

The Internationalist n.1

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Internationalism in Deeds, not Words

In the last months, with accusations and counter-accusations flying, the world stage has been filled with the ridiculous argument over “telephone and telematics interception”: this all shows - wonder of wonders! - that everyone is spying on everyone else, as befits a world where “everyone is at war with everyone” (naturally we shall not dwell here on the miserable Italian political burlesque, in which all the parliamentary currents are on stage). For us communists the signals to watch have always been, and still are, quite different.

If the much-aided military intervention in Syria, initially urged by the USA and France, has not yet taken place, the war in the country is nonetheless continuing between bourgeois factions supported by one imperialist power or the other with the consequent massacre of proletarians and the mass exodus to countries near or far. Meanwhile, clashes between opposing factions have sprung up again in Libya and whole areas of sub-Saharan Africa remain in a constant state of belligerence, harassed by armed gangs which are none other than the military arm (the Foreign Legion, so to say) of economic and financial interests, and not only local ones. “The whole North African and Middle Eastern stretch of the Mediterranean, from Tunisia to Syria”, we wrote in a previous article, “is now a single battleground - a half moon devastated by the most highly sophisticated technology of destruction - and it is from here, when

the incurable contradictions of a dying mode of production precipitate, that the spark may come to set off a far more monstrous blaze than that of a local or regional conflict. Beyond Syria, to the east, stretch more battlefields, actual or potential, right up to the Far East where more tension, potentially ungovernable, slumbers just beneath the surface”.

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Three years ago, due to the high costs of printing and mailing, after fifteen issues we interrupted the publication of our yearly English-language magazine Internationalist Papers. Since then, articles in English have appeared on our website www.internationalcommunistparty.org.

The deepening of the economic crisis and the worsening of the living and working conditions of proletarians all over the world have pushed us to make another effort, with a smaller and handier journal, whose birth we salute with this first issue, wishing it a long life.

Internationalist Papers will be resumed as an on-line magazine, coming out from time to time and carrying longer and more substantial articles. We call upon our readers to support our press and get in touch with us.

Facing the economic and social abyss

Proletarians! Comrades!

As the economic crisis hurls us and our human and social condition into the abyss, whilst unemployment and lay-offs increase throughout the world, the reinforced concrete wall, erected by the massive social control exercised for decades by right- and left-wing parties and union organizations is beginning to crumble. The first signs are coming from a young immigrant proletariat that openly challenges employers, an avant-garde that does not shut itself up in the silence of the warehouses or the factories and is not afraid to come out onto the streets and demand a general improvement in its living and working conditions, and from the never-extinguished struggles of proletarians all over the world: from the rebellion of the South-African miners to the fights of the Argentinian, Spanish, Greek, French, Belgian, U.S. workers. But this is not the only sign. Within the proletarian movement two opposing currents are starting to clash: one supports the need, the necessity, the desire to fight, the anger and indignation, the other invokes “rights”, “social peace” - in a word - surrender. Only by answering any attack by capital blow-by-blow can there ever be any hope of putting a higher price on our skins, today in the workplace (or non-workplace!), tomorrow when faced with a new world war.

The programme can only be the following, as it has been for a hundred and fifty years right up until today:

Extend and unify the struggles,

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working towards the creation of **territorial organisms of economic and social defence**, open to all proletarians, independently of their age, gender, nationality, collocation (or non-collocation!) in production, etc. **Demand large increases in wages** to partially guard against the tragic erosion of salaries and pensions, and a full salary for those who are laid off or unemployed, to be paid by the State and the employers. **Claim a drastic reduction in working hours for the same wages** in order to relieve the pressure of the crazy pace of work. **Recover the weapon of the strike**, which must be wrenched out of the hands of those who have

turned it into sort of harmless outing, so that it once again becomes a means of striking at capital. **Refuse any support for the higher needs** of one company or another, private or public, and especially of the national economy, through which the state, the government, the employers and the unions blackmail us unceasingly, calling them "our mutual interests". **Refuse any nationalist temptations** by which the ruling classes in all countries try to set proletarians one against the other.

Proletarians! Comrades!

What is responsible for the tragedy that is striking us is the capitalist mode of production. It must therefore be overthrown, along with the

bourgeois class that manages and directs it, and replaced by Communism, founded on the needs of the human species and not on the laws of profit. This is the prospect that the International Communist Party is working towards and the more combative proletarians will have to organize themselves and work to strengthen it and establish its international roots: the urgency and importance of this are becoming more and more evident day by day.

**International Communist Party
(internationalist papers - il programma comunista - cahiers internationalistes)**

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Meanwhile the moves and counter-moves of international diplomacy (the agreement with the Syrian régime on the destruction of chemical weapons, the negotiations taking place – more or less punctuated by hiccups – on Iran's nuclear project) show that the development of conflicting inter-imperial relations in the most complex key points on the world chess-board have reached a situation of deadlock, in which no-one yet dares to take a decisive step for fear of shattering the fragile balance. Under the pressure of a devastating economic crisis (the 'experts' busy themselves with spreading reassuring signals whilst the truth is that there is no recovery, new bubbles are swelling, unemployment is on the rise everywhere – in Spain it is already over 24-26% - and the threat of new and generalized deflation continues), the whole of the capitalist world is adrift: the most powerful imperialism (the U.S.) is clearly declining; Europe is inevitably a mass of national appetites; France on the one hand and Germany on the other play, or try to play, central roles - the former on a diplomatic-military plane (the interventions in Libya and Mali, and more recently in the

Central African Republic; a first halt to the Iranian nuclear project), the latter on the economic-political one; England plays its now historical role as the fifth column of U.S. imperialism and thus suffers its decline; as to the former young capitalist climbers (the so-called BRICS), they are already starting to run out of breath. Increasingly, individual countries are travelling blind in a desperate climate of "Save yourself if you can!".

Of great significance on this scenario has been the irritation with which the American "old capitalism" (followed suit some days later by the EU) berated German capitalism because ... it was exporting too much. Germany was accused at the end of October by the Currency Report drawn up by the U.S. Treasury of having compensated for domestic austerity by exporting. The Italian daily *La Repubblica* of 1/11/2013 sums the issue up as follows: "During the whole of the Eurozone's financial crisis [...] Germany maintained a comfortable surplus; in 2012 it was even greater than China's"; and it quotes from the Report as follows: "The anemic growth rate of Germany's internal demand and its dependence on exports have been an obstacle to rebalancing, at a time

when many other Eurozone countries have undergone severe pressure to cut their internal demand and limit exports, in order to promote rebalancing. [...] the net result has been a movement towards deflation in the Eurozone, as for the entire world economy." Germany's reply was simple and predictable: "Stop bothering us! We're looking after our own business!" - as befits any national capital involved in keen competition on an international market.

For us communists, this is a far more important signal than a thousand and one revelations of criminal wheeling and dealing by the secret services of one country or another: the accusation clearly appears to speak the language of *trade wars which, in the long-term, announce military warfare*. This is the prospect, inherent not in the "thirst for power" of one country or another or in the "crazy paranoia" of some ruler or other, but in the material dynamics of the laws governing how the capitalist mode of production works, for which the world proletariat must prepare itself. The *world proletariat*, we stress: because the process of proletarianization has intensified over the past decades,

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partly under the pressure of the economic crisis, and now affects every corner of the world. Enormous masses of desperate people are fleeing from wars, famine, growing poverty and ending up on beaches and at frontiers all over the planet: from Lampedusa in Italy to El Paso in the United States, from Ceuta in Spain to Liverpool in Great Britain, from the Turkish-Syrian border to the one between Egypt and Israel, from south-east Asia to eastern Europe... They leave everything and they lose everything, they are merely hands on the labour market, that gigantic industrial reserve army so precious to capital: it brings down salaries and paralyzes the lucky ones who still have a semblance of work (i. e. are exploited) using blackmail. In terms of their material conditions of survival, they are not only without any reserves, but also without a *homeland*, wandering from one country to another, chased and beaten by "the forces of law and order", feared and hated by the national petit-bourgeoisie, which is growing nastier and nastier the more it feels itself losing status and buying power, oppressed by States that reveal to them their intrinsic nature as the armed guardians of class dominion: in the *bare facts* of this enormous mass tragedy, their "identity" (ethnic, national, religious) disappears, diluted and washed away by the tsunami of the capitalist mode of production.

But on the ideological plane of everyday life, those "identities" are constantly taken up again, skillfully reconstructed and made the most of by the nations' ruling classes who have long experience in making di-

visions between people and creating illusions and mystification, fuelled by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces in politics and the unions. These are ruling classes that know perfectly well that the more divisions there are in the proletariat – by reason of ethnic background, religion, nationality, gender, age, place, workplace, those "with jobs" and those "without jobs" – the more fragmented, isolated, broken down the proletariat is, the more "class in itself" (class for capital and thus with all the tremendous stigmata of the capital-work relationship), the more

throttle one another in a future world bloodbath. Nonetheless, it is an internationalism that must no longer be a tired slogan for marches *but a daily practice of struggle*, with the immediate and total refusal of all those directives (ideological, political, stemming from bourgeois or labour parties as well as from the unions) that tend, instead, to see it forgotten or even refused, driving the proletariat backwards and time after time causing divisions into separate and opposing compartments, praising membership of one nation rather than the other (or even factions within the nation), celebrating the past, present and future virtue of the country in question (and we shall soon be seeing how far the centenary of the first world massacre, the 1914-18 war, will serve this purpose), placing the superior needs of the national economy before anything else and pointing to the State as the obligatory reference point and to its military extensions as "beneficial guardians".

Only in the daily practice of defence from attacks by capital (selling one's skin dearly, which is the starting point of any future *political fight*) and in constant contact with *the theory and practice (organizational and in terms of direction) of the revolutionary party*, directed towards overthrowing dominion and towards the dictatorial seizing and management of power, can the words of the 1848 *Manifesto* once again acquire life, body, voice and *above all strength*: "Proletarians all over the world, unite!"

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absolute their dominion is and the longer the extraction of plus-value (the unavoidable law of value and profit) can proceed undisturbed, the longer the capitalist mode of production can pursue its path, groggy as it may be and however shaken by increasingly acute crises.

Internationalism is thus an undeniable fact on the one hand and, on the other, an objective to be attained – one without which it is impossible to fight this constant fragmentation of the world proletariat into segments destined to attack and

Why we are not “bordigists”

“I am not a Marxist!”- Karl Marx

As materialists, we know that languages are a super-structure, standing in a dialectic relationship to the mode of production that determines and expresses it. We also know that, in a class-based society, the dominant ideology is the ideology of the ruling class and language is immersed in it, giving voice to its basic characteristics, divisions and balances of power, and thus contributing in its turn to influencing society as a whole. In our present times (with a capitalism that has reached its supreme, imperialist phase), individualism, which has always been an aspect of bourgeois ideology directly linked to the mode of production and consumption, increasingly pervades language and through it the whole universe of social relations.

And so we use the term “Marxist” regularly, whilst knowing that it is really an improper use (as Marx’s famous declaration, quoted above, firmly states) and that the term “dialectic materialism” or “communism” would be better. So much for that: usage, conventions and practicality have the upper hand and there is nothing wrong with this, on condition that... *On condition* that the sense of the exclamation is well understood: as it lies entirely in the *refusal* (by Marx and all consistent communists) to consider the great work done by him (and by Engels and many other, more or less anonymous militants who, then and later, worked for the communist revolution) as the fruit of genial thought by an individual mind, as an “interpretation of the world” by the umpteenth philosopher. “Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change it*” (XI Thesis on Feuerbach) is not just a slogan: it means that with materialist science’s appearance on the scene of history we are no longer witnessing “philosophical systems” which may

quite rightly assume the name of one thinker or founder of a school of thought or another (Platonism, Aristotelism, Tomism, Kantism, Hegelism, etc.), just because they are “personal interpretations of the world”; we are actually witnessing *a science*, discovered and elaborated thanks to a combination of far broader and more complex historical and social factors than just the single noddle (doubtless of impressive proportions) of the person who materially takes it up, unravels it, explains it and publishes it.

We are not denying the exceptional contribution made at specific moments in history by individuals: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bordiga... However, we refuse to characterize this contribution as a personal one, almost as if materialism were a construction made of Lego to which everyone can add his or her own “original” piece. This is why we refuse the expression “Marxism-Leninism” (precisely because of its awful revisionist implications): Lenin himself might well have exclaimed like Marx, “I am not a Marxist-Leninist!”, because the expression reeks of bourgeois individualism, trampling underfoot the very heart of the materialist concept of history, overturning and misrecognizing the function of personality in history, attributing to individual *x* the role of elaborator of concepts that “integrate” what was “conceived” originally by individual *y* – precisely, more pieces of Lego for a construction in progress, to which individuals can make their own, eclectic contribution. It is no coincidence that “Marxism-Leninism” (not to speak of “Marxism-Leninism Maotsetungthought”!) would become a political-linguistic expression of the advancing and subsequently victorious counter-revolution, a phenomenon *materialistically* rooted in the history of the class war and not the fruit of individual actions: that

counter-revolution that would overthrow the international communist movement from the mid-Nineteen-Twenties onwards and which, precisely because of the linguistic conditioning mentioned above, we are obliged to call “Stalinism” for the sake of brevity and in the absence of any other, brief definition (to define it, our comrades in the ‘Thirties and ‘Forties used the expression “Centrism”; but today that would be incomprehensible).

Even more so do we refuse the label “Bordigists”, for a series of valid reasons. Far from failing to acknowledge the enormous contribution made by Amadeo Bordiga *for his whole life*, we know (and confirm this against all his bourgeois “biographers”) that this was *Party work* and not the individual mental product of an “isolated thinker”: it was the transmission, founded on a rock-solid theoretical basis, of a whole body of historical experience, from *militant to militant* – and by a militant who had always declared the *impersonal nature of the doctrine and practice*, obeying it even when flattery might have led him in a different direction – an anonymous militant, who had been trained in an *impersonal* doctrine, for a cause that reaches far further than individuals and generations. Bordiga and the collective work for the revolutionary Party are inseparable. Moreover, the huge job of theoretical restoration was made possible not only thanks to its being the expression of collective work by the Party, which, if we want to take this viewpoint, saw Bordiga as its spearhead, but also thanks to the political and organizational continuity achieved by comrades who, during the ‘30s, were active abroad, as well as clandestine in Italy – which, over the next few decades, ensured the combination of forces (not all theoretically homogeneous) from which our Party emerged, by selection, in 1952.



LENIN ON INTERNATIONALISM

If a German under Wilhelm or a Frenchman under Clemenceau says, "It is my right and duty as a socialist to defend my country if it is invaded by an enemy", he argues not like a socialist, not like an internationalist, not like a revolutionary proletarian, but like a petty-bourgeois nationalist. Because this argument ignores the revolutionary class struggle of the workers against capital, it ignores the appraisal of the war as a whole from the point of view of the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat, that is, it ignores internationalism, and all that remains is miserable and narrow-minded nationalism. My country is being wronged, that is all I care about—that is what this argument amounts to, and that is where its petty-bourgeois, nationalist narrow-mindedness lies. [...] The Frenchman, German or Italian who says: "Socialism is opposed to violence against nations, therefore I defend myself when my country is invaded", betrays socialism and internationalism, because such a man sees only his own "country", he puts "his own" ... bourgeoisie above everything else and does not give a thought to the international connections which make the war an imperialist war and his bourgeoisie a link in the chain of imperialist plunder. [...]

The socialist, the revolutionary proletarian, the internationalist, argues differently. He says: "The character of the war (whether it is reactionary or revolutionary) does not depend on who the attacker was, or in whose country the 'enemy' is stationed; it depends on what class is waging the war, and on what politics this war is a continuation of. If the war is a reactionary, imperialist war, that is, if it is being waged by two world groups of the imperialist, rapacious, predatory, reactionary bourgeoisie, then every bourgeoisie (even of the smallest country) becomes a participant in the plunder, and my duty as a representative of the revolutionary proletariat is to prepare for the world proletarian revolution as the only escape from the horrors of a world slaughter. I must argue, not from the point of view of 'my' country (for that is the argument of a wretched, stupid, petty-bourgeois nationalist who does not realise that he is only a plaything in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the point of view of my share in the preparation, in the propaganda, and in the acceleration of the world proletarian revolution."

That is what internationalism means, and that is the duty of the internationalist, the revolutionary worker, the genuine socialist.

Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (1918)

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Thus, once again, a collective, anonymous, impersonal experience: that of shared work by militants united for a historical objective, oriented towards the rebirth of the revolutionary Party.

But this is not all. We are not "Bordigists" because Bordiga's work (of restoring and re-proposing "Marxist" theory in its entirety, after the monstrous devastations suffered in the counter-revolution, and of working for the reaffirmation of the revolutionary Party) can in no sense be considered an extra, a "new contribution", a "new interpretation", a "special variety" of Marxism (or, as the well-paid intellectuals addicted to their own egos say, of "Marxisms": precisely!). Bordiga was a most efficient tool, "...the splendid 'machine'," we wrote in our press in the article commemorating him at the time of his death in 1970, "through which ran [...] the current of Marxism's high potential." And we continued, "...and we say 'Marxism' as we, of the Left, have always understood it,

not as an abstract theory to whose budding gems we bow down in a pretence of daily veneration, but as a sharp and shining weapon, whose grip, or aim, we must never let go of - a weapon that must be saved, so that it is not lost in a whirlpool of defeat, by sacrificing everything, first and foremost the ignoble *self*, just as, in order to use it when the battle is raging, weakness, misery, vanity, stupid pride, the mean little 'accounts book' of the individual must be destroyed, to save its healthy or even precious potential in the interests of the 'class-Party'." ("On the death of Amadeo Bordiga. An exemplary militancy at the service of the revolution", *Il programma comunista*, no. 14/1970).

Bordiga did not add or modify a single comma in the body of doctrine that emerged in the mid-1800s when conditions were mature for it because the bourgeois mode of production had given and said of itself all it had to, experimentally verified (*both theoretically and in practice*) in the following one and a half centuries through a few, shining

victories and many bloody defeats: in the very midst of the counter-revolution he managed to remain in place and gather around himself new generations of militants – the Party.

And so we leave to others the petty idolatry of the "individual" and pay no attention to the pretentious irony (or at times the arrogant ignorance, the vindictive contempt, the disgusting slander) towards "Amadeo Bordiga" and the "Bordigists". Aware of belonging to a generation of militants that has faced and will continue to face different problems and duties, we pursue the same work in different conditions: amidst errors, inadequacy and uncertainty, but always anonymously, impersonally and collectively. *Communist militants* – that is all.

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Bangladesh. "Killing is no murder". Dedicated to our murdered comrades

This latest massacre of textile workers in Dacca, Bangladesh, which now counts probably around one thousand dead (400 certain victims, 700 missing several days after the tragedy) and thousands of wounded, in a building housing several factories and which collapsed under their feet whilst they were obliged to keep working despite clear signs of subsidence, raises the numbers of the working-class holocaust to ... how many? How many million workers have been murdered in the name of profit, year by year, by the butchers responsible for the production lines, the guards of the concentration camps that go under the name of business companies, by the executioners of capitalist progress called entrepreneurs, by the employers of death hypocritically known as employers of labour? How much humankind must still be sacrificed to the Moloch of Capital?

Enough! The lives of millions of proletarians sweating blood in the capitalist "Lagers" must find the path to reparative violence, the *overthrowing of this bloody world order!* The struggle of the international workers must not ask any bourgeois Government, Rights or Justice to repair their condition of slavery: it must bring onto the battlefield its own determination, its own organization, its own strength, in the class struggle that will have to be launched on the streets and in the squares, *against the ruling class in any country.* The battle cry of the new proletarian International will still be what it used to be: *Proletarians throughout the world, unite!*

In chapter V, Book III, of *Capital*, entitled "Economy in the Employment of Constant Capital", Marx deals with the thousand and one ways in which our class is exploited, sacrificed on the altar of the "economy of Constant Capital", in the mi-

nes, in the factories, in the workplace, quoting the figures at the time regarding accidents, "killings at work", hygiene, the miserable living conditions, occupational diseases. The cross-section of a world which, then as now, is kept hidden from indiscreet eyes and, unfortunately, removed from the minds of fellow workers themselves, afraid of being noticed, kept on a chain not only by the bosses but also by those (union organizations, reformist parties) which, claiming to speak on their behalf, really want to gain possession of them and keep the chain in their own hands.

These are basically *work prisons* which, particularly today, in the midst of the economic crisis, turn into authentic *death camps* – places that are seen as a "shelter from poverty", whilst they are, instead, the *cause* of human and proletarian poverty. The dozens of workers who have killed themselves over the past two years out of desperation looked around themselves before this final gesture: what they saw was solitude, absence of solidarity, the impossibility of defending themselves and fighting back; they took part in the ritual strikes at the appointed times; they mourned their comrades; but they did not have the courage or the strength, in the isolation and abandonment they were kept in, to turn their suffering and their anger into a fight – and all too often they went back to the factory in silence to wait ... their own turn.

The statistics, capital's war reports, are swallowed up in the great cauldron of the media, where these numbers, cleansed of their immense suffering, lose their meaning, to become material that ages rapidly: sacrifice in the name of ... assumed progress.

Marx writes: "Just as the capitalist mode of production promotes the

development of the productive powers of social labour, on the one hand, so does it whip on to economy in the employment of constant capital on the other. However, it is not only the alienation and indifference that arise between the labourer, the bearer of living labour, and the economical, i.e., rational and thrifty, use of the material conditions of his labour. In line with its contradictory and antagonistic nature, the capitalist mode of production proceeds to count the prodigious dissipation of the labourer's life and health, and the lowering of his living conditions, as an economy in the use of constant capital and thereby as a means of raising the rate of profit".

He adds that, where the worker spends most of his life (the workplace), there he finds the conditions for his active living process, there the conditions of his existence become manifest; and further, that the economy of these conditions, accompanied by the excess work that transforms the worker into a work horse, is a way of *raising the rate of profit, of accelerating the self valorisation of capital, the production of plusvalue.* "Such economy extends to overcrowding close and unsanitary premises with labourers, or, as capitalists put it, to space saving; to crowding dangerous machinery into close quarters without using safety devices; to neglecting safety rules in production processes pernicious to health, or, as in mining, bound up with danger, etc. Not to mention the absence of all provisions to render the production process human, agreeable, or at least bearable. From the capitalist point of view this would be quite a useless and senseless waste".

Yet for the bourgeoisie and the whole breed of the bosses these places are ... proof of human genius! And there are those who would like to raise them to an exemplary level: place-symbols of devotion, of learning, the expression of human dignity!



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In the same chapter of *Capital*, basing what he writes on chilling reports by the factory inspector Leonard Horner, Marx reminds us that the English manufacturers had created the National Association for the Amendment of the Factory La-

ws, which immediately took steps to prove that "killing was no murder when it occurred for the sake of profit". Yes indeed, "killing is no murder": it is just a collateral effect of the war against proletarian humanity. If this is THEIR PHILOSOPHY, THEIR DETERMINATION,

THEIR ARROGANCE, THEIR VIOLENCE, proven over so many centuries, then THE ORDER MUST BE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN: KILLING IS NO MURDER – LET US PUT AN END TO THIS DESTRUCTIVE AND BLOODY MODE OF PRODUCTION.

South Africa – Drowning in the blood of savage anti-proletarian repression, the myths and illusion of post-apartheid

"... fifteen years more or less after the abolition of apartheid, the victory of Nelson Mandela's African National Front and the much praised introduction of democracy, things have not changed so much compared to the past: the situation of South Africa's proletarian class remains tragic in all senses and from all points of view. Amidst obsolete mines, non-existent maintenance, progressively worsening working conditions, could it be, then, that the problem is not skin colour, not one of "democracy against apartheid" but always and despite everything, in South Africa as elsewhere, one of class? And one that will thus require class perspectives and solutions?"

This is how years ago, we concluded a short article reporting the rescue of three thousand two hundred South African miners, trapped for several days in one of the oldest and deepest gold mines in the country (a year before, again in South Africa, a similar "accident" had caused two hundred deaths)[1]. Ours were, as they are termed, "rhetorical questions". The "problem" in South Africa had always been one of class: in a capitalist régime, "racism" and "racial segregation" are the ideological and juridical superstructures that serve to exploit wage labour - they are the expression of a deeper division between classes, a devastating isolation of the proletariat and harsh, repressive control.

The terrifying massacre of miners

by the police in the democratic Republic of South Africa in mid August, near the Marikana platinum mine belonging to the English multinational Lonmin, some eighty kilometres from Johannesburg, was a tragic confirmation of this fact, recalling other massacres perpetrated at the height of the segregationist régime, such as those in Sharpeville in 1960 and in Langa in 1985. The official figures speak of 34 miners killed, at least seventy or so wounded (some seriously) and two hundred and fifty arrested: but, as always, behind these figures are concealed, unreported, the tragedies of whole families suddenly deprived of economic upkeep, in a situation that was already desperate to start with. The obscene massacre is far more serious than the raw figures betray and should revive *the most profound hatred for the ruling capitalist class and its butchering mercenaries* in proletarians of any latitude or longitude, of any language and any colour.

With 80% of the world's reserves, South Africa is the leading producer and exporter of platinum, a precious metal used not only in jewellery but also in the production of automobile parts (catalytic exhausts): and Lonmin is the third largest producer of platinum in the world. Working conditions in these mines (as in others, of both precious and non-precious metals)[2] are extremely hard, wages are miserable and life in the shantytowns that spring up all

around is on the borderline of survival. In this situation and following the example of their fellow workers in the plutonium mines of Impala in Rustenberg, protagonists of a victorious strike in January, in the first week of August the miners at Lonmin – whose avant-garde consists of the rock drillers with the task of cracking the rocks using pneumatic hammers (work that takes its high toll of illnesses, broken bones, amputated fingers and hands, atrocious deaths) – came out on an indefinite wildcat strike, demanding considerable rises (at least triple the 4000 rands a month they are paid today: *around 480 dollars or a little less than 400 euros*), shorter working hours and better living and working conditions – *the basic claims of the working class movement*. In response Lonmin (who complain of a drop in profits, sic!) threatened to fire 3 thousand miners. The latter did not allow themselves to be intimidated and persisted in their action: they gathered on the hills surrounding the mine singing "The fight, the fight, the fight will free us"[3] and grasping iron bars and machetes (many years of experience in clashes with the forces of law and order, in régimes of both apartheid and post-apartheid, had taught them that bare fists are not enough). At this point the police, who had arrived in large numbers in their anti-riot gear and with the support of armoured cars and water cannons, opened fire for some mi-

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nutes, shooting wildly at eye level.

The wildcat strike, born spontaneously out of anger and exasperation, followed weeks of agitation both at Lonmin and in other mines (for example at Acquarius Platinum and, as stated, at Impala Platinum) as well as in other sectors of a proletarian class that has never, in all these years, ceased to demonstrate generously and energetically its will to fight against living and working conditions that are constantly worsening[4]. The strike was supported by the appearance in the field of the young Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), that came into being in 1988 out of a split with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the union that had been the protagonist of great battles in the past but which – with the end of segregation - has sided completely with the government and its economic policies and become the backbone of the powerful COSATU, the strong union congress which unites organizations from various sectors and takes the form of a real régime union: it is no coincidence that the NUM opposed the Marikana miners' strike, even resorting to blacklegging which caused clashes – violent ones, too – between activists from both organizations. The AMCU positions itself as a more radical, grassroots organism, strongly criticizing the NUM (whose ex-president is on the board of Lonmin!), as well as the government constituted since 1994 by the African National Congress (many of whose ministers possess share packets in Lonmin!) and, in the course of recent years, has abundantly won over members from the NUM [5]. At the moment we do not possess sufficient facts to place the AMCU's exact orientation and positions: certainly what is taking place here is an extremely violent stand-off between an institutional union and a union that intends

carrying out action independently of the COSATU and the ANC.

Created in 1912, the African National Congress set itself up from the very beginning as a cross-class organization: a radical, bourgeois party committed to guiding the anti-segregationist movement while never moving beyond these limits[6]. Subsequently, when in 1994, after an intricate path of negotiations with the previous régime, the abolition of apartheid was achieved, the ANC won the elections and formed its own government, based on an alliance with the COSATU and the... South African "communist" party, which for some time had been acting as a reference point and ideological inspiration for the ANC and is thus jointly responsible for all the economic policies adopted.

In an article published in 1994, immediately after the "first democratic elections" in South Africa, we wrote: "As Marxists we would never have taken the ambitious and demagogic programme of nationalization and 'redistribution of land', loudly proclaimed at the time by the ANC, seriously: the relations of capital exist in a régime of nationalization, just as they do in a régime of privatization; salaried labour remains

the same in the former as in the latter. It is nonetheless significant that the leading exponents of Mandela's party have officially 'converted' to the thesis that it is no longer a question of 'opposing the large business enterprises as such' but at the most of introducing the usual anti-trust laws; that, far from weighing on the State balance with the *faux frais* (unproductive costs) of a 'social' policy, it is a question of



'adjusting and gradually reducing the State's running costs, so as to free resources for use in productive investments' (see: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1994)"[7]. Of course the problem reached far beyond the "simple" question of nationalization: the spirit of democratic and pious reform expressed by the "left" right up to Mandela *deviated* the proletarian class movement (which had

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fought fiercely *not only against segregation*) towards a *miserable solution* – and this must be pointed to as an authentic betrayal of the proletariat. In the light of the above, it comes as no surprise that, when the ANC, the COSATU and the South African “communist” Party (the so-called triple Alliance) form the government and poverty, hunger and repression plague the proletariat,

declare themselves to be.

At this point, however, let us take a short step backwards and ask ourselves: why apartheid and what was the path to post-apartheid? In 1990 this is what we wrote while the, not even very clandestine, negotiations were going on between De Klerk’s all-white government and the ANC: “The apartheid system had basically been introduced by land

property and mining capital, who exploited black labour reserves on a semi-slave basis: initially industrial capital took considerable advantage of this but now the time has come for industries to operate on the basis of ‘free’ labour, i.e. modern slavery in golden chains; their very development demands, though at the same time *through gradual reforms*, the establishment of racial equality at work and the

sure from the foreign multinationals who were in favour of adapting the system to the situation of bourgeois society and economy and to the necessity, for example, of creating a vast internal market, making black labour mobile and no longer hampered by the internal passport and migrant workers system and drawing on a better qualified reserve of black labour.” And we added, as the umpteenth confirmation of Marxist theory: “at a given point in its development, the production organism generates a specific superstructure functional to a precise historical moment which will in turn be replaced by another superstructure responding to the needs of the next process of accumulation. The forms of production thus enter into conflict with the *forces* of production.”[8]

Four years later, when the process of democratic change had begun, with the ANC having triumphed at the elections and amongst the hymns of all true democrats to Mandela’s “rainbow nation”, we were in a position to write (not “prophets of doom” nor Cassandras, but *materialists*): “South Africa’s coloured proletariat will thus be placed – is already placed – before the crude reality of exploitation that is in no way mitigated by the presence of men with their same skin colour in the government and indeed in the direction of it; they will, like it or not, have to take the hard but crystal-clear direction of a relentless class struggle against a miserable salary and infamously excessive working hours, as well as against the trials of unemployment and under-employment. We white-skinned proletarians will have to fight, and shall fight, with them and for them, as they with us and for us.”[9]

South Africa is not as far away as it might seem on the world map, it is not a marginal country: for some ti-



formations such as the AMCU emerge. On the other hand, we are not interested in the dynamics of labels and self representations: the class struggle, the conflict between capital and labour, is incessant – the old mole that never ceases to dig, independently of what proletarians may think about themselves and what the organizations which they create on individual occasions may

launching of the right democratic slogans to make their dominion more secure, because less hateful at the level of race relations. This is a process that had already started off some years before and which aims to refine little by little (the estimated plan is for 5 years...) [in actual fact only four were sufficient] the more backward aspects of the South-African constitution, under added press-



continuation from page 9 "South Africa..."

me, before and after the fall of apartheid, it has been one of the essential links in the world chain of imperialism. What has happened in this summer of 2012 follows a script that has been repeated thousands and thousands of times over at every longitude and latitude, yesterday as today, and is unfortunately destined to be repeated again, if the world proletariat does not manage to extract a whole series of lessons from the obscene massacre of its black brothers: that the outcome of any social conflict, even if it were "only" to win rises and better working and living conditions, depends on *the organized strength brought onto the battlefield* – it is a question of power ("those who have iron have bread," said Auguste Blanqui, one of the heads of the Paris Commune); that on the rocky path towards a return to general class struggle, the proletariat will have harsh clashes with all political and union formations, always ready to bar their way when they really come out to fight; that no government hesitates to take recourse to its cops to counter any attempt at questioning, *even minimally*, the relations between exploited and exploiters; that the State, be it democratic or fascist, with all its legal and illegal armed units, is the tool with which Capital and the ruling class maintain and defend their dominion.

Thus it is a *question of power*: of who has the power and defends it at the cost of bloodbaths, and who does not have it and must win it, organizing themselves in the immediate present to defend their living and working conditions and recognizing, at a political level, the need for a revolutionary guide, solidly based on a tradition and possessing a programme that has been historically verified and confirmed. The long 1990 article, to which we refer the

reader for further details of all the related historical, political and economic issues, ended as follows: "To come into existence in South Africa, the bourgeois mode of production does not need a bourgeois revolution: it has already been solidly established there for well over a century. *It can* reform in a desperate effort to survive the waves of revolutionary rebellion that are crashing against it from all sides of the social substrata; but it *cannot*, thanks merely to a few rags and tatters of "egalitarian" reform, close its debts with its bloody past of labour exploitation. *It can* sweeten and maybe even some day abolish segregationist slavery but only in order to keep *wage slavery* alive and, if possible, gain a wider basis for it. As for the rest of the world, and indeed even more so there, the axis of the situation is the *proletarian and communist revolution*. The possibility of it exploding and destroying the pillars of capital will be decided by the birth, development and strongly centralized organization of the world communist party, in the context of a re-awakening of the world class struggle. We know that our objective is not close at hand; there is no time to lose in setting out along the path leading to it." [10]

We have nothing to add to what we wrote twelve years previously – if not that, in the final accounts we will be presenting to a bourgeoisie as blood-seeking as it is useless, we shall be including the martyred bodies of our class brothers struck down on the hill of Marikana in South Africa.

NOTES

[1]"Sud Africa: salvi i tremila minatori, resta il problema principale [South Africa: the three thousand miners rescued, the main problem remains]", *Il programma comuni-*

sta, no.5/2007.

[2]South Africa is the world's largest exporter, not only of platinum, but also of gold, manganese, chrome and vanadium; the second largest of antimony, diamonds, fluorine and asbestos; the third largest of titanium, uranium and zirconium.

[3]*New York Times*, 16/8/2012.

[4]It should be remembered that, as well as the large black African contingent, the South African proletarian class consists of sectors defined "coloureds", of Asians and of whites: unemployment is 30% amongst blacks, 22.30% for "coloureds", 8.60% for Asians and 5.10% for whites (Source: Statistics South Africa – Economic Indicators for 2009–2010 by Year, Key Indicators and Month). To this can be added more data relating to the percentage of the population living below the poverty line: 31.3% in 2009 (according to the World Bank). As regards per-capita income, taking that of the white population as 100, 60.0 goes to Asian labour, 22.0 to "coloureds" and 13.0 to blacks (Source: Trends in South African Income Distribution and Poverty since the Fall of Apartheid, OECD iLibrary). It can, moreover, be noted that according to a study in 2011 by the University of Cape Town, relating to the richest 10% of South Africa's population, 40% of it consists of a black upper middle class: further proof of the fact that the problem is not one of colour but of class.

[5]See the Italian daily *Il Manifesto*, 19/8/2012.

[6]For a more detailed analysis, see "Rapporti fra classi e fra razze nel Sud-Africa [Relations between classes and races in South Africa]", *Il programma comunista*, nos.13-14/1956, and "Sud Africa: Realtà e contraddizioni dell'apartheid [South Africa: reality and contradictions of apartheid]", *Il programma comunista*, n.3/1990.

[7]"Sud Africa: I proletari sono appena all'inizio della loro lotta" [South Africa: the proletarians are only at the beginning of their battle]", *Il programma comunista*, no.4/1994.

[8]"Sud Africa: Realtà e contraddizioni dell'apartheid [South Africa: Reality and contradictions of apartheid]", cit. Also see "Le riforme in Sud Africa alla misura del capitalismo [Reforms in South Africa to suit capitalism]", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1990.

[9]"Sud Africa: I proletari sono appena all'inizio della loro lotta [South Africa: The proletarians are only at the beginning of their battle]", cit.

[10]"Sud Africa: Realtà e contraddizioni dell'apartheid [South Africa: reality and contradictions of apartheid]", cit.

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From one end of the African continent to the other, proletarians engage in the fight

In another article, we give an account of the French intervention which developed from mid-January onwards in Mali: it demonstrates that, as we had previously pointed out, the “critical areas” are multiplying under pressure from the worldwide crisis and that Africa is one of them. Meanwhile, however, news arrives from one end of the Continent to the other of the indomitable fighting spirit of a proletariat that is determined to set a high price on its scalps.

In Tunisia, where for many years strong social movement has been simmering (it was the starting point for the proletarian uprisings of 2011 which, before being deviated into the dead ends of democratic and petit-bourgeois claims, gradually boiled over into other countries on the Mediterranean’s southern shores), for some months now the working class has taken up the struggle again, demonstrating that no “change of régime” can “free” the proletariat from class oppression. Unemployment, social exclusion and the cost of living are increasing daily to an alarming degree (especially in the centre and south of the country where unemployment stands at between 25.3 and 26.1%; in Tunisi it is 19%), the proletarian neighbourhoods plunge into decline and neglect, tension grows and the now decades-long tradition of organization and conflict is still alive and clearly to be seen.

Last November in Siliana, a town of 25 000 inhabitants, 130 km. south of Tunisi, there were violent clashes with the forces of law and order during a general strike, with over three hundred wounded amongst the demonstrators, and these were followed by equally violent clashes with the paramilitary forces of the “Leagues in defence of the

revolution”. In Gafsa, the production of phosphates, an important resource for the Tunisian economy, is more or less at a standstill due to strikes and sit-ins; in Sidi Bouzid, where the spark of revolt caught fire two years ago, strikes and protests follow on one another’s heels. The apparatus of repression, transferred lock, stock and barrel from the old régime to the new (having, if anything, been perfected, as befits a... democratic régime), hurled itself against workers and union activists, equipped with the full range of torture and murder, rape and “disappearances in prison”. This is sustained by the “ideological repression” operated by the forces of Islam which – as we have pointed

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out several times – fill the same counter-revolutionary function (in a religious version) as classical social-democracy. Subsequently, towards the end of January in Qairouan a large demonstration by the unemployed turned into a night of urban guerrilla warfare, violently repressed by the forces of law and order, resulting in many wounded and hundreds of arrests.

If we move to the other end of the Continent, to South Africa, the outlook is no different. Indeed. If the Marikana miners’ massacre came after a long period of agitation, harsh clashes inside the institutional unions and against a government which, beneath its democratic and “rainbow” façade, has continued the work of repression dating back to times of racial segregation, since then demonstrations of the miners’ enduring will to fight have not been

lacking (and the miners are the core of the South-African proletariat: we must remember that the mining sector employs 500 thousand workers directly and just as many indirectly), along with other segments of the working class, but also impoverished sectors of the rest of the population.

The economic crisis is striking down victims also here – the Continent’s strongest imperialism. In mid-January 2013, the vast majority of the 58 thousand miners at the Khomanani, Thembelani and Tumela plants, belonging to Anglo-American Platinum (Amplats), a branch that owns 80% of the British mining giant Anglo-American and extracts 40% of the world’s platinum, came out on strike when faced with the threat of lay-offs for 14 thousand of them, as part of a wide-ranging restructuring project in the whole sector of platinum, of which South Africa is the world’s number one producer.

The working conditions in the mining camps are dreadful: deeper and deeper excavations have to be made in extremely narrow and badly ventilated shafts and the costs of maintenance and modernization, particularly in times of crisis, are “unproductive”, a dead weight to be got rid of... The platinum mining sector which supplies the car industry (and not only jewellers!) is feeling the effects of the worldwide crisis in the automobile sector and the progressive increase in the cost of electrical power.

The bosses’ slogan can only be “higher productivity and lower costs, to become more competitive on the world market” = sacking thousands of workers. Here as elsewhere. Other restructuring operations loom on the horizon in other industries and mining sectors, with unemployment that already

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affects a quarter of the South-African population. Again in mid-January the vineyard workers (yes, South-African wine!) and the fruit and vegetable pickers in the western Cape region (60% of the country's agricultural exports, 200 thousand workers), who had been fighting for months for 100% wage increases, clashed with police and private security forces in the vicinity of the town of De Doors: these are seasonal workers who earn a minimum daily wage of 69 rand (6 euros) – defined "starvation wages" by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy itself (South Africa's wine-producing industry earns yearly profits of around 26 billion rand). The agitation has been going on since November, when the agricultural workers refused proposals advanced by the institutional central union COSATU to resolve the conflict, and is putting the harvests, including the grape harvest, at serious risk.

The South African police has intervened several times in full riot gear, firing rubber bullets and tear gas and making something like 150 arrests, whilst the main motorway connecting the Cape region to Johannesburg and many other roads was closed for almost a week, cut off by real barricades erected to prevent the arrival of blacklegs and stop police movements. And so we joyfully greet the South African proletarians who are continuing a class tradition dating back to the beginnings of the nineteen hundreds and too often betrayed and deviated towards the backwaters of racial and national issues. A poster displayed widely in Johannesburg in September 1917 by the Industrial Workers of Africa declared: "Unite as workers. Unite: forget the things which divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers; let Labour be your common bond."

From Tunisia to South Africa and viceversa, may the same cry echo!

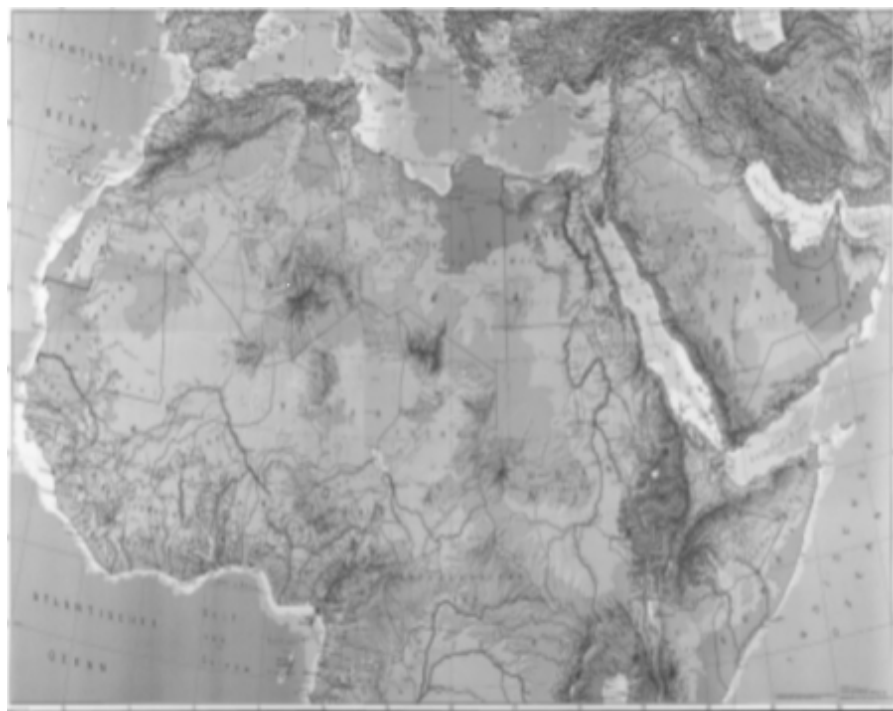
North Africa – A brief reply

A German-speaking reader has asked us to "explain very briefly" our position on the "revolts in North Africa". Here is our "brief reply". We remind readers that we have devoted numerous articles to this issue over the past two years.

We consider that the economic crisis has sparked off the social movements occurring in North Africa. The economic crisis did not come unexpectedly (in fact strikes and revolts have been happening in Tunisia and Egypt throughout the past few years) and is an integral part of the general crisis that capitalism is going through all over the world. Of course the crisis is becoming evident in every national

staple foods. We therefore believe that the initial protagonists of the struggles were proletarians and the proletarianized masses (in their condition as the "class in itself"), inspired by economic factors, by hunger.

However, their energies have been used by the petit-bourgeoisie, in particular the urban and intellectual sectors. These petit-bourgeois strata have taken advantage of the social agitation to deviate proletarian energies against the symbols and representatives of the régimes which, from decolonization up to the present, have controlled the States in this area. From that point onwards, the proletariat has been



segment of the bourgeoisie, according to the characteristics of individual states ("emerging" China is one thing, "powerful" North America is another, and "Old France" yet another, etc. etc.). In countries located between North Africa and the Middle East, the crisis is making itself felt intolerably, with a rise in the general cost of living and especially in

under the sway of political and economic interests in conserving capitalism: it is used as a mass to be manoeuvred for one faction or the other, preparing, in the name of a more or less mature representative democracy (whether inspired by Islam or appearing as secular is of little importance), to replace the staff of the old regime. The proletarians and proletarianized

The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing
(K. Marx)

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masses have been promised, as usual, a smattering of welfare state. Just how vain these promises are is demonstrated by the wave of flights and migrations, which have become more marked in correspondence with these waves of uprisings.

Another factor that has been unleashed against these proletarian masses has been the intervention of the stronger imperialist States, which have taken advantage of the unstable situation, supporting the "rebels" in general and one "faction" or the other in particular, to recommence "sharing and dividing amongst themselves" this important area, rich in raw materials. This is an intervention (quite evident in Libya and in Syria, though always with the due distinctions), which has an anti-proletarian function: to deviate energy in a nationalist direction and prevent the merest possibility of a tiny seed of united proletarian front from sprouting, even if only at the economic level (i. e., defending material living conditions).

We also have to remember that the situation is in any case dynamic and that the real problems (those of hunger and lack of work) cannot be solved but only postponed (the latest events in Tunisia are proof of this).

We have no particular "illusions": we do not expect the proletarian and proletarianized masses alone to set first the economic struggles and then the social and political ones of our class moving again. This recovery of the struggle will not be linear and progressive, either in this area or elsewhere: there will be peaks and dips, explosions and implosions, advances and retreats, in areas far vaster than North Africa... In this perspective, we have to work to restore the World Communist Party, which will be the only organ able to give perspective, continuity and a final objective to the reactions that the dynamics of the crisis could set off.

Syria

Amongst partisans and loyalists, nationalists and mercenaries, all provided with arms by their imperialist instigators, the planned murder of proletarians takes place in perfect text-book style. Today is the turn of the Syrians. Let the proletariat launch its defeatist slogan: "The enemy in any country is the bourgeoisie! It must be overthrown."

"The partisan is someone who fights for someone else, whether out of conviction, duty or for money is of little importance. The militant of a revolutionary party is a worker who is fighting for himself and the class he belongs to. The destiny of revolutionary revival depends on the ability to raise a new and insurmountable barrier between the method of the party's class action and the democratic-bourgeois method of the partisan struggle".

(from our text "Marxismo o partigianesimo", Battaglia comunista, n°14, 1949)

As communists and internationalists, we know by heart and from the science of history that in the age of imperialism class dominion and oppression extends and intensifies. The economic crises that follow one upon the other leave scattered behind them growing poverty and a backwash of death amongst proletarians all over the world. War is the natural habitat of capitalism: indeed, imperialism means growing international competition, keen trade wars, the export of capitals which inevitably enter into conflict with each other, the control over sources of raw materials and their transport routes and thus attempts to exclude competitors, right up to the unbridled outbreak of conflicts, first locally and then, in perspective and given favourable and necessary material conditions, worldwide. This

is what has been happening for decades from the Balkan area, through the Middle East (Iraq and the Palestinian Territories) up to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the crossroads of more or less approved or legal trade (arms and drugs), vital trade corridors, oil and gas pipelines, oil fields and sources of water.

For months, after having swept through Libya and Mali (and a few years earlier Nigeria, Sudan and Central Africa), multinational imperialism has been laying waste to Syria and massacring the poor and the deprived, the proletarians and the proletarianized. It is a multi-centre attack that again reflects and represents the English, French, American, Russian colonialist divisions and mandates, joined now by recent Chinese ambitions and less recent Israeli ones, which reach as far as Iran. States invented ex-novo and subordinate from their constitution onwards to old colonial centres (Jordan, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria) are again in the sights of the great powers, obliged to confront one another by the pressure of the devastating crisis in which we are all immersed. The international mandate of the UN, which has allowed the death of thousands of Slav, Iraqi, Afghan proletarians, is the agreement that permits these brigands to attack Syria today and even more in the future. In the ideological imperialist fervour, the appeal for so-called "peace", the condemnation of the "dictatorship" of one puppet or another, the lament for the absence of the wraith "democracy", the rejoicing for the presence of "liberators", loyalists and mercenaries on all sides, with the addition of various Jihadists and "brothers in faith", are all accompanied by the far more real and lethal designs of the great arms dealers, in perfect mutual agreement, directly or indirectly dispatched by the company Anonymous Capital Ltd., engaged in destroying the overproduction of

continuation from page 13 "Syria"
goods.

As communists and internationalists, our slogans can only be those of revolutionary defeatism against the bourgeoisie of all nations, large and small, already organized in states or still subordinate, attacked or attackers:

* The refusal of any military action (in whatever guise: humanitarian, democratic, bearer of civilization) by "our" national bourgeoisie.

The refusal to accept economic and social sacrifices in the name of the "country's economy".

* Organization of the fight to defend the living and working conditions of the proletariat, as an obligatory phase in dealing a hard blow to the war efforts of the bourgeoisie.

* A decisive return to the methods

and objectives of the class struggle, breaking with any logic of cooperation or social pact – methods and objectives that for now represent the only real internationalist solidarity by proletarians in imperialist capitals towards the oppressed proletarian masses.

* Refusal of any partisan spirit (nationalist, patriotic, mercenary, humanitarian, pacifist) in favour of one "front" or another.

Only on the basis of these basic premises, implying independent action by the proletariat, will it be possible to organize open revolutionary defeatism at the centre of the class strategy, thus making it possible to break down the war front.

In this commitment to the struggle, who are our allies? They are proletarians all over the world and in particular those in countries massacred by imperialist wars. They

are not and never will be any bourgeois faction, whatever it may be, however armed or "resistant", in whatever guise, lay or religious, reformist or – even worse – pseudo-socialist.

The profound economic crisis and armed attacks that have followed on one other over the past few decades demonstrate that the capitalist mode of production has come to the end of its road, that its protracted death throes are merely destructive and that the time has therefore come to put it out of its misery. Through the violent seizing of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat directed by the communist party, will it at last be possible to set up a classless society – communism. Thus, the real conquest of the present is the rebirth, extension and firm establishment of the world communist party.

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USA. Immigration Reform: new bait for the geese

The United States – a country that can be said to have been born of immigration and which, particularly in the decades between the 1800s and the 1900s, founded its economic power on cheap immigrant labour – has a long history of measures for the control and regulation of the migratory flux which demonstrate clearly how they correspond to the needs of the labour market and not to ethical or humanitarian scruples.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, for example, which was progressively revisited, extended and finally abrogated but not until 1943, prohibited entry to the United States by any more Chinese workers, skilled or not, admitting only traders, diplomatic staff and students. Since immigration by Chinese workers employed in the gold and silver mines of the west and in the building of the big, transcontinental railroads, whilst waiting for their families to join them, had already been going on for many decades, the 1882 law, with its subsequent appendices and extensions ended up by creating almost exclusively male communities (Chinatowns) – known as the “bachelor society”.

Taking advantage of the San Francisco earthquake and fire (1906), which destroyed most of the municipal offices and archives, many of these “bachelors” managed to have their wives and children join them, using false documents; others, to get round the state laws which prohibited their marriage to white women, cohabited with Irish women, considered the lowest rung on the social ladder. The 1943 abrogation of the Chinese Exclusion Act, with the approval of the new Magnuson Act, corresponded to the needs of the world war going on at the time: it naturalized the Chinese already resident on American soil (though without, in some States, acknowledging their right to own property or business or trading

enterprises), re-opened access for a limited number of them (105 a year) and allowed access to “war wives” (young women whom Chinese-American servicemen had met in the Pacific theatre of war). The remaining limitations were not abrogated until the mid-‘sixties.

In the meantime, however, between 1880 and 2004, whilst the doors to Asian immigration were closing, those to immigration from the Old World were thrown open. It will be sufficient here to recall a few, striking figures: 1881-1890, 5.2 million; 1891-1900: 3.6 million; 1901-1910: 8.7 million; 1911-1920: 5.7 million; of these roughly 23 million immigrants, the vast majority came from southern and eastern Europe. Not only: the end of the American civil war in 1864, with the abolition of slavery and the reorganization of the country in an exclusively capitalist-industrial perspective, created an enormous reserve of new “free” labour: former slaves and their children, transformed into farm workers, sharecroppers and unskilled workers. There is no need to emphasize the enormous amount of plusvalue extracted from surplus labour by this incredible mass of cheap labourers – the lightning economic development of the United States, which, at the end of the First World War, was winning the historical title of the most powerful capitalist country from Great Britain, had its origins there.

Then, in 1921, the Emergency Immigration Act and, above all the Immigration Act of 1924, shut off the flow: with the ideological purpose of “preserving the idea of American homogeneity” (amply anticipating by about ten years the Italian “race laws”!), a limit on entry was introduced – 2% of the numbers of each individual nationality resident on American soil according to the 1890 Census. The legislation

thus penalized immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia: at the same time, it left the doors open to immigration from Central and South America.

And in fact in the following decades (the “roaring ‘twenties” when all the conditions were building up for the crash of ’29; the Great Depression of the ‘thirties; the immediate second post-war period marked by economic expansion), immigration grew, particularly from Mexico and Puerto Rico, with the creation of new reserves of super-blackmailable, super-exploited and super-persecuted labour (persecuted both legally and illegally: there were countless attacks and murders of Mexican-American workers, just as there were countless repressive measures introduced at state or local levels). The extraction of plusvalue from surplus labour carried on massively and unrelentingly. Yet, even within this all-American (in the sense of “continental”) flux, numerous measures adopted over time help to enlighten us and understand the dynamics and reasons for the control of migratory flows. For example, on the basis of the operation known as “Mexican Repatriation” between 1929 and 1939, around one million people of Mexican origin were forced to return to Mexico, independently of the fact that many of them were American citizens to all effects or about to become so (in 2005 California was to vote a “Law of apology for the repatriation programme”! Up to the present the federal government has not pronounced itself in this regard); then, in 1942 (war years in which labour was scarce), along came the “Bracero Program”, a series of agreements with the Mexican government on the importation of temporary “laborers” (braceros): 4,200 in 1942, 444 thousand in 1959, 179 thousand in 1964, the year in which the “Program” was



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stopped. In the meantime, forced repatriation did not cease: in 1954 it was sanctioned by "Operation Wetback" (the clandestine immigrants who by night waded the Rio Grande, a long stretch of which marked the border between Mexico and the United States, were known as "wetbacks"), according to which the more or less illegal immigrants were sent back by ship and then (after several dramatic accidents) by truck and train. On the one hand, then, there was the need to have a constantly available "industrial reserve army", to depress salaries and exercise constant blackmailing pressure on employed labour; on the other, a series of measures for the military occupation of the territory and open terrorism towards immigrants (as well as reassuring the disgusting "half classes"): thus in 1994 (under Clinton's presidency), the infamous "Operation Gatekeeper" was implemented, to keep the Mexican-US border around San Diego (California) under control: a 9-thousand strong special force, check points, infra-red cameras, seismographs and underground sensors, reflectors and barbed wire, computerized systems, formations of vigilantes supporting police operations and a steel barrier 22 kilometres long and 3 metres high between Tijuana (Mexico) and San Isidro (California). According to official data, between 1998 and 2004 around two thousand people died along that border in their attempt to enter the United States clandestinely in search of work.

Something similar happened in Puerto Rico, which became an American protectorate in 1898. After granting American citizenship in 1917, the trickle of immigration from the island towards the mainland became a river: a first wave started in 1932 (collapse of raw sugar prices, demographic explosion); a second, coinciding with the Second World War (hands needed to

replace "war absences" in the factories, cannon fodder on the war fronts); a third in the 'fifties (the programme of forced industrialization known as "Operation Bootstrap" upsets the local economy consisting of small producers and farm workers); a fourth in the 'seventies (coinciding with a new phase in the world economic crisis). Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans (as well as central and south Americans of various origins) thus join the Afro-Americans and other immigrants in the giant cauldron of labourers to be drawn upon by the American economy.

New "immigration reforms" will then be introduced in 1986, 1990 and 1996, modulating the migratory flow according to high and low points in the crisis of over-production of goods and capital we have been immersed in for more than three decades now. In the last four years of the Obama presidency, for example, there were a million and a half deportees (in 2012 alone, according to figures from the Department of Homeland Security, as many as 400 thousand people were deported, 90 thousand of whom prove to be the parents of American citizens!) [1]. Not only this: the exquisitely democratic and progressive Obama administration broadened the deportation programmes, built new detention centres for immigrants and dispatched more thousands of frontier guards and contingents of National Guards to the south-western States.[2]

As can be seen, "immigration policy" in the USA (as in any other country) obeys two main imperatives: on a material level, that of ensuring a reserve of cheap labour and a constant "industrial reserve army", compatibly with the economic cycle, which depresses salaries and exercises blackmailing pressure on the rest of the employed proletariat; on an ideological level, that of fuelling the "war amongst the poor" and setting different sectors of the

proletariat one against the other – the classical "divide et impera" ("divide and rule").

With an eye to re-election, President Obama promised a "reform of immigration", together with a law on arms. And the whole of the American political world (and not only) is quivering with excitement: ah, the "progressive" president! Ah, the regularly reborn "American democracy"! In fact, behind the rhetoric, things are a little different and, even though this reform will not be coming up for discussion for a few months yet, a "bi-partisan" group of senators is already at work and some significant trends are already to be seen [3]. To legalize their position, the over 11 million illegal immigrants (official figures) will have to: a) register with the government offices in question; b) pass an examination to prove that their background and past is regular and legal, that they know English and that they have a job ("proof of work"); c) pay a fine (\$ 10 thousand) and all outstanding taxes).

Clearly the vast majority of the over 11 million who had entered illegally, perhaps already after deportation and a clandestine return, with poor resources for survival, subject to the ups and downs of extremely precarious living and working conditions, will simply be excluded. The others, instead, the so-called "dreamers" (children of a better protected middle class), will not have difficulties. Precisely – divide et impera.

Moreover, as some analysts have already predicted [4], the process of regularization and naturalization may take a very long time: mention has even been made of around ten years. Not only this: as regards the future migratory flow, measures are foreseen that divide the immigrants into two categories: skilled and unskilled workers – needless to say, the latter category will be the one at a disadvantage, particularly as regards temporary work (building, factory



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work, hotels and restaurants, the food industry). Here illegal and clandestine labour will continue to rule, with the effects we have already described. At the same time, repressive measures are expected to become more severe, with a strict registration process for incoming migrants (biometric ID card).

To sum up, the bi-partisan project would actually produce the following consequences:

1) a good half of families without documents may have to sacrifice 1/3 of their income to pay for the fine established (\$10 thousand!);

2) from 3.6 to 5.8 million clandestine immigrants may be excluded from the naturalization process due to insufficient "knowledge of English" (one of the requisites);

3) further millions may be excluded because of years-old past crimes, such as the use of false documents or possession of light

drugs (two very common crimes in a régime of illegality);

4) over 1.6 million may be excluded because of the "at least 5 years residence" clause;

5) over one million (of whom 1/3 women) may be excluded because they are unable to demonstrate that they have secure employment;

6) 40 thousand homosexual couples may be excluded by the Defence of Marriage Act;

7) an unknown number may be excluded because of having returned after having been deported or having refused to leave the country after a deportation order;

8) finally, it is estimated that during the current year 400 thousand applicants may be deported according to the current laws, whilst the debate is still going on [5].

As can be seen, things are not what they seem to be, or what the official rhetoric of "fine sentiments" and the "democratic process" would

have us imagine. We shall be following the planned "reform of immigration" closely, as we have already followed the "health reform" signed by Obama [6]: certainly up to the present it looks like the umpteenth swindle for the proletariat. But the geese always pick up the bait.

Notes:

[1]See: [color lines.com/archives/2013/01/immigration_reform_primer.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/01/immigration_reform_primer.html).

[2]idem

[3]See: *The Wall Street Journal*, 1/1/2013 and 30/1/2013

[4]See again: colorlines.com/archives/2013/01/immigration_reform_primer.html

[5]The figures come from colorlines.com/archives/2013/02/how_millions_could_get_out_immigration_reform_primer.html

[6]See: "USA. La riforma sanitaria ennesimo inganno per i proletari [Health reform, the umpteenth rip-off for the proletariat]", *Il programma comunista*, n.4/2010

What lies behind the French intervention in Mali

Our science (dialectic materialism) teaches us to look behind phenomena and beyond appearances. In mid January 2013, politicians, journalists and opinion leaders (the army of *zombies* who plague us every day) made every effort to explain that the aim of France's intervention in Mali (and in Somalia), approved and actively supported by the majority of the western-euro powers, with the military involvement of numerous surrounding African countries, was to limit the expansion of Al Qaeda in the Sahel, the region to the south of the Sahara, which for years has been the scene of local and international clashes and tension.

As has been happening *in practice* for over ten years, Al Qaeda (in its various guises and reincarnations – a real Foreign Legion which, under the cover of fundamentalist Islam, does the dirty work for whoever pays best) is the pretext for the

umpteenth *purely imperialist intervention*, after the ranging of troops two years ago and with similar mechanisms in Libya (the continuity between Sarkozy and Hollande *should* be evident to everyone in this umpteenth proof of the unquenched thirst for *grandeur*). *In reality*, in this area, which is so crucial from an economic point of view (human and raw materials: uranium, gold, gas, oil, iron, tungsten, bauxite, coal, hydrocarbons, cotton, peanuts, mangoes etc. - not forgetting the precious water supplies) and from a strategic point of view (a true meeting point between Algeria, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, connecting the Mediterranean with the Gulf of Guinea, separating East Africa from the rest of the continent to the east and south), the conflict is between appetites made even keener by the continuing world crisis.

He one hand, the progressive ene-

tration of capitals (and thus businesses) from China, India, Russia and Japan, eroding the presence of the "old" Euro-American imperialism in Africa, is not just a recent phenomenon – and so it is no surprise that one of the levers of France's vice-like intervention (which appears to have been a failure from a military point of view) should be in the east: in Somalia, i.e. in the Horn of Africa, which has always been one of the continent's most critical seismic fault lines. On the other hand, and again not just recently, the area of influence of the country which, as we demonstrated at the time of the Marikana miners' massacre (August 2012), has always set itself up as the leading imperialist pole on the African continent is extending: the influence of South Africa.

Thus Africa (we pointed this out in another article, available on our website: "As Long As There Is



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Capital, No peace Is Desirable, No War Is Less Than Infamous") is another of those "critical areas" in which, more or less directly, bare-facedly or through third parties, competing interests clash in a capitalist world marked by growing instability with a relentless trend towards a wide-ranging conflict. With the end of the age of colonial rule in a period including two world wars and extending to the mid nineteen-seventies (the independence of Angola and Mozambique from Portuguese rule came in 1975 and completed the cycle of national, anti-colonial revolutions), the continent has nonetheless remained *the prey of imperialisms*. Coming, not by chance, only a few weeks after Hollande's trip to Algeria, presented as confirmation of the olive branch of peace fifty years after the bloody civil war, French intervention in the republic of Mali (independent of France since 1960), under the pretext of defeating the Jihad armies of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, is the most recent and evident example of this clash of imperialisms that is gradually starting to surface. An example, needless to say, that is a tragedy for entire populations who, as usual, pay the price of all this: already hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing from the war zones and crowding into nearby or surrounding countries, destined to swell the numbers of the Biblical exodus affecting the whole world (despite the idiots who would like to set up barriers!).

In the meantime everyone takes advantage of the situation to ... look after their own interests. France is interested in defending her own (precious) supply of uranium and other minerals (first and foremost

hydrocarbons) and in limiting the advance of "other" capitals: in fact India has already got her hands on important sources of iron in the Koulikoro region and a cement plant in Bafoulabé, Canada is in Falea in the south-west and Gao in the north and Australia in Kidal in the north, all with enormous plants for extracting uranium; between 2001 and 2008 in the sector of gold alone 60 prospecting licences were issued to foreign companies; an enormous deposit of bauxite (which, if exploited, would allow Mali to become the

mercenaries are everywhere in the area, putting up the prices of their services in direct proportion to the "cries of alarm" which (to the usual accompaniment of sensational news that no-one can prove or disprove – ah, the freedom of the press!) are raised all over the world to suit the idiots about the "new threat of terrorism". Italy has also made available a number of military airports (and meanwhile there are arguments about ... whether or not it is ethical to use drones instead of 'planes with pilots!'). Briefly, the whole area is being re-designed with the invention of new national territories and new "Liberation Movements"...

And so, whilst the seismic shocks recur at increasingly short intervals, the development of events must be followed with attention. At the same time, the task of *revolutionary defeatism* must be taken up with growing determination by the proletariat in all countries: the refusal to become accomplices, *at any level* (from the defence of the "national economy" to military mobilisation), of worldwide imperialist gangsterism.

NOTES:

[1] Timidly, Italian economic daily "Il Sole-24 ore" of 3/2/2013 ran the headline "Paris on a mission for Niger's uranium" and commented: "French intervention in Mali fights the advance of Islamic extremism but also defends important economic interests. [...] The armed forces protect Niger's mineral resources which will soon guarantee 40% of the mineral used by nuclear power stations". Oh my goodness!

[2] It is no coincidence that the vice-president of the USA recently offered his congratulations on the French exploit, exhorting a return now under the umbrella of the NATO. It's fine to look after your own business but then you have to listen to "the master's voice", too, (no matter if it is a little weaker than in the past.



leading world exporter) was recently discovered and all this whets appetites all over the world [1] ... At the same time, as in the case of Libya, France's role is to act as the spearhead of an International Holy Crusade, dragging behind it the corresponding African contingents [2]. For her part, Algeria attempts to defend her own gaslines and oil wells, even at the cost of killing off "international hostages". In addition, particularly after the upheavals in Libya (and as happened before in the Balkans), arms dealers and

Some may turn up their noses at this title – those who still believe in the intrinsic good of “things as they are.” But they should take a look around them: in Bangladesh, in the collapse of a monstrous building housing numerous clothes factories (clothes that are “in fashion” in any western country), one thousand two hundred proletarians, women and men, exploited and underpaid, die, chained to the production line by a single mode of production in its merciless quest for profit; in Syria, day after day, the butchering of proletarian and proletarianized masses continues in a war that all the leading imperialisms are involved and equally interested in, where they all earn profits from the legal and illegal sales of arms of every sort. Must we go on with the list of daily massacre, with a count of violent deaths – in every clime and in every form – that brings goose pimples to the flesh?

The military wars between imperialist thieves with their bands of mercenaries assembled on both sides; the war of Capital against the proletariat, its working and living conditions, its very existence, with the deaths in the workplace, the progressive poisoning, the daily exhaustion of men, women and children for the extraction of plus value; the “low intensity” wars, the fruit of individual and collective suffering, of madness and frustration, the unhealthy obsession with being on top (domestic violence against women and kids, mass killings in schools or in the streets, the homicidal neglect that follows when the elderly and the sick are pushed aside, those who are no longer of use to the production process) ... Not to mention the environmental disaster: this, too, is a war carried out with every weapon imaginable. What is all this if not widespread destruction, against which only the obtuse insensitivity produced by political and religious narcotics prevents a rebellion?

Capitalism is the system of widespread destruction

Yes, capitalism is the system of widespread destruction. And this is certainly not a novelty: it is sufficient to open Marx’s Capital (to read it and assimilate it as *a weapon of criticism and of combat*) for a blood-chilling demonstration of this impregnable reality, over a span of over two centuries of bourgeois rule. And now, behind this destruction, another, even more devastating is being prepared.

For some time now, vast stretches of the world have become critical areas: the Maghreb-Mashrek strip of territory, from Tunisia to the Middle East, right up to Iran; the part connecting Afghanistan to the Indo-Chinese peninsula, right through India; the coasts on opposite sides of the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea; the sub-Saharan and Central African strip. For years now, either regional wars have been going on here, in which *all the imperialist powers* are more or less directly involved, or tension and friction have been building up which could soon lead to breaking point in the fragile and unstable balance. This is the heritage of two world wars with the planet being re-designed by the belligerent and victorious powers; it is the heritage of a capitalism that has reached its imperialist phase – i.e. the one in which the destruction, aggression and violence inherent in this mode of production since its very beginnings manifest themselves to the highest degree (should we recall the genocide of the Irish, the Indians, the Africans, the Native Americans?).

We communists do not demonize capitalism – we have acknowledged its historical merits during the obligatory passage from the Middle Ages to the so-called “modern age”. But we remember, and demonstrate with figures at hand, that its agony (*because this is what it is*: not labour

pains but the torment of the end) is destined to cause everything to decay: in the economy, in society, in material life and culture. What is coming, as the economic crisis spreads and worsens (a crisis of surplus production of goods and capitals, thus inherent in the nature of capitalism), is one more stage in this widespread destruction. What is coming is a new world conflict: no longer regional, no longer limited to some far-off area from which we just receive the figures (the macabre bulletin) of those who have died in bombings, attacks, machine-gunnings, gassings, shootings, mass murders and so on, in the exquisite case histories of destruction techniques invented by the capitalist arms industry – the only one to really “hold out” in times of crisis. A *new slaughter*, which will again have as its main victim *the proletariat* – as in the First and Second World Wars. And so there will be a transition *from widespread destruction to total destruction* – in the hope, afterwards (if the destruction has not overstepped the upper limit for the survival of the human race), of rebuilding and, through rebuilding, to generate business opportunities – just as it was after the Second World War.

The proletariat, all over the world, must get ready for this. It is the only force capable of preventing a third world slaughter. It must get ready by starting once again to fight in order to defend itself from enemy attacks and, thanks to these struggles to defend itself, learn to get organized to attack the enemy and overthrow it – *before it is too late*. Our task as communists is to direct these struggles from the (indispensable) level of defence to that of attack (when objective and subjective conditions are mature for this).

What is more, there is an urgent



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need for *the real sense and practice of revolutionary defeatism to spread amongst avant-garde proletarians*. Today this means: opposing any economic and social blackmail by Capital and its State and by political parties and "institutional unions" who are its tools and its pillars; refusing any demand for sacrifices in the name of the "superior needs of the national economy"; not giving in to the illusion that Capital's State is "Everyone's State", fighting openly, without any uncertainty or mercy, against all attempts to break the class front according to racial or national divides; preparing to boycott any war efforts by the national bourgeoisie and refusing to mobilize to defend the Nation as the "superior good" to be defended against "the enemy"; resisting any temptation to joint one war front or the other as the various pacifists and fake, one-track "anti-imperialists" will, *inevitably*, encourage us to at the given moment.

Not on one side or the other but on *our own side* – on the side of our own immediate and historical interests: this must be task assigned to the world proletariat in the day-to-day battles it fights and when faced with the storms that are gathering. We communists fight, day by day, to make this task into a decisive and final victory, the flag around which proletarians will assemble to move into the attack.

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Occupy the factories or pose the question of power?

If there's anything that sends supporters of revolutionary spontaneity of all types and origins over the moon it is the myth of "workers' control".

It is obvious that, staggering under the blows of the economic crisis and faced with the threat of closures and lay-offs, the instinctive reaction of proletarians is to try the path of occupation and worker-management. There are many examples: to mention only the most recent, the Brazilian packaging factory Flaskô, in September 2012 (subtitle of a long article in the Italian daily *Il Manifesto* of 13/9: "Visit to a company which, faced with relocation, has chased out the 'boss' and continued production"); and quite recently in mid-February 2013, the Greek pottery factory Vio.Me. (owned by Philkeram-Johnson, the leader in this sector), occupied by the workers who organized themselves as a cooperative and began worker-management. But don't let us forget what happened during the economic crisis in Argentina, at the beginning of 2000: dozens of factories, mostly small or medium-sized, occupied with worker-managements in the form of cooperatives or jointly managed with the former owners or the State. Or the famous cases of the Innse machine works in Milan in 2009, or Jabil (ex-Nokia), again in Milan, in 2012. No doubt other episodes will follow, more or less spontaneously and more or less piloted or controlled by the official unions.

What is our position as communists, to this sort of action? Do we support it? Can we limit ourselves to commenting that, as this is the will of the workers, it therefore constitutes a positive expression of the workers' fighting spirit? Obviously not.

Occupying a factory, self-manage-

ment of it, "getting the machinery going again", "keeping the production line in order", "deciding how, what, why and for whom to produce and cooperate" means remaining inside the circle of the damned of capitalist economy: the economy of business companies, of islands of production, still dominated by market laws. "Worker" management, rather than management by "the boss" or "the State" (municipalized, nationalized) does nothing to change its inevitably capitalist nature: there is the obligation to enter the market, to buy and sell, to compete with other companies, to draw up the balance sheet for the year... becoming "little bosses", "self-entrepreneurs". This is the prospect that supporters of revolutionary spontaneity of all types and origins encourage amongst proletarians beaten down by the crisis. A rehash of nineteenth-century anarchy based on "free communes" which barter the products of illusory "associated work" amongst themselves. A sort of "grassroots socialism" that sprouts up in the flower gardens bombarded by capitalist economy.

Not only is the issue of power not considered in the least (lord forbid!): it is even impossible to comprehend that socialist economy shall not be a photocopy of bourgeois economy, under a different name. To an economy based on business companies typical of capitalism, Socialism will oppose an economy based on a centralized economic and political plan. Only by means of a centralized economic plan and the centralized and unified management of the whole economic apparatus, will it be possible to allow individual production units to escape the need to valorize and independently accumulate the plusvalue produced by the workers, the need for capitalist

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entrepreneurial accumulation: briefly, to get out of the capitalist system itself and start socialization of the whole economy, which will no longer be founded on any form of private appropriation. It is not a question of changing the business management of the capitalist process by entrusting it to the workers rather than to other figures but of managing the whole product issuing from the general production process according to a social and no longer entrepreneurial mode: only on this condition can the production process itself rid itself of its capitalist nature, which constantly aims at entrepreneurial accumulation, and will assume a socialist nature for the satisfaction of human social needs. This possibility has now been made feasible more or less everywhere and above all where capitalism is most fully developed and generalized, both in industry and in the service sector and agricultural production. No further developments in capitalism or different forms of management within business enterprises are necessary, but simply and exclusively all the production must be managed socially as a unit, according to a general plan that finally and exclusively takes into account general social needs.

And here, once again, the issue of power arises. Lenin wrote in April 1917: "Control without power is an empty phrase." Only by keeping a firm hold on the levers of power, won by the revolution guided by the communist party, is it possible to progress to real socialist re-organization, thus not based on business companies, of the whole production apparatus and, more generally, of the whole of society in all its aspects. For supporters of spontaneism, instead, it is possible to manage a single factory independently and then spread this worker management gradually to other factories, so as to obtain ... what? But of course! "Workers' control"! And,

invariably, they refer to the experience of "factory occupation" in the so-called "biennio rosso" – the "red two years" from 1919-1920 in Italy.

In fact, it is this very experience that shows how, if the issue of power is neglected, every struggle, however generous, carried out inside the enclosure of the business company, even perhaps excluding the bosses and with occupation and management by the workers, solves nothing – bourgeois power waited patiently (but with its assault troops ready at hand) and, lacking a revolutionary guide, the struggle inside the factories died out. Our comrades, who were at that time leading a harsh struggle against the opportunist direction of the PSI (Italian socialist party) in favour of the constitution of the Communist Party, summed up the terms of the issue very clearly in an article that appeared in their newspaper *Il Soviet* of 22/2/1920, entitled "Seize the factory or seize the power?": "it has been said that where factory councils exist, they have operated by taking over the direction of the mills and continuing work. We would not like the working class masses to get the idea that by developing the institution of factory councils, it is automatically possible to take over the factories and eliminate capitalists. This would be the most harmful of illusions. The factory will only be won by the working class – and not only this or that specific category of workers, which would be too slight an achievement and surely not a communist one – when the whole of the working class has gained control of political power. Without the latter, any illusions will promptly be dispelled by the royal guards, the carabinieri, etc. themselves, i.e. the mechanism of oppression and power at the service of the bourgeoisie, its political power apparatus. These vain and continual outbreaks by the working class masses, which day by day wear themselves out in small efforts, must be channelled, united,

organized into a single, great, overall effort aiming directly to strike at the heart of the bourgeois enemy. This function can and must be performed exclusively by a communist party, which does not, and must not have any task at this point, other than that of directing all its efforts towards making the working-class masses aware of the need for this vast political action, which is the only major route by which they will far more directly gain possession of the factory that they are attempting in vain to win by other means." [1]

Now some will say: "What do you mean, power! What do you mean, socialism! Here proletarians face the problem of survival, of feeding themselves!" True, and in fact we are not focusing on those workers who, abandoned to their own devices or as the victims of bad advice from the "faithful servants of capitalism" (see: unions and opportunist and reformist political groups), are under the illusion that they are dealing in this way, by means of "workers' control and workers' management", with the attacks levelled at them by the bosses, by capital and by the State. We are aiming at all those who, in the past and in the present and certainly in the future, deviate the energy of the proletariat, trapping it in blind allies and in a perspective doomed to failure, preventing it from expressing itself in real class antagonism. Even when starting out from one isolated workplace or the other, any movement of militant opposition and solidarity must break out of it, setting itself the objective not of creating illusory "islands of alternative production" or "counter-power" (!!!) – which, however, exclude whole, huge sectors of the proletariat, such as the unemployed or precarious workers, who have no workplace to occupy and manage! – but to constitute territorial organisms of defence and proletarian struggle. The latter must be capable of sustaining over a pe-



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riod of time and extending to increasingly broad sectors the battles that the economic crisis will inevitably spark off, whatever their form and with all their objectives: wages, hours, pace of work, safety in the workplace, but also pensions, the cost of living, housing, daily survival, defence from the legal or illegal squadrons of bourgeois power and so on.

Not inside the factories (where, even in the most democratic of régimes, the gates bear the notorious sign Arbeit Macht Frei: "Work Liberates!") but outside on the streets and in the squares: it is here that the destiny of "workers' control" is decided! And it is decided according to the sole perspective that the bloody attacks of the capitalist crisis will make increasingly evident and necessary, that of preparation for revolution and the seizing of power. Otherwise the "fine dreams" of those, of whatever colour or origin, who support spontaneism will turn into the worst of nightmares: and, of course, not for them, but for the proletariat!

NOTES:

[1] Quoted in our *Storia della Sinistra comunista. 1919-1920* [History of the Communist Left. 1919-1920], Edizioni Il programma comunista, Milano 1972, p.177.

Summary of "Il programma comunista", n.1/2014

- Necessità del partito
- La Cina tra nuove riforme, repressioni e antagonismi
- Corso del capitalismo mondiale
- Turchia oggi (I)
- Gravità e stupidità nel cosmo
- Other articles on various subjects

Deniers, improvisers, builders of the revolutionary party

Amongst the many aspects that the economic crisis highlights with increasing (and more dramatic) clarity is the fact that without the revolutionary party, organized, selected and founded on solid theory and on a programme confirmed by long historical experience, honed by the balance of eighty years of counter-revolution, without this party, the world proletariat is alone and abandoned to itself, faced with the attack unleashed against it by the world of production, which is getting increasingly violent in its anti-proletarian manifestations.

At the same time, whilst this political solitude becomes so widely and keenly felt throughout the world in all kinds of different ways, there is an increase in the number of people who (like ticks clinging to a body, parasites coming from a variety of origins, most of which can be traced back to the evil emanations of the "half classes") belittle, minimize, neglect or postpone until a vaguely defined tomorrow – in practice deny – the central (organizational and guiding) role of the revolutionary party.

Naturally, the history of the workers' and communist movement is full of those who frankly refuse the party: the anarchists, first and foremost, against whom the communists have always had to struggle, defending the central role of the party against any metaphysical vision of power, of the proletariat, of a classless society. There follow, making the appropriate distinctions which cannot be gone into here[1], the anarcho-socialists, the U.S. wobblies and the Italian and French revolutionary syndicalists, vigorous social fighters but closed in their concept of local, factory-bound, revolutionary spontaneity, which is also, substantially, anarchical; and finally,

the workerists of various natures and derivations, from the whole range of the communist movement's vicissitudes in the last century. None of them have hidden their refusal of the party's organization, insisting, due to their profoundly mistaken reading of the history of the communist movement, on drawing the conclusion that any party organization is no more than a tool of "bureaucratization" and "oppression of the will of the grassroots". However, the revolutionary party and its organizational and guiding role on behalf of the class can even be denied by conceiving of it in a substantially distorted manner (amongst the historical examples of this, we might think of the story of the German KAPD): the "party of the masses and not of the leaders", the "party that must limit itself to communist propaganda so as not to substitute for the class itself", the "party whose grassroots must be workers only," and so on [2].

The misery of the phase of history we are condemned to live through today seems to reproduce a vulgar, Lilliputian version of these deniers of the party: workerism, spontaneism, "movementism" spout them constantly, in- and outside the Indian reservations of the social centres, amongst the "pissed-off" half classes, amongst the wan heirs of Gramsci, amongst the "rebels" and the "subjectivists" of the "revolution here and now" who snob any revolutionary preparation, amongst the students that don't want to "be tied down", amongst all those who, after decades of polluting democracy, cannot conceive of the need for organization and hard work in contact with the class.

This ballast weighs hard on a proletariat experiencing acute suffering and attempting to fight back as well as it can to make its voice heard,



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struggling for survival with the strength of desperation – at times with sudden flare-ups extinguished in bloodbaths (to confine ourselves to recent history: in South Africa, in Vietnam, in Cambodia), at times with widespread uprisings soon channelled into the tracks of petit-bourgeois demands for the replacement of one régime or another and thus castrated and suffocated (the movements of purely proletarian origins that originally inflamed North Africa). Without going any further into the analysis of these events (to which we have devoted many pages in our press over the past few years), it is clear that the lack of a revolutionary party worldwide has resulted in the proletarian class moving in total solitude under the pressure of material events, as well as with the limited (but necessary) horizon of defending their living and working conditions with scattered ranks and inevitably remaining the victim of democratic and reformist illusions and phantoms.

However, as previously stated, there are many ways of “refusing the party”. Today there are a great deal of “improvisers”, who do believe that the revolutionary party is necessary but ... tomorrow, at another time, in the phase when an imminent revolution demands it (or in other words: when it does us the honour of informing us that the party is needed!). Then indeed, the avant-garde will roll up its sleeves and, in the heat of revolutionary fervour, will pull the party out of a hat and suggest it to the class – which in turn, amazed by its beauty, will fall in love on the spot (there are no end of bolts from the blue at times of revolution!), ready to follow it to the ends of the Earth. Today, as we are nowhere near this sublime moment, let's devote ourselves to exchanging information, arguing about who is best, yelling and quarrelling online

and over the social networks, on Facebook and Twitter, where everyone has a strategy ready and waiting, is perfectly aware of the right answer, has formed the right opinion about revolution and counter-revolution, about the dynamics of the crisis and the nature of communist society. The party? No need for it today: better to collect a large number of followers, of “chosen friends”; better to argue and demonstrate who knows best; better to exchange pompous theses and documents that are an end in themselves; better to create a milieu of groups online. In this way we are safe from defeat and above all, we are finally protagonists on a daily basis. The class? Let it continue with its struggles! Working in contact with it? Who cares! The guiding and organizational role of the party? If it really is necessary, we can talk about it later!

Instead, the party cannot be improvised and neither can its (dialectic) connection to the class and the class struggle. It cannot be improvised because party means principally the theoretical and practical continuity of an organization and, if continuity is not worked at, if it is not defended tooth and nail, if it is not safeguarded for the next generations, not just as a “study group”, as “intellectuals”, as “word spinners”, this continuity is broken, fades, is no use any more – what remains is merely the dictatorship of the ruling ideology and bourgeois state oppression. The party cannot be improvised, because the only guarantee of its being able to guide the class towards seizing power and managing the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary bridge to a classless society lies precisely in its training militants, in its taking part in proletarian struggles with a tendency towards a critical, directional and organizational function, in the constant and profound analysis of economic and social facts (and not for intellectual satisfaction, to let off

steam or acquire personal gain). The party cannot be improvised, because the class will not be able to recognize it and acknowledge its guidance (thus making itself acknowledged as a historical element and no longer just as an oppressed class) unless it has had it alongside in its own burning defeats and victories, unless it has been able to draw from it the lessons deriving from those struggles, those defeats and those victories, unless it has been able to identify in its militants those best suited to act as guides, in the situation of the moment and in a future perspective. Tomorrow it will be too late: and historical experience, with all the tragedies linked to the absence or delays of the revolutionary party, has taught us this in an all too dramatic manner.

There is another group of people that, at first glance, would seem to stand apart from this depressing scenario: that of the “builders” of the revolutionary party. The latter “feel” that this party is a necessity but believe that its (relative) absence on the present historical panorama can be remedied by “building” it, as though it were a Lego construction: by meeting periodically around a table with other groups and formations, elaborating “platforms” and “conference documents” on which “convergences” can be pronounced, coordinating with one party or mini-party or the other in a new edition of the political-unionist “intergroups” of the past, creating phantomatic (popular?) fronts or bureaux or coordination offices, reviving old names or inventing new ones, believing and persuading others that the party can arise from and within the struggles, from grassroots organisms on which a ... political-educational function is conferred. To sum up, a DIY party to which everyone contributes what they can: all with a profound disdain for homogeneity of theory, principles, programme and, above all, totally indifferent to the merciless



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balance sheet of the past century's history of the working class and communist movement – which is the one true basis to start out from in order to begin posing the question of a party, just as the Communist Left did in 1926, at the dawn of the most violent wave of counter-revolution, when it handed down to future generations, in the "Lyons Theses" [3], the balance sheet of a past made up of struggles, triumphs and defeats – the necessary bridge laid towards the future. The party is not "built", just as socialism is not "built". All that can be done is to enter a tradition that is already present in the communist movement and continue its battle, obstinately and inconveniently against the current – and that tradition is our tradition. But, as

everyone knows, these are mere trifles! The crisis is gathering momentum, things are urgent: let's build the party without worrying about what happened before! Forget the past! And what emerges is ... Frankenstein's monster-party.

Increasingly, in the frantic times approaching, we communists will have to fight all these mobs of deniers, improvisers, builders of the revolutionary party. We shall have to do so by continuing our century-old battle, now decidedly a minority but essential for preparing tomorrow: defending theory, strengthening the organization, putting down international roots, taking part in the struggles of our class with the objective of guiding and directing it, training cadres and militants, constantly and incessantly analysing

the facts in the light of dialectic materialism. This is the party and to those who deny it, those who wish to improvise it or "build" it, we must have the courage to say that they are on the other side of the fence. "Those who are not with us are against us".

NOTES

[1] See the pages devoted to them in volume II of our *Storia della sinistra comunista. 1919-1920*, Edizioni Il programma comunista, Milano 1972, Chapters VI and VIII.

[2] On these positions, see the work quoted above.

[3] See them, with a long introduction and commentary, in our *Internationalist Papers*, n.14, Spring-Summer 2009. Also on our website:

www.internationalcommunistparty.org.

Summary of "Internationalist Papers", n.15/Autumn-Winter 2011

- To the reader
- From England's burning cities
- They just don't know which way to turn
- Increasingly unstable, chaotic and destructive the world of capitalism
- The failure of capitalism (and of all illusions of reforming it)
- Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean Sea
- Greek chronicles
- Gaza – imperialist butchery against the proletariat
- Haiti and Chile
- The disasters in the Gulf of Mexico: Putting an end to a destructive mode of production
- The anti-proletarian "Holy Alliance" celebrates its umpteenth, squalid ritual
- The immigration issue
- Darwinian anniversaries: Evolution and revolution
- First of May 2010: Against the bourgeoisie and its union and politician lackeys, a single united proletarian battlefield
- Democracy and the bourgeois state are two constant enemies of the proletariat

What distinguishes our Party is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, against the theory of "socialism in one country", and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistance Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization, in close interrelationship with the working class, against personal and electoral politics.