

communist program

ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

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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 the Popular Fronts and the Resistance blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the working class. against personal and electoral politics.

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Organ of the International Communist Party

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Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a General Revival of the Class Struggle

We base our critique of individual terrorism on Marxism, which recognizes class violence as the midwife of history and provides the only path and the only force capable of linking it with the sporadic episodes of proletarian violence against bourgeois oppression. This critique must first show the material social causes of a phenomenon which regularly appears in the history of the struggle between classes; it must then analyse its characteristic ideology, its basic features and its different historical forms. This analysis must be based on the only possible perspective, that of the proletarian class struggle—a struggle which in a future objective situation inevitably must end in an open war. In this war the party provides the necessary organization, orientation and discipline of the proletarian forces. Although this ultimate confrontation between classes is certainly some distance away, it is now that we must begin to prepare for it, politically as well as materially.

To supplement the numerous articles already published in our press (1), we will begin here by referring back to the classical works of the Marxist movement.

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«A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not on social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crises the class struggle ripens into a direct civil war [...]. Any moral condemnation of civil war would be absolutely impermissible from the standpoint of Marxism» (2).

In these lines Lenin condenses the fundamental *principles* which must guide Marxists in their analysis of the different immediate

(1) See in particular, in English, «Terrorism and Communism: On the Events in Germany», in issue no. 4 of this review. In French see our pamphlet *Violence, terrorisme et lutte de classe*, which is a collection of articles from our press and leaflets distributed by the party; also see the articles «L'idéologie des Brigades Rouges» and «Critique du romantisme terroriste» in nos. 264 and 265 of *Le Proletaire*, our French language newspaper.

(2) *Guerrilla Warfare* (1906), *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 219-220. The long quote we use a little further on is found on pp. 213-214.

manifestations of terrorism, in their appreciation of the role and importance of the «armed struggle conducted by individuals and small groups». These manifestations occur in many different situations but they are all part of an inevitable and unrestrainable process which, if not always civil war, is *never* social peace.

In the analysis of a particular manifestation of «terrorism», these considerations of *principle* prohibit in advance any attempt to base a judgment on anything other than the *unswerving, permanent opposition to the ruling class's state*—a fundamental characteristic of communists. They prohibit not only any open declaration of social pacifism (as is characteristic of the official «Communist» Parties) but also the more subtle and more dangerous positions which attempt to dodge the problem, refusing to openly and consistently take up the perspective of the class struggle with all this inevitably entails—something which is a necessity for Marxists even when the struggle has not yet burst out into open war.

From the standpoint of these criteria, Marxists can no more «deplore» the phenomenon of individual terrorism than they can «deplore» whatever other manifestation of the endemic crises of bourgeois society. They must first show its material causes and its historical roots, then pose the following question: what significance does this phenomenon have from the point of view of the class struggle, not in general or in the abstract, but here and now? How must it be considered with respect to the development of the class struggle which sooner or later (and today we must admit that it will not be the case of the near future) «in certain periods of acute economic and social crises» must develop into civil war? What task does it impose on a party which must not «make» but *lead* the revolution, which must, as Lenin said, give the revolution its stamp? What task does it impose on a party which knows in advance that the day of revolution will be reached only through an uneven course of ups and downs with elementary and spontaneous small clashes preceding the great battle, a party which cannot direct this battle if it has not actively prepared itself for it by working to take leadership of these preliminary struggles? In particular, how must the party respond to those who reduce the whole class struggle to terrorism and make it the one and only means of action by the class party, assuming that with such a perspective one could still speak of a party. Those who refuse violence in general, armed struggle in general and terrorism in general are by definition outside of Marxism, but it is not sufficient to demand all these in general (i.e. to demand revolution in general) to have the right to call oneself a Marxist.

The Insufficient Responses of the «Left»

Many so-called «left» groups pretend to respond in a Marxist way against «terrorism as an absolute method» (or terrorism «as a principle»). But in reality their responses are completely insufficient and reveal an attempt to cover up the fact that they hedge and hesitate

on the question of violence and terrorism in general. Lenin gives us the basic guidelines to follow on this question in the first chapter of *Guerrilla Warfare* from which we have quoted above. He writes:

«Let us begin from the beginning. What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the question of forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not «concoct» them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the *mass* struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class-consciousness of the masses grows, as economic and political crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, *inevitably* arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism *learns*, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to *teach* the masses forms of struggle invented by «systematisers» in the seclusion of their studies. We know—said Kautsky, for instance, when examining the forms of social revolution—that the coming crisis will introduce new forms of struggle that we are now unable to foresee.

«In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely *historical* examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.»

Thus it is not sufficient to respond to the terrorist ideology as follows: you are for *individual* violence and we are for class violence, *collective* violence; this is what distinguishes Marxism from «revolutionary adventurism». Such a formulation is insufficient polemically and has negative effects on the work of the revolutionary preparation of the working class. The grain of truth it contains is that only the violence exercised by the proletariat is the midwife of history—that is to say only the violence of the *one* revolutionary class in capitalist society, the class which in its arduous struggle is armed with its indispensable organ of the party in order to centralize all its efforts to emancipate itself and in order to direct all the elementary pushes, even «irrational» ones, towards the objective of the seizure of power.

It is also true—and this is something which the theoreticians of anarcho-spontaneous terrorism do not understand—that this objective is not realizable at any given moment. It can be reached only by passing through successive phases where we see not small groups of conspirators or daring individuals entering into the struggle but always greater masses who are set into motion not at all by their «consciousness» or by an internalization of a rational plan of action, but by the pressure of their material conditions of life. It is undeniable that the supreme demonstration of class violence, *insurrection*, which ushers in the conquest and dictatorial exercise of power, can only be the «art» that it must be in order to assure victory insofar as it rests «not upon a Party (3), but upon the advanced class». It is possible only insofar as it is based on the «revolutionary upsurge of the people» and knows how to seize this «turning point in the history of the growing revolution when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the *vacillations* in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and irresolute friends of the revolution are strongest». It is certain that terrorism, whether old or new, whether of the anarchist type at the end of the 19th Century or of Baader and the Red Brigades today, totally ignores these conditions for, as we shall see, it cannot but ignore them.

The boundary line between individual and collective violence, however, is not at all absolute. During the insurrection and in the movement which leads up to it, it is not only the vanguard class which enters into struggle and battles the enemy, but also along with it a fringe of layers and subdivisions of the «people». In such a situation it is pure sophistry to oppose individual terrorism to collective terrorism or even to try to find a clear limit between the two. It is sophistry to pretend that in such a mass (and consequently *collective*) movement one can exclude or eliminate violent and terrorist initiatives by «individuals and small groups» of the proletariat. It is pure sophistry to pretend that the party must oppose these actions instead of placing them under its direct control. It is sophistry fitting of academicians and armchair revolutionaries, and it serves no other purpose than to indefinitely put off revolutionary violence, the revolution, and the class dictatorship.

(3) It is necessary to understand the exact sense of this: neither on plot or on a party, insofar as revolutionary situations are not created at will. The author of these words (Lenin, «Marxism and Insurrection», 26/27-9-1917, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 22) is also the one who relentlessly explained to the hesitant comrades that once these objective conditions are realized, the intervention of the party is indispensable in order to orientate the movement and enable it to be organized in a cohesive way. He was also the one who showed the necessity for a special clandestine, conspiratorial, military organ of the party charged with the practical tasks of applying this «art of insurrection». Consequently, it is not enough to say that Marxists reject Blanquism. They reject the conspiratorial plot elevated to an absolute and supra-historic schema but they themselves must use conspiratorial methods. We will come to this point later on when we follow the writings of Lenin and Trotsky, and the history of the Bolshevik Party on the eve of Red October.

In 1906, Lenin spoke of the growing number of armed actions by «individuals and small groups» which «aim at assassinating individuals, chiefs and subordinates in the army and police [or else at] the confiscation of monetary funds both from the government and from private persons» (4). Those who were shocked by these actions and who cried out in horror against anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism were met with this harsh response by Lenin: in the present situation, these forms of struggle are *inevitable*, and the task of the revolutionary party is not to shun them out of fear of being disorganized by them but on the contrary to give them the organization that they fatally lack, and to try to take them «under its control» (5).

Likewise, in 1921, while the Italian proletariat led a difficult defensive struggle against fascism, without however neglecting the favorable occasions for counter-attack, and while the Maximalists (6) signed a «peace agreement» with the Fascists, the Communist Party of Italy responded with the following, denouncing the hypocritical arguments of the Maximalists:

«Revolutionary socialism recognizes that at a certain moment in history [...] the clash between social classes takes the form of civil war. This war, which is fought with all possible means, is manifested episodically at first in skirmishes by patrols, which increase in number, expanding their activity and aggressive force. There are those who would want to dictate rules of chivalry in this war. The experience of wars and of past and recent revolutions shows to what point this attempt is infantile and far from the reality anguishly faced in action.

«To distinguish in this war between collective violence and individual violence would be to split hairs and to quibble about the possibility of a struggle in which individual violence could be eliminated. And more often than not it is tantamount to a refusal to wage this war. Anyone who is openly opposed to the civil war denies the class struggle itself, for the class struggle, in the socialist view and given the causes which engender it, cannot but lead in the end to civil war. If one is opposed to this war, then one must clearly say this to the proletariat as the gentlemen of the socialist right have all too often done. But if one recognizes the historical necessity of civil war, then it is necessary to accept it with all the excesses that come along with it, while at the same time attempting to take leadership of it by following a political discipline and anticipating its outcome» (7).

As concerns the «excesses» which are so vehemently denounced by opportunist propaganda, it is necessary to remember the words that Marx and Engels addressed to the workers on the barricades of the

(4) Not to mention taking hostages, the execution of spies or provocateurs, or actions to free political prisoners, etc. We will return to this point later.

(5) *Guerrilla Warfare*, op. cit., p. 224. This question is dealt with great detail in «The Objectives of the Detachments of the Revolutionary Army» (1905), *Collected Works*, vol. 5.

(6) A wing of the Italian Socialist Party led by Serrati.

(7) «While the 'Peacemaking Expedition' Is Being Prepared», an article published in *Il Comunista*, 31-7-1921.

revolution, who were determined not to limit themselves to the objectives set by the bourgeoisie in their common struggle against the old feudal regime:

«Far from opposing so-called excesses—instances of popular revenge against hated individuals or public buildings that are associated only with hateful recollections—such instances must not only be tolerated but the leadership of them taken in hand» (8).

There will be those who will respond that the situation today is different than when Marx and Engels wrote these words. This is certainly true. In fact one of our criticisms of both classical and modern day terrorism is precisely that it is incapable of understanding at what moments individual terror is called for and, as a consequence, erects a metaphysical principle valid for any situation and divorced from all material basis. Nevertheless, the party cannot consider only the present since its task is precisely to build today the subjective conditions for the revolutionary struggle tomorrow. It thus has the duty to begin now to prepare its militants and the proletarian vanguard for the day (and whether this day is near or far away is of little importance) when the acts of «individuals or small groups», either spontaneous or organized by the party, will have a real role to play and when their execution *must not* be stifled by a repugnance for this type of action supposedly justified by «principles». The party has the duty to prepare the proletarian vanguard for the «ideal» solution, which is for the party to take these actions under its control and utilize them according to its assessment of the actual situation and its general strategy. It also has the duty to prepare them for the possibility—which is to a certain extent inevitable—that these acts will occur outside of its control, as manifestations of healthy proletarian anger.

Just as it is not enough to oppose collective violence to individual violence, it is also insufficient to reject the theory of «exemplary acts» characteristic both of the old terrorism and, supposedly, of its modern variety. To simply reject it is to make the same error that is committed by the ideologists of the «propaganda of the deed»: that which is only a means, and sometimes an expedient, is transformed into an *entity* (one rejecting it in the absolute, the other advancing it in the absolute). It is certain that neither a revolutionary situation nor the overthrow of the enemy's machinery of domination can be brought about either by an isolated act of the «dynamitéro» or by the effect which such a courageous act supposedly has with respect to «raising the consciousness of the masses» (or the «people», to use a language better suited to this subject).

Marxists, however, do not direct this perfectly correct critique against the act itself; they direct it against its idealization, its theoretical justification. Precisely because they possess the theoretical tools which prevent them from falling into idealizations of this

kind, Marxists must also recognize the value that these acts can have in particular phases of the class struggle. Even sporadic actions of this kind can be of value in intimidating the enemy and even more importantly can serve to strengthen the will of the proletarian fighters, to give them a sense of their own strength and the vulnerability of the enemy, and to show the exploited that the regime against which they revolt is certainly powerful but *not all powerful*, maybe difficult to destroy but *not immortal*. In certain aspects and within certain limits, the class struggle obeys the same laws as all other wars. It was not necessary to wait until our «civilized» epoch to discover the effect of intimidation on the attacker as well as on the attacked; and it was not insignificant that Marx and Engels labeled the famous «excesses» as «examples» and called on communists not to deplore them but to encourage them and if possible to lead them.

This point is dealt with in the *Draft Program of Action of the Communist Party of Italy* presented to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International at the end of 1922. The *Draft Program* was based on the Party's practical experience in the civil war and was completely in accord with the action it carried out in the course of the two preceding years. It explains:

«[Fascism] aims at demoralizing and defeating the proletariat by means of the terrorist method, that is to say by giving the proletariat the impression that the fascist forces are invincible and that it is impossible to hold out against them. In order to fight against this process of demoralization of the masses, it is necessary to make the proletariat realize that to oppose force by force, organization by organization, arming by arming, is not a vague slogan which will only be realized in the far distant future, but a practical and realizable activity which alone will make it possible to prepare for a reemergence of armed actions by the proletariat. In this area of activity, the Party does not set up limits of principle except in the sense that any action which is not planned by the corresponding organs of the party must be rejected (and this includes consequently any individual initiative). This does not mean that we refrain from individual actions aimed at particular individuals in the enemy camp or from those carried out by isolated communist comrades upon the order of the party. It is the contrary, for an action can involve military groups or formations only when the great masses begin to enter into the struggle. In the normal course of class guerrilla warfare, the party must organize actions of individuals or small selected groups, and it must carefully prepare these actions in order to avoid unfavorable consequences. Actions of this type will be directed not only at the armed forces or the fascists but also, in general, at the property, institutions and persons of the bourgeois class and all the bourgeois parties. As a general rule it is necessary to avoid causing too much damage, direct or indirect, to the material interests of the workers. The objective of these actions should be to strike back in retaliation to each and every attack of the enemy against proletarian institutions. In this area, the Communist Party must act in the same way towards the bourgeois institutions as the fascists do towards the proletarian masses. A corollary of this tactic is that in the anti-fascist campaign it is important not to fall into the fascists' trap by over-emphasizing the atrocities and the ruth-

(8) *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League, 1850.*

less character of their actions. While holding fascism responsible for all its actions, it is necessary to guard against taking a tearful attitude and to place the greatest possible emphasis instead on the acts of violence carried out by the forces under the direction of the party or by the proletariat in spontaneous response to the enemy's attack» (9).

Let us repeat once more that the criteria which guide the class party in its choice of methods of actions are not moralistic criteria. Neither does the party have an infallible recipe for defeating the enemy and securing victory. However in the offensive as in the desperate defensive and even in the most painful defeat, it must attempt to make the most effective use of the «psychological» factors in the social struggle. Although the role and importance of these factors in agitation around economic issues and in strikes is very different than in an episode of open or smouldering civil war, they nevertheless play a role in every situation and it is always necessary to take these factors into consideration, not in order to build them into a myth as does the idealists who erect terrorism as a system, but instead in order to better utilize them as tactical resources.

The year 1921 gave proof not only of how insufficient but how dangerous that orientation is which propagates the false and petty criticisms of terrorism such as those we have mentioned previously. A wing of the Communist Party of Germany, in reaction against the idiotic theory of «the offensive at all costs» with its perspective of a final and «irreversible» crisis of capitalism, fell into the most defeatist of defensive positions—at all costs. As could be expected, it stigmatized as Blanquism, anarchism, and gangsterism (10) the acts of terror and the reprisals which nuclei of proletarians, who were being hunted down by the police, the army and the courts, engaged in if only to defend themselves and survive—and it would have been too bad for them if they had not done it.

At the Third Congress of the Communist International (1921), Lenin and Trotsky proclaimed that while it is idiotic to preach the permanent offensive, it is treason to refuse the offensive in general and «on

(9) This *Draft Program of Action* was published in its entirety in no. 67 of *Programme Communiste*, our French language theoretical review. The passage quoted above can be found on p. 57.

(10) As usual, all this clamoring (especially on the part of Paul Levi) was accompanied by warnings against the danger of the party compromising with the sub-proletariat (the lumpen proletariat) and badly used quotes from Marx and Engels. In 1906, Lenin had already responded to such protestations:

«It is said that guerilla warfare brings the conscious proletarians into close association with degraded, drunken riff-raff. That is true. But it only means that the Party of the proletariat can never regard guerilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods, that it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be enobled by the enlightening and organizing influence of socialism. And without this latter condition, all, positively all, methods of struggle in bourgeois society bring the proletariat into close association with the various non-proletarian strata above and below it and, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become frayed, corrupted, and prostituted» (*Guerrilla Warfare*, *op. cit.*, p. 224).

principles»; and the International, while condemning the offensive erected as an absolute, saluted the «terrorist» actions of Max Hölz. A party which must lead the class which has the historic mission of attacking the enemy and destroying its central strongholds, evidently cannot renounce the direct and armed attack without committing suicide as a revolutionary party, although it understands that it cannot launch this attack at any given moment. The point that Lenin and Trotsky wanted to make, however, went further than this general recapitulation, and can be summed up in this way: it is an elementary rule of war—and no one knew it better than Trotsky—that one cannot defend oneself efficiently if all attack is renounced *a priori*. Even in a defensive battle, offensive actions cannot be refused on principle and the opportunity to launch them must not be decided according to an abstract principle but according to a practical evaluation of the situation. This point is further elaborated in one of our basic party texts, in total agreement with the position of the International:

«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 definitely 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 » (11).

This passage very clearly indicates the materialist considerations which must guide Marxists on this as well as all other questions in the class struggle. It shows that no Marxist critique of the ideology of terrorism can be made if the object of the critique is the terrorists' «code of actions» (which in certain situations is unattackable and must only be placed within the framework of a general revolutionary action) or their constantly reoccurring errors in the evaluation of the relations of forces. Instead the terrorist ideology must be attacked at its roots. If not, the critique will fall into the vulgar and defeatist pacifism which so rightly aroused Lenin's revolutionary furor.

When Fritz Adler assassinated the Austrian prime minister, Stürckh, October 21, 1916, Lenin's response was the exact opposite of any kind of pacifism. Taking the floor at the congress of the Swiss Socialist Party, he left open the answer to whether in this particular case it was a question of an

«application of terrorism as tactics (12), i.e., systematic organisation of political assassinations unconnected with the mass revolutionary struggle; or whether it was a single act in the transition from the opportunist, non-socialist defence of the fatherland tactics of the official Austrian Social-Democrats to the tactics of revolutionary mass struggle».

But regardless of which it may represent, he went on to say:

«At all events, we are convinced that the experience of revolution and counter-revolution in Russia has proved the correctness of our Party's more than twenty-year struggle against terrorism as tactics. We must not forget, however, that this struggle was closely connected with a ruthless struggle against opportunism, which was inclined to repudiate the use of all violence by the oppressed classes against their oppressors. We have always stood for the use of violence in the mass struggle and in con-

(11) «Party and Class Action», published in *Rassegna Comunista*, 31-5-1921. Translated in our booklet, *Party and Class*; this quote is found on pp. 41-42.

(12) It can be objected that in the individualist type of terrorism, we are dealing with a strategy rather than a tactic. However, it is important not to forget that Lenin wrote these words during a period of all-out imperialist war and in the hypothesis not only of a revolutionary situation but of a revolutionary strategy based on the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. It is from this viewpoint that the tactical tasks of the proletarian and communist vanguard had to be correctly defined. As for the individual or collective terror, they had to be seen from the standpoint of linking them with the actions of the mass of proletarians and exploited in general and not from the standpoint of «exemplary acts».

nection with it. Secondly, we linked the struggle against terrorism with many years of propaganda, started long before December 1905, for an armed uprising. We have regarded the armed uprising not only as the best means by which the proletariat can retaliate to the government's policy, but also as the inevitable result of the development of the class struggle for socialism and democracy. Thirdly, we have not confined ourselves to accepting violence in principle and to propaganda for armed uprising. For example, four years before the revolution we supported the use of violence by the masses against their oppressors, particularly in street demonstrations. We sought to bring to the whole country the lesson taught by every such demonstration. We began to devote more and more attention to organising sustained and systematic mass resistance against the police and the army, to winning over, through this resistance, as large as possible a part of the army to the side of the proletariat in its struggle against the government, to inducing the peasantry and the army to take a conscious part in this struggle. These are the tactics we have applied in the struggle against terrorism, and it is our firm conviction that they have proved successful» (13).

This short recapitulation of the process of formation of the Bolshevik Party contains the formulation of several fundamental principles. These are linked to the points we have already covered and take us in the direction of those which still remain to be developed. So let us stop here for a moment and examine the principles which Lenin has laid out.

First of all, the critique of terrorism (which is better labeled «individualist» rather than «individual» terrorism) and, in certain circumstances, the open struggle against it, are legitimate and even obligatory only on the condition that they are always linked to the critique of opportunism and the unrelenting struggle against it. It is significant that Lenin explained here that a distinguishing characteristic of opportunism is the rejection of any violence on the part of the oppressed class against the oppressors. Those who adopt such a position have no right to criticize terrorism; the same applies to those who mouth Lenin's critique of terrorism but who do not themselves attack opportunism.

Secondly, the two «deviations» which the movement historically had to fight in order to establish a class orientation and a solid class organization—the opportunist deviation and the «terrorist» deviation—cannot be put on the same level. Likewise, as Lenin demonstrated in 1920, «left-wing communism», the «infantile disorder», also cannot be placed on the same level as that form of *senile degeneration*, which is pacifist, legalist and reformist opportunism. In the case of the latter, there is nothing to salvage and all must be rejected. In the case of the former we can salvage at least—and this is not at all insignificant—the call for violence against the oppressors. Of course, this can be salvaged only by inserting it in the general and many faceted movement of the

(13) «Speech at the Congress of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party», Zurich, Nov. 4, 1916, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 123-124.

proletariat, and even of the popular masses, adapting it to the development and necessities of the movement and endeavouring to place it under the «supervision» and even the *conscious initiative* of the class party. It is only in this way that we can dispell the confused ideas in which its theoreticians encase it and which, as they express the mentality of the petty-bourgeois, inevitably give it an individualist and impulsive character.

Third, communists do not confine themselves to the demand in principle of violence «of the oppressed against the oppressors» as a general thesis which must be obeyed only in theory. They must extend this demand, in different degrees and in different forms, to the *whole range* of manifestations of the class struggle, from the most elementary to the most developed (14) which ends in the armed insurrection and the seizure and exercise of power. They must *ideologically* prepare the proletarians for the necessity of using violence in order to later be in a position to prepare them—and this is what is essential—for using it *physically*. This is why, as Lenin said, communists must not hesitate to recognize as something deserving «our fullest sympathy» even an isolated, individualist act of anarchism, such as that of Fritz Adler if such an act, as an instinctive reaction of a militant or group of militants, expresses the aim of the proletarian political organization of beginning to move forwards out of the swamp of opportunism.

Fourth, the Russian experience, which is valuable as an actual historical example, shows exactly under what conditions the «struggle against terrorism» can succeed and push this phenomenon to the sidelines. For this it is necessary that the organized workers' movement grows and strengthens, that its vanguard elements align themselves on the side of the struggle against the ruling class and its state, and that the class party gains an influence among the working class which enables it to orient the class and take it forward, and to

(14) In Lenin's brief speech from which we have quoted above, he spoke of «street demonstrations», which is something that is already on a higher level than the immediate struggles of the working class. But we already have seen and we will see again further on that he is envisioning here also more modest and sporadic actions, beginning with strike pickets which are also an elementary defensive form of violence.

In «Tasks of the Left Zimmerwaldists in the Swiss Social-Democratic Party», written some months later, Lenin illustrated the work of propaganda and agitation which needed to be developed in all areas in order to lead the masses to a position of revolutionary defeatism. He emphasized that «*Social-Democratic groups must be formed in all military units*» of the army; and that «*the historical inevitability and legitimacy, from the standpoint of socialism, of using arms in the only legitimate war, namely the proletarian war against the bourgeoisie to liberate humanity from wage-slavery, must be explained*». When he spoke of making «*propaganda against isolated terrorist actions*» it was in order to «*link up the struggle of the revolutionary sector of the army with the broad movement of the proletariat and of the exploited population generally*». Finally, he called for more intensive propaganda «*urging soldiers to refuse to obey when troops are used against strikers*» and explaining that «*passive disobedience alone is not enough*». (Collected Works, Vol. 23, p. 144).

agitate in all its sectors for the general aims of communism, for its principles, its program and its tactics. Then, individual terrorism as a specific phenomenon will tend to pass to the sidelines, but only in the measure where the class movement and the party have taken from it the demand for violence and transformed it; only in the measure where they make it *one* of the tactical means necessitated in different degrees and forms by the various situations and no longer the single method with supposed miraculous qualities. In other words, it is only by going beyond the narrow limits of individualist terrorism that it is possible to escape the dead end to which it leads.

We must not forget that this type of terrorism, in fact, historically has appeared in one of two historical situations. First, we see it in periods of deep internal social crisis which disrupt and unsettle more or less large layers of the ruling class and its sub-strata, above all the intellectuals. These strata, incapable of orienting themselves in the existing regime and unable to make a place for themselves within it, are pushed onto the political and social scene and, to the extent that *the organized working class movement, the only one which is revolutionary, is lacking, on the ebb, or too weak*, they are pushed into the position where they play an ephemeral vanguard role. In the absence of the polarizing force of the modern proletariat, these layers are abandoned to their immediate spontaneism and take the direction corresponding to the social factors which motivate them and to their ideology, which is idealist, voluntarist, and moralistic.

This was the case with the essentially populist and Blanquist terrorism which appeared during the 1870's in Russia, as well as the basically anarchist varieties which appeared in France and Spain at the end of the 19th Century, after the bloody defeat of the Paris Commune and the Spanish republican movements (1873-74).

This type of terrorism has also appeared—for instance in the years immediately preceding and following the 1905 Revolution in Russia and also, in part, today—as a desperate political and moralistic reaction against the predominance of the opportunist currents within the working class movement. As Lenin wrote in 1920 «*anarchism* [and Lenin included in this term all the varieties not only of anarchist but also populist and blanquist terrorism] *was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement. The two monstrosities complemented each other*» (15). The decline of the «old» terrorism at the beginning of the 1890's coincided with the extension and radicalization of strikes and the birth of the first Marxist groups and circles. The «new» terrorism which has emerged in the years preceding the 1905 Revolution has coincided with the rise of both the working class movement, which had an influence on the peasantry, and the working class party. History has its inexorable laws, even if this escapes the theoreticians of individualist terrorism.

(15) «Left-Wing» Communism — An Infantile Disorder», *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 32.

A Long Struggle on Two Fronts

It is very important to see how the critique of individualist terrorism went hand in hand with the unrelenting struggle against the opportunist tendencies within the Russian party, which furnished terrorism with an objective justification. In 1898-1901, a clean break with the terrorist and conspiratorial anarchist and Blanquist tradition was one of the indispensable conditions for the birth of the class party. But as the whole complexity of tasks of revolutionary Marxists became clear with respect to the general perspective and with respect to tactics and organization, the question of revolutionary terror and its use emerged from the shadows of the past to take its proper place in the perspective of a movement that encompasses all of society and in which the working class takes on the role of *protagonist* and *guide*.

At First the Rupture

In a pamphlet written by Lenin in 1898—the very pamphlet where he elaborated the function of the proletariat in the double revolution with such clarity that no doubt could be left about the significance of the participation of the proletariat in the democratic revolution—we read:

«Blanquist, conspiratorial traditions are fearfully strong among the former [the Narodniki], so much so that they cannot conceive of political struggle except in the form of political conspiracy. The Social-Democrats, however, are not guilty of such a narrow outlook; they do not believe in conspiracies; they think that the period of conspiracies has long passed away, that to reduce political struggle to conspiracy means, on the one hand, immensely restricting its scope, and, on the other hand, choosing the most unsuitable methods of struggle».

The axis of the critique is thus the «narrowness» of the horizon of the «conspirators on principle» and not its «illegitimacy»; the «inadequacy» of the means they adopt and not their «inconsistency» in the absolute. It is necessary to go beyond the dead end of their actions and their theoretical postulates so that the many-sided activity of Russian social-democrats could develop, an activity which

«consists in spreading by *propaganda* the teachings of scientific socialism, in spreading among the workers a proper understanding of the various classes in Russian society, of their interrelations, of the struggle between the classes, of the role of the working class in the struggle, of its attitude towards the declining and the developing classes, towards the past and future of capitalism, and understanding of the historical task of international social-democracy and of the Russian working class. Inseparably connected with propaganda is *agitation* among the workers [...]. Agitation among the workers means that the Social-Democrats must take part in all the spontaneous manifestations of the working class struggle, in all the

conflicts between the workers and the capitalists over the working day, wages, working conditions, etc., etc» (16).

In 1900, having already sketched the main line which the tremendous theoretical armament of the Russian party would follow in the years to come, Lenin tackled, in the pamphlet *Urgent Tasks of Our Movement*, the delicate problems of a «*period of vacillation and doubt bordering on self-negation*» which had swept through Russian Social Democracy, attributing it to a faulty orientation in the party's practical day to day activity. These vacillations and doubts had one of two effects: either «*the working class movement is being sundered from socialism*» through the practice of aiding the workers to wage the economic struggle without explaining to them «*the socialist aim and the political tasks of the movement as a whole*»; or «*socialism is being sundered from the labour movement*» by pretending that since the workers supposedly confine themselves to the economic struggle, the struggle against the government must be waged «*entirely by the intelligentsia*». The economist error produces as a counteraction the error which reduces politics to a conspiratorial activity, and vice versa. To follow the revolutionary path we must transcend these two deviations and abolish the one-sided character of activities through organizing them according to a general tactical plan where *each* has its own role to play. Lenin writes:

«*Our principal and fundamental task is to facilitate the political development and organization of the working class. Those who push this task into the background, who refuse to subordinate to it all the special tasks and particular methods of struggle, are following a false path and causing serious harm to the movement. And it is being pushed into the background, firstly, by those who call upon revolutionaries to employ only the forces of isolated conspiratorial circles cut off from the working class movement in the struggle against the government. It is being pushed into the background, secondly, by those who restrict the content and scope of political propaganda, agitation and organization; who think it fit and proper to treat the workers to «politics» only at exceptional moments in their lives, only on festive occasions [...].*

«Social-Democracy does not tie its hands, it does not restrict its activities to one preconceived plan or method of political struggle; it recognizes *all methods of struggle, provided they correspond to the forces at the disposal of the Party and facilitate the achievement of the best results possible under the given conditions.* If we have a strongly organized Party, a single strike may turn into a political demonstration, into a political victory over the government. If we have a strongly organized Party, a revolt in a single locality may grow into a victorious revolution» (17).

In 1901, with the programmatic foundations of the party and the general lines of its tactics (the «tactics-as-process» of *What Is to Be Done?*) having been laid out, the problem of organizational tasks had

(16) Lenin, «Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats», *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 340 and 329. The term «social-democrat» of course was at the time synonymous with «socialist» or «communist».

(17) *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 367 and 369-371 (underlined by us).

to be confronted with urgency. From this point of view, what role does terrorism play? Once again Lenin does not approach the problem abstractly but considers it in relationship to the perspectives, the tasks and the general objectives of the movement and in relationship to the degree of development of the movement's organ of leadership, the party. It is from this point of view that he sees the problem in *Where to Begin?* Can a given tactical means, terrorism for example, contribute to the reinforcement of the movement or does it carry risks of weakening it or even of destroying it? Lenin writes:

«In principle we have never rejected, and cannot reject, terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle, given a definite state of the troops and the existence of definite conditions. But the important point is that terror, at the present time, is by no means suggested as an operation for the army in the field, an operation closely connected with and integrated into the entire system of struggle, but as an independent form of occasional attack unrelated to any army. Without a central body and with the weakness of local revolutionary organisations, this, in fact, is all that terror can be. We, therefore, declare emphatically that under the present conditions such a means of struggle is inopportune and unsuitable; that it diverts the most active fighters from their real task, the task which is most important from the standpoint of the interests of the movement as a whole; and that it disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution [...]. Far be it from us to deny the significance of heroic individual blows, but it is our duty to sound a vigorous warning against becoming infatuated with terror, against taking it to be the chief and basic means of struggle as so many people strongly incline to do at present. [...]

«In other words, the immediate task of our Party is not to summon all available forces for the attack right now, but to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle» (18).

Next, Surpassing the Narrow Limits of Individualist Terrorism

The worker's movement can only break the narrow limits in which it is confined by forces whose viewpoint is tied to immediate circumstances and their variations, when it surpasses its own *spontaneous immediatism*. The two poles of this spontaneity, which both lead to the subjection of the movement to bourgeois politics, are precisely economism and terrorism. The worker's movement can overcome and surpass this spontaneity only by assimilating the revolutionary Marxist program, defended with a dogmatic firmness and a constant inflexibility, and imported into the ranks of the movement by the tenacious work of the party. This is what Lenin wrote in *What Is to Be Done?*:

(18) *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 19-20.

«In the last footnote, we cited the opinion of an Economist and of a non-Social Democratic terrorist, who showed themselves to be accidentally in agreement. Speaking generally, however, there is not an accidental, but a necessary, inherent connection between the two [...]. The Economists and the present day terrorists have one common root, namely, subservience to spontaneity [...]. At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the 'drab everyday struggle' and those who call for the most self-sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of the 'labor movement pure and simple', while the terrorists bow to the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working class movement into an integral whole [...].

«Political activity has its logic, quite apart from the consciousness of those who, with the best intentions, call either for terror or for lending the economic struggle itself a political character. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and, in this case, good intentions cannot save one from being drawn 'along the line of least resistance'.

«[...] the terrorists and the Economists underestimate the revolutionary activity of the masses... one group goes out in search of artificial 'excitants', the other talks about 'concrete demands'. But both fail to devote sufficient attention to the development of their own activity in political agitation and in the organization of political exposures» (19).

In the following chapters («What Kind of Organization Do We Require» and «A 'Conspiratorial' Organization and 'Democracy'») Lenin shows in what context the individual terrorist action ceases to be that which it is spontaneously, i.e. a manifestation of «*revolutionary adventurism*». This is possible only in the context of the complex and organized action of the party; a party which knows the *whole* scope of its own tasks and is ready to use *any* workable means in its propaganda and agitation which are directed to *all* layers of society and concern *all* relations among classes and *all* relations between these classes and the state; a party which works to «*bring closer and merge into a single whole the elemental destructive force of the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organization of revolutionaries*». Lenin writes:

«[...] a strong revolutionary organization is absolutely necessary precisely for the purpose of giving stability to the movement and of safeguarding it against the possibility of making thoughtless attacks. Precisely at the present time, when no such organization yet exists, and when the revolutionary movement is rapidly and spontaneously growing, we already observe two opposite extremes (which, as is to be expected, 'meet'). These are: the utterly unsound economism and the preaching of moderation, and the equally unsound 'excitative terror' [...] there exists Social-Democrats who give way to both these extremes. This is not surprising, for, apart from other reasons, the 'economic struggle against the employers and the government' can never satisfy revolutionaries, and opposite extremes will therefore always appear here and

(19) *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 417-421.

there. *Only a centralized, militant organization that consistently carries out a Social-Democratic policy, that satisfies, so to speak, all revolutionary instincts and strivings, can safeguard the movement against making thoughtless attacks and prepare attacks that hold out the promise of success»* (20).

To be very clear and to prevent anyone from using his words to procrastinate about taking up the struggle, Lenin added these explicit words in September 1902:

«The Social-Democrats will always warn against adventurism and ruthlessly expose illusions which inevitably end in complete disappointment. We must bear in mind that a revolutionary party is worthy of its name only when it guides *in deed* the movement of a revolutionary class. We must bear in mind that any popular movement assumes an infinite variety of forms, is constantly developing new forms and discarding the old, and effecting modifications or new combinations of old and new forms. It is our duty to participate actively in this process of working out means and methods of struggle. [...] *Without in the least denying violence and terrorism in principle*, we demanded work for the preparation of such forms of violence as were calculated to bring about the direct participation of the masses and which guaranteed that participation. We do not close our eyes to the difficulties of this task, but will work at it steadfastly and persistently, undeterred by the objections that this is a matter of the "vague and distant future." Yes, gentlemen, we stand for future and not only past forms of the movement. We give preference to long and arduous work on what promises a future rather than to an "easy" repetition of what has been condemned by the past» (21).

A long and arduous work on what promises a future... Three years later, on September 26, 1905, Lenin devoted a short enthusiastic article «From the Defensive to the Offensive» to the news of what today would be called a «commando» action in the seacoast town of Riga. Seventy people attacked the central prison, killing and wounding some guards; they freed two political prisoners and succeeded in retreating without sustaining heavy losses. Lenin writes:

«It is by engaging in such operations that the pioneers of armed struggle become fused with the masses not merely in world but in deed, assume leadership of the combat squads and contingents of the proletariat, train in the crucible of civil war dozens of popular leaders who, tomorrow, on the day of the workers' uprising, will be able to help with their experience and their heroic courage thousands and tens of thousands of workers. [...]

«Our trophies are two revolutionary leaders rescued from prison. This is indeed a brilliant victory!! It is a real victory, scored in a battle against an enemy armed to the teeth. *It is no longer a plot against some detested individual, no act of vengeance or desperation, no mere "intimidation"—no, it was a well thought-out and prepared commencement of operations*

(20) *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 512 and 476-477 (last sentence underlined by us).

(21) «Revolutionary Adventurism», *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 194-195 (middle section underlined by us).

by a contingent of the revolutionary army, planned with due regard for the correlations of forces. [...] Fortunately, the time has passed when revolution was "made" by individual revolutionary terrorists, because the people were not revolutionary. The bomb has ceased to be the weapon of the solitary "bomb thrower", and is becoming *an essential weapon of the people»* (22).

In order to reach this point and to reproduce this episode on a large scale, to pass from individual terrorism to mass terrorism which absorbs and utilizes the former, required that a higher stage be reached than that attained by the movement which swept along the great masses in 1905. It required a party which had already tackled the problems of *armed insurrection and guerrilla warfare* (the latter being precisely the struggle of individuals or groups utilizing *revolutionary terror*). It required that the party should have already resolved these problems and based the preparation for the future on these conclusions. Although this future was maybe years away, although it was perhaps to be preceded by discouragements and defeats, the party was able to foresee and prepare for it thanks to its Marxist method—and after the dress rehearsal of 1905 it was finally realized in October 1917.

(To Be Continued)

(22) *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 283-284 (the last third underlined by us).

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The Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920)

Introduction

The Theses which we are publishing here were drawn up for the national conference of the Communist Abstentionist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party in 1920 (1). This faction, to which we trace the origins of our party today, was to split from the Socialist Party in January 1921 to form the Communist Party of Italy. Although the Faction was officially formed in July 1919, it had already organized itself in the end of 1918 around the newspaper *Il Soviet* and had a long history of far-left opposition within the Socialist Party behind it. This opposition dated back to the struggle in 1912-1914 against reformism, electoral blocks with the bourgeois left, and the Libyan war (where our current opposed the annexation of Libya for internationalist reasons); later, during World War I, a small group of young Italian Marxists firmly and resolutely adopted the stance of revolutionary defeatism as advanced by Lenin.

The decisive question which confronted the Faction in May 1920 — just a month before the convening of the Second Congress of the Communist International — was the split from the Socialist Party. In the words of a motion adopted at the conference, the SP was *«absolutely incapable, given its present make-up and function, of assuming the leadership of the proletarian revolution. Its many deficiencies are the result of the presence within it of a reformist tendency which inevitably will take a counter-revolutionary position in the crucial moment of the class struggle, and of the practice of a verbal support for the communist program [this refers to the centrist current, the so-called Maximalists] coupled with the opportunist practice of traditional socialism in the area of political and economic action»*. The problem in short was that of laying the foundations of the Communist Party of Italy, Section of the Communist International. This party was born approximately six months later, on January 21st, 1921, on the basis of the same principles formulated in the document we are translating here. While it upheld the *tactic* of abstaining

(1) This conference was held in Florence on May 8-9, 1920. The *Theses* were published in nos. 16 and 17 of *Il Soviet* (June 6 and 27, 1920).

from elections and the parliament in such countries as Italy where the bourgeois revolution had long since been achieved and where there existed a long corrupting democratic tradition, it did not in any way turn this tactic into a matter of principle which might keep it from supporting the political, theoretical and programmatic platform of the Third International. On the contrary it unreservedly shared its cardinal points.

The importance of the Theses of the Faction lies in the first place in their international perspective, which is something that has always characterized the Italian Left. They do not present the platform of a *national* party but instead are a synthesis of the theoretical, programmatic, and tactical positions which necessarily distinguish the party of the *world* communist revolution. The *Theses* do not confine themselves to the Italian locality (which is not mentioned in any of the theses) but formulate the principles which delimit the communist party from every other supposedly working class political organization and which must guide every communist party in any area of the world and in any phase of the era opened by the first world war and the Russian Revolution. This aspect of the *Theses* has a special importance in that one of the central demands of the Left at the Second Congress of the International was precisely that a single program for all communist parties should be formulated, a program binding for all without any exceptions because of supposed «national peculiarities».

In the second place the *Theses* respect the criteria which we also would have liked to have seen centrally applied at the Second Congress even if it were to be done in a condensed and even schematic form. The *Theses* develop the questions of theory and principle separately from the question of tactics and take up the tactical directives only after clearly defining the theoretical and programmatic foundations and ultimate objectives of the communist movement and only after clearly showing that tactics and program are closely interconnected and inseparable. The *Theses* thus respect perfectly the dialectical schema which Lenin, at the Third Congress of the Communist International, correctly reproached the infantile extremists and theoreticians of the «offensive at all costs», for having forgotten — or for never having learned — and in which doctrine, principles, final aim, program, and tactics each have their precise place and can not be lumped together indiscriminately in a terminological confusion. On the other hand the *Theses* very firmly insist on the bond without which the unity between theory and praxis, between thought and action — one of the cardinal points of Marxism — would be broken.

Accordingly, the *Theses* are divided into three parts. The first summarizes the fundamental premises of the communist doctrine and of its vision of human history. This history is the history of class struggles which culminate in the conquest of political power by the class whose very existence expresses the antagonism which has become unbearable between the forces of production and the

relations of production. This conquest of power can only be achieved — and in fact has only been achieved — through violent revolution, which has as its necessary corollary the dictatorial exercise of political power by the victorious class. The *Theses* insist on the necessity of a centralized military organization of proletarian forces against the assaults of the counter-revolution. They also give a picture of the economic and social transformations which the proletarian dictatorship will implement by means of «despotic inroads» extending up to the point of the complete suppression of capitalist economic relations, the abolition of classes, and consequently the dissolution of the state as a political apparatus of power which will be progressively replaced by the collective rational administration of economic and social activity.

Above all the *Theses* clearly bring out the primary function of the party. They state: «it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat constitutes itself into a class struggling for its emancipation» and further that «the dictatorship of the proletariat will [...] be the dictatorship of the Communist Party». These two concepts were very strongly insisted on in the Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution adopted at the Second Congress of the Comintern; they were the criterion used by the Communist International to distinguish itself from all other supposedly close political currents. Many of these currents, although abstractly recognizing the principle of revolution and therefore of violence, ignored or worse yet denied the following imperatives: 1) that this violence be guided before and after the conquest of power by a consciousness both of the general objectives and of the methods required to attain them, and 2) that it be directed by a centralized organization.

For Marxism this consciousness and this organization can only be materialized in the party. Nothing could better distinguish our current from the innumerable contemporary variants of workerism, immediatism, and spontaneism represented in Italy by «Ordine Nuovo», the anarcho-syndicalists or the anarchists themselves, and in Germany particularly by the KAPD. Nothing could prove with greater clarity that our view of the revolutionary process and its premises was exactly the same as the Bolsheviks. The question of the role of the party and the process of revolution and dictatorship was central to the great polemics of Lenin and Trotsky against both the infantile extremists and Kautsky; the positions of the latter two confirm the fact that *all* the variants of opportunism sooner or later end in the centrist negation of the very bases of the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only a weak echo of these polemics reached Italy, yet this did not prevent the Italian Left from assuming once again a principled position on these questions that was identical to that boldly advanced by the Bolsheviks amid the cries of dismay from all the philistines flourishing in the ranks of the Western proletariat. In this respect as well, the *Theses* bear a clear international

imprint, which makes them the *one* real support given by the West to the great task of reestablishing the cardinal points of the Marxist doctrine undertaken by the Third International. All this shows, moreover, that we not only had nothing whatsoever in common with the infantile extremists but were at the *opposite* pole from them.

The second part develops a critique of all the ideologies which communism openly criticizes and combats: philosophical idealism and its translation into political terms, that is to say parliamentary democracy; petty-bourgeois and Wilsonian pacifism; utopian socialism in all its manifestations, from its classical form up to its most extreme offshoots, the latter of which see the forms of organization assumed not only by the struggle for revolutionary preparation but by the conquest of power, and even by the exercise of the dictatorship, as a transposition of the immediate organizations in which proletarians are assembled under the domination of capital (that is according to their positions and their short-term interests within the bourgeois mode of production); reformism with its theory that the proletarian class can take power gradually, moving little by little from its position as an oppressed class to that of a ruling class, including here its conception of the exercise of this class rule; and finally anarchism which has its direct origins in bourgeois idealism and consequently is a reflection of the capitalist form of production and distribution.

In the third part, the entire spectrum of activities which the party is summoned to pursue as the representative of the general and permanent interests of the class is deduced from the theoretical and programmatic principles of communism: theoretical work, propaganda, proselytism, active participation in the life of trade unions and economic organizations, anti-military propaganda within the army, revolutionary preparation including legal and clandestine work, and finally the revolutionary insurrection, the attempt to seize power. The *Theses* reiterate our rejection of the tactic of participating in elections and parliamentary activity in the countries with a long democratic tradition. This tactic clearly is rejected not for reasons of principle, valid in any period, but on the basis of arguments founded on the Marxist view of the historical period in which the revolutionary seizure of power is posed as the single, direct perspective for the proletarian class. In particular this rejection flows from a recognition of the enormous obstacle which is created for revolutionary preparation in the advanced capitalist countries by the persistence not only of democratic institutions, but also of illusions nurtured by the exploiting class among the oppressed class concerning the possibility that it can attain its emancipation by means of these institutions.

The *Theses* proceed to emphasize the refusal *on principle* of «agreements or alliances with other political movements which share with it [the Communist Party] a specific immediate objective [or even which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie] but diverge from it in their program for further political action». As was made more explicit in our critique of the slogan of «the

political united front» advanced by the Comintern in 1921, this refusal did not exclude the call for united actions by union organizations — including those linked to other political movements — in the area of the defence of the living and working conditions of all proletarians, whatever may be their ideological or political affiliation. Point 13 dealing with the soviets is in complete accord with the *Theses* later adopted by the Second Congress; it very explicitly states that soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle, but become revolutionary to the extent that the party conquers a majority in them. Whereas on the one hand they can constitute a precious instrument of revolutionary struggle in a period of acute crisis, they can likewise present a serious danger of conciliation and combination with the institutions of bourgeois democracy whenever the bourgeoisie's power is reinforced. Noteworthy also in light of future polemics is point 3 which does not make the «approval of the majority» or some gross numerical coefficient a pre-condition for the party's action.

It might seem strange that the *Theses* reject the idea that majority approval is necessary in the area of class action led by the party, but state with respect to the *internal* functioning of the party that «the party functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and towards the decisions of the central organs chosen by that majority to lead the movement» (part III, point 2). One must not forget however that for our current, as was stated in the *Rome Theses* (1922), «the proclamation of the Party's program and the selection of people for the different functions of the organization results in appearance from a democratic vote by delegates of the party. In reality, however, they are the products of a real process which accumulates the lessons of experience, and prepares and selects leaders, thereby enabling the program and the hierarchy of the party to take shape» (2). Discipline is the result of this «real process» in so far as this process has no break in continuity. It cannot result from a mechanism which, like any mechanism, can have no *intrinsic* value independent of the purpose for which it has been devised and can produce results opposite from those for which it was intended. It is for this reason that our party later on utilized the formula of «*organic centralism*» (in place of «democratic centralism») which better expresses the party's mode of functioning (see especially our text *The Democratic Principle* which will be published shortly in this review).

The *Theses* conclude with two formulae which express the unequivocal Marxist position which renounces in the Blanquist theory the idea of a coup by an audacious minority, the voluntarist act not based on an appreciation of the real relationship of forces in society as a

(2) «Rome Theses of the Communist Party of Italy», part I, point 4. These *Theses* were adopted by the CPI at its Rome Congress in March 1922. The Italian text is found in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, the French translation in *Défense de la continuité du programme communiste* (see the list of publications on the inside back cover).

whole; but which claims Blanquism as its own and as the very substance of Marxism, inasmuch as it is the theory of armed insurrection, dictatorship and civil war.

With the exception of the formulation of the tactic of electoral abstentionism — which was very important for us in regard to the formation of real communist parties from the elements and currents within the old socialist parties in the West — there is not a single point in the *Theses* to which the Bolsheviks could not then subscribe. When barely seven years had elapsed, the Italian Left, at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy at Lyons and at the Sixth Enlarged Executive at Moscow, was obliged to remind the Leninist Old Guard—which was then locked in a tragic struggle by the vise of counter-revolution mounting within the very ranks of the party — that Marxism is a single global vision of the world and of history, and that tactical maneuvering has and must have a limit because it necessarily has repercussions on a factor which plays a great role in the influence of the party on the class — namely the continuity of principles and program openly proclaimed, translated into practice consistent with them, and implemented by a close-knit organization.

Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party - May 1920

1. Communism is the doctrine of the social and historical pre-conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

The elaboration of this doctrine began in the period of the first proletarian movements against the effects of the bourgeois system of production. It took shape in the Marxist critique of the capitalist economy, the method of historical materialism, the theory of class struggle and the conception of the development which will take place in the historical process of the fall of the capitalist regime and the proletarian revolution.

2. It is on the basis of this doctrine — which found its first and fundamental systematic expression in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 — that the Communist Party is constituted.

3. In the present historical period, the situation created by bourgeois relations of production, based on the private ownership of the means of production and exchange, on the private appropriation of the products of collective labour and on free competition in private trade of all products, becomes more and more intolerable for the proletariat.

4. To these economic relations correspond the political institutions characteristic of capitalism: the state based on democratic and

parliamentary representation. In a society divided into classes, the state is the organisation of the power of the class which is economically privileged. Although the bourgeoisie represents a minority within society, the democratic state represents the system of armed force organized for the purpose of preserving the capitalist relations of production.

5. The struggle of the proletariat against capitalist exploitation assumes a succession of forms going from the violent destruction of machines to the organization on a craft basis to improve working conditions, to the creation of factory councils, and to attempts to take possession of enterprises.

In all these individual actions, the proletariat moves in the direction of the decisive revolutionary struggle against the power of the bourgeois state, which prevents the present relations of production from being broken.

6. This revolutionary struggle is the conflict between the whole proletarian class and the whole bourgeois class. Its instrument is the political class party, the communist party, which achieves the conscious organization of the proletarian vanguard aware of the necessity of unifying its action, *in space* — by transcending the interests of particular groups, trades or nationalities — and *in time* — by subordinating to the final outcome of the struggle the partial gains and conquests which do not modify the essence of the bourgeois structure.

Consequently it is only by organizing itself into a political party that the proletariat constitutes itself into a class struggling for its emancipation.

7. The objective of the action of the Communist Party is the violent overthrow of bourgeois rule, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and the organization of the latter into a ruling class.

8. Parliamentary democracy in which citizens of every class are represented is the form assumed by the organization of the bourgeoisie into a ruling class. The organization of the proletariat into a ruling class will instead be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, through a type of state in which representation (the system of workers' councils) will be decided only by members of the working class (the industrial proletariat and the poor peasants), with the bourgeois being denied the right to vote.

9. After the old bureaucratic, police and military machine has been destroyed, the proletarian state will unify the armed forces of the laboring class into an organization which will have as its task the repression of all counter-revolutionary attempts by the dispossessed class and the execution of measures of intervention into bourgeois relations of production and property.

10. The process of transition from the capitalist economy to a communist one will be extremely complex and its phases will differ

according to differing degrees of economic development. The end-point of this process will be the total achievement of the ownership and management of the means of production by the whole unified collectivity, together with the central and rational distribution of productive forces among the different branches of production, and finally the central administration of the allocation of products by the collectivity.

11. When capitalist economic relationships have been entirely eliminated, the abolition of classes will be an accomplished fact and the state, as a political apparatus of power, will be progressively replaced by the rational, collective administration of economic and social activity.

12. The process of transforming the relations of production will be accompanied by a wide range of social measures stemming from the principle that the collectivity takes charge of the physical and intellectual existence of all its members. In this way, all the birth marks which the proletariat has inherited from the capitalist world will be progressively eliminated and, in the words of the *Manifesto*, in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

13. The pre-conditions for the victory of proletarian power in the struggle for the realization of communism are to be found not so much in the rational use of skills in technical tasks, as in the fact that political responsibilities and the control of the state apparatus are confided to those people who will put the general interest and the final triumph of communism before the particular and limited interests of groups.

Precisely because the Communist Party is the organization of proletarians who have achieved this class consciousness, the aim of the party will be, by its propaganda, to win elective posts for its members within the social organization. The dictatorship of the proletariat will therefore be the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the latter will be a party of government in a sense totally opposed to that of the old oligarchies, for communists will assume responsibilities which will demand the maximum of sacrifice and renunciation and they will take upon their shoulders the heaviest burden of the revolutionary task which falls on the proletariat in the difficult labour through which a new world will come to birth.

II

1. The critique which communists continuously make on the basis of the fundamental methods of Marxism, and the propagation of the conclusions to which it leads, have as their objective the extirpation of those influences which the ideological systems of other classes and other parties have over the proletariat.

2. First of all, communism sweeps away idealist conceptions which consider the material of the world of thought as the base, and not the result, of the real relations of human life and of their development. All religious and philosophical formulations of this type must be considered as the ideological baggage of classes whose supremacy — which preceded the bourgeois epoch — rested on an ecclesiastical, aristocratic or dynastic organization receiving its authority only from a pretended super-human investiture.

One symptom of the decadence of the modern bourgeoisie is the fact that those old ideologies which it had itself destroyed reappear in its midst under new forms.

A communism founded on idealist bases would be an unacceptable absurdity.

3. In still more characteristic fashion, communism is the demolition of the conceptions of liberalism and bourgeois democracy by the Marxist critique. The juridical assertion of freedom of thought and political equality of citizens, and the idea that institutions founded on the rights of the majority and on the mechanism of universal electoral representation are a sufficient base for a gradual and indefinite progress of human society, are ideologies which correspond to the regime of private economy and free competition, and to the interests of the capitalist class.

4. One of the illusions of bourgeois democracy is the belief that the living conditions of the masses can be improved through increasing the education and training provided by the ruling classes and their institutions. In fact it is the opposite: raising the intellectual level of the great masses demands, as a pre-condition, a better standard of material life, something which is incompatible with the bourgeois regime. Moreover through its schools, the bourgeoisie tries to broadcast precisely the ideologies which inhibit the masses from perceiving the present institutions as the very obstacle to their emancipation.

5. Another fundamental tenet of bourgeois democracy lies in the principle of nationality. The formation of states on a national basis corresponds to the class necessities of the bourgeoisie at the moment when it establishes its own power, in that it can thus avail itself of national and patriotic ideologies (which correspond to certain interests common in the initial period of capitalism to people of the same race, language and customs) and use them to delay and mitigate the conflict between the capitalist state and the proletarian masses.

National irredentisms are thus born of essentially bourgeois interests.

The bourgeoisie itself does not hesitate to trample on the principle of nationality as soon as the development of capitalism drives it to the often violent conquest of foreign markets and to the resulting conflict among the great states over the latter. Communism transcends the principle of nationality in that it demonstrates the identical predicament in which the mass of disinherited workers find themselves with respect to employers, whatever may be the nationality of either

the former or the latter; it proclaims the international association to be the type of political organization which the proletariat will create when it, in turn, comes to power.

In the perspective of the communist critique, therefore, the recent world war was brought about by capitalist imperialism. This critique demolishes those various interpretations which take up the viewpoint of one or another bourgeois state and try to present the war as a vindication of the national rights of certain peoples or as a struggle of democratically more advanced states against those organized on pre-bourgeois forms, or finally, as a supposed necessity of self-defence against enemy aggression.

6. Communism is likewise opposed to the conceptions of bourgeois pacifism and to Wilsonian illusions on the possibility of a world association of states, based on disarmament and arbitration and having as its pre-condition the Utopia of a sub-division of state units by nationality. For communists, war will become impossible and national questions will be solved only when the capitalist regime has been replaced by the International Communist Republic.

7. In a third area, communism presents itself as the transcendence of the systems of utopian socialism which seek to eliminate the faults of social organization by instituting complete plans for a new organization of society whose possibility of realization was not put in relationship to the real development of history.

8. The proletariat's elaboration of its own interpretation of society and history to guide its action against the social relations of the capitalist world, continuously gives rise to a multitude of schools or currents, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the very immaturity of the conditions of struggle and by all the various bourgeois prejudices. From all this arise the errors and setbacks in proletarian action. But it is due to this material of experience that the communist movement succeeds in defining with ever greater clarity the central features of its doctrine and its tactics, differentiating itself clearly from all the other currents active within the proletariat itself and openly combating them.

9. The formation of producers' cooperatives, in which the capital belongs to the workers who work in them, cannot be a path towards the suppression of the capitalist system. This is because the acquisition of raw materials and the distribution of products are effected according to the laws of private economy and consequently, credit, and therefore private capital ultimately exercises control over the collective capital of the cooperative itself.

10. Communists cannot consider economic trade or craft organizations to be sufficient for the struggle for the proletarian revolution or as the basic organs of the communist economy.

The organization of the class through trade unions serves to neutralize competition between workers of the same trade and prevents wages falling to the lowest level. However it cannot lead to the

elimination of capitalist profit, still less to the unification of the workers of all trades against the privilege of bourgeois power. Further, the simple transfer of the ownership of the enterprises from the private employer to the workers' union could not achieve the basic economic features of communism, for the latter necessitates the transfer of ownership to the whole proletarian collectivity since this is the only way to eliminate the characteristics of the private economy in the appropriation and distribution of products.

Communists consider the union as the site of an initial proletarian experience which permits the workers to go further towards the concept and the practice of political struggle, which has as its organ the class party.

11. In general, it is an error to believe that the revolution is a question of forms of organizations which proletarians group into according to their position and interests within the framework of the capitalist system of production.

It is not a modification of the structure of economic organizations, then, which can provide the proletariat with an effective instrument for its emancipation.

Factory unions and factory councils emerge as organs for the defense of the interests of the proletarians of different enterprises at the point when it begins to appear possible that capitalist despotism in the management of the enterprises could be limited. But obtaining the right of these organizations to supervise (to monitor) production to a more or less large degree is not incompatible with the capitalist system and could even be used by it as a means to preserve its domination.

Even the transfer of factory management to factory councils would not mean (any more than in the case of the unions) the advent of the communist system. According to the true communist conception, workers' supervision of production will not be achieved until after the overthrow of bourgeois power, and it will be a supervision over the running of every enterprise exercised by the whole proletariat unified in the state of workers' councils. Communist management of production will be the direction of every branch and every productive unit by rational collective organs which will represent the interests of all workers united in the work of building communism.

12. Capitalist relations of production cannot be modified by the intervention of the organs of bourgeois power.

This is why the transfer of private enterprises to the state or to the local government does not correspond in the slightest to the communist conception. Such a transfer is invariably accompanied by the payment of the capital value of the enterprise to the former owners who thus fully retain their right to exploit. The enterprises themselves continue to function as private enterprises within the framework of the capitalist economy, and they often become convenient instruments in the work of class preservation and defense undertaken by the bourgeois state.

13. The idea that capitalist exploitation of the proletariat can be gradually diminished and then eliminated by the legislative and reformist action of present political institutions, be it elicited by representatives of the proletarian party inside those institutions or even by mass agitation, leads only to complicity in the defense of the privileges of the bourgeoisie. The latter will on occasion pretend to give up a minimum of its privileges in order to try to appease the anger of the masses and to divert their revolutionary attempts against the bases of the capitalist regime.

14. The conquest of political power by the proletariat, even if such an objective is considered as the final, total aim of its action, cannot be achieved by winning a majority within bourgeois elective organs.

Thanks to the executive organs of the state, which are the direct agents of the bourgeoisie, the latter very easily ensures a majority within the elective organs for its delegates or for those elements which fall under its influence or into its game because they want to individually or collectively win elective posts. Moreover, participation in such institutions requires the agreement to respect the juridical and political bases of the bourgeois constitution. This agreement is merely formal but nevertheless it is sufficient to free the bourgeoisie from even the slightest embarrassment of an accusation of formal illegality at the point when it will logically resort to its real means of armed defence rather than abandon power and permit the proletariat to smash its bureaucratic and military machine of domination.

15. To recognize the necessity of insurrectionary struggle for the seizure of power, while at the same time proposing that the proletariat exercise its power by conceding representation to the bourgeoisie in new political organizations (constituent assemblies or combinations of these with the system of workers' councils) is an unacceptable program and is opposed to the central communist demand, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The process of expropriating the bourgeoisie would be immediately compromised if this class retained a means to influence somehow the formation of the representative organs of the expropriating proletarian state. This would permit the bourgeoisie to use the influence which it will inevitably retain because of its experience and its intellectual and technical training, in order to deploy its political activity towards the reestablishment of its power in a counter-revolution. The same consequences would result if the slightest democratic prejudice was allowed to survive in regard to an equality of treatment which is supposedly to be granted to the bourgeois by the proletarian power in such matters as freedom of association, propaganda and the press.

16. The program which proposes an organ of political representation based on delegates from the various trades and professions of all the social classes is not even in form a road leading to the system of workers' councils, since the latter is characterized by the exclusion

of the bourgeois from electoral rights and its central organization is not chosen on the basis of trade but by territorial constituency. The form of representation in question is rather an inferior stage even in comparison with present parliamentary democracy.

17. Anarchism is profoundly opposed to the ideas of communism. It aims at the immediate installation of a society without a state and political system and advocates, for the economy of the future, the autonomous functioning of units of production, rejecting any concept of a central organization and regulation of human activities in production and distribution. Such a conception is close to that of the bourgeois private economy and remains alien to the fundamental essence of communism. Moreover the immediate elimination of the state as a machinery of political power would be equivalent to a failure to offer resistance to the counter-revolution, unless one presupposes that classes have been immediately abolished, that is to say that there has been the so-called revolutionary expropriation simultaneous with the insurrection against bourgeois power.

Not the slightest possibility of this exists, given the complexity of the proletarian tasks in the substitution of the communist economy for the present one, and given the necessity that such a process be directed by a central organization representing the general interest of the proletariat and subordinating to this interest all the local and particular interests which act as the principal conservative force within capitalism.

III

1. The communist doctrine and economic determinism do not see communists as passive spectators of historical destiny but on the contrary as indefatigable fighters. Struggle and action, however, would be ineffective if divorced from the lessons of doctrine and of experience seen in the light of the communist critique.

2. The revolutionary work of communists is based on the organization into a party of those proletarians who unite a consciousness of communist principles with the decision to devote all their energy to the cause of the revolution. The party, organized internationally, functions on the basis of discipline towards the decisions of the majority and towards the decisions of the central organs chosen by that majority to lead the movement.

3. Propaganda and proselytism — in which the party accepts new members only on the basis of the most sure guarantees — are fundamental activities of the party. Although it bases the success of its action on the propagation of its principles and final objectives and although it struggles in the interest of the immense majority of society, the communist movement does not make the approval of the majority a pre-condition for its action. The criterion which determines the occasion to launch a revolutionary action is the

objective evaluation of our own forces and those of our enemies, taking into consideration all the complex factors of which the numerical element is not the sole or even the most important determinant.

4. The communist party, internally, develops an intense work of study and political critique intimately linked to the exigencies of action and to historical experience, and it strives to organize this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with the means at its disposal, it works to diffuse the lessons of its own critical experience and to refute enemy schools and parties. Above all, the party conducts its activity and propaganda among the proletarian masses and works to polarize them around it, particularly at those times when they are set in motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them and especially within the organizations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests.

5. Communists therefore penetrate proletarian co-operatives, unions, factory councils, and form groups of communist workers within them. They strive to win a majority and posts of leadership so that the mass of proletarians mobilized by these associations subordinate their action to the highest political and revolutionary ends of the struggle for communism.

6. The communist party, on the other hand, remains outside all institutions and associations in which bourgeois and workers participate in common, or worse still, which are led and sponsored by members of the bourgeoisie (societies of mutual assistance, charities, cultural schools, popular universities, Freemasons' Lodges, etc.). It combats the action and influence of these institutions and associations and tries to divert proletarians from them.

7. Participation in elections to the representative organs of bourgeois democracy and participation in parliamentary activity, while always presenting a continuous danger of deviation, may be utilized for propaganda and for schooling the movement during the period in which there does not yet exist the possibility of overthrowing bourgeois rule and in which, as a consequence, the party's task is restricted to criticism and opposition. In the present period, which began with the end of the world war, with the first communist revolutions and the creation of the Third International, communists pose, as the direct objective of the political action of the proletariat in every country, the revolutionary conquest of power, to which end all the energy and all the preparatory work of the party must be devoted.

In this period, it is inadmissible to participate in these organs which function as a powerful defensive instrument of the bourgeoisie and which are designed to operate even within the ranks of the proletariat. It is precisely in opposition to these organs, to their structure as to their function, that communists call for the system of workers' councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Because of the great importance which electoral activity assumes in practice, it is not possible to reconcile this activity with the assertion that it is not the means of achieving the principal objective of the party's action, which is the conquest of power. It also is not possible to prevent it from absorbing all the activity of the movement and from diverting it from revolutionary preparation.

8. The electoral conquest of local governmental bodies entails the same inconveniences as parliamentarism but to an even greater degree. It cannot be accepted as a means of action against bourgeois power for two reasons: 1) these local bodies have no real power but are subjected to the state machine, and 2) although the assertion of the principle of local autonomy can today cause some embarrassment for the ruling bourgeoisie, such a method would have the result of providing it with a base of operations in its struggle against the establishment of proletarian power and is contrary to the communist principle of centralized action.

9. In the revolutionary period, all the efforts of the communists concentrate on enabling the action of the masses to attain a maximum of intensity and efficiency. Communists combine propaganda and revolutionary preparation with the organization of large and frequent proletarian demonstrations above all in the major centers and strive to use economic movements in order to organize demonstrations of a political character in which the proletariat reaffirms and strengthens its will to overthrow the bourgeois power.

10. The Communist Party carries its propaganda into the ranks of the bourgeois army. Communist anti-militarism is not based on a sterile humanitarianism. Its aim instead is to convince proletarians that the bourgeoisie arms them to defend its own interests and to use their force against the cause of the proletariat.

11. The Communist Party trains itself to act as the general staff of the proletariat in the revolutionary war. For this reason it prepares and organizes its own network of intelligence and communication. Above all, it supports and organizes the arming of the proletariat.

12. The Communist Party concludes no agreements or alliances with other political movements which share with it a specific immediate objective, but diverge from it in their program of further action. It must equally refuse the alliance — otherwise known as the «united front» — with all working class tendencies which accept insurrectionary action against the bourgeoisie but diverge from the communist program in the development of subsequent action.

Communists have no reason to consider the growth of forces tending to overthrow bourgeois power as a favorable condition when the forces working for the constitution of proletarian power on communist directives remain insufficient, since only a communist leadership can assure its success.

13. The soviets or councils of workers, peasants and soldiers, constitute the organs of proletarian power and can exercise their true function only after the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Soviets are not in themselves organs of revolutionary struggle. They become revolutionary when the Communist Party wins a majority within them.

Workers' councils can also arise before the revolution, in a period of acute crisis in which the state power is seriously threatened.

In a revolutionary situation, it may be necessary for the party to take the initiative in forming soviets, but this cannot be a means of precipitating such a situation. If the power of the bourgeoisie is strengthened, the survival of councils can present a serious danger to the revolutionary struggle — the danger of a conciliation and a combination of proletarian organs with the organs of bourgeois democracy.

14. What distinguishes communists is not that, in every situation and in every episode of the class struggle, they call for the immediate mobilization of all proletarian forces for a general insurrection. What distinguishes them is that they clearly say that the phase of insurrection is an inevitable outcome of the struggle, and that they prepare the proletariat to face it in conditions favorable to the success and the further development of the revolution.

Depending on the situation — which the party can better assess than the rest of the proletariat — the party can therefore find itself confronted with the necessity to act in order to hasten or to delay the moment of the decisive battle. In any event, the specific task of the party is to fight both against those who, desiring to hasten revolutionary action at any price, could drive the proletariat into disaster, and against the opportunists who exploit every occasion in which decisive action is undesirable in order to block the revolutionary movement by diverting the action of the masses towards other objectives. The Communist Party, on the contrary, must lead the action of the masses always further in an effective preparation for the final and inevitable armed struggle against the defensive forces of bourgeois rule.

Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle

V. The Degeneration of the Proletarian Power in Russia and the Question of the Dictatorship

The difficult problem of the degeneration of the proletarian power can be summarized briefly. In a large country the working class conquered power following the program which called for armed insurrection and the annihilation of all influence of the defeated class through pressure of the proletarian class dictatorship. In the other countries of the world, however, the working class either did not have the strength to initiate the revolutionary attack or else was defeated in the attempt. In these countries, power remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and production and exchange continued according to the laws of capitalism which dominated all the relationships of the world market.

In the country where the revolution triumphed, the dictatorship held firm politically and militarily against every counter-attack. It brought the civil war to a close in a few short and victorious years, and foreign capitalism did not engage in a general action to crush it.

A process of internal degeneration of the new political and administrative apparatus began to develop however. A privileged circle began to form, monopolizing the advantages and posts in the bureaucratic hierarchy while continuing to claim to represent the interests of the great laboring masses.

In the other countries, the revolutionary working class movement, which was intimately linked to this same political hierarchy, not only did not succeed in the victorious overthrow of the bourgeois states, but progressively lost and distorted the whole sense of its own action by pursuing other non-revolutionary objectives.

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This terrible problem in the history of the class struggle gives rise to a crucial question: how can such a double catastrophe be prevented? The question actually is badly posed. For those who follow the determinist method the question actually is one of determining

the true characteristics and laws of this degenerative process, in order to establish when and how we can recognize the conditions which would allow us to expect and pursue a revolutionary course free from this pathological reversion.

Here we will not concern ourselves with refuting those who deny the existence of such a degeneration and who maintain that in Russia there is a true revolutionary working class power, an actual evolution of the economic forms towards communism, and a coordination with the other proletarian parties of the world which will actually lead to the overthrow of world capitalism.

Nor will we concern ourselves here with a study of the socio-economic aspects of the problem, for this would necessitate a detailed and careful analysis of the mechanism of production and distribution in Russia and of the actual relationships which Russia has with foreign capitalist economies.

Instead, at the end of this historical exposition on the question of violence and force, we will respond to those who claim that such an oppressive and bureaucratic degeneration is a direct consequence of infringing and violating the canons and principles of elective democracy.

This democratic critique has two aspects, with the less radical being in fact the more insidious. The first is overtly bourgeois and is directly linked to the entire world campaign to defame the Russian Revolution. This campaign, which has been going on since 1917, has been led by all the liberals, democrats and social democrats of the world who have been terrorized as much by the magnificent and courageous theoretical proclamation of the method of the proletarian dictatorship as by its practical application.

After everything that has been said we will consider this first aspect of the democratic lamentation to have been refuted. The struggle against it, however, still remains of primary importance today since the conformist demand of what Lenin called «democracy in general» (and which in the basic communist works represents the dialectical opposite, the antithesis of the revolutionary position) is still disgustingly paraded by the very parties who claim to be linked to the present regime in Russia. This very regime, although making dangerous and condemnable concessions to the bourgeois democratic mechanism at home in the area of formal rights, not only continues to be but becomes increasingly a strictly totalitarian and police state.

Therefore we can never insist enough on our critique of democracy in all the historical forms in which it has appeared until now. Democracy has always been an internal method of organization of the oppressor class, whether this class is old or new. It has always been a technique, whether old or new, that is utilized in the internal relations among the elements and groups of the exploiting class. In the bourgeois revolutions it was also the necessary and vital environment for the emergence of capitalism.

The old democracies were based on electoral principles, assemblies, parliaments or councils. While deceitfully pretending that their aim was to realize a well-being for all and the extension of the spiritual or material conquests to all of society, their actual function was to enforce and maintain the exploitation of a mass of heathens, slaves and helots, of whole peoples who had been oppressed because they were less advanced or less war-like, and of a whole mass who had been excluded from the temple, the senate, the city and the assemblies.

We can see the reality of the multitude of banal theories based on the principle of egalitarianism: it is the compromise, agreement, and conspiracy among the members of the privileged minority to the detriment of the lower classes. Our appraisal of the modern democratic form, which is based on the holy charter of the British, French, and American revolutions, is no different. Modern democracy is a technique which provides the best political conditions for the capitalist oppression and exploitation of the workers. It replaces the old network of feudal oppression by which capitalism itself was suffocated, but only to exploit in a way which is new and different, but no less intense or extensive.

Our interpretation of the present totalitarian phase of the bourgeois epoch is fundamental in regard to this point. In this phase the parliamentary forms, having played out their role, tend to disappear and the atmosphere of modern capitalism becomes anti-liberal and anti-democratic. The tactical consequence of this correct evaluation is that any call to return to the old bourgeois democracy characteristic of rising capitalism is opposed to the interests of the working class; it is reactionary and even «anti-progressive».

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We will now take up the second aspect of the democratic critique. This aspect is not inspired by the dogmas of an inter-class and above-class democracy but instead says basically the following: it is well and good to establish the proletarian dictatorship and to do away with any scruples in the repression of the rights of the defeated bourgeois minority; however once the bourgeoisie in Russia was deprived of all rights, the *degeneration* of the proletarian state occurred because the rules of representation were violated «within» the working class. If an elective system truly functioning according to the majority principle had been established and respected in the base organizations of the proletariat (the soviets, the unions and the political party), with every decision made on the basis of the numerical outcome of a «truly free» vote, then the true revolutionary path would have been automatically maintained and it would have been possible to ward off any degeneration and any danger of the abusive, suffocating domination by the ignoble «Stalinist clique».

At the heart of this widely accepted viewpoint is the idea that each individual, solely due to the fact that he or she belongs to an

economic class (i.e. that he finds himself in particular relationships in common with many others with respect to production) is consequently predisposed to acquire a clear class «consciousness», in other words to acquire that body of ideas and understandings which reflect the interests, the historical path and the future of his class. This is a false way of understanding Marxist determinism because the formation of consciousness is something which, although certainly linked to the basic economic conditions, lags behind them at a great distance in time and has a field of action that is much more restricted.

For example, many centuries before the development of the historical consciousness of the bourgeois class, the bourgeois, the tradesman, the banker, and the small manufacturer existed and fulfilled essential economic functions, but had the mentality of servants and accomplices of the feudal lords. A revolutionary tendency and ideology slowly formed among them however and an audacious minority began to organize itself in order to attempt to conquer power.

Just as it is true that some members of the aristocracy fought for the bourgeois revolution, it is also true that there were many members of the bourgeoisie who, after the conquest of power in the great democratic revolutions, not only retained a way of thinking but also a course of action contrary to the general interests of their own class, and militated and fought with the counter-revolutionary party.

Similarly, while the opinions and consciousness of the worker are formed under the influence of his or her working and material living conditions, they are also formed in the environment of the whole traditional conservative ideology in which the capitalist world envelopes the worker.

This conservative influence is becoming increasingly stronger in the present period. It is not necessary to list again the resources which are available not only for the systematic organization of propaganda through modern techniques, but also for the actual centralized intervention in the economic life through the adoption of numerous reformist measures and state intervention which are intended to satisfy certain secondary needs of the workers and which in fact often have a concrete effect on their economic situation.

For the crude and uneducated masses, the old aristocratic and feudal regimes needed only the church to fabricate servile ideologies. They acted on the rising bourgeoisie, however, primarily through their monopoly over the school and culture. The young bourgeoisie was consequently compelled to sustain a great and complex ideological struggle which the literature presents as a struggle for the freedom of thought but which in fact concerned the superstructure and a fierce conflict between two forces who were organized to defeat one another.

Today world capitalism in addition to the church and schools, disposes of an endless number of other forms of ideological manipulation and countless methods for forming a so-called «consciousness».

It surpasses the old regimes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the fabrication of falsehoods and deceits. This is true not only in that it broadcasts the most absurd doctrines and superstitions but also in that it informs the masses in a totally false way about the countless events in the complexity of modern life.

In spite of this tremendous arsenal of our class enemy we have always maintained that within the oppressed class an antagonistic ideology and doctrine would form and would achieve a greater and greater clarity as the economic development itself sharpens the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production and as the fierce struggle between different class interests spreads. This perspective is not founded on the argument that given the fact that the proletarians outnumber the bourgeois, the sum total of their individual views and conceptions would prevail over that of the enemy due to their greater numerical weight.

We have always maintained that this clarity and consciousness is not realized in an amorphous mass of isolated individuals. It is realized instead in organizations which emerge from the undifferentiated mass, in resolute minorities who join together beyond national boundaries following the line of the general historical continuity of the movement. These minorities assume the function of leading the struggle of the masses; the greater part of the masses on the other hand are pushed into this struggle by economic factors well before they develop the same strength and clarity of ideas that is crystalized in the guiding party.

This is why a count of the votes cast by the entire working class mass (supposing such a thing were possible) would not exclude an outcome favorable to the counter-revolution even in a situation which would be conducive to a forward advance and a struggle under the leadership of the vanguard minority. Even a general and widespread political struggle which ends with the victorious conquest of power is not sufficient for the immediate elimination of the whole complex of traditional influences of bourgeois ideology. The latter not only continues to survive throughout the whole social structure within the country of the victorious revolution itself, but continues to act from outside with a massive deployment of all the modern means of propaganda of which we have spoken before.

It is, of course, of great advantage to break the state machinery, to destroy all the old structures for the systematic fabrication of bourgeois ideology (such as the church, the school and other countless associations) and to take control over all the major means of diffusing ideas, such as the press, the radio, the theater, etc. However all this is not enough. It must be completed by a socio-economic condition: the rapid and successful eradication of the bourgeois form of production. Lenin was well aware that the necessity of permitting the continued existence (and in a certain sense the flourishing) of the family management of the small peasant farms meant that a whole area would be

left open to the influence of the selfish and mercantile bourgeois psychology, to the anti-revolutionary propaganda of the priest, and in short to the play of countless counter-revolutionary superstitions. The unfavorable relationship of forces, however, left no other choice. Only in conserving the force, strength and firmness of the armed power of the industrial proletariat was it possible to make use of the revolutionary impetus of the peasant allies against the shackles of the agrarian feudal regime and at the same time guard against the danger of a possible revolt by the middle peasants, such as occurred during the civil war under Denikin and Kolchak.

The erroneous position of those who want to see the application of arithmetic democracy within the working class, or within certain class organizations, can thus be traced back to a false appreciation of the Marxist determinism.

We have already shown that it is incorrect to believe that in each historical period each of the opposing classes has corresponding groups which profess theories opposed to the other classes. Instead the correct thesis is that in each historical epoch the doctrinal system based on the interests of the ruling class tends to be professed by the oppressed class, much to the advantage of the former. He who is a slave in the body is also a slave in the mind. The old bourgeois lie is precisely to pretend that we must begin with the liberation of the intellect (a method which leads to nothing and costs nothing for the privileged class), while instead we must start with the physical liberation of the body.

It is also erroneous to establish the following progression of determinisms with respect to the famous problem of consciousness: influence of economic factors, class consciousness, class action. The progression instead is the reverse: influence of economic factors, class action, class consciousness. Consciousness comes at the end and, in general, after the decisive victory. Economic necessity unites and focuses the pressure and energy of all those who are oppressed and suffocated by the forms of a given productive system. The oppressed react, they fight, they hurl themselves against these forms. In the course of this clash and this battle they increasingly develop an understanding of the general conditions of the struggle as well as its laws and principles, and a clear comprehension of the program of the class struggle develops.

For decades we have been reproached for wanting a revolution carried out by those who are unconscious.

We *could* have responded that provided that the revolution sweeps away the mass of horrors created by the bourgeois regime and provided that the terrible encirclement of the productive masses by bourgeois institutions which oppress and suffocate them is broken, then it would not bother us in the least if the decisive blows were delivered even by those who are not yet conscious of the aim of the struggle.

Instead, we left Marxists have always clearly and emphatically insisted on the importance of theory in the working class movement, and we consequently have constantly denounced the absence of principles and the betrayal of these by the right opportunists. We have always maintained the validity of the Marxist conception which considers the proletariat even as the true inheritor of modern classical philosophy. Let us explain. The struggle of the bourgeois usurers, colonial settlers and merchants was paralleled by an attack by the critical method against the dogmas of the church and the ideology of the authority of divine right; there was a revolution which appeared to be completed in natural philosophy before it was completed in society. This resulted from the fact that, of those forms which had to be destroyed in order for the capitalist productive forces to develop, not the least difficult to break down was the scholastic and theocratic ideological system of the middle ages. However, after its political and social victory, the bourgeoisie became conservative. It had no interest in directing the weapon of the critique, which it had used against the lies of Christian cosmology, to the area of the much more pressing and human problem of the social structure. This second task in the evolution of the theoretical consciousness of society fell to a new class which was pushed by its own interests to lay bare the lies of bourgeois civilization. This new class, in the powerful dialectical vision of Marx, was the class of the «wretched artisans», excluded from culture in the middle ages and supposedly elevated to a position of legal equality by the liberal revolution; it was the class of manual laborers of big industry, uneducated and all but illiterate.

The key to our conception lies precisely in the fact that we do not consider the seat of consciousness to be the narrow area of the individual person and that we well know that, generally speaking, the elements of the mass who are pushed into struggle cannot possess in their minds the general theoretical outlook. To require such a condition would be purely illusory and counter-revolutionary. Neither does this task of elaborating the theoretical consciousness fall to a band or group of superior individuals whose mission is to help humanity. It falls instead to an organism, to a mechanism differentiated within the mass, utilizing the individual elements as cells that compose the tissue and elevating them to a function made possible only by this complex of relationships. This organism, this system, this complex of elements each with its own function, (analogous to the animal organism with its extremely complicated systems of tissues, networks, vessels, etc.) is the class organism, the party, which in a certain way defines the class faced with itself and gives the class the capacity to make its own history.

This whole process is reflected in the most diverse ways with respect to the different individuals who statistically belong to the class. To be more specific, we are not surprised to find side by side in a given situation the revolutionary and conscious worker, the worker who is still a total victim of the conservative political influences and

who perhaps even marches in the ranks of the enemy, the worker who follows the opportunist currents of the movement, etc.

And we would have no conclusions to automatically draw from a vote among the working class that would indicate the following of each of these various positions — assuming that such a vote was actually possible.

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It is only too well established that the class party, both before and after the conquest of power, is susceptible of degeneration in its function as a revolutionary instrument. It is necessary to search both for the causes of this serious phenomenon of social pathology and for the means to fight it. However it only follows from what has been said above that the method of voting cannot guarantee the correctness of the Party's orientation and directives, regardless of whether this voting is done by militants of the party or by a much wider circle encompassing the workers who belong to the unions, the factory organizations or even the representative organs of a political nature, such as the soviets or workers councils.

The history of the working class movement shows concretely that such a method has never led to any good and has never prevented the disastrous victories of opportunism. In all the conflicts between tendencies within the traditional socialist parties before World War I, the right-wing revisionists always argued against the radical Marxists of the left that they (the right wing) were much more closely tied to the wide strata of the working class than the narrow circle of the leadership of the political party. The opportunist currents had their main support in the parliamentary leaders of the party who disobeyed the party's political directives and demanded a free hand to collaborate with the bourgeois parties. They did so under the pretext that they had been elected by the mass of proletarian voters who far outnumbered the proletarians who belonged to the party and elected the party's political leadership. The union leaders who belonged to the party practised the same collaboration on the union level as the parliamentary leaders did on the political level. They refused the discipline of the class party, using the justification that they represented all the unionized workers who greatly outnumbered the party's militants. In their haste to ally with capitalism (something which culminated in their support for the first imperialist war) neither the parliamentary possibilists nor the union bureaucrats hesitated, in the name of the workerism and laborism they proudly flaunted, to deride those groups who brought forwards the true class politics within the party and to brand these groups as intellectuals and sometimes even as non-proletarians.

The history of Sorelian syndicalism also shows that the method of direct representation of the rank and file worker does not have left results and does not lead to the preservation of a truly revolutionary

orientation. At a certain period this school of anarcho-syndicalism had seemed to some to be a true alternative to the degeneration of the social-democratic party which had taken the road of renouncing direct action and class violence. The Marxist groups which later converged in the Leninist reconstruction of the Third International rightly criticized and condemned this seemingly radical orientation. They denounced it for abandoning the only unifying class method which could surmount the narrowness of the individual trade and of the everyday conflicts limited to economic demands. Even if physically violent means of struggle were used, this orientation leads to the denial of the position of revolutionary Marxism, because for Marxism every class struggle is a political struggle and the indispensable instrument of this struggle is the party.

The justness of this theoretical polemic was confirmed by the fact that even revolutionary syndicalism sank in the crisis of the war and passed into the ranks of social patriotism in the various countries.

Now, in regards to the action of the party after the revolutionary victory, we will turn to the major episodes of the Russian Revolution which shed the greatest light and provide us with the best experience.

We reject the critique which claims that the disastrous degeneration of Leninist revolutionary politics into the present Stalinist policies was brought about in the beginning by the excessive predominance of the party and its central committee over the other working class organizations. We reject the illusory viewpoint that the whole degenerative process could have been contained if a vote among the various base organizations had been used as the means to decide both the make-up of the hierarchy and the major changes in the politics of the proletarian state. The problem of the degeneration cannot be comprehended without connecting it to the question of the socio-economic role of the various working class organs in the process of the destruction of the old economy and of the construction of the new.

Unions undoubtedly constitute and for a long period have constituted a basic area of struggle in the development of the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. But this has been possible with success only when the class party has carried on a serious work within the unions in order to shift the concentration of energy from narrow intermediate objectives to general class aims. The trade union, even as it evolved into the industrial union, finds limits to its dynamic because within it there exist different interests between the various categories and groups of workers. There are even greater limits to its action as capitalist society and the capitalist state pass through the three successive historical phases: the prohibition of trade organizations and strikes; the toleration of autonomous trade organizations; and finally the conquest of the trade unions and their imprisonment in the bourgeois system.

Even under a solidly established proletarian dictatorship, the union cannot be considered as an organ which represents the workers

in a fundamental and stable way. In this social period conflicts between the various trades in the working class can still exist. The basic point is that the workers only have reason to make use of the union as long as the working class power is compelled to tolerate, in certain sections, the temporary presence of employers; with the disappearance of the latter due to the advance of socialist development, all content of union action is lost. Our conception of socialism is not the substitution of the state boss for the private boss. However if the relationship were such in the transition period, then in the supreme interests of revolutionary politics it could not be admitted as a principle that the employer state must always give in to the economic pressure of the workers' unions.

We won't go further in this involved analysis, for at this point we have already sufficiently explained why we left Communists do not admit that the unionized mass would be allowed to exert an influence on revolutionary politics through a majority vote.

Now let us consider the factory councils. We must remember that this form of economic organization, which at first appeared to be much more radical than the union, went on to lose always more its pretense of revolutionary dynamism; today the idea of factory councils is common to all political currents, even the fascists. The conception of factory councils as an organization which participates first in the supervising and later the management of production, and in the end which is capable of taking over, factory by factory, the management of production in its totality, has proved to be totally collaborationist. It has proved to be another way, no less effective than the old syndicalism, of preventing the masses from being channeled in the direction of the great united and centralized struggle for power. The polemic surrounding this question caused a great stir in the young Communist parties when the Russian Bolsheviks were compelled to take firm and even drastic measures to combat the workers' tendency towards autonomous technical and economic management of the factories in which they worked. Such an autonomous management not only impeded the realization of a true socialist plan but also had the danger of seriously harming the efficiency of the productive machinery — something the counter-revolutionaries were counting on. In fact the factory council, even more so than the union, can act as an exponent of very narrow interests which can come into conflict with the general class interests.

Consequently the factory councils also cannot be considered as a basic and definitive organ of the working class state. When a true communist economy is established in certain sectors of production and circulation — that is to say when we have gone far beyond the simple expulsion of the capitalist owner from industry and the management of the enterprise by the state — then it will be precisely an economy based on autonomous enterprises which have to have disappeared. Once we have gone beyond the mercantilist form of production, the local plant will only be a technical node in the great network guided

rationally by a unitary plan. The firm will no longer have a balance sheet of income and expenditures; consequently it will no longer be a firm at all and the producer will no longer be a wage laborer. Thus the factory council, like the union, has natural limits of functioning which prevent it from being, up to the end the real field for class preparation where the proletariat can build its will and capacity to struggle until it completely achieves its final goal. This is the reason why these economic organizations cannot be a body which oversees the party holding state power and which judges whether or not the party has strayed from the basic historical path.

It remains for us to examine the new organizations which were brought to life by the Russian Revolution. These were the workers, peasants and, at the beginning, soldiers soviets.

Some claimed that this system represented a new proletarian constitutional form counterposed to the traditional constitutional forms of the bourgeois state. The soviet system reached from the smallest village to the highest bodies of the state through successive horizontal strata. Furthermore it had the two following characteristics: 1) it excluded all elements of the old propertied classes, in other words it was the organizational manifestation of the proletarian dictatorship, and 2) it concentrated all representative, executive and, in theory, even judicial powers in its nerve centers. It has been said that because of these characteristics the soviet system is a perfect mechanism of internal class democracy which, once discovered, would eclipse the traditional parliaments of bourgeois liberalism.

However, since the emergence of socialism from its utopian phase, every Marxist has known that the invention of a constitutional form is not enough to distinguish the great social forms and the great historical epochs. The constitutional structures are transitory reflections of the relationship of forces; they are not derived from universal principles from which we could deduce an inherent mode of state organization.

Soviets in their essence are actual class organizations and are not, as some believed, conglomerations of trade or craft organizations. Consequently they do not suffer from the narrowness of the purely economic organization. For us their importance lies above all in the fact that they are organs of struggle. We do not try to view them in terms of ideal structural models but in terms of the history of their real development.

Thus it was a decisive moment in the Russian Revolution when, shortly after the election of the Constituent Assembly, the soviets rose up against the latter as its dialectical opposite and Bolshevik power dissolved the parliamentary assembly by force. This was the realization of the brilliant historical slogan «All Power to the Soviets».

However, all this was not sufficient for us to accept the idea that once such a form of class representation is born (and leaving aside here the fluctuations, in every sense, of its representative composition

which we are not able to examine here), a majority vote, at whatever moment and turn in the difficult struggle waged by the revolution both domestically and externally, is a reliable and easy method for solving every question and even avoiding the counter-revolutionary degeneration.

We must admit that the soviet system, due to the very complexity of its historical evolutionary cycle (which incidentally must end in the most optimistic hypothesis with the disappearance of the soviets along with the withering away of the state), is susceptible of falling under counter-revolutionary influence just as it is susceptible of being a revolutionary instrument. In conclusion, we do not believe that there is any constitutional form which can immunize us against such a danger — the only guarantee, if any, lies in the development of the domestic and international relations of social forces.

Since we want to establish the supremacy of the party, which includes only a minority of the class, over the other forms of organization, it could be possible for someone to object that we seem to think that the party is eternal, in other words that it will survive the withering away of the state of which Engels spoke.

Here we do not want to go into a discussion on the future transformation of the party. Just as the state, in the Marxist definition, withers away and is transformed, from a political apparatus of coercion, into a large and always more rational technical administration, so the party evolves into a simple organization for social research and study corresponding to the large institutions for scientific research in the new society.

The distinctive characteristic of the party follows from its organic nature. One does not join the party because one has a particular position in the economic or social structure. No one is automatically a party militant because he is a proletarian, a voter, a citizen, etc.

Jurisprudents would say that one joins the party by free individual initiative. We Marxists say otherwise: one joins the party always due to factors born out of relationships of social environment, but these factors can be linked in a more general way to the characteristics of the class party, to its presence in all parts of the world, to the fact that it is made up of workers of all trades and enterprises and, in principle, even of those who are not workers, and to the continuity of its work through the successive stages of propaganda, organization, physical combat, seizure of power, and the construction of a new order.

Out of all the proletarian organizations, it is consequently the political party which least suffers from those structural and functional limits which enable the anti-proletarian influences — the germs which cause the disease of opportunism — to force their way in. We have said many times, though, that this danger also exists for the party. The conclusion that we draw *is not* that it can be warded off by subordinating the party to the other organizations of that class which the party represents — a subordination which is often demanded under

false pretexts, other times simply out of naivety with the reason that a greater number of workers belong to other class organizations.

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Our conception of this question also concerns the supposed necessity of internal party democracy. We do not deny that there unfortunately have been numerous and disastrous examples of errors committed by the central leadership of the communist parties. However can these errors be avoided through computing the votes of the rank and file militants?

We do not attribute the degeneration which took place in the Communist Party to the fact that the assemblies and congresses of the militants had little voice with respect to the initiatives taken by the center.

At many historical turning points we have seen the rank and file smothered by the center for counter-revolutionary purposes. To this end even the instruments of the state machine, including the most brutal, have been employed. But all this is not the origin of the degeneration of the party but an inevitable manifestation of it, a sign that the party has yielded to counter-revolutionary influences.

The position of the Italian Communist Left on what we could call «the question of revolutionary guarantees» was first of all that no constitutional or contractual provision can protect the party against degeneration even though the party, as opposed to the other organizations we have studied, has the characteristics of a contractual organization (and we use the term not as it is used in jurisprudence nor even as it was used by J.J. Rousseau). At the base of the relationship between the militant and the party there is an obligation which, in order to ride ourselves of the undesirable adjective «contractual», we can simply call a dialectical obligation. The relationship is double and flows in two directions: from the center to the base and from the base to the center. If the action of the center goes in accordance with the good functioning of the dialectical relationship, it is met by healthy responses from the base.

The celebrated problem of discipline thus consists in establishing a system of limits for the base which is the proper reflection of the limits set for the action of the leadership. Consequently we have always maintained that the leadership must not have the right, in the great turning points in the political situation, to discover, invent and impose pretendedly new principles, new formulations and new guidelines for the action of the party. These sudden shifts make up the history of opportunism. When such a crisis occurs (and this can happen precisely because the party is not an immediate and automatic organization) it is followed by an internal struggle, the formation of tendencies, and splits. In such a case these are useful developments, just as a fever, for freeing an organism of disease. Nevertheless, «constitutionally» they cannot be accepted, encouraged or tolerated.

There is no rule or recipe for preventing the party from falling into the crisis of opportunism or for preventing it from necessarily reacting by forming factions. However we have the experience of many decades of proletarian struggle which enables us to establish some necessary, optimum conditions of which the research, the defense and the realization must be the constant task for our movement. We conclude by laying down the most important of these.

1). The party must defend and advocate all the clarity and continuity of the communist doctrine throughout its successive historical applications. It must not tolerate the proclamation of principles which are in even partial conflict with its theoretical cornerstones.

2). In every historical situation the party must openly proclaim the complete content of its economic, social, and political program, above all in regards to the question of power, its conquest by means of armed force, and its exercise through dictatorship.

Those dictatorships which degenerate into regimes of privileges for a small circle of bureaucrats have always been accompanied by hypocritical ideological proclamations that are masked behind basically populist slogans, sometimes democratic, sometimes nationalist in nature, and by the pretention of having the support of the popular masses. The revolutionary communist party on the other hand does not hesitate to declare its intention of attacking the state and its institutions and of holding the defeated class under the despotic weight of the dictatorship, even when it admits that only an advanced minority of the oppressed class has reached the point of understanding these necessities of the struggle.

«Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims» (the *Manifesto*). Only renegades pride themselves on a supposed ability to attain these aims while cleverly hiding them.

3). The party must observe a strict organizational rigor: it does not accept the idea of increasing its ranks by making compromises with groups or grouplets, or worse still of bargaining to win over the membership of the rank and file by making concessions to alleged leaders.

4). The party must work to instill clear historical understanding of the antagonistic nature of the struggle. Communists demand the initiative of attack against a whole world of rules and regulations, and traditions. They know that they constitute a danger for the privileged classes. They call the masses to the offensive and not to the defensive against the pretended danger of losing supposed gains and improvements won under capitalism. Communists do not *lend and lease* their party for causes not their own and for non-proletarian objectives such as liberty, country, democracy and other such lies.

«Proletarians have nothing to loose but their chains».

5). Communists renounce the whole gamut of tactical expedients which were advocated under the pretext of hastening the process of

winning over large strata of the masses to the revolutionary program. Such expedients are the political compromise, the alliance and united front with other parties, and the various slogans concerning the state which were used as substitutes for the dictatorship of the proletariat (such as workers' and peasants' government, progressive democracy).

Communists recognize, historically, that the use of these tactical means is one of the main factors which hastened the decomposition of the proletarian movement and communist soviet rule. They maintain that those who deplore the opportunist syphilis of the Stalinist movement but who at the same time champion the tactical weapons of the opportunist enemy are more dangerous than the Stalinists themselves.

Postscript

The work *Force, Violence, and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle*, which we have published in five parts, deals with the questions of the use of force in social relationships and the characteristics of the revolutionary dictatorship according to the correct Marxist interpretation. We did not intentionally go into the question of the organization of the class and the party, however in the final part of the discussion on the causes of the degeneration of the dictatorship, we were led straight to this point since many people have attributed the degeneration to errors in internal organization and to the violation of a democratic and elective process within both the party and the other class organizations.

In refuting this thesis, however, we have neglected to mention an important polemic which took place in the Communist International in 1925-26 on the subject of changing the organizational base of the Communist Party to factory cells or factory nuclei. The Italian Left was practically alone in resolutely opposing this change and in insisting that the organizational base must remain territorial.

This position was exhaustively expounded at the time, however the central point was this: the organic function of the party, a function which no other organization can fulfill, is to lead the struggle from the level of the individual economic struggle on the local and trade basis to the united, general proletarian class struggle which is social and political. Such a task, consequently, cannot be seriously undertaken by an organizational unit which includes only workers of the same trade or concern. This milieu will only be receptive to narrow trade interests, the central directives of the party will seem as something coming from above, something foreign, and the party officials will never meet with the rank and file on an equal footing and in a certain sense they will no longer belong to the party since they are not employed by a concern.

Territorial groups by nature, however, place workers of every trade and workers employed by different employers on the same level as the other militants from social strata which are not strictly prolet-

arian — and the party openly accepts the latter as rank and file members, and initially only as rank and file members, if necessary keeping them in quarantine for some time before calling them, if such a thing is warranted, to organizational positions.

It had been claimed that the factory cell would provide a closer link between the party organization and the great masses. However we demonstrated at the time that the concept of factory cells contained the same opportunist and demagogic defects as right-wing workerism and Labourism and counterposed the party officials to the rank and file in a true caricature of Lenin's conception of professional revolutionaries.

The Left replaced the idiotic majoritary criterion, which is copied after bourgeois democracy, with a higher, dialectical criterion which hinges everything on the solid link of both the rank and file militants and the leadership to the strict and obligatory continuity of theory, program and tactics. It rejected any idea of demagogically wooing those wide layers of the masses which are so easily maneuverable. The Left's conception of the organization of the party is, in reality, the only one which can provide protection against the bureaucratic degeneration of the leading strata of the party and against the suffocation of the party's rank and file by the leadership, both of which lead to a situation where the enemy class gains a devastating influence.

The Evolution of Inter-Imperialist Relations Since the Second World War

The general Meeting of the International Communist Party held on 29-30 October, 1977 was devoted to a study of the development of inter-imperialist relations resulting from the present general crisis of capitalism. The following is a summary of that study with the appended political report.

In 1946 we wrote in our organ *Prometeo*:

«The revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat understands clearly the fact that a capitalist dictatorship on a world scale has followed the World War. This dictatorship is maintained by a co-ordinating body of the major powers which henceforth deprive the small states and a number of those which, until now, were considered as «great powers», of any autonomy and sovereignty. This great world political force is an expression of the bourgeoisie's attempt to centralize its inexorable dictatorship, while masking it behind the formulae of «United Nations» and «Security Council». Its success would constitute a complete triumph for the principles of *fascism*, which, in the real dialectic of history, the conquered have bequeathed to the conquerors.

«The more or less lengthy duration of this international totalitarian rule of capital depends upon the economic possibilities offered to the practically intact productive machine of the victors— principally the United States. The situation now augurs for many years of profitable investment and frantic capitalist accumulation in the deserts created by the war and in those countries which the destructions of the war have precipitated from the lofty summits of capitalist development to colonial backwardness.

«The fundamental perspective of revolutionary Marxists is that this centralized bourgeois organization cannot last forever. In fact the vertiginous rhythm which it will impart to the administration of all human resources, and which will be accompanied by the merciless enslavement of the producing masses, will give rise to new antagonisms and new crises, to collisions between the hostile social classes and —within the camp of bourgeois dictatorship itself— to collisions between the colossal nation states. However, now that the war is over, we cannot expect this complex cycle to run its course very rapidly» (1).

(1) «Le prospettive del dopoguerra in relazione alla Piattaforma del Partito», October 1946, republished in *Per l'organica sistemazione dei principi comunisti* (Milan, Edizioni Il Programma comunista, pp. 142-144).

More than thirty years have elapsed since these lines were written. But they summarize the history of those three decades incisively and describe the turn capitalism has taken under the whip of the international crisis which they predicted. Thus in these times when it is easy to lose one's head, our party doesn't have to search for answers; it already possesses them. And since these have been confirmed by history, it can concentrate all its forces on accomplishing those tasks for which it has prepared itself from birth: the historic struggle for the preparation of the world victory of the communist dictatorship.

America and Russia took great care not to end the war until they had occupied the territory abandoned by the losers and had met face to face in military occupation of both the defeated states and their own minor allies. This is because they were conscious of their counter-revolutionary mission: to prevent the miseries of defeat from provoking a new social upheaval, as had happened after the First World War. But the necessary result was that their victory made them not only «guarantors of imperialist peace» but also new imperialist competitors and adversaries in a future world conflict.

Two Giants Face to Face

What is the historical dynamic of these two giants that are being pushed into inevitable confrontation? The USA has been an industrial power of the first order since the beginning of the century, with favourable geographic, historical, and strategic conditions. It became the greatest financial power in the world by profiting from the First World War. After the Second World War it became an omnipresent imperialism with gigantic appetites whetted by the swelling of its war-time productive apparatus. Its ambitions were not limited to England's former designs on Europe; it hoped to devour Europe as far as the Urals, an aspiration evidenced by the plans of such financiers as Wallace, who dreamt of buying Russia the same way the US was buying England and all Europe (2).

America is thus the epitome of imperialism. From the moment the limits of its sphere of influence became too narrow to contain both its own strength augmented by a new cycle of accumulation, and the renewed strength of Europe and Japan, it had to manifest its tendency to conquer the entire world. And naturally, the American bourgeoisie would advance under the banner of freedom and human rights, just as it has since its inception when it monopolized the whole continent, then claimed China, and finally swallowed Europe.

For its part the Russian state is driven by a different dynamic. Historically, military competition has stimulated its economic development—from Peter the Great to Stalin—and wars have stimulated its

(2) See the articles from 1947 and 1949 republished in *Per l'organica sistemazione...*, entitled «America», «Ancora America», «Aggressione all'Europa», «United States of Europe», etc.

social progress—from the abolition of serfdom to the Bolshevik Revolution, not to mention the democratic revolution of 1905. This military dynamic is accentuated both by Russia's continental position, which necessitates a buffer zone and protection of its accesses to the sea, and by the immensity of its territory, which until now has prevented Russia from waging war on two fronts simultaneously (in Europe and Siberia) and has resulted in its diplomatic balancing act.

Therefore Russian domination of Eastern Europe (and Manchuria until 1948) is not only determined by a policy of creating buffer zones, which were originally designed to protect a ruined Russia from a powerful, nuclear-armed America. It also stems from the irrepressible need, essentially for military reasons, to remedy the economic backwardness of an imperialism still regional in comparison with the world imperialism of the USA. This was only possible through the pillage of the economically more advanced countries. Thus, by evoking hypocritically the faded glory of the betrayed revolution and the relative weakness of its economy, Russia was able to pretend that its armies advanced for the alleged defence of the socialist camp against the imperialist camp.

The adversaries in the next world conflict have been face to face since 1945. They have already sharpened their ideological weapons for this conflict, which is disguised by the one camp as a crusade for liberty and human rights and by the other camp as an anti-imperialist struggle. Carter and Brezhnev have invented nothing new, as the text we quoted shows (3).

From Cold War to Detente

It has always been clear to our party that the key to the post-war period was precisely Russo-American joint rule over Europe, and that the status quo could not be challenged again until, with the economic power of Europe and Japan restored, the cycle of capitalist accumulation had led to a new rupture in the equilibrium between the two blocs, an equilibrium which left the Russian zone economically lagging behind Western capitalism. The Cold War was thus the direct continuation of the Second World War. It was characterized by the partition between the superpowers of the zones left free by the old exhausted European imperialisms when they were swept out by the anti-imperialist wave that began in China and then spread progressively throughout all Asia and North Africa, causing repercussions in Black Africa and Latin America (4). But this Cold War, carefully confined to the Third World

(3) See «Le prospettive del dopoguerra...» and particularly the chapters entitled: «La possibile guerra come falsa crociata anticapitalista», and «La guerra futura come crociata antitotalitaria».

(4) Our party has done an enormous amount of work in integrating national and peasant factors into the Marxist perspective, notably from 1953 to 1960, with a rich list of contributions, from *Fattori di razza e nazione nella teoria marxista to L'incandescente risveglio delle "gente di colore" nella visione marxista*.

arena, necessitated an increased pressure on Europe, while war propaganda provided an alibi for the joint imperialist stranglehold formalized by the signing of the NATO accord and the Warsaw Pact in 1947. Their positions secured, neither Russia nor the USA has had to change a single comma in the treaty already signed at Yalta. The climax of this period was the Suez crisis in 1956, when France and England bowed to Nasser under combined US and Russian pressure.

Meanwhile, history marched on. The development of Russian capitalism created a growing need for productivity (5), while the uprisings of Berlin and Budapest showed the need for a slight relaxation of the economic pressure Russia exerted on its satellites. The American crisis of the sixties and the economic resurgence of Europe and Japan marked the end of America's near-autarky and nuclear monopoly. Moreover, the danger of the anti-colonial wave obliged the USA to intervene as policeman as early as 1958. At the turn of the sixties all these factors resulted in a detente in Russian-American relations (6). But it goes without saying that this detente could signify nothing other than a greater burden on the exploited classes and the smaller states. And was it not accompanied by a «balance of terror» which has twice led to nuclear alerts (Cuba in 1962, the Middle East in 1973), and which is rooted in an unbridled arms race?

During this period the joint rule functioned perfectly, first at Berlin, then at Prague and Lisbon, despite centrifugal tendencies in either camp; and it was re-affirmed at Helsinki. It has even spread to the Third World, where detente has given the USA a free hand to play the role of policeman on all continents, from Santo Domingo to Leopoldville, and particularly in Indonesia. When there have been battles (the Middle East and Vietnam) the resulting compromises have enabled the USA to reassert its supremacy. However, the anticipated economic effects, notably the opening up of the East, have only started to make themselves felt timidly since 1971.

The Crisis of 1975

But under the iron heel of Russian-American entente the very factors that would undermine it were developing, in particular those which contributed to the maturation of the crisis of overproduction, whose first serious assault culminated in 1975, closing the post-war cycle of expansion. It is interesting to note that the productive cycle which preceded the crisis accelerated capital concentration and international trade. In reaction to the omens of crisis manifested in monetary conflicts, it aggravated the tendencies which engendered the crisis of overproduction, by unifying the cycles of different capitalist economies

(5) See *Dialogue avec les morts*, concerning the XXth Congress of the C.P.S.U.

(6) On this subject, see the series of articles which appeared in *Il programma comunista*, nos. 1-6 (1960), entitled: «La "distensione", aspetto recente della crisi capitalista».

and raising competition to the maximum. It thus reduced the chances of recovering from the crisis without creating even more serious crises (7).

Meanwhile, the «oil crisis» (8) illustrated that the deterioration in the terms of trade could only be prevented if the underdeveloped countries exploited the increasing demand for raw materials in order to alter the division of ground rent in their favour. It showed particularly that the solution adopted has resulted in a deepening of the abyss between rich and poor countries, while the increased indebtedness of the poor multiplies the risk of financial and social crises, as the 1977 riots in Egypt demonstrate.

It is true that capitalism has resisted this first attack of the illness relatively well. What are the factors that have helped it to surmount this attack? First, the massive unification of the international financial system in the hands of the USA has provided for the enormous transfers of capital holdings provoked by the oil crisis by maintaining their circulation essentially within the traditional banking circuit in the form of petrodollars. But can the transformation of crises into financial explosions be avoided in the long run if the mark and the yen succeed in attaining autonomy in relation to the dollar? The unification of the financial system by the USA has enabled it to delay the commercial and tariff war opened by the manipulation of exchange rates and the constant revaluation of the mark and the yen since 1971. Nevertheless the commercial war has begun: we need only think of the battles raging in the fields of nuclear industry, aeronautics, steel, textiles, computers, and telecommunications. Today the alternative is protectionism or «orderly marketing». But orderly marketing is nothing other than protectionism, organized, however, under the aegis of the USA and for its benefit.

The other factors that explain capitalism's resistance are of a social nature. First, it is necessary to see that the crisis occurred after the end of what we have called the «eruptive phase» of the anti-imperialist movement. And we must recognize that the bourgeoisie did everything in its power to avoid a fusion of this movement and the economic crisis. This is one of the secrets of Kissinger's «shuttle diplomacy» both in Asia and the Middle East. But there is little chance that the closing of this cycle will calm the «zone of storms» (9). Instead, this time the proletariat will take the lead in new social upheavals to defend its own class interests, drawing the poor peasant masses along behind it in a context where the revolutionary halo of bourgeois classes that have attained political independence will appear increasingly tarnish-

(7) See «The Course of World Imperialism» in *Communist Program* no. 1 and «Cours de l'imperialisme mondial» in *Programme Communiste* no. 72.

(8) See *Programme Communiste* no. 64 (October, 1974).

(9) See the editorial in *Le Prolétaire* no. 196 (May, 1975) entitled «Le cycle de l'éveil de l'Asie ne s'est fermé que pour se rouvrir sur un plan plus élevé», and also in no. 223 (June, 1976) entitled «Le volcan du Proche-Orient».

ed. The riots in Cairo also point to a future pregnant with social struggle, and we hope that their development will come quickly enough to be a factor in the deepening of the capitalist crisis.

We must also bear in mind the terrible delay in the curve of proletarian struggle caused by the Stalinist counter-revolution, by the inertia spread through the powerful shock absorbers of social reformism, and by the machinations of «workers' parties'» opportunism (10). However it should be noted that where the weight of these factors is felt least, due to the greater weakness of capitalism or the particular trajectory of opportunism, the workers' struggles are more sustained and more perseverant, and even exhibit undeniable class spirit. This is the case in Spain and in Poland, and—to our great pleasure—in haughty England, yesterday the despot of the world market, today reduced to a small industrial country that shows all Europe its future of irremediable decay. Certainly this still does not suffice to change the general social situation. But with the permanence of these struggles, one of the necessary conditions for the party's work, and for the reversal of the historical factors which inhibit the general revival of class struggle, is beginning to appear. The capitalist crisis must continue to aggravate the condition of the working class and liquidate the guarantees granted to large sections of the workers. It will thus weaken the factors which hinder the proletarian struggle and hasten the evolution of the opportunist parties. Therefore, with the development of the capitalist crisis, there is a greater probability that the class struggle will become an *objective factor* in the crisis in the coming years.

This is why revolutionary communists have a clear understanding that the productive crisis of 1975 was not a simple crisis—even the bourgeoisie is convinced of this—but a veritable *turning point* in the history of the twentieth century.

A World Once Again Too Small for Imperialist Appetites

The international crisis has already resulted in a notable acceleration in the race for markets, in the quest for raw materials, and in the race to export capital, not only in the form of loans, but also as direct investments. The result of this is *protection of the existing spheres of influence*, which is particularly clear in the case of the USA with its exclusive preserves in Latin America since 1971. This race also explains America's full-scale return to the Middle East in 1973 and Russia's tendency to take more than a passing interest in the quest for raw materials, notably in Southern Africa and Morocco. Finally, although the inevitable tendency of Japan and Europe to establish spheres of influence is still being blocked by American financial power and military might, there is nonetheless already a growing economic

(10) See «Once Again on Crisis and Revolution», which appeared in *Communist Program* no. 1.

dependence of certain small countries on these imperialist states: Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Rumania, etc., on West Germany; Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea, etc., on Japan; Black Africa on France.

But the most profound tendency the crisis could have produced in the area of international relations is the intensification of East-West economic intercourse. This is for two reasons. On the one hand there is the enormous weight with which the West—a capitalist high pressure zone—bears down on the East, which has always been an area of relative capitalist low pressure. On the other hand, in the East there is an irresistible attraction created by the enormous demand for Western technology. However, this West to East current is impeded by many factors. For the East, the opening of its market would produce dangerous centrifugal tendencies immediately. It should be noted that between 1971 and 1976 the fraction of West German trade conducted with the East bloc rose from only 3.5% to almost 10%, making West Germany the East's principal trading partner by far. This was sufficient for West Germany to replace Russia as the principal trading partner of several countries, for example Rumania and Poland. This has happened despite the measures taken since 1971 to reinforce the economic and financial centralization of COMECON, a centralization, moreover, whose effects confirm that Russian pillage of the small countries of Eastern Europe is still going strong.

The West regards the East as a veritable Eldorado, and the USA takes a keen interest in the treasures of Siberia. But capital investment in the territory of an adversary entails enormous risk. Thus America prefers to allow Germany and Japan to take the first steps, a tactic which has the advantage of providing an outlet for their economic appetites and—if the USA can manage it—of concentrating their imperialist aggressiveness on Russia. However, this also entails a great risk: that of a direct entente between Japan and Russia. Naturally, the USA resists such an outcome fiercely, for example by forbidding Tokyo to help in the construction of a second Transsiberian railroad, or to reach an agreement with Moscow for nuclear cooperation. But the USA will not be able to impose such restrictions indefinitely. Consequently, the borders of the East are still only half open, and worse still, the crisis has caused a contraction of Eastern markets. Given the formidable economic pressures forcing the two zones to co-operate more intimately, if links cannot be developed by peaceful means then they will have to be created by other means. This is the change in perspective brought about by the crisis.

One other factor must be taken into account for a full understanding of the international situation. Since the Second World War the Eastern economy has had a more rapid rate of growth because of the relative youthfulness of that geo-historic area from a capitalist point of view. As a result, Russia, by the mere logic of its economic development and its own military dynamic, has been transformed from the regional power it once was into a *world* power.

Thus while the sphere dominated by American imperialism exerts a more and more unbearable economic pressure on the East—which has repercussions in the military sphere—Russian imperialism, driven by the dialectic of its relative economic backwardness, exerts an accentuated, directly *military* pressure on the West. With the revival of Japanese and European imperialism, and the emergence of the young Chinese power in Asia, the international game has ceased to be bipolar and has become multipolar.

China and Russia

It is undeniable that the equilibrium that once existed between Russia and America has already undergone a profound transformation with China's new alliance. The fact that this evolution of Chinese politics, initiated by the quarrel with Moscow, reached its culmination in 1975, shows clearly that the objective turnabout in the world situation has become a factor in the subjective politics and strategy of the big powers. Our party has always pointed out the historical tendency which, for economic and geographical reasons, pushes China and America into alliance (11). Only the formal conclusion of this alliance could have allowed the Paris accords, the end of the Vietnam war, and the turnabout in American politics effected by the Carter administration.

From the Russian point of view, the quarrel with China has already obliged Moscow to increase its military presence on the Eastern frontier from 14 to 43 divisions between 1968 and 1974. However, for strategical purposes the Far East constitutes Russia's military rear, while its imperialist centre of gravity is located in Europe. Consequently Russia remains incapable of entering a western war, into which China will necessarily be drawn, on good footing, without concluding an alliance in the East. Thus, as much to counterbalance China as—hypothetically—to draw it into an alliance, Russia needs an alliance with Japan. This objective must constitute the key to Russian strategy in the Far East.

China's new alliance and the ability of American Polaris missiles to strike at Russia from submarines in the Indian Ocean since the sixties, together with the Russian retreat from the Middle East begun in 1970, have resulted in a relative weakening of Russia's position. This could only be compensated for first by an acceleration of the arms race, and later by a military «offensivism». This is what underlies the servile theories of certain Maoist groups which raise the spectre of «Russian expansionism» and appeal for national defence in the European imperialist countries today, just as they will call for the defence of the entire Western bloc tomorrow.

(11) See *Il Programma Comunista* no. 6 (1953) and *Le Proletaire* no. 137 (30 October, 1972).

It has been clearly established that Russia's naval armament is determined by the need to protect itself against American rockets, by the needs arising from its continental antagonism with China, and finally by the need to control the sea routes around Europe, the vital objective of the two world giants. It is clear that these tendencies are directly in conflict with the imperialist interests of the USA, which also covets the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and now Africa, as much for its wealth as for its strategic role. Thus, as a result of the development of military technology and imperialist expansion, this entire region has become a security zone for the two great powers simultaneously, not to mention the smaller imperialist powers, such as France, which are mired in this region up to their necks.

These facts totally refute the theory of «defensism» demolished by the Marxist critique 70 years ago. Who is the aggressor and who the victim when the entire world has become a feeding ground for everyone's imperialist appetites? And once again, it is the most powerful giant, the USA, which goads the weaker into aggression. But both of them are bandits and the proletariat must deny both of them its support if it hopes to be able to destroy them one day.

The Pre-War Period Has Begun

We can say that the pre-war period began in 1975. A noteworthy proof of this is provided by the arms race, not in the fact of the race itself, which is a permanent phenomenon, but in its quantitative acceleration and particularly its qualitative evolution. The point is that the arms levels that corresponded to the «balance of terror» are not those which would ensure victory in an imperialist conflict. This is not to say that these weapons would not be used tomorrow, either to take advantage of a decisive moment or to intimidate the proletariat. If they used blanket bombings at Dresden and Hamburg, or destroyed the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs yesterday, the imperialist states of today can do much better with their impressive stocks of H-bombs, MIRVs, and more recently, cruise missiles and neutron bombs. However, we have now passed from the era of simple «deterrence» to that of the «flexible response». All research today is concentrated on the development of tactical nuclear weapons and more accurate delivery systems rather than greater fire-power, on protection against enemy missiles and on improving conventional weaponry. Even the most devout worshippers of disarmament are obliged to recognize that progress in technological discoveries has rendered all arms limitation agreements obsolete, which proves that these agreements serve no other purpose than to divert attention from the real arms race. They have been forced to admit that the juicy profits squeezed from arms sales and particularly from competition between Russia and the USA have made nonsense of all attempts to limit the proliferation of arms, even nuclear weaponry. They must accept the evidence: within the context of capitalism there is only one way to disarm an enemy, and that is to destroy him by force.

The preparation for a new imperialist conflict is distinctly discernable in the strategy of the two superpowers, and particularly that of the most powerful imperialism, the USA. It is self-evident that Carter's policies are the politics of *war*. If Kissinger's detente was based on Russo-American joint rule over Europe, the new American strategy is founded on an alliance with Japan and Europe, for which Germany, because it causes the USA the greatest anxiety, must furnish the axis. The core of the Brzezinski doctrine lies in an attempt to channel the renewed aggressiveness of Europe and Japan towards Russia, heralding the end of the era governed by the Yalta agreements.

This policy goes hand in hand with an attempt to avert the dangers of social explosion, above all in Europe, which, in the mind of the new Washington administration, will become the principal threat to democracy (read: the established world order). This is why a counter-revolutionary entente with Russia —although it would entail a different orientation of US policy— is still necessary. For all these reasons the preferred battlefield in the impending war will be Europe, but it will also be the theater of war which presents the greatest danger for this handsome lot.

Naturally, this strategy contains serious unknowns. However, we must acknowledge that our most powerful enemy has the will to confront them. He is preparing for this confrontation, as always, under the *banner of freedom and human rights*, which he waves in Europe against the «Russian threat», in Africa against Russia and the remnants of European imperialism, and in Latin America against the excesses of the puppet regimes placed in power by the USA itself.

Africa and Europe

From this study a picture emerges which illuminates all the conclusions we have already drawn empirically: the future is now being prepared in Africa.

Because this continent has yet to be divided up between the big superpowers at the very time when the redivision of the world has begun, and because, together with the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, it forms part of a larger whole which is of vital strategic importance, Africa has been chosen as a staging area for the future world imperialist conflict. It is therefore obvious that Moscow's anti-imperialist campaign, as well as Washington's crusade for human rights, must be combatted relentlessly by the party, and their hypocrisy revealed through the examples provided by events within Africa.

This zone is also important because the anti-colonialist wave has been prolonged precisely in the South, where the working class is most concentrated, providing an opportunity to link up with the wave of workers' and peasants' struggles which must break over all oppressed continents. If one adds to this the fact that everything which

occurs in this area has inevitable repercussions in Europe, the events in Africa may be of great help to the European proletariat in its struggle against the old bourgeois strongholds. In this context, the party must conduct a resolute fight for defeatism in the quarrels between the imperialist brigands, and campaign for class solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggles developing in the colonial world. The alliance between the proletariat of the imperialist metropolises and the exploited masses of the enslaved countries, so sadly missing from the social wave during the «eruptive phase» of the anti-colonial revolt, may be forged anew in the fire of the imminent upheavals in Africa.

All the manifestations of the economic crisis —the imbalances caused by the arms race; the alterations of alliances sparked by national rivalries and even by social and political struggles in the «Third World» countries; and above all the risks of abrupt changes in the policies of Japan and Europe, and especially of Germany— all these must be counted among the factors capable of causing a radical disruption of the present balance of power between the huge imperialist giants. There is not a single bourgeois politician who would neglect to portray Japan's tendencies toward rearmament, or the re-unification of Germany, as possible elements in the further evolution of world politics, but possible only at the price of spectacular upsets in the network of alliances. What is most disquieting for the bourgeoisie is the accumulation of inflammable materials in Europe, with its heartland in Germany, for Europe is tormented by centrifugal tendencies in the two blocs and divided down the middle by the two superpowers. More than any other region, Europe will become sensitive to the mood of the most tremendous concentration of proletarian masses, which the deepening of the crisis cannot help but set in motion. This makes Europe not only the most «volatile variable» in relations between the two superpowers, but also once again the potential centre of gravity in the social struggle.

If we compare this pre-war period with the post-First World War situation, we note that twelve years elapsed between the moment when England decided that entente with Germany was impossible and began systematic preparations for war, and the outbreak of the war itself. England's policy consisted in an encirclement of Germany and concessions both to its external allies and to the proletariat through Lloyd George's domestic reforms. Is this not the same policy Carter is implementing now, albeit with more difficulty?

The proletariat would not be able to take advantage of the years that separate us from the approaching world conflict, to prepare to transform it into a civil war and make it a signal for proletarian revolution, unless from today, and in call camps at the same time, the party were to conduct the most intransigent theoretical fight against bourgeois militarism and against the pretexts for rearmament. Therefore the party must wage a resolute struggle against the theories of national defence in the bourgeois states —and above all in the imperialist states—, against chauvinism and social pacifism, and for revolutionary

defeatism and the international unity of the proletariat, a struggle for the red dictatorship and communism.

The Tasks the Party Must Fulfill to Prepare a Revolutionary Outcome to the Crisis

This report has outlined the general tendencies of the present historical cycle of capitalism. This cycle is not only the objective continuation and result of the preceding cycle of capitalist accumulation and expansion, but it is also the result predicted by the Marxist critique, that is by the party, at the end of the Second World War.

It is no coincidence that this report began with a quote from one of our texts from that epoch. This text announced the phenomena which appear increasingly clearly today as an accelerated accumulation of explosive material on the world scale; it indicated what the ideological disguises of a third imperialist butchery would be; and finally it specified the objectives and tasks of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat confronted by the bourgeois final solution to the crisis, a crisis that would be more than merely economic.

These tasks can be summarized as the preparation of a proletarian response to the perspective of a new conflict presented as yet another crusade for «peace» and «freedom». The specific tasks of the party flow from the necessity of this preparation. On the theoretical level, it requires resurrecting those powerful themes of revolutionary defeatism and the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. In the realm of practice, it requires putting forward these positions within the working class throughout the maturation of the military confrontation and throughout all the phases leading up to it, and organizing a growing nucleus of proletarians around the party's doctrine, directives, and slogans. However we must place this work in the context of *our* history as a party, as an organ of revolutionary combat, taking into consideration the evolution of the objective situation.

From Yesterday to Today

On the theoretical level, we foresaw not only the inevitable explosion of the world economic crisis, but also the approximate limits of the cycle within which it would occur. This was no mystical prophecy, but a scientific forecast based on an analysis of the data of the economic cycle and an assessment of its tendencies in the light of Marxist theory.

We were not content merely to predict the outbreak of this crisis. We examined year by year—in an uninterrupted series of analyses of the course of imperialism—those phenomena which revealed the accumulation of material causes and objective factors converging to

produce a general convulsion. At the same time, we could not ignore the theoretical arguments which prohibit Marxists from deriving the curves of social and political evolution—two curves which differ from each other, though they are linked—mechanically from the curve of economic evolution. We thus outlined the complex factors causing the social curve to lag behind the economic curve, and in doing so we referred both to texts and declarations of our current and to the theses and speeches of the Congresses of the Third International. This lag has been rendered still deeper and more catastrophic by two factors: 1) the Stalinist counter-revolution, and 2) the process of accumulation of capital, with a concomitant reinforcement of capital's domination over labour. Fortified by the counter-revolution, the rule of capital has developed in the post-Second World War period practically without encountering any resistance.

Therefore we did not fall into the trap of establishing a mechanical, i.e. non-dialectical equation between crisis and revolution. This would amount to portraying the superstructure as a direct copy of the economic base, and forgetting that while the former derives from the latter, it is not as a mechanical relationship, but one of reciprocal interaction.

The tactical level is connected to the analysis of all the historical factors at work. In the realm of tactics, as the capitalist crisis slowly matured, our party went through a difficult period, of which our trade union theses, among other documents, are a reflection. These theses were not intended in any way to innovate the party's theory and program. On the contrary, their aim was to retie the revolutionary thread by resuming the analysis of the disastrous consequences for the working class of the «third opportunist wave», whose effects had been added to the older wave of social-democratic opportunism. We therefore had to understand *why* the revival of the proletarian movement was condemned to begin anew from the lowest level of its spontaneity. Despite our own post-war perspective, we had in fact wished to leap over this stage easily. Thus we indicated that the reconstruction of class trade unions was a priority and almost a prerequisite for economic struggle. This was incorrect because two conditions are indispensable in order to reverse the process by which the former red trade unions had become unions of class collaboration. The conditions are: 1) the rebirth of a broad and vigorous, at least trade-unionist movement of the proletariat, and 2) in its wake, the strengthening of the revolutionary party, a party which must be able to recognize this movement for what it is (and not for what it would like it to be), and which must be determined to inject class consciousness into it. In the absence of these two conditions, the reconstruction of the class trade union, an objective in itself inseparable from our program, could never be attained. Moreover, it was necessary to be aware that the encounter between the class curve and the party curve does not happen as a result of purely objective factors, sufficient in themselves to polarize great masses around the revolutionary communist program and the

party that defends it, nor conversely, as a result of intellectual enlightenment. It happens through a process in which the party's action of animation, direction, and organization is no less decisive than material impulses. This party action is all the more important since the working class movement has been burdened with a long history of defeats, which have not merely plunged it into confusion, but also destroyed it physically.

Therefore the party resumed a cohesive activity in two areas: 1) political, theoretical, and organizational preparation of its militants; and 2) development of interventions which corresponded better to the real level of economic and social struggles, and which were in a better position to elicit a response at least from the vanguard layers of the proletariat compelled to fight instinctively against the bourgeoisie and its opportunist servants. The outbreak of the crisis has shown the accuracy of our «balance sheet», or rather, our forecast, which did not date from 1972, but went back at least to 1950. It obliged us to fight consistently for the day-to-day defence of the proletariat's living, working, and class struggle conditions, reaffirming the great themes of the means, the methods, and even the contents of a serious resistance to the capitalist offensive. This fight, directed against what was really a united front of the bourgeoisie and opportunism, could only be waged through the channels opened by history, and not by our will. On the one hand, we had to wage the fight within the trade unions, which contained the vast majority of the workers, without succumbing to any illusions about the possibility of transforming, or much less, conquering them. And on the other hand, the fight had to be carried into the fragile organisms that tiny groups of proletarians were induced to create in their confused and often contradictory attempt to organize a defence for which the trade unions did not offer the thinnest support. In this aspect of our work, we had no illusions about the ability of these organisms to resist the pressure of trade union opportunism for very long, or indeed the pressure of spontaneist or leftist currents in general. Such groups often create defensive organisms artificially, and then always try to mould them into a vehicle for «political» recruitment, thereby depriving them of their character as organisms open to workers of any political affiliation. Once they have fulfilled this function or can no longer be used for general political agitation, these defensive organisms are simply abandoned to their fate. Consequently we intervene in them without any illusory faith in their long-term stability, and without pretending that they are the pillars of a «new trade union organization», much less the embryonic forms of intermediate «political» organizations.

Our fight still remained theoretical; but our theory was intended for action. We could not expect to mobilize even a consistent nucleus of workers, let alone the masses, even if we hoped that the workers' reaction to the violent shock of the crisis would not be as slow and painful as it has turned out to be. But if our theory could not yet be translated into slogans, it could provide a general perspective for

regrouping the workers into a compact resistance front, regardless of their political affiliation and their place in production.

On the level of economic struggles—and only on that level—we cannot exclude theoretically the possibility of a minimum temporary convergence with other forces, a convergence that does not imply effacing the limits defined by our theory and our program. We regarded this possibility as *minimal* a priori, and put it forward with all the necessary reservations. And the facts have confirmed the old Marxist thesis that the only ones who really defend the class in its most immediate and humble interests, and try to organize this defence without any philistine prejudices, are precisely those who defend firmly the ultimate aims of communism in all situations.

Though of negligible weight from the point of view of recruitment, the results of the little battle we have been fighting appear precious in the long run. They consist in the experience accumulated by the entire party in the sector of economic struggle. This sector has always been vital to us, but until now we had only succeeded in penetrating it through tiny cracks, and generally at a local level. Concretely, this experience has meant a broadening of our contacts with the class and of our political propaganda, the acquisition of a more widespread and deep-rooted militant spirit, a strengthening and improved adaptation of our organizational structure, and above all an extension and deepening of our theoretical and practical struggle against opportunism in all its forms, including «leftism». Thus a process, contradictory in appearance only has been set in motion on the terrain of struggle, on a scale we have no intention of over-estimating. This is the process through which the party begins to acquire roots in the class, emerging from its objective isolation. At the same time, the party appears *unique*, with its own character, standing out from all the «intermediate» and pseudo-revolutionary political formations.

From Today to Tomorrow

We have never spread any illusions among the proletariat about the fact that the curve of the working class movement has been descending for decades. But is this curve in the process of rising again? We feel that it is beginning to rise slowly in a still molecular process, after having touched bottom. We see signs of this not so much in episodes of open proletarian revolt, which are not sufficient to make a lasting break in the «social peace», as in the more and more frequent manifestations of anger and disillusionment with the arrogance of reformist opportunism. In fact, the void beginning to form around opportunism in some places, which the inexorable pressure of the crisis can only accentuate, will compel it to remove the last mask behind which it conceals its unconditional defence of the established order. We detect symptoms of a slow rise of the working class movement in the internal crisis afflicting «leftism» aligned on the same front as classical opportunism under the banner of a «workers'»

or «left» government. This process can only be accelerated by the imperious necessity for capital to impose new sacrifices and new disciplinary constraints upon the working class. Lastly we see signs of a resurgence in the panic stirred up among the bourgeois and opportunists by every confused and superficial form of revolt against factory despotism or every violation of the painfully constructed social peace, not to mention the effects of terrorism. This panic is so out of proportion with its causes that it can only be explained by the acute fear on the part of the ruling class and its servants that the embers of revolt, and not just discontent, are smouldering silently under the appearance of social calm. The bourgeoisie fears that the epicentre of this revolt is —or might become— the working class, and not the petty-bourgeois fringes momentarily pushed to the forefront by the fractures of society.

For the working class, and thus also for us, the way forward will necessarily be strewn with obstacles. In particular, opportunism cannot fail to reappear —as has happened already— in other more «romantic», but still dangerous forms, such as anarcho-syndicalism, spontaneism, and terrorist revolt. These currents must be nourished by the economic crisis and by the fact that the sluggishness of the proletarian revival does not point to a gradual and uniform process, but to an alternation of sudden and almost unpredictable explosions with equally sudden relapses, even if the general movement is ascending.

This means that a much broader field of action is opening up to us than in the past, a field no longer limited to theoretical and programmatic propaganda or the immediate defence of the living and working conditions of the proletariat. It presents a perspective potentially leading up to the offensive. On the theoretical level our activity must consist in a demonstration of the validity of Marxism, a demonstration which the deepening of the crisis confirms more forcefully every day through great historical events as well as through material facts, and through the bankruptcy of gradualist and reformist illusions. On the practical level, the party must intervene in the formation of vanguard nuclei which are prepared to fight resolutely not only against the effects of the economic crisis, but also against its causes, so that they tend toward the «qualitative leap» from the terrain of defensive struggle and resistance to that of a general, offensive, political struggle.

It is for this reason that, at a recent party meeting, we emphasized the need to confirm the striking political lessons embodied in our doctrine by means of the material evidence of the crisis the class is now passing through. This does not imply that intervention in economic struggles could or should be abandoned, but instead that the objective conditions are taking shape which may enable partial struggles to give rise to a growing consciousness, within broader circles of workers, of the need to go beyond the limits of the purely economic terrain. As Lenin showed, we must fan these sparks with an intervention of broader scope. By tempering the party's activity in the fires ignited

by these sparks, we will be able to lay the basis for an organized response to the perspective of a third imperialist war as a solution to the increasingly agonizing dilemmas engendered by the economic and social crisis.

Furthermore, the 1977 party meeting emphasized the gigantic task of struggling against chauvinism, militarism, crusades of «psychological» war preparation, and any manifestations of the race to conquer strategic bases outside Europe today, and inside Europe tomorrow. This struggle must be theoretical at first, then practical and organizational —but these two aspects are closely interwoven. Our task cannot be measured by its immediate results, but we must nonetheless devote ourselves to it immediately, because the cycle leading to war has accelerated, while an adequate revolutionary preparation will still require time.

If we have conquered even a small space in the class during these last years, and if we have grown stronger as a result, then we must defend that space fiercely and neglect no opportunity to enlarge it patiently, methodically, and without respite. The fact that we refused the cheap gains of the «revolutionary phrase» throughout these decades during which it has been exploited by «leftist» currents, enables us to continue to reject it firmly, in order to confront the serious tasks of preparation for the cycle of social upheaval unfolding before us.

We will only be able to fulfill these tasks if we continue straight ahead along our road, avoiding the pitfalls of easy dividends, empty boasting, and resignation to unfavourable day-to-day circumstances.

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Iran

The Legacy of the Shah : Capitalist Transformation Forced from Above

We publish below an article which appeared in December, 1978, in our French newspaper, *Le Proletaire*, together with some economic and social observations taken from our Italian organ, *Il Programma Comunista*. Both were written before the «February days», when the masses revolted and tried to resolve the most immediate problems posed by the social movement *in their own way*. The insurrection thus came up against the privileges of imperialism, the Court, and the remnants of ancient despotism placed at the service of a frantic accumulation of capital driven by imperialism and symbolized by the hated SAVAK. The bourgeoisie as well as the ayatollahs tried to settle these questions «from above», by introducing constitutional reforms and by preserving the continuity of the state and its essential organs, the officer corps and the police.

The armed workers chased the SAVAK agents out of the factories, and the officer corps was roughed up, but it is obvious that the bourgeoisie, after receiving power from the hands of the clergy, is now making a concerted effort to get both operating as soon as possible. In the meantime it is obliged to carry out a purge that it nonetheless strives to keep as limited and harmless as possible. As long as the working class obstructs production, it is constrained to tolerate the inevitable aberrations of the petty bourgeoisie, which has taken refuge in Islam in the hope of protecting itself from the advance of capitalism.

The dramatic events that shook Iran prove that only *insurrection* can deal with the question of reforms thoroughly and satisfy the most pressing economic and political needs of the broad masses, and only *insurrection* can strike a serious blow at imperialism. Moreover, Iran has also demonstrated that in the absence of its *independent party*, without which the insurrection cannot accomplish the destruction of the state, the working class reaps the *minimum* return from its enormous sacrifices. The tremendous waste of social energies which is occurring in Iranian society today can only bring to mind the powerful image used by Trotsky in his preface to the *History of the Russian Revolution* : « *Without a guiding organization the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam.* »

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx wrote that all bourgeois revolutions have only perfected the state apparatus, instead of smashing it to pieces. Hence it is clear that the victors of today have already inherited the historical tasks of the defeated. It is also clear that the reforms they have made will leave the working masses and even broad layers of the peasantry in hunger, since these reforms were subordinated to the need to strengthen the bourgeois state. But in the present international situation, this does not mean that the state will achieve a lasting stability, nor that the army protected by the flag of Islam will not succeed in eliminating, by a coup d'Etat, the conglomerate of petty bourgeois elements endeavouring to make a nest for themselves in the state apparatus. On the contrary, this may be necessary in order to make the state a more efficient counter-revolutionary instrument in these stormy times, and in order to replace it once again under the direct rule of imperialism. Under such tragic conditions, the best service the «Islamic revolution» could render to history would be for the political power it has erected to reveal its true nature as soon as possible: it is the *political power of the bourgeoisie as a class*. This would force the proletariat in turn to appear on the historical scene as a *distinct party*.

The masses of workers held the monarchy and the army at bay for months before dealing them both a powerful blow. Will they continue to work *voluntarily*, without flinching, without trying instinctively to advance *their own class demands*, which no bourgeoisie is willing to satisfy? And will the agricultural proletariat and the poor peasantry refrain from attacking these property relations which lie half-way between the feudal past and the modern capitalist relations of production?

In January we predicted that «the existing social front between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie has to fall apart [...]. But since this political rupture has not been initiated by the proletariat, it might unfortunately happen under the most disadvantageous conditions for the proletariat, leaving it unprepared and bound hand and foot to «Islamic democracy», to face the state. The working masses would have no alternative but resignation or a desperate uprising» (1).

Revolutionary Marxists follow the tragedy of the Iranian proletariat anxiously, and struggle so that the proletariat will not have to suffer once again all the sacrifices borne by past generations and so that, in the difficult re-awakening of the class struggle, the party will direct its steps as soon as possible onto the road of world communist revolution.

With the «awakening of Asia» at the beginning of the century, Marxism expected social upheavals both in the colonies—India, Indonesia, and Indochina—and in the semi-colonies—China, Turkey, and

(1) «L'Iran, c'est le monde», in *Le Prolétaire*, no. 281, Jan. 1979.

Persia (Iran). The fate of Persia, situated on the Asiatic frontiers of Russia, was linked to Russia's fate more than any other country, for social as well as strategic reasons. Thus the Russian revolution of 1905 produced an echo with the Iranian «liberal constitution», which endeavoured to limit the privileges of imperialism and monarchical power and gave the urban classes a certain freedom of movement, but left the privileges of the landed aristocracy intact.

The social earthquake of Red October also unleashed vast peasant movements, but the social development in Iran had not yet reached the point where it could give birth to urban classes capable of using these movements as a revolutionary lever. In the period immediately following 1917, the alternative was clear: 1) either the Russian revolution and the international proletariat would take the lead of this nascent social movement and enable Iran to leap over the bourgeois stage of historical development, by breaking ancient despotism and the centuries old oppression of the landed nobility, or 2) imperialism would succeed in making Iran an outpost in its counter-revolutionary *cordon sanitaire*, thus continuing its former policy of containment against Russia's Asiatic expansionism; and this would mean the introduction of a modern army into Iran, which in turn would necessarily result in a capitalist transformation under the tutelage of imperialism.

The isolation of the October Revolution left Iran at the mercy of the capitalist revolution *from above*. In addition to the impetus contributed by anti-Russian interests, which persisted and resumed their old logic when the proletarian revolution was liquidated by Stalinism, the capitalist revolution from above was given a powerful economic stimulus by the discovery of oil—which nourished its brazen hope of buying off the old classes instead of having to fight them, as well as the hope buying off the exploited classes' historical right to make a revolution.

The champion of this historical path was Reza Khan who, reinforced by British support, set his cossacks loose to conquer Teheran. After saving the nobility and priests from social revolt, he forced them to surrender their titles and part of their political prerogatives in exchange for continuing to recognize their social privileges. He also confiscated more than half a million acres (5% of the arable land) and placed it in the Crown's personal domain, as payment for services rendered to society. Although he gave the rising bourgeoisie the embryo of a modern law code and a network of communications, and was almost to the point of installing a Republic after the example of Mustapha Kemal Pasha in Turkey, he tore the Constitution of 1906 to pieces, further reinforcing the authoritarianism of the central power.

Thus, the totalitarian centralism of capitalist primitive accumulation was grafted, under the pressure of imperialism, into the ancient trunk of bureaucratic despotism, a despotism that had emerged slowly from the geographic isolation of self-sufficient hamlets straining under the weight of cities which had sprouted up at the intersection of landed property and the intense commerce of the caravan routes. This

monstrous hybrid, combining traditional Asiatic absolutism with the «bloody legislation» that accompanied the birth of the modern wage-earning class everywhere, secreted a sort of Oriental «enlightened despotism». How could the flag of the capitalist revolution forced from above be anything but a mixture of disparate elements?

Its alleged «national» character, and even the abolition of treaties giving foreigners extra-territorial privileges, were only a cover invented by England in order to channel the awakened Persian national movement against the enormous Russian neighbour. The cover was designed especially to hide the English claim to exclusive hegemony over the whole of historical Persia, just as pan-Arabism had provided it an alibi in the Near East. The proof of this was furnished when Reza Khan wished to remain neutral in 1941. England retorted: «Reza, who made you Shah?»—and deposed him.

Capitalism's First Steps

Oil production began in 1909 and increased to 200,000 barrels a day in 1939, and to nearly 1 million barrels a day in 1959. Obviously the proportion of the state budget accounted for by the royal domains diminished considerably in relation to oil revenues. The revenues from oil financed industry, which began to move forward in the 1930's. Alongside the state and the foreign companies which controlled big industry, a small and middle local industry began to develop, especially in textiles and foodstuffs. Above all, commerce took great strides, patronized by the Court, in an atmosphere teeming with bribery, corruption, intrigue, and influence peddling.

In the 1950's almost all of the fifty thousand villages in Iran, with an average population of 250, were still owned by sixty thousand nobles; ten thousand of these villages were in the hands of owners of more than five villages; 10% were religious property, and 5% belonged to the Crown. The great mass of peasant families still paid a tribute *in kind* to the landlord, who controlled water resources (an irrigation system is essential in this semi-arid country where 40% of the land has to be watered artificially) and the redistribution of land, which was still subject to annual rotation among families, except in certain cases where it was cultivated jointly.

The countryside was nonetheless drawn into the general foment. The landlords, who traditionally lived in the cities, began to farm their lands to get money, half of them managing the farm themselves, while the rest rented to civil servants or merchants. A sector of large-scale farming emerged, bringing with it speculative crops and wage labour. Thus in 1960, 12,300 units of more than 125 acres cultivated 13% of the land. On the other hand, the peasant economy, reduced to diminutive plots on which the landlord exerted an increasing economic pressure, became more specialized, and the plots shrank to the point that 40% of the families had less than five acres each. At that

level a bare existence was impossible and many peasants were compelled to seek employment on the large estates or emigrate to the cities.

In spite of this economic evolution the sole master in the village was the landlord, for he not only utilized the land arbitrarily, but dispensed justice as well, so that the old patriarchal relations became unbearable for the peasants. The landlord's economic weight on the peasants' shoulders thus remained intact, even though the economic importance of the landed aristocracy as a whole had only declined with the development of the cities, industry, and commerce which thrived thanks to the production of oil. The political weight of this social class remained considerable, a fact which is explained by the fusion of the landed aristocracy with the army and high government offices. This situation was perpetuated not only because the nobility had a long military tradition and because the Iranian state was above all an army, but also because the countryside remained under the exclusive control of the nobility until the beginning of the 1960's, while the state administration and civil servants controlled the cities.

But Iran is a country where 31% of the total population in 1956 lived in the cities, where shops and industry accounted for 1.2 million persons (21% of the active population), where commerce, transportation, and public services employed close to one million persons (17% of the active population), where 60% of the urban population lived on wages, and the remaining 40% from activities that had nothing to do with agriculture—not to mention a parasitic administration and army which employed at least 450,000 persons (2). Could a country with such a profusion of bourgeois and modern interests—even if they were drawn along almost in spite of themselves by imperialism and anesthetized by the oil revenue—be driven by the riding whip of the aristocracy for much longer?

In the 1950's, economic and social conditions were quite ripe for a bourgeois revolution directed against imperialism and the old feudal relations, a revolution, moreover, which could base itself on a true peasant revolution.

Iran was not spared by the social tidal wave that engulfed Asia from its epicentre in the Far East in reaction to the earthquake caused by the second imperialist war. The urban classes took advantage of the situation—the weakening of the regime brought about by the transformation of the country into a vast battlefield, the fall of Reza Khan, and the struggle for influence between the British and Americans—in order to make their own voice heard.

The Mossadegh reform responded to the first movements by nuclei of workers and the urban petty bourgeoisie, which had significant

(2) The social structure of Iran in 1956 bore a resemblance to Russia in 1914, where the urban population amounted to only 20%. The proportion of proletarians was quite similar (33% in Iran and 26% in Russia), and that of industrial proletarians almost identical (13% vs 11%).

repercussions throughout the countryside. The new classes born from urban development endeavoured to negotiate with imperialism for more room in the state apparatus *vis-à-vis* the nobility, and for a larger share of the ground rent, while promising an agrarian reform and the Constitution of 1906 in order to calm the masses. But even that was refused by American imperialism, England's successor in the region. The USA was conscious of Iran's strategic location at the heart of the «zone of storms» in the Gulf oil fields, and of its role as a rampart against Russian expansion in Asia. This is why the coup of August 1953, which put an end to the impotent reformism of Mossadegh and returned the Shah to power, marked a new acceleration of Iran's integration into the world market, while the treaty with the United States in 1956 initiated a new phase of militarization.

The SAVAK was created in the same year, furnishing a centralized police apparatus which controlled the entire country in co-operation with the Americans. But that did not prevent a resurgence of the social movement in the form of broad workers' strikes in 1956 and 1959. The economic crisis of 1960-61 awoke the students and petty bourgeoisie, and spread to the countryside where an atmosphere of peasant revolt reigned at the beginning of 1963. The movement reached its climax in June 1963, when a large spontaneous revolt was put down by the army, leaving 15,000 corpses in the dust of the streets of Teheran and its suburbs.

However, the counter-revolution could not leave the social situation unchanged. Although it had used the nobility to frustrate the bourgeoisie's claims against imperialism between 1950 and 1953, it could restore the complete domination of imperialism only by further accentuating the capitalist character of the state, and of the army itself. A feudalist can wield a sword, not pilot an airplane. Likewise, driving a tank requires a soldier hardened in the school of industrial sweatshops, not a peasant serf barely able to hold a gun. The formation of a modern army and the utilization of oil revenues—henceforth the sole income of the state which had definitively ceased to support itself on agricultural ground rent—necessitated social concessions to bourgeois development and a reduction of the political weight of the old landed aristocracy in the state. If the counter-revolution of 1850 in Germany was able to prevail only by making itself «the testamentary executor of the revolution», this time, in an Iran caught in the grip of an imperialism that had assimilated all the experience of a whole cycle of bourgeois rule, the counter-revolution could hold out against the rising Asiatic social wave only by *preceding* the revolution: as the government itself explained, it had to «make a revolution from above when it threatened to be made from below».

The Reforms of the «White Revolution»

The reforms of 1962-63 limited landed property to the possession of one village, while the «liberated» land became the property of the peasants in exchange for a tax paid to the state for a period of fifteen

years. The remaining peasants were transformed into tenant farmers, while the government gradually took over administration of the villages from the nobility. In reality it was not until 1969 that the old landed aristocracy became convinced of the advantages of the new system: the agrarian reform could then be generalized, and the mass of peasant cultivators became owners of their small plots by means of a tax paid to the state for twelve years. Meanwhile, co-operative organizations theoretically undertook the tasks of maintaining the irrigation systems and marketing the crops.

This reform had the undeniable effects of destroying the old peasant economy. It broke the basic economic links which subordinated the peasant to the noble and to the remnants of the old agrarian community; it drew the peasant increasingly into the market, and accentuated the massive proletarianization of the peasantry, which still vegetated on ridiculously small plots. However, the peasant, now at the mercy of the market, still had to bear the arrogance and wrath both of the old landlords, who were the real masters in the co-operatives, and also of the state bureaucrats who henceforth supervised capitalist exploitation, but always in the old despotic style.

While enforcing the passage of the peasant to modern society and maintaining a maximum of oppression, the «white revolution» took the longest route to capitalist agriculture. The old feudal domain was theoretically opened up to capitalism, but the development of productivity was exceedingly sluggish and weak. Agro-industries were implanted on 1,000,000 acres through the fusion of local and Anglo-Saxon capital, and agricultural companies were set up on another 1,000,000 acres. The peasant thus became a wage earner at sword-point under the direction of the old landlord who had been transformed into a capitalist linked to the state bureaucracy. Producers co-operatives were formed, enabling large landowners to concentrate the land and credits for their own benefit. Tractors, fertilizer, and credits were introduced into a commercial agriculture of middle and rich peasants, which provisioned 70% of the market with only a quarter of the manpower. But in spite of all these measures, Iranian agriculture in the 1970's ceased to be able to produce enough food for the cities, and as result Iran has had to resort to massive grain imports.

The reform liquidated the weight of landed property and began to open up the countryside to industrial products; fresh manpower poured into a capitalist industry stimulated by Iran's subordination to the economic and strategic requirements of imperialism. The exponential development of Iranian industry thus succeeded in creating an *outlet* for the pressure of the peasant masses on the remnants of pre-bourgeois forms in the countryside. Iran became an industrial country: in 1973, agriculture represented no more than 18% of the national revenue, surpassed by industry and factories which accounted for 22.3%, and by oil which accounted for 19.5%, not to mention the inevitable services which thrived like leeches on all the rest and which represented no less than 40.2%. In relation to 1960, the active agricul-

tural population grew by only 9%, representing 400,000 persons; to reach 40.1% of the total active population, while the total for industry and mines, now 2.7 million persons, grew 125%. The tertiary sector, after a rural exodus of close to a million and a half persons, now comprised as many workers as the other sectors.

Until this point, the capitalism which had penetrated Iranian society appeared only as a simple by-product of the development of monetary wealth produced by the oil gold mine. The generalization of this wealth swelled the old channels of commerce and usury, those antediluvian forms of capital. Whence the tremendous growth of the Bazaar.

Alongside this, the bureaucratic state implanted the new mode of production, but it used the old social forms: it did not invest in industry to make capital; it spent its revenues on industrial gadgets. It treated itself to steel mills and agro-industries in the same way as Darius had indulged in the palaces of Persepolis. Moreover, the Iranian state could «play its international role» as the pillar of counter-revolution, policeman of the Gulf, and the West's rampart against Russia, and at the same time contain all the enormous social contradictions created by this exponential development on a still archaic social base, only by strengthening its apparatus. It inflated beyond measure «the most modern army in the world» and the most centralized, ferocious police force, in order to suppress whatever could not be bought off, amidst a maelstrom of corruption and influence-peddling such as Marx believed had attained its historical climax in the France of Napoleon III.

However, if the «ears of the king» of old succeeded in detecting social discontent quickly enough to sound the alert, the modern SAVAK could not hear all the dissenting voices engendered by modern development, much less silence them. The soaring oil prices in 1973 not only provoked a real leap forward in industry, but the rise of oil revenues condemned the society, already bled white by the revolution from above, to a new leap *towards full capitalism*. Capital means concentration: from now on, small industry had to give way to large industry, small commerce to large commerce, small agriculture to large agriculture. Get big or perish; that is the law.

In the name of civilization, the cossack sabre delivered Iran to the yoke of the world market. When the large stores were unable to drive the Bazaar out of business, modern urbanism razed it to the ground. When the large-scale import of American wheat (now furnishing a quarter of consumption) no longer sufficed to keep the worker's wages as low as possible in order to compensate for the low productivity of industry, a new agrarian law was introduced to bury the agricultural middle class just «liberated» by the agrarian reform, as well as landed property unfit to become big-capitalist.

In nineteenth century England, the «corn laws» which authorized the import of American grain, were the object of an important political battle in which the proletariat participated with admirable combativity. It fought alongside the industrial bourgeoisie, even though it was aware

that the import of American grain signified a decrease in the value of its labour power. But the workers' aim was to break the economic and political power of the landed aristocracy, and they took advantage of the dispute between different factions of the bourgeoisie to put forward their own demand for a 10-hour work-day.

In present-day Iran, this battle has already been fought, unfortunately without the political participation of the proletariat. The interests of bourgeoisified landed property have become subordinated to those of industrial capital, with the help of its master, international finance capital.

As for the small and middle bourgeoisie of the cities and countryside, of the Bazaar and the co-operatives, the spontaneous effect of the laws of the market was still too limited to complete their historically inevitable ruin at the rate required by the cyclone of big capital. Here too the state had to intervene. When oil revenue was not enough to do the job, the SAVAK took over. But then the international crisis broke out and Iranian society fell prey to an unprecedented economic and social crisis, this time without any shock absorbers.

In the Storm of the Crisis

After 1970 Iran was hit by a powerful wave of workers' strikes involving one by one all the enterprises and all the sectors of the economy; the proletarians did not hesitate to brave torture and murder. Naturally, the massive increase in the cost of living and the sudden slowdown in expansion gave an additional impetus to the strikes. But in the breach opened by the working class the crisis incited the impoverished urban masses to revolt. With them came the Bazaar, which strained under the brutal contraction of the market and the unbearable weight of foreign competition, and finally the middle classes, undergoing a rapid proletarianization, and the students.

This crisis was compounded by a terrible agricultural crisis. The most serious effects were not caused by the failure of the agro-industries, which had to be bailed out by the state. More importantly, foreign competition prevented large scale farmers from selling wheat on the market, and hence they could not meet their bills. The unemployed and the migrant labourers thronged towards the countryside, casting the poor peasants and the agricultural proletariat into the depths of poverty. Following the cities, almost the whole rural population stood up against the Shah and imperialism.

The rebellion of the middle classes against the regime explains the mass and popular character of the Iranian revolt. But the proletariat still has powerful links with the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, and in the absence of a bourgeois revolution which could have exposed the broad masses to an intense political struggle, the interests of the various classes had not become differentiated. The terrible consequences of the Stalinist counter-revolution condemn the young Iranian

proletariat, in spite of its great combativity, to fight without a party which could guide its steps, hasten the assimilation of its own experience, and teach the proletariat its own program. All these factors explain why the working class is still only the tail of the political movement of the petty bourgeoisie, of the «people in general». Hence the apparent unanimity of a movement whose social components, although united in their hatred of the despotic regime and of its master, American imperialism, nonetheless reflect profoundly different interests.

The powerful economic links between the Shiite church and commercial and landed (essentially urban) property, in addition to the terrible backwardness of the countryside, preserve the clergy's enormous influence in social life. Moreover, the traditional role of the mosques as centers of charitable help and especially as a focus of social and political life in a country where all other kinds of expression and assembly are cruelly suppressed, as well as the traditional opposition of the Shiite religion to the Shah's regime, explain the tremendous religious imprint on the whole revolt movement.

In particular, the Shiite religion furnishes the banner of struggle against the influx of Western ideas and provides an ideological cover for the struggle of the middle classes against competition from Western manufactures and capital. It assures a continuity to the protest against the crimes of the regime. By adapting its organization to channel the popular movement, the Shiite church has transformed itself into a party, the party of political protest against the despotism of capital, with a nationalist program and aspirations to «turn back the wheel of history». This «feudal democratism», adulated by the late Mossadegh's National Front, the Tudeh Party, and a string of Maoist-populist groups, is the purest synthesis of the political impotence of the petty and middle bourgeoisie and their reactionary historical vision.

Whether the Shah remains or a new Islamic republic is established, the new government will probably be compelled to negotiate with imperialism for a certain tightening of the borders against foreign goods which will give a temporary respite to the middle and rich peasantry and to the urban petty bourgeoisie. But the greatest damage for the Bazaar comes more from the fall of the oil revenues than from the unavoidable foreign rivalry that this fall aggravates; it will come to a quick understanding with its true master, imperialism. As for the middle peasantry and landed property, on the one hand they can be sure that industrial capital will not be able to guarantee for very long an archaism that entails a terrible handicap for it in competition on the *domestic market*. On the other hand, it is *certain* that Islamic democracy is as congenitally incapable as the Shah's regime of giving the peasant masses a «supplementary agrarian revolution» which would alleviate their oppression; it is all the more incapable of delivering them from the torments of capitalism, from which they could not liberate themselves without destroying its roots, that is, without overthrowing bourgeois society.

In the meantime, a change of regime could well remove the aspects of the state that are most unbearable, such as the exorbitant rights granted

to foreigners or the intolerable luxury of some families among the «corrupt» aristocracy. But it is clear that no constitution, no «democracy», will be anything more than a «fig leaf of absolutism» designed to hide the nudity of the state's terrorism. As for the state, the remnants of ancient despotism have become so intimately linked to its capitalist function that they can be eliminated radically only if that function is destroyed. It can only be destroyed by means of a revolution which, while basing itself on the need for a radical destruction of the pre-bourgeois vestiges, falls into the hands of the proletariat in order to serve as a machine of war in the struggle of the international proletariat against capitalism.

The old impotent classes as well as new immature classes surge up periodically but break as regularly against this Bonapartism raised to the hundredth power. Born in the void created between a frenetic economic development and the sluggishness of social evolution, this Bonapartism has been fortified by its control of the economic levers and by a gigantic military and police machine, as well as by the military, financial, and political support of imperialism.

Let us anticipate the next social earthquake by referring to the analogy of another Bonapartism. The working class in Iran today, still weak and without leadership, is nevertheless the only historical class capable of advancing society. It must oppose the concentrated force of the despotic state with a *still more centralized and centralizing force*, having drawn the lessons from the present tragedy and assimilated the wealth of lessons from the long and tortuous road of the international working class. Like the French working class of more than a century ago, on the ruins of a society heated to incandescence by its raging contradictions, it will erect its Red Commune, a victorious link in the international chain of the proletarian revolution.

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May Day

For the Independent Class Struggle

Ninety years have passed since May 1st was declared an international day of working class solidarity in memory of the working class martyrs of Chicago who fell on the battlefield of the struggle for the 8 hour day.

Since then, the technological development of large capitalist industry has made great leaps and bounds, the social productive forces have been tremendously expanded and developed and the whole world is basking in the so-called progress of bourgeois society. But for the working class, the undeniable triumph of capitalist «civilization» means everything but the freedom from suffering, want and fear.

Ninety years have passed. But for millions and millions of workers, the 8 hour day is still on the far-off horizon. For still other millions and millions this continues to be a limit below which it is prohibited to descend.

Ninety years have passed. But there where the workday has been reduced to less than 8 hours (a conquest won at the cost of long and difficult struggles and the defense of which will require still more of the same), it means an enormous increase in the work-load and, consequently, the physical and psychological exhaustion of the workers.

Ninety years have passed. But even in the «advanced» capitalist countries, the insufficiency of wages and the precarious character of living conditions compel millions and millions of working class families to try to find an immediate solution to the problem of survival by working overtime or off the books, by taking on a second job, etc. And in the so-called «backwards» countries, never have the problems of poverty and hunger been so bad.

Ninety years have passed and through its struggle, the immense army of workers has obtained the «privilege» to acquire a greater quantity—but always minute—of «products» and «services» which the capitalist class is so proud of. But the counterpart of this «privilege» is the cyclical return of those forms of social disease which are called crises. In the whirlpool of these crises—as Marxism has scientifically

foreseen—all that seemed to be secure or all that was pretended to be secure becomes uncertain; all that seemed to be gained or all that was pretended to be gained goes up in smoke. In place of a secure job there is partial or total, temporary or permanent, unemployment. In place of a sure income there are uncertain wages, always lagging behind the rise in the cost of living.

As was explained in the Communist Manifesto more than a century ago and as is confirmed once more by the course of the international situation today, which serves as the backdrop for this Mayday 1979, in order to get over these crises, the bourgeoisie knows no other method than, on one hand, the «enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces» and, on the other, «the conquest of new markets, and the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented». It is for this reason that the working class throughout the world has payed for these ninety years of uncertain «secure privileges» with two world butcheries, an unending series of local wars, and the menace of still more terrible future conflicts.

WORKERS !

The harsh lessons of reality lay bare the lie that the forward march of capitalist «progress» means the steady improvement of the quality of life of the proletariat. The utter bankruptcy of this pretention in turn spells the bankruptcy of the parallel ideology of working class reformism and gradualism.

In its traditional version, Social Democracy preaches to the workers that their struggle for emancipation against capital does not necessitate the destruction of the bourgeois state, only its reform through a patient work of gaining footholds within the system. In its more modern version, which the parties of Stalinist origin (even if they disavow such a title) attempt to pass off for «communist», it is not content to present socialism as the product of a progressive extension of democratic rights and institutions. It goes on to instruct workers that their emancipation has ceased to be, as was proclaimed in the Statutes of the First International, «a social problem which embraces every country where modern society exists» and has become instead a «local and national» problem to be resolved country by country, each respecting the jealously guarded national independence of the others.

According to the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, the proletarians are called upon by history to be the GRAVEDIGGERS of capitalist society, the very society in which reformism, in both of its versions, tries forever to imprison the working class. The aim of reformism it to keep the only class which has a world to win, as a slave RESIGNED to the existing mode of production—fearing God, observing the law, defending the country.

WORKERS !

The call for national solidarity launched by the chorus of false working class parties and unions is the prelude, in peacetime, to the call for national solidarity in the mobilization for a new imperialist war.

The call for sacrifices and for «responsible struggles» means the disarmament of your class in the only war in which you have any interest to fight: the WAR AGAINST CAPITAL.

By asking you to respect the rules of democratic play, reformism renounces forever the only possible program which can lead to a classless society, to communism: THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT under the leadership of the revolutionary class party.

Working class reformism has abandoned this program, which does not have and cannot have anything in common with the aims connected with the democratic ideology. It has abandoned the methods which the struggle for this program necessarily imposes and which are by definition diametrically opposed to the legalist, pacifist and collaborationist methods of reformism. It has abandoned the political and organizational independence of the proletariat which alone can enable proletarians to «act as a class in their struggle against the centralized power of the possessing classes». It has abandoned proletarian internationalism in favor of bourgeois nationalism and, worse still, even in favor of localism. All this can have no other effect than to leave you disarmed, disunited and without leadership even in the simple struggle of daily resistance against capital. All this ties your hands not only with respect to the revolutionary assault TOMORROW but even in the elementary defensive struggle for bread and work TODAY.

Mayday 1979. The battle long ago in Chicago, as well as the century and a half of proletarian struggle throughout the world which has left our movement countless anonymous martyrs, can be commemorated in only one way:

- THROUGH TAKING UP THE INDEPENDENT CLASS STRUGGLE !
- FOR THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION !
- FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT !
- FOR COMMUNISM !

Socialism Is International and Internationalist or It Is Not Socialism

It is not by chance, nor is it a paradox, that the cruel reality of a new war has swept over the same Indo-Chinese peninsula which for so many years was the theater of great and tragic events which the proletarians and the exploited masses all over the world followed with sympathy and solidarity. It is not an undecipherable mystery that the cannon fodder used by both sides on the two fronts of this war has been the very peoples who were the heroes of the victory over the American giant in Vietnam and Cambodia and the very people who, fifty years ago in China, were the first to raise in Asia the banner of the struggle against the old ruling classes in the pay of imperialism.

The peoples of Indochina, and before them, those of China, did in fact break the chains of colonialism and throw off the yoke of a centuries old exploitation; and by doing so they undoubtedly shook up the international established order. However, they *have not* «built socialism» as they, along with the proletarians of the entire world, have been led to believe. What has been built are nation states which serve as the basis for the development and expansion of national capitalisms, hence the inevitable rise of national antagonisms, market competition and border disputes.

The pretended «communist» parties of these nations are the heirs of the theory of «socialism in one country», presented by Moscow and Peking as being either the original discovery of Stalin or Mao, or as the updated, perfected version of the Marxist doctrine. They have falsely labeled as «socialism» what actually is the forced industrialization of national economies. This process was historically necessary for the development of a modern proletariat and for the generalized explosion of the class struggle in this immense area of the world. And as such this process has to be welcomed and favoured. But it can never go beyond the narrow limits which are historically inherent in bourgeois society and the bourgeois system of production. Once the basis for capitalist development has been established these parties reveal their true nature. They are not working for the brotherhood of peoples in this area of Asia or pooling their resources to advance towards socialism; neither are they offering their best energies to further the cause of the international proletarian revolution. Instead, these parties are the instruments of young and greedy bourgeoisies anxious to carve out a place for themselves in the world. They are intent on obtaining this on the backs of others, contending with one another at gunpoint for strategic positions, for raw materials and even for the smallest plot of fertile land, as is customary among bourgeoisies.

The tragic events in China, Vietnam and Cambodia, as well as in Russia before, are part of the great tragedy which has befallen the working class throughout the world. It is the tragedy of proletarians—

the class which, in the words of the *Manifesto*, «has no country»—who have been made to rebuild «their» country after each world war and to fight against each other to defend its «sacred» borders. It is the tragedy of proletarians—those who have «nothing to lose» in the violent overthrow of every existing social order but their chains—who have been «educated» to cherish the chains of wage labor as a blessing, and along with this, the market and money, the firm which exploits them, the nation for which they periodically shed their blood, and the democratic hypocrisy that calls them «equals» and «brothers» of their exploiters. They have even been led to mistake these infamous chains for «socialist» achievements. It is the tragedy of proletarians who have had torn from their hearts and minds even the memory that revolutionary socialism can only be, as Marx said, «*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*».

Today, the very facts confirm the Marxist theory and sweep away the castle of lies built by Stalinism and Maoism. They tear away the mask of «national socialisms» and reveal the ferocious jaw of bourgeois «civilization», its ignoble mercantile «values», its miserable self interests, the dog eat dog world it thrives in, and the race among individuals, classes and peoples to dominate one another: in other words, they show the monstrous face of permanent war.

In the East as in the West, in Asia as in Europe, Africa, or America, in the world which dares to call itself «socialist», the capitalist mode of production is accumulating the explosive potential for a Third World War. The always more frequent local wars are but the first warning signs of this. And as could be expected, both sides of the developing front are underway to present this future war as the latest *crusade* for a better, more just and, finally, more peaceful world.

There is only one force which can stop the race towards this abyss: the class struggle. This struggle does not stop in front of any «national» interest, but defends exclusively the interests of all the exploited. It knows no factory, trade, or national divisions. In peacetime it refuses to subordinate itself to the needs of a country which it does not recognize as its own; and, with even greater reason, it refuses all social truce in wartime. It opposes the hysterical cry of «National Unity» with its resolute call for «Revolutionary Defeatism».

Socialism is international, or it is plainly capitalism.

The proletariat is revolutionary and internationalist, or it is nothing.

For the independent class struggle!

For the world communist revolution!

For the proletarian dictatorship!

For communism!

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Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a General Revival of the Class Struggle

We base our critique of individual terrorism on Marxism, which recognizes class violence as the midwife of history and provides the only path and the only force capable of linking it with the sporadic episodes of proletarian violence against bourgeois oppression. This critique must first show the material social causes of a phenomenon which regularly appears in the history of the struggle between classes; it must then analyse its characteristic ideology, its basic features and its different historical forms. This analysis must be based on the only possible perspective, that of the proletarian class struggle—a struggle which in a future objective situation inevitably must end in an open war. In this war the party provides the necessary organization, orientation and discipline of the proletarian forces. Although this ultimate confrontation between classes is certainly some distance away, it is now that we must begin to prepare for it, politically as well as materially.

To supplement the numerous articles already published in our press (1), we will begin here by referring back to the classical works of the Marxist movement.

*
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«A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not on social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crises the class struggle ripens into a direct civil war [...]. Any moral condemnation of civil war would be absolutely impermissible from the standpoint of Marxism» (2).

In these lines Lenin condenses the fundamental *principles* which must guide Marxists in their analysis of the different immediate

(1) See in particular, in English, «Terrorism and Communism: On the Events in Germany», in issue no. 4 of this review. In French see our pamphlet *Violence, terrorisme et lutte de classe*, which is a collection of articles from our press and leaflets distributed by the party; also see the articles «L'idéologie des Brigades Rouges» and «Critique du romantisme terroriste» in nos. 264 and 265 of *Le Proletaire*, our French language newspaper.

(2) *Guerrilla Warfare* (1906), *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 219-220. The long quote we use a little further on is found on pp. 213-214.