being directed not against the class enemies of capitalism but against the *betrayers* of the people, of the nation, of the country, and of civil society, all these hollow concepts being identified with the state itself and, as a matter of fact, with the government and the party in power.

The victorious proletariat, by using its state in order to «crush the unavoidable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie» (Lenin) will strike at the old rulers and their last supporters every time they oppose, in a logical defense of their class interests, the measures intended to uproot economic privilege. These social elements will keep an estranged and passive position *vis-à-vis* the apparatus of power: whenever they try to free themselves from the passivity imposed upon them, material force will subdue them. They will share no «social contract», they will have no «legal or patriotic duty». As veritable social prisoners of war (as in fact were the former aristocrats and clergymen for the Jacobin bourgeoisie) they will have nothing to *betray* because they will not be requested to take any ridiculous oath of allegiance.

d) The historical glitter of the popular assemblies and democratic

gatherings hardly disguised the fact that, at its birth, the bourgeois state formed armed bodies and a police force for the internal and external struggle against the old regime and quickly substituted the guillotine for the gallows. This executive apparatus was charged with the task of administering legal force both on the great historical level and against isolated violations of the rules of appropriation and exchange characteristic of the economy founded on private property. It acted in a perfectly natural manner against the first proletarian movements which threatened, even if only instinctively, the bourgeois form of production. The imposing reality of the new social dualism was hidden by the game of the «legislative» apparatus which claimed to be able to bring about the participation of all citizens and all the opinions of the various parties in the state and in the management of the state with a perfect equilibrium and within an atmosphere of social peace.

The proletarian state, as an open class dictatorship, will dispose of all distinctions between the executive and legislative levels of power, both of which will be united in the same organs. The distinction between the legislative and executive is, in effect, characteristic of a regime which conceals and protects the dictatorship of one class under an external cloak which is multi-class and *multi-party*. «The Commune was a working, not a parliamentary body» (Marx).

e) The bourgeois state in its classical form—in coherence with an individualist ideology which the theoretical fiction universally extends to all citizens and which is the mental reflection of the reality of an economy founded on the monopoly of private property by one class—refused to allow any intermediate body other than elective constitutional assemblies to exist between the isolated individual subject and the legal state center. Political clubs and parties that had been necessary during the insurrectional stage were tolerated by it by virtue of the demagogic assertion of free thought and on the condition that they exist as simple confessional groupings and electoral bureaux. In a later stage the reality of class repression forced the state to tolerate the association of economic interests, the labor unions, which it distrusted as a «state within the state». Finally, unions became a form of class solidarity adopted by the capitalists themselves for their own class interests and aims. Moreover, under the pretext of *legally recognizing* the labor unions, the state undertook the task of absorbing and sterilizing them, thus depriving them of any autonomy so as to prevent the revolutionary party from taking their leadership.

Labor unions will still be present in the proletarian state in the measure where there still remains employers or at least impersonal enterprises where the workers remain wage earners paid in money. Their function will be to protect the standard of living of the working class, their action being parallel on this point to that of the party and the state. Non-working class unions will be forbidden. Actually, on the question of distribution of income between the working class and the non-proletarian or semi-proletarian classes, the worker's

situation could be threatened by considerations other than the superior needs of the general revolutionary struggle against international capitalism. But this possibility, which will long subsist, justifies the unions' secondary role in relation to the political communist party, the international revolutionary vanguard, which forms a unitary whole with the parties struggling in the still capitalist countries and as such leads the proletarian state.

The proletarian state can only be «animated» by a single party and it would be senseless to require that this party organize in its ranks a statistical majority and be supported by such a majority in «popular elections»—that old bourgeois trap. One of the historical possibilities is the existence of political parties composed in appearance by proletarians, but in reality influenced by counter-revolutionary traditions or by foreign capitalisms. This contradiction, the most dangerous of all, cannot be resolved through the recognition of «formal rights» nor through the process of voting within the framework of an abstract «class democracy». This too will be a crisis to be liquidated in terms of relationships of force. There is no statistical contrivance which can ensure a satisfactory revolutionary solution; this will depend solely upon the degree of solidity and clarity reached by the revolutionary communist movement throughout the world. A century ago in the West, and fifty years ago in the Czarist Empire, Marxists rightly argued against the simple-minded democrats that the capitalists and proprietors are a minority, and therefore the only true government of the majority is the government of the working class. If the word democracy means power of the majority, the democrats should stand on our class side. But this word both in its literal sense («power of the people») as well as in the dirty use that is more and more being made of it, means «power belonging not to one but to all classes». For this historical reason, just as we reject «bourgeois democracy» and «democracy in general» (as Lenin also did), we must politically and theoretically exclude, as a contradiction in terms, «class democracy» and «workers' democracy».

The dictatorship advocated by marxism is necessary because it cannot be unanimously accepted and furthermore it will not have the naivety to abdicate for lack of having a majority of votes, if such a thing were ascertainable. Precisely because it declares this it will not run the risk of being confused with a dictatorship of men or groups of men who take control of the government and substitute themselves for the working class. The revolution requires a dictatorship, because it would be ridiculous to subordinate the revolution to a 100 % acceptance or a 51 % majority. Wherever these figures are displayed, it means that the revolution has been betrayed.

In conclusion the communist party will rule alone, and will never give up power without a physical struggle. This bold declaration of not yielding to the deception of figures and of not making use of them will aid the struggle against revolutionary degeneration.

In the higher stage of communism—a stage which does not know

commodity production, money nor nations and which will also witness the death of the state— labor unions will be deprived of their «reason to be». The party as an organization for combat will be necessary as long as the remnants of capitalism survive in the world. Moreover, it may always have the task of being the depository and propagator of social doctrine, which gives a general vision of the development of relationships between human society and material nature.

## V

The marxist conception, that of substituting parliamentary assemblies with working bodies, does not lead us back into «economic democracy» either, i.e. into a system which would adapt the state organs to the workplaces, to the productive or commercial units, etc., while excluding from any representative function the remaining employers and the individuals still owning property. The elimination of the employer and the proprietor only defines half of socialism; the other half, the most significant one, consists of the elimination of *capitalist economic anarchy* (Marx). As the new socialist organization emerges and develops with the party and the revolutionary state in the foreground, it will not limit itself to striking only the former employers and their flunkies but above all it will redistribute the social tasks and responsibilities of individuals in quite a new and original way.

Therefore the network of enterprises and services such as they have been inherited from capitalism will not be taken as the basis of an apparatus of so-called «sovereignty», that is of the delegation of powers within the state and up to the level of its central bodies. It is precisely the presence of the single-class state and of the solidly and qualitatively unitary and homogeneous party which offers the maximum of favorable conditions for a reshaping of social machinery that be driven as little as possible by the pressures of the limited interests of small groups and as much as possible by general data and by their scientific study in the interests of the collective welfare. The changes in the productive mechanism will be enormous; let us only think of the program for reversing the relationships between town and country, on which Marx and Engels insisted so much and which is the exact antithesis to present trends in all countries.

Therefore, the network modeled after the working place is an inadequate expression which repeats the old Proudhonist and Lassalian positions that Marxism long ago rejected and surpassed.

## VI

The definition of the type of links between the organs of the class state and its base depends first of all upon the results of historical dialectics and cannot be deduced from «eternal principles», from «natural

law», or from a sacred and inviolable constitutional charter. Any further details in this regard would be mere utopia. There is not a grain of utopianism in Marx, Engels stated. The very idea of the famous delegation of power by the isolated individual (elector) thanks to a platonic act emanating from his freedom of opinion must be left to the foggy realms of metaphysics; opinions in actuality are but a reflection of material conditions and social forms, and power consists of the intervention of physical force.

The negative characterization of the proletarian dictatorship is clearly defined: the bourgeois and semi-bourgeois will no longer have political rights, they will be prevented by force from gathering in groups of common interests or in associations for political agitation; they will never be allowed to vote, elect, or delegate others to any post or function whatsoever. But even the relationship between the worker—a recognized and active member of the class in power—and the state apparatus will no longer retain that fictitious and deceitful characteristic of a *delegation* of power, of a representation through the intermediary of a *deputy*, an election ticket, or by a party. Delegation means in effect the renunciation to the possibility of direct action. The pretended «sovereignty» of the democratic right is but an abdication, and in most cases it is an abdication in favor of a scoundrel.

The working members of society will be grouped into local territorial organs according to their place of residence, and in certain cases according to the displacements imposed by their participation in a productive mechanism in full transformation. Thanks to their uninterrupted and continuous action, the participation of all active social elements in the mechanism of the state apparatus, and therefore in the management and exercise of class power, will be assured. To sketch these mechanisms is impossible before the class relationships from which they will spring have been concretely realized.

## VII

The Paris Commune established as most important principles (see Marx, Engels, Lenin) that its members and officials would be subject to recall at any time, and that their salary would not exceed the wage of an average worker. Any separation between the producers on the periphery and the bureaucrats at the center is thus eliminated by means of systematic rotations. Civil service will cease being a *career* and even a *profession*. No doubt, when put into practice, these controls will create tremendous difficulties, but it was long ago that Lenin expressed his contempt for all plans of revolutions to be carried out *without difficulties!* The inevitable conflicts will not be completely resolved by drawing up piles of rules and regulations: they will constitute a historical and political problem and will express a real relationship of forces. The Bolshevik revolution did not stop in front of the Constituent Assembly but dispersed it. The workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils had risen. This new type of state organs which burst forth in the

blaze of the social war (and were already present in the revolution of 1905) extended from the village to the entire country through a network of territorial units; their formation did not answer to any of the prejudices about the «rights of man» or the «universal, free, direct and secret» suffrage!

The communist party unleashes and wins the civil war, it occupies the key positions in a military and social sense, it multiplies its means of propaganda and agitation a thousand-fold through seizing buildings and public establishments. And without losing time and without procedural whims, it establishes the «armed bodies of workers» of which Lenin spoke, the red guard, the revolutionary police. At the meetings of the Soviets, it wins over a majority to the slogan: «All power to the Soviets!». Is this majority a merely legal, or a coldly and plainly numerical fact? Not at all! Should anyone —be he a spy or a well-intentioned but misled worker— vote for the Soviet to renounce or compromise the power conquered thanks to the blood of the proletarian fighters, he will be kicked out by his comrades' rifle butts. And no one will waste time with counting him in the «legal minority», that criminal hypocrisy which the revolution can do without and which the counter-revolution can only feed upon.

## VIII

Historical facts different from those of Russia in 1917 (i.e. the recent collapse of feudal despotism, a disastrous war, the role played by opportunist leaders) could create, while remaining on the same fundamental line, different practical forms of the basic network of the state. From the time the proletarian movement left utopianism behind, it has found its way and assured its success thanks not only to the real experience of the present mode of production and the structure of the present state, but also to the experience of the strategical mistakes of the proletarian revolution, both on the battlefield of the «hot» civil war where the Communards of 1871 gloriously fell and on the «cold» one which was lost between 1917 and 1926 —this last was the great battle of Russia between Lenin's International and world capitalism supported in the front lines by the miserable complicity of all the opportunists.

Communists have no codified constitutions to propose. They have a world of lies and constitutions —crystallized in the law and in the force of the dominant class— to crush. They know that only a revolutionary and totalitarian apparatus of force and power, which excludes no means, will be able to prevent the infamous relics of a barbarous epoch from rising again —only it will be able to prevent the monster of social privilege, craving for revenge and servitude, from raising its head again and hurling for the thousandth time its deceitful cry of *Freedom!*

## The International Communist Party

What distinguishes the International Communist Party is the integral reaffirmation of the Marxist doctrine —restored by Lenin and forming the basis of the foundation of the Third International— as the *only* and *compulsory* path to the emancipation of the working class and consequently to socialism.

This path has its beginning in the reality of the incurable antagonism between the productive forces and the bourgeois relations of production, which is the basis of the no less incurable antagonism between the capitalist class and the working class. It passes through the revolutionary destruction of the bourgeois state to the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. This dictatorship is the instrument for defending the conquered power and repressing the attempts by the defeated class to reconquer it; it also is the weapon for despotically intervening in the economy in order to initiate its transformation from capitalism to socialism.

The indispensable organ for preparing the working class for the revolutionary conquest of power and for the exercise of dictatorship after that conquest can only be the party. It has in its doctrine the general vision not only of communist society, the material basis of which is created by capitalism itself, but also of the historical path leading towards its realization; it embodies in its program the permanent, international interests of the class which is called upon to be the midwife of the new society; and it establishes, according to those aims and interests, its own invariant strategy, its own well-defined tactics and its own rigorously centralized organization. These strategy and tactics —the basic foundation of which was consistently defended in the West solely by the Communist Left (the founders of the Communist Party of Italy in 1921) in their struggle against the stalinist deterioration of the International— are necessarily anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary, anti-gradualistic and anti-reformist, anti-collaborationist and anti-nationalist. They are therefore directly opposed not only to classic reformism but also to its stalinist variety (whether it be «Russian» or «Chinese») and to the related theorizations of socialism in one country, national peaceful ways to socialism, interclass blocs, and democratic and antifascist popular fronts in peace or in war. On the other hand, they clearly differentiate themselves from the conceptions of a number of currents which recognize or pretend to recognize the necessity of revolutionary violence and of class dictatorship but which fall back, in their critique of stalinism, into the negation of the central role of the communist party in the proletarian revolution; in negating this they destroy the basis for the proletariat's preparation of the revolutionary assault and for the establishment and exercise of the red dictatorship and of red terror.

The necessity of defending and proclaiming this monolithic construction —no part of which can be abandoned without the whole collapsing— is confirmed by the fall of the parties of the Second International into the *Union Sacrée* during the first imperialist war and into open democratism and ministerialism between the wars; it is also demonstrated by the catastrophe of the stalinized Third International and by the world triumph of an imperialism in democratic clothing and of its pillar and policeman, the United States. The international vanguard of the proletariat, the single world Communist Party, can be recreated and reorganized only around this theoretical and programmatic construction, if a way is to finally be open out of the longest and most terrible counter-revolution of contemporary history.

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