

Marking out the Foundations

1946

Tracciato d'impostazione appeared in July 1946 in the first edition of our review *Prometeo*. Online at [Marking out the Foundations - International Communist Party](#)

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Marxism is not a choice between opinions

This writing, for obvious reasons, does not contain within itself the proof of what it asserts. It sets itself the task of establishing, as clearly as possible, the political tendency of the publication within which it appears. It is a declaration of cardinal principles which aims to prevent confusion and misunderstandings, whether involuntary or intentional.

Before convincing the reader, it is matter of getting him to understand our basic positions first. Persuasion, propaganda, and proselytizing come later.

According to the method we keep to here, opinions do not become established as a result of the deeds of prophets, apostles, and thinkers whose brains have given birth to new truths and earned them hordes of followers.

The process is very different. It is the impersonal work of a social vanguard explaining and clarifying the theoretical positions towards which they are drawn as individuals – well before becoming conscious of them – by the real shared conditions under which they live. The method is therefore anti-scholastic, anti-cultural and anti-enlightenment.

In the present phase of theoretical confusion – a reflection of the existing practical disorganization – it is not really surprising if potential adherents are alienated, rather than attracted, by the presentation of our distinctive approach, and nor should we complain about it.

How Marxists are connected with a historic tradition

When presenting their programmes, all political movements stake a claim to historical precedents, and in a certain sense to traditions; whether of the recent or distant past, national or international.

This magazine is but a theoretical organ of a movement that stakes its claim to clearly defined origins, too. However, as opposed to other movements, it does not set out from a revealed word which is attributed to super-human sources; it does not recognize the authority of unchangeable texts, and nor does it recognize that, in order to understand an issue, one needs resort to moral, philosophical, or legal canons since it rejects the notion that these are somehow innate or immanent in the way man thinks and feels.

It is acceptable to identify this orientation with the terms Marxism, socialism, communism or the political movement of the working class; the problem is that these terms are abused. In 1917, Lenin thought changing the name of party, going back to the

'Communist' of the 1848 Manifesto, was a fundamental requirement. Today, the rampant abuse of the word 'Communist', by parties which long ago deviated from any revolutionary class line, still creates major confusion. Movements which are open defenders of bourgeois institutions have the nerve to call themselves proletarian parties, and the term 'Marxist' is used to define the most absurd agglomerations of parties, such as those collected under the banner of Spanish anti-Francoism.

We are referring here to the following historic line: the Communist Manifesto of 1848 (also more properly named Manifesto of the Communist Party, without the addition of any country name); the fundamental works of Marx and Engels; the classic restoration of revolutionary Marxism against all opportunist revisionisms which accompanied the revolutionary victory in Russia, 1917, and the fundamental works of Lenin; the founding declarations of the Third International made at the First and Second Congresses; the positions held by the Left at successive Congresses from 1922 onwards.

This historic line is connected in Italy with the Left current of the Socialist Party during the 1914-1918 war; with the founding of the Communist Party of Italy at Leghorn (Livorno) in January 1921; its Rome Congress in 1922; the activity of its left-wing which predominated in the party until the 1926 Congress, and since then, outside the Party and the Comintern organizing abroad instead.

This line does not coincide with the line of the Trotskyist movement of the Fourth International. Only very belatedly did Trotsky, and even more belatedly Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and the other Russian groups of the Bolshevik tradition, revolt against the wrong tactics which up to 1924 they had supported; only very belatedly would they recognize that the deviation had reached the stage of corrupting the fundamental political principles of the movement. Today's Trotskyists are for the restoration of these principles, but they cling on to the destructive tactic of "maneuvering", incorrectly defined as Bolshevik and Leninist.

Setting out the dialectical method of Marxism

Any investigation must be based on a consideration of the entire historical process up to the present and on an objective examination of contemporary social phenomena.

Although many claim adherence to this method, it has been corrupted often in the course of its application.

The basis of the investigation must be the material means by which human groups satisfy their needs, their productive techniques

and, in the course of its development, the economic relations that arise.

These factors determine the superstructure of a historical period, expressed in the legal, political, and military institutions and the characteristics of the dominant ideologies.

This method is aptly defined by the expressions: historical materialism, dialectical materialism, economic determinism, scientific socialism, and critical communism.

The important thing is firm reliance on real, factual outcomes: myths and divinities are not required to portray and explain human activity, and neither are principles based on "rights" or natural "morality", such as Justice, Equality, Fraternity and similar empty abstractions. Given the irresistible influence which the dominant ideology holds in its epoch, it is most important not to give in to such illusory postulates inadvertently, or without admitting it, especially at those crucial moments when decisive action is required.

The dialectical method is the only one that overcomes the current contradiction between a rigorous theoretical continuity and coherence on the one hand, and on the other the ability to critically confront old conclusions established in formal terms and rules.

Accepting this method isn't like adopting a faith or becoming a fanatical adherent of a particular school or party.

The contradiction between the productive forces and social forms

The productive forces (consisting principally of people capable of production, their organizational structure, and the tools and mechanical means they utilize) operate within the framework of forms of production.

By forms we mean the arrangement, the relationships of dependence in which productive and social activity develops. Such forms include all the established hierarchies (family, military, theocratical, political), the State and its bodies, the law and the courts which enforce it, and the rules and provisions of an economic and legal character which resist any transgression.

A given type of society will manage to survive as long as its productive forces are able to reproduce themselves within the framework of its forms of production. History shows us, however, that this equilibrium tends to be broken. Various factors, such as advances in technology, population growth, and improved communications lead to great expansions in the productive forces. These new forces collide with and tend to break down the more traditional forms. When the new productive forces succeed in overcoming the old forms, you have a revolution: the community organizes itself into new economic, social,

and legal relationships. New forms take the place of old

The Marxist dialectical method discovers, applies, and confirms its solutions in investigations on a societal scale; researching mass collective phenomena using the scientific and experimental method (the very same method which the thinkers of the bourgeois epoch applied to the natural world, in the course of an ideological struggle which was but a reflection of the revolutionary social struggle of their class, the bourgeoisie, against the theocratic and absolutist regimes, one which they could not dare to extend into the social domain). From the results acquired investigating this collective plane, the dialectical method deduces solutions to questions of individual behavior, whereas all the rival religious, legal, philosophic, and economic schools instead proceed in exactly the opposite direction: building, that is, their standards of collective conduct on the inconsistent basis of the myth of the individual, whether portrayed as an immortal spirit, a citizen subject to the rule of law, or conceived of as an immutable unit of economic policy, and so on and so forth. Meanwhile, science has gone beyond its various hypotheses about indivisible, material individuals: rather than defining atoms as incorruptible, monad-type units, they define them instead as rich complexes, as meeting points of the radiant dynamics issuing from the external energy field; thus today one can schematically say that the cosmos is not the function of units, but every unit is the function of the cosmos.

Whoever believes in the individual, and talks of personality, dignity, liberty, and of one's duties as a man and a citizen is not employing Marxist thought. People are not set in motion by opinions, beliefs, or faiths. It is not any wondrous quality of so-called thought which inspires their will or their actions. What prompts them to act is their needs. When entire groups of people share the same material needs simultaneously, these needs take on the character of interests. They clash with the limitations imposed by the environment and social structure on their ability to satisfy their needs. And they react individually, and collectively, in a way which, on average, is necessarily determined before the play of stimuli and reactions cause sentiments, thoughts and judgements to arise in their brains.

The phenomenon is obviously extremely complex and can, in individual cases, contradict the general law, which nevertheless remains justified.

Be that as it may, whoever maintains that the motor cause of social and historic events is individual consciousness, moral principles, and the opinions and decisions of the individual or citizen, has no right to be called a Marxist.

Class, class struggle, party

The contradiction between productive forces and social forms manifests as a struggle between classes with antagonistic economic interests. In the final stages, this struggle becomes the armed struggle for the conquest of power.

Class is not seen by Marxism as cold, statistical data, but as an active organic force, and it appears when the simple convergence of economic conditions and interests lead to action and a common struggle.

In these situations, the movement is driven by groupings and organizations of the vanguard, whose modern and developed form is the class political party. The collectivity, whose action culminates in the action of a party, operates in history with an efficiency and a real dynamic which cannot be obtained on the limited scale of individual action.

It is the party which arrives at a theoretical consciousness of the development of events, and a consequent influence on their outcomes, in a way determined by the productive forces and by the relations among them.

In spite of the great difficulty and complexity of the issues, one cannot clarify principles and directives without simplification. With this in mind, we draw attention to three historical types of political movement into which all can be classified.

Conformist: movements which fight to preserve the existing forms and institutions, prohibiting all change, and appealing to immutable principles; be they presented in religious, philosophic, or legal guises.

Reformist: though not calling for a sharp and violent overthrow of traditional institutions, these movements recognize the strong pressure of the productive forces. They therefore propose gradual and partial changes of the existing order.

Revolutionary: (here we adopt the provisional term *Antiformist*); movements which proclaim, and put into practice, the attack on old forms, and which, even before knowing how to theorize about the character of the new regime, tend to crush the old, provoking the irresistible birth of new forms.

Conformism – Reformism – Antiformism.

Any schematization involves the risk error. One could ask whether the Marxist dialectic doesn't also lead to the construction of an artificial and generalized model of historical events, by reducing all

development to a succession of class dominations which start off revolutionary, become reformist, and end up conservative. The evocative conclusion to this sequence of events, achieved by the revolutionary victory of the proletariat and with the advent of the classless society (which Marx referred to as, "the end of human pre-history") might seem to be a finalistic construct, and therefore metaphysical like those false philosophies of the past. Hegel was denounced by Marx for reducing his dialectic system to an absolute construction, for falling unconsciously into a metaphysic which he had managed to overcome in the destructive part of his critique (philosophical reflection of the bourgeois revolutionary struggle).

As a culmination of the classic philosophy of German idealism, and of bourgeois thought, Hegel put forward the absurd thesis that the history of action, and of thought, must finally crystallize into his perfect system, in the conquest of the Absolute. Such a static conclusion is ruled out by the Marxist dialectic.

Nevertheless, in his classic exposition of scientific socialism, (as contrasted with Utopianism, which believed that social renewal could be accomplished simply by campaigning for the adoption of a projected better society put forward by a thinker or sect) Engels seems to admit that there is a general rule or law of historic movement when he uses expressions like "there is progression forward", "the world progresses". However, the use of such vigorous slogans for propaganda purposes should not lead one to believe that a recipe has been discovered which encompasses all the infinite possible directions in which human society may develop, that is, a recipe which could just as easily replace the familiar bourgeois abstractions of evolution, civilization, progress, and the like.

The marvelous advantage of the dialectic method of investigation is that it is revolutionary in its very essence: it is expressed in the implacable destruction of innumerable theoretical systems which time after time conceal the domination of the privileged classes. For this cemetery of broken idols, we need not substitute a new myth, a new sentiment, nor a new credo, but just the realistic expression of a series of relationships which exist between factual conditions and their most foreseeable developments.

For example, the correct Marxist formulation is not, "one day the proletariat will take political power, destroy the capitalist system and construct the communist economy"; instead it is: "only by its organization as a class, in a political party, and by the armed installation of its dictatorship, will the proletariat be able to destroy the power of the capitalist economy and render possible a non-capitalist, non-commercial economy".

From the scientific point of view, one cannot exclude capitalism ending in a different way, such as a return to barbarism, a world catastrophe due to armies at war having the character, for example, of a pathological degeneration of the human race (those blinded and condemned to the disintegration of radioactive tissue at Hiroshima and Nagasaki serve as a warning) or other forms of destruction that cannot be foreseen at present.

Interpreting the present historical period

The revolutionary Communist movement of this convulsive period must be characterized not only by its theoretical destruction of every conformism with, and reformism of, the present world, but also by its practical and tactical position: by the fact that it can have no common road with any movement whatsoever, whether conformist or reformist, not even for limited periods in particular sectors.

It must be based, above all, on the historically acquired and irrevocable knowledge that capitalism has exhausted its initial antiformalism, that is to say, it no longer has the historic task of destroying pre-capitalist forms and resisting the threat of their possible restoration.

This is not to deny that, as long as the powerful forces of capitalist development, which accelerated the transformation of the world on an unprecedented degree, continued to maintain its corresponding relations, the proletarian class could, and should, dialectically, condemn them in doctrine and support them in action.

An essential difference between the metaphysical method and the dialectical method as applied to History lies in this latter point.

Political and social institutions or organizations are not good or bad in themselves; they cannot be accepted or rejected based on an examination of their characteristics according to a set of general principles or rules.

According to the dialectical interpretation of history, every institution, in successive situations, had a role and influence which is revolutionary to begin with, then progressive, and finally conservative.

For each problem we encounter, it is a matter of properly contextualizing the productive forces and the social factors in order to understand their expressions as political conflict.

It is being metaphysical to declare oneself, on principle, as authoritarian or libertarian, royalist or republican, aristocrat or democrat, and to refer in polemics to canons outside their historic context. Even the elderly Plato, in the first systematic attempt at political science, ventured beyond such mystical, absolute principles,

and Aristotle followed him by distinguishing three types of political rule – the power of one, of the few, and of the many - to which correspond the following the good and bad forms: monarchy and tyranny – aristocracy and oligarchy – democracy and demagoguery.

The modern analysis, primarily beginning with Marx, goes much further.

In the present historical phase, nearly every political enunciation and propaganda statement relies on the worst traditional motifs derived from religious, legal, and philosophical superstitions of every kind.

This chaos of ideas – the reflection of the interests of a decaying society in the minds of men – must be opposed by the dialectical analysis of the actual, real forces in play.

To introduce this analysis, it is necessary evaluate the well-known relationships from earlier historical epochs.

Dialectical evaluation of historic forms – Economic example: mercantilism

Starting with economic forms, it makes no sense in general to declare support for an economy which is communist or private, liberal or monopolist, individual or collective, or to judge the merits these systems according to the general well-being: doing so is Utopianism, which is opposed to the Marxist dialectic.

Engels' classic description of communism as "the negation of the negation" is well known. The first forms of human production were communist, then came private property, a more complex and efficient system. From there, human society is returning to Communism.

This modern communism would be unrealizable if primitive communism had not been superseded, conquered, and destroyed by the system of private property. The Marxist considers this initial transformation an advantage, and not as a misfortune. What we say of communism applies to all other economic forms as well, such as slavery, serfdom, manufacturing, industrial and monopolist capitalism, and so on.

The end of barbarism was marked by the transition to a commodity-producing economy, in which the objects for the satisfaction of human needs ceased to be acquired and consumed directly by the producer and became exchangeable, initially through direct barter and subsequently through a common money equivalent. This new form of economy represented a great social revolution when it appeared.

It was now possible to divide productive tasks among a group of people (division of labour), thus massively expanding and diversifying the characteristics of social life. One can recognize this revolutionary transition, while also asserting that following a series of types of economic organization all based on the common principle of mercantilism (slavery, feudalism, capitalism) the trend now is towards a non-mercantile economy. The idea that production is impossible outside the mechanism of the monetary exchange of merchandise is now a conformist and reactionary thesis.

Abolishing mercantile economic relations is only now possible due to the development of associated labour and the concentration of productive forces. Through its own development, capitalism, this last mercantile economy, undermines itself as a mode of production and corresponding social relations, thus freeing use-values (including human labour) from the form of the commodity.

Just a century earlier, it would have been sheer folly to criticize the mercantile system with arguments of a philosophical, legal, or moral nature.

Social example: the family

The various types of social arrangements which have succeeded one another have been the means whereby collective life differs itself from primitive, animal individualism: passing through an immense cycle that has increasingly complicated the relations in which the individual lives and acts, these forms of society cannot, taken individually, be judged as favorable or unfavorable; they must be considered in relation to the historical development that has given them a fluid role in successive transformations and revolutions.

These institutions begin as revolutionary conquests, develop and reform over historical cycles, until they finally become a reactionary and conformist obstacle.

The institution of the family appears as the primitive social form of humankind when the bond between parents and offspring is prolonged well beyond physiologically necessity. The first form of authority is born, exerted by the mother and father over their children, even when the latter are strong and physically mature. This is a revolutionary stage, since the first possibility of collectively organized life appears, establishing the basis for further developments which ultimately lead to the first forms of organized society and the State.

Over vast periods of time social life becomes increasingly complex, and humankind's mutual involvement and authority over each other extends beyond the bounds of kinship and blood. The new,

broader, social aggregation contains and disciplines the institution of the family. This occurs in the first cities, States, and aristocratic regimes, and later under the bourgeois regime. All are based on the fetish/institution of inheritance.

There then appears the necessity of an economy which supersedes the interplay of individual interests. The institution of the family, far too restricted for this new economic arrangement, becomes an obstacle and a reactionary element in society.

Without denying the historic role played by the family, the modern communist, after observing that the capitalist system has already deformed and dissolved the alleged "sanctity" of this institution, fights it openly with the aim of its (the family's) abolition.

Political Example: monarchy and republic

The different forms of the State, such as monarchy and republic, alternate over the course of history in a complex manner, and can represent a revolutionary, progressive, or conservative force depending on the historic situation. We admit that, generally speaking, before capitalism is superseded, it will probably manage to liquidate any remaining dynastic regimes. However, we must not proceed with absolute judgements situated outside of time and space.

The first monarchies appeared as the political expression of a division of material tasks: whilst certain elements within the family unit or the primitive tribe took to hunting, fishing, agriculture, or the first handicrafts, others were assigned to armed defense, or indeed to the armed plundering of other groups and peoples; and so the first warriors and kings attained the privilege of power at major risk to themselves. Yet there still appeared social forms of a most developed and complex nature, which would previously have been impossible, representing the road toward a revolution in social relationships.

The institution of monarchy enabled the later establishment and development of vast national State organizations, which could be directed against the federations of principalities and small nobility. It had an innovative and reformist function. Dante was the great monarchical reformist of early Modern Times.

More recently, the monarchy (and indeed the republic) has served in many countries to cloak the strict class rule of the bourgeoisie.

Over the course of history, there have been Republican movements or parties that were revolutionary, reformist, or even markedly conservative.

If we just refer to a few accessible and simplified examples: the

Brutus “who expelled Tarquin” was revolutionary; the Gracchi, who sought to give the aristocratic republic a content conforming to plebian interests, were reformists; the traditional republicans, such as Cato and Cicero, who struggled against the grandiose historic evolution, represented by the expansion of the Roman Empire with its legal and social forms, were reactionary and conformist. However, the question is completely distorted when one resorts to platitudes about Caesarism, tyranny, or, at the other extreme, sacred principles of republican liberty and other rhetorical/literary motifs.

Among modern examples, it is sufficient to point out as being antiformalist, reformist and conformist, the three French republics of 1793, 1848, and 1871, respectively.

Ideological example: Christian religion

Crises of economic forms are reflected not only in political and social institutions, but also in religious beliefs and philosophical opinions. Every legal, religious, and philosophical stance must be considered in relation to the prevailing historic situations and social crises, since each marched, from time to time, under the revolutionary, the reformist, and the conformist banners.

The movement which bears Christ’s name was once antiformalist and revolutionary.

To declare that there exists in all men a soul of divine origin which is destined to immortality, irrespective of social position or caste, was tantamount to a revolutionary rebellion against the oppression and slavery of the ancient Orient. As long as the law allowed the human person to be considered as a commodity, to be bought and sold like an animal, with all legal prerogatives of free men and citizens thus becoming the monopoly of only one class, the affirmation that all believers were equal was a call to battle against the implacable resistance of the Jewish theocratic organization, and the aristocratic and military hierarchies of the ancient world.

After long historical phases, and after the abolition of slavery, Christianity became the official religion and pillar of the State.

It lives its reformist period in Modern Europe, waging a struggle against the excessive loyalty of the Church to the most privileged and oppressive layers of society.

Today, there is no ideology more conformist than Christianity, and even on the eve of the bourgeois revolution it was the most powerful doctrinal and organizational weapon of the old regimes.

Today, the Church’s powerful network and its religious influence, entirely reconciled and harmonized with capitalism, is

employed as a fundamental bulwark against the danger of proletarian revolution.

Today's social relationships have long since seen each individual turned into an economic enterprise, each theoretically susceptible of assets and liabilities. The superstition which sees each individual enclosed within the circle of a moral balance of his actions, projected into the illusion of a life after death, is nothing but the mental reflection of man of the present bourgeois society founded on private economy.

It is impossible to lead a struggle aimed at smashing the framework of an economy based on private enterprise and individual balance sheets, without also adopting an openly anti-religious and anti-Christian position.

The capitalist cycle: revolutionary phase

In the major countries, the modern capitalist bourgeoisie has already gone through three characteristic historical stages.

The bourgeoisie came into view as an openly revolutionary class and led an armed struggle to break the chains of feudal and clerical absolutism, which tie the productive forces of peasants to the land and the artisans to guilds.

The breaking of these chains coincides with the development of the productive forces which, with the resources of modern technology, tends to concentrate the workers into great masses.

In order for these new economic forms to develop freely, the traditional regimes must be forcibly overthrown.

The bourgeois class not only leads the insurrectionary struggle, but after its initial victory installs an iron dictatorship to prevent any counter-attack on the part of the monarchies, feudal lords, and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

The capitalist class appears in history as an antiformalist force using its immense, repressed energy to destroy all material and ideological obstacles lying in its path. Old beliefs and canons are overturned by bourgeois thinkers in the most radical manner.

The theory of authority as divine right are replaced by those of equality and political liberty, of popular sovereignty. Representative institutions are declared necessary, and thanks to them, it is said, power will be the expression of the free manifestation of collective will.

In this phase, the liberal and democratic principle is clearly revolutionary and antiformalist, all the more so since it is achieved by means of violence and revolutionary terror, and is defended against any attempts at reactionary restorations by the dictatorship of the

conquering class.

Evolutionary and democratic phase

In the second phase, after the establishment of the capitalist regime, the bourgeoisie declares itself the representative of society's higher development and welfare. We see a relatively tranquil phase in which the productive forces develop, the entire inhabited world is integrated into any increasingly global economy, and economic activity intensifies as a whole. This is the progressive and reformist phase of the capitalist cycle.

In this second bourgeois phase, the mechanism of parliamentary democracy runs parallel to the reformist tendency. The dominant class strives to make this system appear to represent and reflect the interests and demands of the working class. Governments claim to satisfy these demands with economic and legislative measures which nevertheless allow the legal norms of the bourgeois system to be maintained. Parliamentarism and democracy no longer contain revolutionary content, but rather take on a reformist content, guaranteeing the development of the capitalist system by warding off the violent clashes and explosions of the class struggle.

Fascist and imperialist phase

The third phase is that of modern imperialism, characterized by the monopolist concentration of the economy, the formation of capitalist trusts and syndicates, and by large-scale State planning. The bourgeois economy is transformed and loses those characteristics of classic liberalism, in which each business enterprise was autonomous in relation to its economic decisions and relations of exchange. An increasingly strict discipline is imposed on production and distribution. The economic indices are no longer the result of the free game of competition, but the influence of capitalist associations, of organs of banking and financial concentrations, and finally of the state directly. Their political State, which in Marxist parlance is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, guards the latter's interests as government organ and police protector and asserts itself more and more as the organ of control, and even of administration, of the economy.

This concentration of economic power in the hands of the State should not be interpreted as a shift from private economy to a collective economy. Indeed, it can only be passed off as such by ignoring the fact that the contemporary State only expresses the

interests of a minority. All nationalization established within the framework of commodity exchange leads to a capitalist concentration which strengthens, rather than weakens, the capitalist character of the economy. The political development of the bourgeois parties in this contemporary phase (as Lenin proved in his critique of modern imperialism) lends itself to the most narrow forms of oppression, manifested in regimes defined as totalitarian and fascist. These regimes are the most modern political type of bourgeois society. As they spread throughout the entire world this process will become abundantly clear. A concomitant aspect of this political concentration is the absolute predominance of a few great States at the expense of the autonomy of the intermediate and smaller States.

Since this phase is accompanied by an absolutely astronomical increase in the pace of industry and finance, previously ignored both in terms of quality and quantity in the pre-bourgeois world, this third capitalist phase cannot be seen as a reemergence of pre-capitalist institutions and forms. Capitalism effectively repudiates the representative democratic apparatus and installs governments which are absolutely despotic.

It has already theorized and established the totalitarian party-state and hierarchical centralization in some countries. In other countries, capital continues to employ democratic slogans, universally devoid of content. Everywhere it is proceeding inexorably in the same direction.

For an exact assessment of the contemporary historical process, the correct position is as follows: the period of liberalism and democracy has closed, and the democratic demands which were formerly revolutionary, then progressive and reformist, are today anachronistic and clearly conformist.

Proletarian strategy during the period of bourgeois revolutions

The cycle of the proletarian movement corresponds to the cycle of the capital.

From its inception, the great industrial proletariat constructs a critique of the economic, juridical, and political formulations of the bourgeoisie. It is discovered and theorized, that the bourgeois class neither liberates nor emancipates humanity, but simply replaces the previous systems of domination and exploitation with its own.

However, the workers of all countries must fight side by side with the bourgeoisie in order to overthrow feudal institutions, and they do not fall for any reactionary socialism, which, brandishing the spectre of a new, merciless capitalist master, calls upon the workers to

ally themselves with the leading monarchical and agrarian classes.

Even in the struggles led by the young capitalist regimes to prevent reactionary restorations, the proletariat cannot refuse support to the bourgeoisie.

The early strategy of the nascent proletariat begins to anticipate anti-bourgeois movements under the impetus of the very struggle it is fighting alongside the bourgeoisie, arriving immediately at a simultaneous liberation from feudal oppression and capitalist exploitation.

An embryonic manifestation of this can be found during the great French Revolution with Babeuf's "Conspiracy of the Equals". Theoretically, this movement is immature, but the repression which the victorious bourgeoisie brought down on the very workers who fought alongside them and for their interests serves as an enduring historic lesson.

On the eve of the bourgeois and national revolutionary wave of 1848, the theory of the class struggle was already completely developed, for the relations between bourgeois and proletarians, on the European and world scale, were by this time very clear.

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx projects at the same time an alliance with the bourgeoisie against the parties of monarchical restoration in France and Prussian conservatism, as well as an immediate move towards a revolution aiming for the conquest of power by the working class. In this historical phase any attempt at workers' revolt is still mercilessly repressed, but the doctrine and strategy of the class during this phase moves on the path of the Marxist method.

The same circumstances and evaluations apply with the Paris Commune; that great bid for power, in which the French proletariat, after having overthrown Napoleon III and assured the victory of the Bourgeois Republic, attempted to conquer power again, giving us, even if only for a few months, the first historic example of class government.

What is most significant and suggestive in this episode is the unconditional anti-proletarian alliance of the democratic bourgeoisie with the conservatives, and even with the victorious Prussian Army, in order to crush this first attempt at the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Socialist tendencies during the democratic-pacifist stage

In the second phase, in which reformism in the framework of the bourgeois economy is associated with representative and parliamentary systems, the proletariat is confronted with an alternative

of historical significance.

Theoretically, a question of interpretation arises regarding revolutionary doctrine, considered as a critique of bourgeois institutions and ideologies which defend it: will the collapse of capitalist domination come about by means of violent conflict, or can it be achieved with gradual changes and using parliament?

Practically speaking, the question is no longer whether the working class should side with bourgeoisie against the pre-capitalist regimes, which had by now disappeared. The question is whether it should ally itself with an advanced and progressive section of the bourgeoisie better positioned to reform capitalism?

The idyllic, intermediate phase of capitalism (1871-1914) sees the growth of revisionist currents of Marxism. The Marxist approach is distorted, and fundamental texts are falsified. A new strategy is established, according to which vast economic and political organizations of the working class penetrate and conquer the political institutions through legal means, preparing for a gradual transformation of the entire capitalist economic machine.

The polemics of this phase split the proletarian movement into opposing tendencies. Although an immediate insurrectionary assault to break the bourgeois power is not posed, the left Marxists vigorously resisted the collaborationist tactic on the trade-union and Parliamentary plane, the intent of supporting bourgeois governments and having socialist parties participate in ministerial coalitions.

At this point the acute crisis in the world socialist movement begins. Its cause is the outbreak of the 1914 war and the passing of the greater part of the trade-union and parliamentary leaders to the politics of national collaboration and war.

Proletarian tactics in the imperialist capitalist and fascist phase

In its third phase – due to capitalism's endless development of productive forces which it must keep from destroying its organizational equilibrium – it is compelled to abandon liberal and democratic methods. In the political sphere this leads to concentrations of power in strong State organs, and economic life is subjected to strict controls. The workers' movement is once again confronted with two alternatives.

On the theoretical side, we must affirm that these narrower, stricter forms of domination by the capitalist class constitute the necessary, most developed, and modern phase that capitalism can achieve, in order to finally arrive at the end of its cycle, having exhausted its historical possibilities. They do not, therefore, represent a

mere step backwards to to more barbaric methods of policing and political repression, after which a return to an alleged liberal tolerance is to be expected.

On the tactical side, it is wrong to ask the proletariat to fight for a capitalism able to make liberal and democratic concessions, since the climate of democratic politics is no longer required to further the growth of capitalist productive energies; an indispensable premise for the socialist economy.

Such a question, in the first, revolutionary, bourgeois phase, was not only posed by history, but found a solution in the joint struggle of the Third and Fourth Estates, and the alliance between the two classes was an indispensable step on the road toward socialism.

In the second phase, the question is legitimately posed of parallel action between democratic reformist and the proletarian socialist parties. If History has since agreed with the rejection of this solution, a rejection defended by the revolutionary Marxist left against the revisionist and reformist right wing, the latter cannot be considered conformist before the fatal degeneration of 1914-1918. They might have believed that the wheels of history turned at a slow rhythm, they didn't attempt (not yet) to turn the wheels back. It is necessary to render this justice to Bebel, Jaures and Turati.

In the present phase of rapacious Imperialism and savage world wars, the possibility of parallel action between the proletariat and the democratic bourgeoisie is no longer posed historically. Those who adopt the opposite view no longer represent an alternative version, or tendency, of the workers' movement, but have fully moved to conservative conformism.

The only alternative to be posed, and resolved, today is altogether different. Given that the world capitalist regime is developing in a centralist, totalitarian, and "fascist" direction, should not the working class join forces with this movement since it is the only reformist aspect of the bourgeois order which now remains? Can there be a dawning of Socialism within this inexorable advance of State Capitalism, helping it to disperse the last traditional resistance of the free-enterprisers, liberals, and bourgeois conformists of the first period?

Or, should not the proletarian movement, lacking unity and damaged by its inability to break with class-collaboration during the two world wars, reconstruct itself by rejecting such a method, by rejecting the illusion that pacifist forms of bourgeois organization will reappear and be more inclined to legal methods of "struggle", or at any rate vulnerable to pressure from the masses (two answers, equally dangerous due to the defeatism they instill in any revolutionary

movement)?

The Marxist dialectical method replies in the negative to the question about whether there should be an alliance with the new, modern bourgeois forms, the reasons being the same as those used previously against the alliance with reformism during the democratic and pacifist phase.

Capitalism, dialectical premise of socialism, no longer needs assistance in being born (affirming its revolutionary dictatorship) nor to develop (in its liberal and democratic phase).

In the modern phase it must inevitably concentrate its economic and political forms into monstrous units.

Its transformation and its reformism assure its development at the same time as its conservatism is defended.

The movement of the working class will only avoid succumbing to bourgeois domination if it refuses to offer assistance to capitalism during its latter stages of development, even if these stages are inevitable. If it is to reorganize its forces, the working class must reject these antiquated perspectives. It must free itself from the burden of old traditions and denounce – already a whole historical stage late – any tactical settlement with reformism of any kind.

The Russian Revolution; errors and deviations of the Third International; retrogression of the proletarian regime in Russia

At the end of the first world war, the most burning contemporary historical issue crosses over into the present period – the crisis of the Tsarist regime; a feudal State structure surviving alongside a rapidly developing capitalism. For some decades, the position of the Marxist Left (Lenin, the Bolsheviks) had been settled upon the strategic perspective of fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat while, simultaneously, the entire forces of anti-absolutism were fighting to overthrow the feudal empire.

The war permitted the realization of this great goal, and in the brief span of nine months power passed from the dynasty, from the aristocracy, and from the clergy, via an interlude of government by the bourgeois democratic parties, to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This great event gave an enormous boost to questions and opinions about the realignment of forces, the struggle for power, and the strategy of proletarian revolution.

In this brief period, the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party passed through each one of its phases: struggle by the side of the bourgeoisie against the old regime; struggle against the bourgeoisie itself as soon as it tried to build its own state on the ruins of the feudal

state; split with, and struggle against, the reformist and gradualist parties within the workers' movement, arriving finally at an exclusive monopoly of power in the hands of the working class and the Communist Party. The impact of the Russian Revolution on the workers' movement can be seen in the crushing defeat of the revisionist and collaborationist tendencies, and the proletarian parties around the world were propelled onto the terrain of the armed struggle for power.

But there were many erroneous interpretations when it came to applying Russian tactics and strategy to other countries, where the installation of Kerensky-type regimes by applying a politics of coalition was seen as desirable, in order to then deal the death blow at the decisive moment.

It was forgotten that in Russia, the succession of events there was strictly related to the late formation of a characteristically capitalist political State, whereas such a State had become firmly rooted in the other European countries for decades, or even centuries, and was much stronger insofar as its legal structure was democratic and parliamentary.

Many failed to realize that the alliances between the Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks in the insurrectionary battles, and also on those occasions when an attempted feudal restoration needed to be prevented, represented historically the last possible examples of such a relation of political forces. For example, in Germany, the proletarian revolution would have followed the same tactical line as in the Russian Revolution, if it had emerged, as Marx hoped, from the crisis of 1848. However, in 1918-1919, the revolution could only have been successful if the revolutionary communist party had the forces it needed to sweep away the coalition of Kaiserists, bourgeoisie, and social democrats which held power in the Weimar Republic.

When, with fascism, we had the first example of the totalitarian type of bourgeois government appearing in Italy, the International Communist movement adopted a fundamentally wrong approach and showed that it had completely moved away from the correct revolutionary strategy when it consigned the proletariat to struggling for liberty and constitutional guarantees within an anti-fascist coalition.

To confuse Hitler and Mussolini, both of whom were reformers of the capitalist regime in the most modern sense, with Kornilov, or with the forces of the restoration and the Holy Alliance of 1815, was the greatest and most ruinous error of judgement and signified the total abandonment of the revolutionary method.

The imperialist phase, economically ripe in all modern

countries, appeared (and will appear) in its political fascist form in an order determined by the respective power relations between state and state and between class and class of the various countries.

This phase could have been considered as a new opportunity for a revolutionary assault by the proletariat; not, however, in the sense of deploying the forces of the communist vanguard merely to waste them in pursuit of the illusory objective of stopping the bourgeoisie from abandoning its legal forms, by demanding the restoration of constitutional guarantees and the parliamentary system. On the contrary, the proletariat could, and should, have accepted the historic end of this instrument of bourgeois oppression and accepted the challenge to struggle outside legality; in order to attempt to smash the rest of the apparatus – police, military, bureaucracy, and juridical – attached to the capitalist power and its State.

The current approach to the problem of proletarian strategy

The adoption by the Communist Parties of the strategy of the great anti-fascist bloc – exasperated by the slogans of national collaboration in the anti-German war of 1939, the partisan movements, the committees of national liberation, and most shamefully of all by the collaboration in ministerial coalitions – marks the second disastrous defeat of the world revolutionary movement.

The proletarian revolutionary movement can only be rebuilt, in theory, organization, and action if it rids itself of, and struggles against, politics of this kind; a politics which today unites the socialist and communist parties inspired by Moscow. The new movement must base itself on a political line which completely opposes the slogans spread about by these opportunist movements, whose anti-fascism – as a dialectical approach clearly reveals – places them completely in line – in deeds if not in words – with the fascist evolution of social organization.

The new revolutionary movement of the proletariat, characteristic of the imperialist and fascist stage, bases itself on the following general positions:

- 1) Rejection of the view that, after the defeat of Italy, Germany and Japan, a phase has begun in which there is a general return to democracy; assertion of the opposite view, according to which the end of the war is accompanied by a conversion, on the part of the bourgeois governments in the victor countries, to the methods and programmes of fascism, even, and indeed particularly, when reformist and labourite parties participate in government. Refusal to take up the cause to

return to liberal forms – an illusory demand which is not in the interests of the proletariat.

2) Declaration that the present Russian regime has lost its proletarian character, and that this occurred in parallel with the abandonment of revolutionary politics by the Third International. A progressive involution has led the political, economic, and social forms in Russia to take on bourgeois characteristics once again. This process should not be seen as a return to praetorian forms of autocratic tyranny, or pre-bourgeois forms, but as the advent, by a different historic road, of the same type of advanced social organization presented by the State Capitalism of those countries with a totalitarian regime: regimes in which State planning opens the way to staggering developments and increases the potential for an imperialist line. Faced with such a situation, we do not call on Russia to return to parliamentary democratic forms, which is in decay in all modern States in any case; instead we work for the reestablishment, in Russia too, of the totalitarian revolutionary communist party.

3) Rejection of every call for national solidarity of the classes and parties; a call made not long ago in order to overthrow the so-called totalitarian regimes and to fight the Axis States, now being used in order to reconstruct the world damaged by capitalist wars by way of legal methods.

4) Rejection of the united front tactic, that is, of inviting the so-called socialist and Communist parties, which now have no proletarian character, to abandon their government coalitions and create a so-called proletarian unity.

5) Determined struggle against all ideological crusades which attempt to mobilize the working classes of the various countries onto patriotic fronts for a new Imperialist War; whether they are called on to fight for 'Red' Russia against Anglo-Saxon Imperialism or, in a war presented as anti-fascist, to support Western democracy against Stalinist totalitarianism.
