

Communist Left

Semi-Annual Magazine of the International Communist Party

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Ecological catastrophism and global superstitions Capitalism gets a makeover

Children, airheads and schemers

Protests “in defense of the climate” have taken place since last spring in almost all the major cities of the world.

The well-publicized “movement” Fridays for Future persuaded the youngest schoolchildren to cut school to “ask” governments to “act”.

Such an undignified spectacle was promoted by the regime’s media and governments. In New York, the mayor justified absence from lessons, in Italy the Minister of Education issued a similar circular, as in Canada in Toronto, Montreal... Jubilant demonstrations came from all sides, from petty bourgeois dementia to the bigwigs’ hypocrisy. Even the United Nations has awarded the movement the “UN Champion of the Earth” award.

The “Hubbert peak” and unstoppable capitalism

While fearing the possibility that capitalism could destroy the world, certain “scientists” have been rediscovering the “Hubbert peak” theory, according to which the extraction of oil should have peaked around 1980, given the finite nature of the reserves. This prediction, which proved completely wrong, in ignorance of the Marxist theory of differential rent and of the explosive nature of the capitalist mode of production, would delegate the rationality of energy production to capitalism by resorting to “alternative” sources, in the belief that capitalism can “choose” anything, in particular by obeying the petty spitefulness of ecologists, far less for the good of future generations.

Or, “accelerationism”!

From the opposite side of the river to the ecological dreams of a capitalism that needs to “wind down”, are, latest news, the “accelerationists”: pushing capitalism forward in all its intensifications and inequalities until it explodes, it becomes impossible, intolerable, thus releasing, some delude themselves, socialism. A Futurism, (which was also a leftist movement) of the 21st century.

As if capitalism had not gone too far already, at least for a century in the West and now everywhere; its future is only crisis and war, and total counter-revolution.

In reality, the catastrophic progress of capital does not need, and is insensitive to, both the “pushes” of the latter as to the “restraints” of the former; it makes its own fatal way, which only the political intervention of a revolutionary class can break, not certainly correct.

Treacherous ecologism

Under the conditions of telesales and remote shopping, which enables capitalism to obscure the techniques applied for the production and use of energy (see, for example Volkswagen and similar), it is difficult to make a quantitative study or a reliable comparison on the real efficiency of the various solutions and machines. Here too the self-absorbed, and irredeemably false, character of science and technology in this society is evident. We will therefore confine ourselves to some minimal notes.

The diligence with which salesmen in green uniforms apply greenwash by the bucketload to make so-called “renewable” systems seem “ecologically clean” is not enough to kid us, as sworn enemies of capitalism and true and only allies of Mankind and Nature.

Those who accept capitalism must accept the constant increase in the volume of production. But, to produce more and more means of production and commodities at an insane rate of growth, a greater consumption of energy is needed.

It is said then: just resort to “renewable sources”. But nobody can prove that the use of these types of energy production, on a capitalistically hyperbolic scale, is not equally deadly towards nature.

Another example is resorting to biomass and biogas; all things considered, this is no less “dirty” than oil and natural gas. The production of cereals and other species to be used as fuel, although renewable, is not indifferent to nature. Those crops must also draw on the fertility of the earth as well as the sunlight. Furthermore, the extensions of these crops are often removed from the green lungs of the world, such as the Amazon rainforest or the tropical forests of Southeast Asia and India. Finally, the production of these “bio-fuels”, which diverts land from food production, would upset food price dynamics, leading to a worsening of nutrition levels for the lower classes.

Again: photovoltaic production involves the difficult dismantling of highly poisonous materials. The same for fuel cells.

There is a lot of talk currently about the electric car. A modest calculus, accessible even to non “specialists”, as we happily admit to being. Energy contained in a diesel tank: 30 liters by 9.4 kWh per liter = 282 kWh. Motor efficiency 33%: useful energy 93 kWh. To “fill up” the equivalent in electric accumulators (lithium or non-lithium), with a normal power socket of 1 kW takes 93 hours! And not to mention the heat losses. But they pretend to produce, and sell, the “hybrid” car, which costs much more and in the end is still driven by a combustion engine!

With this we certainly do not want to defend the use of fuels from fossil sources. We only want to declare that all the “new solutions” that are so insistently proposed arise under the sole thrust of the whimsical and ruthless law of profit, of immediate and corporate interest and that, in the present society, they are only an expression of the ignorance, or deceit, of those who defend them.

We do not believe it is necessary to highlight how under all this interest in the “new technologies” (which are often not new at all) are also hidden the selfishness of the great

nations, whose minimum energy autarchy is necessary, for imperialist reasons, in particular in the case of a war clash. Energy is a weapon.

It is clear that the energy crisis is only such for capitalism, which is based by its nature on squandering every human and material resource. No technology can ever reduce the thankless use that capitalism makes of natural resources. Only a post-capitalist society can begin to study seriously and face real rational reforms in this essential sector of the relationship between living species and the environment.

Before then, it is not a matter of convincing the polluters, but of overthrowing the political power of the polluter class. This will not be done by a vague movement of enlightened and mindful individuals drawn from all classes, but by a movement of proletarians, for the most part uninformed about “ecology”, but convinced of the need to defend their living and working conditions, and guided by their communist party not towards the immediate “salvation of the planet” but to its precondition, the revolutionary destruction of bourgeois institutions.

Centenary of the Proletarian Revolution in Hungary

Just over a century ago, in Hungary in March 1919, the proletariat proclaimed the Soviet Republic, the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, the state power of the working class. Communists, for the most part ex-prisoners of war in Russia, who had fought alongside the Bolsheviks in the 1917 Revolution, were in charge.

At the end of the war, the working class, organized and rebellious, and supported by the poor peasantry, had overthrown the Hungarian monarchy during the bourgeois phase of the revolution. However it had held back from taking power because its class consciousness was still not sufficiently developed to take power on its own.

But imbued with a tremendous subversive energy the Hungarian proletariat would move closer to its young Communist Party, with its clear and relevant watchwords of soviet power and armed insurrection. These found fertile terrain and soon took firm root among the workers.

After defeat in the war and the disbanding of the armed forces the agitation and organizational activity of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) invited the workers to take up arms. The crisis came to a head. In brief, the armed industrial workers occupied the factories and the large landed properties and kicked out the owners.

But in the vast majority of cases their weapons weren't fired: to protect itself from the revolution the bourgeoisie had sought help in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (HSDP), but the latter, not having the masses under its control, couldn't play the openly traitorous role that Noske had managed to get away with in Germany.

The social democrats, the loyal servants of the cowardly bourgeoisie, ended up coming to terms with the Hungarian Communist Party, and pretended to accept their program.

Only four months earlier, on November 1, 1918, with the Austro-Hungarian Empire already collapsing, two ministers nominated by the HSDP, Kunfi and Böhm, had been sworn in as members of the bourgeoisie's new "democratic" coalition government by Archduke Joseph. In order to gain the support of the victorious Entente, this government agreed that Hungary could serve as its military base for armed intervention against soviet Russia.

In his speech at the swearing in Kunfi had declared: "It is a difficult task for me, a convinced social democrat, to have to say, although I still say it, that we don't want to apply the method of class hatred and class struggle. We address our appeal to everybody, so that by eliminating class interests, and consigning confessional views to second place, all will want to help us in the great task".

In March 1919 this same Kunfi, with the revolution looming, presented himself along with other social traitors at the prisons where the communists had been incarcerated by the government, pretending to accept the Communist Party program, which sought the dictatorship of the proletariat.

And yet the revolution in Hungary would triumph. The armed working class, led by the Communist Party alone, took all power into its hands. The bourgeoisie ceded power without a single drop of blood being spilled.

In place of government ministries, which were closed down, People's Commissariats were nominated. On 21 March 1919 the Revolutionary Government Soviet was formed, which immediately proclaimed the Soviet Republic and proceeded with maximum energy to put into effect the political and immediate economic program of the proletariat.

In a short time it rolled out a complex, powerful and far-reaching program of expropriation and economic reorganization.

The bourgeois organs of political representation were immediately destroyed.

New organs for the control of production and distribution were set in place immediately, starting with the large factories and the banks.

Measures to protect the interests of the working class were taken straight away. The working day was set at 8 hours, and at 6 for younger workers, wage levels were standardized and paid holidays instituted. The boss's country villas were assigned to the peasant councils and the land was nationalized. Due to an expropriation of rented properties tens of thousands of workers' and proletarian families were re-housed in suitable accommodation. The town houses of the aristocracy were converted into homes for the disabled and elderly and the luxurious residences on Lake Balaton used to accommodate thousands of ill or abandoned children.

Energetic requisitions of food took place in areas where rich farmers had organized armed counter-revolutions, and the latter became increasingly easy to repress.

But the balance of forces between the two parties, communist and social democrat, were clearly weighted in favour of the latter, and not excluding them from power was a major mistake. The social democrat Sándor Garbai was installed as president of the government soviet, and eleven out of thirteen newly established commissariats were also held by the social democrats. The communists held only two, the Commissariats of Foreign Affairs (Béla Kun) and Agriculture (Károly Vántus) along with the office of the vice-commissioners.

The role of the social democrats, who were revealing their true face as traitors and as a support for the bourgeoisie against the soviet power, was becoming increasingly clear. The expropriated bourgeoisie, the aristocracy and the priests plotted counter-revolution and took up arms against the Soviet Republic. The military powers of the Entente encircled Hungary and mounted an invasion. The imperialist robbers gathered at Versailles and with their economic blockade decreed that it be starved to death.

The policy the social democrats adopted towards the aristocratic and bourgeois classes was weak and indecisive. Under the pretext that religion should remain a private affair they would block any effective disciplining of the clergy, enabling the priests in the villages to fan the flames of counter-revolution and incite the peasants to starve the cities. Aristocrats, officials, and any bourgeois of a reactionary turn of mind, all were free to roam the

country undisturbed because the Commissar of Justice, a social democrat, was opposed to any affront to “personal liberty”.

As a consequence of the “moderate” application of the dictatorship that the social democrats imposed, zealous elements of the bourgeoisie and especially of the petty bourgeoisie penetrated the soviet institutions. The social democrats found the new economic arrangements too radical as well, and sabotaged them whenever they could; this was made that much easier thanks to the mass of ex-state employees and bourgeois parasites left in the administrative apparatus for “humanitarian reasons”. To provide the capital with food and provisions was becoming increasingly difficult. The superstitions of democratic ideology would prevent any decisive measures being taken against the recalcitrant peasantry.

The social democrats of right and centre plotted from within the Soviet Republic to weaken and overthrow it. They called secret meetings and shuttled back and forth to Vienna to strike deals with the Austrian social democrat authorities and diplomats of the Entente states.

Both Lenin and Béla Kun would later admit that the alliance with the social democrats was a mistake.

On 24 June, arriving on the Danube on board armoured river boats, around 300 officer cadets from the ex-military academy attempted to take Budapest, commencing with a bombardment of the Hotel Hungaria, in the district where the Soviet government was based. The rebellion, prepared in grand style with the help of the Entente Missions, was easily repelled. But the retaliation was half-hearted, resulting in a new surge of counter-revolutionary agitation, especially in the provinces: the Governing Council pardoned the 300 rebel officer cadets, and condemned the 13 organizers to death, although the latter would be pardoned as well after the intervention of the Missions.

The Hungarian revolution, isolated and encircled on every side, could hold out no longer.

In August the Romanian army entered Budapest and occupied Hungary militarily. All of the dictatorship’s economic measures were revoked.

The bourgeoisie now wanted to take its revenge, and make an example of its opponents, and in its traditional bloody manner, within a few weeks Hungary was transformed into a proletarian cemetery. Tens of thousands of the working class’s best representatives would be assassinated and as many again crammed into the prisons and internment camps, where they would be tortured to death with beatings and starvation.

The facts speak volumes about the lengths to which the bourgeoisie will go to perpetuate its rule. By contrast, the dictatorship of the proletariat, accused by the bourgeoisie of infinite horrors, had been responsible for little more than two hundred victims, and most of these as a result of armed clashes.

Lenin drew the lesson from the defeat of the proletarian dictatorship in Hungary.

“A series of articles in the central organ of the Austrian Communist Party, *Die Rote Fahne*, of Vienna, has revealed one of the fundamental causes of this collapse [of the proleta-

rian dictatorship]: the betrayal by the ‘socialists’, who in words passed over to Béla Kun’s side and declared themselves communists, but in practice did not carry out a policy that corresponded to the dictatorship of the proletariat, rather they dithered, hesitated, relied on the bourgeoisie, and in part directly sabotaged and betrayed the proletarian revolution.

“The imperialist robbers (that is, the governments of England, France, etc) who with their global power have encircled the Soviet Republic, have savagely crushed, by means of the Romanian massacres, the Hungarian soviet government, naturally taking advantage of the doubts and uncertainties that exist *inside it*”.

A lesson that would be clearly formulated by our party: the dictatorship of the proletariat and the exclusive dictatorship of the communist party is the same thing. In an article written back in 1951, “Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party”, we would write:

“The proletarian State can only be animated by a single party and it would be senseless to require that this party organizes in its ranks a statistical majority and be supported by such a majority in ‘popular elections’ – that old bourgeois trap. One of the historical possibilities is the existence of political parties composed in appearance by proletarians, but in reality influenced by counterrevolutionary traditions or by foreign capitalisms (...) This too will be a crisis to be liquidated in terms of force relations (...) the communist party will rule alone, and will never give up power without a physical struggle”.

The Hungarian revolutionary bid for power, like the contemporaneous one in Germany and the Paris Commune half a century before, ended in defeat. They were attempts to “storm heaven”, against the overwhelming forces of the calculating and ruthless drive of the international bourgeoisie to maintain capitalism at all costs. We do not ascribe the responsibility for this defeat to particular individuals, but to an objective historical immaturity. The communist revolution to come, thanks to the sacrifice they made, will proceed securely and inflexibly toward the definitive victory of the working class everywhere.

The Labor Movement in the United States of America

(Continues from last issue)

Part 9

Some further observations on the final years of the 1st International
The formation of the party between 1871 and 1883
caught between Marxism, Lassalleanism and Anarchism

The history of political parties in the United States began as far back as the 1820s with the Working Men's Party. However, this path was soon abandoned, and the mass of workers from the few existing industries, dockyards and artisan workshops dedicated themselves to building trade union organizations, which promised an effect defense of living and working conditions. A very rich history, which we have described in the party work reports presented at the general meetings. On the political level, however, the results are poor, and the American working class goes through the disappointing experiences of cooperativism, collaboration with bourgeois parties, various moralist movements, up to involvement in the 1861-65 war of secession.

The War from this point of view marks a watershed. The need to assume a political role, to fight effectively in the name of the whole class, is felt and translates into the attempt to transform a union body, the National Labor Union, into a real party. The experiment is of short duration but the increased class participation that results, favoured also by the eight hours movement, is instrumental in paving the way for a more modern political movement of the class. Above all, it will make possible the activity of the International Workingmen's Association, the First International.

Party and Trade Union

A characteristic of the labor movement in the United States over much of its history has been a separation, a lack of connectedness between its economic and political components, between the party and the trade unions. For the Marxist school it is essential to define the roles and establish the correct relationship between these two manifestations of the movement.

This important question was often considered in the debates of the First International, which had been constituted as an association of generic workers' organizations. However, at its Conference in London, held between 17-23 September 1871, it stated:

“Considering the following passage of the preamble to the Rules:

“The economical emancipation of the working classes is the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means’;

“That the Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association (1864) states: 'The lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economical monopolies. So far from promoting, they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labour... To conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working classes;'

“That the Congress of Lausanne (1867) has passed this resolution: 'The social emancipation of the workmen is inseparable from their political emancipation';

“That the declaration of the General Council relative to the pretended plot of the French Internationalists on the eve of the plebiscite (1870) says: 'Certainly by the tenor of our Statutes, all our branches in England, on the Continent, and in America have the special mission not only to serve as centres for the militant organization of the working class, but also to support, in their respective countries, every political movement tending towards the accomplishment of our ultimate end – the economical emancipation of the working class';

“That false translations of the original Statutes have given rise to various interpretations which were mischievous to the development and action of the International Working Men's Association;

“In presence of an unbridled reaction which violently crushes every effort at emancipation on the part of the working men, and pretends to maintain by brute force the distinction of classes and the political domination of the propertied classes resulting from it;

“Considering, that against this collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes;

“That this constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end – the abolition of classes;

“That the combination of forces which the working class has already effected by its economical struggles ought at the same time to serve as a lever for its struggles against the political power of landlords and capitalists –

“The Conference recalls to the members of the International:

“That in the militant state of the working class, its economical movement and its political action are indissolubly united”.

Marx dealt with the question in a very decisive way in a letter to his American disciple Bolte, dated 23 November 1871:

“The political movement of the working class has as its object, of course, the conquest of political power for the working class, and for this it is naturally necessary that a previous organisation of the working class, itself arising from their economic struggles, should have been developed up to a certain point.

“On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and attempts to force them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory or even a particular industry to force a shorter working day out of the capitalists by strikes, etc., is a purely economic movement. On the other hand the movement to force an eight-hour day, etc., *law* is a *political* movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a *political* movement, that is to say a movement of the *class*, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing a general social force of compulsion. If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are themselves equally a means of the development of this organisation.

“Where the working class is not yet far enough advanced in its organisation to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, i.e., the political power of the ruling classes, it must at any rate be trained for this by continual agitation against and a hostile attitude towards the policy of the ruling classes. Otherwise it will remain a plaything in their hands”.

Lassalleanism and Marxism

The question had already been posed by the first authentic representatives of Marxism from the moment they set foot on American soil. The first among many, Joseph Weydemeyer, had fought a bitter battle against the utopian illusions of Wilhelm Weitling, reasserting correct organizational models for working class organization, defence, and for taking power.

When, a year later, the General Council of the First International was moved to America, the programme of “authoritarian communism” would continue to be advocated by its new General Secretary, Marx’s loyal friend and follower, Friedrich Sorge.

The stance taken by the Lassallean faction, highly influential at the time and with a significant presence within the International, was very different. According to them, economic struggles were necessarily doomed to failure because they were dictated by immutable economic laws. Instead of trade unions they believed organisations of tradesmen should be created, which emulated the earlier precedents of Weitling and Owen, and which concentrated on building an alternative economy based on mutual aid, self-sufficiency and cooperatives. To install this economy on a larger scale, which would require cheap credit and State aid, the workers were urged to support Lassallean candidates at

elections. Slowly the remaining citizens would be persuaded of the validity of their programme, and more and more voters would come around to the idea, until finally political power was achieved. Meanwhile, by conducting election campaigns at city, State and national level, they could gain access to public finances. This vision of a municipal and national state socialism, appealed especially to artisans and the self-employed.

Clearly the co-operativist veneer concealed what was substantially an individualist perspective, and its inter-classist appeal would thus attract small proprietors as well. These would include the adherents of the Greenback movement, who supported monetary reform, and it was no accident that the Lassaleans would support them as well.

Of the Greenbackers, so-called because of the color of the paper currency, Sorge would write: "They wanted (and still want) to abolish gold and silver currency and exchange it for paper money in necessary quantities, which would be redeemable only against very low-interest-bearing state bonds; in other words, it would be practically unredeemable. How this idea could find such a wide circulation just after the war during which the working classes, indeed the majority of the population, often suffered heavy losses through the fluctuating rate of exchange (during the war paper money dropped to two fifths of its nominal value) is a riddle to anyone who forgets that it is a well-understood interest of the possessing classes to divert the workers from their own interests, to lead the workers' aspirations in the wrong direction; not to allow the labor organizations to grow strong, to weaken them".

Opposing the Lassallean faction, from the standpoint of their much more comprehensive and complex vision, the Marxists advocated a very different kind of political organization. The goal of the political party for the Marxists was to *conquer political power*.

Both Marxists and Lassaleans were agreed at this stage that political organisation involved organising in the electoral sphere. In this they were opposed to the anarchists who rejected any political manifestation of the working class.

But it would actually be in the United States, where the franchise was first extended to broad strata of the working class, that the first cracks in the optimistic thesis of a 'peaceful' way to working class power via elections, making use of the working classes numerical strength, would start to appear.

As the vanguard of the working class, the Marxists were quick to notice this, and by 1876, at the Union Congress in Philadelphia they noted that "The ballot box has long ago ceased to record the popular will, and only serves to falsify the same in the hands of professional politicians". Given the presence of an "enormous amount of small reformers and quacks" in this "middle class Republic", and "*Considering*, That the corruption and mis-application of the ballot box as well as the silly reform movement flourish most in the years of presidential elections, at such times greatly endangering the organisation of workingmen", party members and workingmen were invited to abstain from the ballot box and direct their efforts towards *organising themselves*.

If the notion that conquering working class power through the ballot box still remained, bolstered by the great strides forward made by the party in Germany, it nevertheless could only have any chance of success if there was a mass base to build on, which had both a clear sense of its own class identity and interests, and the resolution and determination to pursue them.

Such a base, the Marxists believed, could only be achieved through long and patient work in the trade unions, and within the sphere of mass campaigning organisations based on the trades unions. The process of building up these organisations, which would also involve fighting for reforms to improve working class living standards and conditions, would serve as a necessary training ground. The evident reluctance of the ruling classes to concede any legislative reforms which improved the condition of the working class, with every step along the way a gruelling struggle for the basic necessities, would open the eyes of the workers and urge them towards an ultimate political solution.

The unemployment struggles of 1873 temporarily lessened the internal conflict within the International but the ultimate failure of these struggles would be used by the Lassalleans to bolster their notion that the only effective solution was action on the political plane (which for them meant using the electoral process) directed towards gaining concessions from the State as regards their demands for co-operative forms of labour organisation, most of which were entirely compatible with capitalism.

The Marxists replied that the demonstrations of the unemployed should be continued, for they secured relief for homeless and hungry families, stimulated workers to think along socialist lines, and presented opportunities for bringing home to the workers the message that only socialism could end the exploitation of the masses. Moreover, when political *action* was undertaken, it had to be based on the working class and not, as the Lassalleans advocated, as part of a coalition of whatever groups were prepared to join in their campaign for state aid to cooperative enterprises.

Unprepared to abide by the International's resolutions, the Lassalleans split from the International in 1874 and established the Workingmen's Party of Illinois in the West, and the Social-Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America in the East. Their failure in the 1874 elections would however force them to accept the importance of trade union organisation at later party conventions.

The Influence of the Party in Germany

In Germany, meanwhile, the two workers' parties, the General German Workers' Association and the Marxist influenced, pro-International 'Eisenacher' party, led by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, were moving towards reconciliation. In 1874, even before their eventual merger a year later, the two parties had reached impressive dimensions, polling in that year 350,000 votes in the elections and returning nine deputies to the Reichstag.

At the famous Gotha Congress in 1875, the two parties would work out a program they considered mutually acceptable, and join together to form the Social-Democratic Party.

In America Sorge was very impressed with the program for the Gotha Congress, drawn up by Liebknecht, which stressed the primary importance of organizing workers into trade unions (indeed one reason Sorge was ousted from General Council of the International in the fall of 1874 was because of his outspoken support for Liebknecht).

But it was the successes of the German workers' parties at the polls which would impress socialists in the United States, and by the fall of 1875, socialist unity was the predominant issue in both Marxist and Lassallean circles.

In his historic *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, originally drafted at the time of the Unity Congress in 1875, Marx heaped much gall on the sugary "unity", and condemned the many concessions made to the Lassalleans. In the period of the Anti-socialist laws in Germany (1878-1890), which were introduced after two anarchist attempts on the life of the Kaiser, Marx and Engels had been emphatic about not criticising the Lassalleans in the German party in public, although engaging in a vigorous polemic with them via internal party circulars and letters. Only in 1891, when the Gotha Programme was finally abandoned at the time of the Halle Party Congress, did Engels finally feel compelled to issue Marx's critique for publication, considering it to have 'far-reaching significance' in its settling of accounts with Lassallean economic principles and tactics.

In the United States, however, the battle between the two factions would come very much out into the open.

The 'Iron law of wages'

Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and the letter to Bracke which accompanied it of May 5, 1875, and Engel's letter to Bebel of March 18-28, 1875, are readily available and provide a very comprehensive analysis of Lassalleanism. We will therefore restrict ourselves here to merely providing an overview of Lassalle's doctrine, sufficient to provide a backdrop to the uneasy relationship between the so-called 'political' (Lassallean) and 'trade union' (Marxist) wings of the socialist movement in the United States in the seventies and eighties.

In the substantially Malthusian 'Iron law of wages' Lassalle held that workers' wages would always oscillate around a bare minimum since any temporary improvement in wages would inevitably produce a higher birth rate amongst workers. This would then increase competition for jobs and bring wages back down again. Conversely, if wages sunk too low, the birth rate would go down, emigration would increase and wages would creep back up again. According to Marx on the other hand, as outlined in the first volume of *Capital*, wages were more or less determined by the relative proportion of the industrial reserve army to those in work, which meant, for example, that wages could potentially rise during a

period of increased birth-rate if a contemporaneous boom was employing extra workers in a still greater proportion, and if workers had sufficient strength to impose the rise.

If one important consequence to be drawn from Marx's analysis was the importance of linking up the struggle of the unemployed proletariat with the employed proletariat, another was that trade union activity was necessary and could produce important results.

Lassalle's view of the worthlessness of economic battles would actually lead him to oppose the repeal of the anti-combination laws, and this would be branded by Marx as particularly pernicious since it did not just follow from Lassalle's mistaken theory of the 'Iron law of wages', but expressed his refusal to accept and encourage the *direct expression of working-class self activity*.

The 'Iron Law', which deemed any working class defensive action as entirely useless, implied there was left but one alternative to the worker, and in particular to artisans or skilled craftsmen: they should become entrepreneurs themselves, set up their own cooperatives, and since they did not possess capital, the state should provide it. As one of Lassalle's biographers commented, Lassalle wasn't so much a Marxian (although he thought he was) as a Hegelian. "He does not think in terms of a class struggle. What he wants is not the socialist State, but the social State; not the State of oppositions but the State of compromises".

Lassalle's view reflected the class relations in Germany at the time; a country where the pace of capitalist development had been slowed down by a canny landed aristocracy which used its highly elaborate and all encompassing state structure (endorsed on a philosophical level by the Hegelian professors, who were State employees themselves) to bind both the bourgeoisie and proletariat to its requirements by means of state planning and social reform, with the state operating as the ultimate arbiter while at the same time playing off the different classes against each other. And perhaps Lassalle was to some extent an unwitting dupe in this drama. Bismarck was only too happy to appear as an aristocratic ally of the oppressed workers against the bourgeoisie, and adapt elements of Lassalle's programme to the needs of the class he represented. And by combining these elements with the work of the conservative monarchist Rodbertus, who was briefly Prussian minister in 1848, Bismarck would forge a formidable weapon to destabilise the rising workers' movement: 'State Socialism'.

Lassalleanism, with its notion of workers setting up co-operatives funded by the State, would all too readily lend itself to the notion that *any* State, rather than a workers' State in particular, could enact socialist reforms.

And since it was very much the particular contradictions of Bismarck's Germany that were thus reflected in Lassalle's ideas, their survival on American soil would very much depend on them being taken up by his disciples in the German émigré community.

The Formation of the Workingmen's Party of the United States

On the occasion of Sorge's resignation from the International in 1874, Engels wrote to him on September 12: "with your resignation the old International is anyhow entirely wound up and at an end. And that is well. It belonged to the period of the Second Empire, during which the oppression reigning throughout Europe prescribed unity and abstention from all internal polemics to the workers' movement, then just awakening" (Sept 12-17, 1874).

The time had come to form a class *party*. The Workingmen's Party of the United States would arise as the first Marxist party in the United States two years later, and would be mainly composed of sections and ex-sections of the First International. In fact it was very much a case of a handover from the one to the other and the founding unity congress of the new party took place within a week of the congress which had formally dissolved the International, and at the same venue in Philadelphia.

Within the new party, after various attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable, the earlier controversies that had raged between the Lassallean and Marxist factions inevitably broke out again. The language and ideas of the new party platform were Marxist, and were indeed mainly drawn up by Sorge, but it was nevertheless the result of a compromise. If it adopted the trade union policies of the International, it was obliged to accept the Lassallean request that a national instead of an international organization be established. On the key issue of political action and trade unionism, the platform took the position: "The political action of the party is confined to obtaining legislative acts in the interest of the working class proper. It will not enter into a political campaign before being strong enough to exercise a perceptible influence". The view that an organisation of workers in economic organisations needed to be in place before an effective battle could be mounted in the political sphere was supported by the old members of the International (Sorge, McDonnell, Otto Weydemeyer, and Speyer).

The national executive committee, eventually to be located in Chicago and dominated by the Lassalleans, opposed this line and a resolution was passed empowering it to permit local sections to enter political campaigns when circumstances were considered favourable. In addition, despite the objections of Sorge and the other Marxists, the platform endorsed the Lassallean principle of governmental transfer of industrial enterprises to producers' cooperatives.

While the Lassalleans insisted on the inherently conservative nature of the trade unions, and that the party's fight to win political power effectively made the unions redundant, the Marxists insisted that there was no conflict between trade unionism and political action, and that the two actually complemented each other. To be sure, the trade union viewpoint tended to be narrow, but it was not inherently hostile to socialism and, with the party's guidance, the trade unions could be brought to see that improvements such as higher wages and shorter hours, while important, would not fundamentally solve the problems of the working class under capitalism. The struggle for these immediate

demands was however important, both to better the conditions of the working class and to train them in the movement for socialism.

The Marxists could point to clear evidence of adhering to this position in their practical work. Increasingly strong connections had been established between the Marxists and Ira Steward and the Eight Hour League (“The Boston Group”) after the latter had split from the Greenbackers in 1872. Sorge had mailed Steward manuscript copies of translations of complete sections of *Capital*, including the complete section “The Working Day”, and Steward informed Sorge that he and George E. McNeil, the spokesman for the New England labor movement and fellow leader of the eight-hour movement, were greatly impressed by what they had read and wanted to familiarize Americans with it. In Sorge’s words, “with the help of the Old Internationalists, the leaders of the Boston Eight Hour League were induced to enter the Workingmen’s Party. This gave rise to well-justified hopes for expanding the party and its principles in the New England states. The Executive in Chicago, the West, had no comprehension of the situation and through its clumsiness forced the new Englanders out again”.

The objections of the Marxists to the party engaging in premature electoral campaigns would be ignored and the party’s Lassallean-dominated executive committee along with its pro-Lassallean corresponding secretary, Philip Van Patten, pressed on regardless. New Haven would accordingly nominate a ticket in the fall election of 1876 and it was soon followed by sections in Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Chicago, all in defiance of the official platform. When the electoral results showed that the socialist candidates in New Haven, Chicago, and Cincinnati had gained a large vote and that six Party members had been elected in Milwaukee, the Lassalleans were more than ever determined to ignore the official regulations. They mounted an intensified attack on the Marxist view that political action should await the formation of strong trade unions.

The Lassalleans now felt strong enough to try and deprive the Marxists of their control of the party’s English speaking organ, the *Labor Standard*, which was under the editorship of the Marxist J.P. McDonnell. Various dirty tricks, including manipulation of funds and control of the printing press were deployed to try and remove this important mouthpiece from the Marxists, but it continued to advocate a pro-union stance, which it backed up with the publication of articles by Engels, giving news of trade union activities and labor struggles in Europe.

Whilst all this was going on the great uprising of 1877 broke out, and further successes at the polls in 1877 appeared to confirm the Lassallean perspective on the value of electoral intervention. Over the opposition of the former internationalists, the Lassalleans summoned a special convention (Sorge, McDonnell, Weydemeyer, and Speyer would refuse to attend) in Newark, New Jersey, on December 26, 1877, where the “political action” socialists gained complete control of the party. The *Labour Standard* was stricken from the list of the party’s organs and, in Sorge’s words, ‘a thorough cleanout of the rest of the Internationalists took place (...) the statutes, the program, and the name of

the organization were changed and manipulated after the famous overseas model'. The Socialist Labor Party was born.

The 'famous overseas model' which Sorge referred to was the German SDP, and he would further comment that "It is well known that at the German unity congress in Gotha the Lassalleans stamped their program and tactics with *their* coloring and *their* ideas, but that the Eisenachers, the German Internationalists, soon took over the leadership of the later admirable development of the Socialist Party of Germany. In the United States the situation was reversed. At the unity congress in Philadelphia the American Internationalists for the most part enforced their views (even though they were in the two-to-five minority). After a short time, however, they saw their views weakened, ignored, and finally completely changed by the new party and its representatives. The Old Internationalists saw the danger in this process within the new organization during the years 1876-1878. Their warnings and protests were answered arrogantly or not at all. Under these conditions they viewed their activities as pure Sisyphean labor. So they withdrew more and more, mostly into the trade unions, and so cleared the field for the pure socialistic agitation of the younger immigrants who occupied and ruled it from then on" (Sorge).

Sorge, McDonnel, Weydemeyer, and Speyer would thus withdraw from the party to join with Ira Steward, George E. McNeill and George Gunton in forming the International Labor Union.

Since we have already referred to this organisation in the last chapter of this study in *Communist Left* no. 44/45, we will merely add that one of the instructions which the Hague Congress issued to the General Council of the International, when the latter moved to New York City in 1872, was that it should concentrate on establishing, precisely, an international labor union. According to P.S. Foner, "Although its life was only five years and it did not survive 1882, the International Labor Union is important for what it represented and what it attempted to do. It was the first great effort to organize all unskilled workers in one union and by uniting them with the trade unions of skilled workers to achieve nationwide labor solidarity irrespective of nationality, sex, race, creed, color, or religion".

The Socialist Labor Party

The now renamed party, reorganised mainly with a view to conducting political campaigns, met with considerable success at the polls during the Spring and Fall elections in 1878. The vote in Chicago in the spring election was about 8,000 and two socialist aldermen were elected. In the following Fall the Socialists in Chicago elected four members to the legislature, one senator and three assemblymen. By the beginning of 1879, the party had grown to about 100 sections in 25 different states, with a total membership of 10,000, and the election success continued. But this was to be the high water-mark. The Marxist warnings about a precipitate rush into electoral politics without sufficient

preparation and without trade union support would soon be proved correct. The Socialist vote in the autumn elections in Chicago in 1879 fell from 12,000 to 4,800 and the “political action” socialists were quick to attribute this to the recovery of the economy. As Philip Van Patten, the party’s national secretary would put it: “The plundered toilers are rapidly being drawn back to their old paths, and are closing their ears to the appeals of reason. They are selling their birthright for a mess of pottage by rejecting the prospect of future emancipation in their greed for the trifling gains of the present”. But, Lassallean though he was, he would equally now make a concession to the Marxists, declaring “The only reliable foundation today is the trade union organization (...) And while political efforts of a spasmodic nature will often achieve temporary success, yet the only test of political strength is the extent to which trade union organization backs up the political movement”.

He was indeed correct to say that the party’s electoral successes were in no small part due to the support they had received from the trade unionists, and in areas where this was lacking the results were dismal. In Chicago, where the party had its most resounding electoral successes, Albert R. Parsons, founding member of the International Labour Union and also elected president of the Amalgamated Trade and Labor Unions of Chicago and Vicinity, had been a key instigator in the forging of a formal alliance between the trade unions and the Socialist Party.

The split in the SLP

In 1880, the organized Socialist movement split into two irreconcilable factions; this event, as well as being due to the differences already described, was accelerated by two events that occurred in that year.

The first involved a socialist candidate in the local elections in Chicago being fraudulently deprived of his seat by the election judges, evidencing that the bourgeoisie could manipulate the electoral machinery of democracy to obtain the results it desired.

The second event was the split in the Socialist Party prompted by the manner of participation in the presidential elections of 1880. The majority was in favour of an alliance with the Greenbackers, who called for government credit to fund producers’ co-operatives, a request analogous to what the Lassaleans were calling for, and thus of interest to sections of the Socialist Labor Party.

The Greenback movement, which for many years “had led a quiet life in the Far West”, reappeared in a new form in the late 1870s. According to Sorge: “knowing full well that they could not find a large following in the industrial East without major concessions to the workers, they added a few labor demands to their program—it was only on paper anyway—and with this induced the SLP executive to enter the alliance with them and send a strong delegation to the greenbackers’ nominating convention in Chicago during the summer of 1880” (...) “ironically enough, by the time the Socialists had made up their minds to work with the Greenback-Labor coalition, the workers had already left the movement”.

Indeed, the result of the Executive's alliance with the greenbackers was the walkout of the Chicagoans, who in Sorge's estimation were "the strongest and most active group of progressive workers, who rejected any kind of alliance with the 'reformers'". This group with Albert Parsons at their head, and taking the trade unions with him, proceeded to nominate their own independent candidates in the local elections and the party was greatly weakened by their secession and its consequences, which would involve anarchism being seen as a viable alternative.

The Workers Militias

Further reason for the split had been the position the executive had taken towards the 'Educational and Defensive societies' (*Lehr und Wehr Vereine*) which had been organised by the socialists of Chicago and Cincinnati.

Although these workers' militias, mainly composed of members of the SLP, had started to form in 1875 they became much more widespread in the wake of the repression following the Great Strike of 1877, during which the combined forces of the police, territorial militias and the federal army launched violent attacks against the workers. In Chicago workers had been targeted for particularly brutal repression due to their highly organised support for the strike. At a meeting of the furniture workers "the infamous Chicago police broke in, dispersed its members, killed one union official, and laid the groundwork for the bitter and justified hate of the Chicago workers for the nightstick [truncheon] heroes" (Sorge). After 1877 great fortified armouries were built in the large industrial cities, and the minds of military men were quickly directed towards methods of riot control and numerous pamphlets were issued on the subject.

For several years it wasn't very wise for workers who wanted to keep their jobs to join trade unions, or support radical movements; many were forced to sign a pledge they wouldn't join the unions, or even support the eight-hours movement. The inevitable result was that the workers' movement was forced underground. Sorge viewed the demise of the International Labor Union as partially conditioned by the workers' need for secrecy; especially in the company enclaves in which "whole towns—landed property, houses, schools, churches, everything without exception—belonged to the factory owners, which in such places ruled as despotically as the Czar of Russia".

Enormous pressure was being applied to workers, their organizations and the movement in general, up to and including physical violence and killings, and this meant that many workers viewed armed self-defence and consequently armed political action—and the Paris Commune was still fresh in people's minds—as a reasonable response. Many saw the secret organisation in the workers' militias, the acquisition of arms and the drilling in the woods, as preparation for the forthcoming final battles with capitalism – the revolution – in which they meant to meet the police with guns and bombs.

The national executive committee of the party was opposed to these essentially military organisations. According to Van Patten, in his report to the convention: "As they carried the red flag and acknowledged their socialistic tendencies the public were informed that the socialists were determined to accomplish by force what they could not obtain by the ballot".

In 1878 all members of the SLP in these clubs were ordered to leave.

The sponsors of the military labor organizations resented this interference of the executive committee, and when the convention assembled they moved for a vote of censure against the latter. The motion was adopted by a small majority after a heated debate. On the whole, however, the convention was dominated by the moderate rather than the radical elements, and the latter soon developed an open dissatisfaction with the party administration.

The Social Revolutionary Clubs

In November 1880, a number of members of the New York sections of the party left the organization and formed a Social Revolutionary Club, which adopted a platform modelled in the main after the Gotha programme of the German Social Democratic Party, but interspersed with some violent anarchistic phrases. The leading spirit of the new movement (according to an early history of American socialism by Morris Hillquit) was Wilhelm Hasselmann, who had been one of the representatives of the Lassallean party in the unity negotiations at the Gotha Congress, and had been described by Engels in a letter to Sorge as having visibly discredited himself, along with the other Lassallean deputies, in the Reichstag. It was after his expulsion from the German party in 1880, following a joint declaration against Bebel and parliamentarism, that he would emigrate to the United States and agitate for the Social Revolutionary Club in New York. Soon other revolutionary clubs sprang up in Boston, Philadelphia and Milwaukee, all cities with a large immigrant population who were particularly receptive to anarchist ideas after the experiences of repression in their homelands and the new and bitter experiences since their arrival in the United States. Of greatest significance were the Chicago clubs of which Paul Grottkau, August Spies, and Albert R. Parsons were the leading members.

"A national convention of Social Revolutionary Clubs was held in Chicago in 1881. The meeting was called by the New York club, which had participated in a London congress, where efforts were made to revive the International Working People's Association (IWPA) –the so-called Black International–the organization of anarchists founded by Bakunin. Returning from the London convention, where they had affiliated their club with the IWPA, the New York Social Revolutionaries brought back with them the doctrine of "propaganda by deed". They advocated conspiratorial action and individual terror against the ruling class as the only way to rouse the masses to revolt".

"The 1881 convention of the Social Revolutionary clubs did not result in a unified organization, but a name - the Revolutionary Socialist Party - and a platform were

adopted. The platform urged the organization of trade unions on “Communitistic” principles and asserted that aid should be given only to those unions which were “progressive” in character. The platform also denounced the ballot as “an invention of the bourgeoisie to fool the workers” and recommended independent political action only in order to prove to workers “the iniquity of our political institutions and the futility of seeking to reconstruct society through the ballot”. The chief weapon to be used in combating the capitalist system was the “armed organizations of workingmen who stand ready with the gun to resist encroachment upon their rights” (Foner).

The features of the new movement continued to fluctuate between a radical socialism and out-anarchism.

A faithful expression of the heterogeneous movement was Johann Most, a disciple of Dühring and translator of an abbreviated (but appalling, according to Marx) version of *Das Kapital*. Elected twice to the German Reichstag, and twice incarcerated for ‘riotous speeches’, in 1878, immediately after the enactment of the anti-socialist laws in that year, he was expelled from Berlin.

In London he started to publish *Die Freiheit* (Freedom), which even if considered a semi-official organ of the SPD, and indeed smuggled illegally into Germany, it soon became a vehicle for Most’s anarchist views, especially after his expulsion, along with the aforementioned Wilhelm Hasselmann, from the SPD in 1880.

In a letter to Sorge (19 October 1877) Marx expressed dissatisfaction with “the rotten spirit which was making itself felt in our party in Germany” following the Gotha Congress. He attributed this to the compromise with the Lassalleans and “other half-way elements”; notably with Dühring and his followers, for which Most had been responsible. “The workers themselves,” Marx went on to say, “when, like Mr. Most and Co. they give up work and become professional literary men, always set some theoretical mischief going and are always ready to attach themselves to muddleheads from the alleged ‘learned’ caste”.

In a further letter to Sorge (19 September 1879) Marx says that while Bernstein (Aaron, uncle of Eduard) and others had criticised Most’s paper for being “too revolutionary” he and Engels “reproach him because it has no *revolutionary content* but only *revolutionary phraseology*. We reproach him not for *criticising the German Party leaders*, but first for making *public row* instead of conveying his opinions to them, as we do, in writing, *i.e., in letters*”. In another letter Engels characterises *Die Freiheit’s* content as ‘empty shrieking’, considering Most’s ambition to be to publish “the most revolutionary paper in the world, but this is not achieved by just repeating the word revolution in every line”.

In November 1880, writing again to Sorge, Marx would say he had: “only recently discovered Most’s blackguardism – in a *Russian* socialist paper. He never dared print in German what can be read here in the Russian vernacular. This is no longer an attack upon individual persons, but a dragging of the *whole German labor movement through the mud*. At the same time it grotesquely *shows his absolute lack of understanding* of the doctrine he formerly dealt in. It is babbling, so silly, so illogical, so degenerate, that it

finally dissolves into *nothing*, viz., Johann Most's boundless personal vanity. As he was unable to accomplish anything in Germany in spite of all his ranting, except among a certain Berlin mob, he has allied himself with the younger generation of Bakuninists in Paris (...) In any event Most has performed the good service of having brought all the ranters – Andreas Scheu, Hasselmann, etc., etc. – together as group”.

In 1881, after publishing an article glorifying the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and calling for the deed to be emulated, Most was imprisoned and sentenced to hard labor for 16 months. The severity of the sentence surprised Marx, who would contribute to *Die Freiheit's* defence fund and campaign in Most's defence after the charges were brought. It was shortly after Most had served out this sentence that he arrived in New York.

The great mass-meeting arranged for Most's reception in the large hall of the Cooper Union Institute in December 1882 turned into a veritable ovation for the “victim of *bourgeois* justice,” and his tour of propaganda through the principal cities of the country in the early part of 1883 resembled a triumphal procession.

To quote Foner again: “Most helped pave the way for a congress of American anarchists at Pittsburgh in October, 1883. Twenty Six cities were represented at this convention where the International Working People's Association was formed. Most, Parsons and Spies were its outstanding delegates”.

This new anarchist movement, reborn on American soil with a more pro-union stance, would prove an outlet for the workers' anger and revolutionary sentiments, within the narrow limits of individualism and voluntarism.

After the events of Haymarket in 1886, the bourgeois state would bring the full weight of its repressive apparatus down on the worker's movement.

We will trace the sequence of events leading up to those events in a subsequent chapter, and also plot the later course of the Socialist Labor Party as it navigated its way through these events.

(to be continued)

The Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today

“Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d’oggi”,
in *Il Programma Comunista*, no 10, 1955 to 4, 1956

(continues from issue 42/43)

Part One Struggle for power in the two revolutions

1 – The 1914 War

The relationship between the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 cannot be ignored. This well-known point is one we have recalled on an infinite number of occasions. The entire historical development which ties the Marxist parties of Europe and of Russia together, and which links the prospects for the future that had formed to the particularities of their internal political life and faction struggles, were all shaped by that volcanic historical crisis, that political earthquake in August 1914 from which 41 years now separate us.

Although our intention here is not to write history and the essential things everybody already knows, we nevertheless still need to recall the main points.

In Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, a mainly Slav province which had passed from the Ottoman to the Austrian Empire after the Balkan Wars, on the 28th of June Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the elderly Franz Joseph, is passing through in an open-topped car with his wife. They are mortally wounded by shots from the revolver of a young Bosnian nationalist.

In the tragic weeks that followed, the government in Vienna announced that the assassin and his accomplices had confessed under interrogation to being agents of the independence movement and the Serbian government. On 23 July, supposedly secretly spurred on by Kaiser Wilhelm, the Austrian foreign minister would issue its historic ultimatum to Serbia, imposing a series of political and internal police measures. A 48 hours deadline was set. Serbia’s response was weak in tone but it didn’t agree to all of the conditions. On the 23rd, Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, attempted to mediate by calling a conference. This was rejected by Germany. On the 28th, a month after the assassination, Austria declared war on Serbia.

On the 29th Russia mobilized, on the 30th Germany did the same, on two frontiers. On the 31st Germany ordered Russia to revoke the mobilization order within 24 hours, and after receiving no response it declared war on the 1st of August. On the 3rd it declared

war on France, on the 4th it invaded Belgium but without a declaration of war. Only on 6 August did Austria declare war on Russia.

As we all know, the Belgian government decided to mount an armed resistance to the invasion and Great Britain declared war on Germany for having violated international pledges to respect Belgian neutrality. Count Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Foreign Minister, famously countered this by asking how Britain could go to war over 'a scrap of paper'.

It would later emerge that the British, only a few days before, had assured Berlin it would not intervene if Germany went to war with France and Russia, tacitly encouraging the Kaiser's government to launch itself into the abyss.

But before we look at the immediate effects of the war on Russia, which is the subject of our present inquiry, we need to mull over another aspect of that tragic month: the collapse of International socialism.

The circumstances at the time, it should be borne in mind, were very different from when war broke in 1939. In 1914 there was a clash in every country between two clear alternatives: the internationalist class position on the one hand, and a unanimously national, patriotic position on the other. And this really was the case everywhere. By 1939 everything had changed, and in given countries there was to be found a bourgeois defeatism which founded the movements against the based on being open "partisans of the national enemy". In the first historical cycle nationalism would triumph, in the second it split into two nationalisms. The cycle in which internationalism will get back on its feet is yet to happen.

2 – Nightmarish Collapse

Two days after Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, the German socialist party issued a powerful anti-war manifesto condemning it as «deliberately calculated to provoke war», and declaring that «not a single drop of German soldier's blood must be sacrificed to the Austrian despot's lust for power».

But by the time the International Socialist Bureau was summoned to an emergency meeting in Brussels on the 29th and 30th July, the situation was already coming to a head. Old Victor Adler, the leader of the Austrian socialists, would say in the opening address: «We are already at war. Don't expect any further action from us. We are under martial law. Our newspapers are suppressed. I am not here to deliver a speech to the meeting but to tell you the truth that now, as hundreds of thousands of men march towards the borders, any action is impossible».

Bebel, who had died at the end of 1913, was no longer around ; for the Germans Haase and Kautsky attended and debated directly with Jaurès and Guesde on the remote possibility that the war between Austria and Serbia might not necessarily extend to the rest of Europe (magnificent the stance of the few socialists in Serbia).

A general strike against mobilization was proposed only by Keir Hardie (the small British Socialist Party taking a not unworthy stance as well) and by Balabanoff, representing Italy along with Morgari. And who met this with a frosty response? The orthodox Marxist,

Jules Guesde: «A general strike would only be effective in countries where socialism is strong, thus facilitating the victory of backward nations over the progressive ones. What socialist would want the invasion of his country, its defeat at the hands of a more retrograde country?».

Lenin was not there, but in a village in the Carpathians with his wife who was sick; Rosa was suffering from a heart complaint. Magnificent was the *adroit* and non-orthodox Jaurés, thundering out at a great mass-meeting with the immense crowd echoing the call: Down with war! Down with War! Long Live the International! Two days later the nationalist Vilain would kill the great tribune with two revolver shots, in Paris.

The only thing the meeting could do was to bring forward to the 9th August the world socialist congress which was due to take place in Vienna on the 23rd. But, as Wolfe correctly pointed out, those ten days would shake the world a lot more than the decades that followed [B.D.Wolfe, “Three who made a revolution”, New York, 1948].

Meanwhile between 31 July and 4 August in Berlin there were back to back meetings of the socialist party leadership and parliamentary group, with their 110 strong contingent of deputies in the Reichstag.

Mueller was dispatched to Paris where they considered the same question, although most of the French comrades said: France has been attacked, we have to vote Yes to war credits, and you Germans No. In Berlin 78 votes to 14 decided in favour of war credits with a declaration declining responsibility for the war. On the 4th all 110 were registered as voting for the credits (including the 14, amongst whom the president of the German Social Democratic Party Haase, and even Karl Liebknecht, for discipline’s sake) though one, just one, Fritz Kunert from Halle, slipped out of the Chamber before the vote.

The same day press dispatches from Paris brought the same baleful news: war credits for national defence passed unanimously.

In the two capitals crowds demonstrated in the streets to the cry of Up the War! Trotsky was in the capital of Austria at the time, where he was astonished to hear the cries of exalted joy from the young demonstrators. What ideas are inflaming them? he asked himself. The national ideal? But isn’t Austria the very negation of any national ideal? But Trotsky always put his faith in the masses, and in his autobiography he found an entirely optimistic explanation for this agitation aroused by the mobilization, a leap in the dark by the dominant classes.

3 – Seven Theses on War

Following his eventful crossing from Austria – where he was an enemy alien – into neutral Switzerland, Lenin was without reliable news on the stance taken by the Russian socialists. It was said that all the social democrats in the Duma, Mensheviks included, had refused to vote for war credits. But some things still stuck in his craw: in the pre-vote debate, Kautsky, who he still considered his teacher, had opined for abstention, but afterwards, with a thousand and one sophisms, he would justify and defend the vote in favour set by the majority. Lenin then learned that in Paris Plekhanov had become a propagand-

ist for enrolment into the French army. For days Lenin was consumed with rage and fury until finally he adjusted to the necessity of having to start all over again, and to denigrate the new traitors. As soon as he could get six or seven Bolshevik comrades together, he presented them with seven concise theses on war. There was him, Zinoviev and their partners, three Duma deputies and perhaps the French-Russian Inessa Armand as well.

One: the European war has the clearly defined character of a bourgeois, imperialist and dynastic war.

Two: The conduct of the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, in the Second International (1889- 1914), who have voted for war credits and repeated the bourgeois-chauvinist phrases of the Prussian Junkers and the bourgeoisie, is a direct betrayal of socialism.

Three: The conduct of the Belgian and French Social-Democratic leaders, who have betrayed socialism by entering bourgeois governments, is just as reprehensible.

Four: The betrayal of socialism by most of the leaders of the Second International signifies the ideological and political bankruptcy of the International. This collapse is mainly caused by the present prevalence within it of petty-bourgeois opportunism.

Five: false and unacceptable are the justifications given by the various countries for their participation in the war, namely: national defence, defence of civilization, of democracy and so on.

Six: It is the first and foremost task of Russian Social-Democrats to wage a ruthless, all-out struggle against Great-Russian and tsarist-monarchist chauvinism, and against the sophisms used by the Russian liberals and constitutional democrats, and a section of the populists, to defend such chauvinism. From the viewpoint of the working class and the toiling masses of all the peoples of Russia, the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and its army, which oppress Poland, the Ukraine, and many other peoples of Russia would be the lesser evil by far.

Seven: the slogans of Social-Democracy at the present time must be all-embracing propaganda, involving the army and the theatre of hostilities as well, for the socialist revolution and the need to use weapons, not against their brothers, the wage slaves in other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments and parties of all countries... the urgent necessity of organising illegal nuclei and groups in the armies of all nations... appeal to the revolutionary consciousness of the masses against the traitorous leaders... agitation in favour of republics in Germany, Poland and Russia.

The text was adopted with a few amendments, or rather additions.

1. An attack on the so-called "centre" which had capitulated in the face of the opportunists and which needed to be kept out of the new international. This direct attack on Kautsky may not have been written by Lenin.

2. A recognition that not all workers had succumbed to war fever and in many cases had been hostile to chauvinism and opportunism. This was possibly prompted by news about those countries where part of the movement was on the right path (Serbia, Italy, England, some Greek and Bulgarian groups, etc).

3. An additional note on Russia whose source, Wolfe believes, is undoubtedly Lenin, in that it constitutes «a characteristic formulation of the requirements and of the slogans of a democratic revolution in Russia». And we wanted to put it here because it takes us directly to our main theme: «Struggle against the tsarist monarchy and Great-Russian, Pan-Slavist chauvinism, and advocacy of the liberation of and self-determination for nationalities oppressed by Russia, coupled with the immediate slogans of a democratic republic, the confiscation of the landed estates, and an eight-hour working day».

A few weeks after the war broke out in 1914 the view of revolutionary Marxists is therefore clear.

In Europe: liquidation of the Second International and foundation of the Third.

In Europe: struggle to liquidate the war not through peace but by the overthrow of capitalist class rule (socialist revolution), subject to the toppling of the dynastic regimes.

In Russia: war lost, end of Tsarism, democratic revolution effected through radical measures. Transition to a socialist revolution only in tandem with a similar European revolution.

4 – No “New Theory”

This cycle is recounted in the official Stalinist History of the Bolshevik Party in such a way as to conclude with Lenin, confronted with the opportunist collapse of the European movement, supposedly creating the “new theory” of revolution in one country. It is therefore in this sense, and to this end, that it lays claim to Lenin’s entire inexhaustible crusade against the social-patriots: «such as the Bolsheviks’ theoretical and tactical conception regarding the questions of war, peace and revolution».

It is instead abundantly clear, using pretexts even more specious than Guesde’s and Kautsky’s, that the astounding orders given to the Communist Parties during the Second World War, who were hurled onto a joint front with the bourgeoisies, left not a single stone of Lenin’s theory of war, peace and revolution standing, insofar as it was just the “old theory” of Marx, which the traitors of 1914 had similarly torn to shreds, and which Lenin, to their eternal shame, had gloriously reinstated. What else is the victory of the retrograde country which Guesde talked about in Brussels if not the eternal lie of the victory of the fascists over France or England which had to be avoided at all costs?

The official falsification relies on two of Lenin articles from 1915 and 1916. The 1915 one is entitled “On the Slogan for a United States of Europe”. Lenin, quite rightly, had a number of reservations about this slogan. The way it appeared in the seven theses was as republican United States of Europe, coordinated with the call for republics in Russia, Germany and Poland. (Today all done, but when will we add England to the list?). Later on the Party rightly decided to postpone this political slogan, as it could lead to misunderstandings. According to Lenin the United States of Europe between capitalist States (not just dynastic) is an inadmissible formula; but not because it is a pre-socialist, democratic formula since such demands may still be useful, but because in this case such a body

would be reactionary. An excellent and prophetic opinion on the various federations and European leagues propounded on all sides today, Stalinist ones included. «A United States of Europe under capitalism is tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies».

Excuse us if we persist in the digression, but today they would be in second place behind America in any case, which now has the lion's share of that partition. But this just makes the likelihood of a federal Europe being either "reactionary or impossible" even more likely.

Either against America, as Lenin viewed them in 1915, or under America, as we think likely today (or even under Russia, or under an entente between them) the United States of Europe would inevitably be against the colonies and against socialism.

As far as we are concerned, Lenin clearly states, war presents a more revolutionary situation than European federalism (rather different this than adopting the theory, etc, etc, of the various above- mentioned sacresties!)

Our slogan would be United States of the World, says Lenin. But even that doesn't really suit us, firstly, because it clashes with socialism, «In the second place because it could generate the mistaken opinion that the victory of socialism in one country is impossible, and wrong ideas about the relations such a country would have with other ones».

It is here we want them, these gentlemen. It is the period subsequent to this that official history invokes: «Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible initially in some or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat in that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production, will arise against the rest of the capitalist world attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, [here finishes the citation by the great allies of Roosevelt, and before him Hitler, by the castrators of the revolution and of Lenin's thinking, but we'll go on] stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their States».

5 – Simultaneous Revolution?

The other citation which the afore-mentioned text would like to put on record is from an article written in Autumn 1916 *The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution*, in which is openly treated the hypothesis of a *capitalist* country in which the proletariat has taken power and then conducts a war against countries that are still bourgeois, importing the revolution. This scenario, which we have covered on many occasions, is a million miles away from the ghastly buffoonery of "peaceful co-existence", "peaceful emulation" and "defence against aggression", inasmuch as such a war would be a class war, of unadulterated aggression, and above all an unconcealed declaration to the proletariat of the world to stand by and prepare for the moment when it will be possible to attack the strongholds of capitalist exploitation.

The crude sleight of hand lies in slipping from one of these theses to the other: taking political power in one country – building socialism in one capitalist country where power has been conquered – building socialism *just in Russia*. And it is this last thing which we maintain belongs in cloud cuckoo land, as will be borne out by the palpable economic facts in the second part of this report.

This then is the load of rubbish which supposedly justifies the *new theory* (only to then to be quickly bury it, new or not). «This theory differed radically from the conception which was widespread *among Marxists* in the pre-imperialist phase of capitalism, when *Marxists* held that socialism couldn't win in one country but would triumph at the same time in all the civilized countries». And then: Lenin destroyed this wrong theory, etc, etc.

This is just a fairy tale, every word of it made up, and Lenin had nothing to do with it. And did anyone ever really believe in this fable of simultaneous socialism in all countries anyway? Neither the left, nor with greater reason the right of Mrxism. And the *civilized* countries, which ones are they then? France, England and America, but Russia – certainly not. And Germany? To hear the bigots of 1914, of 1941, and those of today, who in order to attack the European Defence Community revive that much abused bogeyman of the thuggish, armed German, Germany is more uncivilized... than the Hottentots!

However, before continuing to dispel the central ambiguity that animates the entire narrative of proletarian history *ad usum Kraemlini*, it is necessary to make an observation. This alleged dualism between two theories, an old and a new one, the one arising from the circumstances of pre-imperialist capitalism and followed, , with related tactics, by the Second International, and the other supposedly discovered and installed by Lenin, and based on the experiences of the most recent imperialist phase (stage), is not a defining mark of the Stalinist brand of opportunism alone.

The opportunism of the 2nd International also had an overblown (and lousy) *new theory* of its own: one which boasted of having done justice to a forty-eightist and catastrophist Marx, authoritarian and terrorist, and modelled itself not on the bristly, coruscating “red terror doctor”, but an the most honourable parliamentary social-democrat in his top hat and tails (we even saw such creatures in Moscow), who loathed the class party and courted instead the pacifist and gradualist economic unions, ever ready to put the dampers on any mass action, and who finally, between the white fury of Vladimir Ulyanov, and of us latest dupes, voted through war credits for the imperialist massacre. It was the revisionist theory of Bernstein and Co., singing their eternal, whorish refrain: the... times... have... changed.

So then, the same old story about the old nineteenth century theory of big bearded Karl, and the new twentieth century theory they have the nerve to attribute to Lenin, but which is the legacy of a simian army of bare-arsed baboons who aren't even fit to gibber his name; a theory typical of many small groups who don't like to call themselves Stalinists, because they aren't aware they are, and who – as we have rammed home on so many occasions – devote themselves to dry-docking the ship of the revolution which supposedly ran aground because they weren't around, poor cercopithecoids, to design the new theory,

fortified by what Marx didn't know and Lenin had only just begun to spell out; it is the legacy of the many small groups which every now and again, in a horrible “bouillabaisse” of doctrines and onanistic interpretations announce they are going to “reconstruct the class party”. Let us leave these gentlemen to their excitations (which above all fail to address the capricious aim that really motivates them: of attracting attention) and get back to the Kremlesque machinations.

6 – Down with Disarmament!

The other contribution to the theory of the “revolution in one country” is drawn by those Moscow *bishops' council* from another article, from Autumn 1916, which treats another theme: namely it smashes to smithereens, as the article from 1915 did the United States of Europe, another slogan, in support of disarmament, which the left-wing elements of the socialist movement, during the war, especially in the Socialist Youth International, were going to launch in opposition to social-chauvinism.

The article is a powerful attack on pacifism, a consistent theme in Lenin's work, and throughout the decades of Marx's “old theory”, and inseparable from the desperate resistance which radical Marxists have always mounted against the philanthropic-humanitarian pietism of the radical petty bourgeoisie and libertarians and against the gradualist visions of late nineteenth century reformism, which in a general cesspit of trade-union-big-wig corporativism and democratic electoralism wished to stifle power, violence, dictatorship, wars between States and wars between classes; a contemptible view and a world away from Marxism in its original, unadulterated form, avenged by the nimble fingers of those who patched it back together after it was ripped to shreds by those traitors. Today it must be proposed again, against the collectors of signatures, in the face of the bold supporters of the pen's mighty crusade against the cannon and the atomic bomb [Cf. “The ‘Disarmament’ Slogan”, October 1916].

In the article “The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution”, which in our expositions (which invent or discover nothing, but only repropose the historical material, endowment of the anonymous, eternal movement, within the framework of well-defined developmental phases) is placed in the right context, here is the passage that suits the officials: «The development of capitalism proceeds extremely unevenly in different countries. It cannot be otherwise under commodity production [*aplica et fac saponem!*...]. From this it follows irrefutably that socialism cannot achieve victory simultaneously *in all* [Lenin's italics] countries. It will achieve victory first in one or several countries, while the other countries will remain, for a certain period, bourgeois and pre-bourgeois. This is bound to create not only friction, but a direct attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie of other countries to crush the socialist State's victorious proletariat. In such cases, a war on our part would be a legitimate and just war. It would be a war for socialism, for the liberation of other nations from the bourgeoisie».

Pure gold, this passage. But so are the sentences which precede it: «The victory of socialism in one country does not at one stroke eliminate all wars in general. On the contrary it presupposes war».

A bit different from claiming, as the Stalinists do, that they are in a socialist country, and therefore preparing universal peace! They are in a bourgeois country, and their pacifism is just as hypocritical as the bourgeoisie when they were anti-1914, then anti-1939, and now anti-third world war (1970?). It will end up the same way.

And then there are the sentences that come immediately after: «Engels was perfectly right when, in his letter of 12 September 1882 to Kautsky, he clearly stated that it was possible for *already victorious* socialism to wage “defensive wars”. He was alluding in fact to the defence of the victorious proletariat against the bourgeoisie of other countries» [“The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution”, September 1916)]. Poor altar boys! In the very writings they are relying on to show us Lenin giving birth to the new theory, the latter, in one of his typically clear explanations, demonstrates that what he is saying was already well known to the *Marxists* “of the second pre-imperialist period”, that is, a good 38 years before; and certainly Engels knew all this not because he dreamed it up that autumn evening, but because he was drawing on the ABC of Marxism, which History gave birth to around 1840.

What interests us is the historical context and overall structure of the article. Since we can't reproduce it all we will give an idea of its powerful framework.

7 – Youthful Exuberance

Lenin had been struck by Grimm's theses in the *Jugend-Internationale*. In the minimum programmes of the old parties there was inserted the item: people's militia, arming the people. The war had rendered this a topical problem, and it is well-known that the anarchistic trade unions supported the “refusal to serve” argument. Their spokesman at the Stockholm conference in 1907 was Hervé, who had supported the correct thesis of the general strike in a speech which was theoretically disjointed (and was deemed as such by Lenin). So the young left Marxists resolved to replace the slogan *arming the people* with *disarmament*. Lenin was against it.

We should recall that among the socialist youth of Italy at that time the anti-militarist problem was also being discussed at length; and not only on the theoretical level but in high-profile trials as well. The idealist individualist stance – I am against the spilling of blood and will not take up arms – was condemned as typically bourgeois. When the question touched on Italy's entry into the war, we stated that by declaring ourselves neutralist we were misrepresenting our revolutionary position: “neutrality” of the bourgeois State was not our goal, nor a role for it as a mediator, or as a proponent of the absurd idea of universal disarmament, a notion no less bourgeois than that of individual disarmament. In peace and in war we said (shameful to admit we weren't even aware of Lenin): «We are enemies of

the bourgeois State and want to strangle it. Following mobilization, whatever the strength of our forces may be, we won't offer it neutrality, and we won't disarm the class struggle».

My young friends and comrades, says Lenin, you want to argue for disarmament because that is the clearest, most decisive, most consistent expression of the struggle against *all* militarism and *all* war. But you are wrong. It is a premise which is idealistic, metaphysical, and nothing to do with us: for us being against war is the ultimate point of arrival, not the point of departure. The abolition of war in itself is not a slogan we defend. War is one of the historical facts which mark the stages of the capitalist cycle in its ascent and decline: to abolish war is, fortunately, meaningless, if it weren't it would mean stopping that cycle before a revolutionary outcome was achieved. But that is how *we* express it. Lenin goes – sometimes too much – for the concrete. He explains the cases when we are not against war.

First of all he goes into the *bourgeois* revolutionary wars supported by Marxists. For which see our extensive treatments of the subject [Cf. among others the “Fili del Tempo” which appeared in nos. 10-14/1950 and 4-6/1951 of “Battaglia Comunista”, the party's fortnightly publication at that time]. The thesis that in Europe such wars came to an end in 1871, which was formulated by Marx at the time as «the national armies are as *one* against the proletariat!», is replaced by Grimm with the “obviously wrong” formula of *in the era of this unbridled imperialism national wars are not possible*. Lenin would have been happy to put his signature to that if it had been followed by the words *in the European camp, between the European powers*, prophetically slapping down the apologetics for French and Italian “national liberation” offered in 1945. His counterblast here is that national wars outside of Europe, in Asia, in the East, are still entirely possible, and indeed they still are today.

Secondly, civil wars are wars which will not end until the division of society into classes ends: another exception to the famous “any” wars.

Finally Lenin mentions the future revolutionary war, which is no longer *bourgeois* but *socialist*. So, three kinds of *just* war, i.e., wars we might have to support. According to Lenin, the correct formulation is as follows:

«To accept the defence of the fatherland slogan in the 1914-16 imperialist war is to corrupt the labour movement with the aid of a bourgeois lie». This response, he says, hits the opportunists much harder than any platonic slogan calling for *disarmament* or against any *defence of the fatherland*. He proposed adding that henceforth any war waged by these powers: England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy, Japan and the United States is bound to be reactionary, and the proletariat must work for the defeat of its ‘own’ government in such wars, taking full advantage of it in order to unleash revolutionary insurrections.

This is a theory which hinges on the entrenched anti-pacifism of Marx and Engels. So then, Stalinists, what is this new theory? Did the age of full imperialism come to an end in 1939 perhaps? And instead one had to *defend the fatherland* first in Germany and Austria, deriding it elsewhere – and then in France, England, Italy, in order to save them from Germany? Evidently a third theory is called for, then a fourth and so on ad infinitum; but still the stuck record you love so much spins round and round: the... times...

have... changed; the... times... have... changed.

But it is still the same old opportunism, smelling as bad as ever.

8 – Guns and Workers

Since it concerns the youth movement, Lenin, after having said one shouldn't include the call for *disarmament* but substitute *people's militia* with *proletarian militia*, points out the importance of learning how to use arms if an insurrection is to be mounted, another point we have been fighting for decades, even if unfortunately we have only seen it applied purely in the service of bourgeois ideologies, in illegal movements, sure, but emanating from bourgeois States and armies. Lenin even mentions the arming of proletarian women. «How will proletarian women react? Only by cursing all war and everything military, only by demanding disarmament? The women of an oppressed and really revolutionary class will never accept that shameful role. They will say to their sons: “You will soon be grown up. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art properly. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as is being done in the present war, and as the traitors to socialism are telling you to do. They need it to fight the bourgeoisie of their own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, and not by pious wishes, but by defeating and disarming the bourgeoisie”».

The latter passage is not likely to get quoted by Stalinists. As a matter of fact inviting women to *come up with pious wishes* is exactly what they do; wishes so pious indeed that they actually invoke Pope Pius XII as the greatest example of a *disarmer* (and compared to such a rabble, he was a respectable one at that).

In order to get young people to better understand dialectics, which even many *oldies* still can't digest, Lenin followed his thesis through, to the point of leaving intact – theoretically – the expression *defence of the fatherland* and *defensive war*. One needs to know how to properly interpret a text in such cases. Marxist literature, having established that the catchphrase “against all wars”, so beloved of liberals and libertarians, had no place within it, and that a not always straightforward historical distinction needs to be made between the various wars and different types of war, had nevertheless ended up inheriting, in order to make such distinctions, the common formulation: when attacked you defend yourself. Despite the fact that this is a million miles away from transposing, as do philistines, the piddling little rules of individual morality onto the historical plane, one ended up by calling wars of defence wars which were supported, or at least not sabotaged. It is well known that the First Address of the First International on the Franco-Prussian War contained the expression: On the German side, the war is *a war of defence*. And in fact it was Napoleon III who had boldly launched the attack. But the fact is that at the end of that historical cycle Marx was more interested in seeing the ruination of Bonaparte than the hated Prussians, and Bonaparte (see the rich harvest of quotations) is considered an ally of the Tsar: nothing would have changed if it was Moltke who had made the first move, and the call had been *zur Paris, zur Paris* rather than *à Berlin! à Berlin!*

9 – Fatherland and Defence

So what does Lenin have to say about it, at least in the officially sanctioned Italian translation? [The translation of the citation used here is from the 1964 Progress Publishers English language edition of “The Military Programme”, so it also was officially sanctioned!]

«To accept “defence of the fatherland” in the present war [1916] is no more nor less than to accept it as a “just” war, conforming to the interests of the proletariat – no more or less, we repeat, because *invasions may occur in any war*. It would be sheer folly to repudiate ‘defence of the fatherland’ *on the part of* oppressed nations in their wars *against* the imperialist great powers, or on the part of a victorious proletariat in *its* war against some Galliffet of a bourgeois State» (General Galliffet, the “Butcher of the Commune”).

We, who would never alter our theory’s “propositions” or “theorems”, but occasionally have the temerity to rearrange their *symbols*, have italicised the words *invasions may occur in any war*, to clearly identify our annotation.

Just as the slogan “Oppose all wars” is not dialectical, so no less metaphysical and bourgeois is it to state «We are against wars, unless they are wars of defence, and the national territory is threatened by an enemy invasion, given that the *defence of the fatherland* is considered sacrosanct by the citizens of *every country*».

This is in fact the formula of opportunism which explains how on the same day the French and the Germans, in their respective unanimities, voted for national war. The words *invasions may occur in any war* recalls an article published in *Avanti!* in 1915, entitled on “Socialism and National Defence” [December 21, republished in “Storia della Sinistra Comunista”, 1912-1919].

With the stock phrase “duty to defend the nation” you don’t actually just accept *some* wars, you accept *all wars*. Once the bourgeois States have issued the order to open fire, ‘over here, and over there’, both territories are in danger; it may happen that one of the armies abandons its own territory for strategic reasons, becoming an “aggressor” in the process, and there are many historical examples of this.

Therefore we draw distinctions between one kind of war and another, and even if we sometimes use popular terms (although in fact we’d like to ban them altogether) such as *just* or *defensive* war, to signal a war we support or which we believe to be useful in a revolutionary sense, we are in fact asking ourselves the historical-dialectical question: “is such and such a war *in the interests of the proletariat*? Does it, as Lenin put it, *conform to the interests of the proletariat*?” As regards the war in 1914 the answer was *No. Nowhere*. And though it was clearly a case of a neutral country being attacked, the Belgian socialists were wrong as well; and the brave comrades in no less attacked Serbia were right.

For example in 1849 Marx and Engels supported Austria, which was plainly the aggressor, against little Denmark, and, as the Trieste report on the *Factors of Race and Nation* clearly shows, they did the same in all of the wars up to 1870. *They would have* supported the Napoleonic invasions and rejected the characterization of the German wars at

the beginning of the century as *just, defensive* wars, or even as wars of *independence*, as the bourgeois and petty-bourgeoisie in general viewed it. Back then it was in the interests of the revolution that the first Napoleon should win, and not the Holy Alliance.

However Lenin is always worried that the party, when making decisions, rather than drawing on the overall perspective of our complete, complex, and never sharply dualistic view of living history, might draw instead on stock phrases, which as often as not are bourgeois. We would find it more exact to say not that in given cases we admit the legitimacy of war and the country defended, but that in given times and places when faced with war we will sabotage it, and in others we will *defend it*. The word 'country' is too a-classist, and Lenin, in the same more widely distributed 1916 theses, puts a nice slant on the sentence in the *Manifesto* about countries; and us proletarians not having one.

In any case, it is extremely dangerous to adopt slogans of the '*Disarmament*' variety and it signifies a total relapse into bourgeois ideology.

10 – Victory in One Country

It wasn't a pointless digression to comment on the all-out war which broke out in 1914, even if it involved repeating ideas we have expounded on before, mainly with the aim of emphasising that our theory of war and peace is set and hasn't changed for over a hundred years. As mentioned earlier, it is strictly linked to our historical theme, the revolution in Russia.

Having explained the two texts by Lenin which condemn two fanciful and stupid ideas: the United States of Europe, and global European disarmament, we return to the point which Stalinists have been so keen to distort: the revolution in one country.

When reading our texts, it should be borne in mind they weren't written just to fill some gap on a library bookshelf, adding another abstract chapter to an abstract subject or discipline, but arose within the life of a bitter dispute which was the historical substructure of a real battle of opposing forces and interests. We are in a living struggle taking place between Lenin and those who supported the war. It is necessary to follow this robust dialogue that would soon become an armed struggle conducted on several very different fronts.

The Revolutionary Marxists say: In no country can this war be supported, no defence of the war, but in all countries sabotage of the war and also of defence of the homeland.

The opportunists and also the more dangerous centrists hypocritically respond: we are ready to do it. But only on condition we can be 100% certain, while we are stopping our own State's army from the rear, that the other side is stopped as well. If there is no such assurance, we would merely be defending the enemy's war.

Is it clear that such an apparently logical objection, as easy to grasp as all of the populist theses the miserable activists are talking to the proletariat about these days, includes bankrupting the revolution. Thus, for example, during the war with Austria, we managed to prevent, through a superhuman effort, the socialist parliamentary deputies in Italy from voting for war credits, but when the collapse of Caporetto occurred, it was only

because the bourgeoisie did us the honour of attributing it to our propaganda (how would a Togliatti deal with such a historic problem? Would he say it was to allow the Veneto fall, glorifying Sicily? However nothing ever collapsed thanks to anything he did), that our honourable deputies suddenly wanted to vote through the funds for the defence of Mount Grappa, and take the same road the Germans and French had taken in 1914. Whether it was good or bad to have prevented it one cannot say: certainly it cast a spotlight on the opportunist plague, which later needed to be branded with a red hot iron.

Lenin wasn't the kind of person who would bother to argue such a point. He often said that only an imbecile is incapable of understanding that every revolutionary party has to sabotage the wars of its own State. In truth getting the point over for us was actually much harder and not so straightforward, and taking it forward us a lot about the impossibility of proceeding always by means of crystal-clear expressions; and about the authentic glory of "revolutionary obscurity", the master of which, in our view, was the great Karl.

However Lenin is unyielding on this point and would give his cast iron demonstrations the unequivocal title: *Contro Corrente* [Refers to a collection of Lenin's articles from the years 1914-1916. These were originally published outside Russia in the "Sozial-demokrat" and in "Kommunist", and later republished by the Petrograd Soviet in 1918 under the title "Contro Corrente"].

History didn't allow him, great as he was, to anticipate a horrible possibility: the danger of getting sucked back, powerless and impotent, into the slimy depths of the current; which we all thought had been reversed but unfortunately hadn't been.

It is necessary to sabotage war on both sides of a front WITHOUT setting the condition that the sabotage be conducted with equal force; without minding if it might even be non-existent on the other side. It is equally necessary in such a situation, with an enemy army crossing the undefended frontier, to try and liquidate *one's own* bourgeoisie, *one's own* State, to take power, to install the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Along with "fraternization", with international agitation, and with all the means at the disposition of the victorious power, the rebel movement within the enemy country will also be stimulated.

The response is simple, as far as Centrism is concerned. But if despite everything such a movement fails, the enemy State and army continues to function, and they go on to occupy the revolutionary country and overthrow the proletarian State, what do you do then?

Lenin had two responses to this: one is from the history of the Commune, which wouldn't hesitate, having managed to defeat the bourgeois cops of France, to greet the Prussians with cannonades as well, but under no circumstances would it lower the red flag of revolution. The other response to the twisted apologists of the imperialist and counter-revolutionary, bourgeois war, was precisely: *war. Our war, revolutionary war, socialist war.*

Against the same enemy then? So it's the *same* war defended by us? snigger the philistine contradictors. No, because the new war is class war, because it isn't conducted alongside the bourgeois State and its general staff, already swept aside; because its victory won't be a victory for any imperialist coalition, but for the world revolution.

11 – Ditched Resolution (La carta cambiata) ⁽¹⁾

This historic point concerns the possibility of a revolutionary manoeuvre by the International against the traitors of 1914, as entirely opposed to what was done in 1939 and 1941.

Opportunism is the *watchword* of non-revolution, the class truce within individual nations conceded to all of the belligerents, until war is over.

We will show that it is vulgar sleight of hand to equate this shameful and barefaced traitor's expedient with the movement's alleged precautionary adherence to a theory which requires "simultaneous revolution" in every country.

Lenin's formula is the rejection of this *watchword*, the rejection of the class truce in all countries, whether at war and or at peace; it presses forward to realise the revolutionary event regardless of whether a State wins or loses, and above all if takes revolutionary advantage of the defeat.

Wherever the reverses of war gave the proletarian party the possibility of doing so, it had to take power: this would need to the policy in Germany, in France – and, of course, in Russia.

France without Germany would have had a socialist government; or Germany without France. Both such governments could have taken resolute anti-capitalist measures and above all throttled the war industrialists; and then the immediate requirement on the winning side would not be to *disarm*, but to organize a *revolutionary* army to stop the capitalist enemy, to stop their own revolution from being stangled.

The building of communism in Russia, or in a prevalently feudal and patriarchal "one" country in general, has nothing to do with the latter thesis, and cannot be based on it: it is something else altogether.

So what should revolutionaries in Russia be trying to achieve? By God, how many times do we have to say it: not socialism, but a *democratic* republic. The hypothesis of socialism in one country is obvious, but spell it out and it reads: *Capitalist* country.

So there it is: the ace up your sleeve, Mr Card sharper, has been played.

(to be continued)

(1) - *Carta Cambiata* is the title in the original Italian publication and involves an untranslatable play on the word 'carta', which can mean paper, playing card, paper, document, charter, etc. "Cambiare la carta", for instance, means roughly 'to change ones tune', but to translate *Carta cambiata* as 'changed charter' conveys its main meaning, in that it refers to the famous Stuttgart Resolution carried at the International Socialist Congress in 1907. This resolution took a classist anti-war stance, and changing it (or rather dumping it) in 1914 effectively sounded the death knell of the Second International. The most revolutionary element within the 1907 Resolution was the final paragraph, the contribution of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, which referred to what the working classes should do if attempts to prevent war failed: 'Should war break out (...) it is their duty to intercede for its speedy end, and to strive with all their power to make use of the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people, and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule'

From the Archive of the Left

The function of the chief in the Marxist conception: Lenin-Luxemburg-Liebknecht

Three text from *Bilan* and *Prometeo*, 1933-1936

Luxemburg and Liebknecht, Revolutionary Communist Leaders

Prometeo no. 84, February 5, 1933

On 2 January 1919 the Spartacist League broke all organizational relations with the independent socialists (USPD) and established the Communist Party at the Berlin Congress. While this process of building the organ called upon to direct the proletarian struggles that came to the fore politically in the torrent of events of the immediate post-war followed an accelerated course under the direction of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, the Russian proletariat, under the firm leadership of the Bolshevik party, was driving off all of the combined attacks of united capitalism, in a desperate struggle.

But what were the true conditions of the balance of forces at this time in Germany?

After the events of November 1918, and following the constitution of the provisional government through the coalition of the two socialist parties, Majority Social Democratic Party and Independents, the defeat of German imperialism had provoked a disorganization of the State and of its entire superstructure such as to bring about, with the corresponding radicalization of the masses, favourable conditions for the proletariat to move to the conquest of political power.

While the Russian proletariat, which had already passed to the organization of the Red Army and already represented, on the eve of the insurrectionary movements of November 1918 in Germany, a powerful support for proletarian victory, social democracy was working hard to safeguard the teetering edifice of the capitalist regime.

The theory of the Kautskys and Bauers consisted in characterizing the proletariat's way out of the situation as something that would have served as a pretext for an immediate invasion of German territory by the victorious allied capitalist powers, which would have meant the definitive and certain defeat of the proletarian class.

The inconsistency of this argument is proved by all the events that followed.

While the Kautskys and the Bauers provided, at the decisive moments, the best weapons for the defence of the bourgeois regime, by disorienting the masses when all the

conditions existed for the assault on power, the Scheidemanns and the Noskes then, in the days of January of 1919, were required to complete this treacherous work by standing up as the executioners of the working class.

From the first days of the insurrection, when soldiers and sailors in particular responded to the calls of the Spartacists, when, in the streets of Berlin, it seemed that the fate of the German revolution must be decided, social democracy – whether majoritarian or independent – multiplied its presence to crush the impetus of the masses, putting itself completely at the service of the “Fatherland in danger” by presenting the insurgents as “savages”, mobilizing all forces first to prevent the extension of the movement and then moving on to the massacre of the young Communist Party.

The savage decapitation of the communist movement that followed in the tragic days of mid-January in Berlin marks an important stage in bringing the proletarian movement to a halt.

The defeat of the German proletariat was moreover reflected in the defeat of a series of revolutions started in various countries, and in the difficulties faced in the course of consolidating the Russian revolution.

If these were the negative consequences of the defeat, we must not forget the positive aspects that it also embodied.

This first baptism of fire of the young communist party in the armed struggle, and the open functioning of social-democracy as a watchdog for the capitalist regime, were the elements that determined the orientation of the social-democratic masses towards communism, towards the Russian revolution.

Liebkecht and Rosa Luxemburg represent, within the framework of these events, the indestructible figures of proletarian action with respect to the constitution of the class party: the communist party.

The most radical break with all social democratic tendencies was sanctioned by the events of January. These events could have been reflected advantageously in the subsequent future course of proletarian struggles.

The years 1921, and 1923 in particular found, in these events, the lessons that were likely to point the proletarian movement towards victory.

But the opposite direction was also taken in 1923.

Not towards the immediate and direct struggle for the conquest of political power, but towards the alliance with the left wing of social democracy, the bloc with Zeigner in Saxony.

What occurred in 1919 excluded this prospect; this error cannot be imputed to Liebkecht and Rosa. Indeed, their whole activity, and the last moments of their life in particular, exclude this perspective *a priori*. Centristism, which seeks to pin the blame for the 1923 defeat on Liebkecht and Rosa, presenting their own positions as “centrist”, because, in their opinion, Liebkecht and Rosa had delayed the split with the independents precisely when the situation required a firm leadership capable of leading the masses, who

had reached boiling point, towards the final objectives.

In this way centrism wants to reduce its responsibilities for the 1923 defeat by accusing Liebknecht of having a false position on the role of the party, since already in the Second International he allegedly submitted to the concept of the spontaneity of the masses, thus reducing the leadership role of the proletarian vanguard, the position fought for by the Bolsheviks.

By reducing the question of the Spartacists' activity in these terms, that is to say, to their inadequacy in understanding of the central question of "the independent and decisive leadership of proletarian struggles", the movements of 1919 appear as a delayed event resulting from alleged semi-Menshevik positions that were previously supported in opposition to the Bolshevik fraction of the Second International.

A simple look at the uneven development of the proletarian movement, at the tenacious struggle during the war, supported by the sparse group of Spartacists against the independents, and against the most proven traitors of the proletarian class, demonstrate the real confluence of the healthy forces of the revolutionary Spartacist movement towards the positions supported by the Bolsheviks, while at the same time destroying the purported error of the spontaneity of the masses.

The logical consequence of the development of these positions subsequently led the Spartacists towards the establishment of the class party: towards the constitution of the communist party – and this in advance of all the other groups.

The delay in this constitution is not attributable to the will of certain elements, it is an inevitable result of the whole process of decomposition of social democracy and the political maturation of the masses towards the notion of their class party. In this process of formation and destruction, the contribution of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg remains peerless: to reduce its own responsibility for the defeat of 1923, the scholasticism of official centrism relies on the commonplaces of inveterate opportunists. Whereas the Spartacists, in spite of the fact that all the conditions for the assault on power were not present, did not hesitate for a single moment to put themselves at the head of the movement, official centrism, in a favourable situation such as arose in 1923, didn't face up to its responsibilities, crediting itself with the greatest defeat of the international proletariat.

Today, when the communist movement is torn apart by an unprecedented crisis, when the bourgeoisie – despite its complete bankruptcy – attacks everywhere, when fires are already flaring up and threatening to ignite powder kegs on all continents, engulfing all humanity in the cauldron of a new war, the problem of the communist direction of struggles takes on a capital importance, of life or death for the oppressed of all countries.

At the anniversary of the death of the three leaders of the international proletariat, at the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, the communist vanguard will find, in the regeneration of the communist movement, the indispensable condition for taking up proletarian struggles once again, for the proletarian revolution, for the final victory of communism.

Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg belong to the world proletariat

Prometeo no 127, January 26, 1936

The commemoration of the proletarian leaders who fell after the war, in the name and for the account of the international proletariat struggling for its release in all countries, is of particular importance due to the current situation. While everything is collapsing in the workers' camp, and the Italian, German and Russian prisons are filled with revolutionary proletarians; while the capitalist order has broken, either with violence or with corruption, the conscience and the class organizations of the workers; when the imperialist war announces its imminent arrival, it must be proclaimed and demonstrated that the work of Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht persists despite socialists and centrists, despite the momentary victory of capitalism.

It is wrong to find proof of the failure of their efforts in the situations of defeat that we live through, because their genius ultimately only expressed the unleashing of the class struggle that allowed the world proletariat to conquer the State in Russia, to found the Communist International and the communist parties. No amount of corruption can ultimately stop the appearance of this unleashing of the struggle, these social eruptions, because they are the expression of the contradictory bases of the capitalist regime. The current situation is only an interlude before the unleashing of events that will again throw the proletariat into gigantic struggles, in which other leaders will arise with a vision that will mark a continuity with the previous work and a progression in the historical vision of the proletariat.

Today, with the triumph of the counter-revolution, it is filth that generates the proletarian "leaders", the Stalins, the Blums and Vanderveldes, whose nefarious work is at its height.

We therefore consider Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg as the expression of proletarian conscience in the phase of the struggle against opportunism in the Second International and in the post-war insurrectionary eruptions.

We categorically refuse to commemorate a "Leninism" or a "Luxemburgism", considering only the contribution of Lenin and Luxemburg, and of the world proletariat of which they were a progressive expression on its "via dolorosa" towards emancipation, to the ideological heritage and to the arsenal of weapons of the revolution that the proletariat must continually perfect to be able to achieve its specific objectives.

Lenin represents the question of the party, his choice of leaders, the dictatorship of the proletariat through the armed uprising of the workers; Rosa represents the attempt – on a stronger and more complex class front – to approach the theoretical and practical examination of the problems of the proletarian revolution; Liebknecht represents the self-sacrifice of the revolutionary who gives up his life to lead the workers into the insurrection.

For those who need a “Leninism” and a “Luxemburgism” to complete the task of filling their skulls, Lenin will be the discourse on cooperatives, an introduction to socialism in one country. They will also be the ones who advocate political and structural bases for the establishment of communist parties on foundations other than those on which Lenin founded the Bolshevik party. Rosa will be the spontaneity of the masses, the anti-party, the democrat irreducibly opposed to “Leninism”. There will be others, such as Trotsky, who was what he, alas, will no longer be – a first-rate proletarian leader – who will need “Leninism” to explain the need to reach socialist parties in the name of political maneuvering.

For us, we will see in the Leninist speculations of the centrists and the Trotskyists, in the re-shuffling of Rosa’s work by the Laurats and Souvarines, or by certain socialists forgetful of their complicity in her assassination, which consecrated the massacre of the German proletariat, ideological expressions of a counter-revolutionary work that must hinder workers from continuing their effort of clarification and programmatic progression, whilst at the same time serving to explain their betrayal.

It is true that there were serious differences of opinion between Lenin and Rosa, but their significance must be set in the specific historical context of different situations in Germany and Russia, where these divergences arose. Thus, even Lenin cannot be appraised outside the appraisal of the historical circumstances that allowed him to found a party, to lead the proletariat to insurrection, but that could only allow him to pose for the first time – and without being able to solve it – the question of the management of the proletarian State, of its permanent connection with the struggles of the international proletariat.

Luxemburg and Liebknecht represented the battle of a working class in a zone of very advanced capitalism where democratic corruption had performed extensive work of bribery and destruction. Their vision of events could not march in step with the insurrectionary eruption of the proletariat in 1919. The contradiction between the “Critique of the Russian Revolution”, written by Rosa in prison before the revolutionary events in Germany, and the program of the Spartacus League, which was directly fertilized by the struggles of the German proletariat, rests on this.

Lenin, by contrast, arose from the conjunction of the awakening of the masses of all the countries with the revolutionary eruptions in Russia, where from 1900 to 1917 there was a revolutionary ferment that the overthrow of the Czarist regime could not make disappear and could not delay and that allowed the Bolsheviks to arrive at programmatic formulations before Revolution.

The programme of the world revolution could only be touched on by Lenin, due to the extent of the problem posed by the birth of the first proletarian State. From this we derive the contradictions in the course of this period; a period in which the internationalist notions were fundamental in making the founding the proletarian State a victory of the workers of all countries; not such were instead the conceptions that would be used to build socialism in one country, which would only show how centrism represents the proletarian defeats.

In reality, putting Lenin and Rosa on the same level is affirming that the German

workers' struggle was the first echo of the Russian revolution and the second attempt on the path to world revolution, that these are two phases of the formation of the class consciousness of the workers in the aftermath of war, in which Lenin's phase could express itself with the seizure of power and in which the other phase, that of Rosa, had to be murdered by capitalism and its socialist agents.

We would commemorate Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht with the conviction that the work they took up after Marx and Engels continues and progresses in workers' organisms (despite the current depression of the movement) in which the attempt is being made to understand and translate for the new period, in order to arm the communist nuclei with the ideological weapons needed to solve the problems that tomorrow's revolutionary uprisings will once more present.

We do not need a "Leninism" but only a method of investigation that allows us to understand the significance, the contribution and the limits of the programmatic realizations of our leaders, the significance, the contribution and the limits that are those of formation of proletarian conscience in its time. Let to those who must camouflage themselves, dress in clothes that are not theirs to deceive the proletariat, the task of brandishing these theories. The bourgeois revolutions had to hide the class antagonisms that they revealed under confused ideologies. Traitors and opportunists must adorn themselves with "Leninism" or "Luxemburgism" in order to introduce among the proletarians an ideology of defeat, of despair, of impotence and finally of participation in the imperialist war.

In its communist fractions that once again take up the flag carried by these revolutionaries, the world proletariat will know how to respond, today with contempt, tomorrow with violence, to the bourgeois falsifiers and the regimes of which they are the faithful expression. It will commemorate Lenin by proclaiming its historic mission with which persists despite the momentary defeats, and its devotion to the program of the world revolution for which these great leaders lived.

Who are the heirs of Lenin, Luxemburg & Liebknecht?

Bilan no 27, January 1936

We want to commemorate three proletarian leaders who have fallen in the revolutionary struggle by responding vigorously to shameful speculation that is emerging about them in the workers' movement.

In all four corners of the Earth the bankruptcy of "Leninism" and the triumph of

“Luxemburgism” are being proclaimed. Behold the heralds of the new faith. They just forget, like the monkey of Florian’s fable, to light their magic lantern. Look at what has become of Soviet Russia and the Communist Parties which, based on Leninist foundations, are today instruments of capitalism. Rosa Luxemburg, by contrast, foresaw and predicted this bankruptcy, she alone advanced the necessary positions for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Let’s go back to “Luxemburgism”!

It’s all very simple, quite clear. It remains only to prove such assertions, to highlight the elements on which we intend to base ourselves. And here, this is more difficult. We’re going to try to prove it.

Rosa’s pamphlet on the Russian Revolution of 1917 is contrasted with Lenin’s work in October 1917. Moreover, some hold up as their banner her articles in the *Neue Zeit* against the methods of organization, the conception of Lenin’s party as set out in the latter’s “What is to be done?” Historically, can these conceptions be contrasted as two different systems? Yes! for those weak-minded people who reduce eras of class struggle to polemics between “leaders” or between groups. No! for Marxists who see in these ideologies attempts conditioned by the stage of class struggle in different countries, with the goal of expressing the historical and internationalist consciousness of the given proletariat.

Unfortunate people who, without fear of ridicule, oppose the struggle of German workers for the world revolution to that of the Russian workers and who exclaim solemnly: «The efforts of Russian workers have become bankrupt, but not those of the German proletariat». History laughs, with good reason, at these judgments and there will come a time when proletarians themselves, disgusted, will kick them away.

We deny anyone the right to “judge” Lenin and Luxemburg.

Their work is not a cold theoretical manifestation coming out of their brains, like Minerva from Jupiter’s brain, but the fruit of bitter battles by workers over decades of incredible sacrifices by thousands of proletarians, of the painful ascent of proletarian classes towards their emancipation. Let us therefore try to understand the historical epochs for which they were the brilliant expressions, the objective limits faced by the proletariats whose march they guided; let us therefore try, for both, to separate the essential from the contingent, the doctrinal contribution from the hypothesis and then we will be doing useful work rather than causing confusion.

But above all we need to start with the right criteria. Either we base ourselves on the class struggle to explain the doctrine, or else doctrine is used to invent a fantasy class struggle. If Lenin is the result of a maturation of class struggle in Russia, it must be proved that this maturation had to abort in “Leninism”, a theory that is claimed today by the builders of socialism in one country. Is this possible? Yes! if we look at class struggle “in one country”, thus using an anti-Marxist method, and if we claim that the October Revolution was not the explosion of international class antagonisms on the weakest sector of the capitalist world, but the result of the backward conditions of Russia, which made “Leninism” the theory of domination of the Communist Party “over” the proletariat and “Luxem-

burgism” the theory of democratic domination of the proletariat in the more developed sectors of the capitalist system. But if we stick to the Marxist criteria that see the collision of a rapidly developing proletariat in Russia with the most advanced positions of Western socialism, a timid bourgeoisie, feudal and peasant classes, we can understand why the formation of the Bolshevik party was made through a selection process expressing the international conclusions that resulted in the class struggles in Russia, peremptorily proving that, in the global imperialist phase, the proletariat had to fight for the proletarian revolution, even when the bourgeois revolution did not take its course, taking up economic tasks on its own account. If the Russian proletariat took the initiative for the constitution of the Third International, it is because its victory was only possible on the basis of internationalist criteria that made October 1917 an endeavor on behalf of workers around the world.

That the special circumstances of Russia were of great importance, we do not deny; that they prevented Lenin from accurately seeing certain problems, such as the problem of national minorities and colonial movements, we perfectly admit ⁽¹⁾. But is this where the contribution of the Russian proletariat in the work of global emancipation, which we commemorate in Lenin, resides? You would have to be blind to believe this. From 1903 to 1917, Russian workers fashioned the party theory that allowed them to march towards insurrection. This is a historic event that no opportunistic hand can tear away. It is said that Rosa was right at the time against Lenin, who had created a machine which, after his death, was bound to produce the “dictator Stalin”. Once again, if the class struggle depended on the parties and not the latter on the class struggle, this stupid explanation would become a source of profundities. For a Souvarine, this historical (??) vision (?) may suffice, as it will certainly suffice for all those who proclaim themselves “democratic communists” and cling to the formulations of formal democracy, therefore bourgeois, which we found among other class formulations in the aforementioned pamphlet by Luxemburg.

However, since it is necessary not to link, but to brutally oppose the period of the Russian revolution of 1917 to the victory of the centrist bureaucracy, we should attempt to do the same between the time when Luxemburg wrote her pamphlet on Russia in prison, and the period when, liberated by the German revolution, she wrote her *Spartakusprogramm*, which breaks with democratic mirages and joins the Bolshevik front, fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. What we don’t do for Lenin, we don’t do for Rosa. We do not want to give the idea that after the victory in Russia, Lenin could only reflect the degree of maturity of the workers from all over the world grouped around the Third International. What if this maturity was not enough to help the Bolsheviks solve the greatest problem of their century? It is the fault of “Leninism”, we are told. What if the ideological immaturity of the proletariats of the different countries were to allow Lenin to push for the formation of the Communist Party not on the historical basis verified by the Bolshevik Party, but on a retrograde basis, in the name of the largest gathering of the masses for the world revolution; if this is one of the causes of the easy victory of centrism, who is responsible for this? “Leninism?” But the latter was created on other foundations!

The same goes for Rosa; they prefer to destroy her memory by quoting her pamphlet on the Russian revolution (where the weak points of her doctrinal work appear, weak points that we will find in other pre-war writings and which result from the conditions of the class struggle in Germany, in which the containment of social antagonisms in a young imperialist country, itself economically contained, was to allow the expression of a Marxist current that could only take a clear and well-defined form when these antagonisms erupted in a violent outburst of class struggle) rather than examining the historical conditions that weighed on it and which jumped in 1919.

It is no coincidence that the admirable figure of Luxemburg appears in all its sharpness, in the directives for the German revolution, in the *Spartakusprogramm*. Those who wanted Spartakus' death had no cure for the democratic formulations previously expressed by Rosa. They understood that the outburst of class struggle had allowed the German proletariat to glimpse the path followed by the Russian Bolsheviks and that it was the application of the same principles to German conditions. Rosa has the merit of presenting the problem of national minorities better than the latter. The Second Congress of the Communist International paid an involuntary tribute to her by modifying, at the proposal of Lenin himself, the traditional Bolshevik point of view in a contingent position, marking the doubt and uncertainty of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. But on the party's problem, Rosa could say nothing other than what German workers felt before the war, failing to find in their class struggle the strength to oppose an organic fraction to opportunism, but just an ideological current, a global phenomenon and the fruit of burgeoning imperialism. One can only rely on the phenomena posed for the real development of situations: Rosa could clearly perceive the national problem in the prototype country of imperialist capitalism, but not the historical problem of the party in the absence of the revolutionary explosions experienced in Russia ⁽²⁾.

We will therefore not recognize "Leninism" or "Luxemburgism" but only a method of historical investigation bequeathed by Marx and which, in different periods of class struggle, allowed a Lenin and a Luxemburg to systematize or express lessons generated by these phases in a set of principles. These principles are milestones for moving forward and not empty formulas of content as they would like us to believe by linking Lenin and his discourse on cooperation to "socialism in one country"; Rosa and her famous prison pamphlet, to "democratic communism", to the anti-party, to anti-Lenin. They cannot be pitted against one another, just as the struggle of the German workers of 1919 cannot be pitted against that of the Russian workers of 1917. The synthesis of these currents, also directed towards the world revolution, is still to be done, and is done, let us be sure, in the fractions that are preparing ideologically and practically for the latter.

Between Lenin and the Russia of Stakhanovism, there is the abyss of the German defeats of 1923, the Chinese defeats of 1927, the advent of fascism in March 1933, the entry of the USSR into the League of Nations, the race towards the new imperialist war, in which Russia will participate in one or the other of the constellations. Between the

“Luxemburgism” of the Souvarines and Laurats ⁽³⁾, of the German SAP ⁽⁴⁾ and Luxemburg’s work, there is the *Spartakusprogramm*: two periods of class struggle.

Liebknecht would illustrate this program by concretizing the deep impetus of the proletarian masses in Germany towards the revolution in 1919. But Liebknecht, especially in the current period, would be a glorious example, full of lessons for internationalist communists. He would prove that isolation is the ransom that must be paid, in certain periods, in order to retain the right to maintain positions around which the workers will gather tomorrow. At the risk of one’s life, you have to stand up to the pack. You have to resist, alone. For us, Liebknecht’s example did not die at a time when socialists and centrists commemorate the three “Ls” by preparing the workers for the Sacred Union, by approving, in the name of “Leninism”, the worsening of exploitation of Russian workers.

Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht are now tied to fractions which, against all odds, are struggling to fashion the new party of the proletariat, to add a further link to the work of proletarian emancipation; to fractions which, despite the current situation, do not doubt the triumph of the communist revolution for which they work and the course of events and internationalist communists. We reclaim their flag and tomorrow the masses will add their victory and the doctrinal contribution resulting from the period that witnessed the betrayal and sinking of the first proletarian State, the Third International and the Communist Party.

1) Our current's position on the national and colonial question would be clarified following an important theoretical work in the fifties, which would lead, among other things, to the publication of “Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory”.

2) Here is a more precise formulation that we have given: the programme of the Communist Party was born, complete and final, in 1848; the formal parties that follow tend to move close this limit, in theory and in tactics; any deviation from it, among leaders and communists, can be explained but not justified by the contingent situation.

3) Lucien Laurat was one of the founders of the Austrian Communist Party, who moved closer to Souvarine after 1923.

4) SAP: a German left social-democratic party created in 1931.

Summaries of the ICP General Meetings in 2019

Meetings Number 133-134-135

A beautiful, international party meeting

Turin, January 25-27, 2019

Saturday session

- Economy and society in Israel and Palestine. #1, Economy
- Course of economy - Towards a new crisis
- The military question: In Russia from 1905 to February 1917
- The organic party in Lenin
- Workers struggles in Latin America
- The Succession of the Modes of Production: Slave-Serf-Wage labourer

Sunday session

- Marx and mathematics
- Labor activity
- The formation of the Indian nation
- Hungarian revolution: The counter-attack of the Red Army

Excellentlly organized in the usual convenient location as our previous meetings in Turin, we convened the party network for the regular work meeting from Friday 25th to Sunday 27th January.

In addition to the Italians, there were also comrades from Great Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Venezuela and the Middle East, clearly demonstrating a small party but which makes every effort to include in collective work, which takes place according to a single plan, communist militants of any country. We can with satisfaction boast that, despite the difficulty of the different languages, the maturity everywhere of the development of capitalism and its contradictions and the international uniqueness of our doctrine and of our program greatly facilitate and make natural and spontaneous the insertion of these new forces in the common battle array.

As is well known, we welcome at general meetings - the key moment of all our work as a living organization, theoretical study and development of the external intervention - only militant comrades who have fully accepted our program and the discipline of the party. General meetings, as they are not congresses, let alone conferences or rallies, and their purpose is not propaganda, neither outside the party nor, worse, inside. The relationships that we present to you have another purpose, they are contributions to the conscience that the party must maintain of itself and of the world, they integrate themselves in a continuity inserted, from a meeting to the next, in a tradition that comes from very far on a well-known and definitive trajectory and method.

As always here we report for the comrades present and for those absent a summary of the reports, all of great commitment and importance, which demonstrate the good results and ded-

ication of our small but well-connected team.

And we also present it to proletarians outside the party, who will increasingly hear the words of communism and in whose struggles we participate, study their difficulties and try to give them the healthy and appropriate class address.

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To our general meeting the contributions of all party groups converge and intertwine in their tenacious and consistent battle Genoa, May 24-26, 2019

Saturday session

- Course of the world economic crisis: productions, the crisis of trade
- The new trade union organizations in the first post-war Germany
- The military question: The civil war in Russia, March-April 1917
- The concept and practice of the dictatorship - after Marx - The communist State in Russia
- The development of capitalism in Israel and the Occupied Territories

Sunday session

- Report of the North American section
- The social situation in Iran
- The rearmament of States
- Trade union activity of the party
- Report on the situation in Venezuela
- The birth of the Communist Party in China

Planned for a long time, we held the periodic general meeting of the party in our beautiful and welcoming headquarters in Genoa; delegations of almost all our international groups were present, apart from the absence of some, who sent an adequate written communication, for health reasons.

We met in a first session on Friday afternoon, continued the next morning, for the organizational part of the meeting and all the activities in which the party's forces are involved: each group was able to report on what they are committed to do and on the results of the work, for which sometimes the help of other comrades was requested to try to solve some difficulties.

We reserve ample space for the description of the struggles environment and workers' organizations, the evaluation of their maturity and of how the workers we are in contact with respond to our union address. This is the main terrain on which our class actually fights, and on which the adequacy and the addresses of the various parties and currents will be compared.

To this test of facts we await anyone who wants to be recognized to join and stand on the workers' front of social war, of Communism and of the disciplined and solid militant party.

As usual we give here for the absent comrades and for the readers a preview on the content of the numerous and very important reports, presented in the sessions of Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

International party meeting

Florence, October 4-6, 2019 [GM135]

Saturday session

- Report on the course of capitalism
- The German revolution of 1919 in "Bilan" and in "Prometeo"
- The PCd'I and the civil war in Italy
- The military question - First World War - The opposition to war in belligerent countries
- The formation of the Indian nation
- Lenin on proletarian dictatorship in 1920 Russia

Sunday session

- Trade union activity of the party
- The Hungarian revolution of 1919 under siege of the bourgeois States
- Report of the party section in Venezuela
- The labor movement in Great Britain in the first post-war period
- Origins and history of the International Red Trade Union

From Friday 4 to Sunday 6 October we gathered for the periodic general meeting in our large Florence office. There were comrades and representatives of sections from Great Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Venezuela and, from Italy, Turin, Genoa, Veneto, Cortona, Bari, Rome.

All activities were carried out with our pressing and orderly rhythms, according to the pre-established plan, finally agreed on at the beginning of the meeting. Intercalary translations in English were performed.

Our certainly not plethoric forces are able to express a great deal of work, not only for the individual skills and diligence of our comrades, but because they are inserted in the healthy environment of communist solidarity that is maintained within our team.

We know that we must defend the program of tomorrow's revolution today. This great task can only be done with a methodical and impersonal doing, in a fraternal discipline that eschews exhibitionism, originality and the stupid gossip of intellectuals. With the same serene commitment that was of Marx, Engels and our other masters, without obviously considering ourselves at their level, we work to accumulate and develop the necessary ideological ammunition of the party that will lead the working class to power, and to destruction of all power.

Today it is a question not of discovering new truths but of extending to the party the horizon of knowledge of the complex developments, in time and space, of the struggle between the classes and sub-classes of the past and present of this now rotten bourgeois world.

Not by particular tactical maneuvers or expedients, but by the correct performance of its functions, of all its functions, among which the contact with the working class is vital, will the quantitative and qualitative extension of the party occur.

The succession of modes of production: Slave-Serf-Wage laborer

The first of the introductory reports to the capitalist mode of production focused on the analysis of differences and similarities between the three forms of alienated labor. From this point of view, the history of humanity can be divided into three great eras, a path that starts from lower communism and ends in higher communism after having crossed an entire era characterized by the division of society into opposing classes.

In the secondary form of production, as in the tertiary, the dependence of the producer on the owner of the means of production is strictly personal; on the contrary the modern wage worker is dominated by material submission relationships. But all are however "slaves", just as Engels brilliantly shows in his work dedicated to the English working class: «The serf was the slave of the piece of land on which he was born, the working-man is the slave of his own necessities of life and of the money with which he has to buy them – both are *slaves of a thing* (...) Slaves they both are, with the single difference that the slavery of the one is undissembled, open, honest; that of the other cunning, sly, disguised, deceitfully concealed from himself and everyone else, a hypocritical servitude worse than the old».

The relationships of personal dependence are the first forms in which human productivity develops and can only do so in restricted, isolated areas. This stage of the productive forces is followed by the personal independence founded on the material dependence of the capitalist era. It will be only in communism that individuals will be freed with their universal development, an expression of their collective productivity, their social heritage.

The search for the characteristics common to the three different forms in which the social relations of the classist epochs manifest themselves must avoid the bourgeois pseudo-scientific deception that does not attribute substantial differences to these three different forms. The aim is to support the thesis of the naturalness and eternity of capital-

ism by stripping salary and surplus value of their capitalist character and thus transforming capital into the end, always and forever, of history.

The progress of capitalism with respect to the modes of production that preceded it lies in the total polarity on the one hand of the producer without property and on the other of the owner who is not a worker; thus the wage earner, unlike the slave and the servant, does not offer his own self directly but is forced to sell the only merchandise he owns: his ability to work.

This peculiarity conceals the exploitative relationship that underlies what appears to be a simple mercantile exchange of equivalents. This appearance, a simple change of form, constitutes the chain that ties the working class to the infernal machine constituted by the capitalist mechanism of extortion of surplus value.

In the capitalist mode of production, compared to the previous ones, it is more difficult to distinguish that part of the day in which the producer works to reproduce the value of his means of subsistence from that in which he works for the class that appropriates surplus value. It is the wage form that «cancels all traces of division of the working day into necessary work and surplus work, in paid and unpaid work: every job appears as paid work».

The bourgeois ideology, and it could not be otherwise, has constantly exalted the progress achieved thanks to the liberation of the producer from the ancient relations of material dependence, but the wage worker is now free even in the sense that he is found to be devoid of any property. It is this liberation that has enabled money to become capital, a process in which the owner of money finds «in the commodity market the free worker, free in the double sense that as a free person he possesses his labor power as his own commodity and, on the other hand, he has no other goods to sell, he is naked and bare, free of all the things needed to realize his working capacity».

Modern slavery cannot manifest itself in all its crudeness, except in the place where surplus value is produced: the lord has today assumed the appearance of the capitalist. Beyond appearance, the working class is under the total control of the bourgeois because they are the despotic masters of all livelihoods. This condition must not be referred only to the youth age of capital, but even in the modern and highly automated robotic industry there are masses of «workers crowded in the factories, militarily organized. And they are placed, as simple soldiers of the industry, under the supervision of a complete hierarchy of various levels of officers».

Going to the conclusions the comrade briefly mentioned those so-called germs that in capitalism already deny the last form of producer slavery. If at the beginning the worker sold his labor force to capital because he lacked «the material means for the production of a commodity, now his own individual workforce fails its task unless it is sold to capital».

Science stands against society as authority of the capitalist, as a productive process that dominates the producers themselves, and dialectically this is the presupposition for this power to return to the service of a society freed from division into antagonist classes, so that work can become self-realization of the individual. This is communism.

Proletarian dictatorship - Lenin in 1920

We continue the exam of the materializing of the proletarian dictatorship in soviet Russia, which for us communists means dictatorship of the communist party, by making reference to Lenin's writings. On 6 February, 1929, Lenin makes a "Speech at the Fourth Conference of Gubernia Extraordinary Commissions": «Both before and after the October Revolution we held the view that the birth of a new order was impossible without revolutionary coercion, that all the regrets and complaints that we hear from non-Party petty-bourgeois intellectuals are simply reactionary (...) Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters. On the other hand, revolutionary coercion is bound to be employed towards the wavering and unstable elements among the masses themselves (...) the October Revolution started when the army was completely demoralised and there was a complete absence of any military organization (...) in building up this new disciplined Red Army we had to resort to revolutionary coercion. And this revolutionary coercion was quite rightly applied to self-seeking elements».

On March 17 we have the "Resolutions of the Politbureau of the C.C., R.C.P.(B.) Concerning Breach of Party Discipline by Members of the A.C.C.T.U. Party Group ": «The Politbureau, composed of comrades Bukharin, Lenin and Krestinsky, discussed on November 17, 1920 the abnormal situation arising from the fact that Party members sponsor resolutions at non-Party congresses which run counter to the decisions of the Party's C.C. The Politbureau resolves that from the point of view of Party discipline this is decidedly wrong and impermissible. Considering the quite exceptional circumstances, however (namely, the very early date of the forthcoming Party congress, the publication of Comrade Tomsky's theses, and the comparatively minor importance of the still moot question of collective management with or without one-man management in separate cases) it is recognised as a politically lesser evil that members of the A.C.C.T.U. Party group be permitted, pending the decision of the Party congress, to sponsor the resolution of that group at current congresses of the various trade unions».

From a speech at "The Ninth All-Russia Conference of the R.C.P.(B.), September 22-25, 1920": «As regards the old specialists we have heard some very heated attacks here. The truth came out in Comrade Kutuzov's speech when he said that the proletariat saw no improvement of its position from Soviet Russia – if anything, it was often worse. That's true. But one must sort out the facts, for instance, that in Vienna, where there is no Soviet government, you have the same deterioration, to which you can add a moral humiliation a hundred times worse. But the rank and file cannot get this straight. Understandably, we are asked: What did we get in the course of these two years? And obviously, dissatisfaction with the old specialists is widespread. Naturally, the question whether we need specialists or not was a salient issue. We shouldn't forget, however, that without them we would not have had our army. We would have found ourselves in the same position as Hungary and

the Finnish workers».

Concerning the concessions about to be given to capitalist countries concessionaires, Lenin says: «If we were well off, we would not offer concessions, but when you're hungry, when you have to manage in any possible way to give people a break, you must reason in a different way».

In a speech of 21 December 1920 we read: «Question: Couldn't the capitalists use the concessions to avert crises at home and thus stave off a social revolution? Answer: If the capitalists could avert crises at home, then capitalism would be everlasting. They are decidedly blind pawns in the general mechanism; the imperialist war has shown that».

At the Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets (22-29 December 1920), in a speech to the communist fraction:

«We must push forward with the training of engineers and agronomists from among the workers and peasants. This is beyond all question, and the Soviet government is taking steps in this direction, but we cannot count on very quick results; it may not take as long as electrification, but it will take at least several years; so it is wrong of Comrade Korzinov to suggest that all other matters be set aside until we have our own agronomists. By now we have got to find and get the best agronomists, call them to our meetings, demand from them an account and thus single out the industrious and educated men from the rest (...) The thing is to apply in good time to the institution that has to remedy matters, and not talk about it here, where we cannot collect accurate information about what Comrade Ryazanov has heard of this or that person and has not checked it or discovered the true facts. Is that democratic centralism? It is not at all democratic, and not at all centralism, but disorder and the introduction of chaos. Complaints should be lodged with Party bodies. If that body does not fulfil its duty it should be made to give a strict account of itself (...)

«Question: If the R.C.P. congress group rejects the resolution of the CC, shall we be worthy members of the R.C.P. or just showing our obstinacy?

«Answer: My answer to this note is a document called "Rules of the Russian Communist Party". In Clause 62 of this document we read: "On matters relating to its inner life and current work the group is autonomous". This means that all members of the group have the right and are bound to vote according to their conscience and not on the instructions of the C.C. If, in voting according to your conscience, you pass a second decision against the C.C.'s proposal, we are obliged, on the basis of Clause 62, to summon the Central Committee, and we shall do so at once, and you will send your representatives to attend its meeting. A serious question like this were best discussed two or three times to iron out serious differences of opinion between us. That is how matters stand, that is how we have to act. You have to vote now, not because the higher Party body has issued directives, but because you have either been persuaded or you have not».

The abysmal distance of our idea of discipline from that of Stalinists, who do not venture beyond the bourgeois concept of discipline, is quite apparent: for the bourgeois, whom they however represent, it is confined to the fact that there is one or more to com-

mand, and others who obey. They don't go any further than the barracks. The discipline of communists is first of all to an historical program. Whenever our leaders would abandon such program, they would put themselves outside the party, and our discipline would force us to disobey.

The organic party in Lenin

The report on the organic conception of the party in Lenin and in the Communist Left continues with addressing one of the most sensitive aspects of our doctrine. This characterizes our party with respect to the plethora of organizations that today, like yesterday, refer to Marx, to communism, if not to "Leninism".

We have denounced this last term a thousand times. It is a lock-pick to unhinge the doctrine of the party; a doctrine that is Lenin's, as we have recalled in these pages, but not as an original contribution to a theoretical corpus that would be in continuous evolution thanks to alleged new discoveries or lessons of history. Instead, we have abundantly demonstrated that Lenin was the most orthodox of Marx and Engels' followers, and that their works were constantly being reviewed, even in the years around October (it is enough to re-read "The State and Revolution"). So too was it for the Left, nor did it change in the years that followed.

It is a question of the way the party functions, the relationships established between its various activities; the relationships between the daily activity of the militants and the immutable doctrine of revolutionary communism. A way of functioning that already a century ago we defined as "organic centralism"

We first mentioned it in 1922 ("The democratic principle"): «Democracy cannot be a principle for us: centralism indisputably is, since the essential characteristics of party organization must be unity of structure and action. In order to express the continuity of party structure in space, the term *centralism* is sufficient, but in order to introduce the essential idea of continuity in time – the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances towards the same goal – we will propose saying, linking these two essential ideas of unity together, that the communist party bases its organization on "*organic centralism*".».

The party must be a centralized structure, with the presence of different organs and a central one capable of coordinating, directing and issuing orders to the whole network; absolute discipline of all members of the organization in executing orders placed by the center; no autonomy to local sections or groups; no communication network diverging from the unitary one that connects the center to the periphery and the periphery to the center.

This is the conception of the party found in all the writings of Lenin (especially expressed at the time of the II Congress ("What is to be done", "Letter to a Comrade", etc.), in which we speak of centralism, of organization, of discipline, but also of dictatorship of

the program, of the science of the revolution, with which all must comply.

But the party works thanks to the work of men: what are the guarantees that these men will not betray or make mistakes? The objection of the petty bourgeois is evident: who will prevent individuals from doing what they like, from disobeying or disregarding orders. Because in every individual, even militants in the party, is there not the seed of individualism, self-exaltation, anarchism, etc. etc.?

For the Left, the solution does not lie in raising bureaucratic networks and organizational repressions, of which we have always declared that we can very well do without; in the same way that we do without counting heads, not to mention the statutes, also disliked by Lenin.

The guarantee of obedience to the orders of the center by the base is not given by the observance of the articles of a statute or a code, but by adherence to the “orders” of the common heritage of the party. The party hierarchy does not need to be elected by the base, nor to be nominated from above, because the only selection criterion is that of the capacity to carry out the functions of the party organ.

The designation of the militants in the various functions, including the central one, becomes a “natural and spontaneous” fact that does not need any particular formal sanction. Lenin writes in the “Letter to a comrade”: «The whole art of running a secret organization should consist in making use of everything possible, in “giving everyone something to do”, at the same time retaining leadership of the whole movement, not by virtue of having the power, of course, but by virtue of authority, energy, greater experience, greater versatility, and greater talent».

Organic centralism is also the denial of the division of the party into fractions and is a fitting expression of the overcoming of their historical necessity. The activity of a healthy party now excludes the formation of fractions that contend for the power of direction. Just as we believe that fractions formed on the periphery for the conquest of the Party Center are unjustified, we equally exclude that the Center behaves as a fraction to maintain itself in the leadership of the Party.

The lessons of the party losing its way due to the degeneration of the Center are those that have strengthened us in the application of organic centralism. And those were the most painful, most disastrous defeats. The worst was the degeneration of the Moscow Center, which bent the international revolutionary thrust of the labor movement to the interests of the now State-capitalist – and no longer communist, internationalist and proletarian – Russian State.

Therefore, to avoid splits and fractions, or even the mere loss of individual militants, the party has at its disposal the only instrument of the correct revolutionary policy, its physiological activity, to prevent it from degeneration. And then we return to the work of study, sculpting, clarification and demonstration of the correctness of the programmatic and tactical bases.

«The art of predicting how the party will react to orders, and what orders will get

the good reaction, is the art of revolutionary tactics; it can only be entrusted to the collective use of past experience of action, summarized in clear rules of action» (Theses of the Left at Lyon's PCd'I Congress, 1926).

Communist discipline, absolute in any case, is not that of a barracks: common work and a common goal make comrades bound by "fraternal consideration" (Lenin). In the party, and in the communist party alone, one can tend to give life to a strongly anti-bourgeois environment which, despite the conditioning due to its immersion in this inhuman society, constitutes an anticipation of the characteristics of the future communist society. The party presents itself to the working class both as the instrument of its emancipation and as a true anticipation of the future society, the synthesis of what the militant feels and lives while offering his life to that great upheaval of human history that will make man pass, in the meaning of Engels, from the realm of necessity to that of freedom.

The Military question: in Russia from 1905 to February 1917

The report began with the birth and development of trade union organizations in Russia which, like the parties, were illegal. Nevertheless, they arose out of the need to defend the working and living conditions of the working class in some factories.

In 1896 important strikes, of up to 35 thousand workers, took place in Petrograd in order to increase wages and reduce the working day from 14 to 10 and a half hours. The strike was so strong that industrialists were forced to reduce it to 11 and a half hours, but only for some sectors and without limit for overtime. The right to form trade unions and to strike was not recognized.

Since it was impossible to contain the workers, and fearing that they might assume subversive characters, a leader of the Moscow political police, Zubatov, proposed in 1898 to set up legal organizations, with managers chosen by the workers but controlled by the police, to make economic demands and to strike only in extreme cases. The government endorsed this project of associationism from above, known as "Police Socialism".

Since 1900, several "Mutual Aid Societies" were established, which in 1903 organized massive and violent strikes in all industrial districts of Russia until the government dissolved them.

The project was resumed in Petrograd, entrusting the direction of the new "Association of Russian Factory Workers" to the pope Gapon, to combat illiteracy and alcoholism among the workers, but forbidding strikes. With funds from the Ministry of the Interior - the workers' quotas were insufficient - Gapon opened 11 offices in the city, while those in other cities failed.

After the Bloody Sunday on 22nd January 1905 the police dissolved all the workers' associations and Gapon fled abroad; he returned the following year and was assassinated by social-revolutionary activists, who considered him a traitor and government agent.

In 1912 strikes resumed, further repressed with Russia's entry into the war in 1914, under the pretext of "a country in danger" and with the constitution of the "Industrial War Committees", supported by the Mensheviks, to guarantee war production.

In support of the workers' actions, centres were spontaneously set up in Petrograd to collect money and food for the families of the struggling workers, usually from a single factory and for the duration of the strike, until the police arrested the organizers.

Subsequently, it was necessary to set up a permanent body that went beyond the limits of the factory and extended to all workers, with the election of delegates for each production unit. The term "soviet", which in Russian means council, was used for the first time.

The revolution of 1905 produced massive strikes throughout Russia with the rapid spread of the Soviets.

When the tsarism regained control of the situation, it dissolved the Soviets and the workers' associations. The experience of as many as 62 Soviets throughout Russia, composed by workers, peasants, Cossacks, soldiers and sailors, remained alive; in Petrograd 41 unions had been formed, fighting for the eight-hour working day, the prohibition of children's work, the abolition of fines and the recognition of union delegates.

In that freezing winter the food crisis had worsened dramatically for the few supplies that arrived in Petrograd. Between January and February there were massive strikes involving 700,000 workers, mostly in the factories controlled for war production.

The event organized for International Women's Day on 8 March 1917 was preceded by propaganda from the three main political organizations, despite the censorship of the war regime: the Bolshevik Party, which was for the categorical opposition to the war; the Mensheviks, with a liberal workers' party tactic, which supported the continuation of the war; the group of "United Social Democrats" (Mežtrajony), directed by Trozki, who sought an impossible mediation between the parties.

On the opposite class front, the big land aristocracy and the capitalists. A bloc of them tried to reach an agreement with the Tsar for the concession of a European-style democratic regime and government in order to strengthen their political and economic domination, adapted to the new social reality, in a constitutional monarchy, and so avoiding revolutionary subversion.

In this situation, the Tsar preferred to move to Mogilev, the headquarters at the front in Belarus, although not to the liking of his own generals.

The government in Petrograd, due to constant changes of ministers and internal power struggles, had lost control of the country, especially in the production and distribution of food, which was subjected to strong speculation, adopting crazy and contradictory resolutions that worsened the situation.

In spite of the signs of agitation of the masses caused by the crisis, the central committee of the Bolshevik Party did not have a clear picture of the situation, which it considered still far from revolutionary action, to the point that the Bolshevik committee of the proletarian Vyborg district, vanguard in Petrograd, advised against any strike on the occa-

sion of the March 8th demonstration, fearing its transformation into open conflict followed by bloody repression. However, it invited to prepare for the next revolutionary action.

In February, the strikes started again. The Putilov workshops responded with a lockdown against the workers' demands, but on Thursday, March 8, the textile workers of Petrograd go on strike, sending delegates to the machine shops to ask the workers to join them and support the common struggle. The chronicles report 90 thousand strikers on that day. The police does not intervene. The next day the strike widens and involves 200 thousand workers, there are small clashes with the police which does not intervene *en masse* reserving more decisive actions for the days to come.

On Saturday, other economic and social sectors also join the workers of the industries involving 240 thousand participants. The police begin to shoot at the various gathering points of the masses, who in some cases respond to the fire by killing commissioners and officers, sometimes killed by their own soldiers. The Tsar, from Mogilev, orders the immediate liquidation of the riots and dissolves the Duma. During the night, about a hundred trade union leaders, workers' cooperatives and the Bolshevik committee are arrested.

On Sunday, the army and the police try to regain control of Petrograd by firing on the various marches. The turning point is when a department not only disobeys the order to shoot into the crowd, but also shoots at a police department. During the night, a state of siege is declared in the city. The Tsar underestimates all the news.

On Monday the strikes continue, which also affect all the barracks with a substantial passage of soldiers on the side of the revolution. Police stations are set on fire, the courthouse, the headquarters of the Ocrana, the prisons of political prisoners are opened, the arsenals looted: the tsarist power no longer exists. The Tsar rejects all proposals for conciliation and succession.

In one wing of the palace of Tauride, the remnants of the old government and members of the progressive bloc meet to form a provisional government to ensure control of the city, while in another wing of the palace an opposite power is being formed by the soviet of the workers' deputies of Petrograd. The members of all opposition to the Tsarist regime participate in that assembly; the Mensheviks take the leadership; they elect the various commissions to defend the revolution and to supply food, the editorial staff of a newspaper, the *Izvestija*, and an Executive Committee.

A first important decision is taken immediately: the soldiers will elect one delegate for each company (100-200 soldiers) while the workers one for every 1,000. This puts the Bolshevik component in a strong minority, since the soldiers, mainly peasants, mostly follow the arguments of the Mensheviks, especially for their program of division of the land of large estates.

The next day the Tsar decides to return to Petrograd, but the imperial train is stopped by the blocks of revolutionary soldiers and diverted to Pskov.

On the night of March 1st, the leaders of the Soviet of Petrograd decided to entrust all power to the Provisional Government, on the pretext that only a bourgeois government

could bring down the feudal power of the Tsar. In reality the Duma did not intend at all to support the most radical thrusts, but rather to curb them and save the monarchy, while reducing its power and role. At the head of the Provisional Government and in the various ministries were placed personalities of the upper middle class, landowners together with elements of socialist inspiration, the classic government of national unity composed of heterogeneous and apparently opposed political forces. In this way a particular balance of power was established in which the decisions of the government were submitted to the opinion of the Soviet.

The "Ordinance No. 1" adopted by the Soviet concerned relations with soldiers; it contained two important points: the election to the Soviet of a representative for each company of lower-ranking soldiers and that the orders of the Military Commission be subordinate to the directives of the Soviet. In addition, soldiers were bound by hierarchical discipline only when on duty and offensive behavior and arbitrary punishment by officers was forbidden.

The police was abolished, replaced by a people's militia, and the armed forces came under the control of the Soviet: the orders of the commanders at the front and on the fleet were subjected to a prior approval of the Soviet and its commissioners.

The Bolsheviks demanded to address three important issues in the Soviet: peace, with the end of the war, the reduction of the working day to 8 hours and land reform, but they did not have adequate answers.

The Tsar was in the royal wagon stopped in the station in Pskov undecided on who to cede power to. Reached by a delegation of the Provisional Government, he appointed Prince Lvov as head and abdicated in favor of his brother, who refused, awaiting the decisions of the next Constituent Assembly.

But already on March 4 the Soviet obtained from the Provisional Government the arrest of the former Tsar, a decision imposed by the most radical proletarian wing and soldiers, who wanted no more of the monarchy and demanded the immediate execution of Nicholas II.

It was a revolution of little blood as the statistics of the city speak of 1,315 dead, of which 602 soldiers, 587 citizens, 73 policemen and 53 officers, most of them for reprisal and revenge.

The landowners organised themselves to prevent the dreaded division of the large estates. However, in order to calm the situation, they supported the requisition of the Romanov lands and possibly the ecclesiastical ones.

On the war front, with a proclamation, the government declared its loyalty to previous alliances, relying on Plechanov's declarations that now the war would no longer be imperialist but would take on the character of defending the revolution from external enemies, a lie that had an initial hold on the masses.

The Bolshevik Party was reorganizing itself, with the repatriation of the exiles from abroad and of the deportees to Siberia; even its leading group in Petrograd, arrested on Feb-

ruary 26 in the middle of the revolution, had been freed along with all the political prisoners. It was legally constituted on March 2 organized on three components: the Central Committee composed of 9 members, the Petrograd Committee and the Pan-Russian Military Organization, which was immediately joined by two thousand soldiers of the city garrison.

In Petrograd the Bolshevik Party, which out of a working class in the city of 400,000 workers, had no more than 2,000 members, grew to 16,000 in a short time; in the party conference in April 1917 there were about 80,000 members.

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks were always a minority, as can be seen from the data of the first Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies on June 3rd, 1917, where out of 1,090 delegates the socialrevolutionaries had 285 with the right to vote, the Mensheviks 248 and the Bolsheviks only 105. Also in Moscow they were a minority, where the Executive Committee of the Soviet was composed of 24 S-R, 21 Mensheviks, 23 Bolsheviks, 2 unifiers, 1 Bundist, 1 Latvian Social Democrat, 1 Polish Social Democrat, 1 trade unionist and 1 without party. For the Bolsheviks the political situation was even more confused in the Urals and Siberia.

On 3rd April Lenin arrived in Petrograd, welcomed by a great mass of workers and soldiers, but also by a great heap of slander about his collaboration with the Germans.

The 10 points of the "April Theses" were briefly commented on, in particular those concerning the war in progress as imperialist war, against the false concept of revolutionary defensism.

On April 18th, instead, the Provisional Government, in an official note to the governments of the Triple Entente, declared itself in favour of the continuation of the war, from which territorial annexations and allowances were expected.

There was a reshuffle in the government, with now 6 ministers between S-R and menseviks against 10 representatives of the bourgeoisie, which still produced hazy promises about the length of the working day and speculation on food.

The Russian industrial bourgeoisie was also organizing itself on a modern basis: in a few months 206 new joint-stock companies and the first pan-Russian association of industrialists were founded. The American government, very interested in strengthening and managing the Russian railway network, promised funds with the clause, expressed by the head of the American delegation: "no fight, no money".

The report continued with the international opposition to the war, both in what was organized by socialist parties and spontaneously in the cities, factories and on the fronts, where the Russian revolution had set an example and the hope of emancipation for the exploited masses. The betrayal of the Second International and the vote on war credits by Social Democratic deputies failed to prevent some revolts against militarism. Vigorous were the workers from Germany and Austria-Hungary, who were more involved in the war effort and in direct contact with the Russian front.

In September 1915, a conference was held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, with 38 delegates from socialist parties from 11 countries, in opposition to the war but of pacifist

inspiration, with the aim of developing a common strategy against the current war. Two opposing lines immediately emerged: the first, supported by most delegates, did not intend to break with the Second International, despite having betrayed the working class, and in fact aligned itself with the hypocrisy expressed by the leaders of Italian socialism of “neither joining nor sabotaging”. The Second International was formed around the group of Bolsheviks for the creation of a new revolutionary International, with the indication of transforming imperialist war into civil war. Considered to be “out of its mind”, it was rejected by 20 votes to 8.

The following year a second international conference was held in Kienthal: it explicitly condemned the imperialist war, but in the absence of a true revolutionary international, all the actions taken by the various proletarian organizations were uncoordinated and fragmented.

In Germany, at the beginning of 1916 Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin were tried for their opposition to the war. Liebknecht was later banned from parliament and expelled from the SPD, while protests for the shortage of food spread throughout the country during the May 1st celebrations.

In 1917 the SPD currents opposing the war were expelled from the party: they were to form the USPD, with the accession of the Spartacus League. Strikes also began in the factories of the war industry. After the revolution in Russia the Spartacists invited the workers to form the Soviets of the workers’ deputies, following the example of the Russian ones. The strikes, despite being suffocated by the police with the support of the collaborationist parties, quadrupled in number, from 816 in 1915 to 2,798 in 1917. Even in the army, especially on the Eastern front, without war actions after the February revolution in Russia, there were episodes of insubordination and fraternization with Russian soldiers, so much so that, on the occasion of May 1st, Russian soldiers also participated in the assemblies of German soldiers, who reported on their experience in their country.

The most important episodes take place at the bases of the deep-sea military fleet. The most powerful and valuable ships are kept at berth in the bases for fear of losing them in combat due to their considerable inferiority with respect to the British navy, now supported by the American navy, or on the extensive minefields set up to fight the underwater war.

On the flagship Frederick the Great and his twin Prince Regent Leopold there was a sailors’ organization, kept strictly secret because of the very harsh military discipline on warships. Some left-wing activists of the Social Democracy and the USPD were part of it. Max Reichpietsch and Albin Köbin were efficient organizers: starting from the requests for better food, against the ban on leaving the base, the severe military censorship, the reduced visits of relatives and the harassment of officers, they put up a demonstration, which was to involve the shipyard workers too, and promised to express support for the Russian revolution through the revolution in Germany. Following their arrest, serious disturbances broke out on the ships with reprisals against the most hated officers. They were repressed by sending infantry units. After a brief trial the two leaders were sentenced to death, immedi-

ately executed, and others suffered long sentences of hard military imprisonment.

On 3rd November 1918 the mutiny of the Kiel fleet began, which marked the beginning of the November Revolution, followed two months later, from 4th to 15th January 1919, by the Spartacist revolt in Berlin, which ended tragically for the proletarian revolutionary forces with the assassinations of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

The opposition to the war in Austria-Hungary reflected the multi-ethnic army of the Empire, “refuge of small nations”, in which lived populations and soldiers who spoke languages incomprehensible to officers, who only spoke German or Hungarian. The imperial commands doubted whether the troops could hold, influenced by the propaganda of their respective nationalisms for the formation of new independent States.

However, it was not this propaganda the main reason of confusion in the Austro-Hungarian army, but the poor strategic approach and conduct of the war, which resulted, in a few months of battles, in the loss of about one million soldiers. These were replaced by new, hurriedly trained soldiers, but much more serious was the substantial loss of officers, whose preparation required more time and resources.

In the Carpathians the living conditions of the soldiers were terrible; already in the spring of 1915 the Czech troops collapsed dramatically at the first big test against the Tsarist army: the losses in some infantry regiments were two thirds, the survivors preferred to be prisoners rather than continue fighting. While denying its responsibilities, the command completely reassigned the troops and for two years there were no serious episodes of collective insubordination but only individual ones. Insubordination resumed in January 1917 with the refusal of infantry units to go to the front. Because of the shortage of food, systematic looting began in the villages.

From the 1st to the 3rd February 1918 in the naval base of Kotor, where the ships were blocked in port by the sailors of the Entente, a great revolt broke out involving 6 ships with 2,400 sailors. The organizing committee of 400 sailors, based on the experience of the Russian Revolution, had elected its delegates and made various demands including immediate peace and the formation of new independent States on an ethnic-linguistic basis. The revolt was quelled not so much by the intervention of Loyalist ships and land troops, as by the disorganization of that impromptu committee. After a brief trial 392 members of the committee were condemned to various sentences and 4 of the leaders to death, a sentence that was carried out on 11 February.

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, on March 3, 1918, also provided for the exchange of prisoners of war on a large scale between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire: hundreds of thousands of Austro-Hungarian soldiers were repatriated, convinced that they would be immediately discharged; but the command of Vienna, given the shortage of soldiers, after having isolated the elements politicized during their imprisonment, sent them back to the front in small groups in the wards already active. Many cases of individual insubordination and desertion took place in the wards where the presence of former prisoners was greatest.

Between April and May 1918 there were 5 cases of great revolts of several hundred soldiers who refused to return to the front. They were joined by hundreds of civilians who plundered the food and ammunition depots. The uprisings were stopped after hard fighting and summary shootings using loyal imperial troops from departments of ethnic groups other than the rebels. Thus the revolts ceased but mass desertions intensified.

In England the opposition to the war had to do with a voluntary army, more motivated than the obligatory one, to which were added departments fed by its vast colonial empire: 4.5 million soldiers. The United Kingdom was never the scene of wartime events. Moreover, the British government also succeeded in enslaving the political parties close to the working class and trade unions to the interests of the national bourgeoisie by singing the refrain of the endangered homeland to their corrupt leaders, placed in ministerial positions. In particular, the Trade Unions were included in the management of the factories by reserving some privileges to their members. These, which in 1914 were 3.7 million, rose to 5.4 million in 1918. This guaranteed relative social peace, even though the working class was exploited beyond all limits. However, there were widespread but isolated strikes. A ministerial commission reported on the causes of the discontent: extension of the working day, increased work rates, low wages, food shortages, and increasingly expensive housing. Also in the United Kingdom the Russian revolution gave impetus to the workers' struggle, strikes that in April 1917 spread to 48 cities with over 250,000 participants.

The war against the war in France was facilitated by the contiguity between the lines of the fronts, the industrial areas and the inhabited centers of medium extension so that, in spite of the rigid military censorship, the news about the war events and the international ones circulated more easily and, even among a thousand difficulties, they influenced each other. Here, too, the working class was subject to the strict military regime. Here too, in the factories, women had taken the place of men, sent to the front with compulsory military service and drugged with the blackmail of the country in danger.

On 1st May 1917, despite opposition from the leaders of the socialist parties and trade unions, a strike was called in Paris, which soon spread to most of the industrial centers, including those for war production. A reduction in the working day, equal pay for women and men and an end to the war were required. All the toughest demonstrations were attacked by the police, who often used colonial troop divisions.

After the catastrophic conclusion of General Nivelle's senseless offensive, on May 3rd, the first uprisings in the troops began, with the refusal of the soldiers to resume fighting and with 30,000 soldiers leaving the trenches. In the following days, dozens of battalions and entire regiments refused to obey the order to return to the trenches. Even the special units of the 5th Division refused to return to the front line: after only 6 days of rest and the singing of the International they organized a demonstration. This fact had great resonance and suffered a harsh repression that ended with 3 shootings. In Soissons, two regiments, having learned of the reprisals made by colonial troops against a demonstration of workers on strike, took possession of a train to reach the city, but were stopped by other

troops. The next day other soldiers in revolt tried to reach Paris, but here too they were stopped by units loyal to the government.

These events were influenced by the presence of Russian infantrymen requested by the French government in return for the military aid granted to the Tsar. The Russian expeditionary corps, a real exchange of cannons for cannon meat, was set up in 1916 by taking troops from the reserves and equipped with its own officers and commander. The agreement provided that all costs of transport, provisions, ammunition and training were to be borne entirely by France.

After suffering heavy losses in the toughest battles, discontent broke out. In July 1917 the Russian infantrymen asked to return to Russia, through the delegates they had appointed in the meantime, executing the Petersburg Soviet's order no. 1 concerning the election of the soldiers' delegates. A good part of them mutinied. Artillery and infantry divisions, separated the Loyalist troops from those in revolt, surrounded them. After unsuccessful attempts at negotiation, the assault on the camp resulted in a dozen dead, 50 wounded and an unknown number of hasty executions.

The Revolution in Germany from 1919 to 1923: The New Unions

We continued with the rereading of the 1972 report. The political positions of both the KPD and the left currents that merged into the KAPD were reflected in Germany in the attitude of these parties towards the trade union organizations that arose in opposition to the to the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB), which was led by reformists and reconstituted in July 1919.

It is not easy to describe this as there were many developments and splits.

The influx of proletarians into their ranks expresses not so much adhesion to programmatic platforms as the disgust of combative workers towards the conciliation policy of the powerful center.

Moreover, this dispersion was the product of the blows from the counter-revolution led by the Social Democrats, which resulted in the arrest of the best organizers and often the dissolution of the category trade unions after major strikes in virtually all German States (Länder), with these often ending in street battles.

The decentralized tradition of the German workers' movement also weighed heavily. This was reflected in the various dissident trade unions and aggravated by the political ones, which elevated it almost to a paradigm for revolutionary organization and action. In fact, common to both the craft and factory unions arising in opposition to the large unions was their federal structure.

Political groups influenced these new organisms and directed them according to their erroneous ideas: 1) rejection of a hierarchical organization and leaders; 2) rejection of political action, meaning parliamentary action, or solely focused on action based on de-

mands; 3) idealization of the general strike as a decisive weapon of class conflict, excluding armed insurrection; 4) attribution of post-revolutionary economic management to trade unions, or factory councils.

In contrast to the IWW in the United States, the new forms of German economic association did not reflect the need, positive from the point of view of the general interests of the class, to organize the mass of unskilled workers, precarious workers, immigrants, etc., who were usually excluded from the official confederations, which were home to a skilled labor aristocracy, but tended to set up in closed organisms, grouping nuclei of proletarians not as wage laborers but based on adherence to particular ideals. They were eventually reduced to union appendages of revolutionary syndicalism, anarchism or councilism.

Revolutionary syndicalism, while not having a long tradition as in Latin countries, had maintained a certain continuity on a clandestine basis during the war. It was responsible for the establishment in late 1918 of the first trade union outside the new ADGB, namely the *Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften* (Free Federation of German Trade Unions). Its orientation was clear from its appeal of 14 December: «Abolition of wage labor, expropriation of land, factories and means of production from the great capitalists and establishment of socialist-communist production». It rejects not only reforms but also wage increases pursued in the bourgeois sphere; contrasts direct action with parliamentary and “minimalist” action; recommends the general strike, solidarity and sabotage of capitalist production as specific means in the struggle for socialism; aims to overcome the division between economic and political organizations with a unitary association; entrusts future management of production to syndicalist unions; it does not reject the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat, provided it is exercised by workers’ councils and not by a party.

Things changed as soon as the anarchists took over. When the first trade union association, severely hit by the repression during the great social struggles of 1919, reorganized itself in December as *Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands* (FAUD) the anarchists inserted in its declaration of principles: rejection of the political party in general; no connection with the existing workers’ parties, even on the left; affirmation that socialism is a question of culture that can only be resolved from the bottom up through the creative activity of the people; rejection of organized violence.

On the other hand, as German infantile left-wing communism never achieved a homogeneity of principles and program at the political level, it came to impose different conceptions on the economic associations that emerged with its contribution or that it was to direct.

For example, there are influences of both American unionism and councilism in the statute of the *Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union* (AAU, General Workers’ Union), drawn up in August 1919 in Essen, the basis for the reconstruction of the hard-pressed miners’ unions.

In February 1920, in Hanover, what would henceforth be the *Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands* (AAUD, General Workers’ Union of Germany) proclaimed its aim «to organize wage laborers for the final fight against capitalism and for the establishment of the Council Republic» stating that «those organizations which (...) reject the dictatorship

of the proletariat cannot belong to the AAUD; they do not recognize the factory organization as its organizational basis». The new organization is therefore a mixture of trade union and political party, and a substitute for the political party. The union pushed for a break not only with trade unions, whether led by reformists or revolutionary syndicalists, but also with the KPD and every party.

Later, in conjunction with the formation of the KAPD, programmatic and organizational norms were imposed on the AAUD.

The undoubted combativity of these breakaway unions did not find a firm, prepared and experienced Communist Party that could direct it towards the unification of each section of the class in mass organizations open to all workers regardless of category or political affiliation.

The German Revolution of 1919 in *Prometeo*

From 1929 to 1937 our Fraction's press dedicated some articles to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, as well as the republication of their various writings, demonstrating the coherence of our position in the face of bourgeois and Stalinist repression.

We presented a selection of these articles. They were interventions that the party was compelled to make in defense of Rosa and Karl.

But it was not only to defend the honor and memory of those great comrades, who at the time were scornfully denigrated by Stalinism throughout the world labor movement

In addition, a political current and school of thought called "Luxemburgism" as opposed to "Leninism" was being falsely attributed to them both by the Stalinist right and by an alleged anti-Stalinist left.

A "retroactive condemnation" of the two great revolutionaries was attempted, denying their teachings and attitudes, which were proudly hostile to all social democratic reformism and betrayal.

The same infamy was visited upon Trotsky, while the betrayal of Lenin was perpetuated with the despicable invention of "Leninism".

We Communists consider the use of proper names to be unscientific and misleading and try to avoid them, unless they are mere symbols of impersonal positions. Aren't the figures of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky universally used against Marx, Lenin and Trotsky? The balance sheet for the history of a "personality", however great, is always negative.

We do not expect infallibility in individuals, whether leaders or followers and all of our comrades and communists as soldiers on the path to the revolution who have been able to make a gigantic contribution, one of permanent value even today.

The article "The lessons of three anniversaries" in *Prometeo* n.13, 10 February 1929 says: «Today it seems clear and indisputable that Rosa and Karl are the leaders of the German proletariat who were able to prepare the new era that was opening up, the last, that is, of capitalism, where the horizon of proletarian and communist revolutions is found». And it concludes: «The lessons of these great leaders are the ones that inspire our Fraction,

against which the Communist Parties fight so stubbornly. Will this temporary situation move towards the slaughter of the Russian and world proletariat or in the opposite direction, to a European and world revolution? We are fighting for the revolution, but even if the catastrophe should occur, now that it seems that centrism is prepared to do to Trotsky and the Russian left what Noske already did or had done to Karl, Rosa and the Spartacist movement, we affirm that the allegiance to the teachings of the great leaders that we commemorate is the allegiance we have sworn first and foremost to our struggle; it will be the allegiance that will lead us and the proletariat not to defeat but to victory and liberation».

“Luxemburg and Liebknecht, revolutionary and communist leaders”, in *Prometeo* n. 84, 5 February 1933, describes the historical situation, the balance of forces and the role, on the one hand of the Spartacist League, which founded the Communist Party, and on the other of the Majoritarians, and Independents, the assassins of the revolution. From January to May 1919, 15,000 fierce revolutionary fighters were slain by the bloody fury of the counter-revolution along with Karl, Rosa, Leo Jogiches and Eugene Leviné. We wrote:

«On January 2, 1919, the Spartacists broke all organizational relations with the Independents and constituted the Communist Party at the Berlin conference (...)

«But what were the true conditions of the balance of forces at this time in Germany?

«After the events of November 1918, after the establishment of the provisional government with the coalition of the two socialist parties, Majority and Independent, the defeat of German imperialism had caused such a disorganization of the State and of all its superstructure as to pose, with the radicalization of the masses that corresponded to this, the favorable premises for the proletariat to move towards the conquest of political power (...)

«While the Kautskys and the Bauers provided the best weapons in the decisive moments for the defense of the bourgeois regime, by disorienting the masses when all the conditions existed for the assault on power, the Scheidemanns and the Noskes then, in the days of January 1919, had to complete this treacherous work by appointing themselves as the executioners execution of the working class.

«From the first days of the insurrection, when the soldiers and sailors in particular responded to the Spartacists' appeals, when it seemed as if the fate of the German revolution was to be decided on the streets of Berlin, Social Democracy, whether Majoritarian or Independent (...) put itself at the complete disposal of the 'homeland in danger' by presenting the insurgents as 'savages', first mobilizing all forces to prevent the extension of the movement, then moving on to the massacre of the young communist party.

«The savage decapitation of the communist movement that followed in the tragic days of mid-January in Berlin marks an important stage in arresting the proletarian movement .

«The defeat of the German proletariat was then reflected in the defeat of a series of revolutions that began in the various countries and in the difficulties of consolidating the course of the Russian revolution (...)

«Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg represent, within these events, the indestruct-

ible figures of proletarian action regarding the constitution of his class party: the communist party».

We concluded the report with a few extracts from “Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg belong to the world proletariat” in *Prometeo*, n.127, 26 January 1936. While the work of these three great revolutionaries is strongly vindicated, any form of “Leninism” or “Luxemburgism” is now rejected as mere expressions of bourgeois opportunism.

«While the capitalist order has broken the conscience and class organizations of the workers, here with violence, there with corruption, and while the imperialist war announces its imminent arrival, we must proclaim and prove that the work of Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht persists (...) despite the momentary victory of capitalism.

«It is a mistake to seek, in the situations of defeat that we are experiencing, proof of the failure of their efforts (...) Other leaders will arise with a vision that will mark a continuity with the previous work and a progression of the historical vision of the proletariat (...) We consider Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg as the expression of proletarian conscience in the phase of the struggle against opportunism in the Second International and of the post-war insurrectionary eruptions.

«We categorically refuse to commemorate a “Leninism” or a “Luxemburgism”, to consider only the contribution of Lenin and Luxemburg to (...) the ideological heritage, to the arsenal of the weapons of the revolution that the proletariat must continually perfect to be able to achieve its specific objectives.

«Lenin is the problem of the party, of the selection of its cadres, of the dictatorship of the proletariat through the armed uprising of the workers; Rosa is the attempt – on a stronger and more complex class front – to approach the theoretical and practical examination of the problems of the proletarian revolution; Liebknecht is the abnegation of the revolutionary who sacrifices his life to lead the workers to insurrection (...)

«To put Lenin and Rosa on the same level is actually to affirm that the struggle of the German workers was the first echo of the Russian revolution and the second attempt in towards world revolution, that these are two phases of the formation of the class consciousness of the workers in the post-war period, in which the phase of Lenin could express itself with the seizure of power while the other, that of Rosa, had to be murdered by capitalism and its socialist agents.

«We will commemorate Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, with the conviction that the work that they picked up again after Marx and Engels, (despite the current depression of the labor movement) continues and progresses (...) to solve the problems that tomorrow’s revolutionary irruptions will bring again (...)

«The world proletariat, in its communist fractions that will take up the flag that these revolutionaries carried, will know how to respond, today with contempt, tomorrow with violence, to the bourgeois falsifiers and to the regimes of which they are the faithful expression».

The Hungarian Revolution - The Red Army Counterattack

The presentation of our study on the Hungarian Revolution of 1919 continued with the offensive of the Romanian-Boiar troops of the end of April, which saw the mobilization of the Czech troops at the same time, with two divisions in command of the Italian general Piccione. Paris gave instructions: the Romanian royal army had moved to the Tisza line, Czech troops had crossed the Sajò and threatened Miskolc, and Szolnok, in central Hungary. There were also three Serbian divisions and three French in the south and southwest, two other French in the north west. They were in total an impact force of at least 17 divisions, ready to act to wipe out the Republic of the Councils. The young red army, mostly composed of workers, still inexperienced, also due to the betrayal of most officers, was unable to stem the offensive of the Romanian army which, in less than two weeks, occupied the most fertile area of the country. From the north, the Czechs advanced to Salgótarján, just 70 kilometers from Budapest.

Kun sent Wilson, the Romanian, Czech and Yugoslav governments peace proposals calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the non-interference in Hungary's internal affairs, the defense of the rights of Hungarian national minorities who remained beyond the dividing line.

On May 2 at the first session of the Revolutionary Government Council. Béla Kun spoke with merciless sincerity: «The Red Army handed over Szolnok without a fight. The Czechs are betting on Miskolc. There is no real military force. The effectiveness of the troops is zero».

Kunfi proposed the resignation of the Government of the Councils, Weltner also demanded that power be taken over by a directorate. Szamuely asked them: «if the dictatorship of the proletariat is to continue to be exercised, why then should the government of the councils be dismissed, which, in fact, does nothing but exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat?». Béla Szándò also considered the handover of power to be a cowardice and an act of abandonment to the working class. At seven o'clock in the evening, the CC of Budapest was called to discuss whether to continue in the resistance or whether to surrender to the Entente, a solution to which many Social Democrats already tended. Over six hundred delegates took part, and under the influence of Kun's arguments, realizing that it could only be a complete victory or a complete defeat, they decided for resistance.

Kun intervened: «Budapest must be defended at all costs, because we must defend the Hungarian workers' movement, this truly glorious section of the international proletarian revolution». Many workers' interventions followed which asked the government of councils to make weapons and equipment to fight available to the local workers' councils, and urged anyone who was able to take up a weapon to go immediately to the barracks. Kun concluded: «We have food, we have weapons. Not only can Soviet Hungary be defended, but the possibility of honorable peace can also be guaranteed for it. To arms! ». In a few days, an army of almost one hundred thousand men was organized by the factory

workers. In April, an Austrian battalion of about a thousand left-wing anarchist and socialist soldiers had arrived from Vienna and were immediately sent to the defense of Debrecen. In the Hungarian Red Army there were Russian, Polish, Austrian, Italian (about three hundred), Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Romanian and Slovak internationalists, following the example of the internationalists who had fought in the ranks of the Russian army. Many fell in defense of the Tisza front and in the Northern Campaign. The internationalists were the first to go to the attack on Lučenec.

The Romanian advance was stopped at the Tisza, and after just ten days the counter-offensive on the Czech front began, with the complete victory of the new workers' army. The Red Army advanced rapidly across the front, threatening the whole of Slovakia.

While in the north-east, in the short span of a couple of days the red army managed to victoriously climb the course of the river Hernád quickly opening the road to Košice, in the north-west it launched the attack crossing the Danube at Esztergom, conquered Levice and Nové Zámky thus foreseeing a further advance to Bratislava.

On June 3, the Red Army had managed to bring the situation across the entire northern front back to the demarcation line in late 1918.

In the occupied Slovak territories, the Slovak Republic of Councils was proclaimed in Prešov. The policy adopted was the same as that implemented in Budapest, with particular regard to linguistic integration: the official body of the new republic was published in Slovak and Hungarian for the Magyar peoples of the region. Kun himself spoke to the proletariat of the region: «We do not care what language this or that worker, our proletarian brother, speaks. We know only one enemy: the bourgeoisie, whatever language it speaks (...) And it is in peace and harmony that we will achieve our slogan "Proletarians of the whole world, unite!"».

However, the support of the peasant masses was lacking, following the policy of socialization of the lands and the forced requisition of agricultural products. As in the Hungarian countryside, so in the Slovak countryside the peasants opposed, in a more or less active way, to what was considered an undue dispossession of their resources in favor of the inhabitants of the urban centers and the troops at the front.

But the workers of the factories of Pest and of the mines of the provinces were at the front together with the children of the poor peasants. Kun said of them: «Instead of fleeing soldiers who plunder, the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements of the countryside have before them the spectacle of the proletarians of the workshops, conscious, enthusiastic and disciplined, who are capable of educating and directing the proletarians of the earth (...) The arrival of these workers troops has strengthened the bonds of fraternal alliance between proletarians of the cities and the countryside. Their calm and serious behavior, their agitating work, contributed throughout the country to affirm the dictatorship of the proletariat».

The speaker then reported on the numerous problems that plagued the Soviets and the trap set up by the Entente to crush the proletarian dictatorship.

Thus Kun at the Revolutionary CC of 24 May: «We cannot stand with arms

crossed, on the contrary we must face events with weapons in hand (...) Social Democrats are people so pusillanimous and so far from the positions of revolutionary socialism as to have nothing to do with us, and nothing in common even with the proletariat.

«Comrades, it is true that in the current situation of international politics we cannot count on any kind of peace. But on the other hand, nobody in this world can count on it. Not even Germany, because the peace they were imposed will not be real peace. Whether the Scheidemanns sign it or not sign it (...) If the Scheidemanns sign it, it will simply mean that the proletariat will fight not the French counterrevolution, not the counterrevolution of the Entente, but the counterrevolution of Noske, with his volunteer corps.

«The peace that will be imposed on the Austrians will lead to similar results. Whether this peace imposed on the Austrians is signed or not, it will in any case lead to war, external war or class civil war. We benefit from the luck of not having to fight against Noske or Scheidemann at home.

«As for those who, having let themselves be taken over by discouragement or inspired by the bourgeoisie, try to insinuate among the proletarians the idea that it would be better to return to the previous state of things, to these I would reply by taking up the words that this American comrade who spoke here: she spoke of the oldest and most developed democracy in the world, of this democracy subject to the leadership of Wilson, the greatest representative of pacifism: a democracy where the working class is treated in this way, what is it if not dictatorship of the bourgeoisie? (...)

«Nobody ever said that the dictatorship of the proletariat could immediately create welfare. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a sort of Eldorado, we knew from before that the proletariat would have suffered, known hunger, shed its blood and lived all the miseries of an imperialist war (..) It is indisputable that we will have to organize a more strictly regulated distribution and consumption, so that the supplies are the same for everyone. Certainly the territory of Hungary is barely sufficient to supply the two million inhabitants of Budapest and its region. It is also indisputable that there are supplies that must be found to feed the elite of the Hungarian proletariat, so that this vanguard, the Budapest proletariat, is not reduced to starvation (...) Propaganda work must be oriented towards campaigns. The feelings of fraternal sympathy and solidarity between the urban proletariat and the poor peasants must be awakened; and, through this propaganda, to break the resistance of those peasant strata who, by virtue of their social situation, should instead be in solidarity with us. At the same time, we are concerned about ensuring an adequate distribution of foodstuffs to the proletarians of Budapest, on the one hand thanks to a direct exchange of goods, on the other hand thanks to the distribution of existing industrial products in agricultural production cooperatives and particularly in cooperatives that will have to bring together small individual farmers (...) The hope we place in the transdanubian region lies in the agricultural production cooperatives. These cooperatives span on such areas that we may soon provide with their produce a large part of Budapest's food needs. These agricultural production cooperatives are, I believe, one of the greatest

reasons for the pride of our Republic of the Councils, in spite of all the anti-social statements and all the anti-socialist and anti-Marxist views of those who claim that the farmers cannot be brought to cultivate the land in common»

Kun's speech at the Revolutionary CC of May 31 highlighted, once again, the problems related to the organization of food supply and distribution in the country, and then mentioned the National Farmers Congress of June 1, where Kun listed the victories of the glorious red soldiers.

The representatives of the capitalists gathered in Versailles, following the request for help from the Czech government, which with the advance of the red army feared a revolution also in its territory, finally had to speak to the Hungarian Government of the Councils, so far unheard in the peace requests. Their missions in Budapest were aware that nothing more than the prospect of peace could break down the unity of the decision to resist in the Hungarian proletariat. Therefore, they invited the Government of the Councils to withdraw the red army from the Czech-Slovak territory, offering in exchange - with the usual duplicity of bourgeois diplomacy - the evacuation by the Romanian army of the territories beyond the Tisza. The government of the councils was forced to propose acceptance of the note to the Congress of Soviets, and the majority accepted it. This Congress, the overwhelming majority of which was formed by the old leaders of the Social Democratic Party, in its judgment on the policy of the governing Council, and on the world political situation, rather resembled an assembly of counterrevolutionaries than revolutionaries.

Thus the Red Army withdrew from the occupied territories of Slovakia. But the governments of the Entente did not start negotiations with the government of the councils, nor ordered the Romanian troops to withdraw.

The Birth of the Communist Party of China - First part

The advance to the east of the world revolution

The seizure of power in Russia in November 1917 marked a historic turning point of immense proportions and opened an era of social revolution throughout the world. The Russian Bolsheviks, like the revolutionaries of all countries, trusted that the revolution would break out in Europe, the heart of the bourgeois world domination.

But, even if the main efforts to get out of the isolation in which the revolutionary power in Russia was found were directed to the expansion of the revolution in Europe, until immediately after the seizure of power the eastern question became of vital importance for the State directed by the Bolsheviks, since it had inherited a vast territory in Asia bordering Turkey, Persia, the various entities of Central Asia, China, Korea.

The eastern front was one of the main ones of the civil war. For much of 1918 until mid-1919 the Bolsheviks were under pressure by the advance from the east of the white troops, supported by numerous foreign armies, which came to threaten the heart of the

communist State. The conflict on the eastern front, with the counterrevolutionary armies advanced up to the Volga, changed in favor of the Bolsheviks from the spring of 1919. From the summer of 1919 until the beginning of 1920 the war had moved further east, in Siberia, and towards the beginning of 1920 the war began to turn in favor of the Bolsheviks, ending with the complete defeat of the white armies.

With the advance of the Red Army to the East, the field of action of the International was also expanded. In the meantime, at the Second Congress, the International had just defined a precise world communist tactic for the destruction of capitalism in the whole world, establishing that for the world victory of communism it was necessary that the openly classist struggle of the proletariat of the capitalist metropolises be linked to the double revolutions of the colonial countries, attributing to the proletariat of the colonies and to its nascent communist parties the leading role of the national-revolutionary struggle. Around this perspective outlined by the International, the first forces oriented towards communism gathered in China. The advance of the world revolution to the East thus came into contact with the Chinese world, where, however, the proletariat was extremely small in number and politically weak.

The backwardness of the Chinese worker

The delay in capitalist development in China inevitably affected the conditions of the class struggle. Even on the threshold of the 1920s, the Chinese proletariat was only about two million out of a population of over four hundred. But, in spite of the numerical weakness, the Chinese working class had already undertaken potentially autonomous actions, the first instinctive strikes, often of a luddist type, frequently characterized by regional or provincial rivalries, inasmuch as in many cases the strikes in a factory involved only the workers coming from the same province. The workers were still framed in traditional organizations, such as guilds, regional associations, secret societies, and there was nothing like a trade union.

The primitive character of the first actions of the Chinese working class inevitably reflected itself on the political level. Among the various parties that emerged in the aftermath of the fall of the imperial dynasty in 1911, some claimed to represent the interests of the proletariat. But these formations only sought to profit from the workers' movement, representing the interests of other social forces, the ambitions of the small bourgeoisie and national capitalism. They were mostly born from the desire of some politicians to want to build a working-class clientele, acting as spokesmen for the world of labor, but for their ideology, for their political objectives and for their activities they didn't belong to it.

Throughout the period before the October Revolution, Marxism is virtually unknown in China. In a largely pre-capitalist society, with a poorly developed proletariat, Marxism had no influence on those revolutionaries who set themselves the goal of subverting the existing order and Marx was considered one of the Western thinkers like the others.

A first spread of Marxism in China followed the revolutionary events in Russia. Just

after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks tried to establish contacts with the Chinese world and its workers, but all initiatives at this early stage had to deal with the backwardness of the Chinese labor movement, which had not yet developed class organizations for economic defense, and above all lacked its own political organization.

This was evident with the struggles that developed in China in 1919 known as the “May 4 Movement”: the Chinese proletariat had no political or organizational autonomy and was under the control of other social forces.

But if the workers’ movement in China still showed all its backwardness, for several years a nationalist movement had been born and developed, within which a decidedly anti-imperialist and revolutionary wing had formed.

The revolutionary nationalist movement

The political subjugation of China had produced a marked nationalism that spread especially among intellectuals, also taking decidedly revolutionary forms.

Historically, the cultural problem in China had always been of great importance, deriving from the social structure of the country itself and from the function that the holders of culture had in the exercise of political and also economic power. For centuries the members who would form the ruling class of the traditional State with fundamental positions in the management of power and in the apparatus had been recruited among the intellectuals. But, also due to the abolition in 1905 of the imperial examinations, traditional culture had progressively lost its social function, as was lost the economic value of intellectuals; with the arrival to power of the warlords, they had been replaced also in their traditional bureaucratic position.

In this situation, among the most advanced intellectuals began to come forward the will to rebel against this state of affairs. The practice of “consensus” with respect to the established order, which had traditionally characterized the intellectuals, went into crisis and the conviction began to spread that it was necessary to react to the collapse of the country and that to “save China” it was necessary to completely renew the values and principles that were the basis of social coexistence. Obviously for intellectuals the instrument of action was culture, but a “new culture”, no longer aimed at “consensus” but at “revolt”, it had to become a weapon against the subjugation of China to foreigners and against the ruling classes, accomplices of foreigners and responsible for the decline of the country. In essence, it had to be a “cultural revolution”.

In support of this new perspective, in the summer of 1915, the magazine “New Youth” was founded, which became an instrument for the diffusion of innovative ideas, influencing large sectors of the youth who, in the following years, took part in the revolutionary movement. Until the beginning of 1919, many other magazines joined the “New Youth”, and throughout the country youth and student associations were born, which took on the need for a radical renewal of China.

The October Revolution produced within this cultural movement a differentiation

of the revolutionary elements from the rest of the intellectuals. Despite the limited knowledge of Marxist doctrine at the time, there was a growing enthusiasm for the revolution in Russia, which was beginning to be considered as the “fuse of the world revolution”.

But before taking sides openly with Bolshevism, the last illusion about the possibility of emancipation of China through paths other than those of the proletarian revolution had to fall.

Students and half classes move

The end of the First World War and the Versailles agreements dispersed the hope that China would be emancipated in post-war settlement. Germany's owned Chinese colonies passed to Japan and this led to a strong anti-Japanese and anti-government reaction: on May 4, 1919, there were major student demonstrations in Beijing. Thousands of students demonstrated demanding the return of Shandong to China, the non-signature of the Treaty of Versailles and the resignation of the pro-Japanese ministers. The “May 4 Movement” spread throughout the country and from students and intellectuals to the business world. Propaganda was undertaken in favor of the boycott of Japanese goods.

In June, following the arrest of hundreds of students in Beijing, the movement entered a new phase, as the solidarity of the working class moved in support of the students with strikes involving tens of thousands of workers.

The “May 4 Movement” achieved its immediate objectives: the Beijing government forced the ministers considered traitors to resign and the Chinese delegation in Versailles refused to sign the peace treaty and therefore to endorse the transfer of rights to Shandong to Japan.

For the first time in China, it had united elements of the bourgeoisie, intellectuals, the small bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat in a common action, a sort of class blockade, without the peasants for the moment, with the proletariat in a position subordinate to the national interests of the other classes, which demanded the end of the conservative government and the restoration of China as a sovereign State, putting an end to dependence on foreign powers.

But if the demonstrations and strikes had a subordinate role in the “4 May Movement”, in the following months and years the struggles for revenge widened more and more and the workers' organizations were born and strengthened. Meanwhile, the events of those months of 1919 had had important repercussions on the young people who had participated enthusiastically in those struggles.

At Versailles the victorious powers had proceeded to divide the world openly showing the brigandage nature of imperialism and that the war just fought had been nothing more than a war of robbery. The decisions taken at Versailles suddenly dispelled the hopes of regaining sovereignty and territorial integrity, which part of the Chinese youth hoped would be possible through negotiation and agreement with the great powers. If in May 1919 the imperialists confirmed their interest in keeping China subjugated and continu-

ing to plunder its resources, in July the revolutionary government of the Bolsheviks in Russia showed the Chinese people the policy of a revolutionary power with a whole series of concessions in favor of the Chinese people that practically abolished all the privileges that the Tsarist government had snatched from China. In this way, Chinese nationalism was fascinated by Bolshevik Russia.

The Third International, operating within the nationalist movements a distinction between the moderate wing prone to compromise with imperialism and the decidedly revolutionary wing, will bring the national revolutionary movements out of the narrow limits of a struggle for national liberation from foreign oppression to unite them with the proletariat of the developed countries in the great world strategy for communism. Here, in Lenin's words, is how the Second Congress of the International resolved the question of relations with the revolutionary movements in the backward countries:

«We have nothing to do with the bourgeois democratic movements and only the national revolutionary movements should interest us. There is some agreement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonial countries, so that very often the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while supporting the national movement, works in concert with the imperialist bourgeoisie against all the revolutionary movements. This fact has been irrefutably documented in the committee, and in order to better confirm this difference, the expression "democratic bourgeoisies" has been replaced almost everywhere in the theses with the expression "national revolutionaries". The idea is that we, as communists, should only support bourgeois movements for the emancipation of colonies when these movements are actually revolutionary, only when their representatives do not prevent us from educating and organizing in a revolutionary way the peasants and the large masses of the exploited» (Lenin's speech on the national and colonial question, 26 June 1920).

It was precisely the most radical elements of the "4 May Movement" that were the first to adhere to communism.

The Communist Party of Italy and the Civil War Against State and Fascism

On the issue of the fascist phenomenon and class violence, the whining social-democracy kept boasting, and pretended to demonstrate that the workers, being defenceless, passively endured the overwhelming violence of the enemy.

It would be enough, in order to refute the thesis envisioning a proletariat which was passive to the violence of the enemy, to skim through the three Party's journals, which were daily reporting episodes of armed skirmishes between proletarians and white guards, where violence was answered violence: and our enemy was, very often, forced into a painful retreat, with losses greatly outnumbering those that the bourgeois press was disclosing.

On March 6, 1921 "Il Comunista" wrote: «we joyfully keep records of a war bulletin in which – finally! – our opponent's losses have outnumbered ours». And it added: «We've supported the violent option to flake the violence by our opponent. The revolutionary masses have come aware of the necessity of this method; and in following it, they are siding with us».

The report started accounting for an episode of true civil war, of a revolutionary struggle victoriously carried out by the proletariat, notwithstanding its origin lied in a fact which was completely afar from the class struggle (in May 1920): a football match played in Viareggio between a local team and that of Lucca. At the end of the match, a brawl broke out between supporting teams. One of the Carabinieri therein shot at eye level: the referee was hit, and died instantly thereafter. The Carabinieri were then surrounded by an enraged mob; the populace assaulted the Marine and Carabinieri stations; the troop was ordered to retreat and the city remained in the people's hands.

The railway station was occupied, and telephone and telegraph wire was cut. For two days no trains passed by Viareggio, with the exception of the "red trains", which were set up to make the proletarians flow to the victim's funeral. Trenches and barricades were under the surveillance of armed red guards. The general strike was announced at once.

Soldiers, who were sent to Viareggio in order to put the city under state of siege fraternised immediately with the rebels, to whom they handed their arms over.

In addition to the troops, torpedo boats were also sent; but the officers were made prisoners as soon as they got off to order the surrender. Ground officials had to hand over their arms, while sea officers negotiated their liberation by accepting to retreat.

An account was then given on armed opposition against Fascism; the report described various episodes which took place in several urban centers in Apulia: Taranto, Cerignola, Bari and Andria.

The use of squadristo by agrarians had become systematic in Apulia, In 1921, like in the rest of Italy. The first targets were the socialist and communist municipal administrations, offices of proletarian organizations, and leading political figures. But the proletariat of Apulia was aware as to how to reply to the acts of violence, and so fascists and rich agrarians who kicked the bucket were in a not small number.

We will skip most of the events, but it is worth mentioning here what happened in Bari at end February, 1921. On Sunday, 20, the PCd'I had organized a national demonstration. Nicola Bombacci was the appointed spokesman for the city. Fascists declared that they wouldn't allow the communist protest, issuing death threats for the local communists in the eventuality of their defiance.

In reply to this menace, the proletarians left their work places in many factories, then armed with sticks went to the station in parade, with the purpose to wait for and protect the Party emissary.

The next day, a group of Fascists, which intervned in order to interrupt the demonstration, received the expected lesson and the communist daily newspaper "Ordine

Nuovo” commented on this day as follows: «As a whole, the communist demonstration had a splendid outcome, the Fascists were given a lesson, of which they will keep a long-lasting memory. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of them in the hospital injured with stick wounds, and even one with a knife wound».

In the following days, in different zones of Apulia, the Fascists caused several outbreaks of violence and issued threats, but the working class got in arms, well squared up and determined to contrast violence with violence. So harsh the defeats that were suffered by the Fascists, that the Steering Council of the Fasci di Combattimento of Bari, after openly declaring their surrender, passed a vile agenda, which, condemning the use of the violence, «calls for the mass of their organized members to embrace the discipline of work and a fruitful pacification propaganda, with a warning that the Fatherland would successfully move through the crisis that travailed it, and reach its bright destiny not with the avail of violence, but with the collaboration and the effort of all of its sons».

On February 27, the “Ordine Nuovo” commented: «The Apulian rural proletariat has shown the workers and peasants of the North how to strike».

The report then moved from Bari to Trieste; this was a city where the proletariat had a long internationalist tradition and even, in the new party, a flamboyant communist one. In Leghorn - not incidentally - the absolute majority of the Julian delegates subscribed to PCd'I.

To effect a deadly strike to this powerful proletariat, the Fascists, with the help of the police, organized the dismantling of “Il Lavoratore”, a glorious press service which represented their guide since 1895.

In the late evening of February 10 a squad of about 30 armed-to-teeth Fascists brought their assault to the journal. The Fascists advanced until they made it to the building's door. But, two bombs were thrown; and this was effective enough to disperse the attackers. The police rapidly made its intervention. The building was surrounded, the rooms occupied by the public force, journalists and typographers were arrested and brutally beaten.

After this intervention, the police gave way to the Fascists, who reduced all of the machinery of the typography to debris, and then set fire to all of the paper materials. The fire propagated immediately to every side of the building. The firemen were allowed to put their hydrants in action only when the flames were about to set ablaze also the houses in the neighborhood.

The annihilation work carried out by the police and the Fascists had nevertheless as effect, that the proletariat held on tight around the flag of the Communist Party. The answer of the workers of Trieste was not belated. They immediately got into a strike: every production activity ended at all in the dockyards, the workshops, and in the port. Trams got stopped, and many shops closed down. The troop was put on duty inside the barracks, due to the terror of workers' retaliation.

Once the strike was over in Trieste, it continued in Monfalcone. Vehement clashes,

between proletarians and Fascists, broke out there. The workers countered against the Fascists' armed assaults, with the throw of hand grenades; in both sides, the injured were a significant number. The proletarians' revenge was not absent: if the fire had been able to destroy the communist journal, then the fire itself would have brought the interests of the bourgeois class ruin. A group of workers, once occupied the entrances of the enormous ship yards "San Marco", set the majestic carpentry, the dockyard, the general storage site, two mechanical workshops, the storage site for inflammable goods all ablaze. The offices of the workshop were completely destroyed.

The Carabinieri, royal guards (police), military units, Guardia di Finanza, with rifles and armored vehicles flocked to the site. The packed gunfight, between the public force, and the workers, barricaded into the administration branch of the dockyard, lasted for almost two hours.

For all of the rest of the day, the dockyard went on burning; the following day, the fire still wasn't completely out. The estimated damage was between 15 and 20 millions liras.

With the toll of the proletarians' immense sacrifices, "Il Lavoratore" restarted its publishing activity in the same year, on September 10, tough and combative, to the support of all the battles of the proletariat of the Venezia Giulia.

With sound evidence, the proletariat, in every corner of Italy, made theirs the indication of the young Communist Party, to accept the fight on the same ground, on which the bourgeoisie brought it and respond to arms with arms.

As long as the Fascists set fires and brought destruction to the proletariat's institutions, freely and with no need of fearing any consequences, and as long as the victims could be counted only in the workers' own ranks, the bourgeois press chanted its war cry against the subversives everyday. On the other hand, when the proletarians squared up on the ground of violent struggle, then the bourgeois cowardly begged for peace: in their own words, «Peace, for the sake and the pity of the Fatherland!».

Origin and history of the Profintern

The first report on the Red Trade Union International outlined what made it necessary and how it was formed.

It was recalled that the First International was attended indiscriminately by parties and trade unions. Already at its 1st International Congress, Geneva 1866, the international recognized the value of trade unions for the defense of the interests of the working class. The need was declared for a «union under an international flag of the [trade union] organizations from different countries». In addition to the fight against the abuses of capital, These unions should support with their actions every revolutionary movement, social and political, that aimed at the complete liberation of the working class.

It was only after 25 years that the first attempts were made to implement practically

what had been hoped for in 1866. At the 2nd Congress of the Second International, Brussels 1891, the creation of Labor Secretariats in every nation was recommended so that in conflicts between capital and labor, workers from other countries would also be able to take useful solidarity measures.

The 4th Congress, London 1896, took a new step forward by approving the deliberation: «It is urgent and necessary to create a Trade Union Council in each country so as to make uniform trade union activity possible (...) The trade unions in each country will receive and strive to attract foreign workers into their ranks, so as to prevent a decrease in wages resulting from the employment of foreign workers. In the event of a strike, lockout or boycott, they will have to provide the local committees with material aid according to the means at their disposal».

From that moment on, the trade union movement made great progress. The International now exerted an effective influence on workers' movements in all countries and, at the outbreak of World War II, more than 9 million proletarians were unionized.

However, at the outbreak of the war, like the parties, the trade unions were also involved in the national inter-classist embrace. The workers' unions not only did not make any serious opposition to the war, on the contrary, most of their leaders placed themselves at the complete disposal of the bourgeois governments; with their total consent the laws that in some way protected the working class were cancelled. The ease with which, when war broke out, the international union officials put the class struggle in the icebox, defending their country's national interests, can only be explained by the fact that this adhesion had already been long prepared for, when the trade unions were still carrying out a fictitious class struggle.

When the war ended, the proletariat from both the victorious and the defeated nations found itself suffering all the consequences of the world conflict. The conquests that it had acquired through hard struggles during the "peaceful development" of capitalism were suddenly annulled. The proletariat was left with only unemployment and misery or underpaid work.

This state of affairs gave rise to the desire to resume the class struggle and to the instinctive need for the proletariat to organize itself in trade union associations. If, before the war, there were about 9 million trade union militants in the world, now there were 40 million. The progress made in a very short time had been extraordinary: in Germany from 2 million to 10 million, in England from 3 to 8 million, in Italy from 800 thousand to 2 million, in France from 500 thousand to about 1 and a half million. The same phenomenon happened in the countries of the Far East: China, India, Japan recorded an incredible development of trade union organizations.

Unions once again became organizations that included the great working masses who, in the revolutionary wave that swept through the world, forced the same opportunist bureaucracies to keep themselves on a class terrain. The watchword of the general strike had conquered the working masses, and more and more often the trade unions were led

by a revolutionary leadership.

But collaborationist unionism was not going to give up. The leaders of this army of 40 million proletarians continued to be the same ones who, during the war, denied internationalism and incited the workers to fight for the defense of their bourgeois homelands. Once peace had been restored, they re-established the broken international relations with the intention of continuing the work of betrayal carried out within the borders of the bourgeois homeland.

The Formation of the Indian Nation

The comrade continued his report on India by describing the events before, during and after Indo-Pakistani independence.

Between the end of 1945 and the first part of 1946, new elections were held in India at the request of the Governor General in order to verify the consistency of the various parties in the electoral field. The electoral torment was focused on the Pakistan issue. If it was evident that the British Raj was “on his deathbed”, the relations of force between the bourgeois factions led by Congress and the Muslim League were not at all clear. The results of the elections demonstrated the almost absolute predominance acquired by these two parties, which respectively won almost all the “general” seats, those reserved for the Hindus, and those assigned to the Moslems.

The refrain of official historiography, which sees Nerhu as the author of the defeat of the British plan (16 May 1946), which provided for an independent Indian Union formed both by the provinces of British India and by the princely States, is evidently superficial because it does not grasp the real causes, certainly not to be sought in the choices of an individual.

For several years now, the decadent British imperialism had learned how much the “colonial system” no longer suited it. But the British bourgeoisie, despite the war and the new world order, aspired to maintain a certain influence in this part of the world.

At the same time the cowardly Indian bourgeoisie, which had never proved to be a revolutionary class, was dominated by a great terror: the revolt of the oppressed classes and their unification. It was therefore essential that independence should create a new State with far greater powers than the British had envisaged, not limited only to external defense. The Indian bourgeoisie needed instead a strong and centralized structure, without limitations in its powers, to carry out a series of reforms able to develop capitalism, through the intervention of the State in economy. The possibility of dividing such a vast territory appeared therefore as a necessity. Nehru, who had harshly criticized the partition for years, accepted the secession of Pakistan.

The Indian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, needed a strong central government without obligations and limitations, to implement a series of reforms, through economic

planning and State intervention in the economy. A scenario which, beyond the rhetoric and ideology of the future Indian Prime Minister (from 1947 to 1964), could only happen with the support of the capitalists, many of whom had long been supporters of the Congress Party. This could not have been done with the scheme proposed by the British, which took powers away from the central government and granted them to the individual provinces.

Pending a new Constitution a government was formed under the leadership of Nehru, in office since September 2, 1946. The League did not hesitate to join the executive along with Congress and at the same time to declare that direct action which was a prelude to an impressive series of massacres that would accompany the separate birth of independent India and Pakistan.

On August 16, 1946, a League demonstration in Calcutta resulted in what would go down in history as the great Calcutta massacre. An episode that first marked the gap from the "traditional" unrest, and triggered a spiral of numerous massacres, between Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other, which resulted in the partition.

The hatred between the masses of different religions and ethnic groups exploded in some areas of the subcontinent, desired, planned and fed by the respective bourgeoisies, with consequences which would become even more disastrous after independence.

However, in different regions the struggle between the classes prevailed and prevented the war of religion. Poor peasants, Muslims and Hindus, fought together against their masters. There were numerous cases of peasant uprisings in rural Bengal and in some princely States, such as Travancore and Hyderabad, and in particular in the region of Telangana (territory situated between Orissa and Andhra Pradesh) where since July 1946 there was a real insurrection against Hindu and Muslim landowners.

In 1946 it was evident that the Indian National Congress had abandoned the goal of one India. Even the British Crown, anticipating that it would be better to keep the two new States in its sphere, was now following this course.

The separation plan was finalized on May 11, 1947, approved by the British government, accepted by the Congress Party, representatives of the Sikh and the Muslim League. On 18 July the British Parliament ratified the India Independence Act, bringing forward the end of the Raj to midnight on 14 August 1947.

When the British withdrew from Pakistan on August 15, 1947, they divided India not only from Pakistan, but also from the great provinces of Punjab and Bengal. This line of separation, the Radcliffe arbitration, was only revealed at the last moment.

Gandhi, who in fact no longer had any voice in the Party, had opposed, in words, the division of the subcontinent, declaring that Great Britain had no right to impose the partition on a "temporarily insane India". However, when the partition plan was presented on June 2, and the viceroy received favorable responses from everyone, the Indian monk decided to observe a day of silence.

The partition was welcomed by the leaders of Congress, the Radcliffe line followed

most of the conditions the party had set. The end of the war had in fact reduced the influence of the League on the Crown, and increased the power of the Hindu bourgeoisie Party. The Congress could be said to be satisfied, Pakistan was reduced in size with the division of the Punjab and Bengal, therefore constituted by two entities separated by more than 1,500 kilometers of Indian territory: West Pakistan and East Pakistan, the latter with the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 to become Bangladesh.

Violent unrest broke out in several northern provinces, leading to mass migrations and a transfer of the population along religious lines, resulting in the largest forced migration in the twentieth century. In March 1948, Muslim refugees from India reached 6 million in Punjab, while Sikhs and Hindus on the other hand reached 4.5 million. Similar thing in Bengal where there were a few million refugees.

The partition was not a poisonous farewell gift from the departing imperial devil, but the fruit of a precise desire of both the Hindu and Muslim bourgeoisies. Pakistani and Indian national historiography describe the explosions of violence as irrational and spontaneous, or at most accuse the rival bourgeoisie of it. Instead, before independence, clashes and intercommunal violence represented the struggle for power between the two bourgeoisies and one of the attempts to prevent or influence British border arbitration. Afterwards, once sovereignty had been achieved, their precise aim was to sweep away the deep-rooted feelings of solidarity and class unity.

It was a planned and organized violence with the support, more or less hidden, of the new States. In northern India, numerous paramilitary groups were deployed in the cities, recruiting armed volunteers from among the thousands of soldiers demobilized by the World War. In Punjab alone, there were about 60,000 members of the RSS (Rashhtriya Swayam Sevak Sang) movement.

The violence began before the partition and was not a consequence of it, but one of the main instruments to get there, to make irreversible the decision to divide the subcontinent into two States and separate, not only physically, the oppressed classes. The Indo-Pakistani dawn was stained by the blood of millions of men sacrificed for the triumph of His Majesty Capital.

The Course and the Crisis of World Capitalism

The spokesman's report was crystal clear, in depth and very well documented. It accounts as proof for the seriousness and coherence of our ancient work method. And that's true even for a topic like the study and interpretation of economical data, which requires continuity and method, as well as a great amount of dedication, experience, and a great deal of evaluation accuracy.

A synthesis of the conclusions, which in turn provided material for the report offered at the public conference held by the Party in Paris in November, is featured inside

the poster for their call, that we quote here.

On the other hand, a synthetical representation of the complete set of data will be shown in the final issue of the essay, which is to be published in one of the next issues of this journal.

The massive destructions and the carnages of the Second World War have given to world capitalism a shortcut to get out of the 1929 crisis, and gave rise to a new cycle of capital accumulation, left almost completely untainted by the overproduction crisis: it was the infamous, pretty well reckoned by economists and journalists, 30-year period of the "Boom". However, this cycle has ended forever with the inception of the first overproduction crisis of the years 1974-1975. Since then, and as it used to occur in Marx's own times, in a 7-10 years long cycle, capitalism has fallen into an international overproduction crisis following a growth phase: internal and external commerce have shrunk considerably, the cases of bankruptcy of commercial and industrial enterprises have exploded, the markets were overloaded with goods that are hard to dispose of. Bankruptcies have led to mass-scale unemployment and corporate reorganizations. With the accumulation of uncollected payments, banks themselves go bankrupt and the price of bonds and stocks fall, and capital enters into a deflation spiral.

Both industrial and financial bourgeoisie, faced by the crisis of their economic system which had granted them enormous privileges, has responded with the systematic adoption of subcontracts and delocalizations, thus making the workers more and more vulnerable. Monopolies and global corporations respond with massive delocalizations in countries where the low-cost manpower can be exploited without restrictions, like China.

This "globalization", as the servant economists of the bourgeoisie go calling it, has allowed worldwide capitalism to delay its own crisis of 30 years approximately.

In addition, a ruthless speculation is taking place everywhere: on raw materials - petroleum, gas, etc. - on dairies, real estate and so on, in cahoots with a generalized deregulation and dismantling of public services, which Capitalism is not able to grant any longer. Any trick or maneuver can be accepted as long as it produces profits. The suffering inflicted to the workers by this economic policy is something of which the bourgeoisie is not worried about. What worries them and their governments is the spreading of capitalism's crisis in every corner of the world, and the social unrest that could find their origin in it.

Nevertheless, the economic policy enacted by the bourgeoisie and its governments doesn't solve anything! On the contrary, the crisis gets worse, crisis after crisis: cycle after cycle, the growth gets slower, while enterprise debt - as well as private and government debt - is growing so big to put the entire system at risk.

The same central banks detain thousands of billions of dollars in the form of bonds, many of which will never be refunded, thus pushing the crisis onto the very foundation of the entire financial system.

Notwithstanding, the solution exists: capitalism has in fact developed, by socializing the productive forces, the economic foundations of the communist society to an im-

pressive extent; and in fact, this is the great role it has in history.

It is then the senile crisis of capitalism which imposes the necessity of a transition towards the communist society: a classless, communitarian society, without market-driven production, where the goal of production will be the satisfaction of the human needs, whereas the purpose of production under capitalist rule is the accumulation of capital.

Capitalism - and the bourgeoisie with it - has become a parasitic organism, which impedes humanity's development, dragging it into unjustified wars and inflicting atrocious sufferings to a significant part of humanity, and destroying the nature.

The grotesque course of this economic system cannot be stopped peacefully. Transition to communism requires the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, its expropriation, and the abolition of wage labor. All the above has to be enacted by replacing the market-driven management of production and distribution with an only physical and not monetary accounting, based on the human needs, in harmony with the fundamental equilibrium.

The World Rearmament of States

The domination of US imperialism over the world

The major world economic powers have not yet recovered from the economic crisis that erupted in 2008, and a new one is approaching, which promises to be even more devastating.

This state of continuous emergency worldwide has serious effects not only on the economy and finance, but also on trade, diplomatic and military relations between States, calling into question the current balance of forces and the traditional areas of influence.

The most uncomfortable imperialism in this situation is of course the dominant one, the United States of America. The US superpower was born out of the war. If its cradle was the first world imperialist war, in the second the young, rampant Yankee imperialism consolidated its hold on the whole world by becoming the greatest imperialist power in history.

The long period of "peace" following the second world slaughter, which cost the death of tens of millions of proletarians, has been dominated by the United States which over time, through their economic and military power, have extended their hands over the whole world as demonstrates not only the strength of the dollar, recognized and accepted as the currency of exchange for most international commercial transactions, but also by the dozens of military bases scattered around the globe and the navy fleets that with their aircraft carriers patrol the Oceans as watchdogs to defend the western order.

The fall of the Russian Empire in the late eighties of the last century, an opponent and at the same time ally of Washington in the imperialist domination of the world, has shown how the military imperialism of Moscow, lacking an equally powerful economic structure, has failed to resist the intensification of competition between States that

worsened after the economic crisis of the early seventies of the last century.

The defeat suffered by the Red Army in Afghanistan at the hands of an army of rebels armed and foraged by rival US imperialism marked the beginning of the end for Russian imperialism.

But forty years after the collapse of the USSR, which usurped the name of socialist, today the USA is no longer the creditor of the world but rather the largest world debtor, and its manufacturing no longer represents half of the world production, but is around 15%, in second place after 21% of China, while Russia, having lost its empire and now reduced to regional power, stands at around a meager 2%. Despite this indisputable economic decline which is difficult not to compare with that of other world empires of the past, primarily Great Britain and France, the USA continues to maintain undisputed military supremacy.

As a matter of fact, the United States is today the only imperialist superpower capable of having a deployment of military forces on a global level.

The US sees China as its main enemy

In recent months the attention of the United States has focused on containing China, overshadowing the conflicts with Russia which until last year was still at the forefront of Washington's concerns.

At the beginning of 2019, the United States decided to withdraw from the so-called Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the Treaty that limited the production of short and short range missiles, accusing Russia of not respecting it. According to many military experts, given that Russia is absolutely unable to compare with the USA in the production of missiles, the real reason why Washington wanted to end the treaty would be to have free hands to install missiles in the Pacific region as an anti-Chinese measure.

The INF treaty in fact prevented Washington and Moscow from owning and using ground-based (conventional and nuclear) missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

By leaving the Treaty, Washington could install such types of carriers at its bases in Asia-Pacific to target ships, submarines and artificial outposts of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the South China Sea and even on the coast of the People's Republic of China.

This attitude of the United States has not failed to concern not only Russia, directly concerned, but also Germany and, obviously, China.

The US Department of Defense believes that the Chinese State's foreign policy has changed in recent years, that China is now implementing an aggressive policy towards neighboring States, especially towards Taiwan but also towards other States bordering the Pacific Ocean, that it seeks to extend its area of influence beyond the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean and also to the Arctic Ocean. In this sense, the Chinese government's projects called *One belt one road* and also *Made in China 2025* are interpreted as direct threats to US interests.

In one of our recent works we observed:

«For the United States of America, the imperative is to curb the rise of any power that defies their hegemony over the world on a commercial, financial and, ultimately, military level. That dominance seemed to have stabilized after the break-up of the USSR and the weakness of present-day Russia, which has barely recovered from a serious crisis in recent years and finds itself among lower-ranking imperialist powers, and after the proven inability of the European Union to truly form an effective political force - divergent interests between States are too strong, too many lacerations of a declining economic fabric, too many tensions on the single currency.

«By contrast, for China the BRI (the so-called Silk Road) is also based on the historical need to oppose the first world imperialism. By now the global picture sees China technologically reaching the USA; on the military side, as concerns ground troops the development has been enormous and the distance is no longer so marked; that between the two military navies remains remarkable. So the military threat is also making headway, an option that is presently far away, but not negligible». (Colonized the colonizers, "Il Partito Comunista", March-April 2019).

The Department of Defense reports to the US Congress in recent months have been increasingly concerned about China's foreign policy initiatives, regarding the strengthening of the People's Liberation Army and its technological advances, as well China's financial presence in the economy of an increasing number of countries.

China is accused of using trade agreements and its financial weight in the various countries as tools to pave the way for diplomatic influence and a direct military presence in those countries.

The incident with Huawei, accused of using its communication networks in various countries to do espionage in favor of the Chinese State, reveals these American fears.

An example of this line of action, as reported by the Department of Defense, is that of Sri Lanka, where China managed to obtain control of the southern port of Hambantota from the Sri Lankan government, thanks to the important economic ties that bind it to Beijing, and now it's trying to do the same with Colombo harbor, both fundamental points along the sea route that connects China to the Mediterranean and also to South Pacific.

The Pentagon also stigmatizes the fact that China is increasing its arms sale to other countries.

Despite the fact that the United States is by far the largest arms exporter in the world, at least since the end of the Second World War, they accuse China of using the sale of arms to broaden its sphere of influence:

Of course Washington's accusations against China have their reason, the PRC is the only country in the world currently able to challenge the US military power.

Military spending growth: United States and China lead the dances

This increase in tension between the two States is testified by examining the trend in world military spending in 2018.

The data released by SIPRI at the end of April 2019 record a worldwide military expenditure of 1822 billion dollars which seems to correspond to 2.1% of world GDP.

The previous year this expenditure had been calculated at 1739 billion, therefore there was an increase of 83 billion dollars. A major increase and almost all absorbed by the increase in military spending of the two greatest world imperialisms, the USA and China, which recorded an increase of \$45bn (about 7%) and \$11bn (about 5%), respectively, for a total of approximately \$56bn.

This race for rearmament of the two greatest world imperialisms seems to us to lead to excluding the possibility of an agreement between the two giants, which would be to the detriment of the rest of the world.

The political, economic and military events of recent years, however, suggest that a clash between the United States and China is approaching, and with the other major powers to have no other choice than to choose the master to trust and obey. Neither Russia, nor Japan, nor Germany or France, have in fact the possibility of establishing a third pole capable of moving independently.

Beijing for now seems to want to test the adversary's military apparatus without arriving at a direct confrontation, aware of its relative inferiority. The United States, on the contrary, are on the alert to try to intervene before China passes the point of no return and acquires a war capacity comparable with that of the United States.

On the other hand, we can't compare the current race for rearmament with that which took place after the end of the Second World War and the Yalta agreements, the famous "cold war".

The race to rearmament, both conventional and atomic, which marked the half century between the end of the war and the crushing of the Russian empire, was intended to ensure, by the two contenders, the possibility of responding to a possible "first blow" inflicted with atomic, and at the same time it fulfilled the need to control, through military bases distributed all over the world, the respective areas of influence, including their own armies of proletarians.

After the collapse of the USSR, the US remained the only global superpower for two decades and had also started to reduce its gigantic military spending, but the economic crisis and the sudden increase in Chinese power forced the Pentagon to reverse the process and to resume increasing the defense budget to enhance the sale of their weapons and at the same time counter the influence of China.

On the Chinese side, the current rearmament race is caused by the need to support the growth of its economic and financial influence, which is expanding to ever wider areas of the planet, with a military system capable of defending it, and by the need to make energy supplies and traffic of commodities to the world market safer.

Other countries that are most important for military spending have decreased it, for example Saudi Arabia (-6%), Russia (-3%) and France (-1.5), while India increased it by 3%.

The increase in military spending has affected other important States such as South

Korea, Brazil, Turkey, Pakistan.

Since it is a small group of countries to grab up 84% of world spending on armaments, we can try to arrange them within five power groups:

Two world superpowers respectively 36% and 14% of world spending. A group of 4 countries around 3.5%: Saudi Arabia, India, France, Russia. A group around 2.5%: UK, Germany, Japan, South Korea. A group around 1.5%: Italy, Brazil, Australia, Canada. A group around 1%: Turkey, Spain, Israel, Iran.

Iran, hit by a serious economic crisis after the US sanctions that led to a significant decrease in its oil exports, has decreased its military expenditure returning to the 2016 level, despite the growing tension with the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The constant increase in military spending as well as the frequent and sudden changes in alliances between the highest imperialisms and the minor ones, are the symptom of the approach of a new military clash worldwide, the only instrument, for a capitalism now in permanent crisis, to find a new frightening youth, at the cost of a new global proletarian massacre. The only alternative to this horrendous prospect is the international communist revolution.

Economy and Society in Israel and Palestine

For almost eighty years now a conflict has been raging which could be described as a direct continuation of the Second World War, in which the bourgeoisie, in order to survive, eliminated millions upon millions of proletarians; a mass extermination of that part of the population for which there was no space in capitalism's infamous post-war reconstruction.

Over the course of those decades various fake left currents, posing as progressive and 'revolutionary', have managed to bog down the Palestinian, and even more so the Israeli, proletariat in bourgeois nationalism; and thus, in this strategic and war-torn part of the world, under circumstances of great pain and suffering, a State would be created in the region as an instrument of imperialism.

Meanwhile, the movement that will bury it, communism, can only act by means of an international revolution. There is no other way out, the communist revolution is international, and only with the ending of the division of society into classes will wars cease and States be extinguished.

The party predicted, and history has confirmed, that all national-bourgeois movements in the zone are destined to capitulate before imperialism, regardless of the bellicose and ultra-revolutionary actions undertaken by Pan-arabism. There is no more space for a double revolution, only for the development of the class struggle and of the organizations it needs to wage that struggle; which when the time is ripe will become an armed struggle, leading up to the insurrection whose guide will be the historical doctrine of the liberation of the proletariat: communism.

There are no special manoeuvres, no sudden changes of direction, imposed by the will of 'the chosen few', that can accelerate the movement. Communism is not built, and neither are revolutions created, by communists. That is just the old Stalinist myth of the "construction of socialism".

In the Middle East as well, the only way to resolve the conflict – a solution that may seem distant, but could be closer than we think – must necessarily be by way of the historical stages foreseen by Marxism, and through the development of a strong proletariat, loyal to its class rather than to any country, and which accepts the leadership of its party.

Jerusalem-Al Quds will never be that myth, that temple, that Zionist nationalism claims for it because today it is once again the centre, and often the epicentre, of battles and encounters between the currents of global capitalism, with all its contradictions, those contradictions that are eating away at its insides and will eventually condemn it to death.

The Jewish proletariat doesn't have to characterize itself as left or right, but in its struggle against the Jewish bourgeoisie. And the Palestinian proletariat against those responsible for spilling its blood: the death and destruction that reigns in colonized Palestine are the reflection of the bloody essence of capitalism, and the Palestinian resistance is nothing more than a smoke screen used by the governing Arabs throughout the region to cover up their enslavement of the tough and courageous Palestinian proletariat, and drive a wedge between it and its class brothers.

Today there are virtually no expressions of solidarity from the western proletariat, particularly that in Israel, with the struggle of the Palestinian proletarians, but the class war in such an explosive part of the world could accelerate very rapidly.

The report began with a set of indices on Industrial Production and Added Value at constant prices. A separate part concerned arms production, its relative weight in the economy and trends in arms sales abroad. The data regarding agriculture showed a marked decline, also in absolute terms, in Israel as much as in the West Bank and Gaza.

In both Israel and Palestine capitalism has rapidly destroyed all traces of the old societies, and after transforming them in its own image, and both are now firmly tied in to the world market. Capitalism, leaving in its wake thousands of dead, has radically moulded the lives of millions of people in order to put them at its disposal.

In contrast to the reactionary laments of the petty bourgeoisie we recognize that this transition was inevitable, and that the disappearance of the fedayeen, the peasant farmers tied to the land is, despite everything, progressive.

On the other hand it has led inexorably to the greater expansion of Israeli colonialism, and of capitalism.

Today the Palestinian is increasingly also a proletarian, in a direct struggle with his own bourgeoisie, which controls all business.

When in the West the great majority of the "left" gave their unconditional support to the struggle of the Fedayeen for a national bourgeois liberation, and left the prospect of class struggle to one side, they looked like they moving to the left of the Party, anchored on its

class foundations. But History would soon fully confirm what the Party had predicted. In confirmation of this point the comrade presenting the report read from “Key points on the Mideast question”, which concluded an important study carried out by the party in 1983.

Our position hasn't changed, which is confirmation in itself of the efficacy of our working method within the field of theory, and above all, of tactics; a method that consists neither of sterile immediatism, which has cost so much useless spilling of blood, nor of bourgeois pacifism which serves as a useful collaborator in the wars between the ethnic groups.

An initial chapter described the scale of labour power in Palestine, which is experiencing a sharp rise. Agriculture increasingly has less weight whereas the service sector, construction and industry are growing. Unemployment, which in Gaza has reached the extremely high level of 44%, in the West Bank is only around 14%.

In Gaza, the scarcity of drinkable water, electrical energy, cuts in economic assistance, and unemployment have produced an explosive situation which will inevitably fuel the proletarian revolt. The comrade gave a detailed account of the most recent hard fought mobilizations in defence of pay, mainly in the public sector.

The rage and desperation of proletarians has been channelled into demonstrations along the border with Israel, led by politico-religious bourgeois and petty bourgeois organizations who claim to be protecting the “mother land”. The result has been a blood bath: Israel has killed 110 Palestinians and wounded a further 4,000, evidencing yet again that modern democracy, for all its fine words about “human rights”, will stop at nothing when bourgeois power feels under threat.

Palestinians working in Israel and within the settlements of the Israeli colonists tend to get the most tiring and tedious jobs assigned to them, in general those that the Israeli proletariat doesn't want to do. For the most part they work in the building sector, many of them in the Jewish settlements helping to build the colonies!

In Israel today there are 4 million proletarians, 87% of which are wage earners; 12 % of wage earners are employed in industry; agriculture represents between 1 and 2% and is for the most part subsidized by the State. 21% of the population lives below the poverty line. Unemployment is officially under 4%, but the real figure is much higher.

There are almost half a million non native proletarians working in Israel, in the building sector and in agriculture. And this section of the proletariat is growing. They are mainly from Sudan, Eritrea, Eastern Europe, South America and South-East Asia. They are highly exploited, and can generally be found working in particularly dire conditions, but they receive no support from the regime's unions.

Protests by refugees from east Africa were held in 2014, 2015 and 2018 against expulsions, but the humanitarian words, typical of the pacifist bourgeoisie, have not managed to prevent these expulsions, nor have they improved the standard of living of this part of the proletariat.

Having got on to the history of the labour movement in Israel, the comrade first gave a summary of the cardinal points as regards the general Marxist interpretation of the

formation of modern nations, a complex subject that needs to be firmly anchored in the doctrinal foundations of Marxism.

This doesn't mean giving in to "Third Worldist" positions, which see the "revolutionary spirit" being decanted from the global proletariat to the popular movements in the Third World; positions which express the struggle for "development" against the pressure being exercised on these peoples by the imperialist States. The support which Marxism has always maintained it should give to the national movements has never derived from abstract, aprioristic considerations; it has never been a question of "justice" or "reason", but of evaluations that have been made that are strictly linked to the revolutionary historical facts.

On the other hand, the exploitation, expulsion and annihilation of the Palestinian proletariat is a reality which is confirmed every single day. The destiny of the Israeli proletariat is necessarily bound up with that of the Palestinian proletariat. Its liberation will necessarily be achieved by way of the liberation of the proletariat in the occupied territories.

We can however show that even if the proletariat in Israel has always been suppressed ideologically, it has still taken part in the class struggle.

The trade union confederation Histadrut, for a long time virtually the sole representative of the Jewish working class, is a pillar and faithful adherent of Zionism. It was formed before the creation of the Israeli State, and is historically linked to MAPAI, the Zionist labour party in parliament.

Throughout its existence Histadrut has fomented racial hatred between Jews and Arabs. An Arab section was created only in 1943 but it took until 1959 before Arabs were accepted into the main organization. It nevertheless continued to put obstacles in the way of any kind of proletarian solidarity between Jews and Arabs.

This notwithstanding the report mentioned spontaneously arisen organizations which included both Jews and Arabs in 1919 along with the strikes in 1924. Despite Histadrut's numerous betrayals of the working class there have been encouraging incidences of proletarian solidarity between Jewish and Palestinian workers. Well known episodes are those of the postal workers and railwaymen in 1946, which went on to become a general action with 23,000 out on strike; the maritime workers in 1951, and the dockers in 1969.

But the Israeli proletarian movement is changing rapidly, and almost half a million non-native workers are now included in their ranks. Along with this there is also the rapid demographic growth of the Palestinian proletariat, and the intolerance that Jewish workers are showing towards orthodox Jews. A certain number of trade unions have therefore emerged which are independent from Histadrut, and although these still have only a small influence they have nevertheless managed to organize a couple of sensational strikes in the important transport sector.

European capitalism expelled the Jews from Europe because there was no room for them: capital in crisis needed to get rid of the surplus population. Their expulsion provoked, in another place, another expulsion of people. There the victorious imperialist fronts imposed a regime that was formally democratic but in fact extremely totalitarian.

Over the course of the past decades this situation has been severely aggravated by all the imperialisms: European, American and Russian ones and now Chinese.

The class struggle on the West Bank has its own history. The Palestinian proletariat has always struggled alone, and the countless massacres it has endured over the last seventy years are evidence of that. Its main enemy is its own government, which talks about revolution but capitulates to the Israeli bourgeoisie and receives money from it.

The Bantustan which the PLO has created, combined with the macabre Israeli torture of the expulsions and settlements, is responsible for the miserable situation on the West Bank.

Before the creation of the Israeli State and the annexation of the West bank by Jordan, the largest trade union organisation in Palestine was the Arab Worker's Association. Before the Nakbait had almost 35,000 members.

With the creation of the Israeli State, the focus of trade union activity passed to Nablus, with an eventual merger with the Jordanian trade union movement. In Gaza, however, when it was under Egyptian rule, the Palestinian trade union movement went its own way and the Palestinian trade union federation was formed. In 1969 it became an integral part of the PLO.

Once Jordanian law came into force the trade unions were subjected to rigorous control. Afterwards, with the occupation of the West Bank by Israel all trade union activity was forbidden until 1979. Nevertheless the trade union grew in a way that was quite surprising. It is estimated that at the end of the seventies it had around 12,000 members.

In the eighties the trade union movement fractured into more than 160 separate unions, organizing in all less than 6,000 workers. The reasons for this division can be found in the sectarian struggle between the various bourgeois organizations who want to control the proletarian movement and replace the class demands of the growing urban proletariat with the nationalist demands of the reformist movement, which at that time was preparing to negotiate the setting up of the Palestinian Authority. The latter, once in place, brought into being a unitary trade union centre, called the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, allied to and led by Fatah, and later by the Palestinian Authority itself.

In 2011 and 2012, during the Arab Spring, the proletariat took to the streets in violent manifestations of anger to defend their standard of living, in the face of a hike in taxes and the cost of petrol, and came into direct confrontation with the Palestinian Authority. The revolts were harshly repressed by the Palestinian forces of order who availed themselves of the logistical support of the Israeli occupation forces.

Hamas is a movement strongly tinged with religion which was set up by the Israeli secret services to oppose the uncontrolled proletarian movement of the intifada and the secular PLO. Hamas has rolled out a network of social services, with money from the Shin Bet (the Israeli Security Agency, Israel's internal security service) and it has become the representative of the Palestinian resistance. Israel has spent more than twenty years organizing Hamas, with excellent results as far as they are concerned.

This fundamentalist, anti-worker movement has undoubtedly obtained a notable consensus among the Palestinian population. It has allowed the propaganda for the unity of the Zionist State to be kept up, and has justified the continual massacre of the “religious fanatics” and “terrorists”. All of it, of course, is to conceal the real war that is going on: the class war against the proletariat, and especially against the Palestinian proletariat.

The Islamist phenomenon in the Middle East isn't a regressive peasant or petty bourgeois movement, but a creature of the financial and petroleum imperialisms emanating both in the region and the cursed West. It is certainly not a movement of bourgeois nationalists, who are set on revolution. It is a tool used by the predatory financial imperialists to prevent and stamp out proletarian revolt, and any organizational forms the workers come up with in the course of their regroupment. Its base for the most part is composed of members of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, of merchants, students, the unemployed and professors from the region's Islamic universities.

Throughout the world we have seen demonstrations in support of the protests in Gaza. In Turkey, in France and in Israel as well. In Haifa the demonstrations were suppressed by the police.

These demonstrations evidence a malaise, a sense of uneasiness, but they are conducted in a pacifist and inter-classist spirit. Their opposition is next to useless.

No inter-classist pacifism will ever be able to stop wars and massacres.

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The Communist Party is printed and produced by

- Associazione La Sinistra Comunista - Casella Postale 1157 - 50121 Firenze – Italy
- I.C.P. Editions – c/o 96 Bold Street – Liverpool L1 4HY – United Kingdom
- C.L. Publishing – c/o 523 S.E. Morrison St. – Portland, OR 97214 – U.S.A