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and Second World Wars, gathers strength and resonates. The current massacre is being played out on this infamous heap of patent falsehoods, imposed on the general public of the East and West.

In the West, pro-invasion propaganda is by far predominant, reaching disgusting levels of stupidity, while the bloody and equally lying publicity of the invader is rigorously silenced. One is reminded of the accounts of famous newspaper columnists for the edification of the populations during the First and Second World Wars. The tones are the same, the same lies propagated to drive proletarians to the slaughter, to stir up hatred among proletarians by smearing the “enemies”. Those of today enjoy no less barking and brazen techniques.

What is missing on both sides – and it cannot be otherwise – is not a national but a class-based reading of what is going on in their midst, the reality of their opposing interests, perspectives, sufferings, clashes. Proletarian families seeing their loved ones sent to the slaughter and forced into cold and starvation by the selfishness of the big bourgeois. Very little of this news filters into the narrative of either state. Everything is supposed to be buried under the cloak of ‘patriotism’ and the fight for ‘freedom’. But beyond the bourgeois propaganda, a proletarian anti-war movement, hidden and repressed, not yet organised, already coils itself for a strike.

Only to a Party which unconditionally places itself on the side of the proletariat, which ‘has no fatherland’ and no flag, and is against bourgeois fatherlands and bourgeois flags, only to such a Party, which in the storm of war does not lose sight of the goal of the international communist revolution, which is both far and near, only to this Party, which is absolutely above and against all fighting parties, is it given to identify the historical consequences of one outcome or another of the bourgeois wars.

It is in this sense that we are “not indifferent”.

War and “indifferentism”

One thing is absolutely clear to us, who have historically been against all wars between imperialisms and have only fought for the war between classes for over a century: all warfare between the bourgeois states is the rule of the capitalist world, which has reached its full spread over the entire globe, at the lowest point of degeneration.

We communists do not stand for the victory of any one bourgeoisie over the other, but we are not indifferent to the unfolding historical drama. Analysts, career soldiers, journalists, sold out to the instructions of the big bourgeois tycoons or disciplined by the state, and big publishing groups linked to big national capital, go to great pains to explain to us the intricate relationships of the troops on the ground, the strategies in action, the prospects more or less favourable to one or the other side.

Which “victory”, a term that can now only be relative, or which cease-fire or armistice, occurs, must be a reason for us to study and analyse, because revolution is also the historical product of how the clash between the imperialisms of the world, between the imperialist monsters, evolves, as well as the dynamics of capitalism as a universal mode of production. But over everything, the absolutely necessary re-birth of the party of the revolution is required. The party has an obligation to understand, to analyse, obviously in the context of its capabilities, everything that is happening, both overt and covert.

But without its “war on war” there is only one true loser, the international proletariat, particularly that of Ukraine and that of Russia. This war is against them, men brought to opposite sides by the capitalists, disguised on the one hand as a defence of national freedom against the invader, on the other hand as a defence of the threatened Russian national integrity.

On these issues, which are not those of the proletarians of the two nations, but opposed to their class interests, both in the invaded nation and in the invading nation, the same lie that has always been repeated in previous wars and gave justificatory substance to the carnage of the First

emergence of important hotbeds of labour struggle in the western United States. Its establishment corresponded to the government's immediate necessity to accompany the repressive initiatives towards the IWW with the work of transforming the material and union conditions in the sectors where workers turned to revolutionary organisations during their struggles and copied their methods and objectives. The presence of the IWW within the strikes and its growing strength corresponded to the development of a remarkable radicalism in struggles where there were very low wages and very long hours, and where, both because of the weakness of the trade unions and the intransigent bosses' extremism, there were no mechanisms of conflict mediation and even less an organic practice of collective bargaining.

Towards the end of the summer, unrest, particularly in Arizona's copper mines and the Northwest timber industry, had reached a point where it posed a serious threat to war production and social peace. It was the local structures of the AFL in Arizona, along with its national leadership, who approached President Wilson and asked him to take action to protect the rights of state workers after an arbitrary deportation of a thousand miners to the desert. Similar requests had also come to Washington from other western parts of the country where unions were very weak and were crushed by the growing clash between workers' radicalism and indiscriminate repression by employers and police. The traditional unions, faced with the choice between joining the most combative workers – making available for them their powerful organisational structure – and turning to the bourgeois state – apparently to protect the workers but in reality to regain a hegemonic position within the class – had opted for the second solution without hesitation, since their path towards substantial integration into the state was no longer reversible.

In the mining districts, the workers, for the most part recently immigrated, were struggling not only to obtain wage increases and working time reductions but also to put an end to what the same committee then called an 'autocratic management of the industry'. The workers, in fact, were practically prevented from any form of collective organisation and the control of the employers over the political and police authorities was such as to trigger the most brutal repres-

of war production took shape. It was based on a series of agreements that regulated working conditions and the very presence of unions within industries operating under government contracts.

For the government, the main problem was the determination with which the unions, feeling particularly strong because of the enormous demand for labour and the urgency of the work, demanded that the wage conditions and union regulations and, above all, the *closed shop*, were respected in all contracts; the problem also lay in the increased combativeness of the base, in the demand for the closed shop by the unions and in a certain indifference of the employers towards wage increases (since, in the war industries, the profits were guaranteed by the state, the state would have to compensate for the higher costs). Therefore, as we have seen, the industries contended for workers by means of wage increases.

The need for regulation and stabilisation of the situation was therefore very urgent, requiring the administration to make precise choices towards the unions and their demands. An agency was therefore established (one of the many tripartite parties that arose during the war) for the determination and control of wages, hours and working conditions; it was composed of a representative of the army, one of the "public" and one of the union movement. The decisions of the commission, which had to be considered binding by the parties, managed to overcome the most burning problems which prevented a decisive and immediate growth of production and caused a constant state of tension in the workplace, granting the unions the wage and regulatory conditions requested by them – which undoubtedly gave them a certain prestige and authority in front of the workers – in exchange for their definitive renunciation of the request of the closed shop. For the entrepreneurs – who most of all feared the growth of the union's power through its control over hiring and who had no particular interest in the magnitude of the wage increases – the agreement was an undoubted success.

Other agencies were created for the resolution of working conflicts in sectors of military relevance. The most important was the President's Mediation Commission, appointed by Wilson on September 19, 1917 to deal with the

ous demand for production. The government's realisation of this long-held goal of the labour movement was necessary for the conciliation of labour and capital, and if it often was the tripartite agencies granting this measure to the workers without struggle, it is equally true that it was often forced from the employers without any government intervention. The bosses as a whole accepted this government policy and only in special and sporadic cases was any opposition exercised.

From the unions' point of view, it allowed a considerable strengthening of their organisations firstly, within the workplace, because of the greater freedom they had towards the entrepreneurs, thanks to the governmental action against anti-union discrimination, and because of their growing rank and file; and secondly, more generally, because of the power they were gaining through the integration of production into the governmental apparatus.

The counterbalance to this process was the repression and destruction of the forces of the workers' movement, which represented the only organised alternative to the conservative unions; this also constituted a valid deterrent for all those who could think of not respecting the peace agreement by the government and the leaders of the AFL

All these factors, on the other hand, while contributing to the strengthening of the unions, also shifted their main reason for strength from the ability to successfully face the employers to the permanence of cooperative relations with the government: that is, they made the unions less and less "self-sufficient", as they liked to call themselves, and increasingly linked to political balance and to their orientation in a liberal sense. This produced some rather important changes within the AFL organisation itself, wherein all tendencies towards bureaucratisation and transfer of power to the top management of the unions were accentuated.

In January 1918, the United States Employment Service (USES) was born: a federal employment office, it was responsible for regulating the labour market. In general, its work was aimed at planning and organising a distribution of the workforce more in line with the needs of production sectors, thus remedying the chaos of the first year of war caused by the anarchic race

tries of vital importance for it during the beginning of 1918.

Undoubtedly, strikes and the fear thereof were the main causes for the improvement in working conditions. The recognition of the unions, their inclusion in forums responsible for the regulation of conflicts and determination of working conditions, and the work of extending collective bargaining and convincing entrepreneurs to abandon anti-union discrimination drew their origin precisely from the impossibility of curbing worker agitation in any other way. Precisely for this reason, the government did not hesitate to resort to other means, such as shop committees, when collective bargaining did not require recourse to unions or they were not strong enough to guarantee it. It was also for this reason that the administration granted the unions only those *quid pro quos* indispensable to obtain their collaboration, but not, for example, the closed shop, which would have given them excessive strength and would have provoked an open confrontation with substantial sections of the bourgeoisie.

The state sharpens its weapons of control

On the whole, in the first phase of the war, the administration's labour policy was quite incisive and innovative even if its major results were limited to industrial sectors directly responsible for supplying the armed forces or building the structures and machinery necessary for their operation. In all sectors where the government intervened directly to regulate working conditions, wages rose (at least nominally) to levels required by the union pay scales, even where this had not been established since the first agreements, as in the case of shipyards. This was partially due to the pressure that the union leaders in the various agencies could exert, but the main reason was undoubtedly that the workers' struggle would have exploded and extended much further without these measures, eliminating any possibility of guaranteeing social peace and making it impossible to use unions as instruments of conciliation and workers' "empowerment".

As far as working hours are concerned, the maximum limit of eight hours was established everywhere as the base time, while overtime hours – 50% or even 100% more than base pay – practically became the rule given the enorm-

It goes without saying, however, that it is the proletariat that bears the brunt of emergencies and is made to sacrifice the most, by fair means (patriotism, vague promises, propaganda) or by brutal ones (threats of enrolment, repression, anti-union laws).

Indeed, the constitutive document of the NWLB gave official character and maximum authority, to collective bargaining and its tools, strengthening the boundaries within which it could develop, and thus constituting a powerful deterrent against any temptation to break the balance that had come to exist between the bosses, government, and conservative unions.

The consolidation of cooperation between these groups, and its centralisation under the protection of the state and government, tended to rather quickly assume authoritarian and orderly connotations. The wage policy of government agencies, thus, while meeting some of the proletariat's demands in order to eliminate the most important causes of class conflict – establishing minimum wages and tying numerical wages to the trend in the cost of living (*i.e.*, compensating for inflation) – also traced precise boundaries beyond which workers' demands could not go. Beyond these borders there was only head-on confrontation with the state apparatus and with the broad political and trade union alignment that supported its policy.

It is good to remember that the spread and consolidation of collective bargaining, however extensive, especially during the war, never undermined or weakened the legal systems hitherto used to fight the unions. The target of these means had simply been redirected away from unions and towards radical organisations; they were far from done away with. The use of injunctions and legislation against trusts for the persecution of workers' organisations, including conservative unions, would quickly make a comeback in the post-war period. However, even if temporarily, a much more solid institutional framework was established in the face of workers' struggles, capable of intervening harshly in those conflicts where some of the cardinal points of its activity were questioned; its greater compactness accelerated the integration of trade unions and, as we have seen, managed to overturn even the behaviours and choices most rooted in their tradition.

the pace of inflation; in fact, in real terms, wages increased (compared to 1914) by 4% in 1916, by 1% in 1917, and by 4% in 1918. The regulation of working conditions by the government had not done anything other than prevent a net devaluation of wages with respect to the increase in the cost of living, and this result was also obtained above all through the constant pressure exerted by workers with strikes or with the simple threat of struggle.

The real and important changes taking place in the wage structure were the increase in the real wages of less skilled workers and the consequent decrease in the wage differences between the highest and lowest paid sections of the proletariat; these were due to the fact that unskilled workers – generally not organised in unions – had been able to take advantage of a shortage of the reserve workforce (thanks to the concomitance between a very high production demand, the employment of a certain part of the workforce in the armed forces, and the virtual disappearance of the high migratory flow) to impose their demands on both the bosses and the government.

The bourgeois solution: patriotism–democracy–corporatism

The key feature of the last year of the war was undoubtedly the decisive entry of the government into the field of relations between the bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat. The establishment of the National War Labor Board and the War Labor Policies Board represents the start of a labour policy aimed on the one hand at coordinating and centralising the government's conciliatory activity and on the other hand at coordinating and – up to a certain point – planning production, mainly intervening on wage and working conditions: an intervention caused by the war contingency, first foreseen and then real, which, as indeed in other countries in similar situations, requires perfect coordination of resources to achieve the goal of victory. In these cases, the bourgeois state does not hesitate to strike even the capitalists who do not comply with its regulations, a characteristic that in peacetime is more typical of manifestly dictatorial regimes, but even in that case the measure is linked to some form of emergency because the bourgeoisie prefers total anarchy of production, which it calls – rather pompously and crassly – “freedom”.

way the conditions of exploitation of the working class, in order to minimise the conflict between capital and labour, with preparation for entry into war in mind. This was done by peaceable means if possible, by ruthless ones whenever necessary. These ruthless means were, among other things, a harsh persecution of all non-cooperative trade union agitators and the outlawing of the IWW, even with the enactment of special laws, such as the Espionage Act and the law against criminal syndicalism.

State intervention also included a strong involvement of the collaborationist trade unions – those of the AFL in particular – with regard both to social peace and to the war effort, an involvement that the trade union movement adhered to with enthusiasm, being almost integrated into the state; it was so for a time in fact, but never in a completely formal way. Nevertheless, in fact, the “responsible” trade union is accepted by the bourgeoisie in its structure of government, a historical event that will soon after be imitated in all capitalist countries, either in a disguised manner (democratic regimes) or in a directly institutional manner (dictatorial regimes).

A peculiar characteristic of the class struggle in the USA, which differentiates it from that which took place in Europe in the same years, at least in the more industrialised countries, was the scarce penetration of the socialist party into the class due on the one hand to the theoretical and organisational weakness of the parties that succeeded each other and on the other hand to conditions outside the class, such as the great distances between industrial concentrations, the virulence of the reaction of the bourgeoisie, the fluidity of class composition – often multi-ethnic and multilingual, with successive migratory waves, each time of proletarians less evolved than those already present (except in the case of the migration of the Germans in the central period of the 19th century, generally socialist workers); in fact, after the civil war and especially between 1890 and the outbreak of the First World War, immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe was almost exclusively composed of former peasants, who required years of factory work to acquire class consciousness. This, combined with the prevailing individualist ideology – derived from a past of pioneers – conditioned the development of the proletariat in both a political and union sense.

Labor developed, which – unlike trade unions – organised all workers, including non-skilled workers, women, and children. Despite its numerous successes, however, the leadership of the Knights of Labor did not like the weapon of the strike, and this attitude in the long run led to real betrayals of the struggling workers, and therefore to the decline of the organisation in favour of trade unions, now united in the American Federation of Labor; which, in spite of the fact that its member unions continued to keep unskilled workers away, began to rise rapidly in the late 1880s.

Unfortunately, the trade unions – narrow and often localistic, aiming for partial results for the working-class aristocracy – was not what was needed in a country where a ravenous bourgeoisie would not retreat before anything to impose its terms. Against the struggling workers, in addition to the vigilantes of the company or rented from the Pinkerton agency, the local militias were always present, while the judges, always ready to submit to the demands of the bosses, did not spare injunctions and sentenced the strikers to severe penalties, often involving imprisonment. Not infrequently, in the most important cases, when all these resources were not enough, federal troops intervened. In addition to this complex bourgeois apparatus, there were numerous cases in which the AFL unions themselves sided with the bosses, or even organised scabbing. Many struggles were characterised by armed clashes, wounding and killing many.

With the rise of the new millennium, the interest of the AFL to present itself as a bulwark for the survival of capitalist society is clear, just as the Industrial Workers of the World was born with opposing union and political aims. The latter represented an example of combativity and dedication to the cause of the working class, but it was always a minority movement due to its fusion of the party and the union form; nevertheless, this did not prevent it from conducting great and hard struggles, especially in the western half of the country.

The final part of the period treated in this work – ending with the entry of the US into the first world war in 1917 – saw a growing attention and presence of the federal state in trade union matters, with the intent to eliminate the pressures of the most extreme sectors of the bourgeoisie and to organise in a homogeneous

tional social-democratic and social-patriotic opportunism.

In April the historical balance sheet is completed in an extremely thorough way, profiting from the transitory legality then in force in Russia. The program of action is constructed with great resolution. It is just a matter of applying it.

70 – Legal preparation or preparation for battle?

The question can be seen under two aspects: of method and principle, and tactics. Two extreme “wings”, to use a rather inexact term, see it in very clear-cut terms. Lenin’s dialectical viewpoint identifies the two types of activity and strives to apply them at the most appropriate times, when they are most likely to meet with success.

A position that is clearly Menshevik and opportunist is to say: tsarism has collapsed, and power is held by a coalition, sometimes open, sometimes hidden, of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois opportunists. It is established that we cannot support any part of the domestic or foreign program of such a government: we need to call for power to be passed to the workers’ and peasants’ councils. But now that we are free to agitate and distribute our propaganda, following the victory of the democratic revolution, it is just a matter of winning, openly and by legal means, the majority in the workers’ organisations and the soviets. Even worse it would be to say: such peaceful agitation must be extended, even if we did win a majority in the Soviets, until the constituent assembly is convoked, in order to successfully place in a minority the solution of a coalition government with the bourgeoisie.

For a start, such a solution should be rejected as it is non-revolutionary, insofar as it is not proposed in reference to a transient phase, but in the sense of an acknowledgement that, after the democratic liberation, the party programmatically and on principle excludes armed struggle, the civil war, though having on the other hand excluded a parliamentary and government bloc with the bourgeois parties. Lenin’s response is instead completely dialectical: now, at the end of April, it doesn’t suit us to provoke, in the short term, a civil war to take power. Nevertheless, the civil war will happen, and there are two hypotheses: a tsarist counter-revolution which

or even by other parties – those which engage with the historical process, and what actually then happens.

It is for that reason that we gave a lot of space to the April phase; during which the party drew up its theoretical balance-sheet of two battles, of differing content, about which it has sufficed for us, and will continue to suffice, to sketch out the key stages and important struggles.

The Bolshevik party had developed on a grand scale an impressive edifice of historical perspectives in the period leading up to 1905, grafting its conclusions and forecasts relative to Russia onto the great perspective of Marxist communism regarding proletarian battles in the countries of the white race.

A second balance sheet had to be made during the new pause determined by the reaction which followed 1905 and utilising the lessons learnt in that great struggle, until one arrived at the next major crisis to hit international socialism with the outbreak of war in 1914. A new doctrinal battle was conducted, not so much at first within Russian socialism, which appeared to Lenin, too, to be entirely against a war proclaimed by the hated Tsar (we saw that here Lenin was for the most part mistaken, unable to believe that after so much theoretical preparation there would be any hesitation on that point), as within the parties in the West, most of which had shamefully caved in and gone along with the chauvinist betrayal.

When in February 1917 the crisis engulfed the Russian Tsarist state, all doctrinal forecasts are once again put to the test of facts, but the devastating effects of the European and world war would overlap with those of the class struggle in Russia, and of the anti-feudal revolution in which the working class must take up a fighting position that is difficult to define, but certainly in the front ranks.

The party within which there had been such abundant preparation following February, would acquit itself well in terms of action, but find itself on shaky ground in the latter phase as regards three problems which we have adequately outlined. First: response to the war. Second: the task of the proletarian party in the anti-feudal revolution. Third: the struggle against interna-

sembly would be able to legislate otherwise. A miserable end for the man who had been dubbed the “minister of the mujiks”.

This gave further confirmation of the correctness of the Bolshevik view, who proposed that without waiting for the Constituent assembly the land should, without further delay, be declared the property of the State, by handing it over into the immediate material possession of the local peasant councils to be collectively managed by them or to make transitory distributions of land allotments to farming families.

73 – The demands of the urban workers

At the same time in the cities the scarcity of resources and staple goods was agitating the workers who were clamouring for pay increases. For months on end the government avoided this thorny issue, they had no minister of labour, whereas the progressive Konovalov was minister of trade and industry. Finally, the Menshevik Skobelev would take it on, but with the sole means of getting the so-called unofficial Duma Conference to appoint a commission, divided into sub-commissions and sections, which were deprived of any authority, and which hid behind the assertions made by the employers that any major expenditure would cause the productive machinery to grind to halt, or cause an enormous rise in prices. Around a million industrial workers would take action in the factories, not satisfied with the vague works committees which the new regime had grudgingly recognised.

Until early June it would only be in commissions and theoretical declarations that the government would tackle the question of the State’s political economy, its control of the factories and the prospect of direct state control of the largest ones, which the government viewed very unfavourably because...due to the severe lack of resources it wasn’t possible to pass to socialism! Conditions as regards obtaining supplies were worsening, workers’ wives found themselves queuing for days on end, and in the large and medium sized centres the wave of discontent was steadily rising.

As for the army, whereas the government was plotting a revival of the military struggle

those for entering the government, and those against it. After the initial crisis involving the street protests, the delegates voted 34 to 19 in favour of reaching a settlement with the bourgeoisie. In Lenin’s opinion, it was the petty bourgeoisie, faced with the threat of a new revolutionary phase, which was caving in, conceding to the capitalists on all positions. On 6/19 May, the members of the new government were announced, a government presided over by the bourgeois Lvov with Kerensky and the others mentioned above: the bourgeoisie and the opportunists had clinched their pact of steel.

As predicted, the government would be powerless even in a reformist sense and the timid steps taken by the “socialists” were soon blocked, thus among the masses of the city and countryside disappointment in the government and the leaders of the Soviet would increase at this time.

72 – The struggle in the countryside

The struggle of the peasants to seize in one way or another the land of the big landowners was boiling over, and one of the aims of the coalition was to divert this simmering threat into achievements attained by peaceful means. The Minister of Agriculture Chernov made attempts to implement the convoluted theoretical program of the Social Revolutionaries, involving re-partition of the land. He welcomed the call from the rural zones which denounced the attempts of the landowners to save themselves from spoliation by means of partial sales to nominees, or to rich or well-to-do peasants: and he adopted the measure of suspending, with a legal order to the notaries, all contracts involving the sale of land.

This strange measure, which contrasted on the theoretical level with the program of a great bourgeois revolution, which in France in 1789 would make ‘of the land an article of commerce’, aroused the indignation of the big landowners, who claimed that Chernov should withdraw this provision. Despicably this man first rendered it ineffective in practice by specifying that the transmission of mortgage rights was not prohibited, and then, more cowardly still, he authorised the resumption of all contracts which conformed ‘to the law’, under the pretext that only the future Constituent As-

quietly being led by two strong-arm organisers – Stalin and Sverdlov, who never went to the tribune. Trotsky was not yet in the Bolshevik Party. He rightly remarks that if Sverdlov hadn't died, soon he would have assumed the role, close as he was to Lenin, of the party's organising secretary.

However, the Bolsheviks, who as the facts would show were already in control of the masses in the capital Petrograd and could have exerted pressure on the congress from without, for the last time waged a great battle of words and ideas, on a neutral terrain, a declaration of war alongside the bourgeoisie as much as the opportunists, who were still vested in dividing up the legacy of Tsarism between them.

The primary question was the attitude to take towards the provisional government. The Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks would uphold the position, in the All-Russian Congress, which had hitherto prevailed in the Petrograd Soviet, that is, to leave governmental power to the coalition ministry, formed outside the Soviets, inside the equivocal committee which claimed to trace itself back to the old Duma “elected” under the Tsar. And meanwhile everything should be deferred until the Constituent Assembly, to be democratically elected “as in the liberal, civilised countries”.

Tsereteli, one of the most talkative speakers, repeated for the umpteenth time:

At the present moment, there's no political party in Russia that says: give us power, leave, we will occupy your place. Such a party in Russia doesn't exist.

The old rhetorician was confident of his effect on the audience, but a voice – Lenin's – answered him from one of the delegates' benches: ‘*Such a party exists!*’

Amidst much commotion and astonished comments, Lenin took the platform:

He [Tsereteli] said that there is no political party in Russia that would express willingness to take all state power into its hands. I say: ‘Such a party exists! No party has a right to refuse power, and our party does not refuse it. Our party is ready at any moment to take all power into its hands!’.

This is an excellent historical lesson in the study of revolutionary processes; it is not a philosophy, as eternal as it is worthless, of organisation, a historical form whose effectiveness lies in its content, and which is not revolutionary *automatically*, and can indeed be the opposite. Indeed, it is the explosive play of the social forces that we follow.

On the eve of the congress the Bolsheviks measured the degree of their assiduous preparation: at the Conference of the Factory and Shop committees held between May 30 and 3 June (12 -16 June new style), in which three quarters of the delegates accepted Lenin's Bolshevik line, well illustrated in the ‘Resolution on measures to cope with economic disorganisation’, at the conference of the Bolshevik military organisations held during the All-Russian Congress of soldiers, and on other occasions and demonstrations. The workers' trade unions had increased during that period to 130-newly constituted ones in the capital and 2,000 throughout Russia.

75 – The line-up at the Congress

The All-Russian Congress, which opened on 3/16 June under the direction of the opportunist leaders in the government and of the capital's Soviet, consisted of more than a thousand delegates, but only 822 had a deliberative vote. Of these, 285 were Socialist-Revolutionaries, 248 Mensheviks, and these, together with a variety of smaller fractions, were in the overwhelming majority. The Bolsheviks numbered a mere 105. Represented at the Congress were 305 unified local soviets of peasant and soldier deputies from throughout Russia; 53 regional and provincial soviets; 21 organisations from the active army; 8 from the reserve army; and 5 from the navy. This was the disposition of a gigantic, organised, armed force: it showed itself to be totally impotent.

At this congress the solid Bolshevik fraction had neither the aim of achieving a Bolshevik majority, nor that of attacking the congress from without if it rejected its proposals. The step being taken then was just promoting as widely as possible the revolutionary program which the party had adopted in April.

Sitting in the presidency for the Bolsheviks were Kamenev, Zinoviev, Nogin and Krylenko. The main speakers were Lenin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev. But the work of the fraction was

govern with them – exerting hegemony over them.

78 – “Popular” revolutions

We won’t at this point examine what Marx and Lenin had to say about a *dualism of power* in the anti-feudal revolution which had already revealed itself in the French Revolution of the 18th century (and we could say also in the English ones of the 17th Century, in the time of Cromwell and then of William of Orange’s) and ended up in both those cases with the defeat of the embryonic “people’s power” and the triumph of the minority propertied class of manufacturers, bankers, and bourgeois landowners. In this conception we see counterposed to the first Parliament, to the Estates General, of 1789, the extremist Convention of 1793, which expressed the revolutionary ardour of the urban *sans-culottes* and the incendiary serfs from the countryside, succumbing in the Thermidor to the power of the big bourgeoisie, as quite a while after the Commune would succumb to Thiers’ thugs.

Although skipping such an analysis we will quote a passage from Lenin which confirms that the Russian Revolution was a wholly bourgeois revolution, and of all of those it played out as a “truly popular” one – which does not contradict the thesis that it triumphed in October as a revolution that was politically *socialist*, but which *aimed to achieve* an anti-capitalist social development, even though, at the end of the cycle, with the defeat of the revolutionary and internationalist party after the defeat of the European communists, it withdrew – no less than the French revolution of 1793 did – into the great feudalism-to-capitalism transition. The passage is this, from *State and Revolution*:

If we take the revolutions of the 20th century as examples we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions are both bourgeois revolutions. Neither of them, however, is a ‘people’s’ revolution, since in neither case does the mass of the people, their vast majority, come out actively, independently, with their own economic and political demands.... The Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905-07 [Lenin is writing between February and October, at the time of the June congress in fact, and here denounces Tsereteli, just a few days

In accordance with this doctrine (*Vain is the thought*, Lenin cries out, *that this is only a theoretical question*), from then up to now, we have always called “blabbermouths” those who, in the absence of any real movement, and with a bourgeois parliamentary government still firmly in place, want to “found Soviets in Italy”.

Everyone is fond of building, constructing, and founding. The bourgeois animus of the building firm! We are revolutionaries insofar as we aspire only to tear down, demolish, and destroy!

But we would like to dwell a moment on the very remarkable claim that an institution of government which arose from the exploited masses occurred not only in 1905 Russia and with the Paris Commune, but also ‘*in 1792 France*’.

This is a thesis of Marx and Lenin’s that rests on very solid foundations. The French Revolution of 1789-1793 was a bourgeois revolution, *i.e.*, it was determined by the pressure of the capitalist mode of production which needed to replace feudalism; nor could there have been any other social perspective than the passing of economic privilege and political power from the feudal nobility to the big bourgeoisie. But the clash manifested itself as a collision of the mass of urban and rural poor against the *ancien régime* and its defenders: and it is precisely a revolution that historically straddles feudalism and capitalism that can best be described as a *truly popular revolution*. It was a class revolution fought *for* the bourgeoisie, but not *by* the bourgeoisie, who sent the poor and the middle-class *intelligentsia*, to fight for them. Our revolution will be a true *class* revolution rather than a *popular* one, because the proletariat will engage in a revolution for itself, and what is more it will abolish all classes; the working class will make this happen, and it alone.

In 1917 Russia, between February and October, we don’t have the historic problem of the revolution in-between capitalism and socialism, but rather that of the revolution from feudalism to capitalism. In distant 1792 there was a second bourgeois revolution, and the poor people were able to fight but not govern, whereas in the more recent one in 1917, we are talking about the...penultimate bourgeois revolution, and the proletariat, already with a significant presence, had to fight with the whole of the people and

this (in Italy the various Institutes for Industrial Reconstruction) but for the purpose of increasing capitalist profits with State money: the revolution must do this in order to forfeit a part of the profits. And finally, but only later, will the Bolsheviks propose the nationalisation of factories.

From 1918, and in 1921, Lenin will explain that this is not, even with expropriation without compensation, a question of socialism, but of climbing the rung of State capitalism, which is on the march towards socialism.

But you must pose the question as a concrete relationship of political forces. The revolutionary party gives the order for the nationalisation of the factories of the heavy arms industry, to strengthen the armed power of the State itself and the political power of the working class. The opportunists oppose this, because they don't want to take either profits or power from the capitalists, and they assume that socialism not being mature, it is not the time to nationalise the great means of production! The correct response is twofold: nationalisation of industry is State capitalism, and not yet socialism (not even in the sense of the lower stage of communism). But in denying this measure and in supporting it one has an act of fighting *against* socialism and *for* socialism, with the proletariat leading the latter fight even in the knowledge that it comes to administer the political power, still under a democratic form, of a bourgeois society.

(to be continued)

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Summaries of two previous General Meetings

Bringing the words of communism back into the hearts of proletarians of every country

Video conference meeting, 26–28 May 2023
[GM 146]

As arranged in good time and convened by the party's international centre, a general meeting was held from Friday, 26 May to Sunday, 28 May. Individuals and local groups were connected by tele-conference.

classes within a revolutionary democracy, do you demand that the assembly of Soviets on principle respect the power of a pre-established centre that is outside it? You invite workers to elect Menshevik and SR delegates, you invite them to follow these parties that call themselves socialist; but by what logic, if these parties claim on principle that they don't want to come to power?

This argument, which is as clear as it is incisive, aims to achieve the following set of results: only the Soviets are to have power and form the basis of the government. But for this to be possible it is necessary that within the Soviets there cannot prevail parties that declare themselves to be workers' parties, but which renounce at the outset any possibility of taking power.

80 – Political economic measures

Lenin's speech also throws light on the question of practical anti-capitalist measures which the coalition government is powerless to implement. The opportunists here defend themselves with the usual ruse: the economic situation is serious; Russia is poor and has been further impoverished by the war. Calling for measures against big industry means claiming to “install” socialism: they call themselves socialists, but they object, entirely out of context, that socialism follows only on the basis of developed capitalism. Lenin explains that this isn't what it is about, but only about going forward in the sense of pursuing the workers' interests and opposing bourgeois interests. In April we merely asked, he said, for an investigation into the 500-800 per cent profits obtained by the war magnates from war contracts, by chucking a few of them into prison for a while so they can reveal all, and by means of workers' control in the factories. *This is not socialism.*

We're still at the same point in the polemic. They are a series of steps which can be taken in our class struggle, possible even when socialism isn't, which as a point of arrival is not to be found within the revolution in Russia, although it must remain the *final aim* of the class and the party. So, we are talking about workers' control, about compulsory *cartelisation*, that is, the establishment of State-controlled industrial trade unions. Bourgeois governments also do

As is our practice, we report below the syntheses of reports presented over the two 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 (cf. *The Communist Party* nos. 53 and 54) are the full text of the reports on capitalism in Mexico and the labour struggles in the United States, as well as that of the relationship between democracy and socialism. Additional reports may be found in other languages. Full texts of the remainder will be published later.

A – Theoretical topics

Marxist theory of knowledge

Bourgeois ideology, part III: Heresies

In the 11th and 12th centuries cities were born or reborn, particularly in north-central Italy and Flanders, but also in northern France, Burgundy, Provence, and Rhenish Germany. The pre-bourgeois merchant and petty-nobility classes settled there, which first clashed and then merged and gave rise to the bourgeoisie around the 13th century. In central-northern Italy, in those same centuries, the Communes established themselves, which tended towards real autonomy from the empire and self-government, more markedly than in the other regions of the former Carolingian Empire.

Together with the cities and the bourgeoisie, ‘heresies’ appeared, in an incomparably more evident manner than in previous centuries. Such religious conceptions, heretical or not, always had at their basis ‘millenarianism’, the expectation of the end of time, messianism and the model of the first Christian communities, where all goods were pooled.

These conceptions did not constitute an ideology useful to the bourgeoisie, but were often taken up by merchants and bourgeoisie as well. To this we can give two explanations. The first, and most obvious, consists in the dominance of a religious ideology that saw the return to the origins as the only possible remedy against a present ‘degenerated’ due to the ‘corruption’ of the Church and the Empire, institutions that should instead have marched on the

terms of variety, consistency and coherence, given the minuscule size of our membership, truly appear to be a “miracle”, materially determined by the historical urgency of communism. It is made possible not by the exceptional skills of today's comrades, but by the organic method of our work, free of the miseries of bourgeois civilisation: individualism, infighting, and competition.

We listened to the reports of the local groups, of the progress in our press initiatives, periodicals, and monographs, of intervention in the trade unions in the various countries, of the possibilities of disseminating our words, to be formulated ever better in relation to the current monstrous convulsions of the dying world of capital.

Reports of the activity of each Section and Working Group

Friday Session

1. The continuity between fascism and democracy in Italy
2. The agrarian question in the feudal epoch

Saturday Session

1. Japan in the economic crisis
2. On the history of the International Communist Party
3. Theories of surplus-value: Robert Malthus
4. Labour struggles in Latin America
5. Democracy: false friend of socialism
6. The Red Army in Germany, 1919

Sunday Session

1. The military question in the Russian Revolution: The first two Battles of Tsaritsyn
2. Strikes and union activity in the United States
3. The course of the world economic crisis
4. The origins of socialism in the Ottoman Empire
5. The Party's trade union activity in Italy
6. The recent coups in African states

* * *

Report abstracts

One of the most important points in the Ricardian system is the discovery that the profit rate has a tendency to fall.

According to Smith, this would occur as a result of increasing accumulation and the accompanying increasing competition of capital. Ricardo retorts to this argument by stating that competition can equalise profits in the different branches of production; however, it cannot lower the general rate of profit.

The tendency for the rate of profit to fall is also derived from the increase in the rate of land rent, but this tendency of rent does not actually exist, and with that falls its effect on the fall in the rate of profit.

Second, the research rests on the erroneous assumption that the rate of surplus value and the rate of profit coincide, and that therefore a fall in the rate of profit corresponds to that of surplus value.

Ricardian theory thus rests on erroneous assumptions: 1) that the existence and growth of the land rent are conditioned by the decreasing fertility of agriculture; 2) that the rate of profit is equal to the rate of surplus-value and can rise or fall only in inverse proportion to how the wage declines or rises.

At this point, it is necessary to shift attention to the arena where all the contradictions and antitheses of bourgeois production come to explosion: the world market. Precisely because all the contradictory elements reach their climax here, apologetics unleashes its worst weapons and, instead of investigating what the contradictory elements that explode in the catastrophe consist of, it contents itself with denying the catastrophe and insisting, in the face of the regular periodicity of crises, that if production conformed to the schoolbooks the end of prosperity would never come. Apologetics, then, consists in the falsification of the simplest economic relations and especially in holding firm to unity in the face of antithesis.

In order to show that capitalist production cannot lead to general crises, all conditions and determinations of form, all principles and specific differences, in short capitalist production itself, are denied, and in fact it is shown that if the capitalist mode of production, instead of be-

eat at the same table. This term was commonly used by Franciscans.

It is only with the birth of capitalism and the reflection on it, culminating in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848, that sentiment is united with reason and science, giving rise to our historical programme. In the name of the common communist sentiment, with the various Waldensians, Franciscans, and Dulcinians, we sit at the same table and share the same bread, the fruit of the earth and human labour.

This same bread that capitalism turns into stone. The latter is not just a metaphor: Marx himself describes how already in his time flour was mixed with marble dust, to increase the weight of the bread, and thus sell it at a higher price and profit.

The reality of capitalism is worse than any fantasy, and it is worse than whatever “conspiracy” the bourgeoisie concocts to give an easy explanation for what they do not know, cannot, and do not want to understand.

* * *

Marxist crisis theory **Theories of surplus-value**

David Ricardo (cont.)

We resume the exposition of the chapter on theories of crises concerning Ricardo, which will go into the study of the bourgeois conception of the fall of the rate of profit, accumulation and consequently the crises of overproduction, the utmost horror of every apologist, hired to deny the catastrophe to which the abominable last classist mode of production constantly tends.

The language used at this juncture by Marx is far from simple and straightforward, but every great scientific achievement is dutifully preceded by a good deal of effort, and this we require of the communist reader whose brain muscles must train to learn the theory of the liberation of the proletariat.

The amplitude of space devoted to Ricardo in *Theories of surplus value* allows the same principles to be taken up again and again so as to approach the crux of the matter in stages.

Malthus' theoretical conclusions are therefore in line with his own role as apologist. Ricardo represents bourgeois production as such, as signifying the freest unfettered deployment of social productive forces. Malthus, too, wants the freest possible development of capitalist production, produced solely from the misery of those who are its chief architects, the working classes, but it must at the same time accommodate the 'consumption needs' of the aristocracy and its branches in the state and church.

* * *

B – Historical topics

The course of the global economy

The course of world capitalism

The past two years have been particularly chaotic.

After a prolonged period of deflation following the great crisis of 2008-2009, inflation has returned. Initially, production could not keep up with demand, leading to congested ports due to a shortage of container ships. Consequently, prices for transportation, raw materials, and energy skyrocketed. This upward trend extended to grain prices, driven by a combination of a general drought and China's large demand to feed its population and animal herds. The imperialist war between Russia and Ukraine, which commenced in February 2022, temporarily sent both energy and grain prices soaring.

What's more, starting in March 2022, the Fed began raising interest rates to combat inflation and restore a "normal" economic situation. This move was followed by all other major central banks, excluding Japan. However, after years of near-zero or even negative interest rates, such a hike is not without consequences and is expected to contribute to increased chaos.

The incidental and underlying causes of the return of inflation have been explained in previous reports. A further factor was the 'just in time' practice of companies minimising stocks in order to lower production costs. Thus, when the period of Covid quarantine came to an end in most of the big imperialist centres, in order to replenish themselves, companies simultan-

'quantity of labour'. Since what a quantity of labour is exchanged against, namely wages, constitutes the value of this quantity of labour, it is a tautology to say that the value of a given quantity of labour is equal to the mass of money or commodities against which this labour is exchanged. This simply means that the exchange value of a given quantity of labour is equal to its exchange value also called wages. But it does not at all follow that a given quantity of labour is equal to the quantity of labour contained in wages or in the money or commodities in which wages are represented.

According to Malthus the value of a commodity is equal to the sum of money to be paid by the buyer, and this sum of money is valued by the mass of common labour, which can be bought with it. But by what this sum of money is determined, is not said. It is the vulgar representation of it in common life in which cost price and value are identical; it is the image of value proper to the philistine entangled in competition.

Seeking internal solutions within the classical school to the problems posed by Smith and Ricardo, however, the transition to the vulgar conception is made. In fact, he is forced to derive surplus value from the fact that the seller would sell the commodity above its value, that is, at a greater labour time than that contained in it. In this way, however, what the capitalist would gain as seller of one commodity, he would lose as buyer of another, in a reciprocal swindle.

Where then would the buyers come from who pay the capitalist the amount of labour that is equal to the labour contained in the commodity plus its profit? The only exception is the working class.

Since profit derives precisely from the fact that workers can only buy back part of the product, the capitalist class can never realise its profit by means of worker demand. Another demand is necessary. For the capitalist to realise his profit would therefore require buyers who are not sellers. Hence the need for landowners, those on pensions or sinecures, priests, etc., with the result that Malthus champions the maximum possible accretion of the unproductive classes.

the brink of a recession. Consequently, there has been a noticeable decline in inflation. After reaching its peak in June 2022 at 9.1% in the U.S. and in October 2022 at 10.6% in Europe, inflation dropped to 5.5% in Europe and 3% in the U.S. by June 2023. However, there was a slight resurgence of inflation in the U.S., reaching 3.7 in August. This phenomenon is attributed to the summer season and government incentives aimed at stimulating industrial production and supporting the development of new technologies.

In Europe, there are indications that the inflation disparity among various countries is narrowing. In June, the highest recorded inflation values were 6.3% in the United Kingdom and 4.9% in France. A significant contributing factor to this trend is undoubtedly the escalation in fuel prices, closely linked to the upward trajectory of oil prices.

In a bid to bolster oil prices, OPEC+ has consistently reduced daily production. This strategy has led to a significant imbalance between supply and demand in the third quarter, reaching 1.6 million barrels per day – the highest level since 2021. To counteract this decline, countries dependent on oil consumption are depleting their stocks. In August alone, they withdrew 76.3 million barrels, bringing reserves to their lowest point in 13 months. Consequently, this depletion has contributed to a surge in prices, with Brent crude oil from the North Sea reaching \$94 per barrel in September 2023.

The escalation of prices cannot be solely attributed to certain countries' monopolies on hydrocarbon production. Another contributing factor is the under-investment observed in the raw materials and energy sectors over the past decade, coupled with speculation that identifies opportunities for significant profits.

However, within the chronic crisis of the capitalist mode of production, periods of recession are anticipated to be succeeded by a new wave of deflation. However, within the chronic crisis of the capitalist mode of production, periods of recession are anticipated to be succeeded by a new wave of deflation. Central banks will then once again have to rush to the rescue of capital to keep it from collapsing.

Poland, which experienced a notable surge in production since becoming a member of the European Union, has witnessed a slight downturn in the industry over the past three months. This follows a marked slowdown between October and December and is concurrently influenced by a decline in international demand.

On the other hand, as seen in the graph, the drop in production in South Korea is spectacular. While Germany is heavily dependent on world markets, particularly those in China, Europe, and North America.

India seems to be escaping global deflation for now, with relatively high increases. This is due to its poor integration into the world market and the relative weakness of its industry relative to its demographic weight.

After a recession from August 2021 to March 2022, Brazil experienced a slight recovery from July 2022 to November 2022. The -1.1 percent annual decline recorded in December is indicative of a return to recession.

In Turkey, after a sharp slowdown in industrial production from July 2022, the increases have now turned negative, dropping to -7.5 percent by February 2023.

Canada, a major exporter of commodities, particularly oil, has seen all its increases remain positive, but slowing sharply since June 2022, from 5.8 percent annually in May 2022 to 1.7 percent in February 2023.

In conclusion, the steadfast old mole persists in its splendid subversive efforts. The contradictions within the economic undercurrents intensify, creating immense pressures that will inevitably rupture the capitalist framework, akin to a colossal volcano unleashing accumulated forces.

Driven by necessity, the proletariat of the whole world will be on the move again, directed by its class party, to resume its place in history.

The course of the economic crisis: A general overview

Decline in inflation

The surge in interest rates has initiated a global economic decline, bringing the world to

still 6.6% lower than it was 22 years earlier. Hence, British capitalism has been in recession since the 2000s. But, as if by magic, the statisticians of the British bourgeoisie have manipulated all the indices. If we take the average of the first seven months of 2023, a year of recession compared to 2022, also in recession, we get a surplus of 1.5% over the 2000 index! Thus, the British bourgeoisie would have us believe that British capitalism is doing better than German capitalism.

Even this foolishness is for us a confirmation of their decadence: soon the bourgeoisies of all countries will no longer be capable of producing reliable statistics. Instead of industrial production they will rely on the far more dubious GDP statistics.

The situation in Italy is not any better. Following a robust recovery in 2021 with a growth rate of +11.7%, which came after a decline of 11% in 2020, growth dwindled to +0.4% in 2022 before turning negative in 2023 with a decline of -2.7%, based on indices for the first nine months of the year. Despite positive performances in 2017 and 2018, Italian capitalism had managed to narrow the gap with the 2007 peak by a still significant 17.6%. Despite the post-pandemic recovery, industrial production is still 20% lower than it was in 2007.

In Poland, the accumulation of industrial capital has maintained a notable average annual growth rate of 5.4% for a few years. This growth is particularly remarkable when juxtaposed with the decrepit capitalisms of the Old Continent.

But the with recession at the beginning of the year, production recorded a 1.7% drop in the first six months.

World trade shows a slowdown in exports as of October 2022, but they have fallen sharply for most major imperialist countries. The exports of China, Korea, the United States and Belgium have decreased by about 10%. Those of Japan by 5%. Chinese imports decreased 15% in July on a year-on-year basis. As usual, the decline in imports is synonymous with a domestic recession

We can conclude that, as expected, after two years of growth in 2017 and 2018, global capit-

flow of investments. German monopolies in the automotive, mechanical, and chemical industries, by making massive investments in China, generated fabulous profits for years. However, as Chinese capitalism, having acquired know-how from the West, has seen its growth slow down, it is now capable of competing in sectors like machine tools, chemicals, and motor vehicles, which constitute the strengths of German capitalism.

China stands as Germany's largest trading partner, with the interchange between the two countries reaching \$300 billion. However, Germany's trade deficit is steadily growing – a trend that could intensify with the increasing competition from Chinese electric cars, whose prices are highly competitive. Europe, and particularly Germany, lags behind in this sector and struggles to compete with Chinese production. After years of reluctance to invest in the production of batteries, magnets, and electric motors, European industry, especially German industry, finds itself fighting for survival. The lucrative car market could slip away entirely from the middle class, as Europe proves incapable of producing vehicles that can compete in terms of both price and quality. In its senile crisis, German capitalism faces the risk of succumbing to far stronger imperialist powers.

French capitalism, like German capitalism, experienced a slightly better industrial output growth of 0.51% in 2023 compared to 2022, which had witnessed a mild recession. However, the overall picture is even less optimistic than in Germany. In comparison with 2019, production is 4.9% lower, while it remains 12% below its 2007 peak. In other words, the level of production is very close to that of 2009, during the worst times of the overproduction crisis. Despite various measures taken, the older imperialist states are evidently struggling to overcome the crisis that occurred between 2000 and 2009.

The other great sick man of Europe is the United Kingdom. After the strong recovery in 2021 from the fall of 2020, Britain has been in recession again since October 2021. If we compare the index for the first seven months of 2023 with those of 2022, we have a -1.4%, a decline that follows that of -3.7% in 2022. If we compare the 2019 index with the high reached in 2000, we find that in 2022 industrial output is

terised by the division of the country, became from 1923 onward an alliance. Starting from the pretext that China was not ripe for communism and the soviet system, that is, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, it came to circumscribe the tasks of its revolution within a framework compatible with a bourgeois order, of which Sun Yat-sen was the main protagonist.

A Menshevik policy was in fact sanctioned insofar as, at that time, China was not economically much more backward than Russia of 1917, where the Bolsheviki had instead first fought for a radical, albeit democratic, revolution led by the proletarians and poor peasants against all other bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class parties. Reversing Lenin's teachings on tactics in so-called double revolutions and the International's indications for the proletariat of the colonies and semi-colonies, the new course pushed the party of the proletariat into submission to the bourgeois leadership.

In February 1923, Sun Yat-sen reclaimed leadership of the Canton government, leading to strengthened ties between himself and Soviet Russia.

That February of 1923 saw the suppression of the strike of the railroaders on the Peking-Hankow line, the last of the wave of strikes initiated in 1919 that had peaked in 1922. This event was read as a confirmation of the weakness of the CPC and the need to bind itself to the Kuomintang.

In reality this alleged weakness of the Communist Party of China did not entirely correspond to the actual situation, for while at the beginning of 1923 the Party's membership was effectively small, it was also true that the Party had taken over the leadership of many trade unions which had undergone great development precisely in the course of 1922, thus establishing even then a notable influence on the young Chinese working class, still uncontaminated by the contagion of that reformism and opportunism which had already taken firm root in Europe. Moreover, during 1922 the proletarian movement had demonstrated a great capacity for struggle, and the repression of February 1923 had caused only a momentary interruption of the vigorous class action that would shortly thereafter resume with superior force, culminat-

pendent character of the proletarian movement even in its embryonic form'. Thus, the first steps were being taken toward abandoning the defence of the party and its programmatic and organisational autonomy, as the 1920 theses clearly stipulated.

Ties with the Kuomintang went beyond the internal aspect of cooperation with the CPC, affecting also the diplomatic plane of relations with the Soviet state. Toward the end of January 1923 in Shanghai there was a meeting between Joffe, from August '22 head of Soviet diplomacy in China, and Sun Yat-sen, who, after his expulsion from Canton, was well disposed to move his party "to the left" and to receive Soviet help against its domestic and foreign rivals.

On the Soviet side, after unsuccessful negotiations with the Peking government had been attempted in past years and a certain openness had also been shown toward the warlord Wu Peifu, who had imposed in central China and whose initial anti-Japanese attitude had resulted in a reconciliation with the Anglo-Saxon imperialists, it began to point more and more firmly to Sun Yat-sen as an aspirant to power in China. To make a deal with Sun Yat-sen, Soviet diplomacy showed him the benefits of aligning with the less powerful CPC, backed by the strength of the Soviet state. This involved temporarily setting aside communist and revolutionary objectives in China. Thus, on January 23, 1923 Joffe and Sun Yat-sen drafted the following statement:

Dr. Sun Yat-sen maintains that neither the communist order nor the Soviet system can at present be introduced into China, because the necessary conditions for a successful establishment of communism or Sovietism do not exist there. This opinion is entirely shared by Mr. Joffe, who also thinks that the supreme and most urgent problem of China is to realise national unification and achieve full national independence; and, in connection with this great task, he assured Mr. Sun Yat-sen that China has the warmest sympathy of the Russian people and can count on the support of Russia.

The initial relations between the Russian proletarian state and then-extant Chinese bourgeois governments, in a political context charac-

disagreed with Sorokin's decision, disregarded his orders, and headed for the quickest route to defend Tsaritsyn. This other disobedience triggered strong internal disagreements, to the point that some members of the Military Committee, falsely accused by Sorokin of treason, were arrested and shot. The entire HQ fell into complete chaos to the point where it was unable to issue safe and precise orders and did not even know the exact location of its forces and the outcome of battles.

Denikin took advantage of the immobility of the 11th Red Army and the weakening of some sectors and occupied Armavir. For fear of the sure Cossack reprisals, the number of volunteers who joined the Red Army grew, but the supply problem and the quality of the troops worsened.

Nevertheless, on 28 October, Taman's Red infantry attack on Stavropol caused the Whites to retreat more than 30 kilometres from the city, but the Red HQ, still in chaos, did not take advantage of the favourable situation to disperse Denikin's formations, which received new military supplies from the Allies, thus enabling a broad counter-attack to recapture the strategic Stavropol, the last supply point for the 11th Army. The situation worsened for the Bolsheviks when the surviving members of the Military Committee declared Sorokin a traitor; he sought refuge among the Stavropol soldiers he believed to be loyal to him. On 2 November, he fell into the hands of Matveev's former fighters and was immediately shot.

In the following days, Wrangel's white cavalry, in repeated attacks lasting days, succeeded in occupying the city while what remained of the 11th Army, on 20 November, began a long march across the steppes separating it from Astrakhan. The white cavalry sent in pursuit had to give up, mired in mud.

The causes of the defeat of that valiant army were twofold: lack of supplies and chaos due to internal strife.

Having reached the cities of the lower Volga, the former 11th Army began to reorganise, first having to beat Spanish flu and typhus.

End of the Kuban campaign

the reorganisation of the Bolshevik army. Made up of military members of the army and political members elected by the soldiers of the unit in action, this committee had decision-making autonomy in all operational-strategic matters. In this regard, the following passage from Trotsky's military writings was quoted:

Command, therefore, was somewhat split. The commander retained simple military direction; the work of political education was concentrated in the hands of the commissars. But the commissar was above all the direct representative of Soviet power in the army. Without hindering the properly military work of the commander and without under any circumstances diminishing the latter's authority, the commissar had to create conditions such that this authority could never act against the interests of the revolution.

Denikin, in order to annihilate the 11th Army once and for all, reacted by setting up an encirclement of the Bolsheviks entrenched between the Laba and Kuban rivers from five directions, with the aim of cutting off all possibility of supplies and escape routes. An ambitious plan for his limited forces, which resulted in three weeks of hard fighting at the end of which Sorokin's counterattack forced the Whites to give up and retreat.

The never-ending disagreements over the conduct of operations between Sorokin and Matveev were rekindled when precise directives came from Moscow to move immediately towards Tsaritsyn to bring relief to the Tenth Army; while Matveev proposed the immediate transfer by rail to Tsaritsyn, on the contrary Sorokin intended to descend to the east to control Stavropol, then south to Grozny and the oil fields against the Terek Cossacks, and finally to head for Tsaritsyn.

Sorokin had his plan adopted despite the protests of Matveev, who refused to carry out his orders in the following days. Sorokin convinced the RMSR to have him arrested and shot.

On 7 October, the same day as Matveev's execution, Sorokin's elaborate manoeuvre to conquer Stavropol began, for whose defence Denikin sent adequate reinforcements. The commander of the Steel Division, Zhloba, also

and southern sectors futile. The Red troops had to retreat and re-deploy.

Strict decrees were issued against deserters, spies, and saboteurs, and younger conscripts were mobilised and hastily trained.

On August 22, the reorganised Red Army launched a counter-offensive in two directions, breaking the enemy lines with repeated bayonet assaults, driving them back along the entire front. Further Red victories in the following weeks pushed the Cossacks back across the Don to their original positions, decreeing the failure of Krasnov's first offensive.

The Cossacks suffered heavy losses: 12,000 dead, wounded, and prisoners; but the revolutionary losses were worse: 50,000 dead, wounded, and prisoners, despite taking dozens of machine guns, 27,000 rifles, 3,000 horses, and a large amount of ammunition in spoils.

A telegram from Stalin to Lenin on 6 September ends: 'The enemy is routed and retreating behind the Don. Tsaritsyn is safe! The offensive continues'. Trotsky, President of the Revolutionary Military Council (RVS) and head of the Red Army, instead telegraphed Lenin with the request to immediately recall Stalin to Moscow because: 'The battle for Tsaritsyn, in spite of superior forces, has in any case gone badly'.

In reality, the breakthrough had not taken place. Denisov, to ease the pressure, had retreated slowly, engaging in only limited engagements that succeeded in stopping the Bolshevik counter-attacks.

The great work of reorganisation of the Red Army directed by Trotsky had produced an efficient military and hierarchical structure organised by fronts and armies with an audacious plan to reintroduce professional soldiers into the Bolshevik army, the selection of whom was entrusted to a special commission headed by Lev Glezarov. At the beginning of the civil war, the officer corps of the Red Army consisted of 75% former tsarist officers, often used as military specialists, a proportion that rose to 83% by the end of the civil war in 1922. It is recorded that out of 82 tsarist generals commanding in the Red Army, only 5 defected. If necessary, their

The White General Krasnov was supported by the Krug, the Cossack assembly, and especially by German economic and military aid. He had a modest force of about 40,000 soldiers, 610 machine guns, and 150 artillery pieces. Krasnov managed to extend his control over other Cossack territories and on April 17, 1918, he founded the Don Republic, which covered an area more than half the size of Italy, with less than 4 million inhabitants, half of whom were Cossacks and the rest poorly supported peasants and migrant workers.

The conquest of Tsaritsyn, an important railway junction connecting the centre of Russia with the lower Volga and Caucasus regions, was vital for Krasnov. From the south, most of the grain, foodstuffs and fuel travelled there to the large Bolshevik-controlled cities of the north and all the raw materials needed by the Soviet war industry and the Red Army, which was engaged in defending the 'encircled fortress' of the revolution on an 8,000-kilometre front.

Moreover, the Cossacks, having conquered the city, would have been able to join forces with those of Ataman Dutov, on the offensive on the Volga 450 kilometres further north. This conjunction would have facilitated an advance on Moscow.

The plans drawn up by the White Cossack Denisov for the first battle for Tsaritsyn envisaged an offensive in two directions: the main one directed at the town; a second to contain any Red relief coming from much further north.

The Soviet defences, distributed along the course of the Don, were numerically equivalent to those of the enemy. But they were poorly co-ordinated with each other and deployed mainly in defence of Tsaritsyn, weakening the sectors north of the city.

The defence had armoured trains which, moving quickly on the outer railway ring, could assist the Red defenders by cannonading the enemy; the same was true of the river gunboats on the Volga.

The White attack in the north, characterised by the strong numerical superiority and the lack of Red co-ordination, disrupted railway communications with Moscow, isolating the city and rendering partial Red successes in the central

The failure of the Army of the Don at Tsaritsyn, although superior in combat, was due to a number of causes: the strong attachment of the Cossacks to their homeland often led them to desert when news of danger came from their villages; they used their otherwise-effective cavalry in a way ill-suited to the new modalities of modern warfare: not rapid troop movements, but old-fashioned, reckless, galloping charges, which were stopped by machine guns emplaced in fortified positions.

Voroshilov's and Stalin's decision to implement a mobile and active defence, which let the Cossack impetus vent itself in bloody assaults and then move on to bayonet counter-attacks, was possible because the fighting quality of the Red troops improved markedly, battle after battle.

The rift between Stalin and Trotsky, which came to constitute a kind of 'military opposition', was absolutely unconscionable in the midst of the civil war for the defence of the proletarian revolution. Lenin, pressed by both sides, finally called Stalin back to Moscow.

* * *

The agrarian question

At these meetings a comrade presented the first chapters of a report on the agrarian question in the Marxist tradition. It will be structured as follows: Historical background; Capitalism and agriculture; Economic theory of rent; The struggles of the labourers; today and tomorrow.

Historical background

The slave mode of production

Let us first take up the texts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kautsky, and our Party to recall what we have written so far on this vast and fundamental subject.

We mentioned the agrarian question in the Athenian state, the essentials of which Friedrich Engels well summarises in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In his conclusion he states:

The counter-revolutionary vanguards arrived, only 7 kilometres from Tsaritsyn, at the last line of trenches and barbed wire near Sadovaya station, where Voroshilov organised the last defence. He gathered all available firepower, including armoured trains, and concentrated his fire on the sectors where the enemy was advancing.

October 17: After the preventive bombardment ceased, the Cossack infantry advanced according to their classic fighting pattern in orderly, compact rows with their flags flying. When they reached 400 metres from the Red trenches, they were hit by a wall of fire that created huge holes in their tight ranks. The Red infantry came out of the trenches to pursue the retreating enemy, who fell back to the west. The railway ring around Tsaritsyn thus remained under Bolshevik control.

After this heavy defeat, Mamontov launched an attack in the northern sector. The Whites bypassed Tsaritsyn from the north in two directions, blocking river traffic on the Volga. Voroshilov, through rapid movements along internal lines, succeeded in re-establishing the defences, which were also strengthened by the arrival of experienced Latvian regiments from the eastern front, which restored numerical supremacy in favour of the Reds.

October 22: the advance towards Tsaritsyn from the north was halted and the Whites pushed back about 30 kilometres from the town, allowing rail links with the rest of Soviet Russia to be restored in November.

This notable defeat deprived Krasnov of any hope of linking up with Dutov's Cossacks, who were operating east of the Volga; the Cossacks' morale plummeted as they became less and less motivated to fight far from their home territories. The arrival of the cold season led to a gradual slowdown in all operations.

November 11: The armistice stipulated by Germany signalled its defeat and exit from the war, depriving the Cossack formations of all support, forcing Krasnov into a more open approach towards Denikin's Volunteer Army, which was mainly supported by the British and French.

booty; a portion of the rural population also participates in the “adventures” of war.

However, most of these were only seasonal or part-time nomads. They spent most of their days on land which housed their families, in agriculturally organised territories, settled in a village.... In the ninth and tenth centuries the village, whatever its size or shape, provided the normal background of human existence. In Saxon England, for instance, the village served as the basis for the levying and collection of taxes.

Around these fixed points was laid out the pattern of the cultivated land, and particularly the network of trackways and paths, which appear in the landscape of today as the most tenacious relic of our ancient heritage....

In Western Europe...except in the Mediterranean coastal lands where building was in stone, men's habitations in the early, and even the not-so-early, Middle Ages were huts of wattle and daub, short-lived and destructible.... However, villages did not change their location readily, and for this there were apparently two reasons. Firstly, because the land on which the village stood was subject to a particular legal status, different from that of the surrounding land, and enjoying customary privileges which made its boundaries unalterable. Legal historians have shown that the village was made up of contiguous parcels of land which most Carolingian documents describe by the word *mansus*, and which the peasant dialects of the late Middle Ages called variously *meix*, *Hof*, *mansure*, *toft*.... We understand by this an enclosure, solidly rooted to its site by a permanent barrier such as a palisade or a living hedge, carefully maintained, a protected asylum to which the entry was forbidden and the violation of which was punished by severe penalties: an island of refuge where the occupant was assumed to be the master and at whose threshold communal servitude and the demands of chiefs and lords stopped short.

These enclosures provided a haven for possessions, cattle, stocks of food, and sleeping men, protected them against

tearing down the old edifices instead of getting them from the quarries. This method did more harm to the ancient works of art than the devastations of the invading Vandals and other barbarians.

The feudal mode of production

A general picture of that socio-economic formation in Europe – before turning to our Marxist classics – can be obtained in Georges Duby's *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*. We read:

[I]n the civilisation of the ninth and tenth centuries the rural way of life was universal. Entire countries, like England and almost all the Germanic lands were absolutely without towns. Elsewhere some towns existed: such as the few ancient Roman cities in the south which had not suffered complete dilapidation, or the new townships on trade routes which were making their appearance along the rivers leading to the northern seas. But except for some in Lombardy, these ‘towns’ appear as minute centres of population, each numbering at most a few hundred permanent inhabitants and deeply immersed in the life of the surrounding countryside. Indeed, they could hardly be distinguished from it. Vineyards encircled them; fields penetrated their walls; they were full of cattle, barns, and farm labourers.

All their inhabitants from the very richest, bishops and even the king himself, to the few specialists, Jewish or Christian, who conducted long-distance trade, remained first and foremost countrymen whose whole life was dominated by the rhythm of the agricultural seasons, who depended for their existence on the produce of the soil, and who drew directly from it their entire worldly wealth.... Ninth-century Western Europe was peopled by a stable peasantry rooted in its environment. Not that we should picture it as totally immobile. There was still room in rural life for nomadic movements.

Movements take place in the summer for pastoral transhumance or transport on wagons; some periodically venture out to gather wild produce, for hunting, or for robbery, in search of

Documentary evidence of the existence of currents and parties with left positions is limited to a period of twenty-five years, from 1909 to 1934. But it is a period marked, in the Empire first then in Turkey later, by several decisive historical events: the 1908 revolution, the Italo-Turkish War, the Balkan Wars, the First World War, the Armenian genocide, the emergence of the national independence movement against the occupation of parts of Turkey by the Entente, Mustafa Kemal's victory against aggression by Greece and against internal reactionary uprisings, the exchange and transfer of Greek-Turkish populations, and finally the consolidation of Kemalist power and the defeat of the left wing of the Communist Party.

For this reason, the comrades presenting this report have first sorted the documents by period, to deal later with the particular circumstances under which the individual documents they present were written.

Introduction

It is appropriate to provide the reader with some background information on the history of the Ottoman Empire, which expanded over a wide geo-historical region.

At the end of the 18th century, the Empire was a well-developed but stagnant feudal monarchy, ruling over vast territories. Thanks to its relations with the West in the early 19th century, capitalism began to expand and develop within the Empire. The bulk of the bourgeoisie emerged from the extremely numerous and influential non-Muslim minorities who were directly linked to Western capital and trade. They had previously been merchants and shopkeepers, and certainly were not the most important part of their communities, but their status increased rapidly as their businesses and capital expanded in an Empire where the source of wealth was still land.

Factories began to spring up in the cities. The growing power of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie led even in remote villages to the establishment of schools to teach positive science. New ideologies such as liberalism and nationalism spread. In turn, peasants began to immigrate to the cities, forming most of the new working class.

been constructed and two recently renovated by Abbot Irminone.... The estate mills [were] available to the local peasant farms in return for payment.... [In] one royal manor in northern Gaul, Annapes...as much grain was brought to the manorial granges from its five mills and brewery as was harvested on the entire arable area of the estate.... In spite of taxes and the pre-emption on their own harvest, peasants found it to their advantage to make use of the manorial mills.

It was recalled how bread was the staple food, even in the less civilised regions of Latin Christendom.

We then went on to describe how agricultural production was organised, which can be summarised in these three points:

1) In the texts, the description of harvests and sowings and, more frequently, that of the grain benefits owed by the peasants, prove that, generally, the fields, both those of the peasants and those of the lords, produced not only winter grains, but also spring grains, and in particular oats.

2) The arrangement in the agricultural calendar of *corvées* for ploughing required of the serfs by the lordships indicates that the ploughing cycle was frequently ordered according to two sowing seasons, one in winter, the other in summer or spring.

3) Ploughing plots in large estates often appear in groups of three; for example, in about half of the domains of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés described in the Irminone polyptych, surveyors counted three, six, or nine lordly fields. This arrangement suggests that cultivation there was organised according to a ternary rhythm.

* * *

Rise of the labour and communist movement in the Ottoman Empire

of ‘democratic centralism’ and replacing it with the more appropriate ‘organic centralism’.

The communist parties must realise an organic centralism which, with the maximum compatible consultation of the base, ensures the spontaneous elimination of every grouping tending to differentiate. This is not achieved by formal, mechanical hierarchical prescriptions, but, as Lenin says, with just revolutionary policy. (*Lyon Theses*, 1926)

Function and role of the leader in our party.

Leaders, too, are a product of the party’s activity, the party’s working methods, and the trust the party has attracted. If the party, in spite of the variable and often unfavourable situation, follows the revolutionary line and fights opportunist deviations, the selection of leaders, the formation of a general staff, take place in a favourable manner, and in the period of the final struggle we will certainly not always have a Lenin, but a solid and courageous leadership. (6th ECCI, 1926)

Discipline and fractions.

The appearance and development of fractions is indicative of a general malaise in the party, and a symptom of the non-responsiveness of the party’s vital functions to its aims, and they are combated by identifying the malaise in order to eliminate it, not by abusing disciplinary powers to resolve the situation in a necessarily formal and provisional manner. (*Platform of the Left*, 1925)

We see no serious drawbacks in an exaggerated preoccupation with opportunist danger.... Whereas very grave is the danger if on the contrary...the opportunist disease spreads before one has dared to vigorously sound the alarm in some part of the party. Criticism without error does not harm even the thousandth part of what error without criticism harms. (‘The Opportunist Danger and the International’, 1925)

How then was it possible that the party that was born in Livorno, founded on similar foundations, later degenerated? The answer is that it

Nonetheless, our current party has very different characteristics from those of the parties of the time, due to a historical selection that draws on both the victories and defeats of the international workers’ movement and its parties.

If until 1914 the two souls, the reformist and the revolutionary, could coexist within the same parties and the 2nd International, it was the outbreak of the imperialist war that was to separate and define the irreconcilability of the two opposing tendencies: on the one hand the social-democracy, at the service of capital and their respective bourgeois homelands, on the other the revolutionary, for the sabotage of war, its transformation from war between states into war between classes, the violent seizure of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The same happened after the experience of the Stalinist counter-revolution. Throughout the course of the Second World War, almost the entire proletarian movement suffered a blatant subservience to the interests of capitalist preservation, signing the liquidation, officially and unofficially, of the Third International.

No political organisation other than our own current, anchored in the Italian Communist Left, was able to take the criticism of Stalinist degeneration all the way. Consequently, the leadership of the international proletariat can only be taken by the unique, unitary International Communist Party.

When one speaks of the Italian Communist Left in most people’s minds, one thinks of its abstentionism. We can say that this was, at the time, a very important aspect from a tactical point of view, but not one of principle. On the contrary, until then the Communist Left had elaborated other fundamental characteristics of internal party life and relations between comrades: organic centralism, rejection of any kind of personalism, the possibility for each comrade to participate in party work.

In this regard, the extended report will include extensive quotations from our classic texts, demonstrating how the current party is in perfect continuity with the tradition of the Left.

Organic centralism. As far back as 1922 we proposed abandoning the organisational concept

capitalist maturity was compatible with greater economic vitality.

The overthrow of the decades-old Gaddafi regime was seen by Sarkozy as an opportunity to get his hands on the Libyan oil rent by beating the competition, in the case of Libya primarily the Italian one, and to strengthen his control over neighbouring Niger, at that time one of the main suppliers of uranium needed by the French nuclear industry.

On the other hand, France is also not spared by the greed of the imperialist metropolises attempting to appropriate control of energy resources, and their associated rents to compensate for the meagre profits resulting from their industrial decline.

If, in our Marxist view, politics is presented as a condensate of economics, we find nothing particularly strange in observing how weak economies, in which capitalist modernity has disrupted traditional social organisation, starting with the introduction of extractive industry, correspond to weak political forms.

The states of sub-Saharan Africa came into being on the basis of borders arbitrarily drawn according to the interests of the former colonial powers, on territories that were heterogeneous in terms of physical geography, fragmented from an ethnic and linguistic point of view, and characterised by very disparate historical traditions.

Their perennial political instability poses a problem of understanding and analysis that does not seem within the reach of bourgeois publicists. Take for instance the raging Jihadist guerrilla warfare of the last fifteen years.

The prevailing narrative on this persistent scourge in sub-Saharan African countries seeks to explain the difficulties of local governments, and their Western allies, especially in religious motivations, with vast territories falling under the military control of the faithful who fly the flag of fundamentalism. As usual, the depiction of the bourgeois world turns reality upside down to rest on its head. It describes with the façade of affiliation with internationally known acronyms of radical Islamism the subjection of individuals from marginalised social groups and peripheral rural communities to fierce economic

negative connotations over time that far outweighed the slavish optimism of the Ivorian president, especially after the Ivory Coast's little "miracle" came to an end in the late 1970s as a consequence of the slowdown of the cycle of capitalist accumulation in the old metropolis.

Highlighting some unmentionable aspects of the relations of the Elysée Palace with the 14 former overseas territories on African soil was an essay published in 1998 entitled *La Françafrique, le plus long scandale de la République* by the economist François-Xavier Verschave. In this book, beyond the usual jeremiads about the lack of democracy in African countries, some characteristics of the relations between the old colonies and the former metropolises were rather realistically identified. *Françafrique* was defined quite correctly as:

a nebula of economic, political and military actors, in France and Africa, organised in networks and lobbies, and polarised around the monopolisation of the two rents: raw materials and public development aid. The logic is to prohibit initiative outside the circle of the initiated. The system recycles itself in criminalisation.

While we have been witnessing the Elysée's growing agitation over the fate of its African sphere of influence for many years, a turning point in this regard can be established with the war conducted in 2011 in Libya by NATO and strongly desired by the French president at the time. What was loosely perceived as the first step in a campaign of colonial reconquest (the term 'neo-colonialism' is inadequate for us to describe the phenomenon given that it is about imperialist spheres of influence in which the movement of capital prevails over military occupation and the institutional presence of colonial metropolises), was even then a sign of the difficulty for France to sustain the contest between powers for the control of African markets.

A misleading interpretation sees the Libyan enterprise as an 'error' from which serious consequences for French policy in North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa would follow. But the premises of that mistake were all in the relative decline of France as a power and the appearance on the scene of new competitors whose lesser

setbacks. In Niger, over 80% of the population still lives in rural areas where a subsistence economy prevails and transhumance is widespread in livestock farming.

In the countryside, there never existed a definite ownership of land and the right of possession was based on a customary rural code in which, until recently, the so-called right of the axe was recognised, whereby the first person to come on a piece of land took possession of it only for clearing it. In the many decades of independent Niger's history, successive governments have failed to establish definite criteria for the allocation of property rights. This indefinite ownership of land, in an era of recurring droughts and climate change, has made the settlement of disputes between neighbours and between them and nomadic herders more complex and uncertain.

Complicating matters is the demographic dynamic of a country that has seen its population multiply by ten since 1950, from 2.46 million to over 25 million today. With the world's highest fertility rate, albeit slowly declining, still above 7 children per woman, at current rates Niger's inhabitants will reach 35 million by 2030. The country's population is now the youngest in the world; 49% of it under 15 years old.

In addition to the low level of urbanisation, the low level of industrialisation is evidenced by an electricity network that reaches less than 20% of the population. The lack of modernisation of the road network, especially in the north of the country, is also due to the lack of aid from international donors who, it is said, do not want to make it easier for migrants to cross the desert. On the difficult and unsafe routes across the desert, illegal trafficking of drugs proliferates, including cocaine, cannabis, and opioids, especially tramadol, destined, after crossing Libya, for Europe and the Middle East.

The lack of investment in infrastructure has also slowed down the exploitation of the country's mineral resources. The auriferous ones are very important. Uranium mining in the Arlit area of Agadez province by the French company Orano (formerly Areva) has declined from its peak in 2007 due to lower global demand after the Fukushima disaster. An attack by al-Qaeda in the Maghreb in 2013 forced a costly rein-

the oldest industrialised countries, are in search of substitutes for the proletariat and go so far as to place their expectations for change in the military caste of the peripheral countries. Even today there are those who, in a logic completely alien to the tradition of the workers' movement, find pretexts to appreciate the career military man in power as long as he is willing to launch populist and demagogic buzzwords.

Ibrahim Traoré has made a career out of the "fight against terrorism" and domestically pushes the accelerator on the militarisation of society, aware that the enlistment of volunteers exerts a strong appeal on the masses of youth, who are the vast majority of the population and who have little chance of finding employment and see a prospect in the profession of arms. Once again, war becomes a way to sculpt society in the image and likeness of capital, framing the workforce with military discipline, creating proletarian reserve armies by depopulating rural areas, intercepting investment and aid from external imperialist powers interested in supplanting rival imperialisms.

It is no coincidence that last July Traoré met with Putin near St. Petersburg, while the head of the Burkinabè junta himself met with a Russian military delegation at the end of August to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Meanwhile, Russia is confirmed as the main supplier of arms to the Sahel countries.

Completing the picture of the decline of *Françafrique* was the coup d'état in Niger on 26 July. The overthrow of President Mohamed Bazoum was once again justified by the military, which set up the 'National Council for the Protection of the Homeland', 'because of the deteriorating security situation and bad governance'.

To speak of 'bad governance' in one of the poorest countries in the world where, for what bourgeois statistics are worth, the illiteracy rate among the adult population exceeds 70% and where life expectancy at birth is around 61 years, sounds like an understatement. A semi-populated country until just a few years ago, two-thirds of whose territory lies in the Sahara desert, it has seen that third of fertile or semi-fertile land progressively eroded where, since the 1970s, severe drought waves have undermined agriculture, leading to significant social

As the economic crisis deepens and the government's prescriptions for dealing with it fail, at least partially, the Turkish bourgeoisie found a diversion in the demand of democratic freedoms, the protest against cronyism and generalised corruption. A heterogeneous set of grievances against the ruling party came to the attention of the voters: disrespect for civil rights, women, minorities, Kurds, homosexuals, and trans people; lack of merit in access to state organs and offices; hostile stance toward Western-style secular democratic principles; arbitrary arrests of opponents and journalists and subsequent court convictions.

Some space has been given to the oppression of the working class, but in the enfeebled forms in which it is denounced by every bourgeois opposition force, insisting on the lack of safety in the workplace, wages below subsistence and the legally established minimum, the legal presence of child workers in factories, etc.

The opposition had therefore declared this year's elections crucial, that “the people” would finally make the “right decision” and that “Turkey” would thus emerge from this difficult situation. Many leftist parties adhered to this rhetoric.

Thus was presented a “polarised” society in which, even in significant sections of the working class, there was an expectation that “this time” the opposition could achieve a real electoral “victory”. “Turkey” would return to the path of parliamentary democracy and solve its problems peacefully, according to the democratic standards of a European state and become a country ‘better able to compete with the world’.

The Turkish bourgeoisie and the elections

Instead, this election round has also been yet another showdown between bourgeois gangs. All indications are that there will be at least a temporary compromise between the warring factions, with the coven of the victor Erdoğan trying to grab the lion's share.

One of the internal contrasts within the Turkish bourgeoisie is between the organisations of the industrial bosses. The large industrialists were traditionally organised in the TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Business Asso-

cisive choice of camp, not least because of the looseness of the current imperialist alignments being formed.

The United States, which has a military presence in the country, does not seem poised to withdraw. The Biden administration did not explicitly condemn the coup and did not even call it what it was so as not to be forced to issue sanctions against Niger. The US base in Agadez, one of the most important for the deployment of drones, will probably continue to be operational and should have been the subject of negotiations during the meetings between Victoria Nuland, the Deputy Secretary of State under the Biden administration, and the ruling junta in Niamey. The agreements reached probably envisage the relocation of the 1,100 US military personnel to the Agadez base alone after the abandonment of the one in Niamey, held by the Americans together with French soldiers. In the meantime, the Italian military presence with 350 soldiers does not seem to be questioned by the Niger junta, and neither is that of the German military advisers.

But the picture brought about by the wave of coups that upset old balances in sub-Saharan Africa still seems to be evolving. The Elysée Palace's plan to restore the deposed Niger president to power by means of an intervention by the countries of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, has been frustrated by the opposition of Mali and Burkina Faso, which have entered into a joint defence treaty with Niger.

It is, however, a fracture that brings the final collapse of *Françafrique* closer, an event that far from ending the struggle for the division of African resources and land between the major imperialist powers, would only intensify it. In the future evolution of political arrangements and alliances in this region of the world, it is all too easy to foresee the development of another gigantic fault zone in a geo-historical area that is increasingly crucial for inter-imperialist rivalries.

* * *

Still a neo-Ottoman Turkey

access to more information thanks to the Internet, and the rapid increase in the number of students in universities and the migration from rural to urban areas is completely wrong.

In fact, these elections have shown that right-wing tendencies are on the rise even in the younger generation. Many, including young people, complain that the current government is not racist enough, that immigrants are the cause of their problems.

Once again it has been shown that the road to workers' liberation does not go through bourgeois democracy.

The true Communist Party does not give up its principles and is not afraid to express them, lest it lose supporters or, worse, votes! The true Communist Party has nothing to do with bourgeois democracy, which stinks like a sewer, where we feed on filthy lies of all kinds.

* * *

The selfless proletarian fight against pension reform in France

The Intersyndicale weakened, then ended the struggle

In *Il Partito Comunista* no. 422, we presented an account of the great anti-pension-reform movement in France, focusing on the internal reactions within the CGT. Its 53rd congress took place in March, during which there was a considerable strengthening of the internal opposition, characterised by opportunist positions in the trade union-political field, which coexist with a certain confrontational character with respect to the collaborationist leadership. Here we update on the evolution of the resistance movement and its conclusion.

The apex of the movement was in March 2023, as the discussion of the pension reform in parliament approached, then following its approval, in order to obtain it, the government resorted to Article 49-3 of the Constitution (an institution similar to the “vote of confidence” in Italy), which allows parliamentary discussion to be circumvented.

camps, were kept within the democratic institutional framework and did not have the disruptive, perhaps even bloody, outcomes that a propaganda interested in dramatising that filing ritual was hinting at. In fact, the aim of the ruling class is to shift the attention of proletarians to interclass issues and to prevent any detailed and non-generic reference to the working-class condition, even by artfully emphasising and magnifying the minimal and insignificant program differences between the parties in the field.

Turkey's elections proved once again that the bourgeoisie will, behind the democratic mask, as long as it can, never give up an iota of state repression. Turkey's oppressed groups (women, Kurds, homosexuals, trans people, immigrants, etc.) know this: genocide, torture, massacres, forced migration, executions, unjust sentences, and similar disgusting and monstrous events are not a thing of the past!

As much as the bourgeois states try to hide it, as much as they deny it, these abominations continue to be committed.

The Kurds, women, the discriminated, who pay the price for these cruelties, will never be able to mitigate the oppression they suffer through the instrument of elections. Before the elections, the parties of the bourgeois left claimed that ‘you can solve your problems by voting for us every four years’. This attitude only reinforces the illusion that the solution lies in voting rather than in subordinating every social demand to the strength of the working class, its independent organisation, unionisation, and strikes, and not the illusion that it is easier to achieve socialism through reformism, “common sense” and an electoral victory.

The will of capital will always come out of the ballot box. It will not be education that will open voters' eyes. Nor will their status as exploited wage earners or oppressed minorities. The dominant ideology will always be the ideology of the ruling class. Only in the Communist Party is the condemnation of bourgeois society consciously guarded.

The idea that the young proletarian and oppressed generations will move toward communism solely due to the effect of social evolution and the increasingly cosmopolitan environment,

The French proletariat, in a social fabric that has changed since the 1980s with the deconstruction of big business and increasing precariousness, was faced with a government determined not to give in, a repressive apparatus strengthened, and recently trained against the *Gilets Jaunes*. In the face of this, the regime unions, anxious to avoid class struggle, diverted it into parliamentarianism, begging the government to negotiate in order to finally force defeat and return to the table of “social dialogue” as soon as possible.

Having cashed in on its victory, today the French government announced it would continue the offensive with the reform of the *Revenu de Solidarité Active* (RSA), a social welfare benefit for the most destitute, and a new immigration law to further divide the workers. In the meantime, spending on armaments has increased, both for the war in Ukraine and for internal repression.

A first assessment

The movement had already started before the introduction of the reform. 2022 was a particularly intense year for trade union struggles in various sectors: the school workers in January, then the childcare workers, the strike of the precarious postal workers led by the rank-and-file union SUD, strikes in RATP with demands around questions of maintenance and safety, the nuclear power plant stoppages led by the FNME-CGT (*Fédération nationale des mines et de l'énergie*), and above all the strikes in the petrochemical refineries and terminals led by the combative FNIC-CGT in October to demand wage increases (*‘Le lotte operaie in Francia’, Il Partito Comunista* no. 419). Finally, there was the strike of SNCF train conductors on December 23–25, organised by a group of workers operating outside the unions.

Also worth mentioning in November was the movement of SNCF signalmen at the Bourget 2022 marshalling yard in the Paris region involving 80 railway workers, often new recruits with no tradition of strike action, organised with SUD Rail. Initially, they opted for strikes of 59 minutes every day during peak hours, which corresponded to 3 hours of traffic stoppages due to the stop and restart procedures. In January 2023, in the absence of any response from management, they switched to two 59-minute strikes per shift, and so on until April. Then, with the

After the fourteenth day of national mobilisation, on June 6, the Intersyndicale blew the whistle.

But not the working class. Indeed, the day demonstrated the persistence of mobilisation, despite a loss of momentum: 900,000 demonstrators throughout France, 300,000 of them in Paris, according to the CGT.

Once the demonstration had started, CFDT General Secretary Berger made it clear that he saw it as the final act of the dispute: that ‘the game is over’, and he called on the trade unions to ‘bring their weight to bear in the future balance of power’ on other issues: purchasing power of wages, housing, working conditions, etc. This was a twisted way of saying that the CFDT, and the majority of the Intersyndicale, intended to abandon the anti-pension mobilisation and reopen the “social dialogue”, which in Italy we call *concertazione* (and which in English we call ‘class collaboration’).

On June 7, predictably, the President of Parliament invoked Article 40 of the Constitution (rejection of a bill if it creates additional expense for the state) against the LIOT motion. The next day, the LIOT withdrew the bill. This was yet another miserable result of trade unions’ tactic of relying on the institutions of the bourgeois regime.

On June 16, the Intersyndicale met for the last time before summer. In the wake of the announcement by the head of the CFDT, the joint communiqué “noted defeat”: ‘The Intersyndicale and the protesters failed to convince the government to backtrack on raising the retirement age from 62 to 64’. Sophie Binet of the CGT, for her part, added that ‘with another President of the Republic, in another country, we would have won’.

In other words, according to the leaders of the two largest French regime unions, it was impossible for the working class to win: the defeat was the result of Macron’s “denial of democracy” and “numerous forcings”, not of the combination of factors inherent to the class struggle: the conduct of the Intersyndicale and the proletariat’s combativity. For them, there is no class struggle, but rather the contraposition of “democracy” and “authoritarianism”.

collected in 1954 in a code of administrative laws were adopted in the fascist period.... Some of these sets of rules even collect pre-fascist regulations, so that their codification in the fascist period acts as a bridge between pre-fascism and post-fascism.... The continuity is not only ensured by the permanence of the rules, but also by the personnel: a large majority of the top public personnel of the democratic age come from the ranks of the bureaucracy formed in the fascist period.... The idea of fascism as a parenthesis, of a sharp break between the fascist period and republican Italy, therefore, is wrong. Or, rather, it corresponds more to the need of contemporaries to establish a distance between fascism and themselves, than to the reality of the facts.

In the second chapter we read:

Defining the ‘fascist state’ is difficult because, apart from its proclaimed totalitarian nature, its roots lie in liberal Italy and its institutions survive the fall of fascism; because a part of its institutions is no different from those created in the same years in other parts of the world.... Fascism itself solemnly proclaimed that it wanted to build a totalitarian state.... It aspired to be totalitarian, because it proclaimed ‘everything in the state, nothing outside the state’. The ‘fascist state’ was thus able to combine a wide variety of ideological legacies and to link up with conservative Catholic social doctrine. It exploited all the elements of authoritarianism of the existing state, introducing new elements, of a Caesaristic and totalitarian type.... The very rupture constituted by the liberation and the 1948 Constitution becomes less important in this perspective: one thinks of the ‘continuity’ between certain statements of the 1942 code (and of the 1927 Labour Charter itself) and certain provisions of the 1948 Constitution...[and] of the ‘continuity’ constituted by the permanence of so much of the legislation of the 1930–40 period.

We now come to Chapter 3:

many parts. The Crown and the Senate of the Kingdom of Italy remained in existence, albeit disempowered. The Royal Edict of 1848 on the press was retained, even if it underwent profound modifications.... In many cases the Fascist legislation consisted of a collection of norms from the previous sixty years, updated and made more suitable for the new regime.... When presenting the laws for the defence of the state to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the kingdom in 1925–28, Alfredo Rocco could always show their connection with pre-fascist legislation and illustrate the element of statutory continuity.... This continuity of institutions is accompanied by the continuity of the technical-political personnel.

The author goes on to speak of the

reproduction within the corporations of the then-so-called class conflicts (between workers and employers). For the most intelligent corporatists, the fascist state did not annul social unrest within a generic solidarity. It subsumed it into the state, keeping it under control.

We go on to read of

rationalising measures... not unlike those that had been adopted by the historical Italian Right. On the contrary, these measures, in many cases, collected obsolete norms from the liberal age, enhanced them and framed them in an organic context. In other cases, they revived institutions and procedures from the first years after Unification or even from the Kingdom of Sardinia.... measures to deal with the economic crisis. Here there is maximum correspondence with choices made outside Italy, especially in the banking sector and public enterprises.

Again:

Just as there is continuity between the liberal-authoritarian state of pre-fascism, there is continuity between the state of the fascist period and the post-fascist democratic state. Two-thirds of the rules

However, various signals suggest that the current momentum may be approaching its end.

The recent imposition of export bans impacting the production of integrated circuit manufacturing machinery is anticipated to solidify what is already indicated in market forecasts during the second half of the year. Weaknesses in the IT sector have resulted in a decrease in demand for services, hitting a low point just when Japanese capitalists anticipated the post-pandemic “big rebound”. The resilience of Japanese capitalism appears to be sustained primarily by declining energy prices, injecting fresh vitality into consumer spending that is not driven by net growth or additional structural factors.

Increasing consumption would necessitate raising wages, but “spring talks” on this issue have been postponed. This delay is attributed to the fact that the Bank of Japan (BoJ) shows no intention of slowing down the pace of rate hikes anytime soon. Consequently, the BoJ is attempting to highlight the rebound in industrial production to portray the country as “stable”. Against the backdrop of a deteriorating labor market, Kishida’s approach is an attempt to portray the workers’ plight as temporary and recoverable. March data indicates a rise in the unemployment rate (2.6% in February compared to 2.4% in January), while in the same months, the ratio of jobs to job applications dropped from 1.35 to 1.34.

The trend was propelled by weakness in the manufacturing sector and strength in the services sector. These same sectors are largely responsible for the surge in output through January, leading to the perception that their improvement may be temporary.

The strategy advocated by the Japan Trade Union Confederation, focusing on the policy of raising wages, was met by businesses and corporate industries with a wage increase of +1.4% in April (the start of Japan's fiscal year). However, this increase was limited to just one month. Additionally, the April data revealed a 0.3% decrease in overtime pay, marking the first decline in two years.

The impact of the *shunto*, the spring wage negotiations, went no further and certain conditions were stipulated by Kishida. He stated that

imal wage increases, and restrained government spending.

Kuroda’s policy, previously closely aligned with Abenomics, is now transitioning towards a more restrictive approach known as a “buy-back”, as discussed in previous reports. This shift has faced open criticism from other players in the capitalist economy, including the Black-Rock fund, expressing concerns about the market's inability to absorb the large “fluctuations” in prices and the “excessive force” with which it may spill over into the markets.

Most indicators suggest a considerable risk which will have a significant impact on Japan's technology industry. This is in the wake of a global escalation of the imperialist feud involving the United States, NATO, Russia, and China, along with their respective allies. The anticipated contraction in GDP for both the first and second quarters is a crucial indication of this outcome. Unofficially, several sources associate these contractions with each other in a causal relationship.

The inflation trend mirrors what is observed globally, showing a gradual decline. This outcome is attributed to central bankers’ inability to promptly rein in inflation. In March, “core” (primary, excluding energy and food) consumer prices increased by 3.2% compared to the previous year, marking a slowdown from the 42-year highs of 4.3% in January and 3.3% in February. This deceleration is a consequence of government subsidies aimed at curbing individuals' energy expenditures. Despite this decline, the figure remains well above the BoJ’s target, indicating that the reduction in prices may not occur as swiftly as desired.

Retail sales in Japan have maintained an annual growth rate of +6.6%, surpassing the previous forecast of +5.8%. This growth has been primarily driven by the automotive and domestic sectors, especially department stores. Additionally, industrial production relative to domestic output saw a notable increase of 4.5% in February compared to January, surpassing the forecasted 2.7% increase. While these figures seem impressive, they are undermined by the modern tricks of bourgeois economics of lowering expectations on economic indicators, making it easier for them to be exceeded by reality.

vailing wage patterns in the different countries tend to lower what is paid to retirees and laid-off workers to abysmal levels, and deprive the vast masses of unemployed and hidden unemployment: workers in the informal economy, 'self-employed', day labourers, etc., of all resources.

Real wages are being eroded by inflation and employers' rapacity, seeking to maximise the exploitation of workers. All this is leading to a deterioration in the living, eating and health conditions of proletarian families.

In Colombia there have been no government promises of any kind for the workers. The trade union centres have reserved the workers the role of extras, to make them join the event organised by President Gustavo Petro, who needed to show "popular support" for his anti-proletarian policy. Petro called on 'Colombian citizens' to mobilise in support of the reforms his government has proposed to the Congress of the Republic. Workers' discontent was channelled towards the institutional mechanisms of bourgeois democracy, pushing the workers' struggle into the background in relation to its plans for labour reform.

In Brazil, the trade union centres mobilised the workers and obtained from the Lula government only the adjustment of the minimum wage from 1,302 to 1,320 reais (R\$) per month (about US\$267 US, an increase of 1.38%) and income tax exemption for those earning up to 2,640 R\$. The teachers went on strike demanding a wage increase. They denounce that the implementation of the table announced by the government will reduce the total salary, which will affect the pension calculation. For example, if a teacher with 40 hours of work earns R\$ 3,529.74 per month as a basic salary, with bonuses their salary is R\$ 4,500 (about US\$911): this worker will not receive any increase. Similarly, the government's salary adjustment has not benefited the school's administrative staff.

The strike started on May 4, five years late. But the judiciary ordered its interruption under penalty of a fine of R\$ 300,000 for each day of the strike. The Governor of the Federal District asked the Judiciary to double the fine to R\$ 600,000 per day and the freezing of the union's bank account.

This strategy is complemented by the expectation of progress in microchip production, with Taiwan's TSMC poised to share its knowledge with the Japanese corporate sector to reclaim the top positions it once held in the global market. However, in a more practical sense, Japan is faced with competition from U.S. plans to "re-shore" chip production facilities. This, in turn, sparks joint competition and a race against time to steal raw materials and semi-finished products.

Apart from the striking resemblances with Italy, especially in the approach taken by the Italian bourgeoisie to persist with its long-standing policy of low wages, this type of economic development strongly suggests that in Japan, the post-Covid-19 recovery is already largely concluded. The current phase illustrates the rapid global progression of the economic and financial crisis, with which the Japanese bourgeoisie is increasingly unable to cope, forcing it to fall back to the strategy of mitigating the war between the classes.

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The working class in Latin America: Report to the September 2023 General Meeting

For May Day, from Mexico to Patagonia, we witnessed the traditional parades of workers who bowed to the demagogic policies of governments, or who anticipated in vain possible announcements of wage increases or "improvements" in working conditions, waiting for crumbs to fall from the table of the bosses' banquet. In every country the ruling demagogue has made his promises with the support of business and the various union centres subservient to capital.

If we exclude countries like Venezuela and Cuba, where nominal wages are close to zero, Colombia, Brazil and Peru stand out with the lowest minimum wages. However, we know that even in Uruguay, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Paraguay, which have the highest minimum wages in the region, workers survive at the cost of much deprivation, for food, health care and hygiene. On the other hand, the pre-

In general, the labour movement in Italy remains in a condition of weakness and passivity, and this is reflected in our activities in the areas listed above.

If we take a look at the overall situation of the class struggle in Italy, the last general movements of a certain strength – inter-categorical, involving the generality of the class – were in 1992, against the agreement that completed the revocation of the ‘sliding scale’ – which provoked a protest at the top of the regime unions and a strengthening of grassroots unionism – and that of 1994, against the Berlusconi government’s first pension reform.

The last strong national sectoral strike movement, which developed spontaneously with so-called ‘wildcat’ strikes that repeatedly violated anti-strike legislation, was the public transport workers’ strike of December 2002–January 2003, which also developed outside and against the regime’s unions and which strengthened grassroots unionism in the sector (*Disamina e bilancio dello sciopero dei tranvieri*).

As far as factory strikes are concerned, we had the 21-day strike at FIAT in Melfi in April 2004 (*‘Cobas e Fiom alla riprova di Melfi’*), and ten years later the 35-day strike at Thyssen-Krupp in Terni in October–November 2014 (*‘Terni, Uno sciopero di 35 giorni tradito dai sindacati di regime’*).

Since 2011, there has been the development of a reorganisation of grassroots unionism in the logistics sector, chiefly but not exclusively in SI Cobas. This movement has been considerable, leading to the formation of what is now the second largest grassroots union, SI Cobas, with approximately 20,000 members, but has remained confined to this category, with only minor exceptions.

The first rank-and-file trade union became *Unione Sindacale di Base*, which was formed in 2010 from the merger of the previous *Rappresentanze Sindacali di Base* with parts of *Confederazione Unitaria di Base* and the small *SdL (Sindacato dei Lavoratori)*. Membership can be estimated at around 40,000. Compared to its origins in 2010 and to the tradition of the main founding organisation – the *RdB* – the *USB* has partially changed its character over the last 13

nationalist positions, defence of national sovereignty and inclinations towards electoral participation and parliamentarism. The large trade union centres of Latin America, old and new, maintain a policy of class conciliation, far from any call to struggle.

* * *

The Party’s trade union activity in Italy

Report to the May 2023 General Meeting

From the beginning of February to date, trade union activity in Italy has continued to take place in the different spheres that we have already listed in the last report:

- the propaganda of union-political positions and direction in the streets, with leafleting and newspapers, favouring places frequented by workers;
- the same propaganda in front of workplaces;
- intervention at trade union events with party leaflets;
- the activity within the inter-union body known as the Self-Convocated Coordination of Workers (CLA), to fight for the unity of action of combative unionism;
- the activity within the grassroots trade union organisations; and
- writing articles for the trade union page of the Party newspaper.

As already mentioned, it rises from the most general level – propaganda among the masses in the streets – gradually to more and more characterised and specific levels, up to our press, where the class union line is made explicit in all its aspects and in its connection to and descent from the communist programme and theory.

We also organised a public meeting of the Party in Turin on April 30, the day before May Day, at the headquarters of *Confederazione Cobas*, on a trade union issue: *Gli scioperi in Francia, Gran Bretagna, Germania, Grecia sono l'inizio dell'inevitabile estendersi della lotta di classe internazionale. Presto anche in Italia i lavoratori si dovranno mobilitare. Quali le condizioni per dimostrare tutta la loro forza e determinazione?*

Also on 25 February, we took part in the successful national anti-war demonstration called by the USB, distributing a Party leaflet entitled *Il massacro dei proletari ucraini e russi continua e prefigura quello mondiale cui il capitalismo vuol condurre l'umanità intera. Solo la rivoluzione internazionale dei lavoratori potrà impedirlo!*

With a trade union militant from the opposition in CGIL, we distributed the leaflet calling the national assembly of the CLA (*Assemblea pubblica. Salute sicurezza repressione nei posti di lavoro e sul territorio*), scheduled for Sunday 3 March in Genoa, which was attended by some thirty people. It was an opportunity to expound in some detail on important issues concerning the relationship between trade unions and the Party and the question of the unity of action of combative unionism. This was done with the introductory speech given by our comrade (*Questioni cruciali del sindacalismo di classe discusse ad una assemblea del CLA*). The text of this speech was translated by our comrades into English and is published in no. 57 of *The Communist Party* ('Crucial Questions of Class Trade-Unionism Discussed at a Meeting of the CLA'). The speech was an opportunity to counter the inconsistent arguments of the speaker at the 18 February assembly organised by the Genoese SI Cobas.

On 8 March in Genoa, we took part in the International Women's Day demonstration, distributing the party's leaflet, translated into our press in 16 languages (*It is capitalism that prevents women's liberation*).

We paid special attention to following the strike movements in France and the UK, and reporting on them in our press. This was done in the May-June issue of *Il Partito Comunista*, with two articles entitled '*In Francia la lotta generale di classe travolge i bonzi della Cgt*' and '*Nel Regno Unito scioperi e manifestazioni annunciano il risveglio della classe operaia*'.

What happened there, and especially in France, had a certain reflection among the militants of combative unionism in Italy. Delegations, one from the USB, one from Fiom, went – separately – to one of the demonstrations in Marseilles.

Added to this was the breakdown of the fragile unity of action of grassroots unionism, between the leaderships of the USB and SI Cobas, in the national demonstration in Rome on 3 December, in which we participated by carrying out propaganda work.

This led the USB leadership to call a general strike for Friday, 26 May, convened and organised without involving any other grassroots union, the outcome of which was, despite the leadership's proclamations, negative.

We summarise our activity from February 2023 to date.

On Saturday 25 February, the USB called a national anti-war demonstration in Genoa with the slogan: 'Down with weapons, up with wages!' Behind the slogan, appreciable, there is, however, the ill-concealed pro-Russian stance of its leadership group.

Five days earlier, on Monday 20 February, we took part in the USB Liguria confederal coordination, in preparation for the demonstration on the 25th. In it we reaffirmed that the ongoing war in Ukraine is imperialist on both fronts; that only the workers will be able to stop the general imperialist war that is ripening; that the strikes and the demonstration against the war and in defence of wages are a first step on this road.

Two days earlier, on Saturday 18 February, we had spoken at an assembly called by the Genoese SI Cobas in the dockers' hall. The assembly had as its theme the war in Ukraine and a book written by the political front that runs SI Cobas was being presented there. It was therefore a case of using the trade union for a function unrelated to it, as an organisational tool of a political group. There is dissatisfaction within this union over this conduct.

We intervened by explaining that at the trade union level, the unity of action of the workers and, to this end, the unity of action of combative trade unionism is fundamental; on the other hand, opportunism is characterised by acting in an inverted way: it makes political frontism (the SI Cobas leadership has formed a political front with Stalinist groups) and trade union sectarianism, dividing and weakening the workers' fighting actions.

and not instead a form of bourgeois class rule – ‘the best political envelope of capitalism,’ said Lenin – complementary to totalitarian and openly fascist forms of government, and which does not change the bourgeois nature of the state at all.

In response to the USB leadership's most recent address at the 30 March conference, we stated that if it is true that the only way to defend wages is through struggle, then those left-wing bourgeois parties that the USB leadership deludes into thinking they can help the workers should be put to the test as to their real intentions. And not with the demand for a minimum wage, but with the abolition of the anti-strike laws, which prevent a large part of the working class from fighting, specifically those categories that have been fighting in recent months in France and the UK.

The article on the minimum wage addressed another diversion used, in this case by regime unionism, to keep workers from returning to the struggle: that of “tax reform”. At the final assembly of the 19th Congress of the CGIL, in Rimini, General Secretary Landini called it ‘the mother of all battles’. The main exponent of the trade union fraction that heads Fiom–CGIL in Genoa, which declares itself combative and held its congress in Genoa in December 2022 under the slogan ‘For a class union’, agreed with this statement by the great piecard. In the article we also denounced this opportunism that masquerades as class unionism.

We distributed the party newspaper at the May Day event in Turin.

On 13 May in Florence, we took part in a demonstration called by the SI Cobas of Prato against the police repression of its two young local leaders. We distributed a specially prepared leaflet to the 600 or so participants (*Per la rinascita di un forte movimento sindacale di classe contro sfruttamento e repressione*). The workers in the procession showed great attachment and trust in their union.

Three major strikes took place in logistics. One on 7 April in the major couriers (Brt, Gls, and Sda), members of the employers' association Fedit, which succeeded in causing substantial delays in their activities. A second took place at the Co-op warehouse in Pieve

agogic support of bourgeois politicians. Tridico and Conte's calls and speeches are framed in this context.

This is why we published two articles in our press: the first on the decline of wages in Italy (*‘Il declino costante dei salari in Italia’*), the second on the issue of the ‘legal minimum wage’, which we called a mirage to divert workers from the necessary fight for wages (*‘Miraggio del salario minimo per deviare la combattività operaia’*).

Many, even within the USB, recognise that without a general struggle of the entire working class of the appropriate strength, a minimum wage law would resolve itself into a downward compromise between the bourgeois parties, who piggyback on this utopia for mere electoral purposes. On the other hand, if the conditions were in place to express a movement of such strength, then it would not be convenient to channel it into the kind of parliamentary politics from which such a law could be expected, but instead it would be better to have a direct confrontation with the bosses to obtain wage increases.

It is true what the regime unions claim, that wage levels should be regulated not by law but by bargaining. But they do this because, conducted in their preferred manner, *i.e.*, without a fight, bargaining guarantees that the bosses will pay low wages. The solution, however, does not lie in the illusion that the downward bargaining of the regime's trade unions can be circumvented by imposing, with supposed support from parties of the bourgeois left, a law to protect wages. This fully social-democratic, and fascist, illusion rests on the idea that capitalism can be conditioned by democracy, with rules that come to protect the living conditions of proletarians and their class unions.

On this level rests the other erroneous claim of the restoration of the sliding scale, put forward by the USB and other trade union currents, for example the Trotskyist opposition currents within the CGIL. Yet another is that of a law on union representation, which, according to USB leaders, would guarantee class unionism the right to be recognised.

These opportunist currents perpetuate the falsehood that democracy is what it says it is,

In addition to the trade union report, presented at the end of September, we add here the fact that, since the day of mobilisation promoted by the CLA and other organisations, a permanent collaboration between these bodies has sprung up, which for the time being has given itself the name ‘Coordination of 12 October’. It includes: the CLA, the CMC, the trade unions SGB, CUB Trasporti, and Sol Cobas, activists of the CGIL group ‘*Le Radici del Sindacato*’, families of the victims of the Viareggio railway massacre and the Torre piloti in Genoa, the Assembly of 29 June, and *Medicina Democratica*.

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From the Archive of the Left

Party and proletarian class organisations in the tradition of revolutionary communism

From *Il Partito Comunista*, nos. 12–14, 1975

(Part 1 of 3)

Economic struggle and political struggle

Continuing to elucidate the question of the united front, let us return to the basics of our Marxist conception. The working class is compelled to struggle against the capitalist regime by the need to defend its conditions of existence, its wages, its labour, its very life. This struggle, which takes place on the terrain of the economic conditions of the workers, is transformed at certain critical moments into a political struggle, into a struggle for the conquest of political power, because at such moments the very defence of the workers’ living conditions can only be done by wresting political power from the hands of the bourgeoisie, by establishing the dictatorial power of the proletarian class, on the basis of which alone is possible the destruction of the capitalist mode of production and the reorganisation in a communist sense of the economy and society. The conduct of the political struggle can only be entrusted to a

On the editorial side, in the July and September newspapers, we published articles on the youth revolt in the French suburbs; the repression against workers’ struggles by the Venezuelan bourgeois regime, cloaked in “socialism”; strikes in the USA, particularly in the UPS and auto industry; strikes in Argentina and Brazil; and, finally, in Fiume, Croatia, where garbage collectors organised to fight outside the regime’s union.

In Italy, activity in the *Coordinamento Lavoratori Autoconvocati* continued. On June 8, a communiqué was published in solidarity with the *Coordinamento Macchinisti Cargo* (CMC) in view of the ninth strike organised by this organisation, called for the following day.

On June 25, an assembly was held in Florence, on the theme of Health, Safety, and Repression in the workplace and in the territory, at the end of which a motion of solidarity was drawn up with the workers in struggle, organised with SI Cobas, at the Mondo Convenienza company in Campi Bisenzio (Florence), and €350 was collected to give to the workers. At the assembly it was decided to work on a mobilisation in September/October on this theme as well as in the direction of the establishment of a broader coordination to work on this issue.

On June 29, at the parade in Viareggio for the 14th anniversary of the 2009 massacre, representatives of CMC, GKN, Mondo Convenienza, the Opposition Area in CGIL Toscana and the CLA marched together.

On July 19, the CLA issued a new communiqué in solidarity with the CMC, for the tenth strike scheduled for July 21.

On July 23, an extended meeting was held, in person and online, to implement the commitments made at the June 25 assembly in Florence. The minutes of the meeting were published on July 30. A mobilisation day in Bologna, in front of the court, was decided for October 12.

On September 2, a communiqué was published about the railway massacre in Brandizzo (Turin) two days earlier, in which five railway maintenance workers lost their lives.

* * *

We find here a fundamental and constant line of the Marxist approach. Workers as such can at best arrive at the consciousness of the need to defend their living conditions and to organise themselves for this defence. The transition from this elementary, “trade unionist” consciousness to political, socialist consciousness only takes place through the intervention and influence of the political party. Otherwise, the economic struggle and economic organisations may be subject to non-revolutionary perspectives and directions, may be directed according to bourgeois politics. Trade-unionism, Lenin says, is the bourgeois politics of the working class.

Role of the party in the Theses of the Communist International

These elementary notions we have recalled are the result of the experience of the entire world proletarian struggle over a century. They were the basis of the gigantic work carried out by the Communist International. We quote from *Theses on the role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution* (1920):

2. Until the time when state power has been conquered by the proletariat, and the proletariat has established its rule once and for all and secured it from bourgeois restoration, until that time the Communist Party will only have the minority of the working class organised in its ranks. Until the seizure of power and during the period of transition the Communist Party is able, under favourable conditions, to exercise undisputed mental and political influence over all the proletarian and half-proletarian layers of the population, but is not able to unite them organisationally in its ranks....

3. The concept of the party and that of the class must be kept strictly separate. The members of the “Christian” and liberal trade unions of Germany, England and other countries are undoubtedly part of the working class. The more or less significant sections of workers who still stand behind Scheidemann, Gompers, and co. are undoubtedly part of the working class. It is very possible that, under certain historical circumstances, the working class can become interspersed with numerous reactionary layers. The

In our 1951 text *Revolutionary Party and Economic Action*, we defined the factors of the revolutionary process as follows: 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) The presence of the specific class party organ and its influence on the economic bodies of the class itself through its organised network of communist groups in the economic organisations.

On the same basis and in the same sense is our classic assertion: only the political Party represents the revolutionary purpose of the class. The other class organisations, which are so insofar as they bring workers together, can be influenced and subjugated to non-revolutionary, bourgeois, social-conservative, even counter-revolutionary directions and perspectives.

This happens not only because the bourgeoisie tends to influence the working class with all its powerful material and spiritual means, and to corrupt it in a thousand ways, the most damaging of which is always that of opportunism, but also because, at least on an immediate and partial level, the interests of individual groups and strata of workers are not at all incompatible with the permanence of the capitalist mode of production, with bourgeois rule, even if on a general and historical level they contradict the interests of the class as a whole. It is only at certain critical moments in history that even immediate and partial interests of workers' groups come into open contradiction with the capitalist mode of production, and it is at these moments that the only body that has a historical and global vision of class interests can usefully win over the immediate workers' bodies to its influence.

This applies not only to trade union, economic organisations, but also to bodies, such as soviets, that express the workers' tendency to revolutionary struggle.

All workers' organisations must therefore be won over to the revolutionary perspective by the action within them of the revolutionary organism, the political party. Otherwise, they are powerless from the revolutionary point of view, while remaining workers' organisms.

i.e., open, character against all deviations, not only opportunist, but also “leftist”.

Naturally, just as there is a class delimitation in the physical sense, whereby only those belonging to a particular class, that of wage-earning workers, organise, so there is a delimitation from the organs of the bourgeois state, from the influence of openly bourgeois parties that deny in principle the workers the real right to defend their living and working conditions through class struggle and autonomous class organisation. That is, they deny the very function for which the immediate organisations arise. But this is the only organisational delimitation of these bodies.

“Left” communism in 1920 and today

Far be it for us to draw a parallel between the “leftism” that we could call serious, the “leftism” of the Germans, who were roundly condemned in 1920 by Lenin, and who to a large extent represented, like the earlier Italian or French anarcho-syndicalism, a response of large groups and strata of workers fighting against the betrayal of social democracy, and the “leftism” of the more or less numerous fringe groups of today’s “leftists”, who represent nothing more than petit-bourgeois burst that has nothing to do with the working-class movement. The only accomplishment of this “new leftist comic opera” has been to divert the small number of workers who felt the need to oppose the unbridled opportunism of the national, official Communist parties into their various false and impotent positions.

We draw the parallel only to demonstrate the irreversible and total divergence of the Marxist Communist Party’s approach from that of these alleged “neighbours”, showing that it dates not from today but from fifty years ago, and taking into account the proportions and seriousness of the matter.

The “leftism” of the German communists in 1920 started, like that of today’s “leftists”, from a pole opposite to our Marxist one; from the most complete ‘confusion of the concepts of party and class’. This confusion, which is tantamount to being out of the Marxist mainstream forever, led the German KAPD, like the Italian Ordinovists, to a failure to understand, on the

lithic block of positions, the Party can only be closed and strictly delimited in its organisation. The political direction of the Party is indispensable to lead the proletarian struggle in the revolutionary sense, but it is a result of the historical and global course of this struggle, it is not something that can be questioned or democratically submitted to the approval of each group or category of workers that the situation pushes to the struggle. One accepts it, even without understanding it individually, recognising it as the irreplaceable weapon of the revolutionary class struggle. And only those who accept it entirely and globally enter the party organisation. The Party is therefore an organism closed to all those, even proletarians, even combatants, who do not accept its positions en bloc.

Workers’ organisations, both economic and political of the soviet type, have a useful function in the class struggle because they are open, *i.e.*, they are constituted in such a way as to include as many workers as possible from a company, category, or locality. For the same functions they propose, they need to unite all the workers who are in the same economic conditions or on the same territory. A workers’ organisation for the purpose of conducting the economic struggle against the bosses, which is not suitable for bringing together in principle all the workers of the category to which it is addressed, would thereby nullify its function. The same can be said of Soviets which, being territorial bodies of the workers in order to exercise power, must necessarily be open to all workers in a given locality.

Not only that, but as these bodies are open to all workers, to the exclusion of those belonging to other social classes, they must also necessarily be open to all political ideologies within the proletariat, to the influence of all proletarian parties. They cannot discriminate against workers on either a political or religious basis. Only in this way can they fulfil the function for which they were born and live in the events of the class struggle.

Communists, advocates of the utmost closure of the class political organ, have always been those who have not only always understood the nature and necessity of the immediate workers’ bodies, but have also always been those who have defended their working-class,

bined with the defensive, economic function, but which does not annul it or render it useless. Leaving behind the mechanism of ‘forms of organisation’ and aiming at the substance, we would say that workers need class economic organisms to conduct their daily struggle against the effects of capitalist oppression, and therefore on the economic terrain (a thousand forms, a thousand possible combinations; one and irreplaceable function: to be organisms constitutionally accessible only to workers, to serve the defence of wages, of workplace, of daily bread). Whereas in periods when the social struggle is close to turning into a struggle for power, workers need, and therefore arise, workers’ organisations suitable for exercising the state functions of the proletarian dictatorship.

In terms of forms, it can even be the workers’ economic defence organisations themselves that, as the struggle radicalises and under the influence of the party, can assume the function of the political assault on bourgeois power and the destruction of the bourgeois state.

When we speak of the immediate organisms of the working class, we therefore mean to speak, beyond the specific and contingent forms, of the organisms that the class is forced to give itself, driven by its unavoidable needs. We speak of functions and needs rather than forms. And to argue that the working class can do without immediate economic organisms is no more or less to argue that it can do without the struggle for demands. It means denying the fundamental assumption of all Marxism that political struggle is nothing but the critical precipitation at certain moments, and under the influence of the party, of the very struggle that workers wage to defend their living conditions.

Economic struggles and organisms, political party

In another respect, our Marxist vision combats the mechanistic approach of the “form-seekers”. If without revolution the Soviets become a parody and are condemned to die, if their tendency to conquer political power can only find its outlet, its realisation only under the direction of the revolutionary class party, degenerating otherwise to empty forms powerless to realise themselves, the same, *a fortiori*, applies to the workers’ economic defence organisations and to the economic struggle itself. Workers’

deputies only under the following three conditions: (a) A mass revolutionary drive in the widest circles of workers, soldiers, and the toiling masses; (b) A deepening of the economic and political crisis to such an extent that power begins to slip out of the hands of the established governments; (c) The maturing in the ranks of considerable layers of workers and above all of the Communist Party of the firm decision to engage in a decisive, systematic and planned struggle for power...

Attempts by individual communist groups in France, Italy, America and England to create Soviets which nevertheless do not embrace large masses of workers, and which therefore cannot wage a direct struggle for power, only damage the real work of preparing the Soviet revolution...

Without revolution, the Soviets are impossible. Soviets without proletarian revolution inevitably turn into a parody of Soviets. Real mass Soviets appear as the historically given form of the dictatorship of the proletariat... (*Theses of the Third International on the Conditions of Establishment of Workers' Councils, 1920*)

The Soviets are thus the organisms that the working class forges for the conquest of power and the exercise of dictatorship, a conquest and exercise that is, however, only possible insofar as these workers’ organisations that express such need and necessity are permeated and influenced by the political party, the only organism that can truly conquer power and exercise dictatorship.

The Soviets, therefore, are not characterised by their orientation or their intrinsically revolutionary nature, but by their workers’ structure which makes them suitable, once they are conquered by the party’s influence, to assume and exercise political power. But above all, and this is what we want to emphasise, they do not constitute a substitute form for workers’ organisations of an economic, defensive, trade union nature.

They represent a different function of the class which in a thousand ways can be com-

The weakness of the working masses, their indecision, their accessibility to the fictitious arguments of the opportunist bosses, can only be overcome, as the struggle intensifies, to the extent that the broadest strata of the working class learn, through their own experience, through their victories and defeats, that on the basis of the capitalist economic system human living conditions can no longer be achieved; to the extent that the advanced communist workers learn to be, in the economic struggle, not only the propagandists of the ideas of communism, but also the most decisive leaders of the economic struggle and of the trade unions...

Since communists attach more importance to the aims and nature of trade union organisation than to its form, they must not retreat from a split in the trade union organisations, if renouncing the split were to amount to renouncing revolutionary work in the trade unions, renouncing the attempt to make them an instrument of the revolutionary struggle, renouncing the organisation of the most exploited sectors of the proletariat. But even if such a split proves to be necessary, it must only proceed if the communists succeed, through a relentless struggle against the opportunist leaders and their tactics and through the most active participation in the economic struggles, in convincing the broad working masses that the split is being undertaken not for remote revolutionary objectives still incomprehensible to them, but for the concrete and most immediate interest of the working class in the development of its struggles for demands. Communists, should a split become necessary, must consider with the utmost care whether it will not lead to their isolation from the working masses.

The tendency to create factory councils, which animates workers in various countries more and more every day, originates from the most varied causes (struggle against counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, demoralisation after defeats in the purely claiming struggle, effort to create organisations that embrace all workers), but it always and everywhere

In order to gain victory in the economic struggle, the great working masses who hitherto remained outside the trade unions are flocking to their ranks. In all capitalist countries there is a strong strengthening of the trade unions, which are now an organisation no longer of the advanced part of the proletariat alone, but of its great masses. By flocking to the trade unions, they seek to make them their fighting weapon. The increasingly bitter class contrasts force the trade unions to take the lead in strikes, which engulf the entire capitalist world in mighty waves and constantly interrupt the process of production and exchange. By raising their demands in parallel with rising prices and increasing misery, the working masses upset the foundations of every capitalist calculation, this elementary assumption of every orderly economy. The trade unions which, during the war, had become organs of influence of the working masses in the interests of the bourgeoisie become organs of destruction of capitalism...

In view of the influx of powerful working-class masses into the trade unions, in view of the objectively revolutionary character of the economic struggle that these masses wage in opposition to the trade union bureaucracy, communists must in all countries enter the trade unions to make them organs of struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, for communism. They must take the initiative in setting up trade unions where they do not exist.

Any voluntary alienation from the trade union movement, any artificial attempt to create particular trade unions without being forced to do so by exceptional acts of violence by the trade union bureaucracy (dissolution of local revolutionary groups in the trade unions by opportunist centres) or by its narrowly aristocratic policy, which prohibits large masses of low-skilled workers from joining organisations, represents a grave danger to the communist movement. It threatens to hand over to opportunist bosses working in the service of the bourgeoisie the most advanced workers, most endowed with class consciousness.

most conscious workers from the trade unions and forming small organisations of them, but in infusing the trade unions with a revolutionary spirit by remaining within them, claiming the revolutionary aspirations of the working-class day by day, and thus trying to transform them into instruments of the social revolution.

All organising work in the old trade unions must be aimed at combating the passivity and betrayal of the trade union bureaucracy in the course of the struggle for the day-to-day interests of the workers. Conquering the trade unions means conquering the mass of workers, which can only be conquered by systematic and stubborn work, by continually highlighting the contrast between the tendency of compromise and class collaboration and our strictly revolutionary tendency. The motto 'outside the trade unions' prevents us from conquering the masses and thus distances us from the social revolution.

Another blow to the "form-worshippers" this time to the "union-form-worshippers", who are still numerous today. The Theses in fact continue:

But it would also be a mistake to regard trade union organisations as an end in themselves. Trade unions are not an end, they are the means to the end; and so, while we reject the watchword of 'outside the trade unions!', we must in the most resolute way also assert ourselves against the fetishism of organisation and the watchword of 'unity at any cost and without reservation'. Conquering the unions does not mean seizing the union treasury and union property, but conquering the souls of union members. Many comrades forget this distinction, often confusing the union with its premises, its till and its management. Such point of view must be categorically rejected by the revolutionary class unions. These are for unity and against the split, but they do not fear the split: here is a point that must be clear to each of us.

Fifty years of unchallenged opportunist domination of the workers' unions combined with the capitalist tendency for unions to be

Gewerkschaftsbund in Germany, constitutes in itself a caricature of factory councils and discredits among the masses the very idea of such an organisation.

In reality, under the pseudonym of factory councils, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* merely constitutes its fraction nuclei, an indisputable right for every organisation: but it is useless in this case to attach such pompous labels to these nuclei...

The anti-revolutionary attitude currently being adopted by the trade union bureaucracy, the help it has given to the repression of the workers' revolutionary movement, has led a section of proletarians and revolutionaries throughout the world to break away from the trade unions and create new, purely revolutionary organisations of their own, hence the watchwords 'destroy the trade unions', 'outside the trade unions' which find a certain sympathy among the most desperate revolutionary elements, made pessimistic by the inertia of the masses. Such tactics of driving out the revolutionary elements, and abandoning the trade unions, millions of proletarians, to the unchallenged influence of the traitors of the working class, play into the hands of the trade union bureaucracy and must therefore be decisively and categorically rejected. Not destruction, but conquest of the trade unions, i.e., of the masses organised in the old trade unions: this is the watchword around which the revolutionary struggle must be organised and develop...

The advocates of the Red International would be making a most serious mistake...if they abandoned the trade unions and shut themselves up in the small revolutionary trade union groupings. The workers expelled from the unions must not disperse, but must remain organised in the same framework to which they belonged before their exclusion, continuously acting as a regular and legitimate member of the union that expelled them....

The task of the revolutionary elements of the trade union movement therefore consists, not in detaching the best and

What Distinguishes Our Party

The line running from Marx to Lenin to the Foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Livorno 1921, and from there to the struggle of popular fronts and coalitions of resistance groups.

The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoeuvrings.

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