

Proletarian

International Communist Party («programme communiste»)

The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism



International Communist Party

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**The fundamentals of revolutionary
marxist communism in the doctrine
and in the history of the
international proletarian struggle**

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PRESENTATION

The “*Fundamentals of revolutionary marxist communism...*”, the text of a report given by Amadeo Bordiga during the general meeting of the party held in Paris June 8th, and 9th 1957, has been out of print for years. A republication of this text, its power intact after almost a half-century, was essential because it is the demolition of the false alternatives, deformations and revisions which, in the name of “enrichment” or of the “development” of Marxism for supposedly for drawing a reckoning of the lessons of history; disavow the fundamental elements of the communist program on the questions of the party, and of the State. Especially since they are often presented under a left appearance, these orientations are catastrophic for the revolutionary perspective and the combat of the proletariat because they deprive it of the weapons without which it is irremediably condemned to defeat.

In reaction to the legalism and reformism of the socialist parties during the period preceding the First World War, there appeared and developed the “revolutionary syndicalist” current, especially in France, Italy and Spain (but also in Germany and in the USA). For the revolutionary syndicalists, the party was by nature a specifically parliamentary and not revolutionary organization, which it was necessary to keep away from the trade unions, while the latter, because they were made up of only workers, were the specific body of proletarian revolutionary struggle which was to culminate in the “expropriating general strike”; the revolutionary syndicalists moreover allotted to the trade unions the function of organizing social production after the revolution thanks to the technical capabilities acquired by their members under capitalism.

In this vision, wrapped in the idealistic fogs of Sorelianism with its theory of violence as a purifying myth, it is not only the “constitution of the proletariat into a class, consequently into a party” but also the “*constitution of the proletariat into the dominant class*” (the *Manifesto*) which disappears for the simple reason that the fundamental act of the **seizure of political power** disappears as the first essential step to begin the economic reorganization conceived and carried out **centrally** according to the goals of socialism; i.e. goals which are not local but general, not national but global, not of a category but as regards the whole human species. By liquidating the **proletarian dictatorship** and its organ, the **party**, to replace

them by a phantasmagorical and impotent *workers' democracy*, it is ultimately the revolution and as a result, socialism which are liquidated.

And things do not change when it is the *factory council* which is put in place of the trade union, as in the conception of the Italian Socialist Antonio Gramsci and of his Turinese partisans of "**Ordine Nuovo**" and all the *councilists* and *proponents of self-management* who followed. In a programmatic article in "Ordine Nuovo" entitled "Workers' Democracy", Gramsci and Togliatti wrote in 1919: "*the socialist State exists already potentially in the institutions of social life characteristic of the exploited laboring class. To connect these institutions with each other, to coordinate them and subordinate them to a hierarchy of capabilities and of power, signifies the creation as of now of a true workers' democracy, in effective opposition to the bourgeois State, and prepared as of now to replace the bourgeois State in all its essential functions of management and administration of the national patrimony*"(1).

And a year later, commenting on the polemics within his group which had led to the drafting of this article, Gramsci affirmed: "*Yes, there is in Italy, in Turin, a germ of workers' government, a germ of the Soviet; it is the internal commission [organization of the workers in the factory at the base of the local unions]; let us study this workers' institution, make an investigation, study even the capitalist factory, but not as an organization of material production, because one would need for that a specialized culture that we do not have; let us study the capitalist factory as a form necessary to the working class, like political organization [!], as the 'national territory of workers' self-government'*" (2).

The German Left which was incarnated in the KAPD (Communist Workers Party of Germany), born in reaction to social-democratic reformism but also to the parliamentarist and legalist tendencies of the young Communist Party (KPD), defended positions which undoubtedly did not always flow from pure anarchism as with the extreme case of Otto Rühle and his partisans, but which nevertheless constituted similar anti-party deviations fundamentally similar to those of the Italian *Ordinovists*. In its program (where one could find in the preamble this pearl of the purest anarchistic water: "*To express **the autonomy of its members** in all circumstances, is the basic principle of a proletarian party, which is not a party in the traditional sense*"), an idealism completely foreign to marxist materialism made the KAPD affirm that the *retard* of the revolution was caused by subjective and psychological factors: "*the ideology of the proletariat is still partly imprisoned by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois representations. The psychology of the German proletariat, in its present aspect, shows only too distinctly the traces of secular militarist slavery (...). The problem of the German revolution is the problem of the **development of the self-awareness of the German proletariat***"

(...) The idea of the Councils during the period of the proletarian struggle for political power is at the center of the revolutionary process". Declaring its hostility to opportunist methods of struggle, to parliament and the trade unions, the program put the "*Factory organization*" at the center of the revolutionary struggle: "*It corresponds to the idea of the councils; (...) being born organically in the future, constituting the future, it is the form of expression of a social revolution which tends to the classless society. It is an organization of pure proletarian struggle.*"

(...) It is necessary that the fight is carried out in the factory. It is there that workers stand side by side as comrades, it is there that all are forced to be equal.. It is there that the mass are the engine of production and are ceaselessly pushed to take control of production, to unveil its secrets. It is there that the ideological struggle, the revolutionising of consciousness, undergoes a permanent tumult, from man to man, from mass to mass (...). Uninterrupted Propaganda for socialism, factory assemblies, political discussions, etc., all that is part of the tasks [of the Factory organization]; in brief, it is the revolution in the factory".

Moreover the KAPD located within this organization the "second great goal" (the first being destruction of the traditional trade unions) of preparing under capitalism "*the construction of the communist society*" (3) as if the organization of the future society were to be copied on the structuring of capitalist society into enterprises, and that the organizations of struggle of the proletarians under capitalism (the trade unions in the case of the revolutionary trade unionists, the "factory organization" in the case of the KAPD, factory councils in the case of the *Ordinovists*) were to be the germ for it!

It is easy to see that these deviations are all of the same type. The political struggle carried out by the **Communist Left of Italy** against *Ordinovism* is also of value against the German Left, because it was not a local and circumstantial polemic, but a fight in defense of the authentic Marxists positions.

The organ of the Communist Left, "**Il Soviet**" wrote: "*To maintain as the comrades of 'Ordine Nuovo' of Turin do, that even before the fall of the bourgeoisie, the workers' councils are already not only organs of political struggle, but also of economico-technical preparation for the communist system, is a pure and simple return to socialist gradualism: this viewpoint, which is called reformism or trade unionism, is defined by the false idea that the proletariat can emancipate itself by gaining ground in economic relations even though capitalism, along with the State, still holds political power.*"

(...) In conclusion: we do not oppose the constitution of internal factory councils if their personnel or their organizations demand them. But we affirm that the activity of the Communist Party must be directed along a different axis: the struggle for the conquest of political power" (4).

Indeed for the Communist Left "*the soviet is not a revolutionary body in its essence*"; it can very well be "*one of the organs of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat*", but only insofar as it can "*constitute, at a certain stage, an adequate terrain for the revolutionary struggle which the party carries out*" (5). "*At the stage we are at, i.e. when the proletarian State is still a programmatic aspiration, the fundamental problem is that of the conquest of power by the communist proletarians, i.e. by the workers organized in the political class party and determined to realize the historical form of revolutionary power, the dictatorship of the proletariat*" (6).

The only organ which is in its essence revolutionary is the **proletarian political party** – insofar as it is truly communist, i.e. insofar as its program, its organization and its daily action are perfectly coherent and in conformity with the principles of Communism. The goal of the revolutionary struggle cannot be the conquest of power **in the factory** which is nothing other than a dangerous illusion, but the conquest of

the **central political power** by insurrection and armed struggle, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is only **after** having seized power, after having founded its own exclusive class power, **lead by its party**, that the proletariat will have the means of intervening despotically and in a centralized manner in society to overthrow, the possessing classes, along with all their points of support and to root out capitalism.

Yesterday, at the time of the revolutionary wave after the First World War, it was necessary to point out the forgotten cardinal points of revolutionary communism; since the depth and the length of the counter-revolution have made any trace of the Marxist tradition within the proletarian masses of the world disappear, this politico-programmatic struggle is even more necessary today since it is to be desired that, tomorrow, at the time of the next revolutionary wave, the proletariat does not allow itself to be misled by falsely extremist anti-party currents.

The fundamentals of revolutionary marxist communism in the doctrine and in the history of the international proletarian struggle

- P R E M I S E -

PLAN OF THE EXPOSITION

We need to begin, first of all, by explaining that the aim of our present exposition is not to systematically examine every economic, historical and political aspect of the communist conception and its programme, nor to provide an exhaustive treatment of what we might call the “connective tissue” which binds all these different aspects of communism together, by which we mean our original and completely distinctive way of resolving the questions of the relationship between theory and action, economy and ideology, determining causality and the dynamics of human society; that is, the method which Marxism, and Marxism alone, has used since it first appeared in the first half of the 19th century, and which, for brevity’s sake, may be referred to as the philosophical aspect of Marxism, or *dialectical materialism*.

Moreover, if we tried to systematize these concepts in order to explain our particular view of the function of the individual in society, of the relation of both individual and society to the State, and the significance our doctrine attributes to *class*, we would be laying ourselves open to the usual accusation of abstractness; we would thus risk being misunderstood, as we would be omitting a basic component of our doctrine; namely, that the formulas needed to unravel these questions are not fixed for all time, but are variable within a succession of great historical periods, which for us correspond to different social forms and modes of production.

Therefore, though asserting the consistency with which Marxism has responded to events in different historical situations, our “re-exposition” will be closely linked to the unfortunate, world-wide phase which the revolutionary movement against capital has been going through for decades – and which will certainly continue for many

(1) cf “*Workers’ democracy*”, “L’Ordine Nuovo”, 21/6/1919.

(2) cf “*The program of L’Ordine Nuovo*”, “L’Ordine Nuovo” 14-28/8/1920. In an article of 5/6/1920, Gramsci had written: “*the revolutionary organizations (the political party and the trade-union associations) are in the camp of political liberty, in the camp of bourgeois democracy (...): the revolutionary process develops in the camp of production, in the factory, where the relations are those of oppressor to oppressed, of exploiter to exploited, where freedom does not exist for the worker, where democracy does not exist (...)*”.

The working class affirms that as well as industrial power, that the source of industrial power must return to the factory, to pose the factory anew, from the workers point of view, as the form in which the working class constitutes itself into a specific organic body, like the cell of a State, the workers’ State, as the basis of a new representative system, the system of the councils. The workers’ State, since it is born from a productive configuration [Good-bye Marx, hello Proudhon!], already creates the conditions of its development, of its dissolution as State, to its organic incorporation in a world system, the Communist International”, etc.

(3) cf “*Program of the KAPD*” in “*Not parliament, nor trade unions: for Workers’ Councils! Left communists in the German revolution (1918-1922)*” Ed. Les nuits rouges, p. 94-108. Being able to make here only some short allusions to the problems, we return the reader to the chapter of the *Storia* (History of the communist Left) “The marxist left of Italy and the international communist movement”, PC n° 58.

(4) cf “*For the constitution of workers’ councils in Italy*”, “Il Soviet”, IIIrd year, n°1 (4/1/1920), Programme Communist n°74, p. 66. “Il Soviet” was the organ of the current of the Communist Left which made its primary objective the foundation of the communist party. For a thorough criticism of the theses of Gramsci and ordinovist current, we return the reader to n° 71, 72 and 74 of “Programme Communist”.

(5) cf “*For the constitution...*”, “Il Soviet” n° 7, PC n° 74, p. 79.

(6) cf “*For the constitution...*”, “Il Soviet” n° 4, PC n° 74, p. 72.

decades to come. Contrary to our adversaries who strive to deform our doctrines, we will restore the cornerstones which they try to destroy to their precise position.

In order to do that, we will focus our attention on the three main groups of critics of revolutionary Marxism, especially the one which most obstinately claims to be based on the same principles and movements which we claim to be linked to.

We remind the reader that a similar theme was developed during our 1952 meeting in Milan (“*Invarianza storica del marxismo nel corso rivoluzionario*”, in *Il Programma Comunista*, n° 1-5, 1953). The first part of the report lays claim to the historical **invariance** of which Marxism, it was maintained, is not a doctrine in continuous formation but rather one completed in the appropriate historical period, that is, the period which witnessed the birth of the modern proletariat. It is a touchstone of our historical vision that this class will go through the whole arc of the rise and fall of capitalism using the same **unaltered** theoretical armoury. The second part of the report – “The False Expedient of Activism” – developed a critique of the perennial illusion of “voluntarism”, portraying it as an extremely dangerous and degenerate form of Marxism which always finds new life whenever there is an outbreak of opportunist epidemics.

REVIEW OF THE OPPOSITION

In the first part of the report, we divided the enemies of our positions into three camps: those who deny the validity of Marxism, those who falsify it, and those who claim to be bringing it up to date.

Today, the first group is represented by the open defenders and apologists of capitalism, who portray it as the ultimate form of human “civilization”. We won’t be paying too much attention to them; they have already received a **knockout blow** from Karl Marx and this frees us to apply the same knockout blows to the other two groups. (Incidentally, once and for all, our critique does not aspire so much to a definitive polemical victory, rather it aims, within the limits of this summary, to clearly define our positions and our characteristic features, and entrusts us with proving that they haven’t changed at all in over a 100 years).

The defeat of Marx’s **deniers**, which is only a doctrinal one today (but will be a social one tomorrow), is confirmed by the fact that every day more of them go to the side of those who “steal” the truths which Marx discovered; since they are convinced they cannot refute them when these truths are firmly enunciated (we revolutionaries have no such fears about their classical theses), in so doing, they join the second group, the falsifiers, or (why not?) the third one, the modernizers.

The **falsifiers** are those who have been historically defined as “opportunists”, revisionists or reformists, i.e. those who have eliminated the prospect of revolutionary catastrophe and the use of armed violence from the complex of Marx’s theories – as though this were possible without destroying them in their entirety. But there is a category of falsifier resembling the deniers in all points (and their equals in the activist superstition) even among those who ostensibly accept violence and rebellion; there is in actuality a point from which they both recoil, a point which belongs exclusively to Marx’s theory and constitutes its discriminating element: armed force, no longer in the hands of particular oppressed individuals or groups, but in the hands of the

liberated and victorious class, the class **dictatorship**, *bête noire* of social-democrats and anarchists alike. We could imagine that in and around 1917, this second group, rotten to the core, had been knocked out by Lenin’s blows; however, although we considered this victory as definitive in the realm of doctrine, we were also among the first to warn that the right conditions existed for the re-emergence of that infamous breed. Nowadays we can see it both in Stalinism, and in the Russian post-Stalinism issuing out of the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party.

Finally in the third category, the **modernizers**, we place those groups which, despite considering Stalinism to be a new form of the classical opportunism defeated by Lenin, impute this dreadful reversal in the fortunes of the revolutionary labor movement to defects and inadequacies within Marx’s original doctrine; which they claim to be able to rectify on the basis of evidence which historical evolution has provided subsequent to the theory’s formation; an evolution, according to them, which contradicts it.

In Italy, in France, and elsewhere, there are many of these groups and groupuscules in which the first proletarian reaction against the terrible disillusionments due to the deformations and decomposition caused by Stalinism dissipate themselves with disastrous results. One current of these groups is linked to Trotskyism, but in fact fails to appreciate that Trotsky always condemned Stalin for deviating from Marx. Admittedly, Trotsky also indulged rather too much in personal and moral judgments; a sterile method as evidenced by the shameless way in which the 20th Congress has used precisely such methods to prostitute the revolutionary tradition much more than even Stalin himself.

Every one of these groups has succumbed to the disease of activism, but their enormous critical distance from Marxism means they have failed to see that they are making the same mistakes as the German Bernstein and Co. who wished to build socialism within parliamentary democracy by opposing their everyday practice to what *they saw* as “cold” theory. The activism of these groups is likewise akin to that of Stalin’s heirs, who have smashed to pieces Marx, Lenin and Trotsky’s positions on the internationality of the socialist economic transformation in an indecent display of armed might, with which, while strutting their lust for power, they claim to have “built” the new economy.

Stalin is the theoretical father of this method of enrichment and modernization of Marxism, a method which, whenever and wherever it appears, signifies the destruction of the revolutionary force of the perspective of the world proletariat.

Thus, while we adopt a standpoint which opposes all three groups simultaneously, it is the specious deformations and the presumptuous new theories of the third group which most urgently need to be addressed and set to rights. Being contemporaneous they are better known, but it is still difficult for today’s workers, following the ravages of Stalinism, to relate them to the old historical traps; against which we propose one stance and one alone: a return to the fundamental communist positions of the **Manifesto** of 1848, which contains, in potential, our entire social and historical criticism, and which likewise demonstrates that everything which has happened since; all the bloody struggles and defeats experienced by the proletariat during the course of the last century; only serve to confirm the validity of that which some people foolishly wish to abandon.

PART ONE

THE PARTY AND THE CLASS STATE, ESSENTIAL FORMS OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF POWER

In spite of the preventive counter-measures taken by the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the number of critics of the Moscow degeneration has continued to grow after the events in Hungary, Poland and Eastern Germany, and they are even to be found on the margins of the official Stalinist parties in the West, and include people like Sartre and Picasso who are in our opinion, highly dubious and petit-bourgeois. Their not entirely unsuccessful condemnation of Moscow sounds something like this: abuse of dictatorship, abuse of the centrally-disciplined political party, abuse of the State power in its dictatorial form. All these people put forward similar remedies: more liberty, more democracy, socialism to be replaced in the ideological and political atmosphere of legality and liberal electoralism, and the use of the force of the State in general in the struggle between diverse solutions and therefore political opinions should be renounced. As usual, the main targets of our critique are not those who hold this point of view because they openly advocate the bourgeois mode of production, (sanctified by just such an ideological, juridical and political framework), but those who wish to graft such nonsensical chatter onto the trunk of the Marxist doctrine.

We hold exactly the opposite point of view. The revolutionary movement, freed from servile admiration of American “freedom”, freed from all subjection to a corrupt Moscow and invulnerable to the terrible virus of opportunism, can only experience a resurgence by returning to the radical platform of original Marxism, and by declaring that the content of Socialism surpasses and negates such concepts as Liberty, Democracy, and Parliamentarism and reveals them to be means of defending and propping up Capitalism. It masks the supreme lie and main plank of counter-revolutionary thought which consists in the notion of the State as being neutral in the face of class interests, and towards the solutions proposed by contending parties, in brief, in the face of stupefied **freedom of opinions**. Such a State, and such a freedom, are monstrous inventions that history has never known nor will ever know.

It is indisputable that Marxism established and declared this position right from its inception. But it must also be emphasized that the concept of the use of physical force against an enemy minority – or majority – presupposes the intervention of two essential forms contained within the Marxist historical schema: **Party and State**.

A “Marxist historical schema” exists, in other words, insofar as the Marxist doctrine is based upon the possibility of mapping out a schema within history. If that schema cannot be found, or is wrong, then Marxism will fall apart and its **deniers** will be right. As for the falsifiers and “modernizers” of Marxism, they would be highly unlikely to capitulate even if provided with evidence that their views were mistaken!

Those who oppose our thesis that **Party and State** are not **accessory** but rather **principal** elements within the Marxist schema, and who prefer to insist that **class** is the principal element, with Party and State as **accessory** features of class history and class struggles (and as easy to change as the tires or headlights on a car) are directly contradicted by Marx himself. In a letter to Weydemeyer quoted by Lenin in *State and Revolution*, Marx wrote that the existence of **classes** wasn’t discovered by him but by bourgeois economists and historians (in 1852). It wasn’t me who discovered class **struggles**, he added, but many others which doesn’t mean they were communist or revolutionary. The content of my doctrine, he said, resides in the historical concept of the “dictatorship” of the proletariat as the necessary stage in the transition from capitalism to socialism. Thus speaks Marx, one of the rare times where he speaks about himself.

We are, therefore, not particularly interested in a statistically defined working class, and neither are we particularly interested in attempts to work out where the interests of the working class diverge from other classes (there are always more than two in society). What interests us is the class which has set up its dictatorship, i.e. which has taken power, destroyed the bourgeois State, and set up its own State: that is how Lenin masterfully clarified it, shaming those in the 2nd International who had “forgotten” Marxism. How is it that **class** can form the basis of a dictatorial and totalitarian State power, of a new State machine opposed to the old like a victorious army occupying the positions of the defeated enemy? Through what organ? The philistine’s immediate answer is that for us it is a **man**, and in Russia Lenin was that man (whom they have the nerve to lump together with the wretched Stalin, scorned today after having been adored yesterday, then perhaps murdered by his own devotees). Our answer is and has always been profoundly different.

The organ of the dictatorship and the wielder of the **weapon of the State** is the political class **Party**; the party which, through its doctrine and its continuous historical action, has been potentially granted the task, proper to the proletarian class, of transforming society. The Party. We not only say that the struggle and the historical task of the class cannot be achieved without the two forms: dictatorial State, (i.e. the exclusion, as long as they exist, of the other classes which are henceforth defeated and subdued) and political Party, we say – in our dialectical and revolutionary language – that one can only begin to speak of **class** – of establishing a dynamic link between a repressed class in today’s society and a future revolutionized social form, and taking into consideration the struggle between the class which holds the State and the class which is to overthrow it – only when the class is no longer a cold statistical term at the miserable level of bourgeois thought, but a reality, made manifest in its

organ, the Party, without which it has no life nor strength for the struggle.

One cannot therefore detach party from class as the accessory from the **essential**. All the more so, when (as is the case with the new deformers of Marxism) by putting forward the idea of a proletariat without a party, or with a party which is sterilized and impotent, or by looking for substitutes for it, they have actually annihilated the **class** by depriving it of any possibility of **fighting** for socialism, or even for its miserable crust of bread.

AN ERROR UNMASKED ONE CENTURY AGO

As a result of their confused critique, today's "enrichers" of Marxism have made similar blunders, and without even knowing it have ended up adopting the same bourgeois and petit-bourgeois insinuations which were made when the Russian Revolution was still following the classic Marxist line – admired even by the "enrichers" – in which Class, State, Party and Party members stood solidly on the same revolutionary terrain, precisely because on these essential points there were no hesitations of any kind.

They fail to realize that in diluting the party and its function as the main revolutionary organ, they **declass** the proletariat; which having been deprived of the ability to overthrow the ruling class, or even to mitigate its effects in restricted fields of activity, ends up helplessly shackled to it. They really think they have **improved** Marxism by having learnt from history a banal commonplace of the "don't push things too far!" variety, worthy of the pettiest shop-keeper. What they don't see is that it isn't a correction we're dealing with here but an enslavement; or better still, an inferiority complex born out of an impotent lack of understanding.

The Party form and the State form are key elements in the earliest Marxist texts; and are two fundamental stages in the epic development which the *Communist Manifesto* describes. There are two revolutionary "moments" referred to in the chapter "Proletarians and Communists". The first stage (already touched on before in the first chapter "Bourgeois and Proletarians") is the **organization of the proletariat into a political party**. This follows on from another very famous statement: *every class struggle is a political struggle*, but it is much clearer, and tallies with our thesis which states: the proletariat is a class in a historical sense when it has started to struggle politically as a party. In fact, the Manifesto states: "*this organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party*".

The second revolutionary stage is **the organization of the proletariat into a ruling class**. Here the question of power and the State arises. "*As we have seen above, the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class...*".

A little further on we find Marx's blunt definition of the Class State: "*The proletariat itself organized as the ruling class*".

We needn't point out here that another of the essential theses reinstated by Lenin, the eventual disappearance of the State, is also included in this famous early text. The general definition: "*Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another*" underscores the classic assertions: **the public power will lose its political character**, classes and all class

domination will disappear, even that of the proletariat.

Therefore, Party and State are at the heart of the Marxist viewpoint. You either accept or reject it. Searching for the class outside of its Party and its State is a waste of energy, and depriving the class of them means turning your back on communism and the revolution.

But this foolish attempt, which the "modernizers" consider an original discovery of the post World War Two period, had already been made before the *Manifesto*, when it had been routed by Marx in his formidable polemical pamphlet against Proudhon: *The Poverty of Philosophy*. This pivotal work refuted the position (very advanced for the epoch) that the social transformation and abolition of private property might be achieved without the need to engage in a struggle for political power. Finally there is the famous sentence: "**Do not say that the social movement excludes the political movement**", which leads on to our unequivocal thesis: by **Politics** we don't mean a peaceful ideological contest, or worse still, a constitutional debate; we mean "hand-to-hand combat", "total revolution", and finally, as the poetess George Sand put it: "*le combat ou la mort*".

Proudhon rejects the idea of political conflict because his view of the social transformation is fundamentally flawed: it doesn't involve the complete overthrow of capitalist relations of production; it is rooted in competition, localized and co-operativist, and is trapped within a bourgeois vision of the enterprise and the market. He might have proclaimed that "*property is theft*", but his system, remains a system of bourgeois property because it remains mercantile. Proudhon's myopia about economic revolution is the same as today's "self-management socialists", who reproduce in a less vigorous form the old Utopia of Robert Owen; who wanted to liberate the workers by handing the management of the factories over to them, right in the midst of bourgeois society. Whether these people label themselves "Ordinovists" in Italy, or "Barbarists" in France, they are in the end, all of them, chips off the same Proudhonian block and deserve the same invective as Stalin: Oh Poverty of the *enrichers*!

RESURRECTED AND TENACIOUS PROUDHONISM !

In Proudhon's system we find individual exchange, the market, and the **free will** of the buyer and seller exalted above all else. It is asserted that in order to eliminate social injustice, all that is required is to relate the exchange value of every commodity to the value of the labor contained within it. Marx demonstrates (and will show later, pitting himself against Bakunin, against Lassalle, against Duhring, against Sorel and against all the latter-day pygmies mentioned above) that what lies beneath all this is nothing other than the apologia, and the preservation, of bourgeois economy; incidentally, there is nothing different in Stalin's claim that in a socialist society, like Russia was according to him, the law of exchange of equivalent values will continue to exist.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in a few succinct lines, Marx points out the abyss which lies between these by-products of the capitalist system and the colossal vision of the communist society of tomorrow. It is his reply to the Proudhonist theory of a society in which the unfettered free play of competition and the "balance of supply and demand" achieve the miracle of ensuring that everyone gets the most useful and essential goods at "minimum cost", the eternal, petit-bourgeois dream of the idiotic

servants of capital. Marx easily disposes of such sophistry and ridicules it by comparing it to the claim that Proudhonian gents go out for a stroll to ensure fine weather, under the pretext, that when the weather is fine everyone goes out for a stroll.

*“In a future society, in which class antagonism will have ceased, in which there will no longer be any classes, the use (of products) will no longer be determined by the **minimum** time of production; but the **social** time of production devoted to different articles will be determined by the degree of their social utility”* (1).

This passage, one of the many gems that can be found in the classic writings of our great school, shows how insane it is to maintain that Marx loved to describe capitalism and its laws, but never described socialist society for fear of lapsing into...utopianism. An insanity common to Stalin and anti-Stalinists serially.

In fact, in their wish to emancipate the proletariat whilst preserving mercantile exchange, it is the Proudhons and Stalins who are the utopians; and the latest version of such attempts is Khrushchev’s reform of Russian industry. The free, individual exchange, on which Proudhon’s metaphysics is based, leads to exchange between factories, workshops, and firms **managed** by workers, and results in the rancid banality which locates the content of socialism in the conquest of the factory by the proletarians who work there.

In his crusade to defend competition, old Proudhon was the precursor of that modern superstition – productive “emulation”. Back in his day, the orthodox thinkers (unaware of being less reactionary than today’s Khrushchevs) used to say that progress arises from healthy “emulation”. But Proudhon identifies productive “industrial” emulation with competition itself. Rivals for the same object, such as *“the lover for the woman”* (2), tend to emulate one another. Marx observes with sarcasm that if the lover’s immediate **object** is the woman, then the immediate object of industrial rivalry should be the **product**, not the **profit**. But since in the bourgeois world profit is the name of the game (and this is true a hundred years on) the alleged productive emulation ends up as **commercial** competition. And beneath the seductive smiles which

(1) *“The Poverty of Philosophy”* chapter one, part 2, “Constituted Value or Synthetic Value”

(2) *“The Poverty of Philosophy”* chapter two, part 3, “Competition and Monopoly”

(3) In this new edition of *The Fundamentals of Revolutionary Communism* it seems to us of interest to insert the complete citation in Marx’s text, in order to facilitate the understanding of our remark on the question of industrial emulation or commercial emulation. Marx replies to Proudhon—defender of regulated competition, who affirmed that *“(…) the object of industrial emulation is necessarily profit. Emulation is nothing but competition itself”*— in these terms:

“Competition is emulation with a view to profit. Is industrial emulation necessarily emulation with a view to profit, that is, competition?? M. Proudhon proves it by affirming it. We have seen that, for him, to affirm is to prove, just as to suppose is to deny.

If the immediate object of the lover is the woman, the immediate object of industrial emulation is the product and not the profit.

Competition is not industrial emulation, it is commercial emulation. In our time industrial emulation exists only in view of commerce. There are even phases in the economic life of modern nations when everybody is seized with a sort of craze for making profit without producing. This speculation craze, which recurs periodically, lays bare the true character of competition, which seeks to escape the need for industrial emulation.”

the Americans and Muscovites are currently casting in each other’s direction, profit is still what they are both after (3).

Along with his defective view of the revolutionary society, Proudhon is the precursor of the worst aspects of today’s fashionable “factory socialists”: the rejection of **Party** and **State** because they create **leaders**, chiefs and power-brokers, who, due to **the weakness of human nature**, will **inevitably** be transformed into a privileged group; into a new dominant class (or caste?) to live off the backs of the proletariat.

These superstitions about “human nature” were ridiculed by Marx a long time ago when he wrote in a short, pithy sentence: *“Monsieur Proudhon ignores the fact that all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature”*. Under this massive tombstone can be laid to rest countless throngs of past, present and future anti-Marxist idiots.

In support of our declaration that not even the most minor restrictions can be placed on the *“full and unqualified use”* of the weapons of **Party** and **State** in the workers’ revolution, and in order to get rid of these hypocritical scruples, we should add that in order to deal with the inevitable **individual** manifestations of the psychological pathology which proletarians and communists have inherited, not from **human nature**, but from capitalist society, with its horrible ideology and its individualistic mythology of the “dignity of the human being”, there is only one organization capable of providing an effective and radical remedy. That organization is specifically the communist political party, both during the revolutionary struggle, and after it, when it assumes its most definitive function – that of the wielding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Other types of organizations which think they can replace it must be rejected not only because of their revolutionary impotence, but because they are a hundred times more susceptible to the degenerating influence of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie. The criticism of these organizations, proposed by various sides from time immemorial, should adopt a historical rather than a “philosophical” approach; but it is still of prime importance to make a Marxist analysis of the justifications put forward by the proponents of these schemes, and clearly demonstrate that are influenced by an ideology which is essentially bourgeois in outlook, or even less than bourgeois, such as the views proposed by the pseudo-intellectuals who so dangerously infest the margins of the working-class movement.

Putting the non-proletarian at the same level as the proletarian in its organization, the Party is the **only** form of organization which can allow non-proletarians to arrive at the theoretical and historical position which is based on the revolutionary interests of the labouring class; finally, though only after much anguish and torment, these renegades from other classes will serve as revolutionary resources rather than as bourgeois booby-traps in our own ranks.

The Party’s superiority lies precisely in its overcoming of the disease of **laborism** and **workerism**. One enters the party as a consequence of one’s own position in the **hand to hand struggle** between historical forces for a revolutionary social form; and one’s position as party member and militant is not merely a servile copy of your position *“in respect to the productive mechanism”*, i.e. that mechanism which is created by bourgeois society and related *“physiologically”* to that society and to its ruling class.

PART TWO

THE PROLETARIAT'S ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS ARE ONLY PALE SUBSTITUTES FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

A HISTORY OF IMPOTENT SYSTEMS

In our fight against the Stalinist betrayal, we have always considered its distortions of economic theory as a thousand times more serious than the “abuse of power” which so scandalized Trotskyists and Khrushchevians, or the famous “crimes” which the philistines of the world keep harping on about. In order to combat this treason, we have always used Marx’s classical thesis against Proudhon which appears in the first volume of *Capital*, “*We may well, therefore, be astonished at the cleverness of Proudhon, who would abolish capitalistic property by enforcing the eternal laws of property that are based on commodity production*”. (4)

Every criticism and “improved” program put out by all the various so-called anti-Stalinist groups relies on the ridiculous notion that there needs to be a detoxification – sterilization as far as the revolution is concerned – of the Party and the State, forms which were supposedly abused by Stalin (according to the extremely hackneyed thesis of “the tyrant and his cronies”) because of his **lust for power**. It is important to show that all those who nurture this bigoted preoccupation (and who probably want to be leaders, and crave personal success, themselves) have succumbed, as far as economic and social matters are concerned, to the same reactionary illusion as Proudhon: they are blind to the fact that the historical opposition between communism and capitalism means that communism and socialism are opposed to mercantilism.

Initially we need to consider the historical evidence. This shows us that every interpretation which has attempted to repel the “monsters” of Party and political State, by putting forward new types of organization to officer (marshal) the proletarian class in its struggle against capital and to establish a post-capitalist society, has been a miserable failure.

In the third part of this report, we will deal with economics, or rather we will

(4) “*Capital*”, Book I, Section VII, (Ed Sociales, 1977, p. 27) (our translation).

demonstrate that the goal, the program, which all these “non-party” and “non-State” movements set themselves is not a socialist and communist society, but rather a petit-bourgeois economic pipedream, which has resulted in them all falling into modern capitalism’s game of Parties and States.

First of all, it must be recognized that all these attempts based on formulas or “recipes” for organizational miracle cures are clearly not Marxist. They echo the stale banalities of the political hucksters of fifty years ago, who reduced the events of historical struggle to a procession of mannequins as in a fashion show. According to these gossiping pedants the political club was the motive force of the French Revolution (Girondins, Jacobins), then along came the electoral parties, followed by the local, communal organizations advocated by the anarchists. Then (let’s say, around 1900) the fashionable thing becomes workers’ occupational trade unions, with an inherent tendency to replace all the other organizational forms and use their revolutionary potential to set themselves up in opposition to Party and State (Georges Sorel). A very hackneyed refrain. Today (1957), another “self-sufficient” form—the factory council—is given pride of place under various guises by the Dutch *Tribunists*, Italian Gramscists, Yugoslavian Titoists, the so-called Trotskyists, and a number of other *Batrachomyomachian* (5) “left-wing” groups.

Just one of Marx, Engels and Lenin’s theses is enough to bury all this useless drivel: **revolution is not a question of forms of organization**. The real issue is the clash of historical forces and the new social program which will replace capitalism when its long cycle is over. Instead of discovering the goal scientifically, in determining factors of the past and present, the old pre-Marxist utopianism invented it instead. The new post-Marxist utopianism eliminates the goal, and replaces it with the frantically active organization (or in the words of Bernstein, chief social-democratic revisionist: “*The goal is nothing: the movement is everything*”).

We shall briefly recall these proposals in which the proletarians were given the role of populating the new forms of organization and which in reality lead through bitter defeats to the proletariat being even more subjected to the yoke of Capital.

THE SUPERSTITION OF THE LOCAL “COMMUNE”

Anarchist doctrines are the expression of the following thesis: centralized power is evil; and they assume that the entire question of the liberation of the oppressed class can be resolved by getting rid of centralized power. But for the anarchist, class is only an accessory concept. He wishes to liberate the individual, the person, and thereby conforms with the program of the liberal and bourgeois revolution. He only

(5) The “*Batrachomyomachia*” is a parody of Homer’s *Ilyad* and the *Odyssey* which tells the burlesque history of the war between the mice and the frogs as witnessed by the gods who, after some dissension, decide not to intervene. Amadeo Bordiga gave this title to a 1953 article where he criticizes the pretenses of the equally burlesque French group, “*Socialisme ou barbarie*” (“Socialism or Barbarism”) who wanted to supplement Marxism in order to explain the nature of the USSR (headed, according to this group by a new class, the bureaucracy). The “Barbarists”, so-called “enrichers” of Marxism, were in fact unable to reach the same level as Marxism: they remained only “batrachomyomachians”.

reproaches the latter for having installed a new form of power, failing to see that this is merely the necessary consequence of the fact that it didn't have as its content and motive-force the liberation of the person or the citizen, but the achieving of dominion of a new social class over the means of production. Anarchism, libertarianism (and if one examines it a little more closely, even Stalinism, in its western guise) is nothing other than classical revolutionary bourgeois liberalism **plus something else** which they call local autonomy, administrative State, and entry of the laboring classes into the organs of the constitutional power. With similar petit-bourgeois blunders grafted on to it, bourgeois liberalism (which in its time was a real and serious matter) becomes just an illusion with which to castrate the workers' revolution, which is right where it is, unfortunately, sunk up to its neck.

Marxism, on the other hand, is the dialectical negation of capitalist liberalism. It doesn't wish to keep part of capitalism in order to improve it here and there, but to crush it with the **class** institutions it has created at the local, and especially the central level. Such a task can't be achieved by encouraging complete autonomy and independence, but only by the formation of a centralized destructive power, whose essential and specific forms are the revolutionary Party and State, and these forms alone.

The idea of freeing the individual, the person, and making him autonomous, boils down to the ridiculous formula of the subjective **refractory** individual, who shuts his eyes to society and its oppressive structure because he is convinced that he can't change it, or else he dreams about one day planting a bomb somewhere; the end result is a contemporary existentialism incapable of any social effect whatever.

This shrill petit-bourgeois demand, which arises out of the anger of the small autonomous producer expropriated by big capital and therefore from the defense of property (which Stirner and other individualists consider an inviolable "extension of the individual") adapted itself to the great historic advance of the working masses, and over the course of time recognized some forms of proletarian organization. At the time of the crisis in the 1st International (after 1870) there was a split between the Marxists and anarchists over the latter's continued refusal to recognize economic organizations, or even strikes. Engels established that economic trade-unions and strikes weren't enough to resolve the question of revolution, but that the revolutionary party should support them, inasmuch as their value as already stated in the *Communist Manifesto* lies in the extension of proletarian organization towards a single, centralized form, which is by its nature political.

During this phase, the libertarians proposed an ill-defined local, revolutionary "commune", sometimes described as a force which struggles against the constituted power and asserts its autonomy by breaking all links with the central State, and sometimes as a form which manages a new economy. This idea wasn't new but harkened back to the first capitalist forms which appeared at the end of the Middle-Ages: the autonomous communes, which existed in Italy and in German Flanders where a young bourgeoisie was fighting against the Empire. As always in such cases, events which were then revolutionary, in terms of economic development, have today become an empty repetition falsely disguised as extremism.

Throughout the fifty years that the anarchists have commemorated it, the model for this local organ was the Paris Commune of 1871. In Marx and Lenin's far more powerful

and irrevocable analysis it is, on the contrary, history's first great example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of a centralized, though only territorial, proletarian State.

The French capitalist State, embodied in Thier's IIIrd Republic, quit its capital to crush the proletarian Paris, preparing the assault from behind the Prussian army lines. After the desperate resistance and horrifying massacre, Marx could write that from that day onwards all the bourgeois national armies were in league against the proletariat.

It wasn't a question of reducing the historical conflict from a national to the communal level (above all if one considers a poor defenseless commune in the provincial periphery) but of extending it onto an international scale. At the time of the IInd International there even emerged a new version of socialism (which struck the uneasy spirit of the pre-war Mussolini) called *communalism*, which aimed to create cells of the future society by conquering municipal administrations: not, alas, with dynamite like the anarchists wished, but by winning local elections. Since then, the relentless forces of economic development, well known to Marxists, have ensured that every local structure has become tangled in an ever more inextricable web of economic, administrative, and political ties with the central government: just think of the ridiculousness of each little rebel town council setting up its own radio and TV stations to "jam" those of the hated central State! The idea of organizations forming confederations of workers in each town, and each town declaring itself politically independent and economically autarchic, is therefore now defunct. Bourgeois illusions about "autonomy" still survive, however, and will continue to befuddle the minds, and paralyse the hands, of working class militants for a long time to come (6).

The other forms of workers' "immediate" organizations, ensnared around the craft and professional trade unions, industrial unions, and the factory councils were to have a longer and more complex history. Insofar as such forms are proposed as alternatives to the revolutionary political party, the history of these movements and the doctrines

(6) It is useful to prove that the ideas maintained here belong to the classical tradition of Marxism. We want to do this using a passage contained in the letter from Marx to Engels of 20 June 1866, the war in question in the letter is the war between Prussia and Austria, Italy is an ally of the former. The passage is important in connection with the Marxist appreciation of the wars for the formation of the European nations, a phase which was not yet closed then; but today it is still more topical when Marx himself, in a really prophetic way, mocked the idea that the new society in a small nation can play the role of a model for whole world. What he said then about the French model we repeat today for the Russian one.

"Yesterday there was a discussion in the International Council on the present war. It had been announced beforehand and our room was very full. The Italian gentlemen had also sent us representatives once more. The discussion wound up, as was to be expected, with "the question of nationality" in general and the attitude we should take towards it. This subject was adjourned till next Tuesday.

The French, very numerous represented, gave vent to their cordial dislike for the Italians. Moreover the representatives of "Young France" (non-workers) came out with the announcement that all nationalities and even nations were "antiquated prejudices." Proudhonised Stirnerism. Everything to be dissolved into little "groups" or "communes" which will in their turn form an "association" but no state. And indeed this "individualisation" of mankind and the corresponding "mutualism" are to proceed while history comes to a stop in all other countries and the whole world waits until the French are ripe for a social revolution. They will

which are more or less confusedly based upon them, coincide with the history of opportunism during the Second and Third Internationals. As we have covered the subject on numerous occasions elsewhere, we will give only a brief summary here, but we will remark that the European masses are still largely ignorant of their class's history, and one day they will really need to learn from the immense sacrifices which have been made, and to draw the lessons of these terrible experiences.

The history of localism, and of so-called anarchist and libertarian communism, is the history of opportunism within the First International itself which Marx fought to free of these tendencies by means of both theoretical criticism, and hard organizational struggle against Bakunin and his intractable supporters in France, Switzerland, Spain and Italy.

Despite being able to draw on the rich historical experience of the Russian Revolution, many "left-wingers", and declared enemies of Stalinism, nevertheless still look to the anarchists for potential support. We therefore need to reiterate that anarchism was the first of the diseases to infect the proletarian movement, and was the precursor to all later opportunisms (including Stalinism) in that it displaced politics and history onto a terrain of equivocation in order to attract the small and middle bourgeois strata of society onto the proletarian side – despite the fact that these classes have always ruined everything, and have been the source of every kind of calamity and error. What resulted from this approach wasn't proletarian leadership over the "popular masses", but destruction of any proletarian features of the general movement, and a reinforced enslavement of the proletariat to Capital.

Marxism has denounced this danger since its earliest days, and it is painful to hear people say that it can be dealt with more effectively now than in Marx's day because there are more facts available, while they misinterpret what was already clear over a century ago. This "popular" version of working-class revolution used to horrify Engels, and he condemned it in a hundred different passages, as in the preface to *The Class Struggles in France*:

"After the defeats of 1849 we in no way shared the illusions of the vulgar democracy grouped around the would-be provisional governments in partibus. This vulgar democracy reckoned on a speedy and finally decisive victory of the "people" over the "oppressors"; we looked to a long struggle, after the removal of the "oppressors", between the antagonistic elements concealed within this people itself." (7)

then perform the experiment before our eyes, and the rest of the world, overcome by the force of their example, will do the same. Just what Fourier expected of his model phalanstery. Moreover, everyone who encumbers the "social" question with the "superstitions" of the old world is "reactionary."

The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue, etc., who had done away with nationalities, had spoken "French" to us, i.e., a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand. I also suggested that by the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption into the model French nation." Marxist Internet Archive (MIA) (*Marx Engels Correspondence, 1866*)

(7) F. Engels, Preface to the 1895 *"Class Struggles in France"*, Ed. Sociale 1946, p. 11. In the latest Ed. Social version, the term "popular" is translated as "vulgar". (our translation)

As far as Marxist doctrine is concerned, from that time on it was equipped with the basic concepts and principles needed to criticize all of today's "popular" variants of opportunism (including the models put forward by small groups such as the "*Quadrifogliares*" and "*Barbarists*" (8) who have recently dedicated lengthy palinodes to the Hungarian events in which as always they have presented a "popular" movement as a class movement).

Those who replace the class with the "people" are those who, while placing it before and above the party, think they are rendering a supreme homage to the class whereas in reality they are declassing it, drowning it in "popular" confusion, a deadly sacrifice to the counter-revolution.

THE MYTH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNION

By the end of the 19th century, the political parties of the proletarian class in Europe had become large and powerful organizations. Their role model was German "Social-Democracy", which after a long struggle had forced the bourgeois Kaiser-State to repeal Bismark's exceptional anti-socialist laws, and had also steadily increased its share of the votes and the parliamentary seats at each successive general election. This party was supposed to be the repository of Marx and Engel's tradition, and the prestige it enjoyed within the new IInd International when it was set up in 1889, was due to this fact.

But within this very party a new current called **revisionism** had been growing with Eduard Bernstein as its main theoretician. This tendency stated overtly that bourgeois society, during the epoch of relative social and international tranquility which followed the Franco-Prussian War, had developed **new** aspects which were pointing to "new ways to socialism", different from those of Marx.

Today's young militants should not be astonished that it was this very same phrase which was used to launch the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956: exactly the same words, but with everybody thinking they were brand new. The Italian revisionist Bonomi, expelled from the party in 1912 and later appointed as Secretary of State for War in Giolitti's cabinet, and who, under this title would end up machine-gunning not fascists, but the proletarians who were fighting against them. Finally he would even become one of the leaders of the anti-fascist Republic. Half a century ago he wrote a book which boasted the title: "*The New Roads to Socialism*". Giolitti derived from this same book the fine phrase that socialists **had relegated Marx to the attic**. The current international Communist Left movement is directly historically connected to the Left Fraction who, all those years ago, replied to this provocation by naming their journal "*La soffitta*" (the attic).

The revisionists maintained that given the new developments within European,

(8) *Quadrifoglio* (Four-leaf clover): Italian organization that had formed by the merger of four groups: "*Battaglia Comunista*" from which our tendency had separated in 1952, the Italian section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, a libertarian group which preceded "*Lotta Comunista*", etc. *Barbarists*: Members of the French group "*Socialisme ou Barbarie*" (Socialism or Barbarism), issuing from Trotskyism, which successfully recruited militants of the Left in France.

and world capitalism, insurrectional struggles, the use of armed violence and the revolutionary conquest of power, had become useless, and they completely rejected Marx's central thesis: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Replacing this "catastrophic vision" there would be legal and electoral activity and legislative and parliamentary action; it went as far as having socialist deputies participating in bourgeois cabinets (possibilism, Millerandism) in order to pass laws favorable to the working class, despite the fact that every international congress up to the First World War had consistently condemned such tactics, and despite the expulsion from the party of collaborationists like Bonomi (though not the Bernsteins, nor the Turatis in Italy).

This political and theoretical degeneracy of the socialist parties, which we won't go into detail about here, led to a wave of distrust towards the organizational **form** of the party amongst large sections of the proletariat, and provided a favorable atmosphere for a range of anarchist and anti-Marxist critics. To begin with, only a few currents of minor numerical importance fought the revisionists on the grounds of strict conformity to Marx's original doctrine (radicals in Germany, intransigent revolutionaries in Italy; and groups elsewhere dubbed "hard", "strict", "orthodox" etc.).

These currents, which corresponded to the Bolshevism of Plekhanov and Lenin in Russia (although during the war Plekhanov turned out to be just as bad as the German Kautsky) never ceased for an instant to defend the Party-form (though only Lenin would clearly defend the State-form, that is to say, the Dictatorship-form). But for ten years or so, there had been another current fighting against social-democratic revisionism, namely **revolutionary syndicalism**. Georges Sorel was their main theoretician and leader, even if earlier antecedents certainly existed. It was a movement which was particularly strong in the Latin countries: to begin with they fought inside the socialist parties, but later split off, both because of the vicissitudes of the struggle and in order to be consistent with a doctrine which rejected the necessity of the party as a revolutionary class organ.

The primary form of proletarian organization for the syndicalists was the economic **trade union**, whose main task was supposed to be not only leading the class struggle to defend the immediate interests of the working class, but also preparing, without being subject to any political party, to lead the final revolutionary war against the capitalist system.

THE SORELIANS AND MARXISM

A complete analysis of the origins and evolution of this doctrine, both as we find it in Sorel's work, and in the multifarious groups which in various countries subscribed to it, would take us too far off our track; at this point we shall therefore just discuss its historical balance sheet, and its very questionable view of a future non-capitalist society. Sorel and many of his followers, in Italy as well, started off by declaring that they were the true successors of Marx in fighting against legalitarian revisionism in its pacifist and evolutionist guise. Eventually they were forced to admit that their tendency represented a new revisionism; left rather than right wing in appearance but actually issuing from the same source, and containing the same dangers.

What Sorel said he retained from Marx was the use of violence and the struggle of

the proletarian class against bourgeois institutions and authority, especially the State. Thus he appeared to be in strict conformity with the Marxist historical critique according to which the contemporary State which emerged from the bourgeois revolution, in its democratic and parliamentary forms, remains an organization perfectly adapted for the defence of the dominant class, whose power cannot be destroyed by legal means. The Sorelians defended the use of illegal action, violence, and the revolutionary general strike, and raised the latter to the rank of the supreme ideal, precisely at a time when in most socialist parties such slogans were being fiercely repudiated.

The Sorelian general strike which is the culmination of the theory of "direct action" (that is, without legally elected intermediaries between proletarians and the bourgeoisie) was conceived of as occurring simultaneously in all trades, in all cities of a particular State, or even in all States at once (of which there is, of course, no example). In reality the insurrection of the syndicalists is still restricted, insofar as it takes the form of actions by individuals, or at most, actions by isolated groups; in neither case does it attain the level of class action. This was due to Sorel's horror of a revolutionary political organization necessarily taking on a military form, and after victory, a State form (proletarian State, Dictatorship); and since Sorelians don't agree with Party, State, and Dictatorship they would end up treading the same path as Bakunin had thirty years before. The national general strike, assuming it to be victorious, would supposedly coincide (on the same day?) with a general expropriation (the "expropriating strike"), but such a vision of the passage from one social form to another is as nebulous and weak as it is disappointing and ephemeral.

In Italy in 1920 – in an atmosphere of general enthusiasm for Lenin, for the party, for taking power, and for the "expropriating dictatorship" – this superficially extreme slogan of the "expropriating strike" was adopted by both maximalists and Ordiovists; this was one of many occasions when we had to defend Marxist positions strenuously and pitilessly, even at risk of being accused of **bridling** the movement.

Sorel and his epigones find themselves far removed from Marxist determinism, and the interaction which occurs between the economic and political spheres is a dead letter to them. Since they are individualist and voluntarist, initially they see in the revolution an impossible act of consciousness and only afterwards as an act of force. As Lenin demonstrated in "*What is To Be Done?*", they turn Marxism upside down, onto its head. In considering that consciousness and will explode in the conscience of **the individual** they make a clean sweep of the bourgeois State, of class divisions and of class psychology. Since they are unable to understand the inevitable alternative – capitalist dictatorship or communist dictatorship – they evade the dilemma in the only way that is historically possible: by re-establishing the former. And whether this is done consciously or not may be the burning issue for them but, for us it is a nullity.

We are not really interested in following the logical evolution of Georges Sorel's thinking after that: idealism, spiritualism, and then a return to the womb of the Catholic Church.

THE TEST OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As already stated above, we certainly can't provide here an in-depth analysis of the disaster which struck the socialist movement in August 1914 at the outbreak of

the First World War. We just need to see if the crisis affected only the political parties, or the trade unions, and indeed the syndicalist ideologists, as well. And the latter, although never thinking of themselves as a party, were in fact precisely that; indeed their members were drawn mainly from the petit-bourgeois class, despite their superstitious attachment to notions of working-class purity. At that time, in typical anarchist fashion, the syndicalists consisted of a variety of ill-defined “groups” which declared themselves to be **non-political, non-electoral, non-parliamentary, and non-party** etc, etc. And we have plenty of contemporary examples to demonstrate that this show of chaste reserve with regard to political parties and revolutionary politics doesn’t stop these unstable and confused *regroupments* from joining bourgeois and opportunist parties, or even fighting in electoral campaigns for filthy class traitors. Autonomy before everything else!

There is no doubt – indeed it would form the basis for the restoration of revolutionary Marxism in Lenin’s time – that the biggest European socialist parties had displayed a shameless bankruptcy. We need hardly recall that Lenin, unable to accept the news, would crush the newspapers underfoot as he furiously paced about his small Swiss room like a caged bear, unapproachable even to Krupskaya for three whole weeks.

We retract not a single word we have ever said, or action we have taken, against these betrayers of socialism, who voted for war credits, and who entered the *Union Sacrée* cabinets. However in Italy, facilitated by a nine month delay (Italy entered the war on May 24th, 1915) the struggle to prevent the party leaders from deserting proletarian positions lasted until just days before the mobilization order was issued. The leadership of the socialist party held firm, and although the reformist current predominated in the parliamentary group and was opposed to calling a national general strike, it nevertheless pledged to vote against the Government and its war credits and actually did so unanimously. In fact it was the leaders of the CGIL (Confederation of Labor) who took up the most defeatist (to the proletariat) position, and it was they whom we had to unmask in their sabotage of the general strike proposal: although they said they feared the strike’s failure, in fact they feared its success, and for purely bourgeois patriotic reasons.

In all countries it was the big trade unions which dragged the political parties down this road of incommensurable shame. Such it was in France, in Germany, and in Austria. In England, the *Labour Party*, that old monstrosity and grand champion of counter-revolution, to which the trade unions are affiliated, stepped unanimously into the ranks of the war-mongers while the small British Socialist Party took an oppositional attitude.

Sorelian critics of parliamentarism had quite rightly denounced the disgraceful manoeuvres of Labor MPs, but they failed to realize that these gentlemen, as they roamed around the bourgeois governmental lobbies, were being forcibly petitioned by trade union organizers to obtain material concessions for their members. Lenin warned that the betrayal and cowardice of the revolutionary leaders was not a **cause** of opportunism, which was at its most virulent during the 1914 crisis, but rather an **inseparable manifestation** of opportunism, and indeed this had been the view of Marx and Engels ever since their letters about the German counter-revolution in 1850. Opportunism is a social fact, a deeply entrenched compromise between classes, and it would be sheer madness to ignore it. Capitalism would later offer a pact of mutual

collaboration to certain sections of industrial workers who were exempted from military service. The Railway Workers Union in Italy would oppose the CGIL’s repudiation of the general strike (and in doing so put their members’ exemption from military service at stake) and were only able to do so because of their political strength, and the close ties which this combative workers’ organization had forged with the extremist wing of the Marxist party.

During the crisis in 1914, as during many similar though less sensational crises, the trade unions were like lead weights tied to the feet of the class parties. The fault lay with the leading circles, but it is necessary to remember that trade-unionists can only get rid of these misleaders, party militants can only get rid of their failed leaders and socialist electors can only get rid of their corrupt MP’s after long years of struggle. The Sorelians, obviously not having considered this impressive array of evidence, proposed to remedy revisionism by boycotting parties and seeking refuge in the workers’ unions.

The situation was even worst in France and Italy, where certain trade-union confederations were under the influence of the anarcho-syndicalist current. In France this current was even in the majority and its secretary Jouhaux, Sorelian to the marrow, was a sworn enemy of the party and its parliamentary fraction. Nevertheless, as the First World War broke out, Jouhaux would subscribe to the jingoist politics of the socialist parliamentary deputies, dragging his organization and its mass membership along behind him, with only a few, at first absolutely negligible exceptions. It was the same for the famously cultivated scholar Elisée Reclus, and for the even more famous Gustave Hervé, leader of the European anti-militarists, editor of the “*Guerre Sociale*”, and organizer of the “*Citoyen-Browning*” or revolver-citizen, who had earlier felt obliged to stick the “the French flag into the dungheap”. When the war broke out Hervé would change the title of his journal to “*La Victoire*”, start an incredibly venomous campaign against the German people, and finally end up in the dungheap himself – the best place for him.

Nothing better emerged from the Sorelian ranks than from the French Socialist Party which, even then, was not worth two cents as far as Marxism was concerned. The “non-party” syndicalists ended up like messieurs Guesde and Cachin; who came to buy Mussolini’s newspaper with the francs of the French State (Cachin later became a communist, then a Hitler supporter, and then a staunch anti-fascist).

In Italy, the Confederation of Labor was confronted with the Italian Syndicalist Union. Although thoroughly imbued with a shallow reformism, the former had never complied with war politics. But the anarcho-syndicalist union had split into two currents, one against the war, the other with De Ambris and Corridoni openly interventionist. The socialist party passed the test more honourably: when the old chief of the extreme left, Mussolini became in favor of the war, and he was expelled from the Milan section in October 1914, not a voice was raised in his defense.

THE FACTORY ORGANIZATION

In the first place, the idea that the proletarian political party should be sacrificed in order to shift the center of revolutionary gravity towards the trade unions involves a complete abandonment of the basic tenets of Marxist theory. It is thus a view which only receives support from those who have abjured Marxism’s philosophical and

economic creed; as the Sorelians did eventually, and the Bakunians right from the start; it is a view, moreover, which history has shown to be totally baseless. The argument according to which the trade union is superior in that political parties allow non-working class elements to join, and that these elements end up in the executive posts – while this never occurs in the trade unions – flies in the face of the most resounding historical evidence to the contrary.

The narrowness of the trade unionist perspective, when compared to the political, resides in the fact it is restricted within a trade, rather than a class, context, and is affected by a rigid, mediaeval separation of crafts. Neither should the recent transformation of trade – or professional – trade unions into **industrial** unions be regarded as a significant step forward. In this latter form, for instance, a carpenter operative who works in an automobile plant has to join the metal-workers union rather than the carpenters' union. But both forms are equally characterized by the fact that amongst the rank-and-file, contact between the union members is restricted to dealing with the problems of just one narrow sector of production rather than that of society as a **whole**. Bringing about a synthesis of the various interests of local, professional and industrial proletarian groups, can only be accomplished through the intermediary of an apparatus which includes officials from the various organizations.

The narrow sectional interests of the proletarian class can therefore only be overcome in the party organization, which avoids dividing its members according to trade or profession.

Not long after the First World War, with the large trade unions and confederations clearly co-responsible with the socialist MPs and parties for the betrayal of the socialist cause, there was a widespread tendency to overestimate a new form of immediate organization which had arisen amongst the industrial proletariat: **the factory council**.

Those who theorized this system maintained that it expressed, better than any other, the historical function of the modern working class in two ways. The defense of the workers' interests would pass out of the hands of the trade union and be entrusted to the local factory council, with the latter connected to other councils via a "System of Councils", operating at the local, regional and national levels as well as within the different sectors of industry. There was, however, a new demand which arose: the **control**, and eventually **management**, of production. Factory councils would demand to intervene not only in setting wages, hours, and everything else to do with management-labor relations, but also to intervene in the technical-economic operations decided hitherto by management, i.e., production quotas, acquisition of raw materials, and disposal of the products. A whole range of "conquests" of this nature would lead to total **workers' management**, that is to say the effective elimination and expropriation of the employers.

In Italy at least, this enticing mirage was immediately described by revolutionary Marxists as extremely deceptive. It was a view which ignored the question of centralized power, insofar as the bourgeois State was supposed to co-exist with an advanced degree of **workers' control** (an early example of **coexistence** between wolf and lambs!); or even with a network of **workers' management** spread over a certain number of enterprises or groups of enterprises.

All this was nothing other than a new revisionism, a worse version of reformism. This hypothetical scheme, insofar as it involved a network of locally managed

operations, was even worse than that of the classical revisionists, who at least accepted the need for socially planned production, even though they entrusted it to a political State which was supposed to be conquered by the working class through peaceful means.

From a theoretical point of view it is easy to establish that such a system is just as anti-Marxist as Sorelian syndicalism. In a very similar way we see those two suspect characters – class **Party** and class **State** – totally banished from the revolutionary stage; at least the classical revisionists just confined themselves to open sabotage of class violence and class dictatorship! In essence, though, it is revolution and socialism which are eliminated in both cases.

This banal suspicion of the **Party** and **State** forms continued to gain ground over the decades that followed, and the "content of socialism" came to be confused with these two postulates: workers' control of production, and workers' management of production. And all this stuff was supposedly the "new Marxism".

Did Marx ever say what "the content of socialism" was? No. Marx never replied to such a metaphysical question. The content of a receptacle can just as well be water as wine, or indeed a rather more unpleasant liquid. As Marxists, it is appropriate to ask: what is the historical process which leads to socialism? What relations will exist between individuals "under socialism", i.e. within a society which is no longer capitalist? From this dual perspective it would be nonsense to reply: control of production, management of the factory, or as is so often added: **autonomy of the working class**.

For over a century now, we have defined the historical process which leads from fully industrialized capitalist society to Socialism as follows: formation of the proletariat, organization of the proletariat into a class political party, organization of the proletariat into the ruling class. The control and management of production can only start after reaching the latter stage. This will occur not **in individual factories** managed by **staff councils**, but within **society as a whole**, by the **class State** with the class party at its helm.

If the ridiculous search for "content" is applied to a fully socialist society, we have all the more reason for saying that the formulae "**workers' control**" and "**workers' management**" are lacking in any content. Under socialism, society isn't divided into producers and non-producers any more because society is no longer divided into classes. The "content" (if we have to use such an insipid expression) won't be proletarian autonomy, control, and management of production, but the **disappearance of the proletarian class**; of the wage system; of exchange – even in its last surviving form as the exchange of money for labor-power; and finally, the **individual enterprise** will disappear as well. There will be nothing to control and manage, and nobody to demand **autonomy** from.

These ideologies have only shown their total inability, both theoretically and in practice, to struggle for anything beyond a pale imitation of bourgeois society. What they really want is **their own autonomy** from the power of the class party and the revolutionary dictatorship. When Marx was still very young, and imbued with Hegelian ideas (ideas which these people still believe in even now) he would have answered that those who seek proletarian **autonomy** find instead bourgeois autonomy, raised up as an eternal model of mankind (see: "*On the Jewish Question*").

HISTORY OF “FACTORY SOCIALISM”

The ancestors of the Italian *Ordinivist* (9) factory councils are the old Anglo-Saxon **craft-guilds**, which were formed not to fight against bourgeois employers but against various feudal forms and rival guilds.

As soon as the Russian Revolution came to no longer be considered as an initial phase of the European proletarian revolution, but as a struggle of the peasantry to “seize the land”, this wretched distortion, in its turn, would give rise to the superficial parallel of “seizing the factories”. In such ways as this does one end up wandering off the main road which leads to the conquest of power and the conquest of society.

We have examined elsewhere in our press how Lenin settled the Russian agrarian and industrial questions, and we won’t go into it here. Syndicalists and anarchists everywhere would withdraw their support from the Russian revolution when they realized that Lenin saw “workers’ and peasants’ control” as subsidiary to the main aim of gaining control of the central power; as a slogan to invoke in enterprises which the Russian State had not yet managed to expropriate. Attempts at achieving autonomous management of the factories by their operatives had to be repressed, sometimes by force, in order to avoid pointless economic damage; damage which was anti-socialist insofar as it adversely effected the military and political direction of the civil war.

Confusion between the workers’ **Council State**, with the councils functioning as political and territorial organs, and the fictitious *ordinovist* factory Council State, with each council managing itself independently, was rapidly dispelled. On this subject we need only read the theses of the IInd Congress of the Communist International on Trade Unions and Factory Councils which define the tasks of such bodies before and after the revolution. The Marxist solution to the problem is the penetration of these organisms by the revolutionary party, and their subordination to (rather than autonomy from!) the revolutionary State. In our studies on Russia we described the discussions which followed one another on this subject.

We shall now briefly refer to the Italian experience. In 1920, the famous episode of the factory occupations took place. The workers, openly dissatisfied with the cowardly attitude of the big union federations, and forced into action by the economic situation and the injurious demands imposed by the industrialists after the initial post-war euphoria, barricaded themselves inside the factories, set about organizing their defense and expelled the management. In numerous places they tried to keep the factories running and sometimes even to dispose of the products they had manufactured through regular sale.

If then, in September 1920, the Italian proletariat had had a strong and resolute revolutionary party this movement might have gone on to achieve great things; to the contrary, following the 1919 unitary congress in Bologna and the sensational election

(9) The “*Ordinovists*” were the members of the Turinese councilist fraction of Italian Socialist Party led by Gramsci; they entered the Communist Party from its foundation. Taking advantage of the arrest by the fascists of the principal communist leaders, members of the Left, the International appointed Gramsci and his supporters to head the Communist Party of Italy. The name of this current comes from its journal “*Ordine Nuovo*” (New Order).

victory (with 150 socialist deputies elected to parliament), the Socialist Party was going through a profound crisis as the false extremism of Serrati’s “*Maximalists*” took hold. It was a crisis which wouldn’t be resolved until January 1921, by the split at Livorno which gave birth to the Communist Party of Italy. In the P.S.I (Italian Socialist Party) of the time, the procedure was always to refer decisions to various hybrid committees. These would include representatives of the party leadership (along with some of its peripheral organizations, contested by the various currents), socialist MPs, and the leaders of the Confederation of Labor. In vain did the Left declare that it was the party alone which was authorized to deal with problems relating to the political struggle of the working class. The socialist MPs and the trade union leaders should be bound by its instructions since they were members of the party. It was a case of needing to take action on a nationwide scale, action which was overtly political.

As a veritable orgy of false extremist positions swept the country, we had proof of how disastrous it was to the party to be lacking a solid doctrinal platform. The great factory occupation movement of the time led to the mistaken notion that the Soviet, or workers’ council, system as established in Russia, could be immediately extended to Italy; indeed even open adversaries of the revolutionary conquest of power talked about proclaiming it. But Lenin and the World congresses had taken a very clear stand on the issue, and stated that Soviets are not bodies which can **coexist** with the traditional State. On the contrary, they arise when an open struggle for power is taking place, when their function becomes that of replacing the executive and legislative organs of a bourgeois State teetering on the verge of collapse. But all this would be forgotten, and in the midst of general confusion and an absurd alliance between legalists and revolutionaries, the movement would collapse into impotence.

The bourgeois leader Giolitti was much more clear-sighted about these things. Despite the law allowing him to deploy troops to expel the workers occupying the industrial plants, and despite being spurred on to do so by the forces of the right and of nascent fascism, he purposely refrained from issuing such orders. The workers and their organizations, occupying factories which had come to a virtual standstill, didn’t look as though they were about to burst out of the factories with arms in hand, attack the bourgeois forces, and occupy the State and Police headquarters; hunger alone would be enough to undermine their untenable position. With Giolitti hardly needing to fire a single shot, the movement collapsed of its own accord. After a few isolated incidents, the bourgeois managers and bosses were soon back in charge of the factories and running them in exactly the same way as before. The storm had abated, and bourgeois power and privilege had escaped relatively unscathed.

The whole history of post-war Italy clearly shows that the proletarian struggle, even under favourable conditions, is doomed to failure unless it is led by a revolutionary party capable of settling the question of power in a radical way; a fact equally borne out by the history of Fascism. It was the final bankruptcy of that system of ideas which rejects revolution as a means to gain political control of society; which rejects launching the attack on the bourgeois State and establishing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat; which wishes to replace these measures with the shabby delusion that workers will conquer and control the factories, and supposedly organize themselves into factory councils which embrace the entire workforce, apart from any political directive and of any party membership.

The Italian Ordinovist current had not yet gone so far as declaring the political party unnecessary since it broadly agreed with the IIIrd International's tactic of establishing contacts with other proletarian parties, even reformist and opportunist ones, since it supported the idea of a class front composed of industrial workers and the petit-bourgeoisie. But future events, and the triumph of opportunism within Italy and the Communist International, would show that the doctrine of self-sufficient factory councils (with their own little self-contained revolutions), was a very dangerous starting point; as indeed was the illusion that communist victory was assured as soon as individual enterprises had passed from the hands of the management into those of their employees. In fact Communism involves the reorganization of the whole of human life, and the old productive model – to which the spontaneously arisen networks of trade-union and factory based organizations subscribed – needs to be denounced, and then totally destroyed from top to bottom.

A FUTILE RETURN TO VACUOUS FORMULAS

The great Russian tragedy has been accompanied at every stage of its involution by attempts to breathe life into various forms of proletarian organization; in spite of the fact that the **political Party and Dictatorship of the Proletariat** were considered central factors by the great pioneers of the October Revolution; central to their immense organizational effort which carried them to the forefront of the proletarian, anti-capitalist assault which menaced capitalism at the end of the First World War.

No useful contribution towards a theoretical and practical revival of the class movement will ever emerge from an anxious mistrust about the Party and State forms of organization. These are forms which are absolutely indispensable if the relations of class domination are to be over-turned once and for all. The childish objection to these forms boils down to the idea that it is something called “human nature” to resort to the exercise of power, whether defending the cause of forces within society (as part of a “hierarchical” system authorized to protect it), whether to defend the interests of individuals, or simply in order to satisfy an insatiable lust for power on the part of those who are invested with power within the party and the State.

Marxism consists in the demonstration that such a fate does not exist and that the actions of individuals depend on the forces generated by general interests, especially when they act not as individuals reacting in parallel to others like simple molecules of a mass, but – above all – of elements carried by social dynamics at the decisive points, at the crucial points of the historic struggle.

Either we read history as Marxists, or we relapse into scholastic masturbations which explain great events as due to monarchical maneuverings over hereditary claims and the transmission of the crown to heirs, or as the exploits of great cavaliers, dashing buccaneers, urged on to perform great exploits in the quest for personal glory and posthumous immortality!

For us, and for Marx, it is just not possible for the lone individual, taking conscious foresight as his starting point, to go out and “mould” society and History in conformity with his motive will. And this goes not only for the poor devil of a molecule floundering about in the social magma, but even more so for kings and the queens, for those invested with high office and honors, for those with dozens of titles and initials after

their names. It is indeed particularly these people who don't know what they want, don't achieve what they thought they would, and to whom, if you'll excuse the noble expression, historical determinism reserves its biggest kick up the backside. In fact, if you accept our doctrine, “great” leaders are greater marionettes of history than anyone else.

When viewed in the context of a succession of productive forms, each one replacing the one before, it will be seen that all revolutions go through a particularly dynamic stage in which the combatants, who at this point appear as the expression of socially determined forces pushing them towards a greater good, will as a general rule put up with any number of sacrifices and privations: there will be those, both in the ranks and in the higher profile roles, who will give up their lives, and their “hunger for power”, whilst obeying the still un-deciphered forces which accompany the birth of every new social form.

In the final phase of each form, this social dynamism evaporates due to the fact that a new, opposed, social form is arising within the old. At this point there appears a conservative defence of the traditional form which tends to manifest itself as an underwriting of personal egoisms, individual belly-stuffing, and open corruption; as exemplified in the bribe-takers, praetorians, feudal courtiers, debauched clerics, and the shady speculators and corrupt accountants of today's bourgeois regime.

And yet the defense of the capitalist form against its fall is still led with vigor and tenacity, even in the midst of an ocean of cynicism and existential egoism, by the organized networks of the States and the political parties of the dominant class. At decisive historical moments they have shown that they know how to organize a solidly united counter-revolutionary force, and we refer here not only to Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, but also to England, the United States and contemporary Russia, on the condition that we go a little beyond surface appearances.

And since they are aware that the source of our power is the knowledge we have of the “geological stratification” of the historical underground, they even try to steal that from us as well!

Should we, of all people, really be so cowardly as to renounce the power and the form which this invincible force of ours will have to assume, namely: the revolutionary Party and the iron State of the Dictatorship? Within these organizational structures particular individuals will hold certainly key positions, of course, but their duty, far from engaging in personal maneuvering and secret or surprising intrigues and conspiracies, will be to obey rigorously the requirements which dictate the historical process of the coming into being of the organs of the irreversible revolution which will overthrow the economic and social forms.

To propose to find in organizations other than the Party **guarantees** against the degeneration of a leader or an individual charged with whatever function, it is to show quite simply that one has disavowed all our Marxist doctrine.

In fact the network of “leaders” and “functionaries” in these organizations is the same as in the party, and in general it isn't even solely composed of workers. And even if it were, history has taught us the unhappy truth that the worker who leaves his job to work in the trade-union bureaucracy is often more likely to betray his class than somebody originating from the non-proletarian classes. Examples? We could provide thousands of them.

All this monkey business is generally presented as a move towards an establishing of tighter bonds, of closer links, with the “masses”. But who are the masses? They are the working class when deprived of historical energy, i.e. without a party to set them on the historic revolutionary path; a class, therefore, tied to and **resigned to its state of subjection** and to the chains which tie it to the bourgeois social organism. Then again, in certain historical situations, the masses may quantitatively swamp the working “class” with an overflow of **semi-proletarian** layers.

In absolute consonance with the precepts of the Marxist school, we see a double historical moment in this situation and it is possible to synthesize all that we have said previously in this distinction.

In the period before the bourgeois revolution proper breaks out, when feudal forms still need to be brought crashing down, as for example in Russia in 1917, elements amongst these still un-proletarianized “people” confront the power of the State and contest society’s leadership. At certain decisive moments these strata tend to side with the proletarian class, adding not only a numerical advantage, but also contributing a potentially revolutionary factor which can be used during the transitional phase; on condition, that is, that the party of the workers’ dictatorship has a clear historical vision, a powerful and autonomous organization, and has guaranteed its hegemony by retaining close links with the proletarian class throughout the world. The situation changes when the revolutionary anti-feudal pressure subsides: the popular “framework” which encased the revolutionary and classist proletariat now becomes not only reactionary, but even more reactionary than the bourgeoisie itself. Now any steps to retain links with it lead to opportunism, to destruction of the revolutionary power, and to solidarity with capitalist conservatism. Today, throughout all the countries of the “white race”, this principle is still valid.

The present Russian opportunists, in their mad dash towards a total repudiation of anything that smacks of revolution, have not – yet – dumped the party-form, but they still seek to justify each successive stage of their involution with an **appeal to the masses**, and every now and again to proclaim their solidarity with them.

No further **a posteriori** or historical evidence is required to show the sheer inconsistency of this equivocal, and repugnant recipe, and the essential part it has played in the liquidation of the revolutionary party.

PART THREE

PETIT-BOURGEOIS DISTORTIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNIST SOCIETY IN THE «SYNDICALIST» AND «FACTORY SOCIALIST» CONCEPTIONS

THE POLITICAL PARTY IS IRREPLACEABLE

The view that the organizations formed by workers to conduct their struggles should be entirely structured around the production network of the bourgeois industrial economy – a view taken to its furthest extreme in Gramsci’s system and revived today by various anti-Stalinist groups – has proved to be entirely ineffectual in practice and invariably goes hand in hand with a failure to identify the fundamental differences between the economic structure of today and tomorrow: between the present capitalist society and the communist society which will take its place because of the victory of the proletarian class. Any such theory therefore falls far short of the Marxist critique of the present capitalist economic system.

This implies an economic error similar in all points to those which it denounces in the Stalinist system and which were worsened enormously since the XXth Congress, when it continued to claim to criticize and correct Stalin. This error consists in imagining a society in which the workers would have gained the victory over their employers at the local level, within their trade, or within their factory, while remaining imprisoned, enmeshed in a market economy, without realizing that that means the same thing as capitalism.

The features of a non-capitalist and non-mercantile society which emerge from a genuine Marxist analysis, resulting from a critical and scientific forecast which is free of any trace of utopianism, can be attained and adhered to on the programmatic level only by the Party, insofar as it alone escapes from the servitude of “adhesion” to the organization which the mode of capitalistic production imposes on the

producing class.

Hesitations on the necessity of the Party and State necessarily entrain the total liquidation of the programmatic acquisitions concerning the complete opposition of communist and capitalist forms which is in the possession of the party of the Marxist school. Its enough to consider the fundamental points which the Marxist program has attained (abolition of the social and technical division of labor, entailing the suppression of barriers between different production units; abolition of the contradiction between town and countryside; social synthesis of science and practical human activity), to immediately see that any “concrete” plan to organize proletarian action which sets out to mirror the structure of the present-day economic world is doomed to remain trapped within the characteristic limitations of today’s capitalist forms, and condemns itself to be counter-revolutionary without even realizing it.

The way to emancipate itself from this subjugation, though only after a long succession of conflicts and perplexity, is through establishing organizations without any of the materials or any models drawn from the bourgeois world: the proletarian Party and State, within which the society of tomorrow crystallizes in advance of its existence in a historical sense. Within those organizations which we define as “immediatist”, which copy and bear the physiological imprint of present-day society, all they can even potentially do is crystallize and perpetuate **this** society.

THE “COMMUNE” FORM

It is a very strange fact that the libertarians, who around 1870 or so engaged in their polemics against Marx in the First International, and whose short-sightedness we have already referred to, are still widely considered to be “more advanced” than Marx. Actually, in spite of their verbal opposition to militarism and patriotism, they never grasped the importance of going beyond the purely national level when criticizing bourgeois economy and studying the laws of how it spreads on the global scale, with the importance of the formation of the world market.

Marx described the formation of the international market as the ultimate and crowning historical task of the modern bourgeoisie; after that there remained only the fight to establish the proletarian dictatorship in the countries which were most advanced, and, after the destruction of the national states which arose alongside capitalism, an expansion of the power of the international proletarian class on an ever-vaster scale. The anarchist proposal, when not actually advocating unlimited autonomy for all individuals, whatever their class, was to destroy the capitalist State so as to replace it with small social units, the famous **producers’ communes**, which after the collapse of the central government would supposedly be totally autonomous, even with respect to each other. It is impossible to see how this rather abstract form of future society based on local “communes” differs from today’s bourgeois society, and its economic procedures don’t seem that different either. Those who set out to describe this future society, such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, thought it enough merely to link it to a set of philosophical abstractions, rather than to an analysis of historically verified laws of social production. When they did take up Marx’s critique, it was only in the most minimal and selective way since they were unable to infer the conclusions implied by the

theory: they were impressed by the concept of surplus value (which is an economic theorem) but used it merely to support their moral condemnation of exploitation, which they saw as arising from human beings exerting “power” over each other. Unable to attain the theoretical level of dialectics, they were debarred from understanding, for instance, that in the transition from the appropriation of the physical product of the serf’s labor by the landowning lord to the production of surplus value in the capitalist system, an actual “liberation” from more crushing forms of servitude and oppression has taken place; for even if the division into classes, and the existence of a State power, still remained a historical necessity, and benefited the bourgeois class, in that historical period it **benefited the whole of the rest of society as well**.

One of the principal causes of the greater output of labor as a whole, and of the higher average remuneration for the same amount of labor, was because of the creation of the nationwide market and the division of productive labor into different branches of industry, with the latter enabled to exchange their fully and semi-worked products within a zone of free circulation of commodities, and increasingly impelled to extend this zone beyond the boundaries of each State.

This increase (fully foreseen by Marxism) in the wealth of the bourgeoisie and in the power of each of each of its states, and along with this the production of surplus-value, does not immediately mean that an absolute increase in the gross revenue extracted is at the expense of the lower classes. To a certain extent, it is still compatible with a lessening of the hours of work and with a general improvement in the satisfaction of needs. Therefore, the idea of dismantling capitalism by breaking up the national State into little islands of power, (characteristic of the pre-bourgeois Middle Ages!), makes no sense at all. It would clearly be a retrograde step to force the economy back into these limited confines, even if the sole aim were to prevent a few lazy, non-workers from appropriating any of the resources from each of the little communes.

In this system of egalitarian communes, it is certain that the cost of the daily food supply, calculated in terms of the hours of work of **all** the adult members of the community (leaving aside the slight objection: who would compel those who didn’t want to work to do so?) would be more than if production was organized at the level of a nation, take modern France for instance, where there is a continuous and regular economic traffic between the different communes, and a given manufactured article is obtained from the places where it is produced without the least difficulty; even if the “two hundred families” still gorge themselves up to their eyeballs. In fact, these various communes would have no option but to trade amongst each other on the basis of free exchange. And even if we admitted that a “universal consciousness” would suffice to peacefully regulate these relations between the different locally based economic nuclei, there would still be nothing to prevent one commune from extracting surplus-value from another due to a fluctuating equivalence between one commodity and another.

This imaginary system of little economic communes is nothing more than a philosophical caricature of that age-old petit-bourgeois dream of **self-government**. It can easily be seen that this system is just as mercantile as the one which existed in Stalin’s Russia or in the increasingly anti-proletarian post-Stalinist Russia, and it is equally clear that it involves a totally bourgeois system of monetary equivalents

(without a State to mint money?) which is bound to weigh down the average productive laborer far more than a system of national or imperialist, large-scale industries.

THE “TRADE UNION” FORM

So far, we have been elaborating the historico-political part of our criticism of the trade unionist (or syndicalist) conception of the proletarian struggle. Using the bitter proof of past experience, we have highlighted the doctrinal insufficiency and the ineptitude of the formula: trade unions versus the bourgeois State; a formula put forward with the intention of getting rid of not only the organ of political struggle, the party, but also the organ of social direction – as indispensable as it is historically transitory – represented by the revolutionary State which Marx envisaged.

According to the ideology of Sorel and his followers, the trade union is sufficient, on its own, to both lead the struggle, and to organize and manage the no-longer-capitalist proletarian economy. In this part, we will show that such a position makes sense only on the basis of a completely confused and insipid ahistorical schematization of the characteristic features of the mode of production which will succeed bourgeois capitalism. Such a schema, which will never be realized nor can it be, survives only in the semi-bourgeois imagination; nourished by a certain hatred against the big bosses, it fails to see the depth of the antithesis which exists between today’s society, and the one which will emerge from the victory of the proletariat.

A lot of confusion has always been caused by opportunism on the subject of what form the future society will take: we need only think of those political parties which, though considering themselves Marxist, would go so far as to declare that the formulation of such a historically finalistic program – which they called “maximal”, not to contrast it with a program which was immediate and “minimum”, but rather to deride the necessity of attaining it – was entirely superfluous. For a long time we have fought to prove that the decisive features of such a program have been known to us since the Marxist current first appeared, and we will need to continue to struggle to prove it. But the vision of the imaginary socialist mode which will supposedly result from the victory of the trade union organizations over the capitalist bosses, and from the supposedly ensuing collapse of the bourgeois political State, is much more indefinite and vague than ours.

Throughout the history of the various socialist currents there has been – even in important texts – a great deal of confusing of co-operative forms – which are nothing but a derivation from pre-Marxist utopianism – with the socialist economic form. We will examine this view of a society based on a network of co-operative producers later on when we describe the **managerial** factory council current of socialism. As for the Sorelian syndicalist vision of the society subsequent to the collapse of capitalism, the first question we must ask ourselves is whether the fundamental unit of this society will be the locally based trade union, perhaps one with only a slight territorial extension, or the national and, potentially international, trade union.

We should not forget that, within the framework of the organizations of economic defence which the working class formed at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, there was one institution, chiefly in the Latin countries, which would excel in terms of dynamism and energy. In Italy, it was known as the “**Camera del**

Lavoro” and in France, less appropriately, it was called the “**Bourse du Travail**”. Whilst the Italian denomination certainly reeks of bourgeois parliamentarism, the latter is worse in that it conveys the idea of a **labor market**, a place where workers are on sale to the highest bidder amongst the employers; it therefore gives the impression of being even further removed from the struggle to root out capitalist ideology.

Whereas individual trade unions and leagues, and even their national federations, being much less unitary and centralized, suffer the limitations of particular trade interests, which concern themselves with short-term, restricted demands, the “**Cameras**” and “**Bourses**” – chambers of labor of the city and countryside, by developing solidarity amongst workers from different trades and workplaces, were more inclined to consider class problems at a deeper, distinctly political level. Even though the locally-based nature of these organizations meant they couldn’t completely free themselves of those defects which we examined earlier on (in our criticism of localist and “communalist” forms), real political problems were discussed there, not in the trite electoral sense, but in terms of revolutionary activity.

THE VIGOR OF INTER-SYNDICAL FORMS

We could mention many episodes, which occurred in those post-WWI Red Years, in which the specific and highly active organ of the chambers of labor, the **General Council of the Leagues**, rallied the Italian workers to mass movements and uprisings, often entirely bypassing the trade union officials, and in acting on vigorous appeals openly made in the name of socialist and then communist groups.

In France during the first part of this century, the powerful waves of movements emanating from the *Bourses du Travail* left the “**Sûreté**” (Police) filled with dread. Without knowing it, the Bourses were political organs of the struggle for power, but the reformist and sometimes even the anarchist trade-union “**bonzes**” would take advantage of their local isolation to prevent the movement from spreading to the national or international level, as in the case of the aborted attempted strike called in defense of Red Russia, which was under attack from the bourgeois armies of the Entente.

In September, 1920, during the occupation of the factories, terror-stricken bourgeois shop-keepers kept their shutters rolled up, allowing stocks of their consumer goods to be taken and pooled at the Chambers of Labor, who distributed them to the unemployed: involving the Chambers going well beyond a narrow trade-unionist concern with wages; under these circumstances, the supreme guardian of the established order, Prime minister Giolitti, kept his cool and was clever enough not to indict us for larceny, as a rigorous observance of the law would have required.

In the subsequent fascist phase, it was not Mussolini’s squads, (which at that time were suffering a series of bloody defeats), but the regular armed forces of the State (including heavy artillery) which were deployed to attack the workers in Empoli, Prato, Sarzana, Parma and Ancona, and in Bari, even the navy; and only after repeated assaults did they defeat the armed workers holding out in the heavily fortified Chambers of Labor. The August 1922 strike failed because this defense wasn’t coordinated at a nationwide level, which only the newly formed Communist Party would attempt: once again the trade-union leaders and the maximalist-reformist controlled Socialist party

managed to curb the movement in the main cities, where the fascist movement counted for nothing, having gained control only of Florence and Bologna; in Milan, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Venice, and Palermo, the workers would be brought, peacefully and legally, under their paralysing leadership. Therefore it is from August 1922, (and not from the comedy of the March on Rome in October, 1922) that we can really date the victory of Italian capitalism over the proletarian revolution, killed by the infamous opportunist plague – and here we'll leave the Italian example.

We thus note therefore especially in the trade union network the impotence of the individual local trade unions and the national Federation of trades, with a national confederation controlled almost everywhere by the opportunist parties whereas the only stronghold of class action lived on for a certain period, in the inter-syndical organs of the cities and the provinces.

During the present phase of Stalinist opportunism, even this one, last, precious resource has been destroyed. And since the Chambers of Labor, as main venues for the mass assemblies of the most combative workers, no longer exist (traditionally, **thousands** of workers used to attend every evening, making it easy for decisions to reach the whole area by the next morning) today's pink-and-red priesthood have replaced them with corridors full of rows of bureaucratic counter windows, where each isolated, intimidated worker goes to ask what is due to him; or to accept orders from on high about some current ridiculous little action, even if he grumbles afterward against the orders he receives and laments on the castration of strikes.

THE ECONOMIC FUNCTION

Let us suppose the working class had defeated the established order by trade union action alone, and that a new economic and productive activity had started to unfold after bourgeois control was eliminated. In the case of a city with a strong, centralized and closely linked trade union organization, such a hypothesis is perhaps least far from reality, but we are still left with the objections we made about the “communal” form; as to the possibility of attaining a definitive victory in a particular city or region without having achieved it in the neighboring areas of the same country as well.

To understand what the Sorelians mean by trade union management of the “future” economy (without repeating what we have already said about the illusion of a system of locally managed communes) we have to imagine a system of economic management which, in any given country (with our usual reservations about the negative prospects of a victory over capitalism limited to one country) assigns responsibility for the different branches of the economy to the leading bodies of the various national trade unions. To clarify our point, let us imagine that the organization of bread production, and of all other grain-based products, is entrusted to the “Federation of Grain Industries”, with analogous arrangements for all other trades and industries. In other words, we have to imagine that all the products of a given branch of production have been placed at the disposal of large organizations resembling national trusts. Since all the capitalist managers would long since have been removed, these organizations would need to make decisions about how to utilize the entire product (in our example: bread, pasta etc.) in such a way as to receive, from other parallel organizations, not

only what their members require for their personal consumption, but new raw materials, instruments of labor, etc., as well.

Such an economy is an exchange economy, and it continues to be so whether or not the exchanges take place at the “higher”, or the “lower”, levels of the organization. In the first case, exchange takes place at the apex of the various sectors of production, each of which distributes the various products required for production and consumption down through its hierarchical structure. Here the system of exchange remains, **at its summit**, a mercantile one, that is, it requires some law of equivalence in order to equate the value of the **stocks** of one “producers’ union” with another; and we can easily suppose that these syndicates would be very numerous, and just as easily suppose that each of them would need to separately negotiate with all the others.

Let us not even ask **who** is to establish this system of equivalent values, or **what** would guarantee the autonomy and “the equality” between all the “producers’ unions” implied in all these fantastical constructions; but let us be so “liberal” as to think it possible that the various equivalent values could be “peacefully” determined through a “spontaneously” established equilibrium. A measuring system of such complexity couldn't operate without the age-old expedient of a **general equivalent**, in a word, **money**, the logical measure of every exchange.

It is easy to conclude that the “higher” system would eventually break down into the “lower”, since it would be impossible to restrict the handling of money in such a society just to those top people entrusted with arranging the exchanges between one production trust and another (and here the word *syndicate* is entirely appropriate); inevitably this right would be extended to all trust members, to all trust workers, who would thus be empowered to “buy” whatever they wanted after receiving their quota of money from their particular vertical organization: in other words, their wages, just like today, the only alleged difference being that it would be “undiminished” (as in Duhring, Lassalle and others) by the boss's profit margin.

The bourgeois, liberal, illusion of a system of trade unions existing independently from one another, and free to negotiate the terms under which they part with their stock of (monopolized) products, is connected with the idea that each producer, having been remunerated with the **undiminished proceeds of his work** (nonsense ridiculed by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*) would then be able to do whatever he liked with it in terms of the consumer goods he acquired. And here is the rub: that these “free producers’ economies” are shown to be just as far removed from the social economy, which Marx called socialism and communism, as capitalism, if not further.

In the socialist economy, it is **not** the individual who makes decisions about production (what is to be produced, and how much) or about consumption, but society, the **species** as a whole. Here is the essential point. The independence of the producer is just another of those vacuous, democratic stock-phrases which achieve precisely nothing. In the present society, the wage-earning worker, the slave of capital, may not be an independent producer, but he is independent as a consumer, insofar as (within a certain quantitative limit which **isn't** determined by sheer hunger as the charlatan Lassalle's **iron law of wages** maintains, but which increases to a certain extent as bourgeois society expands) he can spend his wage-packet on whatever he wants.

In bourgeois society, the proletariat produces whatever the capitalist requires – or put in a more generalized and scientific way whatever the general laws of the capitalist mode of production require; whatever is required by capital, that superhuman monster – and, at least within a certain limit, he consumes, certainly not as much as it wants, but **as** he wants. In Socialist society, individuals **will not** be free to make choices regarding what productive activities they take part in, and what they consume, as **both** these spheres will be dictated by society, and in the interests of society. By whom? This the inevitable imbecilic question, to which we unhesitatingly reply: in the initial phase it will be the “dictatorship” of the revolutionary proletariat class, whose only organ capable of arriving at a **prior understanding** of the forces which will then come into play is the revolutionary Party; in a second historical phase, society as a whole will exert its will spontaneously through a diffused economy, which will have abolished both the **autonomy** of classes and of individual persons, in all fields of human activity.

THE POLEMIC IS ALWAYS THE SAME

At each step of the way our discussion has turned up formulas which appear rather surprising. This is why we must demonstrate that for a century they have belonged to a school which cannot be confused with any other: Marxism.

This is all the more necessary as in addition to traditional Stalinists and to the degenerated Stalinists in vogue today, we have arrayed against us the anti-Stalinists who emerge like swarms of locusts and who, intoning along with the former the same old tune of the “correction” and “enrichment” of the Marxism of the past, and who are content instead to break their lances in favour of “autonomy” attributing the incessant defeats of the revolution to the fact that this “autonomy” has been **violated**.

And what have these restless inventors of the latest formula come up with now? In one of the periodicals of the highly eclectic “*Quadrioglio*” we see nothing other than the republished writings (from 1880-1890) of Francesco Saverio Merlino, the “libertarian socialist”: early propagator of an ultra-rancid recipe which is still being cooked up today, in an eclectic variety of sauces, by a whole brood of little newspapers who have perched outside Palmiro Togliatti’s window to provoke him with their naughty twitterings; but what they have failed to understand, when it comes to this particular recipe, is that good old Palmiro is a **master chef**! Compared to him they are just a bunch of scullery boys. And here is the recipe: salvation lies in the union between the **values** of Socialism and of Liberty!

According to them, the ideology of the saviour of Marx and of revolutionary science, the old and very confused Merlino, triumphed not only in Russia in 1905, and 1917 (!), but above all in the 1956 Polish and Hungarian uprisings, and even during the so-called Yugoslavian “experience”.

Merlino’s formulas are mainly drawn from an article he wrote about the 1891 “Erfurt Programme”. For the **modernizers** this is strong stuff. These old formulas simply revive the notorious confusion, dispelled by our current in the post-World War One years, between the irksome, nonsensical “free people’s State” of the German Social Democrats and the central position of Marx on the proletariat **dictatorship**; having failed to take into account that it was on this very issue, after 1875, that Marx and Engels were on the verge of disowning the German socialists, which we will get back

to in a moment. Here is what Merlino says: “*The power to direct, to manage, and to administrate the socialist society must belong not to a mythical people’s and workers’ State, but to the **mutually confederated workers associations themselves***”. “*Shall we commit everything to a central power, or allow the workers’ associations the right to organize themselves **in their own fashion**, taking possession of the instruments of labor?*”. “*We do not want a central government or administration, which would constitute the most exorbitant of autocracies, but properly and freely confederated workers’ organizations*”.

These formulas suit us well insofar as we can show how perfectly they express the thinking of Togliatti, Khrushchev, of Tito and others, and how perfectly they express the exact opposite of what we are fighting for. The *Quadrioglists*, *Barbarists* and all other **confederated associations** are on the other side of the barricades.

Their ultimate heart-felt cry is always the same “**bureaucratic centralism, or class autonomy?**”. If such indeed were the antithesis, instead of Marx and Lenin’s “Dictatorial Center of Capital or of the Proletariat?”, whether or not these gentlemen like it or not we would have no hesitation about opting for bureaucratic centralism; which at certain key historical conjunctures may be a necessary evil, and which would be easily controllable by a party which absolutely refused to compromise its principles (Marx), which was free from organizational slackness and tactical acrobatics, and which was immune to the plague of autonomy and federalism. As to “class autonomy”, it is complete imbecility. The socialist society is one in which classes have been abolished. Even if we concede that under a regime of class domination the dominated class may advance the demand for autonomy as a form of protest, in a society without a capitalist class, autonomy can only signify a struggle between one set of workers and another, between one confederation and another, between different trade unions, between different sets of “producers”. Under Socialism, producers are no longer a distinct and separate part of society.

The fact that each association disposes of the instruments of labor of its sector “in its own fashion” does not make it socialism! Instead it substitutes for class struggle, whose ultimate aim is dictatorship, the absurd “*bellum omnium contra omnes*”: the war of all against all; an historical solution which, by chance, is as sterile as it is absurd.

Slaves would be in a position of class **autonomy** if they were to declare “we are happy to remain slaves, but we want to decide what food to serve to our masters at table, and which of our daughters they can take to their beds!” Even the Christian position was a thousand times more revolutionary than that, for although it didn’t herald a classless society, it did nevertheless clearly proclaim: “no difference between slaves and free citizens”.

The concepts expressed here are all to be found, word for word, in Marx’s writings as we will now proceed to demonstrate.

UNFORGETTABLE WORDS

The substitution of **autonomy** for the class **struggle** constitutes the error of the trade unionist or workerist-type schools, all of whom we will call “immediatists” insofar as they confuse the dialectically distinct moments of immediate organization, of the

historical trajectory and of revolutionary theory. They want to reduce the whole historical cycle of the proletariat to an inscription in a register of the workers of a particular factory, a corporation or another small productive islet, and to construct their whole edifice according to this cold and lifeless model. Marxist determinism, on the other hand, destroys the bourgeois fiction of the individual, the person, the citizen, and reveals that the philosophical attributes of this mythical entity are nothing but a universalization and eternalization of the relations which benefit the individual member of the modern ruling class, the bourgeois, the capitalist, the owners of land and money, the merchant. Having overthrown this repugnant idol, Marxism replaces it with economic **society**, “and provisionally a national society”.

All “immediatists”, that is to say, all those who have climbed only a thousandth of the distance separating them from the summits of communism; commit this confusion: in the place of **society** they put in its place a simple regrouping of workers; and they choose this regroupment without going outside of the narrow prison walls which comprise this bourgeois society of “**free men**”: the factory, the trade, the territorial and juridical district. Their entire miserable effort consists in telling these non-free, these non-citizens, and these **non-individuals** (such is the great idea with which the bourgeois revolution unconsciously inspires them) to envy and imitate their oppressors: Become autonomous, Free! Become citizens! Become people! In a word: to bourgeoisify themselves!

The question is not the attribution of the functions carried out today by capitalism with immediate groups from the existing social organization, but the birth of the **non-capitalist society**. Here is the abyss between this pusillanimous comedic opera and us... Confronted with the abortive results of their theories, they twitter on about a new autocracy, a bureaucratic center, an organ of oppression, and that in order to avoid this, it is necessary to break this powerful unity – the society, not the person – into so many “autonomous” fragments, free to mimic the ignoble and furthermore already archaic bourgeois models.

Do it, but have at least the courage of Merlino! Rank Karl Marx among the autocrats, the oppressors and the corrupters of the proletariat, and naturally Lenin (whom Merlino did not know) too.

Antonio Labriola lent support to Merlino when he protested against the idea Lassalle (a prince of **immediatism**) had of “paving the way to the solution of the social question by establishing producers’ co-operatives with State aid under the democratic control of the working people”. This nauseating passage would actually find its way into the Gotha Programme (1875), but didn’t appear in the Erfurt Programme (1891) due to Engel’s tough response.

But who, if not Marx and Engels, utterly negated all particularism and federalism, any deviation à propos “autonomous domains of economic organization” and ripped up this ignoble Lassallian formulation in texts that the Social Democracy kept hidden under the barrel for fully fifteen years, as with the “Critique of the Gotha Programme”, and which contain the most classic dialectical construction of the future society ever, crushing the immediatism (today in full expansion) which presents the State as the horn of plenty from which the working class should draw sustenance? The texts masterfully elaborated by Lenin are enough to show this.

Today, since we are almost suffocated by all these stupid “questions of struc-

ture”, “problems to be solved” and “ways to be paved”, let us have a breath of fresh air from those pages left to grow yellow in Bebel’s desk drawer.

“*The existing class struggle is discarded in favour of the **empty journalistic formula**: ‘the social question’, the solution for which one ‘paves the way’.* Instead of being the result of the revolutionary process of social transformation in society, ‘the socialist organization of the total labor’ (in a previous passage, Marx had already pulverised another idiotic expression still much used today, “emancipation of labor” whereas he always speaks of ‘emancipation of the **working class**’) *comes into being through the aid of the State!*”

He then turns in derision to the formula of democratic control by the working people:

“*And particularly in the case of a working people which, through these demands that it puts to the state, expresses its full consciousness that it neither rules nor is ripe for ruling!*”

But, for Marxists the passage from the same text which shows the form of tomorrow’s society is this:

“*To say that the workers want to establish the conditions of collective production **ON THE SCALE OF SOCIETY**, and by themselves, i.e. on the national scale, to begin with, means that they work to revolutionize the present conditions of production, and that has nothing to do with co-operatives subsidized by the State.*”

ON THE SCALE OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

This passage, along with many similar ones, is enough to establish that anyone who sinks from the “level of society”, which at a certain historical point **prior** to the conquest of power coincides with the “national level”, down to federal/trade union levels (municipal “commune”, individual enterprise, or worse still), falls into immediatism, betrays Marxism, and lacks any conception of communist society: and is consequently estranged from revolutionary struggle.

As to the gigantic antithesis between the “revolutionary transformation of society” and the “socialist organization of labor”, it could equally be addressed to Moscow’s “builders of socialism”, so that we can throw in their faces the fact that the transition to socialism is not something you **contract out to a construction firm**; Marx never even touched the word **construction**, and he weighed his words carefully (just as Lenin **re-weighed** them), and would never have dreamed of using such a crassly bourgeois and vulgarly voluntaristic expression.

We won’t recall here Marx’s famous pointed criticism of the **Free People’s State** which was later re-echoed by Lenin out to millions, no longer from the confines of a study, but under the blazing skies of one of the greatest revolutions! And how much more miserable are they who have forgotten it yet again! The freer the State, the more it oppresses the working class to defend Capital! We don’t want to free the State, we want to put it in chains, and then strangle it. And with words such as these the **anti-statism** of the various Bakunins and the Merlino is sent back where it belongs: to take up its place among the clownish parodies of political thought. In its place (this is the superiority of the dialectic!) the new State (Engels) which **will be used not for**

freedom but for repression, but which will have to come into existence before being able to disappear forever with the abolition of classes.

The Free People's State can be put in the same bag as **class autonomy**. They are both only the forms of **immediatist impotence**, of the **immanence of bourgeois** thought.

As to the fundamental concept of a unitary "society" to replace the antithesis between capitalists and proletarians (and between producers and consumers as well) it is interesting to look at its evolution in the various programs of the German party, even if they were all vividly critiqued. It was the Lassalean program (Leipzig, 1863) which contained the formula of **the elimination of class antagonisms** which Marx refuted by stating that **classes themselves** needed to be eliminated; the **means** of achieving this was precisely through their antagonism.

The program of the "Marxists" (Eisenach, 1869), which Marx said had been drawn up without taking into account the theoretical conquests of the socialist movement, demanded the ending of class domination and the wage-laborer, but still spoke of the "undiminished proceeds of labor" to be given to each worker, and of an organization of labor to be formed on a cooperative basis (but without State aid).

The Gotha program (1875), resulting from the deplorable fusion between the Eisenachers and the Lassallians and which remained formulated in the same terms which Marx had criticized, stated however that the instruments of labor will be "the common inheritance of all society". Marx would have left this sentence just as it is, but he wished to say not "**raised to**", but "**transformed into**" common inheritance. We see an **anti-activist** correction there.

The Erfurt program, the drafting of which took into account a great number of Engels suggestions, after the publication of the critiques to the Gotha program, expresses itself clearly on this point: "*transformation of capitalist property into social property, and transformation of the production of commodities into socialist production, into production carried out by society and for society*".

The conclusion, from the doctrinal point of view, is that the imaginary society "managed by the workers' production syndicates" not only was not historically envisaged by proletarian science – and short of a total bankruptcy of this science, of Marx, Engels, Lenin and all of us, it will never arrive – but that it does not have anything in common with the socialist and communist form, even in its transitional phase.

It is a schema in which production and distribution do not attain the social, or even "national", level, since it is the "freely confederated" or "federated" free trade unions which have the instruments and products of labor at their disposal, and who are free to deal with them in their own way. If they succeeded in entrenching themselves in "autonomous" territories, these sectors would then fight between themselves, first through competition, and then physically, especially in the "absence" of any species of State.

In this fictitious schema, not only is production not carried out **by society for society**, but by trade syndicates for trade syndicates, but above all, **commodities** continue to be produced; meaning that production is still **non-socialist**, since each article of consumption transferred from one trade syndicate to another does so as a commodity, and since this cannot occur without the existence of a monetary equivalent, it is necessarily transferred, as such, to each individual producer. The wage system

still survives, as is always the case in these utopias of undiminished labour, and the accumulation of capital in the hands of the autonomous trade syndicates, and eventually into those of private individuals, is still possible. If our critique has relied largely on a "reduction to the absurd" (*reductio ad absurdum*) methodology, it is entirely due to the petit-bourgeois content of all these various utopias.

We'll finish this doctrinal part by taking another passage from "*Critique of the Gotha Programme*", which enables us to refute both the "immediatists" and the partisans of "State Capitalism" to remind them that the task of our indispensable proletarian dictatorial State is not to **liberate**, but to **repress Capital**, along with those who defend it whether they be bourgeois, petit-bourgeois, or even proletarian (that is those enslaved by bourgeois or sub-bourgeois tradition). This passage was written by Marx in order to ridicule the "minimalist" proposition of a progressive tax on income (which actually exists in Russia today): It is one of those passages which made for you, Gentlemen, and which should take your breath away: "income tax supposes different sources of income of different social classes and **THEREFORE CAPITALIST SOCIETY.**"

THE RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE AND LENIN

In the period between the 1920 and the 1921 Communist International congresses, a debate took place at the Xth congress of the Russian party (3-16 March, 1921) with the so-called "Workers' Opposition", which we've covered in greater depth elsewhere in our study of Russia. We should remark that the oppositional stance put up by the Italian Left in 1920/21 (which we will return to in a documented future publication) was very different from the line of this opposition, which was harshly defined by Lenin as a "syndicalist and anarchist deviation" within the party.

One of the many falsifications of Stalin's "Short History of the Communist Party" was to have assimilated Trotsky with these "workerists" under the pretext that he happened to be engaged in a debate regarding the tasks of the trade unions. In fact, Trotsky was completely on Lenin's side at that stage, and the genuinely Marxist proposal he made was that the trade unions should be absolutely subordinated to the proletarian State and Party (a party which, back in 1921, he did not consider – and neither did we – as having degenerated).

The Workers' Opposition based themselves precisely on an **immediatist** conception of socialist economy and on the false and naïve opinion that socialism can be established in any place, at any time, as long as the **workers** are left alone and allowed to get on with managing economic life by themselves. Lenin characterizes this position in the following fashion: "The organization of the management of the national economy is the function of an All-Russia Congress of Producers organized in industrial unions which shall elect a central body to run the whole of the national economy."

Just let Nikita Khrushchev push his *sovmarkos* any further, and it won't be long before **he** revives this old idea but in an even worse form: with regional unions instead of national unions of producers. Instead of considering the conquering and the gaining of control over a national territory as merely a springboard for the achievement of further international conquests (a cardinal rule of Marxism) these people make a point

of rushing off to set up organizations at the local and regional levels instead; persisting in their imbecilic pursuit of **autonomy** that will never have any other result than to encourage initiatives and enterprises of a capitalist nature.

It does not interest us here to recall the whole history of economic management in Russia which we developed in lengthy studies known to the reader; we will note only that the Xth Congress was where Lenin delivered his classic discourse "*On The Tax in Kind*", where he demonstrates that what was on the agenda was not the passage to socialism, but the passage to State capitalism and even, as can be seen by a Marxist, the passage of molecular commodity production to private capitalism. A position of formidable strength which clarified everything; whereas the infamous opportunism which followed succeeded in throwing everything into confusion.

It is important for us to show that the arguments Lenin used against the proponents of an economy managed by the producers are exactly the same as the ones used by Marx and Engels, which we ourselves continue to use today in our struggle against the latest syndicalist and anarchist deformations and which are simmering even amongst groups who never believed in Stalin, Togliatti or Thorez, or for that matter even Khrushchev (though they believe in Tito with iron fervor).

The **Producers' Unions** undergo the same kind of mauling by Lenin that Lassalle's **cooperatives** met with under Marx. Let us quote some passages prepared by Lenin which we have already used (see "Il Programma Comunista" no 21, 1956, and in particular points 69, 70 and 71 of the "Russian Structure" - "*Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi*"):

"(These) ideas are fundamentally erroneous from the theoretical point of view, a total rupture with Marxism and communism as well as with the results of the practical experience of all semi-proletarian revolutions (meditate on this!) and of the current proletarian revolution.

In the first place, the concept of producers includes the proletarian, the semi-proletarian and the small producer of commodities; it deviates radically from the essential idea of the class struggle and the fundamental principle requiring a precise delimitation of the classes (to be contemplated six times while thinking of the blasphemies of Stalin and those of the XXth Congress and also to the enthusiasts of the recent Polish and Hungarian movements)

To count on the masses without the party or to flirt with this notion (Attention, Quadrifoglists and Barbarists, you avid demagogues who have no craniums around you to stuff anyway!) is also a fundamental deviation from Marxism."

This is the same Lenin speaking, in whom, competing with the Stalinists, you wish to have discovered the invaluable resource of "going to the masses"!

*"Marxism teaches (and here Lenin quotes the confirmations of the previous world congresses) that only the **political party of the working class, i.e., the Communist Party**, is capable of uniting, training, and organizing a vanguard of the proletariat and all of the masses of the working people, that it alone will be capable of withstanding the inevitable petit-bourgeois vacillations of these masses and the inevitable traditions of and relapses into narrow craft unionism or craft prejudices among the proletariat".*

This passage emphasizes the inferiority of all **immediate** organizations with respect to the political party, as well as the grave risks which these organizations take due to

their historically inevitable contact with the semi-proletarian and petit-bourgeois classes. Lenin once again concludes by saying: "*without the political leadership of the party, the proletarian dictatorship is impossible*".

In this same text Lenin denies that the 1919 program of the Russian party had ever conceded the function of economic management to the trade unions. Certainly a few sentences from that program spoke about the management of the whole of the national economy as "*a single economic entity*", and of the "*indissoluble ties between the central State administration, the national economy and the broad masses of working people*" as a target to be achieved, on condition that the trade unions "*liberate themselves from the narrow craft-union spirit, and embrace the majority and little-by-little the totality of the working people*".

TRADE UNIONS AND STATE CAPITALISM

The question of the trade unions and the central economic management of the State will return to the forefront in Russia, and even in the rest of the world, because it constitutes a convenient fallback position for the modern capitalism of all countries, especially America.

The "Leninist" criterion regarding this question is that the trade unions follow **only with delay and difficulty** the stages already reached by the revolutionary political party, and that if one leaves them to their own devices, they fall back into petit-bourgeois weaknesses and collaboration with the bourgeois economy.

At the social level in Russia from 1919 to 1921, with the curve of industrialization at its lowest point, the first, defective attempts were being taken in managing industry which had been wrenched from the hands of private capitalists. At this stage it was clear that the Communist Party could establish a strong and reliable foothold in the industrial workers' unions as long as these were not autonomous, but strongly influenced by the Party itself, and, as Trotsky rightly maintained in 1926, as long as they were considered as organs of the centralized State.

The question is clear if it is not forgotten that at this stage there is a nationalization of industry but not a socialist industry or economy. Industries, which have been taken from the private owners and trusts without compensation, are managed by the State within a mercantile economic system founded on the enterprise; even if the State has a class basis and conducts a socialist policy globally, the system of this industrial society is still called State Capitalism and not socialism.

It is not necessary to define the existing economic form as capitalist, that comes about through what actually occurred in the following decades: the State loses its socialist political contents and its proletarian class contents, when on the international level it does not devote its efforts to bring about the revolution in the bourgeois States; when it concludes war alliances with them; when it participates in pacts and governmental agreements with bourgeois democratic parties within the bourgeois states; and when finally, inside Russia it puts the interests of the petit-bourgeoisie and peasants before those of the real proletarians of the cities and the countryside.

It is therefore worth asking ourselves what the place of the trade unions is during the State-capitalist stage is.

If the State is directed by a party which does not carry out and even thwarts the

policies of the world proletarian revolution, then the mercantile economic system, utilizing monetary equivalents and wage-labor founded on the enterprise justifies the existence of the trade unions as bodies of defense of working conditions, vis-a-vis the State-owner, the State-employer. But even in such a situation, the useful formula is not the attribution of central administrative management to the trade unions, but the direction of the trade unions by a proletarian party able once again to put forward the question of the conquest of the central power. Where this party does not exist or where, as in Russia, there remains only its carcass reduced to an instrument of the capitalist state, then there has been a relapse into wage-slavery, a situation which will never historically lead to emancipation either by the efforts of autonomous groups of workers aiming to seize control of given sectors of production, nor by a stupid re-edition of the **liberal** revolution (it is true that in Russia, it is Khrushchev's State which is attempting to perform this very function).

If such a disintegration occurs, i.e. when these **sectors** are detached one from the other, they tumble into the greedy hands of private capital and, in any case, into the grasping talons of international capital.

Or in the inverse case, in a situation where State capitalism represents a decisive step ahead, i.e. where the central political power historically works to extend the international revolution, the trade unions, except by becoming defeatist bodies which must be repressed, must learn from the class party, the authentic party of the industrial wage workers of the entire world, how to obtain from the class of factory workers (of whose courage and self-sacrifice history has given numerous inspiring examples) their contribution of labor, surplus labor and surplus value for the revolution, for the civil war, for the Red Armies of every country, for ammunition to be used in a social class conflict which overrides all borders and frontiers.

Even in such historic circumstances as these, for the trade unions to claim the undiminished proceeds of labor would not only be anti-economic and anti-social, but also defeatist with regard to the terrible task which history has assigned to the class of pure wage-earners, and to that class alone: that of bringing about the bloody birth of the new society. This task which, overlapping centuries and centuries of tormented history, is opposed to the dearest whims of the school of petty book-keepers and workerist second-hand dealers, to the school of "immediatists" each generation of which wants to be able to immediately get its hands on the full benefit of the business that it has carried on, while **confederating in full autonomy**.

THE FACTORY-BASED FORM

The examination which we have just made of trade union management of a society which follows capitalism, such as is conceived by this species of immediatists i.e. the syndicalists, clearly reveals the much more serious defects of the "Factory Council" form. The first manifestations of the renewal of this myth occurred at the time of the Congress of the department commissars (roughly: shop stewards) at the large FIAT plant in Turin, and in Gramsci's review "*l'Ordine Nuovo*". At this time, the Italian Left current warned of the danger and; if it greeted "*l'Ordine Nuovo*" insofar as it had stepped into the arena to do battle with the Menshevik opportunism of the traditional Italian trade unions and against the inconsistency of the Socialist Party which, in this

year, 1919 was praised as being pro-Bolshevik; it warned it at the same time to be on guard against this deviation. From the beginning of his ideological evolution, which he never dissimulated given the clarity of the individual, from idealist philosopher and in favor of the war, towards the anti-defensist Marxism of Lenin, Gramsci gave his journal a title which translates into "The New Order". He did not speak about a new Class exerting its political domination, nor of a new class State; he was slow to accept Marxist positions on the dictatorship of the party and the radical vision of Marxism which goes far beyond the economics of the factory to encompass all relations in the human and natural world. He himself acknowledged this at the Lyon Congress in 1926: "*we always prefer those who learn new chapters from Marxism to those who forget them*". In 1919, Gramsci had hardly gotten beyond his conception which perceived in the Russian Revolution the inversion of determinism and the miracle of the human will able to violate hostile economic conditions. The fact that he saw Lenin, this "*maker of miracles*" defend the most rigorous Marxist determinism, did not remain without effect on him: neither master, nor pupil were mediocre. In any event, he was right to call the system of Councils **Ordine Nuovo** (an ideal construction, quasi-literary, or better, artistic which had seduced his nimble spirit), because the proletariat set up a new Order on an immediate basis, like those before the liberal revolution, like the three *états* of French society of the XVIIIth century.

This is not surprising: all the "immediatists" which we have reviewed so far have done nothing but translate the demand of a class that exercises its dictatorship to **suppress** classes, and which is the last in the world to aspire to be the One Class, into a shabby request to be raised to the Fourth Estate. Immediatism always needs to describe the new by starting off with a photograph of the old. Antonio Gramsci would give his immediatism the name "concretism" having borrowed this term from bourgeois intellectual enemies of the revolution; he had not realized, or we had not succeeded in rendering comprehensible to him, that any concretism is counter-revolutionary. If Humanity had had to rely on the immediatists, it would never have known that the earth is round and that it moves, that air has weight, as do celestial bodies, that Epicurus's atoms exist, as do the recently discovered subatomic particles; the relativity of Galileo and that of Einstein, and...it could never have envisioned any revolution.

Antonio did not know (and not through any lack of reading ... he had the misfortune of being one of those people who read everything) that the concept of "Orders" had been abandoned as early as 1847 when Marx wrote about it in his anti-Proudhonian, "*Poverty of Philosophy*":

"Can it be supposed that after the collapse of them old society there will be a new class rule, expressing itself in a new political power? No!"

It would have sufficed for all the contradictors to have read only this monosyllable. And why not?

Because "*the redemption of the working class consists in the abolition of all classes, in the same way as the redemption of the Third Estate, of the bourgeois Order, consisted in the abolition of all estates, of all Orders.*"

Since then many generations have come and gone; three Internationals were born and died. We have witnessed a great number of people who wanted to surpass Marx and Lenin, slandering their pre-eminence. Few, very few even approximated the height of the *Incorruptible*, the bourgeois Maximilien Robespierre who for a

hundred and seventy years has rested under the tombstone marking the death of all New Orders!

MARXISM AND THE “COUNCIL ECONOMY”

Our text demonstrates the irreconcilable antithesis between these two theses – which does not interest us so much because of the polemic with Gramsci but because there are groups of confused anti-Stalinists and pallid epigones who still want to revive these councilist positions.

The autonomous, local enterprise is the smallest social unit imaginable, suffering the two limitations of professional category and the circumscription of the locale. Let us once again suppose that it will be somehow possible to eliminate privilege and exploitation from within such an enterprise by distributing amongst its workers that elusive **total value** of labor; outside its own boundaries, the tentacles of the market and exchange would continue to exist, and in their worst form, with the plague of capitalist economic anarchy, which gobbles up everything. In this Council system where Party and Class are absent, who therefore, before the elimination of classes is accomplished, is going to manage the functions which are not strictly concerned with the technical side of production? And, to consider only one point, who is going to take care of those who are not a part of one of these enterprises – what about the unemployed? In such a system, and much more so than in any other cell-based commune or trade union system, it would be possible for the cycle of accumulation to start all over again (supposing it had ever been stopped) in the form of accumulation of money or of huge stocks of raw materials or finished products. Within this hypothetical system, conditions exist in the highest degree for a slow, shady accumulated savings to grow into dominating capital.

The adversary is the individual enterprise itself, not the fact that it has a boss. How are you going to calculate economic equivalents between one enterprise and another, especially when the bigger ones will be stifling the smaller, when some will have more productive equipment than others, when some will be using “conventional” instruments of production and others nuclear power? This system, whose starting point is a fetishism about equality and justice amongst individuals, as well as a comical dread of privilege, exploitation and oppression, would be an even worse breeding ground for all these horrors than the present society.

Is it so difficult to believe that those big words, privilege and exploitation, are excluded from our Marxist dictionary? Let us take up the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* again.

Marx is struck, among other things, by the passages containing the Lassalian idiocies about the “Free State” and the “iron law of wages” which finishes, according to him (and Engels repeats it elsewhere), with a “vague redundant formula” (here, he who has never sinned, throws the first stone!) which is as follows: “the party endeavours to abolish exploitation in all its forms and to eliminate any social and political inequality.”

Here, according to Marx and Engels, is what they should have said instead: “With the abolition of class distinctions, all forms of social and political inequality arising from them will disappear of their own accord”.

This scientific way of talking – not to mention the long critical note on the equal distribution formula, which is compared to the bourgeois insinuation that socialism cannot abolish poverty but only generalize it to everybody – is enough in itself to dispose of a whole gamut of reviews and articles which are being written, in the years 1956-7, alas!, about the **content of socialism** as a **philosophy of exploitation**.

In the same passage Marx also deals with the limitations of Lassalle’s vision (which, significantly, he links to Malthusian theories, today restored to life by the American, anti-Marxist “social welfare” schools) according to which socialism is roused to action only inasmuch as the workers’ wages are frozen at too low a level; whereas in fact it is a matter of abolishing wage-labor because “*it is a system of slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social forces of labor productivity develop, whether or not the worker is paid well, or badly*”.

Marx then traces the parallel with slavery, which we touched on above in connection with the demand for the autonomy of the wage-worker:

“*It is as if, among slaves who have finally perceived the secret behind slavery and broken out in rebellion, one slave, still in thrall to obsolete notions, [an immediatist, Ordinovist, non-Marxist slave we should say] were to inscribe on the programme of rebellion: slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!*”.

To the champions of “social welfare” we say: Gentlemen, even if capitalism could increase average living standards without limits, we reiterate our historic prediction: capitalism’s death!

But the *standard* of the large FIAT complex seemed to Gramsci as being that of a noble order in comparison of the sad brutish existence of the Sardinian shepherd (12), more lowly than the Fourth Estate.

In the soviet-style Five Year Plan which we presented to the great FIAT, we forecast for 1956 a 15.7% increase in sales over 1955, up from 310 billion to 358 billion lira. Although only 340 billions have been announced, the nominal capital has been raised from 76 to 100 billions, which is to say, by 32% in two years.

Is this **New Order**, in Turin and Moscow, already beginning to chart less alluring **curves**?

CONCLUSION

The immediatists are all those who are suspicious of the Party and State forms which we, along with Marx and Lenin regard as of primary importance in the revolution. During our confrontation of the immediatist “vision” of the future society with the socialist and Marxist vision, although we’ve looked into the *Marginal notes on the Gotha Programme*, we haven’t yet examined the fundamental distinction between the lower stage and the higher stage of socialist society which, based on Marx’s brief remarks, Lenin rendered classic.

The obvious superiority of the economic system in which production and distribution is not performed by “autonomous units” on the pattern of the present capitalist “concentration camps” based around jobs, enterprises, and various jurisdictions including the nation – whose barbed wire fences we will forcibly remove one of these days, but **by** society, **for** society, and **on the scale of society**, is already apparent in the lower of the two stages theorized by Marx.

In the **lower** stage of socialism class differences have still not been eliminated; the State can’t be abolished yet; the pathological traditions of a society divided into Orders, up to the Third Estate which is the last, still survive; the city and country are still separate; the social division of duties and tasks, the separation of technical and manual labor, of science and work, has not yet been abolished.

But in the economic domain, the sectors of society which hitherto had a closeted, independent existence are thrown into the unitary, social melting pot. The small communes, trade confederations, and individual enterprises, are through forever: they are not even allowed so much as a transitory existence.

From the very moment when we deal with “*a communist society, just as it emerges from the womb of capitalist society*”, there is no longer a place for the market, with access to isolated sectors surrounded by barbed wire.

“*Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, **the producers do not exchange their products anymore**; similarly the labor spent on the products no longer appears as the value [underlined by Marx] of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, as a material characteristic, for now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual pieces of labor are no longer merely **indirectly** [as would be the case in the commune, trade union and factory council schemes] but **directly**, a component part of the total labor*”.

In the concluding pages of our study of Russia’s political and economic structure, we developed the point that even during the first, **lower** stage of

communism the mercantile limitations of commodity-production are overstepped. No longer can anything be acquired by an individual and bound to his person, or his family, by monetary means: a non-accumulable voucher of short validity gives him exclusively the right to products for human consumption within a still restricted and socially calculated limit. Our conception of the dictatorship (initially; followed by a social, species rationality) over consumption implies that the voucher will not be marked as a certain denomination of money (which one could then convert, for example, all into tobacco or alcohol, rather than into milk or bread), but of specific products, just like the wartime “ration cards”.

Bourgeois right will survive, however, insofar as the amount of consumption will correspond to the amount of labor furnished to society – after the well-known deductions to the common fund have been made – and this calculation will have to be based on availability, and not exclusively on utility and need.

There will no longer be a mercantile connection with the law of the value, which would make it possible to compare two products located in the mass of the social production, which is contrary to what would occur if they came from “autonomous” communes of trade unions or of enterprises with partly dual economic compatibilities. Only a final connection between the quantity of work provided and individual daily consumption would remain.

A citation we chanced to see offers us a wonderful opportunity to explain this concept. Somebody, an outstanding immediatist, as one can see, has actually written that “in the socialist economy the market will remain, but one can see that it will be restricted to products; labor will no longer be a commodity”. Such people can sometimes help us express an idea correctly: as long we turn what they say upside-down. Here is the truth: “in the socialist economy there will no longer be a market” or better still: “an economy is socialist when the market no longer exists”. In the first stage, however, “one economic quantity will still be measured as a commodity: human labor”. In the higher stage, human labor will be nothing other than a way of life; it will become a pleasure according to Marx. He says it better than us: “**labor will become the first vital need**”.

In order to free man’s work from being a commodity it is necessary to destroy the whole market system! Wasn’t this the first thing Marx said to Proudhon?

The half-Marxist newspaper which knew enough to criticize the enormity above however agreed with its author on the accuracy of another singular thesis which unfortunately, is very widespread and which it will be necessary for us to demolish in another study: **in order to abolish the market the productive forces need to be greatly increased**. This is not true at all: according to Marxist theory, the productive forces are already over-developed.

Marx considers the development of the productive forces as the basis for the higher stage, that in which consumption is not socially limited by insufficient production and not as a necessary condition for ending generalized mercantilism and of capitalist anarchy.

In the 1891 programme, in a passage which was certainly written by the great Engels, it says: “*Already the productive forces have **become too great for the form of private property to be any longer compatible with their wise employment***”.

It is more than time to crush the monstrous forces of capitalistic production under a dictatorship controlling production and consumption. It is simply a question of revolutionary force for that class which, even when its living standards are rising – which Marx, never denied – is constantly burdened with by insecurity and **uncertainty about the future**. It is an uncertainty which looms over the whole of society as well, and a few decades from now it will take the form of an alternative between global crisis and war – or international communist revolution.

As to the question of revolutionary force, it is in the first place the question of the reconstruction of revolutionary theory. Then it entails the reconstitution of the Communist Party without borders.

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China 1927: The Stalinist Counter-revolution leads the Chinese Proletarians to Massacre

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• France: - Down with the Electoral Circus. Long Live The Revolutionary Struggle! - For a Return to the Class Struggle. No to the Union Sacree behind the PS!
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Our Internet Site: www.pcint.org

Our e-mail address :
proletarian@pcint.org

To find our publications:
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CORRESPONDENCE

France: Programme,
BP 57428, 9367 Lyon cedex 07

Italy: Il Comunista
C.P. 10835, 20110 Milano

Switzerland: Editions Programme
Ch. de la Roche 3, 1020 Renens

Program of the International Communist Party

The International Communist Party is constituted on the basis of the following principles established at Leghorn in 1921 at 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 defence 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: on the economic terrain creating monopolistic trusts among the employers, and trying to control and manage production and exchange according to central plans with State management of whole sectors of production. On the political terrain, 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 coordination 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.