

The Continuing Massacre of Russian and Ukrainian Proletarians for the Greatest Profits of the Capitalists of all Countries

Report presented at the January 2023 General Meeting

The war in Ukraine is entering its twelfth month, and in that time, it has already amply demonstrated that it is not a war like the others that have been taking place, even for years, on the “periphery of the Empire”, from Yemen to Syria, from the Horn of Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, from Armenia to the Himalayan borders, where Indian and Chinese infantrymen are even fighting and killing each other with their bare hands.

It is a war in the heart of Europe, one of the world's largest capitalist agglomerations, pitting two regular armies against each other, and the first conventional, high-intensity conflict fought on the European continent since the end of World War II.

The fighting takes place in ways not seen in decades, perhaps since the Korean War (1950-53) or the Iraq-Iran War (1980-88), and to which Western armies are no longer accustomed or prepared: intense and continuous artillery barrages, deployment of tens of thousands of fighters, extensive use of field fortifications with prolonged life in the trenches, ground air strikes, clashes between dozens of armoured vehicles, fierce struggles for control of urban centres, and high casualty rates among the units.

Prefiguring a New Global Imperialist Confrontation

Hundreds of thousands of men have been mobilised on both sides, and casualties are now counted in the hundreds of thousands as well, obviously largely proletarian.

Clearly, in order to assess such a war, it is essential to take into account the global political and economic situation, the looming crisis push-

ing all bourgeois states toward a policy of rearmament and war.

In December 2022, we wrote “Since 2014, war had been brewing in Europe to give vent to imperialist tensions that walked hand in hand with recurring crises.” Ukraine has been an open wound for years and that is where the war originated based also, as is always the case, on contingent factors.

Not a War Between Russia and Ukraine

The war must be placed in this economic and social climate.

It is true that Russia is now reduced to the rank of a middle power and is certainly not a superpower as the USSR might have been considered, or as the US or China are today; it is true that the Russian High Command has made errors of judgement and that the Armed Forces have shown not a few weaknesses, but it is certain that Ukraine has been able to hold out so far only thanks to the formidable and not disinterested help, both militarily and financially, of the US and secondarily of the other major Western powers whether part of NATO or not.

Only prompt outside help in arms, dollars, information, and trained soldiers enabled the Ukrainian state to keep hundreds of thousands of men at the front and to keep alive a population of a few tens of millions of proletarians even when exposed to the most severe deprivations.

The Ukrainian ruling class, the one that is conducting the war, deciding to resist the invasion, decided to sell its proletarians to NATO to wage war against Russia masking the operation with the lies of defending the country's freedom and independence

Who's Leading the Game

After the recent decision by NATO and allies to supply German tanks to Ukraine, US President Joe Biden declared that the decision “is not a fight against Russia, but a fight for freedom.” He was echoed by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who in a TV interview was keen to reiterate that “no, absolutely not”, Germany has not become a party to the war in Ukraine by delivering Leopard tanks to Kiev.

For his part, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said instead that NATO countries would

now be co-belligerent: “Sending various weapons systems to Ukraine, including tanks... Moscow perceives this as direct involvement in the conflict.”

Imperialist on Both Fronts

Undoubtedly, this was an imperialist aggression of one bourgeois state against another bourgeois state. But we do not pass moral judgement on the war.

We communists do not claim, as the bourgeois philistines do, that every war of aggression is an “unjust” war and every “defensive” war is a just war. In the chaotic ruin of capitalism overwhelmed by its deadly crisis, local wars are a constant and general war an inescapable necessity that drags the bourgeois class and its giant states into its chasm. The aggressors are at once victims and executioners as much as the aggressed.

We claim, moreover, the possibility for the revolutionary socialist state to wage wars of aggression against bourgeois states, just as the Red Army did against Poland between 1919 and 1921, just as we have not failed to express appreciation also for the wars waged by the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the old feudal empires.

Our judgement on this war is therefore very clear: it is a war between imperialist states – and it is not relevant who is the aggressor and who is the aggressed – which pits a more powerful state, Russia, against a weaker state, Ukraine, with the latter, however, being supported by powerful allies, primarily the United States, Poland, and Britain.

In a 1938 essay, Trotsky rightly described Czechoslovakia as an imperialist state in that monopoly capital dominated there and other national minorities were oppressed. Both of these elements also characterise Ukraine today. Moreover, it is evident that Kiev has made itself an instrument of major powers interested in clashing with Russia.

It was once referred to, with reference to the states of Europe that fell under the USSR's sphere of influence, as “states of limited sovereignty”. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, etc., were free to decide how to organise themselves internally but could not change their position in terms of international re-

lations on pain of intervention by the Soviet Army.

With the fall of the USSR everything has changed for nothing has changed: these states have simply changed sides, but they have no real national independence, which is impossible for small nations at this stage of fetid imperialism. To save themselves from Russian influence they had to sell themselves to the United States or Germany, submit to Western imperialism, and become its instruments even in foreign policy.

Against the European Bourgeoisies

The rupture of economic ties between Russia and Germany, as well as between Russia and the rest of Europe, the mothballing of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, for which the US was directly responsible, the embargo on Russian gas and oil, etc., have affected European economies perhaps even more than Russia's. The Chinese economy has also been hit with the partial disruption of the transit route that used to unite Beijing and Berlin via Ukraine. This has largely benefited the US capitalists, especially in the energy sector, who are now exporting LPG to Europe at 4 times the cost of what came from Russia via pipelines, and the military industry that is doing a brisk business with supplies to Ukraine, but also to the other European states that will have to fill their depleted arsenals.

German industry, which for years had enjoyed the opportunity to use cheap and virtually inexhaustible energy sources from Russia, will henceforth have to pay much more for gas and oil than US industrialists. This will result in the loss of market share to the overseas competitor. This is also a war against Germany and European countries.

Toward Rearmament

The war has further accelerated the arms race in all the world's most industrialized countries, starting with Germany, but also affecting France, Italy, Britain, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, and of course China and the United States. By now, the target of 2 percent of GDP spending on armaments that NATO sought to impose on the reluctant European states has been far surpassed by rearmament plans hastily approved under the pressure of war:

According to new data released by the US State Department, due to the war in Ukraine and

tensions in the Indo-Pacific, arms deliveries totalled \$51.9 billion, registering a 49 percent increase over 2021. Germany was the main buyer in Europe with a total of \$8.4 billion; followed by Poland with \$6 billion, mainly as a result of the August 2022 order for 250 M1 Abrams tanks. (Limes, Jan. 26, 2023)

Capitalists in Cahoots

We have repeatedly pointed out, both in our old and in our more recent assessments, that the cooperation between Moscow and Washington has never waned. For the US, Russia is not a competitor; on the contrary, it is mostly an ally, as we have seen in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, where the two powers have cooperated in their respective counterrevolutionary and anti-proletarian roles.

That is why the American bourgeoisie, through its state, maintains a permanent dialogue with the Kremlin. The US wants to wear down the Russian economy and its Armed Forces and contain the Russian attempt to expand westward, but it does not want Russia to collapse, because it is an important counterrevolutionary bastion which maintains bourgeois stability in Central Asia, and possesses an arsenal of thousands of nuclear weapons, which it is necessary to keep under strict control.

Moreover, Western imperialism fears that a crisis in the current regime could trigger a social uprising of gigantic proportions on the borders of Europe.

It is therefore a matter for Washington to wear down and weaken Russia, but not to the breaking point.

What, then, might be the Pentagon's policy? Perhaps to try to ensure that neither army can prevail, that mutual offensives fail, and that the conflict turns into a war of attrition, creating the conditions for a freeze in military operations and a subsequent cease-fire, of course disregarding what this may cost in terms of human and material losses for the proletariat of the two countries.

While the proletariat of Russia and Ukraine is bled dry on the front lines, the imperialist states continue undaunted in their race toward economic crisis and the abyss of world war.

In this tragic situation, as the European proletariat is delayed in regaining its class bearings,

it is only to a Party that unconditionally takes the side of the proletarians, who “have no fatherland” and no flag, and is against bourgeois fatherlands and flags, it is only to this Party which in the storm of war does not lose sight of the goal of the international communist revolution, which is far and near at the same time, it is only to this Party, which is absolutely above and against all fighting parties, will leadership be given of the movement for the resumption of the revolutionary class struggle, when it ineluctably comes.

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The Labour Movement in the United States of America

Part 17: The “Progressive Era”

At the beginning of the century, the US economy, now fully recovered from the “Great Depression” of the 1890s, was heading towards a long period of expansion destined to end with the boom of the years of the First World War. In the forty years after the Civil War, the country had transformed itself from a predominantly agricultural and largely unexplored nation into a major industrial power. The victory over Spain in 1898, in the war for dominion over Cuba, and the subsequent annexations of Puerto Rico and the Philippines, had shown the world that the young American imperialism should now be considered as one of the protagonists of the international scene. If the sanction of American political-military power would come only with the world conflict, the recognition of its economic strength was now a given.

Even before the end of the nineteenth century, industrial production had reached very high levels. The United States had surpassed Great Britain in the production of steel and cast iron in 1890, and coal in 1895. At the beginning of the century, the United States accounted for 30.1% of the world production of manufactured goods, rising to 35.8% in 1913, far above the levels reached by the other great industrial powers, Great Britain and Germany. Also in 1913, the USA obtained the definitive statistical sanction of its economic supremacy: in that year, in fact, its gross national product per capita exceeded even that of Great Britain, until then the first among the industrialised nations. But, perhaps even more importantly, the United States ex-

celled above all because of the rate of growth of its economy, consistently higher than that of the other industrial powers. In the period between 1870 and 1913, the annual growth rate of production per employee was 1.9%, compared to 1.6% in Germany, 1.4% in France, 1.0% in Great Britain and 0.8% in Italy. During the same period, the annual growth rate of the gross national product per capita was 2.2%, well above the 1.7% of Germany, 1.4% of France, 1.2% of Great Britain and 0.7% of Italy.

The development of the US economy in the second half of the nineteenth century was accompanied by a vigorous growth of presence on international markets, especially after the crisis of the 1890s. The value of exports increased five-fold in the fifty years between 1860 and 1910, from 400 to 1,919 million dollars: but in the following five years it grew by 50%, reaching 2,966 million dollars in 1915. Since the 1890s, in fact, there has been a sharp increase in the attention paid to foreign markets. Entrepreneurs, financiers, and political leaders saw in commercial expansion, in the conquest of new markets, the indispensable solution to the dilemma posed by growth. The end of the process of internal colonisation, the so-called “closing of the frontier”, induced the ruling class to look abroad for new spaces for the placement of surplus goods and capital. On this basis, the young American imperialism took its first steps: first, by consolidating its economic and political dominance over the two Americas, and secondly by trying to extend its influence over the Pacific area and the Far East. The “open door doctrine”, enunciated by Secretary of State John Hay in 1899 with regard to China, provided this expansionist drive with a “general strategy”, based on the pursuit of economic penetration in new markets rather than on the classic colonial practice of territorial conquest. At the beginning of the new century, therefore, the United States entered decisively into the international competition between the great powers. Twenty years later, at the end of the First World War, they were already in a position of clear predominance.

While big capital led this epochal advance, a newly formed working class was amassing in the cities, whose characteristics were continually modified, and even disrupted, by the continuous waves of migration from Europe. The differences produced by the different experiences at home intersected and overlapped with religious, cultural, and ethnic divisions. The latter became

particularly relevant towards the end of the century and in the first fifteen years of the 20th century. The migratory flow reached the highest peaks, touching the average of almost one million arrivals per year, in the period between 1900 and 1914. Above all in this period, the influx of emigrants of Slavic or Latin origin from the Mediterranean or eastern areas of Europe became by far predominant, while in the 19th century the immigrants were mostly of Anglo-Saxon, German or Scandinavian origin. As land became more and more expensive, and the possibility of leaving Europe with even a small amount of capital became more and more rare, there were no other possibilities open to immigrants than life in a poor quarter of the city, working in a factory, or in a remote mining village. In the urban areas all the tensions deriving from the impact between an extremely composite and differentiated working class and an industry that was growing and changing its characteristics under the pressure of mechanisation and the search for maximum efficiency were concentrated.

In the course of what was called the “Progressive Era” all social components underwent a rapid evolution. The large corporation in a position of quasi-monopoly certainly represented the antithesis of the previous ideals of American democracy of a rural kind, whose central figures, the farmer and the small independent businessman, had given life to the culture, and the myths, of individualism. The organisation of the trusts constituted, on the economic level, a mortal threat to that culture, because their ability to control the market and prices eliminated every possibility, and even semblance, of free competition. In the political field, the concentration of wealth offered the possibility of corrupting and controlling public affairs on a scale hitherto unthinkable. For this reason, the fight against trusts had already constituted, in the last decades of the 19th century, one of the battle horses of rural populist agitation. Particularly rooted in the agrarian states of the Midwest, the populist movement had demanded, and in part obtained, around 1890, public control over railroad tariffs (Interstate Commerce Act) and measures to control respect for the rules of competition (Sherman Act). But the agitation against the trusts continued to remain, at least until the beginning of the World War, one of the central themes of the American political scene. The anti-monopoly controversy became, in fact, one of the battle horses of the “progressive” reform movements.

Exponents of the old ruling elites such as Theodore Roosevelt, intellectuals, professionals, merchants, generally the most open-minded members of the middle and upper classes, reacted openly in the face of the pressing radical change of status that threatened them. While on the one hand they saw the rise of the new, arrogant power of financiers and industrialists who, at the head of great economic empires, accumulated an enormous power of conditioning on the life of the country, on the other hand they felt the threat of a growing working class that tended to the organisation of strong unions and, at least potentially, to the construction of a socialist alternative.

Faced with the social upheaval resulting from the rapid growth of an industrial economy, the agitation of a “progressive” nature chose the dual path of denunciation in front of public opinion and the political battle at local and central level. In the early years of the century became famous journalists nicknamed muckrakers (shovellers of manure): they brought to light numerous scandals, abuses, episodes of corruption in the public life of the cities. It spread with them a publicity of denunciation first, and then analysis of the social plagues produced by the boom in industry and urbanism: dilapidated neighbourhoods, poverty, child labour and women in appalling conditions, accidents at work. But while attacking monopoly big business, they never lost sight of the danger posed by the working class, whose uncontrolled union organisation and growing presence of socialism and related ideologies were feared above all.

Big business had clear objectives: stability of the financial system, predictability of market trends, elimination of the harmful effects of competition, elimination or reduction of labour conflicts.

For this reason, the major reforms, especially at federal level, ended up being supported, and often designed and managed, by the most politically “enlightened” exponents of big financial and industrial capital. Thus, the reorganisation of the banking system, implemented in 1913 with the Federal Reserve Act, was directly inspired by the bankers, who created a more elastic and efficient credit structure. Similarly, the regulation of competition in the railways, the new Clayton law on trusts, the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission (responsible for the supervision of any monopolistic activities), the modifi-

ation of protective tariffs, were all reforms launched with the consent of large industrial capital. The men of the large corporations participated directly in the conception and planning of reforms that were presented as an attempt at public control over certain aspects of the economic structure. And they were the ones called upon to be part of the federal commissions charged with administering and applying the reform laws. In this way, the control of major economic interests over politics was realised, the use of political instruments to rationalise the economic system, defined as “political capitalism”. It was a question of institutionalising the guidance of politics operated by capital, which is inseparable from the capitalist system of production, but which the bourgeoisie always tries to hide, so as not to highlight the class character of the state; and which only appears in the light of day when the bourgeoisie is forced to resort to the authoritarian solution.

The reforming thrust of big capital also had as its primary objective the pursuit of a “rational” and “efficient” harmony between classes, to prevent the emergence of an aggressive and organised working class, with all the dangers that this would entail.

Reformism, an antidote to the class struggle?

It was the latter, a far from remote or fantastic possibility in the early years of the century. The years of economic expansion that followed the crisis of the '90s had seen a dizzying multiplication of strikes and workers' unrest. The number of officially registered strikes went from 1,098 in 1898 to 1,839 in 1900; it then rose to 3,240 in 1902 and arrived the following year at an “all-time high” of 3,648, which would only be surpassed in the years of World War I. Trade union members, which at the end of the 1890s did not exceed 500,000, reached one million in 1901 and exceeded two million in 1904. They were still low values, however, when viewed in relation to total industrial workers. In fact, the percentage of union members in the total labour force was 12.3% in 1904, the year with the most favourable ratio. In the following period it would fluctuate around 10-11%, only to rise again during the conflict. However, this was a considerable and very rapid progress compared to the percentages of the previous years: 3.5% in 1897, 4.4% in 1899, 7.4% in 1901, 11.3% in 1903. But three-fourths of the members belonged to the

unions belonging to the AFL, that federation of which we have already spoken at length, and whose leaders were fundamentally convinced that the welfare of labour was inevitably connected with that of capital.

On the whole, the attitude of the entrepreneurs was divided along two distinctly different political lines. A large part of the companies gave life, starting in 1904, to a real campaign, coordinated nationally by the National Association of Manufacturers, to remove all union representation from the companies and hit the root of the strength of the unions. It was a real generalised offensive, which used all possible repressive instruments, both state and private, to re-establish the total control of the employers in the companies.

Other industrial sectors, however, tried to follow a different line. Some exponents of the major corporations, starting with those linked to the financial house Morgan, began to think that social stability, outside and inside the factory, could be more solidly guaranteed through the recognition of conservative unions as representatives of the workers, the establishment of a regular collective bargaining, the creation of bodies for mediation and arbitration of labour conflicts.

To this end, in 1900, the National Civic Federation (NCF) was born. We have spoken previously of the birth and activities of this structure that brought together exponents of various social components, with a clear anti-working-class purpose and class collaboration. It symbolised the reform movement's aspiration to social harmony, and in particular that of the most conscious sectors of big capital; it pushed the AFL to embark decisively on the path of cooperation; it favoured the formation of political balances of reformist orientation on labour issues.

In 1912, the reformist orientations of a large part of the country also imposed themselves on the political level, with the victory in the presidential elections of Woodrow Wilson, on a program, called the “New Freedom”, with a clear progressive approach. The Socialist Party, which was born in 1901 from the convergence of the Social Democratic Party of America with elements of the Socialist Labor Party, obtained its best success, approaching one million votes. In the following two years, the structural reforms we mentioned above were enacted. But, above all, the affirmation of the Democrats and the es-

tablishment of the Wilson administration changed the state's attitude towards the working class. Faced with growing conflict, the need to develop a comprehensive policy of social stabilisation led the government to adopt the line of cooperation between capital and workers' organisations. At first in an uncertain and sporadic way, then gradually with greater organicity and determination, the co-responsibility of the AFL and of the conservative unions for the maintenance of social peace and the increase of productivity became an explicit political choice of the administration. The World War, with the multiplication of state control over the economic and social sphere of the country's life, saw the full affirmation of this policy. The repression of conflict, and in particular of its most radical expressions, was accompanied by the spread of collective bargaining, the recognition of union standards both in the field of wages and regulations, and the integration of union leaders in the structures of conciliation of labour conflicts.

Labour legislation

These measures were more necessary than ever for the bourgeoisie, since the years 1912 and 1913 were the years in which the radical clash between the working class and the bosses emerged most explicitly in the most industrialised states of the East. These are the years in which the most de-qualified sectors of the working class, those of more recent immigration from Southeast Europe, express with greater force their claims and their insubordination to the high rates of exploitation that the rationalisation of production brings with it. To mention only the best known, in 1912 there was the textile strike in Lawrence, in 1913 those in the silk industry in Paterson, in the rubber industry in Akron and in the car industry at Studebaker in Detroit. This was the culmination of a whole cycle of determined struggles that worried the industrial bourgeoisie, which understood that it was necessary to take action, no longer relying solely on direct confrontation, now incapable on its own to keep in check the most desperate strata of the class, especially because on the horizon, from 1914, there was the involvement in the great war, and the movement for preventive rearmament, called “preparedness”.

The reformist response to the workers' struggles, and more generally to social unrest, managed to take shape in various legislative measures in the course of these years thanks to a

political situation now quite clearly oriented in a “progressive” sense. So much so that the Democratic Party in its pre-electoral convention not only warmly welcomed the delegation of the American Federation of Labor, but practically left to the latter the task of writing that part of its electoral platform concerning the world of labour. The situation immediately appeared extremely favourable to those sectors of big capital that constituted the direction and soul of the “progressive” movement, even if in a very discreet and sometimes hidden way. The NCF, in fact, often constituted a true centre of elaboration and conception of those reform projects that were most dear to the big corporations, and one of the most important instruments through which they intervened in the debate and in political action. Gompers himself wrote in his autobiography that in the session of Congress immediately following the elections, “the union proposals received unprecedented attention”.

To this picture must be added the remarkable success obtained by the Socialist Party, whose candidate for the presidency, Eugene Debs, obtained about 900,000 votes, just under 6%, the highest result in the history of the party. This affirmation obviously sounded threatening to big business and all other defenders of the economic and social system, and therefore helped to stimulate reformist tendencies and attempts at rationalisation.

It should not be thought, however, that there were no obstacles or difficulties in the face of the push for reform. The most important of these were the more openly reactionary and decidedly anti-union forces in the employers' camp. They were organised in hundreds and hundreds of local associations, starting with the chambers of commerce, and in numerous trade organisations, but above all they had a strong national organisation, the National Association of Manufacturers which, originally created to give weight at state and government level to the employers' need to expand foreign trade, then built its fortunes on a rigid and decisive anti-union position. The NAM was responsible for directing and organising the violent reaction of hundreds of entrepreneurs to the workers' struggles and for creating national campaigns for the open-shop and against what they liked to call “immoral class legislation”. At the institutional level, the NAM used its power of pressure, which reached the most blatant corruption, at the local level, through powerful lobbies; the same happened at the federal level, with

the creation of special organisations; a custom that the bourgeoisie has not abandoned, on the contrary, it has institutionalised it.

But it was the control of the courts that constituted the main institutional obstacle to the development of the reform initiative, and it was precisely their attitude towards social and industrial questions that aroused popular discontent. Because the law placed “private property rights above personal and social rights”, as Robert Hoxie, a well-known reformer of the time, complained, the courts very often struck down laws that postulated any workers' rights and declared them unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution, the very one passed at the end of the Civil War to guarantee the rights and freedom of blacks! It stated that no person shall be deprived of “life, liberty, or property without due process of law”, and this formula was used by the courts to invalidate any law that placed any restrictions on the freedom of the entrepreneur.

In the spring of 1917, with the war just around the corner, and when both the main capitalist sectors and the administration had by then definitively opted for a policy of openness to the moderate components of the workers' movement, the Supreme Court finally sanctioned this changed attitude of the judiciary. In a very short time it issued a series of rulings declaring constitutional some of the most important measures passed in the field of labour legislation both at state and federal level.

Legislation aimed at regulating child labour was also very extensive, given that in 1906 43 states had already passed measures on the subject. Many of these measures were, however, very limited, if not formal and ridiculous: in South Carolina, for example, an article had been voted in which, after having established a limit of twelve years for child labour, exceptions were allowed if this imposed sacrifices on families!

Only an apparent victory

The eight-hour claim was supported by vigorous union campaigns and was at the centre of attention. This was also because the processes of restructuring and rationalisation of production directly involved the question of working hours, contributing to the opening of a discussion even in employers' circles. However, the discussion was not much more than that, because if the introduction of the eight-hour working day at

Ford's factory chain dates back to this period, to the first months of 1914, the vast majority of industries would continue, at least until the war, to maintain much longer working hours, ten and often, as in the steel industry, even twelve hours.

The question of working hours remained, therefore, in these years entrusted to the direct confrontation between the working class and the employers, and even the legislative measures which were voted, at the federal level, for some categories, had their origin, as we shall see, in the need for the government to intervene in order to settle some important open disputes.

This extensive development of labour legislation in the second decade of the century was due to complex and often diverse reasons, which reflected the different tendencies and movements that animated the country on the social level. However, we can try to identify the basic reasons that gave rise to this phenomenon.

The most important, and above all the most urgent, was the need to contain the impetuous development of social unrest and the workers' struggle. More precisely, there was a need, on the part of the most conscious sectors of capital and the ruling class as a whole, to divert the development of social agitation from class and anti-capitalist tendencies, exemplified not only by the fighting behaviour of large sectors of the working class, but also by the growth of a revolutionary organisation such as the Industrial Workers of the World and the fortunes of the socialist party.

On the other hand, many of these laws had a rather relative effectiveness, and their function often did not go beyond propaganda. The Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, for example, had no power whatsoever to force employers to apply the minimum wage it had established: it could only publish lists of renegade employers for public disapproval, but nothing more. In other situations, where the law was obligatory, its effectiveness was reduced to a minimum by the fact that the levels set were not linked to price changes, so that in times of rising costs of living, the quotas set soon became lower than the wages actually applied. To this must be added a final factor, that of the action that employers could exert in each state, either through pressure on legislative bodies, or through the presence of their representatives in the commissions charged with setting minimum wage

levels, in order to impose minimum levels low enough not to substantially modify the situation. After that, it is clear that the entrepreneurs were able to exploit the political and propaganda aspects of the legislation in their favour without having to pay particularly high costs or be forced to introduce major changes in their companies.

In the field of labour and social legislation, the problem for capital was, therefore, to prevent radical solutions, without opposing the reform movement, but, on the contrary, being part of it and trying to influence it, to direct it towards solutions suited to their needs. The case of workman's compensation (i.e., guarantees and indemnities in the case of accidents at work) is extremely indicative in this sense. Many large companies, even those that were fiercely anti-union, had already launched accident insurance programs, both because it was a measure that could no longer be avoided, on pain of giving a further reason for social unrest, and in order to increase the worker's loyalty to the company. Legislation took note of this, extending it to all companies and, above all, relieving companies of the relative burdens.

A very meaningful parallel can be made between these interventions, even of a social nature, and the measures taken by European authoritarian regimes a few years later: an example is the claimed defence of the family, which had been seriously weakened as an agent of social reproduction in the 19th century; hence the attempt to regulate female and child labour, and the valorisation of domestic work and the role of the housewife.

On the whole, the various measures of social and labour legislation, while drawing their origin from the growth of workers' struggles, from the threat that they constituted for the entire social order and from the pressure of a reformist character of large sectors of the middle class, ended up being realised, and determined in their content, precisely by the action of the most conscious sectors of big capital.

The attitude of the AFL towards labour legislation was always well-differentiated, depending on the interests of the union store. Its leaders in fact saw the reform action from above as an emptying of the role of the unions "good", and therefore as their dis-empowerment. Thus, the AFL tended to remain entrenched in the ideology, and practice, of "pure and simple" union-

ism on which it had based its successes. This meant that the federation's line on labour legislation was initially determined by a fairly simple mechanism: reject any measure that would intervene in problems or sectors of the working class where unions were present or expected to be able to organise workers. This meant rejecting almost all laws aimed at regulating in some way the working conditions of adult male workers, i.e., the sector on which the trade unions were based and to which they addressed themselves. For example, they were openly opposed to laws limiting working hours for men, because they wanted this issue to be resolved solely and exclusively by direct bargaining with employers, by the union struggle. On the contrary, they favoured, and often directly committed themselves to the promulgation of laws to regulate working conditions in those sectors where they could not reach with the organisation of the unions or where they believed they had to operate to limit the competition brought to the labour market by the workers they organised: thus the federation committed itself so that public employees, among whom the prohibition to strike made it impossible to have a strong union presence, obtained the eight-hour schedule, minimum wages and workman's compensation through special laws of Congress. The battle for the regulation of child labour also saw the AFL fully engaged and active, since its spread was a very effective tool to keep wages low and exert more forcefully the blackmail of unemployment on adult workers. In the field of limiting working hours for women, the AFL was always in the forefront, and even came, as in California, to promote the bill itself. There were several reasons for this attitude. First, the unions did not organise, nor did they intend to organise, women, particularly the great mass of unskilled women workers at whom the legislation was primarily aimed. Moreover, on the part of the leaders of the unions and the federation, there was a certain ideological and political convergence with the capitalist projects of limiting women's work and reconstructing and consolidating the family structure. A traditional opposition to the development of women's work was rather rooted in the trade workers' organisations, and there had been numerous battles against the hiring of women in the factories.

With regard to the establishment of minimum wages for women, however, the AFL was in opposition, or merely gave formal support to the movement: this was because they were convinced that minimum wage levels for women

would call into question the union tables and weaken the unions, something that officials were not at all happy about because of the danger it could pose to their chairs.

In the years of Wilson's first presidency, however, the attitude of the federation slowly began to change. It tended more and more to support all those laws that concerned sectors of workers where there had never been any practice of collective bargaining, where the unions had never been able, or had never wanted, to develop their own organisation. It is important to note that this logic was based on the fact that the unions based all their strength, and their very existence, on their ability to exercise almost monopolistic control (hence the tendency to establish the closed-shop) of the labour market job by job, thus leaving out the enormous mass of unskilled workers. It was precisely the development of struggles and worker organisation in the unskilled sectors, in open antagonism with the AFL and the trade unions, that played a decisive role in making the latter change their position and accept the reformist logic of capital, in the common interest of cutting the grass under the feet of these struggles.

On the whole, however, there remained a fairly firm position against any legislative regulation of the main aspects of working conditions, first and foremost of working hours and minimum wages, with regard to adult male workers, that is, where there were, or could be organised, unions of skilled workers. In this case, for the union leaders, the existence and functions of their organisation came into play and it is therefore obvious that they were particularly opposed to those programs that could allow the government to compete for the trust of their members. The growing harmony between the AFL and the government came to fruition in 1913 with the calling to head the newly established Department of Labor of William B. Wilson, a former executive of the miners' union whom Gompers had proposed for the position.

At this point, therefore, at a time when the start of the campaign for preparedness and, above all, the beginning of a cycle of large-scale labour struggles changed the political and social framework, relations between the federation and the government had matured to such an extent that the traditional distrust of the AFL leadership in the intervention of the state in labour problems had almost disappeared. In 1916 the shift

became obvious and explicit. While the campaign of economic and ideological mobilisation of the country in view of a possible entry into the war consolidates the cooperation between unions and government, the spread of a massive wave of strikes forces the administration to make clearer and more explicit choices in its labour policy.

The President intervenes

The outbreak of war in Europe had created enough demand in American industry to overcome the crisis of 1914 and, starting in the spring of 1915, to start a consistent economic recovery; at the same time, it had produced a vertiginous drop in immigration levels. The result of these two phenomena was a rapid disappearance of the traditional reserve of labour-power and a consequent strengthening of the bargaining power of the working class.

From 737 strikes in 1914, the number rose to 658 in the first half of 1915 and 675 in the second half. In 1916, the figures rose steadily: 111 strikes in January, 195 in February, 189 in March, 329 in April and 461 in May. It is a cycle of struggles that will last until the United States enters the war and, albeit under different conditions, even during the war itself, expressing a strength and often a unity between different categories of workers, between immigrants and non-immigrants, between skilled and unskilled workers, that tends to overcome old divisions.

In this climate, in the summer of 1916, the administration was faced with a dispute opened by the four Brotherhoods, which organised more than 350,000 railroad workers, with all the companies to obtain an eight-hour schedule, a maximum daily distance of 100 miles and the payment of overtime at 50% more than the normal hourly wage for all freight train personnel. Faced with the companies' refusal and the union decision to call a strike that would paralyse the entire transportation network, Wilson personally intervened with his own mediation plan. But the companies refuse the plan and the Brotherhoods, as a result, start the organisational machine that must prepare for the strike, set for September 4. At this point the president, having no other means to prevent the paralysis of transportation that would result from the strike, goes directly to Congress, on August 29, asking the Congressmen to decide immediately to 1) restructure and enlarge the Interstate Commerce Commission,

the administrative body that presided over the regulation of the railroad system, 2) establish an eight-hour basic schedule for all interstate railroad workers, 3) to establish a commission of inquiry into the results and costs of implementing the basic eight-hour schedule, 4) to give its consent to a reconsideration of railroad freight rates by the ICC after the introduction of the eight-hour schedule, 5) to amend existing laws so as to make inquiry into labour disputes on the railroads mandatory before strikes or lockouts could be legally declared, 6) to give the president the power to control the railroads and to organise the staff in case of military necessity. The president's pronouncement in favour of the eight hours is clearly the most important aspect of the whole proposal, although it should be noted the search, explicit in point 5, for a model of labour relations extremely controlled from above. In the face of criticism from the more conservative circles, Wilson replied: "It seems to me, considering the subject of the dispute, that the whole spirit of the moment, and the evidence of recent economic experience, speak in favour of the eight-hour day", where "spirit of the moment" probably means the strength of the movement of struggles underway in the country and "recent economic experience" means the experiences, now anything but negligible, of productive rationalisation that involve, at times, the reduction of working hours. In short, it is the first important anticipation of the labour policy that the administration will adopt during the war, based on the efficient restructuring and the full inclusion of the union in a mechanism of collective bargaining controlled from above. Haste forced Congress to deal only with the problem of working hours, and the president's proposal was accepted, with the establishment of the basic eight-hour schedule. Thus the strike is averted and a period opens in which government and state intervention in labour matters will not only become constant and regular, but will be accepted if not demanded by the trade unions. The AFL, which at the beginning of the dispute announced its solidarity with the Brotherhoods by asserting that "the power" that would institute the eight hours on the railroads would be that of the "labour movement," accepted the law without flinching, satisfied with the administration's pro-union orientation.

The federation leadership, at this point, was ready to welcome, and to urge, the standardisation of working conditions and wages that the government would conduct, in the course of the

war, with their active participation. Yet barely three years had passed since Gompers still peremptorily asserted, "I hope that the time will never come when it will be the authority and power of the government to fix the minimum wages, or the maximum hours, at least for male workers, on the face of the earth." But Gompers had made so many such volte-faces that one was no longer surprised.

The change, as we can see, is quite radical and finds its reasons not only in the danger posed to the AFL by the development of workers' struggles and class organisations that threatened its very existence, but also in the government's changed attitude towards the unions and their demands. A policy that had now openly chosen the path for which for years the men of the NCF, union leaders and the most conscious exponents of big business, had been fighting. That is, the path of the division of the workers' movement, of the recognition and integration of its moderate and conservative components, of the development of an orderly and "constructive" practice of collective bargaining, of the isolation and repression of anti-capitalist behaviour and organisations expressed by considerable sectors of the working class. In the years between Wilson's rise to the presidency and his entry into the war, this line was progressively adopted by the administration and the other structures of the state, up to the Supreme Court, and inspired the basic features of labour legislation. The same opposition of employers to these choices, exemplified by the NAM and similar organisations, was modified, and formal acceptance of social legislation was affected, with the consequent exploitation of the propaganda advantages that this entailed, while boycotting its practical effects.

The new attitude of the most evolved part of the big bourgeoisie shines through in the speeches for the election of 1912, in which he exposes his program defined "New Freedom". There Wilson appears as a champion of the defenceless worker against big business.

The attempt was to cope with the growth of workers' struggles through the establishment of a system of cooperative relations between capital and the moderate sectors of workers' organisations. That is, a system that would make possible orderly, predictable and controllable relations between workers and companies, based on collective bargaining constructively aimed at efficiency and increased production.

It was an opportunity for the AFL to see the reforms it had been presenting to Congress since 1906, the "Bill of Grievances," come to fruition.

It included a call for comprehensive eight-hour legislation for all government employees, some measures to restrict immigration, a bill to protect workers from the competition of forced labour, and various measures to improve working conditions for seamen that would later be incorporated into the La Follette Seamen's Act; but its main points concerned issues related to the right of workers to organise collectively and to take action to fight.

In fact, the first part of the Bill called for a law to prevent the use of injunctions by the courts against workers' struggles or other union activities, and another part called for the tightening of the legislation on trusts while excluding its application to workers' organisations. In the first case, it was a question of taking away from the courts the main instrument of repressive intervention against workers and their organisations; in the second case, it was a question of preventing the use against workers of a law created to punish every restriction and limitation of trade, and on the basis of which the major repressive operations against workers and against the unions themselves had been built. The injunctions were orders of a judge that imposed on those to whom they were addressed to refrain from some action when it could result in "irreparable damage" to property; failure to comply with this order led to charges of contempt of court and immediate imprisonment.

There were three types: the temporary restraining order which was issued by a judge, without any hearing or notice to the party in question, on the basis of a simple complaint; the temporary injunction which required prior notice and could also be preceded by a hearing; and finally there was the permanent injunction which was issued only on the basis of a hearing.

But it is clear that the most important, and most feared by the workers, was the first type of injunction: it was not only issued on the basis of the opinion of the entrepreneur and his version of the facts, but also had the advantage of a very rapid procedure, so as to be a formidable instrument of intervention against a strike or other action of struggle from its very beginning. In this way, an enormous amount of power was concentrated in the hands of judges whose conservative

and pro-patron positions cannot be doubted: it is enough to think, for example, that in the federal courts alone, in the period between 1901 and 1921, the magistrates granted an injunction at the request of the entrepreneur 70 times and refused it only once! So what was supposed to be an "extraordinary remedy" under common law quickly became the "usual legal measure" in the attack on workers' struggles and their organisations, and in fact it was used on the most diverse occasions.

The other measure requested of Congress, namely the exclusion of workers' organisations from the repressive measures of the law against trusts, which tended to strike at any form of limitation or restriction of trade, was of equal and perhaps even greater importance and urgency: that law, in fact, the Sherman Act of 1890, had been used far more to strike at workers' organisations than to prosecute and dissolve trusts. In the period between 1892 and 1896, for example, of the five cases brought by the government for violation of the Sherman Act against trusts, only one was won, while of the five brought against labour organisations, four were won and only one was lost. The mechanism was quite simple: the federal courts had in fact the power to prosecute the leaders of the workers' organisations every time they saw in some action of struggle an undue limitation of trade and competition, and this obviously meant, thanks to the generality of the law, an immense power.

In the first months of 1914 the AFL launched a great propaganda and pressure campaign to put an end to the anti-union use of the Sherman law and to take away from the courts the weapon of the injunction with which unions are fought. In every issue of *American Federationist*, there are articles that, in addition to illustrating the countless abuses committed by the courts, try to convince moderate public opinion, and especially the political circles and the dominant forces in them, of the need for a more liberal legal discipline towards workers' organisations. In fact, it is no coincidence that the most frequently used argument is the threat of a strong growth of radicalism and worker unrest if the unions continue to be weakened and persecuted. The AFL, stressing how the repression of "responsible" and "constructive" unions fuels workers' distrust of the democratic system and cooperation for economic development, thus openly offers itself as the organisation that can guarantee social stability and develop mass consensus for the current eco-

nomical organisation. Gompers, with impressive frankness, wrote: "if you do not grant the full right of association to the working masses of our country, you will have to deal with other elements that will not let you sleep so peacefully and with so few worries."

Marching separately, striking together

As usual, the bourgeoisie was not united on the relationship to be held with the trade unions: we have seen that the small and medium entrepreneurs were headed by the NAM and the Anti-boycott Association. The latter, in addition to opposing the overall project favoured by the government and large corporations, did not intend to deprive themselves of any possible tool for the repression of unions. On the contrary, the attitude of the most acute among the leaders of the corporations was probably already inspired by the idea of granting the unions the legal rights they claimed, precisely in order to bring them more and more onto a collaborative ground and to stimulate them to an attitude of responsibility towards the social order. But above all to guarantee themselves against the development of radical and class organisations of the workers, for which a widespread and solid presence of trade unions constituted a no small obstacle. These different policies derived not only from the greater foresight of the leaders of the corporations, but also from the fact that they could afford such an attitude by virtue of their economic and political strength, which allowed them to successfully fight the unions within their factories, while the small entrepreneurs had a greater need for the repressive intervention of the state in order to win their anti-union battles.

A law was finally passed in October 1914 (the Clayton Act), legitimising the existence of unions: the American Federation of Labor rejoiced at what it considered to be the greatest achievement of its legislative activity, and Gompers would define the Clayton Act as the "Magna Carta" of workers.

In reality, this was little more than a formal success, since the very vague law, even if it meant an open attitude on the part of the state towards the workers' organisations, would certainly not have led to a decrease in repression against the unions, or better, against the strikers, when the political moment required it. So much so that proceedings against unions for violation of the Trusts Act ended up being greater in num-

ber in the twenty-four years after the enactment of the Clayton Act than in the twenty-four years before, when only the Sherman Act was in force. In practice, it was only the existence of unions that was declared legal, while any of their activities, such as boycotts or the publication of lists of anti-union employers, could easily fall into that category of actions aimed at restricting trade that the antitrust legislation intended to punish. Hot air, in short, that the AFL took for granted, but in the end the only real result was exactly what those corrupt organisations wanted.

It is symptomatic, in this regard, how Wilson himself had intervened in the summer of 1914 in two rather serious and almost simultaneous labour conflicts, shortly after the passage of the Clayton Act. On the occasion of a dispute between the Brotherhoods of the railroads and the railroad companies over wages and working conditions on 98 lines in the West, Wilson did not hesitate to intervene with the railroad executives, urging them to accept a mediation plan; their intransigence in fact, after a mediation attempt had failed, might have led to a strike. On this occasion, for the first time, the president appealed for responsibility for the national emergency caused by the war, and his intervention was successful, inducing the railroad companies to accept an arbitration that, however, would later prove to be largely unfavourable to the Brotherhoods on almost all points of the dispute.

But a few months later, in November of the same year, when a struggle of Arkansas miners led by the United Mine Workers found themselves facing a federal court injunction against picketing (and what's more, one of the mine owners was appointed as administrator of the court's orders), Wilson acted quite differently. He had no hesitation in complying with the federal court's request by sending troops to ensure that his order would be obeyed. He thus endorsed not only the injunction and its use, but above all the extreme anti-union behaviour of the magistrates, and to prevent the miners' struggle from defeating the injunction, he ordered the federal troops to disband without hesitation every "illegal meeting" in the territory of the district. In short, the substance of the repression of proletarian struggles did not change, it was only delegated to the central organs of the bourgeois state, and taken away from the arbitrariness of the small or medium capitalist, who with his greed and narrowness can unnecessarily endanger social peace.

Thus the whole complex of refined instruments of anti-union repression, beginning with the injunction, continued to remain more than legitimate and available, ready to be used again in a different situation, and above all functional to always remind the yellow unions that their present power depended on their behaviour, on their willingness to cooperate, on their active participation in the work of stabilising the economic and social order in which big capital and the state were engaging.

Part 18: War: For Capital, a Panacea for All Ills

Wilson changes his line of conduct

We saw how the first Wilson administration (1913-1916) showed much more attention to the labour movement than previous administrations had done. In addition to the aforementioned interventions, the most tangible sign of this was the creation of the Department of Labor, at the head of which (not surprisingly) was placed William B. Wilson – a former member of the miners' union – beginning a tradition of direct corruption of trade union leaders by the State (in commendable anticipation of the same phenomenon in Europe). The task of this Department was to reduce conflicts to a minimum, which was not exactly easy because of strong resistance on both sides: the IWW among workers, and sectors of the employers who believed only in the repression and destruction of workers' organisations.

Another significant initiative was the creation of the Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR), a consultative body aimed at investigating the causes of social unrest, something which came to play an important political role. In practice it was almost an official consecration of the NCF; joining it were both AFL trade unionists and "moderate" representatives of the bourgeoisie. In short: the state committed to take over the function of regulating social conflict and the task of stimulating cooperation between labour and capital which had, until then, been carried out "privately" by conservative unions and exponents of bourgeois interests.

The commitment of the federal administration to making the unions play a role in containing the most radical pressures from the proletariat, and in regulating spontaneous social conflict, became increasingly clear in 1913. Moreover, increasingly large sectors of the bourgeoisie shared this attitude as well.

A typical example is that of the IWW-led 1913 Paterson Silk Strike, where an ill-fated AFL-led scab recruitment campaign was openly encouraged by conservative newspapers to strengthen the AFL. Its motivation: to help it attain the influence necessary to mediate the conflict (something which could not be done insofar as the leadership remained in the hands of the Wobblies). The traditional trade union movement was no longer necessarily seen as an implacable enemy; in moderate and well-organised forms it could become the stable interlocutor of capital, able to speak for and thereby control the spontaneous and local forms of workers' representation.

Alternatively, the employers also supported the company's trade union. The most significant project in this realm was launched by Ford with the establishment of the eight-hour working-day and \$5 daily pay for assembly line workers. To quote William Haywood, it was "an insurance against unrest" which not only aimed to prevent the collective organisation of workers in the factory, but – as part of a larger plan including a profit-sharing project and other welfare measures (insurance, credits, recreational associations, etc.) – tended to develop an ideology and a way of life based on the relationship between the individual worker and the company (as opposed to relationships between classes). These experiences were still very limited in terms of extension and incidence, limited to sections of the most advanced industrial sectors; nevertheless, they demonstrated the urgency to face the growth of worker's struggles and general social instability with means that were no longer limited to direct repression (including repression of union organisation). With this purpose in mind, it pointed to a developing trend that would fully assert itself in the 1920s.

There was a passage – in some cases – from brutal and repressive methods to forms of corporate paternalism. One example of this is the Colorado Coalfield War, a long and very violent strike lasting from September 1913 to December 1914. After the usual actions by bosses and government, with gunfights, casualties, militia and (eventually) federal interventions, the solution, favourable above all to the mining companies, was mainly the effect of the government's efforts to persuade the AFL-affiliated United Mine Workers union (UMW). The Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, the most important of the companies involved, after having

cleverly dragged the strike out to the point of exhaustion, was quick to understand that it could not continue with its old strategies. Once it had established order in the mines (which would continue to be guarded by the federal army until early 1915) and averted the danger of union resistance, its management quickly set up a workers' representation project that became famous under the name of the Rockefeller Plan.

The project envisaged the election of workers' representatives in each mine and in each district and entrusted them with the task of meeting periodically with the company's various management bodies to resolve any disputes. Additionally, mixed committees of workers' and company representatives were set up to study and solve problems related to safety, health, hygiene, housing, and "recreation and education" of employees. This was accompanied by the announcement of the establishment of the eight-hour working day and an unspecified company commitment to increase wages sometime in the future. In short, it was a real alternative to collective bargaining with regular workers' organisations. Of course, the company still had total power to hire and fire at any time.

At the same time as the Rockefeller Plan was being implemented (accepted by the workers via vote in October 1915), important innovations in the administration of labour issues were being introduced at the state level; in particular, an Industrial Commission was established to deal with the enforcement of labour laws and conduct investigations of working conditions where a strike was threatened in order to prevent any interruption of production. Moreover, the Commission also constituted the arbitration authority to which companies and workers had to turn after failures to reach agreement during negotiations.

With such a mix of welfare measures and constant relations with the company management, and with the establishment of the Industrial (also called Walsh) Commission at the state level, the corporations established an organic structure for governing relations with the workers, which at the same time could keep the unions out of the mines and prevent new explosions of workers' struggles. The Rockefeller Plan was thus one of the first examples of company unions: yellow unions that would become a central element of the post-war capitalist counteroffensive.

The Colorado affair also brought to light some interesting elements with regard to the federal administration's policy: it showed that if the government was in favour of collective bargaining, it did not necessarily have to implement it through unions.

The work of the Commission on Industrial Relations was concluded in 1915, with the presentation of a report signed by only 4 of its 9 members (the union representatives and the president), while the others presented two other reports. The main report provided for reasonable working conditions, in addition to more progressive taxation, control of monopolies, and union rights; the other two, although less concerned about the conditions of the working class, still made proposals aimed at avoiding conflicts.

The conclusion of the work of the Commission also touched on another fundamental point of the debate in those years: that of the labour market and of its control. All of the social and economic problems connected with the labour market policy pursued during the final decades of the 1800s were beginning to appear. Based on massive immigration of unskilled workers from Europe – in particular from the poorest rural areas of southern and eastern Europe – the policy aimed at providing industry with a steady reserve army of labour; expressly conceived for the purpose of strangling workers' struggles, it was intended to allow for the rationalisation of work organisation and of its accentuated mechanisation via the use of large masses of unskilled workers in order to destroy the control that labour unions exercised over the production process. Much to the chagrin of capital, however, immigrant workers had become protagonists of the hardest and most important strikes of recent years and the social base of revolutionary organisations like the IWW; they had become the main factor of social instability inside and outside of the factory.

In fact, although unemployment caused a weakening of struggles and workers' organisations, on the other hand it caused considerable agitation in the most affected sectors or in those in the most danger of being affected, so much so that it even led to organisation and struggle of the unemployed.

It was thus proposed that the government set up a special fund to be used for public works during times of crisis in order to absorb part of

the unemployed to prevent the movement from spreading (it could not, of course, do away with unemployment entirely since it resulted from the need to maintain a reserve army of labour). Another proposed measure was "unemployment insurance", an allowance for the unemployed to be paid by the employer. Despite support from many economists, this was strongly opposed by the unions. The AFL saw it (as for other social assistance measures) as an attempt to replace the function of trade unions with the direct initiative of employers and the state so as to weaken the relationship between the unions and the proletariat; since the unions were flabby in terms of struggles at this point, without their welfare function they would have lost any purpose to exist.

Despite the good intentions and reasonable proposals, there is no doubt that the most important results of the Commission's work were political and propagandistic and that its main effect was to win the support of workers and radicals for the Wilson administration and for the idea that unions and radical intellectuals could have real power over social policy; this was of such enormous importance for the government and for American capital that, as we shall see, they will base their choices in the following years – in particular, concerning the preparedness and march towards their involvement in the First World War – precisely on this factor.

The government project on labour policy was accomplished in 1916, the last year of President Wilson's first term.

1916: response to workers' struggles and preparation for war

1916 was the year in which the operation initiated by the government and big capital on labour politics was completed. Faced with the intensification and spread of workers' struggles, and with the prospect of entry into the war, the need to isolate the socialist and radical forces becomes a priority, with a view to stabilising the relationship with the class on a "responsible" and "patriotic" level, thanks to the good offices of the unions. From now on, the government will never lose sight of the goal of dealing with the strike movement and preparing the country and industry for war.

The cycle of workers' struggles developed with the economic recovery caused by the European war — which not only stimulated pro-

duction but also led to a labour market favourable to workers with the reduction of immigration and with the competition between companies for new employees — soon assumed impressive proportions: the number of strikes rapidly increased from 1,204 in 1914, to 1,593 in 1915, to 3,789 in 1916, and 4,450 in 1917.

The new wave of strikes soon appeared to the AFL as an opportunity to regain a prominent position within the working class because many of these strikes were born completely outside of the unions. According to official data, the percentage of all strikes called by the unions in particular — which until then had remained at an average of between 75% and 80% — suddenly dropped to 66.6% in 1916 and the trend continued in the following years (during the war) when the percentage reached its lowest values, with 53.3% in 1917 and 55.5% in 1918. For the unions and their federation this was clearly a rather worrying trend, which could only stimulate their commitment to expand their organised presence and influence among the struggling workers.

Strikes during this time achieved their goals quite frequently — especially regarding wage increases, which had relative value given the rising inflation. Moreover, very often it was the entrepreneurs themselves who granted them unilaterally in order to prevent conflicts; for example, U.S. Steel decided to increase wages by 10% in February and then for a second time in May 1916. Even the eight-hour workday was sometimes conquered, especially by sectors of the proletariat with a greater tradition of union organisation (such as anthracite miners and railway workers). Much more complex, however, was the problem of extending and establishing stable collective bargaining and recognition of the presence of unions. In general, where unions had already been recognised by the employers and there was a customary practice of union agreements, this strengthened and extended its scope of action both as a result of the basic push for greater power by workers and of the choice of some employers' sectors to exceedingly cooperate with the unions in order to strengthen productive stability. Sometimes the pressure of the struggles or fear of them becoming more acute also led hitherto uncompromisingly anti-union entrepreneurs to change tactics and accept collective bargaining. On the whole, nevertheless, there was certainly no lack of resistance and even counter-offensives from all those who deliberately pursued destroying or at least weaken-

ing the unions and who saw the situation created by the war as a good opportunity to carry out their attack by exploiting the climate of emergency; they were now a minority among of the bosses, however — one which had not yet understood in what sense social relations were shifting but who nevertheless existed and continued with their methods, especially at the local level.

The federal administration was by now decidedly oriented to favour the recognition of conservative unions for their role in containing and channelling workers' conflicts within collective bargaining schemes. As the prospect for entering the War approached, there was also the explicit recognition of the role that they could play in the development of production and in the construction of a national and patriotic identity to weaken the classist elements within the workers' movement. At the same time, whenever they proved inefficient or insufficient, the government also tried and succeeded to replace unions during workers' negotiations with the employers.

As a consequence, the percentage of conflicts ended with a conciliation jumped to 36.3% in 1916 after having fluctuated for years between 18% and 19% and having reached 20.9% only in 1915. If we consider that the absolute number of strikes had grown enormously and that above all the number of strikes not called by the unions had grown, it is clear that the government's activity in mediating struggles, together with the efforts of the unions themselves, increased enormously during 1916.

The AFL drive belt of bourgeois governments

Beyond intervening in labour disputes, the government began to move towards the more ambitious goal of integrating the AFL — or at least its management structures — into its labour policy. That is, it was attempting to make it become an irreplaceable component of its apparatus of economic control which, during the war, would unfold in all its extension and articulation; but its foundations were laid in that very 1916, during preparedness. For the time being, it was a matter of persuading the Federation leaders to make a direct commitment towards patriotic ideological mobilisation, transferring also on the institutional and political level those relations of cooperation that were sought — and to a large extent already implemented — on the productive and trade union field. Since the beginning of the

year, the AFL began to express itself and press directly in this direction, claiming the right of workers' organisations to be represented "in all agencies that control and determine public policy or matters of general interest", and guaranteeing the willingness of unions to do for the country, at all levels, what they were already doing in the factory: fighting for efficiency, production, and patriotic mobilisation. The general characteristics that the preparedness had to assume, therefore, for the leaders of the unions, were the maintenance and extension of the working conditions achieved with the most favourable labour agreements, a "democratic" management of the war effort (that is to say, including workers' representatives in determining the main economic choices), and the development of patriotic unity among all social sectors.

The appointment of Gompers to the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, as representative of the trade unions and at the same time with the task of orienting the war policy in the field of labour, officially marked, in October 1916, the start of this policy by the Wilson administration and prepared its most accomplished implementation during the war.

The pressure of the working class, in the absence of the communist party, had as a consequence a strengthening of the unions and the AFL precisely because of the government's decision to support and encourage the choices of those industrial sectors inclined to develop collective bargaining and its choice to recognise unions as tools to contain conflict and pursue productive normality. In fact, cooperation remained linked to the willingness of employers to maintain it, while all the legal instruments of anti-union discrimination — which often allowed to exclude or prevent unions from entering the factory — remained in force, confirmed by several court decisions.

For unions based on skilled workers, which therefore did not tend to organise the entire working class and were not based on the search for a general unity of the class, the material basis of strength was inevitably the ability to achieve and maintain sectoral control over the labour market, place by place and in each category of workers; this was even more exacerbated by the historical characteristics of American economic development, marked by a general overabundance of labour. For this reason, they had always aimed at the establishment of the closed shop in

order to obtain full control of hiring and prevent employers from using the industrial reserve army to undermine union positions and expel unions from the factories.

Conversely, the various bosses' offensives against workers' organisation, intertwined with the destruction of their social base through the rationalisation of production — which made the figure of the highly skilled worker, with their considerable power over the production process, disappear — had focused on the implementation of the open shop, which implied the total power of the entrepreneur to hire and fire at their leisure. This obviously meant that any workers' organisation could easily be expelled from a factory through accelerating the turnover of workers, allowing for complete control over them. The necessary complement to the open shop was the yellow dog contract: an individual contract in which the worker agreed not to join a union during their employment or not to engage in collective bargaining or striking; in this way the formal right to belong to a union was completely worthless. The annulment by the Supreme Court of rulings against "yellow dog" contracts because they would be contrary to the 14th Amendment (according to which no state could "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law") all but demonstrates that the bosses had not renounced their arms.

Thus, at a time when trade union rights were gaining significant political recognition and collective bargaining was increasingly asserting itself as the accepted policy of large sectors of the bourgeoisie and of the government itself, all the rights of employers to violent, anti-union conduct remained intact. The only important success that the AFL obtained in this period was the beginning of legislative work on immigration restriction, which, in the post-war period, would be completed with the virtual blockade of mass immigration of workers from Europe. On the other hand, the employers aimed to substitute for the labour surplus from immigrant labour with that of female labour, with the emigration from the countryside to the city and, above all, with the great migration of blacks from the south to the big industrial cities of the north. The latter was due to a series of factors that would deserve a separate discussion: first of all, meteorological events combined with insect infestations that had wiped out the cotton production of many small farmers, who had had to pay their debts with savings, mules, or even with their small prop-

erty; then a policy of the various southern states strained in previous decades to exclude blacks from civil rights; finally, an endless series of discrimination, persecutions, lynchings to keep them subjugated to the whites, who had not accepted the theoretical equal rights. Official data say that in 1916 and 1917 alone, between 500,000 and 700,000 blacks arrived in the industrial concentrations of the North. Often, playing on racial divisions and prejudices, they were used as scabs against the struggles of white workers, as in previous years the bosses had tried to do with immigrants.

To repeat: the reason for this change of strategy was that recently immigrated workers, employed in large numbers in mass production, had become the main factor of social instability and had soon become the greatest danger for the economic and social system of corporations. Therefore, in the period of preparedness – when an offensive aimed at facing these threats was launched on a social level – there was also launched a political and repressive attack (which would grow until the Red Scare of the first post-war period) against the organisations in which the social danger of immigrants materialised: the radical and left-wing organisations, and in particular the IWW. The repressive wave against the socialists and the IWW and more generally against all opportunities for social and political struggle outside of class-collaborationist boundaries was the other side of the coin of the unions' integration policy and the consolidation of the privileged relationship between the AFL, entrepreneurs, and the government.

While the episodes of violent intervention against the workers' struggles multiplied – especially if they concerned the industries most involved in rearmament and war mobilisation programs – the repression began to assume the most typical features of a patriotic and nationalist crusade, focusing on the radicalism and foreign origin of many workers, to label as national traitors anyone striking outside the protection of conservative unions. The repression was facilitated and obtained most consensus where socialist and extreme left forces suffered the most social isolation or where these tendencies were experiencing a decreasing prominence. Albeit moderate, the reformist policy characterising the first Wilson administration and the ideological campaign conducted mainly by the NCF (aimed at emphasising the merits of this policy as an alternative to socialist programs) had weakened

socialist influence in reformist circles and favoured the strategic alliance between Big Business and middle-class interests which historically characterised the "progressive" era. The 1916 elections testified to this retreat of the socialists, whose votes fell from 897,000 in 1912 to 590,000. Here, the socialists had mainly lost the support of progressive sectors, where the liberal image the administration had presented of itself had taken hold: an image skillfully built in the four years of government and in particular in the last months before the elections, which had included, among other things, support for anti-child labour laws, promotion of the eight-hour workday for railroad workers, and finally the promise to keep the United States out of the European conflict (a blatant lie).

The trade union movement actively participated in Wilson's election campaign, and it was some of the unions most traditionally close to the Socialist Party – such as the Western Federation of Miners or the International Association of Machinists – that, through their move onto the plane of Democratic, electoral struggles, had most demonstrated the weakening influence of the Socialists. The relationship of trust built between the AFL and the Wilson administration allowed the reforms it produced – although they did not produce any substantial change in the lives of most workers – to appear as an alternative to the development of a classist and revolutionary political perspective, and their overall impact was sufficient enough to halt the previously steady growth that the Socialist Party had enjoyed over the previous four years.

Write "cooperation", but read "collaboration"

The participation of the United States in the First World War – which established its emergence as the dominant capitalist nation – was, among other things, the result of its long process of expansion and penetration into the international market.

If the war sanctioned the definitive affirmation of the choices of large corporations in terms of international politics and the direction of economic development, on the other hand it also saw the completion of the political operation that had long been underway with regard to the workers' movement on the part of their most discerning leaders. The traditional strategy of the *kolkhoz* – aimed at the division of the workers' movement, the repression of its classist and re-

volutionary organisations, and recognition of and cooperation with the moderate, pro-capitalist and now "patriotic" ones on the other hand – became the official policy of the federal administration in the last months of preparedness, thus obtaining an organic and extensive application.

The leadership of the AFL obviously supported this evolution by all means, confirming without any shame its definitive and total subjugation to capital. "Our country", said Gompers, "...has the opportunity to become the banker of the world...the great protagonist of world trade." Therefore, preparedness saw the approach of conservative unions towards government policies which sought to seize the fruits of this "opportunity" with far more energy.

The imminence of the war pushed the AFL leadership, in the first months of 1917, to accelerate its initiative both towards the outside and towards the organisation itself. During an unofficial meeting of the executive council of the federation, Gompers proposed to convene a national conference of all unions as soon as possible in order to take a clear and unequivocal position on the world war so that the union movement would not be taken by surprise by the declaration of war against Germany. Clear positions had to be taken so that the government would know that it could count on the unions without reservations and that capital wouldn't drag them in the mud in front of a public audience for any indecision, hesitations, or anti-war tendencies. A conference of the leaders of all the most important organisations was convened on March 12th in Washington to formulate a "precise constructive policy" and define the principles according to which the workers' movement "will cooperate in national defence"; Gompers had already made it known that he intended "to take every step necessary to curb the dissenting opinions on the war that were present in the ranks of the organized workers' movement".

So obvious was the approval by the trade unions for the war that the conference produced a document that did not even mention the opportunity to enter it; the document instead promised maximum patriotic commitment and asked the government to recognise "the organized workers' movement as the agency through which...to cooperate with wage earners" and consequently that its representatives were part of all "agencies for the determination and administration of national defense policy". Secondly, it was required

that these agencies adopt a policy in accordance with the needs of the workers, ensuring that "union standards" in terms of hours, wages and working conditions were respected everywhere; in return, it guaranteed maximum cooperation in the war effort.

Thus, at the official level, very few unions expressed even weak criticism of the March conference resolution (among them the Western Federation of Miners and the Typographical Union, which did not attend the meeting). Only a few independent unions, particularly in the clothing sector, sided with the anti-interventionist campaign of the Socialists, who saw their influence rapidly diminish within the trade unions despite their positions being met with growing consensus among workers (as demonstrated by some elections in the following months).

But the bosses had not given up their offensive; the entry into the war saw the concentration and intensification of attacks on various labour laws in the states on the basis that patriotism required the abolition of all restrictions on the full use of the country's labour potential. In particular, attempts were being made to obtain the revocation or suspension of child labour laws, those for the limitation of women's working hours, laws on the exclusion of immigration from the Far East and, in some states such as West Virginia, laws were also being proposed to prohibit strikes. Although some measures, in some states, were approved, in general the attitude of the federal state prevailed, aimed at uniformly defining working conditions, also in view of a partial planning of productive activity.

With regard to the objective of social peace, the rising tide of struggles for wage increases and the 8 hours could not be faced with simple repression, which would have risked triggering an explosion of class struggles and a radicalisation of the proletariat. On the other hand, the boom produced by the orders of the government and the allies led to enormous profits for the corporations – above all for the biggest ones: US Steel, for example, went from an annual average of 76 million dollars in the three-year period 1912-1914 to 478 million dollars in 1917, while the aggregate figures of net earnings of the American industry rose from 4 billion dollars in 1913 (the best year so far) to 7 billion dollars in 1916 and even higher for 1917. This made possible a policy of wage increases – indulged by many corporations at the time – aimed at coun-

teracting inflation or at least masking its effects on the purchasing power of the workers.

Thus, while the 8-hour limit was abolished in the sectors in which it was previously conquered, excess hours were paid 50% more. Everything now depended on governmental decisions and arbitration by specially created agencies, after the Council of National Defense. President Wilson himself took care to call on state governments not to take advantage of the situation to legislate against workers.

The repression of radicalism and of class organizations

All these measures had, however, a minimal influence on the overall economic and social situation. The situation was characterised by, on the one hand, the chaos and anarchy of a productive recovery that was as intense as it was unregulated and with very strong competition, and on the other hand by a further increase in workers' demands and strikes to support them. Businesses contending for the workers and "labour stealing" among the entrepreneurs, became a source of strength for the proletariat: it was no longer they who competed for jobs and wages, but the entrepreneurs who competed for workers, resulting not only in a strong push for higher wages but also a growing mobility of workers, who went where new jobs were created and where there were the highest wages. There was a very rapid congestion in the industrial centres, where not enough measures were taken to accommodate the workers, an enormous increase in rents, and a sharpening of the wage differences between the various sectors and regions of differing importance to the war. All of this, and the very high inflation resulting from it, would further increase social unrest and the frequency of strikes.

The social situation therefore seemed to be pointing towards a progressive radicalisation in which wildcat strikes could spread and the influence of leftist organisations could expand. In many areas, and particularly in the West where the presence of the AFL was much weaker, very hard clashes broke out between workers and employers.

Evolution towards the harshest social clash was on the agenda in all industrial sectors where a habit of union agreements had not existed; the AFL did not fail to emphasise this fact in order to accelerate the spread of collective bargaining

and its recognition as a reliable intermediary between the needs of capital and the working class.

Evolution towards the harshest social clash was on the agenda in all industrial sectors where a habit of union agreements had not existed; the AFL did not fail to emphasise this fact in order to accelerate the spread of collective bargaining and its recognition as a reliable intermediary between the needs of capital and the working class.

Faced with this situation, and in view of the war effort, the federal government moved more and more quickly and decisively in the direction of a far-reaching offensive against social unrest. It was based on a dual policy of concessions to pro-war organisations – such as the AFL – and the suppression of anti-war organisations and periodicals. Therefore, a rather widespread and capillary process of disintegration of organisations that could organise and consolidate a discontent or opposition to the war soon occurred. The first instrument of this campaign were the laws against trade unionism (criminal syndicalism) that several western states, starting from Idaho and Minnesota, voted in the spring of 1917 and in the following years. They established serious penalties (usually from 1 to 10 years, but sometimes the maximum could rise to 20 or even 25 years) for crimes typically of opinion such as propaganda and agitation. Under these laws, not only those who openly advocated doctrines of criminal acts for political, industrial, and social change (i.e., crime, sabotage, violence, and other unlawful methods of terrorism) could be found guilty, but also all those who justified it or belonged to organisations inspired by these doctrines and, finally, even those who had granted the premises for meetings of these organisations. Finally, it should be noted that these laws often contained clauses that removed them from the possibility of a repeal referendum!

To those on "criminal" trade unionism were soon added other laws that also tended to strike at any attitude contrary to the government and the established order, such as those on the flag, which established, for example, that "no red or black flag or banner, emblem or insignia could be carried in a demonstration that bears writings contrary to the established government, or that are sacrilegious, or that may be offensive to public morals". In this way, the various powers of the state were entrusted with all sorts of instru-

ments to strike at popular unrest and protest. In general, these laws were particularly aimed at repressing the IWW and its activities because, especially in Western states they were identified as the most dangerous organisers of workers' discontent; nevertheless, often the real usefulness the law went much further. Several of their clauses were designed to hit, when deemed appropriate, also certain activities of conservative unions or elementary civil liberties of citizens who had very little to do with organised radicalism; in the phase in which they were issued, however, their objective was only revolutionary and anti-war organisations. At any rate, the conservative unions were already so caught up in the vortex of "patriotic" mobilisation that the state federations of the AFL did not oppose the promulgation of the laws on "criminal" trade unionism, limiting themselves, however with little success, to press for clauses to prevent their use against their organisations: the principles of their stance were never openly contrary to repressive legislation and their practical action – with full participation in the "patriotic" and anti-radical campaign – certainly contributed to its spread. As good shopkeepers, they were happy to accept legislation that took out the competition for the control of the working class, even if it was legislation that in theory could also be used for purely anti-union goals.

Active supporters and promoters of these laws were instead the bosses, who aimed to take advantage of the climate created by the war to equip themselves with effective tools for the repression of workers' struggles. The authorship of the bills was in fact almost always of some entrepreneurial group or association. Around these forces, of course, all the patriotic organisations had gathered (such as the American Legion), the most important of press organs, and the most influential political circles. In this way there spread, in the first months of the war, a frantic local mobilisation of the public apparatus, of the major political and economic interest groups, and of vigilante groups or volunteers who closed the locales of the Socialist Party and the IWW, chased away the militants, and destroyed their organisational networks, making increasing use of the aforementioned laws to facilitate their work.

In this framework, at the beginning of the summer of 1917, a national initiative of the federal government was also launched: on June 15th, the Congress voted the Espionage Act, a

law directly requested by the president to provide the administration with broad powers of repression. Wilson had asked the congress to authorise direct censorship of the press by the White House, but this proposal had been rejected following lively protests from the press and because of the fear of entrusting such power to the executive. However, another article of the Espionage Act gave the administration what it had requested, entrusting the postmaster the authority to exclude from the shipments any material that would incite "betrayal, insurrection or resistance against any law of the United States". In this way, almost all the major socialist newspapers were confiscated, depriving the party of its most important propaganda tools and, having deprived their main source of contact with the centre, wreaking havoc on its local organisations. In addition, the government and the courts attacked the opponents with a long series of indictments that affected both the leaders and, often, the party rank and file. These initiatives, and the great propaganda campaign that accompanied them, naturally fuelled violence and paramilitary activity in all areas of the country so that public demonstrations were very difficult to carry out and the work of the militants had to become semi-clandestine. It is estimated that in the last year of the war there were about 1500 party headquarters destroyed out of a total of about 5000, and this, combined with the suppression of newspapers and the arrest of several activists, greatly weakened the socialist party, especially in the West and Midwest.

This furious repressive campaign was probably made all the more urgent by the considerable consensus that the Socialist Party was gaining among workers and farmers by virtue of its opposition to the war, reflected in some local elections. Despite the considerable difficulties of its campaign and the terrorist press campaign it was subjected to, the party had multiplied its votes in an impressive way: in the Dayton (Ohio) elections held on August 14th, the Socialists obtained 44% of the votes against 6.5% of the previous year; in Buffalo, the following month, they went from 13% to 32% of the votes, in Chicago they obtained 34%, in Cleveland 22.4% and in New York – in an election of considerable national importance – 21.7%. These successes came almost entirely from the small industrial centres or, in the case of large cities, from the workers' districts, testifying to the class character of the opposition to the war.

The other main target of the repressive campaign were the IWW, attacked mainly in their national centre and in those situations of labour struggle in the West that represented their strongholds. From the bourgeoisie of the West there was a strong pressure to take exceptional measures against the presence and influence of wobblies among workers. After having obtained the passage of laws against "criminal" trade unionism, at least in some states, and having started a real lynching campaign against the IWW, the bosses and governors of several states began to turn to the federal government to dissolve the organisation. The administration at first responded negatively to these requests, but started an investigation into the character of the organisation directed by the Department of Justice. In the meantime, a wide variety of repression initiatives were taken by the states. Finally, the federal government accepted the pressures from many States and, towards the end of the summer, took the initiative in its own hands: several jurists, following the investigation of the Justice Department, suggested to the federal government to arrest and indict the wobblies for conspiracy, in order to infringe the law on draft and the Espionage Act.. The government, starting with President Wilson, approved the project. On September 5th, federal agents, along with local sheriffs, raided all IWW offices throughout the country, starting with the National Directorate located in Chicago, and on September 28th, a federal court in Chicago indicted 166 IWW leaders, including all major national leaders, for conspiracy; thus began a series of trials against the organisation's members, beheading the its executives and turning it from a combative industrial union into a legal defence committee.

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The Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today

We resume in this issue our previous habit of publishing instalments of this work, which we suspended in no. 50 of this periodical, picking up where we left off in no. 49. The work of translating and editing this work has continued well past our ability to include in this edition of Communist Left, and readers may find on our website, <http://www.international-communist-party.org/>, chapters as yet unpublished here.

34 – Monosyllabic Proof: Da

Since a certain elephantine global coordinating body did such a great job of creating the myth that only Stalin accepted the April line straightaway, (whereas Pravda, when edited by him and Kamenev, stated that the “*pravdas*” (truths) of Lenin (poor little fellow!) were merely personal opinions) let us quote a last non-Trotskyist witness. This is not the first time we have referred to it, but it is useful and pertinent to the subject under discussion. At the enlarged executive of the Comintern in February-March 1926, during a meeting on the Russian question (the Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev opposition was forming), the debate on which was prevented from being brought to the plenary session on the grounds that the opposition itself had requested as much for fear of being even more severely chastised, a delegate from the left of the Italian party asked Stalin whether it were true that at the 1917 meeting, when discussing the stance to be taken on the war, Lenin had included him, Stalin, among those against whom he directed epithets of the type “Russian chauvinist”, “Cossack nationalist” and such like. As the embarrassed young interpreter remained silent, Stalin ordered him to translate the question for him, raised his head, and clearly said: *da* – yes, it is true.

On one occasion (in fact at that same executive meeting) during an attack on the lefts, Stalin made a triple distinction: when it is comrade X speaking, it is always a lie – when it is comrade Y, it is sometimes true, sometimes a lie – when it is comrade Z (the Italian delegate) it is always true, even if the conclusions he draws are wrong. The witness we have quoted is Stalin himself, via he who according to him (see the report printed in Moscow) never bore false witness. And to him be given due credit for not wishing, even if monosyllabically, to lie either.

That would not be enough to condemn anybody, if even Jesus Christ had to tell his first lieutenant, Peter, that before the cock crowed, he would deny him thrice.

To us materialists it cannot be said: you will be with me in Paradise! History, and its theory, towers above us all, big and small, famous and unknown. It is its path alone that we follow.

35 – April’s Benchmarks

There is no doubt that the arrival of Lenin in Russia, and the April Theses, which would follow within 24 hours, mark a historical turning point, a fundamental stage. But this must not be understood in the sense that they send out a new message to the world, give a new version of revolutionary dynamics, or that from that moment, as we wrote so long ago in these texts, the revolutionary socialist vision had been changed. The simplistic version, as though from a professorial chair, is that for the entire world proletariat the syllabus had changed. No more struggle, victory and attainment of power by the wage-earning proletariat as the springboard for the destruction of capitalism, and for the freeing of the productive forces in order to steer them towards the communist order: but struggle, victory and the attainment of the State by the people, by proletarians and semi-proletarians, workers and peasant proprietors: this then the banal and pedestrian interpretation whose lesson supposedly needs to be learnt by the proletarians in the west; in countries, that is, where capitalism has matured and is in an advanced state of decay before being violently put to death!

The turning point does not concern a capitalist country yielding to the process of socialist revolution, but a country with a decaying feudalism, in the throes of a bourgeois and popular revolution.

The April turning point is a powerful grabbing of the helm of the Bolshevik ship which was succumbing to the waves of petty-bourgeois opportunism, and which had strayed off the course that needs to be followed in a bourgeois revolution; it was a grabbing of the helm that required the eagle eyes and Herculean efforts of its steersman, but didn’t require him to plot a new unknown course, but rather to simply follow, and get others to follow, the course that was already indelibly marked on the navigation chart of History.

Everything that Lenin proclaims and sets down on paper in those historic theses is terribly against what they were doing in Russia; not only against what the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties were doing, but what the workers’ parties and his own one were doing as well. But at the same time, he is fiercely conformist to everything that had already been written, to the course mapped out by Marx and Engels in 1848 and a hundred times confirmed; and to the course traced out by Lenin himself from 1900

onwards for Russia. Impatient People who go weak at the knees at the mention of new, modern directives need only understand this: we defend the immutability of the course, but not its rectilinearity. It is full of difficult twists and turns. But these are not whims that arise in the head the capo, of the Leader, as Trotsky himself puts it. Leader in fact means driver. Just because the leader of the party has the steering wheel in his hands doesn’t mean he has the arbitrary power to go in whatever direction he chooses; he is the driver of a train or of a tramcar. His power lies in knowing that the track is fixed, although certainly not straight all the way; he knows the stations through which it passes and the destination towards which he is driving, the curves and the slopes.

And he is certainly not the only one who knows it. The historically plotted course does not belong to just one thinking head, but belongs to an organisation which transcends individuals, above all in time, forged by living history and by a doctrine, which is (for you a tough word) codified.

If this is denied then we are all of us done for, and no new Lenin will ever save us. We will take our manifestos, books and theses to the pulping mill, in a common bankruptcy.

The April Theses therefore deal with a given, grandiose historical situation, encompassing a crucial year and the thunderous movement of a hundred and fifty million people. They don’t treat the situation as unexpected or new, as one which requires a makeshift solution, but graft it on to the deterministic lines which the doctrine – unitary and cast en bloc – of history and revolution, or rather revolutions, discovered. And discoveries do not evolve or improve. They are either discoveries, or they aren’t.

It seems therefore that Lenin makes his entrance like those who want to dismantle and smash everything up. To destroy is the only Marxist way of constructing and managing things. In the bourgeois and petty bourgeois swamp, and indeed for all dying classes, knowledge is folly, revolutionary truth is treated with hemlock. But on at least one occasion the scandalised conformists have been forced to swallow it. Stepping down from the train, the engineer lays into the opportunist obstacle with a few deft blows. And the train of history continues along its inexorable track; and along the only path

which it could and had to take.

36 – Repel Defencism!

Thesis 1 (Paragraph one): *In our attitude towards the war, which under the new government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government, not the slightest concession to "revolutionary defencism" is permissible.*

After what we have mentioned repeatedly, no theoretical gloss is required. Clearly if the war was considered imperialist by Marxists when fought by England, France, Belgium, etc., one could hardly think that, since it was imperialist under the Tsar, it ceased to be so under a Russian bourgeois democratic government. In fact, it became even more so, because that type of revolution, which Lenin had come to break up, involved a major linking up with the interests of big capital in the West.

It is worth highlighting this: the Bolsheviks had failed in revolutionary dialectics. They hadn't understood that in Russia democracy was accepted, invoked and preached as an inevitable transitional bridge, but not as a situation in which the opposition between State and proletariat should be slackened just because the State passed to the bourgeoisie had assumed parliamentary forms: they hesitated to issue the defeatist slogan in the combatant army, merely because it was Lvov in Moscow and not Nicholas. Lenin wipes the whole thing away.

Thesis 1 (Paragraph two): *The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defencism, only on condition: (a) that the power pass to the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat; (b) that all annexations be renounced in deed and not in word; (c) that a complete break be effected in actual fact with all capitalist interests.*

Firstly, we must draw attention to a formula which is by no means new, but is stated here very clearly, which develops the classic concept of the dictatorship of the workers and peasants, involving the "the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat", and to be illustrated later on. But the important point to highlight is that due to doctrinal rigour, no less than

to avoid blocking oneself in in future public situations (as will be seen) Lenin, although under enormous pressure to react to the "sympathy for the war", which after February threatened to wreck everything, did not use the raw formula of "we are against all wars". It is a fact that here simplistic extremism is ready to commit both errors: the pacifist and the militarist one.

Another important point that clearly needs to be made: the Russian war in 1939-45 was not revolutionary defencism because none of Lenin's conditions were met: power was not in the hands of the proletariat and the poor peasants – there was no renunciation of annexations after the war, because in the first phase Poland was subjugated, in the second phase half of Europe – and not only was there no break with the interests of capital, but a brazen alliance with it: with German capital to get hold of Poland, and with Anglo-American capitalism to get hold of the rest.

37 – Defeatism Continues

Thesis 1 (Paragraph three): *In view of the undoubted honesty of those broad sections of the mass believers in revolutionary defencism who accept the war only as a necessity, and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience to explain their error to them, to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital it is IMPOSSIBLE to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence.*

Lenin, who had seen defencism infiltrating his own party, fully evaluates the real extent of this danger of "Cossack" national patriotism and ingeniously links it to the "pacifism" of the masses. The latter believes that it is Nicholas, William and Franz Joseph pushing for the war to continue, and that the "democratic" governments will quickly put a stop to it. It is necessary to explain that the opposite is the case, and that in our words "War suits democracy" more than it does despotism. The last excerpt is the one we need to know how to read. Lenin underlines the word IMPOSSIBLE, and if we had the original text, we would see that the exact construction is: you shouldn't invoke a democratic peace without violence, because therein lies only error and illusion, but call for the overthrow of capitalism. A shortlist of democratic capitalist States is not a guarantee of general peace, but a condition for

imperialism. A thesis that is the opposite of the one, held in common by all those currently present at the Geneva Convention, which seeks to ward off war with "political honesty"; which maintains that peaceful coexistence is possible, and so on and so forth... whereas they are all plundering wolves.

Thesis 1 (Paragraph four): *The most widespread campaign for this view must be organised in the army at the front. Fraternisation.*

The urgency of the moment meant that this international point is indicated with a few strokes of the chisel. The illegal organisation of military defeatism, the downing of weapons to embrace the enemy soldier, was not because Nicholas and his supporters (the provisional government however wanted to come to terms with Grand Duke Michael!) were in command of the army, but it was something that had to be carried out no less vigorously under the committee and the government of the Duma! The Cossacks *ad honorem* are flabbergasted, and try in vain to hide under the table.

38 – Transition: Between Which Two Stages?

Thesis 2 (Paragraph one): *The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is the TRANSITION from the first stage of the revolution – which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to its second stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.*

Here the noun revolution is written without the adjectives which we have no hesitation in adding. In both the first and the second stages, we are dealing with a bourgeois and democratic revolution, an anti-feudal, non-socialist revolution.

A text is interpreted, normally, in such a way that the various passages and sections are susceptible to being ordered in a logical way. And the following excerpts, as well as the hundred and one formulations for over twenty years of the same thesis, clearly evidence this. There is more: the first stage, that gave power to a bourgeoisie that neither could nor wanted to carry out the anti-feudal revolution on its own, was only possible, as a simple prologue to the anti-Tsarist revolution which everybody was expecting, due

to the international fact of the imperialist war, which lent power to, and imposed obligations on, the local bourgeoisie, and which – due to the failures of the European parties when war broke out – caused disorientation among the nascent Russian proletariat, with the semi-proletarians leaning on the bourgeoisie and not on the workers.

It is now a matter of recuperating. Not in order to do more of what we were determined to do back in 1905, but of making up for the failure of having done much less than set out by the theoretical program, namely: capitalist revolution with democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Thesis 2 (Paragraph two): *This transition is characterised, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognised rights (Russia is AT THE MOMENT the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world); on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and, finally, by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism.*

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the SPECIAL conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

The words we have put in capitals were in italics in the original. In this passage the italicised words at this moment, and special, are the most eloquent. Dialectics teaches that often the response to the hypothesis that negates the existing state of affairs (democratic freedom), matters more than the response to that state of affairs itself (proletarian revolution).

Lenin was bombarded with objections about us being in the minority, that the workers do not understand (or, perhaps it is the professors of Marxism who don't understand a damn thing?), that power is in the hands of the provisional government and the Soviet is in the majority for him and not for us, who have the advantage of being able to meet, talk, publish newspapers, etc.... So then, says Lenin, how could it be better? Is this a reason for writing and talking rubbish? Should we maybe thank the liberal government for what they have bestowed by licking their boots, or at least (that gigantic blockhead Nenni having

already shown how) by becoming its gallant and loyal opposition?

We must certainly take advantage of such largesse though: as Marx always said, the proletariat is, in spite of the victorious bourgeoisie, educated by it; not in school, but by being called to struggle, by being drawn into politics. In this lapsus of liberty we must sail against the current, open the eyes of the masses, get the upper hand.

But take heed: this much is possible in this special moment. Here the political leader keeps a firm grip on his followers, but the far greater theoretical leader already sees clearly what lies ahead. Freedom, no violence against the masses: for now. But would you tell them that the situation is a definitive one, a guaranteed victory of the revolution? Soon we will have to fight on non-legal terrain! The revolution must still be carried out (and not because the socialist one is still to be accomplished) and within months; for if it is not us attacking the bourgeois-opportunist government, it will be them putting us outside the law! In July Lenin already had to go into hiding. But by now the masses had understood. Maybe by reading the “theses”? Never. It was the theses that had understood history. And those blind until then, or dazzled by the splendour of democracy, hesitatingly opened their blurry eyes.

39 – The Provisional Government to the Pillory!

Thesis 3: *No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion-breeding “demand” that THIS government, a government of capitalists, should CEASE to be an imperialist government.*

This is a direct response to the Party’s manifesto in March and to the articles in Pravda, which considered the government which succeeded Tsarism, although it hadn’t been a part of it, a revolutionary conquest, and restricted itself to inviting it to carry a series of “impossible” political measures such as a “democratic” peace initiative, without declaring that it was a government mandated by international capital to keep the war going, and that the war had to be stopped in spite of it, by overthrowing it, which was the only way peace could be achieved. The Lvov government, no less than those that came after it, expressed the requirements of the national bour-

geoisie, which was nurturing hopes of taking its seat at the banquet of victory over Germany and the division of the imperialist plunder, which would give to a bourgeois and militarist Russia a hitherto undreamt-of boost. It reciprocated the aid from the Entente by committing itself to stay in the war through the course of Russian Revolution and see it through to the end, which was possible only if the force of the working class was behind it. It counted on winning over the workers’ leaders just as the governments of France, Belgium, and Germany had done, and it achieved its first successes on this path with the complicity of the Mensheviks and the populists in the Soviets: this no-one had been able to say before the April Theses. No-one had yet moved on from their joy over the fall of the Tsar. Today in Italy the proletariat is immersed in unconsciousness because no-one (apart from us) has moved on from a far more imbecilic victory: over Mussolini, which was not even a turning point in the historic struggle between classes, but just a military episode during the war

40 – Party and Soviet

Thesis 4 (Paragraph one): *Recognition of the fact that in most of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies our Party is in a minority, so for a small minority, as against a bloc of all the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements, from the Popular Socialists and the Socialist-Revolutionaries down to the Organising Committee (Chkheidze, Tsereteli, etc.), Steklov, etc., etc., who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie and spread that influence among the proletariat.*

The well-known situation – the majority in the Soviets in the hands of the right-wing socialists, delegation of power by these to the Provisional Government elected within the Committee of Oppositions of the old Tsarist Duma – is engraved by Lenin in the general formula of opportunism: the bourgeoisie influences and controls the right-wing socialists, the latter influence and control the working masses in favor of the former.

The revolutionaries disapprove of the submission of the Soviets to the Provisional Government, and they are obliged to fight against it. How should they act towards the present leaders of the Soviets, who en bloc, are at the service of a capitalist and military policy? To maybe denounce Soviets, as such? Or to say instead that, given that the “democratic majority” within the Soviets votes to support the bourgeois govern-

ment, this should be ratified in homage to the usual “proletarian united front”?

To a such an alternative Lenin shrugs his shoulders. Neither of the two.

Thesis 4 (Paragraphs two and three): *The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies are the only POSSIBLE FORM of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is, as long as this government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses.*

As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire State power to the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.

As usual we focus on what is underlined: only possible form. The theses are as follows: any government or power based outside the Soviets is not revolutionary. The only government that can be revolutionary is one based on the majority in the Soviet. But he does not say: the Soviets democratically express the will, the free opinion of the workers, and therefore, any government based on it is revolutionary, conforms to proletarian interests, and should be supported. This would be patently false. Today the Soviets express the opinion of a proletariat that has been deceived and misled: they make decisions neither from a revolutionary perspective, nor from the standpoint of the “practical needs” of the masses.

In these circumstances the Soviet, this historic form expressed by the bourgeois Russian Revolution, and a direct introduction to the tasks of the proletariat, is neither cast aside like rubbish, nor forcefully attacked; rather, its errors are systematically denounced.

What directive is offered for this difficult campaign? The famous slogan: All State power to the Soviets.

All means that the Soviets do not recognise other organs of political power not emanating from themselves; that they do not accept divisions of powers, as such divisions are tantamount to a renunciation of any power at all.

Therefore (dialectics!) we recognise the Soviet because it is the only possible form of revolutionary government. We recognise it in principle when its majority is against us too, and do not declare it our enemy. We do not say to it: you either pass into our hands, or we attack you. We say to it: since we can govern only with the Soviet, we will recognise this government even though we are in a minority, and even if the Mensheviks and populists are in the majority. But it must demand all power, and therefore disavow the Duma committee and the Lvov cabinet, cutting its links with it and not negotiating power with parties that are not based exclusively on workers. The Mensheviks and the SRs have a choice: either with the bourgeoisie in the provisional government, or with us in the Soviet that has all power, and which heads the State. This the masses led by the right-wing socialists would understand very well.

41 – Impeccable Tactics

When Lenin explains this to his party comrades, he does not omit to mention that it is well known what the opportunists would choose: the provisional government and not a government of the Soviet with the Bolsheviks; a compromise by which the Soviet would not be the sole organ of power, but the bourgeois ministers would remain, and power being mandated to politicians appointed outside the Soviet would not be denied. Once this choice had become clear, the majority of the Soviet would abandon the opportunists as traitors, and the latter, along with the bourgeoisie, would have been defeated, as they would not be in the way when the inevitable violent clash between the organs of bourgeois power and the Soviet broke out.

The actual development of the revolution in Russia confirmed the accuracy of this forecast in such a luminous and powerful manner that unfortunately the fact that it was not a new way of conducting the socialist revolution got lost from view. This way was not new at all, because it corresponded to the by now rancid politics of the legalitarians, reformists, revisionists, and supporters of collaboration between the petty bourgeoisie and the workers, who had denied all along Marx’s conception of the revolution by which one passes from the capitalist mode of production to the socialist one.

Lenin’s tactic, within that historical setting, was, we repeat, impeccable. The setting is the Russia of the tsars which is emerging from

feudal forms of production, the heyday of this great struggle runs from 1880 to 1917.

The tactic is right, and it is irreproachable because it is precisely the one which should be followed in an anti-feudal revolution, in a bourgeois revolution.

And here we make a connection with a topic that would arise in the future; the struggle that the Italian left conducted between 1918 and 1926 and beyond, and also with Lenin, against the view that the same tactic should be used in the proletarian revolution in capitalist Europe.

42 – Down with Parliamentarism!

Thesis 5 (Paragraph one): *Not a parliamentary republic – to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step – but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.*

We believe that it was here the atom bomb exploded. And yet – and no-one proved it better than Lenin – they are the classic Marxist words from 1848, even if these, seventy years earlier, rigorously described the forms that needed to be destroyed and not yet those that would replace them. He who from these brief comments fails to understand that Marxism culminates in the destruction of democratic parliamentarism is no Marxist, but a complete toerag.

We come now to the contingent historical situation. We have shown how most of the Bolsheviks reasoned. The provisional government is not our government, but what can we impute to it if it is provisional? It has the mandate to call free elections (utter rubbish), thirst for which has tormented Russians for over a century: and after handing over to whoever has the parliamentary majority, the constituent assembly will be gone: therefore, until then let us prepare for the elections, and that's that.

At this point, idiots would later say, Lenin went really mad. For now, the bourgeoisie governs. The Soviet remains to monitor things and delegates substantive power to the provisional government. Then if in the elections to the constituent assembly, the bourgeoisie and their lackeys, all supporters of the war, form the majority, as it certainly will, and definitive power passes

to the parliamentary government, what does the Soviet do then? It realises that what was provisional was itself and disbands, because one can sleep easy knowing there are parliamentary guarantees! It advises proletarians to fight heroically at the front against the Germans, and to make sure it does not get involved in that scandalous activity of organising soldiers' deputies alongside the worker and peasant deputies.

Interpreted in such a way, the Soviet is an organ of struggle for revolutionary times, and its life restricted to times of struggle. Its historical task is supposedly to lead the masses during the insurrection, and having generously shed its blood, to rejoin the ranks, and let the legal power govern undisturbed.

Here we can discern Lenin's greatness. The Soviets are not organs of revolutionary struggle but much more: they are the form which revolutionary State power takes. They are what is contained in the words: democratic dictatorship. The proletariat takes power during the anti-feudal revolution and implements the social transformation which in substance is the creation of capitalism, but during this period it not only takes power from the bourgeoisie and the big landowners, but this power is organised in such a form that they are entirely excluded from it, including any right of representation.

The only political delegation there will be lies at the heart of the network of Soviets running from the periphery to the centre; the State will be supported on this foundation; the bourgeoisie not only has no power but it will not figure as a party of opposition either.

Herein lies the great blasphemy. The form that is appropriate for the anti-feudal revolution in Russia will not be a parliamentary assembly as in the French Revolution, but will be a different kind of organ, based on the class of workers of the city and countryside alone.

Not only the pretext of waiting for the election of the Constituent Assembly collapses, but the very necessity for it as well: the cycle will close with its forced dissolution. We are talking about an entirely different road: conquering a Bolshevik majority in the Soviets, working legally (1848: to organise the proletariat into a political party), then the conquest of all power to the Soviets (organising the proletariat into a ruling class) which clearly involves the forceful

overthrow of the power of the provisional government.

In the socialist revolution the proletariat will overthrow the power of the stable parliamentary, but bourgeois, government and will organise its dictatorship of wage-earners alone, led by the communist party.

Here – never forget it – history is still searching for the forms of proletarian power during a belated democratic revolution.

43 – Police, Army, Bureaucracy

Thesis 5. (Paragraph two): *Abolition of the police, the army, and the bureaucracy (that is: the replacement of the standing army with the armed people).*

Practically speaking the February government had changed the ministers, but not the network, the machinery of national administration. The Black Hundreds had gone, but rather than being an official police force, they were a reactionary party/sect. The generals, the senior central and local functionaries, had changed little from the time of the tsar. The revolution, even insofar as it was bourgeois, was incomplete. If one had to assume political power in order to carry out social tasks corresponding to the liquidation of feudalism and not yet of capitalism (which was only possible if the revolution broke out in Europe) it was necessary, nonetheless, to break up the traditional State apparatus.

The proletarian power of the Soviets could only be based on the armed working class. It would not be a citizens' army insofar as bourgeois and landlords would be excluded from it, as from the representative organs, the aim being to repress any counter-revolutionary attempt to foment civil war.

Only in a revolution that remains socially only capitalist, but in which the proletariat loses control, does the classic permanent national army of the Napoleonic type go back to being the mainstay of State power.

Thesis 5 (Paragraph three): *The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.*

This principle persistently defended by Lenin was, as is well-known, upheld by the Paris Com-

mune. It is a principle for a transitional economy in which the wage system remains fully intact. But it marks a great step towards the elimination of the social division of labour, of the sub-division of society between those who live with uncertainty and those who have "a career". To abolish careers is to deliver an economy in which basic consumption is guaranteed to all, although within limits determined by plans. Today, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie tends to do the opposite: not suppressing those with assured careers, but turning everyone into careerists, especially the industrial workers.

In fact Lenin's policy – by which the administrator (coincident with the political representative) was a simple producer who was temporarily moved, following a decision by his Soviet, to perform that role, from which he could be recalled at any time – would be abandoned when the Republic, which still calls itself Soviet, became a capitalist State ruled by the social forces of capital and not by the workers, before fatally proceeding, on an international scale, in exactly the opposite direction to the one which passes from a workers' dictatorship administering the transition to capitalism to one administering the transition to socialism.

The task of liquidating feudalism from its deep roots, even more so in fact, that arose in 1917 also needed that guarantee. The worker delegated to govern and administer a society in which the bourgeois and bourgeois interests still exploit the labour of his peers must not be exposed to the risk of becoming a privileged person and potential instrument of capitalist power: which was what, after inevitably getting drowned in the massive inundation of newly recruited bureaucrats, and on a general scale would eventually occur.

44 – Frail Human Nature?

On this was Lenin, who so confidently predicted huge events which are still misunderstood today, nurturing vain hopes? The usual sceptics who resolve these kinds of questions with the formula of power unable to resist a craving for wealth, rather than indulging vanity, and which, understood in the vulgar sense, inevitably becomes economic exploitation and despotism, were they perhaps right? Given that such a process is avowedly inherent in all historical climes, and concerns insuperable givens of the hackneyed "human nature"?

It is certainly not the first time we have shown the vile inconsistency of this kind of rubbish; or fought against this very inferior critique of what caused the death of a great revolution. A revolution which, we may add, is not dead, but one which has been channelled into a path that is less rapid historically speaking than was envisaged by Lenin, which lacked precisely the conditions which he posited as necessary.

The Russian Revolution spanned a vast arc of history: from the ruins of a feudal system, which was far more rotten than Louis XVI's, to the installation of a mercantile capitalism which placed it, in its economic forms, on a par with the elephantine capitalism of the west, incarnated in its State machinery insofar as it was better at extracting profit, and with a bureaucracy in its train even more corrupt than the feudal courts, its privileges and perquisites existing on a scale far more scandalous than those.

And yet the phase of heroic service to the revolutionary power – and perhaps the acceptance of austere misery is more astonishing than giving one's life, which is far more common – isn't actually characteristic only of the proletarian revolution, it has been a characteristic of all revolutions, in fact of all social forms of production, and it is easy to read about it in the historical accounts, and even in myths; about which it is precisely idiots who smile, in the belief that the legends which circulate were suddenly cooked one day up by an unbeliever of their calibre.

We need not go back as far as Lycurgus drinking Spartan soup with his peasants and soldiers, to King Agide who divided up all his goods, we need not recall the fasting and renunciations of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims in their times of revolution, nor the episodes from Roman history about Cincinnatus, invincible general but insensible to the seductions of power and wealth, bound to the spade with which he dug his land.

The bourgeois revolution itself had its austere champions who forsook titles and privilege to embrace the new cause. The most illustrious of them, Robespierre, known as the Incorruptible, stood out from all the rest. During the rise of modern capitalism, every nation has its Savonarola of politics, following inflexible self-imposed rules. For example, the Italian liberal bourgeoisie of the old intransigent right from

Sella onwards boasts a string of real fasters in power, inflexible with themselves before anyone else.

The great Bolshevik generation had such men, who were ready to take it upon themselves, for little more than the bread and cheese of the long emigration, to administer a revolution, and furthermore a revolution carried out by the poor, to found a social form that would elevate the rich. Anyone who laughs at Lenin's insistence on taking a workers' wage is a poor soul who envisaged him in the splendid garb of a satrap and never in his threadbare suit: who never saw Zinoviev, Bukharin, and numerous other comrades; who never knew Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, who couldn't be said to have dressed worse than her maid because she never had a maid, and who never drew attention to herself in any way, even though quite capable, as a Marxist theoretician, of contradicting its greatest exponents.

Lenin's formula even now was the right one. History took another path, confirming his doctrine in full, but raising to the first rank the modern satraps of the politics of the super-salaried and those mollified by luxury and crassly bourgeois comforts. An efflorescence of mould, not a force and cause of history, an episode alongside other periods of fetid decomposition, of forms of production that must perish.

45 – The Clearly Bourgeois Social Measures

We will close our analysis, forming a fitting conclusion to what we set out to demonstrate, with the three short theses on the social-economic measures.

We need not comment on thesis 9, on the duties, program, and name of the party, nor on thesis 10, on "Renewing the International" since they lie at the centre of all of our extensive and detailed treatments of the subject.

Thesis 6: *The weight of emphasis in the agrarian program to be shifted to the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.*

Confiscation of all landed estates.

Nationalisation of all lands in the country, the land to be disposed of by the local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies. The organisation of separate Soviets of Deputies

of Poor Peasants. The setting up of a model farm on each of the large estates... under the control of the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and for the public account.

This is clear enough, especially to those who have followed our expositions on the disputed agrarian questions. Lenin sees the waged agricultural worker, who was a pure proletarian and not a peasant farmer, as the first priority. Then the poor peasant farmer. "Poor" means that he has his family as his labour force, not much land, and no working capital: he cannot live from the product of his small strip of land and must occasionally sell his labour to the country bourgeoisie. The formula is not one of a dividing up or municipalisation of the land, but of nationalisation, that is of confiscation of land rent by the State: a measure so bourgeois that it was proposed by Ricardo. Possession to be entrusted to the Soviet, not to the individual producer. The struggle against small-scale agriculture to be conducted with large model farms. These are not yet referred to as State farms but are controlled by the Soviet: thus, agrarian capitalism is allowed.

Thesis 7: *The immediate union of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.*

This measure is also classically of the bourgeois period and already many States have effectively achieved it under various forms. There are banks where there is corporate and merchant capital. Here as well capital is not confiscated but controlled. The State is banker and its clients are private individuals.

Thesis 8: *It is not our IMMEDIATE task to "introduce" socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.*

This thesis is clearly about the urban, industrial economy. It is not, consistent with the above, a demand which the provisional government was expected to insert in its program, but a task entrusted to the proletarian power, and evidently subsequent to these: a) winning over the Soviet to the formula: all power, i.e., to the communist party; b) overthrowing the provisional government and getting rid of the constituent as-

sembly; c) driving forward defeatism in the imperialist war.

And yet this program of social transformation, presented by Lenin in April 1917 as the program for the second stage of the revolution, includes not a single clause about socialist transformation. Lenin says that we are not establishing socialism, a word he uses with extreme care since no government "establishes" socialism: an out and out proletarian dictatorship would disperse bourgeois relations and forms of production: a task of destruction, not of establishing something. In the ensuing conference at the end of April, Lenin would explain everything better, and in more categorical terms.

46 – Other False Dispersals

We therefore placed the April Theses in the context within which they arose, proving that the pronounced shift of policy by Lenin, within the complicated and difficult process of liquidating feudal and Tsarist Russia, was solely about making the most emphatic of returns to a revolutionary strategy. The revolution was, as we mentioned earlier, divided into two stages with respect to the classic expectation of the Bolsheviks, not because yet another stage had been added but because the first stage foresaw, due to the inherent difficulties of the situation, and partly because of revolutionary weakness, that it would be split in two. The February stage was a false revolution, not just a purely bourgeois revolution. It – if history had not taken an entirely different path – would have led straight to counter-revolution, that is, not just to being controlled by the global bourgeoisie, but even, and in parallel throughout with the intricate vicissitudes of the war, towards an attempted Tsarist counter-revolution.

The April Theses obviated this danger. It is therefore another enormous falsehood of Stalinism (after having attempted to attribute to Lenin paternity of the doctrine 'building of socialism in Russia alone' at the time of the 1914 theses against the imperialist war and the opportunist betrayal, theses which were about destroying the war with defeatism in every country, including in one alone and also in Russia, but which said nothing about any constructing) to attribute this to him as if he had announced such a bombshell at the time of his return to Russia in that famous April.

Here is an example of how a publication of Stalinist origin expresses it, along with its quotations from texts that are unmistakably Lenin's: "What marked the situation was therefore the passage from the bourgeois democratic revolution to the socialist revolution, or as Lenin put it the transformation of the bourgeois revolution into the socialist revolution." But Lenin's words are the ones above: "The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is the transition from the first stage of the revolution – which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to its second stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants."

This second text will also be used instead of it. But the case is prepared. The main defect, as even Lenin will say at the subsequent party conference (see chapter 49), is that the socialists pose the question of what to do today in a way that is too general: as the passage to socialism. We cannot claim to be establishing socialism, which would be a monumental absurdity. The majority of the population are small cultivators, peasants who cannot even conceive of socialism. We must "predict" socialism.

The historical dialectic lies in this: the man who declared he did not want to pass to socialism was the greatest of revolutionaries. Those who say they were instructed by him to build it, and who state they have done it, are nothing but damnable bourgeois.

47 – Towards the April Conference

The arrival of Lenin, Zinoviev, Sokolnikov, Krupskaya and other comrades was on 16 April 1917 New Style (European Gregorian calendar) that is, 3 April in the Old Style (Russian Julian Calendar). The famous theses were read by Lenin at the enlarged conference, which was previously arranged in Petrograd by the local organisations, on the 4/17 April. (The first date will always indicate date in the Russian Julian calendar, the second in the Gregorian). The latter conference was to prepare for the national one (the party's seventh) which ran from the 24-29 April (7-12 May). It is best to stick to the old chronology, so we do not end up calling what has become known as the April conference the May conference, or the classic October Revolution the November Revolution. The gap between the two dating systems is 13 days.

We have mentioned already that the conference was already underway and the resolution on a settlement with the Mensheviks was being presented there, and there was even the proposal that the two fractions of the old Russian social democratic party should unite. In Trotsky's words: "The contrast was too cruel. To soften it, Lenin, contrary to his custom, did not subject the resolution that had already been passed (in his absence) to analysis but merely turned his back on it."

We have described the astonishment which his unexpected speech, and the theses it recapitulated, provoked in everybody. Trotsky's demonstration that Stalin was entirely, along with almost everyone else, disowned, is as irrefutable as the story of the incredible makeover thanks to which the official historiography later on, bit by bit, would distort the entire period along with the contrast: before April and after April; leaving in the lurch, let it be understood, Kamenev and other future "Trotskyists". In 1924 Stalin admitted to having shared the erroneous position of compromise with the provisional government which would "power the mill of defencism", confessing that: "I repudiated it only in the middle of April, after I had subscribed to Lenin's theses". But in 1926 he would say "that is gossip" and it was just a matter of "momentary waverings: who has not had them?". In 1930 the historiographer Jaroslavsky would be persecuted for having alluded to these waverings. Leon's expression is most apt: the idol of prestige is a voracious monster!

Finally, in the official *History* it is Kamenev, Rykov, Bubnov and Nogin who are branded for holding this semi-Menshevik position, and Stalin's reaction to it, on returning from exile, is attributed to Molotov and others. We do not attach much importance to this argument. That Stalin = Kamenev in the pre-April period is very clear. But as far as revolutionary history is concerned, all things considered, it is Kamenev, not Stalin, who has been rehabilitated. And even if the opposite were true, the analysis of the historical forces would remain the same.

We cannot go along with Trotsky, however, when he wants to defend here an assessment, he made in 1909, of the disagreement between the "two tactics", according to which there were anti-revolutionary aspects in both the Menshevik and the Bolshevik arguments; the first of these having already emerged, while the second would

only emerge in the event of revolutionary victory.

This supposedly happened in April, and it was supposedly due to Lenin that the party was "rearmed"; an expression used by Leon in 1922 which would later unleash the ire of the Stalinists. Trotsky grafts on to it his theory of the inspirational leader who expresses the masses who are more revolutionary than the party, and the party which is more revolutionary than its organisational "machine".

In these ideas lies the proof that Trotsky drew close to Lenin late in the day and that the Stalinian counter-critique was in part correct, even if both camps were wrong in having people believe that Lenin, by dropping the April bombshell, was putting into effect a revision of the old theses.

We confirm the revolutionary importance of the party's function with the proof that its theory had predicted everything, in a way that was as orthodox as it was reliable. If Lenin "rearmed" the party, the term implies there were those who were "disarming" it, proving in fact, as per our presentation, that Lenin put it back on the positions of the old contrast between "the two tactics" which Trotsky was not too keen on. It was not that Lenin gave secret, brand new weapons to the party, rather he got it to pick up the weapons it was letting go of.

48 – Disagreement at the Conference

There was resistance to Lenin. It was not from Stalin though, who kept a low profile, but from the more ingenuous Kamenev, Rykov, Nogin, Dzerzhinsky and Angarsky among others. "The democratic revolution has not ended". "The impetus for a social revolution should have come from the West".

Before continuing with Lenin's responses, which were decisive, it is necessary to give the very apt formulation which appears in Trotsky's account, when commenting on the reference to the West: "That was true. However, the mission of the provisional Government was not to complete the revolution but to reverse its course. Hence it followed that the democratic revolution could be completed only under the rule of the working class." Here he was following the line.

Attending the All-Russian Conference of Bolshevik organisations from 24-29 April, representing 79,000 party members, were 131 delegates with decisional voting power, and a further 18 attending in a consultative capacity. Of the 79 thousand members a good 15 thousand were in the capital, Petrograd. Here we see the true dimensions of a revolutionary class party. Quite different from the vulgar festivals with head counts and contributions to party funds solicited by means of Luna Park type "attractions"!

In confirmation of Trotsky's statements, it seems that even the Kremlin does not consider April very interesting either. In the Italian translation of Lenin's Selected Works (they are now printing the complete works) of the contribution Lenin made to the April Conference, only the brief theses on the Agrarian and national questions are reported, expressive and important though they nevertheless are. Lenin's main report on the Current Situation, which in an organic way develops the themes of the April Theses, is therefore missing. We must therefore rely on texts which summarise the speeches, and have drawn one from a popular Italian publication, and the other from a rather patchy German summary.

The topics of the conference (after the opening speech given by Lenin, which underlined the historical reach of that conference "on the conditions of the Russian revolution, but of a developing world revolution as well") were as follows: 1) The current situation; 2) The peace conference; 3) Our attitude in the Soviets; 4) The revising of the party program; 5) The situation within the International; 6) Uniting the internationalist social democratic organisations (posthumous remnant from the organisation of the conference after the one in March); 7) The agrarian question; 8) The national question; 9) The constituent assembly; 10) Organisational questions; 11) Regional reports; 12) Elections of the Central Committee. The conference had the same value as a party congress. Following Lenin's arrival, he was charged with developing points 1, 7 and 8 on the agenda, but he only spoke on points 4 and 6, covering the attitude towards the workers' and peasants' soviets, supporting the resolution on the war, and on the situation in the International and the tasks of the RSDLP. He also delivered the concluding speech.

We will not follow Lenin's entire elaboration insofar as his overall construction, developed

over the course of his many interventions, is the same as in the April Theses, on which we reported and fully commented on previously. There are nevertheless some clarifications here and some very important formulations to be found.

49 – The Question of Power Again

Lenin clarifies again that in February power fell out of the hands of feudal despotism and into those of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the large landowners, represented by the Provisional Government and its men in Parliament, the Cadets, and Liberals, and supported by the populists and socialist leaning opportunists. But history poses to the ruling bourgeoisie three tasks it cannot resolve: ending the war, giving land to the peasants, and dealing with the country's economic crisis. The bourgeoisie backs the foreign imperialists in their war of plunder, as did the Tsar, in fact even more than him.

The most it can achieve is an imperialist peace, as a prelude to new wars. The capitalist bourgeoisie has no interest in nationalisation of the land, not because such a measure is incompatible with capitalism, but because of the links between landowners and capitalists, via the mortgages on land obtained from the bourgeois banks. Finally, the bourgeoisie cannot conceive of and realise any measure of economic recovery which would not be at the expense of the workers in the factories and on the land.

Therefore, power must be taken from the bourgeoisie and assumed by the revolutionary proletariat, supported by the peasants.

Here we have a very evocative formulation. Faced with the usual objection that the conditions for a transition from a bourgeois social revolution to a socialist one are absent, Lenin responds: “The Soviets of workers’, peasants’, and soldiers’ deputies must take power not for the purpose of building an ordinary bourgeois republic, nor for the purpose of making a direct transition to socialism.”

In Lenin's exposition, economic and political questions are once again brought fully into focus:

We cannot be for “introducing” socialism – this would be the height of absurdity. We must preach [elsewhere this was translated as “predict”] socialism. The majority of the population

in Russia are peasants, small farmers who can have no idea of socialism. We must therefore put over practical measures.

We have said a lot about these practical sociology-economic measures in various fields, and Lenin's words firmly establish that their character is not such as to render them incompatible with capitalism. We will not repeat here what was said about the control of production and the State bank but will provide a quote which gives a definition of what the postulate “nationalisation of the land/’ means:

Nationalisation of the land, though being a bourgeois measure, implies freedom for the class struggle and freedom of land tenure from all non-bourgeois adjuncts to the greatest possible degree conceivable in a capitalist society. Moreover, nationalisation, representing as it does the abolition of private ownership of land, would, in effect, deal such a powerful blow to private ownership of all the means of production in general that the party of the proletariat must facilitate such a reform in every possible way.

Here Marxist economic science is applied with maximum rigour. Bringing land under State control (in another text the term *Staatseigentum*, or State property, is used) means that of the three protagonists the first, the landowner, is suppressed, leaving in play the other two, the capitalist tenant and the agricultural wage-labourer, to fight the class struggle. This is better than passing tenures, by definition bourgeois, directly to the small peasant farmer. But in his thesis Lenin is prepared to tolerate the latter on condition that the soviets of wage-labourers on the land are organised separately (today gone, but justified how, in a social sense?), and with another advantage in view: that abolishing property in land is a major step forwards by making it possible to predict the abolition of all private property, even of capital.

50 – The New Form of Power

All of these concrete measures, necessary to get the peasant majority to move in our direction, and to get them to support the transfer of power from the provisional government (parliament, constituent assembly) to the Soviets, have nothing to do with “setting an economic foot in socialism”. However, as far as the transfer of power, as a whole, to the soviets goes, this does mean setting “one foot in socialism”. the political one. In relation to these considerations, we

have sidestepped the definition of October as a bourgeois revolution conducted by the proletariat.

October must be described as a socialist revolution, not only because the proletariat is its pilot and ruling class, but because of the originality of its political and State form, which goes beyond any bourgeois republic and is the form that is appropriate in an international socialist revolution; and yet, this new form and power will not be able to initiate the socialist transformation of the economic structure in Russia, but rather in Europe.

Let us see how this development occurs in Lenin's words, or rather in the accounts we have of them:

What, then, are the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat? The main flaw, the main error, in all the socialists' arguments is that this question is put in too general a form, as the question of the transition to socialism. What we should talk about, however, are concrete steps and measures. Some of them are ripe, and some are not. We are now at a transition stage. Clearly, we have brought to the fore new forms, unlike those in bourgeois States. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies are a form of State which does not exist and never did exist in any country. This form represents the first steps towards socialism and is inevitable at the beginning of a socialist society. This is a fact of decisive importance. The Russian revolution has created the Soviets. No bourgeois country in the world has or can have such State institutions. No socialist revolution can be operative with any other State power than this.

“This is a bourgeois revolution, it is therefore useless to speak of socialism”, say our opponents. But we say just the opposite: “Since the bourgeoisie cannot find a way out of the present situation, the revolution is bound to continue”. We must not confine ourselves to democratic phrases; we must make the situation clear to the masses, and indicate a number of practical measures to them, namely, they must take over the syndicates [for which read: production syndicates; a well-known example being the sugar producers syndicate] – control them through the Soviets of workers and peasants, etc. When all such measures are carried out, Russia will be standing with one foot in socialism”.

And in a passage from the resolution:

Operating as it does in one of the most backward countries of Europe amidst a vast population of small peasants, the proletariat of Russia cannot aim at immediately putting into effect socialist changes [Umgestaltung]. But it would be a grave error, and in effect even a complete desertion to the bourgeoisie, to infer from this that the working class must support the bourgeoisie, or that it must keep its activities within limits acceptable to the petty bourgeoisie, or that the proletariat must renounce its leading role in the matter of explaining to the people the urgency of taking a number of practical steps towards socialism [which go in the direction that leads to socialism] for which the time is now ripe.

51 – The Clear Alternative

Thus, taking power, overthrowing the provisional government, abolishing dualism, making the Councils the exclusive foundation of the revolutionary political State is the implacable thesis, not contradicted by the fact that the measures in themselves are not socialist, since, by constituting a decisive step forward from dying feudalism to capitalism, they are heading towards socialism.

Every passage is an incitement. We have already referred to: “the revolution is bound to continue.” Other expressions:

If the Soviets intend to assume power, it is only for such ends [after the other measures, bringing the sugar syndicate under State control]. There is no other reason why they should do so. The alternative is: either the Soviets develop further, or they die an ignominious death as in the case of the Paris Commune. If it is a bourgeois republic that is needed, this can very well be left to the Cadets... The complete success of these steps is only possible by world revolution, if the revolution kills the war, if the workers of the whole world support the revolution. Taking power is, therefore, the only practical measure and the only way out.

But what are the Soviets to do when they assume power? Should they go over to the bourgeoisie? Our answer is – the working class will continue its class struggle.

It is impossible to make a direct transition to socialism. What then is the purpose of the Soviets taking power? They must take power in order to make the first concrete steps towards this transition, steps that can and should be made. In this respect fear is the worst enemy. The masses must be urged to take these steps immediately, otherwise the power of the Soviets of workers and soldiers will have no meaning and will give the people nothing.

Let us translate this speech, repeated *ad infinitum*, into simple terms. In a backward, feudal setting, fully capitalistic measures have the value of steps towards socialism. In the specific setting of Russia and of the imperialist world war, the bourgeoisie will never take decisive steps towards total capitalism, of a radical subversion of feudalism. Do we have to allow a semi-bourgeois republic, ever exposed to a feudal counter-revolution, to live? Never. The proletariat and the communist party must take power and cut the bourgeoisie out if it is to fully enact those totally capitalist measures. And it is through taking such drastic steps that Russia will set one foot – the political not economic one, say we – in socialism.

52 – One Foot then the Other

As regards propaganda even a Lenin can use imagery that is somewhat pedestrian. We will be slavishly modest in our adherence to it, and with these two feet we will occupy ourselves for a while.

First of all, repeating again that what we have available are reports and fragments that are not necessarily in the correct order and on which we have imposed our own ordering of the questions, we will point out that the ‘lecture notes’ of Stalinist stamp which we sometimes draw on bring the passage we have quoted to a close by removing the image of the foot, and replacing it with these shameless words: And these measures, once put into effect, will transport Russia immediately onto the terrain of socialism!

Of course, no matter how hard we try we will never get hold of those minutes from 1917. But they are not necessary to enable us once again to brand as a lie such popularising by a Stalinist source.

Let us look at another passage from Lenin based on feet:

This measure [the second one: the first as we know is nationalisation of agricultural land; now comes the Soviet’s control of large-scale production, over the Sugar Syndicate, the Coal Syndicate, the Metal Syndicate, etc., over the banks, and a fairer, progressive tax on incomes and properties], *since big capital remains...is not socialism – it is a transitional measure, but the carrying out of such measures together with the existence of the Soviets will bring about a situation in which Russia will have one foot in socialism – we say one foot because the peasant majority controls the other part of the country’s economy.*

The first of the two feet therefore refers to the proletariat in industry, the second refers directly to the small peasant farmers. The first is in socialism the second is not. The first stands there in a political sense because it got there thanks to two conditions: the taking of power by the Soviets, and the proletarian State’s control over big industry, over heavy industry. Now this, as we will fully come to see later in the present treatise, is also a political condition: be it of control over what remains of the big capital in private hands, for taking the big factories under State control, or for their *Staatseigentum*. It is a socialist political condition because heavy industry assures, to whoever in power who has it, the weapons of class war and of civil war when faced with internal and external counterrevolution. It is not, on the other hand, a socialist economic condition, since economically it is still a case of private company subjected to State control, or, later on, of company as State property. An economic condition of “State capitalism” is one in which the company, wage-paying, commercial, monetary system remains on its feet; a condition which beyond being political would also be a socialist economic one, would exist from the moment that mercantilism and the profit-making of the individual company had become redundant, and with them the wage system.

So, the foot in Lenin’s expression, even allowing it is not among his most elevated, placed in socialism by Russia is due to a step made in the urban-industrial-proletarian sector alone: this step consists of the power used by the workers against the bourgeoisie and in their governing role with respect to the ‘common people’ and peasantry, which in its turn consists of having adopted the measure of removing the control of

banks, insurance, industrial trusts and so on from the bourgeoisie.

The foot that remains in capitalism is the rural-agrarian one, where it was not possible to put in place in 1917 (and nor was it in place in 1955) a consignment of fully State capitalist measures. The nationalisation or the bringing under State control of the land is not State capitalism either, because private capitalism, big and small, can be associated with it. According to Marx, the land is not capital either in the historical or economic fields. More about this fundamental assumption can be found in our series on the agrarian question, on which Lenin is orthodox personified. Capital here consists of the productive instruments of the agricultural business, the stock, living and dead, fixed and circulating. A full capitalism on the land would have transformed all the peasant farmers into wage earners of the big companies, and from being private it would have become State after the latter had expropriated and confiscated all the agrarian enterprises, the agrarian business capital, and all of the stock.

So, nationalising the land assures us of “the support of the peasant majority”, but it does not create any basis for socialism in agriculture. One merely accomplishes one side of the bourgeois agrarian revolution, that of freeing the small peasant farmer from feudal servitude and from a part of the unearned income due to the landed proprietor; one part, because the State, be it bourgeois or proletarian, will necessarily have to impose taxes that are on a par with those the titular owner of the land paid, if not with all the revenue that he enjoyed.

53 – Further Steps Taken by the Two Feet

Lenin’s constant aspiration was for the rural proletariat to prevail over the small farmer: and the latter remains as such whether he owns property, enjoys the use of it, or becomes in the end a state tenant. Anticipating what we will be saying later, clearly it is not easy, even in the most developed countries, to achieve an agriculture that is based entirely on wage-labour, which is what you have when rural families do not directly consume the product of their own labour in kind. Only from this rung could one contemplate stepping up to an agrarian State capitalism, and say: sure, we are not in socialism, but we have placed one foot on the step that leads to it. Lenin will take up this idea in his 1921 pamphlet on the tax

in kind about which we are going to speak at length.

Let us suppose, with the Boyars and large landed proprietors of the bourgeois variety gone (“Landlords,” i.e., latifundistas), that agrarian entrepreneurs (*kulaks* in Russia) had despoiled all the small peasant farmers and were conducting agriculture entirely with wage-labourers. A step up the ladder to private capitalism in the countryside would then have been made, and it could be said: if we bring all the capital of the *kulaks*, at least of the major ones, under State control, we will enter the phase of State capitalism and place the other foot (on the understanding that the wage earners in industry and on the land are still in possession of all power) in socialism.

What actually happened in Russia then? The *kulaks* were more than expropriated, they were liquidated. Their capital did not pass to the State but was divided into two parts: the big cooperative companies, which are not State entities, have one part, and the other part, split up into many small portions, is divided among the peasant farmers of said companies, who therefore become half-wage earners, half direct producers, with part of the direct product consumed and the rest sold. This solution replaced the quantitative diffusion of genuine State companies, which cultivate a relatively small amount of land. This did not mark a transition from private to State capitalism, but rather the lingering on of a form that is half small-scale local production, that is, below the level of capitalism, whereas it does not rise above it insofar as it is a rural “labour co-operative” because, with its income and expenditure, it has the potential to become a large company that is no longer small and localised, but one that is still private and not a State one.

Let us put it another way. The small peasant farmer under a bourgeois regime differs from the feudal serf because he is free from personal servitude as regards his labour and product. He synthesises in himself (Marx, Lenin) three figures: he is a landed proprietor, because all of the small parcel of land that he works is his; he is a capitalist because the working capital is his; he is a worker because all of the labour in the field is provided by himself and his family.

Let us nationalise the land without passing from small to big companies: the figure of the proprietor vanishes, and there remains in the

small producer the two figures of the small capitalist and the worker (analogy: the artisan, the small worker tenant, or sharecropper).

Let us move on to the big capitalist company: the small peasant farmers have their land and capital expropriated: there remains the third figure of wage-labourers in enterprises which have been concentrated into large units.

And so on to the Russian *kolkhoz*. The small peasant has become, for around half of his labour (power) time, a wage earner and collective capitalist (to him is paid a quota of wages and a quota of profits in a system that is very complicated, as we will see) and for the other half he has become a small-holder again: he has a house, reserve capital, and spends the other part of his labour (power) time on his small plot.

Leaving aside the two minority parts, that are the big State companies and the small peasant families who are not yet *kolkhozian*, it remains the fact that most workers on the land in Russia are still tied to forms of small production, with all the social and economic consequences that follow. The second foot has remained on terrain that is not only not socialist, but is actually pre-capitalist.

54 – Wrong Moves by the First Foot

Undoubtedly after the violent crises which we are going to discuss – the struggles to conquer power, to stifle the war, to annihilate the counterrevolution – industry started to become on the one hand entirely, or almost entirely, State controlled, and on the other, to assume a quantitatively much greater weight in the social economy of Russia. In those cases where this remained associated with the political power in the hands of the Russian proletariat, and with the general movement of the world revolutionary proletariat, the foot Lenin referred to would be even more firmly planted in socialism even if the body was still outside it, remaining in a mercantile and State capitalist setting.

Unfortunately, the grip on the other political base would become loosened. The Russian State fully participated in a war between imperialist States as the ally of one (either) of the two imperialist groups. The Russian proletariat no longer has a governing role with respect to the class of peasant farmers, even *kolkhozian* ones, to whom equal legal status was given under the

political constitution of 1936. Its political movement is no longer linked to the international program of armed revolution and dictatorship, and the Communist International has been dismantled. The second condition has been demolished bit by bit, and the physical expression of this fact has been the persecutions of the left opposition and the “purges” which have decimated its ranks.

Under these conditions State capitalism persists, the domination of large-scale industry remains, but the socialist character of the achievement of these “measures” has been lost, and we are on the same level as the State capitalism of Germany and other countries (which Lenin illustrates in the 1921 pamphlet we cited).

The revolution Lenin wanted, and that October gave us, was therefore socialist because it firmly planted the proletarian-political foot in socialism.

And there the second socio-economic foot would have alighted if the international proletarian revolution had come to the rescue. Maybe only after that even advanced countries like Germany and the United States will see large-scale agrarian State capitalism as a transitional form. And it would have entered it with its whole body by initiating the uprooting of autonomous individual enterprises of the wage-earner and of mercantile monetary distribution, in city and country in parallel.

But although the feudal counter-revolution in Russia, backed by the bourgeoisie of the time, had been defeated, capitalist counter-revolution would triumph in the world.

Not only was the second foot therefore not planted in the terrain of socialism, but the first one was withdrawn from it. Today, or since about thirty years ago in fact, both are outside it.

Not only is Russia not a socialist society, but it is not even a socialist republic. What does remain socialist however, in the light of revolutionary history, is the October Revolution, and Lenin’s monolithic, farsighted construction of Russia’s road ahead.

55 – The Difficult post-April Maneuver

Lenin had only just won the hard battle to rid the Bolshevik party of any residual tolerance for

the bourgeois government and defencism when he found himself faced with a self-styled left-wing objection: you have said it is necessary to take power; very well then; let us then go back to illegality and preparing for an imminent insurrection.

Lenin’s report on tactical developments, according to the scheme of the April the Fourth Theses, was as subtle as it was exhaustive.

We, he said, are only a minority: we must not let our guard down. Due to revolutionary euphoria, many workers in good faith have relapsed into defencism, even in the cities. Until concrete economic measures are put in place, the peasants will not be with us. If in the international revolution we want to preserve the new Council form, we cannot attack the Soviet just because the greater part of it follows not us but the opportunist friends of the bourgeois provisional government.

Said Lenin: “Some may ask: Have we not retreated? We were advocating the conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war, and here we are talking about peaceful not armed action during the transition to Soviet power.” Well, he explained, we are currently in a transitional period in which Milyukov and Guchkov have not yet resorted to violence: and we need, therefore, to make prolonged and patient class propaganda. If we were to speak of civil war now, we would not be Marxists but Blanquists. Our policy is bound, in the immediate future, to lead to the unmasking of the bourgeois government, and especially its Menshevik accomplices (evidently at that time Lenin did not insist on this in public statements). But in Lenin’s construction the future phase of civil war is a precisely defined certainty. The Bolsheviks would discuss it at length in the months that followed, putting a brake on action again in July, and being subjected to persecutions and provocation as a result. Finally in October they would accept the challenge.

Trotsky put it well when he said the party needed time to rearm, so that militants and the advanced part of the masses could get their bearings; only after that, when history had signalled the right moment, would it give battle, and win.

This powerful ensemble of decisions emerged from Lenin’s contributions to the work program, which had been prepared against the background of the previous not very good one.

Having got on to the point about unification with the social-democratic internationalists (by which Kamenev and Stalin meant, in March, bringing back almost all the Mensheviks), the conference, following Lenin’s line, condemned any agreement with the Russian and foreign social democrats or with any opportunism whatsoever and formulated the watchword of the Communist International.

We have thus expanded at length on the tasks that Lenin stated had to be carried out as regards the political situation at this crucial turning point, and also as regards the agrarian question. Meriting further attention is the question of the nationalities; a very serious one under the empire of the tsar, which was defined as a mosaic of a hundred peoples.

The next (fifth) congress at the end of July would signal the passage from the phase of peaceful struggle to the new armed insurrection: but the historical and theoretical line will be the clear elaborations of the April conference; and among the 32 people who formed the October Committee, the same names would appear as on April 14. Stalin was called for the first time to the central committee: Trotsky was still absent and not part of the Bolshevik organisation. According to Trotsky, Lenin, and Stalin apart, out of all those elected to this Central Committee only Sverdlov died of natural causes, and all the others were subsequently executed or unofficially suppressed.

It is maybe at the April conference that the cardinal points of the Russian Revolution shone through with their greatest intensity: the break with the semi anti-Tsarist bourgeoisie, the break with the social opportunists, the break with the war, the linking up with the revolutionary movement and the struggle for the State of the proletarian dictatorship, in all countries.

Points formidably advanced, right from the opening statement in which Lenin states that we are not at the historical turning point of socialist transformation in Russia alone.

56 – The Russian National Question

Concerning Lenin’s contribution to the April Conference (April 24-29, 1917; 7-12 May European calendar), there is still the national question to be considered. We have the text of the resolution that Lenin proposed, and a partial

view of the ideas within it in a pamphlet dated 10 April (immediately after the April 4 theses which we discussed earlier). Using another incomplete publication as our source we can reconstruct an outline of the discussion.

According to that source the principal merit for setting out the national question goes to Stalin, who made the official speech.

It is therefore possible that Stalin had understood enough to retract the policy he had pursued earlier towards the bourgeois provisional government and the opportunist parties in the Soviets. Be that as it may, the decisive intervention that shaped the conference's conclusions was made by Lenin.

It is undoubtedly correct to say that the nationalities oppressed by Tsarism (as the old saying went, a hundred races and a hundred languages under one State and one tsar) played a massive part in the struggle taken up in 1917 to lay the basis of a new power, its passing to a new class. The outcome of the revolution depended, in large part, on knowing whether the proletariat would manage to draw the oppressed nationalities behind the labouring masses. That is a fact: one need only think of Poland, where vicious Tsarist pogroms had massacred Polish and Jewish nationals; and hatred there was directed not only against the Tsar but against Petrograd, against the Russian race, which was historically dominant within the empire. Another matter of decisive historical importance is that the bourgeois provisional government was prepared to continue the old policy of throttling and oppressing the different nationalities: it was repressing national movements, and dissolving organisations of the Diet of Finland type. For the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, confronted with a war situation in which vast zones of the ex-empire were in the hands of the German foreigner, the fact of the matter is that the main slogan was still "Russia one and indivisible", just as under the Tsar when the country was even deemed Holy.

No less historic is the fact that it was the Bolsheviks alone who took a stand against this feudal slogan, openly declaring that the peoples of the oppressed nations had the right to decide their destiny. The popular text, which here and there we have paraphrased, displays little rigour when it attributes this right to the "workers",

when the formula actually refers specifically to the peoples.

It is said, then, that it was Stalin who elaborated with Lenin the principles of the Bolshevik national policy, and that in his report he unmasked the government's policy of thievery and pitilessly denounced the petty-bourgeois conciliators clinging on to the bourgeoisie's coat tails. Well, as is well known, the question of whether or not a directive's paternity is ascribed to the names of illustrious men is not something we find particularly pressing; and as to the point he made, we will talk about Stalin's contributions to the national question in general (see our Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory). What is certain is that the sudden shift in April, to opposing the provisional Government and the opportunists in the Soviets, affected the national question just as it did the issues of war and peace; the attitude to the provisional government and the dualism of powers; and the economic and agrarian measures and so on. Anyone who had seen it as correct about the bourgeoisie's and petty-bourgeoisie's reactionary policy towards the nationalities as correct would necessarily have viewed all of it as correct, and not steered the conference we are discussing towards an attitude of "benevolent expectation" towards the government until the constituent assembly had taken place, and towards a merger with the Mensheviks!

57 – Two Conflicting Positions

They can be assumed to be the points attributed to Stalin, but we find them in the resolution written up by Lenin as follows: a) recognition of the right of the peoples to secede (what does it mean to apply this to workers? nothing); b) for the peoples gathered under a given State, regional autonomy; c) for the national minorities, special laws that guarantee their free development; d) for the proletarians of all of the nationalities under a given State, one indivisible proletarian organisation, and one party.

Now at this point, without dialectics to assist, one does not get very far, just as the Bolshevik left back then did not get very far. Is this the solution of the national question for a communist society? Certainly not. It is the dialectical solution that follows from a bourgeois democratic revolution. But back in 1917, during a phase of conquering, plundering, imperialist capitalism, overseas and in Europe, the bourgeoisie of every country and especially in Russia was totally in-

capable of remaining faithful to all the literary incense (rather than historically concrete actions) burnt in '89 and '48 to the autonomy of small nations and for their liberation (which, when it did happen, was due to insurrections and wars of independence, not rubber stamping from on high).

Such a program, like many of those of an agrarian and urban social nature which are sub-socialist and still democratic-bourgeois, can be adopted and put into effect only by a proletarian power which takes control of the anti-feudal revolutionary process: the key to the entire problem always lies there, in the previous theorisations of the party, in the lessons of history duly interpreted from 1900 to the present day, and linked to what was established as regards theory and policy by Marx back in 1848, for example in relation to the classic question of Poland, which we have covered in great depth.

But Pyatakov (a Marxist not to be written off), supported by others who attended the conference, gave another report on the national question. They eventually did away with Pyatakov, and we are making use of the reference we have. He would state that in an era in which the world economy had established indissoluble links between many countries, the national State constitutes a historical stage which has ended: "The call for independence belongs to a historical epoch that has already passed," he said, "it is reactionary because it wishes to make history go backwards. Setting out from an analysis of the new age, the age of imperialism, we say right now that we cannot conceive of a struggle for socialism that diverges from that conducted under the slogan 'Down with frontiers', a struggle that aims to suppress all frontiers between nations and States."

58 – Lenin's Confutation of the "Lefts"

We will report what was attributed to Lenin because it contains a high value concept, not because we want to put Pyatakov down, as those who write in a "marketing" vein might want to do. We know plenty of comrades who reason as we have Pyatakov talking here, good ones as well, both now and in the past. We also sang the lines which made old Turati blush: "*I confini scellerati cancelliam dagli emisferi*" – let us wipe unholy frontiers from the hemispheres – nor do we regret having sung them or... having hit a wrong note. But singing is one thing, dedu-

cing in a Marxist way is another. We certainly predict that the erasure will come to pass, along with an international culture and language, and the global fusion of the human races, but in following the historical course we carefully avoid serving it up as poetic and lyrical confections.

Lenin as polemicist did not use quack cures, and he would have probably spoken as it appears here:

The method of socialist revolution under the slogan "Down with frontiers" is all muddled up... What does the "method" of socialist revolution under the slogan "Down with frontiers" mean? We MAINTAIN THAT THE STATE IS NECESSARY, AND A STATE PRESUPPOSES FRONTIERS... One must be mad to continue Tsar Nicholas's policy [which was, we suppose Vladimir would have added, down with any frontier which dares to cut across the territory of my Holy Crown]... The slogan "Down with frontiers" will be the suitable only when the socialist revolution has become a reality, instead of a method...

Let us pause over the words we put in capital letters. They are great. Why did the giant Lenin say them at this felicitous moment? Perhaps it was the giant Engels, who theorised in a crystalline phrase: two elements define the State: a definite territory, and armed class power. Or perhaps the giant Marx said them when he was on theoretical terrain and taking on the mantle of authoritarian and accepting the term, he used them to pour scorn on the libertarian anarchists of 1870, who were enlightening the cosmos and history with their: down with God, Bosses, and the State. Or maybe it was some normal person like one of us lot, from the moment when, through no merit of our own, at a certain juncture in our lives, the idea enters our head ("*gli entro' nelle chioche*"), never to abandon it. *Le chioche* (in Neapolitan dialect) are the cerebral hemispheres, the brains, the cortex; or whatever you like of the natural nut.

59 – The Central Question: The State

Bourgeois culture still poses the question as follows: Capitalism means private economy, socialism means State. For a while nine out of ten socialists following this trend sought to exalt the State, and if in pursuit of the usual didactic purpose we just take Italy for a moment, it was well-known there that the anarchists "were

against the State”, and that the Marxist socialists [ouch!] were for conquering the State, under the unfortunate formulation of the “public powers”.

Did we, who were children at the time of the Genoa Congress in 1892, need to read *State and Revolution* in 1919 in order to tackle the question? It was actually quite sufficient to read a couple of Marx and Engels’ well-known and oft quoted paragraphs, acquirable even fourth hand, and with no need to clothe ourselves in erudition.

Marxism is against the State *in general* and against the *bourgeois State in particular*. The society that is in its historical program, since it is without classes, is without a State. But Marxism foresees that the State will serve as a transitory revolutionary instrument precisely in order to destroy the present ruling class, after the revolution has destroyed the present State.

Marxism conducts the struggle against the bourgeois State, which can only be overthrown by violent means. But in previous historical stages Marxism foresees the utilisation of this same State to destroy the feudal State, and in given sectors to hit the private owners of capital with its detoxified nationalisations. In given periods it foresees entering the organs of the bourgeois State firstly to “stimulate” it, then to “sabotage” it, and at a certain point it has to prepare to abandon this terrain for that of insurrection and the taking of power.

Anecdotal evidence can sometimes make explaining things easier. In 1908 the Marxists in Italy began to break the monopoly on revolutionary action held by the anarchists and syndicalists of the then a la mode Sorelian type, who were extremist in words but in substance petty bourgeois; meanwhile it stigmatised the reformist wing of socialism. Attaining a certain notoriety there was the “teachers’ left”, with solid party militants, namely comrades Dini, Capodivacca and others, who pioneered trade union agitation among the teachers. For the deputy and lawyer Turati: *the Dini, the Ciarlantini and other similar “omini”* (little men). For the deputy and lawyer Turati (certainly no idiot even as regards Marxism, and along with him Treves and others) a Marxist without a degree was inconceivable.

In fact, the school master Ciarlantini, at the 1912 Reggio Emilia congress dominated by Mussolini as standard bearer of the left, would

make a speech – maybe not understood by all but commendable none the less – on the subject of socialism against the State for Marxist reasons rather than anarcho-Sorelian ones.

The entire question back then revolved around running for election as intransigents, rather than as part of the dreadful popular blocs, which was a way of getting proletarians and bourgeois to collaborate. Still very young when we fought for this at the time, we were nevertheless very clear that the proletarian class needed to remain separate not in order to penetrate the parliamentary State, but to destroy it by revolutionary means.

In any case, returning to Lenin, he along with Marx and Engels, and us in the stalls, established that we need the State, and in certain cases the post-feudal State of whatever type, including for over a century the bourgeois ones as well. Every time that this historical machine that is the State is of service to us, of service to us is its political and military weapons, even police ones, along with a precisely circumscribed territory as well: we will also need the frontiers.

When feudalism is no more, when the bourgeoisie is no more and when classes are no more or rather no more class forms of economy and production, that is, when there are no more proletarians, then, as Engels said, we will get rid of the State and send it to the scrapyard and after the last States are got rid of, only then will the last frontiers fall.

Certainly not as soon as we have taken power in a big, modern capitalist country; much less after taking power in feudal Russia in 1917. And so, said Lenin to Pyatakov, you tell me nothing with the phrase “no more frontiers”! You must tell me: are they the frontiers of the Romanov territory, or somewhere else? And which ones are they?

The question of April 1917 is still a burning one. At the moment, the French bourgeoisie is screaming that black African Algeria is within the frontiers of its “*République une et indivisible*”. Something to throw in the face of the even more centralist Soviet republic is that it is subjugating peoples behind a curtain that is even longer than Nicholas’s Holy one.

For Marxism the resolution of such burning issues cannot be based on Pyatakov’s passionate

but naïve appeal. Much more is required, when one considers the torrents of historical energy needed to shift frontiers, and how little the workers’ International seems to possess, which is supposed to wipe them, like chalk from a blackboard, from the spherical surface of the planet.

60 – The Usual Historical Kitchen

The balance sheet of this dispute on the national question is made by the Cominformists in the usual way:

What united L. Kamenev and I. Pyatakov [with not a hint that Kamenev and Stalin, a bit before and a bit after April, supported the same line!] was their lack of understanding of the tasks of the revolution and it drew the party into the Menshevik swamp [and Stalin who had drawn up, and then withdrawn, the motion on unification with them, what was he doing?]; Pyatakov, without openly declaring himself [all those who are not in the inner sanctum today have always been, by the same yardstick, Mephistophelian imitators!] against Lenin’s theses, was, in practice, condemning the revolution to isolation and defeat. The party was fighting on two fronts: against the opportunist opposition on the right and against the left opposition.

And it goes on to repeat that the main questions of the conference were covered in the reports given by Stalin and Lenin, in order to suppress, not frontiers like the unfortunate Pyatakov, but the memory, any memory of the fact that back then the right opposition was Stalin; as the incontrovertible data and evidence we have brought forward bears out.

Anyhow, the left opposition would have said this: If we take total revolutionary power in Moscow and Petrograd, we would be mad to let go of Warsaw, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Baku, Batum and so on: it would be a gift to the counter-revolution made in the name of our school’s respect for the theory of the “right to separate”. Which race or nationality did Stalin ever give up, orthodox then against left errors, to conform with the policy on the national question? It was the ups and downs of war that caused free bourgeois Finland to rise, still respected to this day, and free Poland also, which, with Hitler’s help, was resolutely gobbled up in 1940.

It is therefore necessary return to Lenin’s original text, resolute on this point more than ever.

First though we should highlight that not all the cooks in that kitchen were always in unison. The famous official *History* of the Party says that the speaker on the national question, Stalin, had together with Lenin elaborated, etc., etc.; then it reports the resolution, leading one to believe that it was written by the speaker Stalin, as you would. But in Lenin’s Selected Works edited in Moscow, there appears the same resolution, published in Soldatskaya Pravda of 3 May 1917, as indicated, and included in the volume: *Writings of 1917* by Lenin, Vol.1, pp.352-353, ed.1937. Which of the two is the truth?

61 – Lenin and the Question of Nationalities

A first brief formulation, and a very good one, appears in the pamphlet which was written immediately after the 4 April Theses. The chapter on the agrarian and national questions is excellent also on the first question as well: it insists on the division between the rural Soviet of wage-earning agricultural labourers and semi-proletarians (those who, let it be said for the hundredth time, have a parcel of land, but who cannot earn their living from it and have to work for a daily wage here and there for other larger enterprises) and the generic Soviet of peasant farmers, as opposed to “the honeyed petty-bourgeois talk of the populists regarding the peasants in general, which will serve as a shield for the deception of the property-less mass by the wealthy peasants, who are merely a variety of capitalists”. In what respect, therefore, does populism, slapped down back then, differ from today’s agrarian policy of the Cominformists, where, in Italy for instance, they even flirt with the big tenant farmers?!

Lenin asked, then, that every estate confiscated from the landowners (a confiscation the opportunists wanted postponed until ... the constituent assembly had been held) be transformed into a large model farm controlled by the Soviets. And he added:

In order to counteract the petty-bourgeois phrase-mongering and the policy prevailing among the Socialist-Revolutionaries, particularly the idle talk about “subsistence” standards or “labour” standards, “socialisation of the land”, etc., the party of the proletariat must make it clear that small-scale farming under commodity production cannot [Lenin’s italics] save mankind from poverty and oppression.

Repeating yet again that neither Christian Democrats nor “communists” in Italy appear to be in the least interested in pursuing such an objective, preferring instead to hatch clutches of sterile, poverty-stricken family farms, spelling the death knell as much for squalid Basilicata as for magnificent Sicily, we will now get back to the national question: in fact, we will quote Lenin on the subject in full (Point 14 in the pamphlet):

As regards the national question, the proletarian party first of all must advocate the proclamation and immediate realisation of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all of the nations and peoples who were oppressed by Tsarism, or who were forcibly joined to, or forcibly kept within the boundaries of, the State, i.e., annexed.

All statements, declarations and manifestos concerning the renunciation of annexations that are not accompanied by the realisation of the right of secession in practice, are nothing but bourgeois deceptions of the people, or else pious, petty bourgeois wishes.

The proletarian party strives to create a State [you hear!] which is as large as possible, because this is to the advantage of the workers; it strives to draw nations closer together and bring about their further fusion, but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free fraternal union of the workers and the working people of all nations.

The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organises itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of voluntary attraction to such a republic on the part of the working people of all nations.

Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and elaborate guarantees of the rights of national minorities — this is the program of the revolutionary proletariat.

62 – The Conference Resolution

The great historical questions that are presented here, the perspective of which causes discomfort to no few comrades, can be followed better on the basis of the developed resolution. Naturally how the problem is framed changes.

We are (a) under a regime in the feudal period or worse under one that is still Asiatic-despotic? We give a completely free hand to the movements for national liberty, which in the famous theses of 1920 at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International (accepted by the Italian left, which fiercely disagreed with the application of those tactics in the countries of advanced capitalism) there is discussion about as to whether they should be defined as democratic-bourgeois or national revolutionary. Communist and Marxist gullets were invited to swallow both terms, dished up with the following thankless presentation: in given places, times, and social modes, if you can get your hands on guns, it is okay to unite not only with the non-proletarian masses, but with the bourgeoisie themselves. That’s it.

Or are we instead (b) on the morrow of the fall of feudalism and in a republic led by the bourgeoisie which has decided not to deal with the war and land questions? It is necessary to force it to free the nations trapped within the ex-feudal State, and which want to separate. In practical terms this means that the question will not be posed in a “pan-Russian” consultation, but rather in peripheral national consultations.

We are (c) for moving forward, not to a socialist society, but to a socialist republic which bases its power on the Councils of Workers and Peasants? Well, we would be consistent, in the expectation of higher social forms and above all the international revolution, if we proclaimed that the Soviets of the nationalities were free to decide whether or not to separate from the one State.

We mention in advance that the question is not the same as republics united in a federation, and hence not the same as the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, in its day, either, insofar as almost all of the nations and races in play are represented as a minority, and the fact that the various federated and autonomous republics do not correspond, and nor could they, to uniform languages and races.

After the conquest of power, we will maintain the principle of separation, but civil and military wars will have a bearing on its implementation, or rather the wars with States who have sent in counter-revolutionary forces, variously operating in all of the regions of the immense territory.

At a certain point the great battle of 1920 at the gates of Warsaw would determine a major turning point, more than a Polish workers’ uprising would do, and the decision that a Polish National Soviet on the “frontiers” would be proclaimed.

63 – Despotism and Imperialism

The passing of the resolution is a historic moment.

The policy of national oppression, inherited from the autocracy and monarchy, is maintained by the landowners, capitalists, and petty bourgeoisie in order to protect their class privileges and to cause disunity among the workers of the various nationalities. Modern imperialism, which increases the tendency to subjugate weaker nations, is a new factor intensifying national oppression.

The resolution refers back to the historic Marxist thesis which states that in order for the capitalist form of economy to fully develop, and for European society as a whole to be released from the bonds of feudalism, a necessary requirement, to be brought about by means of internal insurrections and national wars, was for States to organise on the basis of a nationality; it was necessary (and couldn’t be otherwise) to liquidate all the old transcontinental empires, and if Vienna’s, Berlin’s and Constantinople’s were reluctant to die, Petrograd’s was even more so.

If, therefore, the rise of the capitalist mode of production within the European zone is linked to the free organisation of the nationalities, something in which proletarians have a direct interest, in a later phase, according to Lenin, it becomes increasingly oppressive. The struggle for overseas and extra continental markets leads to powerful deployments of the military forces of the State and to continuous wars driven by competition, with the aim of exerting political domination over the countries of other continents. When in the great wars the imperialist powers fight to rob each other of their colonies and possessions, also those with a fully developed and democratic capitalism are keen to make conquests that are detrimental to the interests of other European countries and, depending on the outcomes of the wars, the small countries and peoples pass from one hand to the other.

The ideology of European national liberation and liberation in general comes to be replaced by

the idea of spreading modern civilisation: this, in an early stage, is employed to justify the subjection, enslavement and even the destruction of peoples and races of colour, and then takes the form of demands, in the metropolis, for contested frontier provinces that lie in crucial nerve centres, i.e., Alsace Lorraine, Venezia Giulia, the Danzig region, the Sudetenland, the Balkans. From these struggles there arises the solidarity of socialist opportunism with imperialist capitalism, and the epidemic of defencism is triggered, with each side concealing their thirst for conquest under phrases about saving their own developed civilisation from the threat of aggression.

That same socialism which professed to be against all annexations became the supporter of all wars. If one allows for a moment the sophism that peoples with advanced modes of production have “the right” to govern the less advanced ones, a sophism every European country has been guilty of invoking, the bourgeois idea of freedom of peoples and equality of nations, historically devoid of meaning, becomes one of oppression and conquest.

Having broken at the same time with Tsarism allied in Europe with national and class oppression of all kinds, and with the opportunism of 1914 which consecrated the proletariat paying homage to all bourgeois wars, the Russian revolution could not but adopt the policy of ending wars of expansion and conquest and offering freedom to those countries which had been included in the Russian State as a result of violent conquests.

64 – Separation of States

In his preliminary remarks, Lenin points out that a bourgeois republic, with a fully developed democracy, can consent to different peoples and languages coexisting, without one predominating over the other; clearly, he is referring to Switzerland, where there is not one but three official languages. And he adds: “The right of all the nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent States must be recognised.” He says that any other policy would foment national hatred and sabotage internationalist proletarian solidarity. He cites the case of Finland and its conflict with the bourgeois Government in Petrograd, and asserts that Finland, having thrown off the yoke of Tsarism, must be allowed to secede.

If separation from the State is not achieved, the party must support broad regional autonomy and the abolition of a compulsory official language, calling for the new constitution to bring an end to national privileges or any violation of the rights of national minorities.

Readers will recall in the report at Trieste on the Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory the part dedicated to Stalin's writings on linguistics: the theories according to which a class revolution does not interrupt the historical function of the national language referred to the Russian language, which had become *de facto* language of the Soviet republic and of the entire union. Our critique of this notion was useful in proving that this historical requirement of one national language was further proof of the bourgeois character the revolution had assumed, and that it was pointless to get tied up in theoretical knots to justify this requirement on a Marxist level. So, what happened to the opposing claim that the State, first of all, should propose to the national minorities that they secede, and if not, that they be granted a polylingual administration along Swiss lines? Later on, we will return to this issue and consider if the massive State structure in present day Russia does have one national language, legally and actually, as this is one of the obscure features that define an imperialist structure.

65 – Against “Cultural” Autonomy

It is here that we come on to the famous point on which Stalin, back in 1913, had had to collaborate with Lenin on the national question, at cross purposes with the position taken by Austrian social democracy in the pre-war period; a point which Lenin reaffirms in 1917. It was the proposal of the socialists of the “mosaic State” of the Habsburgs. They conceded that the administration of the State, politically and bureaucratically, should be unitary as regards finance, the army and so on, (apart from the relation of parity between Austria and Hungary, united under the crown) and proposed that to all of the subordinate peoples: Slavs, Ottomans, Latins, there should be conceded “the removal of affairs concerning public instruction and similar matters from the competence of the central State, in order for to be placed in the hands of *sui generis* national Diets” without other powers. This creates artificial division, Lenin now adds, between the workers living in the same locality, or even in the same industrial enterprise, by reinforcing

their link with the bourgeois cultures of individual nations, whereas the aim of the Socialists is to “reinforce the international culture of the world proletariat”.

In the study undertaken by the young Stalin, which impressed Lenin and his wife, was precisely developed the idea that the thesis of autonomy in schools, university and in cultural matters was right-wing and opportunist, whereas the revolutionary thesis was the separation of the Austro-Hungarian State from the Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, Ottoman, Serbian, Rumanian, Czech and Slovakian provinces, the fracturing of that State, even if that was not necessarily the task of a socialist revolution – which on the contrary would have been able to bring those people together on a very different plane – but of a bourgeois revolution and of a war settlement, as the first European war was for Austria, as the earlier Balkan one had been for the Ottoman empire.

This thesis is consistent with the Marxist view on the national questions, which with ample elaborations we showed cannot be reduced to the negation of nationalities as a present-day historical fact, and at the time it was strongly defended. But whereas back in 1917 Lenin committed the Russian Revolution to it, which wasn't a national rebellion, but the historical overthrowing of a State which held many nationalities trapped in its web, we might well ask how that thesis developed in subsequent years, and what type of State, as regards freedom of movement of nations and regions, the one in the USSR, constructed in Stalin's name and appearing as a formidable monolithic block, actually is, whereas meanwhile Stalin claims responsibility for the tradition and the merit of being a national super-autonomist. To remain consistent with Lenin's thinking the next step for Russia, to be able to overcome serfdom and national fragmentation, could only be taken in association with the European proletarian revolution. Given that this did not happen, Russia arranged itself into a super-State, concentrated and unitary in its armed forces, both at home and abroad; the classic form of modern capitalism.

66 – Nations and Proletarian Organizations

Radical Marxists had always fought the formation of national parties within the same State, which professed to be socialist (Poland, Bohemia, etc.). In Russia the question, as to

movements within the workers unions and Party organisation, which was already social democratic, was a burning one. Lenin had always supported one sole party throughout the Russian State. The question was particularly relevant to the Jewish Bund, a party which was Marxist in doctrine and known for its energetic revolutionary action. Accepted in Russian and international congresses, the Bund was however unwilling to merge with the socialist, then communist, party, which comprised indifferently militants of all nationalities in its ranks. Lenin clinched this point with the words:

The interests of the working-class demand that the workers of all nationalities in Russia should have common proletarian organisations: political, trade union, co-operative educational institutions, and so forth. Only the merging of the workers of the various nationalities into such common organisations will make it possible for the proletariat to wage a successful struggle against international Capital and bourgeois nationalism.

These final formulae place in their correct relationship the constant pursuit of internationalism, both in the proletarian movement and in the socialist organisation of society in the future, and the struggle against the “immanent” nationalism of the bourgeoisie, with the historical solutions which in the great stages and great areas we are obliged to find and give to the questions of race and nation. What we have said at great length as regards the fundamental conference of April 1917, which maps out the entire trajectory of Russia's revolution by strictly linking together the movement's past and future, which for ease of exposition, too, is personified in Lenin, integrates historically what we developed regarding doctrine in the oft cited Trieste report, which comrades will recall unravelled the question of race and nation, in its historical application, up to the first great world war and within the confines of the central-western European zone, and it was left to the present work to apply the question to Russia, and to another one, presented orally in Florence in December 1953, to apply it to the East and to Asia.

Any justifiable elasticity, on the historical scale or related to global geography, is possible, that much is quite clear as far as Marxist doctrine is concerned, on condition that Lenin's condition of one pluri-national organisation within each State is respected, and their union at an in-

ternational level: in that Communist International which in the wake of the – monolingual – Stalinian declination, was liquidated in a way as rowdy as it was servile, and which will one day shall rise again, as One Communist Party, with sections in each State territory.

67 – Nationality and the West

Proof of the meagre internationalism of Graziadei, Serrati, Cachin and co. lay precisely in their lack of understanding the national question in the world that lay beyond the Urals and the Mediterranean, because that data was not that of the politics of the country they came from.

With the sole aim of rendering Lenin's construct for Russia and the extra-European world more intelligible, a construct which was truly prophetic, and above all strictly orthodox in its Marxism, we will, yet again, fall back on the example of Italy, and ask ourselves if, and from when, it was right to say: where we are the racial and national question doesn't exist; and therefore our party (but this would be correct if it was national!) is only concerned with class issues. Fine, but petty.

The Italian national bourgeois State was formed late, in 1861, on the back of the wars and insurrections of a young bourgeoisie, in which the proletariat fully participated. Although there arose a State of mixed races in the ethnographic sense, everything came together (and, along with the democratic tradition *alla francese*, that of Catholicism, of ecclesiastical internationalism) to settle the racial questions: Russians and even Germans were amazed when they heard us say we did not know if a citizen was Jewish or of a non-Catholic religion: the equality of the conditions of life was total not only legally but in fact and in custom.

Against a lay background such as this, for despite its lateness the capitalist economy appeared among us in its recent forms (it had very different traditions in the North and South, in Palermo and Milan) the class struggle of the proletariat rapidly took shape.

In 1911 the proletarian party rid itself of its last national prejudices: it loudly denounced the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of unity, and at the same time broke off its alliance with the petty bourgeoisie against alleged reactionary

strata, there being no more reactionary stratum than the petty bourgeoisie itself.

But stuck in the gullet of the bourgeoisie there still remained a negative, irredentist, national question. An honest radical bourgeois at the end of the century felt there would be a fourth war and he called it “*la prova del fuoco*” the crucial test; and bourgeois Italy came out of the imperialist war well, but without the support of the proletariat, which was able to remain indifferent.

The socialist proletariat had provided good evidence (facilitated by history, rather than due to any inherent merit) for its anti-imperialist and anti-annexationist positions during the harsh African ventures at the end of the nineteenth century and in 1911-12; it had learnt to tarnish the thesis that corrupts many Marxists: that a war is just if it brings to a barbarous people modernising and civilising systems.

In a certain sense, the Italian proletariat in 1918 found itself unencumbered by the national questions whether negative (irredentism) or positive (empire), as the bourgeoisie alone had been involved, and it felt ready, as regards its internal organisation, to proceed and give battle on the class front.

68 – Revolution with Europe

If that battle, which doesn’t require every glorious and inglorious episode to be gone into, was lost, it is due also to the struggles not having been correctly placed within an international framework, to an underestimation of the much better equipped imperialisms of England, France and Germany, which had pulled the carpet from under the feet of the European Revolution.

If a Russian revolution is unable to attain the peak of its cycle without a revolution in Europe, mainly because of its inadequate economic forms, an Italian revolution cannot, not because of all the usual rubbish about regions being depressed or backward, but because geographically events occurring in Italy become international matters; indeed, the bourgeois revolution itself only got underway because of the wars of systematisation in Europe, in the West and East, which cleared the road of conservative obstacles. Whichever of the two imperial blocks into which Europe can be divided wins it can take charge in Italy, and in the past, and in the future, this country with its too many frontiers will share borders

with both of the adversaries. The Italian militants, therefore, shouldn’t be too proud in being the first to overcome the evils of chauvinist opportunism. They should not say that due to their experience of politics on the domestic front they can declare the national question overcome, or that they can go on to delete those too many frontiers of theirs.

That won’t happen before the question of the ones in Europe has been settled, including the huge problem of the two Germanies: revolution alone can unite them, but the European revolution needs German unity, and a German workers’ dictatorship, whereas the prospect of that happening in England and France is more fragile, for various reasons.

It would be a really, stupid kind of national pride to refuse to acknowledge this point, and fail to see that we have to learn from the past revolution in Russia, and also from ones yet to happen in Asia, in order to break the cycle of the hundred and one conditions which, in endless succession, lie between us and socialism.

It wouldn’t be bad thing, having got back onto the subject, to mention a couple of other things about the national question in Russia in 1917.

The historical thesis that the provisional government composed of members of the bourgeoisie and social-opportunists, as well as keeping the war going, continued the Tsarist directive of ruling over the whole of indivisible “Panrusia” and – typically – fought against the movements in the peripheral areas of a national-bourgeois type with repressive measures (whereas the Bolsheviks on the contrary adopted the position of *disannexation* with a view to achieving internationalist revolutionary understanding among the working classes), is a thesis that has been confirmed in a series of facts.

Ukraine (a third of the population of European Russia, a ninth of its territory). Petlyura and other bourgeois nationalists followed by the social-opportunists formed the *Rada*, which, when it called for self-determination, but not separation, came into conflict with the Petrograd government. Lenin considered such requests modest and affirmed that one shouldn’t “deny the Ukraine’s right to freely secede from Russia. Only unqualified recognition of this right makes it possible to advocate a free

union of the Ukrainians and the Great Russians, a voluntary association of the two peoples in one State”. In July an agreement was made between Petrograd and Kiev; but on August 4 it was revoked drastically and unilaterally by Petrograd.

Finland (population 3 per cent, territory 4 per cent). Having consented to the Diet on the basis of a previous Tsarist constitution, after a conflict with it the provisional government dissolved it in July 1917. Lenin had written:

The tsars pursued a crude policy of annexation, bartering one nation for another by agreement with other monarchs (the partition of Poland, the deal with Napoleon over Finland, and so on), just like the landowners, who used to exchange peasant serfs. The bourgeoisie, on turning republican, is carrying on the same policy of annexation, only more subtly, less openly... Workers, do not be influenced by the annexationist policy of the Provisional Government towards Finland, Kurland, and the Ukraine.

Turkestan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan (territories partly in central Asia, population a seventh of European Russia). The Provisional Government governed them from the centre with the Tsar’s old bureaucratic apparatus, granted amnesties to the executioners of the national insurrections, and imposed the Russian language and schooling on these Muslim and Mongol peoples.

Poland. Here the provisional government made the grand gesture in February 1917 of publicising the declaration of independence by Russian Poland. But the fact is the Germans had occupied it, and a year before it had proclaimed the same independence! Where Russian troops were in occupation of the territory, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists prevented any “disannexation”. Poland is the classic “test” of the national *vexata quaestio*: and its function in that respect doesn’t start nor end here.

A note on *language*. On 29 March 1917 the Russian provisional government “*authorises the use of all languages and all dialects in the documents of private societies, for teaching in private schools and in commercial literature*”.

The 1918 constitution (which consecrates the independence of Finland, the Persian provinces, Armenia, and the right of national secession) includes education among the central people’s

commissariats, sanctions the general right to free instruction, but doesn’t say anything about the use of the various languages.

The 1936 constitution (on which we will need to dwell later) states in article 121 that the right of the citizen to instruction is “*in the mother tongue*”.

The matter is left to the ministers of education of the federated republics (which are nonetheless not *monolingual*).

Therefore, there is no explicit reference either to one State language or to languages being considered equal under the law.

In practice that same Stalinian pamphlet on linguistics, which places the language factor (see the Trieste report on *Race and Nation*) outside of socio-economic determination and “*politics*”, erects a monumental pedestal to the classic literary historical Russian language, which is no longer considered the language of a nationality, but as a language of the State, *because* it is plurinational.

A concept that is indissolubly linked to the historical phase in which the capitalist-bourgeois form of production dominates, if Marx is Marx.

Regarding this cycle, and in relation to our quotations from Marx on the Crimean War and the siege of Sebastopol, which appeared in that report: Voroshilov, over recent days in that very city, has glorified the heroic and patriotic resistance on the centenary.

* * *

Summaries of Three Past General Meetings Our Consistent Internationalist Work in the Party General Meeting

Video conference meeting, 27-29 May 2022 [GM 143]

The general meeting of the party was held by tele-conference on Friday, May 27 to Sunday, May 29, from 5 to 11 p.m. in Italy, to accommodate the schedules of the various countries.

At the Friday organisational session, in

the presence of comrades only, 43 in number, we listened to reports from the sections, translated on imprint into the three languages Italian, English and Spanish. On Saturday and Sunday – in the presence of 60 comrades and seriously militia-initiated candidates, 42 Europeans, 15 Americans, and 3 Asians – we heard 14 reports, lasting about 30 minutes each, delivered directly in the speaker's preferred language. The text of all the reports had previously been translated into the three languages and made available to the comrades, a method we experienced that allows for better follow-up of what is being illustrated, as well as optimal use of time. At the end of each report, the comrades can send any questions of clarification in writing to the organising table, which the presenters decide whether to answer immediately or later, after the meeting is over.

The Centre's organisational report reported on the work done since the previous meeting and listed the really numerous commitments for the coming months in the various areas of party activity.

All this work, truly remarkable given our minimal forces, is already being carried out in ways that are no longer mercantile and capitalist, no one is being forced into our strict and centralised discipline, no one is receiving any compensation other than his own satisfaction as a communist and the admiration and recognition of comrades, and of the most conscious workers for his engagement in the party. It is these attitudes, naturally and spontaneously assumed, that make possible and empower our social work and struggle today and will develop into the party at large and combatant of tomorrow, the anticipation of a society finally free of bourgeois antagonisms, miseries and morbidities.

Reports of the Activity of each Section and Working Group

Saturday Session

1. Rearmament of States
2. The War in Ukraine
3. Productive Forces Rebel against Capital
4. The Kurdish Question (Chapters IV and V)
5. Origin of the Communist Party of China, 2nd Congress
6. Hungarian Revolution – Agrarian Question
7. Situation in Venezuela

Sunday Session

1. Economic Situation in Pakistan
2. Marxist Theories of Crisis – Theories of surplus-value
3. History of the Profintern – 2nd Congress
4. Economic Course of Imperialism
5. Report on Trade Union Activity
6. The Military Question in the Russian Revolution – Civil War in Russia
7. Party and Culture

* * *

Converging in the International Party Meeting is the Work of all our Groups

Video conference meeting, 23-25 September 2022 [GM 144]

A perfectly organised and successful fall meeting of our party. Comrades from 10 countries attended. Connected by video conference, we attended three six-hour sessions, each interspersed with two short intervals. In the first, on Friday, we listened to the reports of the work of the sections, in the number of 14 those received in advance in written form, and which it was therefore possible to make available to the comrades in writing in Italian, English and Spanish, plus the others that we are gradually translating. On Saturday and Sunday, we heard the following reports, all of which were also made available to those present in their languages.

These studies, although entrusted to different working groups, are presented as the collective work of the party and not as the theses of one part pitted against another. We call these general meetings and no longer congresses: we do not organise debates there but carry out impersonal research work, based on Marxist science and the historical theses of the communist movement, for the ever-better knowledge of the bourgeois world that is our enemy, and on the ways and means for the working class to accompany it to its death.

Reports of the Activity of each Section and Working Group:

Saturday Session

1. Events of the War in Ukraine

2. The Ideology of the Bourgeoisie
3. The National Question of the Mapuche in Chile
4. The Economic Crisis in Britain
5. The Military Question in the Russian Revolution: War in the Kuban
6. The Hungarian Revolution
7. Origins of the Communist Party of China
8. History of the Profintern
9. Report of the Venezuelan Section

Sunday Session

1. Trade Union Activity in Italy
2. The Social Situation in Pakistan
3. The War over Gas Prices
4. The Course of the World Economic Crisis
5. Marxist Economics: The Capital-Labor Relationship
6. On the Origin of surplus-value: Ricardo
7. The Civil War in Italy against the State and Fascism
8. Central Financial Reporting

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Full Homogeneity of Purpose and Program at the Party General Meeting

Video conference meeting, 27-29 January 2023 [GM 145]

According to the arrangements made and the details of the centre's instructions, we convened at the general working meeting of the party, of which in these pages we give a first summary account for the forcibly absent comrades and readers.

Groups and individual experienced militants from ten countries neatly and steadily connected from ten countries. The effectiveness of the tried-and-true organisation of presenting section reports and thematic reports previously translated into Italian, English and Spanish was confirmed, followed by *viva voce* questions, considerations and additions from comrades, translated at once into the other two languages.

As is already apparent from the brief summaries given here, the excellent level of our studies has been confirmed, the purpose of which is not to discover new truths in party theory, correcting or supplementing the original, or new unforeseen ways that history would be opening up. The usefulness of our research is to

draw on the inexhaustible store of Marxism and the living experience of the historical party in order to build, on this stone, the party of tomorrow.

This is the order of business.

The organisational meeting of Friday, the 27th, was reserved for communications to the entire party from the various working groups and sections, in greater detail and more broadly participated than what has been done in the continuous internal correspondence with the centre and within the intervention and study groups.

Saturday and Sunday featured exposition of reports on the topics explored in-depth. Each six-hour session was interrupted for two short breaks.

The presentation of some important reports was postponed until the next meeting due to lack of time.

At the end, we parted after listening to the centre's conclusions and summary of the upcoming future commitments of our small but firmly well-tuned and connected cohort.

Reports of the Activity of each Section and Working Group:

Saturday Session

1. Marxist Theory of Knowledge
2. Our New Approach to the Study of Marxist Economics
3. Origin of the Communist Party of China
4. The Hungarian Revolution of 1919
5. Effects of the World Crisis in Japan
6. The Party's Position on the War in Ukraine

Sunday Session

1. The German "Red Army" in 1923
2. Course of the Crisis of Capitalism
3. The Reality of the Social Protests in Iran
4. Ongoing Labor Struggles
 - In the United Kingdom
 - In the United States
 - In Latin America
 - In France
 - The Party's Union Activity in Italy

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Report Abstracts

As is the habit, we report below the syntheses of reports presented over the three meetings. We also include here the full text of the reports on the Party's trade union activity in Italy and those of its section in Latin America. Already appearing in our English-language press are the full text of the reports on the rearming of states and on the war in Ukraine, as well as that on the crisis in Pakistan. Additional reports may be found in other languages. Full texts of the remainder will be published later.

Marxist Theory of Knowledge

The Class Ideology of the Bourgeoisie

This work aims to analyse the ideologies of the bourgeoisie, from its emergence as a class in the 13th century to, approximately, the rise of our theory in the mid-19th century. This analysis is made by use of dialectical materialism, which, among other things, is a method of analysing the base and dialectically connected superstructure of various human societies.

Among other things, this is because, for us, analysis is never an end in itself: theory, more than a part of praxis, is a form of it.

The purpose of this work is twofold: to know our enemy better and better, which is of great use to us, and also to show confirmations of our materialism, that it is not ideas that create reality, but the other way around. In ideas we find reality reflected, in a way that is not mechanical and is often difficult to decipher. This reality is constituted by the material modes of production, reproduction of the societies that have succeeded one another in history, and the consequent relationships between the members of those societies. Before beginning this analysis, it is necessary to make some clarifications that are best to add here, rather than at the end of this work.

Marxist Monism and Bourgeois Dualisms

In bourgeois thought there is always a dichotomy between reason and faith, between rationality and religion, in addition to the traditional dichotomies of body and soul, body and psyche, nature and culture, and so on, where the two

terms are seen as opposites and irreducible to each other.

Among the bourgeoisie there was and still is the idea that modern science was born alongside the appearance of reason, dated by most to the Renaissance. A metahistorical and metaphysical reason, an underground river that emerged with the Greeks and Romans, disappeared for about 1,500 years, to then resurface in the 15th century. The men of the Renaissance, who also held this view, had excuses that we cannot credit to our contemporaries. In this conception, which it must be said is increasingly abandoned by historians and various scholars, the Middle Ages is an age of darkness, ignorance, and superstition, characterised by faith and religion. With the appearance of reason, during the Enlightenment, the darkness of ignorance and superstition to which religion kept men chained is torn asunder, and they can now see the truth and make it their own. This is what is called "secular" thinking.

Today's "secularist", who claim to speak in the name of reason and science, actually has conceptions that are no less metaphysical than those of religions. In the footsteps of Marx, but also of Ockham and the medieval nominalists, we say that there is no reason as such, but there are reasons. Reason is historically determined: it is the reason of a specific society, which has a specific mode of production and specific social relations among the men in that society. It is the ideological superstructure of a given society, just like all other ideologies, such as religions and philosophies. It is a class reason, it is the reason of the ruling class, it is the mask that hides its domination from itself and especially from those over whom the dominion is exercised.

The Ideology of the End of Ideologies

Among the bourgeoisie, it has been very fashionable for some time now to talk about the end of ideologies, and even to boast of having none. This end of ideologies, for others also the end of history, is only the ideological transposition of the bourgeoisie's desire to see the end not of ideologies in general, but of a very specific ideology, the revolutionary ideology, consisting of communism; guarded by the Communist Party which, as in the Zoroastrian religion, has the task of keeping the eternal fire burning.

One etymology, not the only one proposed, of the term "ideology," ἰδεῶν (ideón), genitive plural of ἰδέα (idéa), "of ideas", has it derived

from the Greek verb ὁράω (horáō), meaning "to see". Ideology therefore means "point of view". This meaning can be accepted by us, as long as it is clear what "point of view" means, which is not that one or more men are more capable than others of interpreting history, and therefore of guiding the society in the best way possible, nor that of cunning priests capable of devising deceptions to dominate over their fellow man.

Ideology, the point of view (other than ours), is never conscious: it is the point of view on the reality of a given society, with given class relations, that transports that reality into the world of ideas, elaborating a vision that, however class-based, however false or partial it may be, still meets the needs of survival and functioning of that society.

The bourgeoisie, who boast that they have no ideologies, and therefore no points of view, boast that they see nothing and, consequently, understand nothing. On this they are right, but we do not think that they have anything to boast about.

Ideology for Marxists

Ideology therefore includes religion, philosophy, and science.

For us materialists, ideologies are both true and false. They are true at the moment when they arise and when they respond to the affirmation of the society that produced them; they are false when, having changed the relations of production and the consequent social relations among the members of that society; society must then elaborate an ideology that is "truer" than the previous one, that is, more suitable for reflecting the new class relations.

But they are false even at the very moment they are true, since they are always and still the ideologies of the ruling class which, by material force and not by the force of ideas, impose themselves on those who are dominated. It is only in moments of revolutionary rupture, when the domination of a class is broken, that the previous ideology, increasingly understood as false, begins to be thrown overboard.

Only in the Communist Party, where the reversal of praxis takes place, does consciousness precede action and ideology precede reality.

Ours is also a class ideology. But it is not partial, because it embraces the totality of histor-

ical and social realities and phenomena that are not easily and immediately perceived and felt. It is the ideology of a class which, through the pursuit of its own interest, aims at its own abolition as well as that of capital, thus pursuing the interest of the human species.

The proletariat is the present and communism the future of the one reality that is the human species. In the party there is already communism: the present contains the future. Past, present, and future are terms that our language, imperfect and always perfectible like any other human tool, uses to refer to a reality that is unique.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, the founder or one of the founders of dialectics, in the early 5th century B.C. said "Everything flows", and also "Truth loves to hide". Truth loves to hide itself precisely because it is dialectical, because it is movement, not an end in itself as Bernstein would have it, nor a contribution from the external as Aristotle believed, but a movement that is the subject of its becoming. Movement is one of the names we give to reality.

Bourgeois Ideology: In the Beginning was the Word

In religions we sometimes find insights of great power, which the philosophy and science of the bourgeoisie, centuries and sometimes millennia later, do not reach. This is not so strange, if we think that the earliest religions were closer to the material basis of society, while the same religions, in later stages, produced ideological constructions that transported society, with its social relations, to the high heavens.

The same has been done by the bourgeoisie, in various ways, from Kant and Hegel to the present. Early Christianity was closer to the material basis than later Christianity; Judaism, as an expression of more archaic social relations, was closer to that basis than Christianity. The Jews, in the Bible, prayed to their god for the abundance of crops and for the fruitfulness of women and herds. They did not pray to him for the salvation of a soul that, we may say, had not yet been invented. First-century Christians themselves did not have the conception of a soul that we know, but they spoke of resurrection of bodies on judgement day, after the long sleep of death.

The prologue of John's gospel reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The author, referring to Christ and thus to God, uses the Greek term *logos* (λόγος) which means word, speech, reason, cause, law. Jerome between the fourth and fifth centuries translates *logos* with the Latin *verbum*, which means word, speech, verb. In Italian it is translated as *verbo*. *Logos* is a term already present in the earliest Greek philosophy, but it is with the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus, that it is understood in the manner that will later be of the Neo-Platonists, and made its own by Christianity, of the middle term between God and the world, which God uses to create the world. Such a middle term that unites God and world, which is God and world, hence God and man, lent itself well to being understood as Christ.

Logos was itself a translation of an older Hebrew term, *davar* (דבר). This term, too, meant "word", but word that is indistinguishable from fact and at one with it. It was evidently part of the language of a society that preceded "the original sin" of class division.

The Latin translation is happier than the Greek one. God is the verb, God is the word, but not just any word. Nor is it the "motionless engine" of the Greeks. The verb is a moving word, a word that is movement. The best translation of the Johannine incipit is that of Goethe who has his Faust say, "In the beginning was action".

This God, this reality that is not static, but that is action, movement, modification, creation, tension toward the future, is none other than matter. The characteristics listed here are the characteristics of matter. A really powerful insight, expressed in the language of myth, religion, magic.

The earliest thinking was magical: the word did not indicate the thing, it evoked it, it was the thing. The distinction between signified and signifier appears in the Greek world only with Aristotle and even more so with the Stoics. We have already said that this magical-religious dimension was the distant memory and nostalgia of primitive communism.

The Time of the Greeks, the Jews, and the Marxists

The burning bush speaking to Moses is movement and not stasis. His words to Moses,

known as "I am who I am", should actually be translated as "I will be who I will be". Again, tension toward the future, in union with the present and the past. The Greeks had a cyclical, circular conception of time, paradoxically more "religious" than the Jewish one, a conception that went as far as Vico, Hegel, Nietzsche, who spoke precisely of an "eternal return". By contrast, the Jewish view of time and history was linear, stretching toward the future, toward "I will be who I will be". This linearity was not perfect and joltless: the vicissitudes of the Jewish people recounted in the Bible, their defeats that meant slavery and foreign domination, led that people to conceive of a direction toward God that was indeed linear, but interrupted by several painful and tragic caesuras. An all in all less "religious", less metaphysical conception than that of the 19th century positivists and their "magnificent and progressive fortunes". The Marxist conception of time and history is more indebted to the Jewish than to the Greek. In our *The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory*, 1951, we read:

An entirely erroneous theory is that of the descending curve of capitalism which leads one to ask falsely why, as capitalism declines, revolution does not advance. The theory of the descending curve compares the historical unfolding to a sine wave: each regime, like the bourgeois regime, begins an upward phase, touches a maximum, then begins to decline to a minimum; after which another regime rises again. Such a view is that of gradualist reformism: there are no surges, shocks or jumps. The usual claim that capitalism is in the descending branch and cannot rise again contains two errors: the fatalist and the gradualist. The first is the illusion that having finished descending capitalism, socialism will come of itself, without agitation, struggle, and armed confrontation, without party preparation. The second, expressed by insensibly flexing the direction of the movement, amounts to admitting that elements of socialism will progressively interpenetrate the capitalist fabric.

The Marxist vision may depict itself (for the sake of clarity and brevity) in many branches of ever ascending curves to those summits (in geometry singular points or cusps) which are followed by an abrupt almost vertical fall; and from below a new social regime, another historical branch of ascension.... Marx did not envisage an ascent and then a decline of capitalism, but instead the simultaneous and dialectical exaltation

of the mass of productive forces that capitalism controls, of their unlimited accumulation and concentration, and at the same time of the antagonistic reaction, constituted by those dominated forces that is the proletarian class. The general productive and economic potential always rises until the equilibrium is broken, and there is a revolutionary explosive phase, in which in a very short precipitous period, with the breaking up of the ancient forms of production, the forces of production fall back to give themselves a new arrangement and resume a more powerful ascent.... It should just be noted that the general ascendant sense is not meant to bind itself to idealistic visions about indefinite human progress, but to the historical fact of the continuous swelling of the material mass of the productive forces, in the succession of the great historical revolutionary crises.

We reiterate that the only criterion for evaluating an ideology lies in whether or not it sends forward the knowledge of the society to which it belongs, and above all in whether or not it constitutes a weapon to destroy an exhausted social order. It was not and will not be the weapons of critique alone that destroyed a now fractious class society, but the critique of weapons exercised by the scienceless, the dispossessed. It will only be with the end of the last class society, and with communism, that what has been broken will be reassembled, that, to use Christian terminology, the Word will become Flesh.

* * *

Marxist Crisis Theory The Forces of Production Rebel Against Capitalism

The first part of this report provides a demonstration of the connection, in the texts of Marx and Engels, between the development of the productive forces and the development of the needs of the human species and the resulting breakdown – termed the “contradiction between the relations of production and the productive forces” – in the process of the satisfaction of the needs of the species. Particular focus is given to the 1848 *Manifesto*.

The brief description of the development of capitalism out of feudalism provided in the *Manifesto* of 1848 is recalled and its relevant passages highlighted, demonstrating that it is the growth of the “wants of the new markets” and

the inability of existing social forms of industry to satisfy them which drove the development of new social forms of industry, passing first from the guild system, then to the manufacturing system, and finally to the capitalist mode of production.

The connection between the class structure of society and the mode of production is asserted tersely, alongside the assertion that the growth of needs is a driving force in the development of the productive forces.

Another quotation demonstrates that the inability of the extant mode of production to satisfy its needs forces the proletariat to struggle in a revolutionary fashion against capitalism.

It is then affirmed that the needs of the species are not fixed; they are the product of a long course of historical development.

A breakdown in the capacity of the species to satisfy its own needs is a breakdown in the activity whereby the species satisfies its needs. This activity is performed via the utilisation of instruments of labour. It is therefore an inability to utilise the productive forces in a way congruent with the species' needs.

The development of production is defined as the application of new productive forces or a change of how productive forces are made use.

We move on then to crises of overproduction as an example of the contradiction. Commercial crises entail a failure by society to satisfy its own needs in terms of consumption of material products. In these crises workers are laid off, enterprises shut down, instruments of labour put out of commission or destroyed.

The historical examples of the economic policies of Nazism – including the Holocaust, which we define as an economic measure – and of the US Roosevelt government are provided to demonstrate that the bourgeois State has sometimes organised on a mass scale the destruction, regression, or putting out-of-commission of means of production and of commodities in the face of commercial crisis. It is reiterated, giving reference to a *Prometeo* article from 1952, that New Deal economic policy was fascistic in nature. We quote Lenin, demonstrating that in the age of imperialism there is no major difference in economic policy between fascism and democracy.

The report shifts its focus from the need for articles of consumption and towards proletarian needs bound up directly with production: shortening of the working day, self-affirmation through labour, lessening the burden of toil, elimination of factory despotism, and the need for a far less strictly regimented social division of labour. The potential for the satisfaction of all of these needs exist in the modern productive forces, but their satisfaction is prevented by the capitalist forms of property.

Drawn out from the needs of the proletariat is the Communist program and its corresponding existence as a party. The Communist Party is the political and ideological representative of the modern productive forces.

It is concluded: the communist revolution is a scientific inevitability.

Theories of Surplus-Value: Adam Smith & David Ricardo

Adam Smith

Having dealt with the study of the Physiocrats in the previous general meeting, the speaker moved on presenting the chapter on Adam Smith. The latter can only very roughly be considered the founder of the classical school of economics, however, his liberal ideas and in particular his “invisible hand” theory suited well to the beginnings of capitalism, although he did not fail to note the possible antagonisms between individual and collective interest. Marx finds that Smith confuses, and at times replaces, the determination, shared by Marx himself, of the value of commodities by means of the quantity of labour required for their reproduction with the value of the quantity of commodities with which that quantity of labour can be bought, which is always less than the former. Since Smith starts, and rightly so, with commodities and the exchange of commodities, in which producers originally oppose each other only as owners of commodities, it appears that in the exchange between capital and wage-labour the general law is immediately abolished and commodities are not exchanged in relation to the quantity of labour they represent. Because of this, Smith concludes that labour-time is no longer the immanent measure governing the exchange-value of commodities as the conditions of labour clash against the wage-labourer in the form of landed property and capital. Smith, therefore, feels the difficulty of deducing, from the law that presides

over the exchange of commodities, the exchange between capital and labour, one that is, apparently, based on opposite principles. The contradiction, however, could not be clarified as long as capital was being opposed to labour, instead of the capacity for labour, labour-power. Regarding the relation of exchange between the owners of their conditions of labour and the owners of mere labour-power Smith states that:

In that early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land, the proportion between the quantities of labour necessary for acquiring different objects seems to be the only circumstance which can afford any rule for exchanging them for one another. (The Wealth of Nations)

So, the quantity of labour-time required to produce different commodities determines the proportion in which they exchange with each other, that is, their exchange-value. Meaning that, in the hypothesis that the labourer is a mere seller of commodities, with his commodity he commands as much of the other's labour as is contained in his own commodity, since they exchange with each other solely as commodities, and the exchange-value of the commodities is determined by labour-time:

As soon as stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons, some of them will naturally employ it in setting to work industrious people, whom they will supply with materials and subsistence, in order to make a profit by the sale of their work, or by what their labour adds to the value of the materials.

Smith differs from the mercantilists because he correctly does not derive profit from sale, from the fact that the commodity is sold above its value. Instead, value, meaning the quantity of labour that labourers add to the raw material, is divided into two parts, one of which pays for their wages and the other constituting the capitalist's profit, a quantity of labour that the labourer sells and is not paid for. Therefore, if the capitalist sells a commodity at its value, that is, if he exchanges it for other commodities according to the law of value, his profit comes from the fact that he has not paid for a part of the labour contained in the commodity. Smith therefore refuted the view that the circumstance for which the entire product of one's labour no longer belongs to the labourer would abolish the law under which the proportion in which commodities

exchange with each other, that is, their exchange-value, is determined by the quantity of labour-time contained in them. However, to this determination of value he would add another, erroneous one, which equates the exchange of the finished product against money with that against labour. According to Smith's theory, the part of capital that is made up of raw materials and means of production has nothing to do, directly, with the production of surplus-value. The latter comes exclusively from the additional quantity of labour that the labourer provides in surplus to the part constituting the equivalent of his wage. Therefore, it is solely from the part of capital advanced as wages that surplus-value arises, since it is the only part of capital that does not only reproduce itself but also produces a surplus. Profit, on the other hand, would arise from the total sum of the advanced capital. However, since Smith explains surplus-value correctly, but not explicitly in the form of a definite category, distinct from its particular forms, he immediately ends up confusing it with profit. This error will persist in Ricardo, and more markedly so, due to the fact that the latter elaborated the fundamental law of value with more systematic unity. This issue will be part of the following report.

David Ricardo

In this report we are dealing with the first of two reports having David Ricardo as their subject. Ricardian economic analysis is seen by the bourgeoisie as that of rampant capitalism in a rigid liberal scheme. The fundamental issue that runs through all of Ricardo's work is the determination of the laws governing the distribution of value. Following Smith, Ricardo accepts the thesis that total supply and demand are equal, therefore, greater or lesser demand for a given commodity can raise or lower its market price, but variation, in a given branch of production, in one direction necessarily corresponds to a variation in the opposite direction in another branch.

Ricardo starts with the determination of the value of commodities by quantity of labour, but the character of labour is not examined further. The substance of commodities is labour; therefore, commodities are value. Their magnitude is different depending on whether they contain more or less of this substance.

Ricardo's method is to start from the determination of the magnitude of value of the commodity by labour time and then investigate

whether the remaining relations, the economic categories, contradict this very determination of value or to what extent they modify it. Ricardo's great historical significance is that he expressed the economic contrast between classes and, in economics, he grasped the root of their historical struggle and the latter's development process.

In no case, however, does Ricardo treat surplus-value by separating and distinguishing it from its particular forms of profit and rent. Therefore, his considerations on the organic composition of capital are limited to the differences passed on by the physiocrats resulting from the circulation process (fixed and circulating capital), while he does not touch upon the differences of the organic composition within the production process. Hence his confusion between value and cost-price, his erroneous theory of rent, his erroneous laws on the causes of the rise and fall of the rate of profit, etc. In reality, profit and surplus-value are only identical in that the capital advanced is identified with the capital directly spent in wages. When we talk about Ricardo's theory of surplus-value, we are talking about his theory of profit since he confuses profit with surplus-value, and therefore considers the former only with reference to variable capital. It is so inherent to the nature of his theory that surplus-value is to be treated only with reference to variable capital that Ricardo treats the whole of capital as variable, as he abstracts from constant capital, although the latter is occasionally mentioned in the form of advances.

Regardless of the confusion between labour and capacity for labour, Ricardo correctly determines the value of labour, which is determined neither by the money nor the means of subsistence the labourer is given, but by the labour time it costs to produce them. Since the value of labour is determined by the value of the necessary means of subsistence on which that value is to be spent; and the value of the commodities of first necessity, like that of all other commodities, is determined by the quantity of labour spent in them, it follows that the value of labour is equal to the value of the means of subsistence, equal to the quantity of labour spent in them.

But as exact as this formula is, nevertheless it is not sufficient. The individual labourer, in return for his wage, does not directly produce the products by which he lives, but commodities of the value of his means of subsistence. Therefore,

if we consider his average daily consumption, the labour time that is contained in his daily means of subsistence constitutes a portion of his working day. The commodity produced during this portion of the working day has the same value, i.e., equal labour-time, as that contained in his daily means of subsistence. Dependent on the latter's value (and thus on the productiveness of social labour, not on the productiveness of the single branch he works in) is the size of the portion of his working day devoted to its reproduction of value. In capitalism, the value of labour is less than the value of the product it creates, the excess of the value of the product over the value of the wages equals surplus-value. Ricardo says profit, but identifies profit with surplus-value here. For him, it is a fact that the value of the product is greater than the value of wages. How this comes to be remains obscure. The length of the total working day is therefore erroneously assumed to be fixed, and erroneous consequences follow from it.

The increase or decrease in surplus-value can therefore be explained only by the increasing or decreasing productiveness of the social labour producing the means of subsistence. That is, only relative surplus-value is included.

If the labourer needed his whole day to produce his own means of subsistence, no surplus-value would be possible, hence no capitalist production and no wage-labour. For capitalist production to exist, the productiveness of social labour must be sufficiently developed so that there is some surplus of the total workday over the labour time needed for the reproduction of the wages. However, if under a given labour time the productiveness of labour can be very different, under a given productiveness labour time can also be very different. If a certain development of the productiveness of labour must be presupposed in order for surplus labour to exist, the mere possibility of it does not make it a reality yet. The labourer must be compelled to work beyond that length, and this obligation is exercised by capital. This aspect is lacking in Ricardo, aspect from which arises the struggle for the normal working day.

The Ricardian theory of profit rests on the assertion that “that profits depend on wages, wages, under common circumstances, on the price of food, and necessaries, and the price of food and necessaries on the fertility of the last-cultivated land”.

This way, rate of profit comes to be ultimately determined by the proportion in which the product of the worst land is divided between capitalists and labourers, and the decisive role of agricultural profits is justified in Ricardo by the fact that, under the simplified hypothesis in which all advanced capital consists of necessaries, the agricultural industry is in position to be self-sufficient, while other branches of industry must employ the former's commodities as capital. The cultivation of worse land increases the price of grain because more labour is required to produce it, the increased price of grain raises monetary wages because labourers still have to buy the same amount of goods to survive. Since the price of industrial commodities does not increase, since the quantity of labour in them has not, the increased wages of the industrial labourers decrease the profits of the manufacturers.

Ricardo's theory of development is an attempt to explain how the “the proportions in which the whole produce is divided between landlords, capitalists, and labourers” change as a result of accumulation, the latter being a determining factor in development itself but one that sets in motion forces capable of slowing down its pace until it is nullified.

In the next chapter we will deal precisely with the fall of the rate of profit and, consequently, with the periodic crises of overproduction.

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History of the Profintern The 2nd Congress

On July 1, 1922, *Il Sindacato Rosso* announced the forthcoming opening of the 2nd Congress of the Profintern, reporting the rules of representation of the National Centres and adhering trade union fractions, as well as an outline agenda, but subject to change.

The Congress was held simultaneously with the 4th Congress of the Communist International. The latter, in its December “Directives for Action”, had dealt comprehensively and in all aspects with the trade union question. From this fundamental document, in the exposition of the report, extensive quotations were read, which will be given in the extended publication.

The “Theses and Resolutions of the Second Congress of the Profintern” denounced the trade union bureaucracies which, in order to counteract the increasing shift of the masses to the left and reduce opposition to silence, resorted indiscriminately “to the expulsion of individuals and groups, even to the expulsion of several hundred thousand workers”.

To counter this criminal action of the Amsterdam International, the Profintern gave the directive that at every workers' meeting, in every workshop, in every factory, the question of the readmission of the expelled should be posed and by putting the question to the judgement of the broad masses.

Another organisation, ostensibly revolutionary but aimed at sabotaging trade union unity, was that of the anarcho-syndicalists who, in the name of a claimed autonomy from the parties, in fact joined the reformists in their splinter work.

The 2nd Congress of the Profintern focused on goals that were common to the international movement as a whole, thus mainly on practical issues: the United Front, trade union unity, organisation, and the relationship with the anarcho-syndicalists.

The work of the Congress began on November 21 with the participation of 213 delegates, significantly fewer than the 380 at the First Congress, but this did not mean that the influence of the Profintern had diminished; on the contrary, we can say that it had even increased.

Of the proletarian masses adhering to or influenced by the Profintern, Lozovsky estimated a figure between 12 and 15 million, thus not less than Amsterdam, due to the fact that a third of their members sympathised with Moscow, while in the Profintern no one sympathised with Amsterdam.

The thorniest issue that the Congress had to face and resolve was that of the organic relationship between Comintern and Profintern, a relationship that the anarcho-syndicalist component refused to accept. United in this refusal were two currents within the anarcho-syndicalist movement: on the one hand, the “pure” anarchists, who wanted to found their own autonomous International, with a marked anti-communist and anti-Soviet orientation; on the opposite side, the revolutionary syndicalists, among whom there

was a strong tendency which, placing itself entirely on the same platform as the communists and admitting the dictatorship of the proletariat, declared itself willing to remain within the Profintern if the close link between the Comintern and the Profintern was dissolved. This aspiration had taken shape especially in the resolutions of the Saint-Etienne Congress and the demands of the French delegation.

Thus it was that the 2nd Congress of the Profintern, in order to prevent further splits, abolished the article of the Statute that in effect bound and subordinated the labour International to the political International. By adopting that subordination, the congress wanted to end the debate between the Profintern and anarcho-syndicalist organisations. For greater clarity it addressed a manifesto to the anarcho-syndicalist organisations in all countries, inviting them to join the Profintern and work with workers in all countries for the liberation of the proletariat.

For their part, the revolutionary syndicalists of France and Italy responded by recording:

the greatest satisfaction the unanimous vote of the 2nd Congress on the mutual relations between the two Internationals... This understanding permits a greater development of the world proletarian movement and to shorten the hour of workers' liberation... Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat! Long live the Red Trade Union International!

Having heard the Report of the Executive Bureau, the Congress approved:

- 1) The activity carried out for the realisation of the proletarian united front;
- 2) The repeated offers of joint action made to the Executive Bureau of the International in Amsterdam, which naturally fell on deaf ears;
- 3) The efforts made to regroup within the Profintern all anarcho-syndicalist organisations with a view to the common struggle against the bourgeoisie and reformism;
- 4) The opposition to the attempted establishment of a new anarchist international;
- 5) The recognition that a united reformist and anarchist front had been formed in struggle against both the Profintern and the Comintern and the revolution of Russia;

6) The need to strengthen the influence and role of the international industry committees for the concentration of all revolutionary forces in the labour movement;

7) Insufficient linkage between the Profintern member organisations and their Centre was admitted, but the realisation of permanent and systematic linkage between all organisations in view of future battles was envisaged.

To the word of the united front there were no objections whatsoever, and for its practical realisation it was stipulated that Profintern supporters should first:

1) Organise and conduct vigorous resistance to the offensive of capital;

2) Never lose sight that the main task lay in organising movements common to all workers' groups;

3) Demonstrate unity, discipline, solidarity in the action of all revolutionary forces;

4) Intense work among the proletarian masses and in the workplaces and not the result of agreements between the trade union leadership.

Defence against the attacks of capital was to be based on elementary objectives that every worker could share: equal wages for men and women; struggle for the maintenance of the eight hours; in favour of the economic claims of youth and resistance to its use as a competitor to the adult proletariat; maintenance of trade union gains and their extension to women workers and maternity; benefits to the unemployed throughout the period of unemployment with equal benefits to men and women; systematic and organised struggle against the paramilitary groups of the bourgeoisie and the state, with arming of the proletariat; struggle for the abrogation of imperialist peace treaties and against attacks on Soviet Russia; against the exploitation and subjugation of the proletarian masses in the colonies, regardless of race.

One noteworthy aspect was the special attention the congress gave to the labour movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries, where:

[T]he class spirit is making itself more and more distinctly felt in this formidable revolutionary torrent. And the duty of the Profintern, like

that of the Comintern, is to give this class movement an ever more precise and deeply revolutionary form, to penetrate it with a communist spirit so that it may achieve the maximum results in the struggle against foreign and domestic capital. The workers of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia approach the Profintern's red flag because they read in it, "War to death on capitalism, in the name of working-class power!"

The 2nd Congress was mainly practical, dealing mainly with questions of organisation and activity. The general principles had already been established, so it merely approved the program of action drawn up at the 1st congress, which summarised the experience of the revolutionary trade union movement in all countries.

The Congress did not avoid serious consideration of the difficulties that the revolutionary trade union movement would force itself to overcome: tens of millions of proletarians still followed the reformists; millions were framed in Catholic, Democratic, and Protestant unions, while tens and tens of millions more were completely outside any organisation.

In the presence of a working class of which a very large part was embedded in organisations complicit with capitalism the SRI would need to adopt an appropriate program and tactics. The other, even more serious, aspect was the huge unorganised proletarian masses. It was determined:

Thus, the most important task of the coming period consists in the struggle for the regroupment of the dispersed workers, for the increase in the strength of the trade unions, for the attraction of the broad masses into the trade union organisations. Our watchword is: "No worker should be left out of the unions". It is of the utmost importance to combat the theory that tends to justify the abandonment of trade unions in the name of revolutionary considerations.... Their propaganda must be vigorously combated... because social revolution is impossible without union-organised workers.... The broad masses can only be attracted into the trade unions through tireless and systematic work for the daily and practical demands and needs of the workers.

Another important problem considered was that of finance.

Undoubtedly, the Congress led to a consolidation of the Red Trade Union International which, unlike Amsterdam, rooted only in Europe and limitedly in North America, had since its inception established a large number of contacts in colonial and semi-colonial countries and at this second Congress was able to demonstrate its presence and activity in every part of the world.

After the 2nd Congress

Just as the Third International had arisen to combat and defeat the opportunism and treachery of the Second, so, in 1920, the creation of a revolutionary trade union International was deemed indispensable to defeat the Amsterdam International, which was closely linked to the interests of the bourgeoisie and international imperialism.

The directive given to the communists was to remain "at all costs" in the yellow unions in order to win their leadership. Their subsequent adherence to Moscow and abandonment of Amsterdam as the centre of the world trade union movement would be the precondition for the expansion of the revolution internationally.

The resolution on tactics passed at the founding congress of the Profintern in July 1921 declared that "the creation of this centre of the revolutionary trade union movement represents the starting point of a bitter struggle within the world trade union movement under the watchword: Moscow or Amsterdam." "The break with Amsterdam constitutes for the national trade union centres a precondition for entry into the Red International." However, in countries where the national organisation adhered to the Amsterdam International, "individual unions, federations and nationally organised minorities can belong to the Profintern while remaining in the old unions." So, it condemned buzzwords such as "destruction of trade unions" or "out of trade unions".

The aim was not to get the best and most conscious workers out of the unions by forming small organisations, but to remain in the old unions in order to "revolutionise them".

One aspect in the previous reports not taken into consideration is that of the International Trade Union Federations and the International Propaganda Committees: we will have to talk about these because the issue and its attempted

solution by Moscow would later mark a change in the line and perspective of the Profintern.

The structure of the Amsterdam Trade Union International (IFTU) was not based solely on the membership in it of the various national organisations, but also included international trade unions, that is, of particular categories of trade and industry that had their own secretariats and held periodic congresses. Of these organisations the most important were the International Federation of Metalworkers and the International Federation of Transport Workers.

Amsterdam had imposed the rule that only unions affiliated with it were admitted to the Internationals. Thus, a national union adhering to the Profintern could not have been a member unless it left Moscow to join the Yellow International. The Profintern's line was not to provoke splits, nor to create new craft Red Internationals, i.e., it maintained the same position it had taken toward the national trade union centres.

In practice, the problem arose when the Russian trade unions asked to be part of the respective craft Internationals. Should the Russians in particular have left Moscow to link up with Amsterdam? This topic will be taken up and developed more fully in the extended report.

The report given at the previous general meeting had focused on the 2nd Congress of the Profintern and especially on its most distinctive achievement, that of the dissolution of the organic link between the two Moscow Internationals: the political and the trade union. Linkage that had been enshrined in the Statute of the founding congress.

It is of December '21 in France the split in the trade union movement and the creation of the CGTU, which made it a condition for its adherence to the Profintern that the organic link with the Communist International be severed. Concessions to the anarcho-syndicalists were not few and were not limited to minor changes in the Statute.

Then Articles 4 and 11 were read by comparing the original texts with the amended ones. In addition, other minor changes had been made to the "Conditions of Membership in the Profintern" and to the "Relations between the Profintern and the Comintern".

In response to Monmousseau, who, in the name of the old French anarcho-syndicalist tradition, had made it a condition that the close link between the two Internationals be broken, the Italian Tresso replied by stating that the tradition invoked by the French syndicalists was a dangerous remnant of a petty-bourgeois mentality, demonstrating the need for the close alliance with the political party. He then affirmed the Italian Communists' opposition to making changes to the statutes.

The last speech on this agenda item was by Zinoviev, the representative of the Comintern, who, after a lengthy introduction, concluded by declaring that the organisational details, after all, would not be so important since, he said, “the French labour movement is worth more to us than a dozen theoretical constructions”. When “practical matters” take precedence over principles even the most classic quotations can be used in the wrong way.

Of course, what was proposed at the 2nd Congress of the Profintern was nothing more than an echo of the decisions already made by the 4th Congress of the Communist International, which were opposed by the representative of the Italian Left, who would later recall:

At the 4th Congress we opposed for reasons of principle a concession that was being made to the revolutionary syndicalists when they wanted to change the statutes of the Profintern and renounce an organic link between the Comintern and the Red Trade Union International. This, in my view was a question, from the Marxist point of view, of decisive importance. When this concession was made I said, this concession will necessarily lead to other concessions in the trade union field. Just as today this important concession is made to the left, to the anarcho-syndicalist tendencies, so tomorrow concessions will have to be made to the right-wing syndicalists, that syndicalist tendency which under the two different forms of the left and the right represents the identical, ever-recurring anti-Marxist obstacle in our path.

And, as we shall see, concessions to the “right” were not long in coming.

In June 1924, at the opening of the 5th Congress of the Comintern (which was followed by the 3rd of the Profintern), the foreign delegates were faced with an unexpected surprise: in the

name of the united front and proletarian unity, the dissolution of the Profintern and membership in Amsterdam was proposed. The embarrassing and contradictory reasons for the project of this new tactic were repeatedly withdrawn and resubmitted in disguised form. Of course, there was continued talk of betrayal by the Amsterdam leaders, but, at the same time, emphasis was given to the emergence of a left-wing current within it that had recently raised the issue of the admission of Russian trade unions into the craft internationals. It was stated that the international unity of the trade union movement “would be re-established by convening a world congress at which all unions affiliated either with the Amsterdam International or the Red International of Trade Unions would be represented on a proportional basis.”

Against the criticism of the project of the new trade union tactics Zinoviev intervened by appealing to Lenin's authority: “Leninism in the trade unions means struggle against schism in the trade unions”; and again, “The true Leninist left is always to be found where the workers are. : Finally, he admitted, “Social democracy has been partly consolidated, even in the trade union sphere. We must now fight it by resorting to indirect ways, which are slower and more arduous. This is the new fact that you do not want to understand.”

It was said that the merger of the two Internationals would be possible only if supported by the thrust of a movement from below of the working masses, and that the Russian trade unions would remain an integral part of the Profintern, and in their separate negotiations with Amsterdam would regard themselves simply as agents of the Profintern and carry on its tactics without pursuing any kind of policy independent of it.

It was proposed that an “international commission” be appointed that would “visit England and Amsterdam in order to study the situation of the labour movement and, possibly, begin negotiations with Amsterdam.”

The question of relations with the English trade unions we shall have to deal with accurately later, now suffice it to say that Lozovsky would shortly thereafter explain that since “the trade unions of the USSR form the basis and foundation of the Profintern, and the English trade unions the basis and foundation of the Am-

sterdam International”, an Anglo-Soviet agreement would pave the way for an understanding between the two Internationals. At the Comintern's 5th Congress, a new question arose: “through which door the proletarian revolution could enter England: whether through the Communist Party or through the trade unions.”

The representative of the Italian Left retorted that:

[F]or our tactics in England it is extremely important that not all our attention and that of the proletariat be directed exclusively to the left-wing labour movement. We must never forget about the party, even if it is a small party today; we must always emphasise that it, in the development of the social crisis in England and in the course of the struggle, will necessarily have to be the guide of the proletariat and the general staff of the revolution.

The whole new trade union approach expressed at the 5th Congress of the Comintern was reiterated at the 3rd Congress of the Profintern, which opened on July 8, 1924.

Bukharin, bringing greetings from the Comintern, insisted that the conquest of the trade unions constituted “a matter of life and death”, stating that the appearance of a left wing in the FSI represented “one of the most important facts of our political life”.

After a brief introductory report by Lozovsky, the question of trade union unity was divided into three parts: 1) on the national level; 2) in the craft internationals; and 3) international unity at the highest level between the Profintern and IFTU.

The outspoken position of the Italian Left on the serious trade union problem is evident:

We reaffirm our opposition to the union split. However, we are not in favour of the current manoeuvres to merge the two trade union internationals because, since the Communist International needs a centre of concentration of the communist trade union forces, and since it has already solved the problem with the creation of the Profintern, instead of the establishment of a trade union section of the Comintern, we do not see the revolutionary reasons that advise such a radical revision of tactics, because we reconfirm that Amsterdam has the function of an agency of the bourgeoisie.

At this point we summarise the evolution of the trade union line, which developed in parallel within the Communist International and the Profintern.

1) At the time of the 2nd Congress of the Comintern (1920) it had been proposed to give certain leftist trade union organisations the opportunity to take part in the Comintern congresses. Naturally, the Italian Communists opposed the admission of trade unions into the world congresses of political parties.

2) At the 3rd Congress a different solution to the problem was proposed; it was decided to found the Profintern, in clear antithesis to Amsterdam. Watchword: “Moscow versus Amsterdam!”

3) At the 4th Congress, to pander to the demands of the French anarcho-syndicalists, the “organic relationship” between Comintern and Profintern was dissolved.

4) At the 5th Congress, the unification of the two Trade Union Internationals was proposed, where the Communists would act as a fraction.

The simplistic objection put to us was, “if in matters of tactics you are for the united front then you must be for unity in matters of organisation”. To this objection we used to reply that we work for union unity at the national level, to penetrate the unions, root ourselves in them and win the broad masses to our influence, knowing that these organisations are destined to play an important role both in the struggle for the seizure of power and thereafter. But when it comes to the international movement the question presents itself differently because, while national unions and confederations, even when they are run by opportunists, still remain proletarian organisations, internationals are a different matter altogether, performing only a political function. The Amsterdam Trade Union International was not a mass proletarian organisation, but an instrument of the bourgeoisie, in close contact with the International Labour Office and the League of Nations, organs that cannot be conquered by the proletariat and its revolutionary party.

The representative of the Italian Left denounced the fact that the International has successively changed the conception of relations between political and economic bodies in the world framework, and in this it is an important

example of the method which, instead of deriving contingent actions from principles, improvises new and different theories to justify actions suggested by apparent convenience and ease of execution and immediate success.

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The Course of the Global Economy

The Course of the Economic Crisis

After the 2017-18 recovery, in 2019 a new economic recession hit capital's global accumulation. The pandemic exacerbated the recession as anti-Covid measures were adopted by some countries. Thanks to the massive economic support measures taken by various states and central banks, 2020 was followed by a vigorous recovery of the industrial production, not fully offsetting, however, the decline of the previous two years.

The recovery in industrial production has been accompanied by general disorganisation, especially in terms of logistics, due to the "just-in-time" approach taken by all companies and the relocation of part of the production to countries with low labour costs, requiring a constant flow of commodities out of them.

To boost production and ensure the development of new technologies, the United States, following the "New Deal" model, launched extended plans amounting to several trillion dollars to boost consumption, technological development and renew obsolete infrastructure. Europe has followed the same path, sizing, however, its support plan according to its possibilities, that is, on a smaller scale.

As usual, we began our overview on the state of industrial production in the major imperialist countries by starting with the United States.

The first graph displayed at the meeting, which plots the annual increments in industrial production, shows a decrease in 2019 and 2020 (minus .8 and minus 7.2 percent, respectively) and the following recovery during 2021, with a 5.6% growth for the year. That makes 2021's production lower than 2019's by 2 percentage points.

Plotting 2021's increments by month, we see a strong recovery early in the year, followed by an abrupt slowdown, a result visible in the industrial production graphs of other countries. However, unlike other Western imperialist countries, growth rates in the US remain relatively strong, such that in 2022, based on the first quarter's increments, industrial production can be expected to exceed 2019's level by about 2 percent.

The following tables showed that in 2018 the United States exceeded its 2007 peak by 1.5%, before falling to negative 1.4% in 2021. As mentioned above, the overcome of the 2007 peak was due to the mining industry, that is, essentially hydrocarbons. On the other hand, manufacturing industry was still far behind: -8.3% in 2021, compared to 2019's -7.7%.

In conclusion, this last "New Deal" made no miracles. We know that the effects of the New Deal between the two world wars were short-lived as by 1938 recession had made a comeback. It was only due to World War II that the American productive machine experienced exceptional growth. Let us turn to Japan and Germany. Both charts show the same curve with a sharp slowdown after the peak, followed by a series of negative increments, especially for Germany, such that output for both countries remains below the levels reached in 2019, which were already recessionary.

This was illustrated by a table, which in addition to Japan, includes the major European countries. Compared to 2019, 2021 saw drops ranging from Spain's 2.9% to Germany's 5.7%. The United Kingdom, with its .9% increase, is the one exception, however, that is due to the manipulation of the indexes. In fact, the British government wants to make people believe that the "Brexit" is having a positive effect on Britain, but on the contrary, it is causing problems to its industry and especially to small and medium-sized enterprises when it comes to importing and exporting to the European continent. Great Britain has never been able to exceed the level of production reached in the year 2000. Since then, the industrial production index, apart from that recent review, has never exceeded that high.

Now, if we compare 2021's level of production with the maximum reached in 2007, the gap is huge: we have -17.8% for Japan, -19.1% for Italy, -12.2% for France, et cetera. Germany, which in 2018 exceeded its 2008 high by 8.2%,

finds itself with a -5.7%. In Europe, the only countries that have exceeded their 2007 or 2008 highs are younger capitalisms such as Poland, Hungary and even Belgium. In Asia, the same conversation is to be had with a country like South Korea.

It is difficult to get reliable data on China. We used gross electricity production to trace the course of capital accumulation in industry. The annual curve shows a strong recovery in 2021 with a 9.2 percent increase after 2020's decrease.

Using monthly indexes, we have a better representation of the course of capital accumulation in China. We find a curve displaying a strong recovery early, certainly overestimated, followed by a sharp slowdown, ending on a negative increment in the month of December.

It is well known that in 2019 Chinese capitalism was in recession when it came to many of its industries: construction, automotive, et cetera. It probably still is today. And the drastic restraining measures, given their extent, definitely play a role in the political control over the population. 2021 saw many strikes in which workers succeeded in their demands. Strikes, demonstrations and even riots are quite common in China.

The next curve is about the annual production of electricity in South Korea.

It reflects very well the sharp slowdown in capital accumulation, as can be seen by the average annual increments in industrial production according to different cycles. We go from a 17.6% average annual increase for the 1954-1979 cycle, to 9.4% for the next one (1979-1997), to 7.5% (1997-2007), to end with a 2.8% increase for the current cycle.

The oil production table shows that the United States remains the largest producer, with 562 million tons, compared to Russia's 488 million and Saudi Arabia's 455 million. The latter two could, if they wanted, increase their production, but they deliberately keep it low to keep prices high. This is the law of monopolies. This explains the high price of both gasoline and diesel as production is kept slightly below market demand. This is clearly seen in the last column, where production is well below the level reached in 2019, as increments, apart from Canada, range from -7 to -13 percent!

For natural gas, however, there is no such differential: compared to 2019, increments range from Norway's -2.3% to Russia's +3.6%. The UK registers a 17.2% drop, but that is due to the fact that its wells are running out.

High gas prices cannot be explained by a shortage of crude oil, rather by the short-sightedness of neo-liberal capitalism operating on the just-in-time principle. Because of it, as winter gas reserves were at their lowest, everyone rushed to buy natural gas in the middle of winter, and under heavy speculation by the wholesalers. Especially since Russia, despite the ongoing war, never cut gas off during this winter, not even from Ukraine. It has cut off Finland, just now, as a retaliatory measure.

The countries on the Atlantic coast, Spain, France, and England, import liquefied natural gas from Qatar and the United States. France, to get rid of Russian gas (which accounts for only 17% of its imports) has increased liquefied gas imports from the United States.

A table showing the exports of the main imperialist countries was also presented. It can be seen that, in 2021, for all countries except China, which has become the workshop of the world, exports, in current dollars, are significantly lower than in 2019. The drop ranges from UK's 15.3 percent to South Korea's 5.5 percent.

Because of high raw material prices, partly due to years of under-investment, many economists predict a new recession by the end of the year. As soon as the Federal Reserve started raising rates, many central banks wanted to follow suit. The last time they did so was in 2018. However, early in 2019, due to the recession and that winter's stock market crash, they had to backtrack, returning to quantitative easing. But they cannot turn back the clock and return to the pre-2008 situation. They would face a catastrophe. Banks will go through the same process this time too, however, ending quantitative easing and raising interest rates can only be temporary. Since 1990, the Central Bank of Japan has never been able to get out of it.

Let us turn to Russia. We showed two graphs, one representing the annual manufacturing output, the other the production of electricity. Another table showed the average annual increments, by cycles, in industrial and manufacturing output.

Both graphs show the 2020 recession, followed by a strong recovery then a sharp slowdown. The table shows that after the terrible recession of the 1990s, industrial production recovered. However, investments have been destined mainly to the mining industry, which accounts for most of Russia's exports, while its manufacturing output is still lagging behind, a minus 17.3 percent from its 1990 peak.

Therein lies the problem, as its manufacturing production depends on many components made in Europe and the United States. Following the thawing of Russian-American relations, many European and American companies invested in the Russian manufacturing industry. For example, the Russian automotive industry is primarily an assembly industry with more than 50 percent of the components made in Western Europe. Many high-tech components, including of course electronic chips, are not produced in Russia.

As a result of sanctions, European and American companies have withdrawn from the Russian market, putting many workers on technical strike. For the time being, Russia is holding up well thanks to gas and oil revenues. The drastic reduction in imports and strict exchange controls have allowed the rouble to recover 25 percent against the dollar and the central bank to slightly lower the discount rate, which had risen to 20%! The inflation rate, depending on the product, is between 18 and 23 percent! The crisis in Russia is coming and will be felt strongly.

The Course of World Capitalism

Following the 2019-2020 recession, which the anti-Covid-19 measures exacerbated, both 2021 and 2022 were characterised by chaos, inflation, and rising interest rates. The drought, Ukraine's invasion, and in particular the soaring prices of raw materials and energy (at their peak, the price of methane rose 20 times and the price of electricity 10) caused the increase of the cost of grain.

The rise in prices of raw materials and energy is mainly due to the under-investment of the last decades, after the collapse of their price on the world market. Here, in all its beauty, is the chaotic nature of the course of capitalism. Adding to the big picture, as always, is speculation, mainly because for speculators, with inflation, money stays cheaper.

In this context, taking into account the heavy indebtedness of states and businesses, we could have expected, as bourgeois economists feared, a brutal world recession. But what happened? Depending on the country, we only see either a sharp slowdown in their growth rates or a mild recession, especially in European countries, with the exception of the United Kingdom. The hardest hit countries are the Asian ones: China, Japan, and South Korea. This is evidenced by their sharp decline in imports and exports.

We began our overview with the United States. Industrial growth rates, driven by the mining industry and its oil and shale gas record breaking production, are quite strong, with monthly increases of 5.0%, 3.3% and 2.5% since September. However, these figures indicate a clear slowdown. If we refer to the manufacturing output, the slowdown is even more pronounced. Since September, monthly growth rates read +3.8%, +2.4% and +1.2%. In 2023 we can therefore expect negative increments in the manufacturing output.

The year 2022 marked an improvement for manufacturing. In 2021, the annual manufacturing output was -8.3% compared to 2007. In 2022, minus 5.5%. A small recovery, then, but one that will probably disappear in 2023. It should be noted that there has been a sharp decline in inflation for several months now. As of December, it has decreased by 5% on an annual basis.

Japan: after the strong recovery of the first half of 2021, which partly offset 2020's decline in output, increments from September 2021 onward have mostly been negative, such that 2022 was a recession year. Its industrial output was a minus 18.6% compared to 2007. It was -17.8% in 2021.

Germany, along with Belgium, was the only major European country to have surpassed its 2008 peak. But as of 2019, like most states, it is once again in recession and its gains have disappeared.

2022 scored a minus 1.6% compared to the 2008 peak. It was -5.7% in 2021, a small improvement. However, after scoring positively in August and September, Germany is once again trending towards a zero percent growth rate.

The U.K. has been in a strong recession since October 2021. For the year 2021 the industrial output was a minus 5.7% compared to its 2000 peak. It has since fallen to -9% in 2022, approaching 2020's -10%. In addition to the soaring energy and commodity prices, the UK's economic situation has clearly worsened as a result of Brexit. The recession, coupled with inflation, has severely worsened the living conditions of the British proletariat, prompting numerous strikes and demonstrations throughout the country.

France alternates between feeble negative and positive increments, so its situation has not changed since 2021. But we can see that it has worsened compared to 2019 as it went from that year's -7.5% from the 2007 peak to 2022's -12.4%. France is therefore in recession again.

Italy had a small recovery in 2022 compared to 2021, sitting at a minus 18.5% from its 2007 peak, a little better than 2021's -19.1%. Thus, in 2022 Italy went back to its 2019 level. Note, however, that all the monthly increments – August aside – have been negative since June 2022. 2023 is thus expected to be worse.

South Korea had fairly strong growth rates, at least until July 2022. Since then, monthly increments have declined and entered negative territory.

China, as is well known, suffered a strong recession in 2015-16, leading to a flight of capital and loss of currency. As everywhere else, there was a recovery over the 2017-18 span, then recession hit again in 2019 manifesting itself in the crisis of the real estate industry – which accounts for a quarter of China's output – and the consumer sector, in particular with declining car sales, despite China becoming by far the largest car market in the world. This recession has been exacerbated by the anti-Covid measures and the rise of unemployment.

The graph shown at the meeting displays China's imports and therefore the strength of its domestic market. The graph displayed China's strong recovery from December 2020 to February 2022 as the health emergency was coming to an end, then the staggering slump to December's -17.2%. After the huge accumulation of capital of the 1990s, the 2008-2009 global crisis led to an abrupt slowdown that resulted in the 2015-2016 recession, then the one China has been ex-

periencing since 2019. Hence the Chinese delegate's attempts to bring China closer to the United States during the Davos Forum, held Jan. 17-20 this year.

Finally, we looked at exports. In recent months the slowdown in exports is evident, however what is particularly noteworthy is the spectacular decline in exports from Asian countries – China, South Korea, and Japan. The latter, not surprisingly, has seen its exports in the red since April of last year (about -5%). But most noticeable is, after a strong slowdown, the spectacular fall of China and South Korea's exports: -15% for the latter and -17% for the former!

Actually, three groups can be distinguished: in addition to the Asian countries, a group is the one consisting of Germany, France, England, and Italy, which all have a similar trend. Above them are the United States and Belgium. But all show a clear slowdown in exports.

To sum up: all the conditions are ripe for a serious global crisis of overproduction. The level of indebtedness of states, households and businesses is high, industrial production in most major countries is well below the peak reached in 2007. World capitalism has managed to avoid a severe deflation, as the one in 1929, thanks to the formidable accumulation of capital in Southeast Asia, especially in China, however, that is coming to an end as China itself is in a crisis of overproduction.

The financial weapon initially used by central banks, “quantitative easing”, has exacerbated inflation. The resulting rise in interest rates now risks causing a chain of bankruptcies. So far, governments and businesses have managed to repay their debts by borrowing again in the market, but at the same time debt continues to grow, making these stunts increasingly dangerous. Adding to it are the trillion dollars debts of the “shadow finance system”, which are out of control and include \$96 trillion in derivatives. It is precisely in the derivatives market that Britain's pension funds have been in danger of collapsing. Only the vigorous intervention of the Bank of England could prevent the general bankruptcy of the British workers' pension funds.

Sooner or later the fall of some dominoes will lead to a general collapse. Will it be this year, or next year, or the year after that? That we

cannot know, but the future of capitalism is sealed.

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Origins of the Communist Party of China

The Second Congress

The Second Congress of the Communist Party of China was held in Shanghai starting on July 10, 1922. Nine official delegates were present, representing the 123 members that the Party counted then.

The documents of the Congress critically examine the international situation and the affairs that had characterised the imperialist aggression towards China, giving major emphasis to the aspects of the struggle against imperialism, then passing into the second level of the 10th June Manifesto, which was principally concentrated on the internal political conditions of China.

The aggression of the imperialists fits into the necessity of world capitalism to pillage colonies and semi-colonies of their resources and exploit their labour. China was a country rich in raw materials and with an extremely large population, which rendered it a battleground of the various [imperialist] powers. The internal political situation was characterised by the presence of warlords, who imperialists used to control Chinese politics and economic life. For eleven years, from the birth of the Republic, China was crossed by the civil war that provoked an unstable division in the country. Without the overthrow of military oppression and imperialism, China would never have reached her unity and the civil war would never have ended.

Analysing the social forces of the national revolution, the report highlighted how the Chinese bourgeoisie were born as an appendage of foreign capitalism that, arrived in China, could not work independently, but had to ask for help from Chinese merchants. In this way, the comprador bourgeoisie was formed, which acted as an intermediary on behalf of foreign capitalists and joined them in the exploitation of China. In this context, the start of the first stage of industrialisation of China was possible.

A great opportunity for development for the Chinese bourgeoisie came with the First World War, which led to 1) the slackening of the economic penetration of European and American products and 2) the boycotts of Japanese goods. But at the end of the way further development of the Chinese bourgeoisie was hampered by the aggressive return of the imperialists who, in defence of their businesses, relied on the warlords. Given that situation, according to the 10th June Manifesto, “the young Chinese bourgeoisie, in order to prevent economic oppression, must rise up and struggle against international capitalist imperialism”. The anti-Japanese movement of 1919 had demonstrated that the young Chinese bourgeoisie were able to unite against imperialism and the corrupt government in Beijing, while the government in Canton was considered the medium of the enlightened bourgeoisie.

Beyond the judgement on the role of the Chinese bourgeoisie in the revolution, it was correctly affirmed that the most important factor of the revolutionary movement consisted of the three hundred million Chinese peasants, who lived in a condition of general poverty due to the lack of land, the civil wars, banditry, [and] the pressure of foreign products. The peasants could be divided into three groups: the big landowners and the rich peasants; the farmers who farmed their land and tenant farmers; and the dailies. The poorest of the second group and all those of the third constituted 95% of the total. Only the revolution could lift them out of this condition of misery and revolutionary victory could only be achieved through their alliance with the working class.

As a cause of the invasion of foreign goods, artisans and small business owners also fell into poverty, and the more national capitalism developed the more their poverty increased. The assessment was that given this condition, the petty bourgeoisie would also be join the revolutionary struggle. Then there was the working class, which was developing. The Great Seamen’s Strike of Hong Kong and other strikes in the rest of the country demonstrated the strength of the proletariat. Workers’ organisations were also establishing themselves.

Given China's economic and political conditions, it was decided to side with the National Revolutionary movement, as the International had resolved for the backward countries at its Second Congress.

In another congressional document, regarding the decision to unite with the national revolutionary struggle, shows how this decision was based on the assessment of being in the period between feudalism and capitalism (“democracy” in the congressional text). China was under the dominion of feudalist militarists and to the outside it was a semi-independent country controlled by imperialist powers. In this period, says the document, “It is inevitable for the bourgeoisie to struggle against feudalism.” Since the proletariat was unable to lead the revolutionary struggle on its own, it would have to join the anti-feudal struggle.

Already in the Russian Revolution the Bolsheviks had demonstrated to be false the Menshevik thesis that in the bourgeois revolution the proletariat had only to support the liberal bourgeoisie, which tends to a compromise with the feudalist classes and institutions, but they had stated, and with success demonstrated in deeds, that the slogan of the proletariat was that of alliance with the peasants of the democratic revolution, which could transcend into permanent revolution, of the working class alone.

Such a perspective was not delineated with clarity by the CPC, lacking in the documents of the second congress of the Party a clear conception of the role of the classes in democratic revolution, such as that which was awaiting China.

In this phase, however, the decisions of the second congress of the CPC, although outlining a theoretical system that left room for a possible affirmation of the Menshevik tactic of revolution in stages, had the aim of incorporating the correct revolutionary tactic as it had been established by the second congress of the International of the union of the proletarian revolution in the mature capitalist countries with the national revolutions in backward countries like China.

Despite a certain weakness from the theoretical point of view, the Chinese Party had the merit of remaining firm on the necessity of preserving the political independence of the proletariat in the national revolution.

Later, theories about the anti-feudal character of the Chinese revolution and the revolutionary nature of the national bourgeoisie as a whole would be used to justify the open betrayal of the working class and would be used to push

through the tactic of alliance with Kuomintang, which would be realised with the submission of the proletariat to the Chinese bourgeoisie party, a process that began during '22, and was fully realised in '24.

But at the second congress the proposal by Maring for the entry of the communists into the Kuomintang was not even taken into consideration, instead a solution emerged which was based only on the cooperation between the two parties. There was imagined, still in vague terms, but already quoting the Kuomintang, a cooperation with the liberal bourgeoisie, supporting Sun Yat-Sen’s party “from the outside”.

To this was added the proposal of a so-called “Democratic Alliance”, which would have involved unionised workers together with members of farmers’ organisations, traders, teachers, students, women, and journalists, as well as parliamentary deputies sympathetic to communism. In this way the communists seemed to want to create a broad “democratic alliance”, which in practice would have replaced the front between the CPC and the Kuomintang, not considered as the only revolutionary party in China. For its part, the Kuomintang did not support this initiative, which completely collapsed as soon as, the day after the Party congress, Maring’s return to China made the tactic of Communist entry into the Kuomintang prevail.

Work in the labour movement was still seen as the principal objective of the CPC, busy promoting an independent class movement.

Even if the Chinese conditions determined the necessity of the realisation of a front of all the revolutionary forces, in particular of the movement guided by Sun Yat-Sen, this front was considered as a temporary union between the proletariat and the peasants, on the one side, and the revolutionary bourgeoisie on the other. But it was clear to the young party that the commitment to national emancipation did not mean to capitulate to the bourgeoisie. From the congressional documents:

The proletariat must not forget its own independent organisation during this struggle. And it is very important that workers organise themselves in the communist party and in the unions. All the workers must always remember that they are an independent class, that they must discipline themselves to prepare for organisation and

struggle, that they must prepare the peasants to join them and organise soviets to attain complete emancipation.

The Directives of the ECCI and the Plenum of August 1922

The second congress of the CPC in July of 1922 had accepted what was established at the Second Congress of the International on the tactics to be adopted in the national and colonial question, with which the Chinese communists had been able to familiarise themselves only with the participation of their delegates at the Congress of communists and of revolutionary organisations of the Far East at the start of 1922.

However, there were not lacking still profound divisions on the questions of the tactics to follow with respect to the national-revolutionary movement, in particular on the question of collaboration with the Kuomintang. The Party planned to march alongside the KMT, still considered a national-revolutionary party. But at its second congress it [the Party] did not discuss the formula proposed by Maring of an “internal bloc” with the KMT, with the communists who would have had to enter the party to carry out the revolutionary work from inside, going, in the idea of Maring – evidently drawn on the experience he had gained in Indonesia – of forming a left wing inside.

Thus, although the question of tactics with respect to the national revolutionary was anything other than definitively settled, the conclusion of the second congress did not leave any doubts about the proposal advocated by Maring, which simply was not adopted.

Maring had, however, obtained from the ECCI at Moscow a sort of green light for his line. On the 18 July, 1922, in fact, the ECCI had formally endorsed some of Maring’s recommendations on China in a document, probably drafted by Radek, in which the Chinese communists were instructed to move their headquarters to Canton and to carry out their work in close contact with Maring, while another document identified Maring as the representative of the Comintern and the Profintern in southern China, valid until September 1923.

The movement of the seat of the Party to Canton, if justified by the fact that there was less repression in southern China, certainly went with the declarations of Maring, who in the report

presented to the International on the situation in China had indicated in the Cantonese area an environment more favourable for the development of a revolutionary movement given the present and the strength exercised there by the KMT. Consequently, this decision also took on the significance of a political choice in favor of closer cooperation with the Kuomintang.

However, there was no written statement in which the International agreed and outlined to China the tactics of communist militants joining the Kuomintang.

The ECCI, however, produced an additional document, Instructions for the ECCI Representative in South China, with which it set out the line to be taken by the Chinese Communists. The document also contained the following directions:

II) The Executive Committee sees the Kuomintang Party as a revolutionary organisation, which maintains the character of the 1912 revolution and seeks to establish an independent Chinese republic. Therefore, the task of the communist elements in China should be as follows: a) The education of ideologically independent elements, which should form the core of the Chinese Communist Party in the future; b) This party shall grow in accordance with the growing division between bourgeois–petty bourgeois and proletarian elements. Until then, communists are obliged to support the Kuomintang Party and especially that wing of the party representing the proletarian and manual labour elements.

III) For the fulfilment of these tasks the communists must organise groups of adherents to communism in the Kuomintang and also in the trade unions.

The instructions of the International’s top leadership, if not an explicit endorsement of Maring’s line, contain quite a few elements of ambiguity with respect to the correct revolutionary approach that had been established at the Second Congress of the International, elements that, however, once developed opened the way for opportunism.

Even from the ECCI document, there seemed to emerge a conviction on the part of the leadership of the International of the inconsistency of the young Chinese party, so much so that it was identified among the main tasks of the Commun-

ists in China to educate elements who would in the future form the nucleus of the CPC, practically as if the Party had yet to be formed. From this came the decision to force the Communists to support the Kuomintang, and a formula was introduced which, in the course of subsequent events, would be on more than one occasion detrimental to the fortunes of the revolution in China, which was to support that “wing” of the Kuomintang that was believed to represent the “proletarian elements.” For the first time, the theory was emerging that within the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie a “left wing,” a faction willing to represent the aspirations of the proletariat, could be identified, which had to be supported and strengthened through the work of the communists.

In any case, as early as mid-1922, the International gave the Chinese Communists the instruction to “organise communist groups of followers in the Kuomintang”, which in essence was what Maring proposed and was rejected by the Chinese Communists, as it could only be carried out with work by communist militants in the nationalist party.

To overcome resistance within the Communist Party of China, Maring convened the Hangzhou Plenum, probably between August 28 and 30, 1922.

Different recollections were given by some of the participants on this important meeting. In all likelihood, Maring would have used the “Instructions for the ECCI Representative in South China” as an endorsement by the International of his tactics. To crush the opposition, Maring would have invoked the authority of the Communist International, urging participants to submit to its discipline. Under such pressure, the CCP leadership voted unanimously for the tactic of entry into the Kuomintang.

It was only by imposing the discipline of the International that Maring was able to change the position previously taken by the CPC, and make them embrace the bourgeoisie in a tactical alliance that was realised by the formation of a communist “inner bloc” in the Kuomintang.

The Hangzhou Plenum thus marks the beginning of that decisive period in relations between the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang, at the end of which, at the Third Party Congress, the Chinese communists would defin-

itively surrender the banner of revolution in China to the Kuomintang, which would then become the central force in the national revolution. The Communists would go to work for the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie, giving up the political and organisational independence of the Party, and end up tied to the bourgeois leadership and discipline of the Kuomintang.

After using them, it will go on to the brutal liquidation of proletarian and communist forces.

The Question of Communist Adherence to the Kuomintang

In early September 1922, the first communists, including Chen Duxiu, were admitted to the Kuomintang and from that time began to participate in the reorganisation of the Nationalist Party. Meanwhile, between September and December, envoys of Sun Yat-sen were conducting a series of discussions with Joffe on possible Soviet military assistance. It was in this context, which saw the beginning of the implementation of Maring’s advocated tactic of communist entry into the Kuomintang, that the Fourth Congress of the International was held in November '22.

Of particular interest was the report of Chinese delegate Lin-Yen-Chin, who outlined the political situation in China and the situation of the class struggle, which was considered particularly positive as a vast strike movement had unfolded during 1922, foreseeing the development of the Communist Party. He then dwelt on its tasks, identifying them as the united front with the Kuomintang, achieved by the individual entry of Communists into the Nationalist Party:

Our Party, bearing in mind that the anti-imperialist united front must be established to expel imperialism from China, has decided to establish a united front between us and the Nationalist Revolutionary Party: the Kuomintang. The form of this united front envisages us joining the party with our individual names and capabilities.

Thus was announced the beginning of the ill-fated tactic of infiltrating the Kuomintang, justified under the illusion that it could wrest influence from the nationalists over the masses. These were the first steps that would lead the CPC and the proletariat in China to submit to the leadership and discipline of the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie, all under the leadership of the International, which was beginning to show

the first dangerous swerves from the correct revolutionary path.

Radek's speech on the eastern question described a much less favourable situation than the one he envisioned at the time of the Second Congress in 1920. Radek disagreed with the Chinese delegate's optimistic tones about the prospects for the party's development in China, highlighting the backwardness of the revolutionary movement in the eastern countries. Hence, just as in the West, the watchword of "going to the masses" should have been launched and the opportunity to link up with any force capable of playing an anti-imperialist role deduced from this, which implied inextricably linking up with bourgeois factions that would inevitably go on the offensive against the revolutionary movement.

The young communist parties compromised themselves with bourgeois forces, which at that time performed an anti-imperialist function. It would not be a few months before the illusion of being able to use such parties collided with the reality of the violent armed repression of the movement and the railroad workers' organisation in February 1923.

But the directives that the leadership of the International directed to the CPC were the result of a negative evaluation of the party's strength, which was considered to be far away from having established links with the masses. Thus, Radek outlined the tasks of Chinese communists:

The first task of the Chinese comrades is to focus on what the Chinese movement is capable of. Comrades, you must understand that neither the victory of socialism nor the establishment of a Soviet republic is on the agenda in China. Unfortunately, even the issue of national unity has not yet historically been on the agenda in China. What we are experiencing in China is reminiscent of the 18th century in Europe, in Germany, where the development of capitalism was still so weak that it had not yet given rise to a single unifying national centre.... Capitalism is beginning to develop in a number of different centres. With a population of over 300 million, without railways, how could it be different? We have broad prospects, which you should support with all the fire of your young communist convictions. In spite of this, our task is to unify the real forces that are forming in the working class with two

objectives: first, to organise the young working class and, second, to establish a right relationship between it and the objectively revolutionary bourgeois forces in order to organise the struggle against European and Asian imperialism.

Radek did not comment on what the Chinese delegate had said about the tactic of bringing communists into the Kuomintang individually, but that was precisely the central aspect of the question of the relationship between the revolutionary forces in China. Such a tactic was certainly not going in the direction of that "proper relationship" between the proletariat and the revolutionary bourgeoisie, because since the Communists would go to work for the bourgeois nationalist party, it would, in practice, impose the subjugation of the Communist Party and the Chinese proletariat to the Kuomintang bourgeoisie.

The International approved "Theses on the Eastern Question", in which the watchword of the "anti-imperialist united front" was launched by drawing clear parallels with the situation in countries of mature capitalism: "Just as in the West, the watchword of the proletarian united front has served and still serves to unmask the social-democratic betrayal of proletarian interests, so the watchword of the anti-imperialist united front will help to unmask the hesitations of the various nationalist-bourgeois groups"

At the Fourth Congress of the International, in 1922, our current clearly expressed the position on the single front. In the speech on the Zinoviev report we observed:

The conquest of the masses must not be reduced to the fluctuations of a statistical index. It is a dialectical process, determined first of all by objective social conditions, and our tactical initiative can only accelerate it within certain limits, or, rather, under certain conditions that we consider prejudicial. Our tactical initiative, i.e., the ability to manoeuvre, is based on the effects it produces in the psychology of the proletariat, using the word psychology in the broadest sense to refer to the consciousness, the state of mind, the will to fight, of the working masses. In this field we must remember that there are two prime factors, according to our revolutionary experience: a complete ideological clarity of the party, and a strict and intelligent continuity in its organisational structure.

In the "Draft Thesis" submitted by the Communist Party of Italy, the question of organisation was clearly defined:

Organisational statutes, no less than ideology and tactical norms, must give an impression of unity and continuity.... There is a need for the elimination of totally abnormal norms of organisation...the systematic penetration and "noyautage" into other bodies that have a political nature and political discipline.

Precisely what was beginning to be put into practice in China with the entry of the Communists into the Kuomintang.

* * *

The Hungarian Revolution of 1919

The Agrarian Question (Conclusion)

We described how, in Hungary, as in Russia, the agrarian question resolved the revolution. The report mentioned Béla Kun's writing "On the Hungarian Soviet Republic":

The fundamental cause of overthrow of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was the lack of a solution to the peasant problem, that is, the agrarian question. Hungary...possesses a developed industry and a proletariat of fully trained workers, but the majority of its population consists of agricultural labourers and smallholders.... The Soviet Republic ordered that all large and medium-sized estates, with all their movable and immovable property, should pass without any indemnity into the ownership of the proletarian state. A decree that appeared a few days later exempted properties of less than 57 hectares from expropriation. The lands thus nationalised were supposed to be cultivated in co-operatives; in reality, the management of them remained in the hands of the administrators of the large estates, without the peasants concerned making their word count. A part of the agricultural workers realised that the dictatorship of the proletariat had liberated them, but the landless day-labourers, who did not work permanently on the large estates, receiving no plots, had no interest in defending the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In another paper from 1920, "The Hungarian Working Class under the White Terror", also by Kun, we read other passages on this subject:

[T]he social base of the white terror was the small town bourgeoisie and landowning and the medium and large peasants.... To the large landowning class, which had switched to the capitalist economy only partially, and which was feudalising again as a result of the country's economic decadence, it was succeeding more and more easily to attract the peasants to their bandwagon.... Against the industrial and agricultural proletariat the landowning classes were closely united behind the white military dictatorship. The Jewish bourgeoisie itself willingly covered the white terror, although it thus renounced power, because only the terrorist from of defence of private property was possible in Hungary.... In Hungary, no land division took place during the dictatorship. The Republic of Councils socialised large landed property and put it under social administration through the cooperatives of the agricultural proletariat. The expropriation of large farms, with the exception of a few regions, lacked the revolutionary activity of the agricultural proletariat. Due to the need to proceed with precaution to ensure the continuity of agrarian production, the expropriation was mainly legal and did not have the necessary revolutionary character. Nevertheless, the agricultural proletarians gathered in the co-operatives formed on the large estates were almost as great a support for the dictatorship, even armed, as the industrial workers. The dictatorship offered the greatest immediate and palpable benefits precisely to the agricultural workers. That is why they were pushed back most of all after the fall of the dictatorship: the proletarian and semi-proletarian agricultural population became then and for a long time the serfs of the landowning peasantry.

The report then went on to describe the secret and illegal communist movement, which was formed late in the day to combat the social democratic elements undermining and sabotaging the dictatorship of the proletariat from within.

Finally beginning the conclusion chapter. It quoted extensive passages from Béla Szántó's paper Class Struggles and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Hungary, in the chapter "With Whom Had the Communist Had to Deal?":

The unification of the Eisenachers and Lassalleans had been characterised by Marx, in his letter to Bracke, among others, as follows:

“We know how much the mere fact of unification pleases the workers, but they are in grave error if they believe that they have not paid very dearly for this momentary success.”

Béla Kun quoted this proposition from Marx in his letter to Ignatius Bogar.

It is unfortunately true that the working class really did pay very dearly for unification.

Kun was only wrong in believing that the fact of unification would please the workers. No, a thousand times no! Since unification had taken place only on paper, but in the mass complete distrust continued to dominate. Distrust not against unification, the restoration of the unity of the labour movement, but against the Social Democratic leaders. The masses abhorred them, had no confidence in them. They instinctively had the feeling that those whose policies prior to the October Revolution, but especially after it for four and a half months had fought the proletarian revolution to the death, could not acquire revolutionary genius overnight. And he was not wrong! Nevertheless, they resigned themselves to it, seeing that there was no other choice.

Béla Kun’s platform did not envision the fusion of the Social Democratic Party with the Communist, but only the restoration of the unity of the labour movement. When he wrote it, he did not think of compiling a government program, but a platform – as he put it – “for the clarification of our own views and those of our benevolent opponents”. And in the first place he also proposed concretely: a joint conference of the revolutionary elements to discuss the platform.

Continuing, Szanto points out the irreconcilable differences between revolutionary communists and social democrats:

There, the legalistic methods, the constitutional way and parliamentary means, here, the unremitting class struggle, revolutionary methods, the dictatorship of the proletariat: between these two directives there is no meeting point, no confrontation, a unity is impossible. These two directives are not compatible in a single organisation. Not only the differences in principle, but even more so the methods of action, arising from the theoretical premises, are so divergent that

they must necessarily separate from each other. ... The more sharply, the more bitterly this process is carried out, the deeper and more complete is the separation between the two tendencies, the more rapidly and in greater numbers the revolutionary elements separate from the right wing, and the left wing grows and swells. And so, in the struggle, together with the education and preparation of the proletariat for revolution, the proletariat itself creates the unity of the proletarian movement by separating and purifying the proletarian elements from the intruding semi-proletarian elements inclined to civil peace. If the proletariat has rejected such elements from itself, it can be capable of exploiting revolutionary situations, and participating in the international revolution.

Szanto, in concluding this candid examination, states:

Before the eyes of the communists hovered the cause of revolution, the cause of world revolution. The Hungarian proletariat was offered the opportunity to grasp it, and thus to promote and revive the world revolution; it was its revolutionary duty to strengthen the proletariat of other countries in its revolution, to awaken it, to incite it. That at the same time those from whom the whole mass had just then broken away would also sneak into the direction of the movement, cannot be for a revolution the only decisive circumstance, though nevertheless not secondary...

The communists already knew that they were dealing not with bona fide revolutionaries, not with organisers and dukes of the revolution, but with people who only wished to participate in the sharing of the spoils.

The Social Democratic leaders have become very zealous since the fall of the dictatorship of the Councils. They write and express themselves very severely in the foreign press to procure justification for themselves before the Social Democrats of other countries. They believed that the white terror in Hungary would destroy all the printed matter, in which their writings and speeches can be read.

They must not forget, however, that even if white terror comes to fulfil their hopes, nevertheless the conviction will live on in the hearts of proletarians that it was the social democrats who undermined and demolished their power.

Conclusions

These reports completed the exposition of the long work on the 1919 Revolution in Hungary that began at the September 2016 meeting.

Béla Kun, in a series of writings, describes the reasons for the failure of the revolution. We have read extensive passages from it:

In Hungary, the situation was made complex by the peculiarity of the structure of the labour movement such that every member of a trade union was at the same time a member of the MSDP and paid with his union dues to the MSDP, whether he wanted to or not, whether he declared himself a social democrat or not. Thus, every member who was a member of the MKP also paid dues to the MSDP. The Communists' first steps were aimed precisely at ensuring that Communists who were members of trade unions were not forced to leave them when they became members of the MKP.

Kun again recalls:

A closed CP could not be organised in Hungary. And the period from the end of November to Feb. 20 – when the imprisonment of the leadership led to the dispersal of the party organisations – proved in general to be too short to allow the organisation to be fine-tuned.

The MKP could count on the masses. Its revolutionary agitation full of momentum, its exemplary Marxist tactics, its well-chosen watchwords, its bold and unyielding revolutionary actions raised the morale of the proletariat and generated the deepest sympathy for the communists.

From the organisational point of view, these masses belonged to the organic unity of the trade unions and the MSDP... It is strongly true what our friend Radek says, that in the course of the dictatorship we would be in great need of a "big cudgel," whose function would be to dance on the backs of Garbai, Weltner and Kunfi... Undoubtedly the germs of defeat were to be found in the merger itself...

The revolutionary workers' party was first and foremost a revolutionary propaganda organisation. The process of forming its structure of organisation and action was arrested by the new 'fusion' that took place within the workers' movement.

Despite its effectiveness, the work done by the MKP in the period from November to March failed to sufficiently deepen the revolutionary consciousness of the broad masses of the proletariat.

Opposition to the revolutionary tendency was great within the labour movement, even without taking into account the obstacles that the Social Democratic Party, a participant in the administration of bourgeois state power, opposed by the means of this state force to revolutionary propaganda and organisation.

This opposition operated essentially in three directions:

1. The social-nationalism established by the MSDP, despite the working masses' readiness for class struggle, found favourable ground among the proletariat; “revolutionary patriotism”. The “support of the interests of the democratic state” was not repugnant to many, especially since – after November – petty-bourgeois elements had entered workers' organisations *en masse*.

2. The social-reformist conception propagated by the trade unions, which wanted to make social policy the central issue of the labour movement, relegated the abolition of wage-labour to the background in the interest of “restarting production”.

3. The bureaucratic apparatus of the labour movement and the party was in favour of class collaboration of the entire labour movement.

The clash between the method of revolutionary class struggle and opportunist politics did not succeed in the first stage of the revolution, that is, before the dictatorship. The bureaucracy of the [socialist] party and trade unions avoided its solution, reluctantly merging with the communists. This merger had no ideological basis. The reasons that drove them to the merger were the same ones that prevented the revolutionary propaganda of the communists. For the social chauvinists, internationalism was but a problem of foreign policy orientation; the social patriots sought support in the communist tendency of the labour movement, given the international political situation. They would have liked to revive the slogan of “territorial integrity” under the screen of red internationalism.

The trade union bureaucracy, which a few days before the dictatorship wanted to impose

methods on factory workers that would increase capitalist exploitation, was forced to beat a retreat in the face of the masses who, in the form of “spontaneous” expropriations, were ever more vigorously carrying out the expropriation of the means of production and the abolition of wage-labour.

Social democratic tactics caused white terror. The white terror, whose prelude was the democratic counterrevolution organised by the official leaders of the MSDP, is a sad but excellent justification of communist tactics. The victory of the bureaucracy, army and officers, the ludicrous weakness of the MSDP, the direct transition of the petty-bourgeois masses from it to the Christian-social party, all dispelled all illusions about class collaboration. The white terror and the dictatorial power of the bourgeoisie, disregarding democratic forms, will shortly show that the bourgeoisie is inclined to abandon the open and rigid form of its dictatorship and is willing to cooperate in government with the workers' party only in case the latter is ready to assume the legacy of the white terror: the defence at any cost of private property, the bourgeoisie and the parasitic existence of the bourgeois state bureaucracy. After white terror, democracy can only be established in a Noske-like form.

Still concerning the Social Democratic traitors, Kun's final “sentence”:

Any organic union with these undecideds is very harmful. If before and during the dictatorship some dialogue with these people could be justified, after the fall of it, a total break with these elements is a historical necessity.

In the course of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Hungarian workers' movement proved that amnesty, which the social-chauvinist leaders benefited from on the part of the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement precisely because the good offices of the hesitant, proved to be the source of the weakening of the revolution. ... Class unity of the workers is a necessary condition for the solidity of power of the proletariat, a condition capable of ensuring the transition from capitalism to socialism, the first stage of communism. The basis of class unity is steadfastness and unity of revolutionary action; the precondition of steadfastness and unity of action is the settlement of accounts of the workers' movement with its internal enemies, that is, the traitors who preach class collaboration and all sorts

of opportunism; the proletariat must eliminate them from the workers' movement....

And so it was until the triumphant and at the same time fatal day of March 21, where the proletariat of Hungary, led by the Communist Party of Hungary, took state power into its own hands and, in parallel, the Communist Party of Hungary, committed, under my leadership, the fatal mistake of merging with the Social Democratic Party of Hungary.

In the last part of the report the comrade mentioned corruption, a nuisance that the proletarian revolution must deal with. In Hungary the communists, aware that they must have a firm and unyielding hand against such an inevitable bourgeois corollary, thus dealt with it (read Kun):

In the course of the dictatorship, it was we, the communists, who first brought an open struggle against any kind of corruption.... Throughout the whole period of the dictatorship these infidels of the revolution supported each other. They warmed counterrevolutionaries of all sorts in their own bosoms in order to benefit from attention after the fall of the dictatorship. Today, they too have emigrated, or in prison, and white terror hunts them down in the same way as communist revolutionaries.

We communists have no interest in hiding the existence of corruption during the dictatorship. We foresaw that there would be some. Not only after the experiences in Russia, where exceptional committees put an end to corruption with relentless severity. We are also reminded of Marx's words, "Certainly the storm also carries garbage, which does not smell like roses in any revolutionary epoch, all sorts of dirt sticks to us. "Take it or leave it". Communists can present themselves with a clear conscience before the tribunal of the Third International and rightly so because they do not deny that there have been corrupts in their own ranks. However, we must draw the consequences for the future, be aware that it is necessary to seriously interdict the Party from the two most important groups of corruption: the social democracy and the lumpenproletariat.

Finally, we read the conclusions from an initial analysis by Béla Kun, who, in his 1924 writing "On the Hungarian Soviet Republic", sum-

maries the main reasons for the failure as follows:

Why did the Hungarian Soviet Republic collapse?... It can be summarised as follows:

- 1. The small area of the Republic, which did not allow for military operations of retreat;*
- 2. The fact that the fortuitous and favourable circumstances of the international political situation, which Comrade Lenin repeatedly cites as one of the factors in the success of the Russian revolution, were lacking;*
- 3. The lack of an organised, centralised, disciplined CP, therefore capable of manoeuvring;*
- 4. The failure to solve the peasant problem, namely, the agrarian question.*

We have read large parts of this writing, which emphasise, among the other reasons listed, the question of the Party:

It is the absence of a party that marked the fate of the dictatorship. This party was insufficient because of the merger.... The Communist Party, which was weak and unorganised, could not have avoided under any circumstances being absorbed by the institutions of the Councils.... As Lenin incessantly repeated, the Workers' Councils, as well as the Republic, must rest on the mass organisations of the working class. Mistake of the Party: it had as its mass organisation of the workers only the trade unions. It was on them that we had to lean, even for the organisation of the Red Army. It was the internal cause of the downfall of the dictatorship.... The experiences of the dictatorship make it absolutely necessary, but also possible, to organise a Communist Party entirely in accordance with the principle of Bolshevik organisation...organised for underground, centralised and closed.... If you love and esteem the Party, above all else, if to be proud of belonging to it is fetishism, then it is the fetishism of revolution, because the Communist Party is the personification of revolutionary consciousness, of revolutionary action.

We continued with the last chapter titled “The Final ‘Lesson’”, where excerpts from Ladislaus Rudas' pamphlet, “The Documents of the Schism”, were read, which deals in ample and fairly detailed detail with what abominable things the Social Democrats did in the days just

before the proletarian revolution and especially during.

We quote a few passages:

As everywhere else, so in Hungary it was the Social Democrats who lowered the red flag before the national flag. It was they who concealed from the proletariat the bankruptcy of capitalism and the impossibility of bourgeois revolution. It was they who by suspending the class struggle (Sigismund Kunfi's speech in the first days of November 1918), wanted to give the bourgeoisie the feeling of security and at the same time the proletariat the illusion of victory. Kunfi's sentimental, confused, petty-bourgeois phrases beautifully masked Garami's cold fraud.... The Social Democratic Party immediately posed as the party of order, of course of the capitalist order, which it wanted to maintain, given the impotence of capitalism itself, with the help of the organised proletariat. The social democrat Garami took as his collaborator, for this purpose, Kálmán Méhely, director of the “National Union of Iron and Steel Industrialists”, a notorious employers' fighting organisation; in fact, who better than the notorious director of the most provocative employers' union could support the social democracy in its action to save capitalism?

If a party, which has proclaimed itself to be proletarian and revolutionary for decades, does not even by chance take a single revolutionary step in the revolution, and instead of the organised strength of the proletariat and the influence gained through the organised masses it always acts consequently and consciously against the revolution of the proletariat and in the interests of capitalism – then it is not committing an error, but a real betrayal. And when a party, as everywhere the social-democratic parties do, turns the whole oppressive mechanism of the capitalist state against the proletarian revolution, spills fraternal blood in the interest of the capitalist revolution, what is this but treason?

The comrade summarised the multiple betrayals implemented by social-traitors.

Rudas' pamphlet, which traces the teaching of this defeat of the revolution, stresses about the social-traitors:

They cannot be convinced at any cost, they can only be fought. This is the great lesson that this writing seeks to impart to the proletari-

at...only struggle can be the road on which the proletariat can come to victory. The epoch of peaceful class struggle has passed; this is the epoch of armed revolution, and the revolution will fall if it wants to win by compromise. Compromise is not possible: the proletariat must fatally beat the path of struggle to the end, and where it shuns it, it pays the price with white terror... Any compromise with anti-revolutionary socialists means ruin for the revolution. He who can only be gained to revolution by the lesson of facts, must be fought. He who cannot be gained even in this way, let him die.

We conclude with Lenin stating, on August 6, 1919 at the Conference of Workers and Soldiers without a Party:

Recent events have shown us that the social-conciliators have not changed at all. Apparently, what has happened in Hungary reproduces on a large scale what has recently happened before our eyes in Baku... But the fact is that even Denikin's men sing us their refrain about the Constituent Assembly; nowhere does the counter-revolution present itself with an open face, and therefore we say: no temporary failure, such as the latest events in Hungary, will dismay us. There is no way out of all misfortunes except in revolution; there is but one sure means: the dictatorship of the proletariat. We say: every defeat of the Red Army only hardens it, makes it stronger and more conscious, because the workers and peasants have now understood, on the basis of bloody experience, what the power of the bourgeoisie and conciliators brings us. The agonising beast of world capitalism makes its last efforts, but it will croak anyway!

As mentioned in the introduction to this work, the carving out of the cornerstones of revolutionary Marxism, which we have a duty to reiterate today, tomorrow and always, continues, namely that “there can be no coalition, no compromise of any kind with socialists so prone to treason”. This can be read explicitly in the conditions of admission to the Communist International, known as the “21 Points”:

No communist can forget the teachings of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The merger of the Hungarian Communists with the so-called "leftist" Social Democrats has cost the Hungarian proletariat dearly. Accordingly, the Second Congress of the Communist International considers it necessary to lay down with the utmost preci-

sion the conditions for the acceptance of new parties, and to recall those parties which are accepted into the Communist International to the duties they have before them.

* * *

The Military Question in the Russian Revolution

The Civil War in Russia (March 1918–February 1920)

On March 8, 1918, the local Murmansk Soviet, fearing a German invasion of the port and military depots, had requested British military support, which sent a small delegation. The original village had expanded during the war due to the construction of the railroad from Leningrad, which was used to get Entente supplies to the Tsarist army. Due to a branch of the warm Gulf Stream, the waters never freeze.

After the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, cooperation with the Bolsheviks in the anti-German function of the former allies was broken off. Those in the sector now have three objectives: first, to prevent the Bolsheviks and Germans from seizing over a million tons of war material stored in the numerous depots, worth \$2.5 billion. Second, support the Czechoslovak Legion, deployed along the Trans-Siberian Railway, to reach Vladivostok for later use on the Western Front, after proper reorganisation in the US. Third, to support the eastern front of the Russian Civil War, where White and Czechoslovak forces are getting the better of Bolshevik forces. Everything was to contribute to weakening the revolution and preventing its spread to Europe. Thus opened the Northern Front of the civil war, which, however, remained secondary.

The Czechoslovak Legion was composed of Czech and Slovak volunteer soldiers who had fought on the side of the Entente, behind the promise of then obtaining an independent Czechoslovak state – at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Similar forces had fought with the Tsarist army for the same purpose. It had 50,000 well-organised and armed men. A clause in the Treaty of Brest guaranteed their free transit along the Trans-Siberian Railway, which took place with extreme difficulty because

of the poor condition of the line and the heavy traffic in both directions, dislocating the formations of those volunteers along more than a thousand kilometres.

Following an incident between soldiers of opposing formations, the Bolshevik command withdrew permission for free transit from the Legion, which responded by engaging the disorganised local Communist troops in several bitter battles and succeeding in taking control of large areas along the Trans-Siberian Railway. These successes fuelled the formation of a diverse number of counterrevolutionary paramilitary groups, improperly called the White Army, which never succeeded in forming a single, coordinated structure because the different groups had discordant goals and remained a chaotic anti-Bolshevik confederation.

The Allies ordered the Czechoslovak Legion to take Yekaterinburg, a short distance from where the tsar and his family were being held prisoner. The disorganised local Bolshevik troops were unable to stop the simultaneous advance of the Czechoslovak Legion and White Army formations. The local Soviet Executive Committee then authorised the execution of the tsar and family, which was carried out on July 17, 1918.

Trotsky's intense organisational work enabled the Red Army to grow in numbers and efficiency to the point that they were soon able to push the Czechoslovaks back from their newly captured positions. The Legion command was pressing to recompose the various formations to reach Vladivostok as soon as possible, especially after the establishment of the new Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918. They concluded an agreement with the Bolsheviks for a speedy relocation, against surrendering part of the imperial gold they held and the counterrevolutionary Kolchak. According to American Red Cross reports, 68,000 volunteers were evacuated.

Let us resume the main chronology.

March 10: Petrograd was now too close to the new German border so the Communist Party decided to move the seat of government and central party bodies to Moscow. Weighing heavily was the situation in neighbouring Finland where the Red formations were in serious trouble supporting the counteroffensive of the

White government, which was assisted militarily by Germany.

In a matter of weeks, the Bolshevik Revolution is severely attacked on all its borders, including the landing of Japanese troops in Vladivostok. In this besieged fortress situation, various economic measures, later called "war communism," are introduced to meet the pressing needs for food and materials for the war industry.

With the separate peace between Soviet Russia and Germany, the strategic arrangements of the war, already tried for 4 years, are altered and now believed to be in the final phase. The French and British governments ask the American government to intervene in the industry, especially to defend the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk depots.

England refuses to evacuate ships from the two ports; instead, landings of French, British, American Canadian and Italian troops totalling about 24,000 begin. The international forces are not of high military quality because they are made up of veterans already wounded in previous fighting or hastily trained recruits. Assigned to combat them are the Sixth and Seventh Red Armies, initially ill-equipped and unprepared, as emerged from early May clashes with British troops in an attempt to regain control of the Russian town of Pechenga, occupied by White Finns on behalf of the Germans to use as a submarine base.

On August 2, the British landing is preceded by a coup by Czarist Captain Chaplin leading anti-Bolshevik forces. British commander Poole establishes a puppet government and imposes martial law in the city. Several Russian naval vessels are sunk, and the remaining Bolshevik forces are unable to retaliate and fall back.

The British strategic plan calls for two lines of penetration using existing armoured trains: one from Archangel on the line to Moscow with the aim of capturing Vologda, headquarters of the Russian central command, the other in the direction of Kotlas-Vjatka to link up with the eastern front of the counterrevolution, held firmly by the Czechoslovaks, who were trying to reach Archangel to embark for the western front. Poole quickly realised that without substantial reinforcements of men and equipment the primary objective would not be achieved. Any

attempt to enlist volunteers fails. Lenin dictates that Kotlas and Vologda be held at all costs, and Trotsky sets a defence strategy based on trenches and fortifications as winter approaches. The new British commander, Ironside, also set up a prudent winter campaign to consolidate the huge territories he controlled through a system of well-equipped forts.

In Karelia, south of Murmansk, military operations take place along the railway line to Petrograd where the Allies have advanced 600 kilometres; they are stopped by a tenacious offensive by international revolutionary forces led by Spiridonov, a Petrograd worker. The winter war suspension decided by the British command allowed the 6th Red Army to reorganise. Its strength was in the 18th Division, made up of highly politicised Petrograd workers, which reached a strength of 13,000 effectives.

On Nov. 11, 1918, the signing of the armistice between Germany and the Entente marked the end of the war. In the preceding days, when Arctic winds had frozen the waters of the rivers and bay around Murmansk while the rivers to the south are still navigable, the Bolshevik counteroffensive near Tulgas begins, with mixed results. Anti-war propaganda and political agitation in the Allied army intensifies.

On December 11, the first mutiny of a fair number of White soldiers takes place, as they refuse to go into combat. A general desertion would put the entire Eastern Front in serious danger. A total of 13 organisers are shot as repression. The British command notes the impossibility of achieving a conquest with minimal effort with their reduced available forces. The morale of the troops suddenly collapses because of the well-organised reaction of the Red Army and especially because the soldiers, after the end of the war, wonder for whom and for what purpose they still fight in those icy Arctic regions: they all want a quick withdrawal from Russia.

Despite prohibitive weather conditions, fighting continued in January and February; some Allied attacks against the Bolsheviks were successful.

On January 20, 1919, at temperatures of -45° , the battle that represents the turning point of the war took place near Shenskursk; after several days of fighting the city was captured by the Red Army forcing the Allies to retreat considerably.

Protests also spread to British soldiers, putting the entire campaign in doubt.

On April 25, a White Russian battalion mutinies: 300 of them, switched to the Bolsheviks, attacked Allied troops near Tulgas. More and more reports emerge of refusal to fight by British and Allied troops.

Between May and June, the repatriation of British and French forces began, partially replaced by British volunteers who had been guaranteed defensive engagement only. French troops also claim to participate only in defensive actions. The Italian group protests the prolonged deployment many months after the armistice.

On July 10, a White unit under British command mutinies and kills British officers. 100 soldiers join the Bolsheviks.

On July 20, 3,000 White soldiers in the key town of Onega, the only winter land route to Murmansk, mutinied and surrendered the town to the Bolsheviks. Attempts to retake it by the British command are in vain, who no longer trust its units.

The final operations record numerous and incisive acts of sabotage for the purpose of hindering the evacuation of Allied troops. The aim of the Bolshevik command is not to allow a peaceful retreat, but a precipitous escape under Bolshevik fire.

The British command reacts with harsh offensives in order to strike a blow the morale of the Red Army. In September, a company of British volunteers refuses to participate in the attack. 93 are arrested and 13 sentenced to death.

On September 27, the last Allied troops leave Arkhangelsk.

On October 12, 1919 Murmansk is abandoned. The remnants of the White Army are left alone to face the Red Army, which improves in organisation and efficiency with each fight. The White Army, poorly disciplined and with supply difficulties, quickly collapses in the face of the Bolshevik offensive launched in December 1919.

On February 21, 1920, the Red Army entered Arkhangelsk, and on March 13, 1920, Murmansk. The remnants of the White Government flee on an icebreaker to France. From a strategic

point of view, the British command had made the mistake of organising the campaign simultaneously on two fronts in different directions in a vast and inaccessible territory having at its disposal only limited reliable forces, relying on uncertain enlistments of inexperienced local volunteers.

War in the Kuban

Uncertain was the situation after the end of the first military campaign in the annihilated Kuban. The three counter-revolutionary commanders, Alekseev, Kaledin, and Kornilov, collectively adopted a defensive strategy in anticipation of major military aid from the Austro-German forces. But their troops, demotivated by continuous retreats, began to disperse.

The Bolsheviks, despite significant losses, retook Rostov and Novocherkassk, forcing Kornilov's Army of Volunteers (AV) to fall back on Ekaterinodar, a newly self-proclaimed Cossack republic. This too was conquered by Red troops resulting in the defeat of the AV. Kaledin committed suicide; Kornilov, dead in the bombing of his headquarters, was replaced by Denikin, who subsequently took command of the AV.

With Operation Faustschlag, in just 11 days, the Germans conquered southern Ukraine all the way to the Black Sea coast, the port of Odessa, all of Crimea, and reached as far as Rostov-on-Don, seriously endangering the fortunes of the revolution.

In the territories along the Don, the power of the Cossack Ataman Krasnov, who had always been a great opponent of the revolution, had been consolidated. With German economic and military support, he had expanded his Don Republic to more than half the size of Italy. However, the Republic had a population of less than 4 million—just over half of them Cossacks—the rest ill-supported peasants immigrating from other regions. In addition to the 10 million roubles from the secret anti-Bolshevik organisation "National Centre," he managed to organise an army of 40,000 soldiers, which was added to what remained of Denikin's AV. The political intentions of the two commanders differed: Ataman was for an independent Cossack republic, whereas Denikin was for a unified, federal, anti-German Russia; this had consequences on the military level. Strategically, Denikin enjoyed an excellent situation, protected to the west by the

new German frontiers, from which aid could come, and to the east by the now reinforced and well-armed AV (a map of the locations was presented at the meeting).

The Red Army, constituted only a few months prior under Trotsky's efficient organisational work, had between 80,000 and 100,000 troops in the Kuban—mostly new recruits with no combat experience. They were dispersed in a variety of groups, smaller units and territorial garrisons to the point that even the commanders did not know exactly the composition of their forces. The difficulties of communication in those territories made any rapid changes in the plans of the battles in progress impossible.

A formation of about 30-40,000 positioned just south of German-occupied Rostov is commanded by Sorokin and is to control them and the Cossack groups. Kalnin had 30,000 troops placed along the important railroad junction between Torgovaya and Tikhoretskaya. A third formation was the Taman Army with about 25,000 men at the Kerch Strait on the Sea of Azov to counter the Germans stationed in Crimea. A fourth formation of about 12,000 troops was entrusted to Dumenko in an isolated position on the railroad near the set of Cossack villages of Velikoknyazheskaya, now Proletarsk, on the Manych River.

These troops were poorly coordinated due to the near-absence of experienced leaders, and poorly armed; Trotsky called them "a plethoric horde rather than an army", who paid little heed to central command orders.

On June 28, 1918, Denikin's AV begins its second Kuban campaign with an attack from three directions on the Torgovaya railway junction and then aimed to recapture Ekaterinodar (Krasnodar). This proves an easy victory, with the retreating Red Army being heavily defeated by white cavalry. Instead of aiming for Ekaterinodar, Denikin sets out north to Proletarsk where he defeated Dumenko's cavalry, which subsequently retreated northward on the important Tsaritsyn (Stalingrad). The Bolshevik command feared an attack on Tsaritsyn, so Stalin, the commissar general for supplies, diverts 6 regiments to the city's defence.

On July 6, Denikin, using the railroad, instead heads south to Ekaterinodar. Red commander Kalnin, in order to counter him, sum-

mons all the forces in the area to Tikhoretsk, particularly those of Sorokin from Bataysk, who, instead of rushing, engaged in futile attacks on the AV cavalry that Denikin left behind to protect the rear. He thus lost much valuable time and manpower.

Denikin, sensing Red intentions, dispatches a cavalry division to interpose itself between Kalnin and Sorokin's forces to prevent them from joining.

On July 14, Denikin's forces, quicker in their manoeuvres, set up a 75-kilometre-long front for the attack on the Tikhoretsk railway junction. The tried-and-tested three-column manoeuvre is repeated: a central attack while two cavalry wings bypass the static defences set up by Kalnin, which does not hold. Red troops withdrew in disorder, abandoning huge amounts of war material. Red prisoners can choose between immediate shooting or enlistment in the AV. Sorokin arrives in the aftermath.

Particularly serious are the consequences for the loss of the important railroad junction that strengthens AV communications while the various detachments of Soviet troops remain permanently separated from each other.

The Soviet command is given to Sorokin, who aims for the defence of Ekaterinodar, while disagreements between the various commanders resurface in the White command. Denikin, for the conquest of the city, intends to gather all his groups for an attack and siege as well as a group intended to counter Sorokin and garrison Armavir. A bold plan to eliminate all Bolshevik resistance in the Kuban with his forces deployed on a front of no less than 245 kilometres.

On July 16, the White offensive began despite Sorokin's strong resistance near Kushchyovskaya, who abandoned the town and headed south toward Timashevsk. Denikin, having blown up the bridges to the north to prevent the arrival of German troops, arrived 40 kilometres from Ekaterinodar.

The lateral columns advanced according to the plan, which seemed to be working well, and the concentration of all AV forces on Ekaterinodar began.

Sorokin's counter-move involves outflanking the enemy by bringing up behind the opposing centre. The Taman Army's best column of veter-

ans is sent against the enemy right flank while Sorokin, leaving out Ekaterinodar, aims at the centre of the AV near Korenovsk, separating it from Denikin's headquarters at Tikhoretsk. The final battle for the Kuban lasted several days, with furious fighting and considerable losses for the AV.

On July 29, the White commanders, left with minimal forces in Ekaterinodar, broke through Sorokin's deployment by attacking him from behind on Korenovsk. Here, too, furious attacks were extensive, and included bayonet attacks. Finally, Sorokin, despite his numerical superiority, yields to the AV's superior experience and efficiency and retreats to reorganise his forces in order to retake the city.

But, after a week of fruitless attempts, Sorokin orders a halt to all attacks and commands a retreat across the Kuban River. All fighting by the various formations ceases on August 14.

On the 15th, Denikin entered Ekaterinodar, concluding the Kuban campaign—now firmly in the hands of counterrevolutionary forces.

The Don Cossacks claim complete autonomy for their republic with an autonomous national army. Denikin, to retain their support, authorised within his armed forces the formation of native units commanded by Cossack officers. The military administration of the occupied territories re-introduced the laws in force before the October Revolution, creating further confusion and unease.

The Red Army of the Caucasus, the most critical of the Bolshevik forces—mentioned by Trotsky as a “terrible example of the evil effects of lack of discipline”—absolutely had to reorganise its remaining forces, which were still substantial although distributed in several separate groups.

Reports of the Venezuelan Section

Report to the May 2022 General Meeting

The Economic Situation

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a direct impact on Latin America, with rising commodity prices, including hydrocarbons, and a resurgence of inflation. The global inter-imperialist struggle for control and access to energy resources has led to a revaluation of some oil-producing countries, such as Venezuela. If the conflict continues Brent could reach \$130/barrel and the Mexican blend \$115, while two years ago it was below \$50.

In the countries' domestic political situation, there has been a resurgence of mass unrest and clashes between right-wing and “left-wing” parties and movements.

The Ukrainian crisis has benefited producing countries (Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Colombia) and punished non-producers (Caribbean, Central America, Peru, Chile). It is not yet clear to what extent the increase in the price of other primary commodities (minerals and food) will affect GDP growth. It has to be seen in the context of the trend of the global economy, which is in crisis and still suffering from the Covid 19 pandemic.

Early forecasts indicate that the region will grow less than expected due to the conflict in Ukraine: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has lowered its forecast for the region from 2.6 percent to 2.3 percent from seven months ago.

Some countries could gain market share by exporting their agricultural products (grains), given the shortage caused by a conflict affecting the two big producers Russia and Ukraine. Spain, for example, to alleviate the shortage has temporarily eased corn import requirements from Argentina and Brazil.

To the rising gasoline and diesel prices, some governments in the region, to maintain popularity and to calm protest movements, have responded by reducing associated taxes or applied subsidies. This represents an increase in government spending and a budget imbalance.

In a hypothetical hydrocarbon crisis, the inter-imperialist struggle for their control would be exacerbated and it is predictable that the United States would strengthen its influence in the region. Brazil is a major producer of bio-fuels.

But these swings in the hydrocarbon and commodity markets in the region are cyclical and these countries will not be able to escape the international crisis of capitalism.

We can expect the return of mass protests like those of 2019, and we will see currents of the right and “left” trying to channel discontent toward electoral changes of presidents and parliaments or political and institutional reforms.

Foreign investment in Latin America may increase in specific areas by the United States and China in preparation for a future war. They will seek alternative supplies: nickel in Colombia and Guatemala; lithium in Bolivia, Argentina and Chile; copper in Chile and Peru; and phosphates in Venezuela. In addition, food production in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay would attract foreign investment.

Following the sanctions against Russia, a White House delegation met in Caracas with the Venezuelan government to sound out a possible supply of energy products to the United States. The initiative aimed not only to reduce Russia's geopolitical influence among Latin Americans, but also to find an alternative to the 500,000 barrels per day of heavy crude oil and derivatives that Washington was buying from Russia and that until 2019 came from Venezuela.

At the same time, an agreement was negotiated between Iran and Venezuela: Venezuela would import condensate from Iran to dilute extra-heavy crude, while Iran would supply Venezuela with engineers, refined products, and spare parts for the oil industry.

In the case of Cuba and Nicaragua, a rapprochement with the United States is not so clear, as they do not have the attractiveness of Venezuelan oil.

The working class can only expect more exploitation, informal employment and unemployment, falling real wages and repression, even in those countries where an ephemeral economic recovery would occur, regardless of the political current in government.

The Struggles of the Working Class

Recent developments in the region include:

- Political unrest in Peru: In April there were large mobilisations against fuel price increases and in general. Much of the participation was spontaneous and not in response to calls from political parties or unions. The streets of several cities filled up and around the Government House. The government first proclaimed a curfew but had to suspend it because it was ignored. It reduced the fuel tax and raised the minimum wage, but this was not enough to quell discontent. Mobilisations have been suppressed. Political parties and labour unions are pushing, as always, for a bourgeois-democratic solution, starting with calls for the dismissal or resignation of President Pedro Castillo of the Republic.

- Venezuela: in April, the bourgeois government announced an increase in the minimum wage for the public sector from \$1.6 to \$28 a month, while the value of the basket of basic goods exceeds \$800. In collective bargaining, wage increases continue to remain symbolic: both the public sector and private companies maintain the policy of paying bonuses on top of wages, the amount of which does not affect the calculation of social benefits.

Between March and April, public employees announced street demonstrations to protest low wages. Retirees were the most active, stimulating the mobilisation of comrades still in force.

Public and private workers demonstrated April 7 at the Ministry of Labour in Caracas rejecting the new minimum wage announced by the government. 6,300 pharmacy employees threatened to strike nationwide over wage increases and other demands.

The Venezuelan government is threatening new fees for public services and various taxes; some central others by governors or mayors; all of which will add to workers' cause for protest.

In April, pensioners staged several protests in the capital and occupied Ministry of Labour offices in several cities.

The second half of April saw widespread unrest among workers at the SIDOR steel company, who went on strike for nearly a week over compliance with the decree on wage increases.

The struggle arose spontaneously by the workers, outside the union's control.

The workers faced government repression, scab squads and demagoguery. The struggle was led by the assemblies. But eventually a section of workers, manipulated by politicians offering to negotiate, went back to work, against assembly directives.

Later, in the first half of May, workers at the Orinoco Ferrominera, SIDOR and Bauxilum held several stoppages and assemblies with the same demand for payment of wages and contractual benefits. Worker agitation has also mounted in Guayana.

On May Day, the government called its May Day gatherings, traditional carnival parades organised and led by the companies and their managers. The pro-government concentration was held in Caracas for media effect. But at the same time, alternative processions were held in several cities, led by various unions of public sector workers and private companies. Here notable was the participation of pensioners. Slogans focused on the demand for wage increases, but also present were various nationalist invocations typical of opportunism. But there was a unified atmosphere. Evidently large was the presence of representatives of opportunist organisations, especially Stalinists and Trotskyists.

On May 1, President Maduro did not make the usual announcement of a wage increase. However, the spokesperson for Venezuelan businesses at the International Labour Organization said that future wage increases in the country would be made through a "tripartite negotiation," involving labour unions, business associations and the government, a procedure abandoned for the past 20 years and which would be reactivated.

- In Brazil, opportunist parties and so-called "popular movements" are promoting street agitations with the word "out Bolsonaro", a banner imposed by the media on impatience and mobilisation against rising food and fuel prices and corruption within the government. Opportunism seeks to channel discontent toward the dead-end path of presidential elections. They call for Bolsonaro's ousting, vaccination for all, and an emergency bonus of 600 reals.

The region's capital crisis will continue to affect workers, subject to unemployment, precariousness and low wages. Even in countries where there is talk of economic recovery, there is no significant recovery in employment or wage increases that exceed the rate of inflation.

The current union centres continue their work of demobilisation, class conciliation and division among workers.

Other Parties on the War in Ukraine

The media and social networks, largely controlled by the West, insist on "Russian crimes against humanity". In Central and South America where there are so-called "progressive" or "leftist" governments, some media outlets have aligned themselves with the Russian and Chinese media apparatus, which emphasise "Ukrainian Nazism and fascism" or "NATO provocations"

At the UN General Assembly, government delegations from Bolivia, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba abstained when voting on the condemnation of Russia. The Venezuelan representation was absent! Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador spoke in favour; however, the governments of Mexico, Brazil and Argentina maintain ambiguous positions by maintaining economic and trade cooperation agreements with Russia. The governments of Venezuela, Cuba and El Salvador are interested in maintaining open relations with the United States to overcome sanctions and engage in verbal contortions to maintain relations with Russia and China as well.

Political parties that call themselves "leftist" or "progressive", but are nothing more than opportunists, are evenly divided between the pro-Russian and those aligned with Ukraine.

The "Communist" Party of Venezuela supports Putin and rejects the Venezuelan government's rapprochement with the United States and selling it oil.

The International Workers' Unity-Fourth International (ITU-CI), a Trotskyist movement, cries "Putin out of Ukraine! No to NATO!" and supports the Ukrainian resistance, going so far as to organise an international solidarity network with Ukrainian militiamen at the front and promotes sending contributions and medicine.

While the Mexican government repudiated the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Morena party sided with Russia and called for the formation of a "friendship group" in parliament.

In Brazil, with different arguments, Bolsonaro and Lula coincide in their support for the Russian government. But, in typical bourgeois ambiguity, Lula declared that "no one can agree with the war". The position of the Brazilian "left" in the face of the war in Ukraine is subordinate to the defence of the interests and business of the national bourgeoisie.

If in Chile, the President denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the "Communist" Party, condemns "acts of war in conflict resolution", but also the US and NATO with their "provocations and expansionist ambitions".

The so-called "left" in Latin America, even those with pseudo-revolutionary phraseology and iconography, seek only to consolidate themselves as an alternative for the administration of bourgeois interests and do not hesitate to join the patriotic campaign, on the side of the imperialist line-up that suits them best. It will be ready to throw the masses of wage-earners into the carnage and super-exploitation that war brings. We will not find parties or movements of the so-called "left" in Central and Latin America with a class, proletarian and communist position. They are politically castrated parties, incapable of taking the lead in resuming the class struggle, bringing the proletariat out of submission to the political control of the bourgeoisie, much less providing it with a revolutionary orientation.

If this conjuncture has served any purpose, it has been to show the caricatured anti-imperialism of the so-called Latin American left, which is inter-classist, counterrevolutionary and complicit in the greater exploitation of wage earners in the region.

* * *

Report to the September 2022 General Meeting

Historical circumstances forced and required the party to devote much of its energies to the reestablishment and defence of the theory and propaganda of its program. The work of its militants has turned to the translation into different languages of the characteristic texts of Marxism

and the Party and to the study and evaluation of the events above. But the Party has never renounced engagement on all fronts of the class struggle, disposing all its forces for this purpose.

We are not a club, a circle, a forum, open to anyone who comes to express his or her opinions or doubts and who indulges and devotes himself or herself to a confrontation of ideas. The party outside presents itself for what it is, and is willing to demonstrate the consistency of what it stands for. But those who join our collective communist battle are integrated at a higher level, in a work begun long ago and by many generations of comrades, in organised and disciplined forms, often constituted by the territorial sections, around predetermined plans of activities to which the party candidate is called upon to contribute according to his or her abilities and strengths. The formation of the militant comes to coincide with his insertion into party life, each at his own pace and in the areas of activity in which he is most inclined.

Party sections are formed on the basis of the territorial criterion, the geographical proximity of the militants, which facilitates their coming together, to plan and carry out specific party activities in those places. Sections are composed of the militants--of different nationalities, ages, occupations, races and genders--who are in a favourable geographic space to meet and organise revolutionary work.

Currently, our old Venezuelan section has become a laboratory for the integration of Spanish-speaking comrades present in different countries. That is, temporarily, the Venezuelan section does not operate on a strictly territorial basis, but on the basis of the language community. We do not know if or for how long we will have to maintain this figure, but it is clear to us that the development of the party will also require the establishment of a section in Spain, or in any other country where the conditions to achieve it arise and where a particular local intervention of the party is required. The establishment of new sections will depend not only on quantitative growth but on the commitment of devoted and disciplined militants. Therefore, the use of technological tools, which are very useful for holding meetings at a distance, does not exclude the need for the territorial structuring of the party.

Report to the January 2023 General Meeting

Wage Struggles in Venezuela

All Latin American governments promise an economic recovery, but all signs point to the fact that this "recovery" will be accompanied by an insignificant increase in jobs, an increase in unemployment (and underemployment and black labour), and a decline in wages.

Presidential and parliamentary elections have given space to new and not-so-new political forces within the demagogic and media game of democracy.

Workers, even in their political disorientation, tend to move in struggles for wage increases, in many cases getting out of the control of union centres which, instead of being an instrument of struggle, prevent strikes and workers' unity. The new governments propagate ephemeral mirages of prosperity that immediately vanish to make way for the discontent of wage earners.

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In Venezuela, school workers began the year with work stoppages throughout the country. The broad participation was not the organisational result of unions, but rather of discontent over falling wages, which are the lowest in Latin America. The health workers' union and several areas of the public sector also joined the mobilisations. Isolated disputes in private companies have also been opened.

These conflicts have in common the demand for wage increases. Government offers to pay with vouchers have been rejected, and some sectors of unionism are proposing wage indexation and others payment in dollars, to protect against the devaluation of the bolivar. There is no inter-union leadership to integrate these struggles, but the trend is for them to converge into a single demand for wage increases.

As was to be expected, some groups have ridden these conflicts to use them as electoral springboards for the presidency of the republic and parliament, but workers have rejected discredited union and political leaders. The labour unrest has allowed many workers to become disillusioned with the pro-government unions and the *Centro Socialista Bolivariana de Traba-*

adores; but they are not too trusting of the other centrals, federations and unions either. This rejection does not necessarily reflect an advance in political clarity. A new direction has yet to emerge, one that favours labour conflicts, consisting of the political influence of the Communist Party.

In a demagogic attempt to calm tempers, the government has been forced to show its "intention" to raise wages and will now try to wear down the movement, which has worked in the past. It remains to be seen whether this time the labour movement will be able to grow in breadth and duration. Meanwhile, the government has launched selective repressive actions to intimidate workers and denounced the demonstrations as "part of a destabilisation plan".

But business circles have also expressed the need for wage adjustments to defend minimum levels of consumption. The *Copei* (Christian-social) party has submitted a "wage emergency" bill, which obviously will not meet workers' demands. In this sense, the government and most union centres are aiming for a tripartite agreement, following the methodology proposed by the International Labour Organization and widely used in many countries. Some union centres have called for a minimum wage of \$300 a month (equal to 66 percent of the food basket amount and 35 percent of the basic basket). *Fedecamaras*, the Venezuelan employers' union, has indicated a minimum wage of \$50 per month.

The government clings to the pretext that it cannot improve wages because of sanctions imposed by the United States, when in fact it boasts of economic growth, which has not translated into an increase in living standards for wage earners. The government has cynically called on workers to take to the streets to protest the economic blockade.

Siderúrgica de Orinoco (SIDOR) workers went on strike for five days in the second week of January. Although the government failed to recruit scabs in the region, in a meeting convened by the governor of Bolivar State, the workers, faced with blackmail from repression, agreed to suspend the protest in exchange for the release of 18 of their detainees, the company's renunciation of firing the protesters, and with a "commitment" to discuss wage demands in a nationwide "working group".

Meanwhile, SIDOR paid vouchers to workers who did not participate in the struggle, praising them as "heroic" and calling those who went on strike "hijackers".

On Monday the 16th, mobilisations and participants continued to grow across the country, with education workers as the main core. The government paid these a 580 bolivar (\$29) bonus, which it then extended to other public sector categories, but workers reiterated their demands for wage increases.

On Monday the 23rd mobilisations in all major cities. Teachers and school administrators mobilised massively. To a lesser extent, academics, health care workers and workers in some state institutions and companies joined.

To counter the mobilisations in schools, the government called for a march in Caracas and some regional demonstrations, mobilising employees of government institutions, scaring them with attendance lists, and launching demands for the rejection of sanctions and economic blockade.

On January 30, the mobilisations maintained their pace, spreading throughout the country and with increased presence of health workers. On the same day, the tripartite meeting was held, with the ILO present, and, as expected, there were no announcements of wage increases, the government refused and proposed the payment of compensatory vouchers. All indications are that the tripartite meeting will serve to prevent wage increases.

On Tuesday, Jan. 31, workers in SIDOR's hot melt areas halted operations in response to non-payment of paychecks and low wages. They are also demanding payment of premium on company profits, savings fund and benefit payments, which have been seized since last May.

Dispersion persists because of the unions' complicity with the government, leaving the movement adrift without promoting assemblies and coordination mechanisms, which furthers the government's strategy of aiming to wear down the movement.

Two qualitative leaps are needed to maintain and advance: on the one hand, to develop its own grassroots organisation to coordinate actions and call assemblies; on the other hand, to involve all sectors to bring energies together in a

general strike. Otherwise, it will be very difficult to achieve what is being demanded.

From the grassroots, consideration has begun to be given to forming struggle committees beyond the unions. Only continuing and deepening the conflict will be able to change the balance of power in favour of the working class.

The Party's Trade Union Activity in Italy

Report to the May 2022 General Meeting

The party's trade union work in Italy from February to May focused mainly on the following areas of activity:

- direct party interventions in strikes, demonstrations, and assemblies;

- activities in the labour movement through the CLA, the *Coordinamento Lavoratori Autoconvocati*, to promote the unity of action of workers and militant unionism;

- activities within the USB

- analysis and commentary in our newspaper of workers' struggles and the labour movement, battling with the opportunist currents dominant in it.

Let us start with this last point. An article came out in the February 2022 issue of our Italian-language newspaper, *Il Partito Comunista*, that analysed the uprising that occurred in Kazakhstan in early January, calling it genuinely proletarian and greeting it enthusiastically. This distinguished our party from most of the opportunist political groups and, in terms of depth of analysis of events and consequent conclusions, from the few who took a similar position. The article was translated by our comrades into several languages, including Russian.

We then drafted an article that polemicised the watchwords of nationalisations and a law against locations, both advanced by the leaders of the ex-GKN Collective, which, fighting against the closure of the Florentine factory, gathered around it a certain movement, which was, however, more inter-classist than proletarian.

Following some student demonstrations of the death of a young man employed in a metal factory as part of the so-called “school-to-work alternation”, we addressed the issue of the relationship between youth, school, and work, according to the authentic positions of revolutionary communism. Our intention was to disseminate the text at student demonstrations, which, however, was not possible as that movement quickly receded.

Finally, in the same issue, we commented on the conduct of the leaders of militant unions, from the aftermath of the October 11 united general strike until January, which had seen the stated intention to continue the united path sink into the usual every-man-for-himself, free-for-all conduct with which the opportunist leaders divide the union struggle.

USB's decision to ally itself with an autonomous, corporatist, right-wing union, instead of with the other base unions, for the RSU (*Rappresentanza sindacale unitaria*) elections in the Central Civil Service sector, was emblematic of this. A decision, by the way, that did not pay off in terms of votes, as the USB coalition did not reach the threshold of so-called “representation” in that sector. These divisions were reflected in the conduct of base unionism in the face of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, which could not but affect the course of the labour movement in the weeks that followed.

The divisions among the base unions are in large part born of the oppositions between the various opportunist political groups that run these organisations. Faced with the war, in their various facets, they had no small amount of hesitancy about the attitude to take, in some cases capitulating in open betrayal of proletarian positions, indicating to the workers to take sides on one or the other side of the front.

On the other hand, the party, on the strength of the Marxist doctrine which it has been able to defend throughout the whole arc of counter-revolutionary history up to the present day – keeping it alive with its daily theoretical and practical work – has been able to indicate to the workers the nature of the war and the conduct to be taken by the labour movement in the face of it from day one.

On February 25, the second day of the war, the provincial FIOM in Genoa called a two-hour

strike against the war in several factories in the city. In the short procession, attended by about 400 workers, our comrades distributed an initial text on the war.

That would be the only strike action against the war promoted by the CGIL. The Genoa FIOM, headed by a political group that proclaims itself internationalist, not only did nothing more, but ignored, in fact sabotaged, the May 20 strike of base unionism.

The hesitations and capitulations of opportunism in the face of the imperialist war—which for now is being fought by proxy in Ukraine—have been reflected in the conduct of the base unions and militant unionism as a whole.

The result was first and foremost a lack of readiness to react to the war. The decision to mobilise workers by calling them to a general strike in a unified manner should have been made in the days following the start of the conflict. Instead, it was formalised only on April 9, at an assembly in Milan, by part of the basic unions, setting the strike for May 20.

The strike thus came three months after the start of the conflict, and this – in the face of the course of the war and its economic consequences as they have unfolded to date – was one of the elements that hindered its better success.

The first initiative on the war by rank-and-file unionism was an online assembly sponsored by SI COBAS on March 13. With about 150 participants, however, it was more party-political than union-political in nature. One of our comrades spoke, pointing to the need for prompt united action by confrontational unionism, but he was the only one to express this view, with the exception of a militant from *Sindacato Generale di Base* (SGB).

Instead, the SI COBAS leadership indicated that it would participate with its own section in the march of the March 26 national demonstration in Florence, convened by the ex-GKN Factory Collective, and would organise a May Day demonstration focused on the theme of opposition to the war. Long time frame, then. This wait-and-see attitude, hesitant in the face of what is the highest form of oppression on the working class in capitalism, was criticised by some SI COBAS militants.

Meanwhile, on the level of activity within the CLA, a collaboration began with an editorial collective called “Union-net”. Three meetings were held between the most active members of the CLA and those of Union-net, and the result was the first joint action consisting of the drafting and distribution of a jointly signed leaflet at the March 26 national demonstration in Florence.

On March 21 in Genoa there was an assembly organised by the ex-GKN Factory Collective to propagandise the following Saturday's national demonstration in Florence. We distributed together with a CLA worker the jointly signed CLA-Union leaflet for Saturday's demonstration, and one of our comrades spoke on behalf of the CLA:

- explaining that the combativeness put forth by the GKN workers was the result of years of union preparation and multiplied effect because it was aimed at building the unity of workers' struggles;

- thus criticised the very poor attendance of base union militants at the assembly, especially the USB, of which the comrade is a delegate;

- criticised even more sharply the complete absence of delegates from the Genovese FIOM, saying that it is run by a political group that proclaims it wants to fight for a "Europe-wide union" but does not even attend with its union delegates an assembly that is an expression of one of the main ongoing workers' struggles organised by workers from their own union; and

- reiterated the need that, in the face of war, all base and militant unionism should organise a united workers' mobilisation.

On Saturday, March 26, we took part in the national demonstration, more inter-classist than proletarian, in Florence called by the ex-GKN Factory Collective, with more than ten thousand in attendance, with our own special leaflet.

The day before – Friday, March 25 – CUB and SGB had sent notice to the *Commissione di Garanzia* (an agency of the Italian state to control strikes) for a general strike on May 20, wanting to set a date in order to avoid the obstacles posed by the anti-strike law in so-called “essential services”.

The day after the Florentine demonstration, the character of which we commented on in our April paper, a communiqué was issued by CUB, SGB, UNICOBAS, USI CIT and ADL Varese calling a national assembly for the purpose of promoting an anti-war general strike. These are all small unions that, even put together, constitute a minority of the already weak base unionism. However, the initiative was finally going in the direction our party wanted and called for, and therefore we immediately supported it within the labour movement.

On Thursday, March 31, a picket was held in Genoa in front of a port gate organised by USB dockworkers against arms trafficking in the port. An assembly followed, in which USB's national leaders displayed all their opportunism and false opposition to the war. We polemicised these politicians in our last newspaper. At the picket and assembly, we distributed a CLA leaflet entitled “Building a United Mobilisation Against the War” which stated:

Two important signals go in the right direction of the unity of action of workers and militant unionism: today the participation of the Genoese SI COBAS in the day of struggle promoted by the USB dockworkers; on April 9 in Milan the convocation of a national united assembly, in attendance, for now by CUB, SGB, ADL Varese, UNICOBAS, COBAS Sardegna, USI CIT.

As the CLA, we believe that all bodies of confrontational unionism should adhere to and concretely participate in this assembly, and that it is the duty of all combative workers to fight so that their trade union organisations will actively contribute to a united mobilisation against the war, beginning with participation in the April 9 assembly.

On April 9 we participated in the assembly in Milan that officially promoted the general strike against the war for May 20.

One of our comrades spoke on behalf of the CLA, stressing that we considered as positive the decision taken by the assembly and the willingness it expressed to work to involve all rank-and-file unionism in the strike.

In this regard, we argued for the need to proceed with a public and formal invitation to all bodies of militant unionism that had not yet joined the strike, not only the base unions such

as USB and the COBAS Confederation but also the militant elements in CGIL. A public and formal invitation, in fact, would have helped those workers within those trade union bodies who want to fight for strike adherence, overcoming resistance to do so from the leadership.

The same was done at the next three, more restricted, meetings where we attended and spoke, again on behalf of the CLA. But the majority of the leaders who had promoted the strike initiative, and who said they hoped all the basic unions would join, always opposed this formal step, which would be a substantive action. So even on the side of the leaderships promoting the strike there are opportunisms that stand in the way of fully unified union action.

On the same day, April 9, other CLA union militants spoke at an USB regional assembly in Florence, prepared by that union to promote a national demonstration it had called for April 22 in Rome. This decision had been made by the USB leadership before the outbreak of war and without involving any other union. The outbreak of war did not change the intention of the USB leadership, which kept its commitment to promote the demonstration on its own. The CLA intervened at this regional assembly by bringing to it the same content expressed by our comrade in Milan, stating that in any case it would participate in the April 22 demonstration, which was then actually accomplished, the only non-USB union body to participate. This conduct of the CLA demonstrated not only its consistency with the principle of the unity of action of confrontational unionism, but also its improved ability to intervene.

A national assembly of the conflict areas in CGIL was held in Florence on April 14, and they agreed to submit an alternative document to the union's new congress, the 19th, which will begin in a few weeks.

The three areas that say they are militant in CGIL are *Reconquistiamo tutto*, a trade union fraction of a Trotskyist party, PCL (*Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori*), the most substantial; *Le giornate di marzo*, which broke away from the first two years ago and is in fact a union fraction of a Trotskyist group; and *Democrazia e Lavoro*, which at the last congress did not present an opposition document but amendments to the majority document and can hardly be considered truly militant.

At this meeting the differences with respect to the war issue emerged. A minority from *Reconquistiamo tutto* declared its support for the Ukrainian resistance “whatever its political direction”, in the name of the “self-determination of peoples” elevated to an absolute principle, to which the struggle between classes is subordinated.

Another Trotskyist group, the most substantial in this area, has taken a more ambiguous position, instead declaring itself against all imperialism but supporting the right of the Ukrainian people to defend themselves by supporting the leftist political groups that oppose the government there.

The Trotskyist group that created *Le giornate di marzo* calls the war in Ukraine imperialist, but without going so far as to point the way of defeatism not only to Russian proletarians but also to Ukrainian proletarians.

These divisions among opportunist political groups that head the conflict areas in CGIL explain the substantial immobility of *Reconquistiamo tutto* in the face of the war. This area after issuing a communiqué, “Against Putin, NATO, and the sending of arms to Ukraine”, on March 4, said or did nothing more until a communiqué in support of the May 20 strike issued on May 15. Certainly positive, but in the meantime, it has never participated in initiatives to promote the strike, either at the April 9 national assembly or at subsequent meetings.

These divisions offer an interesting insight into the crumbling of opportunism in the face of the fact of war, and the unsustainability of its political underpinnings.

The leadership of the USB, which is the main base union in Italy, waited until May 6 to declare its adherence to the May 20 anti-war strike.

A few days later, a communiqué from the provincial Coordination of Delegates of the USB Fire Brigade of Genoa picked up the internationalist and defeatist positions of the bourgeois war.

On the day of the strike against the war, May 20, we intervened in small demonstrations with a special leaflet published in this issue of the paper, in Rome, Florence, Genoa and Turin.

On Thursday, May 26, following a fatal accident at the Genoa airport, the USB – which or-

ganises part of the airport's employees – put together a picket in front of the air terminal to commemorate the worker, who was a union militant, and to denounce security shortcomings. At the well-attended picket, which was also attended by USB delegates and members from other categories, a brief assembly was held, with about two hundred present, at which national USB leaders, the airport USB delegate, a student from the USB youth organisation, and a local SI COBAS leader spoke.

One of our comrades who works at the airport spoke, explaining how similar incidents had happened at the Genoa airport twice before, that safety for companies is a cost that reduces profits, and that for profit the bosses bill a certain number of worker fatalities, in addition to health damage. He concluded by saying that, in order to oppose this state of affairs, denunciations are not enough and that what is needed instead is strength of strike, of organisation, and of struggle. The speech was much appreciated.

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Report to the September 2022 General Meeting

The party's trade union activity in Italy in this period can be divided into four areas: the editorial work of notes, articles, and leaflets; direct participation in demonstrations and strikes; intervention in trade union organisations; and collaboration with the CLA.

For 10 years – since the January 2013 issue – the party has resumed inclusion in *Il Partito Comunista* of a fixed page “for action and theoretical party address,” entitled “*Per il sindacato di classe*” (“For the Class Union”).

In the June 2022 issue, accompanying the leaflet we circulated at the demonstrations for the May 20 general strike against the war, called by all rank-and-file unions, we published a commentary about its progress and preparation.

We were able to follow the preparation of the strike closely through the CLA, which was invited to participate in the preparatory organisational meetings, as well as all the bodies – even non-class bodies – that supported its promotion, since the first national assembly in Milan on April 9, where we intervened both by disseminating party leaflets and by a speech on behalf of the CLA.

It should be remembered that the CLA includes union militants from different bodies of militant unionism: from base unions and opposition groups in the CGIL. Many belong to different political groups, among which our party is clearly in the minority. The CLA was formed and works on a trade-union-political, not party-political, level, based on a guideline shared by our party, and which indeed characterises it, namely the unity of action of militant unionism and workers. While we saw the limitations in the preparation of the May 20 strike against the war, and the low adherence to it, our judgement was not negative, as we attached importance: to the value of the attempt to organise working-class action against the ongoing imperialist war in Ukraine, in the face of the bellicose doge deployed by the bourgeois regime in Italy and Europe, and the immobility of the regime's trade unions aimed at preventing any such reaction by the workers; and to the fact that, even amidst hesitations and hesitations, all rank-and-file unions ultimately joined the strike.

This opinion, like that of the previous united general strike of October 11, 2021, distinguishes us in the field of workers' groups and parties active in the labour movement, most of which either expressed a negative opinion to or belittled the importance of this action taken by rank-and-file, anti-war unions. In fact, unlike us, they attach too much importance to the numerical weakness of the present mobilisations and too little to the features that make them susceptible to wider future development.

The first factor in this distrust is the scant regard in which autonomous working-class action is held, the result of the opportunist political approach that considers of greater value a popular, inter-class movement that – at best – has the working class "at the centre". We, on the other hand, assert that the half-classes and non-proletarian social strata can at most queue up for an autonomous movement of the working class, which is impossible without its identity, its distinct and separate organisation, and capacity for movement.

According to this approach, for example, regarding opposition to the imperialist war, a large part of these opportunist workers' groups place much more value on large pacifist demonstrations of an inter-class character than on strikes by an albeit minority part of the working class. We, on the other hand, know that only the mobil-

isation of our class can prevent or stop the imperialist war.

Thus, a first attempt to mobilise the workers on the trade union, i.e., class, level against the war is of great importance, in the certain prospect of the growth of inter-imperialist contrasts and the pressure of the bourgeois regime on the working class to bend it to militarism.

The second factor of mistrust – which is the basis of the judgement different from that expressed by our party on the merits of the strike against the war and the previous one in October 2021 – is the lack of importance given to the unified character of these mobilisations, that is, to the fact that all the organisations of base unionism joined them. This unitary character does not appear in the immediate term to have led to substantial advances in participation in the strikes thus called.

As we explain in our articles and leaflets, the united action of the bodies of militant unionism – base unions and class-based opposition groups in CGIL – is not in itself the thaumaturgic solution to the current state of passivity of the working class. This is the result of a series of complex factors concerning the century-long cycle of counterrevolution that began in the mid-1920s.

The united action of the bodies of militant trade unionism, pursued consistently and organically, that is, at all levels of trade union action – company, territorial, categorical, national, and confederal – is the subjective condition such as to foster the most rapid return to workers' struggle when objective conditions become favourable in this regard.

Conversely, the persistence of opportunist conduct that divides the action of the base unions is a factor of restraint, of maintaining the regime unions' control over the workers and the workers' state of passivity.

Moreover, the direction of the unity of action of militant trade unionism, agitated at the base of its bodies, is useful in sustaining and organising the struggle against the trade union leadership and their opportunism, from the perspective that that permanent and organic unity of action, leading to a united trade union class front, can only take place against and to the detriment of them.

In the past two years, we have witnessed a partial change of course on the part of the leader-

ship of the base unions. It manifested itself first with the national united strike in logistics on June 18, 2021. It should be recalled that in this very category there was a few years ago the hardest clash between SI COBAS and USB. Then the united course led to the general strike of October 11, 2021, a mobilisation still far from being a true general strike but the most successful compared to similar actions in previous years. Then there was the general strike against the war on May 20, and, finally, the united demonstration in Piacenza on July 23 in response to the arrests of USB and SI COBAS leaders.

This unitary course has taken place, and is likely to continue, amidst limitations, hesitations, retreats.

We do not believe that it is the direct result of the union battle action in this sense carried out by our party, including through the CLA. It is the effect of the maturing conditions of the class struggle, which, exacerbated, makes the direction of the unity of action of militant trade unionism that we anticipated and indicated increasingly necessary, and thus vulnerable the opportunist leadership of the base unions to our party's criticism and proposal of the right direction.

* * *

In the June 2022 issue of *Il Partito Comunista*, we published a commentary on a national assembly convened in Florence on May 15 by the ex-GKN Factory Collective, in which we participated as representatives of the CLA. This assembly thus enabled us to reiterate some important points of our trade union line, what are the true characteristics of a class movement and the relationship between the economic struggle and the political struggle of the working class.

Here, we added only one consideration, which ties in with the above. The ex-GKN Factory Collective managed to aggregate around its struggle against the closure of the plant a movement of a certain size, such that it deployed several demonstrations, well attended, the best successful one with over ten thousand participants. The May 15 assembly was also very successful, with over three hundred in attendance. These numbers have – justifiably – attracted the attentions of all militant unions, their militants, and even the CLA.

However, in spite of the participatory mobilisations, to the extent that the leaders of the ex-GKN Factory Collective attached more importance to uniting their struggle with inter-class movements – such as the student or environmental movements – than to uniting it with other workers' struggles and, even more markedly, than to uniting the action of conflict unionism, the prospects of the small movement to which they gave birth are shorter-lived than those of the united actions of base unionism, albeit for now less striking in terms of participation.

The work, the insistence, on the part of our party has tended to explain how the ex-GKN Factory Collective's ability to mobilise originated in the union work carried out in the past years, up to the announced closure of the factory by the ownership, and how the only future prospect is, yes, outside the factory, but in the wage-earning class, working for the unification of workers' struggles and militant unionism, and not for the construction of a vaguely popular movement.

The pledges made by the ex-GKN Collective for demonstrations planned in the months ahead, with an inter-class character, and the absence of a serious and determined initiative aimed at directing and strengthening the class-struggle union movement, confirm what had already been outlined by observing the evolution of the characters of the demonstrations and demands from the beginnings of the dispute in July 2021 to the present.

The opportunist political approach to the Collective's workers' leaders and their membership in the CGIL have contributed to dispersing these energies of workers' struggle in the quagmire of inter-classism, once again to the detriment of the necessary work of rebuilding class union strength. The potential of autonomous action of the working class is reduced, and not strengthened by promoting the unity of action of militant unionism.

The real pursuit of the unity of action of militant trade unionism to its fullest extent can in fact only lead the opposition areas in CGIL to break with the internal discipline of that union, manifesting the impossibility of the prevalence of a class orientation within it and the need to organise outside and against it.

* * *

After the May 20 strike against the war, there were other meetings among the union leadership but this time reserved only for them, in which therefore neither the CLA nor our comrades were able to participate.

There was confusion about the general initiatives to be promoted in the fall months. A call for a general strike by SI COBAS, USB, and CUB for October 21 appeared to be registered with the Commission of Guarantee; communication sent on July 15 but not propagated among workers by the promoting unions.

On Sunday, September 18, SI COBAS held a national assembly in Bologna, "We revive proletarian opposition to the bosses' schemes of misery, militarism, and to the policies of social butchery", from which it launched a general strike for December 2.

Finally, on September 24, all the main rank-and-file unions sent notice to the *Commissione di Garanzia* of the proclamation of a united general strike on Friday, December 2.

Likely playing a role in this confusion and expectation were the bourgeois political elections on September 25; similar to what happened with the CGIL, whose leadership decided to suspend the union congress for them.

These hesitations are not good, even considering that, in view of the assertion of the "right-wing" bourgeois parties, the CGIL will presumably, as it has always done, engage in some activism in mobilisations, the first sign of which was the convening – without waiting for the passage of the elections – of a national demonstration in Rome for October 8.

But the most important, and positive, fact is that for the second year in a row rank-and-file unionism is unitedly calling a general strike: the problem will now be in its proper preparation.

* * *

Between the anti-war strike on May 20 and the wavering of some of the leadership of the rank-and-file unions in the weeks leading up to the elections, in July there was the affair of the arrest in Piacenza of 8 local and national leaders of SI COBAS and USB. The arrest took place as part of an investigation by the Piacenza prosecutor's office. This is the third attempt – at least confined to the main ones – of a judicial attack

on the class union movement in logistics, twice by the Piacenza prosecutor's office, once by the Modena prosecutor's office.

In the first two cases, all charges were dropped along the trial process. In this third attempt, which for the first time involves not only the SI COBAS but also the USB, the most serious and central charge, that of "criminal conspiracy", came down not even two months after its initiation.

Reading the excerpts of the investigation compiled by the prosecution, indeed it seems blatant how it is characterised in a merely instrumental attack, with anti-union aims, to curb strikes in the logistics sector and destroy the base unions that organise them.

The reaction to the arrests was quite positive in terms of participation in the local demonstrations and the July 23 national demonstration in Piacenza, considering that they took place in the middle of the summer. A positive aspect was the united reaction of SI COBAS and USB: in Piacenza, workers from the two unions marched mixed in the same procession, not divided into two sections. But at the August 3 demonstration in front of the Bologna courthouse, USB was absent.

We intervened at the July 23 demonstration in Piacenza by distributing a leaflet that was promptly translated into four languages.

The CLA also intervened with a leaflet entitled "Unite with struggle and organisation that which the state seeks to divide and intimidate with repression".

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The CLA, in addition to the national demonstration in Piacenza on July 23, intervened in the summer months with two leaflets: The first on August 2 at Piaggio in Pontedera, where on July 27 there was a strike joined compactly by workers, with a procession through the factory, following a serious injury to a factory worker, and the second on September 9 at a postal centre in Ponsacco, Pisa Province, where a worker had died a few days earlier.

A group of delegates from the opposition area in CGIL, metalworkers framed in FIOM, had been working in the Piaggio factory for some time. Several years ago, these delegates

had been suspended from FIOM CGIL but had not left the regime union, and finally were readmitted to it. In 2016, a minority of these delegates left FIOM to join the USB. Between the delegates from the opposition area in CGIL who remained in that union, and those who switched to USB there was from the beginning a climate of discord. A few months ago, the delegates from the opposition area in CGIL who had remained in that regime union also decided to leave it, and switched to a small base union called SIAL COBAS. So now at Piaggio in Pontedera there are two base unions.

In the nearby former Continental factory, now called Vitesco, a few years ago some of the FIOM delegates, also here adherents of the opposition area in CGIL, had left the regime union to join USB. However, these delegates came to a bitter clash with the local USB leadership group, including USB delegates at Piaggio. Together with a member of the USB provincial executive, they finally decided to leave that base union and they also joined SIAL COBAS.

Finally, on September 12, a document was published, drafted by one of our comrades and only slightly modified, entitled "Against the rising cost of living, a united action of militant trade unionism is needed for the creation of a general movement for strong wage increases".

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On September 1, at a national USB anti-war assembly held in Genoa, we distributed a leaflet entitled "The first step to stop the imperialist war is to strike to refuse to pay its costs".

This leaflet and that of the CLA were distributed in Rome on Saturday, September 17 at an "Anti-Capitalist Proletarian Assembly". Two of our comrades and two union militants from the CLA were present. This assembly, which would like to be a permanent body, is what remains of that Anti-Capitalist Action Pact created three years ago by the SI COBAS leadership, finding mainly support outside the union in a Stalinist youth group. We harshly criticized this move by the SI COBAS, because it tended to create a party-union hybrid. We easily predicted that such a Pact would quickly come to an end, which occurred, at the behest of the main forces that had promoted it, including the SI COBAS leadership itself. Some smaller organisations that had joined it did not want to abandon the project, and

with smaller forces renamed it the "Anti-Capitalist Proletarian Assembly". This suffers the same defect as the Pact promoted by the SI COBAS leadership. One of our comrades intervened by reiterating, in a very well-articulated speech, the need to keep the two spheres, trade union and party, distinct.

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Report to the January 2023 General Meeting

The party's interventions in the movement and labour organisations from October to January give a complete picture of its different levels within the working class:

- On the streets with leafleting and newspaper stalking, favouring places frequented by workers;
- In front of workplaces;
- Among the working masses, in demonstrations promoted by labour organisations;
- Within labour organisations, in meetings of their internal, territorial and workplace bodies;
- In the meetings of the inter-union body (CLA) to which the trade union fraction of the party adheres in order to promote with it the unity of action of class unionism, i.e., the United Class Union Front, as a fundamental instrument for achieving the highest degree of workers' unity in the economic class struggle.

It thus rises from a very general level, such as that of street propaganda among the indistinct masses, to more restricted and qualified levels. Each represents a cog in a mechanism that enables the party to enter into the best possible relationship with the proletarian masses.

Such a mechanism operates at present at a very low number of revolutions, it seems almost at a standstill, but we know it will take to work at much higher revolutions with the inevitable return of the workers to struggle.

Of course, the proper functioning of such a mechanism depends on the correct practical direction the party gives the workers in their struggle for their immediate, i.e. economic, interests. Such correctness of direction is possible insofar as it derives from Marxist doctrine, from

which descends the whole of the now centuries-old store of practical Communist experience in the trade union field, which the party jealously preserves and passes on, from generation to generation, seeking to put it into practice, insofar as historical conditions permit.

The same confidence and conviction that the working class will return to struggle in a general, broad, intense way, even to the point of revolutionary confrontation, derives from our doctrine and distinguishes us from the feeling of resignation that pervades in Italy today even a good part of confrontational trade unionism.

It is on the shoulders of our doctrine that we can cope with long years of working class passivity, just as the party has been able to cope with an even broader historical period of counterrevolution, which persists but which sees its economic and ideological foundations subject to progressive erosion.

The inevitability of the class struggle today is confirmed by the ongoing movements of workers' struggle in the United Kingdom, France, the return to the trade union struggle in the United States. This is an economic struggle in the imperialist countries of older, decrepit, and decadent capitalism. This is what awaits all the capitalist countries of the world. When it involves the new industrial giants, now capitalistically mature, starting with China, the legs of the bourgeoisie in all countries will shake again.

In Italy, the trade union movement and our activity have developed in the last 4 months around 4 elements:

- The general strike of the base unions called on September 24 for December 2;
- The action of the new government installed on October 22, after the September 25 general elections;
- The regional general strikes called by CGIL and UIL from Dec. 12 to 16 against the Budget Law passed by government; and
- The 19th CGIL Congress.

Preparation for the unitary general strike of base unionism on Friday, Dec. 2, was developed through three stages of mobilisation: a national unitary assembly of base unionism on Oct. 15 in Milan; a national demonstration with a predom-

inantly inter-class character on Oct. 22 in Bologna; and a national demonstration on Nov. 5 in Naples.

The party intervened in the first two mobilisations: the Milan assembly and the demonstration in Bologna. The preparations for the December 2 strike have already been reported in detail in the December issue of this newspaper. Here we reiterate its essential features.

The whole course of preparation and conduct of the two days of mobilisation of base unionism – the strike on December 2 and the demonstration in Rome on December 3 – offered a limpid confirmation of what our party has always affirmed. The opportunist union leaderships of confrontational trade unionism pander to the necessary unity of action of their organisations only because of contingent calculations, of convenience, only because – within certain limits – they are forced into it. But they will never be able to pursue to the end, consistently and consequently, the building of a united front of conflict unionism, which would be an important step toward the formation of a class union. Their united action is always partial, hesitant, and at all times revocable: “one step forward and two steps back”.

A further confirmation follows, referring to the practical direction of the party's struggle within the trade union organisations: in order to consistently pursue the direction of unity of action of the bodies of conflict unionism, it is necessary to wage a battle within them, and it will only be able to assert itself at the expense of and against the opportunist leaderships.

The fact that the party, in waging such a battle, albeit on the present minimal scale, however proportionate to the present scale of workers' militancy, finds support from union militants outside it and sometimes adherents of other workers' parties, confirms that its course of action will find consensus and followership in an audience of workers extended far beyond the perimeter of its party membership, this inasmuch as it is the only course of action concordant with the needs of the proletarians' defensive class struggle, for their most common and general interests, not limited to particular sectors and not in conflict with their overall interests.

It is this character of the communist trade union orientation that makes it possible to win

the leadership of class organisations and the trade union movement and the functioning of the so-called transmission belt, that is, the link between the party and the proletarian masses through the intermediate defensive organs.

The battle for the unity of action of confrontational trade unionism and the workers' struggle has been waged in recent months both through the CLA and through the direct intervention of the party among the workers.

The conduct of the opportunist leaderships of the USB and SI COBAS, which broke the December 3 procession of 8,000 workers in Rome in half, confirmed the necessity of the work conducted by the CLA. The activity continued with two meetings, one online and one in person. In Genoa, a leaflet was drafted and distributed to two CGIL provincial sectoral congresses - transport (Filt CGIL) and education (Flc CGIL) - that indicated how the militant union currents within the CGIL, in order to prove coherent, must fight to break the unity of regime unionism (which includes CGIL, CISL, UIL and UGL) by countering it with the unity of action of militant unionism, i.e., including the base unions.

A number of considerations must be made regarding this direction:

1 - As has already become apparent in the past, for union currents that claim to be militant within the CGIL, pursuing unity of action with base unionism would entail incurring the reaction from the leadership, which, as is the tradition of opportunism, is always as ready to "open to the right" as it is to club and close to the left; such a reaction can lead all the way to expulsion, as happened at FCA in Melfi in 2015, or at any rate to ouster from positions, granted rather than won, in the internal hierarchy.

For example, in June 2012, the day of the last united general strike of base unionism before the one in October 2021, FIOM's then-national secretary Maurizio Landini - now confederal general secretary of the CGIL - went, invited, to the national assembly of *Federmeccanica's* Industrialists' Association in Bergamo. The conflicting internal opposition supported the strike by the base unions, and some factory groups went to Bergamo to challenge the FIOM secretary. The reaction was, in the following September, the

ouster of the representative of the militant minority from the FIOM national secretariat.

Several components within the CGIL that claim to be militant manifested their opportunism by guarding against pursuing unity of action with militant unionism so as not to lose the leadership positions granted to them by the leadership.

2 - The propaganda of the address of the unity of action of militant unionism, that is, of the base unions and these with the militant currents in CGIL, therefore serves within CGIL:

- to unmask the incoherence of the leaderships of the militant currents, the result of their political opportunism;
- to the extent that it gets its way, to expose the incompatibility of class unionism with the regime's CGIL and the need to organise outside and against it;
- finally, of course, to strengthen the mobilisations promoted by base unionism, extending the unity of action beyond the perimeter of its organisations.

As mentioned, we intervened in a national demonstration in Bologna on October 22. We have already commented on that as well. The leaflet we circulated was in response to the GKN Factory Collective, which, in joining this demonstration, had given it national prominence. In fact, the leaders of the collective, in more than a year of mobilising against the closure of the plant, have gathered a good following, with several demonstrations even with ten thousand participants. One of the most repeated slogans was "unite and converge". But such unity by the leaders of the GKN Collective was understood and sought in an inter-class sense, with the environmental and student movement, rather than with other workers. Instead, our leaflet indicated the need to use all energy to build the unity of workers' struggle and, as the means of achieving it to the highest degree, to fight for the unity of action of confrontational unionism. Battle, this, evaded by the leaders of the GKN Collective.

In the Bologna demonstration, the base unions intervened to propagandise the December 2 strike. They did the same at another demonstration in Naples on November 5.

That day, however, our comrades intervened in another national demonstration, in Rome, promoted by various organisations of the bourgeois pacifist movement, which the CGIL had joined. In the leaflet we denounced the war in Ukraine as an inevitable product of capitalism, demolishing the silly thesis that it was a consequence of the particular warmongering attitude of one or another bourgeois front. Then we gave the indication that not the goodwill and diplomacy of the bourgeois states, but proletarian defeatism on both sides of the imperialist war, will be able to prevent or stop it.

Finally, we propagated the December 2 united general strike of base unionism, indicating how all combative workers within the CGIL were to join it and work for its best success, under the banner of workers' unity of action, of militant unionism, against the anti-worker unity of regime unionism.

One of the elements that manifested the opportunism of the leaderships of the base unions in the preparation of the December 2 united strike was their refusal to work to engage the militant minorities within the CGIL, challenging their opportunist leaderships on this ground. This refusal emerged from the rejection of the CLA's proposal to this effect at the October 15 national assembly in Milan for it to mandate the establishment in each city of unitary strike-building committees open to all workers and all union bodies that supported it. This proposal had been made earlier-and equally rejected-in the run-up to the May 20 strike against the war, by a delegate of the internal opposition to the La Spezia CGIL, which follows the activities of the CLA.

The party, within the limits of its available forces, took on the task, evaded by the leaderships of the base unions, by propagating the Dec. 2 strike among workers and combative militants in the CGIL. On the day of the strike, Friday, Dec. 2, we circulated the leaflet written for the occasion at the demonstrations in Genoa and Florence. The next day at the national demonstration in Rome, which was well successful, in spite of everything, and predominantly working-class in character.

Another element that marked these 4 months of the labour movement in Italy, and our activity in it, was the establishment of the new bourgeois government. Even before its establishment, on October 8, the CGIL organised a national

demonstration in Rome. It took place after the right-wing's success in the Sept. 25 elections, but before the formation of the new government on Oct. 22.

A theme that imposed itself in those days was therefore that of the "return of fascism". The CGIL leadership stuck to a position that reiterated even more clearly its corporatism: "We are not here against anyone but for Labor to be heard". Landini declared from the stage. The confrontational opposition in CGIL, on the other hand, marched behind a banner that read "Prejudicially antifascist".

Our leaflet thus shed light on the misleading opposition between democracy and fascism, on the nature of the bourgeois government and that of the CGIL leadership, and instructed the workers and combative militants in CGIL to take up the task of organising a movement to defend workers' living conditions, first and foremost for strong wage increases in the face of inflation, as was already happening in France in those days, building unity of action with base unionism, adhering to and supporting the December 2 general strike.

Then, after the new government took office and after the national strike of the base unions against the Budget Law and its anti-working-class contents, the CGIL called regional general strikes, of 8 or 4 hours, in the week of December 12 to 16.

The CLA intervened with two documents. The first, appealing to the militants of base unionism to promote the participation of the base unions, in a united way among them, in the regional general strikes and demonstrations promoted by CGIL and UIL, under the banner of workers' unity of action in the economic struggle, as the best means to combat the regime unions' control over the working class, seeking to radicalise the mobilisations they themselves always called in a bland and sparse way. The second document was the CLA's leaflet at the CGIL and UIL strike demonstrations in Genoa and Florence, which reiterated the indication contained in the leaflet distributed at the CGIL provincial trade congresses, namely to break the unity of regime unionism of CGIL, CISL, and UIL with the unity of action of militant unionism.

In Genoa we spoke at a public meeting of port union militants of FILT-CGIL and USB, reiterating the need for the unity of action of confrontational unionism.

On the editorial level, we have paid care and attention to workers' struggle movements in other developed countries in reaction to rising inflation, in France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey. This is to draw as an example and experience of struggle the militancy of workers in those countries. We have also reported a timely description of the wage agreement for metalworkers in Germany, where social peace currently prevails, as in Italy.

On the whole, we can say that union activity is improving in quality, thanks to our constant training to deal in its many planes with the problems it poses, and, at a rate not dependent on us, also in quantity.

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From the Archive of the Left Party and Class

From Rassegna Comunista no. 2, April 15, 1921

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

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

What in fact is a social class according to our critical method? Can we possibly recognise it by the means of a purely objective external acknowledgement of the common economic and social conditions of a great number of individuals, and of their analogous positions in relationship to the productive process? That would not be enough.

Our method does not amount to a mere description of the social structure as it exists at a given moment, nor does it merely draw an abstract line dividing all the individuals composing society into two groups, as is done in the scholastic classifications of the naturalists. The Marxist critique sees human society in its movement, in its development in time; it utilises a fundamentally historical and dialectical criterion, that is to say, it studies the connection of events in their reciprocal interaction.

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

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

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

ation by the mode of production and by its developments.

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

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

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We should perceive the concept of class as dynamic, not static. When we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, the class exists in the true sense of the word; because then the class party must also exist, in a material if not yet in a formal way.

A living party goes hand in hand with a living doctrine and a method of action. A party is a school of political thought and consequently an organisation of struggle. The former is a factor of consciousness, the latter of will, or more precisely of a striving towards a final objective.

Without these two characteristics, we do not yet fulfil the definition of a class. We repeat, the cold recorder of facts may detect certain affinities in the living conditions of strata large or small, but it will not leave its mark on historical developments.

Only within the class party do we find these two characteristics condensed and concretised. The class forms itself as certain conditions and relationships brought about by the consolidation of new systems of production are developed – for instance the establishment of big mechanised factories hiring and training a large labour force; in the same way, the interests of such a collectivity gradually begin to materialise into a more precise consciousness, which begins to take shape in small groups of this collectivity. When the mass is thrust into action, only these first

groups can foresee a final end, and it is they who support and lead the rest.

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

Those groups, those minorities, are nothing other than the party. When its formation (which of course never proceeds without arrests, crises and internal conflicts) has reached a certain stage, then we may say that we have a class in action. Although the party includes only a part of the class, it is still only the party which gives it unity of action and movement, because it amalgamates those elements who, by having overcome the limitations of locality and job category, are sensitive to the class and who represent it.

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

The class presupposes the party, because to exist and to act in history it must have both a

critical doctrine of history and a historical purpose.

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The only true revolutionary conception of class action is that which delegates its leadership to the party. Doctrinal analyses, along with an accumulation of historical experience, allow us to easily reduce any tendency that denies the necessity and predominance of the party's function to the level of petty bourgeois and anti-revolutionary ideology.

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

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

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

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

The concept of the proletariat's right to command its own class action is only an abstraction devoid of any Marxist sense. It conceals a desire to lead the revolutionary party to enlarge itself

by including less mature strata, since as this progressively occurs, the resulting decisions get nearer and nearer to the bourgeois and conservative conceptions.

If we looked for evidence not only through theoretical enquiry, but also in the experiences history has given us, our harvest would be abundant. Let us remember that it is a typical bourgeois cliché to oppose the good “common sense” of the masses to the “evil” of a “minority of agitators”, and to pretend to be most favourably disposed towards the workers, while entertaining the most vehement hatred towards the party which is the only means the workers have to strike at the exploiters' interests. The right-wing currents of the workers' movement, the social-democratic school, whose reactionary tenets have been clearly shown by history, constantly oppose the masses to the party and pretend to be able to find the will of the class by consulting on a scale wider than the limited bounds of the party. When they cannot extend the party beyond all limits of doctrine and discipline in action, they try to establish that its main organs must not be those appointed by a limited number of militant members, but must be those which have been appointed for parliamentary duties by a larger body – actually, parliamentary groups always belong to the extreme right wing of the parties from which they come.

The degeneration of the social-democratic parties of the Second International and the fact that they apparently became less revolutionary than the unorganised masses, are due to the fact that they gradually lost their specific party character precisely through workerist and “labourist” practices. That is, they no longer acted as the vanguard preceding the class but as its mechanical expression in an electoral and corporative system, where equal importance and influence is given to the strata that are the least conscious and the most dependent on egotistical claims of the proletarian class itself. As a reaction to this epidemic, even before the war, there developed a tendency, particularly in Italy, advocating internal party discipline, rejecting new recruits who were not yet welded to our revolutionary doctrine, opposing the autonomy of parliamentary groups and local organs, and recommending that the party should be purged of its false elements. This method has proved to be the real antidote for reformism, and forms the basis of the doctrine and practice of the Third International, which puts primary importance on the role of the

party – that is a centralised, disciplined party with a clear orientation on the problems of principles and tactics. The same Third International judged that the “collapse of the social democratic parties of the Second International was by no means the collapse of proletarian parties in general” but, if we may say so, the failure of organisms that had forgotten they were parties because they had stopped being parties.

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

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

These tendencies would like to recognise the class within an organisation of its own – certainly a characteristic and a most important one – that is, the craft or trade unions which arise before the political party, gather much larger masses and therefore better correspond to the whole of the working class. From an abstract point of view, however, the choice of such a criterion reveals an unconscious respect for that selfsame democratic lie which the bourgeoisie relies on to secure its power by the means of inviting the majority of the people to choose their government. From other theoretical viewpoints, such a method meets with bourgeois conceptions when it entrusts the trade unions with the organisation of the new society and demands the autonomy and decentralisation of the productive functions, just as reactionary economists do. But our present purpose is not to draw out a complete critical analysis of the syndicalist doctrines. It is sufficient to remark, considering the result of historical experience, that the extreme right-wing members of the proletarian movement have always advocated the same point of view, that is, the representation of the working class by trade unions; indeed, they know that by doing so, they

soften and diminish the movement’s character, for the simple reasons that we have already mentioned. Today the bourgeoisie itself shows a sympathy and an inclination, which are by no means illogical, towards the unionisation of the working class; indeed, the more intelligent sections of the bourgeoisie would readily accept a reform of the state and representative apparatus in order to give a larger place to the “apolitical” unions and even to their claims to exercise control over the system of production. The bourgeoisie feels that, as long as the proletariat’s action can be limited to the immediate economic demands that are raised trade by trade, it helps to safeguard the status-quo and to avoid the formation of the perilous “political” consciousness – that is, the only consciousness which is revolutionary for it aims at the enemy’s vulnerable point, the possession of power.

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

In spite of everything, such recipes are constantly being sought for even today. A totally wrong interpretation of Marxist determinism and a limited conception of the part played by facts of consciousness and will in the formation, under the original influence of economic factors, of the revolutionary forces, lead a great number of

people to look for a “mechanical” system of organisation that would almost automatically organise the masses according to each individual’s part in production; according to these illusions, such a device by itself would be enough to make the mass ready to move towards revolution with the maximum revolutionary efficiency. Thus, the illusory solution reappears, which consists of thinking that the everyday satisfaction of economic needs can be reconciled with the final result of the overthrow of the social system by relying on an organisational form to solve the old antithesis between limited and gradual conquests and the maximum revolutionary program. But – as was rightly said in one of the resolutions of the majority of the German Communist Party at a time when these questions (which later provoked the secession of the KAPD) were particularly acute in Germany – revolution is not a question of the form of organisation.

Revolution requires an ordering of the active and positive forces, bound together by one doctrine and one final purpose. The class sets out from an immediate homogeneity of economic conditions that appear to us to be the prime mover of the tendency to go beyond, and destroy, the present mode of production. But in order to assume this great task, the class must have its own thought, its own critical method, its own will bent to achieving ends defined by research and criticism, its own organisation of struggle which with the utmost efficiency channels and utilises every effort and sacrifice. All this is the Party.

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Party and Class Action

From *Rassegna Comunista* no. 4, June 30, 1921

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

A more detailed examination of the historical tasks of the working class on its revolutionary course, both before and after the overthrow of the power of the exploiters, will only confirm the imperative necessity of a political party which must direct the whole struggle of the working class.

In order to have a precise, tangible idea of the technical necessity of the party, we should first consider – even if it may seem illogical – the tasks that the proletariat must accomplish after having come to power and after having wrenched the control of the social machine from the bourgeoisie.

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

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

the complete subordination of all its particular functions to the final general aim of the class.

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

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

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

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

At all times the economic and social relationships in capitalist society are unbearable for the proletarians, who consequently are driven to try to overcome them. Through complex developments the victims of these relationships are brought to realise that, in their instinctive struggle against sufferings and hardships which are common to a multitude of people, individual resources are not enough. Hence, they are led to experiment with collective forms of action in order to increase, through their association, the extent of their influence on the social conditions imposed upon them. But the succession of these experiences all along the path of the develop-

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

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

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

The indispensable task of the party is therefore presented in two ways, as factor of consciousness, and then as factor of will: the former translates into a theoretical conception of the revolutionary process which all members must share; the second into the acceptance of a precise discipline that ensures a coordinated effort and thus the success of the relevant action.

Obviously, this strengthening of the class energies has never been and can never be a securely progressive, continuous process. There are standstills, setbacks and disbandings. Proletarian parties often lose the essential characteristics which they were in the process of forming and their aptitude for fulfilling their historical tasks. In general, under the very influence of particular phenomena of the capitalist world, parties often abandon their principal function which is to concentrate and channel the impulses originating from the movement of the various groups, and to direct them towards the single final aim of

the revolution. Such parties are satisfied with immediate and transitory solutions and satisfactions. They consequently degenerate in their theory and practice to the point of admitting that the proletariat can find conditions of advantageous equilibrium within the capitalist regime, and they adopt as their political aim objectives which are merely partial and immediate, thereby beginning on their way towards class collaboration.

These phenomena of degeneration reached their peak with the great World War. After this a period of healthy reaction has followed: the class parties inspired by revolutionary directives – which are the only parties that are truly class parties – have been reconstructed throughout the world and are organising themselves into the Third International, whose doctrine and action are explicitly revolutionary and “maximalist”.

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

* * *

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

There exists – or there is said to exist – a trend which wishes to have perfectly pure “small parties” and which would almost take pleasure in moving away from contact with the great

masses, accusing them of having little revolutionary consciousness and capabilities. This tendency is severely criticised and is defined as left opportunism. This label however seems to us to be more demagogic than justified; it should rather be reserved for those tendencies that deny the function of the political party and pretend that the masses can be organised on a vast scale for revolution by means of purely economic and syndicalism forms of organisation.

What we must deal with therefore is a more thorough examination of the relationship between the masses and the party. We have seen that the party is only a part of the working class, but how are we to determine the numerical size of this fraction? For us if there is evidence of voluntarist error, and therefore of typical anti-Marxist “opportunism” (and today opportunism can only mean heresy), it is the pretension of establishing such a numerical relationship as an *a priori* rule of organisation; that is to say of establishing that the communist party must have in its ranks, or as sympathisers, a certain number of workers which is either greater or less than a particular given percentage of the proletarian mass.

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

What can be stated as an unquestionable basis for such a discussion on tactics is that it is preferable that the parties should be numerically as large as possible and that they should succeed in attracting around them the largest possible strata of the masses. No one among the communists ever laid down as a principle that the communist party should be composed of a small number of people shut up in an ivory tower of political purity. It is indisputable that the numerical force of the party and the enthusiasm of the proletariat to gather around the party are favour-

able revolutionary conditions; they are unmistakable signs of the maturity of the development of proletarian energies and nobody would ever wish that the communist parties should not progress in that way.

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

If the present period is a revolutionary one, as all communists are firmly convinced, then it follows that we must have large parties which exercise a strong influence over broad sections of the proletariat in every country. But wherever this aim has not yet been realised in spite of undeniable evidence of the acuteness of the crisis and the imminence of its outburst, the causes of this deficiency are very complex; therefore, it would be extremely frivolous to conclude that the party, when it is too small and with little influence, must be artificially extended by merging with other parties or fractions of parties which have members that are supposedly linked to the masses. The decision as to whether members of other organisations should be admitted into the ranks of the party, or on the contrary whether a party which is too large should eliminate part of its membership, cannot stem from arithmetical considerations or from a childish statistical disappointment.

* * *

The formation of the communist parties, with the exception of the Russian Bolshevik Party,

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

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

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

In the abstract hypothesis of the continuous development of the revolutionary energies of the masses, the party sees its numerical and political forces increase in a continuous way, quantitatively growing but remaining qualitatively the same, inasmuch as the number of communists rises, in relation to the total number of proletarians. However, in the actual situation the diverse and continually changing factors of the social environment act upon the mood of the masses in

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

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

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

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

The conclusion that we wish to draw is that the criteria which we must use as a basis to judge the efficiency of the communist parties must be quite different from an *a posteriori* estimate of their numerical forces as compared with those of the other parties which claim to represent the proletariat. The only criteria by which to judge this efficiency are the precisely defined theoretical bases of the party's program and the rigid internal discipline of all its organisational sections and of all its members; only such a discipline can guarantee the utilisation of everyone's work for the greatest success of the revolutionary cause. Any other form of intervention in the composition of the party which is not logically derived from the precise application of these principles can only lead to illusory results and would deprive the class party of its greatest revolutionary strength: this strength lies precisely in the doctrinal and organisational continuity of all its propaganda and all its action, in its ability to "state in advance", how the process of the final struggle between classes will develop and in its ability to give itself the type of organisation which responds to the needs of this decisive phase.

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

The Second Congress of the Third International understood these necessities. At the beginning of a new epoch which must lead to revolution, it had to establish the points of departure of an international work of organisation and revolutionary preparation. It would have perhaps been preferable for the Congress, instead of dealing

with the different themes in the order that they were treated in the theses – all of which dealt with theory and tactics at the same time – to have established first the fundamental basis of the theoretical and programmatic conception of communism, since the organisation of all adhering parties must be primarily based on the acceptance of these theses. The Congress then would have formulated the fundamental rules of action which all members must strictly observe on the trade-union, the agrarian, and the colonial questions and so on. However, all this is dealt with in the body of resolutions adopted by the Second Congress and is excellently summarised in the theses on the conditions of admission of the parties.

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

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

If, as a result of this initial – though organisationally decisive – systematisation of the movement, parties in certain countries have an apparently small membership, then it can be very useful to study the causes of such a phenomenon. However, it would be absurd to modify the established organisational standards and to re-define their application with the aim of obtaining a better numerical relationship of the Communist Party to the masses or to other parties. This would only annihilate all the work accomplished in the period of organisation and would make it useless; it would necessitate beginning the work of preparation all over again, with the supplementary risk of several other starts. Thus, this

method would only result in losing time instead of saving it.

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

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

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

The party will never find such a secure support from the masses, the masses will never find a more secure defender of their class consciousness and of their power, than when the past actions of the party have shown the continuity of its movement towards revolutionary aims, even without the masses or against them at certain unfavourable moments. The support of the masses can be securely won only by a struggle against their opportunist leaders. This means that where non-communist parties still exert an influence among the masses, the masses must be won over by dismantling the organisational network of these parties and by absorbing their proletarian elements into the solid and well-defined organ-

isation of the Communist Party. This is the only method which can give useful solutions and can assure practical success. It corresponds exactly to Marx’s and Engels’ positions towards the dissident movement of the Lassalleans.

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

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

Countless examples would show that last-minute revolutionaries are out of place and useless in our ranks. Only yesterday they had reformist attitudes that were dictated by the special conditions of the period and today they have been led to follow the fundamental communist directive because they are influenced by their often too optimistic considerations about the imminence of the revolution. Any new wavering in the situation – and in a war who can say how many advances and retreats would occur before the final victory – will be sufficient to cause them to return to their old opportunism, thus jeopardising at the same time the contents of our organisation.

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

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

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

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

This is why the “tactics of the offensive” of communist parties are passionately discussed today; these consist of organising and arming the party militants and the close sympathisers, and of manoeuvring them at the opportune moment in offensive actions aiming at rousing the masses in a general movement, or even at accomplishing

spectacular actions in response to the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie.

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

No communist can harbour prejudices towards the use of armed actions, retaliations and even terror or deny that these actions, which require discipline and organisation, must be directed by the communist party. Just as infantile is the conception that the use of violence and armed actions are reserved for the "Great Day" when the supreme struggle for the conquest of power will be launched. In the reality of the revolutionary development, bloody confrontations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are inevitable before the final struggle; they may originate not only from unsuccessful insurrectionist attempts on the part of the proletariat, but also from inevitable, partial and transitory clashes between the forces of bourgeois defence and groups of proletarians who have been impelled to rise in arms, or between bands of bourgeois "white guards" and workers who have been attacked and provoked by them. It is not correct either to say that communist parties must disavow all such actions and reserve all their force for the final moment, because all struggles necessitate a preparation and a period of training and it is in these preliminary actions that the revolutionary capacity of the party to lead and organise the masses must begin to be forged and tested.

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

The offensive action of the party is conceivable only when the reality of the economic and social situation throws the masses into a movement aimed at solving the problems directly related, on the widest scale, to their conditions in life; this movement creates an unrest which can only develop in a truly revolutionary direction on the condition that the party intervenes by

clearly establishing its general aims, and rationally and efficiently organising its action, including the military technique. It is certain that the party's revolutionary preparation can begin to translate itself into planned actions even in the partial movements of the masses: thus, retaliation against white terror – whose aims are to give the proletariat the feeling that it is definitely weaker than its adversaries and to make it abandon the revolutionary preparation – is an indispensable tactical means.

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

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

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

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

can provoke revolutionary situations by giving an order to attack: this amounts to asserting that historical situations can be created by the will of the party.

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

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

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Rome Theses on Tactics – Communist Party of Italy

Adopted at the Second Congress, Rome, March 1922

Theses on Tactics of the Communist Party

- I. Organic Nature of the Communist Party
- II. The Communist Party's Process of Development
- III. Relations between the Communist Party and the Proletarian Class
- IV. Relations between the Communist Party and other Proletarian Political Movements
- V. Elements of the Communist Party's Tactics derived from Study of the Situation
- VI. "Indirect" Tactical Activity of the Communist Party
- VII. "Direct" Tactical Activity of the Commun-

ist Party
VIII. The Italian Communist Party and the Present Moment

I. Organic Nature of the Communist Party

1. The Communist Party, political party of the proletarian class, presents itself in its action as a collectivity operating with a unitary approach. The initial motives which lead the elements and groups of this collectivity to incorporate themselves into an organism with a unitary action are the immediate interests of groups of the working class, arising out of their economic conditions. The essential characteristic of the Communist Party's function is utilisation of the energies incorporated in this way for the attainment of objectives which are common to the entire working class and situated at the culmination of all its struggles; objectives which thus transcend – by integrating them – the interests of single groups, and such immediate and contingent aims as the working class may propose.

2. The integration of all elemental thrusts into a unitary action occurs by virtue of two main factors: one of critical consciousness, from which the party draws its program; the other of will, expressed in the instrument with which the party acts, its disciplined and centralised organisation. It would be erroneous to consider these two factors of consciousness and will as powers that can be obtained by, or are to be expected of, individuals since they are only realisable through the integration of the activity of many individuals into a unitary collective organism.

3. The precise definition of the theoretical and critical consciousness of the communist movement, contained in the programmatic declarations of individual parties and of the Communist International, as well as the organisation of the one and the other, was and still is being arrived at through the examination and study of the history of human society and its structure in the present capitalist epoch, carried out on the basis of facts, experience and through active participation in the actual proletarian struggle.

4. The announcement of these programmatic declarations, and the appointment of the men to whom are entrusted the various positions in the party organisation, is formally carried out by means of a consultation, democratic in form, of the party's representative assemblies, but in reality they must be understood as a product of the

real process which accumulates elements of experience and realises the preparation and selection of leaders, thus shaping both the programmatic content and the hierarchical constitution of the party.

II. The Communist Party's Process of Development

5. The organisation of the proletarian party takes form and develops insofar as there exists – because of the level of maturity to which the social situation has evolved – the possibility of a unitary collective consciousness and action in the direction of the general and ultimate interests of the working class. On the other hand, the proletariat appears and acts as a class in history precisely when the tendency to construct a program and a common method of action, and hence to organise a party, takes form.

6. The process of formation and development of the proletarian party does not present a continuous and regular course, but is susceptible both nationally and internationally of highly complex phases and periods of general crisis. Many times, there has occurred a process of degeneration whereby the action of the proletarian parties has lost, or has moved away from rather than towards, that indispensable character of a unitary activity inspired by the highest revolutionary aims. It has become fragmented in pursuit of the satisfaction of interests of limited groups of workers, or in achieving contingent results (reforms) at the cost of adopting methods which have compromised the work for revolutionary objectives and the preparation of the proletariat for such objectives. Thus, the proletarian parties have often ended by extending the frontiers of their organisation to the spheres of elements that could not yet place themselves upon the terrain of unitary and maximalist collective action. This process has always been accompanied by a deforming revision of doctrine and program, and by such a slackening of internal discipline that instead of having a general staff of capable leaders resolute in the struggle, the proletarian movement has been placed in the hands of hidden agents of the bourgeoisie.

7. The path back from a situation of this kind towards the organisation of a true class party, under the influence of new situations and new pressures to act exercised by events upon the working masses, takes place in the form of a separation of a part of the party which through debates on the program, a critique of unfavourable ex-

periences in the struggle, and the formation within the party of a school and an organisation with its own hierarchy (fraction) reconstitutes that living continuity of a unitary organism, founded on the possession of a consciousness and a discipline, from which the new party arises. This is the process which, in general, led from the failure of the Second International Parties to the birth of the communist Third International.

8. The development of the Communist Party after the resolution of such a crisis, allowing for the possibility of subsequent critical phases produced by new situations, can to facilitate analysis be defined as “normal” development of the party. By displaying the maximum continuity in upholding a program, and in the life of its leading hierarchy (apart from individual replacement of disloyal or worn-out leaders), the party will also perform the maximum of effective and useful work in winning the proletariat to the cause of revolutionary struggle. This is not simply a question of exerting a didactic effect upon the masses; and even less is it a desire to exhibit an intrinsically pure and perfect party. It is rather a question of achieving the maximum yield in the real process whereby – as will be seen better below – through the systematic work of propaganda, proselytism and above all active participation in social struggles, the action of an ever-increasing number of workers is caused to shift from the terrain of partial and immediate interests to the organic and unitary terrain of the struggle for the communist revolution. For only when a similar continuity exists is it possible, not merely to overcome the proletariat's mistrustful hesitations with respect to the party, but rapidly and effectively to channel and incorporate the new energies gained into a common thought and action, thus creating that unity of movement which is an indispensable revolutionary condition.

9. For all the same reasons, the aggregation to the party of other parties or parts detached from parties must be seen as entirely abnormal. A group which up to that moment was distinguished by a different programmatic position and independent organisation does not bring with it an ensemble of elements that can be effectively assimilated en bloc; on the contrary, it impairs the solidity of the old party's political position and internal structure, so that the increase in overall numbers is far from corresponding to an increase in the party's strength and

potential – indeed could on occasion paralyse its work of organising the masses rather than facilitate it.

It is desirable that as soon as possible it should be declared inadmissible within the world communist organisation to depart from two fundamental principles of organisation: in each country, there can only be a single communist party; and it is only possible to join the Communist International by individual admission to the communist party of the country in question.

III. Relations between the Communist Party and the Proletarian Class

10. The specification and definition of the characteristics of the class party, which is the basis for its constitutive structure as organ of the most advanced part of the proletarian class, does not mean that the party need not be bound by close relations with the remainder of the proletariat – indeed it demands that it should be.

11. The nature of these relations derives from the dialectical way of viewing the formation of class consciousness and a unitary organisation of the class party, which transports a vanguard of the proletariat from the terrain of partial, spontaneous movements provoked by the interests of groups on to the terrain of general proletarian action; and which does not achieve this by rejecting those elemental movements, but accomplishes their integration and transcendence through living experiences, by pushing for their realisation, taking active part in them, and following them attentively throughout their development.

12. The work of propagating its ideology and proselytising for its ranks which the party continuously carries on is thus inseparable from the reality of the proletariat's activity and movement in all its myriad forms. It is a banal error to see as contradictory: participation in struggles for contingent and limited objectives, and the preparation of the final and general revolutionary struggle. The very existence of the party's unitary organism, with its indispensable conditions of clarity of programmatic vision and solidity of organisational discipline, gives a guarantee that partial demands will never be accorded the value of ends in themselves, and that the struggle to fulfil them will only be seen as a means of experience and training for useful and effective revolutionary preparation.

13. Hence, the Communist Party participates in the organisational life of all forms of the proletariat's economic organisation open to workers of all political faiths (unions, factory councils, cooperatives, etc.). If the party is to carry out its work effectively, it is a fundamental position to maintain that all organs of this nature must be unitary, in other words must include all those workers who are to be found in a specific economic situation. The party participates in the life of such organs by organising those of its members who belong to them into groups or cells linked to the party organisation. These groups, participating in the front line in the actions of the economic organs to which they belong, draw to themselves – and hence into the ranks of the political party – those elements who become ready for this as the action develops. They aim to win majority support and leading positions in their organisations, thus becoming the natural vehicle for transmitting the party's slogans. A whole activity is thus carried on, which is one of conquest and organisation; this is not limited to propaganda or proselytism or internal electoral campaigns in the proletarian assemblies, but above all involves entering into the thick of struggle and action and helping the workers to derive the most useful experience from them.

14. The entire work and organisation of the communist groups is designed to give the party definitive control over the leading bodies of the economic organisms, and first and foremost over national union executives, which seem the most secure mechanism for leading movements of the proletariat not integrated in the ranks of the party. The Communist Party – seeing it as its primary interest to avoid splits in the unions and other economic organs, so long as their leadership remains in the hands of other parties and political currents – will not enjoin its members to comport themselves, in the field of execution of movements led by such organisms, in contrast with the latter's directives as regards action, though they must express the most open criticism of the action itself and the work of the leaders.

15. Apart from taking part in this way in the life of those proletarian organisms that have arisen naturally through the pressure of real economic interests, and facilitating their extension and reinforcement, the party will strive to bring to the fore through its propaganda those problems of real interest to the workers which, in the evolution of social situations, can give life to

new organisms of economic struggle. By all these means, the party expands and strengthens the influence which via a thousand bonds stretches from its organised ranks to the proletariat as a whole, taking advantage of all its manifestations and potential manifestations in social activity.

16. Any conception of the party organism based on the requirement of perfect critical consciousness and a complete spirit of sacrifice from the part of each of its members, individually considered, and that restricted the layer of the masses linked to the party to revolutionary unions of workers constituted in the economic field by a secessionist criterion and including only those proletarians who accepted given methods of action, would be totally erroneous.

On the other hand, one cannot insist that by a given time, or on the eve of undertaking general actions, the party must have realised the condition of incorporating under its leadership – or actually in its own ranks – the majority of the proletariat. Such a postulate cannot be put forward aprioristically, abstracting from the real dialectical course of the party's process of development. And it is quite meaningless, even in the abstract, to compare the number of workers incorporated into the disciplined and unitary organisation of the party, or following the latter, with the number of those who are unorganised and dispersed or attached to corporative organisms incapable of linking them together organically. The remainder of the present exposition will be an attempt to define the conditions to which relations between the party and the working class must correspond, in order to render given actions possible and effective, and how those conditions may be established.

IV. Relations between the Communist Party and other Proletarian Political Movements

17. One part of the proletariat is especially resistant to incorporation into the ranks of the Communist Party or into its periphery, because it is organised in other political parties or sympathises with them. All the bourgeois parties have proletarian supporters, but here we are above all interested in the social-democratic parties and syndicalist and anarchist currents.

18. Faced with these movements, an incessant criticism of their programs must be carried out, demonstrating their inadequacy for the pur-

poses of proletarian emancipation. This theoretical polemic will be all the more effective if the Communist Party can show that the criticism long made by it of such movements, in accordance with its own programmatic conceptions, are confirmed by proletarian experience. For this reason, in polemics of this kind it is essential not to hide the conflict between our respective methods – including that part which does not apply solely to problems of the moment, but reflects the subsequent developments of the proletariat's action.

19. Such polemics must, moreover, be reflected in the field of action. Communists taking part in struggles in proletarian economic organisms led by socialists, syndicalists or anarchists will not refuse to follow their actions unless the masses as a whole, in a spontaneous movement, should rebel against it. But they will demonstrate how this action, at a certain point in its development, was rendered impotent or utopian because of the incorrect method of the leaders, whereas with the communist method better results would have been achieved, serving the aims of the general revolutionary movement. In their polemics the communists will always distinguish between leaders and masses, leaving the former all responsibility for their errors and faults; moreover, they will not omit to denounce with equal vigour the activity of those leaders who, albeit with sincere revolutionary feelings, propose dangerous and incorrect tactics.

20. If it is an essential aim of the Communist Party to win ground among the proletariat by increasing its strength and influence at the expense of proletarian political parties and currents with which it disagrees, this aim must be achieved by taking part in the reality of the proletarian struggle upon a terrain which can be simultaneously one of common action and of mutual conflict – always on condition that the programmatic and organisational physiognomy of the party is never compromised.

21. In order to draw to itself those proletarians who support other political movements, the Communist Party cannot follow the method of constituting within them organised groups and fractions of communists or communist sympathisers. In the trade unions, this method is logically applied to carry out penetration work, without any aim of causing the communist groups organised in the unions to leave them; with political movements, a method of this kind would com-

promise the party's organic unity, for the reasons already mentioned with respect to the development of the party's organisation.

22. In propaganda and polemics, it is opportune to bear in mind that many workers who are militants in the syndicalist and anarchist ranks were ready to understand the unitary revolutionary struggle, but were set on the wrong path solely through a reaction to the past degeneration of the political parties led by social-democrats. The bitterness of polemics and struggle directed against the socialist parties will be an element of prime importance in bringing these workers back on to the revolutionary terrain.

23. The obvious incompatibility for a member of the Communist Party with simultaneously being a member of another party extends beyond political parties, to other organisms which, though they do not have the name or organisation of a party, nevertheless have a political character, and to all associations which base their acceptance of members on political theses: the most important of these is freemasonry.

V. Elements of the Communist Party's Tactics Derived from Study of the Situation

24. With the preceding elements, the general criteria which govern organisational relations between the Communist Party and other proletarian organisms have been established, in accordance with the former's essential nature. Before coming to the more properly tactical terms of the question, it is necessary to dwell on those elements for resolving any tactical problem that are provided by examination of the momentary situation through which one is passing. The Communist Party's program contains the perspective of a series of situations related to a series of actions which in the course of an unfolding process are generally attributed to them. There is, therefore, a close connection between the programmatic directives and the tactical rules. Studying the situation thus appears as an integral part of resolving tactical problems, considering that the party, on the basis of its consciousness and critical experience, has already predicted how various situations might unfold, and hence defined the tactical possibilities corresponding to the actions to be followed in the various phases. Examination of the situation serves as a check on the accuracy of the party's programmatic positions. On the day that any substantial revision of them should become ne-

cessary, the problem will be far more serious than any that could be resolved by means of a simple tactical switch, and the inevitable rectification of programmatic outlook cannot but have serious consequences on the strength and organisation of the party. The latter must therefore strive to forecast how situations might unfold, in order to exercise the maximum possible degree of influence on them; but waiting for situations to arise in order to subject them, in an eclectic and discontinuous manner, to the guidelines and suggestions they have prompted, is a method characteristic of social-democratic opportunism. If communist parties were forced to adapt themselves to this, they would underwrite the ruin of the ideological and militant construction of communism.

25. The Communist Party succeeds in possessing its character of unity, and its tendency to realise a whole programmatic process, only insofar as it assembles in its ranks that part of the proletariat which, by becoming organised, has overcome the tendency to move only under the direct impulses of limited economic situations. The influence of the situation on general movements of the party ceases to be direct and deterministic, becoming a rational and voluntary dependence, insofar as critical consciousness and the initiative of will, which have only the most limited value for individuals, are realised in the organic collectivity of the party. This is all the more true in that the Communist Party presents itself as the forerunner of those forms of human association which will draw from their transcendence of the existing formless economic organisation the faculty to direct rationally – instead of passively undergoing – the play of economic facts and their laws.

26. The party, however, cannot utilise its will and its initiative in a capricious way or to an arbitrary degree; the limits which it can and must set to both the one and the other are imposed upon it precisely by its programmatic directives, and by the existing possibilities and opportunities for action, which can be deduced from an examination of the contingent situation.

27. Having examined the situation, an assessment needs to be made of the party forces and the relation between these and those of enemy movements. Above all, it is necessary to take care to assess the degree of support the party could expect from the proletariat if the latter undertook an action or engaged in a struggle. This

means forming a precise idea of the repercussions and spontaneous actions which the economic situation produces among the masses, and of the possibility of developing these actions, as a result of the initiatives of the Communist Party and the attitude of the other parties. The forms of influence of the economic situation on the class combativeness of the proletariat are very complex, depending on whether we are passing through a period of growing prosperity of the bourgeois economy, or of crisis with sharpening consequences. The effect of these phases on the activity and organisational life of the proletarian organisms is complex, and cannot be considered simply by embarking on an examination of the economic situation at one given moment, and deducing from it the proletariat's level of combativeness. For it is necessary to take account of the influence of the whole course of previous situations, in all their oscillations and variations. For instance, a period of prosperity can produce a powerful trade-union movement, which in a subsequent crisis of immiseration can be rapidly drawn on to revolutionary positions, while preserving the breadth of its mass organisation and thus favouring the success of the revolution. Or a period of progressive immiseration can disperse the trade-union movement, in such a way that in a subsequent period of prosperity it finds itself at a stage of construction that does not offer a sufficient framework for revolutionary organisation. These examples, which could equally well be reversed, go to prove that the curves of the economic situation and of class combativeness are determined by complex laws, the latter by the former, but do not resemble each other in form. To the rise (or fall) of the former, there may correspond in given cases indifferently a rise or a fall of the latter.

28. The integrative elements of this study are extremely varied. They consist in examining the real tendencies involved in the constitution and development of the proletariat's organisations and the reactions – including psychological reactions – produced upon it by, on the one hand, economic conditions, and on the other, by the specific attitudes and social and political initiatives of the ruling class and its parties. Examination of the situation is effected in the political field by examining the positions and forces of the various classes and parties in relation to the power of the State. With respect to this it is possible to classify the situations in which the Communist Party may find itself taking action into fundamental phases; situations which in the nor-

mal course of things lead it to grow stronger, by extending its membership, and at the same time define ever more precisely the limits of its tactical field. These phases can be specified as follows: Absolutist feudal power – democratic bourgeois power – social-democratic government – intermediate period of social war in which the bases of the State become unstable – proletarian power in the dictatorship of the Councils. In a certain sense, the question of tactics consists not just in choosing the right course for an effective action, but also in preventing the party's activity from going beyond the appropriate limits, and falling back upon methods that correspond to past situations – the consequence of which would be to arrest the party's process of development to the detriment of its revolutionary preparation. The considerations which follow will refer above all to the party's action in the second and third of the above-mentioned political phases.

29. The Communist Party's possession of a critical method and a consciousness which lead to the formulation of its program is a condition of its organic life. For that very reason, the party and the Communist International cannot limit themselves to establishing the greatest liberty and elasticity of tactics, by entrusting their execution to the relevant leading bodies, subject to examination of the situation, in their judgement. Since the party program cannot be characterised as a straightforward aim to be achieved by whatever means but rather as a historical perspective of mutually related pathways and points of arrival, the tactics adopted in successive situations must be related to the program, and thus the general tactical norms adopted in successive situations need to be clearly specified within not too rigid limits, becoming clear and clearer and fluctuating less and less as the movement gains in strength and approaches the final victory. Only such a criterion as this can allow us to approach ever closer to the optimum level of genuine centralisation within the parties and the International needed to direct action effectively; in such a way that orders emanating from the centre will be willingly accepted, not just within the communist parties but also within the mass movement they have managed to organise. One must not however forget that, having once accepted the movement's organic discipline, there is still the factor of initiative on the part of individuals and groups which is dependent on how situations develop and what arises out of them; and on a continual, logical advance in terms of experiences,

and changes to the course being followed, to discover the most effective way of combating the conditions of life imposed on the proletariat by the existing system. Thus, it is incumbent upon the party and the International to explain the totality of its general tactical rules in a systematic manner – since it might eventually call upon those within its own ranks, and within the strata of the proletariat which have rallied around them, to put these tactical rules into practice and to make sacrifices on their behalf – showing how such rules and prospects for action constitute the inevitable route leading to victory. It is, therefore, a practical and organisational necessity, and not the desire to theorise and schematise the complexity of the manoeuvres that the party may be called upon to undertake, which leads us to establish the terms and limits of the party's tactics. And it is for these entirely concrete reasons that the party must take decisions which appear to restrict its possibilities for action, but which alone provide a guarantee of the organic unity of its activity in the proletarian struggle.

VI. “Indirect” Tactical Activity of the Communist Party

30. When the conditions are lacking for a tactical activity that can be defined as direct, having the character of an assault on bourgeois power with the forces at the Communist Party's disposal, and which will be discussed below, the party can and must – far from restricting itself to a pure and simple work of proselytism and propaganda – exert an influence on events through its relations with and pressures upon other parties and political and social movements, with the aim of determining developments of the situation in a direction favourable to its own objectives, and in such a way as to hasten the moment when resolute revolutionary action will be possible.

The initiatives and attitudes to adopt in such a case constitute a delicate problem, and the basic condition which must be laid down that they must on no account be or appear to be in contradiction with the long-term requirements of the party's specific struggle, in accordance with the program of which it is the sole proponent and for which at the decisive moment the proletariat will need to fight. Any stance which causes or entails the demotion to a secondary level of the complete affirmation of this propaganda, which not only has theoretical value, but is mainly derived from day-to-day positions adopted within the ac-

tual proletarian struggle, and which continually has to emphasise the need for the proletariat to embrace the communist program and methods; any stance which made the reaching of given contingent benchmarks appear to be an end in itself rather than a means to proceed further would lead to a weakening of the party structure and its influence in preparing the masses for the revolution.

31. In the historico-political situation which corresponds to democratic bourgeois power there generally takes place a division in the political field into two currents or “blocs” – the left and the right – which vie with each other to run the State. The left bloc is normally supported more or less openly by the social-democratic parties, which favour coalitions on principle. How this contest unfolds is not a matter of indifference to the Communist Party, both because it concerns points and demands which affect the proletarian masses and attract their attention, and because its settlement in a victory of the left really can smooth the path to the proletarian revolution. In examining the problem of the tactical advisability of coalitions with the left political elements – and wanting to avoid all falsely doctrinaire or stupidly sentimental and puritanical apriorism – one must above all bear in mind that the Communist Party enjoys freedom of movement insofar as it is capable of pursuing with continuity its process of organisation and preparation, from which it draws that influence upon the masses which permits it to call them to action. It cannot propose a tactic with an occasional and transitory criterion, reckoning that it will be able subsequently, at the moment when such a tactic ceases to be applicable, to execute a sudden switch and change of front, transforming its allies of yesterday into enemies. If one does not wish to compromise one's links with the masses and their reinforcement at the very moment when it is most essential that these should come to the fore, it will be necessary to pursue in all public and official declarations and attitudes a continuity of method and intention that is strictly consistent with the uninterrupted propaganda and preparation for the final struggle.

32. An essential task of the Communist party, in preparing the proletariat ideologically and practically for the revolutionary struggle for the dictatorship, is to engage in a ruthless criticism of the program of the bourgeois left and of any program that seeks to resolve social problems within the framework of bourgeois parliament-

ary democratic institutions. The substance of the disagreements between the bourgeois right and left for the most part affect the proletariat only insofar as they are demagogic falsifications, which naturally cannot be disarmed purely by theoretical criticism, but must be revealed for what they are in practice, in the thick of struggle. In general the political demands of the left, whose aims certainly do not at all include taking one step up the ladder to some intermediary rung between the economic and political system of capitalism and that of the proletariat, correspond to conditions which give more breathing space to modern capitalism and ensure its more effective defence, as much in their intrinsic value as because they tend to give the masses the impression that the existing institutions can be utilised to achieve their emancipation. This is true of the demands for extension of the suffrage and for other guarantees and improvements of liberalism, as it is of the anti-clerical struggle and the whole baggage of “masonic” politics. Legislative reforms in the economic or social fields have a similar value: either they will not be carried through, or they will be carried through only insofar as they create an obstacle to the revolutionary dynamic of the masses and with that intention.

33. The advent of a left bourgeois or even a social-democratic government may be seen as a preliminary to the final struggle for the proletarian dictatorship; but not in the sense that their practical activity would create useful preconditions of an economic or political kind, and certainly not in the expectation that they would allow the proletariat greater freedom to organise, prepare and engage in revolutionary action. The Communist Party knows and has the duty to proclaim, by force of critical reason and of bloody experience, that these governments will only respect the freedom of movement of the proletariat when it recognises them and defends them as its own representatives, whereas faced with an assault by the masses against the machinery of the democratic State, they would respond with the most ferocious reaction. It is thus in a very different sense that the advent of such governments may be useful: insofar as, that is, that their activity allows the proletariat to deduce from harsh experience that only the installation of its dictatorship can really defeat capitalism. Clearly the exploitation of such an experience will only be effective to the extent that the Communist Party has denounced the government’s failure in advance, and preserved a strong independent or-

ganisation around which the proletariat can regroup, after it is forced to abandon the groups and parties which it would have partly supported in their government experiment.

34. Thus not only would a coalition of the Communist Party with parties of the bourgeois left or of social-democracy damage revolutionary preparation and make it difficult to utilise a left government experiment, but also in practice it would normally postpone the victory of the left over the right bloc. These are rivals for the support of the bourgeois centre, which moves to the left because it is rightly convinced that the left is no less anti-revolutionary and conservative than the right, proposing concessions that are largely apparent and only minimally effective in order to brake the pressing revolutionary movement against the identical institutions accepted by right and left alike. Thus, the presence of the Communist Party in a left coalition would lose the latter more support, above all on the terrain of electoral and parliamentary struggle, than it would bring it through its backing, and the whole experiment would probably be delayed rather than accelerated by such a policy.

35. On the other hand, the Communist Party does not disregard the undeniable fact that the demands around which the left bloc focuses its agitation attract the interest of the masses and, in their formulation, often correspond to their real requirements. The Communist Party will not uphold the superficial thesis that such concessions should be rejected on the grounds that only the final and total revolutionary conquest merits the sacrifices of the proletariat. There would be no sense in proclaiming this since the only result would be that the proletariat would be sure to go behind the democrats and social-democrats and end up enslaved to them. The Communist Party will thus call upon the workers to accept the left’s concessions as an experiment but emphasise in its propaganda its pessimistic forecast as to that experiment’s outcome, and the necessity for the proletariat, if it is not to be ruined by this venture, not to stake its organisational and political independence upon it. The Communist Party will ask the masses to demand of the social-democratic parties – who guarantee the possibility of the promises of the bourgeois left being achieved – that they honour their commitments, and, with its independent and incessant criticism, it will prepare to reap the harvest of the negative outcome of such experiments by showing how the entire bourgeoisie is in fact arrayed in a

united front against the revolutionary proletariat and how those parties which call themselves workers’ parties, but which support the coalition with part of the bourgeoisie, are merely its accomplices and agents.

36. The demands put forward by the left parties, and especially by the social-democrats, are often of a sort that it is appropriate to urge the proletariat to move directly to implement them; since if a struggle did get underway the inadequacy of the means by which the social-democrats proposed to arrive at a program of benefits for the proletariat would at once become apparent. The Communist Party would then highlight those same demands, making them more specific, and raise them as a banner of struggle for the whole of the proletariat, urging the latter to compel the parties which talk of such demands purely for opportunist reasons to demonstrate their commitment to winning them. Whether these are economic demands or of a political nature, the Communist Party will propose them as the objectives of a coalition of trade-union organisms, shunning the setting up of committees to lead the struggle and agitation in which the Communist Party would be represented and involved alongside other political parties; the aim being always to focus the attention of the masses on the distinctive communist program, and maintain its own freedom of movement so it can choose the right moment to widen its sphere of activity when it needs to by ousting the other parties who had revealed their impotence and been abandoned by the masses. The trade-union united front, understood in this way, offers the possibility of combined actions by the whole of the working class from which the communist method can only emerge victorious, it being the only method susceptible of lending the unitary movement of the proletariat real substance, free from any co-responsibility for the activity of parties which express their verbal support for the proletariat’s cause merely out of opportunism, and with counter-revolutionary intentions.

37. The situation which we are considering may take the form of an assault by the bourgeois right upon a democratic or social-democratic government. Even in this case the stance of the Communist Party cannot be one of proclaiming solidarity with governments of this sort since we cannot present to the proletariat as a gain to be defended a political order whose experiment we greeted, and are following, with the intention of

accelerating in the proletariat the conviction that it is not one designed in its favour but for counter-revolutionary ends.

38. It may happen that the left government allows the right-wing organisations, the bourgeois white gangs, to engage in their dramatic exploits against the proletariat and its institutions, and not only does not ask for the proletariat’s support, but insists that the latter has no right to respond by organising armed resistance. In such a case the communists will demonstrate that it can only be actual complicity, indeed a division of functions between liberal government and reactionary irregular forces. The bourgeois is then no longer discussing whether the method of democratic and reformist lullabies or that of violent repression suits it best, but utilises them both at the same time. In this situation, the real and most deadly enemy of revolutionary preparation is the liberal side in government: it tricks the proletariat into taking its side in the name of legality so that it can render it defenceless and disorganised, and so it can defeat it, in full collusion with the whites, on the day the proletariat finds itself forced by events to struggle against the legal apparatus which presides over its exploitation.

39. Another hypothesis is that the government and the left-wing parties which compose invite the proletariat to participate in the armed struggle against a right-wing attack. This invitation is inevitably a trap, and the Communist Party will reply to it by proclaiming that weapons in the hands of proletarians means advent of the proletarian power and State, and the disarming of the traditional bureaucratic and military machinery of the State, since the latter will never follow the orders of a left government which has attained power by legalistic means when it summons the people to armed struggle, and since only the proletarian dictatorship could lend a stable character to a victory over the white bands. As a consequence no “loyalism” should be proclaimed or practised towards such a government, and, most important of all, the masses will need to be made aware that the consolidation of the latter’s power with the help of the proletariat against a right-wing rising or attempted coup d’état, would be very dangerous, because it would mean the consolidation of the very organisation that will oppose the proletariat’s revolutionary advance when this has become its only way out; if control of the armed organisation of the State had been left in the

hands of the democratic parties in government, in other words, if the proletariat had laid down its arms without having used them to overturn the existing political and state forms, against all the forces of the bourgeois class.

VII. “Direct” Tactical Activity of the Communist Party

40. In other cases, however, immediate and pressing demands of the working class, whether for conquest or for defence, find the left and social-democratic parties indifferent. Not having at its disposal sufficient forces to call the masses directly to those conquests, because of the influence upon them of the social-democrats, the Communist Party – avoiding offering any alliance to the social-democrats, indeed proclaiming that they betray even the contingent and immediate interests of the workers – in formulating these objectives of proletarian struggle will invoke a proletarian united front realised on the trade union terrain for their attainment. The implementation of this front will find at their posts the communist militants in the unions; but at the same time, it will leave the party the possibility of intervening when the struggle takes a further development, against which the social democrats will inevitably come out – and at times the syndicalists and anarchists too. On the other hand, the refusal of the other proletarian parties to implement a trade-union united front for these objectives will be utilised by the Communist Party to strike down their influence – not merely with criticism and propaganda which shows how what is involved is real complicity with the bourgeoisie, but above all by participating in the front line in those partial actions of the proletariat which the situation will not fail to provoke, by doing so on the basis of those precise strong points for which the party had proposed the trade union united front of all local organisations and all categories, and by drawing from this a concrete demonstration that the social-democratic leaders by opposing the extension of activity are preparing its defeat. Naturally, the Communist Party will not limit itself to this task of pinning the responsibility for an incorrect tactic on the other parties; but with extreme caution and tight discipline it will study whether the moment has not arrived to overcome the resistance of the counterrevolutionaries, when in the course of the action a situation is produced among the masses such that they would follow a call to action of the Communist Party against any resistance. An initiative of this kind can only be a central one,

and it is never admissible for it to be taken locally by organisms of the Communist Party or trade unions controlled by the communists.

41. The expression “direct” tactics is applied more specially to the activity of the party in a situation which suggests to it that it should take the independent initiative of an attack on bourgeois power, in order to bring it down or to strike it a blow which will gravely weaken it. The party, in order to be able to undertake an action of this kind, must have a solid internal organisation at its disposal, which will give absolute certainty of strict discipline to the orders of the central leadership. It must, in addition, be able to count on the same discipline from the union forces which it leads, so as to be sure of the support of a broad segment of the masses. It also needs a military type of organisation of a certain degree of efficiency, and all the equipment for illegal activity – above all for communications and forms of contact that cannot be checked by the bourgeois government – that will allow it to preserve its leadership of the movement securely in the predictable situation of being outlawed under emergency provisions. But above all, in taking a decision for offensive action upon which may depend the fate of a whole, extremely long labour of preparation, the Communist Party must base itself on a study of the situation which does not just ensure it the discipline of the forces directly organised and led by it; which does not just encourage it to predict that the links which bind it to the best of the proletarian masses will not break in the struggle; but which gives it confidence that the party’s support among the masses and the breadth of the proletariat’s participation in the movement will grow progressively in the course of the action, since the order for this will serve to awaken and set in operation tendencies naturally diffused in the deepest layers of the masses.

42. It will not always be possible for a general movement initiated by the Communist Party for an attempt to overturn bourgeois power to be announced as having this open objective. The directive to engage the struggle may (other than in the case of an exceptional precipitation of revolutionary situations stirring the proletariat) refer to strong points which are something less than the conquest of proletarian power, but which are in part only to be realised through this supreme victory – even though the masses merely see them as immediate and vital demands: objectives which to a limited extent, in-

sofar as they can be realised by a government which is not yet that of the proletarian dictatorship, leave open the possibility of halting the action at a certain point which leaves the level of organisation and militancy of the masses intact, if it appears to be impossible to continue the struggle to the end without compromising, through the outcome, the conditions for resuming it effectively in subsequent situations.

43. It is not even to be excluded that the Communist Party may find it opportune to give the word for an action directly even though it knows that there is no question of arriving at the supreme revolutionary conquest, but only of waging a battle from which the enemy will emerge with his prestige and his organisation damaged, and the proletariat materially and morally strengthened. In such a case, the party will call the masses to struggle by formulating a series of objectives which may either be the actual ones to be achieved, or appear more limited than those which the party proposes to achieve if the struggle is crowned with success. Such objectives, above all in the party’s plan of action, must be arranged in progression, so that the attainment of each of them constitutes a position of possible reinforcement through a halt on the path towards successive struggles. It is necessary to avoid as far as possible the desperate tactic of launching oneself into struggle in conditions such that only the supreme triumph of the revolution constitutes the favourable alternative, while in the opposite event there is a certainty of defeat and dispersal of the proletarian forces for a period impossible to foresee. Partial objectives are thus indispensable to maintain safe control over the action, and to formulate them does not conflict with criticism of their specific economic and social content, insofar as the masses might welcome them not as opportunities for struggle which are a means and a preliminary to the final victory, but as ends of intrinsic value with which to be satisfied once they have been won. Naturally, it is always a delicate and terrible problem to fix these goals and limits to action; it is through the exercise of its experience and the selection of its leaders that the party tempers itself for this supreme responsibility.

44. The party must avoid harbouring or spreading the illusion that, in a situation of stagnation of the proletariat’s militancy, it is possible to bring about the awakening of the masses for struggle through the simple effect of the example given by a group of brave men launching them-

selves into combat, and attempting coups de main against bourgeois institutions. The reasons why the proletariat may lift itself out of a situation of depression are to be sought in the real unfolding of the economic situation; the party’s tactics can and must contribute to this process, but with work that is far more profound and continuous than the dramatic deeds of a vanguard hurled into the attack.

45. The party, however, will use its strength and organisation for actions that are properly controlled both in their conception and in their execution, on the part of armed groups, working-class organisations and street-crowds, which have a demonstrative and defensive value in giving the masses concrete proof that it is possible with organisation and preparation to confront certain forms of resistance and offensive sallies by the ruling class, whether in the form of terrorist outrages by reactionary armed groups or in the form of police obstruction of given types of proletarian organisation and activity. The aim will not be to provoke a general action, but to raise the depressed and demoralised masses up again to the highest level of militancy, with a series of actions designed to reawaken within them sentiments and a need of revolt.

46. The party will absolutely avoid, in such local actions, any infraction of the internal discipline of the trade-union organisms on the part of the local organs and the militants within them who are members of the Communist Party, since these must never be allowed to break with the national executive bodies led by other parties. For as has already been stated, they must serve as indispensable footholds for winning those bodies to the party. The Communist Party and its members will, however, follow the masses actively and offer them all their help when they respond through a spontaneous impulse to bourgeois provocations, even if they go beyond the limits of discipline to the criteria of inaction and passivity of the reformist and opportunist union leaders.

47. In the situation which is characteristic of the moment in which the power of the State is shaken to its foundations, and is about to fall, the Communist Party, amid the full unfurling of its forces and of the agitation of the masses around its banner of maximum demands, will not miss the possibility of influencing moments of unstable equilibrium in the situation by taking advantage of all such forces as may momentarily

be acting in harmony with its own independent activity. When it is quite certain that it will win control of the movement as soon as the traditional State organisation has collapsed, it can have recourse to transitory and contingent agreements with other movements which have forces at their disposal in the field of struggle – but without raising such alliances to themes of propaganda or slogans addressed by the party to the masses. Success will in any case be the sole yardstick for assessing the correctness of having yielded to such contacts, and for judging what calculations are to be made in this respect. It is not theoretical preconceptions or ethical and aesthetic preoccupations that dictate the tactics of the Communist Party; its entire tactics are dictated solely by the real appropriateness of the means to the end and to the reality of the historical process, applying that dialectical synthesis of doctrine and action which is the patrimony of a movement destined to play the lead role in an immense social renewal, the commander of the great revolutionary war.

VIII. The Italian Communist Party and the Present Moment

48. The phase, and thus the problem, of the party's formation has now been completely surmounted in Italy. With the Socialist Congress of Milan – prior to which, the possibility was not definitively excluded of a substantive modification of the constitutive basis of the Communist Party, through fusion with a left faction of the Socialist Party, which would have assumed the significance of an essential and integrative element – with the Milan Congress and its decisions this possibility has vanished entirely. It now seems evident that only the far-left faction which split away at Livorno could constitute the party's creative nucleus. And it is now equally clear that its normal progressive development will, in future, not proceed through a rapprochement with organised groups splitting off from other political formations; instead, it will proceed solely through individual recruitment of single persons who, as they enter its ranks designed precisely to receive them, will not introduce disorder or changes, but simply greater strength – in numbers, and hence in action.

49. The Party, therefore, freed from the cares inherent in every period of initiation, must devote itself completely to its work of ever more extensive penetration among the masses, establishing and multiplying the linking organs

between them and itself. No field of proletarian activity must remain unknown to the communists: the trade unions, the cooperatives, the savings trusts, must be penetrated ever more deeply – with the establishment of communist groups and their linking together – and won to the Party's directives. While the various Aid Committees, for political victims, for Russia, etc., must see the communists represented and enjoy their collaboration. This, however, is simply because the party must not remain indifferent to any instrument which will put it in closer contact with the proletariat; and because it must take care to satisfy the latter's contingent necessities. It is never in order to establish lasting relations with other political parties, even subversive ones.

50. With respect to the latter, the polemics aimed at clarifying their attitude in the eyes of the workers, and at breaking the ambiguity of their programmatic declarations, must continue unflinchingly. Socialists and libertarians pursue the weakening of the proletarian class in two different ways in Italy today: the former with their tactics of submission and disarmament in the face of capitalism's attack; the latter with their struggle against the Republic of Soviets and against the principle of dictatorship of the proletariat, to which they counterpose the empty and theoretical apotheosis of an abstract freedom.

The present Italian situation, characterised by the ever vaster and more complete offensive of the bourgeoisie, daily offers a thousand unhappy documents for our polemics against the anarchists and social democrats, who give manifest proof of their lack of understanding of the moment. For this, rather than representing anything exceptional and transitory, is in reality a natural and predictable stage of development of the capitalistic order: a specific manifestation of the function and purposes of the democratic State.

51. Today, in Italy, one can perceive a characteristic involution of the State with respect to its mode of functioning. The constitutive period of the bourgeois State, which marked a progressive centralisation of all the functions of rule within the organisation of a central authority, finds its counterpart and its negation in the present period, in which the stable unity of all powers – previously removed from the arbitrary decision of individuals – now crumbles and scatters. The powers of the State are once again exercised individually by each private person. And it would

no longer even be necessary for the State to place its organs explicitly – though it does so – at the disposal of bourgeois conservation: from the army to the magistrature, from Parliament to the functionaries of the executive power. For each of these, in the person of its practitioners, uses its own powers to the same end, in an autonomous and uncontrollable manner.

In order then to prevent an unexpected halt in this crisis of dissolution from allowing the State to regain any control over the activity of individuals, the bourgeoisie proceeds hastily to the establishment of supplementary organs. These, perfectly in agreement with the statutory organs – when these function according to the explicit desires of conservation – instead counterpose themselves to those organs and replace them whenever they show signs of moving away from the most supine acquiescence (Civil Committees, Defence Committees, etc.).

To invoke, as social democrats do, a return to State authority and to respect of the law indicates that they, though stating that the parliamentary democratic State is a class State, do not get to understand that it is precisely for this reason that it fulfils today its essential duty, by breaking the written laws that were instrumental to its gradual stabilisation, but which would today endanger its conservation.

52. The present Italian situation contains synthetically within itself all the constitutive elements of the coup d'état, even though the external probative fact of the military deed has not occurred. The progressive occurrence of episodes of violence which successively annul the normal conditions of social life for a whole class of citizens; the superposition of the capricious will of groups and individuals over the dispositions of the written law; the immunity guaranteed to such groups and individuals; and the persecution ordained for their enemies – all this has produced the same results as would have been produced by a more grandiose and more violent single act, which set more numerous forces in motion simultaneously.

The bourgeoisie class is perfectly aware of this state of affairs, but its interests require that the outward appearance of a formal democracy should not be destroyed; and that the general economy should not be deeply shaken by a violent change which ultimately would not offer any greater safeguard for its privilege than that

which it enjoys today. It is thus probable that divided as it is on its evaluation of the necessity for it, and still being powerful enough to break it, the bourgeoisie class would oppose a disruptive military putsch motivated almost solely by personal ambitions. No new form of government could have more contempt than the present one for freedom; for rights already won and sanctioned; for the lives of the workers. Only in a further perfecting of the democratic State, rendering it more able to conceal the real substance of the bourgeoisie's dictatorial régime, can it find its goal. This will be achieved with the formation of a social-democratic government.

53. The present Italian situation engenders and brings to fruition precisely this further stage in the martyrdom of the proletariat. Work is proceeding towards this result from two sides: a strong current in the Socialist Party and the left parties of the bourgeoisie are alike testing the ground, in order to find the most favourable spot for a meeting and an alliance. Both, in fact, motivate their actions solely by the necessity of finding and constructing a defence against destructive fascist violence. And on this terrain, they seek the assent of all the subversive parties, demanding an end to polemics and mutual attacks.

If a social-democratic government would have the strength to fight and defeat fascism – which we strongly doubt, both through our theoretical convictions and because of the examples of recent history – and it therefore becomes necessary to prepare a terrain favourable to its formation, this will be all the more easily and rapidly constituted insofar as the communists continue their present determined and unflinching polemic against the Socialist Party. The communist attack gives the Socialist Party credit in bourgeois eyes, as a target of revolutionary violence and as an impediment and obstacle to the unfurling of the class struggle, and thus makes more probable an agreement and an alliance between them. For it must not be forgotten that left groups of the bourgeoisie began to present socialist collaboration as attainable in Italy from the time that the Livorno split liberated the Socialist Party from any communist current. A quietening down of the struggle between communists and socialists would restore the latter to the ostensible, though false, position of being favourable to the doctrine and practice of the III International; it would thus impede the rein-

forcement of that trust which is the precondition for creation of the social-democratic bloc.

Hence, the most absolute intransigence towards the subversive parties should be practised in the field of political struggle, even allowing the perspective – which for us is fallacious – that a change of men in a formally unchanged State could conceivably occur in a sense that would favour the proletariat.

54. As for fascism, the Communist Party., though considering it as an inevitable consequence of the régime's development, does not draw the conclusion that an attitude of inert passivity should be taken up with respect to it. To combat fascism does not mean to believe that it is possible to annul one function of bourgeois society without destroying the latter's existence; nor to delude oneself that fascism can be defeated in itself, as an episode cut off and isolated from the overall offensive activity of capitalism. It aims instead at rendering less serious and painful the damage which enemy violence inflicts upon the combative and unyielding spirit of the working class.

55. The Communist Party does not exclude but indeed bears in mind the possibility that from the present unstable situation there may arise the opportunity for violent action by a part of the bourgeoisie. Preparing, therefore, a minimum of means necessary to confront and overcome this, it takes up with respect to the problem of direct action an attitude of preparation.

The world crisis of the capitalist economy has had a negative influence on the advance of the proletariat, which has seen its most solid organisations broken. For they had not foreseen the crisis, and hence had not prepared themselves to surmount it victoriously. The party believes that today it is necessary to reconstruct that former solidity, guided by the conviction that in a situation analogous to the one recently traversed, a proletariat solidly organised and led by a revolutionary party could justly go over to the attack. Thus, to construct this party and enlarge its influence over the masses; to give its own members coherence, discipline and preparation; to draw behind it ever broader layers of the working class: these are the essential tasks of the Italian Communists, who will accomplish them taking as their norm the theses on the various questions (trade union, agricultural, etc.) which

will be approved and discussed by the present Congress.

Revolutionary Party and Economic Action

From *Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine*

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FROM SUMMARY:

2. *The second opportunist international historical crisis, marked by the collapse of the Third International, is to be ascribed to intermediatism; which holds that transitory, general political goals needed to be interposed between the bourgeois and the proletarian dictatorships. But the notion that we can avoid intermediatism by renouncing the specific economic demands of proletarian groups is also a mistake.*

4. *According to all the traditions of Marxism and of the Italian and International Left working and struggling inside the proletarian economic organisations is one of the indispensable conditions for successful revolutionary struggle; along with the pressure of the productive forces on production relations, and with the correct theoretical, organisational and tactical continuity of the political party.*

5. *If it is true that during the various phases of the bourgeois historical course – revolutionary, reformist and anti-revolutionary – the dynamics of trade union activity have undergone profound changes (prohibition, tolerance, subjection), this doesn't alter the fact that it is organically indispensable for a layer of organisations to exist between the proletarian masses and the minority that joins the party; such organisations, politically neutral but accessible to workers alone, must be resurrected as the revolution approaches.*

Before we pass on to examine what has changed in the union field in the period after the World Wars and totalitarianism, it is worth recalling the Italian Communist Left's previous stance on the Trade Union question.

1. Even before the Italian party was constituted, two key tactical issues were discussed at

the Second Congress of the International in 1920: parliamentary action and trade-union action. The delegates of the anti-electionist current would now marshal against the so-called left-wing, which supported splitting the unions and giving up the attempt to conquer trade unions led by opportunists. All things considered, these currents situated the centre of revolutionary action in the trade unions and not in the party, and wanted them pure of bourgeois influence (Dutch tribunitists, German KAPD, American Syndicalists, Shop Stewards, etc.).

2. From then on, the Left waged a bitter struggle against these movements analogous to the *Ordine Nuovo* group of Turin, which saw the revolutionary task as consisting in emptying the trade unions to the advantage of the movement for factory councils, with the latter interpreted as the framework of the economic and State organs of the proletarian revolution initiated under full-blown capitalism. These movements thus seriously confused the instruments with the timing of the revolutionary process.

3. The trade union and parliamentary questions are on an entirely different plane altogether. Parliament is clearly the organ of the bourgeois State which claims to represent all classes in society, and all revolutionary Marxists agree that it is impossible for it to form the basis for any other power than that of the bourgeoisie. The question is whether the use of parliamentary mandates can serve the aims of pro-insurrection and pro-dictatorship propaganda and agitation. Those opposed to this view would assert the view that, even given this restricted aim, our representatives would produce the opposite effect by participating in a bourgeois political organisation.

4. Given that the trade unions are professional and economic associations, they will always bring together individuals of the same class, no matter who leads them. It is quite possible that those proletarians organised within them will elect representatives who are not just moderate but totally bourgeois, and that the unions will come directly under the sway of capitalist influences. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the trade unions are composed exclusively of workers and thus it will never be possible to say of them what we say about parliament, namely, that it is only susceptible to a bourgeois direction.

5. In Italy, before the foundation of the Communist Party, socialists refused to work in the catholic or republican unions. Later on, at the time of the great *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* led mainly by reformists and of the *Unione Sindacale* led by anarchists, communists would declare, unanimously and unhesitatingly, that they would not be setting up new unions but instead would work inside and conquer the aforementioned ones and indeed work towards their unification. In the international field, the Italian party would unanimously support not only work in all the national social-democratic unions, but also the existence of the Red International Union (Profintern), which saw the Amsterdam Centre as unconquerable because of its links, by way of the International Labor Office, with the bourgeois League of Nations. The Italian Left was violently opposed to the proposal to liquidate the Profintern in order to constitute one single Trade Union International, still asserting, nonetheless, the principle of unity and internal conquest of the unions and national federations.

6. a) Proletarian union activity has caused significant changes in bourgeois policy over successive historical phases. The early revolutionary bourgeoisies prohibited any form of economic association as an attempt to reconstitute the illiberal regime of the medieval corporations, and any strike was violently suppressed, therefore, all early trade union movements took on revolutionary aspects. The Manifesto would soon announce that all economic and social movement lead to political movements: that their key importance lies in the ensuing extension of proletarian associations and coalitions, whilst their merely economic conquests are precarious and do not impair class exploitation.

b) In the following period, the bourgeoisie would come to understand the necessity of tackling the social question, and, with the precise aim of warding off the revolutionary solution, it would tolerate and legalise the unions and recognise their activity and demands; during this entire phase there were no wars and there was a relative increase in welfare up to 1914. Throughout this period, the work carried out in the unions was the fundamental element in developing strong socialist parties, who could clearly get large movements underway by applying the union lever.

The collapse of the Second International showed that the bourgeoisie had gained a decisive influence over a large part of the working class by means of its relations and compromises with the parliamentary and union chiefs, who almost everywhere dominated the party structures.

c) During the resurgence of the movement which followed the Russian Revolution and the ending of the imperialist war, it was precisely a matter of drawing conclusions from the disastrous failure of the previous trade-unionist and political outlook. There was the attempt to draw the world proletariat onto revolutionary terrain by removing the political and parliamentary traitors through party splits, and by ensuring that the new communist parties were able to eject bourgeois agents from the largest proletarian organisations. This was highly successful in several countries, and capitalism would discover that in order to impede the revolutionary offensive it had to strike back violently, and outlaw not just the parties but also the unions within which the parties were working. Nevertheless, through all the complex vicissitudes of these bourgeois totalitarianisms, outright abolition of the union movement was never adopted. On the contrary, the constitution of a new union network was advocated and put into effect, fully controlled by the counter-revolutionary party, and, in one way or another, declared to be a single and unitary body, wholly faithful to the administrative and State mechanism.

Even where, after the Second World War, for purely contingent reasons, capitalist totalitarianism appeared to have been substituted by democratic liberalism, the union dynamic previously set in motion continued to move uninterruptedly towards State control and insertion into the official administrative organisms. Fascism – dialectical accomplisher of the old reformist demands – put into effect the legal recognition of the union; in this way the union could be the office holder of collective contracts with the employers, laying the way open for the entire union organisation to end up effectively imprisoned through being completely tied to the bourgeois class power.

Such an outcome is crucial for the defence and conservation of the capitalist regime precisely because influencing and making use of the associational framework of trade union organisations is an indispensable stage for every revolutionary movement led by the communist party.

7. Clearly, these radical changes in the unions were not only due to the political strategy of the antagonistic classes and their parties and governments, they were also significantly linked to the changed nature of the economic relations between employer and wage-labourer. In the early union struggles, when the worker tried to confront the monopoly of production with a monopoly of labour-power, the sharpness of the conflict derived from the fact that the proletariat had absolutely no resources except his daily wage. During a time when the worker was deprived of any reserve fund of consumer goods, every struggle became literally a matter of life and death.

The Marxist theory of increasing immiseration is confirmed by the continuous increase in the number of pure proletarians and by the closely related expropriation of the last reserves of layers of the proletariat and middle-classes, a process which is sped up a hundredfold by wars, destruction, monetary inflation and so on. Whilst increasing immiseration is undoubtedly still the general trend, and whilst it is true that in many countries the unemployment figures are enormous and proletarians are just plain massacred, nevertheless, we can see that wherever industrial production flourishes, a whole range of reformist assistance and providential measures exist for the employed worker. These constitute a new type of economic reserve representing a small stake in wealth, and this makes the position of the worker in those areas in a certain sense analogous to the artisan and small peasant. The wage-labourer thus has something to lose, and this makes him hesitant, and even opportunist when union struggles break out and worse still when there are strikes and rebellions. This was a phenomenon remarked on by Marx, Engels and Lenin with regard to the so-called labour aristocracy.

8. Apart from the question of whether or not in such and such a country the revolutionary communist party should participate in the work of given types of union, the elements of the question recapitulated so far lead to the conclusion that any prospect of a general revolutionary movement will depend on the presence of the following essential factors: 1) a large, numerous proletariat of pure wage-earners, 2) a sizeable movement of associations with an economic content including a large part of the proletariat, 3) a strong revolutionary class party, which, composed of a militant minority of workers,

must have been enabled, in the course of the struggle to oppose, broadly and effectively, its own influence within the union movement to that of the bourgeois class and bourgeois power. The factors which have led to establishing the necessity for each and every one of these three conditions, the effective combination of which will determine the outcome of the struggle, were arrived at: a) by a correct application of the theory of historical materialism, which links the basic economic needs of the individual to the dynamics of the great social revolutions, b) by a correct interpretation of the proletarian revolution as regards the problems of the economy, politics, and the State, c) by the lessons derived from the history of all the organised movements of the working class – as much from the degenerations and defeats as from the outstanding achievements and victories.

The general line of the perspective outlined here does not rule that there will be all kinds of different situations arising in the course of the modification, dissolution, and reconstitution of associations of the union type; all those associations, that is, which arise in various countries, either linked to the traditional organisations which once upon a time declared themselves as based on the class struggle approach, or else more or less tied to the most diverse methods and social tendencies, even conservative ones.