

DOUBLE ISSUE

internationalist papers

A publication of the International Communist Party (ICP)

14

SPRING
SUMMER
2009

The New US President and Suckers International Ltd. • The capitalist crisis sweeps away myths, false certainties, illusions. Let proletarians prepare to sweep away capitalism • From world crisis to communist revolution • The winds of war blow harder. The world proletariat will have to regain its class independence, in the face of all factions of war, present and future • Ever-increasing winds of war • Spain: Immigration and social tensions • United States: Immigration, prison and wage labor • A party or a gathering of well-meaning people? • What Distinguishes Our Party • The Need to Prepare Revolution • *Back to Basics*: The Lyon Theses (1926)

internationalist papers

INTERNATIONALIST PAPERS 14

(SPRING-SUMMER 2009-DOUBLE ISSUE)

S U M M A R Y

To the reader	3
The New US President and Suckers International Ltd	4
The capitalist crisis sweeps away myths, false certainties, illusions. Let proletarians prepare to sweep away capitalism	7
From world crisis to communist revolution	18
The winds of war blow harder. The world proletariat will have to regain its class independence, in the face of all factions of war, present and future	30
Ever-increasing winds of war	37
Five Leaflets	40
Two articles on the french situation	50
Spain: Immigration and social tensions	66
Two Articles on the Situation in the Middle East	68
United States: Immigration, prison and wage labor	82
A party or a gathering of well-meaning people?	89
What Distinguishes Our Party	92
The Need to Prepare Revolution	101
<i>Back to Basics</i> - The Lyon Theses (1926)	106
Draft theses presented by the left at the 3rd congress of the communist party of italy (Lyon 1926)	125

A supplement to number 4/2009 of "il programma comunista"

Editorial Office: Edizioni il programma comunista - Casella postale 962 - 20101 Milano (Italy)
Press: Stampamatic - Settimo Milanese (MI) - Italy
Printed: July 2009

Visit our web site:

www.ilprogrammacomunista.com

Write to us:

**Edizioni il programma comunista
Casella postale 962
20101 Milano (Italy)**

The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing
(Karl Marx)

To the reader...

This Double Issue of *Internationalist Papers* comes out with great delay, due to technical problems, in the middle of a new stage of development of the capitalist crisis which opened up in the mid-1970s. As we often showed in our press and party work, this crisis is a crisis of overproduction of good and capitals. It is thus *not* simply a “financial crisis”, caused by some managers’ greed and some banks’ irresponsibility, as the bourgeois press insists on claiming. It is a *structural crisis*, which covers a span of by now thirty-five years, and to which world capitalism tried to answer by vainly recurring to those “counter-tendencies” well analyzed by Marx: but, in the desperate attempt to revitalize the process of self-valorization, capitalism thus sowed the seeds of a further deepening of the crisis itself.

The world is in a turmoil. More and more, national capitals clash against each other, in the grip of the inevitable commercial war and imperialist concentration, as Lenin showed in his *Imperialism*: the FIAT-Chrysler-Opel affair (however it is going to end – we are writing at the end of May 2009) is a clear sign. But underneath this all, military war is being prepared, because this is the only end solution capitalism can envisage to solve its own crisis – a new world bloodbath, in order to destroy the excess of goods (and labor is one of them...).

Proletarian responses are still timid and sparse: but proletarians have an immense power in their hands, and their instinctive capacity to resort to traditional aims and methods of struggle will show it to themselves. But this power is not enough, because it lacks conscience and organization. What is still missing (as we insist in the texts that follow) is the world organ capable to organize and lead the inevitable struggles which will develop in the future, out of the limits of geography and nationality, of firm and category, beyond the walls of the present mode of production, against the State, instrument and bulwark of capitalism. This is what is urgently needed – the International Communist Party. That is what we are working at, in strict connection (wherever and whenever we can) with the battling proletariat, and we are sure that the first proletarian avant-gardes that will be born of the struggles to defend themselves against the capitalist assault will finally feel the same need and will join us.

The New US President and Suckers International Ltd.

The newspapers have discreetly desisted from making an official announcement but it was quite evident. At the beginning of November, after a period of relative decline, Suckers International Ltd. is back on the scene: there has been widespread inebriation in connection with the election of the new US President and many, in the US and abroad, have seen another little piece of brain go up in smoke, proclaiming “new eras”, “historical turning points”, “giant steps forward”, “new chapters in history”, “more future New Deals”, “a return to the original ideals”, and so on. We communists see things quite differently, from a radically different point of view. With the election of Obama as President, the United States do, in fact, take another significant step forward towards the next world war. The same old paradox from the catastrophe-mongers? Let us explain patiently how things stand, to those who are not yet too drunk or whose brain hasn’t yet gone up in smoke.

The US economy is undergoing a serious crisis and this is not a new development. The crisis (which has had, and still has, its own pattern of development, inevitably linked to the predominant position of American capitalism as the absolute victor in the second world blood-bath) has followed the same trend as that of all the world powers from the mid-seventies of the last century onwards. The result, amongst others, has been the

progressive weakening of the American economy (though still dominant) compared to the other powers, its historical rivals (Germany, Japan) or recent ones (China, India). To face up to this new and worrying situation, US capital has been obliged to play the card of “financialization” (the stock exchange and speculation) on all fronts (but, especially in the age of imperialism, all theatres are interdependent); abroad it has had to wage a savage commercial war against its competitors (monetary policies, cartelization, dumping, mergers, protectionism, etc.), which in more than one case over the past twenty years, has turned into armed warfare: there is no other significance to the bloody slaughter of the 1st Gulf War, the Balkan war, the 2nd Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan (not to mention the many episodes of wars fought by proxy, or more or less underground ones, conducted elsewhere, first and foremost in Africa). All these military interventions have aimed on the one hand to bring new oxygen to the choking home economy (the war machinery must operate at full capacity with an enormous production effort and positive effects on the various sectors), at the same time strengthening the control of strategic areas with a view to raw materials or their transport routes; on the other hand, the aim is to strike, more or less directly, at the more dangerous or ... rascal competitors, excluding them from those areas or halting their ex-

pansion (the “best” example was to be seen in the Balkans themselves, where the expansion of German capital towards the south, the Mediterranean and strategic areas, was parried by a bloody war, desired and monitored by the Clinton administration – strong supporters of Obama).

At present, all these “remedies” (the only ones known to capital, *ever since its origins*) have, as predicted, not only proved to be insufficient to cure the patient but have had, both at home, as abroad, a whole series of “side effects” which have aggravated its death throes. The world economic crisis (or rather, its recent acceleration, within the cycle of crises beginning in the mid-seventies) is advancing at all levels and not one “expert” fails to declare that things are destined to go “from bad to worse”: the US economy is at a standstill, unemployment is growing at a giddy rate, particularly amongst certain sectors of the population (blacks, latinos, immigrants – not to mention the tragic condition of clandestine immigrants), the automobile sector is experiencing a profound crisis (with all the inevitable consequences), the middle classes are under increasing pressure, confidence has dropped to a historical low, the “ghost of 1929” has re-appeared with the risk of deep “social ill-being” – a combination of facts, both real and psychological, that puts US society in a similar position to the rest of the world. This means that the erosion of US capital’s world predominance is accelerating further, faced with the inevitable aggressiveness of other competing capitals also feeling the sting of the crisis. The acceleration is thus moving towards a further, keener commercial war, a squeeze by US capital towards other countries’ capitals; and *consequently, as a future prospect*, towards

a new and necessary trial of strength, towards a new armed conflict, with dimensions and implications that are no longer local but *worldwide*. How is it to be prepared? And, most important, how should we prepare ourselves for it?

It is at this point that in the United States (and thus not only here) the “new President” comes into play. Here, too, it will be as well to explain things patiently.

We communists have always denied a) that individuals make history and b) that it is the institutional offices (such as the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or anyone else) or democratic institutions (such as Parliament, rather than the local council) that “do politics” – being offices and institutions whose only purpose is, perhaps to amplify, like actual sound systems, a purely ideological line of “national” consensus, *wholly functional to the interests of capital*. It was never the demagogic oratories of Mussolini from the balcony in Piazza Venezia or Roosevelt’s “fireside speeches” on the radio (or, today, the parliamentary debates or TV talk shows, often undistinguishable one from the other) that “make history” – as far as capital is concerned, history, far less noisily but far more materially, was “made” and is “made” by the banks, the financial institutions, the cartels, the trusts ... *and, at the given moment, by the canons*.

But the words and the speeches served and still serve to fill people’s brains: to reassure them and make them exalt, when and to the extent that it is necessary to smooth the path of the nation’s capital.

Now, in the midst of its crisis, the United States (as any other country undergoing a crisis) is also experiencing the crisis (domestic and foreign) of the ideological discourse of *national consensus*: that ideological glue capable of holding together

the “body of the nation”, denying the interests of antagonistic or incompatible interests and preparing it to swallow its bitter medicine, whilst leading it by hand towards a progressive series of outside conflicts, first “cultural” and ideological, then diplomatic and finally in the form of outright warfare. Succeeding in making the ideological glue efficient on a wide scale again – this is the problem that faces the US ruling class (a model that will gradually be copied by the other ruling classes: the rhetoric that was broadcast in November in France and Italy on the first world bloodbath is a good example of the direction taken). The solution to this problem was certainly not to be found in Bush’s game (that of obtuse arrogance): it is instead far better served by the (exquisitely media-friendly) game played by Obama. He will be the one, with his neo-Kennedy charisma, his interclassist and intercultural message, his explicit symbolism (and blackmail: who can resist at this stage? only some exalted fringe faction, always of use to capital, but not at present) of the “long march of the black people” ... And so the credulous all over the world will swallow the hook ecstatically and in their idiotic “let us dream at least a while”, distribute amongst themselves the tickets for the “Mister and Miss Sucker 2009” gala... Suckers International Ltd. returns to the limelight with drum-rolls, fanfares of trumpets, confetti and streamers.

In the meantime, the new President mixes the ingredients for the glue: one for the hare and one for the hounds. And there is no doubt that he will *have to* pass measures to “re-launch the economy” (the poor automobile!), to “cure social ills” (the disastrous healthcare! the growing poverty! the increasing unemployment!), “to re-organize the finance and banking system” (mortgages! speculation! shaky institu-

tions!). *He will have to do all this to avoid social rebellion.* But (and here the “But” is truly monumental!) he will have to get hold of the money for all this: and he will get hold of it by a) greater exploitation of the American proletariat (who will thus lose three times as much as what is demagogically conceded to them), b) an increasing internal debt (which will be off-loaded onto all the countries that are already financing it now: virtually the whole world, including ... the suckers!), c) growing commercial, and *thus* also military, aggression. And it is here that the glue will have to prove itself, both at home and abroad. In other words, the period of “preparation for the new war” will begin, with all the necessary intellectual and psychological mobilisation (and with the valid assistance of Suckers International Ltd.): the “new New Deal”, the new “righteous wars”, the “threat from the current baddy”, the “war to end all wars”, the “war for democracy”, etc. etc. – the usual repertory that has become the whip of the dominant ideology, well experimented in two devastating pre-wars and in dozens of local “pre-scuffles”.

The new President is rolling up his sleeves right away and Suckers International Ltd. is promising its ecstatic support, forgetting (because its neurons have burnt out in eighty years of counter-revolution) that, in the ‘thirties, it was the New Deal that prepared the way for US intervention in the second world bloodbath.

It remains to be seen if the American proletariat will passively agree to being squeezed further and being sent to slaughter and be slaughtered: but the answer to this dramatic query is closely linked to the return to the limelight in all countries of the world of both the proletariat in arms and the revolutionary party capable of directing it.

The capitalist crisis sweeps away myths, false certainties, illusions. Let proletarians prepare to sweep away capitalism

The financial storm shows no sign of calming: day after day, with slight, momentary pauses (nonetheless capable of stirring the demagogic enthusiasm of "experts" and "organs of information"), the world's stock exchanges burn through billions of billions and total instability reigns. At this point no country's economy is safe - not even in the so-called emerging countries that were supposed to be the engine capable of towing the rusty-wheeled wagons out of the tunnel... Faced with all this, there is utter frenzy amongst the bourgeoisie: the daily papers are awash with streams of words, which all boil down to a single confession - "We don't know which way to turn!" "Bourgeois thought", which has never known how, or been able, to get to the bottom of its own mode of production (because in doing so it would have had to admit to its own transience, its *historically defined nature, destined for death and replacement by a higher mode of production*), reveals to an even greater extent in the age of imperialism (and thus of the totally parasitical existence of the ruling class) its own complete emptiness and inability. From this crisis, which has far deeper roots than it is said to have and which is far from having touched its lowest point, it emerges with admirable clarity that the only possible approach, both from the analytical point of view and from that of a solution, is that of dialectic materialism, communism, the revolutionary party.

At the roots of the crisis

"Crisis of the *sub-prime* mortgages", "financial crisis", "crisis caused by wild speculation", "crisis generated by the lack of regulations"... Let's forget the pathetic interpretations that are suggested to us day after day. The crisis explodes in the mid-nineteen-seventies and is a crisis of *overproduction of goods and capitals*. What does this mean? It means that the cycle of expansion that began with the end of the Second World War is over. In its turn, war (precisely as in the first world bloodbath) had been the inevitable response and solution to the capitalist mode

of production emerging from the world crisis of the '30s – *the latter being a pure crisis of overproduction*. War had thus destroyed the excess of commodities produced compulsively over the previous decades: amongst these, the “special commodity” of labour should not be forgotten – the millions of proletarians massacred on both sides. Not only this: the impulse of reconstruction in the second post-war period (both in defeated and victorious countries) had fuelled the capitalist production machinery to an enormous extent, leading to the extraordinary economic boom of the '50s and '60s, abundantly paid for by the proletariat all over the world (colonies and ex-colonies included). From 1945 to the mid-seventies, the “volcano of production” was in constant, unceasing eruption, fuelling the whole progressive rhetoric of the “best of all possible worlds”, the “end of class differences”, “technology as the answer to everything”, “wealth within easy reach.”

However, we communists know that opposite the “volcano of production” there is *always* the “quagmire of the market” – the *impossibility* of the world market being able to absorb all the commodities it has produced, in the name of production for its own sake and the competition of all against all¹. This perverse mechanism is not the fruit of individual malignity, the greed of the individual capitalist. In an attempt to contrast the law of the

*fall in the average profit rate*², capital (as a *social force*) is obliged, by the very laws of its own mechanism, to produce more and more, to compete more and more, worldwide, to find ways of endless *self-valorization*. It cannot keep still, it cannot impose limits on itself, it cannot do without profit and unregulated growth: “-” is its hallmark, “-” its daily terror.

In those thirty years this is exactly what happened, in the east as in the west, in the “western democracies” as in the so-called (unjustifiably, as we have always demonstrated) “countries of real socialism” – i.e. in the capitalist mode of production, which was dominant everywhere in different forms according to historical contingencies, but ones *already very familiar* (and that can always be traced

1. See: “Vulcano della produzione o palude del mercato? [Volcano of production or Quagmire of the Market?]”, *Il programma comunista*, nn.13-19/1954.

2. The proof of this law, documents in hand, lies in our constant work of analysis of the “course of world capitalism”, carried out by our Party since the nineteen-fifties, not so much on the latest episode, which has made the news, but throughout bourgeois economic history. There is an enormous amount of material: suffice it to consider the two reports “Traiettorie e catastrofe della forma capitalista nella classica monolitica costruzione teorica del marxismo [Trajectory and Catastrophe of the Capitalist Form in the Classical Monolithic Theoretical Construction of Marxism]” (*Il programma comunista*, nn.19-20/1957) and “Il corso del capitalismo mondiale nella esperienza storica e nella dottrina di Marx [The Course of World Capitalism in the Historical Experience and Doctrine of Marx]” (*Il programma comunista*, nos.16-24/1957 and 1-9/1958). An effective summary is to be found in the reports on the “Course of Capitalism” held at the recent General Meetings of the party and gradually published on our Italian-language newspaper, *Il programma comunista* (for example, in nos. 4/2004, 1/2005, 4/2005, 1/2008). As regards the so-called “real estate bubble”, its origins and nature, see the articles published in nos. 5/2006 e 4 e 5/2007 of this same newspaper.

back, in this second post-war period, to more or less highly developed "state capitalism" extending to the various production sectors, to "state intervention", to the *welfare state*, as a form of economic and social domination typical of the expansion phase).

In the mid-seventies this mechanism started to fail. The "volcano of production" had now filled the "quagmire of the market": the tidal wave of excess commodities had overflowed its banks. From this moment onwards there has been an uninterrupted sequence of crises, initially local, low-intensity ones, but extending increasingly and becoming more severe: the 80s and 90s are clear proof of this. The crisis of overproduction has resulted in capital, on the world market, no longer being able to valorize itself at the necessary rate and to the necessary degree, with those production and profit rates that are wrongly imagined to be necessary for attempting (*in vain*, it must be stressed) to combat the *bête noire* of capital: precisely that fall in the average profit rate, which represents its death sentence. A crisis of overproduction, then. And, thus, a *crisis of the real economy*, as they say today: a *crisis arising out of production*³. To deal with this, capital looked for other ways, potentially faster ones, of accumulating money, i.e. the path of finance. It invested enormous sums (individual, national, multinational) on the stock exchange, making use of the financialization of the economy typical of the imperialist phase of capitalism. But continuing to play the stock market when produc-

tion is suffocating and competition on the world markets is growing keener and keener *inevitably* means creating bubbles of speculation. And it is in the nature of bubbles of speculation to burst: just as happened throughout the 80s and 90s, culminating (for now) in the "crisis of the *sub-prime* mortgages".

We repeat: *the roots of the crisis are not to be found in finance, in wild speculation, but in the real economy, in the overproduction of commodities and capitals and in the consequent impossibility of capital to valorize itself at the necessary rate and to the necessary degree*. The chain is not: wild speculation by financiers and unscrupulous players on the stock exchange who obey no rules – financial crisis – recession. The chain is (broadly speaking for the sake of argument): hyper-production in the second post-war period after the destruction of com-

3. To those who object that there has been no lack of crises in previous decades, from the end of the war onwards, we reply: of course they have not been lacking – the best example is the immediate post-war period, with times of crisis that struck the victorious and dominant imperial power – the USA. But the characteristic of the crisis in the mid-seventies is that, for the first time since the end of the war, it struck simultaneously at the economies of the world leaders, who all found themselves hit by crisis at the same time for the first time, and no longer in isolated ones as had happened previously (and therefore with the real chance of off-loading their own particular crisis onto others).

modities and labour in the second world bloodbath – market saturation in a matter of around thirty years – crisis of overproduction from the second half of the seventies onwards – difficulty and slowdown in the process of self valorization of capital – attempt to find quick and remunerative shortcuts to remedy capital's state of suffocation through financialization of the economy – creation of financial bubbles with their successive and increasingly serious explosions (for reasons of space, we shall not give examples, but they are well known) – a chain of bankruptcies of banks, credit institutes and credit crunches – repercussions on the real economy with aggravation of the cycle of recession already in progress (and for the moment we shall stop here, at this link in the chain).

Briefly, *the capitalist mode of production is in its death throes.*

State intervention

At this point, as the storm grew, a great racket was caused by the decision, gradually taken by the governments of all the big countries, on a massive intervention to support the bank crisis with huge injections of capital, even to the extent of a wave of nationalizations. This led several fools to exclaim, "But this is socialism!", endorsing the idiotic equation "state-controlled=socialism", that both Stalinists and Trotskyites have believed in (whether in good faith or not) for decades, without counting the numerous droves of rascally supporters of economic liberalism.

This state intervention came as no surprise to us communists, and for many different reasons. On the one hand because *the state is a tool of capital and of the ruling class*, not an independent and impartial subject: both as an investor and in the guise of the policeman, the state, especially in this imperialist phase, can do none other than defend and promote the interests of capital – as is confirmed by the history of the *whole* course of bourgeois domination and in particular that of the 1900s⁴. On the other hand, we were not surprised because, over the past century, state interventionism (in different forms and ways, which are essentially similar and convergent) has *inevitably* presented itself as the leitmotif of the bourgeoisie's political rule. It was as much a characteristic of Nazi-fascism, in the form of dictatorship (in order to defeat a combative and

threatening proletariat in an area critical for the outcome of the world revolution), as of the U.S. New Deal in the form of democracy (where no such direct threat existed); and it was a characteristic of Stalin's Russia, where a young

4. In this regard, see our party works entitled "Il ciclo storico dell'economia borghese [The Historical Cycle of Bourgeois Economy]" and "Il ciclo storico del dominio politico della borghesia [The Historical Cycle of Bourgeois Political Dominion]", both published in no. 5, 1947, of what was then our theoretical journal *Prometeo*.

capitalism had to be fully developed at supersonic speed, so that it could hold its own with the great existing monsters of imperialism⁵. But it was also a characteristic of the entire political-economic development of the second post-war period which, beneath its superficial and wordy democratic rhetoric, represented perfect continuity, not with the economic liberalism of the phase now definitively outgrown by bourgeois supremacy (before the First World War, to be precise), but with those same centralized and state-controlled regimes that came out of the war defeated. As we have never ceased to declare and to demonstrate in this half century, "the fascists were defeated, fascism won:" in the sense that the substance typical of imperialism (centralization, financialization, state intervention, with all their political and social effects) was transferred from one form to another, *smoothly and with no interruption*.

5. It is as well to recall briefly that for us there was no "building of socialism" in Russia but that, in the absence of a proletarian revolution in the west, the October Revolution (communist in perspective and political strategy but with capitalist economic tasks) ended up by collapsing, with the result that bourgeois economic forces (which could not help but be encouraged) gained the upper hand over the revolution and the Bolshevik Party itself, strangling the former and massacring the latter. Thus, in Russia, *capitalism affirmed itself*, with state management of heavy industries and a wide variety of phases of capitalist development in other sectors. The "fall of the Berlin Wall" in 1989 is not the crash of communism for us (since *it never existed*, either in Russia or elsewhere), but the devastating effect of the economic crisis penetrating even into countries with a more or less state-run economy, in order to accumulate capital. The study of Stalinism we are publishing in our Italian-language newspaper *Il programma comunista* gives an even clearer account of what our party has never ceased to argue, ever since, in 1926, the bastard, counter-revolutionary theory of "socialism in a single country" was advanced.

As we wrote in 1947 (*sixty years ago!*):

"The present war has been lost by the fascists but won by fascism. Despite using a democratic veneer, having saved the integrity and historical continuity of one of its most powerful state units, even in this tremendous crisis, the capitalist world will make a further huge effort to dominate the forces that threaten it and set up an increasingly severe system of control of economic processes, paralyzing the autonomy of any social and political movement that threatens to disturb the established order of things. Just as the legitimist victors over Napoleon were obliged to take on board the inherited social and legal structure of the new French regime, the victors over the fascists and the Nazis, in a more or less brief and more or less transparent process, will recognize by their acts – though denying it in the words of empty ideological proclamations – the need to administer the world, so tremendously shaken by the second imperialist war, with authoritarian and totalitarian methods which were first experimented in the defeated countries.

"Rather than being the result of difficult and apparently paradoxical critical analyses, this basic truth is becoming more evident day by day in the work of organization for economic, social and political control of the world. The bourgeoisie, once individualist, national, liberist and isolationist, now holds its world congresses and, just as the Holy Alliance attempted to stop the bourgeois revolution with the International of absolutism, today the capitalist world tries to found its own International, which cannot help but be centralist and totalitarian."⁶

6. "Il ciclo storico del dominio politico della borghesia [The Historical Cycle of Bourgeois Political Dominion]", cit.

Those who then wish to verify this affirmation by means of a systematic study of what has happened in the field of capitalist economy in the second post-war period and in related state interventions in the economy, can do so on the basis of the detailed analyses contained in our regular studies on "The Course of World Capitalism".

No surprises, then, for us communists, when we come across nationalisation and central intervention by the state: indeed, a splendid confirmation of Marxist theory and the certainty, confirmed by bourgeois practice itself, that we are going in exactly the right direction.

Another confirmation comes from the fact that, in any case, capitalist economy is constitutionally unable to be self-regulating, because it is based on the sovereign law of profit and thus of competition with no holds barred, and this law means that, of course some extent of regulation is necessary; of course some degree of excess must be regulated; of course some attempt to create "world organisms of control" should be made: but in the end, beyond a certain limit, this same law enforces itself brutally and once again powerfully affirms itself. The proof of all this lies in all that is being said today, with more or less penitent capitalists and financiers declaring that "it is the real economy that must become the centre of attention once more," that the massive state interventions to restore liquidity in the banks must serve to "put the real economy back on its feet", to "get it out of the recession"...etc. etc. Or in the admission of George Bush himself (a real testimony to meditate upon!): "I remain a convinced liberist but the necessities of the economy make central intervention necessary."

However, this rosy prospect of a new take-off then comes up against a fact that is far more real: that the economy is *already* in recession *because of a crisis of overproduction*, that *the market is already saturated with goods as well as*

with capital. The capitalist mode of production thus flounders around in its essential contradiction: “volcano of production or quagmire of the market?”⁷

7. Cfr. “Vulcano della produzione o palude del mercato?”, *Il programma comunista*, nn.13-19/1954.

Winds of War

Faced with all this, what is the meaning of all this talk (*common to the ruling classes in every country*) about returning to investments in the real economy? On giving impulse to industry again? On increasing productivity and production? On getting out of the tunnel of recession by launching consumption and making the national economy more competitive on the world market? And so on, from one lot of words to the next?... It means, quite frankly: *the conditions are being created for a new war*, which will not just be a commercial one (as there has *always* been in this second post-war period) but which will *necessarily* have to be *fought by making war*. In other words, in a crisis, capital can do none other than return to the *only final solution* it knows: the one it has always turned to in similar situations, in 1914 as in 1940 – *a world war, to destroy everything that has been produced to excess*.

If, at this stage, someone is tempted to exclaim. “The same old catastrophists!”, they had better stop and think. The classical definition given by Von Clausewitz of war (“the continuation of politics on a different level, and with different means” – of the politics of preservation of capital, we would add) is so well suited to bourgeois society that it might easily be turned around: i.e. defining politics as the projection on a different level and with different means, of that permanent state of war (though mostly carried out underground) that is *capitalism’s real way of being and becoming*. A war between individual capitals in daily economic life; a commercial war between concentrations of capital and thus, in the long term, also between States, for the control of markets and for predominance in vital sectors of production and supplies of raw materials; first a diplomatic war, then one waged by warfare, when the antagonisms inevitably linked to the process of the expansion of capitalism reach a level of extreme tension and look for their “solution” in armed violence, in war *tout court*.

Obviously a number of different factors must concur for the link between the successive stages of a *single process* to become evident, and for the collapse of those theories so skillfully constructed and propagated in support of the ventilated possibility that equilibriums reached in one of them consolidate in a sort of “perpetual peace”, albeit a restless one. In the

Marxist vision, not only is it true that in a capitalist age wars are a necessary and unavoidable product of the current mode of production (and only the proletarian revolution can stop them breaking out or violently interrupt their progress). It is also true that, in certain periods (of crisis in the mechanism of capital accumulation), it is the extreme remedy that the bourgeoisie cannot help turning to, to safeguard its dominion through the mass destruction of capital, commodities and labour – of men and women, that is – and of the products of their hands.

Of course this does not mean that the bourgeoisie embarks on a war on the basis of carefully weighed calculations or the free decisions of their legislative or executive bodies: it is *the very existence of capitalism*, its vital needs, that set in motion the mechanism of the conflict, starting out from the preliminaries of what will then become the formal declaration of war, right up to conducting it practically, *materially and ideologically*. War does not break out either “by chance” or “at the desire” of individuals or groups: it is the final outcome of an objective situation that has matured in a whole variety of sectors and exploded at the breaking point of power relations between the economies of the countries that are candidates for the role of belligerents.

Thus, in the past two decades, the winds of war have never ceased to blow. For those who are not so stupid as to believe that wars are waged to “save democracy”, to “strike down rogue states”, to “get rid of dictators”, it is clear that these more or less local or area wars (which have meant and continue to mean the *massacre of civilians and widespread destruction – i.e., manna for those involved in the reconstruction*) are the direct effect of this crisis: the control of strategic positions, occupation of areas rich in energy (both from the point of view of raw materials and from that of the passage of oil-lines and gas-lines), the exclusion of the main economic players. These are the reasons for the first Gulf War, the war in ex-Yugoslavia, the second Gulf War, the intervention in Afghanistan and so on, throughout a region that reaches from the Balkans to India and is proving increasingly to be a critical seismic fault-line in the capitalist mode of production.

The present phase characterized by the explosion of the speculative bubble of the “*sub-prime mortgages*” is thus only the most recent chapter in a long phase that began in the mid-nineteen-seventies. It is destined to drag on with high and low points for a few years, burning through hundreds and hundreds of billions of billions of dollars, euros, yen, yuan (giddy sums that are themselves the best evidence of market satura-

tion), increasingly aggravating the living and working conditions of millions of proletarians all over the world and making the process of proletarianization of the middle classes more acute, leading to a further giant concentration of banks, financial and state companies, exasperating international competition and hostility. But *this will be nothing compared to what is to come afterwards*: a further and far more devastating crash that will mean an even tighter turn of the screw, a most violent acceleration in the *objective process* previously described. The problem is: how to stop this once and for all?

The effects of the crisis on the proletariat

There is no need to spend many words on what are (and above all will be) the effects of the economic crisis, as it becomes progressively tighter and keener: wages that are increasingly insufficient to secure a decent living, generalized increases in the prices of basic commodities and services, the soaring of unemployment and gigantic waves of migrants without reserves and, for those who may remain in employment, increasingly intense exploitation in the name of productivity and making the company and the nation competitive, progressive cuts in all the "guarantees" conquered by labour struggles over past decades, a head-on attack on the forms and objectives around which proletarian battles are waged and organized, military-police control on daily life and on any type of antagonistic behaviour, or even any behaviour which is not in agreement with "social pact" and "national solidarity" policies... All aspects which, to a more or less minor degree, are already present everywhere, in Italy as in France, in Great Britain as in the United States, in China as in Russia, in Israel as in Iran and India as in Japan; but with the deepening economic crisis they can only become more serious and acute. The bourgeoisie is obliged to cut away all the dead and unproductive branches, it must use the whip to try and bring home the maximum profit possible, it needs a docile and obedient labour force, fragmented and in competition with one other, passive labourers today and drugged tomorrow by the myths of the nation and the fatherland, ready to transform themselves from beasts of labour into cannon fodder – this is the cruel, bare truth and *proletarians must look it in the face without illusions*.

Not only this: the crisis is already striking and will continue to strike increasingly hard at all the intermediate strata, too (the middle classes, the lower-middle classes), who have always deluded themselves that they could hitch onto the triumphal chariot of capitalism, humbly picking up the crumbs, but now

see themselves plunging into the proletarian abyss, simultaneously losing the spin-offs and the social status that have been their foolish boast up to the present. This lower-middle class, which is turning nasty and has no desire to accept the inevitable process of proletarianization that is already affecting it, is a powerful enemy of the proletariat; on the one hand because it is the vehicle of all typical and infectious ills (individualism, career climbing, mental closure, rancour towards those who are different, a tendency to change colours, the inability to be coherent, the obstinate desire to “reform” the un-reformable...); on the other hand, because it will always be the first to proclaim its obedience to the bourgeois State in its policing and military adventures, like a fury against the struggling proletariat. And here again, we can quite clearly see all the warning signs.

Faced with all this, we communists do not have high-sounding or demagogic recipes for success. We have a *prospect* to indicate, that is amply confirmed by the same hard facts of daily life: the unstoppable progress of the economic crisis, the deterioration of all working and living conditions, the approach of a new world bloodbath. And we have a *programme of struggle* to confirm: the capitalist mode of production *must be overthrown* before it proceeds to massacre millions of proletarians once again (risking at the same time to destroy itself and with it the human species); its defeat can only be brought about by a proletariat that takes up the fight again in its own immediate and future interests and can only come about under the guidance of a newly restored world communist party, to whose extension and entrenchment the more aware of the proletarians and the avant-garde in the struggle must give their vital contribution; the capitalist mode of production must be replaced by a classless society, if humanity wishes to survive.

This means:

- The relentless defence of living and working conditions, using the classical arms of the class struggle: strikes with a deep, long-lasting and widespread effect; the blockage of production and services; unification, centralization, generalization and organization of fights beyond the limits of the individual company, category, sector; effective unity between employed proletarians and the unemployed, those “born and bred” in the country and immigrants, men and women, young and old; a strike fund to support the action; the defence and protection of proletarians suffering state repression and of their families. An attack on the individual is an attack on everyone.

- An open battle to win large rises in wages, bigger ones for the worst-paid categories, and drastic reductions in working hours, at the same wage.
- The rebirth of rank-and-file organisms capable of organizing proletarian action and battles effectively, in opposition to the complete betrayal of the official unions.
- The interruption and boycotting of any type of solidarity with capital on all levels (company interests, the national economy, preparations for war, patriotic and military propaganda however disguised, mobilization and intervention) and the re-affirmation of the only possible solidarity for proletarians: *international and class solidarity*. Not a single man for capital's war mongering.
- The strengthening and rooting of the revolutionary party internationally, in the necessary perspective of the violent seizing of power and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat directed by the party.

Capitalism can bring only hunger, destruction and massacres.

The time has come to choke it once and for all!

From world crisis to communist revolution

Not a day goes by without the world press publishing alarming bulletins on the health of the economy. In their upside-down universe, the bourgeois commentators, the “experts” and the “economists” perceive a clear slowdown in world economy: yet, they cannot, of course, trace it back to its original causes because this would mean them having to acknowledge the frailty of their own mode of production. And so they turn to metaphysics.

In the first place, they continue to ask themselves if we are or are not in the midst of a complete recession (the word “crisis” is too strong for them, since it implies a break, a collapse; the word “recession” is softer and evokes the gradual nature of the curve: like saying, “after a slowdown, there’s always an acceleration”), on each occasion putting off until a threatening tomorrow, and yet only a short distance beyond, full recognition of the bare facts – i.e. in Marxist terms, that from the mid-seventies onwards, in alternating phases, but above all with increasingly headlong crashes, capital has no longer succeeded (no longer succeeds) in realizing itself fast enough.

Secondly, they attribute the slowdown in the economy to what are really its effects: the “evil-doers” of the moment are thus the dip in the real estate market, the case of the “subprimes”, the fibrillation on the financial markets, one bubble or another

bursting, the increase in the price of raw materials and food products. And they ask themselves if all this might not risk having consequences on the real economy...when it is precisely the crisis of the real economy that sets off these processes.

Moreover, they believe it is possible for them to find a strategy for containing the crisis in the manoeuvres of the Federal Reserve, the ECB and other central bodies, when it is becoming clearer and clearer that it is a question of desperately trying to catch up with something that is already in full swing: and so the cut in interest rates (from which a “miraculous” trend reversal is expected) is none other than the effect of a situation that is already underway, where the constant rush to cut back is, if anything, the epiphenomenon – and this situation, which is already a reality, is precisely the increasingly feeble condition of the world economy.

Furthermore, while they are actually demonstrating in practical terms the error of liberalist ideological rhetoric (condemned for almost a century now by capitalism’s own development towards imperialism, yet always reviving to cloud the ideas of the current dunces) with increasingly frequent appeals for determined and “authoritative” centralized intervention, they can do no more than recognize the impotence of any prospects for real, feasible planning and

management of the capitalist market, that might be able to attenuate and control instability and vulnerability.

This is not all: the concern of the bourgeois economists is accompanied on the one hand by the need to exorcize the phantom of catastrophe, “reassuring the markets” through mirages of “soft landings”, upturns, recoveries, etc. and banishing any suspicion that it might be the *structure* itself of the capitalist mode of production that is yielding drastically; on the other hand, there is the need to “make the devil seem uglier than he is”, being “more catastrophic than necessary”, “using strong words”, all to bring about paralysis through concern and fear and thus demand more sacrifices “if we wish to get out of the tunnel” and clamour for tighter measures in regulating labour, increasing productivity, imposing social pacts with the use of truncheons, if extortion proves insufficient.

Faced with this dramatic inability of bourgeois economists, politicians and experts (and their reformist hangers-on of all descriptions) to deal with their own structural crisis, let us look at the details of what is happening and what the perspective of communists should be.

Twenty years ago

When the heads of the seven main world economies met in Venice in May 1987, their agenda foresaw a discussion of the gloomy picture that loomed before them. All the indicators were pointing downwards, dips on the Stock Exchange were leading to state intervention, statistical forecasts indicated alarming falls in growth rates in all countries, stopping at around 2.5% (a rate that many nowadays would find tempting!). The crisis and con-

sequent crash on Wall Street, which lasted for weeks in autumn 1987, alarming the whole of the financial world, now seem just a small warning sign of what is about to unleash itself on world capitalism.

The long period preceding this had deluded the bourgeois economists into thinking that the stock markets would open up to massive injections of fresh money from small “popular” investors, in the name of more democratic markets: huge masses of dreamers rushed to play the stock exchange, attracted by the easy money to be earned in the world of false riches. The transformation of production into financial assets thus became increasingly intense, as did the search for other large sources of financial capital. “Working-class shareholding”, which had already received the blessing of the trade unions in all industrialized countries back in the ‘60s, established that part of salary increases should be kept back and invested in the company. Pension funds made their appearance, as well as investment funds, insurance funds, managed by big, transnational groups whose actions became practically uncontrollable. In the euphoria of the mass druging of the economy in the ‘80s, speculation took over all sectors of finance and thus of production and commerce; from here, it naturally passed on into politics, with the spectacular scandals that toppled governments and multinationals (Enron to name just one of them).

The fact that all this was mere speculation, with no kind of correspondence to real production, was demonstrated by the sudden crash on Wall Street and the desperate race to sell off shares that had become so much waste paper.

What had determined these upheavals, after the upward run of post-war decades?

Any capital, large or small, needs to realize itself. In prosperous times this is achieved by the increasing extraction of plus-value from the proletarian masses. In times of crisis, it is achieved wherever possible, even apparently “outside the process of production”: financial investment, in the form of false capital created by speculation, is the form that capitals have most readily turned to over the past few decades. The small economic “successes” that some States have managed to achieve here and there over short or very short periods have been piloted in this way, and only the blind could pretend not to notice that this frequent alternation of crises and phases of speculative euphoria do none other than bring the catastrophe closer.

Everywhere speculation – which is based on credit, and increasingly on huge amounts of credit (that of States, companies, families) that has now become irreclaimable – endeavours to breathe new life into an enfeebled economy, supported by States that are up to their ears in debt and by their central banks: but in this situation the slightest obstacle can become the spark that sets off the explosion. Threatening clouds are gathering as China bursts onto the markets of commodities and finance, and the only thing that the sick economies of western countries are clinging to now is merely the hope that the fresh young Chinese capital will not impose its predatory laws to the utmost, since the crash that followed would inevitably drag world capital down with it. Naturally, there will be no possibility of choice, for either side. Dictating the moves in the field of economy, and thus in politics, are *the unavoidable needs of capitalist production, that is of the production of plus-value and the race to make a profit.*

Is this anything new? A surprise?

What Marx and Lenin had identified as a typical mechanism of the capitalist mode of production has actually come about: i.e. the moment has come in which society possesses “too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them” (Marx-Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Chap. 1: Bourgeois and Proletarians).

This is what has happened in the second post-war period. The Second World War (which was – it is as well to repeat this every time – *an armed conflict between competing imperialist blocks*) was an enormous bloodbath and a gigantic destruction of production forces and commodities, including that most precious of commodities for Capital that is constituted by the labour force: it was inevitable that the post-war period of reconstruction involved an exceptional phase of accumulation of Capital, which lasted overwhelmingly for thirty years or so – the boom, the economic miracle, whatever we wish to call it, which was a feature of all the world economies that came out of the war, whether defeated or victorious. And which was paid for by proletarians from all over the world (including the impoverished masses in the colonies and ex-colonies) by massive exploitation in their

workplaces and in society as a whole: suffice it to remember the huge flows of migration which, since then, have unceasingly moved workforces from one corner of the globe to the other to have the utmost wrung out of them.

This post-war cycle of accumulation (which was accompanied in the east as in the west by an unprecedented operation to build consensus ideologically) lasted for around thirty years. After this, as our Party had foreseen ever since the '50s on the basis of a careful study of the "course of world capitalism", indicating the mid '70s as the turning point¹, it was to end by coming to a halt, precisely around 1975. Since then, in alternate phases of advance and retreat, the economic crisis has dominated the world scenario, creating the conditions for future catastrophes: "And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented" (Marx-Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Chap. 1: Bourgeois and Proletarians).

Today, the young innocents of the bourgeois economy speak of speculation as a *moral element*, abused by the sharks of high finance and the wolves of the Stock Exchange, the greedy and merciless representatives of a capitalism that has suddenly turned less than fatherly and not very protective towards the world of work. This indicates either an unwillingness to understand even the basic facts of the historical process behind it all, or a desire to hide the facts. It means wanting people to believe that financial capital is born out of

nothing and that, once the accidental problems that have so mysteriously arisen have been solved, and one or the other "case theory" has been analyzed, any crisis will be overcome. We, on the other hand, know that financial capital owes its existence and its exponential growth to the forced labour that millions upon millions of proletarians are condemned to during an entire cycle of accumulation; and the more wide-ranging is the war damage that closed the previous cycle, the higher is the entity of the profit that will be produced in

1. Amongst the many articles published at the time on this topic in the pages of this newspaper, see: "L'economia capitalistica in Occidente e il corso storico del suo svolgimento [Capitalist economy in the West and the course of its historical development]" (no. 19/1956, of *Il programma comunista*) and "Il corso del capitalismo mondiale nella esperienza storica e nella dottrina di Marx [The course of world capitalism in historical experience and in Marx's doctrine]" (published uninterruptedly from no. 16/1957 to no. 7/1959, of *Il programma comunista*).

the next, the higher the rate of plus-value will be and thus the quantity of money in search of a collocation. It is of little concern to capital if this immense monster that devours live labour is kept alive, as well as by actual money, by gigantic quotas of mere "promises to pay", to be settled in who knows which year in the future. The lives of future generations of proletarians have been mortgaged by the present credit mechanism, this powerful lever by which capital keeps salaried slaves, the middle classes and the whole of humanity bound to it.

This desperate race to increase production and the consequent surplus in the production of means of production (thus, first the difficulty and then the impossibility of investing capitals *productively*) are the source of all the financial crises that have characterized the XXth century, despite

the more striking formal aspect that distinguishes them, i.e. the ruin of the banks and the crash of the stock exchanges – which lead bourgeois economists to treat them as financial crises.

In the youthful, liberalist phase of development of the capitalist mode of production, the crises ruined a certain number of capitalists, to a certain extent encouraging the concentration of capitals. But for over a century now, the capitalist as an autonomous, independent figure has vanished and freedom belongs to Capital alone, as an impersonal force served by a bureaucracy into which national States organize themselves. Financial capital thus becomes the ideal tool for enormously favouring transfers onto foreign markets. Its constant aim is therefore the formation of an average rate of profit, obliging competing States to engage in wide-scale battle.

All this reveals the lies of the bourgeois pen-pushers who, over the past few decades, have filled our heads with their fantasies of universal panaceas that would make any crisis impossible. In turn there were Taylorism, Toyotism, then *just in time*: in short, anything that was supposed to conciliate forced rhythms of work with universal prosperity, in a world where the circulation of commodities was a clear and peaceful process.

It is thus a *mere propagandistic lie* (supported unfortunately by large masses of deluded *no globals*, pacifists, worshippers of the politics of reform and similar) that crises can be overcome by the politics of competition and the liberalization of markets: it is a lie “evades and obscures the very profound and fundamental contradictions of imperialism: the contradictions between monopoly and free compe-

tition which exists side by side with it, between the gigantic ‘operations’ (and gigantic profits) of finance capital and ‘honest’ trade in the free market, the contradiction between cartels and trusts, on the one hand, and non-cartelised industry, on the other” (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chap. IX: “Critique of Imperialism”).

The problems surface

Today, however, many of the unsolved problems are surfacing. The increase in technical and production resources and in natural and artificial needs; the increasing gap between agricultural and industrial production; the upheavals on the network of markets at each crisis, everything goes to show that the laws of economy are there, claiming their due: they are the *historical condemnation of capitalism*.

Precisely because of its unstoppable tendency towards development, the gigantic growth in the productivity of work and the enormous mass of means of production, capitalism must periodically destroy the excess of wealth it produces. And the crises of the XXth century are marked by a scale quite unknown to the capitalism of the previous century.

The difference between the classical crises up to 1929 and those that followed is to be found in the New Deal, or the *fascistizing of the economy*, by which the bourgeois State makes the working class pay the entire costs of the crises, whilst in ‘29 it was industrial profits that crashed by over 60% in just one year. Some features of that great crisis, which today disturbs the bourgeoisie in their sleep, were the halving of industrial production, the

considerable increase in unemployment, the increase in buying power, the drop in the cost of living with prices falling heavily and finally the crash of stocks and shares.

The crises that came after 1929 seem to be marked by an increase in prices and in the demand for commodities: it is the States that purchase excess production, destroying them in imperialist wars (as well as the slaughter of the Second World War, hundreds of so-called “low-intensity” wars are to be found, sparked off in every continent in the second post-war period) thus encouraging the recovery of production worldwide.

Capitalist technological development allows the price of manufactured goods to be kept down, whilst the prices of food products and raw materials still remain high. This phenomenon was to be seen up to 2006: since then prices have stampeded beyond all control. In January 2006, thick steel laminates were sold at \$525 a ton, today at \$750; over the same period, a ton of aluminium has risen from \$2000 to \$2650; in 2003 a ton of copper was sold at \$1700, today at as much as \$8600. If the price of oil and its derivatives are added to this list of prices, it is clear that the whole of the world’s production machinery is entering the most critical phase in the second post-war period.

After the mid ‘70s and from the ‘80s onwards, at the end of the post-war period of accumulation, there was a more or less general crisis in foreign trade, answered, in the ‘90s, by the tendency towards a large increase in the exportation of capital and direct investments abroad. The curve of industrial production in the same period continued downwards in

the countries of historical capitalism, whilst it soared even further in the “emerging” countries, headed by China and South Korea.²

2. See: “Il corso del capitalismo mondiale dal secondo dopoguerra del XX secolo, verso il terzo conflitto imperialistico o la rivoluzione proletaria [The course of world capitalism from the second postwar period of the XXth century, towards the third imperialist conflict or the proletarian revolution]”, in *Il programma comunista*, no. 1/2008.

It was on this scenario filled with tension and contradictions, with growing imperialist appetites and ferocious competitive battles on a worldwide scale, that the Russian collapse came about at the beginning of the ‘90s, followed by strong speculative pressure on the currency market. Many currencies experienced wave after wave of sales to purchase Deutschmarks and, whilst the German currency gained strength, the downward trajectory of the dollar began. In 1994 the USA increased the cost of money to try and contrast the fall of the dollar but this measure only determined the withdrawal of capital, particularly from Mexico, plunging the country into a crisis. In 1997 the proud Asian “Tigers” fell, followed by Turkey, Albania, Argentina. Old Europe, too, found itself involved, not inconsiderably, in the international tension. In some ways, the war in the Balkans was the continuation of the Gulf war: it regarded an area of Europe where German capitalism had traditionally had its grazing grounds, an area that the USA was regarding with renewed interest and where Russian appetites had long since vanished, by necessity rather than desire. The rearmament campaign, the re-launching of the arms trade, the *longa manus* extended towards the transport routes of hydrocarbons from the Caucasus towards the Mediterranean: these,

and not the principles of “the offence to democracy”, were the reasons at the basis of a war that was to change the picture of geopolitical balance in Balkan Europe.

This is the real context in which world economy has been moving in the past twenty years. One that could not help but give rise to the two Gulf wars, the intervention in Afghanistan, the constant tension on the African continent, the clashes on the western boundaries of Russia, the turbulence in Latin America, not to mention the Balkans and the whole area of the Caucasus. Gradually but inexorably, the world is turning into keg of dynamite, approached from several sides by sizzling fuses.

The crisis and the world proletariat

Thus, from the mid ‘70s onwards, following the appearance and aggravation of the world economic crisis step by step, Capital led an unprecedented attack against the proletariat, in order to dismantle the “welfare system” and win back the “social victories” secured by daily defensive battles in the previous decades. As we wrote in the editorial to the last issue of the newspaper, “If the cycle of accumulation that began after the tremendous disasters of the Second World War made it possible for crumbs, even large ones, to fall from the world feast of reconstruction (and in any case this was only possible because the world proletariat had shaken the banqueting tables violently on several occasions), now, faced with the crisis and in response to it, the ruling

class in all countries is engaged in a violent attack to snatch back everything that had been previously obtained. This goes for all sorts of “social victories”, whether they are to do with salaries and working hours or with measures for more “civilized communal living” or the frequently bandied “civil rights”³.

This attack has proceeded step for step in all countries, independently of their specific influence on the world market, and it has meant: insecure employment, salary cuts, increase in work rhythms and in working hours, the progressive dismantling of the “welfare state” (pensions, healthcare etc.), moving production in order to reduce labour costs, exploiting cheaper workforces, exasperation of migration as a consequence of the social effects of the crisis in countries on the outskirts of the imperialist strongholds and the creation of vast “industrial reserve troops” of migrants, resulting in salaries being kept down, divisions being created within the working class, the offer of a poverty-stricken workforce that is easily blackmailed and therefore ready to accept any conditions; and it has been accompanied by increasingly widespread measures of “social control” and open repression towards those workers who are more reluctant to accept any old living and working conditions – in a word the “fascistizing of democracy”, already quite evident at the end of the Second World War, has made giant strides forward, under the pressure of the world economic crisis. All this has happened thanks to the active, theoretical and practical support of reformist political and union policies, which have offered the bourgeoisie of all countries their practical aid, deluding

3. “‘Conquiste sociali’ e fregature del riformismo [“Social victories” and swindles of reformist policies]”, *Il programma comunista*, no.2/2008.

and disorientating proletarians, neutralizing their battles on several occasions, isolating and denouncing the more combative workers and, more in general, cordoning off any attempt at autonomous and spontaneous organization to avoid it spreading.

Nevertheless, at a national and worldwide level the responses of the proletariat have not been lacking and some, despite being defeated, have been resounding: we are thinking of the 40 days at the Fiat in Turin in 1980 and, again in 1980, the powerful proletarian movement in Poland, the American flight controllers' strike in 1981, the wave of protests at Renault, Citröen and Talbot and in the coal mines of Lorraine in France in 1981, the great miners' strikes in England in 1984, the violent strikes that broke out in South Korea in 1997 and, again in 1997, the long and aggressive strike at the American UPS, the explosive situation in the American ghettos of the south-west, the epidemic of social instability in many Latin American countries (from Mexico to Argentina, including Brazil and Venezuela), the barrel of gunpowder that the Middle East has become, where false "national issues" mask and deviate open class conflict...

Moreover, in the last few years the progression of the world crisis has plunged increasing masses of people into the difficulty of dealing with today and the anguish over tomorrow: streams of hypocrisy are poured out, first to deny the evidence, then to hide it with words of compassion and lastly to avoid the spark of revolt setting the whole planet on fire. Never so much as in this second postwar period have impoverished conditions grown *to the limit of tolera-*

bility, never has social tension spread so much, like oil on water, in all continents. The phase of exasperated productivity, the enormous consumption of labour, the gigantic waste of energy, goods and services are now being followed by their accompaniment of *violent destruction of the accumulated work* and the *systematic destruction of social wealth*. It is not the crude realities of impoverishment, the insufficient salary that mark this age (in which, when there is not work for everyone, there is charity for everyone) but the *fearful spread of uncertainty*, the *multiplication of destruction*, the *exaltation of chaos*, the *orgy of waste* of everything that falls between the minimum necessary for survival and the maximum that is produced.

Now is the moment in which poverty is forcing masses of hungry people out into the streets to try and secure by force what their salaried status no longer allows them. This reminds us of the crystal-clear position of Marxism on *social misery* – a social misery that consists in *not possessing the means of production* and thus *not possessing the availability of the product*. This means that the producer, or the salaried worker, is defenceless when a crisis develops with a consequent reduction in the availability of commodities. The dream of the nest egg, laboriously entrusted to the management of a bank, the 30-square-metre holiday apartment, the car bought on hire-purchase, which all delude the happy owner that he has attained prosperity – in short the few miserly possessions through which capital tries to shape the minds and wills of the proletariat to its own image – soon vanish and leave those who thought they had become "property owners" to reflect on

their real condition as proletarians devoid of resources. It is the laws of accumulation of capital and growing misery discovered by Marx that rule the destiny of the bourgeois system; it is the bourgeois tricks of democratic capitalism, of the worker-stakeholder, of social assistance, that prevent the planet's billions of people without resources from getting rid of capitalism once and for all. The recent revolts for bread in many African, Asian and American countries are reminiscent of others, characteristic of a past time that the bourgeoisie and, above all those who are passionate about "reform" and "progress", considered dead and buried, and which announced the great proletarian battles in Europe a hundred or so years ago.

Today, however, the situation is spreading into all geographical areas. The recent clashes for bread on the streets of Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines, Senegal, Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Caribbean, Pakistan, Thailand, often with the army intervening to defend the shop owners, are none other than a prelude to what could happen in the main imperialist countries, too, in a not-too-distant future. The fakes of the great "humanitarian" organisations, the cops who control the movements of the world's food and financial cartels, proclaim loudly that it is all an "anomaly", that everything will get back to "normal", that it is the fault of this "madman" or the other, who has raised the prices of food products. We are glad to leave them to their empty proclamations, in the certainty that their charity will be of no use.

All the trends of the economy are turning in favour of the revolutionary com-

munist movement. The crisis of the economy reveals to the world proletariat *their true nature*, which is that of the world's producer of plus-value. By definition and out of necessity, they must be organized *on an international scale*, and it is this route that the national movements, still as yet unconnected, must learn to follow, recognizing that *local interests are everyone's interests* and that these interests do not speak one language rather than another but *the single language of the armed struggle for power*. Nevertheless, all this will be insufficient for accounts to be settled. It was not sufficient for the Asian "Tigers" people, when the financial inebriation swept past like a cyclone. It was not sufficient in Turkey, in Albania, in Italy, when the millions of dreamers who thought they would make money on the Stock Exchange were left with a handful of dust. It was not sufficient in Argentina, where the anger of the proletariat was unable to transform the workers' pickets, determined as they were, into anything beyond the "saucepan protest". The just and sacrosanct hatred of the proletariat for capital *will never be sufficient*, without a common direction to its action, without a programme that refuses to make compromises with the enemy and which establishes the violent overthrow of bourgeois power as its uncompromising objective. This direction, or programme cannot be drawn up in the heat of the struggle, when there are other elements that must be brought into play (the mode of the class conflict, the attack against one stronghold of capital or the other, immediate tactical demands). Every time the most bitter struggles, fought by the most determined members of the proletariat, have had to look within their own ranks and

in the heat of the moment, for a strategy and a programme, the only elements capable of transforming the battle into lasting victories, the siren of socialdemocracy, reform, opportunism allied with the bourgeoisie have inoculated their poison, separating, dismembering, creating false illusions and wrecking the most tenacious of battles, *preparing the way for reaction and violence against the proletariat.*

The communist perspective

The capitalist mode of production is heading towards the only outcome that the ruling class knows for solving its structural crisis: *a new inter-imperialist war*. The First World War saw the collapse of all the socialdemocratic parties which – with the sole exception of the small Serbian socialist party and the rather ambiguous position of the Italian socialist party (“Neither support nor sabotage”) – voted for war, siding with their respective bourgeoisies, instead of working to *transform the imperialist war into a civil war*: only rare groups of coherent communists maintained the correct class route, the precondition for the October Revolution and a post-war period illuminated everywhere by revolutionary uprisings. The Second World War came after the violent defeat of the proletariat by democracy (which cradled the working class in the illusion of a pacific development of the capitalist mode of production), nazifascism (which gave the death blow to a proletariat already unarmed and disoriented by cowardly socialdemocratic pacifism) and Stalinism (which upended any communist prospect by theorizing the “building of socialism in a single country” and allying itself first with one imperialist block and then with the other, in the

name of the “defence of the country and of democracy”). We should come to the appointment with the Third World War, for which preparations are underway, having learned from all these experiences, both positive and negative ones, and, above all, armed with the theoretical and strategic-tactical clarity, the firm organization, and the international roots of the revolutionary party: if this is not so, a new slaughter is on the way and it will be even more devastating than the previous two.

As materialists, we know that political class consciousness follows action and not vice-versa. Under the growing pressure of this authentic attack by capital, which will merely spread and become stronger over the next few years, the world proletariat *will be obliged* to fight to defend its living and working conditions. *It will be obliged* to find itself organizations independent of the State (which will increasingly reveal itself as its bitter enemy and the aggressive defender of bourgeois interests) and independent of political parties and trade unions that have done none other than cheat it over the last few years with promises of reform, containing its battles, boycotting them, disorganizing them and betraying them and openly denouncing the more combative and generous of the workers. *It will be obliged* to overcome all the divisions and antagonism that the capitalist mode of production itself fuels within it (racism, localism, nationalism), realizing in the course of the battle that only a united proletarian front will be able to reply effectively to the attack by capital. *It will also be obliged* to understand that the pure and simple (*though necessary*) defence of its own living and working conditions cannot be suf-

ficient: that it is necessary, if only to make this defensive battle effective, to proceed to a counter-attack: from the daily economic guerrilla war to an authentic *class war*, which is *the political war to win power*.

The world organization of struggle requires world organization of the programme and this programme must necessarily be one that comes from a superior social form, i.e. *communism*. All bourgeois economic categories long ago exhausted any positive function in social development, allowing only forms such as *parasitism*, *waste* and *destruction* to prosper. Everything has been ready, for too long now, for the development of a *society without a market, without money, without salaried work and without capital*, in which the potential of individuals and society develop harmoniously.

This programme, conserved for so long in the memory of the great battles of the past, exists and has no need of being elaborated by experts in sociology (which it should, on the contrary, be extremely mistrustful of!). However, it can only be explained and introduced into the class by a specific organ, which does not pose the objectives of limited victories, particular claims, whether local or company-based. This specific organ is not called a union, a circle, a club or a study seminar. It is *the class party* and there is no combative proletariat who can fail to see that it has *remained separated from class history for too long*.

Uncompromisingly at the centre stand *the reinforcement and international roots of the revolutionary party*, solidly anchored to the tradition of the Communist Left, the only one that – for over

almost a century now – has been able to resist and respond (theoretically, politically, organizationally and in practice) to the converging forces of the democratic, nazi-fascist and Stalinist counter-revolution, firmly maintaining the principles that have always distinguished communists from any other formation, group or party: the relentless fight against a society based on profit and on capital, internationalism, the need for a violent revolutionary fracture, the seizing of power and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the guide of the communist party.

At the Congress of Lyons in 1926, whilst the grave historical defeat of the international workers' and communist movement by Stalinism was taking place, the Communist Left, after having been banned from the direction of the Italian Communist Party – Section of the Communist International – conducted its extreme battle, fixing in its Theses (as opposed to the ultra-opportunist ones of Gramsci and Togliatti) the necessary bases for the future re-birth of the communist movement. In the latter, it is also possible to read the vital tasks of the revolutionary party in the long phase of counter-revolution that is still, unfortunately, making its weight felt heavily on the world proletariat:

- “a) the defence and precise formulation, in relation to new groups of facts that may arise, of the basic programmatic postulates, or the theoretical consciousness of the working class movement;
- b) ensuring the continuity of the party's organizational structures and their efficiency and defending it from contami-

nation by outside influences in contrast with the revolutionary interests of the proletariat;

c) active participation in all the battles of the working class even when arising out of partial and limited interests, in order to encourage their development, whilst constantly bringing out the link with ultimate revolutionary interests, presenting the victories of the class struggle as bridges towards the inevitable struggles to come and warning of the danger of resting content with partial achievements as though they were the final goal and bartering them for the conditions for action and class war by the proletariat, or the autonomy and independence of its ideology and organizations, first and foremost the party.

“The supreme aim of this complex work by the party is to prepare the *subjective* conditions of the proletariat’s formation, in the sense that they be-

come capable of exploiting the objective revolutionary opportunities that history presents, as soon as these appear, so as to emerge from the struggle victorious and undefeated.”⁴.

Thus, the defence of theory, political-organizational continuity, active intervention in the class struggle: it is from here that we – the International Communist Party (*Il programma comunista*) – have recommenced, in the conviction that ours is the only path for successfully seizing power, setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat and finally, after centuries of bloody domination by capital, achieving a classless society, the society of the human species, communism.

4. The “Lyons Theses”, presented by the Left of the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI), are reproduced in this same issue of Internationalist Papers (see p.)

The winds of war blow harder. The world proletariat will have to regain its class independence, in the face of all factions of war, present and future¹

Around mid-August, a significant wave of schizophrenia shook the world. In Beijing the Olympic Games opened to the usual accompaniment of hypocritical rhetoric on “universal brotherhood” and “democracy as the supreme value”. During those very same days, in South Ossetia, the Georgian tanks were entering the “rebel region”, reducing the capital to flames and instantly attracting severe punishment from its Russian protector: thousands of deaths amongst civilians, an unknown number of wounded, masses fleeing towards the north, “ethnic cleansing” of Ossetian separatists...² And then, everything seemed to ebb into the same old game of international diplomacy, with the tug of war of declarations, statements, the summits and the mediation: but there is *another fire smouldering under the embers*.

So is this what was going on behind the fireworks? Is this what was concealed behind the “sacred protest” in favour of “human rights trampled in China”? On the one hand, in the name of future business deals, all our television screens exhuded authentic jubilation over Chinese capitalism and its great managers (men and women), the century-old history of the Chinese nation, its technology and its working man, so small but so precious and scrupulous in observing the dictates of wage labour. On the other hand, the winds of war, fuelled by that same agonizing mode of production which gave birth to the “son et lumière” performances in the Eternal City, swept across another area of economic, social, political and strategic earthquakes, the Caucasus, after having devastated the Balkans and the Middle East.

“Who is right?” wondered the ever-“problematic” Italian daily *Manifesto* of 9 August. Thus continuing: “The ethnic, historical, political, military puzzle in those few square miles in the foothills of the Caucasus is a knot that is impossible to

1. This article was written around August 20th, 2008. It does not thus take in account events that may have followed, which will be dealt with in future articles.

2. Of course, this war picture, desumed from the daily press, must be taken very cautiously. We know quite well what is journalism and what it has turned into, especially when it is “embedded” – that is to say, direct expression of this or that national apparatus of war propaganda.

unravel. Right and wrong are entangled and the temptation to use the sword to cut through the knot is strong." To find a way out of our difficulties, all we can do is console ourselves, then: there is no individual responsibility, it is the fate of a martyred land, the dissolution of the USSR which has not yet come to its conclusion, it's all because of the oil, etc. etc. ... And memories of the previous war are evoked, in the same places and between the same protagonists as in 1991-92: deadly clashes with thousands of victims and refugees, ending in stalemate, in a sort of independence recognized by no-one, not even by Russia.

It was the Georgian President Saakashvili, a puppet in the hands of US imperialism, who launched the attack against the separatist region: but the provocation got out of hand, remarks the Italian economic daily *Il Sole - 24 ore* on that same 9 August, and Moscow's retaliation was immediate and severe. Having crossed Northern Ossetia, through the road corridors permitted by the Caucasian mountains, the tanks continued into the contested territory, threatening to invade Georgia, whilst another separatist province, Abkhazia, started to awaken. Russian imperialism no longer agrees to be squeezed into a corner by the advancing influence of its imperialist competitor: and so, a strong sign had to be given, a show of force in these lands which had only been shifted from their original barycentre by unforeseen events which threw them into the arms of new protectors.

The tons of oil and gas from the off-shore deposits in the Caspian Sea and the oil pipelines to the Mediterranean make Georgia a key country in the Caucasian area. For a long time the issue was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, starting from Azerbaijan, crossing Georgia and Turkey to reach the Mediterranean – a project set up in 2006 by a consortium including British Petroleum and Total, in which Italian Eni was also a partner. The Azeri oil reduces Europe's dependence on Russia for power, because it by-passes Russia on its way to the Mediterranean. Thus, to consider some sort of "independence" for Georgia, as for any other country in the area, whilst faced with the international agreements amongst imperialist predators, is *pure madness*. Their existence depends exclusively on the delicate diplomatic and military balance between the USA (and any western allies) and Russia. Georgia, an ally of the imperialism of the stars and stripes, has had to swallow the bitter pill of the numerous Russian military bases that have been situated on its territory for over ten years, as well as the more or less artificial

creation of areas with separatist tendencies³. This was the price paid by the USA to guarantee the security of the pipelines destined for the Turkish coasts of the Mediterranean and no-one fails to see this as a trigger point for the European economy, as well as a huge source of income from the transport and commerce of hydrocarbons. Around a million barrels a day flow through the Georgian-Turkish pipeline, or 1.1% of world production: this is a tempting slice of the cake, badly digested by

3. Cfr. "Il Caucaso, crocevia di poderosi interessi imperialistici" ("Caucasus - a crossroads of powerful imperialist interests"), in our Italian journal *Il programma comunista*, n.1/1996.

Russia but which has made some western companies extremely happy. The situation thus sees on the one hand Russia, threatened by the constitution in Georgia of an economic satellite in the hands of western imperialism, which would like to transform it into a strategic and military ally, shortly making it a member of NATO together with the Ukraine (for years now the military organization of the Georgian army has been "looked after" by the USA); on the other hand, this same western imperialism has nonetheless had to come to a compromise with Russian interests, ceding military control of part of Georgia's territory and accepting the constitution of authentic ghost-states, whose nature is claimed to be rooted in so-called ethnic, religious or linguistic micro-identities.

A situation like this is obviously unsustainable when wider-ranging economic and strategic tensions start to arise. As in the Balkans, the whole of the Caucasian area can rapidly turn into a keg of dynamite ready to explode: the common denominator of these situations is the fight for control of the main strategic areas in Europe and Asia. As in the Balkans, the Caucasus, too, is vital for East-West connections; just like Kosovo, Georgia is fed and equipped by the USA; here, as there, the "downtrodden rights of oppressed ethnic groups" are evoked or will be. It was (in the Balkans) and will be (in the Caucasus) these rights that justify the "humanitarian" intervention and military clash (still in its latent state) between imperialisms. In the Balkans the game served to allow Yankee imperialism to take a threatening tone towards the timid European advances (first and foremost by the Germans). In the Caucasus, it will serve to get round the obvious resistance by Russia to NATO penetration of the southern borders (something that, according to official statements, should happen at the end of this year) with the dispatch of the UN's "military observers" – which will change absolutely nothing in the new state of tension that has built up.

After the glowing embers of conflict in Kosovo were revived, with American and European approval of the independence of Pristina, feeding Serbian irredentism, Albanian and Greek

greed for Macedonia and the separation between Bosnia and Herzegovina, we wrote that sooner or later the revival of the conflict would spread to nearby areas, where claims and fake "unresolved national issues" were being fuelled by sharp-eyed international stirrers⁴.

4. Cfr. "Futuri bagliori di guerra in Kosovo" ("Future flashes of war in Kosovo"), in our Italian journal *Il programma comunista*, n.1/2008.

Already the commentators expected a declaration of independence by South Ossetia and formal recognition; already military preparations were underway in Georgia and in Russia (on 17/7 two military exercises were held, a Russian one in the north of the Caucasus and a Georgian-US one; on 16/7 the Georgian parliament approved a 26.8% increase in military spending, bringing the numbers of troops from 32 000 to 37 000; data supplied by *Il Manifesto* on 9/8). Even earlier the imperialist outlaws' game of Risiko had spread to the most varied regions of the world: brandishing separatist ideas amongst the pro-Russian and pro-American regions of the Ukraine, blocking the flow of oil towards Germany, feeding revanchist enthusiasms in the Baltic countries that see the passage of Russian pipelines through the Baltic and promoting strategic war alliances in Poland and the Czech Republic with the anti-missile shields.

The players acting out the massacre are the same as ever: the same old imperialisms know that these are strategic areas in peace and in war: "destabilize in order to stabilize" has always been the imperialist motto, both in the west and in the east; terrorizing harmless populations by setting in motion terrible machines of war, capable of destroying whole cities in a single "conventional" attack, opening up immense chasms and gutting buildings: this has always been the objective. After the collapse of the USSR, here, too, in these areas, "everything has changed, so that everything can stay the same as before." The old Russian bear sets out again on his uninterrupted march and the winds of the next world war blow more strongly. Under the claws of the Russian Federation this area has seen blood in Chechnya (200 000 dead) and the neighbouring Ingushetia. South Ossetia (the only corridor for rapid transit to Tbilisi) and Abkhazia on the Black Sea are two strategic areas for Russia: not by chance were the missile sites and Georgian port of Poti bombed and not by chance do these regions demand independence from Georgia, which obtained its own independence of Russia in 1991 and today takes refuge under the protective mantle of US dollars and the NATO armed forces. And Nagorno Karabakh, under the control of Armenian troops, and Azerbaijan, whose line of ceasefire has remained unchanged since 1994, when will they start to simmer again? And isn't

Turkish Kurdistan just a gunshot away from Iran and Armenia? How much time will pass before the pre-announced attack on Iran by Israel and the USA becomes operational (Israel is always the justification of justifications for any "humanitarian, democratic and...holy war")? Will the deadly capacity for attack and provocation, the presence of nuclear warheads, the ability to wipe out any of their neighbours ever drive the Israeli proletariat to sabotage the position of all the dominant classes ("the aggressors are always the others") and turn them towards a class position ("the true enemy is in our own country")?

In the middle, Europe (or the Europe the lower middle class dreams of: economically, militarily...and culturally united), obliged to move through this difficult groundswell in the hope that the storm will pass. In the meantime it can take advantage of the fact that its "ceasefire" position (primarily expressed by France and Germany) has been accepted and confirmed by the assembly of countries belonging to NATO. Of course there have been floods of criticisms and diversification of positions but apart from all this there has also been the mediation between American and Russian interests, on behalf of which Europe calls on the authority of its "pacifist" position in the American war in Iraq, of its important role on behalf of ending (?) the latest Israeli-Lebanese war and of its vigilant watch over the Russian-Ukraine situation before the issue of the oil transit exploded. But just how long will all this last? American pressure to redesign Russia and block its "imperial" and imperialist position is probably destined (at least in the immediate future) for failure due to the effect of the progressive decline of US economic power on the world chessboard; and Europe knows this from experience. The distinction between "old" and "new" Europe is also insignificant. We discover that the Russia of the Czars, of Stalin, of Breznev and of Putin, apart from the ideological filters that have always served to hide rather than to reveal, has moved, moves and will continue to move along the same historical and material path: the one inevitably traced first by Russia's young national capitalism and later by the rotting capitalism of the imperialist phase. On the other side, the old English and American imperialisms, by placing NATO (with its more adventurous financial affairs), almost all the Balkan and Baltic countries and those that had a determining role in the Warsaw Pact together in the same pot, believe they are closing the game with Russia. In reality they are placing Europe itself in danger and in particular Germany, which still today needs a "European Order" with Russia as part of it (this is demanded by the very development of German capitalism - a great exporter

of goods and capital). In fact Europe, this jungle of nationalisms that has already seen proof of the tragedy of "all against all" in the Balkans, will sooner or later have to come clean, breaking with fake political unity, illusory monetary agreements and awkward partners like Poland and the Czech Republic. Neither the protection of unity nor enlargement towards the east will suffice to save it from world pressures; indeed, these are what will accelerate the process of disintegration. Whilst it endeavours, like a modern Penelope, to save itself from rival claimants, ever extending and unravelling the web of unity, it will have to capitulate and once again find its Führer: and it will find him in that same Germany which, since the end of the Second World War, has always put its own geopolitical interests before Russian-American negotiations on its territory and before "pacific co-existence" as the fruit of share-out and condominium, and which – once more – will demand satisfaction. A Germany, nonetheless, that today is obliged to co-exist with its previous victors, the first (the USA) gasping for breath and the second (the Russians) with a devastating crisis only just behind them. Thus, since it would be fatal today for Germany to go it alone, this Europe has to put on a smile: mediating and balancing things. Not by chance *Il Sole* – 24 ore of 20 August writes: "There is a vast area of ground where Russia can be offered joint management of international order instead of antagonism. It will be as well to avoid the impression of an armed siege against her, in order to avoid provocative accelerations, in particular by not accepting countries lacking a stable democratic structure as part of NATO. Diplomatic wisdom and not servitude. Whereupon Russia, in a context of regained collective security, will be able to offer her former republics the prospect of a shared future, restoring economic and cultural relations with them. Westerners, too, need Russia, partly to face the disorder of Islam and the rise of China, if Russian regains a preference for a harmonious future, though distant today, rather than the facile choice of immediate and unproductive violence." Smile, then!

All according to the book, then: the aggressor, the attacked, the defender of the aggressor, the defender of the attacked, the hopeless game of international diplomacy...All déjà-vus, from the First World War to the Second and to the hundreds of "little wars" the 1900s have delighted us with in the name of imperialism: to stick to recent times, isn't it in the name of "abused democracy", of the defence of a small country under attack (Kuwait), that a sea of fire with a million dead, mostly civilians, has been devastating Iraq since 1991? Isn't it in the name of the presumed presence of arms of mass destruction that the war, sus-

pended for a brief period, has been able to continue its infernal march onwards? Isn't it in order to capture the "enemies of peace" (the talibans, former friends and allies of the USA in their anti-Russian move) that the war has been able to spread over into Afghanistan?

All according to the book, then: but Lenin teaches us that, in the age of imperialism, it is useless to try and distinguish which country is the aggressor and which the attacked, because *they are all aggressors*, and the only real object of attack is not a country but a class, the proletariat, sent to massacre and be massacred in the line of fire and in the rearguard, in the bombed cities and the devastated countryside.

We repeat once again, because the theoretical-political disaster that has struck the communist movement in the past eighty years has caused it to be forgotten: the proletarians of the Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East, eastern Europe must break once and for all the pseudo-nationalist chains which bound them hand and foot in the First and Second World Wars to the imperialist objectives of oil; and they must be careful not to be infected by the middle classes and their imbecile ideologies which incite people to "choose the side they're on" every few minutes. The only "side" for proletarians is that of the *class struggle against their respective national bourgeoisies, against a society of exploitation and hunger; the fight to win power under the guidance of the revolutionary party and to impose its own class dictatorship*.

"It's all a matter of oil, of borders, of national independence," the reports reassure us: issues that can be solved, according to them, by means of economic and political agreements and a lot of good will. Democracy will be able to turn the clock back and peace will continue to shine...on the cemeteries. We are left with the certainty that this new battlefield is another chime of bells marking the hour of overall slaughter: against which only authentic class politics, aiming to strike down capitalism, are able to stand as a way out and save humanity from the horrors of a new world war. We know that these politics will meet with a wave of eternal pacifist positions, the anti-imperialist marches, the exhortations to social peace: but we are certain that the international proletariat, caught between the everlasting threat of war on the one hand and, on the other, the increasingly unbearable conditions in which they are obliged to live by the chronic crisis of international capital, will finally choose the right path, indicated and represented by its revolutionary party: the *definitive elimination of existing society*.

Ever-increasing winds of war

With the Israeli attack on Gaza and in Lebanon, the situation in the Middle East has become even more serious (but when was it ever “not serious”?). This shows – if there were still any need to – the blind alley in which the whole area finds itself and which it can never get out of by means of negotiations, peace talks, local or international agreements, pacts or compromises. Meanwhile tension rises in the area ranging from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, from India to Pakistan, from Korea to Japan. Lastly, the whole of central Africa is opening up even further to inter-imperialist clashes, conducted more or less by proxy. This is a war scenario that drags on, worsens, spreads, watched helplessly by those who were expecting a second post-war period, or post-fall of the Berlin wall, under the auspices of stability and harmony: the “best of all possible worlds” is increasingly the “worst of the real worlds”.

What’s going wrong? What is it that isn’t working?

Let’s out a stop to all the rubbish talked about the eternal evil of humankind, its egoism and appetites! There is only one name for this scenario: *capitalism in its supreme phase, that of imperialism*, in which the conflict of all against all is *inevitable* (a conflict which is the reflection, at a strategic-military level, of competition as the soul of commerce) in order to share out a booty which the economic crisis that has been dragging on for thirty years renders day by day more precious and more vital for the very survival of the capitalist mode of produc-

tion. “Imperialism,” writes Lenin in the work of the same name (1916), which many would do well to go and study, “is thus capitalism that has reached its final stage of development in which the dominion of monopolies and financial capital has taken shape, the export of capital has assumed great importance, the world has started to be shared out between the big international trusts and the share-out of the earth’s surface between the big imperialist nations has already been completed. [...] In fact this mad desire *not only* to conquer agricultural territories but also to get its hands on highly industrialised countries is one of characteristics of imperialism (the lust of Germany for Belgium, of France for Lorraine), firstly because the fact that the land has already been shared out [in the sense that there are no longer “virgin territories” to be explored and annexed to one colonial country or another, ed.] makes it necessary, when a *new share-out* is going on, to grab *any sort* of country and, in second place, one characteristic of imperialism is the competition between a few great powers fighting for hegemony, i.e. for the conquest of land, not so much for its own sake as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony (for Germany Belgium is of particular importance as a base against England, etc.)”... and therefore, in turn, Baghdad is important as a base against Germany, etc.

Since then ninety years have gone past and the situation has simply continued in that same direction, with growing destruction and bloodshed in the succeed-

ing share-outs, as demonstrated by two world wars and the infinite number of minor wars that have tormented the second post-war period alone. The imperialist phase of capitalism does not attenuate the contrasts, the clashes, the attacks: indeed it makes them keener, inflates them, brings them to a head, until they are made to explode first in local wars and then, when the economic and social situation throughout the world is ripe, in new worldwide slaughter. Capital, in its imperialist phase, knows no other way of escaping from its own structural crisis and it is only reformist, pacifist, petit-bourgeois short-sightedness that suggests that some form of balance is possible, some sort of stable alliance between *international bandits*.

Again Lenin: "Therefore, in capitalist reality, and not in the vulgar Philistine imagination of English priests or the German 'Marxist' Kautsky, 'inter-imperialist' or 'ultra-imperialist' alliances are none other than a 'breathing space' between one war or another, whatever form those alliances take, whether that of an imperialist coalition, or a league of *all* the imperialist powers. Peace alliances prepare wars and, in turn, are born of them; both forms are reciprocally determined and produce, on a *single* and *identical* terrain, [that] of imperialist connections and the relations of world economy and world politics, the alternation of the pacific and non-pacific forms of struggle".

War, then, and not peace; growing aggressiveness; the global dimension of local conflicts – this is the reality of imperialism, this is the *reality of our daily life*. Lebanon, Palestine, India, Korea, Somalia, Darfur; it is not a question of far-off wars but of clashes through which the world's imperialist bandits strike at each other, robbing from each other strategic areas and sources of raw materials or the routes they pass along, keep an eye on each other from a distance, punish ex-allies or the allies of

others, and above all *terrorize and massacre entire populations*. And acting in this way, with a bestiality that grows in direct ratio to the volume of capital at stake, and together with this, to the parasitism and putrefaction inherent in capitalism, they smooth the way for *the next world war, the third world bloodbath to come*, when the crisis will have precipitated to a level where it becomes inevitable and necessary to bring about the atrocious destruction of surplus production, of excess goods, including the human commodities that goes under the name of labour force.

This is what the incessant winds of war tell us, those winds that will continue to blow with increasing strength.

What can be done then? "Naturally, the proletariat in every country must first put an end to its own bourgeoisie," proclaimed the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). This means: no concessions to your own bourgeoisie, no sacrifices for the national economy, an open boycott of war efforts of any nature or in any form whatsoever, open opposition to nationalism and chauvinism however they are disguised. And this means *both* in the countries directly involved in the conflicts, where it is tragically easy to fall into the nationalist, patriotic trap of "defence of the nation" or "support" for one bourgeois faction or the other, against some another bourgeois faction, *and* in the imperialist heartland, where the best help that can be given to the disinherited and desperate masses in those areas, tormented by their ferociously opposed nationalistic bourgeoisies (the Israeli one as the *longa manus* of the USA, just like the Arab one, hungering after the income from oil), is to return to the path of open and direct class struggle against *the states of all bourgeoisies*.

But this means working mainly on spreading the *international roots of the revolutionary party*, which has been missing from the world arena for too long, after a counter-revolution that has

been going on for eighty years now. Only like this will it be possible to find a way out of that blind alley in which everything collapses or destroys, and set out, instead, however difficult and com-

plex this may be, on the path of the revolution leading to a class-free society - to communism.

July 2006

Lenin on internationalism

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

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

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

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

Five leaflets

The economic crisis: for workers a long downward spiral without recovery

Workers!

The recurring economic crises alternating with increasingly feeble recoveries are hitting us harder and harder. To cope with the pressing demands of suffering capitalism, the bourgeoisie attacks our wages and salaries, our living and working conditions, the already frail and inadequate "guarantees" of social insurance and welfare. By using the strength of the bourgeois, democratic state – the supreme tool of our oppression – and all its organs (the parliament, unions, priesthood, mass media, political parties and pseudo-proletarian associations, etc.) those in command keep us subdued and make us pay the whole cost of the crises. And so we are obliged to fight for survival day by day, against precarious employment, unemployment, the high cost of living, the increase in working hours and exploitation, abysmal safety standards, a decline in general living conditions, mass lay-offs to safeguard profits and individual ones to punish the most combative workers, police and legal repression if anyone should raise his or her head.

Workers!

The bosses continue to demand (but in reality to impose) sacrifices, promising us, in exchange, an improvement in living conditions that is never to come about. Judging by the state of the world economy, we communists affirm that, as has happened over the past ten years, even the slightest hint of economic recovery will be absorbed by the bosses in the form of profits, whilst for us proletarians, our miserable salaries will continue to be throttled. In the meantime, bourgeois propaganda does everything possible to blame the consequences of the economic crisis, for example *the growing social decay and progressive impoverishment of the proletarian masses* – for which the bourgeoisie and its economic system are solely responsible – on factors that are instead the inevitable effects of capitalist development, such as criminality and immigration, thus encouraging racism, the war of the poor against the poor and divisions at the heart of the proletariat.

The present world situation will continue on this downward trajectory at an increasing pace, with a constant growth in international tension and local conflicts, in a series of ever deeper and devastating economic crises that will lead imperialist States to arm themselves to the back teeth. In this phase of rearmament there will be

the imposition of further heavy sacrifices and more policing, according to the old motto "Keep quiet and work," coined to "educate" workers to obedience. At the end of this crescendo, the proletariat of all nations will be driven to massacre one another, ranged behind their threadbare national banners and urged on by the fanfare of nationalisms that have been picking up again for some years now. The bourgeoisie in any state involved in the conflict will paint the enemy of the moment as the aggressor, cruel and inhuman, and itself as the victim, good, human and "on the side of god". In other words, we shall observe on a gigantic scale the usual choreography of lies that accompanies the outbreak of any conflict and serves to conceal the only real objective of any war: capitalist profit.

The international proletariat alone, driven by events, will be able to avoid the catastrophe of a new world war, ending the wretched bourgeois civilization and the exploitation it has generated. Urged on by capital's ferocious attack, our class will in fact be obliged to fight in order to defend its living and working conditions, to equip itself with organizations independent of its enemy, the bourgeois State, to overcome all its internal divisions, realising, in the midst of this battle, that only a *united proletarian front* can effectively contrast an attack by capital. We communists point to, and will continue to point out to workers the path of open class warfare, with the methods and objectives that have belonged to it for a hundred and fifty years: **a sustained general strike, with no warning and no limits of time or space; the organized refusal of any discrimination on the basis of age, gender or nationality; a drastic reduction in working hours together with substantial wage increases, larger in the case of the worse paid categories; a full wage for the unemployed, those who have been laid off and immigrants; the organized refusal of any form of precarious or unofficial employment; the fight against any agreement, compatibility or sacrifice in the name of national economy and interests.**

Workers!

Only authentic class politics, aiming to overthrow capitalism, can represent a way out and spare humanity the horrors of a new world war. We know that against these politics the eternal pacifist positions will be ranged, the "anti-imperialist" marches, the exhortations to social peace, and thence military and police repression. But there exists the certainty that the international proletariat, trapped between the never-ending threat of war on the one hand and increasingly unbearable living conditions on the other, will finally be capable of choosing the right path, pointed out and embodied by its revolutionary party: **the final overthrow of existing society.**

Against the military adventures of the Italian bourgeoisie and its following of pacifists and partisans

As communists and internationalists, we know from memory and from the science of history, that in the age of imperialism every "mission abroad" is a mission of war. Indeed imperialism means more international competition, keen trade wars, the export of sums of capital which inevitably enter into conflict with one another, the control of raw material sources and their routes of transport and thus the attempt to exclude competitors, right up to the uncontrolled explosion of conflicts that are initially local and then, in the long term, and when material conditions are ripe and necessary, worldwide. This is what has been going on for decades (ever since a new economic crisis of surplus production appeared on the scene of international capitalism in the mid-1970s) and regards first and foremost the area starting from the Balkans and embracing the Middle East, up to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the crossroads of more or less approved and legal trade (arms and drugs), vital trade corridors, pipelines carrying oil and gas, oilfields and sources of water that imperialism has always had its eyes and its talons poised on – not last of all Italian imperialism, which has several interests in the area, and not recent ones, and which, in any case, wants to (must) try and carve out its own slice of autonomy and presence. As communists and internationalists, we know that those who will pay the price of this will be proletarians and the poor, oppressed and disinherited masses of all countries. And as revolutionary communists and internationalists, our slogans speak clearly against any form of pacifism and nationalist partisan spirit.

- **The refusal of any military adventure (however it may be disguised: humanitarian, democratic, civilizing) by our own bourgeoisie**
- **The refusal to accept sacrifices in the name of the "national economy" (military expenditure is an essential component of any national budget, in times both of war and of peace)**
- **Organization of the fight to defend the living and working conditions of the proletariat, as a necessary step towards striking a hard blow at the war effort of our own bourgeoisie**
- **A decided return to the methods and objectives of the class war - breaking with any logic of orchestration or social peace - methods and objectives that for now represent the**

only real form of internationalist solidarity by the proletariat of imperialist nations with the oppressed proletarian masses.

Only with these basic premises, which imply independent action by the proletariat, will it be possible to organize open revolutionary defeatism, by placing it at the centre of the class strategy, thus making it possible to break and disperse the war front. In this commitment to struggle, who are our allies? Our allies are the proletarians of the whole world and, in particular, those in countries massacred by the imperialist war. They are not – and never will be – this or that bourgeois faction, however armed or “resistant”, whatever its religious or reformist or – even worse – pseudo-socialist façade.

The interventions that have followed one another over the past decade, demonstrate that at this stage the capitalist mode of production has come to the end of the road; that its long agony is merely destructive and that it is therefore necessary to finish it off, in order to finally arrive at a classless society – communism – by violently seizing power and setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat directed by the communist party. Thus the real victory of the contemporary age is the rebirth, spread and firm establishment of the world communist party.

Lebanon: Against the military adventures of the Italian bourgeoisie

And so the soldier boys have departed: another peace mission around in the world, hearts on their sleeves, to help out the weak and the needy... a true people of poets, saints and sailors. This is what we came to.

We do not share this view. As communists, we believe that in the age of imperialism every “*overseas mission*” is a *mission of war*. Imperialism does, in fact, mean growing international competition, aggressive commercial wars, exports of capitals that inevitably come into conflict with one another, the control of raw material sources and their routes of transport and thus the attempt to exclude competitors, leading to the unbridled explosion of conflicts, first local and then, in the long term and where material conditions are favourable and make it necessary, worldwide. This is what has been going on for decades (i.e. since a new crisis of surplus production has once

again erupted violently onto the scenario of world capitalism) and regards first and foremost the area that, starting from the Balkans, embraces the Middle East up to Afghanistan and Pakistan: the crossroads for more or less legal and admissible “businesses” (arms and drugs), crucial trade corridors, pipelines and gaslines, oilfields and sources of fresh water, that imperialism has always had its sights and its paws on (since the beginning of the nineteen hundreds) – first English, then French, then American and Israeli, without forgetting the Germans, Russians and Chinese ... and Italians, whose interests in the area are neither slight nor recent: and who in any case must (under pressure of the economic crisis) try to carve out their own slice of autonomy and presence.

As communists, we think that the “peace mission” that sees the Italian contingent in the front line and in a position of command within the Unifil forces, is in fact a *war mission*, in which miserable obedience to the most powerful imperialist force (USA) is entwined with the chauvinist need to claim a respected place at the feast of the imperialist thieves. As in Afghanistan, as in Iraq. The coming weeks and months will make this increasingly clearer, while steps are taken, day by day along the road leading – though not immediately – to a new world conflict. Those who will pay the price are and will be once again the proletariat of all countries, the poor and disinherited masses.

As communists, what must be our answer?

- the refusal to support any sort of military adventure, however disguised, of our own country's bourgeoisie
- the refusal to accept sacrifices “in defence of the national economy”, which is always and in any case the economy of capital and therefore exploitation at home and abroad
- organisation in order to defend the living and working conditions of the proletariat, against parties and unions that ceased to represent the interests of the working class over half a century ago
- a determined return to the methods and objectives of open class warfare, breaking all ties with the logic of agreements and social pacts
- work for the rebirth, expansion and establishment of a strong foothold for the world revolutionary party.

“Episodes” like this, and above all the many and increasingly serious ones that will follow, also demonstrate that the capitalist mode of production has been at the end of the line for a century now; that its prolonged death throes are merely destructive and increasingly so with each year that goes by (suffice it to think of what it has been like in the past fifteen years!); that it is therefore necessary to put it out of its misery, to finally attain a class-

less society, communism, by means of the violent seizing of power and the instauration of the dictatorship of the proletariat directed by the communist party.

First May 2008

That the red flag fly again, a symbol of class war, not of class conciliation

Proletarians, comrades!

For thirty years (everyone acknowledges this now) the capitalist mode of production has been in a tunnel of economic crisis, alternating periods of recovery and resounding crashes. Following the repression (democratic, fascist, Nazi and Stalinist) of the proletarian masses, first during the war and then in the post-war period, the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production have gradually become more intense and explosive: hundreds of local wars, tens of millions of deaths sacrificed on the altar of profit, increasingly bitter recessions, environmental ruin, the degradation of social life. Today the overall economic crisis (first and foremost in production, and *then* in finance and credit) clearly reveals the dramatic and urgent need for the revolutionary transformation of society. The scenario that is being prepared is, in fact, that of a new world conflict of gigantic proportions: the phases of recession have become more and more frequent and those of expansion weaker and more artificial, and all this makes the commercial war between imperialisms more bitter, making military conquests necessary at strategic points for the defence and winning of markets or for the control of the transport routes for raw materials. This is the key to interpreting the United States' massive gatherings of troops and military intervention in the Mediterranean area, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Afghanistan, closely followed by the lesser, but no less virulent imperialisms (Germany, Japan, Russia, China). American economic predominance is increasingly threatened by the attacks of its competitors: it can no longer get back on its feet and produce a new phase of expansion and what prevent this are the huge internal and foreign debts it has run up, both public and private, the excess production capacity and surplus production which, over the past five decades, have led to fierce commercial competition worldwide. But the whole of the capitalist world is in the midst of a crisis, as demonstrated by the crash of the big banks (German and English, as well as American) and the precarious situation of Japanese and Chinese banks. On the other hand, the dramatic situation in the Middle East proclaims that the whole area – of fundamental importance for international capitalism – is dynamite.

Proletarians, comrades!

The great upheavals described by Marxism ever since the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 are approaching. Capital, in its various national segments, is preparing for this in the only way it can or knows how to: cutting social spending, dismantling “guarantees” (obtained by *fighting* for them), exasperating technological innovation and getting rid of labour, restructuring and privatizing, militarizing society in a more or less clandestine manner, fuelling divisions and contrasting positions amongst workers, spreading the moral virus of patriotism and nationalism, laying the foundations for ever wider and more violent conflicts – all in the name not of the private or personal interests of one puppet or another, but of the survival of its own mode of production. At the direct level of production, capitalist dynamics are having devastating effects on the living and working conditions of the proletarian masses: increasing the pace of work, with an increase in “accidents”, extension of precarious employment and flexibility, longer working hours, a direct or indirect reduction in wages, etc. After eighty years of democratic, fascist and Stalinist counterrevolution (which also allowed quite obscenely capitalist regimes to be passed off as “communist”), our class is scattered and disoriented, a victim of the bourgeois illusion that the future will be rosy, and even its most combative sectors remain isolated and are thus easily defeated. Localism, the fragmentation of struggles, joint agreements, skilfully fuelled by corporate political and union organizations, end up by quelling or deviating any sign of an independent class struggle spontaneously resuming.

And yet, under the pressure of material factors and the social tension produced by the worsening crisis, proletarians all over the world *will be obliged* to return to the path of their traditional claims and traditional methods of struggle. They *will be obliged* to shake off the weight of parties which, having for some time now positioned themselves to defend capital and being ready to serve its vital interests on all occasions, consider them exclusively as a source of votes; and of unions that for some time now have been proclaiming in their words and deeds that the “national economy is the only common interest”, to be defended in every way – by cutting pensions, by agreements and self-regulation of strikes, by isolating and indicting combative workers, and so on. They *will be obliged* to recognize the emptiness of any reformist and gradualist, “amicable” or “joint agreement” prospects, as well as of confused and contradictory “movements” that consume their energies in demonstrations without prospects, dominated by pacifist and clerical ideologies, if not openly reactionary and nationalistic ones. They *will be obliged* to resume the fight, with their usual weapons (pickets, the stoppage of production and provision of services, the constitution of

strike funds, the creation of economic defence organisms that bring together the employed and the unemployed, native and immigrant workers, *a general strike without warning or limits of time and space*), for the following objectives:

- **Considerable wage increases for the worst paid categories**
- **Full wages to the unemployed, paid by the State or by private owners**
- **Drastic reductions in working hours for the same wage**
- **Refusal of overtime and long shifts motivated by the "needs of the company or the national economy"**
- **Opposition to mobility, flexibility and any form of insecure work**
- **Unrelenting defence of the weaker categories of workers most exposed to blackmail**
- **General refusal of child labour**
- **Refusal of any sort of dismissal and lay-off, whatever the motivation**
- **Refusal of all racist ideology, of all legislative or police measures designed to divide the proletariat**
- **Refusal of all patriotism or nationalism, however disguised as "common and superior interests"**
- **Refusal of any imperialist war, however disguised as "defence against outside aggression", "democratic" or "humanitarian".**

When they finally occupy this ground, *the ground of open class warfare*, workers from all over the world *will also be obliged* to acknowledge that this defensive battle is indeed *necessary but is insufficient*. Within the world of capital, of the search for profit at all costs, of the competition of all against all, *there are no acquired rights, no lasting gains, no lasting victories*. The truly great result of these fights will be that of *sealing the union of workers in a single class front, independent and autonomous of the State and whoever supports it*. However, this is not enough, either: *a political battle* will be necessary. Above all, *the revolutionary political party* will be needed, able to direct, guide, bring together these struggles beyond the limits of time and space and of local and generational interests, with the objective (naturally a long way off today but *inevitable and indispensable*) of ending once and for all a mode of production that is solely destructive. And, under its guidance, to open up the way for a classless society, without exploitation or repression, without wars or misery: *the society of a fully realized human species*.

Gaza 2009

Imperialist butchery against the proletariat

Fellow proletarians and comrades!

For weeks now the butchers of the Israeli army have been ploughing ahead with their decade-long criminal demolition job: using the pretext that Hamas must be destroyed, yet another horrific blood bath of Palestinian proletarians has occurred. To a greater or lesser extent, *all* States within the area (idle words and pathetic declarations count for nothing) and *all* the bourgeois factions – both lay and fundamentalist – responsible for this tragic Middle-eastern *cul de sac* (be they supporters of Al Fatah, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood or the theocratic Israeli state – it matters not) closed a blind eye to what has been going on.

The dreadful truth of the matter is that ***no-one wants Palestinian proletarians: in peacetime they are exploited for their labour, and in wartime they are a rich source of cannon-fodder for war-hungry imperialist powers.*** That is all: the obscene truth of the matter.

As long as the suicidal logic of national and nationalist bourgeoisies prevails, ***there will never be a solution*** to the Middle-eastern puzzle (one of the most poisonous of all post-war imperialist legacies). ***There will be no peace*** for as long as aggressive bourgeoisies – more or less a direct expression of north American imperialism (Israel), or those in a strong bargaining position as a result of spiralling oil revenues (all Arab states, ‘moderate’ and non; or ‘extremist’ states like Iran) – continue carving out areas of influence in the annual carnival of carnage served up by rival imperialist powers. ***There will be no lull*** in the veritable holocaust of the proletarian and proletarianised masses in the *entire* area as long as the horizon is dominated by abominable nationalist and religious ideologies and as long as world capitalism is allowed to pursue its insanely destructive course.

The Gaza massacres – and the blood of hundreds of proletarians – only serve to confirm that the obscene monster called capitalism must be destroyed. Only the proletariat – the class that has no reserves and recognizes no homeland, the class whose claim to liberation is human, and human only – can accomplish this. And it can do so only by ***openly resorting to a classist – not nationalist – perspective, a class struggle against all bourgeois factions, a drastic boycotting of all war efforts,*** in order to shatter once and for all the damnable vicious circle of proletarian massacres. ***Only the dictatorship of the proletariat,*** established at long last after centuries of domination by blood-

drenched capital, will be able to sweep away the tragic consequences and problems wrought by a century of imperialist devastation. But this will **only** be possible **if** the proletariat of European and north American metropolises finally succeeds in breaking all ties with its own national bourgeoisies; and if it once again wages an open class struggle, independently of any bourgeois or nationalist formation, under the determined lead of its *own* party, newly exhumed after decades of frightening counter-revolution – and then manages to finally seize power and establish its own class dictatorship, a necessary bridgehead towards a classless society, a society which is at last human: **communism**.

Two Articles on the French Situation

On the 2005 riots in the suburbs

Faced with the social backlash of the economic crisis, the bourgeois State and opportunism fully reveal their true faces

If we return once again to the violent upheavals that struck the *banlieues* [suburbs] of Paris and other French towns between the end of October and beginning of November 2005, it is not because we attribute who knows what revolutionary value to them, as many incurable spontaneous activists immediately did.

At the time, we wrote that “these outbreaks – of extreme importance as signs of the fever growing within capitalist society and the limits beyond which ‘endurance’ cannot go – explode and will increasingly continue to explode but, *left to their own resources*, are destined to pass without a trace (except, unfortunately, that of more dead proletarians), to recede into frustration or – worse still – to be channelled into the *cul de sac* of anarchist rebellion as an end in itself or into ethnic or religious fundamentalism, *both of which deny any revolutionary class prospects*”.¹

For us, then, those riots were both the demonstration of the unsolvable class antagonism implicit in a society based on capital (even where there exists a relatively solid welfare state: despite all those who see in it the solution to the ever keener ill-being of living and working) and an initial, important break with the social pact in a Europe immersed for so long in an inter-classist and reformist slumber.

At the same time we also wrote that “communists must forcefully affirm that

the rebels of the *banlieues* are *proletarians*, contrary to all the manoeuvres going on to present them simply as ‘immigrants’ or as belonging to one or the other ethnic, national or religious group. But they should also confirm that these proletarians do not automatically become the ‘avant-garde of their class’ just because they rebel against social and police oppression.” In all this, what is lacking – and it is the most tragic lack – is the *revolutionary party*: this means “the only organ or tool capable, after a *long period of work in contact with the working class* and thus *recognised by them as being a true and reliable guide*, of taking up the impulse from below, gathering the anger and energy bursting from the depths of a *foul and rotten society* and directing it at the real bastion of capitalist power – the State – in order to take possession of it and overthrow it, in order to build its own dictatorship on the ruins as a bridge towards a *definitively class-free society*”.

The revolutionary Party, faced with class struggles that will become increasingly widespread and increasingly acute and violent clashes with all the forces that wish to bridle or repress the proletariat’s will to fight, is the only link that can solder to-

¹ See our website www.ilprogramma-comunista.com where the French version of this editorial is also published.

gether the proletarian movement and the spontaneous response that the latter can advance both on the economic and social terrain, through *a political class struggle directed towards insurrection and the taking of power*. And we concluded: “This is the only way which, under ripe objective and subjective conditions (including – we must not forget, to the shame of all volunteer efforts – the inability of the bourgeois class to deal with the social crisis) will make it possible for the proletariat to find a way out of the dead ends and ghettos in which they spend their daily life, even when rebelling with virulence”.

The bourgeois State and ruling ideology

Let us start, then, with the most obvious and predictable reaction – that of the State and those high up on its payroll: small-time ideologists, teachers, hack writers, the professional perpetrators of disinformation and manipulation. The State’s intervention was military and *could not be otherwise*. To the disgrace of those who still insist on believing that it is above taking sides, something that “settles conflicts” and “balances contradictions”, the French State (as any bourgeois State would have done) publicly declared that it was *a class tool*, openly defending the interests of the ruling class, i.e. of capital (both in its personal, individual manifestations, and in its impersonal, anonymous and collective ones). It sent in its special military divisions, arrested hundreds and hundreds of people, threw them into jail, put them on trial and, in many cases, “repatriated” them (wherever the “mother country” of these modern “country-less and rootless” people may be), exhumed a curfew law that had been used at the height of the war in Algeria (not by coincidence, in the very same few days and weeks that “the positive role of the

If, then, we return once more to these riots, it is because they have, in a very material way, uncovered not only the social chasm that increasingly splits the supposedly homogeneous society based on capital, but also the political chasm that separates revolutionary positions from opportunist ones (in all their varieties, where those that appear to be the most extremist are also the most reprehensible). It is thus useful to return to the topic with a brief summary of the positions brought into play to respond to the urgency of what has been a brief but significant “social crisis”.

French presence overseas and especially in North Africa” was being celebrated *by law*!). Briefly, it made sure its cudgel was felt, as befits any State, which is an *expression of class dominion*.

Close behind this immediate and timely response (which the proletariat must learn to recognize as inevitable from the bourgeois State, abandoning any democratic and pacifist illusions), followed – in dialectic harmony with it – the hullabaloo of analyses by its ideologists, belonging to the variegated zoo of ever paler, more squalid, cruder and more vulgar “bourgeois thought”, above all – in overall terms – incapable of the least reflection on what had happened. And so there were those who dug up anew the “culture clash”, depicting the young people from the *banlieues* as “scum”, as the youth division of an army of “aliens” attacking the West. There were those who blamed events on the “polygamous family”(!), seen as the breeding ground for social ill-being, or to “over-permissive schools” which no longer served as the vehicles of sound values. There were also those who attributed the disorders to mere

“gangs of criminals”, pushers and small-time delinquents, and those who summoned up the usual ghosts of the “professional agitators”. There were those who placed all the responsibility on the shoulders of the local authorities (right- and “left”-wing) and on the architects and town planners responsible for the distressing suburban “non-places”... And the more the merrier, in a blaze of commonplaces varying from openly racist to frankly stupid, unable, despite the brainpower exerted by their authors, to say anything at all – nothing but a general “intellectual” mobilization, with the aim of drowning in a vortex of true idiocies the widespread anxiety about a possibility the bourgeois class is well acquainted with *from historical experience* if not from its own cultural resources: the possibility, *remote as it may be*, of full class war reappearing on the scene, against which timely and precautionary ideological mobilization must be activated (no matter its substance and quality), whilst the forces of repression do their real work punctually and efficiently. And naturally all this, whether it comes from the rising star of politics Victor Sarkozy or from the hacks of the intelligentsia, like Fitoussi or Fienkelkraut, rather than from the latest imbecile in search of journalistic or television fame, is truly of no surprise to us. As Marx and Engels wrote, “The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas in every epoch; this means that the class that is the *material* power ruling society is at the same time its ruling *spiritual* power.”² And so, if these ideas seem so miserable and super-

fluous, especially in situations of social crisis like this, it is

just because *that class* has, for some time, become *miserable and superfluous*...

It should not, however, be forgotten that this ruling faction has a “leftist” appendage, represented by all those social-political forces that for decades now have accepted *this* mode of production as the only one possible and are making efforts to make it more acceptable to those who, instead, feel the destructive burden of it day by day. Social democracy (the various PCFs and PSs that traditionally – it must not be forgotten – govern those very same suburbs that blew up in their hand) have taken up as their battle cry the magic slogan of *integration*: which is none other than the weapon by which reformism attempts to bind the proletariat to the interests of the bourgeois State and of the nation, thus slowing down the (*complex and contradictory*) process through which it is, instead, able to recognize itself as the *antagonist class*. “Integration” with what, indeed? With “civil society”, the “nation”, the “citizens”, the “people” in that “inter-class syrup” in which – in the dreams of opportunists from all sides – it is possible to forget that we live, instead, in *a society divided into classes, with opposing interests, both immediate and historical, which are, above all irreconcilable*. Thus, faced with the rebellion in the suburbs, these characters can do none other than, on the one hand, and *of necessity*, side with the supporters and imposers of “law and order” and, on the other, accompany this with whining, shopkeeper-style recriminations... “they’ve cut our funds, we can no longer get these young people to feel *French*.” Briefly, for these characters (who see those that they were supposed to control, in order to earn themselves a little medal for “upholding bourgeois values”, slip through their hands) the real problem is that of... “*integration interrompue*!”³

2. Marx-Engels, *German Ideology*, Chap. 1, par. 3

3. A good overview of these positions is to be found in the December 2005 issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* – *Il Manifesto*

The useful idiots

There also exists another faction that has made its voice heard significantly in these circumstances and it is that of the “useful idiots”: rabble who, for three decades now, have been paddling up and down the shores of bourgeois politics, covering them “from the left” and carrying out the function that the old PCF in France (already ultra-reactionary and ultra-chauvinist in itself and an appropriate incarnation of the most obtuse Stalinism) finds it harder and harder to maintain because of the changing times. We are speaking, of course, of “*Lutte Ouvrière*”, a melting pot of Trotskyite origins, similar in some ways to one of the many souls of the Italic *Rifondazione Comunista*. L.O. have always been spokespeople for an explicit form of opportunism almost embarrassing in its obtuseness, whose only more picturesque element is the eternal re-candidature of Arlette Laguillier at the elections. Who (obviously there are no personal arguments here: the clash is between *political positions*) sums up L.O.’s opportunist argument very well in the editorials that appear in the newspaper of the same name. Where, for example, she complains that these riots “do not show much awareness” and that Sarkozy gives rein to “demagogic” promises to re-establish security whilst, alas, in the so-called “sensitive” (“sensibles”) suburbs “there are no more community police officers (*police de proximité*) or permanent police stations and everything is left up to interventions by an ‘army of CRS’ [‘special forces’] which merely serve to spread hatred” (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 4/11/2005). Or, again, after having emphasized once again “the absence of social consciousness and solidarity” shown

by the protagonists of the riots, she complains that, “in those neighbourhoods the State appears only in the basic form of police control or massive CRS action and, at its head, of ministers who express contempt for everything to do with poverty” (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 11/11/2005).

And so, according to L.O., a) there is no social consciousness among those young proletarians (how and when could there possibly be any? These anti-Marxist readers of Gramsci think that consciousness comes before action...), b) the State (without adjectives: this is the Hegelian State, the personification of the pure idea - impartial!) has abdicated from its duty to be ... present in a manner that is ... better ramified, in the proletarian neighbourhoods, limiting itself to the dispatch of assault forces. Thus, in their view, more (bourgeois) State presence is needed! In other words: “Prison vans! in the interests of the working class,” as the *Communist Manifesto* ironized a hundred and fifty years ago referring – not by chance – to the claims of “bourgeois socialism”...

These are concepts that are taken up again and expanded on in the editorial published in the theoretical journal of L.O., *Lutte de classe* (no. 92, Nov. 2005), where mention is made of “the State’s lack of commitment to anything regarding the living conditions of the ‘popular classes’ [where is a similar monstrosity to be heard if not amongst the different varieties of anti-Marxists?!], i.e. to anything that allows them access to a minimum of resources, a minimum of education.” It’s the usual tune: *if* the State really did operate like a good father, *if* democracy really were democracy for

all, *if* justice were not only justice for the chosen few, etc. etc. etc.! And on with another list of complaints: "It should be State schools to take in hand the children of poorer families from nursery school upwards, i.e. from three or even two years of age, because this is the age when they are introduced to language and to group behaviour, which awaken curiosity and the taste for knowledge. But they should be nursery schools in the true sense of the term and not mere parking places where the children learn nothing, except the law of the jungle." Or, yet again, "It is the primary school that should create the conditions for every child to learn to read, write and count correctly. But even where the classes consist of children from poor neighbourhoods who speak French at home, in large classes nothing is taught, or only taught to some of the pupils..."

It is as well to stop here, short of vomiting! We shall just quote the final panegyric in which, after having criticized once again the "blind and useless violence, [...] which is the sign of profound disorientation and a sign of lack of consciousness," they wonder: "How, when, following which route, will the working class rediscover the path of class consciousness which, alone, can transform the anger and rebellion against the innumerable injustices of this society into a revolutionary force able to overturn the capitalist social order?" And the frank answer is: "No-one can say. What can be said is that the ability to fight at least for the defence of our own conditions of existence and to rediscover collective awareness of the need to change the social order, will spring up again where the heart of the present social order is to be found, where exploitation develops, in the factories."

We might have guessed! This is the tenacious rebirth of Gramsci's doctrine: the

myth of the factory, of the proletariat seen exclusively as the "employed and aware industrial worker"! All the rest is unaware and barren. And until this mythical factory worker has reacquired his consciousness (how, L.O. cannot say – at least they are honest about this!), well, "keep calm, lads, consciousness is missing!"

And so for L.O. it's a question of separating, physically and ideologically, what happened in the French suburbs from the rest of the "working class", sociologically and opportunistically seen, denying any connection with the economic crisis that *inevitably* kicks individuals and groups, proletarians and sub-proletarians and even petit-bourgeois onto the scene, without doing us the favour of waiting for them to first acquire (something they could never do) "class consciousness". Not only: in a renewed and unsurprising mixture of workerist spirit and reformism, L.O. conceives of this mythical and abstract "working class" we should be referring to and whose reawakening is to be awaited, as being safely locked within company boundaries, inside the factories and inside the trade unions and perhaps also – in view of the eternal temptations and Trotskyite practices of political entryism – inside the traditional political organisations. To sum up, a "working class" tamed by capital and in a status quo, a zero class – the "class for capital" as Marx called it.

It is clear that similar positions serve no other purpose than to act as spearheads for regaining control "from the left" in view of a potential *class* reawakening: thus presenting themselves as candidates for the "crisis management" that yesterday was the prerogative of the big social democratic and Stalinist-type parties. Today the useful idiots; tomorrow the "new policemen".

Walking corpses

If the bourgeoisie cannot do without “useful idiots” covering them from the left, even less can they do without the “scarecrows”, those “bad teachers” to whom they attribute on the one hand all the evil deeds in question and on the other hand turn to for the “inebriating”, “intoxicating” role they have carved out for themselves over time, to the detriment of an entire generation. Real “walking corpses”, now well rooted in French “leftist” politics, always ready to throw themselves like vultures onto anything that moves, the worst minds of the worst infantile post-’68 thinking did not miss the opportunity to make their own voice heard, preaching in the Italian mainstream press. And so, in the *Corriere della sera* on 7/11/2005, Oreste Scalzone speaks of “rebels”, of “mutineers”, digging up the gunshot and spontaneous-style lingo of Potere Operaio and thereabouts: then he attacks Sarkozy and his “zero-tolerance politics” and defines him “delirious” because this leads to “a hardened and arrogant move towards warfare from the top downwards, surrounded by propaganda which inflames the souls of its recipients still more,” (as if the bourgeois State could do anything different! As if, in a class régime, the ruling class could refrain from exerting pressure and repression!); he is careful not to talk about the capitalist crisis and its consequences, about the inevitably repressive role of the bourgeois State, about the need for a revolutionary political direction that will help the outbursts of rage and insubordination to get out of their dead ends... It might be objected that some things cannot be said in the *Corriere della sera*. Exactly: rather than acknowledging their own failure and retiring to private life, the obstinate *mâîtres*

à penser, on the wrong track from the very beginning, do not cease to step out into the limelight and preach – saying the same things any reformist would say before reaching the antechambers of power...

Exactly.

Now we all know: where there’s the Cat, there’s also the Fox. And indeed, here is Toni Negri, following Scalzone from the pages of *La Stampa* on 12/11/2005, and further clarifying the “thought” of these “corpses”. Even more explicitly than Scalzone, Negri declares to the whole world his own “parasitical” nature, as an intellectual in the pay of the more cunning section of international bourgeoisie. People like him are part of the “body of functionaries” (journalists, teachers, technicians, experts...), whose numbers the Welfare State of the imperialist age added to exponentially in the years of plenty, giving them the tasks of controlling and stuffing brains, but whose numbers now threaten to be drastically reduced. Not by chance, in the interview quoted, Negri speaks with nostalgic admiration of the “great contribution of knowledge that sociology brings to the French administration”: *this* is the breeding ground of these figures, fully bound, by a true umbilical cord, to the form and substance of the bourgeois, imperialist State. And then, if the breeding ground is increasingly “concentrated”, the above-mentioned start to get skittish...

According to Negri, what happened in the French suburbs is (behold! behold!) “a rebellion; but I might even say an insurrection, if we take the term in its tenuous meaning.” And then, after having started by firing off the canons, the mountain gives birth to the molehill:

the blame for all this is the “crisis of Fordism”, the “absence of political response”, the “crisis of democratic representation”. To sum up, an insurrection [a tenuous one!] born of the absence of the State, of the “inability of neoliberalism to become a state policy”, of the inability of the “state to exercise governance, i.e. to keep itself in constant contact with the movements” – something that instead “Fordism, with all its evils, was capable of doing.”. What better than an insurrection [a tenuous one!] for proclaiming “a real opening for processes of participation, which are serious things [goodness!]”, because today “participation means questioning the balance of power, schools that work, savings banks with lower interest rates...”

To help digest the substance of this rather heavy mixture: there is a crisis of Fordism, the state (a neutral tool) is no longer able to exercise governance, the “neoliberal wave [...] exasperates the conflicts and the revolts,” the (subtle!) “insurrections” reiterate the need for “democratic participation”. Poor intestines! Three decades ago we called them “reformers with pistols”. With or without the pistols, this is what they have remained and of the worst sort – mephitic and cadaverous: showing that it isn’t only the pistol that counts!

As to the young people in the suburbs,

Negri’s analysis is serious and profound: “the problem is that they know what they don’t want, not what they want. It’s a big mess.” Our compliments, professor! And the solution? “The kids from the *banlieues* can only look for a way of escape. Doesn’t it seem to you that the right to escape has become a human right?”

Thus the incomparable grand ending, worthy of the theorist of the “multitudes” that were to have taken the place of the “proletariat” (old stuff that the *à la page* philosopher has stored away in the attic): “With Michael [Hardt, co-author of the famous *Empire*] we tried to imagine a way out for this society in crisis. In the exodus, Moses had Aaron – you need rearguards that also use arms but to defend themselves. Resistance is this, because reality is made this way, the world is like this; and the Multitude operates in this world, hunting for that way of escape, which they are looking for in the *banlieues* without having yet found it.” Ipse dixit!

Now if we remember rightly, Aaron also had a rod with which, amongst other things, he “smote the waters that were in the river in the sight of Pharaoh.” (Exodus, 7). Sooner or later the proletariat will grasp that rod firmly and give Negri & Co. and all the “walking corpses” a sound beating.

From revolt to revolution

Let us leave the rest of the pearls that can be gathered here and there from a wide range of positions internationally: from those who declare in no uncertain terms that “this movement of young people from the *banlieues*, despite its faults, is revolutionary” and therefore call on “the

proletariat and the people” (and who might it be, this ‘people’? The petit-bourgeois, the shopkeepers, the farmers? Categories which, especially in France, shine by reason of their obtuse reactionary stance) to those who, instead, hint at the “world union of fighting youth [?!] and

the Marxist avant-garde of the international proletariat", from those who counter the destructive revolt that has "nothing to lose [but] nothing to gain, either" with the "disciplined revolt of the working class, which will necessarily explode, illuminated by the class party, that will truly know where to strike and what must be destroyed [and that] has a whole world to conquer and knows it has it", to those who complain that "these deplorable events [the violence and destruction] have not developed on the sidelines of a movement with objectives and forms of struggle different and compatible with the independent battle of the proletariat" and are thus "devoid of any political class basis", or again those who cannot help exclaiming that "The first victims of this destruction are the workers. It is their cars that are burned. It is their places of work that are closed, leaving several hundreds of them on the dole"! All just words flying around.

We repeat what we wrote at the beginning. These riots are the spontaneous reaction of vast sectors of the proletariat obliged to suffer tragic living conditions and daily oppression. They are flare ups that make a dent in social peace but, on subsiding, risk leaving behind them little or nothing in terms of experience and lessons to be learned in their young actors. There is a tragic lack of the revolutionary party: *not* in the sense of a chief of staff ready to take the lead of any movement (by reason of what delegation or appointment?), *but* in the sense of the long political work of organization and direction of the class, of theoretical and physical clashes with opportunism (in all its guises, including those that depict and present themselves as being "leftist"), of defence against the attacks of capital and its State and revolutionary preparations for attack, for an assault, an insurrection that is any-

thing but "tenuous", because it intends *to take power and exercise it as a dictatorship against all enemies of the revolution*. The path leading from the revolts (blind, spontaneous, instinctive, destructive, like all revolts always) to the revolution is long and winding. Above all it is not straight and not progressive. It is an illusion to imagine a class resurgence that advances as smoothly as oil thanks to the renewed (it is not clear how or why) consciousness of a working class that is informed, knows, chooses and finally starts to get on the move again, solving all the problems, overcoming all contradictions, proceeding by a geometrical accumulation of numerical and political forces. *This is not what the class struggle is*. Those who give the illusion or live in the illusion that it is are doing great harm to the proletariat. The class struggle (and *above all its return, after over seventy years of counter revolution*) is something quite different: it is a contradictory path, consisting of upward surges and falls backwards, advances and retreats, along which the proletarian class (weighed down with all the inertia, the lurid doings, "all the old bourgeois shit", as Marx called it) will return to fight for its own *immediate and historical* rights – and it will do so clashing with all the forces that are against it *but also with all the contradictions it carries within it and behind it and that surround it, put pressure on it and threaten it from every side*. It is not an abstract proletarian class, mythical in its purity and unity, uncorrupted and incorruptible, that already knows what it is fighting for, that knows its enemies, has its own aims clearly before it, advances as one, from the factory to the streets, from the streets to power. It is, on the other hand, the proletarian class produced by capital, which is indeed the bearer of a new mode of production but only inas-

much as it recognizes itself in the revolutionary party: and not by means of sudden illumination but *thanks to the difficult and complex work that this party has managed to carry out in contact with it, first during the long period of counter revolution and then at the height of the economic crisis*. This work cannot be avoided or abbreviated by acts of will, whether they are generous or venturous – *it has to be done and that's all*. Only then will the party be able to “reveal the class to itself”

and the class will recognize its own avant-garde in the party. Only then will the bourgeois crisis itself change from a barren (indeed putrefying and foul) situation of stalemate into another fertile pre-condition for revolution. Only then will the objective and subjective conditions increasingly tend to converge and the revolts take place under a sign that is not merely desperation. Only then will insurrection and the seizing of power *finally* be on the agenda.

The 2006 Anti-CPE Movement: the fight pays but is not enough

In past editions of our Italian-language newspaper, when commenting on the revolts in the *banlieues*, we wrote that lately the social temperature has been rising unceasingly in France¹: first the tough

¹See issues 5/2005 and 1/2006 of *Il programma comunista*.

struggle of the seamen and dockers in Bastia and Marseilles, next the railway strikes, then the anger of the young proletarians from the suburbs and now the wide-scale anti-CPE movement which in the end, after about a month of

wrestling, has forced withdrawal of the government measure. In terms of the mobilisation involved, the contradictions exposed and the social impact there is no doubt that the France is an example of how the economic crisis inevitably drives large sections of the working population (or those expelled from it or kept on the sidelines or in the antechambers) to take in hand the question of their own living and working conditions, both present and future, without delegating it to political and union forces that are openly interested in defending the status quo.

Behind the labels

Let us see how things have gone and what lessons can be drawn from them. The draft law containing the measures of the Contrat Première Embauche (CPE) or first job contract, foresees the possibility of dismissal “without just cause” and from one day to the next for young people under the age of 26 taken on for a

two-year trial period in a firm or company of whatever size (the other type of contract, the Contrat Nouvelle Embauche, CNE, or new job contract, was destined, for the moment to regard salaried workers in small companies). This would obviously have meant that: a) the worker employed would have been

subject for two years to the daily blackmail of “if you don’t like it you can lump it” (equalling low salary, unpaid overtime, flexible hours, hard working conditions, all sorts of persecution), b) it would be in the interests of the employer to fire the young person “on trial” *before* the two years were up and take on someone else, thus avoiding open-ended job contracts and making exclusive use

of precarious, flexible, underpaid and super-blackmailed labour. Which, in turn, would have meant the immediate spread of *precariousness in all sectors*, the approval of precarious employment as the only “working non-relationship”: the CNE and CPE measures, if approved, would basically have hit not only young people under 26 but *the whole world of work*.

The fight against the CPE

Opposition to these new measures became immediately obvious and very soon the fight had extended from Paris to the whole of France, trying to equip itself with a minimum of organization and networking in order to overcome the close confines of single places or situations and also occasionally clashing with the forces of law and order. Surprised by the unforeseen opposition, the State initially adopted the tactics of controlling and cutting off the movement and then turned to its natural allies (up to then only too...neglected): the unions. Which, as might have been expected, operated as authentic fire-fighters. Whilst the occasion demanded that the battle front be made more compact, centralizing it and extending it and – in view of the nature of the CPE and CNE, i.e. measures destined to hit the whole of the working class – the proclamation and preparation of a general strike bringing together all categories of workers, the bonze element worked to dilute the agitation into a series of dates, “days”, demonstrations, unconnected to one another – the classical method always used to boycott the fights in the factories, breaking them up and localizing them. The young precariously employed or fu-

ture precariously employed people were thus left out on their own, yet even in this situation they showed considerable determination, which says a lot about the crisis that is eating into wide sectors of French society. They took action in their actual capacity as the prime destinies of the CPE and CNE: i.e. as future sellers of labour. It was not a “student movement,” as the media, the observers, commentators (to sum up, the dominant ideology) hastened to define it, so as to close it in a ghetto, creating a sort of “sanitary cordon” of empty words, barren sociological analyses, improvised definitions around it. Through their many, different spokespeople, the State acted ideologically towards these “chosen victims” exactly as, only a few months previously, it had acted towards the young proletarians in the *banlieues*: in that case trying to confine the spontaneous wave of rebellion into the categories of “immigrants, Muslims, hooligans”, and in the new one reducing opposition to the CPE to the “students out to create havoc.” In both cases it was crucial to stop the concept of “class” and “class struggle” spreading: that the young people involved should see themselves (and be seen by other sectors of the working

class) as *proletarians*, no matter whether cast out on the edges (in the *banlieues*) or still evolving (in those huge car parks of society that the secondary schools and now even the universities have become). *Marxist analysis does not do sociology*. It sees social phenomena *in motion* and not as static. It sees them from the point of view of *production relations* and *class relations*: that is, from the position of these social phenomena in comparison to *these relations* and *within the given mode of production*. The anti-CPE movement was not a “student movement” but a) the demonstration of the *transformation into proletariat* going on in what are now very large sectors of the half classes, b) the re-

action of *future proletarians to the increasingly precarious nature of work relations*. The two rebellions that followed one another in France in the space of a few months declare and confirm, in practice, what Marxist analysis has always claimed: the proletariat is defined by reason of its being, either in fact or potentially, without reserves, and not by the genealogy of a family tree, its sociological placement, its “culture” or the image it has of itself, or the position it occupies in the factory – as the bourgeoisie and opportunists of all descriptions (not excluding those of the “far left”) would like to argue in a mixture of abject cynicism and romantic rhetoric.

Zombies at work

It was inevitable that a new *querelle* should unleash around the “CPE issue” which experienced the mobilization of the ill-smelling residue of the intelligentsia from sixty-eight and post sixty-eight – a fine sample of those *maitres à penser* who polluted the air during the course of the ‘70s, making their contribution to the counter-revolution that still continues to rage. In an interview with the *Corriere della Sera* of 20/3, Martin Karmitz, then a Maoist, now an important film producer, proclaimed: “I see a movement that merely strives to conserve what already exists, to defend the status quo. [...] Discontent permeates the whole of society but takes concrete shape in the form of defence of the past, the refusal to change. And it is the France of this “No” that is marching.” After having rebuked those who of course are merely “students” to him for not having anything to say “about the horrors in the world [...]”. About war,

rampant racism, religious extremism, inequality, the exploitation of others,” he adds his final little sermon: “To these young people I would like to say: be a bit more daring, have the courage to dream of a different future, like we did,” (we, who in the meantime have put down our roots in the status quo, to the music first of billions of francs and today of millions of euros, tangible symbols ... of “imagination in power”!). He is echoed by André Glucksman, also a Maoist at the time, now pro-American, who strikes one blow at the kettle and another at the pot: “They’re quite right. They show pride and wisdom [!!!] because Villepin’s first job contract is certainly not a liberal step [!!!] towards opening up the market [!!!]. On the contrary, the CPE is an inadequate measure that will not succeed in creating new jobs but will prolong the guarantees and privileges of adult workers already in employment. It seems to be the begin-

ning of a reform but it is really a conservative move.” (interview in the *Corriere della Sera*, 18/3)... which just shows that this rabble has never understood the slightest thing about how capitalism works, what reforms are, what the labour market is, what economic laws are! In practice, with their mouths stuffed full of words, they have stopped at Adam Smith and the “invisible hand” of the market which was to freely regulate economic and social relations. Again Glucksman: “An overall and organic reform is needed; we must not place the w-

hole blame for failure on the shoulders of the students.” In other words: the CPE is unjust because it only affects young people under the age of 26 – something “new” is required that will hit everyone, cancelling out privileges: “equality for everyone ... a step down!” Lastly the cherry on the icing from Bernard-Henry Lévy, who declares unashamedly that the CPE is “a step, a small step, in the right direction.” As to the “student protest”, “we can clearly see the dimension of it, which is for the moment profoundly conservative.” (*Corriere*, 2/4).

The State and its sidekicks

The measures contained in the CNE and the CPE are quite coherent with the need of capital, all over the world, to proceed along the path towards rendering work relations totally precarious: the economic crisis makes this necessary. In this sense the measures are similar to those adopted in other countries: in Italy, for example, as documented in the latest edition of this newspaper in relation to the metalworkers’ contract², or in Zapatero’s Spain, in Merkel’s Germany and Blair’s Great Britain – measures adopted or being adopted by a range of governments that differ only formally from one another, but actually all share the same commitment to “saving capitalism from its own crisis.” The degree, the timing, the modalities may be different but the facts do not change: capital needs ultra-flexible and ultra-blackmailable labour. This is where it returns to its origins, after having given the illusion (through “reforms” made possible by random extraction of plus-value during the twenty-year-and-more economic boom of the post-war recovery) that society based on capital might be the “milk

and honey” of those who worship the “welfare state” and “guarantees for all”. Faced with the crisis, the veils and the masks are off and capital shows itself for what it really is – society based on the war of all against all, which reacts to its own, undeniable death throes in the most savage and merciless fashion.

To do this, the State must be able to count on a whole series of collaborators: and who could be better collaborators than the so-called left-wing parties and so-called workers’ unions? The long opportunist history of the former and the compromising practices of the latter make them perfect allies. This is the real difference between the Italian and the French situations. In Italy the ruling class introduced the same measures over the period of a decade but took the precaution (de-

veloped in over half a century of ... co-existence) of relying on the fire-fighting effect of

2. See: “Dal contratto dei Metalmeccanici, un nuovo attacco alle condizioni di vita e di lavoro dei proletari [From the Metalworkers’ Contract - a new attack on the living and working conditions of proletarians]”, *Il programma comunista*, no.2/2006.

the parties and unions which roped off the working class behind a sanitary cordon, controlling their reactions and separating them by category and region, exhausting them in agitation without prospects, isolating and criminalizing the most antagonistic factions and using the most underhand, equivocal and terrorist methods, in full harmony with action by the State, in order to prevent even the embryo of an opposition front from forming against the measures gradually being introduced. The French ruling class, partly because they could not count on political forces with the same political-historical weight as the Italian heirs of Stalinism (unionisation is much slighter and so, therefore is control), partly because they believed they need only bring into play their own arrogant *grandeur*, partly because the social contradictions became explosive from month to month, neglected to involve that necessary help. Briefly, they thought

they could get by alone and they were mistaken. The unions were, in fact, brought into the picture late, in an evident strategic move to try and control what could be controlled: a move that was partly successful, showing that this help is crucial for capitalism. In fact CGT, ex PCF and their attendant choruses immediately adopted diluting practices, from the isolated, separate days of demonstrations and the rhetoric of the important occasions, against the instinctive, though fragile and confused tendency to achieve a compact battlefield and, above all, more widespread and effective forms of struggle, such as a general strike involving all categories.

Thus, despite the delay, opportunist parties and unions earned their future stripes/chevrons on the field: in the future, the French ruling class will no longer be able to neglect their vital contribution.

The limits of the “movement”

We are not amongst those who see the return of the class struggle, if not even the start of a new cycle of revolutionary battles, in every wave of rebellion (except of course for feeling shocked when the young proletariat of the *banlieues* burn cars belonging to ... their workman neighbours!). We are not the ones who even theorize that, just as '68 was supposed to open up the path to a new season of workers' struggles, the “anti-CPE movement” is supposed to mark the beginning of a new phase drawing closer to the proletarian revolution. In fact, whilst possessing all the characteristics that have been described (a movement of *young people partly belonging already to the prole-*

tariat or becoming part of the proletariat and partly *future proletariat*, fighting against a tangible deterioration in work relations, both present and future), the “anti-CPE movement” is subject to all the weaknesses that still undermine the working class today.

Only mad visionaries can ignore how profound the work of the counter-revolution has been over the past eighty years in its different but convergent forms of democracy, fascism, Stalinism, actually and metaphorically disarming the world proletariat, first and foremost in the advanced capitalist metropolises. The effects of this counter-revolution are clearly to be seen: pursued by an economic crisis that has

crushed “security”, jobs, “guarantees” over the past thirty years, the workers have difficulty finding their way back to the class struggle. It is not merely a question of the day-to-day betrayal by so-called “leftist” parties and so-called “workers” unions, which have now become crucial pins for keeping in place the order of things – a betrayal that is expressed in the boycott of struggles, the removal of their content and methods, the isolation of the more combative proletarians, with those who will not bow their heads being reported to the police and legal authorities, the criminalization of any sign of resistance, accompanied by harder and harder living and working conditions...

It is not just this (which is not a phenomenon of today but a situation that has come into being over a long period of history, starting, in fact, from Stalinism). It also involves the fact that, in these past tragic eighty years, the working class has lost its links to its own fighting traditions, with the classic content and methods of class struggle itself – a struggle that, in the short term, must set itself the aim of embracing proletarians from all sectors in a single defence front but, at the same time, in perspective, must establish the objective of going beyond that limit, advanced though it may be, because it will still continue to have the capital-based State opposite it, with all the State’s repressive apparatus, both openly visible and concealed.

The working class, particularly in capitalistically advanced metropolises, is finding it an arduous task to return to this path, to reclaim the methods and content of the struggle, even at an immediate and spontaneous level. In rap-

id flare-ups, they rebel and instinctively regain the perception of the inevitable antagonism that places them up against bourgeois society, its State and its side-kicks: and in those rapid flare-ups they also manage to recover from the collective memory what is needed for the fight in hand. But the flare-ups pass by and soon die out, usually without leaving anything except for a limited experience that the whole of the bourgeois world (ideology, inertia, repression) will go about cancelling out. To sum up, we are at a far lower level than the one Lenin referred to when he condensed the Marxist theory and practice of the relations between party and class into *What Is To Be Done?*: it is certainly not the “fault” of the working class!

And so the CPE was defeated: but the CNE remains and so do all the other oppressive, anti-working class measures, and there remains the need for capital to make use of these or invent new ones. The fight paid off in the short term but this is not enough. The young proletarians or future proletarians fresh from this experience will have to pose the problem of the continuity of the structures set up and the enlargement of the front of resistance against capital. And they will inevitably have to face the problem of the perspectives they should head towards, because without these any antagonistic movement is destined to be re-absorbed without a trace. And the problem of future perspectives can only be that of the need to shift from a fight based on defence to one of attack: *therefore* the problem of the bourgeois State as a cornerstone of the capitalist mode of production and the issue of the proletarian revolution and the revolutionary party.

The prime need is for the revolutionary party

Over the past few years France seems to have been visited by several nightmares. Capital and its State attempt to react to the deepening pangs of the crisis with economic and social measures like the C-NE and the CNP (aimed at making labour increasingly flexible and susceptible to blackmail) or like the new bill on “selected immigration” (designed to limit, though only partially, immigration: which capital nevertheless continues to need). At the same time, they are trying to reassure the half classes. Meanwhile, the conflictual relationship with the European Union (the recent “No” to the planned European Constitution) and the outbreak of a series of scandals affecting the heads of administration and government betray the profound unease circulating through the country, even though it has not yet succeeded in gathering along the lines and patterns of class opposition, but remains constant, gloomy resentment and alienation. The ideological mobilization (re-evaluation of the country’s colonial past, celebration of the abolition of slavery, etc.) also serves the need to freshen up the celebrations of a shaky and frequently ridiculed *grandeur*, channelling the unease in a strongly conservative direction.

What is dramatically missing from this whole scenario, of extreme interest to communists, is – as we have said – the revolutionary party, the only force able *not only* to direct and coordinate the struggles that, materialistically, are emerging from the social sub-strata by leading them out of the narrow boundaries in which they tend to confine themselves, *but also* to help them take the crucial qualitative step from the ter-

rain of pure economic claims to a political-revolutionary one – basically to make the fights based on defence cross-pollinate, *under specific favourable conditions*, into fights based on attack.

However, it is not sufficient to state this, since the argument is too often used in an abstract and mechanical fashion. The revolutionary party is not a *deus ex machina* which – as in classical tragedy – descends from above and solves situations. To speak of the “prime need for a revolutionary party” means talking about *long, unceasing and methodical work carried out in contact with all sectors of the working class*. And this, in turn, essentially means two things.

First of all, it means that the revolutionary party cannot be invented on the spur of the moment; it is not a white rabbit that can be pulled out of a top-hat. It can only be the result of a long struggle carried out over time for the defence and reaffirmation of a doctrine and a tradition, against all the forces, within the working class and outside it, that have unceasingly attacked and questioned that doctrine and that tradition, trying time after time over a century and a half to break the red thread running through it. This means: the balance sheet of eighty years of counter-revolution, incessant theoretical repair, the defence of principles, of the programme, of tactics, the political and organizational circumscribing of opportunism in all its various disguises (of which that of the “far left”, even in its apparently most radical manifestations, is the worst and the most dangerous), conveying to the new generations of revolutionaries a whole body of theoretical-

practical heritage, intervention in the fights of the proletariat within the limits of their own forces and capacities, to reintroduce revolutionary methods and objectives. Those who fail to understand this prime need are outside any revolutionary perspective: they are part of the spontaneous, movement-driven, anarchoid and subjectivist miasma that has at times literally sold out the world proletariat during this long period of counter-revolution.

From this initial affirmation the second, no less important, arises dialectically. The revolutionary Party is not even the Military General Staff which, at some point, decides to do battle, expecting the class to follow out of pure soldierly discipline, ready to obey any strategy brought into play, any manoeuvre decided behind closed doors. Here, in this purely mechanical and opportunist vision, we have the seeds of all the Stalinist and post-Stalinist aberrations regarding relations between party and class, which led both the revolutionary party (Lenin's Third International) and the world's working class to disaster. The dialectical complexity of this relationship, which actually presupposes *that long, unceasing and methodical work of revolutionary preparation in contact with all sectors of the working class* (as we have learned, above all from Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*), is completely deprived of its true nature in favour of an arrogant and irresponsible over-simplification in pure sergeant-major fashion – a military imitation that makes the skin crawl if we think of the disasters it has produced since the mid-1920s up to the present.

It is a fact that both these mistaken approaches (the spontaneous and the militarist) converge, as has always happened in the history of the communist movement, further demonstrating that opportunism may have several different faces but a single direction – the one that is the direct directly opposite of revolution. On the other hand, the revolutionary party is not “the guiding light” either, a merely academic-scholastic formation whose aim is to “increase the awareness” of the proletariat: taking such a perspective would mean automatically assuming a position outside Marxism, for which the revolution does not consist of the awareness of the proletariat but of material causes that drive the proletariat to encounter the revolutionary party on the rocky path of battles and experiences. Nor is it a formation that will come into being when the masses start to move, because at that point – since that *long, unceasing, methodical work* has not been carried out – it will truly be too late: in this case, too, it would mean not having grasped anything about the dialectics of history and leading the fighting class to certain defeat, having deprived it for too long of the revolutionary organ: which is not simply a prop but must be attached and bound to the class exactly like any other organ is attached and bound to the rest of the body, *in all its parts and functions*.

These are all deviations and aberrations that must be fought, today as yesterday and tomorrow. It will be necessary to return to this topic, since the very evolution of material contradictions will make this necessary, in France, as elsewhere.

Spain: Immigration and social tensions

Spain is one of the countries in Europe with the biggest economic growth. But this depends largely on the fact that it has come later than in other European countries, and on the incidence of immigration from South America. As much as 78% of the population growth is due to immigration, out of a total population of around 43 million (*Negocios de La Gaceta*, 08/03/2007). This giddy increase, with proletarians flooding the large cities – first and foremost Barcelona and Madrid – is also to be seen in a boom in the economy and in GNP. According to the INE (*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas*), in 2015 there will be over 8 million immigrants, i.e. 16% of the total population – a growth rate that puts Spain before France (8%), Belgium (8.7%), Germany (9%) and Austria (9.2%).

However, we have to remember that, despite the huge influx of immigrants over the past few years, every month around 150 thousand jobs remain uncovered (see: *Instituto de Empleo*); at the same time, however, companies are not taking on the Spanish unemployed (employment amongst Spaniards is growing only by 1.7%, as against 20.3% amongst foreigners). The EPA (*Encuesta Población Activa*) speaks of 2.5 million unemployed Spaniards (15%), a sign that unemployment has now become a physiological fact. This shows clearly that the capitalist class is on the lookout for irregular immigrants to put on its payroll, who are ready to work 10-12 hours a day on wages that would be unthinkable for Spanish proletarians. A study by Caixa Catalunya demonstrates that, without the flow of cheap labour, the GNP would not have reached 3.2% a year but would, instead, have shrunk by around 1.7% or perhaps more. We can deduce from this that the *exploitation of the proletariat* has had the effect of making the economy “dynamic” over the decade 1995 to 2005. It is interesting to note that Spain is the country in which immigration has grown most compared to the rest of Eu-

rope: around 8.5% a year, compared to an average 3.4% for the euro countries. Most of the South American or eastern (Chinese, Indian, Pakistani) immigrants are women, whilst it is mainly men who arrive from Africa. Amongst the South Americans, the most numerous are the Ecuadorians (around 700 thousand), fleeing from a poverty-stricken country which counts 8 million poor people out of 13 million inhabitants. The money sent back to Ecuador by these proletarians represents the country's second resource and this alone explains the tremendous level of exploitation suffered by the new slaves of rampant Spanish capitalism. It should not be forgotten that only 4% of immigrants obtain a residence permit: naturally, this only serves to increase the exploitation and the blackmail, particularly in sectors such as building, catering, agriculture for export and domestic work. Generally, those who obtain a work agreement have to content themselves with a “*contrato por obra*”, something very similar to a “project contract”. The working day is quite long and everyone is inclined to accept overtime, paid without any increase in rates (as provided for by the law), since no irregular immigrant is in a position to negotiate with his or her employer.

Not having regular papers means not being able to enjoy the same salary level as other workers, or, worse still, something that does unfortunately happen, not being paid at all, especially if the employer is a subcontractor of a foreign-based multinational. The government provides no protection, a court case is costly and takes time and no worker is ready to risk being sent home to even worse conditions of poverty. Solidarity amongst workers is very scarce, made worse by ethnic differences and by the segmentation imposed by the labour market which, as in the rest of Europe, is based on flexibility and precariousness. Union membership is very low (immigrant associations are preferred) and at the same time there is

a loss of membership amongst Spanish nationals.

With their new entry into Europe, Bulgarians, Romanians and Poles are also being “recruited” by means of agreements between the present government and the governments of eastern European countries. A similar agreement also exists with the Ukraine, with whom Spain has promised to coordinate its own actions, requesting workers directly from the government in Kiev and even providing training courses directly in that country, well before they arrive to sweat it out in the country of Don Quixote. The same strategy of inclusion in the workforce is used for the Senegalese. The Spanish fishermen’s associations requested and obtained intervention by the Ministry of Labour, to “train” around 700 Senegalese workers to work in Spain. The Minister Jesús Caldera had an immediate meeting with the Senegalese President (*El País*, 16/02/2007) to conclude a joint initiative bringing around 4000 African workers to take advantage of the “*contratos en origen*” (sold directly by their own government to become more or less slave labour in Spain). Obviously, as well as doing the worse-paid jobs, the immigrants take on the riskiest tasks, to the extent that the figures on work-related accidents are soaring. Mortality amongst immigrants is 30% higher than the average for the whole of the working population. In 2005, out of an active population of 15.2 million, there were 6.108 accidents at work for every 100 thousand inhabitants. All in all, 78.395 accidents were recorded amongst immigrants, 96 of which were mortal, 838 serious and the rest “slight”.

Spain is one of the countries in Europe with the highest number of clandestine immigrants: research carried out directly by the *Asociación Profesional Española* makes it clear that, compared to the 48.427 immigrants made regular over a two-week period, as many as 58.964 workers applying for regular employment were dismissed from

their jobs. Moreover, the numbers of workers given regular papers has shifted from 766.000 to only 1.097.191 in three years, a ridiculous figure, considering the overall labour force employed. In fact, the research highlights the fact that entrepreneurs fire those who apply for a regular contract. The process of obtaining regular papers is a failure before it begins, since capitalists – the Spanish economy – needs people it can blackmail and exploit to the limit. The living conditions are inhuman: exploited to the limit, with a high cost of living, rents soaring thanks also to the lack of housing, eternally persecuted by the police and discriminated by the rest of the local population... To gain a more precise idea of the importance of immigrants, we might look at the law requested by the Banco de España and voted on 21/09/04, by which dispatches of money to Latin America are regulated – dispatches that amounted to 6000 euros in 2005. Almost all credit institutes offer to dispatch money for immigrants free of charge, so that the flow of money can be better monitored and the volume of wealth produced can be evaluated (it should be remembered that in 1994 dispatches amounted to 312 million euros only). A study by the European Community tells us that the money that capitalist bloodsuckers have saved thanks to the exploitation of immigrants amounts to around 8 points of the GNP. In the end, this constant flood of exploited immigrants, obliged to live in inhuman conditions, cannot fail to produce social reactions, as in the case of Alcorcón (a suburb of Madrid) where months ago clashes occurred between the police and the *bandas latinas*. Few resources are devolved to the suburbs and the possibilities of keeping the new (forgotten and desperate) *olvidados* tame are decreasing steadily. It does not, therefore, take much for instinctive anger to turn into revolt and rebellion, giving further proof – if it were needed – of the degree of ill-being experienced in the squalid society of Spain’s capital.

Two Articles on the Situation in the Middle East

Lebanon: Aggressors only, in the wars of imperialism. The only true victim of attack is always the proletariat

The Israeli offensive in the south of Lebanon (as well as the renewed offensives in Gaza and the West Bank) are the tragic repetition of a situation – that of the Middle East – to which, in the context of bourgeois relations, *there is no way out*. Let us try and find out why and subsequently – most importantly – what the prospects are from the point of view of revolutionary and class politics.

Israeli expansionism

The Israeli military drive, officially motivated by the need to “defend our own borders”, is of a *purely imperialist* nature. In other words, it falls into the pattern of events inherent in imperialism which – being a superstructure of capitalism – can never maintain a balance, a state of pacific stillness, but aggravates to the utmost those features of disorder and aggressiveness that belong to a mode of production based on market laws, on competition, on the extraction of surplus value, on trade war, on the fight of all against all – a mode of production which is led by its own economic laws to a constant division and sharing out of the world market, in the search – once the whole planet has capitulated to the stronger capitalist States – for better positions on the chess board of the world market (in this case, in the field of the Middle East, through the securing and control of the main energy sources, so as to gain a better control of production and related rent) or with a view to excluding the current main competitors. As Lenin wrote in *Imperialism*, “The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely that it strives to annex *not only* agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialised regions (German appetite for Belgium; French appetite for Lorraine), because (1) the fact that the world is already partitioned obliges those contemplating a *redivision* to reach out for *every kind* of territory, and (2) an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several great powers in the striving for hegemony, i.e., for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony” (Chapter VII, “Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism”).

In this sense, Israel – a test-tube state created by the winning powers in the second world slaughter, for the control of an area of strategic importance both for energy and for military purposes, and, as such, a concrete expression of capitalism at its highest point of economic, social and technological development – Israel is an *eminently imperialist state*: both internally (state organisation, economic characteristics, social relations), and in its constant, inexorable projection outside its own borders. However, as Lenin always explained, in an imperialist age, *all countries are or are destined to become so*: in the A, B or C leagues, leaders or stragglers, obtusely proud of their own super power or frothing at the mouth in their attempt to secure a share, or else wagging their tails in servile hope of gain. Thus they are all, actually or potentially, aggressors: and all, as cynically demonstrated by two world wars and an endless number of minor wars, in order to ... “defend themselves”!

Other, more specific and no less important considerations must be added to this general consideration. Firstly, its special genesis alone (which we cannot go into in much detail here but which we shall return to in the future, taking up the ample analyses we have carried out in past decades) makes Israel the appointed “gendarme” of the USA in the area, in the dual sense of being the *longa manus* of US economic and strategic interests and, at the same time, their hub, their “launching pad”, in other words their “aircraft carrier”: the latter being a condition destined to open up other, far from simple, internal contradictions, typical of a country substantially fuelled by foreign capital but at the same time (as is typical of capitalist patterns in an imperialist age) desiring to take its own initiatives, its own direction and not remain forever a mere appendage of the dominant imperialism (this is the reason for the severe and recurrent internal political crises: all to be seen in a bourgeois-capitalist framework, of course, but no less significant because of this). In second place, Israeli military activism, cynical and ruthless as only that of a technologically highly-sophisticated imperialism can be, is made even more acute from a general point of view, by the lingering and worsening world economic crisis, in which the capitalist mode of production has been struggling since the mid-’70s (obliging *all countries* in different but no less acute ways to constantly divide up the market, the world quotas of surplus value, the land and oil rents, the sources of energy: the wars of the ’90s are a clear and dramatic example, despite the eminently bourgeois hypocrisy about “humanitarian wars”!); and, from a more specific and even more pressing point of view, this military activism is made keener still by the effects of the general crisis on *Israel itself*, on its economic and social structure, on its internal class relations (which demand

inevitable chauvinistic rallying, the constant identification of an “enemy lying in wait”, the country being kept in a constant state of alert and tension, the exaltation of a patriotic dimension which even the mild voices of dissent bow down to, like those of the faint-hearted pacifists of “Peace Now”: a further demonstration that all pacifism does is... to prepare for war!).

An old story

On the other hand, the Middle-Eastern tragedy is an old story. With the disbanding of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, imperialist disorder hit the area and the process of constant, dramatic share-outs and new shares-outs began.

The English “Balfour declaration” (1917) already foresaw Jewish settlement in Palestine; at the same time, England had promised the Palestinian Arabs independence in exchange for their alliance during the war: a case of having your cake and eating it, in classical imperialist style, keeping everybody quiet to “divide and rule”. But at that time, just after the war, English imperialism was declining and US imperialism had just started to grow, while other European imperialisms were not really solid enough to be able to penetrate. Not only this. The fire that had been let loose by the Russian October uprisings also affected the poor and proletarian masses of the East who could see a point of reference in the Communist International of the early ‘20s that might lead them out of the dead-ends of outdated modes of production, tribal divisions and contrasts, gathering imperialist oppression, with the inevitable backwash of economic and social disintegration, compromising politics, diplomatic plots and chauvinistic temptations – all weighing on their shoulders.

The First Congress of the Peoples of the East, held in Baku in 1920, proclaimed, in its “Manifesto to the Peoples of the East”: “The peoples of the East have long stagnated in the darkness of ignorance under the despotic yoke of their own tyrant rulers, and under that of foreign capitalist conquerors. But the roar of the world-wide conflict, and the thunder of the Russian workers’ revolution, which has released the *Eastern* people of Russia from the century-old chains of capitalist slavery, has awakened them, and now aroused from their sleep of centuries, they are rising to their feet. They are waking up and are hearing the call to a holy war, to a *ghazavat*: this is our call! It is the call of the First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East, united with the revolutionary proletariat of the West under the banner of the Communist International. Thus we — representatives of the toiling masses of all the peoples of the East: India, Turkey, Persia, Egypt,

Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, China, Indochina, Japan, Korea, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, Daghestan, Northern Caucasasia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Khiva, Bukhara, Turkestan, Ferghana, Tataria, Bashkiria, Kirghizia, etc., united in unbreakable union among ourselves and with the revolutionary workers of the West summon our peoples to a holy war. We say: *Peoples of the East!* You have often heard the call to holy war, from your governments, you have marched under the green banner of the Prophet, but all those holy wars were fraudulent, serving only the interests of your self-seeking rulers, and you, the peasants and workers, remained in slavery and want after these wars. You conquered the good things of life for others, but yourselves never enjoyed any of them. Now we summon you to the first real holy war, under the red banner of the Communist International. We summon you to a holy war for your own well-being, for your own freedom, for your own life!"

Also, the same First Congress of the Peoples of the East declared, in its "Appeal to the Workers of Europe, America, and Japan", proclaimed: "Here in Baku, on the borders of Europe and Asia, we representatives of tens of millions of peasants and workers of Asia and Africa in revolt showed the world our wounds, showed the world the marks of the whip on our backs, the traces left by the chains on our feet and hands. And we raised our daggers, revolvers and swords and swore before the world that we would use these weapons not to fight each other but to fight the capitalists. Believing profoundly that you, the workers of Europe and Asia, will unite with us under the banner of the Communist International for common struggle, for a common victory, for a new life in common, based on fraternal aid between all toilers, we have formed here a Council for Propaganda and Agitation, which, under the guidance of the Communist International, that union of our elder brothers in revolutionary struggle, will rouse the working masses of all colours, organise them and lead them to the attack on the fortress of slavery. Workers of Britain, America, France, Italy, Japan, Germany and other countries! Listen to the voice of the representatives of the millions of the peoples of the East in revolt, who are telling you of their oath to rise up and help you in your fight, and who look for fraternal aid from you in our fight. Notwithstanding the centuries of bondage and enslavement, we turn to you with the faith in your fraternal feelings, with confidence that your victory will mean the liberation of mankind, without distinction of colour, religion or nationality. Repay this confidence of ours in you with confidence that our struggle is not a struggle of darkness and obscurantism, but a struggle for a new and better life, for the development of the peoples of the East on the same foundations of labour and fraternity on which you want to build your life. May your ears be

reached by the thunder with which tens and hundreds of millions of working people in Asia and Africa are responding to our oath, and may this thunder meet with response in the thunderclaps of our fight for the common liberation of all the toilers”.

Clearly, the imperialist designs on the area, that had already become explicit in the First World War and in the immediate post-war period, clashed with a widespread, deeply-rooted and threatening ferment, which in only a few years could have led to an authentic social earthquake, destined to join with the conquests of Soviet October and with the expected and hoped-for outbreak of proletarian revolution in the West. The capitalist-imperialist design for the area would have to wait for “better” times.

This scenario, dangling between two ages, two modes of production, was, unfortunately, to change in the space of just a decade, with the help of the Second World War and of menshevik politics (falling into line behind national bourgeoisies) of triumphant Stalinism. Thus, what the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 (officially recognized by the Soviet Union in 1950) actually did was to bring back into the area, but with greater violence, the inter-imperialist dynamics that had come onto the scene two decades previously without being able to fully extend themselves. With the ideological pretext of “compensation” for the Shoah, the creation of the state of Israel was a “transplant of capitalism onto

the blank sheet of the desert [...] a case of ‘bourgeois revolution to the end’ because of the combination of highly modern industrial forms and the collective management of agricultural lands”¹.

1. “Le ‘Alsazie-Lorene’ del Medio Oriente [The Alsace-Lorraines of the Middle East]”, *Il programma comunista*, no.23/1955

And from the very beginning it was the expression of the most powerful imperialism from an economic and therefore military point of view – that of the United States which had supplanted the British over the years. But as well as being the *longa manus* of the strongest imperialism (with the corresponding blessing of Stalin), the state of Israel responded to another of world imperialism’s needs. Intervention in the Middle East was of exactly the same order as the procedure had been in the division of Germany and Berlin: to avoid any possible repetition of that fire, red and proletarian, that had characterised the immediate first post-war period in areas of critical historical importance from a political, strategic and economic point of view. So began the real tragedy of the Arab people, the impoverished Palestinian masses, the landless and stateless proletarians, too often – during the last half century – hired out to fictitious homelands and reactionary patriotisms, in that “intricate tangle of interests which [as we wrote back in 1955] reflect both the deadly game of inter-continen-

tal coalitions and the more limited clash of local state powers, which are of both an imperialist and a nationalist nature.”²

2 “La crisi del Medio Oriente [The Middle-Eastern Crisis]”, *Il programma comunista*. Nos. 20-21/1955

A dead-end

The re-arrangement of the area after the Second World War did not, in fact, affect Israel only: a whole geopolitics was involved which on the one hand was supposed to work towards breaking up and thus immobilizing rebel masses with no remaining resources and, on the other hand, had to deal with the political and military management of an area where there were enormous reserves of raw materials, first and foremost oil. This meant: Israel in the role of *gendarme*, the penetration of world imperialism through its main national segments (primarily the United States, then Great Britain, France, the USSR, Italy, Germany: today China and India, too, as well as post-1989 Russia), the installing of local regimes that were as sympathetic as possible, with corrupt dynasties holding power, both blackmailed and vulnerable to blackmail, in a weak relationship to the West but ferociously united in the repression of any popular uprising that might come from below... The example of Nasser’s Egypt is crystal clear, with the ideological slogan of pan-Arabism on the one hand (the idea of re-arranging the area from above by using politics of an almost Bismarck-like stamp) and the practical compromise at an economic-military level on the other (US financing for large-scale building work, military agreements with the USSR).

The post-war period – which still continues in the year 2006 and will continue until the real inter-war age starts, with the maturing of the subjective and objective conditions preparing the outbreak of a Third world conflict – will proceed entirely according to these same patterns. And it will, indeed, be a dead-end for everyone: for the capitalist powers involved (which have no interest in “pacifying” the area, since here, in the chaos of the Middle-East, they can more easily strike at one another and which, moreover, with the progressive intensification of the economic crisis, are forced into military adventures, exhausting wrestling matches, and into the murky currents of underground diplomacy) and, above all, for the poor Arab masses, Palestinians and more generally proletarians of whatever origin (thus including those of Hebrew origin; it should not be forgotten that the area has also become a “land of immigration” – from Africa and from Asia), who, because of the lack of any class reference, are increasingly rounded up and harnessed within religious-nationalist perspectives, no matter how radical or gun-wielding – always the expression of this or that bourgeois faction, united by a single objective, to share out the rent deriving from oil.

On the other hand, the problem is extremely complex. What we wrote in 1956 – i.e. that, “due to American imperialism intervening in the intricate moves of nationalist movements in the coastal nations of the Middle-East, every new turn their history takes produces deep repercussions for the world as a whole”³ – is proving even truer now, day by day, turning the whole area (from Serbia to Egypt and Turkey to Afghanistan) into an uninterrupted stretch of unsolvable inter-imperialist tensions: the Balkans of the year 2000. In fact the chancelleries, the “think tanks” and the military commands of the most powerful imperialisms are working on a project of redesign of the area which will take into account the change in international equilibrium, balances of power, alliances and growing tensions: a new arrangement that would nevertheless bear the stamp of capitalist interests in the area (of a strategic and economic nature) and which would therefore do no more than create another dead-end.

3 “Il terremotato Medio Oriente [The Middle-Eastern Earthquake]”, *Il programma comunista*, nos. 7-8/1956.

4 “La crisi del Medio Oriente [The Middle Eastern Crisis]”, cit.

The tragedy of July-August 2006 and its foreseeable after-effects demonstrate that there exist neither real possibilities of diplomatic solutions, more or less under the umbrella of the UN, beyond lukewarm “ceasefires” or ambiguous provisional agreements destined to become waste-paper when subjected to future material pressure, nor credible military or “resistance” or “guerilla” solutions, or of a purely national type: indeed, they merely crush the tormented populations even further in their pits of suffering and destruction. To hand over to them, to tell oneself that they may in some way shake the inter-imperialist hold on the area, to give in to the temptation of the menshevik and Stalinist slogan (“my enemy’s enemy is my friend”) and support one faction or the other means, at best, an “anti-imperialism of appearances”, empty of content and perspectives and, in the worst case, agreeing to the interests of the local bourgeoisie and sectors of bourgeoisie and becoming their “useful idiots”.

On the other hand, it is a fact that, at a military level, too, the strategy of all the contestants (all the capitalist countries caught in the spiral of an economic crisis, and made all the more cynical and ruthless by the putrefaction typical of the imperialist phase), aims essentially at a single objective, apart from the control of the sources of energy and “living space”: *to destroy whole villages, cities, neighbourhoods and infrastructures* (to then proceed with the re-building: already there is talk of it, “good business deals ahead!”) and, above all, *to terrorize and massacre poor civilian populations without resources or means of protection*. The only true victim of attack in this umpteenth imperialist adventure where *all parties are aggressors* is thus *the proletariat*. In this sense, too, we have a foretaste of the coming world war (“the fu-

ture front of the third imperialist war is already advancing through the Middle East," we wrote back in 1955)⁴, which, like all imperialist wars, will have to destroy excess production, the goods that have accumulated on the market because of hyper-productive delirium and which are now choking the capitalist machinery. And it is well known that one of these goods is called *labour force*: real or virtual, present or future, it consists of men, women, young people and children, all immersed in the horrors of capitalism's inferno. When they will once again fight for *their own objectives*, the hatred that the proletarians of all countries will feel for this mode of production, which has now become a mere revolting obscenity, will have to be fuelled also, alas, by these terrible tragedies.

War against imperialist war

Closed inside this vicious circle, the fruit of inter-imperialist dynamics operating from afar, the Middle East will only be able to discover the answer to its dramatic problems in the perspective of a communist revolution.

In the ample party work titled "Marxism and National Issue" (published in n. 13 of our *Internationalist Papers*), we wrote: "Israel's special feature is that it comes into being as a colonising State, which is a characteristic that in no way derives from its religious nature (all the States in the region share this aspect), but from the fact that its economy depends heavily on enormous foreign financing, partly deriving directly from the United States and partly imposed by the latter country on Germany with the pretext of the Holocaust".

We then affirmed that the recurring catchword of the "destruction of the state of Israel" really amounts to "an *openly nationalist objective* devoid of any basis in an area now completely bourgeois, like the Middle East, despite the persistence of Jewish privileges and the consequent oppression and persecution of the Palestinians – aspects that have been tolerated for too long by the western proletariat, paralysed by the crumbs of material privileges that have fallen from the banquet table of the imperialist predators and ensnared by the cross-class ideology preached by the false workers' parties". In fact, the struggle must be directed against the States of *all the bourgeoisies in the area* (Arabic and Israeli), against all the imperialisms that have been trying to get a finger in the pie, against *all the bourgeoisies and bourgeois factions* (be they more or less fundamentalist, more or less extremist, more or less armed, "resistance fighters" or "guerrillas"), who are contending rents and profits at the expense of all the Middle-Eastern *proletarians*, of masses that are increasingly disinherited and desperate.

In the same text, after having mentioned the “the *central role of an analysis of the balance of power in the area*”, in order to avoid repeating merely empty declamatory intentions, we wrote:

“Today, it can be considered that a class-oriented revolutionary path in Israel and throughout the Middle East can only be the result of a catastrophic military defeat of the State of Israel, whose strength lies mainly outside the country and derives mostly from foreign financing and military aid.

“To sum up very briefly, the following elements must be considered:

- a) the State of Israel is the launching pad for all projections of American power in the area. Up to now Europe and Japan have profited from this situation and have participated in the financing of what is an authentic mercenary State;
- b) given that the Israeli proletariat is extremely various (Hebrews, Arab-Israelis, immigrants from south-east Asia, from eastern Europe, from Africa, from Latin America...), the class collaboration and chauvinism of the salaried workers of Jewish origin are rooted *not* in the religious element *but* in the fact that they constitute a “working-class aristocracy” with their own special characteristics and privileges, linked to the specific nature and role of the State of Israel: i.e., they are wage workers for whom – because of material conditions – solidarity with the State of Israel comes before any, even vague, class identity or membership;
- c) defeat of the Israelis’ internal front is only possible in the case of a general collapse of the State. It may come economically with the termination of free financing by the imperialist Trilateral (but already a stop to European aid could pose great economic problems for the Zionist State and its American protector) [...] or politically, through a military defeat”.

And so we went on:

“In the present situation this defeat is inconceivable. Only a revolutionary process that shook Europe, unifying and centralising it under a revolutionary dictatorship, could set off economic, political and military dynamics leading to this result. Without this condition, the dispersed and desperate forces of the Palestinian proletariat and the disinherited Arab masses, were they to be persuaded to fight, are of no military value, though politically they would be of considerable significance: in fact, to paraphrase what Marx says about revolution (‘the first result of revolution is revolution itself’), it could be argued that the first victory of the Palestinian proletarian struggle is the battle of the Palestinian proletariat itself. In this context, *the cycle of purely national struggles and movements for Palestine and for the whole of the Middle East is thus finally devoid of any historical perspective*. Therefore the Party can do no more than indicate a *single*

solution to the Palestinian proletarian masses, one that also contains the possibility of cutting through the knot of national oppression and discrimination: that of *establishing themselves on the ground of an open class struggle against all the rapacious bourgeoisies of the region, in defence of their material living and working conditions, a struggle capable of bringing together in a single front working classes of mixed nationalities, to be sealed by the open, anti-capitalist fight of the proletariat in the imperialist metropolises*".

The problem cannot then be solved simply and demagogically by the "destruction of the state of Israel". It is one thing to reason on the basis of a scenario (improbable or at least only a distant possibility in the present state of affairs and anyway depending on complex and not only local factors) in which a hypothetical military defeat of Israel would inevitably involve shattering decades of balance and thus the re-arrangement (in any case imperialist) of the area: from the communist point of view, this "reasoning" would only have sense and value as part of an overall strategy, which would have to be able to count on a) a return to open class warfare in the imperialist areas, b) the central, organizational and guiding role of the revolutionary party in this return and thus in its development in a revolutionary direction, c) the close link between this return and the struggle of the disinherited masses of the Middle-East, which would allow them to break free of ideological-strategic bonds of a purely nationalist-chauvinist nature, and thus with the objective, as has been said before, of destroying *all the states in the area, as all being bourgeois states* (whether Zionist or Islamic, lay or religious). It is another thing to speak instead of the "destruction of the state of Israel" as a pre-condition, the "first step" in a process (as well as being a moralistic "act of faith" against which to measure the extent to which a political position is "revolutionary"), because this – as well as smelling awfully like menshevism with a Stalinist dressing – would merely deliver the disinherited Middle-Eastern masses to a different circle of suffering in their inferno of exploitation and repression, in which the protagonists would no longer be the Zionist state of Israel but fundamentalist or moderate Islamic states, moreover largely compromised by US or European imperialism: *all – we repeat – equally bourgeois and therefore all ferociously anti-proletarian*.

It is therefore a question of regaining the prospect (and of working towards it) of a proletarian outbreak whose epicentre would inevitably be at the heart of the western, imperialist areas and which would also affect and carry in its wake the shattered and desperate area of the Middle East. The return onto the scene of the proletariat of the imperialist areas, under pressure from material causes deriving from the worsening economic and social crisis and consequently from open attack on them by capital, will inevitably have to start out from an unrelenting defence of their own living and working conditions:

this will mean *no concessions to their own bourgeoisie, no sacrifice in the name of the national economy*. But a real class war waged in this direction and in an unrelenting manner will also mean, in turn and implicitly, the need to go beyond the horizon of *mere defence*: it will mean laying the practical, organizational and tactical bases for moving forward to the attack, to *an open fight against the bourgeoisie*. Because "The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848).

Clearly this prospect cannot then do without the active and significant presence of the revolutionary party, internationally rooted, alongside the working class, to organize and direct its fights and finally guide it, when objective conditions are mature, against the bulwark represented by capital's State. What must be central to the work of the revolutionary party, starting from now, is a relentless struggle, both theoretical and practical, against any national and nationalist position, no matter what "left-wing" disguise it may have been given, the "classical" forms taken by the unhappy experience of "national-bolshevism" or the present ones of varying types of support for local bourgeois factions that have more or less taken up arms.

Briefly, it is a question of resuming the communist perspective of the *war against imperialist wars*, which means fighting against the imperialist adventures of one's own bourgeoisie, however they may be presented ("peace missions", "humanitarian missions", "buffer troops", etc.), taking up agitation once again with the classic slogan of "revolutionary defeatism". It means the refusal to support armed intervention, a boycott of war efforts (both in the "front line" and in the civilian ranks), fraternising instead with an "enemy" that consists of proletarians from other countries.

Of course: this is a very long-term and extremely difficult perspective and above all not one that will offer immediate relief to the disinherited masses in the area. But history has demonstrated amply (and tragically) that there are no alternatives or shortcuts.

Post scriptum

Whilst waiting to return in more detail to the situation and its development, a few words about the most recent events⁵. As is well known, in the meantime the UN has produced, with much difficulty, Resolution 1701, which, just for a change, proves to be vague and ambiguous. It foresees a ceasefire and the setting up of a buffer zone in the south of Lebanon using troops of which half consist of elements from the

⁵ Time of writing approximately 20th August 2006.

Lebanese army and half of UN military forces; the disarming of Hezbollah would be the job of the Lebanese army and in all probability would take concrete shape in the inclusion of the irregular forces in the official ones of the Lebanese army. The United States and England stand by and watch, leaving others to do the dirty work and to bear the expenses in every sense. As to Europe, it once again proves not to be (and not to be capable of being) a political player: after having been the promoter of the resolution, France has started to step back and Germany has kept an extremely low profile. The Italic bourgeoisie instead, faithful to the "libidinous desire to serve" that has always distinguished it, no matter what government represents it, is ready to leave and even (a historic occasion!) to guide the "peace mission" as proposed by Israel. In actual fact the war seems to have left things as they were before: a purposely intricate, fluid situation, pregnant with explosive future potential, as suited to any "arrangement" deriving from the diplomatic manoeuvres of imperialist bandits. The buzz is: good business opportunities for re-building, the freezing of the Middle-Eastern situation in the form that is best suited for energy sources to be controlled by the leading imperialisms (to the detriment of the political adversaries of the moment), whilst awaiting the opportunity to re-arrange the balance of power in the area (something that will not be done on paper but through future clashes and massacres). Meanwhile, the disinherited and desperate masses will continue to act as meat for the slaughter.

The troops that will be sent to the south of Lebanon are none other than "troops of war", because *every intervention – however it is disguised – is a military intervention for imperialism.*

Is there still an issue of the "Palestinian Nation"?

Following the failure in the '60s and '70s to deal in some way with the issue of a "settlement on national territory" (just as the issue of "national unity of Arabic-speaking territories" had failed in the '50s and '60s), the Palestinian bourgeoisie has played the same repressive role towards the Palestinian proletariat that other Arab bourgeoisies have assumed towards Arab proletarians, including the Palestinians. Today the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the West Bank and in Gaza keeps the Palestinian proletarians under control both on its own behalf and on behalf of other Arab and international bourgeoisies, using the strips of territory assigned to it by the moves of world imperialism. Increasingly torn between the interests of Arab and international bourgeoisies, it is reduced to organizing and fuelling the division and the massacre of the Palestinian proletariat in the name of its own specific faction and delivering it, weakened and harmless, to the armed repression of the Israeli bourgeoisie.

This now entrenched and irreversible situation makes it increasingly urgent for the Palestinian proletariat to cut off any endorsement or support for either the bourgeois current of Al Fatah, with its connections to certain Arab bourgeoisies and to Israeli and western ones, or the bourgeois currents of Hamas, more closely linked to an Arab bourgeoisie that waves the flag of Islamic fundamentalism, although only as a cover for its own imperialist regional ambitions and its repressive, anti-proletarian function, which is openly to be seen.

The problem of a Palestinian nation cannot be tackled and solved by the Palestinian bourgeoisie, just as the more general problem of an Arab state cannot be dealt with and solved by any Arab bourgeoisie. The recent division and armed conflicts between the two bourgeois political factions in the territories of Gaza and the West Bank demonstrate, if this were still necessary, that the objective of having a "more acceptable" national territory in terms of extension and borders is no longer one of their main interests. Fully integrated in the business interests of the area for some decades now, influenced by the most powerful and ambitious of Arab bourgeoisies, realistically speaking, the Arab bourgeoisie is no longer concerned with territorial ambitions but uses the existing territories to squeeze the most out of the Palestinian proletariat, whilst controlling and repressing it.

The latter can do nothing but acknowledge this situation. The fact that the objective of an "acceptable" national territory has failed miserably and no solution is being found by the Palestinian bourgeoisie does not mean that the proletariat should "force" a solution, press for it or subjugate itself any further in order to reach this objective. For any proletarian the objective of a national territory with "fair borders", well-defined and safe, and thence any support given to the national bourgeoisie to attain this, is not a principle it should "obey" or which should take priority over its fight against the bourgeoisie itself. Support for a country's bourgeoisie (and in all events practical and military support and certainly not theoretical-political or organizational) were only of use or justifiable in historical situations where the latter took initiatives in which it filled a revolutionary function in opposition to old systems of production and old social classes. In situations where this bourgeoisie has proved incapable and unable to carry out this function, as in the case of the Arab, and especially Palestinian, bourgeoisie – situations in which the old modes of production have certainly been surpassed but through mediation and compromises with the old classes and with imperialist big business –, national problems and territorial settlements almost never find a solution and are more or less put aside, as in the Middle East, creating chronic situations of tragic stalemate. In such situations the belief that in order to fight a country's bourgeoisie the problem of the nation must be solved "first", "settling" the territory, giving it "fair and safe borders" *implies a nationalistic vision of the class war*. Moreover, the belief that it is possible to "put pressure" on the bourgeoisie, share a common cause, supposing that this will strike a blow against Israeli or western imperialism, is *pure illusion*.

The proletariat does not make the issue of the nation (or the fight against one of the imperialist camps) a partial objective or a "phase" taking priority over its own battle, which must be waged first and foremost against its own bourgeoisie. Even if it had encountered a truly revolutionary bourgeoisie, "deserving" of military support (and these are *historical situations that no longer exist and are no longer practicable today*), the Palestinian proletariat should certainly not have waited for a "real" or "fair" settlement of the nation and of its borders etc. to be reached "first", before fighting it. However the national issue is solved or not solved, whatever type of national problem occurs in the bourgeois framework, the proletariat is always crushed and oppressed, both economically and militarily. It must remain indifferent to the way in which the bourgeoisie or the world imperialist theatre deals with and "solves" (in its own way!) the national issue, instead putting in first place the struggle to resist the oppression brought to bear by its own bourgeoisie, whatever national situation has taken shape, looking for its allies *amongst other proletarians only*.

In the Middle East, the proletariat must develop and organize its class unity starting out from the existing situation of "states" and "nations", and fighting the greedy, thieving local states and bourgeoisies. Not until these states have been overthrown and a dictatorship of the proletariat has been established in the region (*a prospect that is unimaginable without there also being a victory of the proletariat in the big centres of capitalism*), will the issue of the nation be able to be dealt with and re-examined *in completely different ways, forms and perspectives*. For Palestinian proletarians there is therefore no longer any "national issue" today, any question of a national settlement or national self-determination; or rather, if there still is, it is nothing to do with them and cannot be solved by the Palestinian proletariat alone, but is a *problem of the whole of the Arab and world proletariat*. As such, it must be faced and solved in terms of the struggle and dictatorship of the world proletariat against all bourgeoisies and their state apparatus. Claims to "Palestinian self-determination" can still usefully be made (i.e. from the point of view of developing a class struggle in the area) *exclusively* from the viewpoint of the Israeli proletariat, (who must thus demonstrate to Palestinian proletarians, by their actions, that they wish to fight against their own bourgeoisie *on this ground, too*): certainly not in order to give a *new impulse* or a *boost* to the national movement of the Palestinian proletariat, but merely as a *defeatist tactic against their own bourgeoisie*, to increase the Palestinian proletariat's confidence in their Israeli counterpart, which may otherwise be considered an accomplice in the misdeeds of its own bourgeoisie.

Only in this way will it be possible to start moving out of the dead end of anti-proletarian massacres, whether they are of Israeli or of Palestinian origin.

United States: Immigration, prison and wage labor

Figures in the press¹ give us an interesting picture of the relationship between immigration, prison and wage labor in the United States, and allow us to explore certain issues relating to the relationship between capital and the working class in the country.

Let us start from the figures (always to be taken with the due pinch of salt), bearing in mind that, whilst the “reform of immigration” (whose objective should be to give “regular” papers to 12 million clandestine immigrants at present working in U.S. territory) is stuck in the parliamentary tug of war, it is a lucky moment for the anti-immigrant legislation, elaborated in various ways in different states – legislation aiming, as always in these cases, at making the conditions of immigrants (especially those from Central and South America) precarious and open to blackmail, applying constant pressure that obliges them to accept *any sort of job and living conditions*. And, we might add, the universal condition of the proletarian migrant – persecuted, exploited (in the specific example, 12 or more hours of labour a day in the fields picking fruit and vegetables), alter-

nately within or outside the law, struggling day after day in what invariably becomes a *war amongst the poor and the desperate*. A new chapter in this war of the poor and the desperate has opened up over the years, under the impulse of the laws of capitalist economy and, in this situation of stalemate (due not to lack of sensitivity on the part of individual members of parliament but to the *needs of the labour market*), it manifests itself in all its crude reality: particularly in the western States, most of the work in the fields – the historical destiny of immigrants, whether legal or clandestine – is now done by those serving prison sentences. The big agricultural enterprises “hire” groups of prisoners from one penitentiary institute or another, to work in the fields under due surveillance at an hourly rate of around \$9.60 – only 60 cents of which go into the pocket of the prisoner-labourer, whilst the rest is hoarded by the institute, which will decide whether to use it in order to pay the damages caused by the crime the individual was involved in or whether to pay it into a fund to be managed by itself and made over to the individual at the time (s)he is ... set free (a sort of severance fund, in view of the fact that, in any case, we are speaking of a *capitalistic prison*). Let us look more closely at the individual issues.

1. It must be kept in mind that this article was published in our Italian-language journal, *Il programma comunista*, in July-August 2007. Figures are mainly taken from the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, 7/21/2005.

The needs of capital and the fluxes of immigrants

The figures tell us that the incidence of immigrant labour as a percentage of total labour in the USA grew from 5% in 1970, to an approx. 6% in 1980, approx.

8% in 1990, approx. 12% in 2000 and approx. 14% in 2004 (in California alone – the state that at present absorbs the highest number of immigrants – the

figure has risen from 10% in 1970 to 32% today).

The history of US capitalism is in many ways the history of endless, successive waves of immigration. Without wanting to go into a history of US immigration here, and limiting ourselves to the 1800s (the century in which US economic power emerges as dominant, after completing the nation-making process through the 1861-64 Civil War, under the banner of the capitalist mode of production alone and thus having created a real domestic market), the first waves of immigration come in the '40s and '50s (German and Irish labour: the former mostly skilled or semi-skilled, the latter unskilled, literally starving and ready to take on any sort of job at any wages, the butt of undisguised racism by the ruling class and by the growing middle classes), which join "native" labour, consisting of the English, the Scots and the more established Americans, on the job market. Already, within the US working class, the first divisions are skilfully created and exploited by the ruling class to weaken any potential opposition front. In the same decades, on the US Pacific coast, large contingents of Chinese are arriving, as they flee from the upheavals caused by capitalist penetration of Asia: they will be working in the gold and silver mines and on the building of the first intercontinental railroads and, once these two sources of work have been exhausted (and the Asian immigrants used to move public opinion against foreigners, culminating in an authentic pogrom), they will create the Chinatowns of the country's main cities.

In the mid-1800s, first the war with Mexico for the control of the vast south-western territories and, subsequently, the Civil War will complete the process of US nation-making: amongst the many

consequences, this involves securing a huge reserve of cheap labour consisting of the populations descending from the Mayas and the Aztecs in the south-west and the former slaves, "free" to join the job market. In both cases, segregation laws and established customs, written and unwritten, will contribute to making both these groups into a hyper-exploited and hyper-oppressed caste. In the second half of the 1800s, the huge wave of migration arrives, mainly from southern and eastern Europe – Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, another enormous contingent of cut-price labour, ready to take on the hardest and worst-paid jobs in order to survive and not be forced to return. The thirty-year period bridging the two centuries sees a constant flow, which will be concentrated mainly in the big cities and constitute the origin of strong social tension, but also of the great workers' battles.

If, therefore, around 7.5 million workers arrive in the United States between 1820 and 1870, in the following 50 years around 26 million arrive, with a peak of 8.8 million in the decade 1901-1919 – figures that alone would suffice to explain the rapid take-off of US imperialism, its intervention in the First World War and its final position as leading world power and creditor.

What we wish to emphasise is that ever since the 1840s but mostly in the four decades between the 1860s and the year 1900 the policy of US capitalism was guided by the motto *divide et impera* (divide and rule) – take advantage of the ethnic and national divisions in the emerging working class (and in most cases fuel them purposely) to weaken the class front, provoke antagonism or racial hatred and, at the same time, herd the immigrant proletarians towards assimilation and a strong sense of nationalism

and patriotism². From the very beginning, the practice has been that of “ethnic replacements”, as the sociologists term the practice of setting immigrant and native proletarians against one another. Some cases are emblematic and

2. In the numerous First of May demonstrations in 2007 promoted by immigrant organisations (particularly from Central or South America), the main slogan, accompanied by the waving of flags with stars and stripes was “I, too, am America”.

3 See: “Il proletariato Chicano: un potenziale rivoluzionario da difendere [Chicano proletariat: a revolutionary potential to be defended]”, in *Il programma comunista*, nos. 1-2-3/1978.

help us to understand what is going on today as regards the “immigration law”. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, banning any further entry by Chinese immigrants, a law with open class prejudice (entry is granted to diplomatic staff and their families, traders and their families and a limited number of students only). The law remains until 1943, when it is abrogated to allow entry by “war brides” (women who married US soldiers of Asian origin in the Far East during the war). Let us leave aside for the moment all aspects relating to the material and psychological consequences of this law, responsible for the advent in US Chinatowns of the so-called “bachelor society” (=men who were unable to bring over the rest of their families). What is interesting to note is that this restrictive anti-Chinese law was joined in those same years by a sort of unofficial but fully operational “open door” for other Asians, from the Philippines (the Philippine islands come under US imperial power in 1898, together with Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico and remain a sort of “clearing house” for Asian immigration in North America),

whilst the door to immigration from Mexico always remains open. Indeed, whilst in 1924 the law known as the National Origins Act practically closes off immigration from Europe, access remains constantly open for the Pacific area (and in particular the Philippines, which are US territory up to 1934) and Mexico (whose border with the United States is so long as to make it virtually impossible to close it off completely – even today). From then onwards, together with black people and Puertoricans, the Philipinos and Mexican-Americans (the so-called *chicanos*)³ are to form one of the most exploited, oppressed and persecuted sectors of the US proletariat. The case of Puerto Rico shows just how hypocritical all bourgeois arguments on “immigration control” are. Puerto Rico is conquered by the United States in 1898, becoming not one of the United States but a “member of the *commonwealth*” – a highly ambiguous relationship that allows US capital to exploit the island as a practical and close-by labour reserve, with the flexibility made necessary by the different phases of the economic cycle. A first flux begins in 1917 (the year Puertoricans are “granted” American citizenship, thus excluding them from the category of “foreigners” subject to possible restrictive laws), it culminates in the ‘30s, makes a strong comeback in the years before and after the Second World War (when it is necessary to “fill the gaps” left by soldiers at the front) and, above all in the ‘50s (the boom years), when “Operation Bootstrap” (in practice the forced industrialization of the island) brings into North America floods of impoverished peasant smallholders, ready to transform themselves into proletarians and sub-proletarians in the big cities, but also to return to the island when the laws of the

economic cycle make this necessary. Something similar was also happening to Mexican-Americans: between 1942 and 1964, the “Bracero [farm labourer] Program” brings over five million *chicanos*, almost by force, into the south-western states, to be employed as seasonal farm workers in appalling living and working conditions (there were many cases in which the workers had to pay rent for the trees they slept under out in the fields!); but in 1954 “Operation Wetback” obliges a million of them, declared “clandestine”, to go back again (amongst them – it will be found later – there are quite a few fully-fledged US citizens). Lastly, in recent years, “Operation Gatekeeper” wants to “regulate” the flow of clandestine immigrants by building an iron wall and setting up “frontier patrols” – “to regulate”, but *not too much...* because, as has become clear, their role is, after all, still *essential* to the US economy.

In Book One of *Capital* (Chap. XXIII: “The General Law of the Accumulation of Capital”), Marx writes that, if a surplus of working-class population is the product necessary for accumulating or developing wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population does, on the

other hand, become the lever of capitalist accumulation, indeed *one of the conditions for the existence of the capitalist mode of production*. It forms an *industrial army of reserve* which belongs absolutely to the capital as if it had been raised at its own expense; to serve its changing need to create value, it creates the human material to be exploited, always at the ready, independently of any real demographic increase.

Thus, the need for a surplus working-class population (to keep salaries down, to exert constant blackmail on the rest of the class, to provide immediate coverage for any gaps that may form in the labour market, to exploit to the absolute maximum a labour force that will accept anything in order to survive) and the control of it by means of “anti-immigrant laws” (laws that are presented as an integral part of a project for “social peace” but which really serve merely to exert further pressure on immigrants and above all in the most vulnerable area, that of the clandestine) are not a contradiction but a law of accumulation – part and parcel of the brutality through which the capitalist mode of production functions.

Prisons and capitalist business

Let us turn now to the other aspect – that of the transformation of the US prison population into another sector of underpaid labour. In fact this, too, is no novelty and there is no lack of examples, particularly in the United States. From the second half of the 1800s onwards in particular, the long lines of chain gangs, prisoners at work on road and railroad building, digging

ditches, strengthening banks or picking cotton and tobacco, guarded by armed police on horseback, were a familiar scene, which even put down roots in popular culture, for example in the “work songs” (“Take this hammer, take it to the captain, tell him I’m gone...”). During the Mississippi floods and those of other big rivers in the first few decades of the 1900s, the

use of prison labour to deal with emergencies was quite common and it was common to use prisoners during the New Deal to build roads in the southern states. In any case, the relationship between prison and bourgeois society has always been very close: suffice it to remember what Marx, again in Book One of *Capital* (Chap. XXIV: "So-called primitive accumulation"), called "bloody legislation against the expropriated", which developed in Europe from the 1500s onwards, culminating in the English "anti-vagrancy laws": "The proletariat created by the breaking up of the bands of feudal retainers and by the forcible expropriation of the people from the soil, this 'free' proletariat could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world. On the other hand, these men, suddenly dragged from their wonted mode of life, could not as suddenly adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition. They were turned *en masse* into beggars, robbers, vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases from stress of circumstances. Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th century, throughout Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage. The fathers of the present working-class were chastised for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as 'voluntary' criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own good will to go on working under the old conditions that no longer existed."

When, as time passed, the problem was no longer just that of adapting to totally new living conditions, i.e. when, from the start of the 1800s onwards, the capitalist mode of production had become generally established in west-

ern Europe, it should not be forgotten that the vagrant, the unemployed, the widow without support, the orphan child, had only one realistic prospect – that of being whisked off to the workhouse – the "penal colony of misery", a true nightmare for the English proletariat and sub-proletariat, made familiar by the novels of Dickens.

Thus, from the very beginning, prison (in its various forms and interpretations) takes the form of a basic tool of capitalist exploitation: it serves to direct huge masses of people uprooted by the rapid and violent processes of transformation towards capitalist exploitation during the shift from feudalism to capitalism and, at the same time, "licenses" even those who find themselves more or less temporarily on the margins of society to take part in the process. A society which, ever since its origins, has found prison (the "penal colony") its most effective metaphor.

In modern times and with the consensus of all the right-thinking reformers, this characteristic of prisons has become even more explicit, particularly in the USA, which, being the most capitalistically "advanced" country, lays down the law to the entire world. So not only prisons as pure repression, as the attempted total elimination of behaviour defined (with the utmost hypocrisy) "anti-social", but also the exact opposite, prisons as structures deeply integrated into capitalist society and the capitalist mode of production, to the point of offering it a further "gift" of ultra-exploited and ultra-black-mailable labour – that of the prisoners. At this point, one can almost hear the shocked protests of the right-thinking citizens: "What do you mean! It's a question of making the condition of the prisoner more dignified by means of

work!” Oh yes, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, as we might read at the entrance to certain Nazi concentration camps: “Work makes us free.” Just what we wished to demonstrate: the creation of *Lagers* by capitalist society has taken giant steps forward.

But let us return to the United States and to the (productive!) work of prisoners.

According to the latest report by the Department of Justice⁴, the prison population of the United States amounted to 2.245.189 at 30 June 2006, with a 2.8% increase over the past year: two thirds in federal jails and one third in local ones. If this prison population is then limited to the 18 to 39 age range and broken down by “ethnic group” and origin, the following picture emerges:

Black: 11.6% (born in the US), 2.5% (born abroad)

Hispanics or Latinos: 6.7% (born in the US), 1.0% (born abroad)

Asians: 1.9% (born in the US), 0.3% (born abroad)

Whites: 1.7% (born in the US), 0.6% (born abroad).

The figures⁵ confirm what can easily be imagined: the situation in prisons is a mirror image of the condition of oppression and discrimination experienced by wide sectors of the “free” US population. This also means that a large part of that abundant 20% of Blacks and Hispanics (Central-Americans, Latin Americans etc.) belong to the US proletariat and sub-proletariat. This gives rise to an initial consideration that we should take good note of. We do not intend analysing here the recent US legislation with its increasingly repressive measures (“three strikes and you’re out” and other delicacies of this nature), nor shall we discuss more specifically the presence in US

prisons of a large number of individuals imprisoned for political motives. It does, however, become immediately clear that repression and imprisonment are used not only for immediate “social pacification” but also to create divisions within the proletariat.

As to work in prisons, this is now widespread and has been for some time. For example, according to the report by the Department of Corrections of Florida, for the tax year 2003-2004, the so-called “Community Work Squads” produced something like 6.5 *million working hours* during the course of the year, for a total value of around 68 *million dollars*, which convert, net of expenses, into 38.5 *million dollars* of “added value” (the expression, used in the report, is the same as for any company balance sheet!). The “beneficiaries” of all this “surplus-labor from prisons” are the Department of Transport, the Public Works sector and other external “Contract Work”⁶.

4. Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Largest Increase in Prison and Jail Inmate Populations Since Midyear 2000”, Department of Justice (Office of Justice Programs), June 27, 2007 (www.usdoj.gov/bjs).

5. Again from *La Repubblica*, 21/7/2007.

6. Bureau of Institutional Support Services, “Community Work Squads – Earnings and Value-Added/Cost Savings Report”, Florida Department of Corrections, October 27, 2004 (www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/worksqds/03-04/index/html).

This is a situation common to a large proportion of the US penitentiary network (but, as we well know, not only). The list of the “beneficiaries” of all this “surplus-labor from prisons” extends well beyond government agencies, transport departments, public works, and includes the choicest of US and non-US companies, such as IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT & T,

Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, HP, TWA, Revlon, Macy's, Pierre Cardin and so on... In some cases, after de-localizing production from over-costly production centres and moving it to the horrible *maquiladoras* along the Mexican border, some companies have ended up outsourcing it on to certain prisons, such as the famous San Quentin in California. There is also the growing phenomenon of the "private prisons", which, through certain corporations (the Corrections Corporation of America, the Geo Group Inc., the Cornell Companies) receive a subsidy for each individual prisoner and must then act like any other private company: i.e. they must have their accounts in order, with all the consequences deriving from this⁷. Let this suffice for the moment.

7. During 2005, 7% of the US prison population was to be found in private prisons, with a rise in percentage of 74.2% compared to 2000 (Office of Justice Programs, "Prisoners in 2005", *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*).

We feel no romantic fascination with the immigrant as such, neither do we play around with reactionary mystifications of the "politically correct" (for which ethnic or national origins, social and cultural traditions are supposed to be of value in themselves and should be safeguarded in the vortex of "globalisation"). Just as, for Marx, "either the

proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing," so the immigrant either feels (s)he is part of the struggling proletariat or (s)he is nothing – indeed, (s)he is subject to the worst chauvinistic infatuations: whether these come from his or her past or present matters very little. In the same way, as far as "prison labour" is concerned, there is, indeed, a positive aspect in it, but not in the same sense as the right-thinking citizens mean (rehabilitation, reintegration, self respect and all the other reformist idiocies that have accompanied the real situation of prisons since they became one of the key institutions in the capitalist mode of production). No, the positive aspect lies, once again, in the potential (and we stress *potential*) for showing the prisoner who is producing "surplus-labor" that (s)he belongs to the camp of the exploited, inside and outside of prison: demonstrating that (s)he is a *proletarian*, in that enormous jail represented by capitalism.

But for all this to decant and take concrete shape in a true proletarian front, two pre-conditions are needed: the class war has to flare up anew, joining together different sectors of the world proletariat so that they overcome the divisions imposed by capital, going through phases that will certainly prove dramatic; and the revolutionary party must once more establish itself internationally.

A party or a gathering of well-meaning people?

An occasional participant at the weekly meetings held in one of our sections, intending to establish his "preferences" between ourselves and others (whom Lenin would define "not particularly intelligent critics who insist on considering themselves communists"), and embarking on a hateful "comparison", thought he had located the classical sore point when he asked: "Do you believe you're the Party of the revolution or don't you think that you are, instead, one of the groups destined to become caught up in a movement of revolutionary revival that you will lend your support to, just like other groups?" This is the real watershed between ourselves and all the other groups, including those who, believing themselves "very intelligent", are ready to constantly update their positions and appear, according to the occasion, as the most "revolutionary".

Of course, our reply disappointed the questioner, who thence felt able to "make his choice" with the utmost confidence and never turned up again, finding it more logical to go to those who feel they are part of a "historical" and "non-sectarian", "mass" movement and not one of "parties". But the episode deserves a non-episodic comment.

First of all, we can observe that this is just an easy way out when faced with the difficulties of the counter-revolutionary situation. The idea of not facing, within historical limits, the task of forming a party to direct the revolution, even if it appears a more "modest" position, really means "waiting to see" how the film will develop and not taking part until everything – *literally everything* – has turned out according to our wishes, our illusions, automatically, because this is how "history" means it to be; *it is equivalent to being irresponsible*. And even admitting this development, the role of the party would prove useless, or would find itself lagging behind events. The "modesty" here consists solely in the modest, subordinate role assigned to the party, not in the foolish claim of being able to understand at every turn the sense of historic events *outside* a complete and exhaustive doctrine, or a definite programme, with established tactical possibilities, getting by, instead, and aside from modesty, thanks to one's own capabilities and brains, in the sea of events which in the end (how convenient!) take the right direction and show our "brains" the positions to be taken (and those to be abandoned).

Clearly, behind a seeming shade of meaning, which only too easily takes the form of opposing "moral" attitudes, a complete theoretical and programmatic contrast is hidden. As always, on the one hand, the easy, "creative" path, which is certainly activist and always seeks justifications in events that happen outside the organisation and theory; on the other, the hard and "sectarian" path, charged with wanting to "superimpose" itself on the real movement, but which is the only way to constitute a revolutionary organization of militants animated by the party's clear picture of the objectives and route to be pursued – and therefore ready to submit to this, ready to make continuous sacrifices, with the utmost abnegation and to carry out *work that is modest because it is not personal*.

On the one hand, there is the role of the party as "illuminator" and its work, which takes place solely as "agitation" at all costs, independently of any possible channelling of the real movement in a given political direction, guided by a sort of "marketing" (i.e. market research to find an outlet for one's own products; and isn't this the claim of the honest "philosophers" of advertising or information technology, too? merely to provide a "stimulus" for consumers without depriving them of their... creativity and choices?). The consumer masses would choose the made-to-measure "party product", as though at the supermarket, at some point. In the meantime, some trifles are completely neglected: theoretical issues that are not of current interest and tactical choices that will be evaluated on the spur of the moment, whilst the form of organization is left up to the party's work with the masses and, above all, with the masses in the party.

On the other hand, there is the role of *the party as the guide of the revolution*, which can only be so on one condition: that it poses itself the question of its own role, at all levels – theoretical, programmatic, tactical, organizational – well before it effectively represents that precise organization formally. This means understanding that history has already supplied all this material and that the masses cannot take possession of it unless there is the active presence of the organization that constantly presents it to them anew in the events that take place and shows that it is capable of organizing them efficiently to achieve the supreme objective: communist society.

It is comical to hear some people who think we are too demanding, or the sole "heirs" of Marxism, in our attempt to set up the nucleus of the future class party, ask suspiciously and with bias: "What form of organization do you 'propose'?" Of course, because we can wait around for enlightenment by the "movement" to set up the party, but the organization, good heavens!,

in the miserable activity that is possible today, must be democratic, the true expression of its members' will! These people can never understand, since they do not have the slightest idea of its basic premises, that only a programmatically coherent party, compact (or, if you like, its initial nucleus), consisting of militants united by the very same programme, can constitute a cast-iron and centralized organization that is at the same time voluntary because it is *wanted*. The organization is a consequence of all aspects of the party: supporting it means supporting the communist programme (the only one) and consequently working on the constitution of the only communist party. When support has been given, practical (organizational) subordination to the programme necessarily follows and the transposition of individual "will" into the will of the party, if the term "subordination" is really too much to use.

It is of no use talking about "organization" without a profound discussion of the party prior to this, a definition of its programme and its tactics. And it is irresponsible to speak of this in relation to a group of individuals linked only by an ideal objective far removed in time but without sharing the same opinion on the means to be used and the path to follow in order to reach this objective. This irresponsibility is greatest when certain people, not satisfied with the confusion already reigning in their own ranks, try to convey this to others, suggesting agreements on joint action, to try out in practice.

Yes, we do intend to constitute the nucleus of the party that will be able to direct the revolutionary class movement. It is a hard task that is beyond us. It is not sufficient to declare this – it must be applied to all our work. At present this work is carried out inadequately and is fragmented, generally amidst unfavourable conditions, but we would be absurd amateurs if we did not set ourselves this precise task. The history of the class struggle has an experience behind it that must stand as a treasure for us. We must take possession of it without delay. Belonging to our movement must mean that we have the willpower to claim this heritage and so understand the words of Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*: "Can a weak revolutionary, hesitant in theoretical matters, with a limited perspective, who justifies his inertia with the spontaneity of the mass movement [...], incapable of presenting a bold and wide-ranging plan that commands respect even from its adversaries [...] possibly be called a revolutionary? NO. He is just a poor artisan [amateur]."

You artisans [amateurs] who want a party free of programmatic limitations and well-defined tactics, where your contribution will find enough "room", turn elsewhere!

What Distinguishes Our Party

Each publication of our international press carries, under the headline, a box which says: "What distinguishes our party is: the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the International, the struggle against the theory of "socialism in one country" and the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistance Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the working class, against personal and electoral politics." What do you mean with this brief and thumbnail presentation of our Party?

Internationalism, revolution, class dictatorship in accordance with invariant Marxism

Thumbnail formulas provide outline sketches – their object is never to illustrate in full. But whosoever reads *this* cannot but be struck by a distinguishing trait of our movement: unlike the myriad "updaters" of Marxism, we hold to a line which is *continuous, unchanged and unchangeable*. It is a line which defines the Communist Party *precisely because* it outruns and overcomes all highs and lows, the advances and retreats, the few – albeit glorious – victories and the many – devastating – defeats of the working

class during its obstacle-filled journey towards emancipation. In actual fact, it is *solely* as a result of the uninterrupted continuity of this line that the proletariat exists as a class as such. Indeed, the line does not reflect the proletariat's *temporary* and occasionally *contradictory* position regarding this or that *stage* of its journey through space and time; but rather, it reflects the *direction* in which the proletariat must necessarily move, *beginning* with its condition as an oppressed and exploited class, before its *achievement* of ruling class status and, from there (and in all countries), to the suppression of all classes and to communism. The selfsame capitalist mode of production creates the material conditions for this journey: it is hardly something that falls from the sky, and necessarily implies struggle from beginning to end. And Marxist doctrine knows all there is to know about the *necessary* crossings and indispensable means involved in this journey, as well as the final destination.

Hence Lenin, in a well known paraphrase of Marx, states that those who do not press recognition of the class struggle into *recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat as its necessary product and obligatory transition point* "for the suppression of all classes and the establishment of a classless society," are not Marxist.

By recognizing solely the class struggle and the antagonism of interests between capital and labour, one simply takes note of the brute fact of what the proletariat is in bourgeois society, but excludes what history itself *imposes* deterministically on the proletariat to

become, in order to free itself from the exploitation to which it is condemned by the relations of capitalist production: to become, that is, the weapon of violent destruction of the bourgeois state power which polices and defends that system of relations, and the means consequently the weapon by which it sets up its own dictatorship ("a political phase of transition" according to Marx, along the road to the "revolutionary transformation of capitalist society into a communist society"). It means accepting the conditions of subjection which the proletariat forever suffers *within* bourgeois society, *even when* struggling to defend its immediate interests from the yoke of capital, and it means denying the proletariat its historical task to emancipate both itself and, simultaneously, humanity – precisely and solely that which makes it *a class*: its being "the mid-wife of a new society."

This line unites past and present of the working class to its *future*, and is no less than the theory, programme and principles of revolutionary communism. And it remains unchanging, regardless of the alternating vicissitudes of the struggle between the classes, in so much as it is embodied in a *party* that makes it *unreservedly* its own, in an *organization* that defends it, fights for it and translates it into action. It is for this reason that Marx and Engels write in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The communists fight to achieve the immediate aims and interests of the working class, *but in the present day movement they at the same time represent the future of the movement itself.*" And, since the proletariat "has no country" and, as a class, pursues objectives which go beyond the limitations of category, locality, firm, section, etc., they

add: "What distinguishes the communists is the fact that, on the one hand, in the various national struggles, they emphasise (and exert) those interests common to the entire proletariat, regardless of nationality; on the other hand, in the various stages of development of the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, they always represent the interest of the movement as a whole."

It is this body of postulates that distinguishes the communists. It is this that rules out the possibility of calling communists all those who disavow the *international character* of both the end towards which the proletariat aims and of the struggle involved in achieving such an end; who repudiate the *identity* of this end and of this struggle with the interests of the movement as a whole and its *future*; who disown the *necessity* of violent revolution and the proletarian dictatorship as a *fixed* course towards socialism; who reject the *necessity* of the party, armed with that unique science which goes under the name of Marxism, as the *organ* of this Cyclopean struggle. No link in this chain can be broken without shattering the entire chain and without the proletariat fall down on its back in resigned acceptance of its status as a class destined to be exploited in *eternity*.

This is the doctrine cut from a single block one hundred and fifty years ago and codified by Marx and Engels in texts which require no additions or changes. It was established anew in its entirety by Lenin to counter the betrayal of social-democracy, against any surrender of the proletarian movement to the "present" or renouncement of the "future"; against any subordination of the movement's aims and overall interests to presumptive aims and immedi-

ate, national interests; against any abandonment of the principles underlying the revolutionary conquest of power and its dictatorial exercise in favour of the would-be safer and less troublesome ways of legalistic, democratic and parliamentary gradualism.

Communist internationalism, militant and centralized organization of the worldwide proletariat

The struggle to not only maintain this line *intact* in the face of the material, political and ideological pressures of bourgeois society, but also to *hone* its essential characteristics with ever greater efficacy through the terrible yet salubrious corroborations of history, to organize the fighting avant-gardes of the working class around that *fil rouge* (tying it up again when it was broken), and to lay siege to the capitalist state strongholds, was a struggle of an inseparably doctrinaire, programmatic, political, tactical and organizational nature, *insofar as the communists are not apostles of a new "creed" or ascetics awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, but the militants of a gigantic social war.*

It was Marx and Engels who fought to destroy, at the very heart of the First International, the Proudhonist virus which negated economic struggles, strikes and, more in general, the economic organization of the proletariat; the Bakhunism which negated the party and its *centrally exercised* dictatorship in the name and interests of class; and the "parliamentary cretinism" which had artfully wormed its way into the rank and file of the proletariat by way of the prevailing social environment. It was Lenin who fought in

Russia against populism, economism, legalism, Menshevism and, internationally, first against Bersteinian revisionism and, later, the capitulation enacted as a result of the imperialist war; a fight not only for the refusal of war credits and the social truce during the conflict, but also for revolutionary defeatism and the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war. It was a fight to win over all hesitations, the inertia of fence-sitters and legalists, the shilly-shallying of those who abode by the "rules of democracy"; and it was a fight to conquer power dictatorially under the resplendent light of October 1917, whilst *at the same time laying down the foundations of the at long last reconstituted Communist International.* "The Communist International intends to fight by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the State." Thus solemnly spoke the communists who had come to Moscow in July 1920 from all over the world, taking up and confirming anew the line that "goes from Marx to Lenin": "The Communist International sees the dictatorship of the proletariat as the sole means by which humanity can be liberated from the horrors of capitalism. The imperialist war has united the destiny of the proletariat in one country with that of the proletariat in all the others. The imperialist war has confirmed what was stated in the general Statutes of the First International: the liberation of the workers is neither a local nor a national problem, but an international problem [...] The Communist International understands that for the workers' association to

achieve victory most rapidly in their struggle for the suppression of capitalism and the creation of communism they must possess a rigidly centralised organization. This organization must truly represent an organic communist party on a worldwide scale. The parties operating in different countries are merely sections of this body. The organizational apparatus of the Communist International must ensure that the workers of any given country receive as much help as possible from the organized proletariats of other countries at all times.”

This is the line which goes from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Communist International. It is a line that rejects all those who refuse to recognize the proletarian dictatorship as the only path towards socialism, as well as those who advocate paths of a national nature to the emancipation of the working class.

The Communist Party of Italy (1921) on the line of Lenin's Communist International

In January 1921 the Communist Party of Italy was founded according to this line. Its programme contains a synthesis of the theoretical, programmatic and tactical patrimony of communism. Let's read it:

“1. Under the present social regime of capital, the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production develops at an ever increasing rate, giving rise to antithetical interests and to the class struggle between the proletariat and the ruling bourgeoisie.

“2. Present-day relations of production are protected and defended by the power

of the bourgeois state: based on the representative system of democracy, the bourgeois state represents the organ for the defence of the interests of the capitalist class.

“3. The proletariat can neither crush nor modify the system of capitalist relations of production, from which its exploitation derives, without violently overthrowing the bourgeois power.

“4. The indispensable organ of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is the political class party. The Communist Party gathers the most advanced, resolute and aware part of the proletariat and as such unifies the efforts of the labouring masses and transforms their struggles for particular group interests and immediate gains into the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat. The party's task is that of propagating the revolutionary consciousness amongst the masses, organizing the material means of action, and leading the working class in the course of its struggles.

“5. The World War, brought about by the internal and incurable contradictions of the capitalist system which led to modern imperialism, triggered off the crisis of capitalist disintegration, and in this situation the class struggle can only end up in an armed conflict between the labouring masses and the power of bourgeois states.

“6. After overthrowing the capitalist power, the proletariat must completely destroy the old state apparatus and install its own dictatorship in order to organize itself as ruling class: it will found the organs of the new regime on the producing class alone and it will deny all political rights to the bourgeois class.

“7. The form of political representation

of the proletarian State is the system of workers' (wage labourers and peasants) councils, already in force in the Russian revolution, which is the beginning of the world proletarian revolution and the first stable realization of the proletarian dictatorship.

"8. The necessary defence of the proletarian State against all counter-revolutionary attacks can only be guaranteed by depriving the bourgeoisie and all the parties that are against the proletarian dictatorship of all means of agitation and political propaganda, and by the armed organization of the proletariat to drive back all internal and external attacks.

"9. Only the proletarian state will be able to systematically intervene in the social economy, and adopt those measures with which the collective management of production and distribution will take the place of the capitalist system.

"10. This transformation of the economy, and consequently of the whole of activities of social life, will gradually eliminate the division of society into classes and the necessity for the political State, whose machinery will gradually give way to one of rational administration of human activities."

The theoretical, political and organizational struggle waged by the Communist Left against the degeneration of the Communist International and the Stalinist counterrevolution

At once the stalwart bastion and assault unit of the worldwide proletarian revolution, Bolshevik power in Russia nonetheless rested upon a frighteningly

backward and largely pre-capitalist economic base. The communist strategy thus consisted in working to arrange for the establishment in all countries of that indispensable instrument of proletarian revolution: the class party.

And around this party it sought to muster the all-important proletarian *avant-garde* whose awe-inspiring will to fight and indomitable spirit of self-sacrifice had emerged intact from a period of military slaughter and post-war chaos and made its presence felt all over the world – especially in central Europe and in those areas where capitalism was at its most advanced. This *avant-garde* knew full well that the revolution would have to triumph in the developed countries (first and foremost in Germany), if Bolshevik Russia – safe in the knowledge that its grasp on political power was unshakable – was to continue its economic advance towards socialism. In so doing it would steal a march on the laborious process implicit in the transit from a pre-bourgeois and predominantly peasant-based economy to the extreme limit of state capitalism.

Armed with the Marxist doctrine restored by Lenin's party, and clinging unswervingly to international discipline and its stringent centralization, these parties should have derived their strategy and their selfsame *raison d'être* from their recognition of the fact that the reformist parties (Lenin's so called "wage labourer-bourgeois parties", like social democracy in all its various get-ups) were, by virtue of the aims they had set themselves after divorcing from fundamental Marxism (and thereby ensuring their more or less direct integration within the bourgeois states), forced to play out an *irreversible counter-revolutionary role* in the social dynamic.

The Bolsheviks made huge efforts to control and overpower the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces taking root in the economic and social subsoil in Russia and to spread the revolutionary flames worldwide. Tragically, these efforts were not complemented by a process of organic and stringently monitored formation of communist parties in the crucial, highly capitalized area of Central Europe.

Traditions of a democratic, parliamentary, legalistic and pacifist nature weighed heavily on the western working-class movement. And neither was the leadership of the International – which our current was ever the last to blame for a historical course whose origins lay in the putrid world of the bourgeois West – always fully aware of the fact that the stubbornness and intransigence with which Lenin and his party had fought against opportunism for some twenty years, and the decisiveness with which they had conquered power (to the exclusion not only of explicitly bourgeois parties, but also of working-class parties of a more conciliatory nature), should have been *even more* radically and consistently applied in those places where the bourgeois revolution had been an accomplished fact for more than half a century.

A rigorous selection was needed from the old socialist parties: but admissions turned out to be a free and easy affair, too many being confident that the relics of the past could be burned on the bonfires in Petersburg and Moscow – a confidence which was big-hearted but turned out to be misplaced. There was also urgent need for new and well-defined tactics which would gather proletarians up around the Marxist revolutionary party on the ground of the defence of living and working condi-

tions within bourgeois society and, by so doing, would not only tear them away from the influence of reformism but also open their eyes to the *illusion* that those who turned their backs on the line which “runs from Marx to Lenin and the Communist International” could *ever* be regained to the cause of proletarian revolution. Thus would the working class have also been enabled to defend itself successfully against the bourgeois counter-revolution in its fascist get-up and, possibly, go on the counter-attack. Instead, marching orders were issued which – especially when appropriated and even put into practice by old reformist, or even social-chauvinist fraudsters, hurriedly accepted beneath the flag of the Communist International – were blurred ones and, *over and beyond the intentions of the Bolsheviks*, admitted belief in that very illusion: a “united front” open to interpretations of a wide, oscillating and even contradictory nature; a “working-class government” – at times presented as “synonymous with the proletarian dictatorship”, at others as a different and even parliamentary vehicle towards power – , all the way down to a “bol-shevisation” whose disfigurement of the parties risked turning them into something akin to labour parties, cancelling out their demarcation (so clear cut at the beginning) from peasant movements and parties in the same capitalist countries, and national-revolutionary parties in the colonies, and heralding a second, wretched edition of the Menshevik theory of the “stage-by-stage revolution” in China.

This progressive loosening-up trend in the field of organization and tactics *also* meant that, instead of controlling and directing the process of purification of

the communist parties from the bedrock of traditional socialism, the International ended up being conditioned by parties which were only nominally communist in the West. The disastrous twofold result of this was that world-wide revolution now became a distant prospect and, by the same measure, the social bourgeois forces pressing on the Bolshevik dictatorship from within and, more importantly, from without Russia, grew so strong that even what had once been the magnificent guiding body of the October revolution and the civil war was overwhelmed by them. Stalinism was nothing if not the expression of this *worldwide* overturning in power relations among the classes. As such, it *had* to massacre the Old Guard so that it might proceed trouble-free on its way to capitalistic accumulation; and before this, it *had* to disguise its counter-revolutionary role behind the flag of "Socialism in one country" – the progenitor of all the "national, pacific and democratic ways to socialism", lined up to succeed social-democracy in its summoning of proletarians the world over to partake in reciprocal massacre during the second imperialistic conflict. The line running from Marx to Lenin, which brought about the formation of the Third International and its springtime splendours, thus continues for us in the fight of the "Italian" Communist Left against all early instances of opportunistic danger (at the beginning, a mere danger; later, a nasty shot of materially determined reality) at the heart of the Communist International. And is also present in the fight waged in parallel with the Russian Opposition in 1926 against Stalinism and its taking over of the Soviet state and what was once Lenin's International.

In the years 1928-1932, beneath a cynical veneer of seeming leftishness, Stalinism resulted in the political and organizational disarmament of the proletariat in the wake of the Nazi-fascist offensive; immediately afterwards, it went about further proletarian disarmament with the "popular fronts" in France, but especially in Spain, where the newly gathering flames of the class struggle were quickly doused in the name of the defence of the republican regime and by means of the government coalition with bourgeois and opportunistic parties. Stalinism in this period also meant buying into second world war carnage under the flag of patriotism and freedom, the admission of "communist" parties to fronts which were no longer simply popular, but also resistance-oriented and national, and their participation in the national post-war governments of reconstruction. The final, coherent corollary of all this was their repudiation – *formal* as well – of the proletarian dictatorship and of internationalism, and their *explicit* candidacy for the rescue of coma-bound democratic institutions and a crisis-stricken national economy.

Thus the line that runs from Marx and Engels to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International, to the Communist Left's fight first against the degeneration of the same International and, later, against the Stalinist counter-revolution cannot, in our view, be separated from the historic struggle against popular, war-prone, national fronts and all their various derivations. And that includes the latest instances of opportunism which, in terms of their virulence, are more than a match for even the most nefarious of bloody actions on the part of the old German social-democracy. Neither can the line be divorced from

condemnation of both the essentially fascist (albeit democratically cloaked) capitalist imperialism based in Washington and the false socialism which reigned in Moscow until 1989 (and which still calls the shots in Peking today), based on the production of goods, on wage-labour and on all the other bourgeois economic categories.

In defence of the continuity of communist programme, through the theoretical and doctrinal restoration, for the reconstruction of the communist party, organ of worldwide revolution

Gathering up anew the *fil rouge* of doctrine, of the programme, the principles, the tactics and the organizational methods of revolutionary communism, necessarily requires us to go back to the world vision of the Communist International at the time of its foundation, completed in its organizational and tactical part by a weighing up of the history of the last eighty years (and thereby confirming the resoluteness of the struggle of the Communist Left). In the years since WWII our party has never wavered in this task, and especially since 1952 with a long series of theses which have now been collected in the volume *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista* (*In defense of the continuity of the communist programme*).

There is no point of convergence between democracy and communism. The path towards proletarian emancipation can be no different from those which prepare *already in the present*, *outside of and against* official institu-

tions, be they bourgeois, democratic or fascist in nature, the proletarian revolution. Such a preparation rejects, *even as a means of agitation*, any electoral and (even worse) parliamentary activity. It is accomplished, on the one hand, by constant participation in the immediate working-class struggles to defend its working and living conditions: struggles which are to be extended, strengthened and developed along the lines of and through classist means. On the other hand, it is accomplished through the untiring propaganda of the proletarian movement's ultimate objective, with reference to which economic struggles are a *school* – and only a school – *of war* as long as they are carried out coherently and without ever forgetting or seeking to disguise their limits. It is accomplished by organizing around the party those proletarians who have become aware, *through struggle*, of the ways by which final victory can be achieved and the *inextinguishable premises* of such a victory; by the strengthening of immediate organizations that are born out of the defensive economic struggle, as a result of the reaction to the absence of the main trade unions and their betrayal; and, lastly, by waging battle at the heart of these trade unions with a view to recovering them (although nothing can be taken for granted here), in situations of extremely high social tension that today are a long way away not only from the *red* tradition but also from the communist direction.

There is no room along this road for the spontaneously-driven and thoroughly misplaced never-say-die illusion of a revolution and proletarian dictatorship that has not been prepared and directed by the Party. Neither is there room for the Trotskyite illusion of a crippling

crisis of a capitalism awaiting solely to be shaken by an organized avant-garde for it to go over the edge after passing through the intermediate stage of “working-class governments” consisting of parties that have moved lock, stock and barrel over to the counter-revolution but which are thought to be regenerable thanks to the impetus of the masses in a state of unrest and the skilful manoeuvring of the communists (in the same way that the “degenerated working-class states” like China, Cuba and others of their ilk, would be won over to the cause of proletarian revolution). Where a century-old adversary of Marxism rears its head again in the midst of working-class “spontaneism” (“workerism”), through Trotskyite (an adjective Trotsky himself would blush at today, notwithstanding his errors) illusionism tactical disorientation (now greatly *worsened*) of the decadent International presents itself again and, on its stump, those

principled deviations from the healthy Marxist doctrine which alone can explain the confusion of nationalisations in industry and economic planning, taken as they are, with socialism. *More than ever before*, the proletariat today requires clarity with regard to the aims of its emancipation and the ways and methods by which it is to be accomplished. We pledge that we shall work hard to provide this clarity, without arrogance but also without hesitations: “a small, compact group making its way along a steep and difficult road”, stubborn in its decision, and faithful to Lenin’s teachings, to fight against, “not only the quagmire, but also those who walk in its direction”. This is required, today as yesterday and as tomorrow, by the tough job of restoring the doctrine and the revolutionary organ: arm-in-arm with the working class, and outside and against all kind of personalistic and electioneering politics.

The Need to Prepare Revolution

In an article published exactly one year ago in this newspaper ("The Global Boom in real Estate", no. 5, September-October 2006) we wrote:

"In the phase of its historical crisis, the fate that condemns Capital to grow, on pain of stagnation and death, leads it to attempt paths of exploitation outside the production process, which is where plus-value is extracted. The law that inevitably imposes declining profit margins forces the enormous mass of capital freely circulating throughout the world to look for every opportunity to make the most of itself in the form of interest, using a variety of financial investments that have at this stage become extremely varied, 'creative' and profitable, by purchasing portions of the earth's crust to be exploited in diverse ways. But since interest is subject to the same declining tendency as profit margins, speculation creates fake capital, destined to vanish in sudden and catastrophic returns to reality. The periodic speculative phases thus reveal the vain attempt of Capital to deny its historical destiny and the crashes are followed by new speculative phases, new 'bubbles' that prepare for new crashes. With the exception of the emerging powers, whose huge development is destined, because of its very nature, to exhaust itself rapidly and bring about just as many enormous conflicts, world Capital experiences no other "growth" except this, fake or produced by the drugs of artificial stimuli to produce and consume."

And after a careful analysis of the boom in real estate, of its premises and characteristics, we concluded:

"Suffice it here to point out that new and increasingly powerful crisis factors are gathering, that future crises promise to be wider and wider in range, with effects on increasingly large sectors of the population, even in the cities of imperialism. One by one, the attempts to make the most out of excess capital by creating bubbles of speculation exhaust themselves and enormous amounts of fake capital disappear into thin air, while there is excess production of goods in the form of an ocean of unsold buildings, and ancillary production also crashes, carrying with it employment. For proletarians, the illusions of easy money and general well-being disappear. The real dreamers are not those who, like us, insist on holding fast to revolutionary communism, but those who continue to believe in capitalism which, once it has completed its historical mission, is a mere dispenser

of illusions and can guarantee nothing but growing misery." The turbulence over the summer, emerging from the US real estate market (and in particular from the sectors of *sub-prime* mortgages) and spreading rapidly to all the world's stock exchanges, confirms what we wrote the previous year. We return to this question in another article published in this issue, whilst for the moment, we wish, instead, to concentrate on other aspects.

Firstly, the events of the summer reveal on the one hand the profound instability of the capitalist mode of production and, on the other, the close connections between all its sectors, which derive from the nature of Capital itself, as a *social force*. The effects will not be immediately visible, because nothing is purely mechanical in economic trends and their reflection on society. However, they will be deep-reaching and such as to set off inevitable chain reactions. The very attitude of the 'observers' and 'experts', typical categories of imperialist parasites, powerless to foresee the future and incapable of evaluating things, is marked either by insincere reassurances ("The system is stable. The economy's working. Don't worry. The shake-ups are good for us.") or by ill-concealed nerves. This means that the situation is not exactly rosy, that 100 billion dollars down the drain (with all the consequences that can be imagined on the GNP, employment, etc.) are not peanuts, and that calls to observe "austerity" will become more and more pressing, that the stick will be raining increasingly violent blows on the backs of the proletariat.

Secondly, the increasingly evident and more radical turbulence in the capitalist mode of production, whilst being a source of renewed enthusiasm for revolutionaries, at the same time obliges them to be ever firmer and more determined in stating *the need to prepare revolution* – which can only mean *working to extend and establish the revolutionary party*. We are not, in fact, amongst those who cry "Wolf!" every five minutes. We know quite well that it will still take a long time for a truly deep and significant crisis to evolve in the mode of capitalist production, and thus for its development (neither mechanical nor automatic) into a revolutionary crisis - despite the turbulence, the sudden shake-ups and the immediate accelerations. For this very reason the party must keep watch and do its work thoroughly: within and outside its own circle, including – where possible – the tasks of organizing and directing proletarian struggles, to contribute towards extending them in the direction of a true proletarian battle front. Clearly the final objective of the party (though this, too, is the music of the future, despite all the impatient and facile souls) will be to channel this re-

born proletarian battle front against the bastions of the state, which defends the capitalist mode of production, to invade and destroy them and thus win power. However, this is neither a short, nor straight, nor easy path and the only way to travel down it without having to go into immediate reverse or seriously lose a sense of direction, is to insist unyieldingly and with determination on *the need, today – as tomorrow and always – to prepare for revolution*.

This means laying claim, both through words and through deeds, to continuity in organization, on a theoretical as well as a practical level, holding fast to the thread linking us to our tradition of struggle, the only one that has managed to react and survive the deepest and most devastating wave of counter-revolution ever to strike the communist and workers' movement, from the '20s onwards. In other words the party must succeed in being present at the historical appointment with the revolutionary crisis, complete with its theoretical tools, its political reckoning, a militant organization that is intact and coherent, so that the struggling proletariat may recognize in it the synthesis and expression of its own historical mission, above and beyond the ups and downs and the stinging defeats. It must defend the organization from any sort of theoretical, political or practical interference that might come from the outside, not out of an intellectual mania for purity but because of the awareness that this *revolutionary tool*, without which the revolutionary crisis can never take a positive direction, must be kept in perfect order, with all its parts working smoothly. It must prepare for the supreme struggle, guaranteeing the theoretical, political and practical preparation of all its militants and taking particular care of the necessary generational change *at an international level*. It must face the problem of penetrating the international proletariat - both in times of stalemate, such as the phase that has been dragging on so tragically for almost eighty years now, and in that of the return to class awareness, which the economic crisis cannot help causing – with methods of struggle and the historical objectives of communism, combating any form of opportunism, of which the spontaneous or infantile-extremist variety is perhaps the most dangerous, precisely because it inevitably ends up by becoming anti-party.

Our "Basic theses", remind us that: "6. The party today carries out the task of scientifically recording social phenomena, in order to confirm the basic theses of Marxism. It analyses, compares and comments on recent and contemporary events. It rejects the elaboration of doctrine, which tends to found new theories or demonstrate the inadequacy of the doctrine in explaining phenomena.

"All this work on the demolition (Lenin: *What to do?*) of opportunism and deviationism stands today at the basis of the party's activity, which by these means, too, follows the revolutionary tradition and experiences during times of revolutionary reflux and the flourishing of opportunist theories, which saw their violent and inflexible opponents in Marx, Engels, Lenin and the Italian Left.

"7. By means of this correct revolutionary evaluation of present-day tasks, even though its numbers may not be large and it may not be closely connected to the proletarian masses, and although it remains a jealous guardian of the theoretical commitment as its most important job, the party refuses categorically to be considered a gathering of thinkers or mere academics in search of new truths or who have lost their hold on yesterday's truth, considering it insufficient.

"Historically, no movement can triumph without theoretical continuity, which is the experience of past struggles. It follows that the party forbids individual freedom of analysis and the concoction of new schemes or explanations of the contemporary social world: it forbids individual freedom of analysis, of criticism and of a future perspective, even by the best prepared intellectual amongst its members, and defends the soundness of a theory that is not the consequence of blind faith but the content of proletarian class science, built up by the stuff of centuries, not by the thought of human beings but by the force of material facts, reflected in the historical consciousness of a revolutionary class and taking concrete shape in its party. Material events have done no more than confirm the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

"8. Despite the restricted numbers of its members, due to clearly counter-revolutionary conditions, the party unceasingly seeks proselytes and carries out propaganda for its principles in all forms, both written and by word of mouth, even though there are few participants at its meetings and its press has a limited circulation. The party considers the press its main work in the present phase, as this is one of the most effective means allowed by the present situation to indicate the line of action to the masses and for an organic and more widespread circulation of the revolutionary movement's principles.

"9. Events themselves and not the will or decision of human beings thus also determine the sector of the masses that is penetrated, limiting it to a small corner of activity in general. Nonetheless, the party loses no opportunity to work its way into every crack, every gap, knowing full well that there will be no recovery until this sector has been enormously widened and has become dominant."¹

This implies *the need to prepare revolution*. It means working on extending, strengthening and putting down firm international roots for the party and therefore, at the same time, contributing to the return of the proletarian struggle to the world stage – a return which it must be possible for the party itself to form and direct, on pain of dispersion and further reflux.

To the opportunists and wordmongers, to those who are over-impatient, this will seem very little. Instead, not only is it a great deal, it is essential and the premise for any revolutionary prospects. It is true that we communists are like sloths. We continue along our path towards the revolution, *slowly but inexorably*. We let others turn somersaults in the branches.

1. "Tesi caratteristiche del partito (1951) [Basic theses of the party]" in *difesa della continuità del partito comunista*, Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1970, pp. 162-163.

Back to Basics

The Lyon Theses (1926)

The *Lyons Theses* are situated at such a crucial moment of the history of the communist and worker movement that they constitute both a culmination and a point of departure in the laborious process of the formation of the world proletarian class party. Drawn up by the left current of the Communist Party of Italy to be counter posed to the theses of the half-Stalinized leadership, they were presented at the 3rd congress of the party at Lyons in January of 1926.¹ They appeared just a few months after the 14th congress of the Russian party at which almost the entire Bolshevik Old Guard, headed by Kamenev and Zinoviev, in an about-face almost as violent as it was unforeseen, rose in opposition to the extension of the NEP and the "Peasants, enrich yourselves!" slogan of Bukharin and the "red professors", and the suffocating internal party regime set up by Stalin. They also appeared one month before the 6th Enlarged Executive of the Communist International (February 1926), at which a battalion of paid lawyers fired red bullets at the only international force - the "Italian" Left, to be precise - that had dared to denounce the Komintern crisis. When it was finally eliminated, the terrain was prepared for the imminent condemnation of the Russian Opposition, which would ensue in November and December.

1. The left leadership of the Communist Party of Italy, founded at the congresses of Livorno (1921) and Rome (1922), was replaced provisionally after the arrest of its principal leaders in February 1923, and definitively after their acquittal in the trial that took place in October of the same year. After some resistance, mainly from Terracini, but also from Togliatti, the new centrist leadership gradually fell into line with the positions of the International. However, at the national conference in Como (May 1924), it still constituted a minority in the party, which had remained almost unanimously on its initial positions. Nevertheless, the left, whose position remained the same at the 5th congress of the International, not only did not demand that it be returned to the leadership of the party, but also insisted that this would depend entirely upon a radical shift in the policy pursued by Moscow. Consequently the draft theses presented by the left at the Como conference stated: "If the political line of the International and the party should remain opposed to that outlined here, or even indeterminate and imprecise, as it has been until now, the Italian left will have no choice but to criticize and monitor, and to firmly and serenely reject bastard solutions obtained through votes by committees or by means of concessions and compromises, most often behind a demagogic mask of the much proclaimed slogan of unity." Consistent with this, at the 5th congress Bordiga refused both the position of Vice-President of the International, offered by Zinoviev, and any share in the responsibilities of the leadership of the Communist Party of Italy at a time when its leaders were moving more and more in the direction desired by Moscow and supported by the Tasca and Graziadei right wing in Italy.

Part I of the theses on General Questions was published in the January 12, 14, 23 and 26 issues of *Unità*. The complete text appeared in a brochure entitled *Tesi per il III congresso* (Rome, 1926).

The international communist movement had reached a crossroads. At the 14th congress Kamenev, Zinoviev and Krupskaya, who until then had shared the political responsibility of the leadership, became aware they were expressing the revolt of *social and material forces* within the Soviet state in their struggle against other *objective* social and material forces a thousand times stronger than the individuals lined up at the podium. (Did not they share with the leadership of the Party, just until few months and few days before, the responsibility of a common political line?). Similarly, in the international arena, the Left knew that by drawing up its theses, which as usual were not confined to the narrow "Italian question", but dealt with communist tactics on a world scale, it was expressing *a historical course* that in a few months would assume the name of China and, in a rare and even unique convergence, England, i.e., a semi-colonial country on the one hand, and the archetype imperialist power on the other.

It was the year of the supreme test. The destiny of Soviet Russia and the International

depended, in the last analysis, on the outcome of the struggle of the Chinese workers and peasants and British proletarians. As the year progressed, the Russian opposition would find out what a terrible situation had been brewing for some time. Rising above old disagreements, Trotsky and Zinoviev, to mention only two, would form a desperate bloc against the tide of counter-revolutionary forces. Throughout 1927, the former would wage a magnificent battle and finally go down in defeat. The Russian Opposition was defeated so also the Chinese revolution, and the English general strike as well. The entire international communist movement was destroyed. In the course of these two years, proletarian internationalism had tried, for the last time, to break the encirclement of "socialism in one country" in Moscow. This battle will remain inscribed in indelible characters on pages that will inspire future generations of the Marxist revolutionary vanguard. However, the Russian Opposition remains unable to transmit to these generations a *general* lesson of a historical course that began long before 1926, since its final *collapse* was, at least in part, a product of that period. It was able to denounce the evil, but not attack *its roots*: this it could not do so because it shared in the responsibility for this historical period, and Stalin and Bukharin were able to paralyze it by reminding it of this fact in their odious polemics, knowing well that their worst enemy was already imprisoned in the net they had all shared in weaving.

Such was not the case with the Italian Left. Weak as it may have been in the international arena, it was the only force that had the right and the *ability* to draw an *overall* lesson from the five previous years, given the stern warnings it had issued year after year regarding the tactical eclecticism of the Komintern, which was increasingly enforced by organizational manipulation, ideological terror and the crushing weight of the state. It drew this lesson at the beginning, not the end of the decisive year (even before: in Italy, the discussion prior to the 3rd congress, during 1925, concentrated on this topic), recognizing it the *fait accompli* what it had *predicted long before* hand. Alone against everyone (*foremost* Zinoviev) at the 6th Enlarged Executive, it was also alone in demanding that the "Russian question" (i.e., the question of "socialism in one country" and the bureaucratic disciplinary regime set up by Stalinism and imposed on all parties in the Komintern) be placed on the agenda of an *emergency* international congress and thereby removed from the Bolshevik party's monopoly on discussion and decisions. The request was transmitted to the Praesidium, which put it off until the especially orchestrated Enlarged Executive in November-December, effectively shelving the problem. The congress wasn't held until two years later, on the ruins of the revolutionary opposition, and no mention was made of the question. Moreover, when it presented its corpus of theses to the international movement as the basis for a *complete, organic* solution to tactical problems, one tied to just as firm a conception of the program, the Left inserted the Russian question as *one* link in the chain connecting all the vital questions of the International, and it thus created the conditions for the return of the international movement to its original program on even *more* solid foundations. At the 7th Enlarged Executive (November-December 1926), Trotsky was altogether correct in stating that if the Bolshevik party placed its stakes on the world revolution it could remain firmly in power not one year, but fifty: but could this stupefying bet be main-

2. Of course there was no "democratic" intent in this demand. It did not seek to oppose a necessary centralization with the sordid decentralization of "national roads"; on the contrary, it was a transposition onto the international stage of our conception of "organic centralism", whereby the summit, linked to the base of pyramid by the single, unbroken thread of a single doctrine and program, receives and synthesizes the impulses from the base, without which the pyramid crumbles. Needless to say, at the time, the West was unable to give Bolshevik Russia or the Komintern the oxygen they desperately needed, for the simple reason that it was already immersed in an increasingly stifling democracy that finally triumphed everywhere. The Left defended the principle - valid at all times and in all places, even if it cannot be realized at present for contingent reasons - that envisions the International as the single party of the revolutionary proletariat, at the summit, then the national sections, where they exist, and at the bottom, the victorious proletarian state, which is the most vulnerable owing precisely to its isolation (particularly in an economically backward country, like Russia) and whose coercive power should never have been used and must never be used (as the Left insistently repeated at the 6th Enlarged Executive) to "resolve" the disciplinary problems of the International or the party leading the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. Cf. our *Storia della sinistra comunista*, vol. I, Milan 1972.

tained without - as the Left put it - inverting the pyramid² of the Komintern, now resting in an unstable balance on its summit (i.e., on the crisis-ridden Russian party), without a total change in its internal regime, and above all, without a complete, vigorous revision of the practice of sudden, unpredictable tactical reversals that had produced so many disasters? Trotsky was never able to answer this question; or rather, he answered it only indirectly by resorting to the tortuous, fateful road of elastic maneuvers he vainly sought to illuminate with a resounding appeal to the revolution in permanence.

This overall answer is to be found in the general section of the *Lyons Theses* (and in its international corollaries), and precisely because it is a *general* solution it can only be accepted or rejected *en bloc*. Holding to this

position, the Left might certainly be crushed under the weight of the unfavourable relationship of forces that developed, as it was in the end; but it is just as certain that it could only *rise again* on the basis of this position, and that an international resurgence of the revolutionary proletariat and its party would only be possible on that basis, i.e., of a complete system fusing together tactical and programmatic questions and implying, by a process of deduction, the mode of organization of the movement.

For this reason the *Lyons Theses* are a point of departure for the present and the future, just as they were a culmination of the history of the decisive years between 1919 and 1926. They are not the product of a few heads, but a dynamic balance sheet of the clash of real forces in the arena of class struggle in a period in which the revolutionary battles of an entire century were condensed, putting to the test of fire the ability of communist parties to remain faithful to their teachings, without deviating. Marxism would be worth nothing if it were unable, in the tradition of Marx and Lenin, to convert even defeats into the elements of victory. This is the profound and timeless significance of our 1926 theses. It is thus important to show that all the thrusts in the long battle waged by the Left in the International converge on and fuse in the *Lyons Theses*, from which it is possible to work back to 1920 to trace the continuity between the episodes of this battle and the series of historical events synthesized in the prophetic analysis of the theses.

As can be seen in the first two volumes of the *History of the Communist Left*³, the Left was incontestably the only current that responded to the world war by adopting the same *principled* positions as those defended by Lenin and the tiny vanguard of the Zimmerwald Left. With the outbreak of the October revolution, and during the two following years, it was *also* alone in remaining firmly attached to the aims and methods of the Bolshevik dictatorship and its leading organ, the Russian party. It was clearly alien to that formal, vague allegiance inspired by the whim of the moment which induced the sudden conversion of the majority of the

French Socialist Party, or elicited the sudden support of the international centrism, both of which remained demagogic and confused, even though, in the most optimistic hypothesis, it may be admitted that their leaders were sincere. It was also alone in stating, at the end of 1918, that a definitive break with the socialist right and especially the even more perfidious centre, and the formation of the communist party on the foundations that would be laid by the 2nd congress of the Communist International in 1920, were *indispensable* conditions for a revolutionary outcome to the post-war crisis.

It is thus not surprising that the Left, intervening in the 2nd congress without an official mandate, as a current in the Italian Socialist Party, did not share any of the objections raised (or temporarily silenced, only to be dragged out back in Italy or in later international congresses) by the official delegation with respect to the Theses on the role of the communist party in the proletarian revolution, the conditions for the formation of Soviets, the national, colonial, peasant and trade union questions, etc. Instead, it made a direct and even decisive contribution to the vitally important formulation of the Conditions of admission to the Communist International, insisting that they be made *even more* severe and that they leave no possibility of adaptation to "local situations."

However, in the context of this common struggle to raise "insurmountable obstacles" to reformism around the Communist International, the directives the Left proposed for the *whole* movement regarding program and organizational procedures already possessed the comprehensive, "closed" character of the formulations the *Lyons Theses* would defend later with clarity and precision. This character was not the product of one person's brain. It was made necessary by the accumulation of experiences fighting under a fully democratic regime with its inevitable bouts of reformism and centrism. And the fact that it was reinforced by vigorous polemics against the leadership of the International could never have been a result, as some later claimed, of "theoretical ostentation" or concern for moral integrity or esthetic perfection; it was exclusively for eminently practical (in the Marxist sense, of course, wherein theory and action are two dialectically indissociable elements) reasons. The Left's attitude was dictated by a healthy concern not so much for the present - i.e., with an historical phase that was far from having exhausted its revolutionary resources - as for the future. Western and central Europe were at the centre of these concerns, since this area was rightly considered the keystone of world communist strategy. However, the maturation of the *subjective* conditions of the revolution - and above all the party - was lagging behind the development of the *objective* conditions there, while the historical circumstances were such as to engender theoretical confusion and organizational heterogeneity and ineffectualness. It was *therefore* necessary to give the rising proletarian movement a centralized world leadership. Under the firm leadership of the party of Lenin and Trotsky, the relatively open and elastic formulae used to this end already involved some risks. But what would happen *later*, if the gigantic revolutionary wave subsided and, with prospects for a revolution fading, the danger of a "social-democratic switch" - to borrow an expression from Trotsky - a danger that is always more real in phases of retreat than on the eve of an insurrection, were to threaten again, bringing to the surface the debris of reformism that excessively vague formulations had not been able to dis-

tance or eliminate? With the war over and revolution *apparently* nigh, people like Cachin and Crispien accepted the theses of the Communist International, soviet power, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the red terror with the same ease with which, six years earlier, they had entered the camp of national defense and the imperialist war. But the objective pressures that had impelled them, unconsciously and involuntarily toward the International would someday be lacking, and the rift separating them from real communists would become an abyss. In this case, how could the International, itself “a factor, but also a product of history” (as the party always and necessarily is) escape from the external pressure of an unfavourable situation as well as from what the *Lyons Theses* called “the repercussions that the means it employs in its action have on the party, through a dialectical interplay of cause and effect”?

An unbroken thread thus connects 1920 and 1926, and this explains why the *Lyons Theses*, reworking, developing and giving a complete, definitive structure to the problems of 1920, have been instrumental in transmitting them, now complemented by the *real* judgment of practical confirmation, to new generations.

To begin with, the links in our dialectical chain were well delimited. If the doctrine, the program and the system of tactical rules are unambiguous and known to all, binding on all members, the organization will be unified, disciplined and effective. Because it has mastered these conditions of its existence, the party will be able to prepare itself and prepare the proletariat for revolutionary solution to the crises of capitalist society, without, in phases of reaction, ever compromising the possibilities for a revolutionary revival of the party and the class. But if one begins by relaxing the links in the chain, and then proceeds to build a theory on that basis, all is lost, including both the possibility of victory in a period of revolutionary advance and the possibilities of a revival after periods of retreat. The party is destroyed, since *it is only* the organ of the revolution to the extent that it uses a solid theoretical and practical continuity to predict “*how* a certain process will come

about *when* certain conditions have been fulfilled”⁴ and “what must be done in the various possible hypotheses on the evolution of objective situations.”⁵

4. Lenin sul cammino della rivoluzione, 1924.

5. Lyons Theses, I, 3.

The history of the 3rd International is unfortunately also the history of the gradual abandoning of this path. It subsequently became the history of *how to kill the party* without even wanting to, or even with the best intentions of saving it. 1926 was the year of “socialism in one country” and its inevitable retinue - Bolshevisation, the crushing of the Left Opposition under the steamroller of discipline-for-the-sake-of-discipline - and this cursed formula means nothing other than the assassination of the world party. The Komintern was definitively dead in 1926. What followed was only a dance of death around its coffin.

For purpose of the presentation we distinguish three aspects to the collapse, though they are in fact intermingled and finally converge in the destruction of the *real* unity of the international communist movement, reduced in 1926-7 to a superficial unity based on military discipline, and serving to mask or justify in advance the freedom of the leadership to betray the program down to the last shred. Finally, when the external pressure of the “apparati” of the Russian party and state power had relent-

ed, this “unity” gave full rein to the thousand “national roads” of an unrecognizable “socialism.” The stages in this process were, briefly, as follows.

We had demanded insistently that communist parties (or better, the International itself, as a *single* communist party) be formed on a theoretical and programmatic platform valid for all times, to be accepted or rejected - something similar to the synthetic proclamation in the first point of the *Lyons Theses* (General questions). This theoretical and programmatic barricade would definitively block not only the doctrines of the ruling class (be they spiritualist, religious and idealist in philosophy and reactionary in politics, or positivist, Voltairian and free-thinking in philosophy and Masonic, anticlerical and democratic in politics), but also the schools of thought having an influence on the working class: from social-democratic, pacifist and gradualist reformism to “syndicalism”, which depreciates the political action of the working class and the necessity of the party as the supreme revolutionary organ; and from anarchism, which repudiates on principle the historical necessity of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat as means for transforming society and suppressing the division of society into classes, to “centrism”, a bastard, ambiguous formula, synthesizing and condensing deviations of the same kind behind a disguise of pseudo-revolutionary phraseology.

This barricade was not raised. The French party, infected to the core by the parliamentary, democratic virus, chauvinistic if need be (Ruhr!, Algeria, etc.), always deaf to the needs of the trade union struggle, constantly contesting any centralized leadership in the name of “its country’s special conditions”, soon inserted its Masonic Jacobinism (Frossard!) and populism (Cachin!) through the gaping hole that had been left. In the Scandinavian parties the theory of “religion considered as a private matter” took hold and a whole Enlarged Executive had to be devoted to this unlikely question in 1923, barely a few months away from the last revolutionary upsurge in Germany, just when all energies should have been concentrated on finding a revolutionary solution to a crisis whose consequences, positive or negative, would necessarily weigh on the entire world movement. The syndicalism dormant within the French party and the workerism of the German party came to life, in reaction to the gradualist and parliamentarist, minimalist and democratic atmosphere. Later on, that mixture of Sorelism and Crocean idealism contained in the “Ordine Nuovo” current”⁶, whose adherents

had been kept in line while the International remained firmly on its original positions and as long as the Left led the party, once

again had free rein. In the end, in conjunction with a skillfully orchestrated advertising campaign in the same way to the launch of the most original products of the bourgeois industry, the theory of “socialism in one country”, that supreme insult to Marx, Engels and Lenin, and to a century of proletarian internationalism, was hatched and spread. Now anything was *admissible*, since nothing had been *prohibited* by a limpid, invariable definition of the doctrine and program. By dealing exhaustively with the question of the relationship between economic determinism and political will, between theory and action and class and of the movement free from the double scourge of inert passivity on the one hand, and unbridled voluntarism on the other, of which the orgy of so-called “Bolshevisation” and the canni-

6. Cf. Lyons Theses, III, 5.

balistic Saturnalia of the “building socialism” in isolation - i.e., in one country - were only the latest variants.

As for the *second* aspect of the party’s decline, the Left had requested the drafting, even in a somewhat schematic form, if need be, of a single, obligatory system of tactical rules, solidly rooted in principles and a prognosis, derived from these principles, of a range of possible alternatives in the dynamic of the class conflict. This request was regarded as abstract, and some spoke of a “metaphysical formula”. But the tragic events of these past decades proved how *terrible concrete* this request actually was. It was obvious to us with the formula for the “conquest of the majority”, then the “political united front”, and finally the “workers’ government” formula, and we followed the overall effects on the *organization* of the laborious maneuvers to incorporate groups of reformists and centrists, and even whole wings of parties. Slogans have their own destiny. The 4th congress of the International lay at the point of contact between a year of bitter defeats (1922) and another extremely tormented year during which the glorious Russian party was shaken by a serious international crisis that could only have been overcome by the steely firmness of a Lenin (the Letters to the Congress in 1923 demonstrate that the great revolutionary, without hesitation or remorse, would have administered a vigorous thrashing if he had been able to take his place at the head of the central committee), but also a year that witnessed a revival of class struggles in Germany, Bulgaria and Estonia and the first sparks of a conflagration in the East. In this intermittent darkness, the glowing fibre of inextinguishable principles was gradually lost, and tactical eclecticism definitively aborted the last opportunities of the period, aggravating the confusion in the Bolshevik party and the International. These events show with utmost clarity the extent to which tactical wavering reacts upon the principles and causes *chain reactions* in all areas. The *Lyons Theses* explain this in the second part (*International Questions*). It is nonetheless important to follow the details of the inexorable process, beginning with the 4th congress, that dragged the International into total ruin.

While fascism, in power in Italy, launched its offensive on the communist movement and arrested the left leaders of the Communist Party of Italy, preventing them from making themselves heard during the crucial year that had just begun, in Germany the occupation of the Ruhr, the collapse of the Mark, the agitation of all strata of the population and the appearance on the political scene of the first nuclei of the Nazi party (NSDAP) confronted the communist party (KPD) - after the defeat or fruitless common action by the parties on both sides of the Rhine - with the thankless task of choosing one of the many interpretations of the united front and “workers’ government” which would best conform to the theses of the 4th congress and the German situation. Faced with this dilemma, the “two spirits” that had co existed in the party since the beginning gave two different answers to the two questions: united front from above, as the leadership wanted, or united front from below, as an unsure, vacillating “left” wanted; and a “workers’ government” in the sense of parliamentary support for a social democratic government, in the sense of participation in a coalition with the social democrats, or even a benevolent neutrality toward the bourgeois government in power to promote passive resistance to the allied aggression (as the leadership of the party envisioned), or “workers’ gov-

ernment” in the sense of a “general” mobilization of the masses with a view to the revolutionary seizure of power” (as the “left” minority expressed it, without giving more detail)?

The disagreements were not limited to these two questions of relatively recent origin. In a situation in which, especially in the Rhineland and the Ruhr, the working masses were in motion, often armed, *both* against the occupation force and against the bourgeois national government, spectres of the 1921 “march action” began to take shape’ should one disassociate oneself from these generous outbursts because they are manifestations of infantile adventurism - the leadership opted for this attitude, invoking the lack of preparation of the masses and the party and the excessively optimistic analysis of the relationship of forces made by the “left” current, to take refuge in a growing “legalitarianism” that came out in full bloom toward the middle of the year? Or should one strive to channel these thrusts, direct them toward a goal, discipline them, as the left wing wanted to - correctly, from the point of view of principles, but in reality with much more rhetorical and activist notions than realistic, considered ones? This tangle of contradictory orientations engendered such confusion and disarray in the party at a time when the political and social situation had reached a critical point, that a “conciliation conference”, called by the Executive of the Komintern in April 1923, was needed to arrive at something of a remedy for the problem (if indeed a remedy at all). This conference condemned the leadership of the German party because it tended to “adapt the communist party to the reformist leaders”, and at the same time applies the brakes to the impatience and immediatist exclamations of the minority. But negotiations, especially “conciliation negotiations, could not heal the wounds, now festering and always ready to reopen in the confusion of pronouncements emanating from Moscow. But the worst was yet to come.

In fact, what soon began to emerge, at first timidly and then in an increasingly explicit form in the leading circles of the party, was the idea the occupation of the Ruhr would provide the ideal opportunity for the “conquest of the majority” in its most elastic interpretation, i.e., the conquest not just of broad strata of proletarians, but of the “people” in general, if appeals were made to attract fluctuating segments of the petty-bourgeoisie, victims of the devaluation of the Mark and strongly influenced by the nationalist revival. If the operation was to succeed it was necessary to try to show them that, as the party leadership proclaimed on May 17, 1923, “they could only defend *themselves* and defend the *future of Germany* by allying with the communists for a fight against the real (?) bourgeoisie”, thereby making the party the defender of German “national values”. An expression that had been condemned energetically in 1921 when a small workerist group from Hamburg had used it now entered the picture without any reaction from the International, the phrase “national Bolshevism”, both the fruit and source of two monumental deviations from Marxism: 1) the more or less explicit lumping together of the national question in the colonies and semi-colonies and in a highly developed capitalist country (the Enlarged Executive of June 12 1923, had no scruples about stating that “*the fact of strongly insisting on the national element in Germany is revolutionary in the SAME sense that the fact of insisting on the national element in the colonies is*”, and stooping even lower in his famous Schlageter speech, Radek

7. For the reasons mentioned above, the Left was unable to speak during this dramatic situation. But a year later, on the eve of the 5th congress, it wrote: "We deny that it is possible to justify the assimilation of the communist movement and the national and patriotic movement in Germany on (the basis of the theses of the 2nd congress on the national and colonial questions). The pressure exerted on Germany by the Entente powers, even in the acute, coercive forms it has assumed recently, does not constitute an element such as might allow us to consider Germany on equal footing with a backward capitalist country. Germany remains a highly developed country from the capitalist point of view whose proletariat is socially and politically more than advanced... To reduce the task of the great proletariat of Germany to one of national emancipation would be an unjustifiable degradation, whereas what we really expect from this proletariat and its revolutionary party is that it succeed in winning victory, not for itself but to save the existence of the economic evolution of Soviet Russia and to unleash the powerful tide of the world revolution on the capitalist fortresses of the West... This is how forgetting the principles upon which communist political solutions are based can lead one to apply these solutions where the appropriate conditions are lacking, in the belief that the most complicated expedients are always available for use." (Amadeo Bordiga, "Comunismo e questione nazionale", in *Prometeo*, No. 4, April 15, 1924).

8. For a few months in 1923 the KPD, striving desperately to attract the "vagabonds of nothingness" of the petty-bourgeoisie, acted like a fellow traveller of the Nazi NSDP, with the two parties' speakers following each other on the podium to fulminate against Versailles and Poincaré, causing stupor and indignation even in the ranks of the Czechoslovakian party! The honeymoon barely lasted a day, it is true, but only because the Nazis were first to denounce this *de facto* "alliance".

declared that "what we call German nationalism is not just nationalism; it is a broad national movement with a *great revolutionary significance*". Zinoviev himself, winding up the Executive, was pleased to note that a bourgeois newspaper had recognized the "national Bolshevik" character of the KPD as proof that the party had finally acquired a mass psychology")⁷; 2) the more or less open recognition of the autonomous revolutionary potential of the petty-bourgeoisie (Radek once again: the KPD must show that it is not only (!!) "the party of the struggle of the industrial proletarians for a piece of bread, but also the party of those proletarianised elements who are fighting for their own freedom, *a freedom that coincides with the freedom of the whole people, with the freedom of all those who work and suffer in Germany*"), and therefore also the interpretation of fascism as the self-mobilization of the petty-bourgeoisie *against* big capital, whereas in fact it was the mobilization of the petty-bourgeoisie *at the instigation* and for

the exclusive benefit of big capital, and consequently *against the proletariat*.⁸

Inexorably, the links in the chain came apart. The Enlarged Executive of June 1923 did not discuss the German situation in detail, even though it was becoming quite explosive. Its attention was monopolized by other problems Norwegian federalism, the Swedish party's neutralism on the religion question, the latest attempt to sell a merger between the CP of Italy and the socialist party in spite of the very high price demanded by the latter for not merging. Though it made no firm decisions, the Executive endorsed the leadership thesis that the KPD should become a rallying point for the proletarianised petty-bourgeois masses by encompassing their dreams of national revival. But the 1923 German question was exclusively an *international* problem; a "nationalist program for the proletarian revolution" in Germany was the worst possible solution, because it would increase the conservative and counter-revolutionary weight of the petty-bourgeoisie in France and England, thereby nullifying the hypothetical advantages of a hybrid Weimar republic. There is no trace of this idea in any of the resolutions of the Executive. At the same time, the Executive quite logically decided to expand the "workers' government" slogan and, fascinated by the proliferation of peasant parties both in the Balkans and in North America (La Follette!), it transformed the slogan into "workers' and peasants' government" *for all countries*, including Germany!

The theses⁹ do warn against a parliamentary and social-revolutionary interpretation of the new tactical recipe, but as we have seen, the first interpretation was authorized by the vagueness and desultory work of the 4th congress, and the second by a mechanical, vulgar transposition of the “workers’ and peasants’ government” slogan from countries on the eve of a double revolution to countries of hyperdeveloped capitalism. Yet another element of what had always unequivocally been the exclusive mark of the Marxist revolutionary party disappeared.

Fast losing its grip on principles, the International let itself be blinded once again by the appeal of easy gains and the fear of being outstripped by the social-democracy in the conquest of the masses; and the undoubtedly vital problem of action directed toward the poor peasants was approached as a maneuver which, within a few years, opened the way to a theory of the *autonomous world* role of the peasant class without regard for the variety and contradictory character of its many components, and removed from any precise definition of its relationship to the industrial and agricultural proletariat, both in highly developed capitalist countries and in the immense colonial and semi-colonial regions, in particular Asia.¹⁰

9. Cf. Protokoll der Konferenz der Erweiterten Executive der Kommunistischen Internationale, Moskau, 12-23 juni 1923.

10. Bukharin in particular put forward this theory beginning with the 5th Enlarged Executive in March 1925. Cf. part II of the Lyons Theses.

But Germany remained *the sensitive point* in the crucial year 1923. Even more than in Estonia and Bulgaria, which we will leave aside for the moment, it was in Germany that tactical vacillations and eclecticism on the part of the Komintern, in the second half of the year, produced the disaster whose immediate and long term consequences prepared the defeats in China and England and the fatal crisis of the Russian party and the International itself in the ensuing years. Suddenly in July 1923 the International, for a long time indifferent to developments in the German situation - perhaps due to its awareness that the KPD lacked any cohesiveness and homogeneity - became alarmed by the fascist danger, and also stated its conviction (perhaps well-founded) that a pre-revolutionary cycle was about to begin. Its directives nonetheless remained vague and cautious for a long time. The cancellation of the big “anti-fascist day” after it was prohibited by the government (July 23) received approval from Moscow and succeeded in reviving disagreements between the KPD leadership and left wing, between red Berlin and the lukewarm provinces, between a proletariat already in action and a “workers’ aristocracy” that lagged behind.

In early August, with the Cuno government obviously foundering, the KPD leadership decided that the moment to mobilize the masses behind the “workers’ and peasants’ government” slogan was at hand, while the “left” proclaimed from its Berlin stronghold that “the interim phase of a workers’ government is practically more and more improbable”. Just when new massive strikes were breaking out, and in the confusion produced by this exchange of contradictory slogans, big capital, now determined to liquidate the failing campaign of “passive resistance” to the Ruhr occupation and ingratiate itself to the Entente - particularly England - placed Stresemann in power.

The by now usual reaction of Moscow was a sharp turn from a fundamentally pessimistic wait-and-see attitude to a frenzied optimism. “The revolution is at Germany’s door,” wrote the Profintern organ in September, “It’s just a matter of

months.” In Moscow, in the presence of the entire KPD general staff, against protests from right and left, it was decided that the assault on power had to be prepared immediately and the date set. On what grounds? Because the 4th congress had given the signal and the 3rd Enlarged Executive had confirmed it. On October 1, in the teeth of the economic and social crisis, Zinoviev declared to Brandler, the secretary of the German party, that he could foresee the “decisive moment four, five, six weeks away”. It was therefore necessary “to pose concretely the problem of *our participation in the Saxony government* (dominated by social-democrats) *on the condition that the followers of Zeigner* (the reformist president of the council) *are really ready to defend Saxony against Bavaria and the fascists.*” Thus in spite of 1918, 1919 and 1921 the plan was to trust the will of the social-democrats to cease being themselves! In the pamphlet *Probleme der deutschen Revolution*, written at precisely that time by the president of the International, Zinoviev, it is correctly stated, on the one hand, that “the next German revolution will be a *classic proletarian revolution*”, i.e., a “pure” proletarian revolution; but, while drawing excessively optimistic conclusions from the German proletariat’s high degree of organization and spirit of discipline (this faculty and fascination for organization in which Rosa Luxemburg in 1918 and Trotsky in 1920 had seen one of the causes of failure in the crucial test of the war, in the absence of the firm leadership of the party) as well as from its “culture” (the concomitant of a large worker aristocracy), on the other hand a revolutionary role is attributed “to the petty-bourgeois urban masses, to lower and middle officials, small merchants, etc.”, from which is deduced the hypothesis that “the role played in the Russian revolution by the war-weary peasantry will be filled to a certain extent in the German revolution by the broad petty-bourgeois urban masses, pushed by the development of capitalism to the brink of economic ruin”!!

There was, however, one small problem with this astounding analysis. The united front had undeniably achieved the desired result in Germany, drawing into the struggle even “the most backward strata of the working class, and uniting them with the revolutionary vanguard”; “the moment is approaching when the enormous majority of German workers, which still places some hope in the social-democracy, will be finally convinced that the decisive struggle must be waged *without and against* the right and left wings of the SDP”; but this moment has not yet arrived, and before it does a new round of experiences, not only in political united fronts, but also in “workers’” coalition governments, will be necessary. The entry of communists into the Saxony government was thus proposed in order to: “1) help the revolutionary vanguard in Saxony to implant itself, to occupy a definite terrain and make its province a springboard for future battles; 2) offer left social-democrats the possibility of unmasking themselves *by their deeds*, thereby enabling social-democratic proletarians to rid themselves of their last illusions”! Moreover, the experience of government (which is only permissible “with the Komintern’s consent”) has no meaning “*unless it offers every guarantee that the state apparatus will really begin to serve the interests of the working class, that hundreds of thousands of workers will be armed for the fight against Bavarian fascism and German fascism in general, and that one really begins to expel bourgeois civil servants en masse from the state apparatus, while no longer being content with verbal promises... and*

economic measures of a revolutionary nature are taken without delay so as to strike a decisive blow against the bourgeoisie". In other words it was necessary, according to the famous telegram from Zinoviev to Brandler on October 1, 1923, "to immediately arm 50,000 to 60,000 men in Saxony, and the same number in Thuringia".

This is all quite contradictory: a revolutionary situation, supposedly favoured by the subversive intervention of the broad petty-bourgeois masses, is announced, and its outcome is defined as a parliamentary governmental coalition; the success achieved by means of the united front in assembling the vast majority of the working class around the party is exalted, and the party submits to a coalition with the most discredited social-democracy in the world; a classic revolutionary "conquest of power" is advocated, and the arming of the proletariat, expulsion of bourgeois civil servants and introduction of dictatorial anti-bourgeois measures are designated as measures to be taken by a social-democratic majority government; this is supposed to help "unmask" the SPD, while in fact it only effaces the distinctive features of our own party; in this way the KPD will supposedly "convince, *by its deeds*, the majority of the German working class that it is no longer just the vanguard, as during the years 1919-1921, but that it has millions of workers behind it", and it presents these workers with the humiliating and shameful "fact" of a government coalition in which three communist ministers (including the party secretary, Brandler) are entirely at the mercy of social-democratic ministers, the assassins of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and with these millions of proletarians behind them, the workers are told not to take power by storm, but to patiently and confidently await a few rifles from their reformist associates! A coalition on the eve of the insurrection! Trotsky's contempt in his *Lessons of October* for this relapse into the capitulationist hesitations of the Bolshevik minority on the eve of the seizure of power in 1917 - this time even worse - was more than justified even though, avoiding the fundamental question, he could not perceive that this "social-democratic relapse" was the *necessary* culmination of the "elastic" united front and workers' government tactics, which he himself had supported and defended before and after 1925¹¹. The date of the insurrection

was set on the basis of the platform for the creation of a social-democratic/ communist government, and then it was postponed at the suggestion of the German leadership. Everything is done as if the revolution were a *technical* feat, not the product of a specific objective situation and an adequate subjective preparation of the party, whereas for months the party had been advocating the semi-legal path of overtures to various

groups and governmental or para-governmental solutions. The party is put on alert so that "in today's seething, tumultuous Germany, where today or tomorrow the vanguard will embark on the decisive battle, bring with it the heavy infantry of the proletariat, the correct united front tactic is not transformed into its *opposite*", but everything is done to bring this about, by hitching the party - in one or two region-

11. Trotsky would have preferred to use the "algebraic formulae" of "united front" and "workers' government" and go beyond them immediately to pose the urgent problem of the revolutionary conquest of power in all its clarity. A summary of the brilliant exposition of this audacious interpretation by Trotsky, as well as our objections to it, can be found in an article by Amadeo Bordiga on "La politica dell'Internazionale", published in *Unità*, No. 15, October 1925.

al provinces at most, isolated in the vast German territory and caught in a vice between a central power entirely in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the more or less regular troops of Bavaria, the traditional reservoir of the German counter-revolution - to the chariot of a social-democracy whose capacity for betrayal has been amply proven. It is then proclaimed that "in today's Germany, now on the threshold of revolution, the general formula of "workers' and peasants' government" is already insufficient... and we must, both in our propaganda and in our mass agitation, show and make it clearly understood that we stand for nothing other than the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the dictatorship of the workers of the cities and villages", and it is claimed that this objective can be attained by entering and remaining in a government with a social-democracy which, in its explicit programmatic statements and factually confirmed tradition, *excludes* the use of the dictatorship and terror.

It was not necessary to wait long for the epilogue. A few days later, on October 20, 1923, the central Reich government sent the Saxony government an ultimatum calling for the immediate dissolution of the workers' militias, even though these were numerically quite weak, and in the event of refusal, threatened to mobilize the Reichswehr. The party decided to launch a general strike throughout Germany, but, lacking self-confidence and unsure of having the support of a proletariat now disoriented by the merry-go-round of contradictory slogans and objectives, Brandler thought that it was first necessary to "consult" the masses, represented by an assembly of workers and political and union officials that met at Chemnitz. After being convinced that the favourable moment had passed, he canceled the order for the work stoppage. One Reichswehr detachment was all that was required to depose the Saxony government. But because of a delay in the transmission of the order canceling the strike, the Hamburg proletariat revolted in isolation and was brought to heel within twenty-four hours by the army, under the leadership of the Kaiser's generals left in their posts by Ebert and Schneidemann. A few pockets of resistance were quickly wiped up, and the 1923 German episode was over.

In the ensuing months, especially at the Enlarged Executive of the International on January 8-12, 1924, it was too easy to assign responsibility for the disaster to the inadequacies, errors and weaknesses of the leadership of the German party. But the party found it just as easy to answer that, except for a few minor mistakes, it had only applied the Komintern's directives, which in turn conformed to the results of the 4th congress. In order to save the furniture (i.e. the unity of a party now more divided than ever), the leadership was shaken up and "guilty parties" were condemned, even though they were kept on as a dubious minority in the new "left" leadership - which, barely a year later, was declared worse than the previous one.¹² But worst of all was the fact that alongside this, yet another tactical turn was announced on the world scale: *no more united fronts from above* as, on the basis of an "incorrect interpretation" of the resolutions of the 4th congress, certain parties, and in the first instance the German party, had been practicing it; from now

on, *united fronts from below*: "The time has come to proclaim openly that we reject any negotiations with the central leadership of the German unions. Our slogan is unity at

12. The minutes of this vehement debate and the text of the resolutions on which it centered can be found in *Die Lehren der deutschen Ereignisse*, Hamburg, 1924.

the base. The united front at the base, already partly realized, can now be made against these gentlemen". *No more* subtle distinctions between left and right social-democrats. "The right social democrats are acknowledged traitors; the left, on the other hand, only mask the counter-revolutionary action of Ebert, Noske and Schneidemann with their demagogy. The KPD rejects negotiation both with the leadership of the SPD and the *left*; leaders, *at least until...*" (a small door is left open for them after the main gate is closed) "...these heroes have the courage to break openly with the band of counter-revolutionaries that leads the social-democratic party." The interpretation to the effect that the workers' and peasants' government is "a government within the framework of bourgeois democracy, a political alliance with the social-democracy" is *no longer* possible; "the workers' and peasants' government means, in the language of the revolution, the *dictatorship of the proletariat*... and never, in any case, a tactic of agreement and parliamentary transaction with the social-democrats. On the contrary the parliamentary activity of communists must also be aimed at unmasking of the counter-revolutionary role of the social-democracy and demonstrating to the workers that the 'workers' governments it has set up are only a trick and a hoax, if they are not in fact liberal, bourgeois governments". *From now on* the "best" and "worst" governments are the same: "fascism and social-democracy are the right and left hands of contemporary capitalism".

The 5th congress of the Communist International (June 17 to July 8, 1924) reflects the profound disarray among parties after the catastrophic results of two years of sudden tactical turns and equivocal orders. Togliatti himself asked someone to tell him once and for all *what was* to be done *exactly*! While the leaders of the national sections once again immolated themselves on the altar of the Executive's infallibility, *the only* severe, but serene voice, free from any personal or local embellishment, was again that of the Left. If it had ever been the Left's habit to rejoice at seeing its predictions confirmed forcefully by the terrible test of proletarian blood spilled for nothing, or to demand in its turn that the heads of those "guilty" or "corrupt" individuals should roll to make way for more innocent and incorruptible heads, this would have been the time to do so. But this was not what the Left wanted or sought: it wanted a courageous break with the deviations of principle of which these "errors" were the inevitable product, whereas the heads were only their momentary expression. "United front from below"? So be it! On the condition that no door be left open to any exceptions in the opposite direction (as was done in the new proposal), and on the condition that it be unequivocally stated that "the basis of the united front can never be a bloc among political parties. This basis can be established in other working class organizations, provided their structure would enable a communist leadership to conquer them". Thus no invitations to organizations such as the social-democratic left or right wing *which cannot* "fight on the final path of the world communist revolution" or even "support the immediate interests of the working class" and to which it would be criminal for us "to deliver, with our work, a certificate of revolutionary aptitude, thereby contradicting all our principled, work, all our work to prepare the working class". A struggle against the social-democracy, "the third bourgeois party"? Agreed, but how does one justify the latest bombshell namely the proposal to merge the Red International of

Labour Unions with the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions? The workers' government a "synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat"? We have paid dearly for the use of an ambiguous *phrase* we demand a "third class burial both for the tactic and for the very expression - workers' government". We do so because "dictatorship of the proletariat means to us that proletarian power will be exercised without allowing the bourgeoisie any political representation. It also means that proletarian power can only be conquered through revolutionary action, mass armed insurrection. If one wants, workers' government can mean all of this; but one can also take it to mean something entirely different (Germany! Germany!): *another* type of government which would not exclude the bourgeoisie from organs of political representation or the possibility of a legal conquest of power". But the workers' government formula is easier for the masses to understand, you say? We reply "How is a simple worker or peasant to understand what workers' government means when after three years we leaders of the workers' movement have not yet succeeded in understanding and defining satisfactorily what such a government really is?" But the problem was even more serious. The fact that the International moved "to the left" in 1925 could have given us cause for relief, *if* we were to pose the problem in terms of petty revenge. This was not, however, our method: "what we criticized in the way the International worked was *precisely* its tendency to move to the right and to the left in response to the situation or to the interpretations one thought could be made of it. As long as the problem of elasticity and eclecticism has not been thoroughly discussed..., as long as this elasticity continues, new vacillations must necessarily emerge and *a new left turn will bring with it the threat of another turn, one even more accentuated, to the right* (isn't this precisely what happened in the ensuing years?). We do not seek a left deviation *in the present circumstances*, but *a general rectification of the International's orientation*: it does not matter to us that this rectification may not be as we demand... but *it must be carried out clearly. We must know where we are going.*"

More than anyone else, the Left wanted world centralization and discipline, but it recognized that one could not depend "on the good intentions of such and such a comrade who, after twenty sessions, signs an agreement the terms of which finally unite the right and the left"; it is "in reality, in action, in the leadership of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat that strives for world unity" that this unity must be realized; to accomplish we need "*a clear tactical orientation and a continuity in the formation of our organizations* within the limits that separate us from other parties." It is therefore necessary to lay the foundations of discipline by establishing it on the bedrock of clarity, firmness and invariance of principles and tactical directives. In a more exciting era that now seems quite distant, discipline resulted from an organic process that plunged its roots into the Bolshevik party's granite theoretical and practical strength. Today, either one rebuilds it on the collective foundations of the world movement, conscientiously and with a fraternal understanding of the gravity of the times, or else one is lost. At this congress that barely touched on the Russian question, which was considered a taboo, the Left dared to proclaim that the guarantee against falling into opportunism could not come from the Russian party alone, because the Russian party urgently needed us, because it sought from us the guarantee we asked it for in vain.

"The time has come for the international of the world proletariat to render the Russian CP a part of the innumerable services it has received from that party. *From the point of view of a revisionist danger the situation of the Russian party is the most perilous*, and the other parties must support it against this danger. *It must obtain most of the strength it needs to overcome the extremely difficult situation in which working from the International*"¹³.

A great battle, but a battle lost! The internal crisis of the Bolshevik party was accentuated by the October debacle in Germany. From the ebb of the revolution in the West and the opportunist explanation emerged the monster of "socialism in one country". The united front "from below" was abandoned in favour of enthusiasm for the united front from above, and even in Germany, for flirtations with bourgeois radicalism¹⁴; during the Matteotti crisis in Italy, Gramsci's disastrous proposal to the "oppositions" to form an Anti-Parliament, which he based once again on the attribution of an independent role to the petty-bourgeoisie, and which prefigured future "popular fronts" against fascism; and the worthless theory that "whoever wishes the end must also want the means", a justification for which was sought in a "Marxism-Leninism" emptied of its substance and reduced to the rank of a vulgar Machiavellian formula, and so on. The general part of the *Lyons Theses* answers each of these deviations, and their "history" is summarized in the International and Italian section, which we will not dwell on here. The outcome is known to all: the castrated International is reduced to a docile instrument of the Russian state's foreign policy; all principles are abandoned; finally, the Komintern is dissolved because of Russia's was alliance with the "democracies" and the way is opened to all the desecrations of the post war period.

We come to the third aspect of the collapse. We have seen how, alongside and even slightly ahead of the tactical maneuvers, and always in the illusion of obtaining a greater concentration of proletarian forces around the party, there began a gradual abandoning of the rigour in organizational criteria that the *twenty-one conditions* had defended as a necessary precondition for the formation of the International on foundations that were neither artificial nor fluctuating. Against our advice, a margin of possible maneuver was soon tolerated in the draconian conditions of admission in order to allow for "national particularities". In recognition of these the International accepted almost full membership of the former French socialist party, and was rewarded with the realization, at each new session of the Executive, that what one faced was the clumsily made-up spectre of the old parliamentarist and chauvinist social-democracy. It had previously given its endorsement to the fusion of the kpd with the "left wing" of the independents: here again the only result was to see them leave again after having contaminated the party and accentuated its original defects. In the notable example of relations with the Italian Socialist Party, it prac-

13. All quotations from Bordiga's speech at the 5th congress of the International are reproduced according to the German minutes (pp. 394-406). The Italian text reproduced in *Stato Operaio* No. 7-8 (1924) is incomplete and the French minutes are scandalously mutilated. The full text of the speech has been translated into French in *Programme Communiste* No. 53-54, pp. 54-73.

14. At the end of 1924, since the results of the presidential elections were not as good as expected, the "left" leadership of the KPD, in a public resolution, stated that it should have followed the advice of the Communist International to help the "working class to unite around the name of a militant republican candidate in the fight against the reaction by making a bloc with the real partisans of the republic on a minimum republican program." They thus returned to the "workers' government" understood as a parliamentary coalition, even with bourgeois parties, against the monarchist peril embodied by Hindenburg!

ticed the kind of “federalism from above”, that in 1923 we threw back at the Norwegian and Danish parties, and it did this every time a vague possibility of recruiting new *numerical* forces seemed to manifest itself in one country or another. So-called sympathizing parties were welcomed into the ranks of the revolutionary International alongside the communist parties, sometimes on an almost equal basis.

The excursion through the lexicon of tactical innovations continued to give strength to the centrifugal currents lying dormant in all the parties, and the sudden turns being dictated only sowed confusion and caused rifts between even the most solid militants. The problem of “discipline” also emerged *irresistibly*, not as a natural and organic product of a prior theoretical homogeneity and a healthy convergence on practical activity, but as a morbid manifestation of a discontinuity in action and a heterogeneity in doctrinal patrimony. The “iron fist” was brought into play whenever mistakes, deviations or weaknesses were detected, a remedy for which was attempted with shake-ups of central committees and executives and it was even idealized as the method and internal rule of the Komintern and its sections and as the sovereign antidote not against adversaries and quislings, but against comrades. The infernal cycle of *self-accusations* and trials, the period the Left, at the 6th Enlarged Executive, called “the sport of humiliation and ideological terrorism” (often exercised by “humiliation and ideological terrorism” (often exercised by “humiliated ex-opponents”), had begun: and there are no trials without jailers.

Discipline to the original clear, trenchant program had been ruptured. To prevent this indiscipline from causing a collapse, people tried to manufacture “real Bolshevik parties” *in vitro*. It is well known what became of these caricatures of Lenin’s party under Stalin’s heel. We issued a warning at the 4th congress: “The guarantee of discipline can only be found in a definition of the limits within which we must apply our methods, in the precise formulation of our program and fundamental tactical resolutions and of our organizational measures”. At the 5th congress we repeated that it would be illusory to pursue the dream of an iron discipline if clarity and precision were lacking in what is the prerequisite of any discipline and homogeneity in organization, and that it would be in vain to lull oneself to sleep with the illusion of a single world party if the continuity and prestige of the international organization were continually being destroyed by a “freedom of choice” granted both to the base and to the summit in regard to the principles that determine practical action and to action itself, i.e., that it was hypocritical to invoke a “Bolshevization” that did not mean intransigence in objectives and congruity between means and ends. Since military style discipline was not enough a specific organizational recipe was decided upon: the parties would be *rebuilt* (five years after they were founded!) on the basis of factory cells, which were regarded as an ideal model inherited from the history of Bolshevism, and this *form* was to provide the solution to the revolutionary problem of *force*. We answered that this formula, which was suitable for Russia before 1917 and had *never* been raised to the level of an immutable dogma by Lenin, could not be transposed as such to the West, and that moreover, a mechanical application implied a veritable rupture with the founding principles and the real process of genesis and development of the revolutionary party, a relapse into “workerism” (6th Enlarged Executive): in reality, the Marxist party is not defined by its overall social composition, but by the goal toward which it strives,

and it is all the more vibrant to the extent it is not imprisoned within the narrow, corporatist confines of the factory.

We showed that this “revision”, celebrated as an antidote for bureaucratism, since this would provide the only link between cells and factories alike. We further addressed the much broader problem toward which all the questions that were to become acute in the struggle within the Russian party in 1925-1926 were converging. We denounced, before it was too late, the mad rage of the “fight against factionism”, the witch hunt that celebrated its victory during the disgusting 1926-1928 campaign against the Russian left and then against the right, whereas in the glorious years of the Bolshevik party, it had not even been used against avowed enemies - who were destroyed if necessary, but never slandered - a campaign which, extending if necessary, but never slandered - a campaign which, extending beyond the borders of the Russian state, first gave birth to the repulsive figure of the public prosecutor, then the professional informer, and finally the executioner. The counter-revolution is as cannibalistic as the revolution is generous (Marx). The first sign that the “star” of the counter-revolution was rising - N.B. sign not cause - was the ferocious, slimy *cannibalism* hypocritically disguised in “Leninist” phraseology, and nobody practiced it with greater zeal than the last-minute recruits, the “converted” Mensheviks, social-patriots who covered their heads with ashes, “yes-men” who moved in a gradually thickening gloom, people who had always said “no” or at least “yes, but...” in the bright daylight we had thought would never dim. We expanded this problem to the even more urgent question of saving the Russian October Revolution in the crucial year of 1926. In spite of an in opposition to all the more than metaphorical prohibitions and threats of sanctions, we issued a final appeal for the crisis in the Russian Party to be discussed in all parties and in world meetings, “because the Russian revolution is the first great step of the world revolution, it is also our revolution, its problems are our problems and every member of the International has the right and duty to collaborate in solving them” (6th Enlarged Executive), because we knew that this crisis was none other than the *crisis of the Communist International*.

Taking up an argument that modern historians can only understand in reverse (this is their job, after all), we recalled that the greatness of the Russian party lay in having applied the strategy and tactics prescribed for fully developed capitalist countries to a backward country within the framework of the *world* vision of the October Revolution and that, in order to raise a solid barrier against a resurgence of opportunism, the International would have to “find solutions that go beyond the framework of the Russian experience for strategical questions”¹⁵, especially questions of relations between the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia and the militant world proletariat, between state and party, and particularly between the state and the Communist International, as well as for questions of the immense arc of revolutionary strategy on a world scale, and corresponding tactical problems. We did not want to simply apply palliatives; we wanted a *radical change* in the methods of the International. There are no pure parties, and in the case of the Russian party in 1926, the “subjective” guarantee against corruption - which is always

15. Our desperate battle, in which we were all alone against everyone, at the 6th Enlarged Executive, should be and will be object of an adequate treatment: see the ProtoKoll Erweiterte Exekutive etc., Moskau 17 Februar bis 15 März 1926, pp. 122-144, 283-289, 517, 577, 609-611 et passim.

uncertain and relative - ceased to be operative. The magnificent organ of theoretical and practical battle that had been the party of Red October was now divided by central problems of principle, not merely secondary ones. In order to save the formidable citadel of the world revolution in the fiery years after the first world war, it was necessary for proletarian internationalism to regain its original verve. This was the only way to save communism from the slide to the right and sure death embodied in "socialism in one country" or, later, "the national roads to socialism", *and it had to be done at that precise moment or never again!*

As the Left had demanded in vain at each congress, the communist movement had to be rebuilt *from top to bottom* on the basis of the lessons of October and a frank, exhaustive appraisal of the Communist International's activity. The *Lyons Theses* and the accompanying commentary made to the Enlarged Executive in February-March 1926 were intended to make this necessary contribution to the international movement and the imperiled Russian revolution. We were muzzled and dispersed then, but although our contribution was denied to that generation, it is still valid for present and future generations!

It would be anti-Marxist to seek the cause of a catastrophe that still crushes us today in the Komintern's deviations from 1922-1926 alone. Many factors combined their action to bring about the historical course that finally and unavoidable prevailed. The party's activity is, however, one of the elements in the objective situation; in certain circumstances, it is a fundamental element. Recognizing the historical origins of opportunism (as we stated at the Enlarged Executive) has never meant accepting opportunism as a necessary, historically inevitable fact: "even if the current situation and future perspectives are unfavourable or relatively unfavourable for us, we must not resign ourselves to opportunist deviations or justify them on the pretext that their causes lie in the objective situation. And if, nevertheless, an internal crisis were to break out, the causes and the means to overcome it must be sought elsewhere, i.e., in the party's work and politics." This is admittedly a curious deduction for an International whose congresses had ended up becoming tribunals for proceeding initiated against groups or individuals considered responsible for the tragic miscarriages of communism in Europe and the rest of the world: everything now became the necessary product of "unfavourable objective situations".

What was really needed was not a trial but a radical critical review based on impersonal data, showing how infinitely complex is the interplay of objective and subjective factors, and demonstrating that if the party's influence on the objective factors - considered for a moment in themselves, independent of our collective action - is limited, it is nonetheless within our power (though perhaps at the price of momentary isolation or failure) to salvage the conditions which alone will enable the subjective factor to act upon history and fecundate it.

The party would be nothing if it were not, objectively and subjectively, for its militants and for the undifferentiated working class, the unbroken transmission line that the ebb and flow of situations can never destroy, even if they succeed in damaging it, but not modifying it. The fight to keep this line intact, to restore it after years of counter-revolutionary depression, and the fight to rebuild the world party of the proletariat - this is the focus of all our revolutionary energies.

Draft theses presented by the left at the 3rd congress of the communist party of italy (Lyon 1926)

In a document such as this it is difficult to avoid a certain disproportion between the different parts, because the debate has given certain points and certain themes greater actuality, and relegated other points, which are nonetheless of equal importance, to a secondary position. To obtain a fuller impression of the thinking of the comrades who drew up these theses, the reader should refer to other already familiar texts, which, unfortunately it is not easy to consult today. We therefore feel that it would be helpful to preface this text with a few references to documents that adopt the same orientation as that set out and defended in these theses.

Rome Theses. Adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Communist Party of Italy on March 26, 1922. The text presented at the Congress was published in *Il Comunista*, No. 67, December 31, 1921; *Ordine Nuovo*, No. 2, January 3, 1922; *Il Lavoratore*, No. 4960, February 5, 1922; and *Rassegna Comunista*, No. 17, January 30, 1922. The modifications made to the original text at the Congress were published in: *Il Comunista*, No. 95, April 4, 1922; *Il Lavoratore*, No. 5014, April 5, 1922; *Ordine Nuovo*, No. 96, April 6, 1922; and *Rassegna Comunista*, No. 26, July 31, 1922.

Theses on the Tactics of the Communist International. Presented at the 4th Congress of the Communist International. Published in No. 17 of *Stato Operaio*, March 6, 1924.

Program of Action of the Italian Communist Party. Presented at the 4th Congress of the Communist International. Published in *Stato Operaio*, same issue as above.

Motion and Theses. Approved by the national (consultative) conference of the Italian Communist Party in May 1924, published in *Stato Operaio*, No. 16, March 18, 1924.

Theses on the Tactics of the Communist International. Presented at the 5th World Congress. Published (in French and German) in the *Congress Bulletin*, No. 20, July 8, 1924.

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Principles of Communism

The theoretical principles of the Communist Party are those of Marxism, which have been restored through the fight against opportunist deviations and which form the foundation of the 3rd International. They include: dialectical materialism as the conception of the world and human history; the basic economic theory of Marx's *Capital* as the method for interpreting modern capitalist economy; the programmatic formulations of the *Communist Manifesto* as the historical and political framework of the emancipation of the world working class. The tremendous experience of the victorious working class. The tremendous experience of the victorious Russian revolution and the work of its leader, Lenin, the "dean" of international communism, constitute the confirmation, restoration and consistent development of this system of principles and methods. Anyone who rejects even part of it is not a communist and therefore cannot be a militant in the International.

The party therefore rejects and condemns the doctrines of the ruling class, the spiritualist and religious theories - idealist in philosophy and reactionary in politics - such as the Voltarian positivist and free-thought theories - which are Masonic, anti-clerical and democratic in politics.

It also condemns other political schools that have a certain following among the working class: social-democratic reformism, which envisions a peaceful evolution, without armed struggle, from capitalist power to workers; power, and advocates class collaboration; syndicalism, which belittles political action by the working class and rejects the necessity of the party as the supreme revolutionary organ; anarchism, which denies the historical necessity of the State and, the proletarian dictatorship to transform social organization and abolish the division of society into classes. The communist party also combats the many manifestations of bastardized revolutionism which is now designated by the well-known term "centrism", and which attempt to ensure the survival of these erroneous positions by combining them with apparently communist theses.

2. Nature of the Party

The historical process by which the proletariat emancipates itself and establishes a new social order follows from the existence of the class struggle. Every class struggle is a political struggle, i.e., it tends to transform itself, into a struggle for the conquest of political po-

wer and the leadership of a new state organism. *Consequently, the organ that leads the class struggle to its final victory is the political class party, the only possible instrument first of a revolutionary insurrection, and second of government.* These elementary, brilliant formulations from Marx, which Lenin reaffirmed, lead to a definition of the party as an organization of all those who adhere to the system of opinions which summarizes the historical task of the revolutionary class and who are determined to work for its victory. In the party, the working class becomes conscious of the path it must take and obtains the will to do so; *historically, the party thus represents the class in all the successive phases of the struggle, even though it may only contain a more or less small fraction of the class at any given time.* This is the essence of the definition Lenin gave for the party at the 2nd World Congress.

This conception, shared by Marx and Lenin, is opposed to the typically opportunist conception of the workerist party to which all individuals with the status of proletarians belong by right. Such a party would be numerically stronger, but it is obvious that the counter-revolutionary influences of the ruling class may and even must prevail in certain situations since this class would be represented in it by the dictatorship of organizers and leaders who, individually, may come from the proletariat as well as from other classes. For this reason, Marx and Lenin combated this fatal error, and in practice did not hesitate to rupture false proletarian unity even during periods of intense social activity by the proletariat, and even through small political groups adhering to the revolutionary program, in order to ensure the continuity of the party's political function, i.e., to prepare the proletariat or its successive tasks. This is the only possible way to achieve the future concentration of the largest possible number of workers under the leadership and the banner of a communist party capable of fighting and winning.

An *immediate* organization of all those who, economically speaking, are workers, cannot fulfill political, and therefore, revolutionary tasks, because various professional or local groups are only compelled to action in a limited way to satisfy partial needs determined by the direct consequences of capitalist exploitation. The synthesis of these individual impulses in a common vision and action which enable individuals and groups to go beyond any particularism by accepting difficulties and sacrifices for the general, final triumph of the cause of the working class can only be achieved through the intervention of a political party, defined by the *political* convictions of its members, at the head of the working class. For Marx and Lenin, the definition of the party as the party of the working class does not have a crudely statistical or constitutional meaning: on the contrary, it is linked to the historical objectives of the proletariat.

Any conception of internal organization problems that falls into the workerist vision of the party reveals a serious theoretical deviation in that it replaces the revolutionary point of view with a democratic point of view and gives more importance to utopian organizational schemes than to the dialectical reality of the conflict between two opposed classes. It contains the danger of a relapse into opportunism. The dangers of degeneration of the revolutionary movement cannot be eliminated by any organizational formula because there is no such formula that can ensure the necessary continuity in the political orientation of leaders and simple militants. The formula to the effect that only an authentic worker can be a communist is also unable to avert degeneration, since it is contradicted by the immense majority of examples of individuals and parties provided by history. The guarantee against degeneration must be sought elsewhere if one does not wish to contradict the basic Marxist postulate which summarizes the conquest won by scientific socialism over the initial stammerings of utopian socialism: *the revolution is not a question of forms of organization*.

We can only resolve the present questions of internal organization of the International and the party on the basis of this conception of the nature of the class party.

3. Action and tactics of the Party

The way the party brings its influence to bear on other groups, organizations and institutions of the society in which it operates constitutes its tactics. The general elements of this question must be defined in connection with the whole of our principles. Only after this will it be possible to specify concrete procedures responding to various kinds of practical problems and successive phases of historical development.

By assigning the revolutionary party its place and role in the genesis of a new society, Marxist theory provides the most brilliant of solutions to the problems of freedom and determinism in human activity. So long as it is posed in terms of the abstract "individual", this problem will be a matter for the metaphysical pedantry of the philosophers of the decadent ruling class. Marxism, on the other hand, poses the question in the light of an objective, scientific conception of society and history. The idea that the individual and one individual - can act on the outside world, deforming and modeling it at will be virtue of a power of initiative conferred upon him by qualities of divine character, is the antipode to our conception; we also condemn the voluntarist conception of the party according to which, having forged a profession of faith, a small group of individuals can impose this on the world by spreading it through a gi-

gantic effort of activity, will and heroism. Moreover, it would be an aberrant and stupid conception of Marxism to believe that history and the revolution obey fixed laws, and that we have nothing more to do than discover these laws through objective research and to try to formulate forecasts about the future without doing anything in terms of action: this fatalistic conception amounts to denying the necessity and function of the party. The powerful originality of Marxist determinism places it not mid-way between these two conceptions, but above both of them. Because it is dialectical and historical, it refuses all apriorism and does not claim to apply the same abstract solution to all problems regardless of the epoch and human group under consideration. If the present development of the sciences does not allow a complete account of the causes that compel the individual to act, beginning with physical and biological data and culminating in a science of psychological activities, it is nonetheless possible to resolve the problem in the area of sociology by applying to the latter, as Marx did, methods of research characteristic of modern positive, experimental science, whose heritage socialism claims in its entirety and which are distinct from the so-called materialist and positivist philosophy that the bourgeoisie adopted during its historical ascension. By giving rational consideration to the reciprocal influences individuals exert on one another, through a critical study of economy and history after having cleared the ground of all traditional ideology, it is possible, in a certain sense to remove the indeterminism of the process that unfolds in each individual. From this point of departure, Marxism has been able to set up a system of notions which is not an immutable gospel, but a living instrument for the study and discovery of the laws of the historical process. This system is based upon economic determinism, discovered by Marx, which sees in the study of economic relations and the development of the technical means of production the objective platform upon which to build a solid understanding of the laws of social life and, to a certain extent, to forecast its further evolution. With this in mind, it should be noted that the final solution does not consist in saying that, once we have found this universal key, it would be sufficient to allow economic phenomena to follow their intrinsic law and result in a given series of foreseen political facts.

To be sure, our critique completely and definitively dismisses both the action of individuals even when they appear as the principal actors in historical events, and the intentions and perspectives from which they imagine this action results. But this by no means signifies that a collective organism like the class party cannot and must not have neither initiative nor will. The solution to which Marxism leads has been formulated on numerous occasions in our fundamental texts.

Men and their organizations, even the most powerful classes, parties, states) have up to now been play things of economic laws the essentials of which they do not know. Lacking theoretical knowledge of the economic process, they have been incapable of mastering and directing it. But the problem is changed for the class that has appeared in the modern historical epoch, the proletariat, and for the political organizations - party and state - which must arise from it. This is the first class that is not impelled to base its accession to power on the consolidation of social privileges and a division of society into classes, which would imply the enslavement and exploitation of a new class. And it is also the first class that succeeds in forging its own doctrine of economic, historical and social development - Marxist communism.

This is therefore the first time that a class struggles for the general abolition of classes, the general abolition of private property in the means of production, and not simply for the transformation of the social forms of this property.

The program of the proletariat is both its emancipation from the yoke of the modern ruling, privileged class, and the emancipation of the entire human collectivity from the tyranny of economic laws which, once, they are understood, can be mastered in a rational and scientific economy enabling direct intervention by man. For this reason and with this in mind, Engels wrote that the proletarian revolution marks the leap from the kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of freedom.

It is not our intention to revive the illusory myth of individualism, which would liberate the Ego from external influences, whereas the individuals dependence is expanded by being diversified, and individual life is more and more difficult to distinguish from a collective life. On the contrary, the problem is posed on another terrain: freedom and will are attributed to a class destined to realize the unity of the human species, which is finally left to cope only with the adverse forces of the outside physical world.

While proletarian humanity, which is still a long way off, may be free and possess a will that is not a sentimental illusion, but the capacity to organize and master the economy in the broadest sense of the term, and while today the proletarian class is still *determined* within the limits of its own action by factors external to itself, although to a lesser extent than other classes, the political party is the organ that concentrates in itself the maximum will and initiative in all areas of its action - not just any party, but the party of the proletarian class, the communist party, which is tied, so to speak, to its final aim by a continuous thread. The party's will, as well as its theoretical consciousness and preparation, are collective functions par excellence. From the Marxist point of view, the task assigned by the party to its own leaders makes them the instruments and operators through

which it can best manifest its ability to understand and explain facts, to plan and lead actions - but these abilities always conserve their origin in the existence and characteristics of the collective organ. As we stated, the Marxist conception of the party and its action is therefore as far from passive fatalism, which is content to wait for the advent of phenomena which it feels it can influence directly, as it is from and voluntarist (in the individualist sense) conception for which the qualities of theoretical training the force of will, spirit of sacrifice, in short a special kind of moral figure and a certain degree of "purity" must be required of every party militant without distinction, which would reduce the party to an *elite* superior to the rest of the social elements making up the working class, whereas the error of passive fatalism would lead, if not to denying the party any function and usefulness, at least to equating it directly with the working class in the economic, statistical sense. We insist on the conclusions already given in the previous thesis, which condemn at the same time the workerist conception of the party and that of the party viewed as an intellectual and "moral" elite: these two conceptions, both equally alien to Marxism, are destined to meet on the path of opportunism.

By defining the party's general tactics in conformity with the nature of the party, Marxism is distinguished from both the abstract pedantry of doctrinaires who turn their backs on the reality of the class struggle and neglect concrete activity, and from sentimental estheticism, which would like to create new situations and new historical movements through brash or heroic deeds by tiny minorities. It distinguishes itself from opportunism which forgets the link with principles, i.e., with the general objectives of the movement, and which, aiming only for immediate and apparent success, only mobilizes for limited and isolated demands, without attempting to determine whether they enter into contradiction with the necessities of preparing the working class for its supreme conquests. Anarchist politics combine theoretical sterility, the inability to understand the dialectical stages of real historical evolution, with the voluntarist illusion that imagines it can speed up social processes by virtue of the example and sacrifice of one or more individuals. Social-democratic politics juxtapose a false, fatalist interpretation of Marxism with voluntarist pragmatism. On the one hand, it is stated that the revolution will mature slowly, on its own, without the voluntary intervention of a proletarian revolution being necessary; on the other hand, for want of being able to renounce the immediate effects of their daily efforts, social-democrats appear only to interest certain groups of the working class, but which, once satisfied only serve social preservation instead of assisting the preparation of the proletarian victory: i.e., such things as reforms, concessions, partial economic and political advantages obtained from the bosses and the bourgeois state.

The artificial introduction into the class movement of the theo-

retical postulates of "modern" voluntarist and pragmatist, basically idealist philosophy (Bergson, Gentile, Croce) only prepares the opportunist guarantee of new reformist phases, and in any case would not pass for a reaction against reformism on the pretext that the latter shows a certain external sympathy for bourgeois positivism.

The party's activity cannot and must not be limited to maintaining the purity of theoretical and organizational principles, nor to obtaining immediate success or a great popularity at any price. Always and in all situations it must develop simultaneously in these three directions:

a) Defend the basic elements of the program, and refine them in relation to new events, i.e. develop the theoretical consciousness of the working class movement;

b) Ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the party organization and protect it against outside influences opposed to the revolutionary interest of the proletariat;

c) Participate actively in all the working class struggles, even those for partial and limited interests to encourage their growth, 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 stopping at partial successes as if they were ends in themselves and of sacrificing to these the conditions of the proletarian class activity and combativeness, i.e. the autonomy and independence of its ideology and organizations, first and foremost, the party.

The supreme goal of the party's complex activities is to achieve the *subjective* conditions of the proletariat's preparation: to enable it to take advantage of the objective revolutionary possibilities provided by history when they appear, in order to be victorious instead of being defeated.

All this is the point of departure for resolving the problems posed by relations between the party and the proletarian masses, between the party and other political parties, between the proletariat and other social classes. The following tactic must be regarded as false: a real communist party must be a mass party *in any and all situations*, i.e. it must always have a numerous organization and a very broad influence on the proletariat, at least numerous and broad enough to exceed that of other so-called workers' parties. This formulation only caricatures Lenin, who, in 1921, issued the entirely correct practical, contingent slogan: to conquer power it is not sufficient to have formed "real" communist parties and launch an insurrectional offensive; it is also necessary to have numerically strong parties that have acquired a predominant influence over the proletariat. This means that in the phase preceding the conquest of power the party must have the masses behind it - above all it must conquer the masses. In such a formulation the only thing that is, in

a certain sense, dangerous, is the expression *majority* of the masses, because it exposes and has exposed "literal Leninists" to the danger of social-democratic theoretical and tactical interpretations. Instead of specifying whether this majority is to be sought in parties, trade unions or other organizations, this opens the way - while expressing a perfectly correct idea, necessary to avoid initiating "desperate" actions with insufficient forces in unfavourable situations - to procrastination in periods when action is possible and necessary, when it is necessary to have a truly "Leninist" determination and initiative. But the formula that the party must have the masses behind it on the eve of the struggle for power has become, in the grotesque interpretation of modern-day pseudo-Leninists who state that the party, must be a mass party "in any and every situation", a typically opportunist formula. There are objective situations in which the relationship of forces is unfavourable to the revolution, even though they may be more separated in time than others, since history progresses at varying speeds, as Marxism teaches. In such situations, to attempt to be a mass party at any price, to be a majority party, to attempt with all one's strength to have a predominant political influence, can only lead to renunciation communist principles and methods in favour of social-democratic petty-bourgeois politics. It is necessary to state clearly that in certain past, present and future situations, the proletariat has been, is and will necessarily be for the most part on a non-revolutionary position - a position of inertia or collaboration with the enemy, depending on circumstances - but in spite of this, the proletariat everywhere and always remains the potentially revolutionary class and the repository of insurrectional possibilities, to the extent that within it the communist party exists and that without ever renouncing any possibility of strengthening itself and showing itself coherently this party can avoid the paths that seems to lead to an easier conquest of an immediate popularity, but which would divert it from its task, depriving the proletariat of the indispensable lever of its revolutionary rebirth. It is from this Marxist, dialectical point of view, and never from an esthetic and sentimental point of view, that one should reject stupid opportunist formula that a communist party is free to accept all means and methods. By ensuring that it is precisely because it is communist, i.e. healthy in its principles and organization, that the party can allow itself the most acrobatic maneuvers one forgets that for us the party is both a factor and a product of historical development, and that in the face of the forces of history, the proletariat behaves like an even more plastic piece of material. It is not influenced by the tortuous justifications that party leaders advance, but real effects, which must be foreseen using above all the experience of past errors. Only correct action in tactical matters and rejection of shortcuts, aided by precise and observed tactical norms will enable the

party to preserve itself against degeneration: this cannot be achieved through theoretical *credos* and organizational sanctions.

In the general question of tactics there is another error that coincides precisely with the classic opportunist position refuted by Marx and Lenin. This involves claiming that in the event struggles between classes and political organizations are not yet situated on the party's specific terrain, the party must choose whichever of the two forces is most favourable to general historical evolution and support or ally with it more or less openly, on the pretext that the conditions of the total proletarian revolution that will occur afterward (and in which the party will be a factor, when the time comes) will only mature as a result of an evolution of social and political forms.

In particular, the very foundations of such politics are doomed to fail: the typical schema, laid out in the most minute detail, of a social and political revolution, which at best prepares the final advent of communism, belongs to the "Marxist" of the opportunists and is the foundation of the defamation of the Russian revolution and the present communist movement by the various Kautskies. It cannot even be established that in general the most advantageous conditions for fertile work by the communist party are realized by certain kinds of bourgeois regime e.g. the most democratic. While it is true that reactionary "rightist" measures have often halted the advance of the proletariat, it is just as true, and much more frequently the case that liberal, *leftist* policies of bourgeois governments have often strangled the class struggle and diverted the working class from decisive actions. A more precise evaluation, really in conformity with Marxism's rupture from the spells of democracy, evolutionism and progressivism, only shows that the bourgeoisie attempts to alternate methods and governing parties in accordance with its counter-revolutionary interests, and that it is often successful in this. Moreover, all our experience shows that whenever bourgeois politics, opportunism has always triumphed.

In the second place, even if it were true that certain changes of government within the framework of the present regime do facilitate the further development of the proletariat's action, experience shows unequivocally that this is subject to an explicitly condition: the existence of a party that has forewarned the masses against the disillusionment that will inevitably follow what was presented as an immediate success, and not only the mere existence of this party, but its ability to act, even before the outbreak of the struggle we are talking about with an autonomy that is obvious to the proletariat, which will only follow it is long as its attitude is correct, not on the basis of schemes that it would be convenient to adopt officially. Faced with struggles that cannot lead to a victory of the proletariat, the party will not make itself the manager of transformations and

achievements that do not directly interest the class it represents, and it will not renounce either its specific character or its autonomous action to participate in a kind of insurance company for all the so-called "new" political movements or for all the political systems and governments threatened by a supposedly "worse" government.

Against the requirements of this line of action people often quote Marx' formula that "communists support every movement directed against the existing social conditions" or Lenin's argument against "the infantile disorder of communism". The way these are being used inside our movement is not fundamentally different from the constant attempts of Bernstein revisionists and Nenni centrists to hold Marxists up to ridicule in the name of Marx and Lenin.

Two observations must be made. First of all, these positions taken by Marx and Lenin have a contingent historical meaning, since they refer to a not yet bourgeois Germany in the case of Marx, and to Czarist Russia for the Bolshevik case illustrated by Lenin in his work. But the solution to the problem of tactics under classic conditions proletariat fighting against a fully developed capitalist bourgeoisie - must not be based on this criterion alone. In the second place, the support Marx is talking about (the same holds for the "compromises" referred to by Lenin, who preferred this term only because he was a magnificent Marxist dialectician, while he continued to champion a not merely formal intransigence, but a genuine one aimed at an immutable goal) is a support for movements still constrained to advance by means of insurrection against the forms of the past, even if this is in contradiction to the ideologies and possible designs of their leaders. The communist party therefore intervenes on the terrain of civil war, as demonstrated by Lenin's positions on the peasant and nationality questions, in the Kornilov episode and in a hundred others. Finally, even beyond these two essential observations, the meaning of Lenin's critique of "the infantile disorder" and of all Marxist texts on the flexibility of revolutionary politics is by no means in contradiction to the fact that they have voluntarily raised a barrier to opportunism, defined by Engels and Lenin as "lack of principles" or forgetfulness of the final objective.

To work out communist tactics following a non-dialectical, formalist method would be a renunciation of Lenin and Marx. It would be a foolish mistake to imagine that, in order to correspond with their ends, means must stand in an ethical, psychological and esthetic relation to them, whereas in fact the real correspondence is historical and dialectical. In tactics, one must not commit the same mistake anarchists and reformists commit in regard to principles when they reject the use of class rule and dictatorial. State of the proletariat to suppress classes and state power, or of offensive violence de-

signed to destroy the existing power, and defensive violence aimed at maintaining proletarian power, to abolish all social violence. It would also be wrong to imagine that a revolutionary party must be for struggle at all times, no matter what the correlation of favourable and hostile forces, that in the case of a strike, for example, communists could advocate no more than that it be given unlimited development, or that a communist must abjure certain methods such as dissimulation, ruse, espionage, etc, because they lack nobility or are unattractive. The critique by Marxism and Lenin of this superficial revolutionism that poisons the proletarian movement is an attempt to solve tactical problems without resorting to stupid, sentimental criteria, and this is now an integral part of the experience of the communist movement.

Among the tactical errors this critique avoids is advocacy of splits in trade unions led by class traitors, on the pretext that communists must carry out political splits with opportunists. For some time now a polemic has been waged in bad faith against the Italian Left, claiming that it draws its conclusions from arguments to the effect that it would be dishonourable to meet personally with opportunist leaders, and others of the *same ilk*.

The critique of the "infantile disorder" does not mean that indefiniteness, chaos and arbitrariness should reign in tactics, and that in short "all methods are good" to achieve our aims. It is stated that the link between methods employed and the objective to be attained is guaranteed by the revolutionary character of the party and by the contributions made to its decisions by remarkable men or groups with a brilliant tradition behind them. This is begging the question and is alien to Marxism, because it disregards the dialectical interplay of causes and effects and the fact that the methods of action the party uses have repercussions on it. Moreover, it forgets that Marxism denies any value to the "intentions" that dictate individuals' or groups' initiatives, not to mention the fact that on the evidence of past bloody experiences, these intentions might inspire suspicion, in the injurious sense of the word.

In his book *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin says that tactical means must be chosen in advance in accordance with the final revolutionary goal and on the basis of a clear vision of the historical struggle of the proletariat and its outcome. He shows that it would be absurd to reject one or another tactical means on the pretext that is "ugly" or that it merits the name "compromise", and that on the contrary, it is necessary to determine whether or not this means is in accordance with this goal. Their collective activity poses and will always pose this question to the party and the International, whose formidable task it is to resolve it. We can say that Marx and Lenin have left us a solid heritage of theoretical principles, but we would not assert that communism has no

more new theoretical research to carry out. However, the same cannot be said with regard to tactics, even after the Russian revolution and the experience of the first years of the new International, which was prematurely deprived of Lenin's presence. The problem of tactics is too broad to be solved with the help of the simplistic and sentimental answers of "infantile" communists. It must be approached with the contribution of the entire communist movement and in the light of its entire earlier and recent experience. We do not contradict Marx or Lenin when we state that the solution to this problem must result in the establishing of rules of action which, though not as vital and fundamental as principles, will nonetheless be obligatory for both militants and leading bodies of the movement, and which will envision the various possible developments of the situation in order to trace out, as precisely as possible, the party's line of action, no matter what the outcome may be.

Study and understanding of various situations are necessary in making tactical decisions, because they make it possible to indicate to the movement that the hour has come or such and such an action, which has been prescribed as closely as possible, but they by no means authorize leaders to propose "improvisations" which would be "surprises" for the movement. It is not possible to predict with absolute certainty how objective situations will develop, but we can foresee what we will have to do in different instances, i.e., we can set down a general outline of tactics. To deny this possibility means renouncing the party's task and, at the same time, renouncing the only guarantee we have that in all circumstances the party's militants and the masses will respond to the orders of the leading centre. In this sense, the party is neither an army nor some other kind of state organ, since in these organs the role of hierarchical authority is preponderant and voluntary membership counts for nothing. But the party member always has the possibility of not executing orders without risk of incurring material sanctions: he can leave the party. The best tactic is the one that does not result in any unexpected repercussions, either in the party or among the masses, even when, at a given turn in the situation, the leading centre does not have time to consult either the former or, naturally the latter. The art of revolutionary tactics is precisely to predict how the party will react to orders and which orders will elicit the correct reaction. This art requires a collective application of past experience and actions summed up in clear, precise rules of action. By leaving leaders exclusively the task of *enforcing* these rules, militants ensure that they will not betray their mandate, and in turn undertake, not just formally, but really, to execute the orders of the movement with initiative and determination. Since the party itself is not perfect, although perfectible, we do not hesitate to say that it is necessary to ensure the greatest clarity and persuasiveness in tactical rules, even

at the risk of a certain schematism. In the event the real situation should contradict the tactical schema we have prepared, it cannot be repaired by recourse to opportunism and eclecticism, but through fresh efforts to adapt the party's line to its tasks. Not only does the good party make the correct tactic, but the correct tactic also makes the good party, and the correct tactic can only be one of the ones that we have all understood and chosen in general outline.

What we deny is essentially that we can reduce the party's collective effort and work to define its own tactical rules, and demand of it a pure and simple obedience to a man, a committee or to a single party of the International and its traditional leading apparatus.

The party's action assumes the form of a *strategy* at crucial moments of the fight for power during which this action assumes an essentially military character. In the preceding phases, the party's action is, however, not reduced to mere ideology, propaganda and organization, but it consists, as we have already stated, in participating in the various struggles the proletariat is forced to engage. Codification of the party's tactical rules is therefore intended to establish upon what conditions its intervention and activity in these movements and its *agitation* in the fire of proletarian struggles will be in harmony with its revolutionary final goal and enable its theoretical preparation, organization and tactical preparation to progress simultaneously.

In the following paragraphs we will examine the various problems we now face to show how we should work out the various norms of communist action in the present stage of development of the revolutionary movement.

II. INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS

1. The Formation of the Third International

From the point of view of restoring the revolutionary doctrine, the formation of the Communist International has provided a complete and definitive solution to the crisis of the 2nd International caused by the world war. But if the formation of the Komintern constitutes an immense historical conquest in terms of organization and tactics, it cannot be said that it has provided such a complete solution to the crisis of the proletarian movement.

The Russian revolution, the glorious first victory of the world proletariat, was a decisive factor in the formation of the new Internationalism. However, because of the prevailing social conditions in that

country, the Russian revolution did not provide the general historical model of tactics applicable to revolutions in other countries. Between the era of autocratic feudal power and that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it experienced no real political rule of the bourgeoisie organized in a stable state belonging to it alone.

This is precisely why the historical confirmation of the Marxist program by the Russian revolution is of the greatest significance, and also why this revolution has made such a powerful contribution to the defeat of social-democratic revisionism on the terrain of principles. But in terms of organization, the fight against the 2nd International, an integral part of the fight against world imperialism, has not had the same decisive success and the many errors that have been committed have prevented communist parties from having all the effectiveness objective conditions allowed them to claim.

With regard to tactics, many problems have not been resolved satisfactorily enough, and remain unresolved today: these problems are the bourgeoisie, the modern bourgeois parliamentary state with a historically stable apparatus, and the proletariat.

The communist parties have therefore not always obtained possible successes in the proletarian offensive against capitalism and in the liquidation of the social-democratic parties, political organs of the bourgeois counter-revolution.

2. The World Economic and Political Situation (1926)

The international situation today appears less favorable to the proletariat than in the first few years after the war. There has been partial economic stabilization of capitalism, which is to be understood as a lull in the disturbances suffered by certain parts of the economic structure, and not as a state of affairs excluding a imminent return of new disturbances.

The crisis of capitalism remains open, and a definitive aggravation is inevitable. In the area of politics, there has been a weakening of the revolutionary workers' movement in almost all the most advanced countries, which is fortunately counterbalanced by the consolidation of Soviet Russia and the struggle of the colonial peoples against the capitalist powers.

Such a situation presents a double danger: first, if the erroneous method of situationism continues to be used, a tendency to pose problems of proletarian action from a Menshevik point of view threatens to arise, even in outline. Secondly, if authentic proletarian action loses momentum, the conditions that Lenin had advocated for a correct application of communist tactics in the national and peasant questions may be lacking in the Komintern's general policy. The post-war proletarian offensive was followed by a bosses' offen-

sive against proletarian positions, and the Komintern responded with the united front slogan. The next problem to appear was the passage of many countries to democratic-pacifist situations, which comrade Trotsky correctly denounced as a danger of degeneration for our movement. It is necessary to avoid any interpretation presenting as vital for the proletariat the outcome of the conflict between two factions of the bourgeoisie, the right and the left, identified too closely with distinct social groups.

The correct analysis is that the ruling class has several methods for ruling and defending itself, which can be reduced essentially to two: the reactionary, fascist method, and the liberal democratic method. Beginning with the economic analysis, Lenin's these, have already established that the most modern strata of the bourgeoisie tend to unify both the production mechanism and their political defense, resorting to the most energetic methods.

It is therefore false to state that in general the road to socialism must pass through a stage of left bourgeois government. However, if this were to occur in a particular case, the condition for a proletarian victory would reside in a party tactic which concentrated the illusions engendered by the arrival of this left government, and which never weakened, even in periods of reaction, the party's opposition to democratic political forms.

3. The International's Working Methods

One of the most important tasks of the Communist International has been to dissipate the distrust of the proletariat toward the political action that had caused the parliamentary degeneration of opportunism.

Marxism does not take politics to mean an art or technique of parliamentary or diplomatic intrigue common to all parties, which each would use for its own ends. Proletarian politics is opposed to the methods of bourgeois politics. It anticipates higher forms of relations, culminating in the art of revolutionary insurrection. This opposition, which we will not study further here, is a vital condition for the link between the revolutionary proletariat and its communist general staff or a good selection of the latter.

The International's practice and work are in contradiction with this revolutionary necessity. In relation with this revolutionary necessity. In relations between the various organs of the communist movement there often prevail two-faced politics, a subordination of theoretical motivations to chance motives and a system of agreements and negotiations between individuals, none of which succeeds in building positive relations between parties and masses, and which have consequently led to very disappointing results.

Improvisation, surprise and dramatics enter too often into the major decisions of the International, and this disorients militants and proletarians. All this happens, for example, in most if the internal problems of parties, which international bodies and congresses resolve by means of a series of laborious arrangements which various groups of leaders are forced to accept, but which do not have a useful role in the real development of parties.

4. Organization Questions

The urgent need for a broad concentration of revolutionary forces had a great weight in the decision to found the Komintern, because at that time a much more rapid development of the objective situation was predicted than actually took place. Since then it has become obvious that organizational criteria should have been established with greater vigour. The formation of parties and the conquest of the masses have not been provoked either by the concessions made to syndicalist and anarchist groups, or by petty deals with centrists permitted by the 21 conditions, or by organic fissions with other parties or factions of parties achieved through political "infiltration", or by the toleration of two communist organizations in certain countries with sympathizing parties. The slogan issued by the 5th Congress - organize the party on the basis of factory cells - does not achieve its objective, which was to eliminate the defects observed unanimously in the sections of the International.

Through its generalization, particularly in the interpretation and given by the leadership of the Italian party, this slogan leads to serious mistakes, particularly a deviation with regard to the Marxist postulate that the revolution is not a question of forms of organization, or the Leninist thesis that an organic solution cannot be valid for all times and all places.

Organization on the basis of factory cells is less suitable for the parties now operating in bourgeois countries with stable parliamentary regimes than is territorial organization. Besides, it is a theoretical error to state that the territorially based party is a social-democratic party, while the party based on cells is a true communist party. In practice, this second type of organization blocks the party's work in unifying proletarian groups from different categories and industries, work which is all the more vital given the more unfavourable situation and more restricted possibilities for the proletariat to organize. Many practical problems arise from the organization of the party on an exclusively cell basis. In Czarist Russia, the question was posed in other terms: relations between the bosses, industrialists and the state were different and the imminence of the struggle for power rendered the corporatist danger less acute.

The factory cell system does not increase the influence of workers in the party, since at every juncture in the network are non-worker or ex-worker elements that form an apparatus of functionaries. Given the defects of the International's working methods the Bolshevization slogan appears, in terms of organization, as a servile and inappropriate application of the Russian experience, and in a number of countries it already tends to cause a paralysis, perhaps involuntary, of spontaneous initiatives and proletarian and class energies by an apparatus whose selection and functioning which obey criteria that are to a great extent artificial. To keep the territorial organization of the party does not mean we have to renounce having party bodies in factories, only that these must be communist groups linked to the party, led by it and forming its trade union wing. This system will enable us to establish better contact with the masses and makes the party's basic organization less vulnerable to discovery.

5. Discipline and factions

Another aspect of Bolshevization is that it considers complete disciplinary centralization and the strict prohibition of factionism to be assure guarantee of the party's effectiveness. The highest authority called upon to decide all controversial questions is the international central organ, in which the Russian Communist Party is acquiring a political, if not hierarchical hegemony.

In reality, this guarantee does not exist, and the whole problem is posed in an inadequate manner. In fact, a flood of factionism was not avoided in the international; disguised and hypocritical forms were encouraged instead. Moreover, from the historical point of view, the overcoming of fractions in the Russian party was never an expedient or a magic recipe applied as a statute, but the result and expression of a correct method of posing problems of doctrine and political action.

Disciplinary sanctions are one of the elements that guarantee against degenerations, but on the condition that their application remain within the limits of exceptional cases and not become the norm or a sort of ideal of party functioning.

The solution does not reside in the constant, hollow invocation of the authoritarianism of the hierarchy, whose credentials are inadequate, either because Russian historical experience is incomplete, even though spectacular, or because within the old guard itself, the guardian of Bolshevik tradition, dissension does in fact arise and the given solution cannot a priori be considered the best. In the same way, this solution also cannot be given by a systematic application of the principles of formal democracy, which Marxism regards only as an occasionally convenient organizational practice.

The communist parties must create an organic centralism which, through maximum consultation of the rank and file, ensures the spontaneous elimination of any grouping that tends to differentiate itself. This cannot be achieved through formal and mechanical hierarchical decrees, but, as Lenin stated, only through correct revolutionary politics. Prevention of factionism, not suppression of fractions, is a fundamental aspect of the party's development. It is absurd, sterile and extremely dangerous to claim that the party and the International are mysteriously assured against any lapse into opportunism or any tendency to deviate. Because these effects can, on the contrary, arise from changes in the general situation or from the action of residual social-democratic traditions, in order to solve our problems, we must admit that any difference of opinion not reducible to cases of individual consciousness or defeatism may turn out to be useful in preserving the party and the proletariat in general from serious dangers.

If these dangers were to crystallize, the differentiation would inevitably, but positively, assume the form of factionism. This could lead to splits, not for the infantile reason that the leaders were not energetic enough at repression, but because the fear of possibility of a collapse of the party or its submission to counter-revolutionary influences was confirmed.

An example of the incorrect method can be seen in the artificial solutions given for the situation of the German party after the opportunist crisis of 1923 which without succeeding in eliminating factionism, prevented a correct revolutionary class reaction against the degeneration of the party from being worked out spontaneously in the ranks of a proletariat as advanced as the German proletariat.

The danger of bourgeois influences in the class party is not manifested historically by the organization of factions, but rather by a shrewd penetration using an appeal to unity and operating like a dictatorship from above, the effect of which is to paralyze the initiatives of the proletarian vanguard.

This factor of defeat is not identified and eliminated by posing the question of discipline to raise an obstacle to factions. This can only be done by succeeding in alerting the party and the proletariat to this pitfall when it manifests itself, not only as a revision of doctrine, but as a positive proposal in favour of a major political maneuver with anti-proletarian consequences.

One of the negative aspects of what is called Bolshevization is the replacement of full and conscious political elaboration within the party - which corresponds to real progress toward a more compact centralism - by noisy, superficial agitation of mechanical formulae on unity for unity and discipline for discipline.

The results of this method are harmful for the party and the proletariat, and obstruct the formation of a "real" communist party. It is

applied in many sections of the International, and is itself a serious symptom of latent opportunism. In the present state of the International, the formation of an international left opposition is not yet required, but if the unfavourable factors described above continue to develop, the formation of such an opposition would be both a revolutionary necessity and a spontaneous result of the situation.

6. Questions of Tactics up to the 5th Congress

Errors in general analogous to the organizational errors have been committed in resolving the tactical problems posed by the situations referred to above in an international context, errors which result from an attempt to make general deductions from the problems that the Russian Communist Party faced in the past.

The united front tactic must not be understood as a political coalition with other ostensibly workers' parties, but as the utilization of the immediate claims arisen by the situations in order to broaden the Communist Party's influence on the masses, without compromising its autonomy.

The basis for the united front is therefore to be found in the proletarian organizations to which proletarians belong as a result of their social position independent of their political convictions or their membership in an organized party. The aim is not to exclude the possibility in practice, of a communist critique of the other political parties and of a continuous organization in communist bodies of new elements derived from these parties: next it is necessary to ensure the masses understanding of the party's direct orders to mobilize then on its program and under its exclusive leadership.

Experience has shown a thousand times that the only way to ensure a revolutionary application of the united front was to reject the method of permanent or transitory political coalitions, committees of struggle composed of representatives of various political parties, and negotiations between the communist party and other parties, invitations to joint action and open letters.

Practice has proven the sterility of this method and even discredited the initial effect as a result of the way it has been abused.

The "worker's government" tactic is the political united front applied to a central demand relating to the problem of the state. This is not simply a wrong tactic, but openly in contradiction with the principles of communism. If the party issues a slogan that means the seizure of power by the proletariat using the specific representative organs of the bourgeois state apparatus, or which even does not explicitly exclude such a possibility, then this is abandoning and renouncing the communist program, not only with regard to proletarian ideology, with all the inevitable negative repercussions, but in

the ideological formulation that this party itself has established and adhered to. The revision of this tactic at the 5th Congress, after the defeat in Germany, was not satisfactory, and further development and tactical experiences have justified abandoning even the expression "workers' government".

The latter slogan can only facilitate a lapse into opportunism, i.e. support for or even participation in governments of the bourgeois class allegedly favorable for the workers.

This is by no means in contradiction with the slogan "all power to the Soviets" or to Soviet-type organizations (elected exclusively by workers), even when opportunist parties dominate them. These parties are in effect against the seizure of power by proletarian organizations, which precisely constitutes the dictatorship of the proletariat (exclusion of non-workers from elected organs and power) which only the communist party can lead.

It is not necessary, and we have no reason to replace the formula "dictatorship of the proletariat" with its only synonym: "government of the communist party."

7. Questions of the "New Tactics"

Yesterday the united front and workers' government slogans were justified by the contention that in order to be victorious it would not be sufficient to have communist parties, but it was necessary to conquer the masses and therefore erode the influence of the social-democrats on the terrain of demands understandable to all workers.

Today a further step is taken and a dangerous question is posed: in order to be able to win, it is said, it is necessary to have the bourgeoisie govern in a more tolerant and flexible manner, which will allow us to prepare ourselves, or it is necessary for the classes intermediate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to rule. This latter position, which admits the possibility of an original government of the middle classes, constitutes a revision of Marxist theory and is equivalent to the counter-revolutionary platform of reformism.

The first position would only define the most favorable objective conditions for propaganda, agitation and organization. It is no less dangerous than the other, as we have already shown with regard to the analysis of situations.

Everything points to the fact that liberalism and bourgeois democracy, in opposition to or in conjunction with the "fascist" method, will evolve toward an exclusion of the communist party from their juridical guarantees (which are worth nothing anything): communism denies them in its program, and therefore excludes itself from them, or so they say. Moreover, this is not incompatible with the principles of bourgeois democracy, and in any case there is no lack of historical

precedent in the feats of so-called left governments such as the program of the Italian Aventin for example. The "freedom" offered to the proletariat will be essentially a greater liberty for counter-revolutionary agents to act within it. The only freedom for the proletariat is its own dictatorship.

We have already shown that within the limits of a left government's ability to create useful conditions, these can only be exploited if the party has continuously held an autonomous position. There is no need to attribute diabolical powers to the bourgeoisie. But there is one certainty, a certainty without which one can no longer call oneself a communist: the final struggle will pit the conquests of the proletariat against the united front of bourgeois forces, whether they are personified by Hindenburg, MacDonald, Mussolini or Noske.

To accustom the proletariat to distinguish the elements in this front which will be involuntarily favorable to it is to introduce a factor of defeat, even if every internal weakness of this front constitutes an obvious factor of victory.

In Germany, after Hindenburg's election, there were electoral alliances with social democrats and other "republican" parties, (i.e. "bourgeois") and a parliamentary alliance in the Prussian Landtag to avoid the formation of a right government. In France there was support for the leftist Cartel in the recent municipal and canton elections (the Clichy tactic). For reasons we have just explained, such tactical methods must be declared unacceptable. The theses of the 2nd Congress of the CI on revolutionary parliamentarism stipulate that the communist party may only present itself on the electoral and parliamentary terrain with vigorously independent positions.

The recent tactics mentioned above present an obvious, perhaps complete, analogy with the traditional methods of the 2nd International-electoral blocs, collaborationism-which were supposedly also justified by a Marxist interpretation.

They represent a real danger for the principles and organizations of the International. Moreover, they have not been authorized by any deliberations of international congresses; much less by the theses on tactics from the 5th Congress.

8. Trade-Union Question

On several occasions the International has changed its conception of relations between political and economic organizations on the world scale. This is a remarkable example of the method which, instead of deriving particular actions from principles, improvises new theories and variables to justify actions which in reality are undertaken because they appear to be easy to carry out and promise immediate success.

First, the admission of trade unions into the Communist International was advocated; next a Red Trade Union International was formed. Each communist party was to fight for trade union unity, which would enable the broadest contact with the masses, and therefore to reject creating its own trade unions by splitting those led by the yellows; on an international scale, however, the Amsterdam Bureau of the International was not to be considered an organization of the working masses, but a counter-revolutionary political organ of the League of Nations.

Next, for reasons that are certainly important, but still limited (plan to use the left trade union movement in England), it was proposed that the Red Trade Union International be abandoned in favor of an organizational unity, on the world scale, with the Amsterdam Bureau.

No consideration regarding the changing situation can justify such serious zigzags, because the question of relations between international political and trade union organizations is a question of principle which can be reduced to the question of relations between party and class for the revolutionary mobilization.

It should be added that internal statutory guarantees were not even observed, and the international organs involved were confronted with a *fait accompli*.

Retention of the slogan "Moscow against Amsterdam" did not exclude and fight for trade union unity in every country. In fact, it was only possible to liquidate tendencies toward splitting trade unions (Italy, Germany) by removing any foundation for the argument that we were preventing the proletariat from breaking free of the influence of the Amsterdam international.

On the other hand, the apparently enthusiastic adherence of our party in France to the proposal of world trade union unity does not prevent it from manifesting an absolute inability to deal with its national trade union problem without resorting to splits.

However, we must not exclude the usefulness of a united front tactic on a world scale, even with the trade unions belonging to Amsterdam.

The left of the Italian party has always fought for proletarian unity in the trade unions, which distinguishes it from the syndicalist and voluntarist pseudo-leftists combated by Lenin. Besides, in Italy the Left represents the exact Leninist conception of the problem of relations between trade unions and factory councils. On the basis of the Russian experience and the theses of the 2nd Congress on that subject, it rejects the serious deviation from principles that consists in denying any revolutionary significance to voluntary membership in trade unions, and replacing it with the utopian and reactionary idea of an institutional apparatus corresponding organically to the entire extent of the capitalist system of production, an error which in practice

translates into an overestimation of factory councils and a de facto boycott of trade unions.

9. Agrarian Question

The agrarian question was defined in the theses of the 2nd Congress of the International in which Lenin applied himself to give the problem of agricultural production its historical place in the Marxist system, showing that in an epoch when the preconditions for the socialization of factories are already mature in the industrial economy, they are still absent in the agricultural economy.

Instead of delaying the proletarian revolution (which alone will enable these preconditions to be achieved), this situation makes the general problems of the poor peasantry impossible to solve within the framework of industrial economy and bourgeois power, and this allows the proletariat to associate its own fight with the emancipation of the poor peasant from the exploitation to which he is submitted by the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, even if this emancipation does not coincide with a general transformation of the rural productive system.

In the case of domains that are juridically large landed estates but which technically are composed of very small productive units, the destruction of the legal superstructure appears as a division of land among the peasants, while in fact it is only the liberation of these small businesses, which were already separate, from the common exploitation weighing down on all of them. This can only come about through a revolutionary destruction of the property relations by the industrial proletariat alone, since unlike the peasant, the proletariat is not only a victim of the bourgeois system of relations of production, but also the historical product of their maturation, condemning them to give way to a system of new and different relations. The proletariat will therefore receive precious help from the fight of the poor peasant, but in Lenin's tactical conclusions the essential thing is first, the fundamental difference they establish between the proletariat's relations with the peasant class, and, also its relations with reactionary middle strata of the urban economy represented in particular by the social-democratic parties; secondly, the principle of the intangible pre-eminence and hegemony of the working class in the conduct of the revolution.

At the time of the conquest of power, the peasant therefore appeared as a revolutionary factor. But if, during the revolution, his ideology changes with respect to the old forms of authority and legality, it does not change much with respect to the relations of production, which remain the traditional relations of isolated family production in competition with others. The peasant therefore remains a serious

danger to the construction of the socialist economy, in which he can only become interested through a major development of agricultural productive forces and technology.

According to Lenin, for tactical and organizational purposes, the agricultural proletariat which owns no land (day laborer) must be given the same consideration and importance as the rest of the proletariat. An alliance should be concluded with the poor peasant, either because he cultivates his plot himself or because this plot is insufficient while it is necessary to neutralize the middle peasant pure and simple, since he is both the victim of certain capitalist relations and an exploiter of labour-power. Finally, the rich peasant, predominantly is characteristically a direct enemy of the revolution. In applying its agrarian tactics the International must avoid the errors that have already manifested themselves (as in the French party), which consist in believing that the peasants can make an original revolution which would be ranked alongside the workers' revolution, or even that the revolutionary mobilization of the workers could be determined by an insurrection originating in the countryside, whereas the real relationship is the opposite.

The peasant who has been won to the communist program, and is therefore eligible to become a political militant must be a member of the communist party. This is the only way to combat the formation of exclusively peasant parties that inevitably fall under the influence of the counter-revolution.

The peasant International (Krestintern) must comprise peasant organizations from all countries which, as in the case of workers unions, are characterized by the fact that they contain all individuals who have the same immediate economic interests. Here too the tactic of political negotiations, political united front or internal fractions in peasant parties, even to undermine them from within, must be rejected.

This tactical rule is not in contradiction with the relations that were established between the Bolsheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries during the civil war, since the new worker and peasant representative institutions already existed.

10. National Question

Lenin also gave a thorough exposition of the theory of popular movements in the colonial countries and certain exceptionally backward countries. While internal economic development or the expansion of foreign capitalism have not yet provided the foundations of the modern class struggle in these countries, the satisfaction of demands that are posed there requires an insurrectionary struggle and the defeat of world imperialism.

In the epoch of the struggle for the proletarian revolution in the metropolises the complete realization of these two conditions allows a fight to develop in these countries which however, locally assumes the form of a conflict between races and nationalities, not classes.

The fundamental ideas of the Leninist conception remain that the world struggle must be led by organs of the revolutionary proletariat, and that the class struggle in colonial areas as well as the formation and independent development of local communist parties, must be encouraged, and never held back or suffocated.

The abusive extension of these considerations to countries where the capitalist regime and bourgeois state apparatus have existed for a long time constitutes a danger. In fact, the national question and patriotic ideology in such cases play a directly counter-revolutionary role by turning the proletariat away from its class struggle. Such deviations have appeared, e.g. in the concessions made by Radek to German nationalists fighting against the allied occupation.

Moreover, in Czechoslovakia, the International's task is to erase every reflection of national dualism in the proletarian organization since the two races are at the same historical level and their common economic milieu is fully evolved.

To raise the struggles of national minorities, *taken in themselves*, to the level of a principle, is therefore a deformation of the communist conception, since in order to determine whether such a struggle offers revolutionary possibilities or whether it will develop in a reactionary direction, completely different criteria are required.

11. Russian Questions (1926)

In the Communist International, the importance of the new economic policy of the Russian state, particularly as given in Lenin's speech in 1921 on the tax in kind and Trotsky's report to the 4th world Congress, is quite obvious. Given the condition of the Russian economy and the fact that the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other countries, Marxists could not pose the question of the perspective for the development of the world revolution and the construction of the socialist economy ¹⁶ otherwise.

The serious political difficulties caused to the Russian state by social relations within the country by the problems of production technology and by foreign relations have given rise to a series of divergences within the Russian Communist Party. With regard to these divergences, it is above all

16. In the course of its theoretical work completed after the second world war, our party submitted this formulation, in use in the Communist International at the time the "Theses" were written, to a rigorous Marxist critique. It showed that the formulation could only mean "construction of the material foundations of socialism": since socialism itself results exclusively from the *destruction* of capitalist relations of production.

17. The first discussion alluded to here was elicited by two letters from Trotsky to the Central Committee, the first on October 8, 1923, and the second, entitled "The New Course", on December 8, published on December 28 and 29 in *Pravda*. After taking an ambiguous position at the 13th Congress (April 17-25, 1923), where he abstained from asking burning questions as Lenin, stricken by a second attack, had requested him to do,

deplorable that the international communist movement has not been in a position to pronounce itself with more information and authority. In the first discussion, Trotsky's considerations on internal party life and on its "new course" were undoubtedly correct, and his observations on the development of the state's economic policy were on the whole correctly proletarian and revolutionary. In the second discussion, Trotsky's considerations on the errors of the International were no less justified, and he showed clearly that the best Bolshevik tradition did not militate in favor of the way the Komintern was being led.

Within the party this debate had a deformed and artificial echo because, in accordance with a well-known method, anti-factionism, occupied the foreground, as well as—and even worse—an anti-Bonapartism without any foundation at all. As for the most recent discussion, it deals with international questions. The fact that the majority of the Russian Communist Party has already pronounced itself cannot serve as an argument to prevent the International from debating it and giving its own opinion, even if the defeated Russian revolution has declined to request it, which does not change the problem.¹⁷

As in other cases, questions of procedure and discipline are being used to smother basic questions. What is at issue here is not the violation of the rights of a minority, with the leaders, if not the rank and file, sharing responsibility for numerous errors committed in the international domain, but questions that are vital for the world communist movement.

The Russian question must be placed before the International for a full study. The elements of the question are as follows: according to Lenin, in the present Russian economy there is a mixture of pre-bourgeois and bourgeois elements, state capitalism and socialism.

Statalised big industry is socialist to the extent that it obeys the productive imperatives of the state, which is a politically proletarian state. The distribution of its products is nonetheless accomplished in a capitalist form, i.e. through the mechanism of the competitive free market.

Trotsky, in his two letters, dealt first with the serious economic crisis that afflicted the USSR (alarming extension of unemployment, rise in industrial prices and stagnation of agricultural prices and, as a consequence, paralysis of trade between the city and countryside), and second with the regime of oppression reigning inside the party and the persecution of opponents, that had assumed alarming proportions. Before Trotsky's intervention, the opposition of the "46" had already formed (Preobrazhensky, Piatakov, etc.) on parallel positions. After a violent campaign, the party leadership condemned them *en bloc* as "anti-Leninists", "petty-bourgeois" and "factionists" at the 13th Conference (January 16-18, 1924). The background for the second discussion was the German debacle of October 1923, for which the leadership of the International placed the responsibility on the leadership of the German Communist Party, which, however, has always acted (or rather refused to act) in conjunction with the Executive of the International. It was initiated by the publication of Trotsky's *Lessons of October* in October 1924 as a preface to the third volume of his 1917. Drawing the lessons of the Russian revolution, Trotsky dealt with the conditions required so that the organization of the party could be equal to its historical tasks in periods when the historical situation places the seizure of power and the insurrection on the order of the day. In response, the leadership launched an ignoble campaign against "Trotskyism", systematically parading all the past disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky. This was the prelude to the bloody persecution against the internationalist opposition in Russia and the triumph of the Stalinist opposition in Russia and the triumph of the Stalinist thesis of "Socialism in one country", which took place in 1926. As the *Theses* show, it is noteworthy that already at the 5th World Congress (June-July 1924), and again the following year, the so-called Trotskyist opposition, obeying the Stalinist *diktat* that the question fell under the exclusive authority of the Russian Communist Party, had agreed not to appeal to the International, and that the "new opposition" of Zinoviev-Karmenev, after waging a vigorous campaign against the theory of "socialism in one country", the embellishment of the NEP and the regime of oppression and arbitrary rule introduced into the party, at the 14th Congress of the Russian party (December 1925), committed the same mistake. In spite of this, at the Enlarged Executive of February-March 1926, the Left again demanded, without being heard, that the "Russian question" – i.e. the question of "relations between the revolutionary struggle of the world proletariat and the policy of the

Russian State and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" – be placed on the agenda of a world congress to be called the following summer, after full discussion in all sections of the Komintern.

18. This passage is above all of a polemical nature. Taken literally, it could indicate to the superficial reader that in 1926, the Italian Left, like Trotsky, considered the Russian economy to be the theatre of a struggle between capitalism and communism, the first being generally identified with private industry, and the second with state industry. To understand that this is not the case, one merely has to refer to the sentence in the preceding passage, to the effect that "Statalised state industry is socialist *to the extent* that it obeys the productive imperatives of the state, which is a *politically* proletarian state" (our emphasis). The meaning of this sentence – which is in perfect agreement with Lenin's best passages – is clear: statalised big industry *is not* socialist in the economic sense of the term, because war communism was ended and it had been based on both wage, labour and the market. If it can be called "socialist", this is so only to the extent that it accomplishes the immediate economic goals of a *proletarian* power, while because of the backwardness of Russia and the delay of the revolution in the advanced countries, these goals were reduced to bringing the country out of economic chaos. The present day reader unfortunately has considerable difficulty in understanding that this terminology, in spite of its ambiguity, was justified. In the meantime, "Western Marxism", and particularly the various nuances of the factory council movement condemned the Bolshevik party and its power not for their real mistakes, but because they were administering a revolution that was *stopped economically at its bourgeois phase*, as if its transformation into a pure socialist revolution depended on their political will and not on the existence in the USSR of the "material conditions of socialism", or better yet on proletarian victory in the west. Under these conditions, references to "Socialist state industry" or "socialist elements" of the Russian economy (as we find in the *Lyons Theses*) by no means involved, as they do for present and past Trotskyism, a stupid political error. They merely recognized the Bolshevik party's *proletarian and socialist objectives*. This was what the Italian Left held to the very end, i.e. until the party had been *destroyed* by the Stalinist counter-revolution, but without neglecting the fight against the growing opportunism that developed within it, as the *Lyons Theses* show. To return to the polemic contained in the passage in questions its meaning is also clear (even though it is of limited scope) if it is compared to the theoretical work accomplished by the party that emerged from the Left after the Second World War on the basis of the bitter experience of the Stalinist counter-revolution. This has shown that the Bolshevik party and power, once they had raised the banner of "socialism in one country", could not boast of being able to "abolish surplus value" (i.e. a basic category of capitalism), or above all of having already abolished it – and that the only more "socialist" accomplishments possible, given the situation in 1926, would have been (much more modestly) to improve the "less than excellent" economic conditions of the wage laborers, at least in the state sector.

In principle it cannot be denied that this system maintains the workers in a less than excellent economic situation which they accept out of revolutionary consciousness, because this is in fact the case. Furthermore, it cannot be excluded that this situation may evolve in the direction of extorting more and more surplus value through the price paid by workers for foodstuffs and the price paid by the state in its purchases, as well as the conditions obtained by it in concessions, trade and all relations with foreign capitalism. This is the way to pose the question of whether the socialist elements of the Russian economy are progressing or retreating, a question which also includes the technical performance and sound organization of state industry¹⁸.

The construction of full socialism, extended to both production and distribution, industry and agriculture, is impossible in a single country. A progressive development of the socialist elements in the Russian economy, assuming the failure of counter-revolutionary plans based on internal factors (rich peasants, new bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie) and external factors (imperialist powers), is nonetheless still possible. Whether these plans assume the form of internal or external aggression, or a progressive sabotage and deflection of Russian social life and the state which will lead them on a slow involution ending in a complete loss of all their proletarian features-whatever may be the case, close collaboration and the contribution of all the parties of the International is a fundamental condition of success.

Above all it is necessary to ensure proletarian Russia and the Russian Communist Party the active and energetic support of the proletarian vanguard, particularly in the imperialist countries. Not only must any aggression be prevented and pressure brought to bear on the bourgeois sta-

tes as regards their relations with Russia, but it is especially necessary that the Russian party be assisted by its sister parties in resolving its problems. It is true that these parties have no direct experience in the problems of government, but in spite of this they will make a contribution to the solution of such problems by adding a revolutionary class coefficient deriving directly from the real class struggle as it unfolds in their respective countries.

As we showed above, relations now established within the Communist International do not lend themselves to this task. A change is urgently needed to react in particular to the excesses caused by "Bolshevization" in the areas of organization, tactics and political positions.

III. ITALIAN QUESTIONS

1. The Italian Situation (1926)

Appreciations of the Italian situation that accord a decisive value to the insufficient development of industrial capitalism are erroneous.

Its limited quantitative extension and the relative historical delay of its emergence were counterbalanced by a series of other circumstances which enabled the bourgeoisie to completely and solidly seize political power at the time of the *Risorgimento*, such that it possesses a very rich and complex tradition of government.

It is not possible to relate the political divergences that historically characterize the parties in the struggle-right and left, clericalism, freemasonry, democracy and fascism-systematically to the social differences existing between landed aristocrats and capitalists and between big and petty bourgeoisies.

The fascist movement must be understood as an attempt to unify the diverging interests of various bourgeois groups for counter-revolutionary purposes. Created and nourished by all the ruling classes, landed aristocrats, industrialists, merchants, bankers, and supported by the traditional state apparatus, the crown, the Church and freemasonry, fascism has pursued its goal by mobilizing social elements from the intermediate classes, in total confusion, which it has succeeded in directing against the proletariat, in a close alliance with all bourgeois elements.

What has happened in Italy must not be explained either as the accession to power of a new social stratum nor as the formation of a new state apparatus with an original ideology and program, nor as the defeat of a part of the bourgeoisie whose interests better coincided with liberal and parliamentary methods. The liberals and

democrats, Giolitti and Nitti, are protagonists of a phase of the counter revolutionary struggle directly linked to the fascist phase and decisive for the defeat of the proletariat. Their policy of concessions, carried out with the complicity of the reformists and maximalists in fact allowed the bourgeoisie to deflect the proletariat's pressure and hold out in the period that followed the war and the demobilization when the ruling class and all its organs were not prepared to resist frontally.

Helped directly in this period by the governments, bureaucracy, police, magistrature, army, etc., fascism then completely replaced the bourgeoisie's old political personnel. This must not lead us into error, or much less serve as a basis for a rehabilitation of parties and groups which have been ousted because the anti-proletarian function they had fulfilled for an entire period was completed, and not because that offered better conditions to the working class.

2. Political orientation of the Communist Left

Throughout the development of the situations mentioned above, the group that formed the communist party obeyed the following criteria: rejection of the illusory antagonisms of the bourgeois, parliamentary scene and affirmation of the proletariat's revolutionary opposition to the bourgeoisie, propaganda within the proletariat to destroy the illusion that the middle classes are capable of producing a political general staff seizing power and clearing the way for the proletariat's conquests, inspire the working class with confidence in its own historical task through propaganda for original autonomous critical, political and tactical positions solidly connected throughout successive situations.

The tradition of this political current goes back to the left of the socialist party which existed before the war. While a majority capable of fighting against both the reformist and syndicalist errors (which had characterized the Left up to then) had formed following the congresses of Reggio Emilia (1912) and Ancona (1914), an extreme left aspiring to more and more radical class positions had also differentiated itself within the majority. Important problems posed to the working class could then be resolved, such as that of electoral tactics, relations with trade unions, the colonial war or free-masonry.

During the war, while almost the whole party opposed the policy of a *union sacrée*, its extreme left, apart from the rest, defended Leninist directives in successive meetings and congresses (Bologna, May 1915; Rome, February 1917; Florence, November 1917; Rome, 1918): refusal of national defense and defeatism; exploitation of military defeat to pose the problem of power, incessant struggle

against the trade union bureaucrats and parliamentary opportunists whose expulsion the party demanded.

After the end of the war, the extreme Left expressed itself through the newspaper *// Soviet*, which, as a first, expounded and defended the Russian revolution fighting against anti-Marxist, opportunist, syndicalist and anarchist interpretations, and correctly posed the essential problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the role of the party, from the beginning defending the necessity of a split in the socialist party.

This same group defended electoral abstentionism, but its conclusions were rejected by the 2nd Congress of the International. However, this abstentionism did not derive from anarcho-syndicalist anti-Marxist theoretical errors, as the severe polemics conducted against the anarchist press prove. The abstentionist tactic was advocated especially the political conditions of full parliamentary democracy, which creates particular difficulties for the conquest of the masses and the correct understanding of the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat, difficulties which, we believe the International continues to underestimate.

On the other hand, abstentionism was proposed in terms of the imminence of great struggles putting the broadest masses of the proletariat into motion (a possibility that has unfortunately disappeared today), and not as a tactic valid every where and always.

With the 1919 elections, Nitti's bourgeois government opened an immense value to revolutionary pressure, and deflected the proletariat's impulses and the party's attention by exploiting its traditions of unbridled electoralism. *// Soviet's* abstentionism was, at the time, the only correct reaction to this, the real cause of the disaster that followed for the proletariat. At the Bologna Congress (1919) the abstentionist minority was alone in correctly posing the problem of the split with the reformists. It tried in vain to come to an agreement on this point with a part of the maximalists, even offering to renounce abstentionism as a precondition. After the defeat of this attempt and up to the 2nd Congress, the abstentionist faction was alone in working on the national scale for the creation of the communist party.

This group therefore represented spontaneous adherence based on its own experience and traditions, by the left of the Italian proletariat to Lenin's directives and Bolshevism, which were then victorious in the Russian revolution.

3. The Left's Work in the Party Leadership

Once the Communist Party had been founded at Livorno in January 1921, the abstentionists did everything within their power to esta-

blish a solid bond with other party groups. If for certain of these the need for the split with the opportunists derived only from international relations for the abstentionists, who had expressly renounced their positions on the elections in favor of discipline, and for many other elements as well there existed a complete agreement between the theses of the International and the lessons of the political struggles they had conducted previously.

In its work, the party leadership was inspired by the interpretation of the Italian situation and the party tasks are outlined above. Consequently it is obvious that the delay experienced in forming the revolutionary party, for with all the other groups bore responsibility, made a further retreat of the proletariat inevitable, and ineluctably determined it.

To put the proletariat in the best possible position throughout its various struggles, the leadership based its action on the need to make a maximum effort to use the traditional apparatus of red organizations, while striving to convince the proletariat that it should

not count on the maximalists and reformists, who went so far as to accept the pacification pact with fascism."¹⁹

From the very beginning, the party declared itself in favor of trade union unity, and proposed the creation of a united front to be expressed through the formation of the "Labour Alliance". No matter what the opinions on the political united front, it is a fact that it was irresistible in Italy in 1921-22, for secondary reasons: The communist party moreover never received invitations to meetings intended to establish an alliance of parties. The party did not intervene in the alliance called by the railway workers to form the trade union alliance in order not to give credence to maneuvers aimed at compromising the founding of the alliance itself, while ascribing responsibility for the defeat to the alliance. But it confirmed in advance that it approved of this initiative, by stating that communists would observe discipline with respect to this new organiza-

tion. Certain contacts then took place between political parties. The communist party did not refuse to participate, but they amounted to nothing at the same time demonstrating the impossibility of an agreement on the basis of political action and the defeatism of all

19. The *pacification pact* was signed on August 3, 1921, on the initiative of the chairman of the House, Nicola, by the following organizations: the fascist party, the leadership of the socialist party, the socialist parliamentary group, General Federation of Labour (led by the socialists). An expression of the socialists' parliamentary cretinism, it stipulated a disarming of the workers in the face of the exactions of the fascists and traditional forces of order. The very terms of this pact are worth noting: "*The present parties undertake to bring to an immediate end all threats, violence, reprisals, punishments, revenge, pressures, and personal violence of any kind. Respective symbols, emblems and ensigns will be respected. The contracting parties undertake reciprocally to respect economic organizations. Any action, any behavior violating this undertaking and agreement are hereby deplored and disavowed by the various delegations. The Italian Socialist Party declares it is alien to the organization and action of the "Arditi del Popolo", just as this is also apparent from the latter's congress, where it proclaimed itself alien to all parties.*" The communist party assumed a particularly clear position with regard to this "pact", denouncing it energetically. As soon as its spokesmen announced it, the Executive of the C.P. sent the leadership of the socialist party the following telegram. "*To cut short any arbitrary use on your part of the name of our Party, we are informing you officially and directly, requesting confirmation by telegram, that we will not participate in any meeting of parties for the purpose of pacification or disarmament. Executive, Communist Party, July 27, 1921.*"

the other groups. During this retreat, the leadership was able to maintain the confidence of the working class and to raise the consciousness of its vanguard by cutting short all traditional maneuvers in the leadership of the proletariat as practiced by pseudo-revolutionary groups and parties. In spite of the party's efforts, it was only later, in August 1922, that a general action was possible. But the defeat of the proletariat was inevitable and from then on fascism, openly supported in its violent struggle by the forces of the State governed by the *liberal democracy*, was master of the country, while the "march on Rome" was only an *a posteriori* legal and formal sanction of its predominance.

At that time, in spite of the ebbing of proletarian action, the party's influence exceeded that of the maximalists and reformists, and its advances had already been marked by the results of the 1921 elections and the great debates that unfolded afterward within the Federation of Labour.

4. Relations Between the Italian Left and the Communist International

The Rome Congress (1922) demonstrated the theoretical divergence between the Italian Left and the majority of the International. Our delegations to the 3rd world Congress and the Enlarged Executive of February 1922 expressed this openly committing, particularly in the first case, "Leftist" errors. The Rome Theses constituted the correct theoretical and political liquidation of any danger of left opportunism in the Italian party.

In practice, the only divergence between the party and the International was manifested with regard to the tactic to be followed *vis a vis* the maximalists but the victory of the unity current at the socialist congress in October 1921 seemed to have settled this.

The Rome Theses were adopted as a party contribution to the decisions of the International, and not as an immediate line of action. The party leadership confirmed this to the Enlarged Executive in 1922. If its discussion was not opened then, this was the result of a decision of the International which the leadership observed out of discipline.

However, in August 1922, the International did not interpret the situation in accordance with the indications of the party leadership, but concluded that the Italian situation was unstable because of the weakening of the State's resistance. It therefore hoped to strengthen the party through a merger with the maximalists, considering the split between the maximalists and the unity group as a decisive factor, while the party leadership on the contrary gave priority to the lessons of the broad strike maneuver of August.

20. In April the Executive Committee of the International had designated a provisional leadership for the Italian section, whose leaders were in prison. It consisted of Togliatti, Scoccimarro, Gennari, Tasca and Terracini. At the Enlarged Executive in June, the old leadership of the Left still in prison, was accused of having caused the failure of the merger with the left maximalists through its sectarianism. The new leadership, headed by Togliatti, was supported by Moscow for the simple reason that it was not hostile to the unification. When the leaders of the Left were let out of prison in December after being acquitted by the tribunal, they did not assume their duties at the head of the party, and never assumed them.

From this time on the two political lines diverged definitely. At the 4th World Congress (December 1922) the left leadership opposed the thesis that won out. When its delegates returned to Italy, it unanimously declined responsibility for the merger, which was entrusted to a Commission, while the left naturally retained its administrative functions. Next came the arrests in February 1923, and the major offensive against the party. Finally the Enlarged Executive

of the CI in June 1923 deposed the old executive and replaced it with another completely different one,²⁰ a situation in which the resignations of some members of the leadership were only a logical consequence. In May 1924 a consultative conference of the party again gave the Left an overwhelming majority over the Centre and the Right, and this is how things stood at the 5th World Congress.

5. The Ordinovist Tradition of the Present Leadership

The *Ordine Nuovo* group was formed in Turin by a few intellectuals who made contact with the proletarian masses in industry when the abstentionist fraction already had a large audience in Turin itself. The ideology of this group was dominated by idealist, bourgeois philosophical conceptions inherited in part from Benedetto Croce and which naturally underwent subsequent evolution. This group's interpretation of Marxist directives was quite slow, and it always held on to some of its original errors. It did not understand the Russian revolution soon enough to be able to apply its lessons to the struggle of the Italian proletariat. In November 1917 comrade Gramsci published an article in *Avanti!* declaring that the Russian revolution had refuted Marx historical materialism and the theory of *Capital*, instead giving an essentially idealist explanation. The extreme left of the party, to which the Youth Federation also belonged, attacked this article.

As the publication of *Ordine Nuovo* demonstrates, this group evolved further toward a non-Marxist, non-Leninist theory of the workers' movement. In this theory the problems of the functioning of unions and the party, questions of armed struggle, the conquest of power and the building of socialism were posed incorrectly. Instead it developed the conception that the systematic organization of the working class was not "voluntary" but "necessary", and copied directly from the capitalist industrial production mechanism.

This system was built on shop committees and factory councils,

to culminate at the same time in the proletarian international, the Communist International, Soviets and the workers' state, which was to exist even before the fall of capitalist power.

Moreover, even in the bourgeois era this system was supposed to serve to build the new economy through its demands and the exercise of control over production.

Later this current apparently abandoned all the non-Marxist positions of its ideology, its utopianism, Proudhonist syndicalism, its economic gradualism prior to the conquest of power, i.e. its reformism, only to replace them little by little with theories quite different from Leninism. But this substitution might not have been so artificial if the Ordinovist group had not detached itself from and finally aligned itself against the group whose traditions, as we have shown, converged spontaneously with Bolshevism, thereby making a serious contribution based on the experience of the proletarian class, not on academic, library exercises inspired by bourgeois texts. This certainly does not preclude that *Ordine Nuovo* might learn and improve itself through close collaboration with the Left, but this was interrupted too soon. It is consequently ironic that the *Ordine Nuovo* leaders should claim to Bolshevize precisely those who had brought them onto the path of Bolshevism, not through mechanical bureaucratic maneuvers, but in the serious, Marxist sense.

Shortly before the World Congress in 1921 *Ordine Nuovo* was against splitting the old party, and posed all trade union questions incorrectly. The International's representative in Italy had to argue with the group over the factory council question and on the premature formation of Soviets.

In April 1920 the Turin section approved the *Ordine Nuovo* theses drawn up by comrade Gramsci, which were adopted by the committee made up of *Ordine Nuovo* members and abstentionists. Apart from the disagreement on abstentionists. Apart from the disagreement on abstentionism, these theses, which were quoted in the resolution of the 2nd Congress, in reality expressed the common thought of the formative communist faction, and their content was not defined by the particular constructions of the *Ordine Nuovo* group, but by the positions that had been clearly accepted long before by the left wing of the party.

The *Ordine Nuovo* group adhered to the Left's position on the International for a while, but in reality its thinking differed from that expressed in the Rome Theses, even though it decided to vote for them.

The real precursor of the *Ordine Nuovo* group's adoption of the International's tactics and general line was comrade Tasca's defense of a position against the Left at the Rome Congress.

Given, on the one hand, the characteristics of the *Ordine Nuovo* group, its particularism and concretism inherited from idealist

bourgeois ideology, and on the other, the latitude allowed by the methods of the present leadership of the International for superficial and incomplete recruitment, it must be concluded that, despite declarations of orthodoxy, the theoretical adherence of Ordine Nuovo to Leninism-and this is of decisive importance for imminent very real political developments-is worth little more than its former acceptance of the Rome Theses.

6. The political work of the present leadership of the party

From 1923 to today the party Centre's work, which, it must be acknowledged, has been carried out in a difficult situation, has given rise to errors which, in substance, are related to those pointed out by us with regard to international problems, but which in part have become much more serious owing to the original deviations characteristic of Ordine Nuovo's conceptions.

Participation in the 1924 elections was an excellent political act, but the same cannot be said of the proposal for common action made to the socialist parties, nor of the "proletarian unity" label this assumed. The excessive tolerance toward certain electoral maneuvers by the "Terzini" was just as deplorable, but the most serious problems were posed by the crisis that opened with the assassination of Matteotti.

The Centre's policy was based on the absurd idea that the weakening of fascism had set first the middle classes, then the proletariat, in motion. This means, on the one hand, lack of confidence in the proletariat's class capacities, even though it had remained vigilant under the crushing apparatus of fascism, and, on the other hand, an overestimation of the initiative of the middle classes. However, in addition to the clarity of Marxist theoretical positions on the subject, the central lesson of Italian experience shows that the intermediate strata tend to be drawn back and forth and to passively follow the strongest side: the proletariat in 1919-20, fascism in 1921-22-23, and, after a period of frenzied agitation in 1924-25, fascism once again today.

The Centre was mistaken in abandoning parliament and in participating in the first meetings of the Aventin²¹ whereas they should have remained in parliament, declared a political attack against the government, and also immediately taken a position against the constitutional and moral stipulations of the Aventin, which determined that the crisis would be resolved in favor of fascism. It cannot be excluded

21. After the assassination of the Socialist representative Matteotti by the fascists, the democratic parties abandoned Parliament, retreating, as the expression goes, "to the Aventin".

that the communists might have been able to abandon parliament, but they should have done so maintaining their own physiognomy and only when the situation would have allowed them to call the masses to direct action. This was one of those moments when the further developments of a situation are determined; the error was therefore fundamental and decisive for a judgment of the abilities of a leading group. It resulted in the working class being unable to take advantage either of the weakening of fascism or of the resounding collapse of the Aventin.

The return to parliament in 1924 and the Repossi's declaration were beneficial, as the wave of approval from the proletariat showed, but they came too late. The Centre vacillated for a long time and only reached a decision when pressured by the party and the Left. The party's preparation was based on colorless instructions and a fantastically incorrect appreciation of the immediate prospects (Gramsci's report to the Central Committee, August 1924). The preparation of the masses, oriented not toward the defeat of the Aventin, but toward its victory, was the worst possible, being linked to the party's proposal to the opposition to form an anti-parliament. In particular, such a tactic was alien to the decisions of the International, which never contemplated proposals to openly bourgeois parties; furthermore, it was such as to lead us out of the domain of communist principles and politics, as well as that of the Marxist conception of history. Independently of any explanation the Centre might have tried to give of the goals and intentions that inspired the proposal-explanations, which would only ever have had very limited repercussions, the Centre certainly gave the masses the illusion of an Anti-State opposed to and actively fighting the traditional state apparatus, whereas in the historical perspective of our program, the only basis for an Anti-State is the representative form of the producing class, the Soviet.

The slogan for an anti-parliament based on workers' and peasants' committees, was equivalent to handing over the proletariat's general staff to representatives of capitalist social groups, people like Amendola, Agnelli, Albertini, etc.

Apart from the certainty that such a state of affairs could never come about, and which can only be called a betrayal, the very fact of presenting this as a communist perspective and proposal is equivalent to a violation of our principles and a weakening of the revolutionary preparation of the proletariat. The Centre's actions are open to other criticisms. We have seen a veritable parade of slogans which corresponded to nothing that could have been attained, nor even to any appreciable agitation outside the party apparatus. The central slogan on the workers' and peasants' committees, which was given only contradictory and twi-

sted explanations, has been neither understood nor followed.

7. The party's trade union activity

Another serious error was committed around the metallurgical strike in March 1925. The leadership did not understand that the delusion caused within the proletariat by the Aventin experience would lead to a general impulse of class action in the form of a strike wave. If it had understood this, it would have been able to guide the FIOM (Italian Federation of Metallurgical Workers) in an entirely different direction (just as we succeeded in inducing it to intervene in the strike initiated by the fascists) toward a general strike, by forming an agitation committee within the union based on local organizations which were entirely in favor of a national strike.

The Centre's trade union orientation did not clearly correspond to the slogan for trade union unity in the confederation, even in spite of the organizational disintegration of the latter. The party's union directives reflected Ordine Nuovo errors with regard to action inside the factories: not only did it create or propose multiple contradictory bodies, but often it issued slogans that downgraded the trade union and the understanding that it is a necessary organ of proletarian struggle.

This resulted in the disgraceful agreement at FIAT in Turin, as well as the confused directives on factory elections, in which the criterion of choice between the tactics of the class candidates and party candidates was not posed correctly, i.e. on a class terrain.

8. The party's activity on the agrarian and national questions

In the agrarian question, the slogan for peasants' defense associations was justified, but the work was conducted too much from above, by a party bureau.

In spite of the difficult situation, in this context we must denounce the danger of a bureaucratic conception of our tasks, which is also present in other party activities.

Correct relations between peasants' associations and workers' unions must be clearly stabilized in the sense that agricultural wage laborers must form a federation belonging to the Confederation of Labour, while between this and the defense associations a close alliance should be built centrally and locally.

A regionalist or "southern" conception, tendencies toward which have already become manifest, should be avoided in the agrarian question. This also applies to positions of regional autonomy defended by some new parties, which should openly be combated as

reactionary, instead of holding fallacious negotiations with them.

The tactic of seeking an alliance with the left of the popular party (Miglioli) and the peasant party has yielded unfavorable results.²²

Once again concessions have been made to politicians foreign to all class tradition without leading to the desired mass movement, often disorienting parts of our party organization. It is also a mistake to overestimate peasant maneuvers aimed at a hypothetical political campaign against the Vatican's influence, a problem which is certainly posed, but which is now being resolved in a totally inadequate way.

9. The Centre's organizational work

The work toward reorganizing the party after the fascist devastation undoubtedly yielded many good results. However, it retained an excessively technical character rather than assuring centralization through the implementation of clear, uniform statutory norms applicable to all comrades or local committees, and it relied entirely on the intervention of the central apparatus. Major steps could have been taken by restoring elections to committees in rank and file organizations, particularly in the more favorable periods of the situation.

Given the increase and subsequent decrease in party membership, and given the ease with which elements who were recruited with comparable ease during the Matteotti crisis are now departing, it is obvious that such facts depend on the development of the situation, not the hypothetical blessings of a change in general orientation.

The results and benefits of the one-month recruitment campaign²³ have been exaggerated. As for the cell organization, the Centre obviously had to act on the general directives of the Komintern, of which we have already spoken. But this was done without uniform directives, haphazardly and with many contradictions, and only repeated pressuring from the rank and file brought about a certain systematization.

It would be desirable to replace the system of inter-regional secretaries with a team of inspectors, establishing a direct political, if not technical, link between the leadership and the party's traditional rank and file organizations the provincial federations. The in-

22. The people's party, founded after the war, shared the lead in the 1919 elections with the socialist party; it can be regarded as the start of the current *Christian Democracy*. The peasant party was one of its wings before becoming independent.

23. "Recruitment month" was launched immediately after Matteotti's assassination, from August 15 to September 15, 1925, and was modeled after the all too famous Russian promotion called the "Lenin levy", which provided the party leadership with the margin of maneuver it had been seeking. Party membership swelled by 10,000, even though at the end of May it had had only 12,000 members, or 14,000 if the *Terzini* are counted.

spectors principal task should be to intervene actively wherever the basic party organization has to be rebuilt, following and assisting it until it becomes capable of functioning normally.

10. The Centre and the question of factionalism

The campaign which culminated in the preparations for our 3rd Congress was deliberately initiated after the 5th World Congress, not in the form of an involvement of the whole party in propagandizing and elaborating the International's directives, in order to create a more advanced real collective consciousness, but in the form of agitation, utilizing the most expeditious methods requiring a minimum of error, designed to induce comrades to renounce the positions of the Left. There was no thought as to whether this method was useful or possibly harmful to the party and its effectiveness against external enemies, but no effort was spared to achieve this internal objective.

Elsewhere we have given a historical and theoretical critique of the illusory method of suppressing factionalism from above. In the Italian case, the 5th Congress had accepted the Left's request that pressures from above be stopped, while it agreed to participate in all party activity, excluding political leadership. The party leadership broke this agreement through a campaign conducted not on ideological or tactical positions, but on the basis of accusations of indi-

discipline directed at isolated comrades, and developed unilaterally at federal congresses.

The formation of a "Committee of Entente" ²⁴ when the Congress was announced was a spontaneous act designed to avoid individual and group acts that might have led to a disintegration, and to channel the action of all comrades of the Left along a common, responsible line within the strict limits of discipline, while the respect of their rights was guaranteed by general party consultation. The Centre seized upon this fact and used it in its agitational plan, presenting comrades of the Left as factionists and splitters who could not defend themselves and who were voted down in federal committees through pressures applied from above.

This agitational scheme was continued with a factionist revision of the

24. In preparation for the 3rd Congress of the CP of Italy, the Left created a "Committee of Entente". This induced the party leadership to open a campaign of defamation against these comrades, based on the accusations of "factionalism". The Presidium of the International sanctioned the maneuver, giving the formal directive that the committee be dissolved. The Left complied with this decision out of discipline and published a communique which, *inter alia*, read as follows: "Although we are accused of factionalism and splitting, we will sacrifice our opinions for party unity, and execute an order we consider incorrect and ruinous for the party. We will herewith show that the Italian Left is perhaps the only current that takes discipline seriously as something which is not merely bargained about. We re-affirm all our former positions and actions. We deny that the committee of entente constitutes a maneuver aimed at splitting the party and forming a faction within it and we again protest the campaign being conducted on that basis, while we are deprived of the right to defend ourselves and the party is being scandalously deceived. However, since the Praesidium feels that the dissolution of the committee of entente will remove the danger of factionalism, and even though we are of the opposite opinion, we will obey. But we place full responsibility upon the Praesidium for the evolution of the inner-party situation, and for the reactions elicited by the way the Centre has administered internal matters. . ."

party apparatus and local cadres, in the way texts for discussion were presented, though the refusal to allow the Left's representatives to intervene in federal Congresses. The whole thing was crowned by unheard of voting methods: anyone who was absent was automatically considered to have voted for the leadership theses.

No matter what the result of such actions in terms of the simple numerical majority, rather than advancing the party's ideological consciousness and its influence over the masses, they have instead seriously harmed both. The worst consequences have only been avoided through the moderation of the comrades of the Left, who have accepted such punishment not because they thought it could be justified, but only because of their devotion to the party.

11. Outline of a working program for the party

The preceding points contain the premises from which, in the opinion of the Left, the party's general and specific tasks should flow. But it is first of all obvious that such a problem can only be solved on the basis of international decisions. The Left can therefore only indicate an outline of an action program to present to the International in order to accomplish the tasks of the Italian section.

The party must prepare the proletariat to resume its class activity and the fight against fascism, making use of the severe experiences it has had lately. At the same time it must destroy all the proletariat's illusions in changes of bourgeois policies, and in the possibility of receiving any help from the urban middle classes, using the experiences of the liberal-democratic period to avoid any repetition of pacifist illusions.

The party will not make proposals for common action to parties of the anti-fascist opposition, and by no means will pursue a policy aimed at detaching any alleged left wing from that opposition or influencing such parties to move left.

In order to mobilize the masses around its program, the party will adopt a tactic of united front from below, and attentively follow developments in the economic situation to formulate immediate demands. The party will abstain from making a central political demand out of the accession of a government that will offer guarantees of freedom; it will not present "freedom for all" as an objective for the working class, and instead will put forward positions that show clearly that freedom for the workers means crushing the freedom of the exploiters and bourgeoisie.

Faced today with the serious problem whereby the class unions and other immediate organs of the proletariat have been decimated, the party must above all agitate the slogan of defense of the traditional red unions and the need for their renaissance. Work in

25. The internal commissions, founded after the war, were organs of struggle inside factories, elected by all workers, both unionized and non-unionized.

factories will avoid creating organs that could diminish the effectiveness of slogans on rebuilding trade unions. Considering the present situation, the party

will work toward union activity within the framework of the "factory union sections" which, because they represent a strong union tradition, are the appropriate organs to lead the workers' struggles which can be conducted today precisely in the factories. We will try to have the illegal internal commissions²⁵ by the trade union section of the factory, but, as soon as possible, the internal commission should again be elected by all personnel in the factory.

As for organization in the countryside, the remarks on the agrarian question remain valid.

Because all organizational possibilities of proletarian groups are now being used to the maximum, we must exploit the slogan for Workers' and Peasants' Committees, while observing the following criteria:

a) the slogan to form Workers' and Peasants' Committees will not be used from time to time, coincidentally, but must be imposed by a vigorous campaign at a time in the situation which clearly gives a directive for proletarian action, which is to say not merely as a purely organizational order;

b) the nucleus of these Committees must be formed from representatives of organizations traditionally known to the masses, even if they have been mutilated by the reaction, such as trade unions and analogous bodies, but not from meetings of political delegates;

c) we may then give the slogan for Committee elections but from the very first it must be clear that these are not Soviets, i.e. organs of the proletarian government, but only the expression of a local and national alliance of all the exploited for common defense.

Concerning relations with the fascist unions, which today no longer appear even formally as voluntary mass organizations, but are true official organs of the alliance between the bosses and fascism, it is necessary in general to reject slogan of penetrating them in order to destroy them from within. The slogan for the reconstruction of the red unions must be accompanied by a denunciation of the fascist unions.

The organization of measures to adopt within the party have already been indicated in part. With regard to the present situation these must satisfy certain needs that must be dealt with elsewhere (clandestinity, underground work). It is nonetheless urgent that these be formalized systematically in clear statutory norms binding on everyone in order to avoid confusion between a healthy centralism and blind obedience to arbitrary, heterogeneous directives that imperil the real solidity of the party.

12. Perspectives for the party's inner situation

The political and organizational situation within our party cannot be definitively resolved within a national framework, because the solution depends on the development of the internal situation and policy of the whole International. It would be a serious mistake and a real betrayal if the national and international leadership continued to subject the Left to the foolish method of pressure from above and reduction of the complex problem of the party's theory and politics to considerations of militants personal behavior.

Because the Left is standing firm on its positions comrades who do not intend to renounce these positions must be able to fulfill the loyal engagement they have accepted in an atmosphere free from maneuvers and reciprocal accusation, i.e. they must be able to execute the decisions of party organs while renouncing all oppositional work, but without being required to participate in the leadership. This proposition obviously proves that the situation is far from perfect, but it would be dangerous to have the party believe that these difficulties can be eliminated through a purely organizational mechanism and through personal positions. Whoever should spread this illusion would be committing a serious crime against the party.

If we really wish to prevent the party atmosphere from becoming poisoned and if we want to move toward a solution of all the difficulties being faced by the party today, we must do away with the petty method of understanding the problem, and pose it in all its aspects in the Party and the International.

LEE LOS TEXTOS DE NUESTRA CORRIENTE

- Elementos de economía marxista
 - Partido y clase
 - Los fundamentos del comunismo revolucionario
 - El proletariado y la guerra imperialista
 - El programa revolucionario de la sociedad comunista elimina toda forma de propiedad de la tierra, de las instalaciones de producción y de los productos del trabajo. (Reunión de Turín, 1-2 de junio de 1958)
 - Teoría marxista de la moneda
 - Comunismo y fascismo (agotado)
 - La sucesión de las formas de producción en la teoría marxista
 - Lecciones de las contrarrevoluciones
-
- Las grandes cuestiones históricas de la revolución en Rusia-Estructura económica y social de Rusia 1913-1957.
 - O preparación revolucionaria o preparación electoral (agotado)
 - Fuerza, violencia y dictadura en la lucha de clase 300
 - Serie de textos sobre el activismo revisionista de actualizadores y enriquecedores. Sobre el papel del individuo como títere en manos de la historia. Sobre los que proponen los caminos intermedios, *más cortos* y *más fáciles*
 - Factores de raza y nación en la teoría marxista
 - La reconquista de Latinoamérica por el capitalismo imperialista español y europeo chocan con el nacionalismo militar y económico

LEE, DIFUNDE Y APOYA ECONOMICAMENTE LA PRENSA COMUNISTA

**PARA CORRESPONDENCIA:
Casella Postale 962 - 20101 MILANO (Italia)**

BACK ISSUES

n° 1 (May 1992)

To the Reader: Resuming Our International Press - Marxism And Russia - The Myth of "Socialist Planning" in Russia - What Distinguishes Our Party - Back To Basics: Fundamental Theses of the Party (1951)-Our Press

n° 2 (June 1993)

To the Reader: A Year After - The International Communist Party -Capitalism Is War - The Fall of the House of Stalin (I) - Back To Basics: Three Documents on the Relationship Between Party and Class - Party Interventions - Our Press

n° 3 (June 1994)

To the Reader: Harsh Realities, Deceitful Mirages - The Abolition of Wage Labor Means the Abolition of Production for the Sake of Production - The Fall of the House of Stalin (II) - Kurds and Palestinians: Which Way Out? - Communists and the Chiapas Indians' Revolt - Back To Basics: Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party (1951) - The International Communist Party - Party Life - Our Press

n° 4 (June 1995)

To the Reader: Contracts For America... And The World -Unemployment, Capitalism's Insoluble Problem - Where We Come From: A Brief Chronology - The Fall of the House of Stalin (III) -Africa: The Clash Between French and American Capitals - Chechnya: Another Medal For Imperialism - Back To Basics: The Democratic Principle (1922) - Party Life - Our Press

n° 5 (June 1996)

To The Reader: Unemployment and Elections - Our Name Is Our Program - Social Struggles in France -Report From U. S.: The Maturing of the Market economy - Former Yugoslavia: A Capitalist, Not A Ethnic, War - The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal: Class Solidarity For All Class Prisoners - Back To Basics: Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle (I) - Our Press

n° 6 (June 1996)

To the Reader: On Some Fin-De-Siècle Myths - The Lonelines of the Working Class, Today - A Eulogy to Patience - From the U.K.: The Historical Path of British Labourism - Total and Unconditional Solidarity With Immigrants of Whatever Status - Documents: Appeal to the Workers of Europe, America and Japan (Baku, 1920) - The Boar In History, or How the USSR Was Dissolved - Back To Basics: Force, Violence and Dictatorship In the Class Struggle (II) - Party Life

n° 7 (May 1998)

To the Reader: Capitalism and Recession - Amidst the Storms of Worldwide Capital - "Globalization": The Mole Is At Work – A Continuity Made Up of Theory, History and Memory - U.S.A.: The "State of the Union"; Or, Waiting For the Second Shoe To Drop - After the Horrendous Massacre In Chiapas - Back To Basics: Force, Violence and Dictatorship In the Class Struggle (III) - **Suplemento en Español:** Editorial -'Un texto de nuestra corriente: El curso a seguir (1946) - Our Press

n° 8 (Spring/Summer 1999)

To the Reader: Party And Class Today (While a New Imperialist War Is Raging) - The War In Serbia and Kossovo Is a Capitalist War -Economic Crisis and the Science of Marxism - The Mole Keeps On Digging - Invariance of Socialdemocracy, Invariance of Marxism - U. S. News: How the Other Half Lives, 1999-2000 - The Kurdish Question - Back To Basics: Force, Violence and Dictatorship In the Class Struggle (IV) - Party Life -

Suplemento en Español: Activismo (1952) - Reformismo y socialismo (1950) - Las dos caras de la revolución cubana (1961) - Our Press

n° 9 (Spring/Summer 2000)

What is the International Communist Party: A Presentation

n° 10 (Spring/Summer 2001)

To the Reader: 1921-2001. A Continuity of Doctrine, Program, and Organisation - "Globalisation" and Proletarian Internationalism - Against All Democratic Illusions - The Palestinian Question and the International Workers' Movement - The Course of Capitalism: USA - Where We Come From - A Brief Chronology - The Laboratory of Counterrevolution: A Brief History of Stalinism in Italy (and Elsewhere) - Gramscism: An Age-Long Bane of Communism - Back To Basics: The 1921 Livorno Program - **Suplemento en Español:** La Asamblea Constituyente en Venezuela, Oxígeno para la Explotación Capitalista - Dos Textos de Nuestra Corriente: Movimiento Obrero e Internacionales Sindicales - El Cadáver Todavía Camina - Programa del Partido Comunista Internacional - De Dónde Venimos

n° 11 (Summer/Fall 2002)

To the Reader - Capitalism's Continuing Quest for Oxygen - The Strategy "Terrorism-War" Is the Bourgeois, Anti-Working-Class Answer to the World Economic Crisis - The Continuity of Revolutionary Marxism Versus the Continuity of Imperialist War - The Martyrdom of the Masses in the Middle East Will Not End Until an International, Class Perspective Is Regained, Resisting and Opposing Any Temptation To Be Lured by National Interests - The "Anti-Global Movement" - After the "Events of Genoa" - The Only Real Perspective Is Revolutionary Marxism - The Historical Necessity of Communism • Gramsci, or the Poverty of Philosophy - Back To Basics: The Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920) - Where We Come From - A Brief Chronology - **Suplemento en Español:** El capitalismo esta a la continua busca de oxígeno - Trás los "Eventos de Génova", la única perspectiva real es la del marxismo revolucionario - Tesis de la Fracción Comunista Abstencionista del PSI (1920)

n° 12 (Spring/Summer 2004)

To the Reader - When a comrade dies - In the chaos of interimperialist disorder - The necessity of the revolutionary party - This latest war - Behind the false "war or peace" option - Revolutionary defeatism is the only answer - Against the imperialist war: pacifism or revolutionary defeatism? - "There is no war that be not infamous, there is no peace that be desirable, until the reign of capital lasts" - The chain of wars will not be broken until the struggle against capital returns to revolutionary marxism - "Pious Wishes" will not stop the destructive course of capitalism. Only the international proletariat, led by its party, can put an end once and for all to the system of profit, exploitation, destruction and wars - *Back to Basics*. Orient

n° 13 (Spring/Summer 2006)

To the Reader - Brief Notes on the Palestinian Elections - The Blazing Banlieues in Paris Loudly Proclaim the Need for the Revolutionary Party - The Attacks That Cause Bloodshed Throughout the World Are the Rotten and Poisonous Fruit of Capitalism in Its Imperialist Phase - Capitalist Disasters, Not "Natural Disasters" - "United Europe"? Myths and Realities - Marxism and the National Issue - Chicago, 1905: The Birth of the Industrial Workers of the World - *Back to Basics*: Theses on Tactics of the Communist Party of Italy ("Rome Theses", 1922)

OUR INTERNATIONAL PRESS

il programma comunista n. 5/2008

Editoriale. Caucaso. I venti di guerra soffiano sempre più forti. È necessario che il proletariato mondiale ritrovi la propria autonomia di classe, contro tutti gli schieramenti bellici, presenti e futuri - Dal mondo del lavoro. Sardegna: i riflessi della crisi in una delle tante periferie dell'imperialismo - Per non dimenticare - 1968-1969: Le lotte operaie tra "piombo democratico" e affossamento opportunistico - Linee di struttura della Riforma (social-fascista) della Contrattazione del lavoro - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (I)

il programma comunista n. 6/2008

Editoriale. La crisi capitalistica travolge miti, false certezze, illusioni. I proletari si preparino a travolgere il capitalismo - A proposito della crisi economica. Catastrofe o pacifica metamorfosi? - Dal mondo del lavoro. A proposito del "Decreto Gelmini" (Legge 133) - Dalla parte dei proletari - Vicenda Alitalia: una storia di ordinaria messa in scena - Ancora a proposito di elezioni e stensionismo - Il neo-Presidente USA e la Gonzi - International SpA - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (II) - Pagine di teoria. La teoria della rendita - Uno sguardo alla situazione economica russa

il programma comunista n. 1/2009

Editoriale. Israele e Palestina. Terrorismo di Stato e difattismo proletario - A Gaza, macelleria imperialista contro il proletariato - Dal mondo del lavoro. Lituania. - La rivolta sotto il palazzo del governo di Riga - Spagna. Altri licenziamenti in corso e in vista - Grecia. Una rivolta nata dal malessere sociale - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (III) - Il ciclo storico dell'economia capitalistica - Il ciclo storico del dominio politico della borghesia

il programma comunista n. 2/2009

Editoriale. La sanguinaria agonia del capitalismo - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (IV) - La rabbia proletaria cova sotto la cenere e la borghesia corre ai ripari. A proposito del divieto di sciopero - Dal mondo del lavoro. Dopo l'Assemblea Nazionale di Roma del sindacalismo di base (7 febbraio) - Lincolnshire. La classe operaia non è "proprietà nazionale" - La riforma social-fascista governativa del modello contrattuale del lavoro; ovvero: un copia-incolla del testo Cgil-Cisl-Uil - Il proletariato sotto il regime delle leggi eccezionali - 4 Marzo 1919 - 4 Marzo 2009. A novant'anni dal Primo Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista

il programma comunista n. 3/2009

Editoriale. Il proletariato torni a fare sentire la propria voce - Accordo Fiat-Chrysler. Una storia di morti viventi - Dal mondo del lavoro. I proletari arrabbiati di Francia suonano la sveglia? - Guyana, Antille, Réunion: l'efficacia dei metodi di classe - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (V) - Da "proprietà e capitale. 1948-1950" (prima parte) - Una precisazione su "stato" e "democrazia"

il programma comunista n. 4/2009

Editoriale. Occupato, precario, disoccupato. Il proletariato è un unico esercito - Uno sguardo alla situazione russa (seconda parte) - *Lo stalinismo*. Non patologia del movimento operaio, ma aperta controrivoluzione borghese (VI) - Da "proprietà e capitale. 1948-1950" (ultima parte) - Ancora a proposito di democrazia

OUR INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Cahiers Internationalistes (nouvelle série) 2

La bourgeoisie redécouvre les luttes ouvrières en pleine orgie électoraliste

Les leçons de la grève à Chausson

Actionnariat populaire et privatisations

La lutte prolétarienne contre l'embargo en Irak est une exigence

de la préparation de la révolution communiste Afrique du Sud:

les prolétaires ne sont qu'au début de leur lutte La Tchétchénie, une autre face du capitalisme

Cahiers Internationalistes 3-4

Editorial. Un monde à la débandade, un avenir à construire

A propos des calomnies contre les communistes révolutionnaires

La fonction de la social-démocratie en Italie (publié dans "Il comunista",

6 février 1921) Les sociaux-démocrates et la violence (publié dans "

il comunista", 12 avril 1921) Les voies qui conduisent au "noskisme"

(publié dans "il comunista", 14 juillet 1921)

Le fascisme (publié dans "il comunista", 17 novembre 1921)

Le programme fasciste (publié dans "il comunista", 27 novembre 1921)

Du gouvernement (publié dans "il comunista", 2 décembre 1921)

Rapport de A. Bordiga sur le fascisme au IV Congrès de

l'Internationale communiste (12ème séance, 16 Novembre 1922)

Cahiers Internationalistes 5

Editorial. La taupe de la "globalisation" capitaliste est au travail

L'Algérie, un exemple supplémentaire d'une dérive inévitable à l'époque

impérialiste de l'indépendance nationale, à l'impasse démocratique et au

massacre systématique de milliers d'êtres humains pour le seul bénéfice

d'intérêts impérialistes Eloge de la patience

Il n'y arien à attendre du nouveau gouvernement de gauche

Convergences et divergences entre les thèses bolcheviques de Lenine-

Boukharine et celles de la gauche communiste d'Italie sur la question

parlementaire

Rapport de A. Bordiga sur le fascisme au V^{me} Congrès de

l'Internationale Communiste

La lutte des sans-papiers en France

Cahiers Internationalistes 6

Qu'est-ce que le Parti Communiste International?

Cahiers Internationalistes 7

L'impérialisme des porte-avions

Crise économique et science marxiste

Invariance de la social-démocratie, invariance du marxisme

Introduction aux "Considérations" et "Thèses de Naples 1965"

Considérations sur l'activité organique du parti quand la situation générale

est historiquement défavorable Thèses sur la tâche historique, l'action et la

structure du Parti Communiste Mondial (Napoli 1965)

La question kurde

Quoi de neuf en France?

Cahiers Internationalistes 8

La nécessité historique du communisme

Le spectre du communisme, cauchemar permanent de la bourgeoisie

Contre toutes les illusions démocratiques

La loi marxiste de la chute tendancielle du taux de profit

Globalisation et internationalisme prolétarien

Luttes économiques et luttes politiques

Parti et classe- Parti et action de classe

La question palestinienne et le mouvement ouvrier international

Cahiers Internationalistes 9

La continuité du marxisme révolutionnaire contre la continuité de la guerre
imperialiste

Le marxisme face à la paix et à la guerre

Le capital à la vaine recherche d'un ordre mondial

Le Parti et l'action économique

La bataille incessante du marxisme contre un antimerialisme de façade
constitue la base nécessaire à la reconquête prolétarienne de ses traditions
de lutte contre la bourgeoisie

La doctrine de l'énergumène

Honte et mensonge du "défensisme"

Tartuffe ou du pacifisme

Storia della Sinistra Comunista

Vol. 1 - 1912-1919 (pp. 423, \$ 20.00, or € 20.00; Vol.2 - 1919-1920 (pp. 740, \$ 30.00, or € 20.00; Vol. 3 - 1920-1921 (pp. 517, \$ 30.00, or € 20.00; Vol. 4 - 1921-1922 (pp. 467, \$ 35.00, or € 20.00)

A comprehensive reappraisal of the formative process of a revolutionary Left wing within the Italian Socialist Party which gave rise to a definitely communist group. This group expressed the tendency which led towards the foundation of a party fulfilling all requirements established by the historical experience of Bolshevism and as stated by the Third International. Documentation is given supporting the essential statement that the theoretical and practical activity displayed by the real founders of the Communist Party of Italy, was a consistent application of some critical points of Marxist strategy and tactics - as restored by Lenin's work - to a specific and indeed typical western situation.

Russia e rivoluzione nella teoria marxista

(pp. 222, \$ 15.00, or € 7.00)

A painstaking and polemic reconstruction of the basic Marxist positions on the "Russian question" before February 1917, which restores the correct analysis and strategy drawn by Marx-Engels and by Lenin as regards the "double revolution". Originally published in 1954-55

Tracciato d'impostazione. I fondamenti del comunismo rivoluzionario.

(pp. 70, \$8.00, or €6.00)

A synthetic exposition of our doctrine, followed by a defence of the fundamentals of revolutionary communism against all anarchist and spontaneist deviations.

In difesa della continuità del programma comunista

(pp. 189, \$ 15.00, or € 6.00)

The theses of the Communist Left, of the Communist Party of Italy, and of the International Communist Party from 1920 up to today with a historical presentation and commentary. Includes: Theses of the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party (1920); Theses on the Tactics of the Communist Party of Italy (Theses of Rome, 1922); The Tactics of the Communist International - Draft theses presented by the Communist Party of Italy at the Fourth World Congress (Moscow, 1922); Theses Presented by the Left at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Italy (Lyons, 1926); Nature, Function and Tactics of the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class (1945); The Party's Essential Theses (1951); Considerations on the Organic Activity of the Party When the General Situation Is Historically Unfavourable (1965); Theses on the Historical Task, the Action and the Structure of the World Communist Party

(1965); Supplementary Theses on the Historical Task, the Action and the Structure of the World Communist Party (1966).

***Elementi dell'economia marxista. Sul metodo dialettico.
Comunismo e conoscenza umana***

(pp. 125, \$ 15.00, or € 6.00)

A summary of Book One of Marx's "Capital", part of the integral reconstruction of Marxist theory undertaken by our Party, against all democratic and reformist deviations. Followed by two texts on methodological and theoretical issues in the same tradition.

Partito e classe

(pp. 140, \$ 15.00. or € 6.00)

Party and Class: the Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution Approved by the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920), and some contributions by the Communist Left on the relationship between party and class, such as "Party and Class" (1921), "Party and Class Action" (1921), "Proletarian Dictatorship and Class Party" (1921).

***"L'estremismo, malattia infantile del comunismo",
condanna dei futuri rinnegati***

(pp. 121, \$ 10.00, or € 6.00)

An extensive commentary on Lenin's "Left-wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder", as an indictment of all future renegades.

Lezioni delle controrivoluzioni

(pp. 81, \$ 8.00, or € 6.00)

An analysis of the various counter-revolutionary waves, and of what communists must learn from them.

Visit our web site:

www.ilprogrammacomunista.com

Write to us:

**Edizioni il programma comunista
Casella postale 962
20101 Milano (Italy)**



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

A publication of the International Communist Party (ICP)

Prices: U.K. £ 3,00 • U.S. and Canada \$5:00 • Belgium, France, Germany and Italy €5,00