

communist program

ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

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WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY: The political continuity which goes from Marx and Engels to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy; the class struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, the struggle against the theory of "socialism in one country" and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of all popular fronts and national resistance blocs; the struggle against the principles and practice of bourgeois democracy, against interclassism and political and trade-union class collaboration, against any form of opportunism and nationalism; the difficult task of restoring the Marxist doctrine and the revolutionary organ par excellence - the class party - closely linked with the working class, and its daily struggle in opposition to capitalism and bourgeois oppression; the struggle against personal and electoral politics, against any form of indifferentism, of tailism, of movementism or the adventurist practice of "armed struggle"; the support of any proletarian struggle which breaks with social peace and rejects the discipline of interclassist collaborationism; the support of all efforts towards proletarian class reorganisation on the basis of economic associationism, with the perspective of a large scale resumption of the class struggle, proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary anticapitalist struggle.

COMMUNIST PROGRAM

Theoretical review of the International Communist Party

ISSN-0033-037X

Administration and diffusion :

Programme, B.P. 57428; 69347 Lyon Cedex 07 - F

One issue: USA and Cdn US \$ 3 / Latin America US \$ 2 / £ 3 / 4 € / 8 CHF

- **Single subscription:** The price of 4 issues - **Support subscription 4**

issues: USA and Cdn US \$ 24 / Latin America US \$ 16 / £ 24 / 32 € / 48

CHF - **Participation in postal costs, for one copy:** 6 € / 6 \$

Payment by money order or check: To the order of DESSUS,

All correspondence should be sent to the address below.

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- Printed by us -

COMMUNIST PROGRAM

Theoretical Review in english of the International Communist Party

Editorial office: Programme B.P. 57428; 69347 Lyon Cedex 07; France

Payment by eurochek or international money order to: DESSUS

All correspondence should be sent to the above address.

Communist Program Resumes its Publication

Our party has always tried to spread internationally its program, its theses, its positions, showing the theoretical and programmatic continuity with the revolutionary communism founded by Marx and Engels, restored at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century by Lenin, reaffirmed and fiercely defended by the Communist Left of Italy, which was at the origin of the Communist Party of Italy and fought with intransigence against any deviation, anarchist, reformist or «centrist» («*maximalism*»), but also and above all against Stalinism.

The Stalinist perspective of «building socialism in one country» meant that Soviet power broke its ties with the international proletarian revolution to devote itself exclusively to the development of the country; in an economically and socially backward Russia reduced to its own forces, this development could only take place in the direction of state capitalism. It was then inevitable that the Communist International, which was de facto led by Moscow, would degenerate completely. This degeneration, which began on the tactical level in 1922, continued on the organizational level, then on the more general political level and finally on the theoretical level, led to the transformation of the International into a mere instrument of the Russian state, which finally decided to dissolve it in 1943 in the middle of the world war. The participation of «Soviet» Russia in the imperialist war of 1939-1945 was the conclusion of the long degeneration of the international communist movement.

The proletarian revolutionary movement could only emerge from this abyss on the basis of the full restoration of the Marxist theory and communist program, which had been disfigured and falsified by the Stalinist movement, the agent of the capitalist counterrevolution in Russia and in the world.

What forces, however infinitesimal, were capable of carrying out this colossal task?

Trotskyism had demonstrated, both on the tactical-political level and on the theoretical level, that it was incapable of restoring Marxism. Sick of democracy and expediency, even if it referred to the great political and theoretical battles of the Trotsky of «Terrorism and Communism», and to his polemics of 1926 to defend Lenin's positions against the false «Leninists» of Stalin or Bukharin, it never succeeded in raising itself to the best political and theoretical positions of its founder, and even less to those of a Lenin.

It only retained from Trotsky his opportunist and false positions of his last period of struggle, making them even worse: from the defence of bourgeois democracy to the «entryism» in the counter-revo-

lutionary reformist parties, from the support to the so-called socialist state capitalist regimes to the alignment with nationalist organizations in the anti-colonial struggles, etc.

The Communist Left of Italy, of which Amadeo Bordiga was the best representative, demonstrated that it was the only political movement to set and carry out the vital task of restoring integrally the Marxist doctrine and the programmatic line consistent with it.

The struggles it waged in defence of Marxism within the Italian Socialist Party since 1912, before, during and after the First World War, and then within the Communist International founded in 1919, formed the basis for the constitution of the Communist Party of Italy in January 1921. Its theoretical and programmatic intransigence was taken at the time for a formalist mania and reduced too simplistically to anti-parliamentarianism – which was undoubtedly one of the characteristics of the Left.

It is the achievements of its theoretical, programmatic, political, tactical and organizational struggle, from its critique of parliamentarianism in the countries of old democracy, its analysis of fascism, to the conditions of admission to the International, to its fight not only against traditional reformism, but above all against the pseudo-revolutionary maximalism «centrism» and Gramsci's deviations, that allowed the current of the Communist Left to begin the work of restoring Marxist positions and reconstituting the class party.

It knew that this work would be long and difficult. After the ravages of Stalinism, it was necessary to find in history, in the contradictions of society, in the causes of the defeat of the world revolution, the demonstration of the powerful validity of authentic, non falsified Marxism.

After the reorganization in Italy before the end of the Second World War of the militants who had resisted Stalinism, the elements most coherent with the traditions of the Communist Left succeeded, through discussions, clashes and ruptures, in picking up the thread not only from the programmatic and theoretical point of view, but also from the organizational point of view. In 1952 the Partito Comunista Internazionale-Il Programma Comunista was born, and it linked its work, its activity and its perspectives to that *thread of time* that had been broken by Stalinism. From then on, one of the priority tasks of the party was to disseminate as widely as possible, in the different languages, the results of the theoretical restoration and the definition of the political and tactical lines around which it intended to develop, without forcing the pace with tactical or organizational expedients, but following a

Communist Program

propaganda plan; as people of different nationalities came into contact with and integrated into the party, the need and the practical possibility of translating into the different languages theses and texts that, in the great majority of cases, had been written in Italian, emerged.

This is how translations of some texts began, in the form of pamphlets; and when in a given country sympathizers had the capacity to carry out a continuous activity, they organized themselves to publish reviews then papers.

Thanks also to the presence of Italian emigrant militants, this process took place in France, Belgium and Switzerland. In 1957, *Programme Communiste*, the party's theoretical review in French, was published, followed in 1963 by the paper *Le Prolétaire*. Since French is much more widely spoken internationally than Italian, especially in Europe and Africa, but also in the Middle East and elsewhere, it was important to be able to spread the voice of the party in this language. It was also thanks to the emigration from Latin America and Spain to France and Switzerland that the party was able to count on elements from these regions, who had become militants, to organize the activity of sections around a magazine and a newspaper: in 1972 the Spanish-language review *El Programa Comunista* was published, and in 1974 the periodical *El Comunista*.

During this period there were many social and political upheavals; in Greece, Spain, Portugal, South America it was not only a post «68» type of agitation as in Germany and the Nordic countries, but real political earthquakes caused by economic and social crises; in some countries they led to brutal dictatorships, as in Greece with the dictatorship of the colonels, in Chile with Pinochet, in Argentina with the dictatorship of Videla, while in Portugal the dictatorship had to give way to a slow democratization, following the national liberation struggles in Angola and Mozambique which became independent in 1975. From 1974 to 1975, the party published a number of pamphlets in Portuguese («Characteristic Theses», «Lessons from the Counter-Revolution», «The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism», etc.) to meet the need for knowledge of our positions in that country. 1974 saw the publication of the first issue of the Greek-language journal *Kommunistikò Programa*, while from 1969 to 1971 several issues of the Danish/Swedish-language journal *Kommunistisk Program* were published.

In Germany, the efforts to publish a party press, which had already begun in the early 1960s, took shape in 1974 with the publication of what was to become *Kommunistisches Programm*. In the same year the first issue of the Swiss supplement to *Le Prolétaire* was published, while the Belgian supplement was published in 1977. In 1978 *El Oumami* was published for the proletarians of the Maghreb and *El Proletario* for Spanish-speaking Latin America. They were followed by the publication in 1981 of a bulletin in Turkish *Enternasyonalist Proleter*, firstly for immigrant proletarians, and a bulletin in Portuguese *Proletário* for Brazil...

The Party's effort responded to the need to provide militants of different nationalities with theoretical and

political materials, knowing that this effort could not give short-term results; by attacking the theory, the program, the political, tactical and organizational lines that had constituted the basis of Lenin's Bolshevik Party and of the Communist International and of the Communist Party of Italy, the Stalinist counter-revolution had destroyed the international communist movement for many decades.

The weak point of this effort was the English-speaking zone (Britain, the United States of America, especially), i.e., the zone where capitalism is the oldest and where imperialism has its strongest world gendarme. With the contribution of a few sympathizers, in the early 1970s texts began to be published in English that combined the balance sheet of the counter-revolution with the foundations of Marxist theory. The first text published was «The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism»; the party's theoretical journal, *Programme communiste*, also was used to disseminate several texts in English: «The International Communist Party», «The Conditions of Admission to the Communist International», «The Theses on parliamentarism presented by the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party», and so on.

Finally, the first issue of an English theoretical review, *Communist Program*, was published in October 1975. The 8th issue of the journal should have been published in September/October 1982, but the internal crisis that occurred between July and October of that year prevented it.

This crisis, the most serious in the history of our party, provoked by the development within it of tendencies that ultimately liquidated the party («contingentist», «movementist», opposed by the academic and wait-and-see tendencies), broke the organization. The underlying theoretical errors – in particular the false evaluation of the historical situation and the erroneous ambition of the party to be a point of reference for the anti-nuclear and workers' social movements – could only cause the explosion of an organization that had swollen numerically too lightly, relegating theoretical and programmatic assimilation to second or even third place.

After this crisis a small group of militants, conscious of the absolute necessity to make a ruthless assessment of the errors in which the party had fallen, resumed the work of re-establishing the theoretical, programmatic, political, tactical and organizational bases that had always distinguished the Communist Left of Italy and the International Communist Party that represented it at the international level.

Le Prolétaire, then *Programme Communiste* and *El Programa Comunista* ensured the continuity of this work, especially in France and Switzerland. In Italy, the crisis, at first, did not seem to have hit the organization as hard as in other countries; but from 1982 to 1984, it resulted in the complete fragmentation of what seemed to be the «hard core» of the party. *Il Programma Comunista*, the party's historic title, ended up in the hands of a group of old comrades who, without even attempting an internal political struggle, appealed

to the bourgeois law to take it over – before shutting themselves up behind Italian borders. Another group organized around a new publication, *Combat*; they defended the thesis of the «original vice» of the Italian Communist Left (an old accusation already formulated by Zinoviev at the beginning of the 1920s), which would be impeccable on the «theoretical» level, but completely deficient on the «political» level (as if it were possible to separate the theory from the political line of the party!). But most of the comrades, completely disoriented by these events, abandoned political militancy and withdrew into private life. Only a handful of militants, grouped around the paper *Il Comunista* (which was already a party paper before the crisis), opposed these deviations; in 1985 the activity of the party was able to reorganize itself in a homogeneous way on an international scale with the militants of *Le Prolétaire*.

It took years to consolidate the activities of the party overcoming the crisis of 1982-84. In 2002, thanks to supporters in Britain and Canada, the publication of the *Proletarian* newsletter began, aimed primarily at informing English-speaking readers of the party's activities.

On the basis of the work of translation of the texts and theses of the party carried out for a long time, we finally have the possibility of publishing again the theoretical review *Communist Program*. No doubt that it will be a very important tool for the development and international implantation of the party in the period of renewal of proletarian struggles that is coming.

To symbolically underline the continuity with the previous work of the party, it was decided to continue the numbering interrupted almost 40 years ago: the first issue of the new publication is therefore number 8.

Summaries of previous issues of « communist program »

Nr. 7 (september 1981)

- The Class Struggle Is More Alive
- Than Ever
- The Blida Trial
- Poland Confirms : The Need for Organization, the Need for the Party
- The Volcano of the Middle East:
 - The Agonizing Transformation of the Palestinian Peasants into Proletarians
 - The Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty and the New Imperialist Order in the Middle East
- The Democratic Principle
- The Social Imperialism of the Spartacists or An Obituary on a Living Tendency
- Reinforcement of the Bourgeois Dictatorship in Turkey
- The Chinese Proletariat Is Awakening

Nr. 6 (September 1980)

- The Era of Wars and Revolutions
- Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a General Resurgence of the Class Struggle
- Fundamental Theses of the Party I. Introduction - 2. Fundamental Theses of the Party
- The Abolition of Wage Labour Means the Abolition of Production for the Sake of Production
- Nicaragua: The Sorry Path of Sandinism

Nr. 5 (June 1979)

- Terrorism and the Difficult Road to a General Revival of the Class Struggle
- Theses of the Communist Abstentionist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party – May 1920
- Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the

Class Struggle - Part V. The Degeneration of Proletarian Power in Russia and the Question of the Dictatorship

- The Evolution of Inter-Imperialist Relations Since the Second World War
- Iran - The Legacy of the Shah: Capitalist Transformation Forced from Above
- Party Interventions:
 - May Day
 - Socialism Is International and Internationalist or It Is Not Socialism

Nr. 4 (April 1978)

- Once Again the Alternative: War or Revolution
- The Myth of «Socialist Planning» in Russia
- Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle. Part IV. Proletarian Struggle and Violence
- Terrorism and Communism. On the Events in Germany:
 - In Germany, a Holy Alliance Against Terrorism
 - Leaflets Distributed by Our Party
 - Today the Revolt of Baader, Tomorrow the Revolt of the Working Class
 - In Memory of Andreas Baader and His Comrades
- What Distinguishes Our Party
- Book Review: Proletarian Order

Nr. 3 (May 1977)

- China: The Bourgeois Revolution Has Been Accomplished, the Proletarian Revolution Remains to Be Made
- Marxism and Russia
- Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle (Part III)
- Angola. From the Victory of the In-

dependence:

- Long Live the Angolan victory and the Emancipation struggles in Black Africa!
- Movement to Bourgeois Normalization
- A True Solidarity with Lebanon and South Africa
- The Exploits of University Marxism (Concerning the Works of Messrs. Baran and Sweezy)
- Party Interventions: Italy, Algeria

Nr. 2 (March 1976)

- Party and Class:
 - Introduction
 - Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution Adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920)
 - Party and Class (1921)
 - Party and Class ction (1921)
 - Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party (1951)
- The I.C.P. - Some Publications of the I.C.P.

Nr. 1 (October 1975)

- Once Again On Crisis and Revolution
- The Course of World Imperialism
- Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle
- The Cycle of the «Awakening of Asia» is Closed Only to Reopen Again on a Higher Level
- The Bitter Fruits of Thirty Years of Democratic. Peace and Capitalist Prosperity
- The I.C.P. - Some Publications of the I.C.P.
- Summaries of Our International Press

The Commune was great because of what it was forced to be, not because of what its creators wanted it to be

In a way, we are very happy to note that, apart from the two events we know about, the commentators and masters of ceremonies of public opinion have almost muted the celebration of the centenary of the Commune. This saved us from witnessing once again the hypocritical comedy of the renegades who are the heirs of the Communards' executioners and their accomplices, from Thiers to Louis Blanc, that is to say, from seeing them unanimously pity and eventually exalt the martyrs of 1871 as victims, as defeated, precisely in the name of the thieves who were the cause of their crushing defeat.

It should not be believed that this half-silence is due to the explosive character of the history of the Commune or to the intrinsic difficulty of concealing with Kautsky's sleight of hand the brilliant analysis that Karl Marx gave in "The Civil War in France". In reality, it is attributable to the prostration of the proletariat and its total abandonment of the most elementary class watchwords, a situation which saves today's opportunism the trouble of artificially distorting the traditions and collective memories of the working class by "creatively developing" the original revolutionary theses, i.e. by transforming them into harmless maximalist-centrist drivel or reformist advocacy. For the moment (on the scale of history, it is really only a moment) the proletariat is deaf to what the Commune represented in the tradition of revolutionary struggle, deaf to the programmatic prin-

ciples confirmed by this experience: the very term "dictatorship of the proletariat" being currently unintelligible to it, the renegades do not need to orchestrate a great campaign to demonstrate that this dictatorship and its historical manifestations will result from the organic development of democracy, from the parliamentary to the council form, or from the representative to the direct form, as the "extremist" petty-bourgeois, vermin brandishing the flag of spontaneism or workerism for the occasion, always dream of.

Of course, in these "extremist" petty-bourgeois circles shaken by the first foreboding shivers of a world-wide economic crisis, the various immediatist and anarchist groupuscules which constitute what is called "leftism" clearly present these two deviations and in this they continue a deep-rooted tradition of classic petty-bourgeois "contestation" which constituted one of the worst weaknesses of the communard movement – a weakness from which the Commune died; It is precisely for this reason that this "contestation" now claims – as it has always claimed – to embody the tradition of the Commune, to be the repository of its historical mission and to express its full meaning. A good reason indeed!

We conform to Marx's examination, which the Bolsheviks made entirely their own. In other words, for us, the true history of the Commune is not to be found in Lissagaray, nor in any other memoirist or later historian, but in the Address

of the First International on "The Civil War in France", as well as in Lenin's "The State and the Revolution" and "The Renegade Kautsky", and in Trotsky's "Terrorism and Communism" and "The Lessons of the Paris Commune". Therefore, these deformations interest us only insofar as they will necessarily reappear during the foreseeable crisis of the world economy and the resumption of the class struggle that will be the consequence (but a consequence that is by no means mechanical) and which, in a more or less long term, will see the proletarian vanguard polarising around the International Communist Party; above all, they interest us only insofar as they constitute the reverse side of this "lesson of the counter-revolution" that Marxism drew once and for all from this experience of defeat that was the Commune, along with so many other experiences, all of them of defeat until today.

Marxism is an experimental science, not an empty, contingent, agnostic empiricism. As such, it studied the counterrevolutions as particular cases of experimentation "in vivo" (the bloody weeks of May 1871 in Paris and January 1919 in Berlin) of the process of constitution of the proletariat as a ruling class. To present the question in a simple but not simplistic way, we have to remember that we can know the function of an organ either by observing it at work (and this is the case of the commune-state, the "Gemeinwesen" sketched out in Paris in the spring of 1871)

or, even more often, by considering the effects of the absence of this organ.

In the Commune, precisely, the catastrophic consequences of the absence of party and party dictatorship, not only for the constitution of the proletariat as a dominant class, but even simply for its action as a class, appear with striking evidence. Without a doubt, this is the crux of all our observations on the Commune, the focal point, for us miserable “dogmatists” and “Talmudists”, of the inversion of praxis, i.e. of revolutionary action as such, the touchstone of the whole material-

ist-dialectical conception that Marxism has of history and therefore also the stumbling block to all kinds of opportunist counterfeits of history. In other words, it is the central point from which the whole range of possible tactical positions are deduced. It is therefore useless to insist on the fact that by putting the central question in its rightful place, we find ourselves in the company of Lenin and Trotsky, while those who prefer to draw other conclusions from the Commune can choose, if they do not openly claim to be followers of Thiers, between Mazzini and Bakunin.

THREE PETTY-BOURGEOIS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE COMMUNE

Far be it from us to make an abbreviated bibliography of the question: what we want to do is to underline some aspects that will contribute to highlighting the conclusions, drawn by Marx himself from the experience of the Commune, aspects that have escaped – and for good reason – the attention of the prostitute writers who would like to pass themselves off as the vestals of “impartial” historiography. So, without falling into quotations and bookish references, we will distinguish the three fundamental interpretations that historians have given of the Commune, or rather the three major attitudes they have taken towards it.

In spite of formal oppositions, each of these great attitudes presents points of contact with the other two, so much so that currents of different ideologies, though all petty bourgeois, have been able to agree on one or the other of them. We will leave aside the attitude of open hostility towards the Commune which is characteristic of the partisans of Versailles, but which many enlightened bourgeois of today find more intelligent to hide behind a petty-bourgeois type of “sympathy” more suited than hatred to fool the proletarians.

It must be admitted that these types of petty-bourgeois interpretation are based on several real aspects of the Commune, unfortunately detached from their context and

from the historical movement to which they belong by a “critical” operation of a fundamentally idealist nature, since it refuses to consider realistically what the Commune could and should have been, in order to judge it solely on what some of its members wanted it to be.

The first of them presents the Commune as the last popular revolution, of the type of the revolutions of the “silly” nineteenth century, and in particular of Forty-Eight, as if June 1848 had not already been the hated revolution of the proletariat, the “ugly” revolution of the blousiers (1), opposed to the democratic, Victor-Hugolian revolutions of all the classes of the “people” as a bloc of antagonistic social forces. For them, the Commune is, in short, the last violent insurrection because it is the last “barricader” insurrection, as if the only possible form of insurrectional violence were the barricade of the democratic revolutions behind which the “crowd of citizens” awaits the spontaneous dissolution of the enemy, of the “henchmen of the tyrant”; as if the proletarian revolution should not have its Red Guard and its Red Army, as if it should not take power militarily and extend the civil war against the bourgeoisie on a scale that is not only national, but international! In reality, the barricades which had succeeded in February 1848 had already proved not only useless, but harm-

ful in June 1848; in the Commune they played the role of a dangerous illusion, almost everyone thinking: “One will not dare...”, which demonstrated “a contrario” the necessity for the purely proletarian revolution of a centralised attack, a thing all the more evident that at the beginning the Commune enjoyed a real military superiority, although the movement was not unleashed in generally favourable conditions.

The second attitude consists in presenting the Commune as a national-democratic, republican-patriotic fact, a logical continuation of the national defence against the Prussian “barbarians” and, moreover, the cradle of the republic “of all the world,” of the republic freed from royalist and feudal obligations. This is the interpretation adopted by the PCF and the Stalinists in general who, with their usual impudence, do not miss an opportunity to make it an anticipation of the... French Resistance, of the Maquis (2) against the “Krauts” and the collaborators, thanks to the precedent of the francs-tireurs (3).

The third interpretation considers the democratic-libertarian aspects of the Commune as exemplary and presents it as a model of federalist revolution and direct democracy which only failed because of the attempts, in vain moreover, to give it a dictatorial direction. It goes without saying that this position is shared not only by anarchists and social democrats, but also by official de-Stalinisers. As for the stupid and pre-Sorelian conception of the Commune as a “Latin revolution” (4) opposed to Marx’s Hegelian-Teutonic schematism, it obviously announces the theories of “national paths” to socialism.

In any case, one could extract from the Commune, in an abstract and arbitrary way, a whole series of “meanings”, including that of an attempt at class conciliation!

All this, in our opinion, does not touch the real problem: what the Commune was by force of circumstance and independently of the thinking of its representatives. Just as, far from being fortuitous, its leadership was exactly what the circumstances allowed it to be, the

deficiencies of this leadership cannot be conceived as mere accidents that do not affect the development of the movement and that can be disregarded in order to pay homage to spontaneity conceived in a mechanistic way. Indeed, to say that an adequate leadership was lacking is to say that the actuali-

sation and conscious pursuit of the historical task of the proletariat was lacking, and therefore that a fully developed revolutionary praxis was lacking, i.e. the knowledge and use of adequate means to reach clearly defined goals ("without revolutionary theory, there is no revolutionary action").

THE LIMITS OF THE STORMING OF HEAVEN

In the Commune there was thus a difference between the potential charge and force of the movement on the one hand and its manifestation on the other. A revolution undoubtedly proletarian in itself, the Commune could not be so in itself and for itself because of the by no means occasional lack of an apparatus capable of gathering and concentrating the received objective impulse. This is the place to recall Trotsky's image in the preface to his "History of the Russian Revolution":

« Without a guiding organisation, the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam. »

Naturally, "the piston-box" is the party, which does not create but directs the revolution, and which is not itself created either as a programme (historical party) resulting from the manifestation of the irreconcilable contradictions of bourgeois society, nor as an organism constituted by a set of cadres which will form the staff of the proletarian army (formal party) resulting from an exasperation of social conflicts which, by a passage from quantity to quality, destroys in a vanguard of the working class the influence of the dominant ideology and class, and the centrifugal, particularistic and local tendencies.

This lack of programmatic clarity of the Commune is very well demonstrated by the fact that it adopted a set of formulas inherited from the past and ranging from the memory of the medieval communes to the Hébertist majority Commune of Ninety-Three. It should not be necessary to recall that, according to Marx (cf. "The 18th Brumaire of

Louis Bonaparte", ch. 1), the premise for the social revolution to become aware of its own content and to orient itself accordingly is precisely the rejection of such reminiscences and the formulation of the historical mission proper to the proletariat, which is no longer a speaking instrument (vocale instrumentum) like the slaves, nor an order, nor a plebeian, but a quite particular class, since by its self-suppression it suppresses the whole mechanism of society divided into classes; a class which has no use for "Cahiers de doléances", which has no unacknowledged "rights" to be recognised, because its only claim as a historical class is the suppression of the situation, not legal, but effective, imposed on it by the mercantilisation of society and, in the first place, of labour power.

It is important to emphasise here that the superstitious attachment to past forms, an expression of the impotence to conceive of the overcoming and thus the dialectical abolition (Aufhebung) of capitalist relations, as well as the more or less metahistorical conditions of the society of producer-owners, characterise the leadership of the entire Commune. This explains Lenin's draconian judgement in 1905, according to which the Commune was "a revolutionary petty-bourgeois government", which indicates that the participation of workers' members in this government did not introduce any proletarian element into it on the political level, the measures taken remaining of a petty-bourgeois character as their origin condemned them to do.

To illustrate this fact, it suffices here to give just one example, that of the policy of the Internationals

(French members of the First International) towards the Banque de France, which Francis Jourde and Charles Besley (5) protected, while the Blanquist group of the ex-Prefecture led by Rigault tried to take it over, even if it was by a coup de main, an intention rendered vain by the attitude of the "responsible" organs of the Commune occupied by the Proudhonians.

On March 18, 1908, Lenin summarised in a speech in Geneva the main points of the Marxist critique of the Commune by observing:

« The patriotic idea had its origin in the Great Revolution of the eighteenth century; it swayed the minds of the socialists of the Commune; and Blanqui, for example, undoubtedly a revolutionary and an ardent supporter of socialism, could find no better title for his newspaper than the bourgeois cry: "The country is in danger!". Combining contradictory tasks — patriotism and socialism — was the fatal mistake of the French socialists. In the Manifesto of the International, issued in September 1870, Marx had warned the French proletariat against being misled by a false national idea [...].

But two mistakes destroyed the fruits of the splendid victory. The proletariat stopped half-way: instead of setting about "expropriating the expropriators", it allowed itself to be led astray by dreams of establishing a higher justice in the country united by a common national task; such institutions as the banks, for example, were not taken over, and Proudhonist theories about a "just exchange", etc., still prevailed among the socialists. The second mistake was excessive magnanimity on the part of the proletariat: instead of destroying its enemies it sought to exert moral influence on them; it underestimated the significance of direct military operations in civil war, and instead of launching a resolute offensive against Versailles that would have crowned its victory in Paris, it tarried and gave the Versailles government time to gather the dark forces and prepare for the blood-soaked week of May. »

A summary analysis of the forces making up the Communard lead-

ership helps us to understand the ideological representations of the movement to which we have already alluded, and to demonstrate to what extent the inadequacy of the leadership amounted to a hiatus between the objective thrust and the subjective maturity. As Rosa Luxemburg said in her polemic against Bernstein, as a class in itself, an agglomeration of proletarian individuals, the proletariat is never ripe for revolution, and it is the crisis that orients it towards its guide and brain, the party. In the Commune we see, on the contrary, an “acephalous” revolution whose achievements correspond only in a tiny part to the pressure of the real movement, which of course does not exclude their importance, which is proportionate to the very importance of this movement: but if we confront it with the historical task of carrying out “the storming of heaven”, to use Karl Marx’s expression, this importance and this greatness become dialectically miserable.

Of course, the patriotic and nationalist component played a considerable role in the Commune, whose very premature and inopportune birth, according to Marx’s well-known judgement, was part of the overall attempts to “radicalise” the government that replaced the “treasonous government” that “should have” defended France from the Prussian advance. Everyone knows that, in his diary, Blanqui himself had sunk not only into patriotism, but into chauvinism and racism, since he described the Germans as “pithécantropes” coming out of black forests plunged into eternal medieval darkness, something truly unworthy of his pen, but unfortunately more than explicable. This nationalism was not, on the other hand, a transitory attitude, for the reactionary illusion which was to reach its peak in the formula of the “Latin revolution” and in the conviction that the most urgent task was to preserve its home – France – is quite characteristic of Blanqui’s thought, and his polemics against Mazzini are almost exclusively centred on this leitmotif (6).

The result was an absurd marriage of Blanquists and radical Jacob-

ins in the Communard majority, with the practical result of blocking all the measures characteristic of the Blanquists, and thus the renunciation by Blanquism itself – except in isolated cases – of autonomous action. On the other hand, one cannot pass over in silence the indisputable fact, illustrated by numerous examples, that chauvinistic attitudes and inclinations towards the Sacred Union were very widespread and almost general within the French section of the First International. The patriotic attitude of this section of the International towards the Franco-Prussian war is well known, and contrasts with the internationalism firmly and rigorously observed by the German section led by Bebel and by the old Liebknecht. This chauvinist attitude of particular trade unions adhering to the International went as far as xenophobic provocation, the invitation to local bosses (7) to persecute “foreign” proletarians, and in particular German ones, as “spies of the enemy”, a sort of “To each his own Boche (8)” before the letter (9).

One could object, with the example of Jules Vallès and his journal, that the most Proudhonist elements did not fall into this chauvinist attitude, because they were generally hostile to the problem of nationalities (which, as Lenin was to demonstrate to Luxemburg, is in itself in no way revolutionary at any time and in any place), despite the occasionally racist attitude of Proudhon who wanted to solve the Jewish question à la Eichmann. It should not be forgotten that they substituted localist federalism for patriotism, being opponents of war between states to the same extent that they were opponents of revolution, i.e. of civil war.

Using almost the same words as Proudhon, who advocated “economic combination” in place of revolution, the opportunist Independent Labour Party (future pillar of the London Bureau) was castigated by Lenin in October 1916 for writing:

« *We do not approve armed rebellion at all, any more than any other form of militarism and war.* »

And what Lenin replied to them is entirely valid against the Proudhonians:

« *Is there any need to prove that these “anti-militarists”, that such advocates of disarmament, not in a small, but in a big country, are the most pernicious opportunists? And yet, theoretically, they are quite right in regarding insurrection as one “form” of militarism and war.* » (“Against the Current”).

Thus, if the Blanquists made a de facto united front with petty-bourgeois radicals with Montagnard delusions incapable of any historical perspective, the French section of the First International itself constituted a united front of various currents, with the predominance of petty-bourgeois tendencies such as Proudhonism and some Bakuninist nuances (Eugène Varlin) in the utopian perspective of class collaboration which was implied in the peaceful “economic combination” of the mutualists or cooperativists.

In any case, national conciliation was presupposed by all the tendencies of the Communard leadership, and not only by Proudhonians like Jourde-Beslay, or by “Jacobin” chatterboxes like Pyat and Miot, but even by one of the best and most far-sighted “left” Blanquists, Théophile Ferré, who in his otherwise very courageous and dignified declarations at the trial saw in the Commune a lawful attempt at national reorganisation that the “reactionaries” of Versailles had refused, thus forcing the Communards to resist.

Indeed, it was Versailles itself (and in particular its left wing, led by the same Louis Blanc who, long after the massacre of the Communards, would demand amnesty for the survivors) that “killed the conciliation”, to use Vermesch’s expression. It was she who demonstrated, with the complaisant support of Bismarck, that proletarians have no homeland; that the bourgeoisies, until then rivals for the monopolisation of markets, no longer have national enemies in the face of the insurgent proletariat, but federate into a single capitalist International; that the “advanced democracy” of Louis Blanc and his epigones com-

petes with any Second Empire (we could say para-fascist in advance) in the repression of this workers' movement which gets out of the rut, i.e. which exceeds the limits of what the bourgeoisie itself can and must give in order to preserve its class power. In short, it was she who confirmed that "those who make revolutions half-heartedly dig their own grave", as Saint-Just had realised, with an intuition valid not only for the bourgeois revolution, but even more so for the proletarian revolution.

Without doubt, this petty-bourgeois orientation of the Commune leadership had a well-defined social basis, which is as true for the so-called "socialist" minority as for the "Jacobin" majority. But it would be quite wrong to conclude, as the anecdotal Rougerie does, for example, that all the Communards were revolutionary petty-bourgeois, or even sans-culottes rather than proletarian insurgents: for these historians, violence and terror are always "Jacobinism", as if, as Kautsky claimed, imitated by these gentlemen even when they ignore it, the predominant character of the proletarian revolutionary was counterrevolutionary weakness, that is to say... Girondinism applied to the working class!

In reality, it was the weight of the petty bourgeoisie that prevailed over the workers' advance precisely because of the latter's lack of revolutionary preparation, which happened (it seems trivial to add) in many other revolutions and counterrevolutions, even where the proletariat had achieved the greatest "sociological" development with industrialisation, the classic example still being Germany of half a century ago. Moreover, historians should be reminded that Marx was not afraid to speak of the possibility and necessity of an autonomous policy of the proletarian class even during the first phase of the double revolution, as can be read in the famous "Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League" of March 1850. And Germany of 1848 was obviously rather less "industrialised" than France at the end of the Second

Empire, with the permission of the sociologists!

In the "*Rabochaya Gazeta*", n° 4-5 of April 15, 1911, Lenin established the correct way to pose the question:

« Two conditions, at least, are necessary for a victorious social revolution: highly developed productive forces and a proletariat adequately prepared for it. But in 1871 both of these conditions were lacking. French capitalism was still poorly developed, and France

was at that time mainly a petty-bourgeois country (artisans, peasants, shopkeepers, etc). On the other hand, there was no workers' party; the working class had not gone through a long school of struggle and was unprepared, and for the most part did not even clearly visualise its tasks and the methods of fulfilling them. There was no serious political organisation of the proletariat, nor were there strong trade unions and co-operative societies... »

THE ABSENCE OF THE PARTY

Not being able to express itself politically for lack of a party with an effectively communist programme, the French working class could not free itself from petty-bourgeois praxis either, and as a result it played a purely follow-the-leader role on many decisive occasions. However, if there was a lack of maturity of the proletariat, it was not because of its raw and statistical composition, but because of the absence of leadership, a fact which cannot be mechanically explained by the degree of economic development of France at the time. The abyss which, even under conditions of an international development of capitalism, can exist between the spontaneous movement of the working masses and the degree of development of the revolutionary party has been illustrated too well by Russia and Germany in our century for us to fall into this error. It might be added that it was also illustrated by England in the last century, and it will not be useless to remind the advocates of neo-Comtian sociology today that the communist party – obviously international – of the Manifesto began to be constituted among German exiles who were for the most part craftsmen of their state!

Leaving aside for the moment the impulses of the working class "base", we must say something about the only "socialist and revolutionary" political expression that has manifested itself, with – it is true – multiple uncertainties, among the different currents of the Commune: Blanquism. From Bernstein to the

present day, opportunism on both the left and the right has always raged against Blanquism, or rather against what in Blanquism justified Marx's famous judgment:

« ... the proletariat rallies more and more around revolutionary socialism, around communism, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations. » ("The Class Struggles in France", book III, March 1850).

Marx, as well as Lenin, was accused of Blanquism because he called for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, because he stressed the need to study and prepare for insurrection, because he spoke of it as an "art" which cannot be left to the initiative and much-vaunted "creativity" of the masses, but which on the contrary presupposes the prior organisation and direction of that force.

To Kautsky, who had a lot of sympathy for the anti-terrorism of the Proudhonians, but who was not far from a contradiction, having accused the Bolsheviks of... Proudhonism because of their alleged "utopianism", Trotsky replied in "Terrorism and Communism":

« With more foundation Kautsky might have compared us with the opponents of the Proudhonists, the Blanquists, who understood the meaning of a revolutionary government, but did not superstitiously make the question of seizing it depend on the formal signs of democracy. But in order to put the comparison of the Communists with the Blanquists on a reasonable footing, it would have to be added that, in the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, we had at our disposal such an organization for revolution as the Blanquists could not even dream of; in our party we had, and have, an invaluable organization of political leadership with a perfected programme of the social revolution. Finally, we had, and have, a powerful apparatus of economic transformation in our trade unions, which stand as a whole under the banner of Communism, and support the Soviet power. »

To see to what extent the founder of the Red Army agreed with Lenin in considering that the "original sin" of the Commune lay in this absence of a revolutionary proletarian party, it suffices to reread "The Lessons of the Commune" which he wrote in February 1921, a year after "Terrorism and Communism", in front of which the "enlightened" and "informed" philistines of today, who would like to see this weapon definitively abandoned, can snigger as much as they like. Let us quote at length:

« The workers' party – the real one – is not a machine for parliamentary manoeuvres, it is the accumulated and organized experience of the proletariat. It is only with the aid of the party, which rests upon the whole history of its past, which foresees theoretically the paths of development, all its stages, and which extracts from it the necessary formula of action, that the proletariat frees itself from the need of always recommencing its history: its hesitations, its lack of decision, its mistakes.

The proletariat of Paris did not have such a party. The bourgeois socialists with whom the Commune swarmed, raised their eyes to heaven, waited for a miracle or else a

prophetic word, hesitated, and during that time the masses groped about and lost their heads because of the indecision of some and the fantasy of others. The result was that the revolution broke out in their very midst, too late, and Paris was encircled. Six months elapsed before the proletariat had reestablished in its memory the lessons of past revolutions, of battles of yore, of the reiterated betrayals of democracy – and it seized power [...].

If the power was found in the hands of the proletariat of Paris on March 18, it was not because it had been deliberately seized, but because its enemies had quitted Paris [...].

The government fled Paris in order to concentrate its forces elsewhere. And it was then that the proletariat became master of the situation.

But it understood this fact only on the morrow. The revolution fell upon it unexpectedly.

This first success was a new source of passivity. The enemy had fled to Versailles. Wasn't that a victory? At that moment the governmental band could have been crushed almost without the spilling of blood. In Paris, all the ministers, with Thiers at their head, could have been taken prisoner. Nobody would have raised a hand to defend them. It was not done. There was no organization of a centralized party, having a rounded view of things and special organs for realizing its decisions.

The debris of the infantry did not want to fall back to Versailles. The thread which tied the officers and the soldiers was pretty tenuous. And had there been a directing party center at Paris, it would have incorporated into the retreating armies – since there was the possibility of retreating – a few hundred or even a few dozen devoted workers, and given them the following instructions: enhance the discontent of the soldiers against the officers, profit by the first favorable psychological moment to free the soldiers from their officers and bring them back to Paris to unite with the people. This could easily have been realized, according to the admissions of Thiers' support-

ers themselves. Nobody even thought of it. Nor was there anybody to think of it. In the midst of great events, moreover, such decisions can be adopted only by a revolutionary party which looks forward to a revolution, prepares for it, does not lose its head, by a party which is accustomed to having a rounded view and is not afraid to act.

And a party of action is just what the French proletariat did not have.

The Central Committee of the National Guard is in effect a Council of Deputies of the armed workers and the petty bourgeoisie [...]

The Central Committee of the National Guard needed to be led [...]. By means of the Councils of Deputies – in the given case they were organs of the National Guard – the party could have been in continual contact with the masses, known their state of mind; its leading center could each day put forward a slogan which, through the medium of the party's militants, would have penetrated into the masses, uniting their thought and their will.

Hardly had the government fallen back to Versailles than the National Guard hastened to unload its responsibility, at the very moment when this responsibility was enormous. The Central Committee imagined "legal" elections to the Commune. It entered into negotiations with the mayors of Paris in order to cover itself, from the Right, with "legality".

Had a violent attack been prepared against Versailles at the same time, the negotiations with the mayors would have been a ruse fully justified [...]. But in reality, these negotiations were being conducted only in order to avert the struggle by some miracle or other. The petty bourgeois radicals and the socialistic idealists, respecting "legality" [...] hoped at the bottom of their souls that Thiers would halt respectfully before revolutionary Paris the minute the latter covered itself with the "legal" Commune.

Passivity and indecision were supported in this case by the sacred principle of federation and autonomy. Paris, you see, is only one

commune among many other communes. Paris wants to impose nothing upon anyone; it does not struggle for the dictatorship, unless it be for the "dictatorship of example"».

In sum, it was nothing but an attempt to replace the proletarian revolution, which was developing, by a petty bourgeois reform: communal autonomy. The real revolutionary task consisted of assuring the proletariat the power all over the country [...]. And to attain this goal, it was necessary to vanquish Versailles without the loss of time and to send agitators, organizers, and armed forces throughout France [...]. Instead of this policy of offensive and aggression which was the only thing that could save the situation, the leaders of Paris attempted to seclude themselves in their communal autonomy: they will not attack the others if the others do not attack them; each town has

its sacred right of self-government. This idealistic chatter [...] covered up in reality a cowardice in face of revolutionary action [...].

Under the form of the "struggle against despotic centralism" and against "stifling" discipline, a fight takes place for the self-preservation of various groups and subgroupings of the working class, for their petty interests, with their petty ward leaders and their local oracles. The entire working class, while preserving its cultural originality and its political nuances, can act methodically and firmly, without remaining in the tow of events, and directing each time its mortal blows against the weak sectors of its enemies, on the condition that at its head, above the wards, the districts, the groups, there is an apparatus which is centralized and bound together by an iron discipline [...] »

success of the venture. This is, of course, a dictatorship, not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of the small minority that has made the revolution, and who are themselves previously organized under the dictatorship of one or several individuals. » (Engels, "The Programme of the Blanquist Fugitives from the Paris Commune", *Der Volksstaat*, No. 73, 26 June 1874).

Having no class base in the proletariat for lack of an adequate programme and strategy, the Blanquists were obliged to look for it in an undifferentiated mass of "citizens" whose common characteristic was reduced very flatly to being "good republicans". The real meaning of Engels' criticism is therefore the reproach of interclassism and in no way of "substitutionism": history, including that of the Commune, has confirmed the diagnosis.

When, in the preface to the address on "The Civil War in France" and in other texts, Engels imputes the political faults of the Commune to the Blanquists, it is not at all, as some historians have believed, because he imagined that the majority of the Commune was made up of Blanquists; it is because, being the only ones capable of understanding the need for certain essential revolutionary measures, they prevented them from being applied in advance by forming a bloc with the conciliatory radical-Jacobin majority. In this respect, it is not useless to underline that Marx, who had understood the strategic inopportunities of an isolated movement like that of the Commune (10), while preaching the need to go all the way once the movement had begun, distinguished very clearly between democratic conciliation which could only prelude proletarian defeat, on the one hand, and, on the other, the tactical compromise of which he speaks in his letter of February 22, 1881 to Domela Nieuwenhuis by saying that it was "the only thing that could be reached at the time" and which supposed or on the contrary the conquest of positions of force, like for example "the appropriation of the Bank of France", an act "enough to dissolve

THE CONTRADICTIONARY ASPECTS OF BLANQUISM

Blanquism could not constitute a real party, a vanguard and guide of the class, insofar as it remained a voluntarist current which believed it possible to take power in any objective situation thanks to the audacious initiative of a group of conspirators, and insofar as it did not have a historical programme from which it could deduce its tactics, although following in the footsteps of Saint-Simon, L. A. Blanqui had personally arrived at the conception of the "withering away" and extinction of the state and the replacement of the government of men by the "administration of things". His vision of the dictatorship of the proletariat thus remained quite formal because it lacked any definite political and economic content, and was thus uprooted from its class terrain which, in a victorious revolution, appears in the form of the proletarian party taking power.

In the Marxist vision, the proletarian party exercises the dictatorship purely by the terror that its weapons inspire in its opponents, according to the magnificent expression of Engels ("On Authority", 1874) who reproached the Com-

mune for not having made sufficient use of it. This party expresses the class programme and relies on the strength of the proletarian vanguard in such a way as to be able to repress not only the other classes, but even the backward layers of the working class itself. Instead, in Blanquism, the party was deprived of a class basis insofar as it was deprived of a programme, so that its conception of party power was reduced to that of the power of a sect of conspirators. This is why Engels was able to write the following lines, which have been completely misinterpreted later as "anti-substitutionist", as if the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to merit this title, should not be exercised by a leading body identified with the party, the only force conscious of the future of the class and capable of guiding it in the direction of its historical mission, i.e., in the direction of what it is historically obliged to do in accordance with its function in society:

« From Blanqui's assumption, that any revolution may be made by the outbreak of a small revolutionary minority, follows of itself the necessity of a dictatorship after the

all the pretensions of the Versailles people in terror". The conciliatory attitude, on the contrary, hinders compromise and unleashes a conflict in which the proletarians find themselves without real leadership. The moderation which found an alibi in the support of the Blanquists and the Internationals was thus fatal even to the only immediate ends and made impossible any strategic retreat after having excluded the possibility of forcing the bourgeoisie to make a pact by taking hostages and, in the first place, that constituted by the Bank of France.

The Blanquists were not even capable of disassociating themselves from Félix Pyat, whose conciliatory and, objectively, treacherous attitude, even with regard to the purely military conduct of the conflict, had nevertheless been denounced several times by the rank-and-file militants in a number of interventions published, for example, in "Le Père Duchesne".

It is true that the libertarian minority of Proudhonian inspiration was politically alien to the revolution, as much or even more so than the Jacobin radicals, because just as petty-bourgeois as they were, it was certainly much more pacifist and localist; the political weight of this minority contributed greatly to the failure of the Commune's leadership by tilting the balance in favour of democracy, but unlike the case of the Blanquists, it cannot be said that the libertarians failed to live up to their own programme, as their attitude was in perfect conformity with it. On the contrary, it was the Blanquists who had proposed the demands found in Marx's "Address": rational use of the Central Committee before wasting time in communal elections, a march on Versailles, confiscation of money deposited in the banks, control of the press, effective counter-espionage, application of the hostage law, in short, the Terror, as Trotsky himself recognised in a passage systematically distorted by unfaithful translators:

« *The measures of the police prefecture headed by had a terrorist character par excellence, although they were not always appro-*

priate to the purpose. »

The inadequacy, that is to say the insufficiency of these measures was due exclusively to the democratic character of the Commune, that is to say to the fact that its majority sabotaged these directives which emanated from a minority,

DESPERATE REACTIONS AGAINST DEMOCRATIC IMPOTENCE

It suffices to recall a few sessions of the Commune which clearly show that only a few Blanquists sought to oppose the incredible democratic impotence, the rivers of honey into which the Commune was sinking in the face of a ruthless counterrevolution whose first initiatives should have made it clear, even to the blind, that it was meticulously preparing the final massacre.

On 24 April Rigault declared:

« *Yesterday, in my absence, you declared that all members of the commune would have the right to visit all the prisoners. In agreement with the Control Committee which you have assigned to me, I ask you to reconsider yesterday's vote, at least with regard to the individuals held incommunicado. If you were to maintain your vote, I would be forced to resign, and I do not think that anyone else could accept such a responsibility under these conditions [...]* When one has not seen the file of an imprisoned man, one can be moved by his words, by questions of family, of humanity, and help him to communicate with the outside world. » Spirit of 1793? Let us remember Lenin's attitude towards Gorky and Lunacharsky, let us reread Trotsky's "Their Morals and Ours"!

Rigault was rightly suspicious of the "revolutionaries" who sat in the Commune and whose dean was the Proudhonian Beslay and he proved on May 5 that there were agents provocateurs in the Commune such as the so-called Blanchet, a defrocked monk:

« *You remember that it was agreed that when we had proceeded to the arrest of a colleague, we would make a report to the Commune; I am doing it today, not within forty-eight hours, but*

not only within the communal leadership, but within Blanquism itself, for since Blanquist centralism was not organic centralism (the dictatorship of a programme), the physical absence of the "Old Man" had provoked a distressing confusion even among his followers.

within two. »

On May 17th, Rigault exclaimed in the same way: « *I am of the opinion that we should respond to the assassinations of the Versaillais in the most energetic way, by striking the guilty and not the first to come [...]* And I place on the same line the men who are in agreement with Versailles and the accomplices of Bonaparte [...] Your jurors must be a true revolutionary tribunal. »

On all these occasions, the other Communards accused Rigault of "Bonapartism" and "despotism", and the historian Lissagaray, who sympathised with them, had the nerve to reproach the inconvenient procurator of the Commune with "the lack of efficiency of his measures" and to accuse him of having persecuted the old instruments of "Napoleon the Lesser" more than the real spies: slander, there will always be something left of it and the other "historians" did not fail to repeat Lissagaray on this point!

Despite the opposition which rendered most of their initiatives futile, Rigault and Ferré actually proved that they knew how to hit the target, as shown by the execution of G. Chaudey, executor of Proudhon's will, participant in international democratic congresses and responsible for the massacre of 22 January in front of the Hôtel de Ville, in short, a true prototype of an "advanced democrat" before the letter, and that of the Gallican archbishop Darboy, liberal, adversary of the dogma of pontifical infallibility, thus true "progressive priest", if not "working-class priest", whom Thiers with great political clairvoyance had refused to exchange with the "head" of whom the Commune lacked, Blanqui "the recluse".

The attitude taken by the most

consistent Blanquists with regard to the Comité de Salut Public (11) is also very significant. In his declaration of vote, Rigault said « *to hope that the Comité de Salut Public will be in 1871 what it is generally believed, but wrongly, to have been in 1793* », namely the organ of the red terror of the proletariat (12). Rigault was not referring to the Hébertist tradition (illustrated by the work of G. Tridon, who belonged to the minority), but rather to the possibility existing in 1871, given the new content of the revolution on the agenda (the proletariat and no longer the bourgeois revolution), of making something other than a rhetorical echo of petty-bourgeois revolutionism (which unfortunately it was) out of the central organ of power. The minority, on the other hand, criticised the very principle of dictatorship and centralism, as an emanation of the hated “principle of authority”, which entirely justifies Engels’ criticism in the “Republican Almanac” of 1874 (13) and the criticism of “Père Duchesne” of 18 May taking up the arguments developed by Vaillant in his declaration of vote of 1 May, perhaps the clearest and most unambiguous of all:

« I do not share the illusion of the assembly that it has founded a political steering committee, a committee of public salvation, when it is merely renewing with a new label its executive committee of the early days. If the assembly wanted to have a real executive committee, which could really take charge of the situation, and deal with political contingencies, it should begin by reforming itself, ceasing to be a small, talkative parliament, destroying the next day at the whim of its fancy what it had created the day before, and throwing itself in the way of all the decisions of its executive committee. The Commune should be nothing more than an assembly of commissions meeting to discuss the resolutions and reports presented by each of them, listening to the political report of its executive committee, and judging whether this committee is fulfilling its duty, whether it knows how to give unity of impulse and direction, whether it has the energy and capacity

necessary for the good of the Commune. To the Executive Committee would be referred the political affairs, to the various commissions all the affairs of their competence, and the meetings would be spent without useless incidents, taking resolutions and no longer discussing them. For an Executive Committee of this order, and the only one really worthy of bearing the title of Salut Public, which is moreover of no importance and which has the disadvantage of being a repetition, I will vote yes without sentences. In a word, it is necessary to organise the Commune and its action; to make action, the Revolution and not agitation, pastiche. »

With Trinquet, Ranvier, Ferré, Rigault and a few others like Duval, the worker-general, member of the International, it was indeed practically a vanguard of Blanquism which opposed the libertarian caprices whose opportunist character it detected very well (“it is necessary to guillotine this heap of Girondins”, Rigault would have exclaimed) and which thus came up against the palaver and inconclusive legalism and the conciliatory wait-and-see attitude of the majority, which did not understand the tasks that the Commune had been forced by necessity and completely against the wishes of its members to take upon itself. Faced with anarcho-democratism spewing its rage against the partisans of revolutionary dictatorship and class terror, Karl Marx’s position is unequivocal, and we find it expressed in his polemic against “La Révolution sociale” directed by Madame

André Léo, wife of Benoît Malon, anarcho-reformist, whose declaration at the Lausanne Peace Congress he quotes:

« Raoul Rigault and Ferre were the two sinister figures of the Commune who, up till then (up till the execution of the hostages (14)), had not stopped calling for bloody measures, albeit in vain », and to which he replies:

« From its very first issue, the newspaper hastened to put itself on the same level as Figaro, Gaulois, Paris-Journal, and other disreputable sheets which have been throwing mud at the General Council », emphasising that this flattery of democratic and inter-class pacifism by denigrating the martyrs of the revolution had been made *« at the very moment when Ferré was waiting in prison to be sent to the Satory post. »*

The opposition of the majority and the minority (unanimous on this point) to the activity of the most determined Blanquists then prevented the use of precious forces such as those of Duval, Dombrovsky (who would be wrongly suspected and would voluntarily go to his death to clear himself of the suspicion of treason), Wroblewsky, all valuable military leaders, and above all Rossel, a true military specialist who, unfortunately, was a bitter opponent of the Blanquists, the only forces capable of employing his strategic qualities, and who even opposed a “military dictatorship” under the control of the Comité de Salut Public whose ineptitude and heterogeneity he knew as well as the best Blanquists.

THE SENTENCE TO PASSIVE DEFENCE

Because of the absence of a revolutionary offensive strategy against Versailles, the Commune was condemned to return to passive defence on the barricades. The day after the Versaillais entered Paris, on 22 March, the Jacobin Delescluze called on the Parisians to march against the enemy, again speaking of showing him *« by their revolutionary energy that Paris can be sold, but that it can neither be surrendered nor defeated. »*

But while any victory appeared impossible, and Delescluze had no choice but to go and get himself killed, on the 25th of May, on one of the last barricades still holding out, and to die standing up as he had decided, the Blanquists Rigault, Ferré and Gois sought to the very end to give examples of revolutionary terror, because as Rigault said, sensing defeat and his own death after the execution of Chaudey, “that will be useful for

the next time” – that is to say, for the next revolution.

Yet the Parisian movement that led to the Commune had initially demonstrated its ability to overcome this desperate tactic by a class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. As Engels said in his famous March 1893 introduction to “Class Struggles in France” ignobly disfigured by the opportunists who led German social democracy, the

struggle in the streets *« will have to be undertaken with greater forces. These, however, may then well prefer, as in the whole great French Revolution or on September 4 and October 31, 1870, in Paris, the open attack to passive barricade tactics »*, attack already experimented in the Great Bourgeois Revolution as well as in the revolutionary days of September 4 and October 31, 1870. If the Commune itself

could be constituted, it was also by an active mobilisation quite different from the passive entrenchment behind vain barricades. If in June 1848, these barricades had not stopped the coalition of the bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois and the sub-proletariat launched in the hunt for the red hydra, it was absurd to expect a different result in May 1871 (15).

It is important to note – in agreement with all the collections of documents, newspapers, reports, etc. – that the rank-and-file militants, the clubists of the suburbs, etc., did not cease for a single moment to ask the question: “Why is the Commune so weak?” (quoted in the collection: *Lettres au “Père Duchesne” pendant la Commune de Paris*, Paris, Bureau d’Editions, 1934, p. 23), to demand measures of terror, to plead for the march on Versailles. On the other hand, it is not difficult to find in many memoirs of the period the same attitude which proves that there was more “consciousness” in the mass than in the leadership, which announced an inevitable defeat, because it is the latter which should have channelled the impulse of the base and given it a completed programmatic and tactical expression. On the contrary, the Commune leadership remained below the level of its following, since in many cases it prevented the work of the few militants (a minority among the Blanquists themselves, as we have seen) who made themselves the interpreters of this workers’ vanguard to which the “up-to-date” inklickers refused the qualification of proletarian and qualified it as “sans-culotte”, according to the same criterion which allowed Kautsky to proclaim the Commune proletarian and the republic of the soviets of Russia “sans-culotte”!

We don’t want to recount anecdotes, but to underline the falsity of the “concretist” legend according to which the “spontaneist” minority would have stuck to the movement of the most determined proletarian strata, it will not be useless to recall the episode recounted by Jules Vallès in his “*Insurgé*” with a truly anarchist candour. As he lamented in the com-



The cannons of the National Guard, rallied to the Commune, are posted at the barricades and at strategic points of the city



In March, as soon as the Versailles government announced its attempt to launch its troops at the nerve points of Paris to regain control of the city and repress the insurrectionary movement, the communards erected the barricades. Saint-Sébastien street, one of the 900 barricades erected in Paris.

pany of Lefrançois and Longuet at the announcement by Genton (another valiant Blanquist shot at Satory) of the execution of Monseigneur Darboy, a young worker replied: « *So we'll know that if the Commune made its rulings as a joke, we applied them seriously... And then, all the same, my bullet made a hole in the heavens!* ». After the Promethean image of Karl Marx's "storming the heavens". Of Karl Marx, where can we find a higher praise of the proletarian rebellion, which unfortunately only expressed itself in a very weakened and faded way during the Commune?

As always, the spontaneists grossly cheat when they exalt as the result of a free creation of the workers that which was only the consequence of petty-bourgeois and counterrevolutionary prejudices that opposed the demands expressed in a confused but vigorous way by the proletariat, the collective and impersonal "Jean Misère" of the workers' songs of the time, whom the objective conditions pushed to the social and therefore political movement – « *fight or death, bloody struggle or nothingness* » – sweeping aside all retrograde Proudhonian utopianism. And it is this same Jean Misère who, after the defeat, will go to the wall with a stoicism which the hangmen will tax with cynical effrontery, with « *insolent resolution to end life rather than live by working* », a sinister pun on the watchword of the Lyon insurgents: « *Live by working or die by fighting.* »

Independently of individual attitudes, the political behaviour of the Proudhonist libertarians (and Proudhon is the spiritual father of Bernstein as much as of Bakunin, for opportunism characterised by immediatism is also invariant) was exactly the same as that of the Commune, which failed in its mission of leading the proletarian dictatorship. To apologise for them is therefore to exalt everything that caused the subjective weakness of the Commune and its fall without an effective struggle. It is therefore not surprising that the opportunists have always praised these aspects of the Commune, identifying them unscrupu-

lously with the true dictatorship of the proletariat as opposed to the dictatorship exercised over the proletariat by the neo-Jacobins and the Blanquists. These people flatter the Commune precisely because it failed, they exalt the absence of the objective, but above all subjective conditions of victory or at least of an affirmation of the revolutionary dictatorship. This amounts in essence to exalting the counterrevolution of which Thiers was only the external agent, the internal agent (no matter how good or bad the faith) having been the domination of petty-bourgeois and, in short, democratic currents.

As Trotsky said, Kautsky, representative of all kinds of opportunism,

« *sees the main advantages of the Commune in features that we find are its misfortune and its fault [...] We cherished the memory of the Commune in spite of the extremely limited character of its experience, the immaturity of its participants, the confusion of its programme, the lack of unity amongst its leaders, the indecision of their plans, the hopeless panic of its executive organs, and the terrifying defeat fatally precipitated by all these.* »

To this quotation from "Terrorism and Communism" it is worth adding another, taken from a pamphlet by Karl Radek, written in response to a pamphlet by Kautsky, entitled "Proletarian Dictatorship and Terrorism":

« *Herr Kautsky gives two examples for the benefit of German readers of the way in which democracy has influenced manners: the violent dictatorship of the Jacobins which was bound to end in defeat*

because it sought to realize its illusions by force, and was therefore bound to mislead and brutalize the proletariat; and against this dark picture he places the bright and moral democratic dictatorship of the Commune of 1871 which has found a warm place "in the hearts of all who long for the liberation of mankind, and not least because it was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of humanity which animated the working class of the nineteenth century". We have shown that Kautsky's presentation is a mere juggling trick. The Paris Commune of 1793 represented no proletarian dictatorship, but a bourgeois one; and it was not "wrecked" on the impracticability of proletarian illusions, but fulfilled its great historical mission – the destruction of feudalism. The proletarian Commune of 1871, on the contrary, was wrecked after a two-months' existence by the confusion of its leaders who were full of illusions, and did not understand that the fight should have been carried beyond the walls of Paris. That which Kautsky calls the spirit of humanity was in reality the weakness of the leaders of the Commune, their irresolution in the face of an inexorable enemy [...].

When Kautsky asserts that the Commune of 1871 has found a warm corner, thanks to its spirit of humanity in the hearts of all who long for the liberation of mankind, the old man mistakes his own womanish heart for the dauntless one of the proletariat. It is not because of its weakness (which he calls humanity) that the Commune has become the symbol of proletarian aspirations, but because it was the first attempt of the proletariat to seize power. »

REVOLUTION IS INSEPARABLE FROM PARTY DICTATORSHIP AND RED TERROR

If the double revolution in Russia succumbed under the weight of its initial democratic task, which was by no means negligible, and under the pressure of the forces of primitive accumulation embodied by Stalinism, it presented, as long as Bolshevism remained alive, the political conditions of permanent

revolution. In the Commune, on the contrary, these conditions did not exist because of the absence of an autonomous communist movement with an adequate programmatic and tactical vision. This resulted in its national and democratic aspect, in contradiction with its base, since unlike the Russian revolution, it did

not have to achieve the construction of capitalism. Together with the cycle of wars of national liberation, it closed the cycle of democratic revolutions, the two being one and the same.

This is its fundamental lesson, as Marx showed in "The Civil War in France" and as subsequent events have only confirmed. Whether hiding behind reformist or leftist arguments, any "national" and "democratic" path to socialism is tantamount to the death of the revolution. The proletarian revolution without party dictatorship, without real red terror, that is to say, the revolution as a joke wished by all liberals, democrats, libertarians, from Kautsky to the militants of the KAPD militants and Dutch Tribunists, from Gramsci to the extra-parliamentary left of today, is only the last hope of the bourgeoisie in the event of a social revolt of the proletariat, only the prelude to new "bloody weeks" doomed to defeat (and of course the same applies to "socialism in one country" or localised to a few, and to every form of centrism).

All forms of immediatism asserted themselves in the leadership of the Commune and their effect condemned them definitively historically, just as the annihilation of the spontaneous impulse of the proletariat by the absence of adequate leadership has definitively condemned all forms of spontaneism. Without doubt, the party is only a necessary and by no means sufficient condition for victory, but its absence is in any case counterrevolutionary, because it is not without reason, and this reason is precisely one of those which make counterrevolution inevitable; on the contrary, even in unfavourable conditions, the presence of the party makes it possible to learn not only theoretical but practical lessons from defeat, and this is the condition for recovery, or at least for an orderly retreat preceding such a recovery. This has been proved with extreme clarity, on the one hand, by the years following the defeat of the Russian revolution of 1905 and leading to the victory of October 1917 and, on the other hand, by the objectively fa-

vourable situations (such as the first post-war period in Germany) which nonetheless led to counterrevolution because of the conditions which had impeded the formation of a genuine communist party, such as the domination of social democracy and especially of Kautskyian centrism.

Since its appearance, scientific socialism, revolutionary communism, has been fighting all the influences which hinder the constitution of the proletariat as a class (and therefore as a political party) and then as a ruling class, and which make it impossible. The great fear that the Commune inspired in the bourgeoisie testifies to the fact that the movement from which it was born was heading in this direction, and that if it did not achieve its goal, it was only because it lacked a direction that was not haphazard and heterogeneous, but that summarised the historical experience of the class. If Marx had not recognised this, the highest praise for the unconscious significance of the revolutionary potential of the Communard movement would have to be found in the floods of insults which the Maxime du Camp, the A. Dumas and other "journalist policemen, merchants of

calumnies", as E. Pottier, poet of the "Internationale", said, threw up against it, and of which we have a good example in "L'orgie rouge", chapter of "Barbares et Bandits: la Prusse et la Commune", by Paul de Saint-Victor (Paris 1871), who writes:

« The insurrection of March 18 [...] broke out suddenly, in the midst of the republic, in the midst of freedom, in the face of the invasion ranged in battle under the ramparts of Paris, against a freely elected assembly, against universal suffrage, against religion, against the bourgeoisie, against industry, against the family, against work, against everything that makes up the dignity, security and life of a people. It is neither to a despotism nor to an aristocracy that it declares war, but to civilisation, to society and to the fatherland. Its dogma is crude atheism, its doctrine is abject materialism, its programme is armed lazzarism, the expropriation of all classes by one, the equality of shares in the human feeding trough, the plundering of public and private wealth, thrown to the appetites and lusts of the proletariat. »

IN WHAT SENSE THE COMMUNE IS IMMORTAL

This is why we recognise in the Commune the still pale dawn of destruction of the Moloch of bourgeois liberties, before which burns its incense of democratic idealism, which has never been so well incarnated as by Gallifet and Noske. This is why Lenin wrote in April 1911, in the "Rabochaya Gazeta", No. 4-5:

« The cause of the Commune is the cause of the social revolution, the cause of the complete political and economic emancipation of the toilers. It is the cause of the proletariat of the whole world. And in this sense it is immortal. »

This cause, the Commune was obviously not able to make it triumph, nor even to defend it with clairvoyance and conscience. The class lesson it taught is all the more incisive. And this lesson is, as we have always affirmed, even if it means being accused of dogmatism

or even psittacism, the most absolute confirmation of the central, irreplaceable role of the class party, characterised by a revolutionary position with regard to the seizure of power and the exercise of dictatorship and the tactical problems linked to it.

As Lenin recalled, there was not a sufficiently high level of productive forces in 1871, but this in no way justified a double revolutionary scheme, thus the revolutionary democratic character of the communist government was only a fatal weakness and an anachronism in which the weight of the past closed off the perspectives of the future. In the present framework of the Euro-American (and Japanese) world enclosed in the network of developed capitalism, there can no longer be any question of insufficient development of the productive forces, while the necessity of a con-

vergence between the working vanguard driven into the streets by the exasperated contradictions of the regime and its political leadership remains entirely.

This leads us to the question of the coincidence of the crisis of capitalism and the maturation of the “formal” party on the international level. It will certainly not be solved tomorrow, and in order to solve it the embryonic organisation of revolutionary Marxists existing today cannot “invent” any organisational expedient, but must rely exclusively on the dictatorship of the programme within itself. This is the condition under which cadres can be formed who are really capable of leading the proletarian movement towards its revolutionary goals, which do not depend on the will of individuals, but on what the proletariat will be forced to do, provided it has the means to do so, namely a party leadership.

There is an unintentional irony in the verse of the anarchist Louise Michel (“Prison Song”, May 1871):

*« When the crowd today is silent
Like the ocean will roar,
That to die it will be ready,
The Commune will soar. »*

Certainly, the great problem is there. But when the proletariat, not the “crowd”, the people, moves under the impulse of events, it must have at its head an international cohort of iron, without which the defeats of the past – such as that of the Commune – could only be repeated. Only then can a world victory won by a world general staff put an end to the painful history of the oppressed class, together with the bloody domination of capital and, in perspective, the leviathan of class society.

(1) “Blousiers”: refers to the revolutionary proletarians during the Commune, usually dressed with a blouse.

(2) “Maquis”: the French resistance movement during the German

occupation in the second World War.

(3) “Francs-tireurs”: historically refers to the non-regular troops, made up of armed civilians, during the Franco-German war of 1870-1871

(4) It is distressing that this nonsense was formulated in “La Commune vécue” by the Blanquist Gaston Da Costa who had been Rigault’s deputy in the Commune’s police force.

(5) Francis Jourde, though not a revolutionary, was condemned by the Versailles courts, while the old Proudhonian (and millionaire) Charles Beslay received a safe-conduct from the government to Switzerland after the Commune’s defeat and later a dismissal.

(6) Cf. on this subject Engels’ criticism of the “The Programme of the Blanquist Fugitives from the Paris Commune” in the “Volksstaat”, No. 73, of 26 June 1874.

(7) Cf. the Manifesto of Printers, Writers and Lithographers of 19 February 1877.

(8) “Boche”: derogatory and offensive nickname given to German soldiers, equivalent of “Kraut” or “Fritz”

(9) Headline of the first legal

“Humanité” of the PCF after the liberation of Paris in the second imperialist world war.

(10) Cf. K. Marx’s speech in Amsterdam on 8 September 1872: « *The revolution must be carried out with solidarity; this is the great lesson of the French Commune, which fell because none of the other centres — Berlin, Madrid, etc. — developed great revolutionary movements comparable to the mighty uprising of the Paris proletariat.* »

(11) The formation of a Comité de Salut Public was proposed on 28 April by the Jacobins following the panic at Issy, to replace the second Executive Commission resulting from the reorganisation of the Commune government decided on 21 April following the first disasters, again on the initiative of the Jacobins.

(12) Even Kautsky seemed to understand the 1793 Comité de Salut Public in this way, reproaching it for not having “achieved socialism”!

(13) From On Authority, “Almanacco Repubblicano for the year 1874”:

« Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing

In the previous year of the Commune, 1870, many workers’ strikes broke out in France. First in January 1870 in Le Creusot, where 3000 troops were mobilised by the bourgeoisie to quell, intimidate and repress the struggle. On 21 March the miners went on strike in their turn. 1500 workers mobilised for the 8-hour day. The repression of the justice system was brutal, with 298 months of condemnation for the 25 leaders imprisoned. In 1870, the strike of the refinery workers at La Villette, in Paris, also broke out. “In 1871, the proletariat was thus at the forefront of the struggles against the bourgeois order in the big cities of France, including Paris, which would be the place of the broadest and deepest confrontation with the power of Thiers and his Versailles soldiers, but also the most repressed.



At the Creusot metallurgical factory, the army intervenes against the strikers

there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon — authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionists. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?

Therefore, either one of two things: either the anti-authoritarians don't know what they're talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion; or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the movement of the proletariat. In either case they serve the reaction. »

(14) It took place on 24 May three days after the Versailles entered Paris, four days after the collapse of the Commune's military defence, at a time when the federalists already knew that they would be defeated and demanded the execution of the decree on hostages.

(15) It should therefore be clear that Engels' refusal of the barricades responds to the fact that he advocates a truly insurrectionary strategy, based on a mobilisation of the most determined layers of the proletariat and directed not only politically, but militarily by the party. For Engels, one must consider the necessity not of a putsch, but of a real revolutionary civil war, likely to take on the character of a class war led by armies:

« But before such a change could be effected, a proletarian dictatorship would become necessary, and the first condition of that was a proletarian army. The working classes would have to conquer the right to emancipate themselves on the battlefield. The task of the International was to organize and combine the forces of labour for the coming struggle. » (Marx, Speech on the occasion of the 7th anniversary of the First International, 1871).

On this subject, we shall reproduce here only a few lines from Trotsky's admirable pages in the "History of the Russian Revolution", Part 3, on "The Art of Insurrection", where he recalls these problems, and in par-

ticular the assimilation of Bolshevism and Blanquism carried out by the social democrats:

« Blanqui's mistake in principle was to identify revolution with insurrection. His technical mistake was to identify insurrection with the barricade. The Marxian criticism has been directed against both mistakes. Although at one with Blanquism in regarding insurrection as an art, Engels discovered not only the subordinate place occupied by insurrection in a revolution, but also the declining rôle of the barricade in an insurrection. Engels' criticism had nothing in common with a renunciation of the revolutionary methods in favour of pure parliamentarism, as the philistines of the German Social Democracy, in co-operation with the Hohenzollern censorship, attempted in their day to pretend. For Engels the question about barricades remained a question about one of the technical elements of an uprising. The reformists have attempted to infer from his rejection of the decisive importance of the barricade a rejection of revolutionary violence in general. That is about the same as to infer the destruction of militarism from considerations of the probable decline in importance of trenches in future warfare. »

Of course, the Blanquists' penchant for barricades stemmed from their incomplete separation from democrats, "good republicans", etc., etc... and in the Commune it delivered them to Miot-type charlatans. We are not talking about the "offensive" aspect of Blanqui's tactics, which were inconsistent because of his conviction that it would take only a handful of conspirators to destroy the bourgeois state.

This may seem false if we refer to the "Instruction pour une prise d'armes" of 1868, an extremely important document which marks a turning point in Blanqui's thought, but it is not if we consider that this text had no appreciable effect either on Blanquist militants or, for example, on the attempts to which Blanqui and more or less faithful followers were committed before the Commune.

Finally, it is necessary to recall the almost comical falsification which the right-wing Stalinist Santiago Carillo, present leader of the Spanish CP dissident from Moscow, has made of Engels' introduction in "Nuestra

Bandera", supplement to No. 58, June 1968, p. 21. According to Carillo, who recognises that barricades « are a purely defensive tactic which leaves the initiative to the adversary », they would in certain cases have the advantage of provoking the "neutralisation" of bourgeois forces « and even their passage at least partially into the camp of the democratic and revolutionary forces. Engels wrote in 1895 that it was mainly this point of view that should be considered in the future when examining the possibility of possible street battles ».

For Carillo, who substitutes the interclassist national strike for the old insurrectionary general strike, Engels would have been in favour of barricades precisely because of the moral effect they have in the democratic revolution: he forgets that Engels always uses the imperfect tense, the revolution having ceased to be "democratic" to become proletarian as early as June 1848, and all the more so in May 1871, which is precisely what led Engels to call for an open attack. While the old reformists were thus falsely accusing Engels of excluding organised class violence and class terror under the pretext that he had declared the barricades obsolete, Carillo, renewing the falsification, hypocritically identifies Engels' position with a defence of the barricade insofar as it excludes organised violence and class terror! Although it shifts the factors, the operation thus leads to the same absurdity as that of the reformists, but it lends itself to the use of the proletariat as cannon fodder for the defence of bourgeois-democratic interests, as if in the 20th century this could mean anything other than the defence of capitalism itself. Carillo is indeed of the same vile race as those who spoke of the "red army" in relation to Chiang Kai-shek's troops and the militias and regular army of the Spanish Republic of 1936.

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Note: Translation of our text "La Commune a été grande par ce qu'elle a été contrainte d'être, non par ce que ses artisans ont voulu qu'elle soit", resumed and adapted from <https://libriincogniti.wordpress.com>. Initially published in our theoretical review "programme communiste", N° 51-52; April-September 1974.

In Defense of the Continuity of the Communist Program

Theses on the Tactics of the Communist Party of Italy

(Rome theses 1922)

The object of the theses presented here concerns the general perspectives that must guide the Party in its actions towards the realization of its program as well as its goal, and the methods it must follow to determine what initiatives to take and what direction to give its momentum.

The problem is not presented in the particular aspects of each of the Party's different spheres of action (parliamentary, trade-union, agrarian, military, national, colonial questions, etc.). These are not treated separately here as they form the object of other discussions and resolutions of international and national congresses.

The theses presented here follow from the program the Communist Party of Italy adopted at Livorno and is the result of the doctrine and methods shared by both the Communist International and the Party whose program declares that:

«The Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) is constituted on the basis of the following principles:

1. An ever-growing contradiction between the forces and relations of production has developed in present-day capitalist society, bringing about the antagonism of interests and the class struggle between the proletariat and the dominant bourgeoisie.

2. Present-day relations of production are preserved and maintained by the power of the bourgeois State which, based on the system of representative democracy, constitutes the principal organ for the defense of the interests of the capitalist class.

3. The proletariat can neither break nor modify the system of cap-

italist production from which its exploitation derives without the violent destruction of the bourgeoisie.

4. The indispensable organ of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is the political party of the class itself.

Grouping within its ranks the most advanced and most conscious part of the proletariat, the Communist Party unifies the efforts of the working masses by leading them from the struggle for group interests and contingent results to the struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat.

The role of the Party is to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, to organize the material means of action and to lead the proletariat in the development of the struggle.

5. The world war was caused by the unresolvable internal contradictions of the capitalist regime that have led to modern imperialism. And thus a crisis in which capitalist society is breaking apart and the class struggle can only lead to an armed conflict between the working masses and the power of the various bourgeois States.

6. Following the overthrow of bourgeois power, the proletariat can only organize itself into the dominant class by the destruction of the old State apparatus and the creation of its own dictatorship, that is to say, by basing the representative

organisms of the State upon the sole productive class and by depriving the bourgeoisie of all political rights.

7. The proletarian State's form of political representation is the system of workers' and peasants' councils already being applied in Russia, the point of departure of the world proletarian revolution and the first stable instance of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

8. The necessary defense of the proletarian State against attempts at counter-revolution can only be assured by depriving the bourgeoisie and all parties hostile to the proletarian dictatorship of the means of agitation and political propaganda and by giving the proletariat an armed organization that can repulse any internal or external attack.

9. Only the proletarian State will be able to intervene systematically in the economic relations of society by carrying out the measures required to assure the replacement of the capitalist system by the collective administration of production and distribution.

10. Such a transformation of the economy and thereby of all the activities of social life will, following from the elimination of the division of society into classes, result in the progressive elimination of the necessity of the political State whose apparatus will little by little be reduced to that of the rational administration of human activity.»

I. THE ORGANIC NATURE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

1. The Communist Party, the political party of the proletarian class, acts collectively on the operational basis of a unitary orientation. The initial motives that cause elements and groups from within this collec-

tivity to organize for unitary action are the immediate interests that the economic situation produces among the different groups of the working class. The role of the Communist Party is characterized essentially by

the utilization of the energies thus contained to attain objectives that, in order for them to be common to the entire working class and the result of all of its successive struggles, are integrated beyond the interests of particular groups and the immediate or contingent demands raised by the working class.

2. The integration of these elementary thrusts in a unitary action manifests itself through two principal factors: one is the critical consciousness from which the Party derives its program; the other is the will that, expressing itself in the disciplined and centralized organization of the Party, is the instrument of its action. It would be erroneous to believe that this consciousness and this will can be obtained from or must be expected from mere individuals, for only the integration of the activities of numerous individuals in a collective unitary organism makes their realization possible.

II. THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

5. The proletarian Party organizes itself and develops to the degree that the maturation and evolution of society allows the consciousness of the general and overriding interests of the working class to appear. Collective and unitary action thus develops in this sense.

On the one hand, the proletariat only appears in history and acts as a class when it develops the tendency to give itself a program and means of common action, that is to say, when it organizes itself as a party.

6. The proletarian party's formation and development is not continuous or regular, but passes through, both nationally and internationally, very complex phases and periods of generalized crisis.

Very often, proletarian Parties have experienced a degeneration that has deprived their actions of unity and conformity to the highest revolutionary goals, or at least have attenuated, as opposed to accenting, these indispensable characteristics of its activity. It thus fragmented itself in the pursuit of advantages limited to such and such a group of workers or

3. The Parties' and the Communist International's programmatic declarations contain a precise definition of the theoretical-critical consciousness of the movement. Such a consciousness, as well as its national and international organization, derives from the study of the history of human society and its structure in the present-day capitalist era on the basis of the facts and experience of the authentic proletarian struggle and active participation within it.

4. The proclamation of such a program and nominations to the different functions of the organization would appear to result from democratic consultation among Party delegates. In reality, they are the result of a process that, by the accumulation of experience and the preparation and selection of leadership elements, allows the program to take shape and the Party structure to develop its own hierarchy.

contingent, reformist objectives, adopting methods that compromised the work of the revolution and the preparation of the proletariat to the realization of its class ends. By such measures, proletarian Parties often opened their ranks to elements that could not yet join in collective unitary action for the supreme objectives. Such a process always led to revisions and deformations of doctrine and program, and the relaxation of internal discipline which, instead of giving the proletarian movement a general staff of adequate and decisive leadership, turned it over to unconscious agents of the bourgeoisie.

7. As a result of new situations and the pressure of events that have provoked the working class to action, it is possible to reverse this misdirection and return to the true class Party. Such a renewal takes the form of a split by that part of the organization which, by defending the program and criticizing the experiences that have been unfavorable to the struggle, and by forming a school and an organized faction within the old party, has reestablished the continuity indispensable

to the life of the unitary organism based upon consciousness and discipline. From this consciousness and discipline a new Party is formed. Such is in general the process which lead from the flawed parties of the 2nd International to the Communist International.

8. The development of the Communist Party, after the conclusion of such a crisis, can be described as «normal» for the purposes of analysis, which does not preclude the return of critical phases in new situations. By offering maximum continuity by means of defense of the Party program and the life of the leadership hierarchy (above and beyond replacement of disloyal or spent leaders), the Party also assures a maximum of useful and efficacious work in order to win the proletariat to the revolutionary struggle. It is not only a question of the edification of the masses, and even less so of putting on display an intrinsically pure and perfect Party, but rather one of obtaining the best return from a real process. As will be seen below, it is a question of making sure that, by means of systematic propaganda work as well as active participation in social struggles, an ever-increasing number of workers advance from the terrain of partial struggles for immediate interests to the terrain of the organic and unitary struggle for the communist revolution. For it is only on the basis of the existence of such a continuity of program and leadership that the Party can not only overcome the suspicions and reticences of the proletariat in its regard, but also channel and rapidly and efficiently frame the new energies won from the unity of thought and action into the unity of movement that is an indispensable condition for the revolution.

9. For the same reasons must be considered entirely abnormal the integration by the Party of other parties or fractions of parties. A group that distinguishes itself by a different programmatic position or by an independent organization does not bring to the Communist Party usefully absorbable elements, but alters the firmness of its political position and the solidity of its structures: in such a case, the increase in man-

power, far from corresponding to an increase in the forces and capacities of the Party, could well paralyze rather than facilitate its work in directing the masses.

It is desirable that the Communist International declare as rapidly as possible that it will not tolerate

the slightest deviation from these two fundamental organizational principles; namely, that there can only be one Communist Party per country and that one can join the International only by means of individual membership in the Communist Party of a given country.

III. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE PROLETARIAN CLASS

10. The delimitation and definition of the characteristics of the class party that found its constitutive structure as the organ of the most advanced part of the proletarian class do not prevent but on the contrary necessitate that it be intimately connected to the rest of the proletariat.

11. The nature of these relations is deduced from the dialectic that determines the formation of class-consciousness and the unitary organization of the Party. This dialectic leads to the displacement of the vanguard of the proletariat from spontaneous movements arising out of partial group interests to generalized proletarian action. However, far from doing so by denying such elementary movements, their unity is assured by means of the vital experience that results from the struggle to realize these movements, active participation in them, and close attention to their development.

12. The work of continuous ideological propaganda carried out by the Party is thus inseparable from both the Party's actions and the proletarian movement in all its forms. It would be banal to think that participation in the struggle for contingent limited results is contradictory to preparation for the final and general revolutionary struggle. The mere existence of the unitary organization of the Party, together with the indispensable clarity of its program and its no less vital organizational and disciplinary firmness, is already a guarantee that, far from never attributing to partial demands the value of ends in themselves, we consider the struggle on their behalf a means for gaining experience and training crucial to genuine revolutionary preparedness.

13. The Communist Party therefore participates in all forms of pro-

letarian economic organization open to all workers without distinction on the basis of political conviction (trade-unions, factory committees, cooperatives etc.). Its fundamental position towards organisms of this kind is that they must understand that since all workers find themselves in a given economic situation, it is by constantly defending itself that it will most usefully increase its own sphere of activity. For that end, the Party organizes its militants, who are members of these organizations, into groups or cells dependent upon the Party. Taking a front-row place in the activities launched by the economic associations in which they militate, the Party militants draw to themselves and thus into the ranks of the Party those elements which, in the course of the struggle, have shown themselves to be mature enough to join.

Since they tend to draw in their wake most of the workers in these organizations and win leading positions, they thus become natural vehicles for Party orders. The work that they accomplish is not limited to propaganda or recruitment or electoral campaigns within proletarian assemblies: it is organizational work that develops in the thick of the struggle and helps the workers to derive the most useful conclusions from their actions.

14. The work and orientation provided by communist groups tends to give the Party definitive control of the organs leading such economic associations. National trade-union federations in particular appear to provide the surest way of leading non-organized proletarian movements towards the Party. The Party considers that it has every interest in avoiding splitting the trade-unions away from other economic associations. That is why it is not

opposed to such movements as their leadership may decide upon on the pretext that these would be led by other parties. This would not prevent the Party from undertaking the widest possible critique of either the actions themselves or their leaders.

15. Not only does the Communist Party participate, as has just been described, in the life of the proletarian organizations engendered naturally by real economic interests; not only is the Party in favour of the growth and reinforcement of such organizations but by means of its propaganda it provides evidence in support of problems that are of real interest to the workers, problems which in the development of the situation can lead to the rise of new organisms of economic struggle. By all such means and through a thousand channels, the Party enlarges and reinforces the influence it has upon the proletariat, thus deriving advantage from every action or possibility of action in social life.

16. It would be a completely erroneous conception of the Party to think that it requires of each of its members considered in isolation a perfectly clear critical consciousness and a total spirit of sacrifice. Likewise would it be wrong to expect the Party to limit its influence to revolutionary unions of workers brought together in the economic realm on the basis of sectarian criteria and consisting only of proletarians prepared to accept given methods of action. On the other hand, nor can it be expected that, at a given moment or on the eve of general actions, the Party would have a majority of the proletariat under its control, still less a majority from within its own ranks. Such a precondition cannot be postulated without taking into account the dialectical process of development of the Party itself. It makes no sense, not even abstractly, to compare the numbers of workers within the disciplined and unitary organization of the Party or under its control, with disorganized or dispersed workers, or even those affiliated with corporatist organisms that are unable to unite them organically. The conditions to which relations between Party and class

must answer in order to effectively produce generalized actions as well

as the means by which to bring these about are defined below.

IV. RELATIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY WITH OTHER PROLETARIAN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

17. The fraction of the proletariat organized in other political parties or sympathetic to them is particularly resistant to groupings within its ranks under Communist Party influence. All bourgeois parties have some proletarian members but those that interest us here are the social-democratic parties in particular as well as the syndicalist and anarchist currents.

18. The Party must develop a relentless critique of the programs of these movements and demonstrate their inadequacy for the emancipation of the proletariat. Such a theoretical polemic will be all the more efficacious to the extent that the Party can best argue that experience confirms the long-standing programmatic criticism it has developed in opposition to these movements. That is why in polemics such as these, one should never cover up methodological divergences, not just in terms of particular problems of the moment but especially with respect to greater extensions of proletarian action.

19. Furthermore, these polemics must be reflected in the realm of action. Communists must not refuse to take part in the struggles of proletarian economic organizations even when these are lead by socialists, syndicalists or anarchists, unless the entire mass should spontaneously rebel against these actions. They can nonetheless demonstrate that the erroneous methods of its leaders condemns such action to powerlessness or, at a given point of its development, utopianism, whereas the communist method would have produced better results in terms of the general revolutionary movement. In these polemics, communists must always distinguish between the leaders and the masses, laying at the feet of the former the responsibility for errors and mistakes. Nor should they give up an opportunity to denounce just as vigorously the work of leaders who, despite revolutionary sincerity, favour dangerous and erroneous tactics.

20. The Communist Party has as essential objectives the gaining of ground within the proletariat, as well as the increase of its manpower and influence at the expense of the currents and political parties of dissident proletarians. On the condition that the programmatic and organizational profile of the Party never be compromised, these objectives will be met through participation in real proletarian struggles on grounds that can simultaneously be those of action in common or in reciprocal opposition to them.

21. In order to attract proletarians belonging to other political movements, the Communist Party will not follow the method of organizing communist fractions or sympathizers within these movements, although it is normal to employ such a method in order to penetrate trade-unions from whose ranks one is not attempting to de-

velop organized communist groups. Applied to political movements, such a method would compromise the Party's organic unity, and this for the reasons stated above with respect to the organizational development of the Party.

22. Nor should it be forgotten in propaganda and polemics that numerous workers already ripe for the unitary and revolutionary conception of the struggle only joined the syndicalist and anarchist ranks in reaction to the degeneration of the old social-democratic parties. The vigour of communist polemics and struggle against the latter will be a factor of the first order in bringing these workers over to the revolutionary terrain.

23. Obviously one cannot be a member of both the Communist Party and another political party. This incompatibility extends to all movements which, without calling themselves parties, have a political character, as well as all associations whose conditions of membership have a political orientation; for instance, freemasons.

V. ELEMENTS OF TACTICS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY DRAWN FROM AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

24. In the preceding points, the general criteria guiding relations between the Communist Party and other proletarian organizations were established in the light of the very nature of the Party. Before discussing tactics proper, it is necessary to consider what elements a study of the overall situation bring to their determination. The program of the Communist Party foresees that in the course of the development which has been generally attributed to it, it will accomplish a series of actions in correspondence with successive situations. There is thus a close connection between programmatic directives and tactical rules. Analysis of the situation therefore is a complementary element in the solution of tactical problems since, in its critical consciousness and experience, the Party had already defined a certain development of these situations, and had thus delimited the possibilities of action corresponding to each of these. Analysis of the

situation permits more exact control of the developmental perspectives that the Party has formulated in its program; but if ever such an analysis entails substantial programmatic revision, the problem will not be solved by a simple tactical about-face: the programmatic vision itself will be inevitably subject to rectification with grave consequences for both the organization and the strength of the Party. It must therefore attempt to predict the development of situations so as to be able to deploy in each situation all the influence it can bring to bear. Only to wait for situations to develop, and basing itself on eclectic and shifting attitudes, is the method characteristic of social-democratic opportunism. If Communist Parties should ever succumb to this kind of drift, they will have contributed to the destruction of communism both as ideology and as militant action.

25. The Communist Party only possesses unity and only tends to-

wards the development prescribed by its program to the degree that it contains within its ranks that fraction of the proletariat that has overcome the tendency to move solely in response to the immediate thrust of particular economic situations. This overcoming occurs precisely by means of political organization. If critical consciousness and initiatives of will have only very limited value for individuals, they are fully realized in the collective nature of the Party, and even more so to the extent that it presents itself as the precursor of forms of human association which, instead of passively submitting to the laws of economic facticity, will be truly able to rationally direct them because they will have overcome the formlessness of present-day economic organization. That is why the Party's overall activities, far from being subject to situational immediacy, are related to it by the interplay of rationality and will.

26. However, the will of the Party must not be exercised capriciously, nor must its initiatives be extended arbitrarily. The limits of both are precisely set by the program and by assessment of possibilities and opportunities for action deduced from the analysis of contingent situations.

27. It is by situational analysis that one can determine the respective strengths of the Party and enemy movements. The Party's first concern must be the correct assessment of the portion of the proletariat that will follow it if it undertook an action or engaged a struggle. In order to do this, the Party must have an accurate idea of the pressures of the economic situation on the masses and the spontaneous upheavals that these can lead to, along with the developments that Communist Party initiatives and the attitude of the other parties could bring to these upheavals.

Whether it is a time of growing prosperity or, on the contrary, of hardship and crises, the influence that the economic situation has upon the class combativeness of the proletariat is a complex one. Nor can such an assessment be deduced from cursory examination of a situation at a given moment, as it is necessary to take into account the

previous evolution, as well as the shifts and variables of all the preceding situations. For example, a time of prosperity can give rise to a powerful trade-union movement which, if followed by a period of crisis and pauperization, can rapidly lead to revolutionary positions that entail the possibility of victory for the broad organization of the masses such a movement will have achieved. On the other hand, a period of progressive impoverishment could stress such a trade-union movement to the extent that in the next period of prosperity, it could no longer provide material for revolutionary organization. These examples (which could be inverted) prove that «the graph of the economic situation and that of class combativeness intersect according to complex laws, the latter being dependent upon the former, but without formally corresponding to it.» The rise of one can correspond, in given cases, to the rise or fall of the other, and conversely.

28. The integrating elements of such an analysis are highly complex. One would have to examine not only the effective tendencies of the proletariat's ability to give form to and develop class organizations, but also every kind of response, including psychological ones, produced on the one hand by the economic situation and on the other hand by the attitudes and social and political initiatives of the ruling class itself and its parties. On the political plane, situational analysis would include the positions of the different classes and parties in relation to State power, as well as an assessment of their strength. In this perspective, the normal course of the development of situations in which the Communist Party could be lead to act with increased efficiency, while at the same time delineating ever more clearly the limits of its tactics, can be categorized in five broad phases. These are: 1. Absolutist feudal power. 2. Bourgeois democratic power. 3. Social-democratic government. 4. An interim period of civil war in which the bases of the State are shaken. 5. Proletarian power of the dictatorship of workers' and peasants' councils. In a sense, the tactical problem consists not only

in selecting the right approach for efficacious action, but also in making certain that the actions of the Party not go beyond the opportune limits that, by reverting to methods corresponding to phases already completed, would halt the Party's development and, far worse, cause it to lose its revolutionary preparedness. The following considerations refer to actions of the Party in the second and third political phases mentioned above.

29. To develop organically, the Communist Party must possess a critical method and consciousness that lead it to formulate a program. It is precisely for this reason that the Party and the Communist International cannot grant maximum tactical liberty and elasticity to the decision-making centres, leaving the determination of tactics to the latter's judgment on the basis of an overview of the situation. The Party program is not characterized by a simple goal that can be reached by any means, but is that of a historical perspective in which means and ends are intimately related. In the various situations, tactics must therefore harmonize with the program and, to that end, the general tactical principles for successive situations must be precise within certain limits. To be sure, these need not be rigid but always increasingly clear and less fluctuating as the momentum gains force and approaches the final victory. It is only thus that maximum centralism in both the Parties and in the International can be attained; that is to say, that the decisions for action taken by the centre will be adopted and executed without resistance not only from the Communist Parties, but also from those parts of the mass movement that the Parties will have succeeded in controlling. It must not, in fact, be forgotten that the root of acceptance of the organic discipline of the movement consists not only of the initiatives of individuals and groups as a result of development of the situation, but in a continuous and logical progression of experience that brings them to rectify their perspective of the road to be taken to obtain the greatest efficiency in the struggle against the conditions

of life that present-day social organization imposes upon the proletariat. That is why, before calling upon their adherents and those proletarians who will follow them to act at the sacrifice of themselves, the Parties and the International must be able to systematically provide an overview of their general tactical principles and to demonstrate why they constitute the only road to victory. If the Party must therefore define the terms and

limits of its tactics, this is not from a desire to theorize or schematize the complex movements it could be lead to undertake, but is the result of practical and organizational necessity. Such a process of definition might seem to limit the Party's possibilities of action, but it is the only guarantee of the continuity and unity of its intervention in the proletarian struggle, and it is for these very concrete reasons that it must be undertaken.

VI. «INDIRECT» TACTICAL ACTIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

30. Conditions do not always present themselves for «direct» tactical action, since this implies an assault upon bourgeois power by the Communist Party and the forces at its disposition. Far from limiting itself simply to proselytizing and propaganda, the Party can and must exert its influence upon events by regulating its relations with other parties and social or political movements and by exerting pressure upon them in order to determine development of a situation favorable to its own ends and hasten the moment where decisive revolutionary action would be possible. What initiatives or attitudes to adopt in such cases constitutes a delicate problem. In order to be effective, the first condition must be that they in no way appear to be in contradiction to the Party's long-range ends as concerns the struggle proper, according to the program it alone defends and on the basis of which the proletariat will fight at the decisive moment. The propaganda of the Party does not only possess theoretical worth; above all it results from the positions the Party adopts daily in the real proletarian struggle, in which it must continually advance the necessity for the proletariat to embrace the communist program and methods. Any attitude that would relegate to second place the integral affirmation of this propaganda or make such-and-such a contingent result an end in itself and not a means towards a greater end, would lead to a weakening of Party structures and an ebb of its influence upon the revolutionary preparation of the masses.

31. In the phase defined above as that of bourgeois democratic power, political forces are generally divided in two currents or «blocs»: the left and the right who fight for leadership of the State.

The social-democratic parties, that are coalitionist in principle, adhere more or less openly to the left bloc. The Communist Party is not indifferent to the development of this struggle, be it by raising points or making demands that interest the proletarian masses and concentrate their focus, or because a victory by the left could in reality smooth the way to the proletarian revolution. As concerns the problem of the tactical opportunity of coalitions with political elements of the left, this must be examined without either falsely doctrinal, stupidly sentimental or puritanical a prioriism. One must begin from the fact that the Communist Party is only capable of initiating momentum to the degree it can pursue with continuity the work of organization and preparation from which comes the influence that would allow to call the masses to action. It can thus not permit itself tactics in response to occasional or momentary criteria, even on condition of foreseeing a sudden about-face, or reversal of fronts that would transform yesterday's allies into enemies when such tactics proved insufficient. If the Party does not wish to compromise its connection with the masses and the possibility of reinforcing it at a moment when that will be of the utmost necessity, all of its public declarations and attitudes have to express its continuity of method and

intention; that is to say, be in complete harmony with its propaganda on behalf of the final struggle and its preparations towards that end.

32. In preparing the proletariat both ideologically and practically for the revolutionary seizure of power, one of the essential tasks of the Communist Party is to mercilessly criticize the program of the bourgeois left and any program that would make use of democratic and bourgeois parliamentary institutions for the resolution of social problems. Most of the time it is only by means of demagogic falsifications that the bourgeois right and left manage to interest the proletariat in their divergences. Obviously these falsifications can not solely be demonstrated by means of theoretical criticism: it is in practice and in the thick of the struggle that they will be unmasked.

The aim of the left is not a step forward to an interim stage somewhere between the economic and political capitalist system and a proletarian system. In general, its political demands tend to lead to improved functioning conditions and the defense of modern capitalism, be it as a result of the content proper of these demands as well as the illusion they give the masses of being able to use current institutions for their emancipation as a class. This applies to demands for widening of the suffrage and other guarantees for the improvement of liberalism, as it does for anticlerical policies and the overall politics of freemasonry. It applies as well in the case of economic or social reforms: either they will not be realized, or they will be only on condition and with the aim of blocking the revolutionary thrust of the masses.

33. If the coming to power of a left bourgeois government or even a social-democratic government can be considered as a step towards the final struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, this is not because it would provide useful economic or political bases or, even less so, because it would give the proletariat greater liberty of organization, preparedness or revolutionary action. It is the Communist Party's duty to proclaim what it knows not only because of Marxist criticism, but from

bloody experience: such governments will allow the proletariat freedom of movement only as long as it considers and supports these governments as its own representatives. But at the first assault of the masses against the institutions of the bourgeois democratic State, they will respond with the fiercest reaction.

It is thus in a wholly other sense that the coming to power of such governments could prove useful; namely, to the degree that their deeds would constitute for the proletariat a real experience that would allow it to conclude that only its dictatorship proper can bring about the defeat of capitalism. It is obvious that the Communist Party will only be able to make efficient use of this experience to the extent that it would have denounced beforehand the bankruptcy of such governments and will have preserved a solid independent organization around which the proletariat will be able to group when it will find itself forced to abandon the groups and parties whose governmental experience it would have initially supported.

34. A coalition of the Communist Party with parties of the bourgeois or social-democratic left would thus harm the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat and would render utilization of the governmental experience of the left difficult. Furthermore, it would practically and considerably retard the victory of the left bloc over the right. In fact, if the clientele of the bourgeois centre over which the two blocs battle orients itself towards the left, it would be rightly because it is convinced that the left is no less a conservative enemy of the revolution than is the right.

For it knows that the concessions it proposes are for the most part apparent only, and when they are effective, it is because they are aimed at braking the revolutionary upsurge against the institutions supported by the left as by the right. As a result, the presence of the Communist Party in a coalition of the left would cause it to lose a large part of its clientele, in particular in terms of electoral support, a loss that the support of the Communists could

not compensate for. Such a policy would probably retard the experience as opposed to accelerating it.

35. It is undeniable that the left bloc espouses demands of interest to the masses and that often correspond to their real exigencies. The Communist Party does not ignore this fact and would not support the superficial thesis that such concessions are to be refused since only the final and total victory of the revolution warrants the sacrifices of the proletariat. Such a position would serve no purpose since its only result would be to reinforce the influence of the democrats and social-democrats over the proletariat. Instead the Communist Party would invite the workers to accept concessions from the left as an experience over whose outcome the Party would not seek to conceal its pessimism, insisting on the need for the proletariat not to throw away its political independence and organization if it does not wish to emerge damaged by the experience. It would incite the masses to demand of the social-democratic parties that they keep to their engagements since they have made themselves the guarantors of the possibility of realizing the promises of the bourgeois left. By its independent and uninterrupted criticism, the Party would prepare to gather the harvest of negative results that will come from these experiences, denouncing the united front of the entire bourgeoisie against the revolutionary proletariat and the complicity of the so-called workers' parties that, by upholding the coalition with a part of the bourgeoisie, have made themselves its agents.

36. The parties of the left and the social-democrats in particular often affect demands of such a kind that only an appeal to the proletariat for direct action could bring them about. In fact, if the struggle were engaged, the insufficiency of the means proposed by the social-democrats for the realization of their program of working-class measures would become immediately apparent. At that moment, the Communist Party could espouse the same demands and make them more precise; in fact, prominently put them forward as a banner of struggle for the proletariat as a whole in

order to force the parties that only spoke of them out of simple opportunism to work for their realization. Be it a question of economic demands or even of a political character, the Communist Party will propose them as the goal of a coalition of trade-union organizations. It would, however, not form leading committees of struggle and agitation on which it would be represented with the other parties; in this way, it would be better able to keep the attention of the masses focused on the specifics of the communist program and preserve its freedom of movement for the moment when it would have to expand the platform of action by going beyond the other parties, now abandoned by the masses after this demonstration of their powerlessness. Thus understood the trade-union united front offers the possibility of overall actions involving the entire working class. The communist method can only emerge victorious from such actions, as it is the only one capable of giving content to the unitary movement of the proletariat, and the only one not to share the slightest responsibility for the doings of parties that affect verbal support for the cause of the proletariat out of opportunism and with counter-revolutionary intentions.

37. Another scenario could take the form of an attack by the bourgeois right against a democratic or socialist government. Even in such a case, the Communist Party would not proclaim solidarity with governments of this kind: if it welcomed them as an experience to be undergone so as to hasten the moment when the proletariat will be convinced of their counter-revolutionary aims, it can obviously not now present such governments as victories worth defending.

38. It could happen that a government of the left would allow right-wing organizations, the white bands of the bourgeoisie, to keep up their attacks against the proletariat and, instead of coming to its support, would refuse it the right of responding by force of arms. In that case, communists would denounce such complicity as the true division of labour between the liberal government and the irregular forces of

the reaction, in which the bourgeoisie would no longer debate the respective merits of democratic-reformist anaesthesia or violent repression, but employs them both simultaneously.

In that situation, the veritable and worst enemy of the revolutionary preparation is the liberal government who leads the proletariat into believing it will defend it to preserve legality so that the proletariat not arm or organize itself. Thus, on the day when under the pressure of events the proletariat will be forced to struggle against the legal institutions that preside over its exploitation, the government will easily be able to crush it with the help of the white bands.

39. It can also happen that the government and the parties of the left that comprise it invite the proletariat to participate in armed resistance against attacks from the right. Such an appeal only conceals a trap. The Communist Party would greet it with the proclamation that arming the proletarians means the coming to power of the proletariat and the proletarian State, as well as the

destruction of the state bureaucracy and the traditional army since neither of these would follow the orders of a legally constituted government of the left from the moment it called the people to the armed struggle. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat could thus bring about a lasting victory over the white bands. As a result, the Communist Party will neither practice nor espouse the slightest «loyalism» towards an endangered liberal government. On the contrary it will show the masses the risks of consolidating that government's power by giving it the proletariat's support against an uprising from the right or an attempted coup d'état. Leaving control of the army to the government parties, that is, surrendering without having overthrown the current political and state forms, would be tantamount to consolidating the very organism called to oppose the revolutionary advance of the proletariat at the precise moment when that advance will have imposed itself as the only possible outcome against all the forces of the bourgeois class.

VII. «DIRECT» TACTICAL ACTIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

40. In the case considered above, the demands presented by the bourgeois left and social-democratic parties as the objectives to be attained retained the attention of the masses, and in turn were subscribed to with greater clarity and energy by the Communist Party though all the while openly criticizing the means proposed by the others for their realization.

But there are other cases where the immediate and pressing needs of the working class, whether for further gains or simple self-defense, would be met only with indifference from the left or social-democratic parties. If because of social-democratic influences over the masses, the Communist Party does not dispose of sufficient force to be able to appeal directly to them, it would take up these demands and call for their realization by a united front of trade-union proletarians. This would avoid having to make an offer of alliance with the social-democrats, and the Party could

even proclaim that they have also betrayed the contingent and immediate interests of the workers. Such a unitary action would find communist militants at work in the trade-unions, leaving the Party free to intervene in the event the struggle took another course, as it would inevitably find the social-democrats, and perhaps even the syndicalists and anarchists, against it. If the other proletarian parties refused to back the trade-union united front demands, the Communist Party would content itself with criticizing them and demonstrating their complicity with the bourgeoisie. In order to destroy their influence, it would above all have to participate on the front-lines of the limited proletarian actions the situation would not fail to give rise to and whose objectives would be those for which the Communist Party had proposed a united front for all local organizations and categories of workers. This would allow it to demonstrate concretely

that in opposing the spread of such movements, the social-democratic leadership is only preparing their defeat. Naturally, the Communist Party will not only content itself with laying the blame for erroneous tactics before the other parties. With all the wisdom and discipline required, it will keep a steady watch for the right moment at which to go beyond the resistance of the counter-revolutionaries; that is, when a situation arises such that in the course of the development of the struggle nothing further will stand in the way of the masses responding to the call to action of the Communist Party. Such an initiative can only be taken by the Party centre; in no case can it be taken by local Communist Party organizations or communist-controlled trade-unions.

41. More particularly, the term «direct tactics» designates actions of the Party when the situation obliges it independently to take the initiative of attacking the bourgeois power so as to topple it or deliver a mortal blow. In order to be able to undertake such an action, the Party must dispose of an internal organization solid enough to warrant the absolute certainty that orders from the centre will be perfectly executed. It must moreover be able to count upon the discipline of the trade-union forces it controls so as to be sure that a large part of the masses will follow it. In addition it needs military formations of a certain efficiency and, so as to be able to keep control over the direction of the movement in the likely event it would be outlawed by emergency measures, requires an underground apparatus and especially a network of communications and liaison that the bourgeois government would not be able to control.

In offensive actions, it is the fate of very lengthy preparatory work that is at stake. Before taking such a heavy decision, the Party will therefore have to have thoroughly studied the situation. It will not suffice that it be able to count on disciplined forces it directly manages and control, nor can the possibility be dismissed that the bonds uniting it to the most vital fraction of the proletariat won't be

broken in the course of the struggle. It will also have to be assured that its influence over the masses and the participation of the proletariat will grow in the course of action, since the development of the latter will awaken and put into play widespread tendencies within the deep layers of the mass.

42. It will not always be possible to proclaim openly that the overall movement unleashed by the Party has as its aim the overthrow of bourgeois power. Except in the case of an exceptionally rapid development of the revolutionary situation, the Party could engage in action on the basis of slogans that are not those of the revolutionary seizure of power, but can only, in a sense, come about by means that the masses would consider to be only immediate and vital demands. In the limited sense that these slogans would be realizable by a government that would not yet be the dictatorship of the proletariat, they give the Party the possibility of putting a stop to the action at a certain point where the organization and combativeness of the masses would not be harmed. This could prove useful if it appears impossible to continue the struggle to the end without compromising the possibility of taking it up again effectively at a later point.

43. Nor can it be excluded that the Party could deem it opportune to directly put forward a slogan for action knowing that it is not yet a question of taking power, but only of continuing a battle in which the prestige and the organization of the enemy will be shaken, which would materially and morally reinforce the proletariat. In that event, the Party would call the masses to the struggle either for objectives that can truly be reached or for more limited objectives than those it would propose in the event of success. In the Party's plan of action, these objectives would be ordered successively in such a way that each success would constitute a platform from which it could strengthen itself for the struggles ahead. Thus could be avoided as much as possible the desperate tactic of throwing oneself into the struggle where the only possible outcomes are either the

triumph of the revolution or, in the contrary case, the certainty of defeat and the dispersal of the proletarian forces for an unforeseeable time. Partial objectives are indispensable for maintaining control over the action, and these can be formulated without their coming into contradiction with the Party's critique of their economic or social content; that is, when they are considered only as ends in themselves whose attainment would satisfy the masses and not as the occasion for struggles that are a means and a step towards the final victory.

To be sure, determining these objectives and the limits of action is always a terribly delicate problem; it is from experience and in the selection of its leaders that the Party learns how to assume this supreme responsibility.

44. The Party does not subscribe to the belief that when the proletariat lacks combativeness, it is enough for a daring group to throw themselves into the struggle and attempt feats of arms against the bourgeois institutions for their example to awaken the masses. It is in the development of the real economic situation that the reasons must be sought that will bring the proletariat out of its prostration. If the tactics of the Party can and must contribute to that awakening, it will be by means of far deeper and sustained work than the spectacular gesture of an vanguard hurled to the assault.

45. However, the party will use its forces and discipline for actions conducted by armed groups, workers' organizations and even whole masses when it has full control over them in terms of planning and execution. Such actions, which may have a demonstrative and defensive value, will be designed to offer the masses concrete proof that with organization and preparation it is possible to counter some of the ruling class's resistance and counter-attacks, whether they take the form of terrorist actions by reactionary groups, or police prohibition of certain forms of proletarian organization and activity. The goal will not be to provoke a general action, but to give the demoralized and defeated mass the highest degree of combativeness

through a series of actions that combine to awaken in it a feeling and need for struggle.

46. The Party will absolutely avoid letting the internal discipline of union organizations be violated by local organizations and by the communists active in them during this kind of local action. Communists must not provoke ruptures with the national central bodies directed by other parties, since, as indicated above, these must serve as indispensable supports for the conquest of such bodies. However, the Communist Party and its militants will follow the masses attentively, giving them all their support when they respond spontaneously to bourgeois provocations by breaking with the discipline of the inaction and passivity imposed by the leaders of reformist and opportunist unions.

47. In the situation that characterizes the moment when state power is being shaken and is about to fall, the Communist Party, deploying its forces to the maximum, and conducting the as much agitation as possible for revolutionary actions, will not lose any opportunity to influence moments of unstable balance in the situation by making use of all the forces that may momentarily be marching with it, though its action must remain independent. When it is certain of taking control of the movement once the traditional State organization has collapsed, it will be able to make transitory agreements with other movements fighting in its camp, without - and this is important - expressing this in mass propaganda or slogans. In all these cases, the only measure of the appropriateness of these contacts and the appraisal that must be made will be success. The Communist Party's tactics are never dictated by theoretical *a priori* or ethical and esthetic concerns; it is solely dictated by the need to conform to the methods and reality of the historical process, in accordance with the dialectical synthesis of doctrine and action that is the heritage of a movement which will be called upon to become the protagonist in the broadest social transformation, the leader of the greatest revolutionary war in history.

The Party and the Trade Union Question

Introduction

The following theses appeared in 1972 in the context of an energetic attempt to set the party's action in economic struggles in the existing trade union organizations in Italy and France back on the right track, after the so-called «Florentine Crisis». They represent a reaction to the ruinous attempts then being made by the comrades of Florence (Italy) in charge to lead the Party union work, to mobilize the masses with slogans such as «re-build class trade unions» or «defend the red Italian general union federation». These attempts were based on the false assumption that a microscopic organization still surrounded on all sides by the prevailing Stalinist counter-revolution had the strength to mobilize the masses or undertake a large scale initiative.

Their erroneous conception consisted in a mechanical transfer of slogans that corresponded to a period of social high tension, such as the time after the First World War, to a completely different phase, which had begun with the victory of Stalinism and continued with the Second World War and the post-war reconstruction, all under the banner of class collaboration, democratic cretinism and reformism. It was quite apparent what phase we were in. But they overlooked the fact that this counterrevolutionary cycle, with the complete destruction of revolutionary communism, had also led to the paralysis of the proletariat's wage struggles and union activity, thereby opening the way for imperialist capitalism to realize one of its most important tendencies: the integration of the trade unions into the apparatus and mechanisms of the bourgeois state. The large union federations had thus lost all traces of autonomy, and under no circumstances merited the name «red unions». This also meant that the renaissance of class unions or other class organizations could not be the point of departure for a real mobilization of the working masses, but that instead such a mobilization would be its prerequisite. This means a renewal of wage struggles on a general scale and a general resistance to capital, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a growing real influence of the revolutionary party on the masses.

The process of the integration of the unions into the state apparatus is a component of the

imperialist development of capitalism, and therefore irreversible.

However, the evolution of capitalism leads not only to imperialism, with all its hideous tendencies, but also to a sharpening of contradictions and the class struggle. Thus the process which has led, through a series of military and political defeats, to a rigid control over the proletariat by its opportunist leadership is reversible. The preconditions for this reversal consist on the one hand in the unavoidable material pressures which will force the proletariat to renew its economic struggles more intensively and extensively, and on the other hand – precisely because of the enormous material weight of opportunism – in the intervention (and consequently also the reconstitution) of the class party, i.e., in the ability of this party both to defend and advance its general political program without lapse, and to intervene in the daily struggles that break out only sporadically today, in order to counteract the braking effect of the opportunist union leadership and parties. These currents long ago became one with capitalism, and do their utmost to save the «national economy» from crises (especially social crises), while the outbreak of crises will necessarily force the proletariat to resist and to fight the opportunist leadership in an unconscious mutiny.

The object of the theses is to emphasize the necessity of active, systematic intervention in the daily struggles and union organizations, in fact, in all mass organizations which, for the sake of accuracy, we prefer to call intermediate organizations, because they lie between the broad masses and the party, and can function as a link or transmission belt. Obviously such work, especially in trade unions, is today necessarily underground work in many cases, and it should thus be noted that it is important this party work be purged of demagogy, of any presumption that the relationship of forces can be reversed with mere gestures, and of any concession to the prevailing illusion that the revolution can be accomplished without a lengthy, patient, rigorous, consciously materialist revolutionary preparation.

The theses therefore outline some basic principles, explain the relevance of these principles to the trade union question, but do not pretend to constitute or replace a detailed plan of action. Such a plan does not fall from thin air, but is the result of the party's continuous intervention in the working masses (no matter how limited its influ-

ence) combined with the resumption of the class struggle or at least a revival of a real combativeness among the working class.

Furthermore, the 1972 theses must be seen as a nodal point in the modest but essential task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine undertaken by our party, and should be understood as a

continuation of the work begun by the Theses of the Second Communist International Congress on the Trade Union Movement, Factory Committees and the Third International (1920) and extended by «The Inversion of Praxis in Marxist Theory (1951)» and «Revolutionary Party and Economic Action (1951)».

I. Points of Principle

1. «The correct Marxist praxis teaches that individual, or similarly, mass consciousness necessarily follows action, and that action follows the impulse generated by economic interests. It is only in the party that consciousness, and in certain phases, the decision to take action, precede the class conflict. But this possibility is organically inseparable from the molecular interaction of initial physical and economic impulses». (*Inversion of Praxis in Marxist Theory*)

Inverting the idealist schema for the interpretation of human events, Marxism sees in history the arena of struggles between classes whose needs and material interests impel them to act on antagonistic fronts. It is only afterwards, in response to the experience of these same struggles, that they acquire consciousness of the direction in which they are moving.

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* outlined the entire ascending scale from the first instinctive reactions against capitalist exploitation up to the organization of the proletariat as a class, and therefore into a political party, and the organization of the class into the ruling class through the seizure of power and the exercise of its dictatorship. Not only does this ascending scale have its necessary roots in elementary economic determinations, which in turn are a reflection of the pressure of the productive forces on the restrictive envelope of productive relations, but it is also **continuously being nourished** by these elementary thrusts. It is true that one does not create revolutions; one leads them. It is equally true however, that one cannot lead revolutions until the vast proletarian masses are **compelled to make them**, and this is not determined by a con-

sciousness or an explicit will on their part, or even by the fact that this consciousness and this will have been transmitted to them in their totality by the Party.

2. «The dialectical interpretation of the formation of class consciousness and of the unitary organization of the class party» implies that the party «transports a vanguard of the proletariat from the terrain of spontaneous and partial movements determined by the interests of groups to that of generalized proletarian action» although the party» does not achieve this by rejecting those elemental movements, but accomplishes their integration and transcendence through living experiences, by pushing for their realization, taking active part in them, and following them attentively throughout their development» (*Rome Theses III, 11*).

From this it follows:

a) that propaganda work and proselytism on the one hand, and the party's numerical size and real influence on more or less large layers of the proletariat, on the other hand, are «inseparable from the reality of the proletariat's activity and movement in all its myriad forms», and b) that it is a «banal error to regard participation in struggles for contingent and limited objectives as being in contradiction with the final and general revolutionary struggle».

A fundamental thesis of Marxism – and therefore of our current – states that this link, which is sometimes broad and deep, sometimes limited and episodic, depending on objective circumstance, can never be obtained by means of tactical expedients detached from principles, but instead, in all circumstances, represents one of the party's fundamental tasks. Conversely, only as a result of this link is the

proletarian struggle able to raise itself above the trade unionist level – the highest it can attain by its own efforts according to Lenin – to reach the level of a struggle of all the exploited class against all the exploiting class and, when the necessary objective conditions permit, the level of a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the concentrated and dictatorial state power of capitalism and for the establishment of centralized and dictatorial proletarian power.

3. For these same reasons of principle, the party's participation, through the intermediary of its groups, in the life of all the forms of proletarian economic associations open to workers (and only to workers) of all political affiliations is an integral part of this task, since, according to the *Manifesto* and the texts of Marxism, these economic associations are the necessary product of these struggles.

The following affirmations count among the party's fundamental positions:

a) the workers' union is never revolutionary in itself; nor is any other form of immediate organization, even those not exclusively economic. On the contrary, because of its immediate nature and the presence of groups with differing immediate interests, it tends to confine itself within the petty and corporatist limits of minimalist and reformist action. The trade union can, however, become a vital instrument of the revolution, and initially of the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat to the extent that the party has conquered a considerable influence within it, i.e. among the organized masses.

b) for the complete fulfillment of this task, and finally for the revolution itself, which presupposes among other things a centralization

of workers' forces, it is desirable that it be unitary, that it comprise all workers placed in a specific economic situation. The corollary of this thesis is that one cannot remedy the tendency of economic organizations to degenerate, nor their continued degeneration, by creating immediate organizations of a different form, and certainly not by creating local organizations or ones limited to the factory. The appearance of such organizations is indeed a necessary aspect of the development of social conflicts, and it is sometimes a symptom of the masses' disgust with the counter-revolutionary practices of the national union.

In certain instances, the party can utilize such organizations by centralizing them, but taken in themselves they reproduce in organizational form the shortcomings, limitations and weaknesses of partial economic struggles.

4. In conformity with Marxist tradition, the Communist Left has therefore always considered the conditions of its existence as an active factor in the preparation of the proletariat for the revolutionary assault and its victory.

a) the appearance of economic struggles on a vast scale and in a non-episodic form, and the intense participation of the party in these struggles for the reasons indicated above.

b) the existence of a system of intermediate organs, which must not be episodic or ephemeral, between the party and the class, and the intervention of the party in these organizations to conquer not necessarily the majority and therefore the leadership, but enough influence to be able to utilize these organs as a transmission belt for its program among the mass of organized workers and to impregnate the program at least in most combative layers of workers.

It is contrary to Marxism to demand that the trade unions be free from all counter-revolutionary influences as a precondition for membership and party revolutionary political work in them, or to replace the unions led by so-called work-

ers' parties with associations composed only of communists. This position is obviously even idealist in origin, because immediate organizations can never attain any such purity, the party itself being by definition subject to counter-revolutionary influences as well.

« The workers' union is made up of individual workers who belong to different parties or to no party; communists neither propose nor provoke splits in unions because of the fact that the leading organs are conquered and held by other parties, but they proclaim openly that the unions cannot fulfil their function completely until the proletarian class party leads these economic organizations. » (1945 *Political Platform* of the Internationalist Communist Party of Italy).

This also applies to the struggle for immediate economic improvements, and not only to the final revolutionary struggle in which the unions and other intermediate organs are in danger of playing a counter-revolutionary role if they are not

led or at least influenced by the party. On the other hand, the role of immediate organizations may be positive, but cannot be sufficient or decisive. The party in itself is not sufficient to achieve victory, but when conditions are favorable its role is certainly decisive.

The party considers – and it counsels the workers to consider – immediate demands not as ends in themselves but as necessary means for the preparation, training and organization of the proletariat for its final objectives. If they were to become ends in themselves they could only perpetuate wage slavery, instead of leading to its destruction. Likewise, the party considers – and this it openly declares – the immediate forms of proletarian organization not as the goal of the workers' emancipation struggle, but as an instrument which the party can and must use to attain the supreme goal of communism. In the party's view they are no more a sacred and intangible fetish than any other form of organization.

II. Historical Evolution and Perspectives of the Immediate Organs of the Working Class

1. The above considerations establish the points of principle without which it is impossible even to give precise, practical directives. They would remain incomplete without an analysis of the historical course that workers' associationism has followed from the victory of the capitalist mode of production up to its senile, imperialist phase, and which our party has characterized with precision in its basic texts from the period after the Second World War.

In an initial phase the victorious bourgeoisie prohibited and forcibly dispersed the first associations of workers' resistance, pushing them in consequence onto the terrain of open and violent political struggle. This is why the First International could be born in part as a regroupment of economic associations led by the General Council around a program seeking to prepare the revolutionary assault against the political power of the ruling classes, the

bulwark of their economic power.

In the ensuing phase, by contrast, the bourgeoisie deemed it more opportune, indeed necessary for the stability of its rule, to tolerate and give legal status to the coalitions of wage laborers, while endeavouring to attract them into its political orbit by virtue of its relations and compromises with reformist union leaders and by supporting itself on a worker aristocracy interested in maintaining a political and social order which gave it privileges that were more or less illusory, but nevertheless disastrous for the consciousness and combativity of the class.

This experience provoked reactions within the unions on the part of the left socialist currents. Above all in Italy, France and the United States, it fed the anarcho-syndicalist illusion that it was possible to avoid opportunist minimalism by opposing the existing economic organizations with other «congenitally»

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revolutionary ones. During the First World War, in most countries this resulted in class collaboration parallel to the *Union sacrée* among political parties, and in a small minority of countries, into a timorous neutrality, and very few union leaders or anarcho-syndicalists escaped the general collapse.

2. The aftermath of the First World War saw the large national trade unions aligned in the social-democratic front (along with the parliamentary groups, they constituted its principal pillars), i.e., in a front for social conservation. Thus the German unions collaborated with the social-democratic governments in repressing the proletarian movement, and the American trade unions sabotaged strikes and defended the established order in keeping with the interests of the privileged skilled labor sector. In Italy the pacifist and minimalist unions moved more or less covertly into line with the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

The extraordinary class vitality, the persistence of a tradition of union struggle, the influx into traditional organizations of huge masses thrust into action by the terrible post-war crisis and composed above all of unskilled laborers – all these factors combined to make opportunism, which through the union leaderships played the role of a transmission belt for bourgeois ideologies and therefore bourgeois practices within workers' organizations, powerless to prevent the unions from experiencing an intense revitalization, even politically. In certain countries the rank and file was in perpetual turmoil, inflamed to differing degrees by Russia's Red October and thus accessible to the revolutionary propaganda of communists. Even though opportunism did reflect the objective tendencies of the imperialist phase, it was unable to play the role it plays today as the agent of the direct subordination of the unions to the bourgeois state.

This is why the International, reconstructed on the basis of fully restored Marxist doctrine, not only emphasized the necessity that communists do revolutionary work in

the unions, «even the most reactionary ones», by all legal and illegal means, but could not exclude their conquest by the party, except in cases such as that of the American Federation of Labor, which was closed not only to revolutionary propaganda but also to the great mass of wage laborers. The manner in which this conquest should or could be accomplished would depend on each specific case, but as a rule the conquest itself could only result from violent battles against opportunism entrenched both in the leaderships and in vast strata of workers, i.e. at the base of existing organizations. At the same time, the Communist International issued its members the directive to support the organizations which had been formed in opposition to the official unions; in response to the disgust which the practice of the bureaucrats inspired in combative workers, and their will to fight on the terrain of open and direct class struggle. The CI hoped to assist them thereby in freeing themselves from their anarcho-syndicalist prejudices, and did not hesitate, when objective conditions imposed the need, to encourage the splitting of old, completely corrupted economic organizations on a general scale (cf. *Theses of the 2nd Congress on the trade union movement and factory committees, 1920*).

3. The situation in Italy was particularly clear in this respect. We mention it because it assists us, more than any other example in this period, in understanding the changes that came about later under the double influence of the victory of fascism and the fierce counter-revolutionary wave of Stalinism.

The three organizations which could justifiably be called red – the CGL (General Confederation of Labour), the USI (Italian Syndical Union) and SF (Union of Railway Workers) – were opposed to the organizations which were clearly initiated by the bosses, referred to as «yellow» and «white». The red unions, initiated by openly working class currents and parties, advocated the methods of class struggle and direct action against the bosses, and

to the extent that these methods were compatible with the opportunist tendencies of their leaders, they were applied. They tended toward autonomy in relation to the state and administration, and they could never have sacrificed this autonomy. The tradition behind them was no abstract formula or set of statutes; it was embodied simultaneously in the combative masses and in a structured, compact network of leagues and union halls where all categories of workers assembled and associated together completely naturally. These labour halls were often the location of a workers' circle and sometimes even the party seat. In all cases, they were fortresses forbidden to priest and state bureaucrat, or what amounts to the same thing, to the police, and if necessary they were defended by arms against the combined forces of democratic order and fascist gangs. The influence of this real and material tradition was exercised not only from the outside, but to a degree which is unimaginable today, within the union organizations themselves. This is what imposed precise limits on the opportunist leaders. Open to all wage workers of every political and religious persuasion, and hence also open to the influence of the Marxist revolutionary party, the organizations were, in spite of their opportunist leaderships, class unions. The proof of their organic nature as red unions is provided by two series of facts: on the one hand, the bourgeois class, which sought desperately to re-assemble its «scattered members» into a centralized and centralizing organization, had to take the locals of the unions, leagues and labor halls by force, and after having conquered them, to destroy the network of traditional organizations in order to construct a new network for its own use. On the other hand, in the final phase of the confrontation with the fascists, the Left issued the slogan for defense of the traditional red unions and of the necessity of rebuilding them once they had been destroyed, by sabotaging openly the corporatist state unions. (cf. *Lyons Theses III, 11*) (1). This did not imply issuing a proletarian licence

to the reformist union leaders of the time, but it was necessary to «provide the facts useful in understanding the development of the capitalist regime and of the reactions of the workers' movement which, in its organizational forms and tendencies, cannot help but feel the effects of this development» (*Union Splits in Italy*, 1949).

It must be understood that in the years 1921-23 the problem faced by the party led by the Italian Marxist Left, i.e. that of working in the unions to establish a link with the masses, win them to communism and overthrow the opportunist leaderships (the propaganda for the unification of the two autonomous unions with the CGL had no other objective) actually resolved itself: social relations and conflicts, forms of organization and struggle, all aspects of the reality of the time corresponded in an obvious and natural way to these principled positions.

4. After the Second World War, without changing any of our principled positions, and in fact reaffirming them clearly and trenchantly in the face of the dismantling of both the communist movement and the workers' movement in general throughout the world, the party constantly denied that the phase opened by the end of the conflict might be interpreted as a mechanical reproduction of the social situation after the first world war.

In reality, in the twenty years between 1926 and 1945 the relationship of forces between the classes had been overturned by the combined action of the Stalinist devastation and the reorganization of the capitalist world along totalitarian, centralized and to speak clearly, even fascist lines, especially in places where the hypocrisy of democratic consultations and civil liberties was maintained.

In spite of the rift in the *Union sacrée* and the support which opportunism offered to the politics of national defense in most countries, the First World War did not succeed in breaking the programmatic and tactical continuity which Marxism regards as the condition and even the guarantee of a class re-

surgence. In spite of the proletariat's stinging political defeat, this continuity was everywhere embodied in communist opposition groups, many quite small, which participated in founding the Communist International.

On the other hand, by physically destroying the CI (before dissolving it formally), by practicing a popular front policy, by dragging the USSR into the League of Nations, Stalinism has placed the prestige of Russian pseudo-socialism at the service of the total submission of the workers' political and union movement to the ruling class, finally delivering the proletariat to imperialist massacre, either as a disarmed victim, or worse yet, as voluntary cannon fodder.

This terrible work of destruction was incomparably graver, in its lasting consequences, than any physical defeat on the battlefield. Thanks to this defeat capitalist evolution toward centralization and discipline has been able to make giant strides. The full impact of this phenomenon can be measured if fascism and Nazism, which were only acute manifestations, are not given exclusive attention, and one considers developments in the USA under Roosevelt, in France during the popular front, in classic Swiss democracy, in «socialist» democracy in the Scandinavian countries and later in «Welfare» England. In all these countries a distinctly totalitarian practice was adopted, consisting in drawing the workers' union into the state apparatus, disciplining them with a system of legal measures in various forms (e.g. Swiss «labor peace» and the regulation of the right to strike in Scandinavia, America and Britain), and in depriving it of a considerable part of its role of assistance, protection and negotiation in favor of specialized state bodies, necessarily set up under the aegis of a progressive democracy (e.g. France under Blum), and which were resurrected by anti-fascism with the Kremlin's blessings.

In all these countries a long tradition of reformism existed whose tarnished emblem Stalinism has polished anew by adding its own

colors. This tradition has enabled a painless and almost imperceptible passage to the most modern forms of centralized administration (and direct economic management) of capitalist rule. It is no coincidence that in Italy and Germany, countries where the threat of proletarian revolution had been most imminent, this task was entrusted instead to fascism, in which the Marxist Italian Left recognized from the very beginning not only the necessary culmination, but the full and complete historical realization of social reformism. In both cases the result was identical: destruction of the workers' movement's last vestige of autonomy where it had not already been drowned in blood, and the possibility for the ruling class to «manoeuvre and control by the most varied means both the constitutional interclassist organs of democracy and organizations containing only proletarians», this possibility deriving directly from «strict control and even total absorption» of these organizations, «with the result that all their traditional technical, union, economic and political functions were increasingly exercised by the organs and offices of the official state apparatus», (cf. *Analysis of Objective Factors Weighing on the Resurgence of the Proletarian Movement*, 1950).

Under the banner of totalitarian rule by the monstrous states that emerged victorious from the «anti-fascist crusade» of the Second World War - states which had actually been defeated politically and socially, since they acted in perfect continuity with fascism - the GGL in Italy and the three «historical» unions were reconstructed in a France occupied by Nazism a short time before (Actually this reconstruction applies formally only to two of the three, since L.O. was formed in April, 1948).

The CGIL was born on a terrain from which Stalinism had swept all class union traditions and where state social assistance and insurance organizations inherited from fascism abounded under a benevolent compromise «not between three mass proletarian parties,

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which did not exist, but between three groups of leaderships, of non-proletarian cliques, each claiming to be the legitimate heir to the fascist regime». From 1944 on, our party declared that such a solution had to be combatted «by urging the workers to overthrow this opportunist apparatus of professional counter-revolutionaries». The CGIL was thus born as the projection into the union sphere of the CLN (Committees of National Liberation) of the new counter-revolutionary alliance installed under the banner of democracy, and as an instrument – which proved to be totally effective – of economic reconstruction at the cost of the sweat, and if necessary the blood, of the workers. The French national union, which divided in April 1948, was controlled by the same forces, allied with the government, and with the same objectives. Since then no further red confederation has existed, even under reformist control; only a tricolor confederation has existed, and the party recognized that this reality was not changed by the 1948 splits in France or the 1949 splits in Italy, which took place for reasons totally alien to any class delimitation, being connected instead with ruptures in the former war alliances of the imperialist powers.

In the absence of minimal conditions which might have permitted the existing economic organizations to enjoy a certain class autonomy, two other factors came into play: a) the almost total subordination of the proletariat to the forces of opportunism, which has been aggravated by the material weight of Russia and its political agents as much as by the allied occupation forces, resulting in the absorption by the proletariat of petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois ideologies; b) a «change in relations between employer and wage worker» which, by dint of an entire «series of reformist assistance and welfare measures», provides the worker with a «small patrimonial guarantee... and therefore something to risk, which makes the worker hesitant and even opportunist at the time of a union

struggle... and above all at the moment of striking and revolt» (cf. *Revolutionary Party and Economic Action*, 1951).

We have never concluded from this – and we will never be tempted to do so – as Marcuse has, that the working class is definitively bourgeoisified, and therefore that its objective historical mission has ended. However, it is certain that this fact has constituted a brake on the resurgence not only of revolutionary action, but even on economic struggle, although it may be transformed into a supplementary factor of instability under the conditions of total insecurity in which the wage laborer will find himself when the crisis breaks out anew in full force. Similarly, this is why opportunism appears today a thousand times more virulent than in any other epoch in the history of social conflict: it penetrates by a thousand channels into the relatively mobile and self-contained layer of the labor aristocracy and into a proletariat already «infected to the core by petty-bourgeois democratism». (cf. *Considerations on the Party's Organic Activity When the Situation is Unfavourable*, 1965)

After the war the world situation of workers' associationism appeared as follows: either trade unions inserted directly into the cogs of the state apparatus, as in the capitalist East bloc, or trade unions intimately connected with the state machinery by links all the more effective the more hypocritically they are concealed, as in the capitalist West bloc, not to mention the unions which the new bourgeoisies in the former colonies have formed, which, being directly dependent upon the state, are only instruments of mobilization and discipline of the workforce. The fact that in some countries separate unions still exist does not detract from this fact, which has been repeatedly indicated in the party's fundamental texts. Nor do preparations in Italy for a reunification which will be no more than a return to the Committees of National Liberation, whose ideology the unions have never abandoned. The reunification is only an open avowal of the fact

that in spite of appearances they remain the same as they were before, i.e. they form a single counter-revolutionary bloc, a transmission belt for bourgeois ideologies, slogans and programs.

5. In 1949 we stated, and we repeat today, that this process is just as irreversible as the totalitarian and centralized evolution of imperialist capitalism, both in economics and in politics, and that this is what provides «the key to the evolution of the trade unions in all the large capitalist countries». But we have a scientific certainty the process that has separated the class from its party for more than thirty years and has made the class consider communism as improbable or even impossible is itself reversible; and we have a scientific certainty that if the dynamic of the imperialist phase implies «a more and more complete subordination of the unions to the bourgeois state», it also implies the unleashing on a global scale of the economic crisis and the explosion of a general resurgence of the class struggle, however distant it may appear today. The real, lasting and fundamental conquest of such a resurgence will be the return of the rigorously selected and centralized organization of the party as an active factor on the stage of history, but it will necessarily be accompanied by the renaissance of mass organizations as intermediaries between the broad mass of the class and its political organ. These organizations need not necessarily be the unions. In the perspective of an abrupt turn toward a revolutionary assault they will not be the unions. In the Russian revolution, it was not the unions but the Soviets which, in a situation of virtual dual power, constituted the intermediary link between the party and the class. But on the world scale there are countries where the revolution will mature slowly and painfully instead of exploding with incendiary speed, and where the reappearance of economic organizations in the strict sense of the word cannot be excluded. In these countries the apparent calm of the «democratic» period of capitalism will give way

to a political high tension (more intense than even after the First World War) which is characteristic of great historical turning points, since the aggravation of all antagonisms will necessarily elicit, within the working class itself, profound ruptures and heated conflicts between the vanguard of the class and its more hesitant and reticent rearguard.

In any case the problem is not one of the **forms** (2) which the resurgence of the class struggle will assume and the modes of organization which it will tend to adopt: what is important is the process which will engender these forms and modes, and which will be more tumultuous and fertile in proportion as the contradictions and paroxysms characteristic of the bourgeois mode of production have accumulated in the course of its highest phase, imperialism. If this process culminates in the seizure of power by the proletariat and the institution of its revolutionary dictatorship, the trade union form will not disappear. Not only must it be reborn wherever it has been supplanted by other intermediate bodies more in conformity with the

needs of revolutionary struggle, but for the first time in history it will then form a link capable of welding the class to the party, as its structure enables it to centrally organize the entire class. Because the road that leads from capitalism to communism can only be long, difficult and tormented, sown with gigantic struggles on the world scale, such a link will be of vital importance, for even where political victory has been secured it will not be possible to vanquish the inertia of mercantile forms or uproot them overnight.

All these reasons of principle are engraved in our fundamental texts, and this perspective is inseparable from the very foundations of Marxism. This is why it is also true that we have nothing to defend in the unions of today, and that we must affirm against them the permanent principle of workers' associationism which is a factor in the development of class struggles, while emphasizing that it is also a product of these struggles, and that the realization of this principle is conditioned by the development of the struggles themselves.

should yield a temporary improvement for the workers and attenuate the most odious forms of capitalist exploitation, it can never emancipate the proletariat from its condition as an exploited and oppressed class. The party, always presenting the final objective to the working class, must likewise demonstrate the necessity of political organization, as well as the necessity of an intermediate system of class organizations under the party's influence for the coordinated development of economic struggles.

2. The party must clearly understand and have the courage to proclaim that the proletarian class resurgence, in order to emerge from the abyss of the counter-revolution, will necessarily pass through painful experiences, abrupt setbacks, harsh deceptions, confused attempts on the part of the class to shake off the crushing yoke of a half century of ignoble opportunist practice. The party cannot condemn episodes of wildcat strikes, formation of strike, rank-and-file, or «base» committees, etc. – phenomena which recur periodically in the history of the workers' movement – independently from the names they have taken. The party cannot ignore them under the pretext that they have no place in the harmonious schema of a centrally organized combat waged on all fronts.

On the contrary, the party recognizes that these phenomena are symptoms of an instinctive reaction by the proletariat against the impotence to which the unions condemn its struggles and demands. It must profit from them in order to inculcate in even a thin layer of the exploited a consciousness that their efforts, no matter how generous, are condemned to remain sterile if the class does not find within itself the strength to accomplish a total political re-alignment, i.e. to orient itself toward the direct and general assault on capitalist power.

In 1920 the attitude of the Abstentionist Faction, which founded the Communist Party of Italy, was no different when it was presented with episodes such as the factory

III. Directives for Practical Action

1. The paradox of the present historical cycle (which is only superficial in the light of the factors described above) is that in the face of the accumulation of the contradictions and ruptures of world capitalism, the working class has fallen to an even lower level than that considered in Lenin's *What is to be Done?*. The problem then was to import political consciousness, socialism, into the class; we now face the difficult task of welding the political intervention of the party onto an economic activity that spontaneously does not even attain the level of what Lenin called trade union consciousness, and which, except in rare cases, retains a sporadic, corporatist, sectoral and we will say even an intranecine competitive character.

The party certainly cannot elicit the class struggle, but its task is to recall constantly the elementary and indispensable conditions of struggle

in the course of even the most sporadic and partial economic battles, by defending the methods and general slogans which tend to unite the workers of all factories, all categories, all localities: extension of strikes, denunciation of rotating strikes, demanding the greatest increase of wages for the most poorly paid categories, massive reduction in the length of the working day; abolition of bonuses, material stimuli and piece-work, full wages to the unemployed.

The party must therefore denounce the work of sabotage and division of the unions which – and this is no coincidence – reject these demands, without renouncing for an instant agitation and propaganda for the supreme objectives of the proletarian movement. It must devote itself to showing the working class how facts confirm the Marxist position, asserting that even if a vigorously-waged economic struggle

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occupations or the large scale strikes in open opposition to the Central union leadership, because, though it regarded these movements as sterile in regard to the objectives being sought, it considered them fertile in political lessons thanks to the party's determined activity.

Similarly, even though our influence will generally remain limited, the party's militants do not refuse to share responsibility on committees and other organs of a temporary nature, provided they are not manoeuvred from the start by political forces alien to class tradition, and they express a real workers' combativity. However, these militants do not neglect any opportunity to recall the necessity of transcending the limits of factory or locality, and of using the energy of the class to reinforce the revolutionary party and to contribute to the rebirth of intermediary class organizations which only a vigorous proletarian resurgence will make possible. They must never succumb to the error of theorizing or admitting that local or temporary organs can be theorized as a model of the future economic or intermediary association in general.

3. No matter what union our militants might belong to in any country (this is a contingent problem), it must be clear that the party does not confer a «class» label on any union, because none on Earth merits this distinction today. (3)

In Italy and France, where several trade unions exist, our militants and communist groups must penetrate the CGIL and CGT. This is not because the party considers them «class» unions, nor because they contain the greatest number of workers, since the other unions comprise large percentages of pure wage workers also. It is because they constitute the specific field of activity of the worst agent of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the proletariat. This Stalinist ultra-opportunism, which, having completed its work of destroying the workers' movement, has become a direct pillar of social conservation by adopting and practicing principles worthy of Mussolini's Labor Char-

ter or the pontifical encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. Because this ultra-opportunism pawns off a counter-revolutionary program and methods in the name of the Russian revolution, we must oppose it polemically with the class tradition of the old unitary union federations, i.e. with a past of which the unions cannot boast because they are of openly corporatist origin.

Representing, not a fraction of the workers' movement (which would imply that a class nature can be recognized at least in part in the union organization itself), but the only proletarian political current, communist militants and groups develop the party program in the unions at every possible opportunity. They assemble a circle, however small, of organized workers around them, and, to the extent they can count on the support of these workers, participate in assemblies and meetings and intervene in them, even when they have been formally excluded from them, as in Italy, for not agreeing to collection of union dues (the *dellega*) (4) by the employer, or for any other reason. They always base their direct interventions on an objective assessment of the relationship of forces, made by the section, group, or if necessary the centre. When such interventions are prohibited in practice, as is now the case in France, and where the torpor of the organized masses allows no concrete possibility of clandestine penetration, individual membership of militants in less central trade unions may be tolerated,

In Italy, the unification now underway will doubtless make our work difficult, – since all political currents will probably be prohibited from the new organization. But the critique of this re-unification must be based on the demonstration of the hypocritical character of the CGIL's every claim to be a class union, not just on the inverse thesis that through this merger with the other two organizations the so-called red union would repudiate its principles and lose its character. Moreover, to the extent that a unification would produce a partisan CLN-type situation at a more advanced stage

of capitalist production, it might even have a positive influence – in the same way that the maintenance of the 1945 political alliance would have caused Stalinism to lose its proletarian appearance in the organizations it controlled – and furnish a polemical argument useful for our propaganda.

In other countries the objective situation could give rise to other problems and impose other solutions, and it will be incumbent on the party, wherever it is implanted, to decide on a practical course without noisy voluntarism or blind fatalism.

4. As this has already occurred in Italy, the functions to which our militants may be called directly by the workers (e.g. shop stewards) can provide a useful test of the weld between political and union action in the narrow sense, despite the danger, to which union work is always exposed, of becoming enclosed in a purely minimalist and corporatist practice, these functions can constitute one of the cases anticipated by the *Fundamental Theses of the Party* (1951), where comrades assume these duties on the basis of a favorable relationship of forces. When «the organization in question does not exclude in its statutes and *a priori* the possibility of conducting an autonomous class activity», our penetration, even in peripheral economic organizations, is desirable in the framework of a rigorous political and programmatic orientation. Comrades therefore endeavour to promote frequent workers' assemblies, initiatives to extend struggles and surpass all time limits, forms of proselytism, even at the individual level, open denunciation of the practice of mixed commissions or studies on work tempo, etc., and corporatist manoeuvres endorsed by the tricolor unions. When the union apparatus reserves the predictable reward of expulsion for rebel delegates, they never submit passively, but appeal the expulsion to the only authority our militants recognise: the proletarians who elected them and whose interests they have defended as every party militant is determined to

do in all circumstances.

5. To develop all forms of practical activity thoroughly and methodically, our press (as Lenin pointed out in *What is to be Done?*) must act as collective organizer for the class and for party militants, and, above all, to regularly and trenchantly defend the principles enumerated in the first section of these Theses, and which are better expounded in other texts (cf. *Revolutionary Party and Economic Action*) It must denounce the futile and counter-revolutionary forms of struggle and objectives proposed by existing unions, even toward solely economic ends. It must show the limits of activities centered on immediate demands and the need to go beyond them in the general revolutionary struggle. It must combat tendencies to limit itself to the factory, enterprise or locality, such as are manifested repeatedly by the proletariat itself, and it must condemn the obscene practice encouraged by opportunism which consists of imploring the paternal intervention of the state or of a duly sensitized «public opinion». It must proclaim the impossibility of politically neutral trade unionism and demand class associations open to the decisive influence of the revolutionary Marxist party and susceptible to conquest by it. It must

emphasize the vital importance of international unification of struggles and economic organizations, and more generally or in a later phase, of intermediary organizations. Finally, while reminding the workers of the great stages of their class movement, of its glorious victories and defeats so rich in lessons, it must follow the present development of proletarian struggles in the world attentively, strictly subordinating its combat and slogans to its program.

(1) Similarly, in its 1944 political platform, the Internationalist Communist Party of Italy (the nucleus of today's ICP) demanded the «reconstruction of the unitary union confederation, autonomous in relation to the state administration, acting according to the methods of class struggle and direct action against the bosses, from local and category based demands to general class demands». This reconstruction presupposed at least a partial resurgence of class struggles in the post-second world war period (Thirty years later it is obvious that this resurgence has not manifested itself yet). However, the party formulated the most explicit doubts about the

possibility of such a resurgence any time soon, but it could not presume to exclude it, and for this reason demanded this reconstruction wherever possible.

(2) It is no coincidence if one of the party's fundamental texts, recalling that in the revolutionary perspective it is «organically indispensable to have between the masses of workers and the minority assembled in the party another layer of organisations which are constitutionally open to only workers», asserts that the essentials of this perspective do not exclude that there may be the most varied evolution in the modification, dissolution and reconstruction of trade union type organisations from the point of view of all the associations existing in different countries today.» (Rome Meeting, April 1951)

(3) This directly concerns the Euro-American region, the epicentre of imperialism. The situation in peripheral areas such as Asia and Africa will merit a separate study.

(4) «the *delega*», is the delegation of the right to collect trade union dues to the employers - through deduction from the pay packet - which was proposed by the three Italian central unions and of course accepted.

«programme communiste», n°53-54, october 1971 - March 1972

PROGRAM OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

The International Communist Party is constituted on the basis of the following principles established at Leghorn in 1921 on the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Section of the Communist International) :

1. In the present capitalist social regime there develops an increasing contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, giving rise to the antithesis of interests and to the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

2. The present day production relations are protected by the power of the bourgeois State, that, whatever the form of representative system and the use of elective democracy, constitutes the organ for the defense of the interests of the capitalist class.

3. The proletariat can neither crush or modify the mechanism of capitalist production relations from which its exploitation derives, without the violent destruction of the bourgeois power.

4. The indispensable organ of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is the class party. The Communist Party consists of the most advanced and resolute part of the proletariat; it unites the efforts of the working masses transforming their struggles for group interests and contingent issues into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. It is up to the Party to propagate revolutionary theory among the masses, to organize the material means of action, to lead the working class during its struggle, securing the historical continuity and the international unity of the movement.

5. After it has smashed the power of the capitalist State, the proletariat must completely destroy the old State apparatus in order to organize itself as the ruling class and set up its own dictatorship; meanwhile depriving the bourgeoisie and members of the bourgeois class of all political rights and functions as long as they survive socially, founding the organs of the new regime exclusively on the productive class. Such is the program that the Communist Party sets itself and which characterizes it. It is this party therefore which exclusively represents, organizes and directs the proletarian dictatorship. The requisite defence of the proletarian state against all counter-revolutionary initiatives can only be assured by depriving the bourgeoisie and parties which are enemies of the proletarian dictatorship of all means of agitation and political propaganda and by equipping the proletariat with an armed organization in order to repel all interior and exterior attacks.

6. Only the force of the proletarian State will be able to systematically put into effect the necessary measures for intervening in the relations of the social economy, by means of which the collective administration of production and distribution will take the place of the capitalist system.

7. This transformation of the economy and consequently of the whole social life will lead to the gradual elimination of the necessity for the political State, which will progressively give way to the rational administration of human activities.

* * *

Faced with the situation in the capitalist world and the workers' movement following the Second World War the position of the Party is the following :

8. In the course of the first half of the twentieth century the capitalist social system has been developing, in the economic field, creating monopolistic trusts among the employers, and trying to control and manage production and ex-

change according to central plans with State management of whole sectors of production. In the political field, there has been an increase of the police and military potential of the State, with governments adopting a more totalitarian form. All these are neither new sorts of social organizations in transition from capitalism to socialism, nor revivals of pre-bourgeois political regimes. On the contrary, they are definite forms of a more and more direct and exclusive management of power and the State by the most developed forces of capital.

This course excludes the progressive, pacifist interpretations of the evolution of the bourgeois regime, and confirms the Marxist prevision of the concentration and the antagonistic array of class forces. So that the proletariat may confront its enemies' growing potential with strengthened revolutionary energy, it must reject the illusory revival of democratic liberalism and constitutional guarantees. The Party must not even accept this as a means of agitation ; it must finish historically once and for all with the practice of alliances, even for transitory issues, with the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois parties, or with pseudo-workers' parties with a reformist program.

9. The global imperialist wars show that the crisis of disintegration of capitalism is inevitable because it has entered the phase when its expansion, instead of signifying a continual increment of the productive forces, is conditioned by repeated and ever-growing destruction. These wars have caused repeated deep crises in the global workers' organizations because the dominant classes could impose on them military and national solidarity with one or the other of the belligerents. The opposing historical solution for which we fight, is the awakening of the class struggle, leading to civil war, the destruction of all international coalitions by the reconstitution of the International Communist Party as an autonomous force independent of any existing political or military power.

10. The proletarian State, to the extent that its apparatus is an instrument and a weapon of struggle in a historical epoch of transition does not derive its organizational strength from constitutional rules nor from representative schemas whatsoever. The most complete historical example of such a State up to the present is that of the Soviets (workers' councils) which were created during the October 1917 revolution, when the working class armed itself under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. The Constituent Assembly having been dissolved, they became the exclusive organs of power repelling the attacks by foreign bourgeois governments and, inside the country, stamping out the rebellion of the vanquished classes and of the middle and petit-bourgeois layers and of the opportunist parties which, in the decisive phases, are inevitably allied with the counter-revolution

11. The defense of the proletarian regime against the dangers of degeneration inherent in the failures and possible retreats in the work of economic and social transformation – whose integral realization is inconceivable within the limits of only one country – can only be assured by the constant coordination between the policy the workers' State and the united international struggle, incessant in times of peace as in times of war, of the proletariat of each country against its bourgeoisie and its State and military apparatus. This co-ordination can only be secured by means of the political and programmatic control of the world communist party over the State apparatus where the working class has seized power.

