

# communist program

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ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

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## CONTENTS

- The Era of Wars and Revolutions ..... 1
- Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a  
General Resurgence of the Class Struggle ... 9

### FUNDAMENTAL THESES OF THE PARTY

- Introduction ..... 34
- Fundamental Theses of the Party ..... 38

- The Abolition of Wage Labour Means  
the Abolition of Production for the  
Sake of Production ..... 62
- Nicaragua: The Sorry Path of Sandinism .. 67

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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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## The Era of Wars and Revolutions

The outbreak of the war in 1914, the first full-scale war of a capitalist world that had entered its highest stage, imperialism, ushered in *the era of wars and revolutions*.

While petty-bourgeois pacifists only saw war as the ultimate horror, communists pointed out that this brutal explosion of the contradictions of capitalism also implied the maturation of the objective conditions of revolution. The imperialist stage is characterized precisely by the aggravation of the contradictions of capitalism and of all the social antagonisms they give rise to, which can only be resolved by means of violence, in a war between bourgeois States or in the war between classes — revolution.

This does not mean that crises, wars and revolutions occur *daily*. Certain texts from the period 1914-1924 would seem to imply this, but these were propaganda texts and not scientific studies. For agitational purposes, it was perfectly legitimate, in the midst of war, to talk of the «disintegration» of capitalist society, of the «final» crisis of capitalism, of struggles «decisive» for the survival of humanity, but these formulas should not be taken *literally*. Even at the stage in which its contradictions manifest themselves most brutally, capitalist development has a cyclical and not a linear movement. A period during which contradictions and antagonisms are accumulated along with capital leads to a violent explosion. If the proletariat does not have the strength to take advantage of the general crisis in order to win a decisive victory, the bourgeoisie will resolve it *in its own way*, that is, as the *Manifesto* states: «*On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones*», and thus by clearing the way for a new period of accumulation of capital, and at the same time, of contradictions and antagonisms, on an even larger scale.

Moreover, these periods of accumulation by no means have a «peaceful» character — the overt violence merely remains *localised* and does not break out in *general* conflict. Since the end of the second imperialist war, there virtually has not been a *single day* of peace in the world. But a conflict bringing the big imperialisms into direct confrontation and embracing all the other countries was impossible, because the material conditions for it were not ripe.

And they are still not ripe even today. Nevertheless they have begun to mature. In a study of the evolution of inter-imperialist relations published last year (1), we analyzed the interplay of factors which demonstrate the capitalist world has now come out of the post-war period and entered a new *pre-war* period. In particular we pointed out the material interests which impel the two super-powers into confrontations, especially in the vast region lying between the Middle East and the Sea of Oman, between the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf, a region which today constitutes a «zone of vital interest» for all the imperialist powers. The world economic crisis and the «oil crisis» have only exacerbated these *material* causes, rendering more meaningless than ever the vain search for the «guilty» party, for the «aggressor», for the «expansionist».

In any case, this question is stupid and hypocritical, for the capitalist mode of production admits neither obstacle nor frontier, is fated to unlimited expansion, tends toward the internationalisation of its particular relations of production and exchange, in short, it is *intrinsically aggressive*. But this search has reached the height of absurdity in the particular conditions of the second post-war period, whose complex and tormented evolution the «progressive» parties and intellectual sects depict as an idealized reflection of Camelot.

With horror they evoke the period of the «cold war» when the two great capitalist concentrations and their monstrous politico-military machines faced each other across the «iron curtain», keeping watch over their respective flocks of satellites; each proclaiming itself a lover of peace and accusing the other of war-mongering; each feeling itself actually or potentially under attack and thus justified and even obliged to *defend itself by counter-attacking* without formally becoming the aggressor. With nostalgia they evoke the period of «detente», that era of eternal peace so tragically interrupted by the rekindling of «warlike instincts» (in the East or West, according to one's ideological leaning) which should be restored in spite of whoever disturbed it. They would do better to ask themselves — but obviously they are by nature incapable of this — whether the precarious equilibrium of the immediate post-war period, whose rupture was *inevitable*, was not pregnant with the progressive unleashing of economic, commercial, financial, diplomatic and military antagonisms which would intensify until they reached the point of a general explosion.

For capitalism tends to tear down all «curtains» whether they are made of lace or iron. Its *normal* condition of existence is the domination of the *unobstructed and unfettered* exchange of commodities and capitals including that particular commodity, Stalin's most precious capital, human beings. After all, is this not what is called peaceful coexistence? But it is *precisely* this normal condition which *necessarily* makes each capitalist, each capitalist «empire» into an *aggressor*, an objective centre of *expansion*, a *god of war* who wages commercial, financial, diplomatic and military war. It is *precisely* this normal condition which obliges each capital to «defend» its «vital

(1) See *Communist Program* no. 5, June 1979.

interest» and *consequently* — even if it did not always tend to enlarge its possessions — to attack and to «aggress» against its neighbours.

A list of the acts of reciprocal intervention and aggression between America and Russia since 1945 is of no use if one is able to see through *the only* really solid curtain of capitalist society, the smoke-screen of propaganda which justifies and glorifies the imperialist order. Let no one be fooled by those who claim that only the violation of a state's borders by an armoured division, a squadron of bombers, or a flotilla of battleships constitutes an act of war, whereas flooding an economically weaker area with commodities does not. These simple minds cannot recognize interference in another state's affairs unless in the form of a brutal *diktat* of the general leading his army. They pretend not to see it in the polite and civilized *diktat* of the financier leading his team of experts, whose power to dispense or withhold humanitarian «aid», to starve those who escaped the bombing, and thus to break the adversary, the competitor, the hesitant or the neutral country, is as effective as the threat of military occupation.

We did not need computer technology to expose the lie which attributes responsibility for the massacres in the two past imperialist wars, and in the one which is gently smouldering, to whoever first takes the initiative to violate a border. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that it is *always* the weakest, the most pressured, the most «aggressed against» imperialism which opens the hostilities. The other, «innocent» by definition, can pick and choose from a variety of other methods to achieve its ends, allowing the violence to remain *hidden* and *silent* behind the mask of «detente» and «peace», without being *obliged* to resort to open and strident force.

For many decades, America has enjoyed an uncontested supremacy on the planet thanks to the crushing *force* of its productive capacity, the force of its capitals which have reproduced themselves and accumulated at a dizzying pace, the force of its mountains of commodities and know-how. Is this war? Certainly! Aggression? Obviously! Interference? Of course! Has America practised defense of its «sacred values», that is, its perspectives for expansion? Undoubtedly! Is not the first and fundamental principle of the small businessman and capitalist — the more so of the big capitalist — *mors tua, vita mea* or in good English, «Perish, so that I may live»?

Russia, whose economy is lagging far behind, strives to catch up with the USA and to resist the pressure exerted on its productive apparatus by the capitals, commodities and technology of the West. It can do this solely by bringing into play the only power it possesses which is truly capable of competing with its American counterpart, its military strength. In fact, in this domain its economic handicap is in part offset by its proximity to the future battlefields and regions which already form the stakes of the diplomatic struggle. In other respects, the Chinese «defection» confronts the USSR with the growing threat of a war on two fronts, and the energy crisis preoccupies it as much as it does the USA. For all these reasons Moscow «accepted the invitation» of the «progressive forces» of Afghanistan, and took advantage of a favourable position, at least in the short term, in order to commit the umpteenth «violation of national sovereignty» and to endanger

«world peace» for the umpteenth time. Aggression? Obviously! Justified by concerns of self-defense? Of course, just as was the American financial and material support to the Cuban tyrant Batista, to the butcher Pinochet, to the Shah of Iran and so many others.

There is no bourgeois aggressor which is not able to *pass itself off* as the victim; there is no bourgeois victim of aggression which is *not in fact* an aggressor. There is no bourgeois war which is not fought in the name of peace, and peace may actually result *for a short while*; there is no bourgeois peace which does not inexorably prepare another war. In the present situation, the giants are face to face in a region which is vital for all imperialisms, because in addition to being *the source and the shipping lane* for oil, it also forms the bridge between two great continental areas, rich in essential raw materials and targets for enormous investments and exploitation. This fact would suffice to show that it is *material* factors which determine a planet-wide competition where all have their «rights» to affirm and defend, against one another, a competition which bears down on the backs of the proletariat and the oppressed and exploited masses. Of course, each imperialism drapes its sordid interests in the banner of Right, Morality, Civilization or Religion, of all the Values which glut the coffers of bourgeois chancelleries.

It is these same material interests which, during the last year, have forced the USSR and its satellites to accelerate their evolution. On one hand, they have had to lower the curtain on the comedy of «socialism achieved within national boundaries» and even on «popular democracy» presented as its prelude. It is significant that in the space of a few months, the «communist» parties of the entire world had to first praise, then damn two Afghan governments, and that today (after similar embarrassments over Budapest and Warsaw, Prague and Bucarest, Peking and Hanoi) they do not know what to say about the third. On the other hand, Russia no longer limits itself to intervening in the European popular democracies in order to «help its brother parties», or merely advancing its pawns in Asia and Africa. In the Third World countries to which not long ago it pretended to give a «disinterested» aid, it has begun to undertake aggressions of the purest colonial kind under the guise of ...philanthropic and humanitarian goals. Two myths collapse with a crash. But their ruins pave the way to a new world butchery.

In the course of the last thirty years, we have applauded the thrashings inflicted on the arrogant American super-power by the peoples and especially the toiling masses who have risen in arms in order to repel it, without allowing ourselves to be duped by the illusory nationalist or deceitful religious ideologies which have served as a banner for them. Today, we hope that the tanks of arrogant Russia will be stopped in their tracks on the steppes and dashed to pieces in the mountain ravines of Afghanistan, just as we hope that the «rapid intervention force» of 150,000 men that Carter can mobilize will be imprisoned on its own bases. We will hardly conceal our joy at any demonstration of impotence on the part of the enormous imperialist power.

But as much as these defeats may weaken our enemy, they are not

enough to break him. Only the reawakening of the proletarian class struggle in the imperialist centers of the East and the West can accomplish this. The return of the class struggle to the stage of history — a single general strike in Moscow or in Detroit, San Francisco and Chicago — threatening both the economic basis of the army and the discipline of proletarians in uniform, will have an infinitely more devastating effect on the rapacious imperialist war machines than a sandstorm in Iran or the revolt of the Afghan rebels.

This proletarian response to the blows dealt to imperialism by the oppressed peoples has yet to materialize. The proletarians of Moscow, Warsaw and Berlin have been crushed by the combined onslaught of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist counter-revolution. They are completely disarmed politically by the «socialist» mask of their bourgeois states. In the West — in the Ruhr, in Paris, London and even more so in the United States — the proletarians have been further corrupted by the crumbs from the orgy of superprofits that their imperialist masters draw from the oppression and exploitation of the whole world. But the shocks and crises of world capitalism combined with the collapse of the myth of false socialisms impel the proletariat of the imperialist bastions once again to take the road of class struggle. At the very moment when the armaments race is accelerating, when the crisis is accumulating gigantic quantities of explosive materials over the whole planet, the task of preparing the only force capable of *victoriously confronting* the enormous concentration of means of production and destruction wielded by world capitalism becomes urgent. It is urgent that we prepare the international working class, the only class which holds the future of mankind in its hands, for the decisive struggle.

It is in connection with this preparation that the stupid and repugnant comedy of the «victim» and the «aggressor» must be denounced. The search for the «guilty party», the «aggressor», the «instigator of war» serves as justification *for both sides* of bourgeois propaganda, each of which is as deleterious as the other: it serves both war-mongering propaganda and pacifist propaganda.

In fact, each of the imperialisms proclaims itself «the victim of aggression» by the other, justifiably, as we have seen. It uses this as an argument to summon its proletariat to class collaboration in national defense, today against the economic, financial and diplomatic attack on the Holy Fatherland, and against the military assault which will threaten it tomorrow. But this simple «defensive will» in reality implies all forms of *war-mongering*. Petty-bourgeois Pacifism, as exemplified by certain small bourgeois States (small, but nonetheless imperialist!), dreams of saving or restoring detente, peaceful coexistence and Peace in general. It spends its time hunting for whoever troubles this blissful state of affairs, and claims that it is able to prevent war by denouncing the aggressor before Universal Conscience. In fact, when its efforts have failed and war breaks out, it has no difficulty finding the vile party who is responsible for it (the other side!...) and just like the others, it too summons the proletariat to participate in the war against Evil.

For the past half-century, thanks to the general defeat of the proletariat and the rejuvenation of capital by the second imperialist butchery, the era of wars and revolutions has passed through a *dormant* phase.

Today it is once again entering an *eruptive* phase. World capitalist society is on its way to a new general explosion of the contradictions and antagonisms that it reproduces on an increasing scale. Far from trembling with fear before this explosion, far from dreaming of Peace, a deceitful and debilitating mirage, the proletariat must prepare itself to confront it victoriously.

To the imperialist war, the proletariat can only oppose *its class war*. To the preparations for the imperialist war, it must immediately counterpose *its own revolutionary preparation*. Beginning today, it must shout out the old cry of class war: «The enemy is in our own country!» From now on, it must prepare itself politically and materially for *revolutionary defeatism*, and if it does not succeed in preventing the outbreak of a new imperialist war, it must prepare itself to transform it into a *civil war* for the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the imposition of its own dictatorship.

FOR PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION!

FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT!

FOR A WORLD COMMUNIST SOCIETY!

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## Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a General Resurgence of the Class Struggle

In the first part of this article (I) we pointed out the inadequacy of certain criticisms directed at individualist terrorism, and we referred to Lenin's polemic against the nihilists and populists in order to place this question in its proper perspective. In his long and determined struggle for the formation of the class party, Lenin had to combat both economist spontaneism and the voluntarism of the theoreticians and practitioners of violence and terror divorced from the *general class struggle*. Then we came to the eve of the 1905 Revolution in Russia. In such a context mass violence and terror, as a response to the needs of the revolution, assume a very precise meaning as Marxist theory has indicated from its origin.

### The «Dress Rehearsal» of 1905

It is no wonder that Lenin called the Russian Revolution of 1905 the «dress rehearsal» for the 1917 revolution. In reality it was a dress rehearsal for the proletariat, which in the course of the year of upheavals experimented with *all* the possible forms of struggle: from demonstrations to street-fighting, from isolated and local strikes to general strikes, from urban and rural revolts to attempts at insurrection, from audacious raids on prisons and arsenals to mutinies in the army and, especially, in the navy, from immediate organizations to the formation of the first Soviets of Workers' Delegates. It was also a dress rehearsal for the party: as the struggle dramatically unfolded the party sharpened its theoretical, programmatic and tactical weapons, placing the problem of the armed insurrection (and the «art of insurrection») on the order of the day, with all that this implied not only in the realization of insurrection but also in the *preparation* for it. And if the party was unable to test these weapons in the heat of events, it was able to transmit them as an intangible bequest to Red October in 1917.

Violence and terror, including that exercised by «individuals and small groups», lost their voluntarist, idealist, and «Blanquist» nature in the sequence of revolutionary events. It fell to the Bolsheviks to defend violence and terror *in this precise context*, opposing not only the avowed opportunists but also the revolutionaries in words, i.e. the Mensheviks and Plekhanov himself.

The revolution had barely broken out when, at the Third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party convened at London from 17 April to 10 May 1905, (12 to 25 April by the old calendar),

(1) See *Communist Program* no. 5. On this subject see also «Terrorism and Communism: on the Events in Germany» in *Communist Program* no. 4.

Lenin presented a resolution on «The Attitude of the R.S.D.L.P. Towards the Armed Uprising». Even though he later agreed to attenuate certain formulations and render others more precise, we reproduce it here:

«1. Whereas the proletariat, being, by virtue of its position, the foremost and most consistent revolutionary class, is therefore called upon to play the role of leader and guide of the general democratic revolutionary movement in Russia;

«2. Whereas only the performance of this role during the revolution will ensure the proletariat the most advantageous position in the ensuing struggle for socialism against the propertied classes of the bourgeois-democratic Russia about to be born; and

«3. Whereas the proletariat can perform this role only if it is organised under the banner of Social-Democracy into an independent political force and if it acts in strikes and demonstrations with the fullest possible unity; «Therefore, the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. resolves that the task of organising the forces of the proletariat for direct struggle against the autocracy by means of mass political strikes and the armed uprising, and of setting up for this purpose an apparatus for information and leadership, is one of the chief tasks of the Party at the present revolutionary moment; for which reason the Congress instructs both the C.C. and the local committees and leagues to start preparing the political mass strike as well as the organisation of special groups for the obtainment and distribution of arms, for the elaboration of a plan of the armed uprising and the direct leadership of the rising. The fulfilment of this task can and should proceed in such a way as will not only not in the least prejudice the general work of awakening the class-consciousness of the proletariat, but, on the contrary, will render that work more effective and successful» (2).

It is the revolution itself that «teaches the masses of the people». For the party, the problem is to know if on its part it will be able to «teach the revolution anything» (3). As long as the workers' movement has existed the party has had the double task of arming the proletariat «with a sense of the burning necessity to arm» for its objective of seizing power, and of bringing «home to those who are conscious of it the need for organization and planned action, the need for considering the whole political situation». In a «normal» situation, the party tempers the generous but impotent will «to mete out summary justice to the bourgeoisie and its servitors» and counterposes to it the strength «of organization and discipline, the force of consciousness, the consciousness that individual acts of assassination are absurd, that the hour for the serious revolutionary struggle of the people has not yet struck, that the political situation is not ripe for it». Under such circumstances the Party will never «bid the people arm, but... will always make it [its] duty... to arm them with a sense of the burning necessity to arm and attack the enemy». But in a revolutionary situation such as 1905, the same party «following the initiative of the revolutionary workers [has] now issued the slogan, TO ARMS!» (4).

(2) Draft Resolution on the Attitude of the RSDLP Towards the Armed Uprising, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 68. Whereas today the Social Democratic parties are merely degenerated reformists, we must remind that at Lenin's time the term Social-Democracy was used to denote the Marxist Party.

(3) Preface to *Two Tactics of the Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905), *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 18.

(4) «Should We Organize the Revolution», Febr. 21, 1905, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 172

This passage shows clearly the position of revolutionary Marxists. It is opposed to that of the «windbags» who *in all circumstances* avoid (or have renounced once and for all) propagating the necessity of *preparing* for this armed insurrection, without which the conquest of power and further transition to socialism are only phantasmagoria. It is also opposed to the position of the *voluntarists* who take up arms or call the proletarians to arms at any moment without paying serious attention to the real relationship of forces. If the first are contemptible because they have in reality abandoned the revolutionary perspective, the second are an ineffective and disorganizing factor because they presume to substitute themselves for the force of things, *which is also the force of the class and the revolutionary party*. Moreover, in the course of insurrectionary movements, the Marxist position is opposed as much to those who confuse insurrection with the struggle of *certain individuals against other individuals*, as to those who in effect advocate the necessity of insurrection, but refuse to *organize* it in the living heart of the general class struggle because, even if they won't admit it, «they are terrorized by the idea that it is up to them to realize it».

With this position irrevocably asserted, Lenin follows the infinitely varied and complex developments of the revolutionary struggle with an anxious and ardent clarity, recording its events and showing Marxist militants how to assume a «guiding and leading role» *in all domains*, including (but not only) that of military preparation. Let us cite a few fragments of his remarks and instructions. In August 1905 he wrote:

«However much you may turn up your noses, gentlemen, at the question of night attacks and similar purely tactical military questions, however much you may pull wry faces about the 'plan' of assigning secretaries of organisations, or their members in general, to stand on duty to provide for any military exigency — life goes its own way, revolution teaches, taking in hand and shaking up the most inveterate pedants. During civil war military questions must of *necessity* be studied down to the last detail, and the interest the workers show in these questions is a most legitimate and healthy phenomenon. Headquarters (or members of the organisations on duty) must of *necessity* be organised. The stationing of patrols and the billeting of squads are all purely military functions; they are all initial operations of a *revolutionary army* and constitute the organisation of an insurrection, the organisation of *revolutionary rule*, which matures and becomes stronger through these small preparations, through these minor clashes, testing its own strength, learning to fight, training itself for victory» (5).

It is also urgent to confront these extremely complex problems. Even in Lenin's most violent passage there is not a trace of «adventurism» or excessive haste:

«Insurrection is an important word. A call to insurrection is an extremely serious call. The more complex the social system, the better the organisation of state power, and the more perfected the military machine, the more

(5) «The Black Hundreds and the Organization of an Uprising», Aug. 29, 1905, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 203. In order to avoid giving the term «revolutionary» army a banal «technical» meaning, Lenin specifies in another passage:

«a military force, the military force of the revolutionary people (and not the people in general), consisting of 1) the armed proletariat and peasantry, 2) organised advance detachments of representatives of these classes, and 3) sections of the army that are prepared to come over to the side of the people. It is all this taken together that constitutes a *revolutionary army*» («The Latest in Iskra Tactics», Oct. 17, 1905, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 366-7).

impermissible is it to launch such a slogan without due thought. And we have stated repeatedly that the revolutionary Social-Democrats have long been preparing to launch it, *but have launched it as a direct call only when there could be no doubt whatever of the gravity, widespread and deep roots of the revolutionary movement, no doubt of matters having literally come to a head...* The slogan of insurrection is a slogan for deciding the issue by material force, *which in present-day European civilisation can only be military force. This slogan should not be put forward until the general prerequisites for revolution have matured, until the masses have definitely shown that they have been roused and are ready to act, until the external circumstances have led to an open crisis.* But once such a slogan has been issued, it would be an arrant disgrace to retreat from it, back to moral force again, to one of the conditions that prepare the ground for an uprising, to a 'possible transition', etc., etc. No, once the die is cast, all subterfuges must be done with; *it must be explained directly and openly to the masses what the practical conditions for a successful revolution are at the present time* (6).

Once again it is necessary to be able *to learn* from the revolution, and to be able *to teach* it something. It is necessary to be able to decide *emphatically* after having appraised the situation *coldly* and chosen the moment. It is necessary to precede the movement of the masses, but only after having prepared them mentally and materially for the necessity of an *irreversible* decision. It must not be pretended that the masses are sufficient in themselves, nor that the party is sufficient in itself, much less its «military arm», which certain theorizations transform into a *substitute* for the party. The revolutionary process is characterized by the volcanic eruption of social forces which force their way in a *thousand* directions, which create and recreate, abandon and then resume organizational forms in which their energies gradually seek direction and discipline. Each of them has repercussions on the others: they are all connected. They all stand or fall *together*.

In July 1906, the first revolutionary wave had receded, but all signs pointed to a vigorous resurgence. This seemed so imminent that the Bolsheviks had to openly boycott the elections to the Duma, proposed as a safety-valve for the anger of the workers and peasants. At that moment Lenin called attention to the fact that the «last word» of the mass movement in the course of the last quarter of 1905 had been the *political general strike*. He showed that this strike was certainly a *necessary* condition for the development of a situation of high social tension, but nonetheless would remain *insufficient* if it did not give rise to the insurrection. The latter was called for by the very fact that the political general strike came up against an adversary conscious that he was playing his last card: *«independently of our will, in spite of any 'directive', the acute revolutionary situation will transform the demonstration into a strike, the protest into struggle, the strike into an insurrection»*. And it is only the development of this ascending chain of events, whose links overlap one another, which will be able to pose the necessity of the conquest of power with absolute clarity for the broad masses.

At the end of 1905 we saw the Soviets of workers' delegates emerge from the strike as organs of mass struggle. But *«by force of circumstances they very quickly became the organs of the general revolutionary struggle against the government»*: they were *«irresistibly*

(6) «The Latest in Iskra Tactics», *op. cit.*, pp. 367-9 (our emphasis).

transformed... into organs of an uprising». However, if the Soviets are *«necessary for welding the masses together, for creating unity in the struggle, for handing on the party slogans (or slogans advanced by agreement between parties) of political leadership, for awakening the interest of the masses, for rousing and attracting them»*, they *«are not sufficient for organizing the immediate fighting forces, for organizing an uprising in the narrowest sense of the word»*. Even more, the very survival of the Soviets implies the existence of a *«military organization alongside the organization of Soviets, for defending the latter, for carrying out an uprising without which the Soviets or any elected representatives of the masses will remain powerless»*. The creation of these military organs obviously cannot be the work of the Party forces alone: the organization of the masses *«into light, mobile, small fighting units will, when things begin to move, render a very great service in regard to procuring arms»* (7).

This still does not suffice. The Moscow insurrection in December 1905 proved Plekhanov wrong when he cried that *«arms must not be taken up»*; the events made it very clear that it was necessary on the contrary to take up arms *«in a more resolute, more energetic manner and in a more aggressive spirit»*, and to apply Marx's instructions that *«insurrection is an art, and that the principal rule of this art is the waging of a desperately bold and irrevocably determined offensive»*. The insurrection also showed that there can be no question of a serious struggle *«unless the revolution assumes a mass character and affects the troops»*. It showed that this fight to «win over» the troops will not be won *«at one stroke»*, but victory will come as a result of a long, tenacious, *«bold, resourceful and aggressive»* struggle, which will *«also be a physical struggle»* (8) at the moment of the insurrection.

Finally, and reciprocally, the armed insurrection, the culminating point of the *general mass revolutionary struggle*, is inconceivable without the activity of *«mobile and exceedingly small units, units of ten, three or even two persons»*. This activity is the very meaning of the *«tactics of guerrilla warfare»*, and it is rendered at once *possible* and *necessary* by developments in modern military technology, both as a prelude and as a *constituent part* of the insurrection as such:

*«The guerrilla warfare and mass terror that have been taking place throughout Russia practically without a break since December, will undoubtedly help the masses to learn the correct tactics of an uprising. Social-Democracy must recognise this mass terror and incorporate it into its tactics, organising and controlling it of course, subordinating it to the interests and conditions of the working-class movement and the general revolutionary struggle, while eliminating and ruthlessly lopping off the 'hooligan' perversion of this guerrilla warfare which was so splendidly and ruthlessly dealt with by our Moscow comrades during the uprising and by the Letts during the days of the famous Lettish republics»* (9).

It is necessary to bear in mind that the insurrection can only be reached at the *apogee* of a long series of demonstrations and strikes,

(7) «The Dissolution of the Duma and the Tasks of the Proletariat», July, 1906, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 124-6.

(8) «Lessons of the Moscow Uprising», Aug. 29, 1906, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 174-6.

(9) *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7. We have italicized the sentences where Lenin gives the keystone of the Marxist view of the use of violence and terror in the revolutionary struggle.



both economic and political; that the army can be won over only at the *apogee* of an effort by the proletariat to arm and rearm itself; that the defense detachments for the Soviets can only really be organized at the apogee of the formation and generalization of the Soviets and so on. Everything holds together, everything converges in the final act of insurrection. This is the immense perspective which Lenin adopts in the draft *Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, and which has nothing in common with the myopic and narrow-minded vision of individualist and voluntarist terrorism. After a new *Resolution on the Armed Insurrection* which summarizes the points we just evoked, he proposed the famous resolution on *Fighting Guerrilla Operations*, completely distorted by those who pretend to refer to it today. It reads:

«Whereas:

«(1) scarcely anywhere in Russia since the December uprising has there been a complete cessation of hostilities, which the revolutionary people are now conducting in the form of sporadic guerrilla attacks upon the enemy; «(2) these guerrilla operations, which are inevitable when two hostile armed forces face each other, and when repression by the temporarily triumphant military is rampant, serve to disorganise the enemy's forces and pave the way for *future open and mass armed operations*;

«(3) such operations are also necessary to enable our fighting squads to *acquire fighting experience and military training*, for in many places during the December uprising they proved to be unprepared for their new tasks; «We are of the opinion, and propose that the Congress should agree:

«(1) that the Party must regard the fighting guerrilla operations of the squads affiliated to or associated with it as being, *in principle, permissible and advisable in the present period*;

«(2) that the character of these fighting guerrilla operations must be adjusted to the task of *training leaders of the masses of workers at a time of insurrection, and of acquiring experience in conducting offensive and surprise military operations*;

«(3) that the paramount immediate object of these operations is to destroy the government, police and military machinery, and to wage a relentless struggle against the active Black-Hundred organisations which are using violence against the population and intimidating it;

«(4) that fighting operations are also permissible for the purpose of seizing funds belonging to the enemy, i.e., the autocratic government, to meet the needs of insurrection, particular care being taken that the interests of the people are infringed as little as possible;

«(5) that fighting guerrilla operations *must be conducted under the control of the Party and, furthermore, in such a way as to prevent the forces of the proletariat from being frittered away and to ensure that the state of the working-class movement and the mood of the broad masses of the given locality are taken into account*» (10).

It is the *totality* of these considerations (which anarchist or Blanquist voluntarism and romanticism, with all their individualism, ignore systematically) which give «guerrilla action» and «mass terrorism» a role which cannot be separated from the insurrectional struggle for the seizure of power. These assertions bring us back to our point of departure, to the quotations from Lenin's *Guerrilla Warfare*, and our text *Party and Class Action* recalled in Part I of this article. After having recapitulated, on the level of the theoretical struggle as well as practical

(10) The text, published on March 29, 1906, is to be found in the *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 153-4 (our emphasis).

instructions, the history of Bolshevism from its birth until the threshold of the struggle for power in the revolution of 1905 — the forebearer of the 1917 revolution —, we can give our critical evaluation not only of individualist terrorism in general but also of its contemporary versions.

## The Marxist Method and the Question of Terrorism

If we have taken this indirect route, it has been in order to clarify the attitude of Marxism towards terrorism, an attitude which, as Trotsky remarked concerning the role of conspiracy in the revolutionary process, is contradictory in appearance only: the principled criticism of individual and romantic terrorism goes hand in hand with the advocacy of violence and terror in the framework of the *general working class strategy of the conquest of power*. The avalanche of self-seeking falsifications by the most varied political groups, in their reaction to the acts of the Red Army Faction (Germany) or the Red Brigades (Italy), can only be combatted on this basis.

Marxism rejects all explanations of the social phenomenon of terrorism which do not repose on a materialist analysis, and whose material basis Marxists must in turn explain. If it is admitted that individualist terrorism is purely and simply the product of a certain *ideology*, it would be necessary to seek the *objective roots* of this ideology: all ideologies are reflections of material realities. If it is admitted that individualist terrorism is the *systematic* result of «underground dealings» by the «other side», it would be necessary to explain why the «provocation» finds such favourable soil. If it is admitted that terrorism is (in general, and not only in a few rare pathological cases) a «political variant» of current criminality, it would still be necessary to explain both the eminently social phenomenon of criminality, as well as the no less social phenomenon of its political «transfiguration».

Marxism, on its part, connects the phenomenon of individual terrorism to a quite precise *historical* and *social* context — failing this it would not have the right to call itself a *science*. With all due deference to those who pretend to be Marxists even while they advance or propose as Marxist such «explanations» as above, we must state that it is precisely in this manner that Marxism has always proceeded in order to study terrorist actions as well as terrorist «theories».

In most cases Marxism has found the roots of terrorism in a violent internal crisis of the ruling class itself, a crisis which compels even the very sons and daughters of the established order to revolt, including those of the highest strata, but particularly those of lower strata, more directly hit or threatened by the developing or approaching social tremor: the intellectuals, students, and more generally, once capitalism has reached a certain stage or is in the process of developing, the urban petty-bourgeoisie. More rarely, and secondarily, it has found these roots in an elementary and spontaneous reaction (the first secret Societies, for example) of the nascent working class against the upheaval of all traditional living and working conditions caused by the primitive accumulation of capital and the development of big industry. In the particular case of the Red Brigades in Italy, the umbilical cord connecting them to the university movement, particularly 1968, that is

to a petty-bourgeois minded social matrix, is obvious.

To the extent that it knows and understands the roots of the phenomenon, Marxism alone is able to *explain it historically* even though it proceeds to its *theoretical demolition*. It alone is able to recognize the *symptomatic value* of events that must take place not only *independently* of the will, decisions, and conscious objectives of the actors who occupy the foreground of the social stage, but against their will, decisions, and conscious objectives. And for Marxism, the *positive* or *negative* value to attribute to these events depends on the *material data of the historical situation*, never on abstract considerations and much less upon *moral judgements!* Obviously the idealists can not understand such a viewpoint.

Let us take a few historical examples of the Marxist critique. In 1847, Engels, with Marx, thrashed Heizen's «tyrannicide», denouncing the vain pretension to overthrow the existing political and social relations by eliminating the big or small «personage», who in reality is not the *cause*, but the *product* of these relations. And in 1878-9 the same Engels greeted the signs of an impending revolution in Russia, which, to be sure, would «*start from above, from within an impoverished and irreverent nobility*» but which, once it had been set in motion, «*would draw the peasants with it*» and thus produce scenes «*which would make 1793 pale*»; the same Engels welcomed «*the powerful conspiracy in the army right up to the imperial court*»; and the same Engels spoke of «*political assassination*» as the «*only means remaining to intelligent, worthy, and proud men to defend themselves against the agents of an inhuman despotism*» (11).

Moreover, while he conducted a merciless criticism from 1875 to 1894 of the populist ideology in Russia and of its Blanquist origins in order to lay the theoretical-programmatic foundations of the organ of the nascent proletariat, the communist party, again, it was Engels who in 1885 wrote in regard to the powder keg which the Czarist empire had become:

«This is one of the exceptional cases where it is possible for a handful of people to *make* a revolution, i.e., with one little push to cause a whole system, which (to use a metaphor of Plekhanov's) is in more than labile equilibrium, to come crashing down, and thus by an action in itself insignificant to release explosive forces that afterwards become uncontrollable. Well now, if ever Blanquism — the fantastic idea of overturning an entire society by the action of a small conspiracy — had a certain *raison d'être*, that is certainly so now in Petersburg. Once the spark has been put to the powder, once the forces have been released and national energy has been transformed from potential into kinetic (another favourite image of Plekhanov's and a very good one) — the people who laid the spark to the mine will be swept away by the explosion, which will be a thousand times as strong as they themselves and which will seek its vent where it can, as the economic forces and resistances determine» (12).

Conversely, Marx condemned the voluntarist dreams of Schapper and Willich in the *negative* condition after 1850 («immediate seizure of

(11) In *La Plebe* of Jan, 22, 1878 and March 21, 1879. This passage is translated from the Italian language collection of Marx's and Engel's writings entitled *India, Cina, Russia* (Milan, 1965), pp. 232-3.

(12) Engels to Vera Zasulich. April 23, 1885. in Marx-Engels. *Selected Correspondence*.

power, or else go home to bed»), dreams in which he did not even see the smallest sign of a favourable situation. In the same way Engels condemned the dreams with which the Blanquist communards in their London refuge indulged themselves at the height of the reflux which followed the crushing of the Paris Commune.

But at the same time Marx and Engels *explained* these dreams from a materialist point of view, from the desperate situation of a working class reduced to impotence and deprived even of the «right of free speech, press and association» after the terrible defeats of 1848-49 in Germany and 1871 in France. And as a result of that generous but powerless will (for the Blanquists did not understand that the working class would only be able to escape from this situation «*in 15, 20 or 50 years*», and then only *on the condition* that they work to build tomorrow's proletarian party), they sought to escape the situation immediately by means of a voluntarist act.

In all these cases, an understanding of the terrorist phenomenon — as an act or as a theory — is the necessary condition for surpassing it by means of a *classist and materialist vision* of the revolutionary process and the role played in this process by the party. This understanding is all the more necessary as romantic terrorism finds not only an open field of action but almost a justification in the *absence* or the *momentary eclipse* of the only historical force capable of polarizing the «explosive energies» which lie dormant within society (whether it be the case of pushing the bourgeois democratic revolution to its extreme consequences in a double revolution or of realizing the proletarian and communist revolution), that is to say, the *proletariat* acting as a *class*.

Next it is necessary to emphasize that the severe judgement of Marxists does not apply to terrorism *in general* but to the *specific* form given to it by those who, following Marx's concise formula *a propos* of Schapper and Willich, hold an «idealist rather than materialistic [point of view]», for whom «*revolutions are not the product of the realities of the situation but the result of a mere effort of will*» (13). What separates us from them is not the question of whether or not violence and terror must be used, but the fact that we have a different and even *opposite* conception of the revolutionary process, of the class struggle and class war. In our conception the terrorist or exemplary act, the audacious attack, implemented even by «individuals or groups» if not by the mass in upheaval, led and preferably organized by the party, find their natural place and their positive function — just as does «conspiracy» which is a *necessary* aspect of the insurrection. — because all these are inserted into an *historical cycle* which cannot be reduced to the proportions of a... putsch.

The fundamental principle of the Marxist conception is that the collision of classes is not resolved on the terrain of law but on that of force, a force whose highest manifestation is revolutionary, authoritarian and centralized violence which strikes the capitalist state and which after the conquest of power is transformed into another form of systematic and planned violence, the proletarian class dictatorship. This is

(13) Marx, «Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne» (1853), In Marx-Engels, *The Cologne Communist Trial*, (London, 1971), p. 62.

the meaning of the famous words in *Capital*, «*violence, the midwife of the old society pregnant with a new*» — and those pacifist academicians who would claim that Marx and Engels did not intend for these words to have their obvious implications and who maintain that the advocacy of violence instead was an invention by Lenin (who is placed in the same sack as Stalin) simply propagate a ridiculous and contemptible lie.

To be sure, in London after 1850 Marx and Engels turned their backs on the voluntarist revolutionaries preoccupied with conceptualizing «*provisional governments of the future*» whereas «*a new unprecedented period of industrial prosperity had set in*» and the foundation of social conditions was «*so secure and... so bourgeois*» (14). But in the fire of the revolutionary battles of the preceding years, inspired by the needs of the struggle, and not by abstract reflexion or a «free choice», it was Marx, whom the bourgeoisie called the *red-terror doctor*, who wrote: «*in order to abbreviate, simplify and concentrate the agony of the old society and the bloody sufferings of the birth of the new, there exists only one means — revolutionary terrorism!*» For if the proletariat has none of the «cannibalism» of the bourgeois counter-revolution, it also disdains the hypocrisy with which the latter hides the ferocity of its reprisals. «*We have no compassion and we ask no compassion from you*», said Marx to the Prussian police who prohibited the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, «*when our turn comes, we shall not make excuses for the terror*» (15).

In 1850 Marx and Engels broke their organizational ties in the Communist League with Schapper and Willich, those men — nonetheless admired personally — who «*replace revolutionary development with the revolutionary phrase*»; they devoted themselves to preparing the «*future party of opposition*», the proletarian class party, for a future which they knew to be quite distant, and to defending «*rigorously independent positions*». But in March of the same year in the famous *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League*, they gave this party the imperative directive that «*the whole proletariat must be armed at once with muskets, rifles, cannon, and ammunition*», knowing well that «*yesterday's allies*» are today's and even more so tomorrow's enemies. They proclaimed that «*under no pretext should arms and ammunition be surrendered; any attempt to disarm the workers must be frustrated, by force if necessary*». In short they stated that «*the workers must be armed and organized*» (16). The same year, in *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Germany*, Engels fixed the imperative tactical guidelines of «*insurrection as an art*», opposed to the idea of an insurrection abandoned to its own spontaneity, deprived of cen-

(14) Engels, «A few words on the History of the Communist League» (1885), in Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, (London, 1942), pp. 23-4.

(15) Marx, «Victory of the Counter-Revolution in Vienna», *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, no. 136, Nov. 1848, and «Suppression of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung», no. 301, May 19, 1849, in Marx-Engels, *Articles from the Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 1848-49, (Moscow, 1972), pp. 149 and 254.

(16) Marx-Engels, *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* (March 1850), in Karl Marx, *Political Writings*, Vol. 1: *The Revolution of 1848*, p. 326.

tralization and thus of effectiveness, guidelines which necessitate acting «*with the greatest determination and on the offensive*» (17).

Indeed in 1874 Marxists condemned mercilessly the voluntarism that reigned among the exiled Blanquists. But in the *Class Struggles in France* (1850) Marx pointed to Blanqui as the man who justly personified, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie — and this is the finest homage it could render him — the terrifying spectre «*of the declaration of the revolution in permanence and of the class dictatorship of the proletariat*» during the tumultuous days of 1848. Again in 1861, Marx exalts him as «*the head and heart of the proletarian party in France*» (18) because he did not hesitate to confront the enemy on its own ground, that of force, and thus also of violence.

In 1871, eyes fixed on the noble example of the Communards, Marx wrote to Kugelmann that «*if they are defeated, only their 'good nature' will be to blame*», above all because they did not want to «*start a civil war*» by marching immediately on Versailles (19). Today, the opportunists tremble at the idea that the Red Brigades might possibly — think of it — unleash civil war! After the defeat of the Commune, once again Marx called for in «*the war of the enslaved against their enslavers, the only justifiable war in history*», the use of the very measures of unveiled retaliation, intimidation, and terror which the vile ruling class made use of against the defeated without hesitating a single second to give its forces the order to «*kill, burn, and destroy*» (20). As for Engels, who in 1874 criticised the «*revolutionary phrase*» of the Blanquists, the same year he reminded the adversaries of authority that:

«A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon — authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?» (21).

Can we be more clear than this? Don't these few passages chosen from among innumerable others anticipate the epic of Red October and the civil war led to victory under the leadership of the «*barbarians*», «*Asiatics*», or even «*Jacobins*» that Lenin and Trotsky were supposed to be?

(17) On the eve of the October Revolution Lenin would quote this page from Engels extensively. See *Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, in Engels, *The German Revolutions* (Chicago, 1967), p. 227.

(18) Marx to L. Watteau, November 10, 1861, in Marx-Engels, *Correspondence*, Moscow, 1971, p. 120.

(19) Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, April 12, 1871, in Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, op. cit., p. 247.

(20) Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Marx, *Political Writings*, Vol. 3, *The First International and After*, 1974, pp. 228-29.

(21) Engels, «On Authority» (1873), in Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1962), p. 369.

## The Incompatibility Between Marxism and Individualist Terrorism

Because it knows the social roots of individualist terrorism, Marxism can define and criticise without difficulty its inherent ideology which governs its actions.

On this level and taking into consideration not the particulars of its manifestations in given circumstances but its *historical constants*, the «difference» between terrorist romanticism and Marxism becomes *incompatibility*, and the divergences are transformed into antitheses. In their struggle or their instinctive reaction against the established order, the members of the social strata where individualist terrorism germinates — the middle classes including the intelligentsia — trail fatally behind them the baggage of *ideological motivations* peculiar to their social origins as well as the corresponding *forms of action*. They revolt as individuals against the weight of the productive, social, and political structures which are suffocating increasingly the «human being» (and which suffocate it all the more so as society pretends to liberate, respect it and enable it to expand). Even when they utilize scraps of Marxist terminology, even when they appeal to the «proletariat» and talk of the «struggle for communism», they situate their revolt fatally under the flag of «bourgeois individualism in reverse», that «*individualism which is the basis of the entire anarchist world outlook*» (22) in which Lenin recognized the very essence of one of the ideological branches of populist terrorism. The necessary complement of this individualism (here it joins the other branch, terrorism elevated to a system, Blanquism) is idealism in the interpretation of history and voluntarism in the theorization of means of action calculated to modify its course, such as Marx criticized in Schapper and Willich.

In the centre of this world view there are no classes, nor, at their root, any modes and relations of production, but instead unconnected individuals. Contrary to classes which are necessarily impelled to act by *material* needs, these individuals supposedly act as a result of «free choice» and a decision of their will. They counterpose to the «evil», the power and the privileges enjoyed by the *individual* oppressors and exploiters, their *moral* indignation, impassioned *will*, the force of the *idea* and the model of a «more just» society thought up by oppressed and exploited *individuals*.

Here we find the triple «misunderstanding» which Lenin revealed in the anarchist conception, and which already marked the pre-Marxist and anti-Marxist side of Blanquism, as Engels emphasized in his criticism of the Blanquist refugees in England: «*Socialist only in sentiment, full of sympathy for the sufferings of the people, Blanqui possesses neither a socialist theory nor well-defined practical propositions for social intervention*». This triple lack of understanding — «*lack of understanding of the causes of exploitation... of the development of society that leads to socialism... of the class struggle as a creative force realizing socialism*» — reflects an idealist vision of the revolutionary process.

(22) Lenin, «Anarchism and Socialism», 1901, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 327.

This vision begins from the crude and immediate data of the oppressed-oppressor, exploited-exploiter, ruled-ruler relationship, which is common to *all* societies divided into classes and thus independent of the particular society in which one lives and acts, and does not succeed in going beyond that. It is incapable of tracing the material causes that *determine* this relationship, not in the abstract and divorced from its historical content but in the *present* mode of production and social life. It is incapable of retracing the class forces which the modern mode of production engenders within it and which tend irresistibly to overthrow it. It is thus incapable of arriving at the ways and means which alone enable these forces to break out of their shell, and at the objectives which the very evolution of this mode of production makes at once *possible* and necessary. Consequently it is condemned to go around in a vicious circle of illusions and disillusionments from which it believes it will be able to escape by the «act of the will» at once destructive and creative.

For this reason Lenin makes a parallel between economism and terrorism: they are two manifestations, opposed only in appearance, of the same *fundamental submission to spontaneity*, to the immediate situation. Whereas the «purely economic» (trade-unionist) struggle reduces the *historical* conflict between the proletarian *class* and the bourgeois *class*, with all its necessary implications, to the simple opposition between wage labourers and bosses which limits its horizon, the «purely terrorist» struggle sees only the subject-sovereign (with or without the crown) opposition and reduces the historical conflict from which it expects a «more humane» society to the slave-master opposition in general.

If terrorist actions (which today, especially in Europe, issue from the bursting of the 1968 dream of an «anti-power» or «alternative-power», just as Russian nihilism issued from the disillusionment of those who wanted to «go to the people» in the 1870's) are opposed by their brilliance to the dull activity of economism, they nonetheless have the same *ideological horizon* that remains confined within the framework of the order which both believe — sincerely, we admit — they are combatting. And if the terrorist is more «respectable» than the economist to the extent that he is an *insurgent*, he is also more abstract: he reasons in terms that apply *indiscriminately* to a slave, feudal, or capitalist society, and he acts accordingly.

The illusions of the terrorist flourish on this terrain unavoidably, and not by coincidence. It is unavoidable that he thinks he «strikes the state in the heart» when he strikes the person of its instruments, or when he strikes the productive apparatus in the person of its agents. It is unavoidable that he confuses the network of interests, relations and institutions on which bourgeois society rests with a hierarchy or even a «clique», a pure and simple *aggregate of individuals*, which for that reason might be vulnerable to the bold undertakings of *another* group of individuals.

It is unavoidable that he confuses the revolution with a *conspiracy of chosen ones* whose aim is to overthrow a *universal conspiracy of evil individuals*. He does not see that in the tightly woven network of the economic structure and the social and political superstructure the

personnel called the executive is only a set of *interchangeable parts*, replaceable and in fact constantly being replaced, in the service of an *impersonal, historically determined machine*.

It is unavoidable that the terrorist isolates the part — the «centre of power», such and such a government or party — from the whole, and imagines that he «disjoins» the whole by disjoining one part (even for that the classic bomb or more modern kidnapping certainly are not enough...). It is unavoidable that certain groups (particularly in Europe) see the evil as the multinational corporation, whose elimination would render a still capitalist world acceptable.

It is unavoidable that he measures the revolutionary or counter-revolutionary temperature of situations by the thermometer of *his own* enthusiasm; what does the complex play of relationships of forces matter if it is pure *will* that creates and leads them? The overestimation of historical situations on the part of the extra and anti-Marxist terrorist by no means results from an «analytical error». On the contrary it is congenital, it is part of his nature and his «raison d'être».

Not only does this submission to spontaneity translate into the impotent attempt to scratch the armour of the «system»; not only is individualist terrorism incapable of disorganizing the adversary, even if it can create undeniable difficulties for it, but it is also just as incapable of organizing the social forces for which it poses as a representative and defender. Worse, it contributes generally to their disorganization.

Thus the Russian populists propagated the myth of the *people* and above all of the Russian peasant who was supposed to be an «instinctive revolutionary»; who still preserved intact the communal institutions which were supposedly forerunners of the future socialist society and who was supposedly ready to take off on his glorious path provided that the armoured shell of a purely political and police superstructure, the Czarist autocracy, were burst. For example, Tkachov, a leader of this current, was

«convinced that it is only necessary to awaken simultaneously in several places the heaped up feeling of exasperation and discontent which... always is present in the bosom of our people. Then the unification of the revolutionary powers will be achieved by itself... and the struggle must end with a victory for the side of the people. Practical necessity, the instinct of self-preservation achieves thus quite by itself a firm and inseparable bond among the revolting communities».

Engels answered him:

«It is impossible to imagine an easier and more pleasant revolution. An uprising occurs in three or four places simultaneously, and the instinctive revolutionary, 'practical necessity', the 'instinct of self-preservation' do the rest, 'quite by themselves'. Why, if it is so ridiculously easy, did not the revolution occur long ago, the people liberate itself, and Russia change to a model socialist country?» (23).

With a few slight modifications of vocabulary we have the same myth expressed in the ideology of the present day terrorists, who even

(23) Engels, «On Social Conditions in Russia» (1875) in *The Russian Menace to Europe*, P.W. Blackstock ed., (1953), p. 214.

when they speak of a «proletariat», confuse it systematically with the *people*: all we have to do is launch our attack, the proletariat is there, ready, it will revolt on its own; all we have to do is rebel, socialism is there, ready, it will be born on its own.

To reason in this manner is to ignore *all* the history of the working class which, on the historical scale, is made up of a succession of advances and defeats. It means ignoring the weight of these vicissitudes, the brake constituted by the inertia inherited from the past, and the defection of whole groups of leaders to the enemy. It means ignoring the influence of bourgeois ideology, spread incessantly from all the high pulpits, and the undermining effects of «competition among wage labourers». It means ignoring the difficulty of accomplishing the leap — for a veritable leap has to be made — from the purely economic struggle to the political struggle, the struggle for power and the impossibility (despite whatever grandiose will) of constructing islets of alternative power within bourgeois society. It means forgetting that this party is not created during the struggle and is not born spontaneously and that it does not await its programme — the programme of proletarian emancipation — from the reflections of an «armed faction»; that it can play its role as leadership organ of the revolution only to the extent that it has *preceded* it, *both* in programme (which cannot be invented today because it was formulated a century and a half ago) and in practical organization. And it means forgetting that the party must play this role in order that the revolution, if it breaks out, will not succumb once again.

What must be done, here and now, within a working class which finally in some areas of the world is just beginning to shake off the weight of opportunism which subjugates it to the bourgeoisie, a working class barely beginning to defend itself on the immediate economic level and which has not yet posed the question of its physical self-defence? What must be done within a working class that is trying laboriously to rediscover the most elementary methods and instruments of class struggle, and to rebuild those organs of trade union resistance that a long period of counter-revolution has destroyed or profoundly deformed? What must be done to combat and liquidate little by little not only the influence of open class collaboration but also of reformism and its thousand «left» variants? What relationship can there be between the immediate struggle that the working class must conduct today on a *still difficult and unfavourable* terrain, and the party's «armed organization» which can exist only in a phase of very high social tension (24), and only as a «military arm» of the *political* party? Is it possible to establish through these elementary struggles, through these first laborious steps, a real solidarity between workers, unemployed, and the utterly destitute, left to eke out a living in whatever marginal way, if we dazzle them with the unreal perspective of an *imminent* revolution? What should be our verdict of the Russian, Cuban, Yugoslavian, Vietnamese, or Albanian «socialisms», and of the «socialist» disguises of the revolutionary national-democratic movements, whose ideology is combined with the anarchist and Blanquist heritage

(24) This of course does not exclude the task of self defence which can be posed in any period.

present terrorist romanticism? Isn't the *class party* indispensable not only for the seizure of power, but also in order to lead and exercise the proletarian dictatorship? Isn't it necessary to reconstruct this party in the footsteps of an uninterrupted tradition, which the party in turn must restore to the working class whole and unaltered, relieved of all the deformations and aberrations accumulated from the right as well as from the «left»? And finally, what is communism, which so many people reduce to a poor copy of capitalism?

All these problems and many more again remain open questions in what passes for the «revolutionary vanguard». Now if we wish to be able to march towards revolution, it is necessary to give these questions a clear and firm answer. Our present day terrorists know no more about revolution than their forebears. All they can say is that the state must be struck at its heart (or what they believe to be its heart), ignoring pure and simple the enormous, sometimes humble and not always spectacular, but *essential* tasks of revolutionary preparation.

To ignore these problems and these tasks, or to rely on the shock of wanton terror to resolve them, not only means evading the difficult and indispensable work of preparing the subjective conditions of the revolution, but in fact means *idealizing* the state of programmatic and tactical disorganization and disorientation in which the working class finds itself today. Not only, as Plekhanov said in 1884 (in his revolutionary period), does this amount to diverting «our attention from the most important point – the organization of the working class for its struggle against its present and future enemies» (25), but it signifies denying the very necessity of this organization. That is, it adds to the disorganization accomplished by reformist opportunism *its own* disorganization and *its own* amorphism which the noise of the revolutionary phrase and bursts of submachine gun fire cannot conceal.

As Trotsky very correctly wrote:

«In every class society there are enough contradictions so that a conspiracy can take root in its cracks... But a pure conspiracy even when victorious can only replace one clique of the same ruling class by another — or still less, merely alter the governmental personages. Only mass insurrection has ever brought the victory of one social regime over another... Now the masses advance and retreat several times before they make up their minds to the final assault» (26).

If we bear in mind that Trotsky said this of a period that was already pre-revolutionary, we can see the hard and long work of preparation we have in front of us today. It is this difficult task that must be undertaken, and it is to this that we must devote the best of our energies. The revolutionary outcome will be the fruit of a *long and arduous conquest*, and not the result of a simple shove administered to the edifice of capitalism, still solid in spite of its undermined foundations.

(25) Plekhanov, «Our Differences» (1884) in *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. 1, (Moscow), p. 181.

(26) Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, 1961), p. 167. Let us make it clear that we quote Trotsky here as a member of the Bolshevik party, as the founder of the Red Army and as an opponent to Stalin's counter-revolutionary theory of «Socialism in one country». This in no way means that we can defend all of Trotsky's positions or that our current has anything to do with Trotskyism today.

Individualist terrorism refuses to enter on this road. It is *in this refusal* that its «folly» resides — and not in the advocacy of the historical necessity of violence, as our brave democrats rave, themselves always so ready to utilize it without restraint to defend bourgeois institutions. It is *this refusal* that condemns terrorism.

## What Do The Masses Need?

It is by no means a contradiction that the individualist idealism which characterizes the doctrine and practice of romantic terrorism, both yesterday and today, attempts at a certain point in its trajectory to escape from the vicious circle of its real isolation and believes that it can «*project itself into the mass movement*», as stated for example in a resolution of the Red Brigades in February 1978. On the contrary, this attempt confirms its nature, for either it fantasizes that it *activates* mass movements in order then to insert itself, or it pretends to be the «tip of the iceberg» of a movement already under way. In either case it only raises its congenital *voluntarism* to a higher level, the better to combine it with spontaneism. The terrorist dreams of organizing «workers' power in the factories, residential areas, and prisons» beginning *right now*, and of carrying out the role of a mailed fist of a military organisation placed at the disposal of this new power.

History repeats itself. In the summer of 1902, Lenin had to combat the Socialist-Revolutionaries:

«In their defence of terrorism, which the experience of the Russian revolutionary movement has so clearly proved to be ineffective, the Socialist-Revolutionaries are talking themselves blue in the face in asseverating that they recognise terrorism only in conjunction with work among the masses, and that therefore the arguments used by the Russian Social-Democrats to refute the efficacy of this method of struggle (and which have indeed been refuted for a long time to come) do not apply to them» (27).

While exalting the episodes of armed «dueling» with the authorities, the Socialist-Revolutionaries proclaimed: «We advocate terrorism not in place of work among the masses, but precisely for and simultaneous with that work». Lenin's answer is all the more instructive since he bases himself on a situation radically different from today's. At that time the masses were practically on the verge of revolting. The serious problem posed for the revolution was to fill the void separating a mass movement on the rise and the fragility of an organization unable — not, at this point, to lead — but to respond to its most elementary needs for orientation, organization and political preparation in the broad sense. Now the «*misunderstanding of the role of organization and education*» has always been for Lenin and Marxism one of the characteristic traits of anarchism. The economists, imprisoned within an *immediatist* vision of the movement, reduce the revolutionary tasks to a day to day intervention in economic struggles. The terrorists, «econo-

(27) Lenin, «Revolutionary Adventurism», *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 189.

mists turned inside out», afflicted with an analogous disorder, limit these tasks to spectacular acts of brilliance. Both ignore the urgent needs, at once both modest and spectacular, of this movement to which they pretend to devote themselves. Both *destroy* the subjective conditions for the strengthening of the organ without which the movement is condemned to go around in circles, that is *the class party*.

Today we are experiencing the *long-term* effects of the social-democratic and Stalinist counter-revolution, which make the rebirth of an authentic «mass movement» so difficult, and which above all bear down with a terrible weight on the reconstruction of the programmatic, tactical, and organizational foundations of the revolutionary class party. Consequently Lenin's words, written in a period of enormous social tension, when the fabric of the future Party of October was being woven, have an even greater relevance, today.

«[The Socialist-Revolutionaries] mistake, as we have already pointed out on numerous occasions, consists in the *failure to understand* the basic defect of our movement... At a time when the revolutionaries *are short of* the forces and means to lead the masses, who are already rising, an appeal to resort to such terrorist acts as the organisation of attempts on the lives of ministers by individuals and groups that are not known to one another means not only *thereby* breaking off work among the masses, but also introducing downright disorganisation into that work».

And in his customary manner of considering the most arduous theoretical questions from the point of view of party work, Lenin explained:

«Anyone who really carries on his revolutionary work in conjunction with the class struggle of the proletariat very well knows, sees and feels what vast numbers of immediate and direct demands of the proletariat (and of the sections of the people capable of supporting the latter) remain unsatisfied. He knows that in very many places, throughout vast areas, the working people are literally straining to go into action, and that their ardour runs to waste because of the scarcity of literature and leadership, the lack of forces and means in the revolutionary organisations. And we find ourselves — we see that we find ourselves — in the same old vicious circle that has so long hemmed in the Russian revolution like an omen of evil. On the one hand, the revolutionary ardour of the insufficiently enlightened and unorganised crowd runs to waste. On the other hand, shots fired by the «elusive individuals» who are losing faith in the possibility of marching in formation and working hand in hand with the masses also end in smoke» (28).

This is why (as we pointed out above) Lenin opposed the «*facile repetition of what has already been condemned by the very past forms of the movement*» to «*what the future possesses*», the «*future forms of the movement*». This is why, declaring «*a determined and relentless war on the Socialist-Revolutionaries*», he wrote, among other things:

«No verbal assurances and vows can disprove the unquestionable fact that present-day terrorism, as practised and advocated by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, is *not connected in any way* with work among the masses, for the masses, or together with the masses; that the organisation of terrorist acts by the Party distracts our very scanty organisational forces from

(28) *Ibid.*, pp. 192-6.

their difficult and by no means completed task of organising a revolutionary *workers'* party; that *in practice* the terrorism of the Socialist-Revolutionaries is nothing else than *single combat*, a method that has been wholly condemned by the experience of history. Even foreign socialists are beginning to become embarrassed by the noisy advocacy of terrorism advanced today by our Socialist-Revolutionaries. Among the masses of the Russian workers this advocacy simply sows harmful illusions, such as the idea that terrorism «compels people to think politically, even against their will» (*Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, No. 7, p. 4), or that «more effectively than months of verbal propaganda it is capable of changing the views... of thousands of people with regard to the revolutionaries and the meaning [!] of their activity», or that it is capable of «infusing new strength into the waverers, those discouraged and shocked by the sad outcome of many demonstrations» (*ibid.*), and so on. These harmful illusions can only bring about early disappointment and weaken the work of preparing the masses for the onslaught upon the autocracy» (29)

... or today upon the bourgeois democratic state.

## The «Fighting Party»

The present day terrorists perhaps believe that they have rallied to Lenin's position because they utilise one of his formulae, that of the «fighting party». Does this really reflect a recognition on their part of the fundamental necessity of the party, and should we see here the indication of a qualitative change in the theory and programme of individualist terrorism? Obviously this is not the case at all, and these people utilize Lenin's expression completely out of context.

In the Marxist conception (not «revised and corrected» by Lenin as some would say, but simply developed in all its explicit and implicit ramifications), the class party, the political party, from its birth contains inscribed in its programme, whose essence is immutable, the fact that its sole function as the political «*organization of the proletariat into a class*» is to prepare the qualitative leap towards «*its organization into a ruling class*», in other words the preparation of the revolutionary seizure of power. This implies the armed insurrection and the dictatorship exercised over the defeated classes by the victorious power led by the party, as much to break the internal and external resistance of the bourgeoisie as to carry on, when objective conditions permit, the by definition international struggle against capitalism on the level of a revolutionary war. The party moreover, knows that this goal cannot be attained and this preparation cannot be realized except on the condition that in the entire period preceding the revolutionary situation it not only has carried out the complex *whole* of activities of propaganda, proselytism, agitation, organization, intervention in workers's struggles, etc., which characterize the party, but also that it *continues* to assume them *all* (in different proportions) *during* the revolutionary situation. Only in this way, in fact, will it be able to respond to the proletariat's needs for organization and political preparation by dint of which it has appeared and which define it as a *class party*.

(29) Lenin, «Why the Social-Democrats Must Declare a Determined and Relentless War on the Socialist-Revolutionaries», *Collected Works*. Vol. 6, p. 175.

«*At the time of the civil war*», writes Lenin in the article on guerilla warfare quoted above, «*the ideal of the party of the proletariat is the fighting party*». Precisely, *at the time of the civil war!* Not at just any time, not in just any situation which the reveries or the will of certain people decree to be a situation of civil war. The party only becomes a «fighting party» when the «*mass movement has actually reached the point of an uprising and when fairly long intervals occur between the 'big engagements' of the insurrection*»; when, in order to prevent the movement from being frayed in the disintegration and the demoralisation implicit in its generous spontaneity, so lacking in orientation, the party must demonstrate that it is capable of leading it. If the party then becomes the «fighting party» it is because it has been preparing itself *for a long time* for the need to acquire its «military arm», a task which is not adapted to any situation or practical at any time. But in no case can the party be confused with its military arm, nor be reduced to that. If it is a «fighting party» this is because it has long since learned how to fight and because «*in time of civil war*» it is ready to use the appropriate means, i.e. military ones, and to lead the proletariat on this level of struggle. But it never considers these means as «*the only or even as the chief method of struggle*»; on the contrary, «*this method must be subordinated to other methods... it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organizing influence of socialism*» (30).

Thus it utilizes these means by framing them in a strategical and tactical plan which *never* permits the political party to be transformed into a more or less tight network of «brigades», nor into any sort of «army». Quite the opposite, this plan necessitates that, in the period of civil war, the political party construct its own military apparatus, rigorously subordinated to the objectives, program, organizational network, and tactical decisions of the party. It requires that the party prepare in advance the subjective conditions for the formation of this apparatus, and not permit itself to be stopped, when the moment arrives, by the inevitable manifestations of «disorganization» brought about by the transition to any wartime action and «*any new form of struggle, accompanied as it is by new dangers and new sacrifices*». These unavoidable troubles nevertheless will be less serious to the extent that party militants are better prepared to meet them and to the extent that the party as a whole has conquered the sympathy and support of increasingly broad layers of the class in the course of work executed with tenacity and continuity on a terrain and with methods which are not and cannot yet be *military*.

This party, whose «military arm» is only an instrument — and an *auxiliary*, technical, and *rigorously* subordinate instrument — does not amuse itself by «choosing clandestinity» (as is said in the typically voluntarist phraseology of romanticist terrorism) even if it foresees that it will be compelled at a certain moment of its trajectory to live an underground existence. Moreover it does not fall into the idealist error that presents clandestinity as mechanically synonymous with armed struggle or military action, even if it foresees that in the crucial phase

(30) Lenin, *Guerilla Warfare, Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 221.

of the insurrection, clandestine action will become one — but only one — of its principal modes of action. On the contrary, then it will not cease to develop by illegal means *all* the activities that characterized its former «legal» life, just as in normal times it must apply itself to weaving a more or less rigid clandestine network, not as an alternate to the open and avowed party network, but as its necessary *complement*, its indispensable *system of defense*.

In short, the party does not believe that its permanent task — which consists in *organizing* and *orienting* the masses in order to be able to lead them, and which it will have to pursue *even after* the end of the civil war and after the conquest of power — can be reduced to what is only *one* of its phases, a phase which is particularly delicate to be sure, but consequently also one which needs most to be *politically controlled*, and one which is the most limited in time.

What can an organisation which acts according to these criteria have in common with the «fighting party» advocated by the Blanquist-type terrorists? The latter raise to the level of the party what for Marxism is only *one of the instruments* of the party, an instrument from which it requires above all a political as well as organizational discipline and obedience, because it is only on this condition that the party will be able to entrust it, at zero hour, with a function of temporary command in a specific sector (31).

For Marxism, the party organ is not a mechanical product of the spontaneous class movement (as all the spontaneist pretend), much less can it be born from a movement reduced to the expression of military commandoes on a very small scale, as the present day brigadists would have it. It does not make up its program from one day to the next collecting up all the so-called new theories. It does not make its organization dependent on the real or imaginary expectations of the moment. It does not subordinate its tactical plan to the immediate attractions of the moment. Its ability to lead the real movement — which it does not *create*, whose moment of birth it cannot *decide*, just as it cannot determine the increasingly varied forms in which its manifold requirements will manifest themselves — depends upon its ability to *precede* it. It depends on its capacity to foresee the final outcome as well as the road that leads to it, the phases it will have to traverse on this long route, the means that will have to be employed each in their turn, none of which excludes the others, even when one may occupy the foreground.

The party has this capacity because it possesses a theory and programme which show the way forward on the revolutionary path to the extent that they embody interests and objectives which do not correspond to one isolated phase of the movement but which *go beyond* objectives which might seem essential to members of the class taken individually, and even to the class as a whole, at particular moments in its history. In short, the party must be the *point of departure* in order to be able to be the decisive lever in the process of the emancipa-

(31) Hence the «revolutionary military committee» of October was a magnificent technopolitical instrument of the Bolshevik party, which received its orders from the party and was responsible to it. Nobody, least of all Trotsky, would ever have thought of raising it to the level of a substitute for the party.



tion of the working class. The military apparatus, on the other hand, a vital organ in the insurrection, but neither sufficient in itself nor autonomous, can only be *one* of the higher stages on the ascending scale of the revolution, *never* its point of departure.

This is why Lenin, in *What Is to Be Done?* shows that the apparently opposed phenomena of economism and terrorism are the two faces of the same coin, which bears the name: *submission to spontaneity*. Consequently, he writes:

«It would be a grievous error indeed to build the Party organisation in anticipation only of outbreaks and street fighting, or only upon the forward march of the drab everyday struggle. We must *always* conduct our everyday work and always be prepared for every situation, because very frequently it is almost impossible to foresee when a period of outbreak will give way to a period of calm. In the instances, however, when it is possible to do so, we could not turn this foresight to account for the purpose of reconstructing our organisation; for in an autocratic country these changes take place with astonishing rapidity, being sometimes connected with a single night raid by the tsarist janizaries. And the revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act (as the Nadezhdins apparently imagine), but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with periods of more or less complete calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organisation, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses» (32).

Thus Lenin points not to the gun or the bomb as the principal instrument of the party, but to the instrument of *education and political organization* constituted by the party newspaper, the vehicle of the principles, program, and the tactical plan — those imperatives to which *each* particular means of struggle is and must remain subordinated. Around this instrument will be formed the organizational network which, precisely,

«will be ready for everything, from upholding the honour, the prestige, and the continuity of the Party in periods of acute revolutionary depression to preparing for, appointing the time for, and carrying out the *nation-wide armed uprising*» (33).

Thus the «*duty to create organizations* [in periods of high social tension] *best adapted to lead the masses in these big engagements and, as far as possible, in these small encounters*» and, when «*the class struggle has become accentuated to the point of civil war... not only to participate but also to play the leading role in this civil war*» — this duty is not entrusted to *just any organization* born as an immediate expression of the struggle or the will to struggle, armed or not. It is entrusted by Lenin to the *revolutionary class party* (34), the *physical* not metaphysical embodiment of the theory, program, and traditions of struggle of a century of the workers' movement.

(32) Lenin, *What is To Be Done*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 514.

(33) *Ibid.*, pp. 514-5.

(34) See *Guerilla Warfare*, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

It is only in this perspective that we have the right and the *duty* to struggle for the «fighting party». Those who do not share this view only fight for fantasies born of their own voluntarism, and in this way they disorganize and disorientate the very «mass movement» they pretend to glorify.

## In the Light of October

The Bolsheviks were rigorously faithful to this global vision, one neither narrow nor short term, of the role of the party in the proletarian revolution and in the preparation for it. This is what enabled them not only to give the signal for the insurrection in October 1917, which would have been insufficient in itself, but also to *lead it and carry it through to victory*.

From February to October, the Party underwent all the phases of its development, fulfilled all its tasks, pushed its propaganda, its agitation, its efforts to organize the proletariat in all directions. Far from being satisfied with its minority position, it tried to *overcome* this by working in the ranks of the class, both «underground» and «above ground», in street demonstrations as well as in economic battles, in the audacious attacks of moments of offensive as well as in the prudent operations in times of retreat or defense. It worked on, concentrating its attention not on its own wishes or impatience but on the *real* aspirations and *profound* needs of the masses, always applying itself to urging the movement *ahead*, even if it entailed rejecting from its own ranks any «tailists» who were prone to remaining in tow of the movement. This is the activity that characterizes the «fighting party», and not its parody served up with urban guerrilla sauce. It is this party activity which produced that «masterpiece of the military art», the October insurrection. It is thanks to this that October was simultaneously the burial of *individualist* terrorism and the most sublime exaltation of *class* violence and terror.

Throughout this study we have endeavoured to reestablish the dialectical series which alone enables us to reaffirm the revolutionary substance of Marxism in the face of the bleatings of democracy and its priests in the workers movement, though without attenuating the century old critique of romantic terrorism. We know no better way of concluding than by quoting the pages where Trotsky, in full agreement with Lenin in his letters to the Central Committee on and before the eve of October, restores *conspiracy* to its proper place, gives it to the proletariat as one of its indispensable weapons.

After having underlined the enormous difference that exists between «*the deliberate undertaking of a minority*» and «*insurrection, which rises above a revolution like a peak in the mountain chain of its events*» and which no more than the revolution as a whole, can «*be evoked at will*», Trotsky writes:

«This does not mean, however, that popular insurrection and conspiracy are in all circumstances mutually exclusive. An element of conspiracy almost always enters to some degree into any insurrection. Being historically condi-

tioned by a certain stage in the growth of a revolution, a mass insurrection is never purely spontaneous. Even when it flashes out unexpectedly to a majority of its own participants, it has been fertilized by those ideas in which the insurrectionaries see a way out of the difficulties of existence. But a mass insurrection can be foreseen and prepared. It can be organized in advance. In this case the conspiracy is subordinate to the insurrection, serves it, smoothes its path, hastens its victory. The higher the political level of a revolution movement and the more serious its leadership, the greater will be the place occupied by conspiracy in a popular insurrection...

«To overthrow the old power is one thing; to take the power in one's own hands is another. The bourgeoisie may win the power in a revolution not because it is revolutionary, but because it is bourgeois. It has in its possession property, education, the press, a network of strategic positions, a hierarchy of institutions. Quite otherwise with the proletariat. Deprived in the nature of things of all social advantages, an insurrectionary proletariat can count only on its numbers, its solidarity, its cadres, its official staff. «Just as a blacksmith cannot seize the red hot iron in his naked hand, so the proletariat cannot directly seize the power; it has to have an organization accomodated to this task. The coordination of the mass insurrection with the conspiracy, the subordination of the conspiracy to the insurrection, the organization of the insurrection through the conspiracy, constitutes that complex and responsible department of revolutionary politics which Marx and Engels called the art of insurrection. It presupposes a correct general leadership of the masses, a flexible orientation in changing conditions, a thought-out plan of attack, cautiousness in technical preparation, and a daring blow...

«The social democrats... do not reject revolution at large as a social catastrophe, any more than they reject earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, eclipses and epidemics of the plague. What they do reject — calling it «Blanquism», or still worse, Bolshevism — is the conscious preparation of an overturn, the plan, the conspiracy...

«From his observations and reflections upon the failure of the many insurrections he witnessed or took part in, Auguste Blanqui derived a number of tactical rules which if violated will make the victory of any insurrection extremely difficult, if not impossible. Blanqui demanded these things: a timely creation of correct revolutionary detachments, their centralized command and adequate equipment, a well calculated placement of barricades, their definite construction, and a systematic, not a mere episodic, defense of them. All these rules, deriving from the military problems of the insurrection, must of course change with social conditions and military technique, but in themselves they are not by any means Blanquism in the sense that this word approaches the German putschism, or revolutionary adventurism. «Insurrection is an art, and like all arts it has its laws. The rules of Blanqui were the demands of a military revolutionary realism. Blanqui's mistake lay not in his direct but his inverse theorem. From the fact that tactical weakness condemns an insurrection to defeat, Blanqui inferred that an observance of the rules of insurrectionary tactics would itself guarantee the victory. Only from this point on is it legitimate to contrast Blanquism with Marxism. Conspiracy does not take the place of insurrection. An active minority of the proletariat, no matter how well organized, cannot seize the power regardless of the general conditions of the country. In this point history has condemned Blanquism. But only in this. His affirmative theorem retains all its force. In order to conquer the power, the proletariat needs more than a spontaneous insurrection. It needs a suitable organization, it needs a plan; it needs a conspiracy» (35).

It is for all these reasons, which form an indivisible whole, that a *revolutionary class party* is needed, solidly rooted in the Soviets, in the

trade unions, in the factory councils, etc., armed with its military apparatus, *but not subordinated to any of these organs*. And Trotsky continues in these terms, which correspond to the fundamental positions of our current:

«Thanks to a favorable combination of historic conditions both domestic and international, the Russian proletariat was headed by a party of extraordinary political clarity and unexampled revolutionary temper. Only this permitted that small and young class to carry out a historic task of unprecedented proportions. It is indeed the general testimony of history — the Paris Commune, the German and Austrian revolutions of 1918, the soviet revolution in Hungary and Bavaria, the Italian revolution of 1919, the German crisis of 1923, the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, the Spanish revolution of 1931 — that up to now the weakest link in the chain of necessary conditions has been the party. The hardest thing of all is for the working-class to create a revolutionary organization capable of rising to the height of its historic task. In the older and more civilized countries powerful forces work toward the weakening and demoralization of the revolutionary vanguard. An important constituent part of this work is the struggle of the social democrats against Blanquism, by which name they designate the revolutionary essence of Marxism».

An enormous task awaits communists: to struggle against the forces of social-democratic, and today above all, Stalinist, origin, while preventing the *erroneous* reaction, the ideology which denies the centralizing function of the party, from rising to its feet again.

It is for this reason that, while laying bare the inconsistency of the «negative side» of terrorist Blanquism and *all* its variants, we call upon young proletarians to struggle with the utmost energy against the false illusions of reformist gradualism, against the opportunist plague, without falling into the sterile and impotent dreams of individualist terrorism. We call upon them to struggle in order that the *revolutionary contents of Marxism* can appear in broad daylight; in order that the link in the chain of necessary conditions for revolution, the Marxist political party, which in the advanced countries has proved to be the weakest link up to now, may strengthen itself and manifest itself with all its vigour; in order that the proletarian revolution may be reborn from the convergence and interaction of the party with the spontaneous insurrection of forces born from the volcano of economic and social life, and in order that, instead of being nipped in the bud once again, it may seize victory.

(35) This quote and the following (our emphasis) are taken from the chapter of the *History of the Russian Revolution* entitled «The Art of Insurrection», Vol. 3, pp. 167. It is clear that with the seizure of power a new chapter is opened, that of the *red terror* in the course of the civil war and the dictatorship. We remind the reader that Trotsky dealt with this question exhaustively and with a formidable dialectical strength in his *Terrorism and Communism*.

# Fundamental Theses of the Party

## Introduction

The *Fundamental Theses of the Party* were drawn up in December 1951 and were to serve as a sort of basis for membership in the party at that time. It was this event which properly marked the reformation of the party after the destruction of the Third Communist International by the Stalinist counter-revolution and after the confused attempts at reconstruction immediately after World War II. The rebirth of the party on a solid basis required first of all the reestablishment of the line of continuity of the communist tradition broken by the counter-revolution, and the restoration and reappropriation of the communist doctrine and program in their entirety. It is this task which the *Theses*, in a concentrated form, take in hand, delimitating the party from all other supposedly working class currents.

To understand the importance of the *Fundamental Theses* and the role they have played in the history of our movement, it is necessary to understand the period leading up to the reconstruction of the party in 1951-1952, the situation at the time the *Theses* were drawn up and the needs to which they responded.

At the Lyons Congress of the Communist Party of Italy in 1926, shortly before the Communist International adopted the theory of «socialism in one country», the Left presented a draft theses (*The Lyons Theses*) which predictably was rejected by the largely Stalinized party. In these theses our current drew not only the balance sheet of the situation in Italy, of its activity when it was in the leadership of the Communist Party of Italy, and of the activity of the Gramsci-Togliatti leadership which was imposed on the party by the Communist International in the years after 1924. It also drew the balance sheet of the international movement, of the advance and following of the retreat of the revolutionary wave of the post World War I period, of the activity of the Communist International both in its splendid restoration of the principles and program of the revolution and in its weaknesses and errors in the domain of tactics and organization.

The Lyons Congress marked the close of a period. From the outbreak of World War I in 1914 to 1926 the Italian Left gave its contribution to the reconstruction of the world party, and it waged a struggle, increasingly defensive, to make this party into a truly effective

organ which could realize the aims it had given itself. After 1926 our current was struck by the blows of the counter-revolution in full force, manifested both in the Stalinist persecution as well as in bourgeois repression, whether fascist in Italy or democratic in France. At the same time it found itself increasingly isolated from the currents which on the international level took a position more or less opposed to Stalinism and its liquidation of the revolutionary party. These opposition currents in effect had a different conception both of the causes of the victory of the bourgeoisie and of Stalinism, and of the way to struggle against them. It became more and more difficult to resist the devastation of the counter-revolution which was brought to bear on the working class movement. While Trotsky desperately looked for the outbreak of the revolution in the last battles of the proletarian retreat and sought at all price — even in the end at the price of compromising principles — to maintain a mass organization, our current (and notably the faction in exile) endeavoured to preserve the continuity of our tradition and to sow the seeds where they did not exist.

With the support given by the official «communist» parties to the imperialist war and with their participation in bourgeois governments of national reconstruction after the war, it became clear that these parties had definitively and irretrievably sunk into social-chauvinism, the defense and respect of bourgeois democracy, and the most barefaced class collaboration. It was only after these events and after a period of attempt to bring to birth a party on its true Marxist foundations that our party was able to be definitively reconstructed. Although it was physically reconstructed essentially in Italy, it was not reconstructed as an Italian party but as the nucleus of a future international party and on the basis of an internationalist program.

We must add a few words about the attempt at formation of the party in the period between the close of World War II and 1951 because the *Fundamental Theses* respond to and clarify certain problems existing during this period in order to lay the basis for the solid formation of the party in 1951-1952. During these years there was a formidable and praiseworthy attempt, based on a real combativity of many militants, to form a real party in Italy. This attempt however was surrounded by a great deal of confusion. The greater part of the comrades thought that the post World War II period would be a repetition of the previous post-war period and would result in a great revolutionary wave. This illusion not only led to a frenzied activism and a search for tactical and organizational expedients which in reality would destroy all the conquests of the left, but it also led to errors of principle and attempts to «update» and revise the Marxist theory. Given this extremely confused situation, it was necessary to struggle a number of years to clarify the divergences which were at work in a party not yet homogenous and which were masked behind differences apparently linked to the analysis of the period. This required first of all the reappropriation of the Marxist doctrine in all its basic aspects and, on this basis, a complete appraisal of the revolution and counter-revolution in Russia and of the whole history of the Communist International. This work, which was reflected in the *Fundamental Theses* and in other basic works, had the result of producing a split

at the end of 1951 between two orientations, then sufficiently delimited for their existence within the same organization to have become impossible. To unite, as Lenin said, it is necessary to divide. Marxists of the Italian Left have never feared splits and have never held the illusion of those who believe they can achieve immediate success thanks to alliances and mergers with heterogeneous forces.

The real existence of our party, consequently, should be dated from the *Fundamental Theses*, which form the full text of a report to the general conference in Florence, December 8th and 9th, 1951. The *Theses* marked the close of one period and beginning of the veritable construction of our organization. This meant that, after almost three decades of oblivion, the revolutionary movement was in a position to advance with a solid theoretical and organizational orientation and to develop all its work for the future revolution, which it knew to be many years away, on the basis of its own positions. This was possible because, for the first time since the tragedy of 1926 in the Russian party and the Communist International, the so-called «Italian» Left (which, however, distinguished itself by raising problems of principle and of tactics of international, not «national» significance) was able to draw the lessons of the most awful counter-revolution the proletarian movement had ever suffered; it was possible because it was able to restore the continuity of the communist tradition that connects Marx and Engels to Lenin, to the Third International, and to the battles waged by our current within the International and outside it, against the frontist, populist, national, and finally chauvinist deviations.

Precisely because it was conceived as a criterion for membership in the party — then still in its birth pangs and restricted to a very small corner of the world, isolated even within Europe — the text does not pretend to *exhaust all* the basic questions of Marxist theory and historical analysis. It develops only those questions regarded as *essential* in order to give the party an indispensable homogeneity and stability and in order to demarcate it from the other allegedly close currents, reserving the solution of other questions, which it nonetheless anticipates, to subsequent party texts. The present reader should refer to these works in order to obtain a complete picture of our theoretical and programmatic positions on such topics as the national and colonial question, the problem of the relationship between revolutionary struggle, i.e. the direct struggle for the seizure of power, and the immediate struggle for partial objectives (hence also between the revolutionary organization and mass organizations), the tactical and organizational bases of the party, the appraisal of the economic and social structure of Russia and China, and so on.

Part I is the party program, the same program that was adopted at the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy in 1921. It was only within the guidelines of the invariant basis of this program that it was possible to add several points concerning our analysis of fascism, and more generally of the increasingly fascist nature of modern capitalist society, and concerning the relations between the world proletarian party and the state which is born as a result of the revolutionary victory, renouncing all the treachery and deceit of such an idea as «socialism in one country».

Part II deals with the universal and permanent tasks of the communist party. While insisting on the central role of the party both in the preparation for the revolution and in the exercise of the dictatorship, it emphasizes the necessity of wide-based organizations intermediary between the party and the class, grouping together proletarians struggling on the level of economic (trade union type) demands. It insists on the necessity of the party as an *organ of the class*, and it rejects, as communists have always done, all conceptions of the party as something exterior to and «above» the proletariat as well as the idea of the party-dissolved-in-the-masses. It advances as permanent the triple task of the party: study, propagandize, and organize.

Part III places our action in the context of the history of the working class movement and the revolutionary movements. It deals primarily with the question of tactics in the general sense (with the more specific aspects of this question being taken up by later works). With the different waves of opportunist degeneration it shows how an inadequate or erroneous conception and application of tactics by the revolutionary party contributed to, reinforced and facilitated the play of objective forces which have tended to denature the party. It develops the tactical problems which the Communist International and the Russian party faced in the years 1921-1926, and it gives an account of the struggle that our current waged against the weaknesses and errors of the tactics pursued by the Comintern, drawing a balance sheet of these experiences. It analyzes the defeat of the proletarian movement in the third opportunist wave, the role of the «Stalinist» parties, their positions and their counter-revolutionary action.

Part IV deals with the activity of the party and its priority tasks in a ferociously counter-revolutionary situation. It condemns as illusory and deadly any idea that a quick victory was possible in such a situation. It shows that the primary activity of the party in such circumstances must be the reestablishment of the communist theory, of Marxism, and its fierce defense against any «innovations».

While the *Theses* place «theoretical» work in first place they also insist — and this is important to emphasize — on the necessity of pursuing all aspects of party work. They affirm that the nature of the party's tasks does not change with the wind, according to the changing situations, but responds to its historical function. The conditions of the moment affect only the quantitative proportion of energy devoted by the party to the different sectors of activity and the immediate possibilities of action. Even when the party finds itself at the «deepest point of the depression» as it did in 1951, and even when it sees that «a resurgence of the revolutionary movement is conceivable only after a period of many years», it does not renounce any of its activities. Even when the situation does not allow it to have an influence on the masses, it does not deny its task of indicating the political line to follow. Even when capitalist society, its material forces and its political agents construct a terrible barrier preventing the party from having an influence on the masses, the party does not lose any opportunity of penetrating into even the smallest fracture opened up in bourgeois society in order to widen it and implant its subversive doctrine. Even

when its trade union activity is of necessity extremely limited, the party never renounces this sector of activity.

The party always attempts to develop all sectors of its activity, because it knows that while there are no artificial expedients for accelerating the resurgence of the class struggle, this resurgence does not depend only on objective factors but also on its own activity. Our rejection of «tactical expedients» cannot be interpreted as a passivity characteristic of those who would renounce their responsibility to the class and who would hand over to the play of objective forces or to the spontaneity of the class the responsibility for accomplishing the tasks which are their own.

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Almost thirty years have passed since the *Theses* were drawn up. However pessimistic had been our appreciation of the situation at the time and of the speed at which we could emerge from the counter-revolution, the reality has been even worse. But history has advanced, the slow difficult work has born fruit. The party, developing its work on the basis and in the line indicated by the *Fundamental Theses*, has experienced a growth of its forces and an enlargement of its sphere of influence and penetration. With the enlargement of the party's external activity and its impact — however weak it remains today — in an international situation where social conflicts are pushing the proletariat to find again its revolutionary path, precise problems in the area of practical activity are inevitably raised. Although these problems go beyond the scope of the *Theses* and must be resolved by the party in the coming period, the *Theses* have served as a guide for party work during several decades and always give the framework in which the party must confront and resolve the particular problems posed by this development of its action.

## Fundamental Theses of the Party

### I Theory

The party's doctrine is based on the principles of historical materialism and critical communism expounded by Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Capital*, and in their other fundamental works. These same principles formed the basis for the constitution of the Communist International, founded in 1919, and of the Communist Party of Italy, founded at Livorno in 1921. They were contained in the party program published in *Battaglia Comunista* no. 1, 1951, and republished several times since then in *Il Programma Comunista*.

The programs reads as follows:

The International Communist Party is founded on the basis of the following principles established at the formation of the Communist Party of Italy (section of the Communist International) at Livorno in 1921.

1. An ever-growing contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production develops within the present capitalist social system, engendering the antagonism of interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

2. The present relations of production are protected by bourgeois state power. No matter what form of representative system, no matter what use may or may not be made of electoral democracy, the bourgeois state always constitutes the organ for defending the interests of the capitalist class.

3. The proletariat can neither destroy nor change the system of capitalist relations of production from which its exploitation derives without overthrowing bourgeois power by means of violence.

4. The indispensable organ of proletarian revolutionary struggle is the class party. The Communist Party, uniting in its ranks the most advanced and most resolute part of the proletariat, unifies the efforts of the labouring masses, leading them from the daily struggle for group interests and limited improvements towards the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. The Party's tasks are to propagate revolutionary theory among the masses, to organize the material means for action, and to lead the working class through the development of its struggle by preserving the historical continuity and international unity of the movement.

5. After the overthrow of capitalist power, the proletariat can organize itself as the ruling class only by destroying the old state apparatus and instituting its own dictatorship. In other words it must deprive the bourgeois class, and the individual bourgeois as long as they survive socially, of all political rights and functions, and base the organs of the new regime on the producing class alone. The Communist Party, whose programme is characterized by the fact that it strives to realize these basic aims, represents, organizes, and leads the proletarian dictatorship, sharing this role with no other party. The necessary defense of the proletarian state against all counter-revolutionary attempts can only be ensured by depriving the bourgeoisie and the parties which are enemies of the proletarian dictatorship of all means of agitation and political propaganda, and by equipping the proletariat with an armed organization for repelling all internal and external attacks.

6. It is only the proletarian state which will be able to systematically intervene in the relations of the social economy, carrying out the whole series of measures which will assure the replacement of the capitalist system by the collective management of production and distribution.

7. As a result of this transformation of the economy and the concomitant transformation of all activities of social life, the need for a political state will be eliminated progressively, and the state apparatus will give way gradually to a rational administration of human activities.

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The party's position in regard to the situation in the capitalist world and within the workers' movement after World War II is based on the following points.

8. In the first half of the 20th century, the development of the capitalist social system has seen, in the economic sphere, the creation of employers' organizations for the purpose of securing a monopolist position on the labor market, attempts to control and manage production and exchange according to central plans, and even state management of entire sectors of production. In the political sphere, there has been a strengthening of the police and military power of the state, while government has assumed totalitarian forms. These developments are not new types of social organization transitional between capitalism and socialism, much less a return to pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of more direct and more exclusive management of power and the state by the most developed forces of capital.

This process precludes pacifist, evolutionist and «progressive» interpretations of the development of the bourgeois regime and confirms the Marxist prognosis concerning the concentration and antagonistic alignment of class forces. In order for the proletariat to strengthen and concentrate its revolutionary energies with a corresponding potential, it must reject the demand of an illusory return to democratic liberalism as well as the demand of legal guarantees, excluding both as agitational methods. The revolutionary class party must liquidate historically the practice of alliances for transitory goals, both with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and with pseudo-workers' reformist parties.

9. The imperialist world wars show that the crisis of capitalist disintegration is inevitable. Capitalism has embarked definitively on the phase in which its expansion no longer intensifies the historical growth of productive forces but instead makes the accumulation of productive forces dependent upon periodic and growing destruction. The world wars caused deep, repeated crises within the world organization of workers, since the ruling classes succeeded in exacting national and military collaboration of the working class in both camps. The only historical alternative which can be posed in this situation is the resumption of the class struggle in every country, and its generalization into a civil war by the working masses to overthrow the power of all bourgeois states and world coalitions, a civil war led by the international communist party reconstructed as an autonomous force opposed to all political and military powers.

10. Since the proletarian state apparatus is an instrument and a weapon of struggle in an historical transitional period, it does not derive its organizational strength from constitutional rules or from any representative schema. The highest historical expression of such an organization until now has been the workers' soviets born in the course of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917, when the working class organized itself militarily under the exclusive leadership of the Bolshevik Party. The burning issues of that period were the totalitarian conquest of power, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the struggle to repulse external attacks by the bourgeois governments and to crush the internal rebellion of the defeated classes, of middle and petty-bourgeois layers, and of the opportunist parties, which are unflinching allies of the counter-revolution in decisive phases.

11. The proletarian regime must defend itself against the dangers of degeneration contained in possible miscarriages and set-backs in the

process of economic and social transformation, the full realization of which is not conceivable within the confines of a single country. This defense can only be insured by a constant coordination between the policy of the workers' state and the unified international struggle of the proletariat of each country against its own bourgeoisie, the capitalist state and its military apparatus. This struggle which must be waged incessantly in whatever situation, be it peace or war, requires the political and programmatic control by the world communist party over the state apparatus in the country where the working class has conquered power.

## II Tasks of the Communist Party

1. The working class can liberate itself from capitalist exploitation only through a political struggle, led by a political organ of the revolutionary class, the communist party.

2. The most important aspect of the political struggle in the Marxist conception is the civil war and the armed insurrection through which one class overthrows the power of the enemy ruling class and institutes its own power. This struggle cannot be successful unless it is led by the party organization.

3. Just as the struggle against the power of the exploiting class cannot be accomplished without the revolutionary political party, likewise the party is necessary for the subsequent work of eradicating the previous economic institutions. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which is indispensable throughout this by no means brief historical transitional period, will be exercised overtly by the party.

4. Before, during, and after the armed struggle for power, the party must also fulfil the following necessary tasks: the defense and propagation of revolutionary theory; the defence and reinforcement of the internal organization through proselytism and propaganda for the communist theory and program; constant activity within the ranks of the proletariat wherever it is driven by economic needs and pressures to struggle in defence of its interests.

5. The party can include in its ranks neither all the individuals which constitute the proletarian class nor even the majority of the class. It includes only that minority which has attained a collective preparation and maturity, in theory and action, corresponding to the general vision and ultimate goal of the historical movement, in the entire world and throughout the historical course from the emergence of the proletariat to its revolutionary victory.

The party is not formed on the basis of individual consciousness. It not only is impossible for each and every proletarian to be conscious of the class doctrine, much less master it intellectually; but such a thing is not even possible for each party militant taken separately. Such a guarantee cannot even be given by the leaders, but only exists in the organic unity of the party.

Therefore, just as we reject every theory of individual action or of mass action independent of a precise organizational tissue, we also refuse any conception of the party as an assemblage of crude, enlight-

tened, or conscious individuals. Instead, the party is a tissue, a system, which has the organic function within the proletarian class of fulfilling the revolutionary tasks in all their aspects and through all their complex phases.

6. Marxism has always emphatically rejected the syndicalist theory wherever it appeared. This theory offers the class exclusively economic organs in the form of trade, industrial, or factory organizations, to which it attributes the ability to develop the social struggle and accomplish the social transformation.

While Marxism considers the trade union in itself to be an insufficient organ for the revolution, it regards it as an indispensable organ for the mobilization of the class on the political and revolutionary level, which is effected through the presence and penetration of the communist party in the working class economic organizations. In the difficult phases presented by the formation of economic associations, only those associations containing solely proletarians and which proletarians join voluntarily, without being obliged to profess specific political, religious or social beliefs, can be considered as favorable for the party's work. Such an open character does not exist in denominational organizations where membership is obligatory, nor in those that have become an integral part of the state apparatus.

7. The party never adopts the method of creating selective economic organizations composed only of workers who accept the principles and leadership of the communist party. But the party recognizes unconditionally that neither the pre-insurrectional situation nor the entire phase, when the party's influence over the masses grows decisively, can take shape unless a layer of organizations for immediate economic defense involving a large proportion of the proletariat extends between the party and the class and unless a network emanating from the party (nuclei, groups, and communist trade union factions) exists within these organizations. The task of the party during unfavourable periods when the proletariat is reduced to passivity is to foresee the forms and encourage the emergence of organizations for carrying out the immediate struggle for economic defense. In the future such organizations may assume entirely new aspects, possibly different from the already well-known type of trade unions, industrial unions, factory councils and so on. The party always encourages forms of organization that facilitate contact and common action between workers from different localities and different occupations, while it rejects closed forms.

8. In the succession of historical situations the party remains aloof from the idealist and utopian vision that entrusts the improvement of society to a union of chosen or enlightened individuals, apostles, or heroes; from the libertarian vision that entrusts the same task to individual rebellion or to a revolt of masses without organization; from the syndicalist or economist vision that entrusts it to the action of economic, apolitical organizations, whether or not it is accompanied by advocacy of violence; and finally from the voluntarist and sectarian vision that, disregarding the real determinist process through which the class insurrection arises from actions and reactions which far precede theoretical consciousness and even a clear will, advocates a small «elite» party which either surrounds itself with extremist trade unions — none

other than their own look-alikes — or commits the error of isolating itself from the proletariat's network of economic and trade union organizations. The latter error was typical of the German KAPD and Dutch Tribunists (1), and was combatted by the Italian Left within the Third International.

The Italian Left took a specific position on the strategic and tactical questions of the proletarian struggle, which can only be treated in connection with that period and the sequence of historical phases in the proletarian movement.

### III Historical Waves of Opportunist Degeneration

1. It is impossible to advocate a position of *intransigence* (that is of refusal *on principle* of all alliances, united fronts, or compromises) valid for all the historical phases of the proletarian movement, without lapsing into an idealism that seeks justification in mystical, ethical, and esthetic considerations foreign to the Marxist vision. Questions of strategy, manoeuvre, tactics and practice in the class and the party are posed and resolved only in the context of history. Consequently they must be understood in relation to the larger global process of the proletariat's advance in the period between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, and not according to a minute study case by case preoccupied with particulars of place and time and entrusted to the arbitration of leadership groups and committees.

2. The proletariat itself is above all a product of the capitalist economy and capitalist industrialization. Therefore, since communism cannot originate in the inspirations of individuals, academic circles, or sects, but only in the struggle of the proletarians themselves, one of the preconditions for communism is the irrevocable victory of capitalism over the forms that preceded it historically, in other words, the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal landed aristocracy and over the other classes of the *ancien régime* in Europe, Asia, and all countries.

At the time of the *Communist Manifesto* modern industry had only begun to develop and was limited to a very few countries. In order to hasten the explosion of the modern class struggle, the proletariat was called upon to fight alongside bourgeois revolutionaries in anti-feudal insurrections and in the wars of national liberation which in that period could only assume the form of armed struggles. Thus the participation of the workers in the great French revolution and in its defence against the European coalitions (including its Napoleonic phase) belongs to the great historical course of proletarian struggle, in spite of the fact that even then the bourgeois dictatorship suppressed the first communist social manifestations fiercely.

Due to the defeats suffered by the still allied proletarians and bourgeois in the revolutionary movements of 1848, Marxists consider

(1) The members of the *Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* (KADP) in Germany, and the Dutch group inspired by Gorter and Pannekoek and assembled around the review *De Tribune*. They separated from the International definitively in 1921.

this period of anti-feudal strategy to extend to 1871 in Europe since historical feudal regimes still existed in Russia, Austria, and Germany, and since the conquest of national unity in Italy, Germany, and also Eastern Europe remained a precondition for European industrial development.

3. The year 1871 is an obvious historical turning point. The struggle against Napoleon III and his dictatorship is already clearly a struggle against a capitalist form, not a feudal one, and hence a product and evidence of the antagonistic concentration of modern class forces. Although it perceived a military obstacle to the modern bourgeois historical development of Germany in Napoleon III, revolutionary Marxism immediately championed the exclusively proletarian struggle against the French bourgeoisie that was waged by all parties of the Paris Commune — the first workers' dictatorship.

With this phase the possibility of a choice between two opposed historical groups and between two national armies is closed for Europe, since a «restoration» of pre-bourgeois forms had become socially impossible in two historical areas: England and North America on the one hand, and Europe as far as the border with the Czarist and Ottoman empires on the other.

#### a) First Opportunist Wave: Close of the 19th Century

4. Disregarding the Bakuninist movement in the First International (1867-1871) and the Sorelian movement in the Second International (1907-1914), which we consider foreign to Marxism, the first wave of opportunism in the ranks of the Marxist proletarian movement was social-democratic revisionism. With the bourgeoisie's victory assured everywhere, a phase without insurrections and without wars was opened. The revisionist position, pointing to the extension of industry, the increase in the number of workers, and universal suffrage, held that socialism was possible through a gradual and bloodless evolution. Thus Bernstein attempted to empty Marxism of its revolutionary content by asserting that it did not belong to the working class, being instead a distorted reflection of the bourgeois insurrectional period. In this phase, so claimed revisionism, the tactical question of alliances between progressive or left bourgeois parties and proletarian parties acquired a new dimension. It was no longer a matter of assisting the birth of capitalism, but of passing from capitalism to socialism through laws and reforms; it was no longer a matter of fighting together in the city and countryside, but of voting together in parliamentary assemblies. Such a proposal of alliances and blocs and even the acceptance of cabinet posts by the proletariat's leaders assumed the historical character of a defection from the revolutionary path, and therefore radical Marxists condemned all electoral blocs.

#### b) Second Opportunist Wave: 1914.

5. The terrible second wave of opportunism struck the proletarian movement at the outbreak of the war in 1914. Countless parliamentary and trade union leaders, large groups of militants, and even entire parties portrayed the war between states as a struggle that might lead to

a restoration of feudal absolutism and to the destruction of the bourgeoisie's civilized conquests as well as its modern productive network. Accordingly they preached solidarity with one's own national state in war-time. This was so on both sides of the front, since on the side of the advanced bourgeoisies of England and France there was Czarist Russia.

The majority of the Second International plunged into opportunist complicity in the war. Few parties, among them the Italian Socialist Party, escaped this fate, and only advanced groups and factions aligned with Lenin, who defined the war as a product of capitalism and not a conflict between capitalism and more ancient social forms. Lenin concluded not only that the *Union Sacrée* and the national alliance had to be condemned, but that the proletarian parties in each country must call for revolutionary defeatism against all warring states and armies.

6. The Third International was formed on the historical anti-social-democratic and anti-social-patriotic basis.

The entire proletarian International not only refused the practice of alliances with other parties for the exercise of parliamentary power; more than that, it denied that the proletarian party alone could conquer power by legal means, however «intransigent» this party may be, and on the ruins of the peaceful phase of capitalism it reaffirmed the necessity of armed violence and the dictatorship.

Not only did the Third International repudiate all alliances with warring governments, even in «defensive» wars, and maintain a class opposition, even in wartime; beyond this, it strove to carry out defeatist action behind the battlelines in every country in order to transform the imperialist war between bourgeois states into a civil war between classes.

7. The revolutionary reply to the first wave of opportunism was the formula: no electoral, parliamentary, or ministerial alliances to obtain reforms.

The reply to the second wave was the tactical formula: no war alliances, after 1871, with one's own state and bourgeoisie.

The belated effect of these reactions prevented the proletariat everywhere from taking advantage of the turning point and collapse of 1914-1918 to engage and win the fight for revolutionary defeatism and for the destruction of the bourgeois state.

8. The sole imposing historical exception was the victory of October 1917 in Russia. Russia was the only large European state still ruled by a feudal regime, and was only sparingly penetrated by capitalist forms of production. In Russia there was a numerically small party which had a tradition of firmly adhering to the correct positions of Marxist doctrine. It had opposed the two opportunist waves within the International, and after the splendid dress rehearsal of the 1905 uprising it had proven its ability to grapple with the problems of a fusion of two revolutions: bourgeois and proletarian.

This party fought alongside of the other parties against Czarism in February 1917, then immediately afterwards against both the liberal bourgeois parties and the opportunist proletarian parties, and succeeded in defeating all of them. Moreover, it played a central role in the reconstruction of the revolutionary International.



9. The significance of this tremendous event is crystallized in irrevocable historical results. In the easternmost country bordering the western European area a relentless struggle led the proletariat alone to power, even though its social development was not entirely complete. After sweeping away the western-style liberal-democratic forms that had just been instituted, the proletarian dictatorship undertook the enormous task of pressing forward economic evolution, a task which entailed overcoming both feudal and new-born capitalist forms. The accomplishment of this task required a victorious resistance against attacks by counter-revolutionary armies and capitalist forces. This necessitated the mobilization of the whole world proletariat to the side of the Soviet power for the attack on the western bourgeois powers. And, with the spread of the revolutionary struggle to the continents inhabited by non-white peoples, it required the mobilization of all the forces ready to take up armed revolt against the imperialism of the white imperialist centers.

10. In the European area the strategy of anti-feudal blocs with the left-bourgeois movements is entirely closed and is replaced by the strategy of armed proletarian struggle for power. But in the backward countries, on the terrain of armed struggle, the emerging proletarian communist parties could not scorn participating in insurrections by other anti-feudal social elements either against the local despotic rulers or against the white colonial masters.

In Lenin's time the historical alternative was as follows: either the world struggle of the proletariat would result in a victory with the overthrow of capitalist power at least in a large part of advanced Europe and the consequent transformation of the Russian economy at rapid tempo, *leaping over* the capitalist stage to catch up with western industry which was already ripe for socialism; or else the large centres of bourgeois imperialism would survive, with the consequence that the revolutionary power in Russia would have to retreat and confine itself to the tasks of only one of two social revolutions, the bourgeois revolution, applying an immense effort to the construction of a capitalist — not a socialist — economy.

11. Thus hastening the conquest of power in Europe was necessary to prevent the soviet state within a few short years from being violently overthrown or from degenerating into a capitalist state. As soon as it became apparent that bourgeois society was reconsolidating itself after the grave shock of the first World War, and that the communist parties would not succeed in winning their battles, except in a few very quickly suppressed attempts, the obviousness of this necessity prompted a search for means to destroy the influence still exerted on significant layers of proletarians by social-democracy and opportunism.

Two counterposed methods were advanced: the first considered the parties of the Second International, which were conducting an open and ruthless campaign against the communist program as well as against revolutionary Russia, as avowed enemies, and combatted them as a part — the most dangerous — of the bourgeois class front. The second consisted in resorting to expedients, to strategic and tactical «manœuvres», in order that the masses influenced by the social-democratic parties could be won over to the communist party.

12. The second method was erroneously justified by invoking the experiences of Bolshevik policy in Russia, thereby deviating from the correct historical position. The Bolshevik's proposals of alliances with other parties — petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois parties — were conditioned by the fact that Czarist power had declared all these movements illegal and compelled them to adopt insurrectional struggle. In Europe it was not possible to propose common action, even for purposes of a manœuvre, on the level of parliamentary or trade union legalism. In Russia, the experience of liberal parliamentarism and legal trade unionism had been very brief in 1905 and lasted only a few months in 1917, whereas in the rest of Europe a half-century of degeneration had turned these domains into fertile ground for extinguishing all revolutionary energies and for imprisoning proletarian leaders in the service of the bourgeoisie. The guarantee provided by the Bolshevik party's firmness in the area of organization and with respect to principles was quite different from any guarantee offered by the existence of proletarian state power in Russia, since — as history has demonstrated — due to the very fact of the existing social relations and international relationship of forces, this power was more vulnerable to the danger of renouncing revolutionary principles and directives.

13. Consequently the left-wing of the International, to which the enormous majority of the Communist Party of Italy belonged until it was practically destroyed by reaction (promoted above all by the historical error in strategy), demanded that in the West all alliances and proposals of alliances with socialist and petty-bourgeois political parties (the tactic of political united fronts) be rejected. It agreed that communists must attempt to enlarge their influence on the masses by participating in all economic and local struggles and by calling upon workers from all organizations and persuasions to develop these struggles to the maximum. But it denied absolutely that the activity of the party should ever be subordinated to the action of political committees, fronts, blocs, or alliances between several parties, even if only for the purpose of public declarations not affecting the internal intentions and directives of the party apparatus. With even greater vigour it rejected the alleged «Bolshevik» tactic when it assumed the form of the «workers' government» slogan, an agitational formula (which on a few occasions led to disastrous practical experiences) for taking power by parliamentary means through a heterogeneous majority comprising communists and socialists of all shades. If the Bolshevik party had been able to envision participating without danger in provisional and multi-party governments during the revolutionary phase, and if this enabled it to pass immediately to the most abrupt autonomy of action and even the outlawing of its temporary allies, then this was possible *solely* because the configuration of historical forces was entirely different: the period of double revolution created an immense pressure, and the existing state was bound to crush any attempt to take power by parliamentary means. It was absurd to transpose such a strategy to a situation where the bourgeois state had a half-century of democratic tradition behind it, with parties that had submitted to constitutional legality.

14. In the balance, the tactical method pursued by the International from 1921 to 1926 proved negative, and in spite of this, at each

Congress (Third, Fourth, and Fifth, and the Enlarged Executive of 1926) more opportunistic variants were adopted. This method was based on the following rule: change tactics according to the assessment of the situation. Every six months new stages in the development of capitalism were revealed by spurious analyses, and each stage had to be combatted with new manœuvres. This is what is at the root of revisionism, which has always been «voluntaristic». When it recognized that the predictions about the advent of socialism had not yet been fulfilled, it thought it could force history with a new practice, but in fact it only ceased to struggle for the proletarian and socialist objective of our maximum program. The reformists of 1900 reasoned that since the situation precluded the possibility of insurrection from then on, it was senseless to await the impossible; why not work for concrete possibilities, elections, legal reforms, and union gains. When this method failed, trade union voluntarism reacted by placing the blame on political practice and on the political party as such, and advocated action by audacious minorities in a general strike led by the unions alone in order to change the situation.

Similarly, when the International saw that the Western proletariat did not take up the struggle for its own dictatorship, it resorted to expedients in order to break the impasse. The result of this was that once the momentary imbalance in capitalist forces had passed, the objective situation and the relationship of forces were not appreciably changed, while the movement became weakened and more and more corrupted. Thus it happened that the impatient revisionists to the right and left of revolutionary Marxism ended up in the service of the bourgeoisie in the *Union Sacrée* of the war. Theoretical preparation and the restoration of principles were sabotaged by the confusion created between the conquest of total power by the proletariat and the formation of «friendly» governments through the support and parliamentary or ministerial participation of communists. In Saxony and Thuringia the experiment ended in a farce, and only two police were needed to remove the government's communist leader from his post.

15. No less confusion was caused in the realm of internal organization, and the difficult task of splitting the revolutionary elements from the opportunists in different parties and countries was compromised. It was thought that new elements, easily manipulable by the centre, could be obtained by tearing off the left-wings *en bloc* from the socialist parties. The new international instead, after an initial period of formation, should have had a stable operation as the world party of the proletariat, to whose national sections new proselytes had to adhere individually. The conquest of large groups of workers was sought, but in reality there was only conniving with the leaders, and this disorganized the leading cadres of the communist parties, continuously changing and rechanging the composition of their leaderships during periods of active struggle. Factions and cells within the socialist and opportunist parties were acknowledged as communist, and organizational fusions were practiced. Thus, rather than becoming fit for struggle, almost all parties were maintained in a state of permanent crisis, and functioned without continuity or a well-defined delimitation between friend and foe; consequently continuous failures occurred in the various nations. The Left instead demands organizational uniformity and continuity.

Another point of disagreement was the replacement of a territorial organization of communist parties by one based on the workplace. This restricted the horizon of the base organizations, which consequently comprised only elements from the same trade with parallel immediate economic interests. The natural synthesis of the various social «thrusts» in the party with its single final objective was weakened. It was expressed only in slogans and directives transmitted by the representatives of the higher centres, who moreover had become party officials and began to exhibit all the characteristics that had been criticized in the political and trade union functionarism of the Second International. This critique cannot be confused with a demand for «internal democracy» or with the regret that party leaders cannot be chosen through «free elections». Instead, at issue were a profound divergence of conceptions concerning the organic character of the party as an historical body living in the reality of the class struggle, and a profound deviation in principle, which rendered communist parties unable to foresee and confront the opportunist danger.

16. Analogous deviations arose within Russia, where, for the first time in history, the movement faced the difficult problem of organization and discipline within a communist party that had attained total state power and naturally had undergone an enormous growth in its membership. The difficulties of the relationship between the domestic social struggle for a new economy and the external political revolutionary struggle created differences of opinion between the Bolshevik Old Guard and new members. The party's leading body which now had not only the party apparatus, but also the entire state apparatus in its hands, was not content with basing itself on the party's doctrine, its tradition of struggle, and the unity and organic character of the international revolutionary movement in order to promote its own opinions or those of the majorities which formed within the leadership, but began to suppress the opposition and protests of militants by means of measures executed by the state apparatus. It proclaimed that in the interest of the revolution any disobedience toward the party centre not only had to be suppressed by internal organizational measures, including even expulsion from the party, but it should also be considered as an attack against the revolutionary state. Such a false relationship between the two organs, the party and the state, obviously created the possibility that the group controlling both of them might enforce the abandonment of the principles and historical line that had characterized the party during the pre-revolutionary period and that belonged to the whole revolutionary proletarian movement.

The party must be considered an organism, united in its theory and action; and membership in it imposes binding obligations on the leaders and militants. But joining (or leaving) the party must not be accompanied by any physical coercion, and this rule must be observed before, during, and after the seizure of power. The party alone, and with complete autonomy, leads the struggle of the exploited class to overthrow the capitalist state, just as it leads the state of the revolutionary proletariat alone and with complete autonomy. But precisely in its capacity as an historically transitory revolutionary organ, the state cannot intervene with legal or police measures against members or

groups in the party without this signifying a serious crisis. From the moment when this practice was adopted in Russia the party experienced an influx of opportunist elements with no other objective than to procure advantages or to induce the state to favor their interests, and these dubious members were accepted without hesitation. Thus, instead of the state beginning to wither away, the party dangerously swelled in size. Because of the mechanical reversal of this relationship, foreign elements succeeded in eliminating the orthodox Marxists from the leadership of the party and the Soviet state, and the betrayers of revolutionary principles were able to paralyse, then try and sentence the consistent defenders of those principles, including those who perceived the irreparable deviation too late. In fact, the government, feeling the repercussions of all the relations it maintained with domestic enemy forces as well as with foreign bourgeois governments (including antagonism and open struggle), resolved the problems and dictated solutions to the leadership and organizational centre of the Russian party. The latter in turn, easily dominated the parties of the other countries in the international organizations and congresses and manipulated the directives of the Comintern which became increasingly conciliatory and eclectic.

The Italian Left, without contesting the revolutionary historical merits of the Russian party, which had led the first proletarian revolution to victory, always maintained that the contributions of other parties still engaged in open struggle with the bourgeois regime remained indispensable. Hence in order to resolve the questions of revolutionary action in Russia and the rest of the world, the following hierarchy was necessary: the International of world communist parties; its different sections, among them the Russian section; and finally, for Russian policy, the Communist government executing the party's directives. Any other arrangement could only compromise the internationalist character of the movement and its revolutionary efficiency. Lenin himself had acknowledged on many occasions that if the revolution were to extend to Europe and the world, the Russian party would assume not even second place, but fourth place at best in the general political and social leadership of the communist revolution. Only on this condition was it possible to avoid the possibility of a divergence between the interests of the Russian state and the objectives of the world revolution.

17. It is not possible to date precisely the beginning of the third opportunist wave, the third pathological degeneration of the world proletarian party, following the two previous ones which had paralysed Marx's International and led to the shameful decline of the second Socialist International. After the political, tactical, and organizational deviations and errors dealt with in points 11 to 16 above, the International succumbed to a full-fledged opportunism with Moscow's attitude toward totalitarian forms of bourgeois government and the repression of the revolutionary movement. These forms appeared after the great proletarian assaults that followed the first World War in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bavaria, the Balkan states, etc. In a formula of questionable Marxist accuracy the International defined these forms from the economic point of view, as a capitalist offensive aimed at lowering the standard of living of the working class, and, from the political point

of view, as an attempt to suppress the freedoms of liberal democracy. Whereas traditionally Marxism had considered liberal democracy to be the most propitious atmosphere for the corruption of the revolutionary movement, the International presented it as a milieu favourable for a proletarian offensive. These new forms were actually the fullest and most complete realization of the great historical course foreseen only by Marxism: on the one hand, economic concentration testifying to the social and global character of capitalist production and compelling the capitalist system to consolidate its apparatus; on the other hand, the consequences in the area of politics and social war resulting from the inevitable final confrontation between classes envisioned by Marxism, corresponding to a situation in which the pressure exerted by the proletariat still remained below the defensive potential of the capitalist class state.

The leaders of the International committed a gross historical error by confusing these events of the postwar period with the Kerensky period in Russia. This led not only to a grave error of theoretical interpretation, but also to an unavoidable reversal in tactics. A defensive and conservative strategy was established for the proletariat and for the communist parties, recommending the formation of fronts with all the least combative and shrewdest bourgeois groups (and consequently the least sound allies) which maintained that it was necessary to secure immediate advantages for the workers without depriving the popular classes of rights of association, voting rights, etc. The International did not understand that fascism or national socialism had nothing to do with a revival of feudal and despotic forms of government, nor did it signify a predominance of supposedly right bourgeois strata opposed to the more progressive big industrial capitalist class, much less an attempt by classes intermediate between the employers and the proletariat to set up an autonomous government. Moreover, it did not understand that fascism, discarding the repugnant mask of parliamentarism, inherited pseudo-Marxist social reformism *in toto*, and assured the workers and the most deprived masses not just a vital minimum, but a series of advances in the realm of social assistance, through a number of measures and interventions by the class state in the interest of preserving capitalism. Thus the International issued the slogan of the struggle for freedom, which was imposed on the Italian party by the chairman of the International from 1926. Yet almost all the party's militants wanted to combat fascism, then in its fourth year in power, with autonomous class politics, and not by making blocs with all the democratic, or even monarchist and catholic parties, for the purpose of demanding the return of constitutional and parliamentary guarantees. From this period the Italian communists had striven to denounce the content of the anti-fascism practiced by all the middle bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, and pseudo-proletarian parties; and in vain they warned that all revolutionary energies would end up in ruins once the International had embarked on the path of degeneration which finally led to the Committees of National Liberation during the Second World War.

The policy of the communist party is by its very nature offensive, and in no case must it fight for an illusory preservation of conditions characteristic of capitalist institutions. If the proletariat had to fight

alongside bourgeois forces in the period before 1871, it was not to enable the bourgeoisie to preserve its established positions or prevent the fall of historically attained forms, but instead to enable it to destroy and surpass historically antecedent forms. In the field of daily economics as in general world politics, the proletariat has nothing to lose and therefore nothing to defend, and its only task is to attack and conquer. Therefore in the appearance of concentrated, unified, and totalitarian forms of capitalism, the party above all must recognize its total ideological victory. It consequently must concern itself exclusively with the real relationship of forces for the preparation of the revolutionary civil war, since this relationship has been rendered unfavourable precisely by successive waves of opportunist and gradualist degeneration. It must do everything in its power to unleash the final attack, and when it cannot do this, it must face defeat; but it must never in a cowardly and defeatist manner beseech the devil of fascism to go away, which would amount to begging stupidly for tolerance or forgiveness from the class enemy.

### c) Third Opportunist Wave: Since 1926.

18. In the second of the great historical opportunist waves the betrayal assumed humanitarian, philanthropic, and pacifist forms, and culminated in a repudiation of the insurrectional method and armed action, later turning into an apology for legalized state violence in the war. What is new in the third degenerative wave is that betrayal and deviation from the revolutionary class line are also presented in the form of combat and civil war. In the present phase, the critique of deviation from the class line remains the same, whether the latter takes the form of common fronts, blocs, or alliances formed for purely propagandistic or electoral and parliamentary purposes, or whether it consists in a hybrid collusion with movements alien to the communist party with the object of bringing one government to power over another within a country by means of a military struggle entailing the conquest of territory or strongholds. Hence, the policy of alliances during the Civil War in Spain (during a period of international peace) as well as the entire partisan movement and the so-called «Resistance» against the Germans or the fascists (during World War II), despite the violent methods employed, represent an unequivocal betrayal of the class struggle and a form of collaboration with capitalist forces. The communist party's refusal to subordinate itself to committees composed of heterogeneous parties or situated above parties can only become *more resolute* when legal agitation gives way to the vital and primordial domain of conspiracy, military preparation and military organization, where it is criminal to have anything in common with non-proletarian movements. It is useless to recall that in cases of defeat, the collusions always ended with a barrage of reprisals against the communists, and in cases of apparent success, with the complete disarming of the revolutionary wing and the denaturation of its party, giving rise to a new consolidation of bourgeois law and order.

19. All these manifestations of opportunism, both in the tactics imposed on the European parties as well as in the governmental prac-

tice in Russia, were crowned after the outbreak of the Second World War by the Russian state's policy *vis à vis* the other belligerent states and by the directives given by Moscow to the communist parties. Not only did these parties not refuse to support the war in all capitalist countries, nor take advantage of the war in order to initiate class actions of revolutionary defeatism with the objective of smashing the state; on the contrary, in the first phase Russia concluded an agreement with Germany, and consequently, while it was decided that the German section should not take action against the Hitler regime, Russia dared to dictate a so-called Marxist tactic to the French and English bourgeoisies, and Moscow recommended that the parties conduct illegal actions against the state and army. But as soon as the Russian state found itself in military conflict with Germany, it consequently acquired an interest in the effectiveness of all the forces opposed to Germany. Not only were the parties in France, England, etc., given the opposite political directive and the command to go over to the Front for national defence (exactly as the Socialists denounced by Lenin had done in 1914), but all theoretical and historical positions were reversed, and the war conducted by the Western powers against Germany was declared — not imperialist — but a war for freedom and democracy from the very beginning, since 1939, when the war broke out and all the pseudo-communist press and propaganda had been directed against England and France.

Thus it is clear that the forces of the Communist International (which formally was liquidated at a certain point in order to provide the imperialist powers with a better guarantee that the communist parties in those countries were completely at the service of their respective nations and fatherlands) had not been employed at any time during the long war to bring about the fall of a capitalist power or the conditions for a conquest of power by the working class. Instead, they were employed *only* in open collaboration with an imperialist camp; and moreover a collaboration with one or another camp according to the changing military and national interests of Russia. The fact that it was no longer a case of simple opportunist tactics, even driven to its extreme, but a total abandonment of the historical positions of communism, was proved by the audacity with which the political appreciation of the bourgeois powers was reversed. France, England, and the United States, defined as imperialist and plutocratic in 1939-40, became representatives of progress, freedom, and civilization in the subsequent years, and shared the program for world reorganization with Russia. But such a spectacular transformation, which was alleged to be in conformity with the theory and texts of Marx and Lenin, did not even have a definitive character, since the first dissensions after 1946 and the first local conflicts in Europe and Asia were enough for Russia and its followers to condemn these same states, in the strongest language, as the most heinous imperialisms.

The ordeals faced by the revolutionary parties that assembled in Moscow in 1919-20 spiraled as they went from contacts with the just denounced social-traitors and social-patriots, to united fronts, to experiments with coalition workers' governments that renounced the dictatorship, to blocs with petty-bourgeois and democratic parties, and finally

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to a total enslavement in the war policies of capitalist powers, today [1951] not only openly acknowledged to be imperialist, but even no less «fascist» than Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Consequently it is no wonder that in the last thirty years any vestige of revolutionary class character in these parties has been completely destroyed.

20. The third historical wave of opportunism has combined the worst characteristics of the two preceding waves, just as capitalism incorporates all the phases of its development in its modern structure.

At the end of the second imperialist war the opportunist parties were allied with all the avowed bourgeois parties in the Committees of National Liberation and participated alongside them in the formation of constitutional governments. In Italy they even participated directly in monarchist cabinets, deferring the question of the institutional state form to a more «opportune» moment. Consequently they repudiated the use of revolutionary means for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, sanctioning the necessity of legal and parliamentary struggle, to which all the class impulses of the proletariat had to be subordinated in the interest of a conquest of political power by a peaceful and electoral road. They advocated participation in governments of national defence, preventing any opposition to governments committed to the war, just as they had refrained from sabotaging the fascist governments during the first years of the conflict, and supported the war efforts through the production of indispensable goods.

Opportunism pursued its disastrous course, and even sacrificed the Third International formally to the class enemy of the proletariat, imperialism, in order to promote «a further strengthening of the United Front of the Allies and other united nations». Thus the historical prediction of the Italian Left, formulated during the first years of the existence of the Third International, had come true. It was inevitable that the growth of opportunism and its domination over the workers' movement should lead to the liquidation of all its revolutionary orientations.

Therefore the reconstruction of the class force of the world proletariat has been severely belated and difficult, and will require a greater effort than ever before.

21. The counter-revolutionary influence on the world proletariat, which was broadened and deepened by the direct participation of opportunist parties on the side of the victorious states in the second world conflict, has resulted in a military occupation of the defeated states in order to prevent an uprising of the exploited masses. This occupation was accepted and justified in its counter-revolutionary intent by all the so-called socialist and communist parties during the conferences at Yalta and Teheran. Thus any serious possibility of revolutionary attack against the bourgeois powers was obstructed, both in the victorious allied countries and in the defeated countries. This demonstrated the correctness of the position of the Italian Left, which considered World War II to be imperialist and the military occupation of the defeated countries to be counter-revolutionary, and predicted the absolute impossibility of an immediate revolutionary resurgence.

22. In perfect consistency with all its increasingly counter-revolutionary past, Russia and its affiliated parties modernized the theory of permanent class collaboration, postulating the peaceful, global

co-existence between capitalist and socialist states. A peaceful competition between states was substituted for the struggle between states, burying once more the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism. A socialist state, if it does not declare holy war against imperialist states, declares and maintains the class struggle within the bourgeois countries, and prepares the proletariat in theory and practice for insurrection. This is the only position that conforms to the program of the communist parties, which do not hesitate to proclaim openly their opinions and aims (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848), and advocate and postulate precisely the violent destruction of bourgeois power.

Therefore the states and the parties that admit the hypothesis of peaceful «coexistence» and «competition» between states instead of propagating the absolute incompatibility between enemy classes and the armed struggle for the liberation of the proletariat from the yoke of capitalism, are in reality neither revolutionary states nor revolutionary parties, and their phraseology only masks the capitalist content of their structure.

The persistence of this ideology within the ranks of the proletariat represents a tragic obstacle. Until it is surmounted there will be no resurgence of the class struggle.

23. The political opportunism of the third wave appears more abject and shameful than its predecessors, since it has descended to the most repugnant depths of pacifism.

The manoeuvre that consists in alternating between pacifism and partisan resistance conceals the trebly scandalous about-face in the appreciation of Anglo-American capitalist imperialism, defined as imperialist in 1939, democratic and a «liberator» of the European proletariat in 1942, and once again as imperialist today.

In reality even at the time of World War I, American capitalism showed that it was a powerfully reactionary and imperialist power (albeit in a lesser degree than today). Lenin and the Third International drew attention to this several times during the glorious period of revolutionary struggle.

By exploiting the attraction pacifism possesses for the workers opportunism exercises an undeniable profound influence on them, although it is obviously inseparable from social pacifism.

Defence of peace and country constitute propaganda themes common to all states and parties coexisting within the United Nations, the new edition of the League of Nations, that «den of thieves» as Lenin called it. These themes are based on class collaboration and represent the fundamental principles of opportunism.

The present-day opportunists show that they are completely outside the revolutionary process, and that they are not even at the level of the utopians, Saint-Simon, Owen, Fourier, nor even at the level of Proudhon himself.

Revolutionary Marxism rejects pacifism as a theory and a propaganda method, and subordinates peace to the violent overthrow of world imperialism. There will be no peace until the whole world proletariat has been liberated from bourgeois exploitation. Moreover, Marxism denounces pacifism as a weapon of the class enemy used to disarm the proletariat and deliver it from the influence of the Revolution.

24. It has become a habitual practice for opportunism to offer a helping hand to the parties of imperialism, to form national governments of «national unity» between classes. Stalinist opportunism has realized this aspiration in the highest bourgeois international organization, the United Nations, declaring an increasingly broader, unlimited inter-class collaboration on the condition that war between the two rival imperialist blocs be avoided and that the repressive apparatus of the states be camouflaged by a veil of democracy and reformism.

Where Stalinism rules uncontested it has realized this condition by setting up a national power in which all social classes are represented. In this way it pretends to harmonize opposed interests, as in the bloc of four classes in China, where the proletariat, far from having conquered political power, is constantly subjected to the pressure of youthful industrial capitalism, and pays the price of «National Reconstruction» on the same basis as the proletariat of all the other countries of the world.

The disarming of revolutionary forces offered to the bourgeoisie by the social patriots of 1914 and by the ministerialists such as Millerand, Bissolati, Vandervelde, Mac Donald, etc., scourged and battered by Lenin and the International, pales before the scandalous and cynical collaboration of the present social-patriots and ministerialists. The Italian Left opposed the slogan of «workers' and peasants' government», showing that either it was a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and was thus an equivocation and a pleonasm, or it meant something else, and was thus unacceptable. It rejected all the more the overt theory of class collaboration, even if it was presented as a transitory tactical means. It claimed the unconditional monopoly of the state and its organs by the proletariat and the class party and called for its unitary and indivisible class dictatorship.

#### IV Party Action in Italy and Other Countries in 1952

1. Since its inception the history of capitalism has presented an irregular development marked by the periodic cycle of crises, established by Marx to be more or less ten years apart and preceded by periods of intense continuous development.

Crises are inseparable from capitalism, which, in spite of these, does not cease to grow, expand, and swell, until the matured forces of the revolution deal it a final blow. Parallel to this the history of the proletarian movement during the course of the capitalist period presents phases of high pressure and advance, phases of sudden or gradual retreat caused by defeat or degeneration, and phases of long wait before a resurgence. The Paris Commune was defeated violently and a period of relatively peaceful development followed, during which precisely the revisionist and opportunist theories emerged, proving the retreat of the revolution.

The October Revolution was defeated through a gradual inolution, culminating in the violent annihilation of its surviving architects. Since 1917 the revolution has been the missing element and even today [1951] a resurgence of the revolutionary forces does not appear to be imminent.

2. In spite of its cyclical crises the capitalist mode of production has extended and taken hold in all countries almost without relent in its technical and social aspects. On the other hand, the tormented history of antagonistic class forces is linked to the vicissitudes of the general historical struggle, to the potential contradiction already present at the dawn of bourgeois rule over the feudal and precapitalist classes, and to the political evolution of the two historical class enemies, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, a development marked by victories and defeats, by errors in tactics and strategy. The first clashes date from 1789, proceeding through 1848, 1871, 1905, and 1917 to today. All the while the bourgeoisie has sharpened its weapons of struggle against the proletariat, corresponding to the increasing growth of its economy.

By contrast, in the face of the gigantic extension and growth of capitalism, the proletariat has not always been able to employ its class energies successfully, and after every defeat has fallen back into the net of opportunism and betrayal, remaining far from the revolution for an increasingly long period of time.

3. The cycle of victorious struggles, of even more disastrous defeats, and of opportunist waves in which the revolutionary movement has succumbed to the influence of the enemy class, represents a broad field of positive experiences through which the revolution matures.

After the defeats, the revolutionary resurgences have been long and difficult. But although it does not appear on the surface of political events, the thread of the movement has not been broken; it maintains the revolutionary class tradition crystallized in a small vanguard.

Periods of political depression:

— from 1848, from the second Parisian revolution to the eve of the Franco-Prussian war, the revolutionary movement was embodied almost exclusively in Marx and Engels and a small circle of comrades.

— from 1872 to 1889, from the defeat of the Paris Commune to the beginning of the colonial war and the re-opening of the capitalist crisis which would lead to the Russo-Japanese war and then to World War I, represents a period of reflux of the movement during which the consciousness of the revolution is represented by Marx and Engels.

— from 1914 to 1918, the period of World War I during which the Second International collapsed, Lenin and other comrades from a few countries carried the movement forward.

With 1926 another unfavourable period for the revolution began during which the October victory was liquidated. Only the Italian Left maintained the theory of revolutionary Marxism intact and in it alone are crystallized the premises of the class resurgence. During World War II the conditions of the movement worsened further, since the war placed the whole proletariat at the service of imperialism and Stalinist opportunism.

Today we are in the midst of the depression, and a resurgence of the revolutionary movement is conceivable only after a period of many

years. The length of the period corresponds to the gravity of the wave of degeneration, as well as to the increasingly large concentration of enemy capitalist forces. On the one hand Stalinism has assumed the most destructive characteristics of the two preceding waves of opportunism, and on the other the process of capitalist concentration today is far greater than that immediately following World War I.

4. Today, although we are at the deepest point of the political depression and the possibilities for action are considerably reduced, the party, following revolutionary tradition, does not intend to break the historical line of preparation for a future large-scale resurgence of the class movement, which must integrate all the results of the previous experiences. The restricted nature of practical activity does not mean a renunciation of revolutionary postulates. The party recognizes that the restriction of certain sectors of activity is quantitatively accentuated, but the entirety of the aspects of its activities is not changed on account of this, and the party does not renounce any area deliberately.

5. Today the principal activity is the restoration of the theory of Marxist communism. We are still at the stage of «the weapon of critique». The party will present no new doctrine but reaffirms the full validity of the fundamental theses of revolutionary Marxism, which have been confirmed amply by facts and more than once falsified and betrayed by opportunism in order to cover retreats and defeats.

The Italian Left denounces and combats the Stalinists today, as it has always denounced all revisionists and opportunists.

The party bases its activity on anti-revisionist positions. Lenin combated the revisionism of Bernstein as soon as it appeared on the political scene, and restored the principled line by demolishing the arguments of the two social-democratic and social-patriotic revisions.

The Italian Left denounced the first tactical deviations as soon as they emerged within the Third International, as the first symptoms of a third revision, which has manifested itself fully today and which contains the errors of the first two.

The proletariat is the last exploited class and consequently in its turn will exploit no one. This is precisely why the doctrine was born with the birth of the proletarian class itself and can be neither modified nor revised.

The development of capitalism from its inception to today confirms the theorems of Marxism as they are set down in the classical texts, and all the purported «innovations» or «teachings» of the last thirty years only confirm that capitalism still lives and must be destroyed. Therefore the central point of the present doctrinal position of the movement is this: no revision of the original principles of the proletarian revolution.

6. The Party today undertakes a work of scientific observation of social phenomena, with the aim of confirming the fundamental theses of Marxism. It analyses, confronts, and comments on recent and contemporary events. It repudiates any doctrinal elaboration that tends to found new theories or to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Marxist doctrine for the explanation of phenomena.

All this work of demolishing opportunism and «deviationism» (Lenin: *What Is To Be Done?*) is today the basis of party activi-

ty. The party follows revolutionary tradition and experiences in this work during these periods of revolutionary reflux and the proliferation of opportunist theories which had as their violent and inflexible opponents Marx, Engels, Lenin and the Italian Left.

7. With this correct revolutionary evaluation of the present-day tasks in hand, the party, although small and having only limited links with the mass of the proletariat, although tenaciously attached to the theoretical task as the most immediate task, absolutely refuses to consider itself as a circle of thinkers or simple researchers who are looking for new truths or who have supposedly lost yesterday's truth and consider it inadequate.

No movement can triumph in history without a theoretical continuity, which is the experience of previous struggles. Consequently the party prohibits personal freedom to elaborate and conjure up new schemata and explanations of the contemporary social world. It prohibits the individual freedom of analysis, critique, and perspective even for its members who are the best prepared intellectually, and defends the firmness of a theory which is not the product of blind faith, but the content of the proletarian class science, constructed from the experiences of several centuries, not from the thought of individuals, but from the force of material facts, reflected in the historical consciousness of a revolutionary class and crystallized in its party. Material facts have only confirmed the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

8. The party, despite the limited number of its members resulting from clearly counter-revolutionary conditions, does not suspend proselytism and the propagation of its principles in all oral and written forms, even if its meetings are attended by only a few individuals and its press has a limited circulation. The party considers its press as the principal activity in the present phase, since it is one of the most effective means permitted by the real situation for indicating the correct political line for the masses to follow, and for an organic and more extensive propagation of the principles of the revolutionary movement.

9. Events, and not the will or determination of individuals, thus also determine the extent to which the penetration of the broad masses is possible, limiting it today to a small part of the party's general activity. Nonetheless the party does not pass up the opportunity to insert itself into every fracture, every break, knowing well that there can be no resurgence until this sector of its activity has been expanded amply and has become dominant.

10. The acceleration of the process depends not only on the profound social causes of historical crises, but also on the work of proselytism and propaganda with the reduced means at the party's disposal. The party denies absolutely that the process can be stimulated by expedient recipes and manoeuvres directed at groups, leaders and apparati that usurp the name «proletarian», «socialist», or «communist». These methods, which characterized the tactics of the Third International after Lenin's absence from the political scene, had no other effect than the disorientation of the Comintern as the organizational expression of the theory and the operative force of the movement, while every «tactical expedient» caused the parties to lose sections of their membership. These methods have been advocated and approved by the Trotskyist move-



ment and by the Fourth International, which wrongly consider them to be communist methods.

There are no fixed recipes for accelerating the class resurgence. There are no «manœuvres» or «expedients» that can make the proletariat listen to its class voice. Such methods cannot make the party appear for what it truly is, but instead deform its function, undermining and compromising the effective resurgence of the revolutionary movement, since the latter is based on the real maturation of the situation and on the ability of the party to respond adequately, an ability that it can acquire only through doctrinal and political inflexibility. The Italian Left has always combatted the method of resorting to tactical expedients to stay afloat, denouncing it as a deviation from principles and incompatible with Marxist determinism.

The party, in line with its previous experiences, thus abstains from issuing or accepting invitations, open letters, and agitational slogans as a basis for forming committees, fronts, and agreements with other political movements and organizations, whatever they may be.

11. The party does not conceal the fact that in phases of resurgence it cannot strengthen itself in an autonomous way unless a form of trade union associationism of the masses emerges.

Although the trade union has not always been free from the influence of the enemy classes and has functioned as a vehicle of extended and profound deviations and deformations, and although it is not a specific revolutionary instrument, nonetheless it is an object of the party's attention, and the party does not refuse voluntarily to work within it, distinguishing itself clearly from all the other political groups. While the party recognizes that it can conduct trade union activity only in a sporadic manner today, it never renounces this activity. From the moment when the concrete numerical relationship between its members, sympathizers, and unionized workers in a given branch reaches a certain proportion, and on the condition that the organization in question does not exclude in its statutes and *a priori* the possibility of conducting an autonomous class activity, the party will undertake to penetrate it and attempt to conquer its leadership.

12. The party is not a direct descendent of the Abstentionist (Left-Wing) Faction of the Italian Socialist Party, although this tendency played a large role in the movement that culminated in the formation of the Communist Party of Italy at Livorno in 1921. The opposition of the Left within the Communist Party of Italy and the Communist International was not based on the theses of abstentionism, but on other basic questions. Parliamentarism loses its importance little by little with the development of the capitalist state, which will assume the form of an open class dictatorship as Marxism has recognized since its inception. Even where they seem to survive, the parliamentary electoral institutions of the traditional bourgeoisies are emptied of their content more and more. What remains is only an empty phraseology which in moments of social crisis reveals the open dictatorial form of the state as the final expression of capitalism, against which the revolutionary proletariat must direct its violence. Therefore since this historical level and this present relationship of forces has been reached, the party can have no interest in democratic elections of any kind and does not deve-

lop its activity into this domain.

13. It is a fact of revolutionary experience that revolutionary generations succeed each other rapidly and that the cult of the individual is a dangerous aspect of opportunism, since the defection of old leaders to the enemy and to conformism due to exhaustion is a natural fact confirmed by the rare exceptions. This is why the party directs the maximum attention to the youth and devotes the maximum effort to the recruitment of young militants and to their preparation for political activity, excluding any careerism or personality cult.

In the present historical atmosphere of counter-revolutionary high potential, we are compelled to create young leadership elements which will guarantee the continuity of the revolution. The contribution of a new revolutionary generation is a necessary condition for the resurgence of the movement.

## The Abolition of Wage Labour Means the Abolition of Production for the Sake of Production

The Marxist critique of bourgeois society is essentially the critique of wage labour. The Marxist condemnation of capitalism is essentially the condemnation of production for the sake of production. Bourgeois prejudice and Stalinist lies have corroded minds so severely that these points are generally not understood. Consequently it is constantly necessary for Marxists to bring attention to them and explain what they mean.

«Capital does not consist in accumulated labour serving living labour as a means for new production. It consists in living labour serving accumulated labour as a means for maintaining and multiplying the exchange value of the latter. ...Thus capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other» (*Wage Labour and Capital*).

In the historical as well as the logical perspective, wage labour, in its generalized form, and production for the sake of production are inseparably connected. Wage labour can only be generalized if the majority of the population has no means of production and, in general, no property at its disposal. In these circumstances the vast majority of mankind is obliged to sell its life — more precisely, its labour power — to an alien force in exchange for money. This «alien force», as everyone knows, is the social class that owns the means of production. Like all previous ruling classes in history, this class endeavours to appropriate the means to enjoy its existence without itself taking part in social production, without submitting to the obligation to work.

This would lead one to believe that the object of capitalist production lies in the satisfaction of the ruling class' needs and that the lives of the vast majority of mankind are subordinated to this object. In reality things are not quite so simple. If it were exclusively a question of supporting a handful of capitalists, then even if they had colossal appetites it would not be necessary for millions upon millions of humans to work themselves to death daily in the mad frenzy of production. The consumption needs of the financial and industrial and

financial obligarchy as well as the state bureaucracy are totally out of proportion to the billions of hours of work contributed annually by the wage earning population in all the advanced industrial countries. Everyone knows that a business which paid its wage labourers «too much» would run a greater risk than if it only paid out an insufficient dividend in the eyes of its shareholders. Such a business would be shipwrecked, bankrupt. And any state that did business in the same way would go bankrupt, too. Only in the absence of the prejudices of bourgeois political economy, and only in the light of the facts of tangible reality, is it possible to understand that capitalist economy, far from corresponding to the personal needs of the members of the bourgeoisie (much less the needs of the wage labourers), obeys the *impersonal laws of capital* which force themselves even upon the ruling class!

As we have been told *ad nauseam*, these laws require the *reduction of production costs*. This command rings out from the factories, where the productive workers are employed, to all other firms and all private and public administrations, and consequently to the entire wage earning population. The *dictatorship of the market* provides the explanation for the following paradoxical fact: the more wealth mankind produces or can produce, the more feverishly it must work, the more strictly must it hold its needs in check, the worse it lives in the final analysis — if, contrary to the capitalists, we do not take «live well» to mean «buy more».

Then it has to be admitted that the object of production is not social consumption, but production itself! In present day decadent capitalism even the most insipid intellect is shocked by this absurdity, and innumerable people can be found who ask with real or feigned *naïveté*: Why economic growth? This is gratifying to know because the most commonplace reality forces millions of humans who have never read a learned book called *Capital* by Karl Marx to recognize a truth that has been proclaimed for over a century: *the standpoint of capitalism is production for the sake of production and not for the satisfaction of the needs of society*. This is the case because capitalism produces *commodities*, and not *use values*.

Under these circumstances, what is the character of a *social revolution* that transforms the whole basis of production? It is this: the class which possesses no means of production or means of existence and which is consequently condemned to wage labour appropriates everything it needs for the assurance of its collective existence. The collective appropriation of social products for the satisfaction of collectively determined needs means the abolition of values as an «objective quality» possessed by these products.

The standpoint of the class of wage labourers cannot be «the reduction of production costs», for in the last analysis what capitalism refers to as production costs is *human life itself*, which it has reduced to a fairly wretched thing! Simply formulated, the proletarian standpoint lies in «increasing production costs»! Therefore the class of wage labourers should be preoccupied not with working more intensively as the productivity of labour increases, but just the opposite, with utilizing increased productivity to free itself from the ancient yoke of labour. Anyone who isn't a hypocritical born-again holy-roller, a blood sucking

bourgeois, or an opportunist pimp can comprehend this easily.

As long as there existed alongside capitalism a wide range of small commodity production whose effective social yield was exceedingly scanty and which condemned the producers to a purely private, isolated, and hence more barbarous existence than the life of the proletarians, this standpoint of the class of wage labourers could not yet appear as the *interest of society as a whole*. For the same reason it could not yet become a reality. But ever since capitalism prevailed over more backward modes of production the interest of society as a whole has been *identical* with the interest of the class of wage labourers. All particular interests must be mercilessly subordinated to this interest; the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat presupposes the victory of this interest. The capitalist norm of *free enterprise* will be suppressed completely, both in the «democratic» West and in the allegedly «socialist» East. In Russia and China its operation has only been restricted rather than eliminated (moreover it is being extended again today under the pressure of the market) as is the case with a single factory of a large enterprise *vis à vis* the head office or with a state industry in the West (eg. the post office) *vis à vis* the state. «The modern state, *no matter what its form*, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital» (*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*: our emphasis).

Whether the *entrepreneur* appears as a private individual or the State, «free enterprise» represents nothing other than a *particular interest*. It acts as if it were the centre of the universe. It lays hold of as much means of production and raw materials and employs as many workers as its capital and its sales prospects enable it to, without asking itself if these means of production and this labour power might not be more useful in another field of activity. It produces as many of its particular commodity as it can dispose of on the market without asking itself if other goods might not be more useful for society. And it is even prepared to go as far as to wage a «psychological war» against the whole population in order to convince it that it has a *need* for this particular commodity.

Both private management and state management lead to the same result, and the enterprise as the navel of the world leads to such absurdities that it becomes increasingly intolerable. The principle that will be introduced with the replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be the direct determination of production *by the whole of society*. This presupposes that the previous individual enterprises have been fused together into a harmonious, cohesive whole, which is only possible if the distribution of workers among different branches of production and spheres of activity in general, today transpiring as a result of economic speculation and competition, is *centrally administered and proceeds from the needs of society*. Only in this way will society avoid having too much steel (and weapons!) and too little food; too much transportation and too little living space; or too many films, recordings, and books, and too few educational and health services. In place of the *anarchy* of capitalist production, communists «demand the *strictest* control, by *society and the state*, of the quantity of labour and the quantity of consumption;

only this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the control of the workers over the capitalists, and must be carried out, not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers*» (*State and Revolution*: our emphasis).

It is peculiar that, on the one hand, to the extent the capitalist yoke becomes increasingly suffocating, the whole world understands better and better the necessity of a centrally planned economy. But on the other hand — and the action of opportunism is responsible for this — very few people understand that a harmonious, cohesive form of social economy can only replace free enterprise when goods are no longer produced as commodities, that is, as values that fetch a price in money, as exchange values! Nevertheless, within a present-day factory the different departments do not «exchange» their products. The assembly department, for example, receives its parts from another department without having to «buy» them. Within the factory the labour time expended on every step is accurately calculated in order to avoid small-scale waste, whereas on the level of the whole society large-scale waste is the rule! These quantities of labour do not assume the form of values. Only when the product is finished and about to «leave» the factory does it acquire a price in money.

Each product must compulsorily «leave» the factory because the factory boundaries are too narrow and because on the broader frontier of social production, considered on the scale of a country, a continent, or even the whole world, innumerable individual factories move around like confused molecules. When the narrow boundaries of the factory have been extended to embrace the social production of a country, of a continent, and finally of the whole world — in other words, when within the total economy the factory occupies the place of the present-day department within a factory (this is the precise meaning of socialization of the means of production) — then it will no longer be necessary for products to acquire a price. Furthermore, this will be completely impossible because value and price can only arise *on the boundary of the system*. They will disappear completely as soon as this system includes the whole world. Capitalist commodity production will *yield* to the extent that the socialist revolution gains ground. This does not mean that capitalism will *survive as long as* the revolution has not taken hold of the whole world, but that it will disappear *only* where the proletariat has already seized power. Still, in the words of the *Manifesto*: «United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat».

Now the abolition of commodity production necessarily means the *abolition of wage labour itself*. Wages are never anything other than the price of a particular commodity: labour power. Besides the market in general, wage labour *presupposes* the labour market, that is, *anarchy in the allocation of labour power*. If products no longer represent values, and if the allocation of labour power is no longer subject to the accidental laws of the market, then it is also impossible to consider labour power itself as an exchange value and to give it a market price. The members of society, henceforth undertaking collectively social labour, which meanwhile has been simplified enormously, will no longer be «payed» for their real or alleged «services». The part of the social

product destined for consumption is available to each individual as his share.

This is what is meant by the *abolition of wage labour*, which has always been a synonym for communism, to Marx and three or four generations of revolutionaries. One need not be a great theoretician to understand that there is nothing «utopian» or «impracticable» about it. And finally, it expresses something that all wage labourers who have not been turned completely into vegetables by opportunism already know in their hearts: Men should work in order to live, instead of living in order to work!

Our party is devoted to the cause that will make this historical necessity a reality, the COMMUNIST REVOLUTION!

## Nicaragua: The Sorry Path of Sandinism

After almost forty years of political stability and virtually absolute social peace in contrast to the turbulence of neighbouring countries, a period of profound political and social instability has opened in Nicaragua. The combined factors of the present international economic crisis and the post World War II period of capitalist accumulation in Central America, under the sponsorship of United States imperialism, has thrown the working masses into the depths of poverty. With the massive expropriation of land by the great landowners, the peasant masses have lost their minuscule holdings, their only regular means of survival, and have been forced to concentrate in miserable shantytowns, where their only hope is to possibly find seasonal work, a few months out of the year, in the large coffee, cotton and sugar cane plantations. The revolt which has shaken Nicaragua is the expression of this condition of generalized misery. This situation furthermore is not unique to Nicaragua, but general throughout this whole region.

The events in Nicaragua, which we will analyze in the following pages, constitute the first great sparks of working class revolt which in the coming period must necessarily engulf all of Central America, the whole Caribbean area and the rest of the Latin American continent as well, and whose shock waves cannot but contribute to the arousing of the great proletarian ally to the North in the nerve center of imperialism.

### The Roots of the Revolt

During the last 40 years order was maintained in Nicaragua by the Somoza regime and its professional army, set up and placed in power by American imperialism soon after dissipating the peasant revolt which has been linked to the name of Augusto Sandino. The first serious and lasting cracks in the regime date from the early 1970's. They were widened by the terrible earthquake of 1972, which destroyed 75% of the capital city, 95% of the shops and small enterprises, as well as eleven of the largest factories (it is estimated that 40% of the total production was destroyed). *But this natural catastrophe only aggravated the rampant economic crisis.* In particular, the agricultural crisis that broke out in 1967 has become sharper every year.

The reconstruction of Managua, the «biggest business» in the history of Nicaragua, contributed to the further growth of these cracks, especially by rupturing the political unity of the ruling classes which until then had been solidly behind the Somoza regime. This resulted from the fact that the Somoza clique took advantage of the affair, and even created an *ad hoc* bank to channel international aid. When the bourgeoisie was excluded from the distribution of hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, when it was saddled with draconian conditions on Somoza-financed loans of the money necessary for the reconstruction of ravaged businesses, and finally, when it was hit with heavy under-the-table supplementary taxes for reconstruction, the bourgeoisie decided this was too much. This is how it suddenly became democratic and organized in an opposition movement. Its first public manifestation took place in March 1974 in the form of the First Congress of Private Initiative, which, according to the organizers, enjoyed the support of 90% of the country's manufacturing and commercial sector. The Congress' resolution quite naturally demanded three essential things from the Somoza government: fiscal reform; the right to participate in government decision-making (read: the right to get its hands indiscriminately on the enormous capital hoarded by Somoza); and the recognition of trade union organizations. The latter demand by no means flows from a fraternal sympathy for the workers, but from the fact that the workers themselves had been set in motion with their own demands.

In fact, the earthquake of 1972 not only left the proletarians of Managua homeless and in extreme desperation, but it also contributed to a galloping inflation. Furthermore, the thirst for profit among the rebuilders of the capital city compelled the government to try to increase the work-week from 48 to 60 hours. Hence it was the employed proletarians who broke the social peace with a wave of strikes from the end of April 1973 onwards. The movement acquired such a strength that Somoza's brutal repression could not control it, but instead only succeeded in helping it to grow. Unable to contain the movement by force, the Somoza regime had to give in to the strikers' demands at the end of May. The proletarians went back to work, but their state of agitation by no means ended at that, because by the end of 1973 and early 1974 new strikes had broken out, now no longer limited to single factories.

When they saw the potential of this strike wave, the opposition capitalists demanded the recognition of trade unions. They understood that a force had to be created which could control the young Nicaraguan proletariat, now that it had made such a vigorous debut on its own terrain for the first time in the history of the country.

It was only when this wave had completely receded that the *Sandinista National Liberation Front* (FSLN) decided to step on to the scene, executing a spectacular feat. On December 27, 1974 it held almost the whole Somoza government hostage and forced it to meet all its demands, especially the release of imprisoned Sandinist leaders. But because this mission was carried out just when the movement had begun to dissipate and without any preparation of the masses for Somoza's inevitable revenge, it could only result in a terrible blood-bath, which halted the social movement for three years.

Immediately after the hostage incident Somoza mounted the counter-attack. He initiated a mass arrest of the workers who had distinguished themselves during the strikes, set up military tribunals, and declared martial law. He ordered a large anti-guerrilla operation with the active participation of American «counter-insurgency» experts permanently stationed at Fort Gulick, Panama, cleaning up residential quarters and villages where the Sandinistas might have had bases, and interned hundreds of proletarian and peasant families in concentration camps. The operation resulted in more than 3,000 proletarians assassinated or reported «lost». The FSLN tactic of «hit and run» already proved to what extent it went against the interests of the mass movement!

There were new social disturbances in mid-1977, and these culminated in the uprising of August-September 1978. The animating spirit of the movement was in the shantytowns where workers were crammed together with uprooted peasant masses that had been proletarianized especially since the rapid capitalist development of the 1960's. It is these proletarianized masses, rather than the industrial workers as such, which constitute the bulk of the Nicaraguan proletariat. Their movement became broader and broader from early 1978.

The obvious catalyst was the January 10, 1978 assassination, on Somoza's orders, of the leader of the bourgeois opposition, Pedro Chamorro, who had become too dangerous a competitor (the American ambassador favoured him for the presidential elections which were to take place three years later, in accordance with Somoza's plan for democratization). The next day the streets of Managua were invaded by demonstrators who set fire to American banks and Somoza's businesses, such as the textile factory «El Porvenir» and the sinister «Plasmaferesis», which was devoted to traffic in human blood. This is how the name «celulas de fuego» (fire cells) was coined to designate the small groups that proliferated for a time everywhere.

When none of its trade union demands were satisfied by Somoza, the bourgeoisie found itself obliged to follow its original plan: it called the «strike» itself, and moreover, paid the workers for their days on strike! It hoped that the workers would spend their paid «holidays» at home as it had told them to. But its hopes quickly turned to despair, for the strikers not only took to the streets, but under the table, they took advantage of the opportunity to pose their own demands, as was the case with the agricultural workers of «Ingenio San Antonio» (a sugar cane complex in the Chinandega region, the largest enterprise in Nicaragua with 20,000 workers) who, exhibiting a total lack of interclassist scruples, demanded a wage increase. Out of fear of being taken advantage of, the bourgeoisie suspended the «strike» on February 6 (it had begun on January 24). But two days after the strike was called off between 20% and 25% of the factories were still shut down.

The movement didn't stop there. The demonstrations continued throughout the country, particularly during the ceremonies held to lay the soul of pious don Chamorro to rest. The murder of a young demonstrator and resident of the shantytown of Monimbo by the National Guard on February 22 touched off a chain reaction of uprisings that continued until the end of the month. The movement began in Monimbo, then extended to Diriamba, Managua, Chinandega, and

Leon (in the Shantytown of Subtiava). However, the movement was strongest in Monimbo, an Indian shantytown of the city of Masaya. The residential quarter was seized by the masses who, with stones, sticks, machettes, and a few rare rifles as their only weapons, resisted the attacks of a National Guard armed to the teeth. The local garrison was kept in check for several days and it had to call in reinforcements from the capital. Only after these had arrived, equipped with light cannon and supported by armour and helicopters dropping incendiary bombs, was the uprising crushed. The result of two days of fighting was 200 dead and several hundred wounded and missing. Monimbo was almost completely razed. Nonetheless, at the end of August, Masaya revolted again.

It was only on the occasion of this new wave, which became a real insurrection, that the FSLN again appeared. At the beginning of the year it had only led attacks at Granada and Rivas, situated outside centres of agitation. On February 22 it took several congressmen hostage in the Palacio Nacional. This detonated the powerful explosion of the poor masses, who, in their state of extreme tension, took the Sandinistas exploit to be the signal for the final attack against the Somoza regime, since the sermons of the priests, the bosses, the petty-bourgeois, the reformists, the Sandinistas — in short, the whole democratic riffraff — pointed to this despised dynasty as the source of their misery.

Undoubtedly the bourgeoisie had sensed a new explosion, because it had been engaged in careful preparations, revealed by a leader of the Enlarged Opposition Front (FAO) in the September 11, 1978 issue of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, for launching another «general strike» at the beginning of the same week as the Sandinistas' action. The offensive obliged the bourgeois «leaders» to put off the «strike» for a few days. Once again they hoped to channel the revolt into a dead end, and once again their manoeuvre fell short of its mark.

The explosion began at Matagalpa and spread like wildfire to all the important cities: Maysaya, Chinandegá, Leon, Esteli, Jinotepe, Managua, etc. For a few days the masses, almost barehanded, stood up to the heavily armed and well trained National Guard. For the first time the FSLN participated in the uprising alongside the masses. In spite of whatever the bourgeois press (or leftist stupidity) would like us to believe, the movement was by no means the work of the FSLN, for the latter merely attached itself to the spontaneous movement of the masses. In fact this is precisely what one of the principal figures in the Sandinistas, Victor Tirado, admitted to the Colombian review *Alternativa*: «We, the Sandinistas, took over the leadership of a popular insurrection that broke out simultaneously in the cities».

But if they «took over the leadership», it was not in order to organize and prepare the masses for the inevitable confrontation with the National Guard and give them a political leadership. They buttressed themselves on the movement in order to obtain recognition from the bourgeois opposition and even from American imperialism. By precipitating the masses onto the path of armed struggle, the Sandinistas led them straight into a new massacre. And the massacres suffered by the masses in each of the insurgent towns, one after the other, were further facilitated by the tactics of the FSLN. No sooner had it at-

tracted an immense enemy force to each town by the massive implantation of its own troops (on the pretext of dispersing the enemy!) then it abandoned the inhabitants to the approaching horde, leaving the masses without the slightest means of defense. In their hasty retreat the Sandinistas even took with them tens and hundreds of inhabitants who had distinguished themselves in combat, that is, the vanguard of the local masses.

## The Civil War - 1979

During the insurrection of August-September 1978, the FSLN merely inserted its own military actions into a *spontaneous* uprising of the masses in order to bring the revolt under its control. However in the new popular explosion, which began in June 1979, it was different. This time the Sandinistas were not taken by surprise. Their intervention undoubtedly had a greater specific gravity than the spontaneous mass revolt, which they consequently succeeded in channeling away from its original course by subordinating it to their general political «strategy». They could achieve this because during the 8-month interval between the two uprisings, the FSLN was able to create an «internal» organizational structure numerically as well as geographically much more extensive and much more effective than before, and to forge closer ties with the masses, chiefly by means of a system of residential committees.

This *organization* and officering of the masses, far from being employed for the destruction of even the last semi-colonial remnants of which Somoza was only one manifestation among many — and they certainly were never employed for the destruction of capitalism, which we never expected of the FSLN — were utilized by the Sandinistas for their own specific purpose, contrary to what even the far left press tries to prove: they were used as a *means of pressure in negotiations* in order to force American imperialism to accept the participation of the FSLN in the «negotiated solution» of the «Nicaraguan crisis», and in order to reach compromises with the very parties they should have considered as their mortal enemies.

The desire to «obtain recognition» by the United States is made explicit in the interview granted by FSLN historical leader Tomás Borge to the Spanish newspaper *El País* in January 1979, where he suggests that the diplomatic intervention of the United States after the events of September 1978 to serve as an intermediary between Somoza and the bourgeois opposition was a setback:

«The United States», he said, «was unable to find a formula which would resolve the Nicaraguan conflict in accordance with its interests... To a large extent this fact is a result of the attempt to put out of the way in an artificial manner an objective reality, such as the existence of Sandinism as the total force of public opinion. It is really absurd to have pretended to solve the problem [here, in the language of the bourgeois, «revolution» is reduced to a «problem»!] without the co-operation of the FSLN».

As for Humberto Ortega, now commander-in-chief of the Sandinista popular army, this is what he declared in *El País* on April 28, 1979:

«It is going to be very difficult to hold the people in check (!); they are already quite radicalized... The only force capable of avoiding chaos in Nicaragua and instability in the region is the FSLN».

The Sandinistas' activities in Managua bring this «strategy of negotiation» into relief, and show how catastrophic it was for the working masses. The «Sandinist offensive» was launched in the month of May. One month later, Managua, which had been relegated to a secondary importance by the Sandinistas, revolted. On June 8, the first clashes began and by June 10 practically the entire city was in revolt. The violence of the explosion can be measured by the speed of the advance of the battle-front. On June 13, the fighting had moved to within 1.000 meters of Somoza's bunker. But at the very moment when the *nerve centre* of the Somoza regime could have been paralyzed by a decisive blow, rather than drawing their reserves into the attack, the Sandinistas halted the spontaneous offensive, retreated, and held the masses back in the suburbs of the city. If they had been *truly revolutionary* the Sandinistas would have taken advantage of this favourable moment to crush Somoza. But the Managua uprising didn't enter into the initial plans of the Sandinistas; as one of their leaders explained, it happened «too soon» for them! The FSLN intended first to gain control of the major provincial towns in order to force American imperialism to grant it recognition, and then, once it had succeeded in controlling more «positions» than the Somoza regime, to force the same imperialism to allow it to take power, with all the necessary concessions.

The FSLN programme called for negotiating the seizure of power. But since the programmatic proclamations were not enough for American imperialism, the FSLN had to prove in deed that: 1) It hadn't the slightest intention of «making a revolution» (and principally to overthrow the state, in the reassurance that Nicaragua would not be a new Cuba); 2) It was capable of controlling the masses; and 3) It was capable of governing. Evidently the sublime tolerance with which the Sandinistas respected Somoza's right to decide for himself the moment when he would leave, the cynical use of populated areas as a shield from the National Guard's artillery bombardments, and the arrogant sacrifice of the poorly armed but courageously devoted proletarian inhabitants of these areas as shock troops against Somoza's ruthless war machine, made a favourable impression on the severe conscience of Wall Street. Barely two days after the offensive of the Managua masses had been halted (i.e. on June 16, 1979) Washington recognized the FSLN as a legitimate opposition element, which, in that capacity, would be allowed to participate in the quest for a solution to the crisis in Nicaragua. Next Washington called a meeting of the OAS, which Somoza baptized with a veritable carnage in the streets of Managua. At that meetings, Cyrus Vance personally advocated the replacement of Somoza by a government of «National Reconciliation» which would mark a «clean break with the past», and threatened an American intervention in order to allow the FSLN to give proof of its new concessions.

Subsequently the USA began to bring considerable pressure to bear on Somoza in order to persuade him to abandon power, *but* at the same time allowing him the time necessary to perform a bloodbath on the masses, particularly in the capital, which would *ensure order* for

some time to come. The outcome of the massacre, a mere 40.000 dead!!! On June 27 the new American negotiator, Bowdler, arrived in Managua without bothering to present his credentials to Somoza. His mission was to force Somoza to resign, following the officious pronouncements in Washington. As the new negotiator was arriving the FSLN was making an unexpected withdrawal of its forces from the suburbs of the capital, leaving the inhabitants disorganized and stupefied in the face of the concentrated repression of the National Guard. The same fateful day it announced its intention to form a State Council of 30 members, in which «all the currents representative of the anti-Somoza struggle» would be represented. Vance's fundamental condition had been met.

On July 9 the FSLN, now already in control of the major towns in the country, began its advance on Managua. On July 10 its forces camped about one day's march from Managua and stayed put, fixed, hoping that Bowdler would make Somoza resign!

On July 12 the Junta met with Bowdler again, and after this session the Junta declared itself ready to adopt a «more flexible position without compromising our principles» (one wonders what principles!) given that... the military situation was favourable! In return the Junta offered Bowdler a plan for replacing Somoza. Somoza would resign and power would pass to the Congress, which in turn would recognize the Sandinista-bourgeois provisional government. Bowdler rejected the plan, most certainly to allow Somoza enough time to inflict his lesson of terror on the masses paralyzed by the FSLN, which remained parked tranquilly a day away from the capital. Bowdler asked for yet another meeting, which was held on July 14 in a very cordial atmosphere, and which he called a «step forward».

Meanwhile in the night of July 16 Somoza resigned, relinquishing power to the President of the Congress, the grotesque Francisco Urcuyo, as provided for in the Sandinista plan. Obviously the «step forward» was Bowdler's acceptance of the plan and his determination to remove Somoza. But it is also clear that Bowdler exacted his price for the agreement by being assured a few «men of confidence» in the key posts of the Provisional Government, as well as other guarantees. In fact a number of the members of the government have direct links with the United States. It is not surprising that this cabinet, according to the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, «is considered to be moderate even among the Somoza milieu».

Just two days after Somoza's resignation, July 19, the Sandinista forces entered Managua. The National Guard surrendered without resistance.

## The Sorry Path of Sandinism

Somoza's retreat and the consolidation of the present *Government of National Reconstruction* have confirmed in practice the shameful theoretical surrender of the FSLN to the ultra-counterrevolutionary bourgeois opposition. Moreover, this surrender had been foreshadowed long ago in the programmatic schema of the FSLN by a series of contemptible betrayals and by an irresistible tendency toward the most

insipid reformism.

This tendency can be verified by comparing the proclamations of guerrilla warfare promulgated from the heights of the tropical *cordillera* before the social crisis broke out with the positions adopted by the Sandinistas gradually after the explosion. It is evident that, by their petty-bourgeois substance manifest in the democratic principles, in the interclassism, and in the nationalism which stand out clearly above the assertion of the continental character of the revolutionary struggle, the early positions of the Sandinistas already contained their future tendencies in embryo. However we must add that in spite of this, in their early period, the revolutionary aspects of Sandinism (the call for insurrection against imperialism, etc.) dominated over their conservative aspects.

We can show briefly how this tendency towards the most vulgar bourgeois reformism took shape in the FSLN programme. In 1969 that programme defined the objective of the organization as follows:

«The FSLN is a politico-military organization whose objective is the seizure of political power by means of the destruction of the bureaucratic and military apparatus of the dictatorship, to be accomplished by the establishment of a revolutionary government based on the alliance of workers and peasants and on the participation of all the anti-imperialist forces of the country».

But then came the economic and social crisis, and with it the eruption of the worker and peasant masses which the Sandinistas defined as the basis of the revolutionary government. The Sandinistas were forced to translate their revolutionary words into revolutionary deeds. However, confronted by harsh reality, the guerrillist, anti-imperialist dreams burst, and the Sandinistas set about changing their lyrics. Consequently, in 1977, when a new powerful social wave had been set in motion and the FSLN had embarked upon what it is accustomed to calling a «new period» in its activity through its «tercerista» tendency (chronologically the third to emerge within the FSLN, enjoying the support of the Socialist International), it dropped all talk of the struggle for power based upon the support of the working class and the peasantry. Quite the contrary, the conduct of the guerrilla actions now continued under the banner of alliance with the bourgeois opposition. The new phase of offensive initiated by the *terceristas* began on October 12, 1977, and in connection with it the «Declaration of the 12» appeared. The definition given by *Lucha Sandinista* (April 1978) is sufficient to characterize the authors: the group is made up of «professional people, intellectuals, factory owners, and Church officials» — the flower of the bourgeoisie. The «Group of 12» became the channel through which the Sandinistas established links with the big bourgeoisie. These links were accompanied by increasingly pronounced and shamefaced programmatic renunciations.

Yesterday's anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic struggle based on the worker-peasant alliance was put aside. It now became an anti-Somoza struggle, no longer based on well-defined *classes* but on an alliance with all «anti-Somoza» forces. This was the position taken by the *terceristas* beginning with their first answer to the «Declaration of the 12»:

«We accept the appeal to participate in a *national solution*, as does the document of our twelve compatriots, but we must point out that there will

be no solution in Nicaragua until Somoza and Somozism have disappeared... Somoza must leave, there must be no more Somozas in the ranks of the army and the government. The deadly apparatus of corruption and crises represented by the dictatorship must be dismantled, and then the FSLN will be disposed to participate in the quest for a *national solution with all the other honest, patriotic, and anti-Somoza sectors of the country*... Our immediate objective is to ensure that Nicaragua is liberated from the Somoza dictatorship and that the country embarks on a true democratic process» (quoted from *Che Guevara* no. 3, organ of the Junta of Revolutionary Co-ordination).

In 1978 a programme entitled «Why does the Sandinista Front fight alongside the People?» appeared. The introduction of this programme confirms the renunciation of the «revolutionary» formulation of 1969 in regard to the Front's objectives, now reduced to the banal anti-Somozism expressed in the text just quoted. The formula employed is «bring a *DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR GOVERNMENT to power*» (the capitals are in the text), and no longer the «revolutionary seizure of power by the FSLN», as in 1969. In addition to the fact that the principal economic and social measures lost their (vague) anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic character of 1969 and were replaced by the simple expropriation of Somoza and Co.'s holdings, a few important changes on other cardinal points should be noted.

*The Army*: the 1969 programme spoke of abolishing the National Guard and creating a «popular, revolutionary, and patriotic army» and of arming the workers, peasants, and students and «other sectors [??] which might organize into popular militias». This is a classical formula of radical petty-bourgeois democracy. In 1978, besides mentioning nothing about suppressing the National Guard (a significant omission), the programme speaks of creating a «new national army», a «democratic and popular» army. At a single blow the revolutionary attribute, undoubtedly too distasteful to the bourgeoisie, as well as the even more distasteful popular militias, have disappeared. We now stand face to face with a classical formulation of *bourgeois reformism*. But this isn't the worst of it: the attitude toward the constituent parts of the National Guard changes too. The 1969 text says that the revolutionary army will be open to the *soldiers* of the National Guard on the following conditions: «that they supported the guerrilla war», «that their hands were not sullied by revolutionary blood», and that they hadn't «plundered the people». In 1978 these criteria were so obliterated that practically the whole National Guard could be incorporated into the «new democratic army». In fact not only the soldiers, but also the officers could participate, and the condition of admission, in addition to support for the FSLN, was simply reduced to «entering our ranks and yielding to our forces!» (1). To the officers of the National Guard it was in effect: «On the day the bourgeoisie and its master, US imperialism, decide to rid themselves of Somoza, surrender to the Sandinistas and you will keep your jobs! Until then, you may continue to massacre without any fears about your future».

(1) We must note that in spite of all the efforts of the new «revolutionary» government to encourage the officers of the National Guard to stay, they instead on the whole have chosen to leave with Somoza and take up more comfortable quarters in the U.S.



*Attitude toward imperialism:* the 1969 programme speaks of «putting an end to yankee interference» and of expelling «the yankee military mission and the Peace Corps». It devotes a special clause to the «abolition of the Chamorro-Bryan treaty [which] makes Nicaragua and other countries of central America colonial possessions of yankee imperialism». In respect to the foreign debt, it announces that it «will not recognize the usurious loans imposed on the country by yankee monopolies». In 1978 US imperialism is no longer mentioned, even in passing! And obviously the anti-imperialist measures advocated in 1969 have disappeared, too. It is true that, out of respect for the habits of protocol, the 1978 programme speaks vaguely of «doing away with all foreign interference», without specifying how, or even what is the «foreign» nationality in question, so as not to offend the White House and its front-man, Carter. And instead of the summary check-list of a few of the manifestations of imperialist domination, which the 1969 text proposes to terminate, the 1978 document speaks loosely of «refusing to recognize all the treaties [...] which are hostile to our dignity», a vague, conditional formula which in fact leaves the door open to recognizing all treaties. As for the crucial question of the famous «loans» (which are nothing other than a form of imperialist exploitation), no mention is made of them at all! This is no «accidental omission», but a rejection of this measure. As Tomás Borge explained in an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El País*:

«We have an interest in maintaining friendly relations with all peoples and governments of the world, including the United States, of course on the condition that they give our dignity and our sovereignty the most absolute respect. We do not wish to maintain artificial contradictions with anyone [the torments of the colonial yoke are an «artificial contradiction» in the language of these euphemizing petty-bourgeois]. One important aspect in this regard is our readiness, already expressed elsewhere, to respect responsibilities accepted previously. We are prepared, without demagoguery or extravagance [!], to re-negotiate our foreign debt».

Although the 1978 programme represents only one of three tendencies in the FSLN, it reflects perfectly the Sandinistas' propensity toward a complete tailism in relation to the oppositional bourgeoisie, and through this medium, in relation to imperialism, whose servile, impotent creature that bourgeoisie is. This is so obvious that the programme of the United Peoples's Movement (MPU), which provided a basis for the unification of the three tendencies, is clearly copied from the 1978 programme. The MPU was created barely a few weeks after the brutal crushing of the uprising in November 1978, in perfect conformity with the creation, advocated by the *terceristas*, of a broad anti-Somoza front, that is, an alliance with increasingly broader sectors of the bourgeoisie. Its composition proves this: the 25 organizations contained in it were almost entirely formed of students, artists, intellectuals, professional people, and other bourgeois types.

In general, the MPU programme repeats the same formulations as the 1978 programme on the principal points (eg. army, imperialism). Yet it did take another step forward on the sorry course of Sandinism, which supported the MPU unreservedly (moreover the FSLN was the principal author of the MPU programme), by making certain chan-

ges which guarantee the bourgeoisie that it renounces all revolutionary voluntarism.

The second clause («Government»), for example, proposes a government of «democratic unity», and no longer of «popular democratic unity», as in the 1978 programme, which probably had caused the bourgeoisie some shivers over the distasteful recollection of past social explosions. Another significant point that demonstrates the abjectly reformist character of the FSLN is the clause on the juridico-legal structure of the State. Thus point 3 («*democratization of the country*») states not only that the military hierarchy may keep its status in the new national army, as we saw in the 1978 programme (repeated almost *verbatim* here), but that the legal and judicial system which gave legal sanction to the «Somoza dictatorship» and sentenced so many militants and workers, would be preserved. In fact, the programme seeks only to «review the judicial system in order to give it a democratic character» and to «suppress administrative corruption and the venality of the judges».

As if all that were not enough, the FSLN (still through the medium of the MPU) offered more guarantees in the same style in the economic sphere. Besides assuring private enterprise the support of the «government of democratic unity», and guaranteeing its participation in the elaboration of a «Plan of Industrial Development» (point 9), it came up with a supplementary proof of its renunciation of the old utopias of the *montaño* days (point 8, agriculture). It gives the *latifundi* the assurance that they may abandon their fear of the agricultural, peasant, anti-*latifundist* revolution advocated earlier by the FSLN. The «*thorough going agrarian reform*» advocated by the Sandinistas today through the MPU will even help the *latifundi*! Consequently, to crown the seven measures that comprise this reform (as always, the central point is the confiscation of Somoza's lands), one central point specifies emphatically that the «*State will provide loans to all producers (large, middle-sized, and small)*». And this from the mouths of the former apostles of the anti-imperialist peasant revolution!

### An Appraisal of the «Sandinist Revolution»

The liquidation of «Somozism» was a real historical necessity for capitalist development in Nicaragua, for this development required a modern bourgeois state representing the interests of the entirety of the ruling classes and thus having a larger social base. Somoza's regime, although having ties with certain bourgeois factions, monopolized power and used it in its own interests of a clique with a national social base composed practically of nothing other than the National Guard, itself set up and trained by U.S. imperialism. Although this regime had been useful in preventing any popular struggle or revolt against imperialist exploitation for forty years, it became in the end an obstacle to the «free play of competition», that is to say, to the «just and equal» exploitation of the sweat and blood of the working masses by all the exploiters (let us recall that the bourgeois opposition was formed in reaction against the «*competencia empresarial desleal*», that is to say the unfair economic competition of Somoza's regime). The «Sandinist Revo-

lution», because of the FSLN's successive reversals of its previously revolutionary positions, has been limited to the realization of the bourgeois reformist demand of a change of regime and its only real result has been to place the whole of the ruling classes in power. Its reforms of the state machinery, vaunted by certain «revolutionaries» in the great imperialist nations as «oh, so revolutionary» (the creation of a permanent army, a police force, and organs of «local power», with the latter being only a copy of the local administrative institutions existing in the most vulgar bourgeois democracies, etc) are nothing other than measures of modernization and reinforcement of the already existing state in a direction which is 100 percent bourgeois.

Economically and socially, the «Sandinist Revolution» has done nothing revolutionary up to the present. All the economic and social relations — and also the dependence vis-à-vis U.S. imperialism — remain unchanged and continue to weight down on the working masses, aggravating their poverty always more. This «revolution» is consequently far below the «constitutional revolutions» of the last century in France (1830 and 1848) which developed and completed the process of bourgeois economic and social transformation by depriving the «backwards» factions of the ruling classes of political power and installing a new regime of the more modern bourgeois factions.

The inability of the «constitutional revolutions» of today to touch on the needed economic and social transformations is linked to the general level of international capitalist development. The bourgeois transformation of Nicaragua, just as of all the other Latin American countries, was carried out during a period where capitalism, on the historical level, had already reached its senile, imperialist stage, suffocating the «backwards» countries and areas under its counter-revolutionary weight.

This is reflected on the level of the class struggle by the lack of all revolutionary energy and initiative on the part of the entire Latin American bourgeoisie which is linked on all levels — political, economic and ideological — to imperialism and to the landed and commercial oligarchies. This is why the Latin American bourgeois not only does not propose any program of *radical* social transformations, but does not even pose the problem of deposing of the outdated forms of rule — such as Somozism — in a radical way. In fact, the bourgeois opposition in Nicaragua initially sought to *negotiate* their participation in the government with Somoza. Later, both due to the explosion of the masses, whose hatred towards Somoza's regime prevented any stable solution as long as the Somoza clique remained in power, and due to the intervention of Sandinism whose political weight grew precisely because it appeared in the eyes of the masses as the only anti-somozist force, the bourgeois opposition had to change its strategy and demanded the replacement of Somoza, but always by means of a negotiated transfer of power.

In such a situation where significant bourgeois tasks remain to be accomplished but where the bourgeoisie has lost all revolutionary energy, the only *bourgeois* force capable of taking up a revolutionary struggle is radical petty-bourgeois democracy, as Marxism pointed out over a century ago. To carry out this revolutionary struggle it would

have to «take the reins» from bourgeois democracy and assume leadership of the destitute masses of the cities and countryside. But such a revolution, we must emphasize, could only be bourgeois, even if the radical democratic party cloaked its ideology with pretendedly socialist phraseology.

The significance of the recent events in Latin America is that it has become clear that due to the terrible weight of imperialism and due to the evolution of Castroism in the direction of the maintenance of the status quo in Latin America and in the world, even the petty bourgeoisie in Latin America has been drained of any revolutionary potential. We see today that the FSLN — the last Mohican of guerillism, the form taken by radical petty-bourgeois democracy in Latin America — has lost its revolutionary pretensions by its alliance with openly counter-revolutionary bourgeois factions. The result of the capitulation of the petty-bourgeois leadership — and with the lack of a proletarian party which could lead and organize the working mass against all of its enemies, for the realization of all its needs — has been to reduce a movement with tremendous revolutionary potential to a caricature of a revolution, incapable of satisfying even the smallest needs of the masses, who were the true heart of the revolt. The FSLN in fact, as we have seen above, in the end submitted the social movement to a negotiated replacement of Somozism, just as the bourgeois opposition had attempted to do.

If the Sandinist victory represents a historical step forward it is not because the *Sandinista* and the provisory government represent revolutionary social forces. It is rather because this victory marks the end of a historical period, the democratic-popular wave of the 60's, and can only mark the beginning of a new era on the continental level, the era of the struggles of the proletariat in its own name.

The victory of Sandinism, at the same time, is the swan song of Latin American petty-bourgeois democracy, the most crying expression of the inevitable and irreversible downfall of this current as a revolutionary tendency, which has gone as far as to deny its own origins and its very reason for existence — the struggle against imperialism and the agrarian revolution — in face of a struggle of the proletariat and peasant masses which it had pretended to represent. This is a lesson which can be drawn not only for the struggle of the masses of Nicaragua but for the struggle of the masses of all of Latin America. The resurgence of the Latin American proletariat opens a new historical period which can only bring to the front of the political scene once more the programmatic objectives established by the Communist International for the two Americas in 1920, in the heat of the last great period of world wide proletarian revolution: revolutionary unity against the united front (political, economic and social) of U.S. imperialism and the Latin American ruling classes, that is to say a united revolutionary struggle against the continental pillar of the American world empire.

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