

# REVOLUTION or WAR

## #27

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The Current Course of History and the Danger of Pacifism

### International Situation

War in Gaza: Workers Have no Country, Fight War with Class Unity and Class Struggle

A Look Back at the Unions' Sabotage of the Public Sector Struggle in Quebec

Austerity Plans in Europe and France: the Preparation for Generalized War

### Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Correspondence on the "Mass Strike"

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Influence and Danger of So-Called "Internationalist" Anarchism

Contribution: Against Individualism and the "2.0" Circle Spirit of the Years 2020

### History of the Workers Movement

The Tactics of the Comintern (Communist International), 1926-1940 (*Prometeo*, 1946-1947)

Part 3: the "Third Period" 1928-1934

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## The Current Course of History and the Danger of Pacifism

Convincing of the crisis of capitalism and the threat of generalized imperialist war are no longer real priorities for the consistent revolutionaries of the International Communist Left. The bourgeoisie itself no longer claims that prosperity for all is just around the corner. Nor does it hide the need to prepare for war. There is no doubt that there are still sectors of the capitalist class and proletariat, and even more so in the petty-bourgeois strata, who refuse to face up to the coming tragedy, but the most conscious and determined sectors of both bourgeoisie and proletariat, especially their political expressions, know where the capitalist world is running. To general war.

The hesitation or blindness that may persist in the ranks of the proletariat in the face of the historical tragedy are reflected – indirectly, of course – in the divergences and debates on crisis and war that pervade the proletarian camp. The fact that an organization of the Communist Left such as the International Communist Current (ICC) continues to deny that there is a dynamic towards generalized war is an expression of this. Overall, however, the central stake between bourgeois ideology and revolutionary proletarian theory no longer concerns crisis and war. It is about the historical course: *is war inevitable? Can it be opposed? Can it be prevented? And if so, how? Who can do this? What force?*

Marxism has always maintained that only the international proletariat can rise up against imperialist war. As an exploited class, production for and preparation for war aggravates the exploitation of labor by capital. Any defensive struggle against the working conditions imposed by war is in itself, objectively, resistance and opposition to it. As a revolutionary class, it is the only social or historical force capable of destroying capitalism, which embodies generalized imperialist war. In short, the proletariat's struggle against capitalist exploitation is also a struggle against imperialist war, when the latter is on the agenda. Because “*in every strike there lurks the hydra of revolution*”, a phrase Lenin took from a Prussian Minister of the Interior<sup>1</sup>, only the proletariat can fight, not against war and for peace, i.e. on the terrain of pacifism, but to transform imperialist war into class war, i.e. on the terrain of proletarian internationalism.

However, the proletariat of Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, the Middle East and Africa have shown, and continue to show, their powerlessness in the face of the wars they suffer directly at work and on

the military fronts. More broadly, the international proletariat is also failing to thwart the march towards generalized war. The same is true of the workers' strikes and struggles on every continent, the massive proletarian mobilizations that took place in Great Britain in 2022, in France in 2023, and the succession of strikes in North America over the last two years, culminating in the auto strike “launched” and sabotaged by the UAW union. Worse still, the American bourgeoisie, guided by the Democrat Biden, who came to lend the union a hand on the picket lines, succeeded in turning the strike into a moment to adapt the American industrial productive apparatus and frame part of America's proletariat in preparation for war.<sup>2</sup>

It would be pointless to deny the limitations of these workers' struggles. They have been unable to challenge the initiative of the unions and bourgeois forces acting within the working class milieu, and to oppose the sabotage by these forces of workers' struggles when there is a workers' struggle, which is far from always being the case. Today, the international proletariat is not in a position to offer an alternative to capitalism and war. A view based on this static photograph can only provoke skepticism and fatalism, not only in its own ranks, but also among individuals, proletarian or otherwise, and groups “inhabited” by revolutionary hope, whatever the latter may be.

Once again, this “feeling” of powerlessness in the proletarian ranks can be echoed and expressed in one way or another within the forces of the proletarian camp, and even within the Communist Left itself: *the proletariat is totally subjugated. It is powerless in the face of war. Or it is defeated and war is inevitable. Or, conversely, the static photo may provoke an act or profession of faith and revolutionary phrase-mongering devoid of political meaning: the proletariat is not defeated, or the bourgeoisie cannot move towards generalized war because the working class is not defeated.* In this case, a simple data-point of the historical equation is transformed into an absolute schema.

This difficulty in seeing beyond the photo, considering only the immediate – real – weakness of the proletariat, weakens and undermines the conviction of revolutionaries, groups, circles, more or less conscious individuals, in the proletariat's revolutionary character and its ability to rise up and oppose the dynamic of generalized war. Added to

<sup>1</sup> . Lecture on the 1905 Revolution, 1917, Collected Works, vol. 23.

<sup>2</sup> . See Revolution or War 26, Workers' Defeat, UAW's Victory and Preparations for Generalized Imperialist War.

this is the fact that the bourgeoisie, its media and propagandists are not idle, but are hammering home the point that the revolutionary proletariat is impotent or even non-existent. Above all, it does not hesitate to have its leftist forces occupy the terrain of pacifism.

Dangerous, too, even if of a different nature, are the “radical” but nevertheless pacifist initiatives of genuinely revolutionary militants and individuals, including and even more so when they display anarchist political radicalism. There is no doubt that the vision of a powerless proletariat, or even its absence from the photo, can only fuel both despair and adventure for the most outraged. The Prague *Anti-War Congress Appeal* is an expression of it.<sup>3</sup> Its object is “the coordination of direct actions to sabotage the war machine”, with no reference to the proletariat and even less to the reality of the balance of power between classes. As it stands, this congress, should it achieve a modicum of success, runs the risk of drawing individuals and circles, often anarchists, into the adventurism and activism of the revolted petty-bourgeoisie. The role and responsibility of the Communist Left is both to warn participants of the danger and political impasse of what is, in the final analysis, no more than the expression of “radical pacifism”, and to offer them the alternative of proletarian internationalism as it can be expressed today, i.e. in terms of the real balance of forces between classes and its dynamics. To date, our participation in this congress has taken the form of a Public Address that we have sent to the participants.<sup>4</sup> It advances the class alternative of proletarian internationalism represented by the NWBCW committees called by the ICT, however modest and limited they may be, to which we have adhered. Of course, it is not exclusive, and any other initiative clearly situated on the terrain of class struggle should be taken into consideration and debated.

Against static, one-sided visions leading to fatalism or voluntarism, we must reaffirm that there is not “a struggle of the proletariat”, but a “struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat”, the struggle of/between classes and not “of class”. Today, it is and will be increasingly determined by the “march to generalized war”. Such is the inevitable course of history. Every national bourgeois is redoubling its attacks on “its own” proletariat, and will continue to do so. It is the necessity for preparing for imperialist war,

and no longer simply the defense of the competitiveness of one national capital in the face of another, that becomes the primary concern of every national capital in the face of the proletariat. Armament production, revival of war industries, explosion of military defense budgets, all at the cost of a debt burden approaching the abyss – crisis and war feeding off each other, as we have said before – that will dictate the terrain and timing of the class confrontations that the bourgeoisie is obliged to provoke. Added to this will be the need to impose both social discipline and the mobilization of large masses of soldiers for the massacres on the front lines, in the long term for most countries, and even today for Russia, Ukraine and Israel.

Contrary to a schematic view that historical proletarian defeat would be an absolute precondition for war, we cannot rule out the possibility that, pressed by the crisis and driven by the logic of imperialist and military rivalries, the bourgeoisie might be forced to launch into generalized war without taking care to inflict on the proletariat an ideological, political and bloody defeat beforehand. In that case, the bourgeoisie would be taking a greater risk, the very one it experienced during the revolutionary wave of 1917-1923. The same risk against which it protected itself by inflicting political defeat and bloody terror in the 1930s.

Admittedly, this historic risk could prove insignificant in the event of a widespread nuclear war destroying the planet. But we are not there yet. There will be class confrontations. All the more reason, then, for revolutionaries to prepare themselves as best they can, so that the proletariat can respond as effectively as possible; that is, and to put it simply, so that it can seize *en masse* the orientations and slogans put forward by communist groups. To achieve this, it needs a material political force capable of defining, carrying and diffusing orientations and slogans to the masses – and of rigorously defending proletarian internationalism against all forms of pacifism. It must set up its own political party, the World Communist Party.

The fight for the latter, which communist groups must take up, is also an element and a factor – ultimately the main one – in the evolution of the balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, of the historical course.

The Editorial Team, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2024

<sup>3</sup> . We reproduce this Appeal in this issue, and follow it with an Address to all participants in the congress, setting out our critical position on the congress and proposing an alternative.

<sup>4</sup> . By the way, its organizers reject the participation of “party-building” groups: “we didn’t invite any of the most “famous” so-called “left-communist” big organizations.” (Interview with the Organization Committee)

## International Situation

*The following leaflet was distributed by the Communist Workers Organisation, affiliate group of the Internationalist Communist Tendency, at pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Great Britain. We support it and make it our own. It is followed (next page) by a brief summary of the public sector strike in Quebec last autumn*

### **Workers Have No Country: Fight War with Class Unity and Class Struggle!**

**T**he war in Gaza is a product of imperialism – just like the wars in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and the other fifty or more conflicts that are raging around the planet. Imperialism is the child of capitalism and the steady stream of barbaric atrocities we are seeing every day represent the true face of the system today. All the talk of “human rights”, “democracy”, the “rulesbased international order”, and so on, cannot conceal this.

Both Israel and Hamas are pawns on the imperialist chessboard. Israel came into being as a result of the victory of Allied imperialism in the Second World War and was initially supported by both the USSR and USA. With the outbreak of the Cold War it became the massively financed and armed outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East. But US domination of the region and the oil trade is now threatened by the rival imperialisms of both Russia and China. Hamas has been funded by Qatar to the tune of \$30 million a month (with Israel’s backing, as it hoped to play off the Palestinian factions against each other and undermine the prospect of a two state solution). Hamas has also been armed by Iran, which has entered into a de facto alliance of convenience with Russia and China against the US.

The Gaza war, like that in Ukraine, is being fought under the banners of nationalism. The truth is there is no such thing as a single Palestinian nation or a single Israeli nation. All nations are divided into classes and talk of the Palestinian or Israeli nation really means the states of the Palestinian or Israeli capitalist class. The working class has no interest in supporting its exploiters in either state, as the past bitter class struggles in both Palestine and Israel demonstrate.

Nationalism is the lie used to convince workers to die for their exploiters and forget their class interests. The various faces of leftism and even sections of anarchism urge us to support one side or the other in the name of “anti-imperialism” or the “lesser evil.” But the Gaza war, the Ukraine war, and all the others, are inter-imperialist wars; there is no anti-imperialist side in these wars. What these wars represent are steps towards a global war where the major imperialist powers will mobilise workers to fight it out.

**The only real anti-imperialist struggle is the fight against capitalism itself, and the only way to oppose imperialist wars is on the basis of class struggle.**

It was the revolutions in Russia and Germany that brought the First World War to an end. Despite the obstacles, class unity and class struggle of all sectors of the working class – regardless of national origin, regardless of which side of the wars they find themselves on – is the only route out of the plunge into barbarism which our rulers are preparing for us and which we will, and are already, paying for in sweat and blood.

The CWO is supporting internationalists forming local “No War but the Class War” groups to intervene in the class struggle, exposing the link between attacks on our living standards and the drive to war. Join us. We say: **No War but the Class War!**

Communist Workers’ Organisation March 2024

## **A Look Back at the Unions' Sabotage of the Public Sector Struggle in Quebec**

The 550,000 public sector workers in the province of Quebec (Canada) have voted 95% in favor of an indefinite general strike (IGS) to be exercised in October. On September 23, over 100,000 workers demonstrated to show their determination. In a leaflet from the NWBCW-Montreal (No War But the Class War) committee distributed at the demonstration, it was mentioned that *“we need to prepare for a general strike by creating strike or struggle committees of all workers, whatever their union affiliation, whether unionized or not, and whatever their job. This is the first way to fight against divisions and the weakening of our forces. We need to take part in union meetings and make proposals to counter union division and sabotage, especially if they come back with the same proposals for action that have failed in the past: isolated actions, sectoral strikes, one or two-day strikes and even a few hours per union. NWBCW committees support workers' struggles because today they are no longer determined solely by the crisis – the defense of national capital against economic rivals – but also by the needs, more or less direct depending on the country, of the push towards generalized war; in particular, the need to develop war economies and rearm. In this situation, every workers' struggle represents, **objectively** and regardless of the consciousness of the proletarians involved, a dynamic of opposition to the crisis and the march towards war of its own national capital. And this applies both economically and ideologically, by tending – and only by tending – to break with the framework of defense of national capital and national unity with its own bourgeoisie.”*

A month later, in November, the “Front Commun des syndicats” [Common Front of the Unions] and non-participating unions to it embarked on a multitude of strikes lasting from a few hours to a few days. As for the FAE (35% of teachers), it opted for a IGS lasting 22 days. This strike, completely isolated from other workers, was never extended to other public or private sectors.

In an IGCL leaflet distributed during the strike days, we wrote: *“It's no longer so much a matter, as a matter of priority, of calling for the formation of struggle committees or the like to prepare and encourage a truly ‘unlimited and united’ strike and its extension beyond the public sector. Today, in the first days of the movement, it is a matter of: calling directly on all public-sector trades and corporations to strike at the same time and all together; calling on them to extend the strike beyond the public sector, into the private sector; calling on all proletarians in Quebec, public and private, to strike immediately and indefinitely, breaking with national unity and the ban on real strikes. And if there are struggle committees, it is up to them to focus all their intervention on these watchwords.”*

On December 27, the unions announced an agreement in principle without disclosing any information, and ended all strikes. Legault's provincial government did not need to pass injunctions and laws to stop the strikes. The unions, as an organ of the capitalist state, took care of that.

And to make sure that public sector workers do not go on an IGS, the unions called for votes between January 8 and February 19, to put an end to any hint of a struggle and ensure acceptance of the government's offers. And most unions held video-conference meetings. The *Alliance des professeures et des professeurs de Montréal*, for example, held such demobilizing assemblies from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., with 52% acceptance of the government's offer.

Although unions try to keep a tight rein on face-to-face meetings, **video-conference meetings should be rejected outright**. The total control exercised by the unions, who organize video conferences, allows them to maneuver in case the vote does not go their way. Not only does staying at home not allow workers to engage in a genuine contradictory “debate” on the struggle itself, in this case the value of the wage agreement, working conditions, and on the direction and modalities of the strike itself. This isolation, increasingly put forward by the unions for both strike votes and management offers, prevents workers from “feeling” the strength and vitality of their collective, so that they can realize that united in the struggle, they are much more than a sum of votes for or against.

Normand

## **To March toward Generalized War, the European Bourgeoisies are Forced to Attack the Proletariat More and More.**

**I**n the previous issue, we tried to show how the economic policies pursued by the Biden administration – “Bidenomics” – represented both the first steps in adapting the American production apparatus to the drive towards generalized imperialist war, and an economic, political and ideological attack on the proletariat. The following article (next page), published on the Internationalist Communist Tendency website, highlights how the French bourgeoisie is also beginning to prepare for war on an economic and “social” level, i.e., to impose the sacrifices on the proletariat in France that are indispensable for this preparation. We call on all those who can, groups, circles and even isolated individuals, to expose this ongoing process in as many countries as possible.

Written a month earlier, the article could not have taken into account the “*Europe Speech*” given by French President Macron on April 25.<sup>5</sup> The speech set out the French bourgeoisie’s vision of Europe as a counterpart to “Bidenomics”, and an attempt to distance itself from the growing polarization between the USA and China precipitated by the war in Ukraine. It is trying to convince Europeans of the need for a “European strategic autonomy” in military defense, and hopes to take the lead, particularly in relation to Germany.

“There is an immense risk that we might be undermined or relegated. Because we are at an unprecedented time of global upheaval, and great transformations are accelerating. (...) We must be clear on the fact that our Europe, today, is mortal. It can die. It can die, and that depends entirely on our choices. But these choices must be made now. Because it is today that the question of peace and war on our continent is being answered, as is our ability or inability to ensure our own security. (...) But the outcome depends on us, as show some very simple observations to highlight how serious my words are. Firstly, we are not armed (...) in light of the widespread rearmament of the world and its acceleration. (...) The second observation is that economically, our [social] model as it is conceived today is no longer sustainable. (...) The third observation (...) is the cultural clash, the battle of imaginations, narratives and [democratic, he clarifies] values, which is increasingly sensitive.”

Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the door to European strategic autonomy, a traditional policy of French imperialism since De Gaulle, had closed, with all European nations taking refuge under the American nuclear umbrella provided by Nato – to the extent that Finland and Sweden joined it in

urgency. With Congress blocking US aid for six months and the possibility of Trump’s election, the risk of American military disengagement in Europe and the loss of its nuclear umbrella has come back to haunt the European bourgeoisies, especially as Russian military successes on the Ukrainian front are increasing. Faced with this, the door to European strategic autonomy, independent of the United States and specific to French imperialism, has reopened, or so France would like to believe, by promoting its military and nuclear capabilities:

“The era when Europe bought its energy and fertilizers from Russia, had its goods manufactured in China, and delegated its security to the United States of America, is over. (...) [It is time] to build a Europe which can show that it is never the vassal of the United States. (...) Nuclear deterrence is central to France’s defence strategy. It is therefore essentially a critical element of defence of the European continent. It is thanks to this credible defence that we will be able to build the security guarantees all our partners expect, throughout Europe, and that we will be able to build the common security framework, a security guarantee for each of us.”

We do not know to what extent the other European bourgeoisies will adhere to France’s ambitions, but there can be little doubt that they will unite on the fact that “the world’s most demanding social model that takes the most from the wealth it produces (...) is no longer sustainable” for all European capitalism. Macron’s speech confirms the title of the following article, which we support: “Social War is Declared.” And it is indeed the bourgeoisie that is declaring it, and is going to wage it and impose it on the proletariat, seeking to ensure that it takes place on the terrain and at the times it thinks it will have the best chance to prevail. This is also the meaning of Macron’s call for Europe to lead the cultural, i.e. ideological, battle, in order to divert the proletariat from the class struggle in the name of defending democracy and national unity. This is why we welcome and support this article.<sup>6</sup>

The Editorial Team

<sup>5</sup> . Reading his long speech is highly instructive. We invite everyone to read it. In English: <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2024/04/24/europe-speech>

<sup>6</sup> . There could be two points for discussion that are totally secondary here and now. The passage on the historical crisis of capitalism needs to be explored further within the proletarian camp as a whole. The call for “self-organization” and the presentation of the party-class relationship, which could only be brief, could be discussed or debated.

## **Austerity Plan in France: Social War Declared!**

**5** 0 billion euros in savings by 2027: this is what Pierre Moscovici, President of the French Audit Office (Cour des Comptes) and a “Socialist”, is calling for to reduce the [French] public deficit in order to meet the European Commission's targets, in a framework of sharply declining growth.

That is all it took for the French government to announce with great fanfare the target of 10 billion in savings for the year 2024, followed by 20 billion in 2025. It is highly likely that this austerity policy will continue until at least 2027 and intensify, as implied by Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire, who wants to put an end to “the French-style welfare state.” All areas are concerned: environment, education, health, housing, social security, unemployment, social benefits... all except the army, which is safe and sound, much to the delight of the bourgeois arms industry, such as Dassault and others!

### **War Economy and Rearmament: Towards Generalized War**

While the level of social spending will fall drastically over the next few years in an attempt to absorb the deficit, military spending will continue to rise, and even double by 2030. This is in line with Emmanuel Macron's much-vaunted “war economy”, and France's rearmament, with several billion euros (!) in military support for the Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, for the first time, EDF's Civaux power plant will be reserved for the military to produce tritium, the isotope fundamental to nuclear deterrence. France is clearly preparing for the possibility of a generalized inter-imperialist war, and is therefore seeking to increase its military budget in anticipation, as evidenced by President Macron's recent statements on the possibility of sending French troops to Ukraine (or elite corps or technician-instructors) to fight Russia. While the various Western leaders have (for the time being) opposed this, it has to be said that all NATO countries are now drastically increasing their military budgets and remilitarizing.<sup>8</sup> In this gloomy context of economic decline and forced remilitarization, all bourgeois governments are looking for resources to finance imperialist butchery while cutting their budgets: the poorest and working people are the first victims.

### **Anti-worker Attacks around the World**

France is not the only country undergoing a terrible social purge to satisfy the interests of the bourgeoisie:

<sup>7</sup> . <https://reporterre.net/Guerre-en-Ukraine-Emmanuel-Macron-essai-d-habiter-l-opinion-a-un-rearmement>.

<sup>8</sup> . <https://www.lexpress.fr/monde/amerique/otan-vers-une-hausse-sans-precedent-des-depenses-militaires-BTCF5TCNWNEEBN3CUPKPNMK3BI/>

Argentina, Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic, Cuba, Pakistan, Egypt, Great Britain, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Venezuela and Sweden have recently implemented particularly ferocious austerity policies against the proletariat, in the hope of emerging from the economic crisis shaking the globe. Everywhere, it is these very conditions of existence that are under attack, while social struggles are multiplying around the world to confront them, as in Cuba, where, far from the American imperialists and the pseudo-communist Cuban bourgeoisie, the working class is self-organizing to demand an improvement in its living conditions.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Historic Crisis of Capital over the Past 50 Years**

In reality, these austerity policies are taking place against the backdrop of capital's historic economic crisis since 1973. Since the two oil shocks of the 1970s, the capitalist world has no longer experienced phases of generalized prosperity, quite the contrary: every 10 years or so, economic crises of varying severity (1973-1979; 1980-1982; 1990-1992; 1997-2002; 2007-2011; 2020-2022 and since the war in Ukraine in 2022) impact the international economic system, leading to a continuous decline in economic growth over the past 50 years.<sup>10</sup> Just as we had never really emerged from the “Great Recession” of 2008<sup>11</sup>, the Covid crisis and then the war in Ukraine plunged the world back into economic depression and “stagflation”. Since 2020, global economic growth has been relatively weak, except in the United States, due to its protectionist and interventionist policies.

Capitalism regularly undergoes economic cycles, characterized by phases of economic expansion, followed by depression, when it must find new outlets to start a new cycle, as Marx explains in *The Capital*:

*“One may assume that in the essential branches of modern industry this life-cycle now averages ten years. However we are not concerned here with the exact figure. This much is evident: the cycle of interconnected turnovers embracing a number of years, in which capital is held fast by its fixed constituent part, furnishes a material basis for the periodic crises. During this cycle*

<sup>9</sup> . <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/am%C3%A9riques/20240318-les-cubains-manifestent-contre-les-p%C3%A9nuries-de-courant-et-de-nourriture>

<sup>10</sup> . [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic\\_growth#/media/File:WeltBIPWorldgroupOECDengl.PNG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_growth#/media/File:WeltBIPWorldgroupOECDengl.PNG)

<sup>11</sup> . <https://www.imf.org/fr/Blogs/Articles/2018/10/03/blog-lasting-effects-the-global-economic-recovery-10-years-after-the-crisis>



*business undergoes successive periods of depression, medium activity, precipitancy, crisis. True, periods in which capital is invested differ greatly and far from coincide in time. But a crisis always forms the starting-point of large new investments. Therefore, from the point of view of society as a whole, more or less, a new material basis for the next turnover cycle.”<sup>12</sup>*

Today, for the bourgeoisie, this “way out of the crisis” means squeezing the proletariat even harder. This policy of austerity is nothing new: under all successive French governments, right and left, austerity policies against the working class have been applied (under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1976, François Mitterrand in 1983, Jacques Chirac in 1995, Nicolas Sarkozy in 2010 and François Hollande in 2014), with no success in reviving the economy.

The current austerity policy is directly linked to this global reflux in economic growth, attributable to geopolitical conflicts and the energy crisis, which is preventing the State from generating sufficient revenue, and which is therefore leading governments to attack public spending in the hope of reducing budget deficits and public debt. All this is done with the obvious aim of reassuring supranational institutions (World Bank, IMF or the European Commission) and, above all, financial markets and rating agencies, so as not to be declared insolvent like Southern Europe was after the 2008 crisis, and to continue attracting foreign investors. But this policy of austerity can only get worse, as there is no prospect of growth in the years ahead, and it creates a vicious circle: less growth due to the international context, so less revenue, so less public spending, which leads to no revival of economic activity, and therefore ever more recession and budget cuts. But the fundamental reason for the current situation lies in the fact that capital, in this last production cycle over the past 50 years, is no longer able to cope with the falling rate of profit that characterizes the capitalist system. This is why we are witnessing the multiplication of attacks on the proletariat, and the march to war, the ultimate solution for capitalism to regenerate itself and restart a new production cycle through the destruction of constant and variable capital.

### **The Need to Self-Organize and Break out of the Reformist Straitjacket**

In the face of these ever-increasing attacks, which will only intensify as a result of the march to war and the economic crisis, our class must seek to self-organize

against the bourgeoisie and its allies, through its international vanguard party, which it unfortunately still lacks. It can trust neither the trade unions nor the institutional left, for it is they who, in Cuba as in Venezuela, in Portugal as in Spain, in Germany as in South Africa, are driving these policies of social purge against the working masses. It cannot and must not simply put forward a defensive program to withdraw the counter-reforms imposed by the state and employers, but also an offensive program to raise wages, improve living and working conditions, lower the retirement age and reduce working hours, without worrying about its financial feasibility in the capitalist system, because it will have to be forced to do so. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said in 1850, in the “Address of the Central Committee to the League of Communists”:

*“[The workers] must drive the proposals of the democrats to their logical extreme (the democrats will in any case act in a reformist and not a revolutionary manner) and transform these proposals into direct attacks on private property. (...) If the democrats demand the regulation of the state debt, then the workers must demand national bankruptcy. The demands of the workers will thus have to be adjusted according to the measures and concessions of the democrats. (...) But they themselves must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat.”*

Only through class struggle, organized and guided by its international Communist Party, will the proletariat realize that communist revolution is the only solution to a decadent, unstable system in perpetual crisis. Otherwise, “But for those workers who allow themselves to be amused by ridiculous strolls in the street, by the planting of liberty trees, by the mellifluous phrases of lawyers, there will first be holy water, then insults, and, finally, grapeshot. And destitution forever.” (Auguste Blanqui, Warning to the People – “The London Toast” , February 25, 1851<sup>13</sup>)

Xav, 25/03/24

<sup>12</sup> . Karl Marx, Capital, volume II, chap. 9, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1956, USSR

<sup>13</sup>. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/blanqui/1851/toast.htm>.

## Debate within the Proletarian Camp

### Correspondence on the Mass Strike

Following our introduction to the ICC article we reprinted in the last issue, we received a critical letter, which we publish here and follow with our response. The primary purpose of this correspondence was to address a passage that quickly put forward a hypothesis for understanding the current development of the “Bordiguist” group that publishes *The Communist Party in the United States*. Its defense of “red syndicalism” could explain the echo it meets by “the fact that the experience of mass strike dynamics by the North American proletariat remains particularly remote - the 1930s...” Readers will find below the comrade's correction, as well as a broader critique of our positions. Our response offered to engage the author – whom we do not know – in a debate on the issues he, or she, raised. Unfortunately, we have not heard from him or her since. Nevertheless, we thought it would be of general interest to publish this correspondence.

#### Letter from comrade Ivan

Hello comrades,

Some brief comments on your introduction to the ICC text "An opportunist intervention towards workers' struggles in the USA"...

First, I do not think it is true that the "the North American proletariat's experience of the mass strike dynamics" is confined to the 1930s, or that North America did not experience events on par with the class battles in Europe you note took place after 1968. Albeit not on as grand of a scale as i.e. Italy during and after "the hot autumn", the USA still faced similar convulsions in the 1970s: the wildcat strike of 10,000 sanitation workers in New York City in 1975, the civil servants' strikes in San Francisco that partially combined i.e. teachers' and hospital workers' struggles alike, and the illegal strike of 200,000 letter carriers in 1970, crushed by the intervention of the army but affecting most major cities. I quote from *Time* on March 30, 1970:

*"Stamping their feet and clapping their hands, members of Branch 36 broke up their December meeting with raucous cries of 'Strike! Strike!' Their mood frightened union officials. 'We were no longer in control,' said Executive Vice President Herman Sandbank... An angry call for an immediate strike vote was ruled unconstitutional, and balloting on the question was put off until St. Patrick's Day. Then, as thousands of their fellow New Yorkers watched the marchers on Fifth Avenue, the letter carriers marched to the ballot boxes and voted 1,555 to 1,055 in favor of a strike. Other locals quickly followed suit. Members of the Manhattan-Bronx Postal Union chased their president, Morris Biller, off the platform when he refused to allow them to take an immediate strike vote.... In a display of impatience with both Congress and their own leadership, some 3,000 members of Chicago's N.A.L.C. Branch 11 shouted*

*down pleas from union officers to remain on their jobs and voted overwhelmingly to strike. The resistance spread quickly. Postal units in Boston, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, San Francisco and several Los Angeles suburbs voted either to continue walkouts already in effect or initiate new ones. At a tumultuous Saturday morning meeting, New York's N.A.L.C. Branch 36, which had started it all, voted almost unanimously to remain off the job."*

Granted, these rarely expanded along anything other than a narrower, sectoral corridor (and therefore do not perfectly exhibit a "mass strike dynamic"). However, they are at least as significant as the three main "general strikes" of the 1930s in the USA, and posed a stronger challenge to the very controls you liken (correctly) to "the total and definitive integration of the trade unions into the state", consummated by the Wagner Act of 1935 and then by the unions' "no-strike" pledge during the war.

Secondly, the remark that the aforementioned "integration" was "in preparation for the 2nd imperialist world war" appears to me as imprecise and slightly mechanical. It is not strictly wrong, and is actually right, correlating with the principles enumerated below by Paul Mattick:

*"...the crisis cannot be reduced to 'purely economic events' although it arises 'purely economically', that is, from the social relations of production clothed in economic forms. The international competitive struggle, fought also by political and military means, influences economic development, just as this in turn gives rise to the various forms of competition. Thus every real crisis can only be understood in connection with social development as a whole."*

In the epoch of imperialism and state-capitalism, states' response to crises coincides with, and is,

preparations for war. This is even partially grasped by the administrators of exploitation themselves, as i.e. Blinken does not explicitly anticipate war with the PRC, but obliquely connects the program of his administration to the 'new challenges' posed by a more competitive geopolitical playing field after COVID. Nonetheless, the architects of the union laws of 1935 in the USA, and even of measures that were plainly a form of military mobilization such as the CCC, did not yet consciously conceive of these as preparations for the sanguinary devalorization of 1939-45. They were certainly less conscious of these measures' utility as preparations for the coming war than i.e. their counterparts in France, whom *Bilan* brilliantly

ascertained were "the Hitler[s] and Mussolini[s] of democratic France", as the Popular Front confirmed Bordiga's "prophecy" that the Socialists would come to power "with a program of the fascist style...". The Wagner Act and the CCC were responses to a crisis, a), whose resolution was WWII, and b), that created the same volatile situation which rulers recognize can take intensified inter-state confrontation to a military level. So these are "preparations for the 2nd imperialist world war", but retroactively and obliquely.

To me, this possibly speaks to a certain level of "two-dimensional-ness" in the IGCL's conception of "crises" and the "solution" of generalized war.

Fraternally, Ivan

### Our Response to Ivan

The IGCL to comrade Ivan,

Dear comrade,

We have discussed your critical comments on the presentation that our journal makes on the ICC article about *The Communist Party's* intervention in working class struggles in the US. We salute your political approach and we appreciate your effort, since it provides historical precisions about the experiences of *Mass strike* in North American as well as the one you make on the "unions' definitive integration to the US state apparatus". Both are worth of debating and political clarification.

1) Actually, your remarks on the experiences of the *mass strike* in the US in the 1970 do not contradict, nor oppose, our understanding of the phenomenon of the *mass strike* as the "universal form of the proletarian class struggle resulting from the present stage of capitalist development and class relations" (Rosa Luxemburg). It rather comes to "enrich" our understanding and our internal discussions. This is the important point that, for our part, we want to underline first. Nor do they really oppose the fact that differences of experience may exist between different fractions of the international proletariat, here between the North America and Europe's ones. Now, and may be is it also a concern you had when you wrote us, it is clear that pointing out this possible differences should not make us looking at the dynamics of the class struggle, actually **the struggle between the classes**, as fixed schema, that would exclude any possibility of *mass strike* in North America for instance.

The observation we make in the journal aims at explaining or exposing particular specificities, such as the development of the "bordiguist" *The Communist Party* in the US, because its position on *red unions*. In this case, our explanation is only an hypothesis. More important,

referring to this "difference of tradition" enables us to point out the difficulties we sometime have while debating, particularly on the immediate *tactics*, with other communist groups, such as the CWO (ICT) for instance, or comrades from countries where the union "closed-shop" system is ruling or not.

For instance, according to the union official rules and traditions, closed-shop or not if so to speak, the individual militants in workplaces will not be faced with the same exact immediate stakes or battles. For example, they will not develop the same immediate "tactics" in regards with the meetings called by the union within the formal framework of the union, that is including only unionized workers. Again generally speaking, in a closed-shop system, the unions' call for a meeting with unionized only can represent a "step forwards", an "opportunity" for the militants to intervene at a local and immediate level for gathering workers and "unite" them for the struggle and fight back the unions' sabotage of any initial struggle or strike. While such unions' call in a "non-closed-shop system" appears at once, again generally speaking, as a direct attempt to divide the workers between members and non union members. There, individual militants can and must directly denounce this division and call for the alternative of general gathering of all workers of the workplace whatever is their trade, their specialty or specific work and their statute and contract.

The same goes for the intervention of the communist groups. That is why we underlined in the article our support to *The Communist Party's* orientation for calling to organize general assemblies to vote in the US situation. While, it is not, in general, a central orientation that we put forwards in our intervention in mass or even local mobilizations in places like France, for instance. In the first case, the setting up of general as-

semblies, that is the gathering of all workers of one workplace, can be a moment, can be a first step, for the struggle to develop and to which the unions openly oppose. In the second, the tradition of holding general assemblies gathering all workers of any workplace, even though attacked and regularly sabotaged by the unions, is still alive for all workers. It does not represent the same stake. For instance, holding a general assembly is not in general an expression, or the result, of an *out-flanking* of the unions. And, it is not always a step forwards. For instance, the left and the leftists do not hesitate to call and even organize *general assemblies* before the struggle or strike itself. In doing so, they attempt, and often succeed so far, to anticipate and *short-circuit* the very dynamics of the struggle<sup>14</sup>. That is why we warn against making General Assemblies a *fetish* – what we call and fight back as “*fetishism of self-organization*” – whose result is often to divide the workers instead of being a moment of their unification. But this is another debate.

Thus, according to the places, the immediate *tactics*, such as calling for general assemblies, or intervening in any gathering called by the unions, may differ not only according to the moment and course of the very struggles themselves, but also according to the local “*tradition*”, is so to speak. Of course, and please, do not take the above immediate *tactics* as absolute rules to be applied in a dogmatic and mechanical way. The basic concern here is to point out that, because the “*historical traditions*”, there can be different direct and immediate approaches, tactics, that correspond to the immediate reality, to say it differently, to the immediate and local relation of forces between the classes. The key point is to verify the different tactics are in coherence, do not contradict, the principles and the programmatic positions. For instance, in the US system in particular, but elsewhere too, the communist groups should take care that their militants’ intervention to unions or unionized meetings should not transform itself into participating to and developing a *unionist* activity and policy, that would strengthen and give credit to any “*union life*”.

2) The same goes for the second point you raise about the *final* integration of the unions in the US state apparatus: the comments you make do not contradict the basic point we defend, that is the fact the union’s historical integration to capitalist state was *in last instance* determined by the perspective of generalized imperialist war. As such, this historical integration worldwide is full part, and even an essential part, of the development of *state capitalism*. For us, this one is both product and factor of the historical impasse of capitalism whose

highest expression is... the imperialist generalized war itself.

Now, we do not see exactly why you think our position is “*imprecise and slightly mechanical*”. It would be worth you develop. It seems that you defend that “*the architects of the union laws of 1935 in the USA (...) did not yet consciously conceive of these as preparations for the sanguinary devalorization of 1939-45.*” We do not oppose this peculiar point. Actually, the fact that the main political leaders of the ruling class are totally, partially, or not at all, conscious of the role they are compelled to accomplish is of secondary interest. What ever the degree of consciousness or understanding of the very dynamics towards world war by Roosevelt, the Popular Fronts leaders, Blum, De Man, or Hitler and Mussolini, etc. does not change the fact the communist groups – as *Bilan* and the Communist Left of Italy or others from the German-Dutch Left did – had to analyze and denounce the fact that the New Deal, the Popular Front, as well as the development of German state capitalism by the Nazis could not have other historical meaning than the preparation to war.<sup>15</sup>

Or is your difference about the fact the New Deal, to speak roughly, was initially only a response to the crisis, first, that could only be resolved, secondly, by the war? Again, and as far as we understand your point, we do not see an opposition to the basic position on this question, which is in the present days of crucial importance: do the capitalist classes are compelled to force the march towards a generalized imperialist war? And if so, is this *march* the determining factor of the whole historical international situation, at first of the class struggle? This is the main question to convince as much as we can the proletarian camp as well as warning the proletariat as a whole.

Could you clear us about what you mean by “*these preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> imperialist world war, but retroactively and obliquely*”? As well, what do you mean by that to you, our position “*speaks to a certain level of ‘two-dimensional-ness’ in the IGCL’s conception of the ‘crises’ and the ‘solution’ of generalized war.*”?

3) Finally, we also discussed the interest for the whole proletarian camp in publishing in our journal your comments or a more developed contribution you may write on these points – if possible for you and for us in our next May issue. Do you agree? We can publish the comments as they are. Or they can be edited and complemented by you. Or, if you feel so, you can write a more developed contribution. Technically, the com-

<sup>14</sup> . That was the case in the last mass mobilizations in France, 2022, 2019, and even 2016. You can refer to our website for the interventions we developed at that time.

<sup>15</sup> . It is obvious that Churchill was much more conscious of the very warlike dynamics than Chamberlain. That is why the choice of politicians in capacity to fulfill and personalized at best the defense of national capital interests at such or such moment is a real stake for any national bourgeoisie. Historically, some do it better than others because their experience.

ments you sent are corresponding to one page of the journal. Even though we have not decided yet the content of the next issue, you could write up to four pages. What do you think?

We do not know exactly if you are used and if you know our general positions as well as our conception of the proletarian camp. Generally speaking, we are always “open” to any debate and confrontation of positions with comrades and sympathizers, whether in agreement or critical to our positions. We think the positions of the ones and the others, at first of the communist groups and organizations, but also of individuals of the proletarian camp, are not their “own” but expressions more or less direct of the problems and questions to which the whole proletariat is confronted to, or will be

confronted to. As such, they are of “general interest” for it, therefore for all the revolutionary forces. Exposing, debating and even confronting the positions are crucial for the very “existence” and intervention of the revolutionary groups and, even more, for the battle to constitute the party of tomorrow. That is why, according to our possibilities and priorities, we encourage readers and contacts to write and contribute so that we can discuss and debate their positions. That is why, according to our material capacities, there the journal, and our political priorities, we attempt as much as we can to publish their contributions and debate them publicly.

Waiting for your comments and response, fraternally,  
the IGCL, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2024

### **Pamphlets (orders at [intleftcom@gmail.com](mailto:intleftcom@gmail.com))**

*IGCL Platform*

*Student Struggle and Assemblies of Neighbourhood* (Internationalist Communists - Klasbatalo)

*La dégénérescence de l'IC : le PCF (1924-1927)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

*Groupe des Travailleurs Marxistes (Mexique, 1938)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French and Spanish)

*La question de la guerre (1935)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

*Morale prolétarienne, lutte de classes et révisionnisme* (IGCL from the IFICC, only in French and Spanish)

*Unions Against the Working Class* (1976, reprinted from the ICC Pamphlet).

## **The Prague “Anti-War Congress”: Influence and Danger of So-Called “Internationalist” Anarchism**

*We reproduce here an “Appeal” for an “anti-war congress” launched by various groups, most of them anarchist, but whose driving force seems to be the revolutionary group Class War - also known by its Czech name, Tridni Valka<sup>16</sup> - more or less descended from or influenced by the Groupe communiste internationaliste (GCI-IGC). We are following up the call for the congress with an Address to the Congress, which we have sent to it, and which is intended as a critical statement of this initiative.*

### **Appeal for an Anti-War Congress in Prague**

**F**rom 20 to 26 May 2024, groups and individuals from different parts of the world will meet in Prague to coordinate anti-war activities as part of the Week of Action. The series of events will also include an anti-war congress, which will take place from Friday 24 to Sunday 26 May 2024. Campaigns, direct actions, projects, publications and analyses related to the issue of war will be presented at the congress. Among other things, this internationalist event will serve as an open assembly that will try to combine theoretical background with practical activities.

We consider it necessary, in the process of resistance to war, to develop an anti-capitalist practice which seeks to preserve political autonomy. In concrete terms, this means that we want to organize outside the political parties, outside the structures of the states, and against all states. We are particularly interested in the ways how we can oppose all the harsh conditions to which we have been exposed and subjected during interstate wars and capitalist peace. We are interested in ways to sabotage wars, how to deprive our enemies of resources, how to undermine the ability of states and their armies to continue wars.

Which way to go and what is to be done? How to join forces and get organized? We will look for answers based on class, not national differentiation; answers that take into account the sheer contradiction between rank-and-file soldiers and officers, between wage laborers and bosses, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. We will look for ways to make soldiers in uniform of any state army identify themselves with the social struggle of their brothers and sisters on the other side of the front line, and not in the murderous orders of their officers. We will also look for ways to oppose false friends, all those who seek to transform the class

struggle into a national or religious struggle for a new state, a new capitalist space, better adapted to their needs.

We support the internationalist community affirming the struggle against the bourgeoisie of all warring sides, against the armies of all states, against the capitalists of each country. Current manifestations of resistance, however contradictory and fragmented they are, undoubtedly contain the seeds of a social polarization that can turn wars between states into class confrontation.

What is meant is the confrontation between the defenders of the nation, the states and capitalism on the one hand, and the social class on the other, which is beginning to realize that defending the nation to which it is bound in chains only serves the interests of those who exploit it.

Direct action against wars now takes various forms, more or less targeted, more or less organized. Let's strive for a qualitative shift whereby individual acts of resistance break out of their isolation through interconnection and coordination. The common enemy in every epoch is, first of all, capitalism, and therefore every state that structures it, the army that defends it, the bourgeoisie that embodies it. The only way out of the nightmare of capitalist wars and capitalist peace is a collective awakening: we must see and sabotage the whole machinery of war, overthrow its representatives and reclaim our power as creators of the world.

We call on groups and individuals interested in participating in the anti-war congress in Prague to contact us well in advance with proposals for the program.

**Together against capitalist wars and capitalist peace!**

February 28<sup>th</sup> 2024

<sup>16</sup> . <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/>

## Address of the International Group of the Communist Left (IGCL) to the Prague “Antiwar Congress” Participants

We have received the Appeal for the “anti-war congress” to be held in Prague.<sup>17</sup> We won't be able to be physically present when it takes place. Had we been able to, we would have intervened, criticizing the political approach and framework on which it is based, and defending our positions on proletarian internationalism in the present historical situation, that of the march to generalized war that capitalism is trying to impose.

First of all and for information about the IGCL, it should be indicated that since its constitution in 2013, we have based all our activities and political orientations on the actuality of the historical alternative *international proletarian revolution or generalized imperialist war*. So much so, in fact, that we have entitled our regular journal *Revolution or War*.

### Proletarian Internationalism and the Present March toward Generalized War

The outbreak of imperialist war in Ukraine was the first expression that capitalism being unable to overcome its economic contradictions, it engaged decidedly into a march towards generalized imperialist war, a Third World War. In this sense, the war in Ukraine was not a local imperialist war like its predecessors. It marked a break with the past. What followed, the way it unfolded and has continued to this day, its implications in terms of imperialist alignments and polarization, as well as policies of generalized rearmament and military production, and then the war in the Middle East, have confirmed this dynamic towards war.

This one compels all bourgeoisies to redouble their specific attacks on their own proletariat. The class struggle, i.e. the struggle between the classes, can only be redoubled and exacerbated at the very initiative of the bourgeoisie. This is not only due to the economic crisis, but also, and increasingly so, to the needs of war. The war in Ukraine has had immediate practical consequences for the world proletariat – inflation for example – and even more dramatically for the proletarians of Ukraine and Russia. The explosion in arms spending and the development of war economies in all countries can only aggravate the exploitation of labor by capital, and impose even greater sacrifices on the proletariat. It is therefore on this perspective of massive confrontations between classes, provoked by the bourgeoisie for the needs of its march to all-out war, that revolutionaries must base their political orientations and interven-

tions today. And it is only on its class terrain that the proletariat can slow down, then oppose, the march towards war, while clearing the way for proletarian revolution and the destruction of all capitalist states.

We are well aware of the current limits of proletarian struggles, despite the massive mobilizations in Great Britain and France in 2022 and 2023, or the revival of significant workers' struggles in the USA, to name but a few of significant examples. But the difficulties of mass mobilization of the proletariat must not distract us from the class struggle, nor lead us to look for substitutes or recipes to replace mass proletarian struggle with minority actions in the anarchist or leftist mode, even under the pretext that they might serve as an example or a “collective awakening”, to borrow an expression from the call to the congress.

And yet, this is precisely what seems to emerge from the political content of the Appeal. Since the vast majority of the “participants” claim to be anarchists, it is unlikely that we will be able to convince the congress as a whole of its a-classist, non-revolutionary approach and to adopt another one.

### An “Anti-war” Congress that Turns its Back on Proletarian Internationalism

The name itself poses a problem. The formula “anti-war congress” is more than confusing, and leaves the door wide open to any concession to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois pacifism, including the most radical. Since “anti-war” has no class reference or meaning, it follows from the outset that the congress does not have as its basic criterion a specifically class or proletarian delimitation and orientation. Yet only the proletariat, as both exploited and revolutionary class, can oppose imperialist war. The experience of 1917 and 1918, particularly in Russia, shows us that the revolutionary proletariat does not fight war per se. It is not “anti-war” per se. It fights against the concrete economic and political consequences that imperialist war, or the march to imperialist war, imposes on it. It is a struggle against the material situation in which it finds itself, and of which it becomes more or less conscious depending on the moment and the situation, and not a struggle for an idea, in this case the one of *anti-war*. “Anti-war” and “proletarian internationalism” are not synonymous. They are opposites in class terms. It is one or the other.

Under these conditions, oblivious to the proletariat and real class struggle, the claim “to combine theoretical background with practical activities.” is at best an empty

<sup>17</sup> . <https://actionweek.noblogs.org/anti-war-congress-en/>

phrase, if not a bluff. Indeed, how can we combine the *theoretical backgrounds* of anarchism, as espoused by the majority of participating groups, with those of other revolutionary groups claiming to follow historical materialism?

This a-classist phraseology advocating the combination – the superseding? – between anarchist and Marxist *theoretical premises* quickly finds its political translation: first and foremost, it matters to “*preserve political autonomy*”, with no further precision. Whose autonomy? From what? Autonomy of the proletariat vis-à-vis all bourgeois political forces, including its most radical, trade unions and leftists, Stalinists, Trotskyists and... anarchists included, at least for the latter most of its main organizations? No, not at all. It matters “*to organize outside the political parties*”, with no further mention or reference to their class character. In short, this is the classic anarchist position, which can only lead to defeat for the proletariat and class betrayal, in particular of the principles of workers' insurrection and the destruction of the bourgeois state on the one hand, and of proletarian internationalism on the other, as demonstrated by the Spanish experience of the CNT in 1936.

Already, we are seeing:

- that the Appeal is in no way based on the proletariat's ability to develop its struggles against the attacks, which are diverse and varied depending on the country, the local situation and the moment, which are all part of the march to generalized war;

- that it effectively rejects the indispensable role of revolutionary minorities – and for us, of the proletarian political party, the Communist Party – in providing orientations and slogans for action tailored precisely to the situations and the shifting balance of power between the classes that will ultimately decide which way the historical alternative of revolution or war is resolved.

This ability of revolutionary political minorities to materialize and exercise vanguard political leadership throughout the proletarian struggle is made possible, provided they fight for it, by the permanent link they establish between their intervention in class struggles and the principles of workers' insurrection, destruction of the capitalist state and exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat – in other words, with the communist program that these minorities materialize and express most clearly. As in the revolutionary wave of 1917-1918, it was not around the anti-war struggle, which was tantamount to pacifism no matter how radical the phrase and “actions”, that revolutionaries ended up rallying, including those anarchist militants who remained individually faithful to internationalism. It was around the slogan of transforming imperialist war into civil war. By

adopting the slogans of workers' insurrection and dictatorship of the proletariat, including by joining the Communist Party or the Communist International, which defended and materialized these slogans, many of them made an explicit or de facto break with anarchism. Anarchism, as a political current and around the figure of Kropotkin, had betrayed the principle of proletarian internationalism as early as 1914, which later made almost all the anarchist groups participate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> imperialist World War.

*Which way to go and what is to be done?*, asks the Appeal. Its penultimate paragraph refers to *direct action*, mentioning only *individual actions* that would matter to coordinate to “*strive for a qualitative shift*”. It is not a question of coordinating and adding up a succession of individual acts, but of taking part in the collective struggle of the proletariat in the face of the sacrifices of various kinds that the bourgeoisie of each country is already imposing and can only accentuate on it for the needs of the war.<sup>18</sup> The end of the Appeal itself expresses confusion and political impotence when it calls for “*a collective awakening*” as “*the only way out of the nightmare of capitalist wars and capitalist peace*”. And what is this *collective awakening* for? To “*see and sabotage the whole machinery of war...*” Insofar as the Appeal ignores any reference to the struggle of the proletariat, *sabotaging the whole machinery of war* is emptied of any class meaning, if such a formula confused to say the least, can have one; or even if such a slogan can at any given moment have any meaning at all. However, the reality of the current balance of forces between the classes is not that of a “pre-revolutionary” period when the proletariat is mobilized en masse and permanently, during which it is sufficiently strong, as in 1917 in Russia, “*to sabotage the war, to prevent the proletarians from being sent to the slaughter, to block the supply and transport of weapons, to organize desertions, mutinies and fraternization among the proletarians in uniform on both sides of the front line, to turn our guns against the organizers of the massacre*”<sup>19</sup>, which the congress wants to talk about. In such a situation, revolutionary insurrection is no more than a question of timing and tactical opportunity. In the reality of today's unfavorable balance of power, it is nothing of the sort and what remains is the radical phrase of

<sup>18</sup> . Revolutionary political organizations can understand and even express their solidarity and fraternity in the face of individual acts against the war, when they are the expression of individual revolt and despair. But they must also underline the political and personal impasse for the latter, and the political danger they represent by turning their backs on the only struggle that can oppose the march to generalized war, i.e. the above all collective class struggle of the proletariat.

<sup>19</sup> . This is a second, less anarchist formulated text, *Together against capitalist wars and capitalist peace*, which calls “*to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary war for the abolition of the class society of capital based on misery*”, but remains fundamentally on the same ground as the Appeal.



*direct action against the war.* As a result, the Appeal – if it is a “sincere” appeal, i.e. one that does not aim to reintroduce a kind of radical bourgeois (leftist) pacifism under an “anti-war” phrase – ends with an admission of impasse and impotence from the proletariat’s point of view, even before the congress is held.

We are well aware that any call for a conference or other event in order to establish a proletarian political space serving as a reference and rallying point, in the broadest sense, for the proletariat as a whole in face of imperialist war, cannot meet with total agreement from the outset. Participating groups, particularly communists, may have to make “concessions”. But they cannot be on the principles. And that the conference or call for it represents a step towards the affirmation of an internationalist political pole or camp. The internationalist conferences of Zimmerwald and Kienthal in 1915 and 1916 must be historical references for us. The Manifesto of the former was criticized by the Zimmerwald Left, which was unable to impose its vision. Nevertheless, it signed the Manifesto because “*is a step forward towards a real struggle against opportunism, towards a rupture with it. It would be sectarianism to refuse to take this step forward ...*” (Lenin, *A First Step*, 1915)

We do not believe that the call for the congress constitutes a step forward in the current situation. At best, it can only be a source of political confusion and leftist, activist adventurism. We call on political groups and individuals wishing to position themselves on the real terrain of proletarian internationalism to break with the content and spirit of the Appeal, while proposing a new one based unequivocally on class struggle. We know that our proposal can only lead to a very clear delimitation and separation from most of the anarchist groups present.

For our part, and to this day, we have joined the call launched at the start of the war in Ukraine by the Internationalist Communist Tendency for the formation of *No War But the Class War* struggle committees.<sup>20</sup> These committees, to which the ICT had established 12 points or criteria for participation, are based, as their name indicates, not on any “anti-war struggle” but on opposition to imperialist war through class war. In so doing, any pacifist illusion that the anti-war formula allows is clearly excluded. Seeking to inscribe themselves on the terrain and timing of the class confrontations that the march to war imposes and will impose, these committees are situated from the outset as moments of mobilization and extension of workers’ struggles, i.e. on the concrete, or material, terrain of the antagonism between classes as it unfolds according to place and time. The fact that the NWBCW initiative has remained lim-

ited to date, largely due to the very limits of workers’ mobilizations, in no way detracts from their validity for the class struggle of today and tomorrow.

Of course, this experience is not exclusive to us. And any other initiative, call for a conference or other, would be welcome, provided it is clearly on the terrain of class struggle and proletarian internationalism. Unfortunately, this is far from being the case with this congress. Its Appeal proves to be an impossible compromise between anarchism and revolutionary positions. When it is explicit on political positions and orientations, anarchist positions prevail.

As a result, the anti-war congress is destined at best for political impotence, at worst for radical pacifism and leftist activism. Unless, it rejects the “anti-war” terrain and takes up the one of proletarian internationalism.

Internationalist Greetings, the IGCL, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2024

<sup>20</sup> . <http://www.igcl.org/Against-the-Imperialist-War-for>

## Contribution: Against Individualism and Circle Spirit "2.0" in the 2020s

A new generation of communist militants has been emerging in recent years. This phenomenon is accelerated by the anguish and awareness that capitalism not only cannot resolve its economic contradictions, but above all that it is dragging humanity into the abyss of generalized imperialist war. How can “conscious” individuals oppose this dramatic outcome if not through militant revolutionary, and therefore communist, commitment? This *generation* – a relative category we use here for ease of exposition – is called upon to constitute the world party which, armed with the communist program and the slogans of insurrection and dictatorship of the proletariat, will be able to and will have the task of “leading” the proletariat in the midst of the hurricane and the various social class battles to come. The bourgeoisie is, and without a doubt always will be, compelled to attack the proletariat in preparation for and on the road to war.

Periods in which the proletariat mobilizes *en masse* – particularly during revolutionary and even pre-revolutionary periods – alter the social atmosphere in which the party, or at least communist groups, and its members live and act, compared to periods where massive struggles are rare. In the absence of such working-class struggles, revolutionary forces and their members, as communist militants, find themselves “socially” isolated to a greater or lesser extent, sometimes even at odds with the feelings and opinions of individual proletarians. The result, among other things, is that individual communist commitment – to be distinguish from leftist militancy<sup>21</sup> – is “socially” marginal, including among exploited workers, and largely ignored and misunderstood, sometimes even by those close to the communist militant. As a result, the latter may find it difficult to link the militant and personal dimensions of their daily individual life.

Among the new and young comrades, there are many questions about the relationship between militant life and personal life: can one engage in organized communist combat and maintain personal relationships with non-militants, or even people who are strangers to and insensitive towards communism and revolutionary commitment? And if so, to what extent? What can be said to them, and what can be shared with them? How to manage both the realization of the militant tasks and the family, romantic relationships, professional life, education and

<sup>21</sup> . We do not have the space here to explain the class opposition between communist and leftist militancy and its concrete implications.

childcare?

### An Individual Way of Life “in line” with the Fight for Communism

The understanding of the party-member relationship is a political question, which the labor movement has already addressed, and on which it has already defined general principles. It is no coincidence that, since the Communist League, questions of functioning and organizational rules dictating relations within the political organization have also been considered programmatic issues. As such, the statutes of the communist organization must be considered an integral part of the political platform of any communist group – tomorrow of the party. As early as 1847, one of the first conditions for membership of the Communist League was that the member should adopt “*a way of life and activity which corresponds to this aim*”<sup>22</sup>, that is to communism.

From the outset, a number of rules follow. To give a simple example that should be clear to all, a communist militant cannot be in the service of the capitalist state's anti-proletarian repression. A member of a communist organization who is a police officer or agent of a state intelligence service would pose a risk to the party in terms of repression and infiltration. But they would also find themselves in open contradiction with any form of communist conviction and commitment, by the very fact of their day-to-day, practical activities that their “livelihood” implies. The situation would be untenable for the individual, in the highly unlikely event of them sincerely believing themselves to be a communist. The same applies to other activities such as trafficking in drugs, arms,<sup>23</sup> human beings and so on.

<sup>22</sup> . [https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Rules\\_of\\_the\\_Communist\\_League\\_\(1847\)](https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Rules_of_the_Communist_League_(1847)).

<sup>23</sup> . Typical of the *political adventurer*, Parvus (1867-1924) was a prominent member of the Left of the social democracy, alongside Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky in particular. He played a leading role in the debate on the mass strike and during the Russian Revolution of 1905 with Trotsky himself. The first signs of a *non-corresponding way of life* appeared when he refused to pay what he owed Maxim Gorky and the Social Democratic Party following the “production” of the play *The Lower Depths*. A “gifted” businessman, he was “involved in speculation during the Balkan wars and had become rich in the service of the Turks” (Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg*), particularly through arms trafficking. All this led to a gradual distancing of Parvus from revolutionary circles, and in particular to a personal break with Rosa Luxemburg. Probably a sincere revolutionary, he believed he could use his personal abilities as a businessman and his contacts with the business world and the state in the service of the revolution. No doubt this type of character, believing

The list is not exhaustive. It includes religious belief, which can only express a fundamental misunderstanding of the revolutionary theory of the proletariat, i.e. historical materialism or Marxism, or membership to Freemasonry. Likewise, the communist organization cannot accept into its ranks militants who display openly racist, xenophobic or sexist opinions and practices, the exercise of physical violence in a romantic relationship, etc.

More complex to settle are cases where the member has set themselves into a personal impasse, leading him or her to engage in *dubious* and dangerous activities in an attempt to “get out”. For example, a member who may have been a gangster, or has gambling debts, or has had to engage in prostitution to survive. Unfortunately, such situations have arisen and will no doubt recur in the future. Another difficult situation for the member and **the organization** to manage is the situation where the former has in their close circle – family, friends, work – individuals belonging to the police, the underworld, or even active members – leaders in particular – of bourgeois political parties. To what extent the communist militant can succeed in avoiding evoking, not their “political ideas”, but their commitment and militant activity in a communist organization remains an issue and a permanent preoccupation.

When such individual situations arise, the organization is obliged to face up to them and help – and protect – the member to respond or get out of them. Often, it can only do so with delay, because the member does not dare confide in the organization and still hopes to get out of the situation by one way or another. This poses two dangers for the *Whole* which is the organization: the first is to put the member at risk of being blackmailed, particularly by the repressive forces of the state; the second is to greatly weaken, if not destroy, their political and militant conviction. All the more so as it is sometimes, but not always, possible for the communist organization to prevent and help members to avoid finding themselves in such personal impasses, which can only be catastrophic both for the individual “private person” – or even those close to him or her – and for the communist militant. This is why all membership and integration into a communist organization must go through a systematic process of clarification and political verification, not only of the aspiring member's agreement with the organization's programmatic positions and general orientations, but

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himself destined for a historic role and destiny, reappears regularly in revolutionary ranks. Of course, even more so during revolutionary periods... Whatever services they believe they can provide to the communist movement, and in particular its financing, these individuals represent a danger to communist organizations that must be combated.

also of what militant commitment means, of the organization's rules and statutes, and of the comrade's conditions and way of life. This is both for the security of the organization and the future of the communist militant within it as a militant, of their militant willingness and political convictions.

The principle guiding the resolution of these exceptional and particular cases, sometimes painful and serious, is not enough to clarify and expose the relationship between the different dimensions of the individual life of the communist militant. On the basis of the experience of the workers' movement, Marxism has defined a whole series of rules for the proletarian political party which have value as a principle. For the reader, let us recall the continuous thread of struggles between the forces that Lenin described as *pro-party* and *anti-party* throughout the history of communism. It began in earnest with Marx and Engels' fight within the Communist League against the proletarian sects of the time, and within the 1st International, the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), against Anarchism. “*The history of the International was a continual struggle on the part of the General Council against the sects and amateur experiments which attempted to assert themselves within the International itself against the genuine movement of the working class.*”<sup>24</sup> Then it continued within the 2<sup>nd</sup> International on at least two levels: that of the party's relationship to its parliamentary fractions, which were aiming for autonomy, and that against the circles Lenin led in the Russian Social-Democratic Party – his pamphlet *One step forward, two steps back* is an essential moment in the historic struggle for the proletarian political party. It is followed by the joint struggle of the Bolshevik Party and what was then still the Abstentionist fraction of the Socialist Party of Italy, the so-called “Left of Italy”, for the adoption and observance of the 21 conditions for admission to the Communist International. Finally, it continued with the struggle of this Left, before becoming a fraction of the CP of Italy, and later, in the 1920s, against the *Zinovievist* Bolshevization that paved the way for the Stalinization of the Communist parties of the time.

Later, the so-called “Bordigist” and “Damenist”<sup>25</sup> currents enjoyed direct organic continuity with the Italian Communist Party and its left fraction. No doubt this is why they only returned to these issues on a few occasions. For its part, the International Communist

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<sup>24</sup> . K. Marx, Letter to F. Bolte, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1871, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71\\_11\\_23.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_11_23.htm).

<sup>25</sup> . Mainly the International Communist Party, which published *Programme communiste et Le Prolétaire* [Proletarian in English] for Bordigism and, for the second, *Il Partito comunista internazionale* which publishes *Battaglia comunista et Prometeo*, and which is at the origin of the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

Current (ICC), a direct offshoot of 1968 and influenced by the individualism of the student protest atmosphere prevailing at the time, was forced to conduct several internal debates and struggles on the organizational question, particularly during its successive organizational crises. The result was a number of texts that readers can find in its *International Review*.<sup>26</sup>

Before going any further on our subject, the different dimensions of the communist militant's life, it is therefore necessary to recall in a very general way the main principles which define the militant relations and in which framework or historical struggle they must be articulated.

### The Proletarian Class Produces Communist Organizations, not Communist Individuals

“By assigning to the revolutionary party its place and its role in the genesis of a new society, the marxist doctrine provides the most brilliant of resolutions to the question of freedom and determination in the activity of mankind. When extended to the abstract "individual" however, the question will continue to furnish material for the metaphysical lucubrations of the philosophers of the ruling and decadent class for years to come. Marxism on the other hand situates the problem in the correct light of a scientific and objective conception of society and history. The idea that the individual – and indeed one individual – can act on the outside world and shape it and mould it at will as though the power of initiative partook of some kind of divine inspiration is a million miles from our view. We equally condemn the voluntarist conception of the party according to which a small group of men, after having forged for themselves a profession of faith, proceed to spread and impose it by a gigantic effort of will, activity and heroism.”<sup>27</sup>

Historically, the proletarian class, “from which emanates

<sup>26</sup> . Here are a few reference texts: from the ICP-Programme communiste, *Programme communiste* #86, *Les bases du militantisme communiste* [The Bases of Communist Militantism, only in French]; from the ICC, *International Review* #5, 29 and 33 (to limit ourselves): *The Historical Context of the ICC Statutes*, Report on the function of the revolutionary organisation, Report on the structure and functioning of the revolutionary organisation. The ICC's internal bulletins contain numerous contributions on the subject, written during the debates the organization was obliged to develop during each of its internal organizational crises. It would certainly be useful to be able to compile and publish them one day. Many of the contributions written by ICC member Marc Chirik on the party-militant relationship can be found in *Marc Laverne et le CCI*, textes choisis et rassemblés par Pierre Hempel (in French).

<sup>27</sup> . Theses [also known as “Theses of Lyon”] for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Italy presented by the Left, 1926.

the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness”,<sup>28</sup> does not produce revolutionary individuals, but political organizations that integrate militants who join and compose them. In this sense, the organization, the *Whole*, enables the militant to transcend their own singularity, provided they integrate themselves into the revolutionary activity of the collective body. In so doing, the active member, in the course of collective action, becomes a product and an expression of the *Whole*, of the organization, and of the permanent struggle for its unity, just like any other part of the organization, local or territorial sections, central organs, etc. As a result, the *Whole*, the communist party or group takes precedence over the individual militant. The political implication of this position is that the party or organization is not at the service of the militant, but that the militant is at the service of the collective. For example, the proletarian political organization has no conception of *educational schooling*, nor any particular duty for the individual theoretical training and development of its members. On the other hand, it does have the responsibility of leading and overseeing the re-appropriation and theoretical and political deepening of the *Whole*, for its ongoing struggle for theoretical-political clarification and political unity.

Expression and materialization of the *communist consciousness*, the programmatic positions of the communist organization, of the party, are not the sum of the individual positions of each of its members, nor the product of this or that thought of an individual communist, nor even of a succession of particularly brilliant communist thinkers. They are first and foremost the historical product of the proletarian struggle, which communist minorities – highest expressions of class consciousness – have been gathering together and synthesizing since the *Communist Manifesto*. In return, they have the task of propagating this class consciousness in the workers' ranks and ensuring the political leadership of the proletarian struggle. This vision does not mean that the role of the individual militant can be summed up solely as the – indispensable – re-appropriation of programmatic positions.<sup>29</sup> The member has a duty to participate in their collective verification and development. In this sense, while they can and must make an individual contribution that cannot be denied or rejected, it can only be made within the framework of the historical heritage and within the organized and collective framework of the militant communist organization.

With rare historical exceptions corresponding to a by-

<sup>28</sup> . K. Marx, *The German Ideology*, I. Feuerbach.

<sup>29</sup> . Re-appropriation can only really take place in an organized, collective framework.

gone period of capitalism, individual energies can only find their field of action and their role within the formal framework of the party or communist organization, the material expression of this Whole. There may be individuals with revolutionary positions on the fringes of communist political organizations. Those who may still appear as such today have almost all been members of Communist Left or other groups, which they eventually left for one reason or another. The political positions they are able to defend are also the product of the historical experience of the proletariat they have acquired through their time in communist organizations or through their direct or indirect reference to them. But the existence of non-organized revolutionary individuals can only be temporary and circumstantial. Sooner or later, to one degree or another, these individuals are obliged to attach themselves to and refer to a programmatic framework and a historical communist current if they are to maintain their communist conviction and a minimum of militant will. Otherwise, they are condemned to individualistic justification of their refusal to participate in an organized militant collective, then either move away from revolutionary positions, or become demoralized and, ultimately, to disappear as effective proletarian militants. *“It is also clear from these arguments how grossly Feuerbach is deceiving himself when (...) by virtue of the qualification "common man" he declares himself a communist, transforms the latter into a predicate of "man", and thereby thinks it possible to change the word "communist", which in the real world means the follower of a definite revolutionary party, into a mere category.”*<sup>30</sup>

Today's positions of the Communist Left are the result of all the work carried out by successive generations of revolutionaries, or more precisely, communist organizations, groups and parties. But there is no point in redoing work that has already been done. *“Any conception of the party organism based on the requirement of perfect critical consciousness and a complete spirit of sacrifice (...) would be totally erroneous.”*<sup>31</sup> Hence the work of re-appropriation, which differs from those who want to discover everything for themselves. It is impossible today for individual militants to be able to “rediscover” and redo by themselves the entire theoretical and political journey accomplished since *The Manifesto*. The task is immense, and a lifetime would not suffice. That is, to give just one example, why it is pointless for a party member to want to read and reread the whole of *The Capital* before being able to take a political stance on this or that question related to the Marxist critique of political

economy. Such a method can only lead to an incomplete re-appropriation with erroneous political consequences. This is not to say that we do not invite and strongly encourage all comrades, and will not just as strongly encourage party members tomorrow, to read and reread the classic theoretical and programmatic texts of the workers' movement, starting with *The Capital*. But the scholastic or academic approach of saying that you cannot take a political position, or even commit yourself as a militant, until you have read all of K. Marx's texts can only lead to an individualistic academic approach, impotence and militant renunciation. It is through active participation in the revolutionary action of the communist organization as a whole that the militant can “educate” themselves theoretically and politically, and acquire militant experience.

### **The Member's Participation in the Party's Collective Activity**

These considerations and general rules on the relationship between party-communist organization and member-militant, in particular the collective and, in principle, “impersonal” dimension of communist commitment, have multiple political implications for the question of the party and its functioning, on the one hand, and the relationship of members to both. It is based on and develops a critique of the bourgeois ideology and mystification of the individual-king, the individual-unit, and rejects all forms of individualism – and by the way, of the democratic ideology and mystification.

“Setting out from the individual-unit in order to draw social conclusions and to construct social blueprints or even in order to deny society, is setting out from an unreal supposition which, even in its most modern formulations, only amounts to refurbishing the concepts of religious revelation and creation and of a spiritual life which is not dependent upon natural and organic life. The divine creator – or a single power governing the destiny of the universe – has given each individual this elementary property of being an autonomous well-defined molecule endowed with consciousness, will and responsibility within the social aggregate, independent of contingent factors deriving from the physical influence of the environment. Only the appearance of this religious and idealist conception is modified in the doctrine of democratic liberalism or libertarian individualism. The soul as a spark from the supreme Being, the subjective sovereignty of each elector, or the unlimited autonomy of the citizen of a society without laws – these are so many sophisms which, in the eyes of the Marxist critique, are tainted with the same infantile idealism, no matter how resolutely "materialist" the first bourgeois

<sup>30</sup> . K. Marx, *The German Ideology*, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_German\\_Ideology.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> . Theses on Tactics of the Communist Party of Italy, [known as “Theses of Roma”], 1922.

liberals and anarchists may have been.”<sup>32</sup>

All proletarian action and struggle is, by its very nature, collective. "The power of the human individual has disappeared before the power of capital, in the factory the worker is now nothing but a cog in the machine. In order to recover his individuality, the worker has had to unite together with others and create associations to defend his wages and his life."<sup>33</sup> And this collective, in action, in struggle, far exceeds in a "superior" unity, a class unity, the simple addition of proletarian individuals, the simple addition of their individual thought or will. Every workers' strike or struggle means a superseding of the proletarian as an individual in a collective action, without which the strike or struggle extinguishes itself. "As an isolated individual, the proletarian is nothing. His whole strength, his whole progress, all his hopes and expectations are derived from organization, from systematic action in conjunction with his fellows. He feels big and strong when he forms part of a big and strong organism. This organism is the main thing for him; the individual in comparison means very little."<sup>34</sup>

The same applies to the communist party and organizations, which represent and go far beyond the political and militant consciousnesses and wills of the individual members who make them up, if only because of the historical and international, universal dimension of the communist program and the positions and orientations that flow from it. "The integration of all elemental thrusts into a unitary action occurs by virtue of two main factors: one of critical consciousness, from which the party draws its programme; the other of will, expressed in the instrument with which the party acts, its disciplined and centralized organization. It would be erroneous to consider these two factors of consciousness and will as powers that can be obtained by, or are to be expected of, individuals since they are only realisable through the integration of the activity of many individuals into a unitary collective organism."<sup>35</sup> The individual militant is therefore no more than the mouthpiece, or the pen when they write, of political positions produced not by their own thought, but by the entire history of the proletariat. They must reject

<sup>32</sup> . Communist Party of Italy, *The Democratic Principle*, 1922 ([https://www.quinterna.org/lingue/english/historical\\_en/democratic\\_principle.htm](https://www.quinterna.org/lingue/english/historical_en/democratic_principle.htm))

<sup>33</sup> . Address of the General Council to the International Workingmen's Association, On the Lausanne Congress, 1967, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1867/lausanne-call.htm>

<sup>34</sup> . Kautsky quoted by Lenin in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. The fact that Kautsky betrayed proletarian internationalism from 1914 onwards, that he was the most eminent actor of centrism within the 2<sup>nd</sup> International at least from the 1910s, before the war, in no way detracts from the class political value of many of the positions he took and texts he wrote before.

<sup>35</sup> . *Theses of Rome*, *op. cit.*

any conception of their militant individuality as an *individual whole*. Instead, they must consider themselves as member of a *collective whole*.

Whether these positions are more or less clearly expressed and defended, whether they are more or less correct, by the militant **mandated** – directly or not – for the organization's intervention changes nothing. When intervening in a workers' assembly or political meeting, the militant – preferably the delegation of militants – is merely the tool available to the communist organization for carrying out a *party intervention*. This does not mean they are just a robot repeating party formulas. But it is only insofar as the political organization has been able to define, on the basis of its programmatic framework, the right orientations, and insofar as the individual militant has been able to make them their own, including by participating in and contributing to their definition and elaboration within the collective framework, that they can best assume the *Party intervention*.

The party does not expect all its members to have the same capacity for commitment, "work" or time to dedicate to the organization, nor the same "political" qualities and experience. One will have writing skills that the other will not. The other will have greater abilities to speak in a public meeting. Others will have more organizational skills, and so on. There is not and cannot be absolute equality between the abilities and effective participation of party members, just as there cannot be equality of commitment to a strike between the different proletarians taking part in it. The communist organization's conception of its members' individual participation to the tasks is based on the principle of "each according to his ability". The ability of the *organization in party*<sup>36</sup> – i.e., based above all on the communist program and the political positions derived from it – to make use of the individual capacities enables it to go beyond the simple addition of the individual capacities of its members and turn them into a historical force. Far from starting from the *individual-unit*, the communist party or organization starts from the *party-unit*, passing through its various parts, i.e. local sections as basic cells, central organs of all levels and individual members, to arrive not at an *individual-unit*, but at *party-unit*.

### Against the Maintenance of the "Circle Spirit and Methods"

The struggle against individualism is therefore a historic and permanent battle for communists, particularly within proletarian political organizations.

<sup>36</sup> . Or "as a party" whatever is the reality of the communist organisation, group, fraction, party, etc.

Throughout the history of the workers' movement, this has been expressed in one form or another, particularly in the era of sects and circles. *“The development of the system of Socialist sects and that of the real workers' movement always stand in inverse ratio to each other. So long as the sects are (historically) justified, the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historic movement. As soon as it has attained this maturity all sects are essentially reactionary.”*<sup>37</sup> Lenin's fight at the 2<sup>nd</sup> RSDLP congress in 1903, which his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* reports on, was to establish a real party, which until then had been made up of circles, i.e. more or less formal groupings based essentially, or primarily, on personal ties or even friendships. *“The issue thus came down to this: circles or a party?”*<sup>38</sup>

It seems to us that it is possible and useful to draw a parallel between the reality of today's proletarian camp and the reality of the revolutionary forces that were then attempting to create *“genuinely Party official institutions”*. Materially, numerically, today's proletarian camp as a whole, starting with its main organizations, comprises a tiny minority of members, the oldest of whom have known each other personally for decades and who have remained, and still remain, largely isolated from their class. It remains largely marked by the conditions of its emergence in the post-1968 and 1970s, and in particular by the remnants of the circle spirit that endures to this day. The task of this generation – or what is left of it today – is to pass the baton to the new generation that is emerging today, which is tending to regroup. This new generation suffers even more from the individualistic practices inherent in the emergence of new media, the Internet and social networks, which bourgeois ideology takes up and propagates to reinforce social atomization and individualism in general. How can we fail to recognize the reality of the groupings, debates and discussion circles characteristic of today's social networks in the following practices criticized by Lenin in 1903?

*“... the Party consisted of separate circles without any organizational tie between them. Any individual could pass from one circle to another at his own ‘sweet will’, for he was not faced with any formulated expression of the will of the whole. Disputes within the circles [we can today add within the social networks] were not settled according to Rules, ‘but by struggle and threats to resign’.”*<sup>39</sup>

Anyone who hangs out or has hung out on social networks cannot fail to recognize the overwhelming predominance of the circle method and spirit on the

networks. No real debate. No effective polemics. No open, well-argued confrontation of divergent positions. Anyone expressing a divergent position is removed from the list of subscribers without further appeal. Formulas just as radical, even grandiloquent, but devoid of practical meaning, i.e. political and class-based. Worse still, the formalism of organization is destroyed, if you try to impose it. No status. No program. No reports or summaries of discussions. No conclusion of the debates with a collective position in the form of an organizational resolution or other political statement. No effective political centralization of discussions and debates. The individual is free to think and say whatever comes to mind. They are accountable only to themselves or their smartphone, and at best to their circle, or network. In the end, the selection criteria are not political but personal. The opposition between *circle spirit* and *party spirit* can be summed up as *loyalty to friends and buddies, or loyalty to communist positions and principles*, and therefore to one's political convictions.<sup>40</sup>

As a corollary, the practice of video meetings is unfortunately tending to replace physical meetings. We have nothing against the organization of video meetings between isolated comrades, especially at an international level, who cannot meet in the same place. On the other hand, the fact that militants no longer make the effort, or even consider it superfluous, to travel and take part in physical meetings, or “face-to-face” meetings as managers in companies call them, is a step backwards from a political acquisition and an organizing principle of the workers' movement.<sup>41</sup> But what is the point of leaving home for a local meeting, taking pen and paper, or even a laptop to take notes, and to make the effort to get to the place when you can hold one at home by video with your smartphone? When one can stay warm – or cool, depending on the season – at home after a day's work. Or, not sacrificing part of a weekend with family or friends for a meeting. Especially if the video reunion means you can also look

<sup>40</sup> . Of course, communist activity and political and organizational divergences, even splits, do not prevent us from maintaining friendly relations with former comrades. Political and personal relationships need to be distinguished as clearly as possible, even if the reality of political struggles can also affect personal relationships. But this is a matter for the militants as individuals, not the organization...

<sup>41</sup> . We know, for example, that the ICC no longer holds local meetings, even when it has several members in the same city. It holds “transversal” meetings, “bringing together” members from different places, thus isolated from their comrades with whom they are supposed to intervene in case of workers' struggles, but staying comfortably at home. The criteria for sending members to a particular video network can only be arbitrary and partly customized. A modern remake of the Zinovievist Bolshevization of the communist parties in the early 1920s, which had substituted meetings by territorial or local section by the creation of corporate cells and which the Left of Italy had strongly denounced.

<sup>37</sup> . K. Marx, Letter to Bolte, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> . Lenin, *One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back*, Beginning of the Congress. The Organizing Committee Incident.

<sup>39</sup> . *idem.*, The New *Iskra*. Opportunism In Questions Of Organisation.

after the family, look after the children, or keep an eye on the washing machine.

In so doing, the basic cell of any communist organization, which sets the pace for the life of communist militancy and the political life of the collective body – the weekly local section – disappears. Dissolved. The privileged moment that is the local meeting, indispensable to political life and the circulation of blood in the political organism, is no more. Gone is the privileged moment for each individual militant, the meeting with their comrades, which makes them an integral part of the organization. Gone is the time when, unlike other moments in their personal life – work, family, etc. – the militant can devote themselves entirely, unreservedly, unhindered, undispersed, for just a few hours, to collective militant activity and give their all to the organization and the common struggle. No more is the special moment when the communist militant can realize in practice what it means to put *communist commitment at the center of their life* – we do not say all their life and all their time – and thus, in addition to giving life to their organization, strengthen, consolidate and give life to their political and militant convictions.

The danger of the penetration of the individualistic and democratic ideology of the Internet goes far beyond the communist forces. The recent strikes in the United States, at UPS, in the car industry, the public sector strike in Quebec, ended with votes, for or against the agreements signed by the unions, over the Internet. An “assembly” by video conference brought together 4,000 education workers in Quebec! Everyone at home! Besides the total control by the unions organizing the video conference allowing all maneuvers in case the vote does not suit them, the fact of staying at home not only does not allow to engage a real contradictory “debate” on the struggle itself, here the value of the wage agreement and the direction and modalities of the strike itself, but even more so does not enable the workers to “feel” the strength and vitality of their collective, that they can become aware that united in the struggle, they are much more than a sum of voters for or against.

Informalism and individualism specific to social networks and smartphones reinforce the danger of circles and the **circle spirit**. The organizational and militant concessions that the main communist organizations make by “habit”<sup>42</sup>, by ease and

immediatism<sup>43</sup> to informalism and individualism specific to the Internet media represent an obstacle in the indispensable effort of theoretical, political, organizational and militant re-appropriation that the young generation must accomplish. The same is true, at least in great part of the previous generation, that which must pass the baton and which, for the vast majority, more or less neglected or left the past experience aside. In particular, the groups of the Communist Left must re-appropriate and put into practice the lessons learned by the workers' movement to fight the maintenance of the circle spirit in the ranks of the proletarian camp and its organizations. In *One step forward, two steps back*, Lenin and the Bolshevik fraction advance a *party method* against the one associated with the circle spirit.

“ It was unnecessary and impossible to give formal shape to the internal ties of a circle or the ties between circles, for these ties rested on personal friendship or on an instinctive ‘confidence’ for which no reason was given. The Party tie cannot and must not rest on either of these; it must be founded on formal, ‘bureaucratically’ worded Rules (bureaucratic from the standpoint of the undisciplined intellectual), strict adherence to which can alone safeguard us from the willfulness and caprices characteristic of the circles, from the circle wrangling that goes by the name of the free “process” of the ideological struggle. (...) When I was a member of a circle only (...) I was entitled to justify my refusal, say, to work with X merely on the grounds of lack of confidence, without stating reason or motive. But now that I have become a member of a party, I have no right to plead lack of confidence in general, for that would throw open the doors to all the freaks and whims of the old circles; I am obliged to give formal reasons for my “confidence” or “lack of confidence”, that is, to cite a formally established principle of our programme, tactics or Rules.”<sup>44</sup>

This *party method*, opposed the method of the “old” circles as well as the new “circles 2.0” of today, is for us a principle. The member of the organization, like any other part of the organization, **including its central organs**, is not free to “think what they want”. Stalinism, widely taken up by all forms of leftism, completely distorted the militant’s relationship to the party. We cannot forbid, if only because it would be in vain, the individual to have political thoughts and positions and to believe that they are the product of their own brain. On the other hand, the communist militant is responsible and accountable to their organization as

<sup>42</sup> . The conditions that prevailed in the 1960s-1970s, the organic break with the organizations of the past as a result of the counter-revolution, the influence of councilism fostered by opposition to Stalinism, and the student atmosphere of the time all left their mark on the organizations of the then reborn Communist Left.

<sup>43</sup> . We are not exempt from this difficulty. Of course, this “social” and above all ideological pressure is also exerted on us.

<sup>44</sup> . Lenin, *op.cit.*



the latter is to the international proletariat. It is not a question of imposing by formal discipline, a decree or an organizational status, for the militant to think “properly”. Even less to impose on a member who disagrees with the party’s position to defend it “by discipline” as the Zinovievist bolshevization established within the parties of the International in the early 1920s and which Stalinism developed into a caricature – dramatic and bloody – thereafter. Apart from the fact that the defense of the position will be less effective from the point of view of the *Whole*, of the political organization, or even totally counterproductive, if the member mandated to intervene does not share it, to defend by discipline a political position with which they disagree can only lead to the weakening and final destruction of their political and militant convictions.<sup>45</sup>

The individual militant, therefore a member of the organization, just like any other part of it, including the central organs as we have said, must always refer to the program, the political platform of the organization to which they have adhered, its positions and orientations adopted at its congresses or other general meetings when they express particular or divergent positions. It can happen that a militant, or a group of militants, ends up adopting a particular position that can, to a greater or lesser extent, question a particular point or a passage of the group’s political platform, or even an orientation or position adopted by the organization. While the organization cannot “prohibit” the existence of this position on behalf of the respect of the platform – this would be absolute and dogmatic – it must emphasize that it is contrary to it and call on the member, or group of members, who defend it to refer to the historical document that is the platform or any other programmatic text – even by questioning it, or ultimately leaving the organization if they cannot convince the organization to change the platform.

Today, at the very moment when a new generation of militants tends to emerge and regroup around the Communist Left, and even to join the organizations composing it, the struggle against the maintenance of the circle spirit and method and resistance to passing to the party method and spirit becomes a priority. Either the communist groups of today will succeed in overcoming their historical weaknesses in this matter and in resisting the siren calls of immediatism linked to the *circle spirit 2.0*, or else they will be drawn into the

fatal and dissolving slope of individualism and informalism. Now that the drums of the generalized war are beating louder and faster, the matter is becoming urgent.

### **The Militant-Personal Life Relationship of the Member of the Communist Organization**

But let us go back to our initial point. The difficulties that the communist militant may encounter in their daily life in managing or carrying out their political commitment and the different aspects of their personal life together must be addressed based at the same time:

- on the general rules or principles guiding the member’s relationship to the organization;
- and as part of the ongoing struggle against individualism and the circle spirit, especially in the age of the Internet and social networks and the increasingly totalitarian grip of state capitalism in all areas of social life.

The political organization is not at the service of the member, as we have said. It has therefore no function or aim to solve the individual and daily personal difficulties faced by its members. However, it is forced to take into account the actual reality of its forces, those on which it can count for the realization of this or that task on this or that occasion. It cannot therefore deny or neglect that members can go through periods and moments that see their commitment and militant mobilization limited or sometimes “suspended”, due to any kind of particular personal difficulties of the member.

It therefore often happens that the two dimensions are experienced and felt as contradictory by the individual member. If one remains on the level of the *individual-unit*, the temptation is great to eliminate one of the two terms of what is experienced as a personal contradiction. Sacrifice, or at least “neglect”, the personal dimension for the realization of the militant task and thus “resolve” the contradiction. Or sacrifice, at least “neglect”, the militant task to preserve one’s personal, family, emotional or other life. The two options have in common to **seem** to solve the difficulty by eliminating one of the two terms of the contradiction instead of superseding it. The consequence, when it is not the cause, of the misunderstanding of the nature of individual communist commitment is either a kind of *sacrificial* or *integral* militancy leading to a *voluntarist* and *activist* vision and practice, or a *dilettante* one leading to a *fatalist* vision and practice.

<sup>45</sup> . Provided they are willing to do so, or at least agree to do so, members may publicly “expose” a position with which they disagree, or even read a text defending it, if no one in agreement is available to defend it. The aim is to set out the terms for political debate and clarification. But the party or organization would make a mistake by forcing a member to defend a position they do not share.

“By way of these considerations, the marxist conception of the party and its activity, as we have stated, thus shuns fatalism, which would have us as passive spectators of phenomena into which no direct intervention is felt possible. Likewise, it rejects every voluntarist conception, as regards individuals, according to which the qualities of theoretical preparation, force of will, and the spirit of sacrifice – in short, a special type of moral figure and a requisite level of "purity" – set the required standards for every single party militant without exception, reducing the latter to an elite, distinct and superior to the rest of the elements that compose the working class. The fatalist and passivistic error, though it might not necessarily lead to negating the function and the utility of the party, at the very least would certainly involve adapting the party to a proletarian class that is understood merely in a statistical and economic sense. We can sum up the conclusions touched on in the preceding theses as the condemnation of both the workerist conception, and that of an elite of an intellectual and moral character. Both these tendencies are aberrations from marxism which end up converging on the slippery slope to opportunism.”<sup>46</sup>

*Dilettant militancy* makes militant engagement a hobby, an occupation among others of the individual. Their communist engagement is not at the “center of their life”. Their political and militant conviction is in the background much more a *revolutionary* posture, than a real commitment of communist militant in the collective party struggle.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, carrying out this or that task is of little importance: why distribute a leaflet that no one will read, why organize a public meeting to which few will come, what good are their arguments when they are not willing to participate in party intervention? How many times have we heard fatalist words such as: *what good is this or that intervention, or we are nothing, or so little...*

The militancy that we describe here as *integral* is of the sacrificial kind. The priority of the militant is all the time and constantly revolutionary activity, however much their personal life may suffer. Their communist engagement is not at the center of their life, but is “all their life”. Such militants have the *merit*, only apparent, to show a much more determined commitment. This is similar to many forms of leftist, Maoist or Trotskyist militancy in particular. Very often, they cannot accept

that their relatives, partner for example, are not also a communist militant. The couple then becomes “militant”. The education of the children then also becomes a political task. The circle of friends is reduced to militants only. In short, they tend to make their daily life a communist catechism and often would like the organization to be an *island of communism*, which can only eventually lead to a vision and practice of a sect. But like the dilettante, their vision starts from the *individual* and not from the collective interest of the proletarian organization. “He forthwith offers proof of his “religious heart” by marching into battle as a priest, in the name of others, that is, in the name of the “poor”, and in such a manner as to make it absolutely plain that he does not need communism for himself, he would have it that he is marching into battle in a spirit of pure, generous, dedicated, effusive self-sacrifice for the “poor, the unhappy and the rejected” who are in need of it.”<sup>48</sup> The result is a militant vision and practice that not only leads to sectarianism, but also quickly descends into *voluntarism* and *activism*.

Both *dilettante* and *integral* - or “total” - militancy, are based on an individualistic misunderstanding of what the individual commitment of the communist militant is and must be. In addition to the political consequences of the erroneous practice of militant engagement and the conception of the party that accompanies it, it expresses the weight of individualistic ideology on the revolutionary forces. It is only by starting from the *party-unit*, the organized and centralized collective, that one can **supersede** the contradiction that the militant individual can feel. Immediately by evaluating with the member, thus also by gaining their political conviction, what is a priority and what is not. The communist party or political group cannot intervene everywhere and always, it must choose priorities among the political objectives. Among these, and depending on the moment, preserving and protecting the member, or members, from a personal situation that may become impossible – a crisis in their intimate relationship for example – can become a stake for the organization. The communist militant that the class has entrusted to the party is precious for both. Moreover, the individual communist commitment is a lifetime commitment, not for a particular and limited time. Not to “burn” militants or exhaust them – the situation arises differently for the organization and the member themselves during mass mobilizations, even more during revolutionary periods – must also be a concern of the communist organization.

“If the organization ensures as much as possible the good condition of each of its members, it is above all in the interest of the organization, so that each of its cells can better

<sup>46</sup> . Theses of Lyon, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> . Often, not always, *militant dilettantism* is carried by militants we will call *adventurers* who see themselves or would see themselves as historical figures – especially when history seems “promising” and communism becomes “fashionable” in some circles

<sup>48</sup> . K. Marx, Circular against, May 1846, [https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Circular\\_Against\\_Kriege](https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Circular_Against_Kriege).

accomplish its share for the organization. This does not mean that we ignore the individuality of the militant and his problems, but that the starting point and the end point is the organization to enable him to accomplish his task in the class struggle, which is why the class made him arise.”<sup>49</sup>

It follows that the organization may have to relieve a comrade of a task for which they are responsible so that they prioritize, in a particular moment, the resolution or prevention of personal difficulties – for example, ensuring the harmony of the couple in the case mentioned above. It is not a question in this case for the organization to meddle, much less to resolve, the personal situation of the member, but to ensure both the most effective possible functioning of the organization and the protection of the militant whose situation becomes difficult, at the risk of weakening their militant capacity and political conviction.

The organization must also convince its members that it is necessary to warn those very close to them, partner, a child of sufficient age to understand, sometimes parents and close friends, of their militant commitment. It is not a matter of involving them within the internal life of the organization, or even informing them, at the risk of mixing personal and family relationships with political ones. The militant/non-militant distinction is important to respect and highlight. It is rather a question of preparing and protecting relatives from all the vagaries of the life of the revolutionary militant. For example, in case of repression, the family and relatives are directly affected with more or less intensity and practical consequences. More broadly, it is important that those with whom the party member shares their daily life be informed of the militant commitment to better manage the practical consequences on the daily life of the family.<sup>50</sup>

These few examples and situations cover only a small part of the different difficulties and situations that the militant may face and which the organization must take into account **in the first place** for the accomplishment of this immediate and long-term tasks term; **second**, for the defense and protection of the militant who is not a super-human. On a daily basis, they are a social being atomized like others who finds themselves confronted with the same personal difficulties as others. If the organization cannot help them to solve their problems, it can serve to help them to face and overcome certain difficulties of daily, emotional, family life, depression or fatigue...

That is the end of these reflections. We are aware that we are far from having addressed all the questions that younger and less experienced militants can have about communist engagement. Especially since personal situations and practical cases are innumerable and often in themselves unique and particular. Just as the communist party or organization cannot resolve the personal difficulties of their members, these general

and largely incomplete considerations cannot be used as a recipe for the organization and the member to face the daily personal difficulties they may encounter. On the other hand, we think that this will help provide the approach and method to be used to treat and overcome them.

Above all, it is about fighting individualistic and political ideology as well as the circle spirit in general and including its contemporary expression. The approach and purpose can only be based on the *collective whole*, that is, *party-unit*, and not the *individual-unit*.

RL, February 2024



<sup>49</sup> . Extract from an intervention by Marc Chirik in the Paris section of the ICC in November 1980, cf. Marc Laverne et le Courant Communiste International, recueil de textes choisis par Pierre Hempel (we translate).

<sup>50</sup> . It happened that, this is a caricatural case, a militant belonging to the "integral" category refused to inform his relatives of his militant commitment. After a while, his wife believed that he had a romantic relationship with whom he visited once a week

while going to the weekly meeting!

## History of The Workers Movement

### The Tactics of the Comintern from 1926 to 1940 (Part 3, chap. 4)

**W**e continue to translate [in French] and publish Vercesi's text tracing the degeneration of the Communist International. The first two parts, including the first three chapters of the original contribution, retraced the episodes of the Anglo-Russian committee during the Great Strike of 1926 in Great Britain, then the crisis within the Russian party and the International leading to the victory of Stalinism, and finally the bloody defeat of the workers' insurrections in China in 1927. After this came the "3rd period", as the degenerated International itself called it, which is the object of the part we publish here. It began before the outbreak of the economic crisis of 1929 and ended with the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany. In addition to recounting the process of degeneration of the International, Vercesi's contribution also recalls the different positions that the Left of Italy, unfortunately alone, opposed at each stage of this process. There was no fatalism in its conception of the "course of history". On the contrary, its positions, orientations and slogans could have helped establish lines of defense behind which the proletariat, or at least parts of it, could have rallied to defend its living conditions. Thus, by asserting its class unity, the proletariat could have limited the scope of counter-revolution, starting with Germany, instead of dissolving proletarian forces in the struggle "against social fascism", then "fascism". The course towards imperialist war, as obvious as it was, was not inevitable.

### The Tactic of the Offensive and Social-Fascism

**I**n the bosom of the socialist parties of the Second International, both before 1914 and when, in the immediate post-war period, between 1919 and 1921, communist parties were founded in all countries, we saw the reformist right and the revolutionary left hold complete opposite positions to each other in the organizational field of the political positions, with the former holding a position of unity and the latter looking to split away from the former. In Italy, it was the Abstentionist Fraction that – in strict accordance with the decisions of the 2nd Congress of the Communist International of September 1920 – took the initiative to split away from the "old and glorious Socialist Party". While all the currents of this party, reformist right and maximalist left, including Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo*, were for unity "from Turati to Bordiga".

The Communist International – under Lenin's leadership – correctly followed Marx's method in building the fundamental organ of the proletarian class: the class party. This can only arise on the basis of a rigorous definition of a theoretical program and of a corresponding political action which finds in the organization of the Party, exclusively limited to those who adhere to this program and to this action, the instrument capable of determining that shift of situations which is allowed by the degree of their revolutionary maturity. The fact that both the right wing and all the other intermediate political currents are for unity should not be surprising since, in the end, they act on a line that seeks the preservation of the bourgeois world. On the contrary, the Marxist left can only aim at the revolutionary take-

down of this bourgeois world by realizing its principles in the ideological, theoretical and organizational field through that decisive split which determined the historical autonomy of the proletariat.

At the core of the Third International, the process is manifested in a different way. The influence, at first, and later the capture of this organization by capitalism is accomplished through the expulsion from its core of every current that does not submit to the counterrevolutionary decisions of the leading center. The fact that determines this modification is the presence of the proletarian State which – in the present historical phase of State totalitarianism – cannot tolerate any stumbling block, obstacle or opposition. If it is true that the bourgeois-democratic State can still tolerate those discussions or oppositions which, since they take place at the periphery of its activity, will never be able to disturb the evolution determined by the center found in the process of development of financial monopolism. On the other hand, as regards both the degenerating proletarian State and the bourgeois State of fascist type (resulting from the most advanced stage of the struggle between classes compared to the democratic one), the dictatorship of the ruling center is achieved by the exclusion of any possibility of opposition tendencies acting even in a peripheral field.

It is well known that, at Lenin's time, the Russian Party experienced an intense activity of discussions within it, and that, until 1920, even organized fractions could exist within it. But this was then the period in which the adaptation of the politics of the proletarian State to the

needs of the world revolution was being laboriously sought. Then the question was reversed and it became a matter of adapting the Party's policy to that of the State, which was more and more obeying the changing and contradictory contingent necessities of its alignment with the general cycle of the historical evolution of the international capitalist regime into which it was about to be incorporated.

The ruling center must have absolute, monopolistic power over all organs of the State; it begins with expulsions from the Party, and ends with the summary execution not only of those who adamantly oppose the established course of the counterrevolution but even of those who attempt to save their lives by abjuring their previous opposition. Despite the capitulations, the different oppositions within the Russian Party are annihilated by violence and terror. Trotsky, for his part, remains steadfast in his uncompromising opposition to Stalin; but, as he traces over the course of the Russian Revolution the pattern of the French Revolution, he considers that the reversal of the function of the Russian State from revolutionary to counter-revolutionary can only be realized with the appearance of the Russian Bonaparte. Until this appearance, since the intense industrialization of Russia was impossible and a military attack of the rest of the capitalist world against Russia presented itself as inevitable, the conditions also exist for "straightening out" the International both from within and, when this proves impossible because of the purge regime in full swing in the International, also through the left-wings of the socialists.

The Italian Left, on the contrary, in strict connection with the same positions of Marx, Lenin and with the indicated procedure followed for the foundation of the Party in Livorno, never engaged in either Zinoviev's way of capitulating to Stalin or Trotsky's way of straightening out the International, but from the starting point of programmatic opposition in the political field it carried on the consequent fractionist course, constantly raising the problem of the substitution of the counter-revolutionary political body with a revolutionary one which remained in the orientation of the world revolution.

In a word, the socialist parties of the Second International were progressively corrupted by the force of inertia of the historical forces of bourgeois preservation which tried to attract in their circle the Marxist and proletarian tendency by keeping it chained in the core of a "United Party". On the contrary, in the communist parties, because of the existence of the "proletarian" State, bourgeois pollution could only be achieved first through disciplinary elimination, and then through the violent extermination of every tendency which did not adapt itself to the changing needs of the counter-revo-

lutionary evolution of this State: of those oriented towards the left as well as of the others towards the right; after the trial of Zinoviev there will be also that of the rightists Rykov and Bukharin.

On the political level, while the process of development of the reformist right follows a logical sequence which allows us to find the principles of the betrayal of 1914 and of Noske in 1919 in the theoretical assault of Bernstein and revisionism of the end of the last century, as far as the degenerative course of the Communist International is concerned, we will see a succession of political positions in violent contrast with each other. Trotsky sees, at the dawn of the "third period", which we will be giving particular attention in this chapter (at the time of the Sixth Congress in 1928), a likelihood of a leftist orientation which would "straighten out" the International developing; our current, on the other hand, sees it as an episode of this whole developing process which was to lead the communist parties to become one of the essential instruments of world capitalism, a process which was destined to reach its completion unless it was broken by the victory of the fractions of the Marxist Left within the communist parties.

Moreover, our current did not conclude that, from the ever-increasing distance between the degenerating politics of the International and the program and interests of the proletariat, new parties had to be formed. The fact that this distance was widening while the historical process did not lead to an opposing reaffirmation of the proletarian class, urged us to not throw ourselves into adventures of the kind Trotsky proposed, which went so far as to advocate, after Hitler's seizure of power in January 1933, entryism into the opposition of the socialist parties. Our fraction continued to prepare the conditions for proletarian recovery through a real understanding of the evolution of the capitalist world, into whose orbit Soviet Russia had also entered.

We have already seen, in the chapter devoted to the Chinese events of 1926-27, that the characteristic of the tactics of the International is given not only by opportunist positions, but by positions which are violently opposed to the immediate and finalist interests of the proletariat. The International cannot remain halfway, it must go all the way: the needs of the counter-revolutionary evolution of the State which is at its core demand it, which, after the triumph of the theory of "socialism in one country", after having broken with the interests of the world proletariat, it could not simply remain suspended in mid-air, and had to go directly and violently to the side of the preservation of the capitalist world, against the interests of the workers.

When revolutionary possibilities existed in China, up to March 1927, the politics and tactics of disciplining the proletariat to be complacent towards the bourgeoisie

were advocated; when these possibilities no longer existed, we turned to insurrectionism in Canton in December 1927; thus bringing to completion that political course which was to lead to the crushing of the Chinese proletariat.

In 1928 the gigantic economic crisis matures, breaking out in America the next year and from that spreading to the whole world. In 1928, the International's tactics were still imbued with the criteria that was followed in England with the Anglo-Russian Committee and in China with the bloc of four classes.

The "insurrection" in Canton was still only an episode, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was even criticized – albeit in hushed tones – at the Enlarged Executive in February 1928. The events were to show, however, that this was by no means an incidental episode but a foreshadowing of what was to come in the tactics of the "third period" that would only be established in the following year. In the meantime, in France, the tactic of "republican discipline" (which went by the name of "Clichy tactic") was applied and led the communists to ensure the election of socialist and radical-socialist senators against the right wing of Poincaré and Tardieu; in Germany the policy of the "popular" referendum against concessions to princes<sup>51</sup>; while the Italian Party – in correlation with the policy followed in the first period of the Aventine in June-November of 1924<sup>52</sup> – launched the directive of the "Antifascist Committees" (a bloc that postulates the adhesion of socialists, reformists and all opponents of fascism). On the other hand, the CC of the Party wrote in a letter addressed to our current and published in issue no. 4 of August 1, 1928 of *Prometeo* (foreign edition): "We must also **take the lead** (underlined in the original) in the fight for the republic, but we must imbue this fight with class content at once. Yes, we must say, we too are for the republic guaranteed by an assembly of workers and peasants." The Italian republic has come and it – as we all know – is "guaranteed" by the assembly of workers and peasants, who in the barracks of Montecitorio watch anxiously over the success of the reconstruction of capitalist society after the upheavals caused by the war and the military defeat.

In 1928 the International remained within the framework of the tactics of 1926 and 1927 and acted as the left wing of the political blocs of bourgeois democracy.

<sup>51</sup> . Having lost their property after the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm and the German Revolution of 1918, the great princely families were compensated despite a "popular" referendum supported by the KPD in 1926. [IGCL note]

<sup>52</sup> . "The **Aventine Secession** was the withdrawal of the parliament opposition, mainly comprising the Italian Socialist Party, Italian Liberal Party, Italian People's Party and Italian Communist Party, from the Chamber of Deputies in 1924-25, following the murder of the deputy Giacomo Matteotti by fascists on 10 June 1924." (wikipedia) which the Left of the Party and Bordiga opposed to. [IGCL note]

Then it changes radically.

Let's begin by examining the theoretical aspect of the new tactics, which would be progressively decided by the 9th Enlarged Executive (March 1928), by the 6th World Congress of the International and by the simultaneous 4th Congress of the Red Trade Union International in the summer of 1928, by the 10th Enlarged Executive of July 1929 and finally by the 11th Enlarged Executive of 1931.

In the "Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution" the 2nd Congress of the International had warned: "The concept of the party and that of the class must be kept strictly separate". The "tactic of the third period", after having completely distorted the criteria of class delimitation, goes so far as to demagogically **identify** the class as those within the Party.

In the economic and social field, Marxism defines the proletarian class as the wage-earning worker in the capitalist regime and considers all those who live off their wages as part of it.

The transformation is now radical: those who compose most of the class are the part of the workers affected by the massive economic crisis, that is, the unemployed to whom the Nazi demagoguery is also addressed. The Party, consequently, does not establish a plan of total mobilization of the proletariat, but limits its action to the mobilization of the unemployed. Correspondingly, unorganized workers are thus considered more conscious than the workers in the trade unions, and the "Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition" is founded, while any work in the trade unions led by "social-fascists" is neglected. The proletariat is thus split in two: the part controlled by the Party, which includes the vanguard, is separated from the rest of the working class and launched into offensive actions, which offered the best conditions for the success of capitalist repression.

In the political field, the new tactic does not aim to hit the capitalist class as a whole, but it isolates a section of its forces – social-democracy – which will be called "social-fascist". In Germany, where at that time the main evolution of world capitalism was taking place, where the liquidation of the democratic staff was being prepared to be replaced by the Nazi one while the corresponding modification of the structure of the capitalist State was underway, the Comintern instead of preparing the proletariat's class action against capitalism, called the masses to fight "social-fascism" in isolation as enemy number one, even making the Communist Party a supporter of Hitler's attack for this end. And when Hitler took the initiative of a "popular" referendum to overthrow the Social-Democratic government of Prussia, the Party was in fact aiming at the same goal, since it didn't intervene in the referendum in a general action against the capitalist class, but remained

within the framework of the struggle against “social-fascism”.

On a more general political level, the Party’s policy is synthesized in the formula of “class against class”. The proletarian class is now defined as those in the Party and all organs annexed to it (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition, Anti-Imperialist League, Friends of the USSR and the many other peripheral organizations): everything outside the Party and its annexes (and don’t forget that all the Marxist currents had been expelled from the Comintern) is the bourgeois class or more specifically “social-fascism”. The mass organizations no longer derive from the base of the capitalist economy but result from the initiative of the Party, while the union fractions are practically eliminated and for they lack a reason for existing, for the unions – acting outside the orbit of the Party, – are “social-fascist” organizations.

It is in this period that the great deity of the “political line of the Party” arises. How far removed we were from Lenin’s time when the tactical positions of the Party were subjected to the verification of events and a frantic attempt was made to determine their validity! By now the “political line” was consecrated as a divine institution and it became a crime not only to question its infallibility, but also not understanding its real hidden meaning. This was absolutely impossible, since the “political line of the Party” obeyed only the ever-changing specific needs of the Russian State to its new role as an instrument of world counter-revolution, and the only one who could reflect its vicissitudes was the executive center at the head of this State. As a result, there were repeated and abrupt turns of events which regularly left those Party leaders who, because they had not completely abandoned the faculty of reasoning and reflecting, showed that they were not “true” Bolsheviks, since they refused to defend today the total opposite of what they said yesterday with the same amount of passion.

One could, on the basis of a superficial analysis, consider that the successes achieved in the field of industrialization in Russia, the economic and therefore military strengthening of the Russian State and the simultaneous unleashing of the “revolutionary” offensive in other countries should have led to a violent retaliation against the Russian State by capitalism. Not only this did not happen, but shortly after Hitler’s rise in Germany, the United States officially recognized Russia, which – according to the statements of the Comintern leaders themselves – was a very important diplomatic victory, while the doors of the League of Nations – what Lenin accurately described as “the society of brigands” – opened to the entrance of Soviet Russia. This was the logical epilogue of the course followed by Comintern

policy.

In fact there was a very close link between the successes of the five-year plans (made possible also thanks to the help of capitalism, which imported raw materials into Russia in exchange for grain exports, while bread rations were in extreme lack) and the policy of the “revolutionary offensive”. In Russia the “colossal victories of socialism” were actually the *result of the intensified exploitation of the proletariat*, and in other countries *the proletarian class was made to be – thanks to the tactics of the “third period” – completely unable to fight back the capitalist offensive*. And Russia’s victory in the field of industrialization and in the diplomatic field, along with Hitler’s conquest of power in Germany, were two aspects of the same course: the victorious course of the counter-revolution of world capitalism, both in Russia and in all other countries.

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Let us now turn to a brief analysis of the official documents of the Comintern and the events that characterize the tactics of the “third period”. Why “third”? The Sixth World Congress specifies it the following way: *1st period* (1917-23), between the revolutionary victory in Russia and the revolutionary defeat in Germany. That of the “acute crisis” of capitalism and the revolutionary battles; *2nd period* (1923-28). That of the “capitalist stabilization”; *3rd period* (which began in 1928 and was to end in 1935, when the change away from “social-fascism” to the Popular Front took place). That of the “radicalization” of the masses.

Let us begin by pointing out that this schematization of the situations has nothing to do with Marxism, which does not distinguish “periods” but represents the process of development that strictly ties situations together and in which the Marxist criteria of the struggle of the classes allow us to see the favorable and unfavorable fluctuations. These fluctuate, in the period from 1917 to 1927, from the revolutionary victory in Russia, and its reflection in the founding of the Communist International, – victory of *international and internationalist* principles – to the negation of this very principle, when, in the footsteps of the defeat of the revolution in China, the national and nationalist theory of “socialism in one country” will triumph.

The classification of the Sixth Congress left, for example, in the first period of the revolutionary advance the November 1922 in Italy,<sup>53</sup> an event that had an exceptional importance not only for the Italian sector but for

<sup>53</sup> . The Fascist “March on Rome” took place at the end of October, and Mussolini was “democratically” appointed President of the Council by the King on October 29. [IGCL note]



the entire political evolution of the capitalist world.

As for the characterization of the “third period”, the Sixth Congress will characterize its analysis in the following way:

*War is imminent.* Whoever dares to deny this imminence is not a “Bolshevik”. War not only between imperialisms (at this time the fundamental constellation is presented in the framework of the violent opposition of England and the United States), but also the war of all imperialisms against Russia: both England, which will see in it the “precondition for its further struggle against the American giant”, and the United States, which, if it has no urgent interest in overthrowing “socialism in Russia”, cannot but aim at extending its dominion in this country as well, would be “inevitably” led to it.

*The aggravation of the class struggle.* “*The proletariat does not remain on the defensive, but goes on the offensive.*” The masses are all the more “radicalized” the more disorganized they are.

“*The new role of social democracy that became ‘social-fascist’.*” In 1926-27 social democracy is an ally to whom (see the Anglo-Russian Committee) the Comintern abandons the direction of the proletarian movements. Now it’s enemy number one. The Nazis unleash the offensive in Germany: the Party will not set up a plan of struggle against capitalism and on the basis of class struggle, but exclusively against “social-fascism”. At the same time, since the mass trade union organizations are framed as being a “social-fascist” organizational apparatus, it follows that it is necessary to abandon the masses there and move on to the construction of another organization: the “Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition”, which defends “the political line of the Party”.

Note the flagrant contradiction existing between the two theses: that of the revolution and that of the war. He who admits only one of them is a heretic. Therefore, the Marxist is a heretic by definition, by virtue of the materialist interpretation of history, which immediately notes that if one of those thesis is true, the other cannot but be false since such a thesis can only be based on the the reverse of what is actually observed in such situations in the course of the historical process that lead the war to its opposite: revolution.

The events proved that, point by point, the cornerstones of the new tactic were to be completely refuted. Indeed:

The war was not at all imminent in 1919 and when it broke out in 1939, the constellations were completely different, with England becoming the ally of the United States and these two imperialisms – the richest imperialisms – becoming in turn allies of the “socialist coun-

try”.

It wasn’t the working class that went on the offensive, but capitalism, which obtained its successes in Hitler’s victory in January 1933 and finally in the unleashing of the Second World Imperialist War.

We did not enter a “social-fascist” era, in Germany it’s just plain fascism that ultimately triumphs. Capitalism temporarily liquidates social democracy, except to call it back in the course of the war, when, in cahoots with democrats and national-communists on one side, fascists and national-socialists on the other, the capitalist world will plunge into the war of 1939-45.

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Let us now turn to a brief summary of the most important facts, which characterized the “tactics of the third period”.

We have already indicated that the predominant political fact was Hitler’s coming to power in January 1933. There were many other political events in which this tactic had the chance to show its “virtues”, but, within the limits of a single article, we’ll limit ourselves to the essential, that is to say the events in Germany. It was in September 1930, only five months after German capitalism had dismissed the coalition government headed by the Social Democrat Mueller, that the fascist advance began. Contrary to what occurred in Italy in 1921-22, German Nazism followed a predominantly legalitarian tactic. The democratic mechanism is perfectly suited to achieve the conversion of the capitalist State from democratic to fascist, something that does not surprise a Marxist at all and that even the current national-communist and socialist dupes in government in Italy and elsewhere know. Instead of attacking the proletarian class-based strongholds, as the fascists did in Italy, with violence and under the protection of the democratic police, the German Nazis employ the method of the progressive legalitarian dismantling of the State apparatus of the leading positions held by their accomplices: the parties of democracy and German Social Democracy. This fact alone, of the possibility offered to capitalism of not having to necessarily resort to the extra-legal violence of fascist squads, is proof the profound modification which has taken place in the situation, in which the threat of the proletarian class party no longer acts.

This reality was, naturally, reversed by the Comintern. In an article by Ercoli<sup>54</sup> (*Stato Operaio*, September 1932) we read among other things: “*the first difference (between the Nazi assault in Germany and the Fascist one in Italy – editor’s note), the most important one, the one that immediately*

<sup>54</sup> . Togliatti, the Stalinist leader of the CP from 1927 [IGCL note]



*jumps to the eye, is the one between the period in which the March on Rome took place and the present period. At that time we were at the end of the first postwar period and on the eve of the period of stabilization of capitalism. Today we are at the heart of the third period, at the heart of an economic crisis of unprecedented breadth and depth, of a crisis that has had and has its most serious manifestations precisely in Germany... Secondly, it is necessary to stop the attention on the line of development of the mass movement.” “Downward line” (in Italy), while in Germany “the decisive fights are still **ahead of us** and the mass movement is developing on an **upward line**, in the direction of these decisive fights.”* In reality the decisive fights of the masses lay neither ahead nor behind and just a year later Hitler was handed the government by Hindenburg. The Party, which a few days earlier had organized a “colossal” demonstration at the Sportpalast in Berlin, was to completely fall apart on the same day of Hitler’s rise to power.

The essential moments of the Nazi advance are: August 9, 1931, the plebiscite against the Social Democratic government of Prussia, a plebiscite requested by Hitler. The elections for the presidency of the Reich on March 13, 1932. On the level of electoral tactics the question of the party’s intervention both in the plebiscite organized by the Fascists and in the elections with a candidate of its own, against Hindenburg and Hitler, can offer no doubt. The Communists could not lend themselves to the Social Democratic maneuver and had to intervene; but there were two ways of intervening. The Marxist way of turning these two electoral manifestations into opportunities to spread propaganda aimed at mobilizing the proletariat on a class basis against the capitalist regime, which meant engaging in a fight against the evolution that was taking place in the capitalist State from democratic to fascist, an evolution that could only be fought by the proletariat and its party against all capitalist forces (democratic and fascist) which were solidly united in their support of Nazism; and the way that comes from the “tactic of the third period”, consisting in detaching these two electoral manifestations from the real process in which they were embedded by making them two episodes of validation of the “political line of the party” which no longer fights the bourgeois class but only one of its forces: “social-fascism”. The plebiscite organized by the fascists to overthrow the Prussian social-democratic government of Braun-Severing becomes the “red plebiscite” to be used as a validation of the “party policy”. In the presidential elections the masses are called upon to vote against Hitler and Hindenburg and for the party leader Thälmann, but not for the proletarian dictatorship. Rather, it was for the realization of the “program of national emancipation”. Now, since that, in said elections, there were so many episodes in the transformation of the bourgeois State from democratic

to fascist, the Party’s participation, which didn’t struggle against capitalism but against “social-fascism”, could only lead to facilitate the said transformation of the State. That is to say, in the first case it was a question of realizing the expulsion of the socialists from the Prussian government, and in the second case of entrusting the Party with the objective of “national emancipation”. It is therefore clear that the Party was taking a position competing with that of the Nazis, and if the events of the time led to the victory of Nazism, nothing excludes that in the present situation the same program will be raised by the “unified socialist party” of Germany which, under the hegemony of Russian imperialism, speaks of “national emancipation” against the same “national emancipation” that Anglo-Saxon imperialism wants to achieve for its own profit.<sup>55</sup>

As for the party’s policy in the social field, it also came from the above-mentioned criteria of the struggle against “social-fascism”, of the multiplication of skirmishes, of the “politicization of strikes”.

Wherever the catastrophic economic crisis creates a movement of resistance by the workers and specially of the unemployed, the party immediately intervenes to make it an episode of “revolutionary” agitation with the result always being the minority getting machine-gunned while the rest of the demoralized working masses observe the victorious advance of the capitalist offensive. The most characteristic episode of this tactic occurred in the demonstration of May 1, 1929 in Berlin, when Zörgiebel – the social-democratic police chief, and a worthy successor of Noske – was able to kill thirty three workers without any mass involvement, as the masses didn’t participate in the demonstrations against “social-fascism” in the slightest.

While the Nazi movement moved forwards in gigantic steps, “*L’Internationale Communiste*” in its issue of May 1, 1932, after the presidential elections, noted “*the peculiar recoil of the party in the industrial regions, a recoil which is manifested precisely in those regions where the National Socialists have achieved a series of great victories.*”

But that is not why the drum of demagogy will be silent. Thälmann declares, “*we will sow disintegration in the camp of the bourgeoisie. We will widen the breach in the ranks of social democracy and increase the process of effervescence in the bosom of this party. We shall form still deeper breaches in the Hitler camp.*”

This tactic, which, as we have seen, is ultimately one of competing with Nazi policy, receives no other justification from the International than the evocation of the

<sup>55</sup> . The text here refers to the post-war situation in 1946. The “Socialist Unity Party of Germany” [SED in German] is the Stalinist party, formed under the aegis of the USSR, which imposed the “merger”, in fact integration, between the SPD organization in the Russian-occupied eastern part of Germany and the German Communist Party, the KPD. [IGCL note]

role previously played by the Social Democrats. The *Stato Operaio* issue of July-August 1931, in an article intended to justify the policy of the German party, writes: “Who accuses the Communists of being the allies of Fascism?.. They are the police ministers of Prussia, the executioners of workers, and Mr. Pietro Nenni,<sup>56</sup> a fascist from the beginning. These considerations are enough to judge the cause.”

When Hindenburg, on January 30, 1933, handed power over to Hitler, we witnessed in essence the replication in Germany of that victory of international capitalism which had been consecrated in Russia in December 1927, when the “theory of Socialism in one country” triumphed. A simple inversion of terms in the same formula. In Russia socialist nationalism, in Germany national-socialism. Thus were established the premises that kickstarted the path of the world towards the second world imperialist war, after the intermediate stages of Ethiopia and Spain.<sup>57</sup>

The defeat inflicted on the international proletariat in Germany does not arouse much of a reaction within the International against the tactics followed by the Comintern. Manuilski rejoiced at this and declared at the plenary meeting of the Executive of the International (see the *Stato Operaio* issue of February 1934): “The attitude on the German question was a touchstone for the degree of Bolshevization of the sections of the Communist International, for their Bolshevik temperament, for their ability to face head-on the abrupt turns of the situation. It must be recognized with satisfaction at this Plenum that the Sections of the Comintern have passed this test with honor. Reflect on what would have happened if these events had occurred a few years ago when the Bolshevization of the Parties of the International was being accomplished through continuous crises. They would undoubtedly have provoked a profound crisis in the Comintern.” It’s impossible to be more cynical and at the same time so explicit about the meaning of “Bolshevization”. Manuilski tells us unequivocally: it is the full success of Bolshevization that immunizes the International from any reaction against the success of the tactics of competing with Hitler’s offense in Germany. After this decisive test, the Comintern proved itself perfectly suited for the next phase of warmongering policy in Spain, right before it became the accomplice of the democratic and fascist forces in the course of the Second World Imperialist War.

The events in Germany were to accentuate the gap between Trotsky’s political positions and those of our current, a gap which had already manifested itself not only on international questions in Trotsky’s criticism of the Comintern’s policy during the German events of 1923, a criticism which Bordiga judged insufficient (see “The Trotsky Question” by A. Bordiga), but also – as we have seen in previous chapters – on the Russian and Chinese

questions.

Trotsky, tracing on the German situation the tactics followed by the Bolshevik Party between 1905 and 1917, and particularly the tactics applied in September 1917 at the time of Kornilov’s threat against Kerensky’s government, started from the premise that Social Democracy was historically a force of opposition to the fascist attack, and concluded that a united front should be advocated to oppose the Nazi attack. And our current was accused by Trotsky of “Stalinism” because it repeated, with respect to the German situation in 1930-33, the policy followed by the Party of Italy in 1921-22, which consisted of a united trade-union front for partial claims resulting in a mobilization of the working class, as a whole, against the capitalist class. On the other hand, as far as the question of power is concerned, for us the central position of the Proletarian Dictatorship had to remain unchanged and could not know any substitute. Trotsky not only did not accept the controversy with our current, but, intolerant of its criticism of the International Opposition, he could find no other solution than the administrative one of our expulsion from said International Opposition, sanctioned in 1932. Trotsky did not understand that it was not possible to judge the evolution of the capitalist State of 1930-33 according to the evolution which had been determined in the period preceding the First World Imperialist War. If before the capitalist State evolved according to the democratic procedure, this depended on the historical particularities of the period. In the period of financial imperialism, and where the struggle between the classes had reached its culminating point, the State was led – by the new historical circumstances – to evolve in a totalitarian and fascist direction, and all the political forces of capitalism could only favor and contribute in solidarity to this outcome. The result was that social democracy, although destined to be one of the victims of this process, could only be a factor in its development, while only the proletarian class and its class party could determine the rupture of this course of the capitalist State. This course could be explained not by historical precedents but by the dialectics of the struggle between classes in its most advanced phase.

The International, founded for the triumph of the world revolution, thus establishes the “tactics of the third period”, which facilitates and supports the triumph of Nazism in Germany. The path that had begun in 1927 continues tragically and only the scattered patrols of the Italian left remain in the barricades to defend Marxist positions.

Vercesi, *Prometeo* 4, December 1946,

English version from the *The Communist Party* website (<https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/Texts/46CominTact.htm>)

<sup>56</sup> . P. Nenni was a leader of the Italian Socialist Party. [IGCL note]

<sup>57</sup> . Mussolini’s Italy invades Ethiopia in October 1935. [IGCL note]

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## Summary of the journal #25 and #26

### #25 September 2023

- Hollywood Screenwriters on Strike and the Movies Oppenheimer and Barbie
- The Drive to World War (CWO-ICT)
- On the Recent Strike of British Colombia Dock Workers  
How Capital Uses Leftist Identity Politics and LGBTQ Rights for its Imperialist Warfare
- Revolts and Riots in French Cities (ICPLe Prolétaire, June 2023)
- New World, Old World (Battaglia comunista-ICT)
- The Political Impasse of the International Communist Current
- On the Book "Russia, Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1905-1924"
- The Tactics of the Comintern (International Communist), 1926-1940 (*Prometeo*, 1946-1947)

### #26 January 2024

- Capitalism on the Brink: Only the International Working Class Can Provide an Historical Alternative to WW3
- United States: Workers' Defeat, UAW's Victory and Preparations for Generalized Imperialist War
- Intervention of *The Communist Party* in the strikes in the United States : A Critique we support from the IC
- Ten Years of the IGCL: What Balance?
- Our Policy towards the Proletarian Camp and the Internationalist Communist Tendency
- Public Meeting of the ICT in Paris
- The Tactics of the Comintern (Communist International), 1926-1940 (*Prometeo*, 1946-1947): Part 2: the Chinese Question

## OUR BASIC POSITIONS

- The IGCL considers and defines all its activities, both internal and external, in relation to and as moments of the struggle for the constitution of the world political party of the proletariat, indispensable tool for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society.
- In addition to intervening in the proletariat's struggles, the IGCL leads this struggle especially in the international proletarian camp. This camp is composed of revolutionary political groups defending and sharing the class positions of the proletariat, in particular proletarian internationalism and the necessity of the class dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The IGCL claims the First, Second and Third Internationals and the struggle of the left fractions within them. In particular, it claims the struggle of the left fraction of the CP of Italy within the Communist International against its Stalinist degeneration and for the programmatic contributions that it has been able to develop and pass on us to this day.
- Only the proletariat, exploited and revolutionary class at the same time, is able to destroy capitalism and to establish communism, the classless society. The consciousness of this revolution, the *communist consciousness*, is produced by the historical struggle of the proletariat. So that it can materialize, defend and develop itself, the proletariat produces communist minorities who organize themselves in parties and whose permanent function is to carry this communist consciousness and to return it to the whole proletariat.
- As the highest expression of this consciousness, the party – or, in its absence, the communist fractions or groups – constitutes and must assume the political leadership of the proletariat. In particular, the party is the only organ that can lead the proletariat to the insurrection and to the destruction of the capitalist state, and to the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The party is organized and functions on the basis of the principles that govern the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *proletarian internationalism* and *centralism* as moments of its international unity and struggle. From the start, the party constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized party. From its very start, the IGCL constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized group.
- The party, as well as the IGCL, bases its program, its principles, its political positions and its action on the theory of *historical materialism*. By explaining the course of history through the development of the class struggle and by recognizing the proletariat as the revolutionary class, it is the only world view that places itself from its point of view. It is the theory of the revolutionary proletariat.
- Only after the victorious insurrection and the disappearance of the bourgeois state will the proletariat be able to organize itself as a ruling class under the political leadership of its party. Its class domination, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is exercised by means of the workers' councils, or soviets. These can only maintain themselves as a unitary organization of the proletariat if they become *organs of the insurrection* and *organs of the class dictatorship*, that is to say, by making the party's slogans their own.
- The dictatorship of the proletariat consists in using the class power of its mass organizations, the councils or soviets, to abolish the economic power of the bourgeoisie and ensure the transition to a classless communist society. The state of the transition period, of the class dictatorship, between capitalism and communism is destined to disappear with the disappearance of the classes, of the proletariat itself and of its party, and the advent of the communist society.
- Since the First World War in 1914, generalized imperialist war and state capitalism have been the main expressions of the historical phase of decadence of capitalism.
- In face of the unceasing development of state capitalism, the proletariat can only advance the research for its unity in all its struggles, even the most limited or localized ones, by taking charge of their extension and generalization. Every workers' struggle, even the most limited, confronts the state apparatus as a whole, against which

the proletariat can only advance the perspective and the weapon of the *mass strike*.

- In the era of dominant state capitalism, the trade unions as a whole, the leadership as well as the base sections, are nowadays full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state within the working class milieu. They aim at maintaining the capitalist order within its ranks, at framing the working class and at preventing, counteracting and sabotaging any proletarian struggle, in particular any extension, generalization and centralization of proletarian fights. Any defense of the trade unions and trade unionism is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, all fractions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called workers', "socialist", "communist" parties, leftist organizations (Trotskyists, Maoists, Anarchists), or even those presenting themselves as anti-capitalist, constitute the left of the political apparatus of capital. All the tactics of popular front, anti-fascist front or united front mixing the interests of the proletariat with those of a fraction of the bourgeoisie, only serve to contain and divert the struggle of the proletariat. Any frontist policy with left parties of the bourgeoisie is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, parliament and electoral campaigns, and in general bourgeois democracy, can no longer be used by the proletariat for its affirmation as a class and for the development of its struggles. Any call to participate in the electoral processes and to vote only reinforces the mystification presenting these elections as a real choice for the exploited and, as such, is counter-revolutionary.
- Communism requires the conscious abolition by the proletariat of capitalist social relations: commodity production, wage labor and classes. The communist transformation of society through the dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean self-management or nationalization of the economy. Any defense of one or the other is counter-revolutionary.
- The so-called "socialist" or even "communist" countries, the former USSR and its Eastern European satellites, China, Cuba, Vietnam, or even Chavez's Venezuela, have only been particularly brutal forms of the universal tendency to state capitalism. Any support, even critical, for the so-called socialist or progressive character of these countries is counter-revolutionary.
- In a world now totally conquered by capitalism and where imperialism imposes itself on every state, any national liberation struggle, far from constituting any kind of progressive movement, is in fact a moment in the constant confrontation between rival imperialisms. Any defense of nationalist ideology, of the "right of peoples to self-determination", of any national liberation struggle is counter-revolutionary today.
- By their very content, the *partial* struggles, anti-racist, feminist, environmentalist, and other aspects of everyday life, far from strengthening the unity and autonomy of the working class, tend on the contrary to divide and dilute it in the confusion of particular categories (race, gender, youth, etc.). Any ideology and movement that advocates *identitarianism*, anti-racism, etc., in the name of the *intersectionality* of struggles, are counter-revolutionary ideologies and movements.
- Terrorism is an expression of social strata without a historical future and of the decomposition of the petty-bourgeoisie, when it is not directly the emanation of the war that the States are permanently waging against each other. It always constitutes a privileged terrain for the police manipulations and provocations of the bourgeoisie. Advocating the secret action of small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which is conditioned by the conscious and organized mass action of the proletariat.
- The IGCL fights, from today, so that the future party is constituted on the programmatic basis of the principles and positions that precede. The formal constitution of the party is necessary at the latest when the intervention, the orientations and the slogans of the communist groups or fractions become permanent material elements of the immediate situation and direct factors of the balance of power between the classes. Then, the immediate struggle for the formal constitution of the party is necessary and becomes urgent.