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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 Third International, against the theory of "socialism in one country", against 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 proletarian class, against all personal and electoral politics.

Internally divided, the ruling, bourgeois class is firm and compact against its old enemy: the proletariat

We have no intention of commenting on the recent buffoonery of the Italian elections. From the USA to the United Kingdom, from France to Russia, from Germany to Spain and so on, the parliamentary whorehouse is increasingly becoming one shameless cackle of voices. And the communist position acquires more and more importance: the bourgeois parliament is "no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists" (Lenin) and the political systems emerging from the second world massacre have inherited the *substance* of fascism, transferring it into the deceptive *forms* of a democracy that has been devoid of any progressive content for over a century and a half; proletarians can expect nothing from institutions (state, regional, municipal) based on "free elections", because it is not there that the destiny of what affects us lies, but where Capital, as an impersonal economic and social force, makes its weight felt and dictates law. The only path to pursue is therefore that of revolutionary preparation for overthrowing this obsolete and now murderous mode of production, starting from its institutions: and this means – in a nutshell – starting from the open and intransigent fight to defend our living and working conditions, refusing any democratic-reformist illusion and constantly committed to reinforcing and putting down international roots for the revolutionary party. In this perspective, we shall limit ourselves to making two observations.

Point number one. What dominates the capitalist world and is reflected (we insist: *reflected*) in the electoral clamour is the uncertainty of how to untangle a world economic crisis which, as we document in the work of our party, apart from any episodic and loudly acclaimed "slight recoveries", continues its unstoppable march, devouring jobs, illusory "guarantees", imaginary "rights", real lives and existences, giving rise to horrifying conflicts and massacres in all corners of the globe (are we forgetting the Middle East, where war has been raging for decades?), fuelling the most obscene outbursts of racism and increasing brutality in interpersonal relations. The ruling bourgeois class is desperately trying to play its few, vain cards in order to deal with a crisis that stems from the very DNA of Capital:



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crises of overproduction of goods and capitals, from which Capital can only escape by means of a new world conflict. But in this regard, it is profoundly divided internally: suffice it to think of the strong polemics that are agitating the world of US economics and politics (protectionism yes/protectionism no) or in Britain (Brexit yes, Brexit no), the contorted path towards the formation of the German government, the continuous and contradictory international diplomatic choreographies, the positioning and repositioning in the Far East, the populism and *revanchism* throughout Dis-united Europe. All this and more is the expression of this uncertainty, of these conflicts and contrasts between national capitals fighting to carve out or defend a slice of the cake, as well as between different factions inside them, of this increasingly evident incapability of the ruling bourgeois class to come to terms with the inevitable centrifugal forces produced by the crisis of its own mode of production.

Point two. This uncertainty and these divisions in the bourgeois camp (both national and international) must not deceive or delude the proletariat, however. Whilst internally divided, the ruling class is solid and compact when facing its historical enemy: the proletariat. On its own side it has the power of the state with all its repressive elements (military and legislative, legal and illegal), the dominion of the mass media (including, and above all, those that present themselves as “democratic”!), the induced collective amnesia regarding anything that has to do with the class war, the social and cultural inertia fuelled and shaped over time, which means that the status quo and “law and order” are divinities to be bowed down to always and without hesitation, and a century-long experience of command, culminating in

ferocious repression every time the proletariat sets off along its own path refusing the promises of social peace (we still remember our companions of the commune massacred in their tens of thousands in 1871, or our Spartacist companions eliminated by the *Freikorps* with the active complicity of the German social democrats in 1918-19!). In recent times, both under the pretext of a skilfully presented and fuelled terrorism, and when dealing with large or small episodes of resistance by a proletariat that shows it is undefeated, even though dispersed and abandoned to its own devices, the various national bourgeoisies have agreed, compact and coordinated, both to dig up and dust down the repressive measures of their more or less recent past (in Italy the infamous and never abrogated *Codice Rocco, in force since 1931*: as we’re talking about fascist-democratic continuity...) and to introduce variations and extensions leading towards increasing reinforcement of state defences – what we have called (amidst the scandalized squeals of “sincere democrats”) “dictatorial democracy”. Thus, the ruling class makes use of a wide and growing range of repressive tools: police charges on pickets, attacks by gangs of blacklegs, traps set for delegates, the ever harsher and more explicit interventions by magistrates, the manipulative use of the mass media, the cunning formation of fascist and Nazi factions with an openly anti-proletarian function...this is *an international reality*.

In France the *banlieues* are under military control; in the United States the operational racism of the “forces of law and order” has brought about a plague of assassinations of young, black proletarians (who, it seems, have already been forgotten): In Egypt and Tunisia strikes are repressed with unprecedented violence; in Great Britain, as in China,

entire metropolitan neighbourhoods are forcefully “emptied” of their proletarian inhabitants to avoid dangerous class concentrations; in Italy, the constant and courageous battles by workers in the logistics sector have been the object of a brutal series of actions by the “forces of law and order” and state institutions– battles that see proletarians from all backgrounds, of different religions, male and female, ranged together, demonstrating that only the class war can free every worker of ideological prejudices and fling the practice of proletarian internationalism in the face of Capital... The list could go on and – as if the growing poverty everywhere were not enough – demonstrates that the economic crisis advances inexorably and nurtures the ruling class’s worst nightmares. And so proletarians must not be under any illusion. But neither must they allow themselves to be intimidated: on the contrary, they must once again become and be aware they are *a powerful, forward-moving force* that no-one can stop. Certainly, they have a powerful enemy before them but they also have two great resources. One of these is their numbers: everywhere in the world, under the pressure of the economic crisis, the proletarian army is swelling and spreading, creating enormous, potential strength, united internationally in terms of hard facts and objective conditions, before convictions and behaviour. The other resource is that of the organization, first and foremost of social resistance and economic claims and then of social and political struggle: organization that is still lacking today, after the thousand and one theoretical and practical devastations caused by ninety years of counter-revolution, but whose urgent need is felt every time proletarians take to the streets in protest, abandoned as they are by openly anti-proletarian parties and institutional trade unions. The first

sort of organization, by extending over the territory and dealing with all the issues relating to living and working conditions, makes it possible to oppose a real front, *not a pretence, made up of words alone*, able to contrast and repel the now daily attacks; the second sort is the political battle, which organizes proletarians into a critical and antagonistic subject, active and militant and pre-

pare them for the revolutionary dismembering of the bourgeois dictatorship and from then onwards guides them in the practice of power, to eliminate all traces of this hateful society divided into classes, opening up the path for a new society where the free development of each individual will be a condition for the free development of all people. Proletarians must become aware again of

these two great resources.

This is why it is urgent for the revolutionary party to gain strength and become internationally rooted: the necessary political reference point for escaping from the long, bloody death throes of a mode of production that is historically out-dated. This is what we have been working at for decades.

Abandon the voting booths! Either prepare for elections, or prepare for revolution!

Is it still possible to fool oneself about the role the now perpetual preparation for coming elections plays, worldwide, in a democratic-parliamentary system which is merely a fig leaf concealing bourgeois dictatorship? The answer is NO! It's no longer possible to go on fooling ourselves!

Over three centuries of history, the bourgeois class has made use of all the *forms of dominion* available for keeping a firm hold on its power over the proletariat. At the time of its revolutionary affirmation against feudalism it outlawed the workers' political and trade union organizations. In its "liberal" phase at the end of the 1800s (the "peaceful" age of capitalist development, dearly paid for by proletarians and colonial peoples), it was already proceeding to absorb the unions and opportunist parties into its democratic-parliamentary mechanism. With the development of imperialism in the 1900s it equipped itself with structures of open political domination with an anti-proletarian and anti-communist function, interlinking them by means of skillful social and reformist legislation. Lastly, in the second post-war period, it inherited from fascism its economic, financial, so-

cial and political substance, disguising it behind a deceptively democratic mask and, *in practical and material terms*, proceeded seamlessly to render the parliamentary institutions void, as initiated and practised by the previous régimes.

Yet this material reality had been clear and evident ever since the Communist Party Manifesto of 1848: "The bourgeoisie increasingly does away with the fragmentation of the means of production, property and the population. It has agglomerated the population, centralized the means of production and concentrated property into a few hands. The necessary consequence has been political centralization. Independent provinces, hardly linked at all by federal bonds, provinces with different interests, laws, governments and customs regulations have been lumped together into a single nation with a single government, a single set of laws, a single national class interest, a single customs border." (Chapter 1, "Bourgeoisie and proletarians")

A single government a single, national class interest: this is the dictatorial rule of the bourgeoisie, independently of the form it may as-

sume according to historical phases. Economic-financial centralization = political centralization: even limiting ourselves to the last few decades, the increasing weight of the executive, legislation by decree, the ever-closer intertwining of economy/finance and politics, state interventionism, the integration of parties and trade unions into the State... All this *is reality*, whilst the democratic-electoral mechanism is pretence – an increasingly miserable and loutish, cynical and stupid pretence, faced with economic and social contradictions and inter-imperialist clashes becoming more acute and destructive day by day.

In 1919, the year in which the Communist International came into being, Lenin wrote: "The bourgeois parliament, even the most democratic in the most democratic of republics, in which capitalist property and power is conserved, is a machine that serves a handful of exploiters to crush millions of workers. [...] limiting oneself to bourgeois parliamentarism, to bourgeois democracy, giving it the more attractive appearance of general "democracy", keeping quiet about its bourgeois nature, forgetting that, as long as

capitalist property lasts, universal suffrage is one of the weapons of the bourgeois State, means shamefully betraying the proletariat, passing over to the side of its class enemy, the bourgeoisie, becoming a traitor and a turncoat.”¹ And since then the list of the traitors and turncoats has grown longer and bigger.

A year later “The Soviet”, the organ of the Socialist Party fraction that was shortly to found the Communist Party of Italy, echoed Lenin: “Our abstentionism derives from the great importance we accord to the political task that falls to the Communist Parties in the present period of history: insurrectional conquest of political power, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the system of the soviets. Since the greatest obstacle to this battle are the traditions and political parties of bourgeois democracy [...], we state that it is indispensable to cut off any contact between the revolutionary movement and bourgeois representative organs: the isolation of the decaying corpse of parliamentary democracy.”² Today that dead body,

that “decaying corpse”, continues to walk abroad like a zombie and behind it follow all those drugged and uglified by the idiotic barking of infamous bourgeois politics and slavish mass media, those who still delude themselves and believe it all.

It might be objected that we are far removed from the objective and subjective conditions necessary for insurrection and the seizing of power. Of course: but for this very reason, what is necessary now is the development, the deeper knowledge and spread - particularly amongst the younger generations who suffer first-hand the inevitable instability of survival in an over-ripe capitalism condemned to death by history - of that *preparation for revolution* that is the only way to totally oppose preparation for elections. We are not saying: “Abandon the voting booths and do what you want.” We are saying: “Join sides with the class struggle and all that it involves at a social and political level. Abandon the voting booth.” We are not in favour of “anti-politics”, this foolish democratic scarecrow: we are for

revolutionary politics which, through mobilization and the daily battles of the workers, the hard work of organizing and politically directing a proletariat under attack from all sides, still internally divided, dispersed and oppressed by decades of open or disguised counter-revolution, prepare the conditions for finally overthrowing this mode of production that tosses and turns amidst an economic crisis with no end to it and no solution apart from that of a new world war, massacring whole populations and devastating entire areas of the planet and preparing even worse massacres and devastations.

But *revolutionary politics* means a *revolutionary party*, the party that we work on tirelessly, albeit a minority proceeding against the current, so that it can put down roots and develop in every social segment of our class.

And so, abandon the voting booths! Abandon the umpteenth swindle! So that we pit our potentially enormous strength against the democratic dictatorship of the ruling class!

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[1] Lenin, “Letter to the Workers of Europe and America” (24/1/1919).

[2] “The Trends in the III International” (23/5/1920).



1917-2017: Toward the Future

In celebrating the centenary of the October Revolution¹, we have tried to extract the lessons to be learned from October 1917 (and suggest them again for the future, as this is what interests us). Now, a question spontaneously arises: is it really necessary to emphasize yet again the urgent need for communism? It would be sufficient to look around us to see the answer. The capitalist mode of production is becoming more and more like a blind, lame tightrope walker setting out along a tightrope fraying at both ends: on all sides the puppets of Capital are insisting that the crisis is coming to an end; on all sides there are more and more signs that the crisis exists, is showing its teeth and accumulating more explosive material, destined to blow up sooner or later. And we might even stop here. But this is impossible.

In other words, it is impossible to ignore the tremendous devastation of the environment, the brutality and slaughter of the dozens of wars going on around the world, the disruption and ferocity accompanying them, the disgusting butchery of entire populations, the beastly exploitation of the labour force which is growing at all latitudes, the arrogance, the indifference, the constant degradation of individual and social relationships, the alienation rife amongst young people with no future prospects, the violence that strikes at women and children, the desperate isolation in which the unemployed and the elderly are trapped, the fury against migrants and “foreigners” – to sum up, everything that goes to make up the stuff of daily life in this mode of production, dominated by the law of profit at all costs, competition and

the war of all against all. The “best of all possible worlds”! From all the pores of blood-letting capitalist society this necessity is dramatically felt ... The same anger (in fact sewage stinking of ignorance and mystification!) by which the ruling class, through its more or less hired pen-pushers, continues to attack the “October Revolution”, goes to show quite clearly that the need for communism is seriously disturbing its sleep, turning it into a nightmare that it can’t escape, even by using strong doses of opiates or other synthetic or ideological drugs.

In the past century, the world proletariat has suffered an assault from the ruling class – both the head-on and inevitable one from its class enemy, and the more subtle and destructive one from its “false friends”, more or less openly but always ranged on the side of power. It has been defeated on the battlefield, more often in the midst of bloodshed, and is still crushed beneath the weight of these defeats. But we communists know, not through religious faith but through historical experience, that beyond a certain limit, the weight of defeat turns into the engine of rebellion – that the slave cannot stand being beaten forever, that sooner or later the oppressed raise their heads and fight back. And so, in the past and in the present, we communists harvest the seeds of the future: today we work to prepare tomorrow.

“What are you going on about? Communism has failed!” this is what the miserable idiots chorus – well-paid and ignorant, and kept on the leash. And so, with the patience that Marx, Engels and Lenin have taught us, we explain once again – not to that riff-raff, just deserving a

good beating, but to young proletarians, wherever they come from who are already suffering the monstrosities of capitalism – what that defeat consisted and consists of and how to shake it off. Toward the future of a classless society.

Lessons from the counter-revolution

And so, “communism has failed,” they tell us. Do you remember what they were saying a few centuries ago? “The earth is flat and stands at the centre of the universe”. *Ipse dixit*: “if that’s what they’ve always said, then it must be true.” One of the effects of the counter-revolution that has been weighing on the proletariat for almost a century (and, mark this, on the whole of society) is the inability (failure to dare) to call into question the dominant version of the facts – accepting it lying down, like a religious dogma. “Of course the USSR is a communist country! Of course China is communist! Of course the Cuban revolution was communist!” and so on. Modes of production, economic laws, capitalism and communism, State, party, class struggle...everything turns into a vague blob with no contours, with the addition of ignorance and manipulation and the absence of any will to know and understand. *Ipse dixit*: you swallow and that’s it.

But let’s proceed in order. Let’s return to 1917 and the long, crucial period of time following it. We have already demonstrated two central and inseparable elements of the Bolshevik comrades’ strategy over the years and months preceding and around October: a) the economic and social structure of Russia was still backward (and in a disastrous



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[1] See “1917-2017: Long Live Red October! Long Live the Proletarian Revolution of the Future!”, *The Internationalist*, n.4/Summer 2017.

state, after the imperialist war and the ferocious siege, lasting at least three years, by the coalition of imperialist brigands) and the task of proletarian power guided by Bolshevik party was to *set the bases (and the bases only) for socialism* - i.e. develop the Russian economy as far as possible in the direction of State capitalism; b) this was to take place in the context of a pure proletarian revolution (i.e. without any commitments to bourgeois socio-economic development), to be prepared, promoted, organized and directed in the most capitalistically advanced countries, first and foremost in Central Europe, given its geographically strategic position. There was no hesitation or misunderstanding about this prospect: proletarian Russia was to resist the attacks by the united forces of the bourgeoisie, accelerate the introduction of capitalism in its most advanced forms and work on the revolution to the west.

On the “success” of this *politically* socialist, unified strategy only did the socialist future of Russia depend, *in the economic field, too*; because then the two halves (the western economic half and the Russian political one) would blend and be able to march at an increasingly brisk pace toward socialism worldwide. The Communist International (the Third International, founded in 1919) was to be the High Command of this process - the world party able to direct it. This was the prospect and the ample body of quotations reported in our previous articles (as well as the enormous work of analysis, reconstruction and provision of detailed historical information carried out over the decades by our Party) is sufficient to demonstrate it for now: anyone who really intends to

understand knows where to come and look for the building blocks in this construction.

The years immediately following October 1917 mark the difficult and dramatic march in that direction. On the one hand - as we said earlier - the Russian proletariat has to face the attack from the world bourgeoisies which, after having been at each other's throats for four long years of war, are now “miraculously” united (and this must surely give food for thought!) in the attempt to strangle the world revolution *in nuce*. On the other hand, the international communist movement endeavours, no doubt with delay and in the midst of much uncertainty, to equip itself with a unified theoretical, political and organizational position, able to carry out that part of the work without which any prospect of developing socialism, even in Russia itself, would be vain: this was the job of the Communist International, which develops it, despite growing uncertainty and ambiguity, in its first four congresses.

And so the “war communism” in the years immediately following the revolution (which an immense host of useful idiots thinks is already “heaven on earth” - or better, for them, “hell”...) consists in a series of measures for an *emergency economy*, or *war economy* - i.e. measures that any power would have *had to* adopt in that situation and has *always* adopted. These were not and could not be communism: unless one believes that ... donkeys are reptiles! But as we know, the useful idiots are far from subtle! Once again: we repeat what our Party has amply demonstrated over the decades². Having overcome that terrible period (the facts of which bourgeois “historians” of all colours cleverly

and shamefully keep silent about) and faced with the delay and then *bloody* defeat of the proletarian movement in Germany and the rest of the industrialized world, revolutionary Russia found itself before the enormous task of developing capitalism in Russia, the only hope of holding out for “ten” or “twenty” years - as they said then - whilst waiting for history itself (the history of the class struggle) to suggest a new revolutionary moment (we must not forget that at the end of the ‘20s the capitalist world would plunge into a new economic crisis and, at the end of the ‘30s, a new world bloodbath). And this was the NEP “new economic policy”: a necessary and predicted passage and not, as the useful idiots with their bourgeois “intelligence” (!!!) instead claim, an “attempt to repair the damage done by Marxist economy!”

We quote a passage from our 1970 text, summing up the long work of analysis carried out by our Party on “Russian affairs” in the course of the 1950s and 1960s:

It was the later defeats of the international revolution that imposed on the Bolsheviks a series of measures regarding economic policy which had nothing to do with socialism but which Stalinism later blessed with this misleading label. In reality, it meant the workers' management of enterprises abandoned by the owners or the re-establishment of a certain degree of internal commerce, industrial planning or the substitution of natural taxation by forced requisition of grain, and all these were mere economic expedients, palliatives to fight poverty and under-production, temporary provisions awaiting the return of the worldwide proletarian battle, which



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[2] Amongst our many works on this subject, see at least *Dialogato con Stalin* (1952), *Russia e rivoluzione nella teoria marxista* (1954-55), *Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi* (1955-57), *Bilan d'une révolution* (1967).

*all revolutionaries worthy of the name never agreed to give up.*³

In the meantime, however, there was the other side of the strategy: the Communist International. Our unceasing battle inside this fundamental organism consisted in trying to make it the authentic world party of the international proletariat, equipped with a theory, tactics and a solid and well-defined organization⁴. And on this terrain, we gradually started to clash with the blurring of the clear original vision, replaced by a series of measures – at the very level of tactics and organization – which, in an attempt to deal with the delays to the revolution in the West, introduced manoeuvres, slogans and prospects that were ambiguous and contradictory, destined, as we warned several times, to reflect on the International's principles and programme: gradually turning it into an instrument of the Russian State and no longer the High Command of the world proletariat. There, in Russia, those capitalist economic forces undergoing their necessary development could not fail to have a social and political reflection and only solid State management with an international perspective could have contained and dealt with them. But this did not happen: between 1923 and 1926 a gradual process of closure and involution of Russian economy and politics was to be seen, with its inevitable effects on the International, too. Once again from our 1970 text:

If the revolution had been victorious in Germany, Soviet power could have restricted itself to the concessions already made to private capitalism and the Russian peasantry and

controlled their social effects. Giving up the perspective of the European revolution, as Stalin did, meant instead giving free rein to the development of capitalist relations in Russia, giving the classes that were the immediate beneficiaries supremacy over the proletariat. This proletariat, an extreme minority, already decimated by the war against the White Russians and subjected to the crushing work of production, had no other weapon against the speculators in private commerce and the greed of the peasants, than the cudgel of the Soviet State. But this State could only remain proletarian as long as it was firmly at one with the international proletariat against reactionary internal factions. Deciding that Russia should construct "its" socialism on its own meant abandoning its proletariat to the enormous pressure from the non-proletarian classes and freeing Russian capitalism from any kind of coercion or control. Worse still, it meant transforming the Soviet State into a State like all others, in an effort to make Russia into a great bourgeois nation as quickly as possible.

This was the true meaning of Stalin's "turning point" and his formula of "socialism in one country". To call "socialism" what was pure capitalism and in coming to an agreement with the reactionary mass of the Russian peasantry, persecuting and killing all the revolutionaries who had remained faithful to Lenin's prospects and the interests of the Russian and international proletariat, Stalin was the instrument of a real counter-revolution. Even though he acted with the atrocious terror of an absolute despot, he was nevertheless not its promoter but the

instrument of it.

After a series of defeats at an international level, as well as internally, after the repression of the armed rebellions and the catastrophic tactical errors of the International, and after the peasants' revolts and famines in Russia, it appeared quite clear towards 1924 that the communist revolution in Europe had been postponed indefinitely. At this point, a terrible, corpo a corpo struggle began with all the other classes in society.

These classes, momentarily seized by enthusiasm for the anti-Tsarist revolution, no longer aspired to anything but enjoying their victory in bourgeois style, i.e. sacrificing the international revolutionary perspective to the establishment of "good relations" with capitalist countries. Stalin was merely the spokesman and the one who achieved their aspirations.

Increasingly, instead of controlling and directing the economic and social forces that were maturing and emerging from below ground and doing this in the context of the world communist strategy, the Russian Party and State became the expression and instrument of these very forces. And the Communist International followed suit. At this point, the mongrel theory of "socialism in one country" took the next step and became destructive as well as bloodthirsty.

We cannot follow all the developments of the involution and subsequent open counter-revolution here: once again we refer those who seriously wish to understand the historical drama that took place from the mid-1920s onwards, and in which we are still immersed, to our



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[3] "Perché la Russia non è socialista", *Il programma comunista*, nn.13-14-15-16-17-18-19/1970.

[4] We remind readers that this unceasing battle is well documented in the five volumes of our *Storia della Sinistra Comunista*, which we refer to for details and a deeper and more complete analysis.

Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi (The economic and social structure of today's Russia) and to the pamphlet *La crisi del 1926 nell'Internazionale Comunista e nel partito russo* (The 1926 crisis in the Communist International and the Russian Party). We limit ourselves to repeating: on the economic and social plane there was never either socialism or communism in Russia and even less so in the rest of the world which, in the following decades and with inevitably national and nationalistic interpretations, followed the deviation and the path to "socialism in one country". Those who paid for this were not only the "old guard", the Bolsheviks, scattered and massacred, but the international proletariat and the world communist movement. A defeat in the field and by external enemies as well as internal ones: *but a defeat*, not the failure of a mode of production! And this is what we have been denouncing ever since the middle of that decade, in the 1920s, so dense with promise and with tragedy.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow

It is clear at this stage that for us, on the basis not of banal self-justification, but of long work spent "hammering the nails back in", of *theoretical restoration* and – never let us forget this – of *open struggle* on all fronts (against bourgeois democracy, against Nazi-fascism, expressions of imperialist rule, and against Stalinism), it has always been a question of defending the political gains of October 1917, of weighing them up and starting out again from there – just as Marx and Engels did after the collapse and bloody repression of the Paris Commune in 1871. And here we are comforted by the very dynamics of

the capitalist mode of production, which continues to pull out the same old unsolvable contradictions at monstrously higher and higher levels: in a word, *the increasingly keen need for communism*.

At the IIIrd Congress of the Italian Communist Party, held secretly in Lyons in 1926, our current, gradually driven into the sidelines by the Party's Directorate and destined in a short while to be largely expelled, presented its own Theses as alternatives to those of Gramsci-Togliatti, by then aligned with victorious Stalinism. These Theses of ours were at one and the same time a weighing-up of what had been happening in the international communist movement and the re-statement of a revolutionary perspective for the future: the basis for the struggle that, since then, our current has never ceased to carry forward, though as a minority and sailing against the current, in order to set the bases for the world communist party to be born anew. In one extremely important section, the Theses sum up the sense of the party's work, to be handed down to future generations: to us and we in turn hand it on to new generations. It states:

The work of the party cannot and must not limit itself solely to conserving the purity of theoretical principles and the purity of the organizational aspect, or solely to the realization at all costs of immediate successes and numerical popularity. It must incorporate, at all times and in all situations, the three following points:

a) the defence and clarification, with regard to new sets of facts that may occur, of the fundamental programmatic postulates, i.e. of the

theoretical conscience of the working-class movement;

b) guarantee of the continuity of the party's organizational aspect and its efficiency, as well as its defence against contamination from influences that are foreign to and opposed to the revolutionary interests of the proletariat;

c) Active participation in all working-class struggles even when arising from partial and limited interests, in order to encourage their development, but always relating them to their revolutionary final goals by showing that the conquests of the class struggle are paths leading to indispensable future battles and denouncing the danger of becoming comfortable with partial achievements as though they were points of arrival and thus of exchanging them for the conditions of active proletarian class struggle, such as the autonomy and independence of its ideology and its organizations, first and foremost amongst them the party.

The supreme objective of this complex activity is to set the subjective conditions for preparing the proletariat, in the sense that the latter should be enabled to profit from the objective possibilities for revolution that history will present, as soon as they appear, so that it leaves the fight as victors and not as the defeated.⁵

This is where we set out from again in 1952, after a full twenty-five years of battling for survival and in contact with the class, even when it was deviated and betrayed by counter-revolutionaries, in the awareness that history (the history of the capitalist mode of production and its increasingly explosive and irrepressible contradictions and the history of the proletarian movement



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[5] Our "Lyons Theses" can be read in English in our former review *Internationalist Papers*, n.14/Spring-Summer 2009.

with all its ups and downs, its partial victories and burning defeats) would not cease to offer these “*objective possibilities for revolution*” once again.

On this terrain we must continue to work. At the level of theory: by analyzing precisely, using the weapon of Marxist science, what goes on at the heart of capitalist society (starting from the “course of world capitalism”, with all its social and ideological reflections). At the level of organization: by defending the Party’s physical continuity from every external influence (petit-bourgeois junk, the mainstream ideology) and state repression (in all its forms, both legal and illegal). At a practical level: intervening, as far as our forces allow us, in proletarian struggles, to organize them, guide them critically and – if and when we obtain real influence within the class – direct them, gradually channelling the class antagonism that the very contradictions of capitalism can’t help but provoke towards the necessary objective of seizing power and the dictatorship of the proletariat guided by the Party. Seizing power: this is the central issue. Our task is to show, at every moment of our class’s tormented life, the need for seizing power, establishing the power of the proletariat guided by the revolutionary Party. As we wrote already in another article⁶, and as we shall never tire of repeating, every aspect of the drama of proletarian survival (a life that is precarious, miserly, besieged: today as yesterday and as tomorrow) demands this outcome: the backbreaking exploitation at the workplace and the dual exploitation, at home and outside, of proletarian women, the salary which (when there is one) slips through your fingers, the day-by-day desperation of unemploy-

ment, the housing problem and how to make it to the end of the month, medical expenses and care for the elderly, a future with (at best!) a starvation pension, illness and death from exhaustion, poisoning, the giddy pace of life and tremendous accidents, emigration with all it involves, persecution of all sorts... And then widespread warfare that is increasing constantly, environmental instability that has reached alarming and threatening levels, cities bursting at their seams and the countryside abandoned or the destruction of whole areas subjected to intensive farming, food adulteration, poisoned water, individual and mass folly, the strangling, numbing and oppression from racist, religious and nationalist ideologies, the open and masked violence of the bourgeois State... Can we really go on illuding ourselves that all this can be eliminated (or at least controlled) without a central power that will refuse to obey particular economic interests, the law of profit, the dictates of international competition? Or without the return to the stage of open battle, no longer delegated to one or the other institution, party, congregation, individual in the constitutional arena, but grounded on open social antagonism, the widest possible front, the refusal of the paralyzing rules of democracy, the “higher demands of the national economy” and “loyalty to the fatherland”. Or without the resuscitation of proletarian territorial organisms that deal with all the demands of open battle as well as all the practical daily needs of the class and that really do function as places and moments for meeting and coming together for all sectors of the proletariat (“guaranteed” or not, employed and unemployed, precarious or pensioners, men and women, young and

old people, immigrants and “natives”), over and above any differences created and fuelled by the ruling ideology, whether ethnic, religious or national? ... We could go on. But the answer is *always*: NO, it is not possible. Again in the first article of this series, and we reconnect here to the latter, in a way closing the circle of this re-evocation which is a *political battle* and not a rhetorical memory, we wrote: “If we do not understand the need for this power, we inevitably fall back into the logic of faint-hearted reformism, all the more frustrating, the more destructive the nature of capitalism grows and advances. On the contrary, only by understanding the necessity of seizing power and thus of the centralized organization of a battle with this objective - only in this way will even partial battles be possible, aiming to defend living and working conditions with the necessary intransigence and firmness, recognizing our own strength and letting our adversaries feel it, too, whether they be the bosses or the State with all their terrorist practices.”

In the course of the inevitable clash with the State and its forces of repression, democratic or totalitarian institutions (and now, more and more often, the democratic-totalitarian, given the transformations that bourgeois state power has undergone in the imperialist age), the proletariat will have to realize the need to bring all its forces into the field, not only in terms of numbers but well organized and well directed – both on the terrain of immediate claims and on that of revolutionary prospects. This process will only be possible on condition that communists, organized in the international communist Party, have previously prepared the way by accompanying



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[6] “1917-2017: Long Live Red October! Long Live the Proletarian Revolution of the Future!”, *The Internationalist*, n.4/Summer 2017.

it and fertilizing it, making it grow and truly become that historical power able to overthrow the capitalist mode of production, opening the path towards a classless society.

The party, then. The other great (and tragic!) lesson that emerges from the years following October 1917 is that the revolutionary party must exist *well before* the showdown between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and that it must be *monolithic* in terms of theory as in terms of practice and organization: not the federation of national parties (as it was for the Second International and as it ended up being for the Communist International before its liquidation), but a single world

party, founded on the historical result of almost a century of counter-revolution, equipped with solid theory, put to the test and verified in direct and constant contact with the reality of a class war that has never ceased over all these decades and a unified organization that has to be promoted, put into practice and defended. This is what we, as a minority working against the current, have always been working on.

And let no-one come along and say: "Fine but what then? We all know that power corrupts... And in any case, communism...What is it, seeing as you say no examples exist?..." The banality of bourgeois intelligence should be left to the

idiots, the ignorant, those with vested interests. Revolutionaries know quite well what the lines and programmatic points of communism are: a century and a half of *theoretical and practical battles, of lessons from counter-revolution*, of attempts to storm heaven crushed in angry bloodshed, of historical *outcomes* achieved in the white-hot heat of the class war. We have nothing to demonstrate or justify. Communists, organized in their party act today on the basis of the experience of yesterday and with the prospect of tomorrow. It is in this sense that we remember "Red October" with pride, passion and determination.



Great Britain

Once again and endlessly “The Housing Question”

To start with

In his text *The Housing Question* (originally published in the form of articles in 1872 and republished as a pamphlet in 1887), Friedrich Engels wrote: “Whence then comes the housing shortage? How did it arise? [... It] is a necessary product of the bourgeois social order; that it cannot fail to be present in a society in which the great masses of the workers are exclusively dependent upon wages, that is to say, on the sum of foodstuffs necessary for their existence and for the propagation of their kind; in which improvements of the existing machinery continually throw masses of workers out of employment; in which violent and regularly recurring industrial vacillations determine on the one hand the existence of a large reserve army of unemployed workers, and on the other hand drive large masses of the workers temporarily unemployed onto the streets; in which the workers are crowded together in masses in the big towns, at a quicker rate than dwellings come into existence for them under existing conditions; in which, therefore, there must always be tenants even for the most infamous pigsties; and in which finally the house owner in his capacity as capitalist has not only the right, but, in view of the competition, to a certain extent also the duty of ruthlessly making as much out of his property in house rent as he possibly can. In such a society the housing shortage is no accident; it is a necessary institution and it can be abolished together with

all its effects on health, etc., only if the whole social order from which it springs is fundamentally refashioned. That, however, bourgeois socialism dare not know. It dare not explain the housing shortage from the existing conditions. And therefore nothing remains for it but to explain the housing shortage by means of moral phrases as the result of the baseness of human beings, as the result of original sin, so to speak”¹.

The quotation serves well to bring into focus what we shall try to demonstrate in the rest of this article concerning the housing situation in Great Britain, taking up again and developing two articles that appeared on these pages in 2015 and again in 2016². In the former, we wrote: “London and other medium-to-large scale cities, especially their city centres, may seem like so many open-air building yards (excavations, cranes, scaffolding for horrible constructions issuing from the nightmares of some richly paid superstar architect: building yards nonetheless subject to the peaks and dips of the market, with long pauses and sudden accelerations). But the reality hidden behind (or beneath?) them is quite different. As has been happening for a good century and a half now, in Great Britain as elsewhere, the *housing issue* is once again cropping up: the other face of land rent, building speculation by capital in its perennial, breathless search for oxygen...”. We recalled the unceasing rise in house prices, the increase in the number of fami-

lies that “prefer” private rental (but with a rent that is always on the rise) to buying their own house, an estimate of the 250 thousand new houses a year needed to meet the needs of the British population (whilst only half of them are actually built), the state of neglect of a large part of public housing with its deterioration and lack of maintenance, the huge rise in the numbers of the homeless... And on the subject of homelessness, we concluded the second article as follows: “Meanwhile, the situation of the homeless is becoming more and more of a tragedy, in particular that of the weaker and more vulnerable sectors, such as single mothers and children. [...] the numbers of new ‘social rent’ apartments financed by the Government continue to dwindle, dropping to fewer than 10 thousand last year, or 70% fewer than five years previously (*The Observer*, 18/9/2016); at the same time, the rents in ‘affordable rent’ apartments have gone up and the combination of the two ‘phenomena’ is producing authentic ghettoization by age ranges, with over-50-year-olds gradually being pushed out towards the suburbs or to rural areas and the younger generation struggling to get by in houses where the rents are constantly on the rise (+5,2% compared to 2015, right up to record figures of around 900 pounds sterling a month, in England and Wales: *The Guardian*, 9/9/2016). Then there is the truly dramatic situation of families obliged to live in ‘temporary accommodation’: in



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[1] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_Housing_Question.pdf.

[2] “Something Is Rotten in the UNited Kingdom. Notes on the Social Situation”, *The Internationalist*, n.3/June 2016; “The Rot Is Growing in the United Kingdom”, *The Internationalist*, n.4/Summer 2017.

London alone 52 thousand family units, it appears, with a total of 90 thousand children: family units mostly consisting of single and/or pregnant mothers [...]. The guidelines here indicate that no family unit should be housed for more than six months in this ‘temporary accommodation’ (often commissioned by the municipalities from private people with no scruples, with the foreseeable consequences resulting from overcrowding, poor hygiene and little or no maintenance, etc.). The reality is quite different, particularly in large cities like London, where it can be seen that over half of these family units remain for periods of up to two years. The consequences are easy to imagine!”. And has the situation changed?

Yes: *for the worse and dramatically.*

The fire at Grenfell Tower, London: mass murder, class murder

On the night between 13th and 14th June 2017 a fire broke out on the third floor of the 24-storey Grenfell Tower, in a neighbourhood consisting wholly of social housing, made up of other, similar high-rise buildings at the heart of the rich borough of Kensington and Chelsea. In just thirty minutes the whole tower (129 apartments) had become one monstrous bonfire. 71 people

burned or suffocated to death – men, women, children, old people. This is the official figure but in all probability it has been underestimated: it appears, in fact, that the building was also inhabited by numerous unregistered immigrants. On glancing through the official list of victims, the names speak for themselves: only eight refer to British or European origins³...

The building, dating from the early 1970s and fitted with lifts (not to be used in case of fire) and a single, central staircase, was managed on behalf of the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council by a mixed association of Kensington and Chelsea tenants, heads of local government and independent figures, the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant

Organisation (KCTMO), the largest association of this type in Great Britain, which manages something like 10 thousand social housing units in this neighbourhood alone. Which, however! is a luxury area of wealth and large mansions, next to and surrounding black spots of extreme poverty⁴: the social composition of the association is therefore easy to imagine... For the purpose of contrasting the KCTMO, a grassroots organization in the lower class neighbourhood, the Grenfell Action Group, was set up and ever since 2013 had been

accusing the KCTMO of being a “mini-Mafia”, criticising the conditions of the entire neighbourhood and even declaring that: “only an incident that results of serious loss of life”, such as a fire in one of the tower blocks, might perhaps be dramatic enough to lead to a change⁵. The grassroots organization’s position was also due to the fact that, between 2012 and 2016, restructuring work had been carried out on the building and, because of the way it was done and the materials used, had worried and perplexed the tenants and the Action Group itself, which had spoken up on several occasions. It is not our intention to go at length into the features of the restructuring work done on the building: suffice it to mention that, in order to improve its appearance (i.e. so as not to be an eyesore in the eyes of the rich residents living only a few hundred yards away) the tower block had been coated with panels made of highly inflammable material and that alternative designs with a view to limiting the damage in case of fire had been turned down because they were ... too costly⁶.

The 320 family nucleuses (including over 200 children) that survived but lost everything are at present “guests” in hotels – and probably candidates for a life on the streets in the future⁷. Today a tremendous



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[3] *The Guardian*, 17/11/2017.

[4] *The Guardian*, 13/11/2017: “A damning report on inequality in Kensington and Chelsea has highlighted the close proximity of extreme wealth and poverty in the area around Grenfell Tower, revealing that in some parts of the borough average incomes can ‘drop 10 times as you cross a street’”.

[5] Cfr. Doug Thorpe, “Public Housing After Grenfell”, in *Transform. A Journal of the Radical Left*, n.3/2017. It must be remembered that similar tragedies occurred in the past: for instance, in May 1968, an entire corner of another tower (Ronan Point, 21 floors, in East London) crumbled after a gas explosion on a fourth-floor flat, causing four deaths and several injured: the ensuing enquire revealed that severe structural deficiencies might have caused the building’s collapse, even only in presence of strong winds! (cfr. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronan_Point). A series of other enquiries revealed structural weaknesses in several council-house buildings in London: some of them were subsequently pulled down. It seems, however, that the possibility of a fire was never taken into account. More recently, in July 2009, another tower caught fire in Camberwell (London), causing six deaths and twenty injuries, and similar “disasters” took place in Liverpool, Stevenage, Irvine...

[6] Cfr. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenfell_Tower_fire. Similar panels are installed in at least 200 towers in Great Britain.

[7] Another dreadful consequence of the catastrophe is the succession of attempted suicides among the survivors, in the following months: at least some twenty, of which one resulting in death. Not only deaths and physical injuries, but the psychological ones as well, are the end product of these “disasters” caused by the law of profit and real-estate speculation – in a word, by capitalism.



blackened trunk, still towering over the gleaming mansions of wealthy London, Grenfell Tower remains to tell us that where the law of profit rules, human life must take second place and can be sacrificed⁸.

But the mass and class murder at Grenfell Tower risks making us forget all the rest: not only the conditions of dozens or hundreds of similar tower blocks, built from second-rate materials with scarce or hurried (or no!) maintenance work and therefore providing a “standard of living” that is easy to imagine, but also the “normal” conditions of most of Great Britain’s proletariat with regard to the immediate need for a place *to live*.

A brief look backwards ...

At this point a brief look back to the past must be taken, to help put the question into focus. Around the mid 1970s (the dating is important: these are the years in which the post-war period of capital expansion comes to an end and the crisis of over-production of goods and capitals explodes), on the one hand a significant, progressive slowdown in the building of new houses *by local councils* occurs in Great Britain (first and foremost of social housing): from half the number of new houses built in 1970 to a miserable 1.25% in the year 2015-16⁹; and on the other hand a series of profound changes in legislation relating to the housing sector take place. Starting from the Housing Act of 1980, associated with Thatcher, (the so-called “Right-to-Buy Act”, which made it possible to buy a house and claim strong tax incentives), the rush to purchase/sell social housing, initially managed in the boroughs by

the local councils, saw no end: by 1987 over a million had been sold. The law also contained measures that made it into a real trap: for example, the local councils were not authorized to spend more than 25% of the income from sales on restoring or extending the housing they managed or on carrying out the necessary maintenance on those they continued to own. In addition the gates were thrown open to a massive influx of speculative capital and private businesses at all levels, with the chains of contracting and subcontracting (in all fields: from building to maintenance, etc.) that we are all well aware of. The short- and long-term effects can easily be imagined. With the fall of the Tory government, the next Labour government (Blair’s!) blithely continued the same policy of deregulation and growth of the private sector, with the development of an authentic building lobby, later setting up the Tenant Management Organisations (TMO) previously mentioned.

This is not all, of course, demonstrating that every aspect of “life” in the capitalist mode of production is closely connected. Indeed, it is evident that when the proletariat is transformed into small house owners, the effect is not only to relieve the public authorities (the State and, bit by bit, all its various parts) of unproductive expenses, but also – and from the point of view of the class struggle, *particularly* – to put this proletariat in a position where it can be blackmailed, i.e. transforming it into “obedient citizens”, respectful of the law, passive towards the State and the authorities, *individually* involved in meeting “home expenses” (and very often

strangled by them), with loans obtained from banks to make the purchase bringing all their attendant problems. To sum up, it becomes one more anti-proletarian weapon wheeled onto the battlefield with the effect of dividing proletarians, intimidating them and making them cautious and passive towards the needs of any class struggle: how can they waste hours and days of work on strikes, when they have a mortgage to pay off? How can they clash with the State and its accomplices, if they need an immaculate criminal record? What is to happen if the company they work for fires them or relocates or lays off workers? Etc, etc. It must not be forgotten that the policy of providing “incentives for house purchases” (with all its ideological and material implications) takes place simultaneously with the rise in proletarian battles in Great Britain which, after so many generous episodes (the battles by the workers, in particular the immigrants, at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories, lasting two years between 1976 and 1978, to quote one example), culminated in the huge miners’ strike of 1984-85, widely controlled by the Unions and fiercely repressed by the State: once again the carrot (an illusion) and the stick (a reality).

... and a look all around

A little before the end of 2017, on one of the numerous building yards dismembering entire areas of London that had attracted building speculation, towered the building company’s slogan: “We’re helping to solve the housing crisis by creating 100,000 new homes. Because homes matter”. Even admitting that these 100 000 homes



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[8] To this end, we like to refer the reader to two of our classic texts, dealing with dwelling conditions under the capitalist mode of production: “Specie umana e crosta terrestre”, *Il programma comunista*, n.6/1952; “Spazio contro cemento”, *Il programma comunista*, n.1/1953. Both can be found in our website www.partitocomunistainternazionale.org.

[9] All data come from Doug Thorpe’s article, quoted above.

see the light of day, no proletarian could ever afford one, even if s/he wanted to. And that slogan, compared to the living conditions in London and Great Britain in general, sounds like authentic and cynical mockery.

Let's stick to some *official* figures (from "Local Government Inform" of 16/6/2017). In London alone, the number of flats belonging to local councils and discreetly termed *not decent*, i.e. not up to inhabitable standards, touches on 40 thousand; in the whole of England (excluding Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the figure doubles. Anyone can do the sums, reckoning family units of two-three-four people and coming to a conclusion on their living conditions... As to the condition of homelessness (which ranges from those sleeping out on the street to those in temporary accommodation which, as we have seen, is more or less definitive and a prelude to ... the streets), the figures are just as striking. A report published in August 2017 by the Heriot Watt University of Edinburgh¹⁰ lists a series of "conditions" defined *core homelessness*, which are useful to remember because they reveal just how tragic the situation is: rough sleeping; sleeping in tents, cars, public transport; squatting (unlicensed, insecure; unsuitable non-residential accommodation, e.g., 'beds in sheds'); hostel residents; users of night/winter shelters; DV victims in Refuge; unsuitable temporary accommodation (bed and breakfast accommodation, hotels, etc.); 'sofa surfing' (staying with others - not family - on short-term/insecure basis/wanting to move, in crowded conditions: students not included). 160 thousand people throughout Great Britain

found themselves in one of these situations in 2016, with a 33.4% rise compared to 2011. And the number is forecast to increase! These are official figures which thus (due to the evident difficulty of monitoring the situation) are in all probability lower than the real ones: indeed in a second report, drawn up by the charitable organization Shelter, the number even doubles, emphasizing what is defined *hidden homelessness*, the condition in which those who have no home wander from one place to another. This is a scenario that, despite having its explosive centre in London, is spreading increasingly to the rest of the country: in Manchester one person out of 154 is homeless; in Bristol one out of 170¹¹. It is a scenario reminiscent of the industrial revolution – one described by Engels so significantly in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published over one hundred and fifty years ago...

What are the answers to the "question"?

Added to other problematic issues (unemployment, erosion of salaries, the progressive dismantling of the national health service, etc.), the "housing question" contributes to creating a potentially explosive social situation in Great Britain – Brexit or not. There is no lack of organizations taking action to tackle it: for example, the Radical Housing Network based in London lists 27 different local bodies that are active in the city on this terrain¹²; and similar bodies have grown up and are spreading in other cities. But on the one hand there is not yet any real, general, coordinated movement, as partly existed in the '70s when the crisis had begun to hit hard: and this

shows what a burning defeat had come in successive years and decades. On the other hand, localism (always the 'bête noire' of the English – and *not only English* - working-class movement) makes these attempts to respond to the attacks of Capital weak and ineffective in the long term. It is not merely a question of geographical localism: it is the tendency to circumscribe problems, isolating one from the other, that must be fought and overcome. The prospect we are working for, in contact with the class wherever our forces make this possible, is a return to the scene of *militant territorial organisms*, which will take on the task of dealing with all aspects of the proletarian condition: from working conditions to the housing question, from gas and electricity bills to public transport, from the organization of the unemployed to the defence of proletarians and the proletarian struggle from attacks by the bourgeois State's legal and illegal gangs, and so on. We know quite well that these *territorial organisms* will not result from plans drawn up around a table and it is not the task of the revolutionary party to create them out of nothing: they will (*they must*) be the result of a whole series of battles by proletarians to defend themselves from the attack of Capital. The task of the revolutionary party is to spread the "slogan", revealing to the more aware proletarian avant-gardes the absolute need for them and linking them to the widest possible protest against the misdeeds of a mode of production that has outlived its time, spreading bloodshed and destruction in its death throes, and that must therefore be overcome, to be replaced at last by a classless society.

January 2018

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[10] "Crisis – Homelessness Projections: Core Homelessness in Great Britain - Summary Report": cfr. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf.

[11] "The Guardian", 8/11/2017.

[12] Cfr. radicalhousingnetwork.org.

From Germany

The Hamburg G20 Summit: a mega-show of democratic illusions

(N.B. The present article appeared in issue no. 1 of our German-language journal *Kommunistisches Programm*).

It is always difficult for capitalist States, torn by inter-imperialist competition and propelled by the economic crisis, to camouflage their own economic dominion as though it were the height of social development: this very myth of lack of alternative is one of the conditions for the survival of capitalist power. The exploited and the oppressed must be politically integrated, either through reactionary, nationalist mobilization acting as the infantry in inter-imperialist rivalry and with a view to the consolidation of the system, or thanks to the illusion of a possible transformation of this system.

In this context, on 6 and 7 July, a show-summit of 20 powerful States will take place in Hamburg, congenially rounded off by alternative demonstrations with colourful proposals for an improved and better regulated organization of the capitalist mode of production and against financial speculation (which has become too evil), against debt, environmental damage, arms production and war. But anti-capitalist oriented and *tendentially* revolutionary activists and groups, too, took action at the beginning of July to organize a *Gipfelsturm* (violent action against the summit) – a significant event in the development of the left-wing political context, not only in Germany.

Imperialist reality

The imperialist scaffolding is starting to creak. “America first”: this is the motto with which US imperialism, through its newly-elected president, Trump, directly addresses its competitors. The military-style show of muscle is nothing

new: over the past few decades the USA has had growing difficulty in hanging on to its role as director of the world, thanks only to its economic force, as well as its military power. Imperialism under the symbol of dollar-power nonetheless finds itself in increasing difficulty, in direct ratio to the progress made by its competitors, first and foremost China, whose economic relations with the USA come up against their own limits. Meanwhile, China disposes of US loans to the tune of over 1 trillion, whilst the US trade deficit with China has risen to almost 350 billion over the past year. China is attempting to reduce its dependency on the dollar and, by using its huge reserves of currency, to intensify its own exports of capital. The “Middle Kingdom” openly advances its imperialist intentions under the motto “a new silk road”: its ports and military investments in the Horn of Africa (Djibouti), as well as its increased activity in Europe, point to the itinerary of this “silk road”.

The fact that China is becoming the second largest investor in the world after the USA and that it is already number one in terms of its commercial relations with Germany causes the German foreign minister, Gabriel, to speak of a new “world division” – a new division that is also manifest at a military level: the USA and China alone are increasing their military spending by 2 percentage points a year.

German imperialism is highly indignant that, during the meeting with the G20’s finance ministers prior to the summit, the USA refused to approve the usual empty formulae of the conclusive statement on freedom of commerce and against protection-

nism, advancing criticism of the enormous trade surplus of the GDR. The surplus of the German trade balance (over 250 billion euro in 2015) is also the economic basis for the process of erosion affecting the European Union (EU), which, with the exit of Great Britain (with a trade deficit of almost 150 billion euro in 2015), has reached its maximum level. At the same time, the EU is attempting to penetrate the cracks left open by the USA (e.g. the free trade agreement with Japan, announced by Trump at the beginning of the year) or not yet filled by China (the “Marshall Plan for Africa”).

The historically unchanging world order that Merkel and her partners in Hamburg wish to refer to at the conference looks more like a ruined palace in disguise – a disguise which, it is recommended, may be uncovered by reading, amongst other titles, Lenin’s study on imperialism, written during the first world war, where for example, we read: “Thus, in capitalist reality, and not in the vulgar phantasies of the English priests or of the German ‘Marxist’ Kautsky, the ‘inter-imperialist’ or ‘ultra-imperialist’ alliances are NONE other than a ‘pause for breath’ between one war and another, whatever form these alliances may take, whether one imperialist coalition against another imperialist coalition, or a general league of all the imperialist powers. Peace alliances prepare wars and are, in turn, born of them – whether one or the other form, they determine one another reciprocally and, on ONE AND THE SAME terrain, produce imperialist links and relations in world economy and politics, an



alternation of pacific and non-pacific forms of struggle.”

The Summit and its alternatives

Faced with the show put on by the Summit of imperialist States, the reformists intend to organize a “counter-summit”, through which alternative political proposals are to be advanced. They thus wish to strengthen “participatory and democratic rights” to motivate the countries of the G20 towards a change in policy, which should combat poverty and hunger... and thus they complain, for example, in their invitation, that no “global rules for a stable financial economy” have yet been established. At the meeting of the finance ministers in March, ATTAC had already complained that “‘just and democratic answers’ to global problems could not be expected from the G20” and had demanded that measures be taken against “tax havens”, the competition between States to provide reduced taxation, as well as for “efficient regulation of financial markets”. Precisely as they did with the campaign for amnesty (*Erlassjahr*) in the organization’s demonstrations in Baden Baden against the meeting of the G20 finance ministers and for a “correct and democratic mechanism for converting debts”, ATTAC’s defenders of the State demand from the capitalist State a policy for alleviating the consequences of the capitalist crisis. It is impossible to take these absurd, pro-capitalist positions seriously, and indeed, in the above-quoted text, Lenin had already written pertinently of them: “the learned and bourgeois publicists’ defence of imperialism generally tends to take a larva-like form, dissimulating the absolute dominion of imperialism and placing before it secondary features, distracting attention from the essential with proposals for “reform” that are not particularly credible, such as, for example, the proposal to establish a

police-like control over trusts and banks.” (cit. pp. 150-151).

Instead, it is certainly worth dealing with apparently more consequential positions, such as those represented by the autonomous groups who, in their appeal for an anti-capitalist demonstration on 6 July, advance a radical differentiation of the summit-show: “We are opposing the summit as well as any effort to include political critique and resistance as a part of the summit’s orchestration as a democratic institution”.

Radical criticism without consequences

Against the backdrop of the personal and theoretical decline of the autonomous movement since the end of the 1980s, in pride of place are active protests against the summits, distinguished by proclamations marked by considerable verbal radicalism. Unlike the confused politics of the alliances, the autonomous groups pose the question of the System and assume a position clearly opposed to reform. “In contrast to bourgeois opposition, we do not suggest to the rulers any alternatives for keeping the capitalist system alive.” (from the *Call to the Demonstration of 6 July*). And again: “The summit (G20) is a key expression of the political dilemma of capitalism: its contradictions are not solved, as is maintained, by politics and those administering politics [...]. The G20 is therefore – not least in relation to parliamentary elections – a formal event that has to legitimize itself by putting on a show [...]. At the same time, the numerous crises of global capitalism see a further, giddy escalation.”

In any event, a radical refusal of capitalism also requires an analysis of its function, its contradictions and, above all, the material bases for overcoming it. And it is precisely here that the serious limits of the autonomous movement’s radicalism

are to be seen. Instead of setting out from the social force created by capitalism, on which the socially-organized production of goods grounds its existence, and with this, also the strength needed to abolish capitalist relations (the proletarian class), the autonomous movement remains confused and subjective and, therefore, politically compatible. Clear as the criticism of reformism is, in the appeals of the autonomous movement, discourse on “practices of resistance” and “new prospects for resistance” remains equally confused: not a word on the proletarian class and the international class war, no link between the development (and crisis) of capitalism and the dynamics of the class war... When we read in the leaflet “however, capitalism’s penetration of the world also acts to unite resistance”, this may sound fine at first; but when it is then concluded that: “resistance against the open mines in Colombia has a link to urban political battles against the Moorborg coal company in the port of Hamburg, which uses Colombian coal as raw material,” and that “desertification and migration caused by climate change have a direct bearing on struggles for the right to housing,” and “the connivance between the interests of valorizing capital becomes evident, like criticism and political attack,” none of these words touch remotely on the terrain of the international class struggle. On the contrary, the old practices of bourgeois initiatives (which in the end can only be of a democratic nature and State-oriented) are resuscitated. For us, instead, it is a matter of abolishing capitalist relations and not of producing a political criticism of them! Since the “anti-capitalism” of the autonomous movement does not intend taking the final step towards the proletarian class war, it itself remains on the same plane as bourgeois politics and the “social



revolution” it promotes becomes a matter of empty words.

The communist prospective

Marxism has the merit of having analyzed the driving forces of capitalist development, placed capitalism in the context of its historical role and defined the course of the proletarian class war. The appearance of the proletarian class on the social battlefield and its constitution in the form of a political party had already been recognized in theory by Marx and Engels when capitalism was still on the rise. They indicated the path of an independent class struggle, deriving from real experiences of struggle (for example the Paris Commune), the need for the violent seizing of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The harsher conditions of the class struggle in capitalism's imperialist phase, analyzed so precisely by Lenin, brought the need to defend Marxist theory against opportunism

onto the agenda. The revolutionary class war against capitalism is a long and complex historical process. Neither the many attempts at revising Marxism, nor the numerous opportunist betrayals have managed to prevent the class war re-emerging from the terrain of capitalism. After the betrayal of social democracy, the historical working class party assumed the form that led to the unification of parties in the Communist International. It was the practical work, oriented by firm theoretical principles, of the “Italian” communist Left that represented, after Stalin's counter-revolution, the basis for the renaissance of the class party, together with the proletarian struggle in the final phases of the second imperialist war in Italy. With the united international communist Party, the historical party of the working class reappears on the battleground. To keep the continuity of the true class party alive and develop a strong and efficient world

party from its organizational nucleus is our main task today.

Even though the dominance of defenders of the capitalist system – reformists, democrats and even fascists still – weighs heavily, it is the system itself that is producing new cracks where sectors of the class start to fight for their own interests and look for alternatives. It is our task to promote these struggles, broaden them and, in the limits of our own forces, direct them and take up the thread of the class war again. Only in this way can the precious treasure-chest of experience in the battles of our class be used and become a real prospective above and beyond the subjective excogitations of projects and conformist political mishmash.

Forward, then, with the
International Communist Party!

When we plan the first unitary "projects" to achieve a uniform network of infrastructure on the earth's crust in which man will no longer be either peasant or townsman, we are situating ourselves therefore, with Marx and Engels, not on the terrain of utopia or vague hypotheses, but in the framework of a precise post-revolutionary and post-capitalist programme. Bourgeois democracy cries out in horror if, to all the other freedoms of the citizen, we want to add the freedom to grow fat from the soil. As for bourgeois democracy, it has stooped so low as to renounce the freedom to breathe. The black fog which has attacked the great city of London in 1952 paralysed all activity for several weeks, while it deposited the fine coal dust secreted from the thousands of chimneys around the metropolis into the lungs of those who ventured into the streets, and rendered completely useless the magnificent systems of lighting and transport, as well as all the factories and other places of work; so much so that it was the thieves and hoodlums who largely profited from it.

We have therefore gone well beyond the equilibrium between the "interests" of the townsman and those of the countryman, which is the question in the latest declarations of Stalin (see Stalin, *The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, point 4). Here it is a question of an objective which capitalism pursues in vain, while that of the socialist revolution is to go beyond social classes, and therefore to suppress the possibility that social groups can secure improvements and well-being at the expense of other groups.

The capitalist system and its supposed modernisation of the most ancient systems wants something for the crust of our planet which is completely irrational. The question is no longer about sharing out the product of such an enterprise. It is no longer a question of the economy, understood as dispute about mercantile or monetary wealth. It is a matter of physically introducing a totally different type of technical equipment for the soil and the subsoil. Perhaps we can leave some of the existing equipment standing here and there for archaeological purposes, some masterpieces of the bourgeois epoch maybe, so that those who accomplished this centuries-old work, only possible after the world revolutionary explosion, can remember them.

From « Specie umana e crosta terrestre » (Il programma comunista, n.6/1952)

FIRST OF MAY 2018
BEAT BACK THE ANTI-PROLETARIAN ATTACK
LEARN TO DEFEND OURSELVES
TO PREPARE FOR WINNING

All over the world, proletarians are under attack. The bourgeoisie and its organs of mass disinformation maintain that “we have come through the crisis”. Yet, disguised as *precarious*, unemployment grows endlessly. The pace and conditions of work worsen constantly. The veritable *mass murders of proletarians* in factories, building yards, on the streets and in the fields reaches shocking figures. What is paid out on rent (if and when it’s possible to find a hole to live in!), food, gas and electricity (which, together with a roof over your head, are basic necessities!), transport (to get to work or look for it!) becomes a stranglehold. Daily living conditions get more and more difficult and alarming, weighing heavily on single people, couples, young and old people. The magistrates and the “forces of law and order” persecute the proletariat in its struggle, banning or attacking pickets, continuously elaborating new measures of repression and intimidation and activating a reign of terror against those who defend what had been attained through long, hard battles over past years. The institutional trade unions and reformist and parliamentary parties have long been pillars of the “established order” and act solely to defend the interests of Capital, the State and the Nation. Nationalist and religious superstitions also weigh like bricks: they delude proletarians that they can find a way out of day-to-day desperation and terror and contribute to separating them and keeping them on opposing sides, in order to weaken them when the time comes for the necessary battle. Adding to this alarming picture, come the individual or group undertakings of squalid racists and neo-fascists, acting as miserable henchmen in the defence of bourgeois interests, spreading terror and division in the rank and file of the proletariat, attacking the worst exploited, the most vulnerable, the most liable to be blackmailed: the growing mass of migrants fleeing the disaster and mass murder that all the imperialist powers have been producing in Africa and Asia for so many decades. And so, finally, come the wars: over an area that covers the southern and eastern rims of the Mediterranean, from Morocco to Syria, with ramifications that reach as far as the Ukraine on one side and Afghanistan and Yemen on the other, the bloody claws of all imperialisms (USA and Israel, Russia and Great Britain, France and Italy, Germany and China, Iran and Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, *and so on*) rip into the flesh of massacred, bombed, burned and gassed proletarians. They are wars for the control of energy sources, wars of strategic manoeuvring, imperialist wars which, in the long term, prepare the way for a new overall conflict – a world war that has already devastated the planet twice – Capital’s last resource for escaping its own structural crises.

Faced with all this, the proletariat – divided, disillusioned, intimidated – must rediscover the path of open struggle, against all bourgeois institutions. It must regain its own total, organizational and political autonomy. It must fight to equip itself with stable territorial organisms to defend living and working conditions. It must once more become aware of the immense power it has in terms of numbers and international scope, organizing itself against all divisions, all misleading illusions, all the hypocritical claims of the institutional trade unions, the constitutional parties of one State or another, one Nation or the other, or of any nationalist prospect. Above all, it must realize that it has no friends amongst the national and international predators and refuse right from the start to take any side in the conflict.

Alongside it in the hard battles that are being prepared, we communists work to make this perspective clearer day by day: so that, in the inevitable class wars of today and tomorrow, after almost a century of defeat and betrayal, the path may once again open up towards a classless society, without exploitation and war – towards communism.

International Communist Party
(il programma comunista – kommunistisches programm – the internationalist)

The Beleaguered Path of the African Proletariat

Since Africa is of growing importance on the world scenario, both in terms of imperialist appetites and penetration and from the point of view of the wars that these same imperialisms wage there and, consequently, the tragic migrations of whole populations, we consider it useful to take another look at the work our party has carried out on the subject since 1952 onwards. The work takes into account the whole of the African continent, from North to South, West to East, from the so-called southern shores of the Mediterranean to South Africa, from the countries of the Gulf of Guinea to Madagascar and from the Horn of Africa to the Heart of Africa and the sub-Saharan and equatorial regions. In the large body of articles published in our journals in the course of decades, we have traced the history of the Continent, dwelling on its economy, society and the struggles of the young bourgeoisie and the equally young proletariat, right up to the age of decolonization after the Second World War. The history of North Africa, in particular, however one wishes to look at it, is interwoven with that of the Middle East, if only because the territories of the "fertile half moon" right up to Morocco share, at least partially, a history, a language and a religion: the Sinai peninsula and the isthmus of Suez are natural hinges between Asia and Africa and the Mediterranean Sea, which bathes the shores of the most important regions in the two areas, from coast to coast.

To sum up

The dawn of the '1900s, with the imperialist development of capitalism already foreseen by Marx and then analysed by Lenin, saw the end of the age of the pure and simple colonial plundering of Africa which had, in previous centuries,

accompanied the industrial development of Europe and was soon to lead to the overall massacre of the proletariat's civilian and military populations. With the help of foreign capital, the young, emerging African bourgeoisies, born in the shadow of colonial dominion, started to lay the bases for the first production facilities and at the same time more or less stable working class formations come into being. After the end of the second world conflict, the age of decolonization opened up for Africa, i.e. the massive and rapid transition of almost all African countries to independence, also favoured by the complex and contradictory processes of "national reconstruction" in which the European bourgeoisies were involved. The African nationalist movements attempt to "define" a political map of Africa: thus the first contrasts emerge and the first clashes between the young, indigenous bourgeoisies and the European, imperialist bourgeoisie. But this is a process with "low revolutionary potential". The young African bourgeoisies, composed mainly of white-collar workers and military staff, reformed but still the heirs of the previous, colonial régime, lacking any real bases for industrial production apart from mining (those raw materials that are so tempting to European and American imperialism), have neither the power nor the will to make a clear break with the old, indigenous, merchant and moneylending classes. These initial conditions are also joined by lack of organizational or managerial ability, the constant retracing of boundaries by the various imperialisms, the absence or lack of capitals (and thus the impossibility of the "mother country" to fully emancipate itself from one imperialism or the other), the miserable condition of agriculture and above all – at a political

level – the lack of any real revolutionary perspective. The battles that nonetheless rage everywhere in Africa's territory, from North to South, are thus slowed down, contained, repressed: and the potentially more advanced spearheads are eliminated, even physically, in agreement with, and with the complicity of local bourgeoisies and European and American imperialism.

The indigenous bourgeoisie in all its various forms (including the so-called "socialist") is thus incapable of any true revolutionary action. There do exist extraordinary examples of attempts to attack both the backward conditions of the past and the oppressive dominion of the imperialist present: in the front line, generous as they are desperate, is an extremely young proletariat which is taking shape around the mines and the first, frail industrial settlements, and the poor farmers hungry for land.

Africa's "revolutionary" movements are thus distributed over the territory according to divisions already introduced by the first colonialists and successive predators. What we called "the awakening of coloured peoples" is the troubled process of moving wider-ranging masses and organizations, with the objective of national liberation against the imperialist bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, the scrambled territory, newly traced and redesigned around a conference table by colonialism and imperialism and accepted by the African and Middle Eastern bourgeoisie, acts as a brake to the course of events. First the *cold war* and subsequently the *detente between Russia and the USA* determined the division of the African and Middle Eastern continent in terms of their roles and alliances: to



sum up, as dominions.

As from the second half of the 1970s, whilst the effects of the systemic economic crisis are making themselves felt, we can consider *the age of African decolonization over*. From then onwards, what will increasingly come to the foreground is the class war of the African and Middle-Eastern proletariat against their indigenous bourgeoisies and the allied imperialist metropolises; an *economic battle* to defend overall living and working conditions, which screams aloud its lack of, and *its need for, a political revolutionary perspective*. And indeed, it is 1979, with the fierce struggles of the Iranian proletariat, occurring well ahead of the foundation of the so-called “Islamic Republic”, that can be considered the turning point for an entire period of history. Thirty years later, with the widespread rebellions demanding bread and the strong and extended unrest in the textile factories, the mines and the oil-drilling areas, promptly deviated and channelled into the cul de sacs of a massive democratic and petit-bourgeois perspective (the so-called “Arab springs”, from 2007 to 2012, involving Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Yemen), signs of a radical economic and social change start to be seen: the open confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, both local and international. And it is no coincidence that this flares up in the midst of the second largest crisis of over-

production in the post-war period and that it is finally crushed by today’s general massacre, which continues to drag on over time (Libya, Syria, Yemen...).

As a consequence of the crisis of the ‘70s, the age we have been living in since the beginning of the ‘80s has opened up the gates to new, imperialist, military intervention: with the Iran-Iraq war and the first Gulf War, followed by the Balkan wars and the second Gulf War of 2003, the massacre of whole populations and territorial destruction gains the upper hand in the Middle-East, from Syria to Yemen. At this stage, the pendulum of migration changes direction: hounded by poverty, corruption, repression and ceaseless massacres by local factions and bands of “legionnaires” bound to one imperialism or the other, enormous masses of people move from the South towards the North and East of the world, leaving an immense hecatomb of death on the bed of the Mediterranean Sea. In the West, grand words like ... “globalization”, “technological automation”, “watersheds of civilization”... are on everyone’s lips. On the contrary, what is going on is a *hyperbolic growth in world inequality*, or that growing poverty (especially proletarian) that Marx indicates as the *genuine product of imperialist capitalism*. A new cycle of accumulation has started up in Africa, too: a new wave of development (industrial, agricultural, mining, oil pro-

duction) affects some areas of the African continent, impoverishing others; overall poverty increases and settles in areas that are already densely populated and capitalistically developed; a vast flux of the *living dead* wanders the African continent, crossing forests and desert areas, migrating indifferently towards the widest variety of countries – an authentic human tsunami fleeing inhuman conditions.

Historical delay: natural conditions and colonization

Let us take a step backwards here. A territorial ethnic-linguistic-economic map of Africa shows the network of relations between groups of human beings – a network of social links and thus of civilizations. North Africa is the meeting point of Greek, Roman and Arab civilizations, whose heritage has had the effect of leaving precapitalist and capitalist development there. The ethnic groups on the Atlantic coast, to the North and South of the Gulf of Guinea, have had more contact with Europeans intent on navigating the African coasts or crossing the Atlantic to the Americas. The areas from the Persian Gulf and the Isthmus of Suez that stretch towards the Indian Ocean had already opened up and been travelling trading routes for a long time: well before colonization, the civilization of the Horn of Africa had experienced a flourishing economy. Sub-Saharan Africa, including the Congo, in turn,



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played a central role in the exchange between the civilizations of the Nile, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes. Other economies and human groups to the South played a specific role in linking the Sub-Saharan black-Sudanese language area (today's equatorial and "French" West Africa) to the North and the black-Bantu language area to the South. Dutch merchants were the first to create a settlement in South Africa amongst the indigenous populations and Cape Town was founded as a supply station for vessels belonging to the Dutch East India Company.

The article, from which we re-publish large excerpts in the following lines, printed in our Italian newspaper *il programma comunista* in 1958, emphasizes the *natural preconditions* that were the cause of the *historical delay in Africa* compared to the economic and political development of Europe and Asia. We read: "Africa, no less than other continents, has participated over the course of the centuries in the social evolution of the human species. If the State is a necessary bridge in the passage from barbarity to civilization, it should be noted that the Africans were familiar with the art of governing themselves, i.e. they were civilized well before slave drivers and missionaries descended on them to Christianize the tropical undergrowth. Flourishing empires, organized on a feudal, hierarchical model, arose in western Sudan, along the coasts of the Gulf of Guinea, in Congolese Africa, in Rhodesia [...]. These state jurisdictions governed vast territories and different peoples and entertained trade and diplomatic relations with the whole of Arab Africa and the Mediterranean: proof of the high level

attained by African "production techniques". Before being hurled into the compounds of colonialism, the black peoples went through all the stages of civilization preceding the one introduced by capitalism: cultivation of the land, animal husbandry, industry, commerce [...]. Obviously civilization is a process that depends closely on the indefinite enlargement of the sphere of social relations between human beings. Civilization evolves according to whether or not there are the conditions for close and frequent relations between nations and collective groups. And what form of communication could be more profitable than maritime travel? [...]. In fact in Europe and in Asia there existed natural conditions for the progress of sea travel and the consequent intensification of intercontinental dealings. Inevitably, the spread of production techniques, i.e. culture, followed behind the arrival of goods. The physical conditions of the world allowed Europe and Asia to become the great receptacles of invigorating currents in the activities of numerous social agglomerations. For the other continents – Africa and above all the Americas – on the other hand, besieged between two oceans uncrossable at the time, these conditions were largely lacking. This is why the Euro-Asiatic civilization progressed more quickly. The peoples progressed socially to different levels not because they were subject to different biological laws, but because they stood in a different relationship to the physical conditions of nature"².

African colonization as a "process of disassociation"

The natural preconditions were subsequently joined by those linked

to economic development, doubly tied to the situation of *colonization on African ground*, which, from a historical point of view, was not a drive towards capitalism, but a process destined to delay its onset even further. In another article, in 1961, we wrote: "Marx speaks of the claim to accumulation of capital, because it is a *process of disassociation and not of progressive accumulation* of the means of production in the hands of the bourgeoisie [...]. In Europe it means both the dissolution of feudal models and the formation of the relationship between capital and wage labour, whilst in the countries of black Africa it is essentially a process of dissolution of previous social and economic models, without the intervention of a second stage – that of progress to a superior mode of production; the wealth that has been separated from its previous producers is deviated to the metropolises to be accumulated in monstrous masses. [...] Imperialism makes every effort to maintain colonies at the initial stage of accumulation, that of the dissolution of local relations, seized by capital (trusts, foreign companies). [...] In the colonies, as in the metropolises, before the process of primitive accumulation begins, there must already be money and goods, i.e. commercial and monetary *circulation* – the *market*. In Europe, the classical process of accumulation means *the passage from capitalist circulation to production*, the transformation of money into capital. In the colonies, the process is limited to the circulation of goods [...]: there, money and goods are not transformed into capital through productive wage labour"³.



NOTES

[2] "Aspetti della rivoluzione africana", *il programma comunista*, n.12,13/1958.

[3] "Incandescente risveglio delle 'genti di colore' nella visione marxista. Rapporti collegati alla riunione di Bologna del 12-13/11/1960", *Il programma comunista*, nn. 1-2/1961.

The formation of the present “national States” in Africa was thus a troubled process. Taking the 1914 situation as a starting point (and leaving out the period when West Africa was placed at the centre of the slave route towards the Americas between the XVIth and XIXth centuries) we find Africa divided up amongst colonizing countries from the extreme North to the South. European intrusion and expansion in Africa takes place by stages and at the centre of the dominion stand Great Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Belgium and Italy. Immense areas are occupied and divided up with the sole criterion of disposing of mining and agricultural resources to be plundered. At the dawn of the First World War, there is a British Africa (Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya), a French Africa (western and equatorial), a Belgian Africa (Congo) and a German one (Cameroon, Tanzania and Namibia), but also a Portuguese-Spanish Africa (Angola) and an Italian one (Libya, Somalia, Eritrea). The division into separate state entities inevitably broke up nationalities, populations, ethnic groups and tribal organizations, often creating artificial oppositions and friction. The concept of colonization as “civilization” was to justify economic, social, cultural and political violence against the populations: a “declaration of progress”!... In an immense marketing campaign, the European bourgeoisie brought sociologists, philosophers, politicians, religious figures and scientists into play, to justify its enlightened presence: it would be a guarantee for the future, it announced, of great social, political and economic victories... In the meantime, it spread its ideas of racial superiority, superior civilization: i.e. its *social Darwinism*.

This is a long period of bourgeois economic and social colonization, the modern expression of the charter

of Human and Citizens’ Rights, which, after Napoleon’s undertakings in Egypt and through his Civil Code, was to impose itself right up to the first world conflict and from then on to the second. At this turning point the young African bourgeoisie was called upon to fight colonial links by the use of force. The dawn of the new States was to demand a huge and organized force of enormous numbers of combatants entering the battlefield, area by area and zone by zone. Abstract ideas of Freedom, also fuelled by pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism would be the ideologies and ideal, universal aspirations of this bourgeoisie: but they would never have the driving power that the “national heroes” predicted or imagined; indeed: they would gradually obstacle the path to the development of capitalism and thus the class organization of the proletariat – the military and political gap within the bourgeois agents concerned, indigenous and imperialist, was too great. It was to be the forces and relations of production that were appearing and establishing themselves, that would open up the path to capitalist development, slowly but inexorably: then, however, to shut it up into *miserably national* compounds. The great imperialist metropolises tried in every conceivable way to block, slow down, deviate the social and production forces, both at a material level and at the level of superstructure, keeping them in the twilight zone of primitive accumulation, only destined to emerge very slowly from the trader’s chrysalis towards an economic development that in the end was not to be a “victory of the human spirit” but a process determined by the battle between the ascending African bourgeois class and the imperialist class.

The political bases were as follows: which classes could ensure “national liberation” in the fight against the

imperialist metropolises? Could the newborn African proletariat and the mass of poor peasants enter the scene as avant-garde fighters and, at the same time, would the young African bourgeoisie be capable of directing the alliance formed by the classes in question and interested in the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist revolution, in a revolutionary sense? There could be only one answer, dense with dramatic implications: *this could only be done by the revolutionary proletariat directed by its own party*.

To speak of “African nations” before decolonialization is nonsense, just as it is to speak of “modern social classes” in the strict sense of the term. The former and the latter arise together. The trading and monetary forms characterizing the pre-capitalist age are forcefully introduced from outside and the production relations with their old forms of ownership act as a brake to capitalist development. It was a matter of transforming family and tribal structures, ancient and age-old civilizations, nameless States and organizations not regulated by any law of rights except for tradition, but also stiffened and consolidated property rights, perhaps set up with the support of the colonizers. The transition from a micro agriculture to agriculture grounded on industrial development and money, through agrarian reform (forms of collective ownership), was immensely difficult to initiate. As we know, the European nations formed when they left feudalism behind them and it took them four or five centuries to settle, through the transition period of merchant trading and the insertion of the usurer system, crossing the phase of primitive accumulation and the formal subordination of work to capital. In Africa, then, the slow and difficult exit from the more primitive, more or less feudal or backward, more or less mercantile forms of



community towards a capitalist structure and the modern national model, comes as no surprise.

The long, active and aggressive hand of modern imperialism also played a negative role in the formation of the “African nations”: there was no lack of clashes between the dawning bourgeoisie and the old ruling classes, clashes between the various “constitutional forms” (federal and centralist), the massacres between different populations, the competing appetites of the great powers, wars of a modern nature and the now mature struggles between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The rapid pace at which decolonization was initiated, with its “national heroes”⁴, demanded great determination, from the young African bourgeoisie which was, however, characterized by its basic fragility, as indicated at the beginning of this article and, above all, by the fear of several countries sinking into a general state of *modern poverty*: the division into modern social classes would not generate a process of harmonious development because, by subjugating and exploiting the proletariat and the mass of landless peasants, the gap between wealth and poverty would grow rapidly and, with it, *the terror at the growth of the proletariat, the historical enemy of the bourgeoisie*, would increase.

Anticolonial uprisings: proletarian strategy and indifference

In another article in 1953, we wrote: “Marxists worthy of the name refuse to accept that colonial and backward countries must pass through the infamous bourgeois revolution, in order to arrive at socialism. They openly support the possibility and

necessity of the ‘leap’ from pre-capitalism to socialism in the colonial countries of Africa, Asia, Oceania, as in the semi-colonial and backward countries of South America. An identical strategy indicated by Marx and Engels for Germany in 1848 and by Lenin and the Bolsheviks for Russia in 1917. The indispensable condition for this leap, yesterday for Germany and Russia and today for backward colonial countries, is for the *dictatorship of the proletariat* to triumph in the powerful countries with super-industrialized capitalism: yesterday England, today the social-geographic area embracing all of Europe, including Russia, and North America. Only if the immense industrial potential of these areas is kept firmly in hand, will the proletarian revolution be able to allow the economy of social relations to advance in backward colonial countries ‘leaping over’ the capitalist phase.”

We continued: “From this gigantic, strategic plan, the criterion to be adopted as a political attitude towards the nationalist uprisings in the colonies follows coherently. If the international revolutionary movement is launched in the supreme struggle against the centres of world imperialism for the seizing of power in Europe and America, and the class war against the capitalist metropolises is going on, as it was in 1917-’20, it is clear that the struggles in the imperialist background, i.e. the national-popular uprisings in the colonies, take their part in the revolutionary strategy of the world proletarian party, since they contribute to undoing the defences of imperialism and broadening the class war. Once the capitalist fortress has been laid low,

the triumphant proletarian revolution will work to get rid of the remaining traces of petit-bourgeois nationalism without upheavals. How? The reply for a Marxist can only be: by placing the colonial countries, finally freed of century-old oppression, in the ‘proletarian, world economic plan’.”

And, note!, we pointed out: “It is one thing to refuse to rent out the proletarian party to bourgeois back-peddling, and quite another to deny the objective influence, exercised by the eventually successful separation of the pluri-national colonial countries from their states, on the maturation process of the pre-conditions for the final collapse of capitalism. The fusion of peoples, without which socialism is inconceivable, will not be obtained by mere constitutional measures (federation, confederation, etc.), but by absorbing and depersonalizing the national economies into a world economic plan. This will be opposed by petit-bourgeois national prejudices, which draw sustenance from the social environment determined by micro agricultural production and from the backward dispersion of the proletariat. Consequently, if the backward and colonial countries succeed, taking advantage of imperialist contradictions, in separating themselves from state, metropolitan contexts, this sort of back-peddling, since it aims at a capitalist concentration of the means of production, creating a national industry that does away with feudal and patriarchal remains, must necessarily concentrate the indigenous proletariat into huge masses, creating new recruits for the future revolution. On the other hand, experience of an independent national government



NOTES

[4] We should like to quote them, remembering that for us the value of individual names, derives merely from their being symbols of social forces: Naguib and Nasser (Egypt), Burghiba (Tunisia), Lumumba (Congo), Sankara (Burkina Faso), Ben Bella (Algeria), Neto (Angola), Mandela and Biko (South Africa), Kenyatta (Kenya), Senghor (Senegal), Nyerere (Tanzania), Azikiwe (Nigeria), Nkrumah (Ghana), Cabral (Guinea-Bissau)...

will serve to cure the exploited masses of the nationalist infatuations inculcated by the dawning indigenous bourgeoisie, which sooner or later will be forced to show its real face as an exploiter no less oppressive than the white rulers. [...] Let the national revolutions come in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Indochina, Malaysia, let an acceleration of the pace of capitalism's integral development come in China, India, Bolivia, Brazil etc., if it is not possible (in these countries) to make the revolutionary 'leap' over capitalism. Does this mean that we applaud Mao-tse-tung or Pandit Nehru or Paz Estensoro? Fools may say so but this means they have grasped nothing of the Marxist dialectics they comically claim to represent. As if Marx, in his famous passage on the mole, rejoicing at the progressive centralization of the bourgeois state machinery, in which he saw the preconditions for the proletariat's frontal attack, were expressing admiration and political support for the evolution of bourgeois totalitarianism! No! The separation of national States from their old, white-dominated, imperial context and the establishment of indigenous executive power founded on the bourgeoisie, clarifies class relations and rudely denies the rebellious alliance of classes against the white oppressor, opposing the national State to the Proletariat. Any measure taken to strengthen power makes social contradictions more acute, concentrating against it the exploited and the oppressed, convinced of the need for a world revolution of the masses. Just as Marx did not take the side of the Third Empire or Napoleon III, though glad of the continual concentration of government power in the hands of the French bourgeoisie, which thus revealed the

true face of capitalist political monopoly and encouraged the proletariat to become aware of it, so we do not, either actively or passively, take the side of the political forces that are setting up the monstrous bourgeois state machinery in the colonies and backward countries"⁵.

When our party focused on the revolutionary events in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, it was correct to propose, as in 1917 in Russia, the same tactics of the *dual revolution*, of the *permanent revolution*. It was generous: it believed in the young African proletariat making its appearance on the stage of history, and hoped that the effects of Stalinism would not manage to suffocate its fighting instincts and class sentiment. But it was well aware that *it was not possible for the proletariat to undertake a leap as considerable as Russia's without the help of the class party*. The history of the movements of liberation from colonialism has confirmed that the African and Middle-Eastern proletariat could provide the energy for the historical leap forward but not act as the guide of the liberation process. The young forces of the militant African bourgeoisie that had formed in the capitalist metropolises and learned from Stalinism not the path to socialism but the "national path to capitalism", had thus already been "educated" by history. *Stalinism meant the theory and political tactics that deliver the proletarian class war into the hands of the bourgeois counter-revolution*. Thus the revolutionary process proved to be far more arduous than that of Lenin's Russia, since Stalin's counter-revolution had left layers of rubble covering the principles, objectives and economic and political organization of the proletariat. It was a

confirmation that, when their historical moment comes, as happened during the course of the French revolution, bourgeois revolutions are not even really the work of the bourgeoisie, but of the peasant and proletarian masses, the disinherited and the poor. Our party clung to this sentiment, this hope, to make the "tree of life" (that of the permanent, active, revolutionary process) richer than theory permitted. Nonetheless, we knew that these masses would not be able to lead to the socialist objective without political direction, or the High Command that had proved so extremely successful after the first World War.

Denying a possible extension of the class war, denying the necessary bond between the international proletarian class movement and the movement of the coloured peoples: this is the indifference that, as we again wrote in our 1961 article, barricaded itself "behind the pretext that the colonial uprisings have bourgeois origins and ideological (and in part social) content and are open to manoeuvres by the opposing forces of imperialism. And here is the vile danger: it is this very *indifference* (which then, on the terrain of the class war, means going over to the enemy side) of the revolutionary proletariat and, worse still, its Party, that blocks the process of radicalization of the colonial uprisings, restricting their prospects in a framework of bourgeois programmes and social forces, thus exposing them to the *possibility* of cynical exploitation by big capital entrenched on the slopes of the White House or the Kremlin. It means *giving up* the mission entrusted to it not by Marx, Engels or Lenin, but by the history of which it is the spokesperson, impoverishing a

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[5] "Moti coloniali e rivoluzione proletaria", *Il programma comunista*, n°2/1953.



historical phenomenon pregnant with future potential.” (our italics).

And again: “For years, almost daily, the rough fist of the “coloureds” has been hammering on the door, not of the bourgeoisie, but of the metropolitan proletarians; and it is not a metaphorical hammering, since the Belgian proletarians in 1961, or the French in the great strikes of past years respond and responded, whether they knew it or not, to the “wave of disorder” emanating from the undergrowth of the Congo or the Algerian Bled; the response comes intermittently over the immense range of the proletarian class; it does not come from its party, or, when it does, it is the opposite to the great revolutionary tradition; it is the bleating response of democracy, conciliating, diplomatic, patriotic, or the no less vile response of haughty and self-sufficient ‘indifference’. Bourgeois uprisings! And nonetheless, the first bell of warning in the Congo, in 1945, as in 1959-60, came from huge strikes, clearly not by the bourgeoisie, but by authentic proletarians [...]. Or weren’t the horizons of February 1848 and February 1917 bourgeois? Wouldn’t the ‘first Russian revolution’ certainly have fallen prey to imperialism and war, if the Bolsheviks hadn’t set themselves the task of leading it beyond itself and had, instead, closed themselves in some stupid stronghold of indifference? The West’s revolutionary proletariat has to regain the time and space so tragically lost in pursuing the mirage of democratic solutions to a problem which, on a world scale, can only be solved by the communist revolution. It cannot demand of the colonial uprisings what depends on itself alone.

“But even like this,” we continued,

“it salutes them passionately: *even like this*, because, as the only spark of life in a dead present, they unhinge the international balance of the established order [...], by catapulting gigantic masses into the arena of history – and these include proletarian masses – which up to now have vegetated in an “isolation without history”, because, even though they might be reduced – though Marxist dialectics refuse to reduce them – *to purely bourgeois uprisings*, they would raise within them the gravediggers that the decadent West, immersed in its idiotic and murderous prosperity, cradles in a sleep even more obtuse than that provoked by the “soporific drug called opium”; to sum up, in the tradition of over a century of history, *they are revolutionaries despite themselves*. Which, for today’s bourgeois and radically indifferent elements, as for those ridiculed by Marx in a letter to Engels in 1853, is quite shocking, quite scandalous: not for us, not for Marxists worthy of the name!”⁶.

Independence and so-called “national socialism”

The African and Middle-Eastern bourgeoisies that in the 1960s boasted of a “socialist society” in their countries, because they belonged to the Russian imperialist block and baptized it so by virtue of the “independence” gained or thought to have been gained, proved powerless, and it could not have been otherwise, to deal with the energy that the African and Arab proletariat expressed in those years. Our work on the “national issue” clarified point by point the infamy and betrayal of Stalinism. All the forms of “African socialism” (Egyptian, Tunisian, Algerian, Congolese, etc.) have been marked by the illusion of being able to avoid

capitalist hell: the dawning petit-bourgeoisie, both industrial and agrarian, has attempted to escape the fate of being crushed by emerging industrial bourgeois forces, whilst the parasite bourgeois forces bound to the ownership of raw materials and land found the most suitable ground for accumulation from property and financial capital income.

Their “socialism” was none other than the economy of small independent producers and small economies individually exchanging products and obliged either to fail miserably or to develop by differentiating themselves increasingly, creating together the big, state complexes and monocultures demanded by the great, world, industrial and agricultural capital and pushing financial parasitism as far as possible. *Only a close combination of the struggles by the proletariat in the metropolises and those in the suburbs of the world in Asia, the Middle East and Africa could have indicated the prospect of socialism and traced it decisively.* We wrote then, that in the period between the two world wars, the African social classes had not yet become clearly differentiated: society was still at a pre-capitalist stage and thus well below its recent condition in which the proletarian masses have developed with the rise of factories and economic organizations, though still unable to fully defend their living and working conditions. With the introduction of industrialism and the modern division of labour, the African states did not come across the pleasures of social division into antagonist classes until later. What lacked was the active element of the revolution, the communist party, which, by linking the proletarian revolution of the advanced countries to the



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[6] “Incandescente risveglio delle ‘genti di colore’ nella visione marxista. Rapporti collegati alla riunione di Bologna del 12-13/11/1960”, cit. The letter from Marx to Engels is of 14 June 1853 (Marx-Engels, *Opere complete*, Vol.XXXIX, pp.281-283).

battles of the African proletariat, could have produced a landslide effect towards socialism. Stalinism had the disastrous effect of making the African proletariat and even that of imperialist countries believe in a “socialist” Ghana or Mali, a “socialist” Algeria, Libya and Egypt, a “socialist” Congo or Angola...

The introduction of so-called “socialism” was none other than a matter of “ideological declarations” and not of great, international class struggles. In turn, what else, could the East European countries, economically more advanced than the African countries, have become - born as they were under Russian dominion as a consequence of the world sharing out territory between the winners of the second world war - if not a “socialist” swamp, born *by decree* and pitifully ending up in the sewers?

Concluding (for now)

In this article – based on the hard work of the party that developed over the ‘50s and ‘60s – we have traced the main features of the historical-economic evolution of Africa and the long periods of time over which, in that immense area and at different stages, there emerged the drive allowing ancient structures and primitive social forms, later becoming pre-capitalist, to give rise to a new mode of production. We have stressed the historical delay in the evolution of Africa, due to adverse,

natural conditions and the colonization that the European bourgeoisie undertook against the populations of Africa, enslaving them and subjugating them and thus dominating them economically – a process not of progressive economic accumulation but of *dissociation*, destined to aggravate this very delay. The subsequent anti-colonial uprisings, directed by the indigenous bourgeoisie (devoid of any great historical effect) against the “mother countries” already imperialist bourgeoisies, were nurtured mainly by the action and forces of the avant-garde classes, poor peasants and the proletariat, which were forced to fight also against colonialist opportunism and indifference with regard to the struggle itself. Formal independence thus made it possible to subjugate the proletariat and so-called “national socialism” was the ground on which Stalinism was sown, in order to cut off any attempt at revolutionary class war. The closure of the colonial age, around the mid-1970s, gave rise to a long period (at least two decades) over which the proletariat began to gain its own experience in terms of fighting to defend its living and working conditions.

The economic crisis at the beginning of the new century (2000-1) and the more profound crisis beginning in 2007-8 produced the first effects with any heavy social impact on the area of North-Africa or, more specifically, on the southern and eastern

shores of the Mediterranean. Here, a combative proletariat, with many years of fighting experience behind it, made a vigorous comeback onto the scene, as we have demonstrated on several occasions over past years. Unfortunately, lacking a revolutionary pole of reference (not only in that area, but also, and above all, in the “advanced” capitalist metropolises), those courageous and desperate fights were harnessed and channelled into the dead end of petit-bourgeois, democratic claims (the so-called “Arab springs”). We see the results in Libya, in Egypt and above all in Syria, where blood has been shed for years now in a massacre without precedent *perpetrated by all the forces in the field*. The “Arab springs” were thus the first signs of processes that will continue to bring death and destruction to the entire southern shore of the Mediterranean.

But the proletarian battles have not ceased: they smoulder under the ashes, beneath the rubble and the cemeteries of ill-fated illusions, only to blaze up again suddenly, lighting the scene once more. We shall certainly be speaking about them again. Most importantly, we work and shall continue to work, so that African and Middle-Eastern proletarians are no longer alone, as they have been for decades, facing the complicity of all the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois counter-revolutionary forces, whether fake socialists or openly declared imperialists.

Tunisia: a new blaze of rebellion!

While the protests and clashes in North Africa were raging, turning the entire area upside down – a season of extraordinary battles, those of the so-called “Arab Springs” – we wrote (*Il programma comunista*, n°2 del 2011): “It was not a revolution. A revolution calls into question not a régime (even the toughest) but a whole mode of production. In Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere there was a powerful and widespread wave of rebellion, originating from the proletarian and proletarianized masses declaring Enough! [...] We witness a movement born in the depths of the social subsoil and sparked off by the advance of the economic crisis, which continues its inexorable path, destroying presumed stability and certainty and at the same time pulling down ideological walls and fences and uniting, under the banner of an urgent need to survive, different sectors of a suffering world proletariat abandoned to its own devices.”

Let us return now to the present, where the same area is heavy with social tension that has failed to die down, even though seven years have passed since those events. Tunisia – so the bourgeois media tell us – has achieved a credible democratic transition, thus deserving mention as

“Country of the year” in the Economist of 2014. But after driving out a dictator who had remained in power for 21 years, the fertile democratic terrain generated a new dictatorship: as predictable!

With the protest in Iran having “died down” (at least for the moment), here it is flaring up again in Tunisia. Seven years after the “Jasmine” rebellion and the so-called “Arab Springs”, those without reserves have again returned to the centre of the fight against the price of living, a precarious existence and poverty, against marginalization and unemployment. Let us get to the heart of the dynamics and try and put the prospects of events past and present into focus.

With differing intensity and to different extents, the proletarian and proletarianized masses of the two countries came out onto the streets with no regard whatsoever for appeals to moderation: after almost ten years of oppression and repression the top was off the bottle again. One more confirmation that the two areas, the Middle East and North Africa, are socially connected: the proletarians, Arabs or Persians without any resources, are and continue to be of the same class, because they have the same needs. At the same time, religious concepts and

divisions are still illusions and ideological drugs they continue to drag along with them, like chains, imposed on them by the ruling class. Just as the anger of young people in Iran has its roots in their miserable living conditions, aggravated by the enormous burden of years and years of spending on war, so, in Tunisia, the trigger for the revolts was provided by the succession of increases in prices produced by the implementation, last December, of the 2018 Financial Law, approved by the Tunisian Parliament (and demanded by the IMF). It foresees increases in the prices of fuel, automobile tax, insurance, services, cars, mobile phones, VAT (+1%) and, last but not least, bread. The Executive’s objective was thus on the one hand to contain public spending and on the other to implement the austerity plan demanded by the International Monetary Fund to “reform” the economy and requiring the repayment over three years of a loan of 2.8 billion dollars. And what does the international loan shark want in exchange? Simple: the elimination of 20 thousand public employees and the end of the pension system, whose deficit has increased by 65% over two years. Where is the money to be found? Through an unrealistic 2% increase in GDP, the lowering of



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salaries, with inflation rising to 6%, and the devaluation of the Tunisian dinar. Faced with this authentic attack, the revolt broke out in a dozen or so cities with protests and clashes on the streets. For three days the country was shaken by the battle against unemployment and poverty, especially amongst the masses of young people.

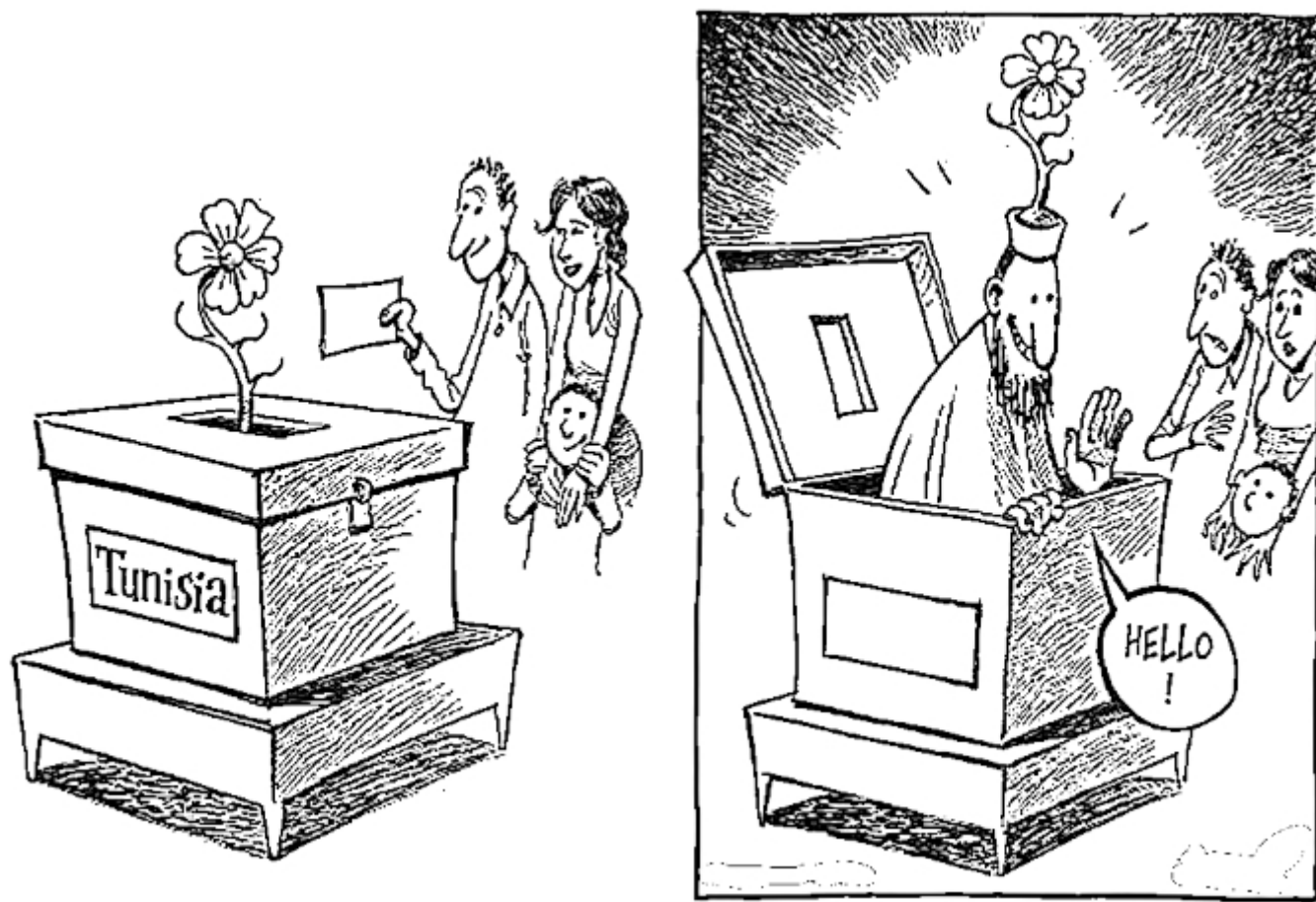
The clashes with the police, the hundreds of arrests, the wounded, the death of a man run over by an army vehicle, the raid of a supermarket show the degree of violence that spontaneously developed. In Tunisi, too, as in the suburbs, hundreds of young people filled the

streets: stones, molotovs ... rubbish bins and police cars set alight... In Cité Zouhour, in the governate of Kasserine, the combined army divisions "restored order" after a day of clashes and tension. The authorities were obliged to confirm that there were huge demonstrations all over the country, during which – so the reports say – police stations, barracks, offices, warehouses, municipal offices and banks were attacked.

Il Sole 24 Ore, the daily organ of the Italian Manufacturers' Association, could not help writing: "the unpopular reforms affect the weaker sectors, yet they are the only way,

painful as they may be, to reach the objective of a "sustainable economy." Where and when? What is happening in the land running from Tunisia to Iran demonstrates on the contrary the unsustainability of this economy, the unsustainability of the capitalist mode of production. The proletarians throughout the area experience this unsustainability at their own cost and attempt, isolated though they are, to react against it: that the "guaranteed" Western proletariat learn the lesson!

Jan. 12, 2018



Humanitarian Intervention as an Imperialist Political Act

“Humanitarian” intervention by the great powers in the many war zones of the Middle East and Africa, in the bordering areas where masses of migrants flee from one country to the next and where famine wipes out entire populations and environmental and social deterioration are growing, with sickness decimating children and the elderly, is the most shameless of lies ever to have been spread through the media.

“Humanitarian” intervention has brought military penetration into these regions – so they say – to “protect” human lives from poverty, health crises, environmental disaster, religious contrasts, mass exodus by migrants, to “remediate” the constant violation of “democratic rights” by terrorism and corrupt classes and, lastly, to “defend” local power’s various legitimate interests.

It is not too hard to understand that intervention by the so-called “liberation forces” – whether Syrian, Russian, Iraqi, Iranian, American, Saudi Arabian, Turkish or Kurdish, ISIS fighters, Italian, French, English, Libyan, is not there just to do away with the real reasons for poverty and social misery, the worsening health conditions or environmental destruction; it is not there to provide a radical solution to the real crux of religious and social clashes; it is not there to do away with war and improve the living and working conditions of those who lack resources and are sinking into a bottomless mire. “Our boys” have not arrived in that part of the world! In every sector of every source of the war all that exists are brutal and miserable bands of soldiers, in the pay of great, medium-sized and small powers. The national flags covering the coffins of mercenaries

and contractors, displayed to the public for triumphant national acclaim, do not belong to us. Amongst the friendly/hostile warlords transits an enormous flow of billions for military spending on armaments and goods (millions of barrels of oil a day), whose balance sheets are one long list of economic contracts to be stipulated.

In the war-torn Middle East sinking in oil and desert sands on the banks of two rivers, a wide network extends of professional killers, mercenary brigades armed by all States and provided for by the great financial structures, governmental and non-governmental organizations, religious and lay set-ups, associations of extortionists and ferrymen of human flesh.

The pitiful background of the misery, pain and death of proletarian populations does not cry out for charity from the Quran or from Catholicism, but the one form of help that only a class without reserves can offer them to escape the massacre. All this suffering should suggest a necessary, defeatist, angry and violent class response by the young proletarian masses against this network that brings only death and desolation. Aren’t the half a million civilian deaths from bombing in Syria, with half the population fleeing, the million deaths in the Iranian-Iraqi war, the slaughter caused by the American attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan and the devastation in Libya enough? Hasn’t the eternal military struggle between Israel and the Arab States, true or fake, sufficed, accompanying as it has the entire history of the Middle East?

The new generation of proletarians must be helped to understand that

their enemies are the States – both the imperialist ones they were born into, and the “foreign” ones. They must be shown that all the States in the Middle East are imperialist, that the game of slaughter, which is played out over the bodies of their mothers, brothers and sisters, is veiled by “religious and democratic convictions”, that all bourgeois States must be fought, both Middle-Eastern and western – the former being merely auxiliary branches of the latter.

Having exhausted all elements of progress in national claims that have been past their prime for half a century now, with the disbanding of anti-colonial and “anti-imperialist” struggles, with the vacuum left by the ideologies, illusions and democratic-bourgeois lies of the Nineteen-Hundreds, entire areas of the Middle East have been reduced to graveyards. Today history encounters a horrid monster, still under the banner of the “magnificent and progressive outcomes” of capitalism – a monster that demands, as payment for its “humanitarian” intervention the control and militarization of social life in all corners of the globe, salaried and servile slavery, oppression of women and religious uglification. This militarization is the reward for the younger generations of proletarians in the west and in the Middle East, lost in fanatic terrorism and reformist and democratic illusions.

“We are not afraid!” cry those who suffered the attacks in Barcelona, Paris, London and Brussels etc., unaware of what is going on and, despite everything, merely brushed by the wings of death. “We are afraid!” cry the Middle-Eastern women, old people and children in tears



in the crossfire of the “humanitarian aiders”, whilst a new young generation of proletarians is buried in the ruins of their houses or fights in a war that is not its own, on the side of the many western or Middle-Eastern state Monsters or the new Monster attempting to arise from death – the Caliphate.

The international bourgeoisie, as it continues to spread death and destruction in all countries, generating endless wars and filling and emptying its arsenals, sees its legitimate justification in ideological drugs, whose objectives are the very real appropriation of profit, income and financial interests. The world system will once again start brandishing a *unifying ideological value* to spark off the next world slaughter. Seventy-five million deaths including soldiers and civilians in the second world war: this was the tribute paid for choosing between democracy and dictatorship, interchangeable forms of the same imperial domination.

Worldwide imperialism represents the exploitation of the proletarian masses, general impoverishment, destruction by warfare, terrible divisions at the heart of the proletariat, a graveyard peace and then, once again, the presentation to the world of its *global strategy* (obviously humanitarian!) for reaching the point of no return: the final massacre.

“Humanitarian” intervention dates back to the beginnings of the pla-

net’s colonization and, in order to mystify the imperialist nature of the present age, the horrendous sort consisting in warfare has proclaimed to the world the highest of ideological motives, religious credo, enlightenment and the age of reason, the mission of civilization, the beneficial science of the nineteenth-century past and *above all* the eminently modern virus of the “democratic principle”.

“Humanitarian” interventionism has imposed itself in the Middle East and in Africa as the best strategy for reaching the highest degree of political and economic dictatorship, raising imperialism to its peak and lifting it to the utmost of bourgeois civilization. Today, the exploitation of resources and financialization are still the hub around which imperialist dynamics rotate, as in the past. They will be joined by the interventionism of the bourgeois States that “are not fully civilized” but armed to their back teeth, so that they can appear in their perfected form, fully democratic, finally capable of nationalist affirmation, pervaded by the liberal universalism promoted by the cosmopolitan nature of humanitarian support.

The powers that emerged victorious from the second world war and the other States who took part in the choir, sanctified humanitarian aid under the umbrella of the UNO (“too bad for the losers”!); the deadly state powers replaced their old rhetoric, grounded on cultural

and racial superiority, with superiority grounded on arms. Do Korea, Somalia, Ruanda, Congo, Bosnia, Kosovo, Syria, Iraq, Libya etc. bring anything to mind? Whilst proudly flaunted state “sovereignty” was in a stranglehold, “humanitarian” interventions underwent enormous escalation. “Moral convictions” have become the *necessary* setting for military intervention! And military missions have become the task of the *protective world State*, whose principle is an expression of the most sinister cynicism: “the human nature we share generates shared moral duties”¹. But, “Since there no longer exists,” so they say, “an international legal mechanism, by making use of the bumf of bourgeois legal documents and under the protective cloak of the UNO, the ruling state powers have continued to act in accordance with their own political and economic ends”². What more illusions do they wish to sell us? In reality, issues like poverty, health crises, environmental deterioration and civil war have become “international threats” that require the intervention of armed violence so that they do not destabilize “our” (???) society. It is written in the supreme Law of conservation of the bourgeois system that ways of life that do not conform to liberal standards are a threat to the whole of society and to humanity!! What’s new? Nothing. Liberal interventionism, in the name of humankind and of citizens, is and has always been the means for imposing the *law of imperialism*³.

NOTES

[1] Peter Djolic, “Gli interventi umanitari: la dottrina dell’imperialismo”, www.sinistrainrete.info

[2] J.L. Holzgrefe, R.O. Keohane, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas*, Cambridge University Press 2003.

[3] M. Barnett, “Humanitarianism Transformed”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 2005, pp. 723-740.

Iran: a blaze of class war

Only eight years ago we wrote: “The proletarian revolution no longer weaves its fabric within a single nation, its path does not open up inside one country alone, but in an *international weft*, because the class war to get free of the capitalist system is international (“Iran, the octopus of reformism”, *Il programma comunista*, n.1/2010). In the intervening years, a new war has hit the Middle East, a deadly war that has devastated the whole of Syrian territory, causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, women and children, and the flight of millions of desperate people. From Damascus to Aleppo, from Mossul to Baghdad and San’a’, the whole of the Middle East has become a cemetery! The alliance between imperialist butchers headed by the Americans – super-armed, friends-cum-enemies, the real *imperialist caliphate* – has silenced a band of idiotic Islamists. The doves of so-called peace have settled on the banks of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, cooing at the victory of the Russian-Iranian-Syrian front. The other countries (Turkey, Iraq, Kurdistan) are left with the remains. By taking part in the war and taking its place at the centre of events, Iran played its own imperialist role together with the other armies, bands and plunderers. The imperialist bourgeoisie has re-evoked the monsters of *nationalism*, plunging the proletariat (our class) into the midst of fright and desperation.

Iran is an industrial country with a numerous and militant working class, capable of fighting even under the most difficult of conditions. The war has “done Iran good”, write the newspapers: in the first half of this year, the GNP grew by 5.6% and the economic growth in 2018 will also be positive, because oil production has doubled. At the same time, mi-

litary operations have been extremely costly and the public debt claims that proletarians must tighten their belts. Unemployment has risen to over 12% but the real rate is far higher and youth unemployment reaches 25% (half the population is under 30 and 750 thousand young people every year enter the labour market). Patrimonies and assets are concentrated in only a few hands, corruption has fuelled the war and the latter corruption. Against this massacre, that the anger of those without resources to fall back on explode, recalling the slogan of defeatism: *the enemy is in our own country!*

A lot of water has flowed under the bridges of 1979, since the banishment of the Shah to the advent of the Islamic Republic, from the war against Iraq of 1982-88 to the workers’ struggles of the new century (2009). The obstacle that stands in the way of our class’s advance, in Iran as in the whole of Europe and all over the world, is the *octopus of reformism*, pursuing its path of lies and deceit. From 28 December 2017, starting from Mashad (the city with the second largest population in Iran), the demonstrations have spread: in their thousands, all over the country, the urban masses spontaneously started to move. Against the rise in food prices, against corruption and growing poverty, anger rose against the bourgeoisie. The demonstrators attacked effigies and the reactionary and reformist role of the clergy; they burned hundreds of motor-bikes belonging to the régime’s militia, the Basij. In the industrial city of Isfahan the workers came out on strike. All this was met with harsh repression, which ended in hundreds of arrests and twenty or so deaths on the streets of Teheran and a dozen other Iranian cities. And this will

not be forgotten.

Today what is proposed for the umpteenth time is no longer the reformism of the champion of progress, Moussavi, of 2009, nor that of the present reformist leader, Rouhani, who tried to settle the demonstrators by invoking calm and “non violence”. As far as we know the demonstrations were not guided by any political leaders from the clergy or civil society, nor by any union authorities. The anger, arising spontaneously from situations of poverty, attacked religious centres, banks, the headquarters of the Islamic militia, law courts, barracks, prefectures, i.e. the palaces of power. After every economic and social crisis, after every war, after every harsh struggle, the illusions of social peace on the one hand and false promises on the other stretch out their tentacles to halt the struggles, perhaps with the prospect of the Koranic charity that we call “charity and welfare” in the west, the miserable form in which our class is humiliated. In these years of warfare the Iranian masses have not waved the banner of *class defeatism* and neither have proletarians in the industrial metropolises. They were unable to: our class’s delay on the historical scale, like the delay of the revolutionary party, is in need of renewed confidence in its own strength, new organizational capacities, but above all a *revolutionary theory and revolutionary tactics*. We have often indicated the need for struggle as a form of advance training for the class war, without which it will be impossible to drive the fight forward, and we have pointed to the establishment of “independent territorial class organisms” as the necessary tools for expressing the class’s objectives. During the Teheran protests there was no lack of slogans: “down with war!” “out of



Syria!”. On the streets there were cries of “bread, work and freedom!” The truncheons and the tear gas only spurred on the protests, gunshots tried to put an end to the fight. The class detonation did not come, only a blaze lasting a few days. And yet, the class detonation we are waiting for will come.

Jan. 8, 2018

The cult of the Leader, the cult of personality, not a divine but a human personality, is an even worse social narcotic that we shall define as the cocaine of the proletariat. The hope for a hero who will inspire men to fight and lead them into battle is like an injection of amphetamine, for which the pharmacologists have found the perfect term: heroin. After a brief period of pathological high-energy intoxication, chronic prostration and collapse follow. There are no injections for a revolution that hesitates, in a society that has been in a torpid state of pregnancy for eighteen months, and is still overdue.

*"Il battilocchio nella storia",
Il programma comunista, n.7/1953*

Open Party and Closed Party

The opportunist parties are “open” by definition, in two senses: first they do not have a strictly outlined programme with a sound basis to it and sometimes not even unequivocally established objectives, and secondly – but the two aspects affect one another – they have a loosely organized structure, gradually adapted and moulded, like the programme itself, to the changing flow of outside events. The fact that for them “the movement is everything, the aim is nothing” necessarily implies the consequence that the principles, the programme, the tactics, the organization are nothing, too: they *claim* to be “concrete”, to “get their teeth into” daily *reality* and, in this sense, to transform it; their reality is servile adaptation to “events”, *allowing themselves to be transformed* lying down; in a word, tail-endism. They are houses without walls, windows without glass: absolutely anything is let in, absolutely anything can exit.

From the polemics between Lenin and Martov at the 2nd congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (not to mention the statutes of the First International), the revolutionary Marxist party is, on the contrary, “closed” – in terms of the invariability of its programme, the unchanging nature of its objectives, the possession of a tactical *plan*, the inviolability of its organizational discipline. It is a walled fortress: a part, or rather an organ, of the class in its fight for emancipation, a selective force and one of synthesis, not a shapeless “jelly” – and this is how it must be, since it is the prospective guide for the seizing of power and the practice of a dictatorship. Not just *anyone* enters it, because its tools are not merely a public exhibition of interchangeable objects to suit the taste of the buyer, but a unique and binding heritage,

not left up to “choices” and not exposed to the vicissitudes of historical constraints.

The characteristics of opportunist parties are their heterogeneous and indeterminate nature, the absence of delimitation; the characteristics of the revolutionary Marxist party are – and this is not an acquired fact but a *reality to be defended* – its demarcation from the outside and its unity towards the inside. In the former type of party, class as a dynamic entity blurs and dissolves, not only losing the vision of its final objectives and the way to achieve them, but absorbing alien objectives and adapting to paths that are not its own; in the latter type of party, the class integrates its energies into an organism that operates *in a single direction* along a *single path*: the party, which precedes the class, instead of following it; which directs it, and is not directed; which is, indeed, the class seen in terms of its historical journey, not of the accidents of time and space.

Only the inability to make use of dialectics can see a contradiction between “closure” of the party as an expression of conscience and will – as a programme and organized militancy – and its candidature for directing the great proletarian masses and, before this, drawing them into its own area of influence. And yet, if ever there were a “manual” for projecting the party towards the outside, it is *What is to be Done?* Yet, at the same time, there is no “manual” of practical action and active militancy that starts out more strictly from the closed “dogmatism” of the party, in order to reach a definition of the multiplicity of its “open” tasks, i.e. facing “outwards”.

The truth is, that in direct opposition to the claims of opportunism, the “closure” of the revolutionary

Marxist party within the unyielding walls of its programme, principles, objectives, “tactical plan” and organization is a necessary precondition for its very ability to act as a force of *synthesis* for the countless impulses that arise from the social subsoil and which, if abandoned to themselves, end up lost in the trickles of the daily struggle and its inevitable reflections on empirical, opportunist eclecticism. The revolutionary party advances its candidature to guide the masses – i.e. to direct them according to a *single* method towards a *single* point, by bringing together layers of the proletariat driven into the arena of social struggle by precise objectives, and, in the vast majority, without access to comprehension of its programme, not to say its objectives, but polarized around it by encountering its action, which is not inspired by changing, sectorial interests, and by the relentless pressure of vital needs common to *everyone* – precisely because it tends to achieve within itself the maximum unity of selected and “directed” energies. It is not an intellectual, or, worse still, a moral luxury that marks its “confines”: it is a requirement for *battle*. Closure within those confines is not meant to rest complacently, as an *élite* would do, ready to act only when history decrees its appearance on the scene: protected by these confines, it comes out in order to achieve the greatest possible class unity consented by the factors in the objective situation, towards sealing historical objectives and actual class movement – this being something that does not fall from the heavens but is actively built up. In an article by our current devoted in 1921 to the *United Front* (a remote objective today, though one that appears before us in all circumstances) we read: “those who find themselves seeing a contra-



diction between invoking the unity of all workers and actually detaching part of them from the others by organizing them in a party with methods that differ from those of other parties, even those that appeal to the proletariat and call themselves revolutionary, demonstrate that they have grasped nothing about our programme; *since in fact these two concepts share the same common origin.*

"The first workers' struggles against the ruling bourgeois class are struggles by more or less numerous groups for partial and immediate objectives. Communism proclaims the need to unite these struggles and their development, in order to give them a common objective and a common method, and this is why it speaks of unity above and beyond the single professional categories, beyond local situations, national frontiers or race. This unity is not the material sum of individuals and groups, but it is achieved through the shifting in direction of the action of all the individuals or groups, when they feel they constitute a class: i.e., they share a common objective and programme.

"If, then, only part of the workers are in the party, nonetheless there is unity of the proletariat, since workers with different professions from different places and of different nationalities take part on the same level, with the same objectives and the same rules of organization. A formal, federative union of trade

unions or perhaps an alliance of proletarian political parties – despite having larger effectives than those of a class party, does not achieve the basic postulate of the union of all workers, *because there is no cohesion and singleness in its objectives and methods.*"

In addition, explaining the work carried out by the Party with a view to, and in favour of, unifying the class unions at the time, the article continues on a very topical issue: "Just as energetically, and even before reaching this organizational unity [...], communists uphold the need for action by the whole of the proletariat, now that it faces an attack by the bosses, so that its partial economic problems merge into one single one: that of *mutual defence*. Once again, they are convinced that, by showing the masses that there is a *single postulate and there must be a single tactic to face the threatened reduction of salaries, unemployment and all the other signs of anti-labour attacks*, and that this programme is the one outlined by the Communist International - a fight led by the political class party against the bourgeois State, for the dictatorship of the proletariat - the task of demonstrating that the proletariat must have a *single programme of revolutionary belligerence* will be made easier. *From the "single front" of the proletariat organized by the union against the bourgeois attack, will arise the single front of the proletariat based on the political*

programme of the Communist Party, demonstrating, by its action and unceasing criticism, that any other programme is insufficient."

In *What is to be done?*, as in 1903, Lenin saw the walled citadel of the party at the centre of a network of loose *Organisationen*, a myriad of free, intermediate organizations, open to all workers; and he pointed to the task of penetrating it and embracing it, like the gradually concentric circles of a growing influence. Only in this way would the working class one day be able – as it was – to become, in turn, compact and closed towards the ruling class and its servile appendages, and move to attack the bastions of power.

Consider this a paradox, if you like, you who are immersed in the ideology of the class enemy: only the revolutionaries – walled up in their minority organization, jealous of its independence, hostile towards any hybridism amongst parties, convinced of the instability and insufficiency of any partial victories in the context of bourgeois society – nonetheless have the right to talk about working class unity against capital, about a proletarian front against the unity between the bourgeoisie and opportunism, about the consequent fight to defend the immediate living and working conditions of the exploited masses.

They alone have this right; they must acquire the power of it.

The Ghost of the European Unity

Imperialist dynamics and the Europeanist Illusion

In the post-second-world-war period, the weakness of Europe's defeated or devastated ruling classes demanded the reconstruction of their economic, political and military apparatus. The USA directed this reconstruction, which was warmly welcomed by the bourgeoisie in the defeated countries as the premise for renewed capitalist accumulation. The Marshall Plan allowed national reconstruction to be launched, once the defeated had been obliged to set up an indefinable artefact called "Europe". In any event, it would be the "grande bourgeoisie" to install the project for "economic integration" and put it into practice in the defence of diverse national interests. The prospect of a "politically united" Europe was, instead, an illusion of the "petite bourgeoisie" in big European states, providing the "little ideals" and driven by the need for them to be widely involved in the process of capitalist development.

The shift to sectorial economic organization (ECSC, Euratom, CAP, etc.) was directed by the pragmatism of the great western bourgeoisies as they recovered. The "unified project", involving the six founder States right up to the present 27, had its greatest credit in the treaties of Brussels (1947), Paris (1951) and Rome (1957). Up to the end of the '60s, the project went through a time of crisis due to French-English contrasts in a climate of strong economic growth, and was taken up again after the monetary crisis of 1970, which experienced the inconvertibility of the dollar and later the cancellation of the Bretton Woods agreements. Of even more decisive importance was the world economic crisis of 1974-75. Subsequently, it was the great Japanese financial crisis of 1987 that

accelerated the rate of "economic integration" under Franco-German direction, in the stress suffered by European capital under the attacks of competition between the USA and Japan. Throughout the '90s and the subsequent decade came a headlong rush towards the brink: the first Gulf War, German reunification and the intervening recession, the stagnation of Japan, the crash in Russia, the Balkan wars, the economic and financial crises in Asia (the so-called "Asian Tigers"), the economic and financial crisis in America (2000-01), the revival of the second Gulf War (2003), right up to the profound economic crisis of the present which has lasted over ten years now... Over these years, as a consequence of the 1992 economic crisis, that same year saw the appearance of the Treaty of Maastricht, followed in 2002 by the institution of the single currency, the Euro.

"United Europe" was never conceived of by the national bourgeoisies as a single, supra-national State with a single Parliament, a single Government, a single Body of Magistrates, a single Army, except in the idealistic and rhetorical lucubration of marginal sectors of the right- and left-wing bourgeoisie. In reality, the real *glue and boosters* of European unification - of an economic nature, never political or supra-national - were the imperialist wars and world crises of over-production. The "prospect of unity" of the "grande bourgeoisie", as we have stated, had the exclusive objective of reaching "agreements on the free circulation of goods" between States, to reduce the effects of the economic crises attacking one or the other of them and all of the States together. The community organisms of the European Union (the Council, Commission and Parliament) constitute insignificant institutions and are ne-

cessarily subordinated to the national dynamics of the individual States. Never has this proved to be so true as it is now, during the recent crises of over-production beginning in 2007-8. The "Europe of States" is the eminently real community of the "national gangs".

A brief history of economic integration

The history of the European economic-political area leading to the instauration of the single currency (the euro), is emblematic for an understanding of how the structure came into being. Up until 1993, this history demonstrates that "political unity" was never at the heart of European reality. In 1950 only the European Payments Union (EPU) was spoken of and in 1951 the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community); in 1955 the aim of creating a Common Market was announced; in 1964 a Committee of Governors of the various national banks was constituted; in 1969 a project was set up for a monetary Union; in 1972, after the storm over the inconvertibility of the American dollar, the EMS, or European Currency Snake was created, to limit the variations in the rates of exchange between the Community currencies of West Germany, France, Italy, Benelux and between the latter currencies and the dollar, whilst the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate was abandoned. The prospected creation of a European Cooperation Fund nonetheless remained devoid of reality. IN 1979 the ECU (European Currency Unit) appears, defined as a basket, consisting of sums determined by each of the community's currencies and the weighted average of the currencies constituting it, as a function of their gross national product.

During those years a Franco-



German agreement decided to align monetary policy with the Central Bank of Germany and, in order to limit variations in the value of currency, an exchange rate was set up with intervals of 2.25% above or below the central value, known as “margins of fluctuation”. When a currency depreciated and reached the lower margin, the national central banks concerned were to sell the strong currency and buy the weaker one in order to prevent it from falling below the margin. Moreover the idea of a European Monetary Fund, which technically was to receive 20% of the gold and dollar reserves of the national central banks, was unsuccessful. Germany, at the time the political and economic voice for this area of “free circulation” found its great strength in the German mark, which became a means of stability for the other European countries, after the great, inflationist flare-up of the ‘70s and ‘80s. Gradually, the Bundesbank took root throughout Europe as the institutional base for the EMS. The liberalization of capital movement nonetheless made the stability of currency exchange more fragile. This gave rise, after much resistance, to the necessity for the monetary Union to be re-launched. It was clear, however, that monetary Union could only start out from a union of “National monies” and that a European central bank was needed, to be instituted simultaneously with the single currency. As is well known, all the national central banks have a long history behind them: the national currency does not only solve the issue of dematerialising gold but also the problem of integrating the capitalist system under the command of the national bourgeoisie. At this stage, in February 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht established the political rules and the four economic and social parameters necessary for entry by the various States belonging to the so-

called European Union: a) a ratio between public debt and GNP not exceeding 3%; b) a ratio between public debt and GNP not exceeding 60%; c) a rate of inflation not exceeding 1.5%; d) a long-term interest rate not exceeding 2%.

However, the approval set off, since 1992, a monetary crisis: the Italian lira and the British pound suspended their participation to the EMS and, at the same time, the Portuguese escudo, the Irish pound, the Spanish peseta were devalued. In 1993, a new wave hit the French franc, which was obliged to widen the margins of fluctuation of 15%. These events once more confirmed the instability of the capitalist system, due to the public finances, to the economic crisis, and to the weakness of the Bundesbank. When the storm ended, the convergence was re-established: but the ballet inevitably started again, some time later. The set-up European Monetary Institute pushed towards a common action the national central banks for the setting-up of the European central bank and recognized, as decisive factors the national States, and not their exclusion, and that the force which until the mid-90s was in the hands of the German mark, now resided in the Euro.

Nonetheless, its ratification sparked off a currency crisis in 1992 (the lira and the pound sterling suspended their participation in the EMS and at the same time the Portuguese scudo, the Irish pound and the Spanish peseta devaluated). In 1993 a new wave involved the French franc, which made it necessary to widen the margins of fluctuation to 15%. All these events confirmed, yet again, the instability of the capitalist system due to public finances, the economic crisis and the weakness of the Bundesbank. Once the storm had passed, convergences were re-established: but the dance inevitably continued shortly afterwards. The European Monetary Institute that

was set up drove the national central banks to take common action and establish the European central bank, recognizing not the exclusion of the national States but their presence as determining factors and acknowledging that the strength that had been in the hands of the German mark until the mid-‘90s, now resided in the Euro.

Right from the start, however, a clause was acknowledged excluding the English pound from the Euro: and this is how the EU comes into being, on two tracks, with two currencies, leading subsequently, in 2017, to Great Britain’s exit from the European Union (Brexit).

The European Central Bank (ECB) was instituted on 1 June 1998 and grounded on the Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union and the “Statute of the European system of central banks and the European Central Bank”, though it did not begin to function until 1 January 1999, when all the functions relating to monetary policy and the rate of exchange of the eleven national central banks were transferred to the ECB. On the same date the exchange rates between national currencies and the Euro were irrevocably fixed. The main objective of the European Central Bank is to keep prices under control, and thus purchasing power in the Eurozone, and to keep inflation at bay, taking care to contain the medium-term rate of inflation below (but nonetheless close to) 2%, by means of opportune monetary policies. According to the Treaty of Maastricht, the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) comprises the European Central Bank and the central banks of the 28 member states of the European Union, regardless of the single currency. However, only the governors of the national banks of countries belonging to the Eurozone take part in the decision-making processes and implementation of the ECB’s monetary policy. The so-



called Eurosystem consists, in fact, of the ECB and the national central banks of the countries that introduced the single currency. The national central banks of the countries outside the “Eurozone” are instead authorized to conduct an independent national monetary policy. As long as there are member states of the European Union that do not belong to the “Eurozone”, the Eurosystem and the ESBC will inevitably continue to co-exist.

Thus, the introduction of the Euro as the single currency did not and does not change the significance of “economic integration”. It allows for “sectorial economic agreements” or “limits to production”, in order to avoid over-production in the areas of agriculture and industry, “regulation of exchange” to prevent competitive devaluation and monetary agreements. The Euro, as a common currency, acknowledges the maintenance of the “nation-enterprise” sovereignty of every State belonging to the European community in its power relations with other States. There is no doubt, however, that with the present crisis of over-production, “the network of interests and contrasts” will become a reason for its collapse and from being a means of development it will be transformed into heavy shackles. Today American protectionism, so widely discussed because of “Trump’s customs duties”, is an aspect that derives from the very contradictions of capital.

The history of the crises that capitalism goes through on an international level reveals the imperialist nature of the system: real and financial economy are “perfectly integrated”. The Maastricht agreements remain mere artefacts fuelling instability instead of attenuating it. Its parameters (GNP, Deficit, Debt, deflation/inflation, interest rates), by which it is believed that a “stable balance” is obtained, are and always will be at the mercy of the global

capitalist system as a whole: i.e. of that “financial landslide” which, as it descends, gathers momentum, *since its “real dynamics” arise out of over-production*. No ECB with its Quantitative Easing will be of any use to the EU for stabilizing and attenuating the immense suffering of the banks produced by the crises. Uncertainty nurtures the market, fuels its entropy and leads to the unravelling of the real economy. The “treaties”, mere scraps of paper, as *superstructures* are destined to sink, carried away by the currents and the tides. The three-phase diagram of the economic-financial cycle (speculation, automatic dynamics of the crisis and destructive crisis) is the formula that will lead the bourgeois economy to catastrophe. Only the proletarian revolution, by resuming a process that ends in the overthrowing of capitalist production, will be able to save humanity from the next war plunging us into hell.

The European Union and the illusion of stability

The Europeanist illusion manifests itself in the out-and-out race to obtain economic *growth*. In answer to competition, the European States attempt at first to develop homogeneous poles of production in their national territories (areas, districts, chains of production, etc.). The most rational economic choice from a national point of view is not to increase relations of exchange *inside* the European Union but, particularly in times of crisis, to increase their exports towards emerging countries outside it, which allow individual countries to expand their own trade. Indeed, by intensive exploitation of the local working class, abroad, national companies attempt to obtain greater development of production in industrial spaces with low organic constituents (reduced costs of raw material, lower salaries, etc.). The economic development is accompa-

nied by development of production and greater accumulation of plus-value. At this point the growth differentials in the various countries boil down to an increase in competition and the distances between them get bigger, creating greater instability.

In any event, credit allowed by stronger economies to weaker ones leads in practice to the latter accruing public and private debts, especially when the economic indicators (interest rates, rates of inflation) are “governed” by large national units, which encourage the belief that the single currency is a vehicle of equilibrium, for example. The economic gap is created, according to Marx’s theory of value, by the difference in productivity between the various national systems, which increases the flow of proletarians into the industrial reserve army, at the same time liberating, through the development of automation, enormous masses of labour. The productivity of the most advanced country imposes its own pace on the various production systems and thus its production prices. The single currency prevents a real reading of the production differentials from country to country, as would happen in the case of *terms of trade* between currencies. Inevitably, there is an increase in the lanes, and thus also in the rates, of development. The devaluation of the weakest country’s currency (just as the revaluation of the strongest currency) would make the gap in productivity visible and give the system a way of temporarily remedying the contradiction, acting on exports: but the single currency does not allow this. A new illusion: the productivity differentials leave no room for escape, because the situation of weakness (or strength) will continue to grow. What the crisis of over-production clearly shows is the widening, or the growth of this gap, which is a gap in productivity



that cannot be remedied without accepting the harsh conditions imposed by the strongest countries, off-loading the whole weight of growing exploitation onto the shoulders of the proletariat. The vitality of periods of prosperity, expansion and over-production are transformed into evident mortality at the end of the cycle: industrial poles, small and medium-sized industries will be swept away in the crises, unless a new and bigger capacity for production comes to their aid.

So-called integration will not, therefore, lead to political and economic stability. On the contrary, with the concentration and centralization of production, the process will determine a growing lack of economic balance over national and European territories, with the development of some areas that have a high concentration of capital and the impoverishment of others. This is where the instability comes from: the lack of balance will create fractures of an economic and thus political nature. At this point the ruling class will experience cracks in its political front due to diverse regional and territorial interests.

The further disintegration of national territories will become catastrophic when balances are upset by deeper economic crises. The trend towards recession will become inevitable where historical preconditions exist (strong territorial units compared to marginal areas or those forcibly annexed, populations or ethnic groups with weak internal cohesion, those imposed by previous wars or buffer zones, experienced as brakes or burdens to the development of stronger ones).

The relationship between State and territory is not just economic but also political (the politics of States are a *power superstructure* dealing with decisive economic and social processes, *under the direction of the ruling class*), so that a Europe diffe-

rent from the present one is possible as a *consequence* of new wars that would create further division of the national or European territory, with a new distribution of the booty by the victorious bourgeoisies.

It seems capitalistically reasonable to come to an agreement to protect the community's economy. Yet this inevitably clashes with the very nature of capital, which sooner or later overthrows any ties or agreements. *Capital takes a national form but its content is international.* The markets themselves, through crises of over-production, assume the responsibility for destroying any control or agreement. The need to constitute "large homogeneous areas" comes from the big Capitals that cannot be controlled by any State, or financial organism, national or international bank. Capitals that, in different forms, travel all round the world in search of valorisation, capitals that mainly find their valorisation in "gambling" with the buying and selling of various types of bonds, credits, shares, currencies, in their frantic search for a plusvalue that gets increasingly smaller in relation to the mass of global capital.

Due to the overlapping of economic cycles, the dynamics of valorisation push forward inexorably. The parasitic dynamics of imperialism, which, for a century now, have had the upper hand over the real economy, with its average profit rates progressively insufficient for a broad accumulation of Capital, show that the immense mass of "fake capitals" is able to destroy entire, first class nations, driving them to bankruptcy. All this is an unequivocal sign of the real domination of Capital over the State and States.

The "jungle" of nationalisms, politics of defence and the proletariat in the European Union

The fact that German economic power is the material barycentre of European reality and that present

economic integration has come to the point of demanding the foundation of a single currency and a European central bank does not mean that "European political unity" is possible.

We are not witnessing any change in the geopolitical landscape of the so-called "united Europe". The political reading of "economic and monetary" integration as a transition to political unity lacks reality and historical perspective.

The currency storm experienced in 1992, for example, cannot be interpreted as a "crisis of confidence in political prospects", because that confidence was never on the agenda of a supra-national bourgeoisie: if anything, it dwells in the illusions of the petit bourgeoisie and passes through phases of optimistic euphoria and pessimistic negation. The fact that, at the time, the clash between currencies demonstrated the contradiction on a continental scale between the increasingly international nature of the capitalist economy and the national husks in which it is inevitably obliged to move, did not necessarily imply that this should translate in reality into a strategy aiming to place Germany at the centre of European unification.

Between potential and necessity there is a gap that is not filled by formal logic. The fact that the monetary and trade agreements do not guarantee the Old Continent stability and cohesion derives from the very reality of the capitalist economy and its anarchy; the contradiction between its international nature and national husks is the result of the intrinsic and grounding dynamics of capitalist economy. Germany has not reached, and will not reach this aim of unification for the same reason it was not attained after two world wars. Who would challenge the historical trend towards this possibility? But the trend is not enough; *material strength* is



needed. Only the strength and victory of national-socialism would have given sense to an objective of these dimensions, in other words European unification. But history told a different story: the imperialist Russian-American victory-pacification of the second post-war period allowed this trend to be “fenced in” and de-potentiated over a long lapse of time, imposing Russian-Atlantic political and military control. The necessary and vital objective of securing irreversible political links cannot be achieved, precisely because Europe cannot produce these links *motu proprio* (it is not just a case of “nations without history” but also of strong political-economic aggregations, inside and outside of Europe), not even if economic and monetary integration were to attain exceptional levels.

One huge economic illusion is the belief that European capitalist economies will lead to the disappearance of nationalisms. Historically, Europe has always existed under pressure from the great nationalisms (from Napoleon III to Bismarck, from Versailles to Yalta), all the more virulent for the new nationalities and nations being born out of violence from the womb of Europe, when they had formerly been kept contained inside imperial containers (the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire). Two hundred years of European history have given us the raging of new wars driven by old and new, real and fake nationalities. The division of Germany after the second world war by the victorious imperialisms and the submission of the East European countries to Russia merely changed the timing for the outbreak of new wars. The collapse of Russia inspired nationalisms that had been kept under lock and key, and also generated the disaggregation of the Balkans. Since 1989, the year Russia came apart, Europe’s territory has been shaken

by new nationalistic processes. In the long term, German economic power will have to come to a reckoning with the victors of yesterday, the USA and Russia, undermining them in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. To say Germany means, in practice, the rebirth of Great Nationalism, which will spark off new wars in Europe.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, an authentic celebration of the “principle of self determination of peoples” was sparked off. In the name of the so-called “peoples’ rights”, presumed nations and communities previously kept under control were driven onto the stage and ancient nationalist nostalgias fuelled, behind which great economic interests are hidden. An overview shows us the systemic nature of the general political instability.

Central Europe has re-awoken, with all its historical nations and national entities, from Austria to Slovenia, from Slovakia to Hungary and Poland (the Visegrad area). In the Balkans all hell has been let loose: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro. In the Baltic Area old alliances and old hatreds have again raised their heads: Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, nurtured by anti-Russian sentiments, the former country with its ancient origins, capable of growing like a Hydra, the others being pure invention – pawns placed in Russia’s way. On Europe’s northern front in the United Kingdom (really an American colony), traditional drives towards independence are underway (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), nurtured by Atlanticism. In Spain comes the impetus towards Catalan and Basque independence. Even the barycentre of the European Union, hinging on the Franco-German area is undergoing transformation. Contrasts have risen to the surface: the Franco-Dutch rejection of the European Referendum, the political

crisis in Belgium and its internal divisions, Poland’s and the Czech Republic’s rapid conversion to Europeanism ready to change its face in the midst of the economic storm, the imperialist decisionism of Sarkozy, Hollande and Macron in Africa (Mali, Libya) and the firm ‘no’ of the European and Atlantic Troika to intervention on behalf of Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland are all signs of storms on the horizon. Germany’s position on non-intervention in the second anti-Iraq war should be seen in connection with these contradictions, as well as the veto on the American missile shield in Poland and in the Czech Republic, the development of exchange relations with Eastern European countries (those that were the old satellites of Moscow) and the weaving of interests with Russia, relations linked to energy and raw materials (gas and oil). If we add Germany’s non-intervention in Libya and low-profile position on Syria, as well as the resistance to firm intervention in the Ukraine (Donbass and Crimea) against Russia, it is clear that common European interests and traditional western alliances *no longer converge at all* but the understandings must continue to last until war alliances have been clearly defined. Centrifugal forces act in accordance with centripetal ones, removing all significance from these same States, creating a vacuum of political legitimacy and centrality. A central State cannot be replaced by a sum of regions or any old community architecture. The “functionalist federalism” by which the *Great Illusion of the European Union* was set up is crumbling away under the onslaught of the economic crisis, whilst national and regional particularisms and populisms prevail against a so-called “solidarity of the community” and the time will come when, in order to feed the middle classes, to the regionalist petit



bourgeoisie squawking under pressure from the crisis, a *nationalist war and a proletariat brought to its knees* will have to be offered in exchange.

It is not enough. The national policies of the individual countries depend on the internal and external economic contradictions that the capitalist process perpetrates. They do not aim to integrate at a supra-national level. All "European" policies are simply supports to national policies, or respond to demands of a particular and contingent nature. To remain such, internal political unity demands, as central data, "security and defence", which are of a purely national nature. There is no unity without coercive force and political unity *cannot help being* a political State, a tool of repression and violence: thus, defence of national interests and political unity are the essential premises for the political existence of the European Union. The failure of the EDC (European Defence Commission) of the '50s was determined by the lack of political unity. The final blow to it came from France, whose role of "grandeur" always demanded acknowledgement even within the Atlantic Alliance itself, from which it later distanced itself, only to draw closer again today as the smell of gunpowder grows stronger. All attempts to build a unified structure of a military nature without political unity have failed. The attempt by a Franco-German initiative, to set up a "common European army" has gone up in smoke...

There are temporary and extemporary alliances: but no "supra-national political units". There is no "gradual process" that will lead from economic integration to political Unity and from there to common military Defence, because in reality there is no such process, except *in the petit-bourgeois imagination*. Any unity (unless it is a question of pre-war alliances, still provisional,

or forced political integration) is impossible in the framework of bourgeois relations. All the more so a military structure that means security and common defences.

If ever a "democratic Europe of the people" were attained, as dreamed of in the last century, it would be the highest expression of economic power of the bourgeois States, an expression of the military force that precedes war for a new sub-division of the continent. It would be a reactionary and anti-proletarian Europe, subordinate to big Capital, centralized in a few States with no fear of taking on in the European continent. In the case hoped for by the left-wing petit bourgeoisie, it would not need to expose its dictatorial side at first, because it would be able to use "social-democratic consensus", in the sense of the present, miserable "welfare state". To respond blow by blow to the economic struggles in defence of the working class, the welfare state would bring onto the field *its powerful control apparatus, the institutional trade unions*, fully integrated into this reactionary body, in order to repress the proletariat, as a pre-condition for the iron fist of hegemonic bourgeois economic power against internal and external enemies. Its potential energy would express itself at the maximum level, ready to turn into kinetic energy. In its socialdemocratic version, it would be none other than the *massive counter-revolutionary husk for resisting communist revolution*.

The Europe of *continental proletarian dictatorship*, on the contrary, is the only revolutionary power able to decide the future of humanity. It would lead humanity away from the catastrophe of war, break national ties definitively and drive the international development of class production forces to their extreme consequence. Since co-existence between capitalist countries and those under proletarian dictatorship

would be impossible, the clash between the two forms of class dictatorship, which represent diametrically opposed economic forms, if not resolved by the victory of one of them, would cruelly destroy both of the two opposing classes. The death of the capitalist form of production will demonstrate the transitory nature of its mode of production on a historical scale. Politically united under the international proletarian dictatorship, with its continental ties broken, Europe would proceed to dismantle capitalism internationally.

The Russian-American victory, German reunification, the disintegration of Russia and stability

The problems of Europe do not coincide with those of modern Germany until the foundation of the German nation through the Franco-Prussian War. Since 1871, "Germany" has meant great economic power at the heart of Europe and the first attempt by the working class to constitute itself as a ruling class during the Paris Commune. It was then that the ruling bourgeois class founded its national State (trampling over the many smaller states and their currencies) with its own currency and central bank. Successively it equipped itself with a federal political organization on the Prussian model: thus with a militarily and bureaucratically centralized structure, accumulating episodes of aggression both towards its neighbours (Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Poland, Czechia, France) and against the proletariat. Driven by its powerful production forces and equipped with a strong trade union organization ("the working class aristocracy" strongly centralized in the State), since then it has found it has to share the European continent with other states that are, however, unable to compete from a political and economic point of view, a



condition of imbalance for the whole of Europe. All the political components, expressions of the German bourgeoisie, contributed to the affirmation of Greater Germany. The Third Reich of 1933, with the centralization of political, economic and financial power overcoming the old federal structure, claimed an economic growth superior to that of Bismarck's Germany, becoming the most advanced tool of European unification, under the mallet of the centralizing violence of Europe's most advanced bourgeoisie. Both in the First and in the Second World Wars, Germany manifested its will to reach this objective. Such unification, by subjugating bordering States, would allow for the growth of a single great State of Europe, which the Czech Republic, part of Poland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Holland and Alsace-Lorraine could be part of. This "Greater Germany" would stand as a gigantic economic force that was demographically strong. The unification of 1990 inaugurated a long period of recession, demonstrating how vitally necessary this unification was and how strong the Russian-American control over Europe was, in particular over Germany. The period of the so-called "Cold War" had frozen the situation of Germany both in the west and in the east. The disaggregation of Russia and the crushing economic and social crisis that ensued were a hard test for East Europe and relations with Germany. From Poland to Czechoslovakia, from Romania to Ukraine, from the minute national ethnic groups in the so-called Baltic Mediterranean to Moldavia, economic and political unrest was rife amongst extremely weak national entities.

Only by taking into account the dynamics (far more complex than those of the XXth century) that shake the economic base of so-called German Europe so profoundly, will

it be possible to understand the state of the next world conflict, at the heart of which there will again be the *Neues Deutschland*. The recent crises of Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Italy and the fear of the monetary union being dissolved demonstrate the fragility of the entire European economic structure.

The affirmation of the victorious powers (i.e. that Russian-American post-war care had brought stability to Europe) had become a commonplace justifying the *aggression* towards Germany and Europe. Political intervention, interferences by NATO or the Warsaw Pact on both fronts had become the two great factors of instability (walls, air corridors, movement of troops, escapes, reunions with families, etc.) during the Cold War. Using powerful weapons of attack (military occupation of German, Italian and Eastern territory) the Russian-American division took place and Europe had its "forced arrangement" in the Yalta agreements. The division of the German proletariat was the final victory of the winners' Holy Alliance. "*Woe-betide the losers!*" was their victory cry against the proletariat. The pretence of "European Unity" in the second post-war period, as well as its "stability", thus coincided with the territorial division (on a military and political basis) mainly of Germany (the Federal Republic on the one hand and the Democratic Republic on the other, in two separate States) and with the occupation of the whole of Eastern Europe. A few strokes of the pen on a handful of papers served the bandits meeting in Yalta to mark out the territories belonging to one or the other of them, with Tito's Yugoslavia acting as the hinge. Beneath the so-called "détente" lurked the violence underlying the division of territory and the general normalization of Europe. The struggles (proletarian and national-bourgeois) in Berlin in 1953, in Budapest and

Warsaw in 1956, in Prague in 1968 and Danzig in 1980 were also the most important attempts to find a way out of the military occupation both in the east and in the west (occupying troops, the placing of NATO headquarters, checkpoints in the key production areas of the territory, both in Germany and in Italy, forced demilitarization, monetary and financial impositions). The division was completed on the one hand by the mass of credit from the USA (Marshall Plan), as had happened after the first world war, and on the other by the massive shift from democratic Germany to Russia of equipment, machinery, production structures that were more technologically advanced than the Russians': thus economic and military disarmament of "Democratic Germany" to the east and financial and military subjugation to the west. Military, political and administrative occupation had made it possible to take apart the engine of production and destroy Germany's war machinery on both sides. With the disaggregation of the Russian empire and the relative lowering of American control over reunited Germany, the general degree of European precariousness increased.

The idea of stability arises out of petit-bourgeois political considerations (in their pacifist, Europeanist and pro-German versions). In a capitalist régime the *status quo*, aiming at normalization, may derive either from a "balance of power" or from the presence of a "superpower" that counterbalances dynamic losses of balance by using force, rapidly adapting to variations. In reality, after emerging from the disaggregation of the Russian empire and German reunification, since the '90s, Europe has revealed a state of economic and political uncertainty and promises new, future upheavals. The acceleration towards European economic and political aggregation and the impe-



tus towards Russia demonstrate this instability: in fact the main fault lines have spread east. The incline has caused Germany's economic-industrial, and thus also political, machinery to spread in that direction. Today, as in the past, its traditional flood lines are Poland, the Baltic countries to the north, the Czech Republic, Serbia and Croatia towards the Adriatic. As Germany consolidated under reunification and Russia disintegrated, as well as Eastern Europe the whole of the Balkans also destabilized. Not the recomposing of the Balkans, about which there was so much philosophizing (the "freedom of the Balkan peoples"!), which the second World War had painstakingly unified under Tito, but the disaggregation due to the pipelines and gaslines that cross the corridors of the Balkans right to the heart of Germany. Like a tsunami, the effects of German reunification have multiplied to the point of breaking up (in parallel and in synchrony) the one-time Russian empire and the Balkan countries right up to the borders of Greece. American support for Russia in the period of transition after the fall of the Berlin wall was necessary for the country's political recovery: in particular the support for Gorbachev and Eltsin avoided catastrophic economic instability, which would have fallen onto the shoulders of Poland and Ukraine encouraging the process of German overflow.

NATO's positioning to the east has two sides to it today: one turns to united Germany, the other to Russia, potentially destined to recover its old imperialist positions in eastern Europe and Asia. On another front, hemmed in by East Europe, Turkey and the Middle East, a crisis looms in the whole of the Caucasus area, rich in natural gas and oil: chaos arises in Chechnya and Georgia, Ossetia, Azerbaijan and above all Afghanistan, which sees the Taleban fighting the Russians with the

support of American arms. With the failure of Gorbachev's (pro-German) "House Europe", the East European territory is and will continue to be increasingly shaken by destabilizing transformations. A "lone path" towards the east by Germany, or in the close company of Russia (exchange relations regarding raw materials-technology) outside agreements to the west, would change the strategic post-war scenario (the so-called Franco-German pact, the rigid Europeanist vision and all eyes focusing on Russia). The guidelines of politics are never "free paths": they are *geopolitical paths running along the power-lines of capital*, which continues, in its "international substance" to be imprisoned in a "national form". Cutting through them means disconnecting the system of "dynamic balances" (dictated by the anarchy of the system) present up to this moment.

European Germany and the antagonist nations

For Germany, being an undeniable power in continental Europe amongst so many other neighbouring States has been a calamity and not a mark of fortune. The joint dominion of the continent in the two world wars (GB, Germany, France) drove it to "flash wars" with millions of deaths. The dynamics of history did not allow the "will for power" to fully play out its role. The firm desire (though the political schemes were exaggerated, both in the present and in the past) under Kohl to attain unification cost a decade of immobility and growing pains.

Great Britain, the historically antagonistic island, saw in the monetary Union an opportunity for an area of free exchange and a large market. Rejecting all community ties, it regarded with diffidence the prospect of German sovereignty in Europe, ratified and strengthened by an effective monetary policy and, no-

netheless, did not remain outside European history. It remained, as in the past, leaning on the USA, awaiting new opportunities for a return to the stage, because willingly or not, Great Britain is a central part of European history. Its abandonment of the community context with Brexit has amply demonstrated this.

France, continuing instead its old colonial politics in Africa, did not give up its ideas of *grandeur* and has not accepted, nor will accept, any politics that subordinate it to its historical antagonists, Great Britain and Germany. For a long time it has kept alive a political-economic alliance with Germany, even going so far as to share military drills. The pacifist position shared with Germany in the second Iraq war was no coincidence. The Franco-German axis, by which the post-war economy was reconstructed in the two countries, and the shared path of economic integration starting from the end of the '70s concluded with the change in the historical reasons for German reunification. The function of the two countries as the historical guardians of European stability assigned to them in the post-war periods as difficult allies but necessary to one another in order to confirm the position in the west and to check political drifts towards the east, saw this bond as strategic. Direction of alliances and at the same time of antagonist drives does not arise and last eternally but always depends on economic events and power factors determined by the development of Capital. Although obliged to integrate, in the future France and Germany will be induced to make their differences felt more strongly: they will be obliged to broaden their scope of action in favour of widening their economic-demographic mass (which can in no way be seen as united from a political point of view) and reach out towards other Eastern European countries, clashing in their "organic"



Russian-German relations, especially in the buffer areas and in the Balkans. No particular political efforts are required to the east, since the “buffer nations” have a long history of economic and political integration with Russia, who attempts to pull them back into the lost economic space, subjected as they are to the American political and military pull of NATO. The economic dynamics of Capital nonetheless act strongly on the Russian side with its energy links – gas and oil pipelines.

Germany has been and remains the only nation that is not sceptical towards Europe (it is the only one that has drawn competitive economic advantage) whilst the other States, faced with political or economic challenges, have time and again turned aside, especially during the crises. The “German” project for the single currency is conceived and supported in the name of its *own* economic stability and the best defi-

nition of its *own* area of influence: thus the European monetary union is *pure integration* with the “new” mark – or Euro. If we add that, for the sake of a rapid exit from the crises, world capitalism imposes an immense mass of capitals, which will inevitably mean a greater nationalistic and protectionist trend, the legitimacy of Merkel’s decisions to save the “top heavy” European scaffolding can be understood. They are legitimate because the scaffolding known as European Union rests on very few solid structures and weighs on the centre of force which is Germany itself which, as well as increasing its own profits, and in the presence of a unified national workforce, sinks its roots into a strongly controlled and controllable mass of immigration, capable of broadening the productive consumption of a growing mass of active and reserve, and at the same time unproductive population

(middle classes and working-class aristocracy), capable of delocalizing production and exporting goods and capitals everywhere. Her decisions are grounded because, as the crisis grows, the situation developing all around them will soon enter a phase of decomposition with the emergence of contrasts in the triad USA, Germany and China.

The military and economic force exercised by the strongest capitalism, the German, in the long term has not stood up to the great challenges of the last century in the context of world capitalism and will not hold out today, either, in the face of the great, now “aged”, industrial powers, or in the face of the new young capitalist forces of Asia. This may mean that the axis of contradictions in the old Europe, squeezed between West and East, could become, as in the past but by reason of more widely ranging factors, the site of future storms. This direction of



the march towards the East and with a demographically greater mass (83 million) is “negatively” conditioned by the community process, which has set up a body of ties to its detriment. Yet, without them, the greatest protectionist blocks and political sell-outs would occur; it is thus understandable that Germany, the exporting nation *par excellence*, will remain nailed to the need for constant, slow but significant expansion, unless wider ranging events place it in a great strategic alliance, avoiding the solitary path or subordination to this “economic community” which represents a trap, as well as a necessity.

In the meantime, political unity, not founded on any mutual factors, except for econometric parameters, will be lost. The weaker countries will be on sale to whoever offers most (in economic, political or military terms), rather than having a sole guide - *Europa Felix*. The subordination of the weaker countries is “won” in the economic compromise played out day by day, crisis after crisis, not in a forced alliance within a fake unity. This is why the German issue will increasingly be identified with the European issue *in a national and nationalistic vein only*. To think that the European Parliament, the Council of Europe (a sort of Higher Chamber of States) are the premises for a united Europe (on the institutional model of a continentally extended German State), of which the monetary union is the glue, the hard core and, once extended, will take the direction of European unity, means failure to understand the relations between economy and politics, which would be reduced to a simple, first grade equation. To affirm that the political-economic commitment of the States, above all the German State, provides the strategic turn towards a united Europe, that this strategy is forcing the rate of procedure towards convergence, that the defence (sa-

ving what there is to be saved!) of national industries is just an extemporary hitch whilst waiting for the reality of the single currency to get rid of all protectionism from the community and the international scenario, means failing to grasp anything about this fragile and improbable reality.

Europe between globalisation and protectionism

The fear of protectionism, the out and out defence of national production, the block on imports reveal signs of an overall change underway. The frequent considerations on economic recovery, the need to lower deficits and the public debt, the attention to anti-deflationary policies to contrast the tendency towards the slowing down of the economy and to reintroduce so-called *welfare*, “well-to-doism” (i.e. the growing purchasing power of salaries, mass employment with remodulation of flexibility and job precariousness) show that the real economy is increasingly dependent on financial structure and the growing poverty of the working class. Today, right in the midst of the crisis, everything is changing: accounts are in the red everywhere, deflation joins uncertainty in jobs and acute growing poverty, the real economy is a wreck and social buffers are a necessity to avoid a social show-down. Regional pay scales are praised, company “profits” are promised instead of “salaries”, linking them to productivity, working hours are made longer by contract, unrest and strike action are more frequent but less intense. Whilst “devaluated” capitals, bad debts, “trash bonds” for investments and financial activity (in reality dead capital) are released, salaries and employment are under attack, large and small companies are closing, the profit margin is falling and with it the economic supports to industry and agriculture are decreasing. A market

unconditioned by protectionism (with no import duty and no barriers) is mere illusion, it would be an “absolutely free market”. To think of forces of production free from State control and at the same time see the State as the true architect of capitalist economy means failing to grasp *the dialectic relation existing between capital economy and the State*. It is economism (and therefore *vulgar materialism*) to believe, on the other hand, that delegating the creation of money (as a prerogative of the national State) to a supra-national organism like the Central European Bank, which in any case has its limits in the national banks, might lead Europe’s capitalist reality to a superior political level.

The old policy of support for agriculture (the furious quarrels between French, English, Italian and today Polish agricultural nationalism), the overcoming of the Maastricht parameters by France, Germany and Italy (flexible as rubber – because of the economic crisis – but not at all flexible for other, weaker countries) and the action taken to defend their power industries by the French and Italian States (see the Enel against Edf affair in Egypt) do not move towards balance but *towards a fight*. If we consider all the previous elements in an international context, including Germany’s and Japan’s submission (by the agreements at the Plaza Hotel in New York on exchange rates signed on 22 September 1985) to American economic policy, first with the devaluation of the dollar and then with its re-evaluation, and if we add that since the latest 2007-8 crisis Germany and Japan may end up politically defeated, squeezed in the iron grip of the USA-China by reason of the emerging economies of Asia, it can be seen that *on the agenda there is only one way out for the two imperialist nations: to resume their power politics*.

Protectionism within an area of so-

called free trade does not cease, just as it does not cease within a State (national subsidies are none other than forms of protectionism for big industry). The difference in prices between industrialized and depressed areas, which no statistics office can hide, between agricultural and industrial products, between salaries and wages, are just forms of protectionism, which merely create a widening gap between wealth and poverty and thus between centralization and concentration of Capital. If this protectionism grows increasingly at an international level, with customs duties on raw materials, food products, power and technology and if foreign imports are blocked and exports expand, the market ends up by cancelling itself. The capitalist mode of production gradually determines breaks between nations, countries, areas, regions, continents, low-profit companies (the more modern) and others with high profit margins (the more backward). The trend towards development, increasingly fuelled by monopolies, which cannot be contained within national borders, is not a discovery of so-called globalization, a sort of border between old and new capitalism. Competition has grown worldwide but *this is not a recent product of capitalism*. The growth of more and more gigantic industrial groups, able to control the continental market from positions of clear advantage does not necessarily eliminate national, intra-European or continental protectionism. Strong community protectionism towards competitors would imply an existing "economic unit" that punishes itself and a self-excluding political unit. The effect will be the onset over the next few years of trade wars between community areas and, even more so, between continental areas and thus *political-military clashes*. This scenario will be accompanied by the objective failure of European monetary policy. There is no doubt

that these events may give rise to new scenarios: but to think that American or Chinese imperialism are the "objective factors" that will upset the balance in Europe and with it the old imperialist powers as well, in particular Germany, moving "freely" on the world stage, means believing in the omnipotence of Super-imperialism, which instead is starting to disintegrate. On factual analysis, historical reality reveals greater complexity than what is rationally constituted: this does not depend on the will of the competitors, but on *huge economic forces entering into conflict*.

The political and military dependency of Germany in the international context

The political and military power of the bourgeoisie is always linked to its economic strength. Germany would seem to be an exception: economically strong but politically weak, the German bourgeoisie has a powerful industrial structure capable of conversion into a war industry (it is no coincidence that steel and aluminium are the crux of the contrasts over American import duty). The Franco-German axis, the military links with the USA (military bases in the so-called European Union), however, are not tools of freedom for German sovereignty but rather signs of stewardship, thus of *dependency*. All the programmes of a political and military nature (presence of the UNO, NATO membership, intervention policies outside the area, direct and indirect participation in so-called pacific undertakings, military collaboration with France) are aspects of conditioning and at the same time signs of the need for Germany to assume a decisive political role in the world and particularly in Europe *in the future*. Great Britain's exit from the European Union was the sign of a "free rein" for an old link, binding Germany not only to Great Britain

but indirectly to the USA. A greater impulse from America for the country, by means of NATO, to assume direct responsibilities in Eastern Europe might mean a decisive anti-Russian shift. Germany, with its strongly homogeneous economic structure, is capable of facing the demands of globalization in any direction, from the USA to China. In the last century it "freed" older and weaker nationalities to the East, which then became subordinated to the stronger economies, from which they receive their means of survival (subsidies and arms). The axes on which Europe rests have always been unstable: the north-south axis, with the extremes of old English and Italian capitalism and with Germany at the centre, pushes the former out of the area (towards the USA) and causes the latter to slip towards the centre (towards Germany), especially the more economically advanced northern Italy; the west-east axis, this too centring on Germany, has never stood up to periods of great economic-social crisis, with France too close and Russia too decentralized.

The strength of German capitalism can hardly fail to constitute Europe's real problem. European instability is growing with the economic-political development of Germany: the more the dimensions of its power emerge, the more the need for it to be downsized makes itself felt. Germany's participation in the Balkan wars drove it to become the true economic and financial partner of the Balkan States. The mark became normal currency in the area: and this was of no small concern to the States of the European Union. The Russian crisis dragged with it Serbia and Kosovo, involving them in war and devastating the Balkan peninsula. NATO's acceptance of Polish, Hungarian and Balkan membership redesigned the whole area from the point of view of military alliances, as well. The war also had as its ob-



jective the conquest of the power corridors (natural gas from the Caucasus), which cross the whole of the Balkans. The old rail project which, at the end of the XIXth century, led from Berlin to Damascus and to Baghdad, raised its head again in the first and in the second World Wars and in recent objectives as well, causing Germany to intervene.

Germany's central position wavers when faced with the huge and unpredictable dimensions that world financial imperialism has assumed and to which all countries are connected. At the beginning of this new century, which has been hit by the biggest crisis since 1929, the world financial system's network became increasingly powerful and viscid. Globalization took the form of an immense centripetal force, at the same time emerging as an immense centrifugal force. Financial transactions attain values of thousands of billions of dollars, which are equivalent to the entire yearly GNP of a country like Italy, and a tiny percentage of them is capable of creating catastrophic effects even in relatively strong countries.

There is no escape from these dynamics of "financial warfare". The central mass of Capital is not to be found in a single nation or continent, even though nations and continents possess enormous gravitational masses. In Europe, Germany is this centre of gravity (immense masses of goods and capitals). In economy (and physics), the science of the *dynamics of mass* locates the barycentre close to the nucleus, even if the "dynamic effects" may manifest themselves far from the barycentre itself, perhaps in the weakest link in the chain connected to the centre of gravity. A widespread illusion is that the economy possesses intrinsic qualities of peace and well-being: this gives us to understand that, under the control of democracy, the "wild spirits of capitalism" may be tamed and channelled in the di-

rection we wish: that technology possesses within it the antibodies for defeating the wild spirits of liberalism; that economic challenges can be answered by other economic challenges, growth rates by higher rates, productivity by greater productivity. And lastly, it appears logical and merely common sense for arms, created on an economic terrain, to be banned from the conflicts (!). But "goodwill" will not destroy the "wild spirits of capitalism", the anarchy of the markets and the volcano of production, the law of unequal development, the growing poverty accompanying the funeral chariot: the great economy, high rates of development travel in cast-iron tanks, devastating and destroying whole territories invaded by goods and money. The military challenges will therefore increase. The armies of capital are the goods carried by the tanks. The winners and losers in the last two wars boasted high levels of production and advanced production relations: they were the new knights of the apocalypse (the USA, USSR, Germany, Japan), with huge potential for development, armed to the back teeth and with an enormous logistic structure and historical consensus.

Economic integration, the monetary union and political unity

There is no direct process leading from economic integration to political unity in Europe. Political unity would imply the formation, either underway or already operational, of a "unified State": it would thus require a political State, supported by a "supra-national bourgeoisie", with an awareness of its historical role, in particular against the proletariat, its real adversary, closed in the cages of the single States. Today, what is known as "the project for European unity" is transferred onto paper day by day.

The *political unity* of the European States would obviously be far more

than *economic integration* (or a *free exchange area*) and more than a *monetary union*: it would be an expression of the strength of the "great supra-national capital", which has subjugated much of national capitals (agrarian, industrial, commercial and above all financial). All this, however, is inconceivable as a "natural development". The shift from economic integration to political unity is *qualitative* and not quantitative. This means that, if real unity exists, this is because there is a political unity preceding it. Economic unity between national units is destined to collapse in the long term, because it can only exist in the form of the forced absorption of one State into another or their "spontaneous" subordination, or, lastly, as the consequence of a war that would confirm the victory of one of them by means of violence. A political unity must already exist: indeed, the national State is the political representative, the superstructure of power of the *entire* bourgeois class (not the sum of the various economic sectors of the same class). Political unity, which is constantly undergoing change, comes to the bourgeois State due to the fact that the bourgeoisie, *as a class*, represents capital in its historically and economically conferred reality, necessary for its wider accumulation. On a European scale, the many, historically formed, national bourgeoisies are in conflict on the economic plane as on the political. The creation of a European central bank can certainly further economic integration, since it represents the system of the national central banks. With a broader range of action than that of the individual national central banks, the European central bank has greater functions and responsibilities, which guarantee the independence of the individual banks. Its prerogative is to manage not "economic policy", but "monetary policy", which together represent both



the real and the financial economy: in other words, the prerogative is to take decisions that influence the exchange rates and interest rates, in the interests of keeping prices stable. The so-called supra-national and national co-operation is at risk of conflict, despite having established common rules on some fundamental parameters in an area particularly subject to the profound contradictions of the capitalist economy. National production first and foremost - imports and exports of goods and capitals, management of credit from the national central banks, fiscal policies, budgetary policies, industrial policies – it cannot escape the national context the bourgeoisie is subject to.

Money does not regulate the entity of value (this is an illusion of the bourgeoisie and the petit bourgeoisie): money is a measure of value, a means of exchange, a means of payment and is *only* an active force when it is Capital, or when it allows the creation of plusvalue. When it is a constant entity (however great) it does not vary in the slightest. Money, when it is income, is only a sterile product of capital. When it is capital, it determines the module, direction and rate of accumulation; when it is money, it in no way determines the dynamics of the processes of circulation, development of markets and growth of the capitalist economy. Only *variable capital*, applied to the means of production, produces plusvalue. Ever since it first appeared on the scene, money, with its entity, has nonetheless been a constant vehicle of instability, whilst Capital is the true cause of this instability. Capital increases internal competition between the producers of goods: all production sectors reveal what is intrinsic in them, average social value (the time spent at work that is socially necessary for the production of goods), which always varies over time. Productivity does not reduce the

lack of balance between the various production sectors: on the contrary, it pits these sectors one against the other. The way in which fusion, centralization, concentration and productivity is increased alters the production process, creates competition, war between industry and agriculture and between small, medium-sized and large industrial and agricultural sectors.

Monetary union, with the single currency, does not lead to the stability of the “Europe system”. First of all, it points to the fact that there is real instability present in the economy, which is in need of an Order, a Diktat regarding exchanges, interest rates and prices. The regulation of flows of capital-money is required by real production, by the over-production of capitals and goods, the drop in the average profit margin. Contradictions in production and circulation, valorisation-devalorisation and velocity, are indicated by flows of money in the same way as a fever indicates the presence of illness.

The monetary union also means a slow and irreversible “tendential loss of sovereignty” of individual national States, due to the growing socialization of so many national production sectors and the gigantic, non-national production units – socialization that can only be achieved in practice through socialism (and nonetheless cannot come into being without that period of transition known as “dictatorship of the proletariat”, destined to revolutionize the mode of production and social distribution in a form that is no longer mercantile). The monetary union is certainly a political act, which marks the fact that profound economic and political imbalances have matured (devaluation of entire nation-enterprises, increasingly broad economic and political contrasts within the ruling class, the half classes and the proletariat), due to the dynamics of capital requiring

a remedy.

In the medium term, capitalist economic development is producing and will continue to produce catastrophic effects in Europe. The dynamics of profit require ever greater and wider-ranging concentration and centralization to win at a higher level of competition based not only on individual nations but on aggregates of nations, continental agreements, agreements in monopoly sectors of varying sizes, agreements which will prove to be grounded on shifting sands, on paper, ready to explode and blow up at the next economic crises.

Since money is the measure of value, a valid currency for everyone must be based on unified criteria for the universal production of value and plusvalue (theory of value). Now, in the final analysis, as Marx explains, the national currency is a reflection of the internal exploitation of the labour force and this creates different rates of plusvalue as well as different profit rates. Capitalism works if there are different internal rates of exploitation, if there are profit differentials, both national and international – differences which, however, must inevitably level out into an average profit rate that tends towards zero. If this occurs, indeed, in the very process of its flattening out, the capitalist economy hits a crisis. Eliminating the differences in national or international profit rates means, however, eliminating the very dynamics of capital, the real flow and reflux of capital. The formation of an area of uniformity of capitalist production is impossible: the field lines in the capital economic field never possess regularity-linearity-symmetry; attempting to eliminate competition in a group or coalition of States, such as those in Europe, is the same as claiming to have eliminated it between national industries. The vitality of capital is founded on the generation and development of increasingly large units of pro-



duction, themselves determined by the previous overall development of the economy. These units possess potential energy, given the organic relationship between fixed and variable capital. The energy dynamics cause the tendency in these units to diminish not their growth but their rate of growth, or speed of growth, as accumulation increases in absolute terms, so that their ageing and death are certain and thus many are dragged into fusion and concentration, otherwise they encounter certain economic death. We communists deny the possibility in a capitalist régime for supercapitalism (national and/or international) to form a single national or international monopoly able to overcome the anarchy of the market and the ensuing swamp. The trend towards the formation of huge poles exists and is inevitable but there is no possibility of there being one and only one capitalist pole on the planet, just as it is impossible for there to be a single magnetic pole. Just as the large national capitalist units do not fully annul the other national sectors, although there is a "tendency" from the point of view of accounting for the formation of a sole national capital, in the same way that there is no possibility of a sole, global, capitalist enterprise forming. The real world trend towards this monad points precisely to the death of capital.

The European monetary union "is not just a technical factor"

Monetary union is *not simply a technical matter* and does not regard solely aspects of pure "economic integration"; in the monetary Union many political issues are involved and political institutions that have been especially created, but this is not sufficient to sustain the passage towards political unity, particularly supra-national unity.

Within a national State, the currency marks the presence of a ruling class,

the bourgeoisie, that has imposed its dominion on all the other classes, on the small and medium bourgeoisie, the middle classes and the proletariat, present on the national territory. In the case of Europe, the affirmation of a permanent régime, not a transitory period, of "single currency" would show that the many weak sectors of the national bourgeoisies (Europe's small and medium bourgeoisie), beaten on an economic and political plane, had, in practice, accepted a role subordinate to a "predominantly non-national" bourgeoisie, that had obliged the national equivalents to submit to it.

The rule of a "predominantly non-national" bourgeoisie over the others (national), however, would not become manifest on the economic plane without manifesting itself on the political plane, as well and *above all at a military level*. The monetary union, a reflection of the ruling political-economic power, should have at its disposition a political-economic direction: i.e. a unified State, rigid banking and economic centralization in the widest sense of the term, and the (*State* by definition) capacity to impose sanctions. But it is here that the contradiction occurs: this process can only come about accompanied by blood and tears whilst a national bourgeoisie, or whoever else on its behalf, cannot accomplish it. It can only be done by a power that is independent of the "nation": the proletariat. The imposition of the dollar on the economies of the losers in the second world war is an example of this. Even in the presence of national currencies, the dollar has managed to determine the whole of European history (and still does), partly since the bourgeoisies have begun marching without their previous economic protection (e.g. the inconvertibility of the dollar into gold at the start of the '70s) and in the presence of a weakening of the

American economy itself and the progressive reduction of their economic distance. Without annulling national currencies, the dollar has been able to dominate Europe's national currencies: it has circulated in such quantities as to impose an almost forced régime in its own money, conserved in the national banks alongside gold, and in this way it has subjugated these currencies to the power of the dollar: i.e. of the American economy. The Latin-American area was also subjugated to the power of the dollar without the various national currencies being annulled.

The national Federal Reserve (America's central bank), the International Monetary Fund, or basically American capitalism, have conferred on the dollar the function that once belonged to gold (that of a world currency). The dematerialization of the general equivalent in favour of the dollar came about in 1944 at Bretton Woods, right after the end of the second world war. The gold standard collapsed because it would no longer have been able to sustain the contradictions of economic development in the post-war period, its end was ripe and the forced decision was merely the final blow. In turn, it was not the crisis that generated the twilight of the dollar (its inconvertibility), but capitalist development itself, since the dollar was then incapable of spontaneously producing the premises for a new season of cycles of survival: the economic crisis of 1974-75 was only just appearing on the threshold. The political decision of 1970-71 was the reflection of an "extraordinary" post-war period that left contradictions strewn across the battlefield and announcing catastrophes, fueled by a long and massive productive accumulation.

The Gold Standard of the second half of the Eighteen Hundreds, from 1873 to 1914, had worked in the same way as the dollar but "had not

been able” to stop the first world war and subsequent crises from breaking out. A monetary régime can vehicle a process but not prevent the system from encountering a crisis. It was the two wars, the crisis of 1929, that decreed, in the midst of contradictory decisions, the end of a system of gold equivalence, showing the inherent fragility and instability of the bourgeois capitalist system; it was thus *tools of power and violence* that decreed the end of the pound sterling, and the mark as well, which had launched into the economic-monetary enterprise together with the dollar. But the transition was determined by an act of political imperialism, not by an agreement: the fact that the various national puppets were there, hanging by their strings, was mere scenography.

What were the objectives that the international monetary system of Bretton Woods had set itself? Precisely the same as those of the European Central Bank today: i.e. stability from a continental perspective and with the agreement of the leading capitalist nations. By what means? As usual: control of exchange rates, prevention of

competitive devaluation, freezing of credit, system of bilateral compensation, equalization funds, international trade, multiple exchanges. Its “formal collapse” did not come about because of events connected to the war, in which American power was defeated, but because of increasingly critical, intrinsic, economic dynamics, which had begun to make their effects felt at the start of the ‘60s (the first American crisis dates back to 1958). In the case of Europe, the passage from national to supra-national currency would certainly start out from greater coordination between economies (though increasingly integrated) than in the past: but this would not have been sufficient, unless conditions of a political (power) nature were imposed by capitalism (and thus by the strongest bourgeoisies). But the bourgeoisie – the dominant bourgeoisie – cannot detach itself from its nation and from “its” economy and cannot help imposing its war diktat. The American Constitution, despite being federal, is based on a unified political, economic and military force: it cannot stand as an example of mythological “voluntary union” (suffi-

ce it to examine the history of the United States and its brutal “war of annexation”, called “War of Secession”). The operational margins are not technical data but political: the mere parameters of Maastricht are not enough (public debt/GNP = 60%, deficit/GNP = 3%) to close the gates on capitalist anarchy. Neither an ideal acknowledgement, nor a juridical form, nor a constituent and constitutional political system is sufficient. “Brutal systems of sanctions” would be required against the recalcitrant bourgeoisies in order to obtain this political unity, and that would determine an increasing lack of cohesion in the precarious balance between the bourgeois forces, more and more acute internal struggles, right up to the point of “civil wars” or imperialist wars. The proletariat itself, in the contingent conditions of “class for capital”, could not help being driven, in the presence of *its international communist party*, to fight not only for the defence of its own living and working conditions, but above all for the destruction of the capitalist mode of production, through class dictatorship.

Kommunistisches Programm

Organ der Internationalen Kommunistischen Partei

Nr. 2 · Winter 2018

Preis: 1,50 Euro

Was unsere Partei kennzeichnet:

Die politische Kontinuität von Marx zu Lenin bis zur Gründung der Kommunistischen Internationale und der Kommunistischen Partei Italiens (Livorno 1921); der Kampf der Kommunistischen Linken gegen die Degeneration der Kommunistischen Internationale, gegen die Theorie des „Sozialismus in einem Land“ und die stalinistische Konterrevolution; die Ablehnung von Volksfronten und des bürgerlichen Widerstandes gegen den Faschismus; die schwierige Arbeit der Wiederherstellung der revolutionären Theorie und Organisation in Verbindung mit der Arbeiterklasse, gegen jede personenbezogene und parlamentarische Politik.



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Aus dem Parteileben

Proletarians pay with their lives for the survival of a mode of production which is by now only lethal

It's a daily massacre of shocking proportions. Just let's stop and think. How many proletarians die every day, in factories, building yards, in the "sweat shops", on the streets and on the seas, in the countryside, in all the countless workplaces of a mode of production that has now become reduced to nothing more than an infernal death machine, an insatiable vampire sucking proletarian blood, as had already been described and decried by Marx and Engels? And how many begin and continue to die day after day, poisoned, gassed, silently corroded on all sides by cancer-inducing agents or exhausted by the physical and psychological pressure of years and decades of an ever-faster pace of work, anguish and desperation? We have the figures for Italy and they are monstrous and eloquent: only the revolting cynicism of ignorance or indifference can prevent a chill to the spine before this slaughter, these *mass murders*, for which there is no other name. But what might the figures be for the rest of Europe? And the Americas? And Asia and Africa? The numbers can't help but be devastating: *ten, a hundred, a thousand holocausts!* The mass media of disinformation do not give us these figures: they limit themselves to telling the story, using all the adjectives of sensationalism and pious journalism, of a factory exploding, a mine collapsing, a bridge falling, a workshop or building going up in flames – *ten, a hundred, a thousand proletarian deaths* in one and then, yes, the event is newsworthy. But they are silent about the daily accounts of slaughter – which instead, on reflection, assume horrendously gigantic proportions. Let us go further, back a little in ti-

me over the years and the decades...through the three centuries dominated by the capitalist mode of production. And here the very thought is truly devastating: from the Industrial Revolution, with its "factory deaths", men who – if they were lucky – reached the age of thirty, and mangled women and children, right down to today, through the whole epic march of "capitalist progress".

The proletarian-scrunching machinery has never ceased to work, grinding and destroying lives, families, aspirations, illusions – transforming the living flesh of human beings into profits to be tossed into the impersonal mechanism of production for production's sake, competition, greater accumulation, the law of value. As though this were not enough, there have been, and continue to be, the wars. And how many proletarian victims have there been (are there) of economic, strategic and political appetites, of States that are the instruments of capital, of nations that obey the law of "kill or be killed"? Victims at the battlefield and victims in the rear-guard, more cannon fodder sent off to the trenches to bayonette or gas one another or shut up like mice in the metropolises as a target for all the most advanced tools of warfare? And the miserable survivors that attempt to escape, wandering from one place to another, at the mercy of hunger, wounds, illness, the most absolute desperation, on tens of thousands of "journeys of hope"? leaving behind the bombed ruins or famine produced by centuries of colonial and imperialist domination, who, if they don't drown or freeze to death first, are unable to find a place where they can at least *survive*, chased from here to there like

mangy dogs by political scoundrels doing their best to encourage the obtuse savagery of the petit-bourgeoisie, whose sole reason for living remains their hatred for "the foreigner"? And what is to be said of the proletarians killed in the picket lines, in demonstrations, in the rebellions sparked off by hunger and exasperation, in the streets of the ghettos, in the countryside of the black market gang-leaders, on the ironclad national borders, victims of the legal or illegal gangs belonging to the State, the defender of capital, or of sub-human individuals emerging from the gutters of a decaying society? Or the sixty thousand *Communards* massacred in Paris at the end of May 1871 by their ferocious class enemy, or the other thousands and tens of thousands of proletarians eliminated by the counter-revolutionary fury that one time after another strikes those generous attempts to "scale the heavens"?

This mode of production exhausted its positive drive at least a century and a half ago, the drive that allowed – *by means of a violent rupture* – the definitive outstripping of the previous mode of production, that of feudalism. And for over a century and a half it has become a deadly killing machine: the vampire which, day after day, sucks the blood of the proletariat in order to remain alive. Against this vampire the crucifix and the garlic are of no use. It has to be killed once and for all, driving a well-sharpened stake deep into its heart: violence against violence. Taking up the fight, increasing it, extending it, radicalizing it, rejecting any illusion of reform and any nationalist divisions, starting out from the slogan "An attack on one is an attack on us all!" Trans-



forming the proletarian numbers (growing constantly, at every economic crisis, at every opening towards war) into *deadly strength and*

power. Organizing in order to learn to defend, defend ourselves and then turn to the attack. Finding our indispensable guide for the struggles of

today and tomorrow – the revolutionary party, the *international communist party*.

August 2018

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Back to Basics

Party and Class (1921)

The “Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution” approved by the Second Congress of the Communist International are genuinely and deeply rooted in the Marxist doctrine. These theses take the definition of the relations between party and class as a starting point and establish that the class party can include in its ranks only a part of the class itself, never the whole nor even perhaps the majority of it.

This obvious truth would have been better emphasised if it had been pointed out that one cannot even speak of a class unless a minority of this class tending to organise itself into a political party has come into existence.

What in fact is a social class according to our critical method? Can we possibly recognise it by the means of a purely objective external acknowledgement of the common economic and social conditions of a great number of individuals, and of their analogous positions in relationship to the productive process? That would not be enough. Our method does not amount to a mere description of the social structure as it exists at a given moment, nor does it merely draw an abstract line dividing all the individuals composing society into two groups, as is done in the scholastic classifications of the naturalists. The Marxist critique sees human society in its movement, in its development in time; it utilises a fundamentally historical and dialectical criterion, that is to say, it studies the connection of events in their reciprocal interaction.

Instead of taking a snapshot of society at a given moment (like the old metaphysical method) and then stu-

dyling it in order to distinguish the different categories into which the individuals composing it must be classified, the dialectical method sees history as a film unrolling its successive scenes; the class must be looked for and distinguished in the striking features of this movement.

In using the first method we would be the target of a thousand objections from pure statisticians and demographers (short-sighted people if there ever were) who would re-examine our divisions and remark that there are not two classes, nor even three or four, but that there can be ten, a hundred or even a thousand classes separated by successive gradations and indefinable transition zones. With the second method, though, we make use of quite different criteria in order to distinguish that protagonist of historical tragedy, the class, and in order to define its characteristics, its actions and its objectives, which become concretised into obviously uniform features among a multitude of changing facts; meanwhile the poor photographer of statistics only records these as a cold series of lifeless data.

Therefore, in order to state that a class exists and acts at a given moment in history, it will not be enough to know, for instance, how many merchants there were in Paris under Louis XIV, or the number of English landlords in the Eighteenth Century, or the number of workers in the Belgian manufacturing industry at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Instead, we will have to submit an entire historical period to our logical investigations; we will have to make out a social, and therefore political, movement which searches for its way through the ups

and downs, the errors and successes, all the while obviously adhering to the set of interests of a strata of people who have been placed in a particular situation by the mode of production and by its developments.

It is this method of analysis that Frederick Engels used in one of his first classical essays, where he drew the explanation of a series of political movements from the history of the English working class, and thus demonstrated the existence of a class struggle.

This dialectical concept of the class allows us to overcome the statistician's pale objections. He does not have the right any longer to view the opposed classes as being clearly divided on the scene of history as are the different choral groups on a theatre scene. He cannot refute our conclusions by arguing that in the contact zone there are undefinable strata through which an osmosis of individuals takes place, because this fact does not alter the historical physiognomy of the classes facing one another.

* * *

Therefore the concept of class must not suggest to us a static image, but instead a dynamic one. When we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, then we can recognise the existence of a class in the true sense of the word. But then the class party exists in a material if not yet in a formal way.

A party lives when there is the existence of a doctrine and a method of action. A party is a school of political thought and consequently an organisation of struggle. The first characteristic is a fact of consciousness, the second is a fact of will, or



more precisely of a striving towards a final end.

Without those two characteristics, we do not yet have the definition of a class. As we have already said, he who coldly records facts may find affinities in the living conditions of more or less large strata, but no mark is engraved in history's development.

It is only within the class party that we can find these two characteristics condensed and concretised. The class forms itself as certain conditions and relationships brought about by the consolidation of new systems of production are developed - for instance the establishment of big factories hiring and training a large labour force; in the same way, the interests of such a collectivity gradually begin to materialise into a more precise consciousness, which begins to take shape in small groups of this collectivity. When the mass is thrust into action, only these first groups can foresee a final end, and it is they who support and lead the rest.

When referring to the modern proletarian class, we must conceive of this process not in relationship to a trade category but to the classes as a whole. It can then be realised how a more precise consciousness of the identity of interests gradually makes its appearance; this consciousness, however, results from such a complexity of experiences and ideas, that it can be found only in limited groups composed of elements selected from every category. Indeed only an advanced minority can have the clear vision of a collective action which is directed towards general ends that concern the whole class and which has at its core the project of changing the whole social regime. Those groups, those minorities, are nothing other than the party. When its formation (which of course never proceeds without arrests, crises and internal conflicts) has reached a certain stage, then we may say that

we have a class in action. Although the party includes only a part of the class, only it can give the class its unity of action and movement, for it amalgamates those elements, beyond the limits of categories and localities, which are sensitive to the class and represent it.

This casts a light on the meaning of this basic fact : the party is only a part of the class. He who considers a static and abstract image of society, and sees the class as a zone with a small nucleus, the party, within it, might easily be led to the following conclusion: since the whole section of the class remaining outside the party is almost always the majority, it might have a greater weight and a greater right. However if it is only remembered that the individuals in that great remaining mass have neither class consciousness nor class will yet and live for their own selfish ends, or for their trade, their village, their nation, then it will be realised that in order to secure the action of the class as a whole in the historical movement, it is necessary to have an organ which inspires, unites and heads it - in short which officers it; it will then be realised that the party actually is the nucleus without which there would be no reason to consider the whole remaining mass as a mobilisation of forces.

The class presupposes the party, because to exist and to act in history it must possess a critical doctrine of history and an aim to attain in it.

* * *

In the only true revolutionary conception, the direction of class action is delegated to the party. Doctrinal analysis, together with a Dumber of historical experiences, allow us to easily reduce to petty bourgeois and anti-revolutionary ideologies, any tendency to deny the necessity and the predominance of the party's function.

If this denial is based on a democratic point of view, it must be sub-

jected to the same criticism that Marxism uses to disprove the favourite theorems of bourgeois liberalism.

It is sufficient to recall that, if the consciousness of human beings is the result, not the cause of the characteristics of the surroundings in which they are compelled to live and act, then never as a rule will the exploited, the starved and the underfed be able to convince themselves of the necessity of overthrowing the well-fed satiated exploiter laden with every resource and capacity. This can only be the exception. Bourgeois electoral democracy seeks the consultation of the masses, for it knows that the response of the majority will always be favourable to the privileged class and will readily delegate to that class the right to govern and to perpetuate exploitation.

It is not the addition or subtraction of the small minority of bourgeois voters that will alter the relationship. The bourgeoisie governs with the majority, not only of all the citizens, but also of the workers taken alone.

Therefore if the party called on the whole proletarian mass to judge the actions and initiatives of which the party alone has the responsibility, it would tie itself to a verdict that would almost certainly be favourable to the bourgeoisie. That verdict would always be less enlightened, less advanced, less revolutionary, and above all less dictated by a consciousness of the really collective interest of the workers and of the final result of the revolutionary struggle, than the advice coming from the ranks of the organised party alone.

The concept of the proletariat's right to command its own class action is only on abstraction devoid of any Marxist sense. It conceals a desire to lead the revolutionary party to enlarge itself by including less mature strata, since as this progressively occurs, the resulting decisions

get nearer and nearer to the bourgeois and conservative conceptions.

If we looked for evidence not only through theoretical enquiry, but also in the experiences history has given us, our harvest would be abundant. Let us remember that it is a typical bourgeois cliché to oppose the good « common sense » of the masses to the « evil » of a « minority of agitators », and to pretend to be most favourably disposed towards the exploiters interests. The right-wing currents of the workers movement, the social-democratic school, whose reactionary tenets have been clearly shown by history, constantly oppose the masses to the party and pretend to be able to find the will of the class by consulting on a scale wider than the limited bounds of the party. When they cannot extend the party beyond all limits of doctrine and discipline in action, they try to establish that its main organs must not be those appointed by a limited number of militant members, but must be those which have been appointed for parliamentary duties by a larger body - actually, parliamentary groups always belong to the extreme right wing' of the parties from which they come.

The degeneracy of the social-democratic parties of the Second International and the fact that they apparently became less revolutionary than the unorganised masses, are due to the fact that they gradually lost their specific party character precisely through workerist and « laborist » practices. That is, they no longer acted as the vanguard preceding the class but as its mechanical expression in an electoral and corporative system, where equal importance and influence is given to the strata that are the least conscious and the most dependent on egotistical claims of the proletarian class itself. As a reaction to this epidemic, even before the war, there developed a tendency, particularly in Italy,

advocating internal party discipline, rejecting new recruits who were not yet welded to our revolutionary doctrine, opposing the autonomy of parliamentary groups and local organs, and recommending that the party should be purged of its false elements. This method has proved to be the real antidote for reformism, and forms the basis of the doctrine and practice of the Third International, which puts primary importance on the role of the party - that is a centralised, disciplined party with a clear orientation on the problems of principles and tactics. The same Third International judged that the « collapse of the socialdemocratic parties of the Second International was by no means the collapse of proletarian parties in general » but, if we may say so, the failure of organisms that had forgotten they were parties because they had stopped being parties.

* * *

There is also a different category of objection to the communist concept of the party's role. These objections are linked to another form of critical and tactical reaction to the reformist degeneracy : they belong to the syndicalist school, which sees the class in the economic trade unions and pretends that these are the organs capable of leading the class in revolution.

Following the classical period of the French, Italian and American syndicalism, these apparently left-wing objections found new formulations in tendencies which are on the margins of the Third International. These too can be easily reduced to semi-bourgeois ideologies by a critique of their principles as well as by acknowledging the historical results they led to.

These tendencies would like to recognise the class within an organisation of its own - certainly a characteristic and a most important one - that is, the craft or trade unions

which arise before the political party, gather much larger masses and therefore better correspond to the whole of the working class. From an abstract point of view, however, the choice of such a criterion reveals an unconscious respect for that selfsame democratic lie which the bourgeoisie relies on to secure its power by the means of inviting the majority of the people to choose their government. In other theoretical viewpoints, such a method meets with bourgeois conceptions when it entrusts the trade unions with the organisation of the new society and demands the autonomy and decentralisation of the productive functions, just as reactionary economists do. But our present purpose is not to draw out a complete critical analysis of the syndicalist doctrines. It is sufficient to remark, considering the result of historical experience, that the extreme right wing members of the proletarian movement have always advocated the same point of view, that is, the representation of the working class by trade unions; indeed they know that by doing so, they soften and diminish the movement's character, for the simple reasons that we have already mentioned. Today the bourgeoisie itself shows a sympathy and an inclination, which are by no means illogical, towards the unionisation of the working class; indeed the more intelligent sections of the bourgeoisie would readily accept a reform of the state and representative apparatus in order to give a larger place to the « apolitical » unions and even to their claims to exercise control over the system of production. The bourgeoisie feels that, as long as the proletariat's action can be limited to the immediate economic demands that are raised trade by trade, it helps to safeguard the status-quo and to avoid the formation of the perilous « political » consciousness - that is, the only consciousness which is revolutiona-

ry for it aims at the enemy's vulnerable point, the possession of power. Past and present syndicalists, however, have always been conscious of the fact that most trade unions are controlled by right wing elements and that the dictatorship of the petty bourgeois leaders over the masses is based on the union bureaucracy even more than on the electoral mechanism of the social-democratic pseudo-parties. Therefore the syndicalists, along with very numerous elements who were merely acting by reaction to the reformist practice, devoted themselves to the study of new forms of union organisation and created new unions independent from the traditional ones. Such an expedient was theoretically wrong for it did not go beyond the fundamental criterion of the economic organisation : that is, the automatic admission of all those who are placed in given conditions by the part they play in production, without demanding special political convictions or special pledges of actions which may require even the sacrifice of their lives. Moreover, in looking for the «producer» it could not go beyond the limits of the «trade », whereas the class party, by considering the «proletarian » in the vast range of his conditions and activities, is alone able to awaken

the revolutionary spirit of the class. Therefore, that remedy which was wrong theoretically also proved inefficient in actuality.

In spite of everything, such recipes are constantly being sought for even today. A totally wrong interpretation of Marxist determinism and a limited conception of the part played by facts of consciousness and will in the formation, under the original influence of economic factors, of the revolutionary forces, lead a great number of people to look for a «mechanical » system of organisation that would almost automatically organise the masses according to each individual's part in production; according to these illusions, such a device by itself would be enough to make the mass ready to move towards revolution with the maximum revolutionary efficiency.

Thus the illusory solution reappears, which consists of thinking that the everyday satisfaction of economical needs can be reconciled with the final result of the overthrow of the social system by relying on an organisational form to solve the old antithesis between limited and gradual conquests and the maximum revolutionary program. But - as was rightly said in one of the resolutions of the majority of the German Communist Party at a time when

these questions (which later provoked the secession of the KAPD) were particularly acute in Germany - revolution is not a question of the form of organisation.

Revolution requires an organisation of active and positive forces united by a doctrine and a final aim. Important strata and innumerable individuals will remain outside this organisation even though they materially belong to the class in whose interest the revolution will triumph. But the class lives, struggles, progresses and wins thanks to the action of the forces it has engendered from its womb in the pains of history. The class originates from an immediate homogeneity of economic conditions which appear to us as the primary motive force of the tendency to destroy and go beyond the present mode of production. But in order to assume this great task, the class must have its own thought, its own critical method, its own will bent on the precise ends defined by research and criticism, and its own organisation of struggle channelling and utilising with the utmost efficiency its collective efforts and sacrifices. All this constitutes the Party.

*(from "Rassegna Comunista"
nr. 2, April 15, 1921).*

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