

REVOLUTION or WAR #10

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Summary

The Rise of New Communist Forces and The Fight for The International Party

International Situation

Balance-sheet of Railworkers' Defeat of Spring 2018 in France

March 28th IGCL Leaflet for The Generalization and Unity of The Struggles

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What Is The Party? (Nuevo Curso)

The Future International (Internationalist Communist Tendency)

Some Comments on the ICT Text on the Future International

History of the Working Class Movement

Rosa Luxemburg and The Feminism (Nuevo Curso)

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(Our review is also available in French)

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Call on Support

We thank our readers who understand and support our activity through written, material or financial contributions, as well as by other means. Publishing, printing and mailing costs of our review represent a large financial effort, given our limited resources.

The development towards decisive class conflicts, as well as our organization's overall activity (intervention in the class and regroupment...), all this demands, among other things, an important financial effort on our part. We appeal to all readers interested in our work, and the analyses that we defend, to show their support by subscribing and by getting the word out about our review, which is published in full version in English and French. We also publish a Spanish version with selected articles (any help with translations is also welcome).

The Rise of New Communist Forces and the Fight for the International Party

Whatever one may think at first glance, from a static and non-historical point of view, the existence and development of what we call the International *Proletarian Camp*, is a material element of **any** historical situation. The groups claiming the Communist Left that are its main component, are both the product of this situation and an active factor in its development since they are the highest expressions of proletarian class consciousness. This is obvious during the few rare revolutionary periods when the revolutionary party, or even the revolutionary parties, influence and lead the proletarian struggle. But this is also true during periods when the proletariat is not massively in struggle, even in periods of full counter-revolution, and the revolutionaries are scattered, divided, reduced to very small groups or circles without direct and immediate influence in the revolutionary class. This is just as true today as capitalism, caught up in the crisis and its own contradictions, imposes increasing misery and sacrifices and seeks to drag humanity into the imperialist war and the proletarians, in their great mass, do not do not know how to oppose it and even too often hesitate to do so.

The reality, the action, the strengths and weaknesses of the communist groups, of the *party in the making*, are essential data to understand the state of the capitalist world and the course of the class struggle. This is why it is important to recognize, welcome and support the ongoing emergence of new political groups claiming the Communist Left, particularly in the United States and Spain. The contribution of new energies, new blood, is to be welcomed in two measures. Firstly, with the crisis of 2008 and the rise of the class struggle in Greece and Spain, for example, one could have thought of a concomitant development of groups of the Communist Left; *development*, it must be specified, in terms of intervention and influence, not in numerical terms. But it is rather the opposite that occurred: delinquency of the International Communist Current, a defeatist ideology that the Communist Left had gone bankrupt with the wind in its sails (of which the journal *Controverses* remains the most accomplished expression), etc. In a second step, the generation of militants of the years 1960-70, generation that formed the base of most historic groups¹ of the Communist Left, is decimated by the fact that many militants have died, the rest being struck by political demoralization. In short, the setting up of new groups around the journal *Intransigence* (<https://intransigence.org/>)² and the

creation of groups around Nuevo Curso (<https://nuevocurso.org/>) as the Liga Emancipación (<http://emancipacion.info/>) is to be saluted fraternally. This dynamic is part of the constant work of the communist militants for the regrouping of the revolutionaries in the class party.

Re-appropriating the Experience of the International Communist Left

The most difficult task for the new communist groups is the re-appropriation of the communist program. We must face reality. Between the current period and the October Revolution, there was a political break marked by the darkest counter-revolution. Only a few small communist nuclei have been able to maintain themselves thus ensuring a certain political and programmatic continuity until today. The younger generations must therefore build on this heritage in order to avoid falling into the pitfall of modernism, that is to say the nihilist ideology that claims that everything has failed, including Marxism, except its own new "theory". If it is too early to state profoundly on the group Emancipación (Spain) which has yet expressed itself little, the journal *Intransigence* # 2 (USA) gives good place to the historical texts of the Communist Left. In fact, there is a text by Grandizo Munis³ and another by the Left Fraction of the Communist Party of Italy. And that's very good.

Moreover, the basic positions of the journal *Intransigence* are typical positions of the Communist Left. Although they are too summary, for example there is no mention of the principle of the Dictatorship of the proletariat and the destruction of the bourgeois state, they somehow express what we call "class frontiers". That is the resulting positions of the highest political experience of the revolutionary movement. However, these positions must be discriminating criteria, otherwise they are only wishful thinking. For example, the article by the Kontra Klasa group from Croatia on the *period of transition* is completely opposed to the basic positions displayed by the journal. Indeed, this one sympathizes with the theory of *communisation*⁴ and,

Gulf Coast Communist Fraction
(<https://gulfoastcommunistfraction.wordpress.com/>)

on which we will state in the next issue, the American group of the ICT, the I'IWG and a new Canadian group, close to the ICT, it seems, the Klasbatalo Collective.

3 . There seems to be a renewed interest in the revolutionary milieu for Grandizo Munis and his political current, the *Fomento Obrero Revolucionario*, which unfortunately no longer has a formal expression. Although we do not claim to be "directly" from this current, it is resolutely placed historically within the Communist Left.

4 . An ultra-left theory that advocates the direct

1 . To be simple, the International Communist Party, the Internationalist Communist Tendency and the International Communist Current.

2 . Workers Offensive ([/www.workersoffensive.org/](http://www.workersoffensive.org/)) that we had saluted in the previous issue of this journal, the

in the purest councilist spirit, the entire article speaks of the transition between capitalism and communism only from the economic point of view without speaking of the central question of political power! Now, this opportunist theory, *communisation*, is to be fought relentlessly.

Which brings us to the question of regroupment. Yes, we must regroup, but according to which method? The regroupment will never be the harmonious addition of the different currents or tendencies of the revolutionary milieu. This is a democratic conception of the regroupment. On the contrary, it will be done through a process, which incidentally unfolds before our eyes in an embryonic way, of political confrontation. By political confrontation, we mean the political struggle that is waged in the revolutionary milieu between the Marxist left and the opportunist right. This demarcation, which is always dynamic and changing, transcends the formal organizations. There are no other ways to the party constitution.

This is probably the main weakness of the journal *Intransigence* # 2: there is no position, debate or political confrontation, on the various texts published. Yet four different groups participate. One can logically think that they do not all have the same positions on all aspects of the class struggle. Why not use the journal as a tool to debate and discuss and thus begin a process of homogenization around one current or another of the Left? The regroupment is not like a shopping centre where everyone opens his small shop to sell his small merchandise.

The Communist Groups: Expressions of the Local Proletariat or rather Expressions of the International Proletariat?

As well, the revolutionaries' regroupment must be done directly on the international ground according to the centralist principle of internationalism. We thus find reductive that *Intransigence* sets itself only on the North American area. The journal has "spontaneously" an international character in that a Croatian group participates, thus contradicting the claim of the grouping only on American soil. This question seems to be one of the main difficulties facing new groups. Should communist groups, including those of today, and the party have to consider and address situations and problems, general and particular, from the local or from the international level?

Whether they are a group with an international physical material existence, in several countries and continents, or only in one isolated city, does not change the political problematic and the approach with which the Communists must approach the problem. To answer this question which concerns the

transition from capitalism to communism, thus avoiding to speak about the essential question of power and the state, in short, a modern and academic version of Anarchism.

space dimension, we must adopt the same method as for the *time dimension*: a communist group, all the more the party, must consider the situations and the problems which arise not from the immediate point of view but from the historical, that is, from the revolutionary and communist future of the international proletariat. It must also approach and consider its activity and its intervention as well as the situations from the international point of view. References and calls to internationalism, certainly indispensable, are not enough and remain only pious wishes, abstractions, if they are not fueled by the vision and a permanent international approach and by the historical perspective of the proletarian insurrection and the Dictatorship of the proletariat. These considerations have concrete political implications of all kinds, including in the intervention in the immediate and local struggles of the working class.

As well, the communist groups and the party always address themselves to the international proletariat even when they intervene in a specific and local struggle with particular orientations and slogans. Because armed with the communist program, and therefore constantly having in mind the historical and international character of the proletarian struggle, they are the most capable, and often the only ones, to precisely be able to put forwards the most effective orientations and slogans, according to the moments and the limits of each working class struggle, "from the smallest to the largest". Thus, any communist group must immediately consider itself as an expression of the international proletariat regardless of the places, the scenes, where its members arise and where it can intervene directly and physically – with obviously a special responsibility in these places. Any new group must "tend to" – it is not an "absolute" that can be decreed but a process of homogeneity and political unity around the communist program for which it is necessary to fight – to form and act as a centralized international group. Once again, these are not pure abstractions, nor even "preferences" in themselves of any ethical order or still dogmas that would be limited to the sole terrain of the organizational form to be adopted, but the choice of the general political approach and method of analysis and intervention to utilize and develop in each moment and ... place, or even field or subject of struggle, where we can intervene. Including, therefore, in the fight for the party and its construction.

Robin, September 2018

International Situation

Rapid Assessment of The Spring 2018 Defeat of the Railway Workers in France : Trade Union Unity Is not The Unity of the Working Class but its Division and Dispersion

We publish below the leaflet that we distributed from March 28th, 2018 in the demonstrations and workers' assemblies in which we were able to participate and intervene⁵ during the workers' mobilizations in February, March and April 2018 in France and whose epicentre was the struggle of railway workers against the "reform of the SNCF" led by the Macron government. Our leaflet calls on proletarians to confront openly, directly and collectively the tactics of days of action and rotating strikes, i.e. union sabotage, to be able to extend and generalize the struggles at a time when various major companies were in a state of conflict, or even on strike: Air France, Carrefour stores, hospitals and particularly old age homes (EPHAD), the FORD factory in Bordeaux, the public service... The idea is then widespread among many workers and the prospect of a massive and united struggle of different sectors is a reality, a stake of the moment, a real possibility even if reduced, that the unions, the media and even Macron himself, "who does not believe in it", he says in an interview, will take up and disguise as a "convergence of struggles" to better empty it of all proletarian content and liquidate it. The extension, which in March depended on the open and renewable strike at the SNCF (even though it was only undertaken by a minority of depots and stations) was the only way to give confidence to the greatest number of proletarians, including railway workers, and to many other sectors, and for them to resolutely engage in the common struggle. And, thus, to impose on the State the only terrain that it fears and that could ultimately have pushed it back: that of the extension "without control", i.e. without union control, of the class struggle, i.e. of a mass strike dynamic.

The Political Passivity of the Railway Workers Delivers Them to Union Sabotage

In order to be as effective as possible, our intervention also tried to take into account another reality that greatly weakens the prospect of extension: the fact that with the sudden and brutal announcement of the attack on February 19th with the

5 . The numerical weakness of our intervention capacities inevitably limits the "immediate" impact of our intervention on struggles of a national scale. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the expression and dissemination, however limited, of political orientations for the struggle are part of it, constituting a material force on the condition that they correspond to the immediate stakes and needs.

publication of the *Spinetta report*, which was particularly provocative, the railway workers remained passive and allowed the unions to act... while they were already in discussion with the government. This situation lasted until the day of action on March 22nd, when two different demonstrations were organized in Paris because of the strike in the civil service. The SNCF trade unions, led by the CGT, did not call for a strike and "allowed the individuals to decide" on their participation in the Paris demonstration⁶. They thus avoid holding general meetings that could have put them in a difficult situation. It is during this period that the extreme left and the trade union SUD incessantly push the CGT, the principal trade union, to organize the strike because otherwise, according to them, "*defeat will be inevitable*"⁷ thereby bringing down and locking up the most combative railway workers on the terrain of the trade union unity "which must be preserved". Even though it is with the CGT, opposed to the immediate strike, that defeat is inevitable! On March 15, to the amazement of the greatest number, all of the different unions gathered in an *Intersyndicale*⁸ [Inter-unions committee] set up in the name of trade union unity and on the altar of which the leftist union SUD was to push the most combative railway workers to renounce the fight for extension and workers' unity, did not call for a renewable strike but for a series of rotating strikes over several months. During this whole period, at least until April 3rd and 4th (date of the first two rotating strikes), leaving the initiative and control of

6 . Only strike notices were filed to allow individual railway workers to decide for themselves to participate in the demonstration through a legal strike. Moreover, on that day, two demonstrations were supposed to meet at the Place de la Bastille in Paris. The unions wanted to avoid at all costs any expression, however limited and weak it might have been at that time, of extension and general struggle of all sectors. The two demonstrations ultimately did not meet at the Bastille at the end of the afternoon "thanks to" the... *Black Bloc* which, at the head of the procession of railway workers, sought confrontation with the police, which was very discreet that day, and blocked the demonstration many times, in particular on Boulevard Beaumarchais.

7 . The Trotskyist group *Permanent Revolution* quoted by the blog *Matière et révolution*. For a more detailed history of the 2018 movement, the reader can refer to the blog article: <https://www.matierevolution.fr/spip.php?article4926>.

8 . The inter-union committee that "unites" all the different unions from the most rightwing, CFDT and UNSA, that the press calls reformist unions in opposition to the others, up to the FO, CGT and SUD called "radical" and even sometimes "revolutionary"...

decisions to the *Intersyndicale*, the passive railway workers gave themselves hands bound to their class enemy. They gave it time to organize and impose the terrain, the conditions and the moment of "confrontation", while other fractions of the proletariat, weaker and less central, but some already in open struggle, were waiting and hoping for a central focus of struggle around which they could break their sense of isolation and engage themselves.

Our Intervention by Leaflet Was Late

For our part, we were also late. Our leaflet should have been produced earlier – by March 22nd at the latest. Certainly, when we realized and diffused it starting on March 28th, it was still possible that the class orientations that we put forward could have been taken up by railway workers, or even by other sectors: the extension and a united struggle remained a possibility in the situation. But it was shrinking day by day until it disappeared definitively the day after the first rotating strikes on the 3rd and 4th of April: the absence of assemblies renewing the strike in opposition to the trade union slogans indicates the inability of the railway workers to break with the dynamic imposed by the *Intersyndicale* and all the forces of the State. In our opinion, from that moment on, the proletarians abandoned any possibility of disputing, even if only minimally, the initiative to the bourgeoisie. It could thus bring the railway workers to exhaustion until the last days of the strike in July and impose an additional setback, after the "labour law" of 2016 (see the assessment we made in *Revolution or War* #6⁹) and that of autumn 2017 (the "reform" of the labour contract already carried out by Macron).

After April 4th, The Impasse and Defeat Assured

After April 3rd and 4th¹⁰, only a "contingent" or external fact to the events themselves – unlikely on this occasion – could have broken this dynamic of confinement and isolation: for example, the explosion of a conflict in another sector – as around the FORD factory in Bordeaux for example –, or even a police blunder. This was not the case: the State took great care to ensure that its anti-riot police controlled demonstrations and clashes with the Black Blocs, or during police evacuations from occupied universities, without any significant victims; as on May 1st in Paris, for example, on the Austerlitz bridge. Politically, it tried and succeeded without difficulty to occupy the whole "social" space in order to counter any eventuality of new conflict: following May 1st, the veterans of *Nuit Debout* [*Up All Night of 2016*¹¹] woke up to call to "*faire la fête à Macron*" ["beat Macron up"] on May 5th in a demonstration in

Paris. They were joined there by their acolytes from the leftist France Insoumise of Mélenchon. Just as the union SUD, organizing an "Inter-stations assembly" [*Intergares*] in Paris, took great care to keep the most combative railway workers locked up in the impasse of the dead-end strike and to ensure that all remained on the unionist, the *Intersyndicale* and union unity terrain: "*we call on all the [trade union] federations to harden the strike and propose the renewal of the movement as of May 24th per 24-hour period decided in the General Assemblies*" (motion adopted by the Paris Inter-stations assembly on the 14th of May¹²).

For our part, after April 3rd and 4th, aware that the window of opportunity for an extension is probably closing definitively, we think that the action orientations of our "agitation" leaflet were no longer corresponding to the immediate potentialities of the struggle – even if we could have still disseminated it from a "propagandist" point of view. We sought the emergence of minorities of workers who were at odds with the dynamics of the movement imposed by the trade unions and who wished to combat it in a form that can only be collective and minority, of the type of struggle committee or "interprofessional" assembly. To our knowledge, there appeared none apart from... those formal ones put in place by Trotskyists in universities between students and the trade unionists of SUD, which led to the *Inter-stations* [*Intergares*] assembly whose purpose was to bring down any combative will onto the trade unionist ground. While our prediction that all extension dynamic was extinguished in the aftermath of April 3rd and 4th has been verified, it is clear that at a time when the *Inter-stations* were calling for "*hardening the strike*", the CGT and the SUD were only seeking to drag the maximum number of railway workers who remained combative into defeat, exhaustion, disgust and the deepest discouragement. Had we had numerical forces a little more consequent than we do, we certainly would have produced a second leaflet drawing the lessons of the movement and warning against "the fight to the finish" of the CGT and SUD in the rotating strikes – in the end, there were 36 days of strike¹³ -

12 . Since we could only publish the English version of the leaflet that we intended to make known to "non-French" readers on April 10th, we accompanied its publication on our website with a short update, only in English, which tried to take into account the workers' impotence to call into question the rotating strike after April 3rd and 4th and to which the reader could refer.

13 . Of course, the communist militants who would have been railworkers themselves would have carry on being on strike, adapting the intervention of the political group as a whole according to the moments and the places, until their own local station or deposit assembly would have call to end it up. This is obvious for revolutionaries but it is better to say it considering certain petty-bourgeois confusions ("an every man for himself" individual in front of the defeat to come) which can circulate in the ranks of certain circles or groups of the Communist Left, for instance as in the ICC in many occasions..

9 . <http://igcl.org/Reflections-and-Balance-Sheet-of>

10 . <http://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/En-inter-gares-les-cheminots-appellent-les-federations-a-durcir-la-greve>.

11 . Que se pueden comparar a los indignados del 2008 en España...

precisely to limit as much as possible the extent of the failure by promoting the sharing of the lessons of this episode of struggle with the greatest number.

Finally, on June 14th, the law was passed in Parliament and the rotating strikes, with fewer and fewer participants, continued until July in... a growing general indifference and with isolated railway workers, divided between strikers and non-strikers, exhausted, desperate and suffocated by wage deductions because of the 36 days of strike...

Macron and The End of The Fetish of The General Strikes of 1968 and 1995

The French bourgeoisie has won a series of important victories against the proletariat in France both at the level of its economic exploitation and at the political level since spring 2016 and the "El Khomri labour law"¹⁴. It is possible – we deliver these elements for reflection – that the defeat of the railway workers marks the end of a particularity of the working class struggle in France. The European bourgeoisie, interested in the elimination of all bad proletarian examples, is not mistaken. As early as 24 April, the right-wing Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* headlined that "*Macron wants to bury May 68 and Autumn 95*" noting that in France, "*the myth of revolution in the street remains. But that, Macron is going to bury it*". In addition to a relative "adjustment" of the price of labour power, i.e. the exploitation of the proletarians, to the level of the main European rivals, the French bourgeoisie has thus won a political victory against the proletariat¹⁵. Undoubtedly, the tactics of the trade union days of action carried out systematically since 2003, and based precisely on the mystification of the general strikes of 1968 and 1995, in particular as an expression of trade union unity, is now worn down to the core – if only because it has led only to setbacks and bitter failures despite massive mobilizations, sometimes counting in millions of demonstrators and strikers, on multiple occasions. Moreover, modern forms of capitalist production have liquidated most of the large factories or sectors on which the leftist and anarchist fetish of the general strike is based, to the benefit of small production units in which "management" is omnipresent both ideologically and politically – prohibiting assemblies or even intervening directly in them if it cannot prevent them. As a result, any initiative to fight or strike is much more difficult. But paradoxically, because of these "modern" conditions of labour exploitation, the need for immediate extension beyond the enterprise

and largely on a geographical – and not corporatist – basis becomes all the more acute and vital and this in contrast to the large factories of yesteryear or vital sectors such as railway workers who could wrongly believe that they alone could bend management and government. This corporatist mystification carried and fed by the unions can only lose its power in view of the modern conditions of capitalist exploitation.

The proletariat in France has thus suffered several political failures and setbacks in its working and living conditions. However, we do not believe that these failures represent any sort of "historic" defeat at the French level; and even less at the international level. In our opinion, and without being able to elaborate here, these significant setbacks do not represent a real rupture in the development of the international class struggle that would significantly weaken the world proletariat. The class struggle in France, under the impetus of the bourgeoisie and especially the Macron government, which has already announced yet another pension reform to come, can only become more accentuated, as in all the other countries, because of the crisis of capital and its pushes towards generalized imperialist war.

For the proletarians and the communists, both the unfolding and the impotence of the struggle of the railway workers and the broader political implications that we can see following the last episodes of struggles in France, underline how much the proletarians' hesitations, even passivity, in the face of the political struggles that the enemy class imposes on them in struggles, in strikes, in assemblies are fraught with consequences. Neither proletarians nor communists can do without confronting all the political forces, particularly those on the left, trade unions, politicians, media, police, etc. of the bourgeois state apparatus. And first and foremost to confront the unions in the immediate struggles. The "economic" proletarian class struggle, because it inevitably confronts the state regardless of the level and degree of struggle and because it carries within itself the revolutionary perspective of the workers' insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat, is essentially a political struggle. That is why our leaflet ends with a call for the consolidation and organization of proletarians and revolutionaries. This is also why we consider that political indifferentism, whether it is *economist*, anarchist – including radical of the *Black Bloc* type, or even councilist – is to be resolutely combated both by the workers, by taking direct control of the political fight in their struggle, and by the communist groups in their general intervention.

RL, July 2018

14 . See *Revolution or War* #6

15 . In connection with the fetish of the general strike of 1968 and 1995, in the collective imagination – which can also represent a material force in the class struggle – deliberately maintained by the unions and the media, the railway workers had taken the place of the workers' fortress of the Renault Billancourt factory in the Paris suburbs closed in 1992. "When Billancourt sneezes, France catches a cold", it used to be said...

France : Strike a the SNCF, Struggles and Conflicts in All Sectors, Students and Pensioners' Demonstrations :
For an Efficient and Powerful Proletarian Fight-back, Generalization and Unification of the Struggle against French Capitalism! (March 28th 2018)

[Warning for the English edition of this leaflet April 10th : the following text should have been published in English more than a week ago. Unfortunately, we were unable to do so for translation and technical problems.

Since the publication and distribution of this leaflet, the situation in France has not changed much except that the ruling class and particularly the unions manage to control quite well the situation. This makes the already very limited potentialities for the railway workers' dynamic to spread and generalize the struggle to other sectors strongly reduced. Now, the railway workers struggle is already almost fully enclosed within the trap of the union's corporatist and "diehard" strike while no other sector seems, for the moment, able to take over the lead, or be the core, of a possible general movement. Thus, according to us, unless "something", any contingent event (spontaneous strike in another sector, violent demonstrations, etc.), comes to break the present dynamic and provides another perspective, this episode of struggle will now certainly remain under the full control of the ruling class and its state until the planned rolling strikes run out. Consequently, if we had the forces to intervene again directly and daily in this working class mobilization, this understanding would not change for the present moment the validity of the main orientation of the leaflet – "extension and unification of the strike, demonstrations and the class fight!" and "regroupment and organization of the most militant workers who want to fight for the extension and the unification of the struggle!". But it would change the focus of the revolutionaries' intervention from the railway workers themselves to other sectors]

Leftists' "Fight to The Finish" and Sabotage



General Assembly of the Paris-Nord Station
(photo from *Révolution permanente*)

*"But to win, the railway workers have to toughen the movement and they are conscious of that". "To toughen" the movement? To denounce and confront the union tactic of the intermittent strikes ? No, still more "radical": To change the calendar of the date of days of strike! "Like many GA as the Paris-Nord, the intergares meeting has voted to change the days of intermittent strikes from June 2 and 3 to Juen 4 and 5"! (Trotskist website of *Révolution permanente*, tendency of the NPA - 4th international, May 29th, 2018).*

Introduction of the leaflet for the "no French" readers, March 28th : We reproduce here the leaflet that we're giving out in France these days before the strike of April 3rd in the state railway company, the SNCF. Its workers are presently suffering a direct attack by the Macron government, that is by the state and the French ruling class. The difficulty for French capital is that it happens while various sectors or factories have been on strike these last weeks and months or are passing through more or less open conflicts in the midst of a generalized increasing discontent in front of the many measures adopted by the government. After more or less secret discussions between the government and the unions, the latter (with very radical words but without any content of struggle) have planned in advance, and without having called on any workers' assemblies to pronounce, several days of action; that is the classical union tactic in France of isolation and exhaustion of the working class struggles. Already in Paris, a street demonstration has taken place March 22nd in two different places at the same time with, on one side the "public employees" and on the other the railway workers. And the days of action at the SNCF will be rolling strikes and they are planed until... next June! Thus the unions and the bourgeoisie in general occupy the entire terrain of the working class fight-back and it remains to the working class to... submit to this imposed tactic leading to defeat or rise up frontally against it and the unions. The stakes are high.

For an Efficient and Powerful Proletarian Fight-back, Generalization and Unification of the Struggle against French Capitalism!

After the March 22nd demonstration, the railway workers will be on a rolling strike from Tuesday April 3rd. They will be on strike every five days and the agenda is already established until... June. Once more, the union tactic of the days of action that has systematically lead to defeat in the massive mobilizations of 2003, 2007, 2010 and 2016, is served up again with the variant that the workers will make a rolling strike! If this scenario and this agenda is not questioned by the general assemblies and the strikers, not only will the railway workers be defeated but, moreover, the other struggles and sources of social conflicts won't be able to identify and unite with the first ones to impose a genuine relation of forces to the government and French capitalism. Yet, the working class discontent is expressed almost everywhere: in the health sector, in the public services, Air France, but also in the private sector, the threat of mass redundancies in Ford and in various other companies all around the country, or still among the pensioned and the students of the faculties – often children of proletarians and future proletarians themselves for their most part. With the union's days of action, all these struggles will remain isolated and will then be also defeated, while their extension and unification would be the best means to force the government and the state withdraw all these attacks.

It is clear for all that the attack against the railway workers is also an attack, economically and politically, against all the workers of this country. After the 2016 attacks against the work contracts, the French bourgeoisie aims to impose new sacrifices on the railway workers of course but also to continue its offensive against the whole working class.

Over time and struggles, the railway workers have been presented as the last bastion of the working class that does resist in France. Rightly or wrongly, the myth is there and the Macron government and, behind it, the whole French state capitalist apparatus, wants to bring it down. The French ruling class wants also to definitively put the memory of the great strikes, 1995 or still 1968, and the threat it is for it, in the drawer of past history. The time to hesitate in front of the proletariat is over if French capitalism wants "close the gap" with its rivals :

"France won't have any motive capacity if it does not have a clear discourse and a lucid look at the world. But it won't have it neither if it does not reinforce its economy and its society. That is why I have asked the government to engage the fundamental reforms which are indispensable for France. Our credibility , our efficiency, our strength are at stake. But the strength of some cannot be nourished by the weaknesses of the others for long. Germany which made its reforms fifteen years ago, notes today that this situation is not viable. My wish is thus that we can build a common force." (Emmanuel Macron's interview to many European newspaper of June 21st, we translate from the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps*, <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/2017/06/21/emmanuel-macron-leurope-nest-un-supermarche-leurope-un-destin-commun>, since we could not find the whole interview in English).

The discourse is clear. One must further lower the living and working conditions – what they call the reforms – of the proletariat so that French capitalism can play a role in the world imperialist and warlike arena on Germany's side and in front of the American, Chinese and Russian great rivals. **Not only must the proletariat pay for the economic crisis of capitalism but also, and more and more, for the imperialist war to which the first, the crisis, inexorably leads.** Yet it is the only one able to oppose this infernal dynamic... by refusing the sacrifices through its struggles and by offering another historical and revolutionary perspective, that of a communist society without misery and war – and of which it is necessary to recall that Stalinism has been the main and bloody gravedigger in the USSR and in the whole world.

Oppose the Union Confinement and Isolation by the Strike and the Extension

The tactics that the unions have put in place isolate in advance the fight of the workers of the SNCF in the corporation and in a schedule of days of strike which can only lock them even more in a strike without any other perspective than to make it last 'to the end'... which, very quickly, will cause division within the strikers between those who want and can strike and those who will not, or less, and who will be discouraged.

The union tactics of the days of action is to be rejected. It imposes demands and fights that are corporatist and isolated. Worse still, by imposing legal notices to strike and by no longer calling general meetings in many SNCF depots - on this point, 'management' and unions work together in all companies - union days of action make the strike a purely individual and not collective decision, which weakens all the will to combat and the feeling of workers solidarity, each worker being referred to his 'individual' consciousness or will, including now at the SNCF by making a prior individual notice of strike.

What is to Be Done in Front of the Union Impasse?

How to outflank the union's slogans? During the strike at the SNCF from December 1986 to January 1987, and while the CGT had set up working picket lines to prevent the strike from starting on Friday, December 19, 1986, the railway workers had imposed their general assemblies (GAs) and went on strike against the CGT and the other unions. This is the path that must be taken again. **Imposing GAs to decide on the strike where unions refuse to do so is the way. Continuing the strike in SNCF depots and assemblies after April 3rd is certainly a first step.**

But if it is necessary, it is also insufficient. The object of the strike should not be in itself the simple blockage of the economy – capital knows how to organize itself to face and circumvent the points of blockages – but the extension of the strike to the other sectors and companies. To this end, it is necessary to advance the most unitary possible demands that the other workers can take back on their own account.

Some proposals among others (and to discuss, even to decline, depending on the particular local situations): the workers of the cleaning company of ONET who clean the Paris railway stations are on strike. It must be maintained that they have the same working and salary conditions as railway workers - or, depending on the strength of the strike, demand the termination of the subcontractors and their hiring by the SNCF. Faced with the redundancies at Ford Bordeaux, maintenance of wages and the employment contract until the end of their unemployment, or even hiring in public services. Or, since the retirement of railway workers will be attacked again, advance the demand for the upgrade of all pensions, public-private, to the present one of railway workers or the ones of public transport. Or again, in the wake of demands at Air France, increase wages and pensions for all ... **All that goes in the direction of unity is to supported. All that goes in the direction of isolation is to be rejected.**

In the same way, the GAs must seek the links and the extension of the struggle around it, geographically, by their opening to the other workers in struggle or even by the sending of mass delegations to the other sectors and companies, even in the so-called popular neighborhoods. The extension of the strike should not be reduced to the extension to the SNCF especially as the main unions opposed to the strike will succeed in blocking it in the least combative deposits while exhausting the strikers on the pretext that the entire SNCF must first strike before extending. It must be done on a geographical basis, by district, city or region and, in return, its success will convince the less militant SNCF workers to join the fight. In addition to the companies and sectors in struggle, it is also the means to train neighborhoods and young people, and younger generations, in the class struggle against capitalism and thus offer them a real solidarity, in the struggle, and a perspective of class struggle. The perspective of class struggle against capitalism is the only remedy against social despair and impasses.

Regroup for the Fight for Extension and Unification

Finally, wherever possible, it is appropriate that the most combative workers and the most convinced of these orientations, the need to fight against isolation and trade union traps, join together in committees of struggle or "interprofessional assemblies" - it does not matter what the name is - in order to organize and to intervene collectively wherever they can to take up this fight both for the extension and the unification and against their sabotage by the trade unions. For the struggle for extension and unification will not be able to do without this political confrontation against the particular organs of the capitalist state that are the trade unions and the left-wing parties, because they act directly in the working class environment.

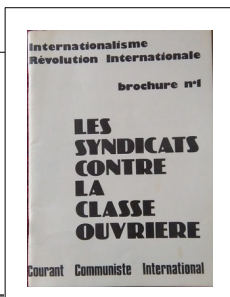
From the 3rd, in all SNCF depots, general assemblies to impose the renewable strike!

In the factories, the neighbourhoods and the cities, extension and unification of the strike, demonstrations and the class fight!

In the factories, the neighbourhoods and the cities, regroupment and organization of the most militant workers who want to fight for the extension and the unification of the struggle!

The International Group of the Communist Left, march 28th 2018

January 23th, Normand



French Reprinting of the ICC Pamphlet *Unions Against the Working Class*

For our readers from North America, we have reprinted the ICC pamphlet in French *Unions Against the Working Class* in French that it is difficult to find on this continent and which was written in 1976. It is also available in English. Even though our group, the IGCL, does not necessarily claim all the arguments and positions of this pamphlet, we think it is an historical document which matters to make known by the young generations and which can serve as a "programmatic" reference for today's communist groups.

**Communiqué on the American withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear agreement:
A step in the march towards generalized imperialist war (10 May 2018).**

Trump's decision to denounce the Iranian nuclear agreement is an important step in the evolution of "international relations", that is imperialist rivalries. The consequences are not only the risks of an immediate extension of the wars in the Middle East, immediately confirmed by the direct confrontation between Iranian and Israeli forces on the night of 9-10 May. But above all the accelerated aggravation of tensions between the great imperialist powers and the growing affirmation of a central imperialist polarization between the United States and continental Europe. It is a real ultimatum that the American bourgeoisie gives to all its rivals... and especially to Europeans. This is what the American ambassador to Germany immediately made clear: "*German companies doing business in Iran should wind down operations immediately*"! (quoted by the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* on May 9th¹⁶).

Beyond the economic aspect, secondary in fact because Germany and Europe could very well tolerate in itself a stop of their investments in Iran, the ultimatum is of a political and imperialist order. "*The United States has chosen the path of confrontation with Europe*" (idem). For German capital and its main allies in the European Union, the dilemma is clear: either submit to the American ultimatum and expect to be stifled very quickly under the successive dictates that will follow and lose all imperialist credit with the other major powers; or it is "*time for Europe to stand up to the United States*" (idem) by regrouping around it the anti-American imperialist front, starting with China and Russia. This will not be without difficulties and internal contradictions in each European country, as *Der Spiegel* expresses, obviously with regret, for the German bourgeoisie, some parts of which still hesitate before the inevitable: "*Europe is confronted with the potential loss of what has been the most important, reliable and beneficial constant of [its] foreign policy for decades: the partnership with the United States and the transatlantic relationship*" (idem). This will not go without difficulties and contradictions within the European Union, in particular with the anti-Russian and pro-American countries of the former Eastern Bloc.

But the main European countries no longer really have a choice. Trump keeps poking at and provoking the European Union and Germany. It expresses so clearly both the degree reached by the contradictions of capitalism, the exacerbation of the competition between capitals in the unbridled search for shrinking profits, which drags us into the generalized war and, consequently and complementarily, the desperate rage that has seized the American

bourgeoisie in the face of its constant historical retreat, since the disappearance of the USSR, on the international scene. Capitalism drags humanity into the generalized imperialist war. The international proletariat, both an exploited class and a revolutionary class, has no choice either. Either submit to capital and that will lead to even more misery and exploitation to prepare for widespread war, then because of war itself; or resist the attacks of capitalism by confronting its states and paving the way for their overthrow, the destruction of capitalism itself and the establishment of a communist society without misery or war.

For the international proletariat to be able to open up this perspective and this hope, it must also resolutely engage in political confrontation against all the forces of each capitalist state, right-wing and left-wing political parties, trade unions and other forces of political and ideological control, and against bourgeois repression¹⁷. If each national bourgeoisie has no other choice but to engage in the march to generalized war and in confrontation with its own working class, the international proletariat – and particularly its most conscious and combative minorities by coming together to lead this class political struggle – has no other choice but to engage in the resolute defense of its class interests by assuming the confrontation with capitalism and its state.

The IGCL, May 10th, 2018.

PS. We draw attention to Nuevo Curso's statement (in Spanish), the main points of which we share: <https://nuevocurso.org/tratado-nuclear-y-rescate-argentino-dos-caras-de-la-guerra-comercial/>.

16 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/time-for-europe-to-stand-up-to-the-united-states-a-1206997.html>

17 This is precisely what the proletariat in France is failing to do, even though the conditions for a widespread and generalized struggle were met around the railway workers' strike in March. By not disputing the timing, the planning, the strike days in the hands of the unions, by respecting the terrain of government-union discussions and negotiations, in short by not confronting politically in the assemblies and in the workplaces the union sabotage, the struggle of railway workers and other mobilizations (such as that of Air France or the Ford factory in Bordeaux) will suffer failures - barring unforeseen circumstances breaking the course of events - because of their isolation. It is a lesson for the proletariat of all countries.

Marxism and The National Question

The end of 2017 was marked by the renewal of nationalist quarrels in Europe. After Scotland, then Flanders in Belgium, Catalan separatism resurfaced in its turn, as did, to a lesser extent, Corsican separatism. These independence movements affecting "old capitalist nations" follow the creation of new nations after the explosion of the Eastern bloc, the Baltic countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the former Yugoslavia. Very often, these nationalist movements are supported, not always (Catalonia and Scotland)¹⁸, by extreme right-wing parties. What do these nationalist movements represent and what are the stakes, and especially what danger do they pose to the international proletariat, and particularly that of the countries or regions under consideration?

Most groups of the Communist Left have been able to respond to the nationalist poison with an uncompromising internationalism¹⁹. Some groups, in particular the blog *Nuevo Curso*²⁰, have been able to correctly analyze the political situation and draw from it appropriate guidelines, fundamental tasks of any revolutionary organization. Among other things, *Nuevo Curso* has been able to point out in its various publications the danger of war as a covert feature of the Spanish situation if the proletariat were ever to join one or the other nationalist camp on a massive scale. We fully share this perspective.

Other groups such as Robin Goodfellow and the Communist Workers' Organisation have expressed more or less confused positions on certain aspects on this occasion. The first group, despite its "Bordigist" tradition, a movement that cannot be accused of democratic tendencies, gives the Catalans the right to self-determination because the Democratic Republic could constitute a field for the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie²¹. Among other things, it can be read in their position that the proletariat must "*demand the dismissal of Philip VI, the immediate abolition of the monarchy and the proclamation of the republic*" and "*demand the holding of a constituent assembly to elaborate the forms of this republic (unitary, federal...)*". All this in the name of a "return to Marx" of 1848, that is, in an attachment to the letter of the writings of Marx and Engels against the very spirit of those writings kept alive by the Italian left!

18 . In the province of Quebec (Canada), there is still an independence movement promoted by the social democrats of Québec Solidaire and the Parti Québécois.

19 . For our part, see *Revolution or War* #9 : *The situation in Spain and the Catalan Question*. <http://igcl.org/The-Situation-in-Spain-and-the>

20 . <https://nuevocurso.org/>. For an English translation of their statement on Catalonia : <http://www.igcl.org/Catalan-Elections-of-December-21st-351>

21 . https://www.robingoodfellow.info/pagesfr/rubriques/Sur_la_Catalogne.htm

The CWO's position opened the door to confusion by suggesting that a proletarian breach could open up from the struggles between nationalisms²². Indeed, it called for the establishment of workers' assemblies in the midst of a nationalist "strike". The political danger being to attach a revolutionary label to the nationalist movement, and thus unwittingly participate in the engagement of proletarians in the bourgeois dynamics of the Catalanists, instead of denouncing it for what it really is, as we can see in the following passage: "*(...) we need an international organisation, a party, which can effectively intervene in events such as the strike in Catalonia – to push the struggle beyond the control of unions and institutional parties, and declare independence from all strata of the ruling class, whatever their nationality.*"

The purpose of this text is therefore to resume the debate on the national question, but from a point of view that is more theoretical than topical. Not that the second option is bad in itself: the blog *Nuevo Curso* has already fulfilled this task in a more than adequate way. We only want here to take up the thread of revolutionary theory on the national question from the perspective of Marx, Engels and especially the Communist Left and thus continue the political debate and confrontation.

1. Marx and Engels on International Relations in Europe

The Nation as the Preferred Terrain for the Bourgeoisie's Struggle Against Feudalism

Throughout the many debates on the national question, especially at the time of the Second International, one element was constantly underestimated at best, completely forgotten at worst. Indeed, during these debates, there was a tortuous attempt to give a well-founded definition of the concept of nation that could then provide the basis for social democracy for a correct orientation on the national question. For some, the national fact is primarily cultural, for others it would be linguistic or legal. Some advocated national autonomy, others self-determination. These attempts at a definition that were not very fruitful from a revolutionary point of view were more an expression of the penetration of bourgeois ideology, gradual but certain, into social democracy than a Marxist political continuity with the "founding fathers". For Marx and Engels, and this is the guiding principle of all their militant activity²³ in the second half of the 19th century, the

22 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-10-07/cataloniacompeting-nationalisms-against-the-working-class>

23 . See among others their "journalistic" work in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

nation is above all an historical and political product. In fact, it is the field par excellence for the economic-political development of the bourgeoisie and its struggle against decadent feudalism.

Thus, in the class conflict that brought the bourgeoisie and feudalism into conflict, it was literally two civilizations that were opposed, as Marx and Engels stated in the *New Rhine Gazette* in 1848 "in Germany, the struggle for centralization against a federal system is the struggle between modern civilization and feudalism." The bourgeoisie advocated the establishment of a body centralizing and delimiting economic life, the nation with an internal market, governed by a unitary political body, the democratic republic²⁴. The feudal system, for its part, tried by all means to cling to its last remnants of domination through the small principdom of the Middle Ages and the absolute monarchy.

Against all the moralizing, romantic and mythical conceptions of the nation associated with multiple forms of nationalism, Marx and Engels developed a materialistic and historical theory of international relations that took into account the national fact. The principle is more than simple. The proletariat must ally itself with the bourgeoisie first to defeat the common enemy, the aristocracy, in a struggle that necessarily takes on a national and democratic form. Under these conditions, the proletariat supports the demands linked to national liberation. Once feudalism is defeated and the bourgeoisie in power, the proletariat can direct its struggle directly against the bourgeoisie. The content of its struggle thus becomes intrinsically international and internationalist because the proletariat no longer fights with and for another class of civil society as a "people", but fights autonomously as an "international proletariat".

Historic Nations against Fragments of Peoples

Similarly, Marx and Engels used terminology at the time that would have made many Third Worldist leftists shout out, even though they claim to be "Marxists". The nations that set out against the aristocracy were called historical nations or viable nations. They had the support of Marx and Engels in their national struggle. In contrast, the "fragments of peoples" that always ended up supporting feudalism in one way or another were characterized as nations without history or strength. Marx and Engels did not support them in any way, in fact they denounced them as the basis for the European reaction. Their ideology, for example pan-Slavism, was for them a vestige of medieval particularisms.

The conception of capital in two distinct phases

24 . Obviously, the democratic republic is the most pure, the most perfect form of bourgeois domination. However, it is not the only one. Constitutional monarchy, fascism and stalinism are "alternative" forms of the domination of capital, dependent on the particular historical conditions.

associated with the theory of the decadence of capitalism is fundamental. Marx and Engels recognized the revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie's struggle against feudalism. In the period of the bourgeoisie's rise to power, the proletariat, although already tending to defend its own class interests, could also occasionally "ally" with it in its struggle against the remnants of pre-capitalist society – particularly against feudalism – in order to accelerate or even to enable the definitive domination of national capital and the creation of real nation states necessary for the development of national capital in countries where the bourgeoisie was too "weak". This historical period gradually ended with the apogee of capitalism that can be traced back to the constitution of the German state following the Franco-Prussian war from 1870 to 1914. During this one, the international proletariat has increasingly asserted itself through its class struggle as a revolutionary class in frontal opposition against the bourgeoisie and the remnants of aristocratic classes now linked to the former.

In its second phase, decadence, the development of capitalism passes from "historically necessary" to reactionary because the bourgeoisie, now in power and with its system of domination in place, wants to defend its mode of production tooth and nail against the new revolutionary class emerging from the very development of capitalism, the proletariat. From the political point of view, having "nothing to gain" and everything to lose from establishing any alliances with the bourgeoisie, and the material conditions for communism having matured sufficiently, it can thus more directly display and fight for its own autonomous political programme, the communist programme. In its daily struggles, the proletariat obviously defends its living conditions, but the development of capitalism allows the perspective of communism to appear as the final necessity of its struggles. Thus, all democratic or national demands become obsolete in the sense that they were the expression of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, thus the expression of an earlier and past phase of history, an antagonism that is replaced by the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Centralization, Democracy, Big Nations and the Republic

Thus Marx and Engels supported Poland's independence in the second half of the 19th century. Their support was not based on moral considerations about oppressed nations, but above all on the prospect of the development of democracy in Europe and the weakening of the Tsarist regime, considered precisely as the ultimate fortress of the feudal reaction in Europe. Any democratic development of an "historical nation" represented the development of the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy and therefore

a battle won by capitalism against feudalism.

Marx and Engels have also always tended to support the "great nations", the large centralized states as the purest political expressions of the bourgeoisie's rise to power. As Engels notes, "*There is no power of any importance in Europe that has not incorporated parts of other nations into its territory ... Nobody will venture to say that the map of Europe is definitively established. But any changes, if they are to endure, must increasingly tend by and large to give the big and viable European nations their real natural frontiers to be determined by language and fellow-feeling, while at the same time the remnants of peoples that can still be found here and there and that are no longer capable of national existence, remain incorporated into the larger nations and either merge into them or are conserved as merely ethnographic relics with no political significance. Military considerations can apply only secondarily.*"²⁵ As much as particularism, federalism and division were the expressions of feudalism ; the rise of capital must take place within the framework of the nation, its centralization and its unity.

The breaking point between the two phases of capital is usually set at 1914, when the First World War broke out. What the year 1914 expresses is that from a geopolitical point of view, capital had conquered and colonized the entire planet. A nation no longer has any other place for its expansion that is not already conquered by another nation, hence the global and imperialist character of this war. But the process of moving from the ascendancy of capitalism to its decadence was already underway before 1914 and continued even after that. It is precisely for this reason, since the years 1910-1920-1930 were a pivotal period between ascendancy and decadence during which the characteristics of the first period could still persist, that it was difficult for the revolutionaries of that time to have a definitive position on a series of questions that today seem obvious²⁶.

It is also necessary to underline all the boldness of Rosa Luxemburg's position on Poland which, during this pivotal period when most revolutionaries defended the principle of national liberation, managed to forcefully stop advocating independence for Poland, but in the spirit of the arguments and with the same method as Marx and Engels ! Indeed, for Luxemburg, the development of capital in Russia and Poland, lagging behind the rest of Europe but of a very concentrated nature, and its corollary, the rise of a class of proletarians throughout Eastern Europe, made Poland's independence obsolete. It should be

remembered that for Marx and Engels, Poland's independence was primarily for the development of democracy and capitalism in Europe against Tsarism. The rise of capital, slow but certain, was beginning to undermine the very foundations of absolutism in Russia, despite a cowardly bourgeoisie²⁷. The rise of a class of proletarians also meant the rise of social democracy throughout the country. Thus Luxemburg advocated the unity of all the social democrats of the Tsarist empire, according to the same conception as Marx and Engels on the large centralized states against national particularisms that go against the progress of history.

It is necessary to be careful not to stick to the letter of the writings of Marx and Engels, but on the contrary to continue to apply the method that underlies their writings and expresses their political "spirit". In this respect, Rosa Luxemburg was a living example of political continuity in relation to Marxism : "*All the manifestations and factors of social progress in Poland, above all its principal factor, the Polish proletariat and its part in the general revolution in the Tsarist Empire, have grown out of the foundations of this same bourgeois-capitalistic development. The social progress and development of Poland are in this way united with the capitalistic process by unbreakable historical ties, which united Poland and Russia, and which buried the Polish national idea. Consequently, all separatist aspirations directed at raising an artificial barrier between Poland and Russia, are by nature directed against the interests of social progress and revolutionary development; or in other words, they are manifestations of reaction. But at the same time, the national idea, after the final failure of the program of the nation-state and national independence, was reduced to a general and undefined idea of national separation, and, as such, Polish nationalism became a form of social reaction blessed by tradition.*"²⁸

2. Lenin and the 3rd International

The 1st World War

With the outbreak of the First World War, the extent of the failure of Social Democracy was exposed to a proletariat that was more than helpless. The scale of this bankruptcy clearly showed that the adoption of

25 . Friedrich Engels, 1859, Po and Rhine (part IV).
http://ciml.250x.com/archive/marx_engels/english/mecwsh/mecwsh-16_1.pdf

26 . For example, on trade unionism, parliamentarism and national liberation, etc. All positions that were definitively clarified well after 1914.

27 . This was the situation in some nations where development of capital was backward and where the bourgeois revolution was not

not yet completed as the phase of decadence approached. The bourgeoisie, instead of moving forward with its revolution, allied itself with the aristocracy against an increasingly threatening proletariat. The tasks of the bourgeoisie revolution then fall to the proletariat. Several revolutionaries tried to deal with this problem, for example Trotsky with "The Revolution permanent".

28 . Rosa Luxemburg, 1909, The National Question (The Nation-State and the Proletariat).
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1909/national-question/index.htm>

"Marxism" by social democracy was quite formal (the Kautskyist centre is the best example), when it was not simply rejected by the Bernstein right. Moreover, if we formally take the writings of Marx and Engels and abstract them from their method, we can justify any counter-revolutionary policy. Thus, in 1914, German Social Democracy could justify the adoption of war credits for its government by the argument of the war of "German civilization" against "tsarist barbarism". Wasn't Marx himself violently against the tsarist regime? Similarly, French socialism could also participate in the sacred union under the pretext of defending the "Republic and the values of the French Revolution" against the Prussian militarism of the Junkers. Wasn't Marx first and foremost a democrat in 1848?

It was therefore the radical left within the social democracy that was the true successor of the revolutionary Marxist current. Its militants, fully trained in the Marxist method, recognized the period change marked by 1914 and the imperialist character of this war. The left-wing militants, under Lenin's leadership, were able to draw the only revolutionary tactic possible from the events, defeatism. That Lenin took a stand for the right of nations to self-determination is completely secondary in that his position on the war was perfectly clear. As we have seen above, the years 1910-1920-1930 were really the pivotal period between the ascendancy and decadence of capital. So "transitional" positions like Lenin's are understandable. The mistake of the "Leninists" is to take up the tactic of the right to self-determination and make it an absolute position, good at all times and in all places, whereas this position is completely obsolete today.

Concessions to Third Worldism

Where the Third International really began to distance itself from Marxism on the national question was when the principle of support for any nationalism of oppressed peoples was adopted. Indeed, since the Baku Congress on the Peoples of the East (1920), a distinction had begun to be made between the nationalism of oppressed peoples, which would be progressive by nature, and the nationalism of oppressor peoples, which would be reactionary to it. This distinction was first theorized by Lenin: "*A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.*"²⁹ This conception, which is really the antithesis of Marxist positions on the national question, expressed the penetration of bourgeois ideology within the communist movement, here in the form of Third Worldism.

In addition, the adoption by the CI of the orientation

towards the development of anti-colonial national revolutions in the East as a support for Soviet power was a step, only one step among many, towards abandoning the principle of world revolution and replacing it with the use of inter-imperialist antagonism in favour of the Soviet state. The USSR using anti-colonialist struggles thought it would weaken imperialism in this way. In fact, it was only gradually inserting itself into the shackles of world imperialism until it eventually became one of the dominant imperialist poles after the principle of socialism in a single country was put forward and the USSR had participated in the Second World War.

3. Communist Will Abolish National Frontiers

It is fashionable in leftist circles to put forward the hollow formula that communism will abolish national oppression. However, this half-truth hides well the reactionary role of leftism, that is, to always try to bring back the fringes of the proletariat that are being politically set in motion on the ground of capitalism. Similarly, it is reductive to denounce nationalism in that it divides the proletariat. Not only does nationalism divide, but it ideologically and politically unites the proletariat with its own national bourgeoisie, which implies as an ultimate consequence the commitment of the proletariat to the imperialist war.

However, the purpose of communism is not to free each nation from the history of humanity or to make all nations equal, but to abolish national borders so that in the long run a world culture can be formed in a society without class or state. As Luxemburg pointed out, « *if socialist society makes the masses of the people cultured, it will also give them the opportunity to master several languages, world languages, and thus to participate in the whole international culture of our cultural milieu and not only in the particular culture of a single national linguistic community.* »³⁰

Robin, July 2018

29 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/autonomy.htm>

30 . Rosa Luxemburg, 1909, *The National Question and Autonomy*. [translated from the French version on Marxists Internet Archive]

Correspondence

Correspondence : Which Relation Between the International Party and Its Local Organizations ?

We publish here an exchange of emails with a geographically isolated North American comrade who wrote to us after he began to learn about the historical positions of the Communist Left and the existence of the current proletarian camp. The discussion mainly focused on the question of the political organization of the proletariat, that is its world party to be built. As the texts of debate in this issue, the Party question and its construction becomes the central question to be debated and clarified within the international proletarian camp. It does not surprise us since this question, which goes far beyond the simple formal claim of the necessity of the Party, fundamentally divides the revolutionary camp between "partidists" and "anti-partidists", between the opposing dynamics that they express and materialize.

The comrade P to the IGCL

But any way, I am mainly interested in the organic creation of the class party. I have been reading on Bordiga's conception of the party structure and also reading the party documents of the current ICC. I am very interested in understanding this more, but am running into problems as I haven't anyone to ask questions to.

I am also hoping to expand my understanding of Marxist analysis and its application in a party structure; as well as an organization tool in connecting the Self-action of the proletariat to the wider class antagonisms of capitalism. But I find that the organizations that are easily accessible in my area are either ml and Trotskyist groupings absorbed in parliamentarianism or anarchists that have no desire to participate in parties and are resolute in their individualist actions.

As for my political development: during my time as [a student] I was more social democratic; I didn't really get involved in politics. But as my studies went on and I was enrolled in what was considered social services courses it became clear that the ideas and solutions to problems that were being presented were either gentrification projects or development for the sake of capital investments in the wealth parts of the city (...).

I also started reading Marx and Lenin during that time. During this time I also started looking for groups that were in my area. I was involved with the WWP for a short period of time, but became disillusioned as their focus was solely on parliamentarianism. I talked with the IMT as well, but their group is far out of my driving range and they seemed more interested in spreading their propaganda than anything else. I am presently in contact with the IWW, but their focus is on anarchist action and they have been spinning their wheels since I began correspondence.

At some point after college I got involved with the reddit communist community as well, mostly as a good source of reading recommendations. I discovered the left communist milieu there and they have been a phenomenal help as a source of readings and understanding. (...) I haven't solidly considered my goals politically, though I have no interest in advancing a parliamentarian program. Something that I know stalinist organization push as a way of increasing a class consciousness that is ill-defined.

Our response :

Dear comrade P,

A comrade sent me the correspondence the two of you had. I am a native English speaker, so he asked me to reply to your question and to follow up with further exchanges. There are no groups that are formally affiliated with our group. However, we do have fraternal relations with other Left communist groups such as the ICT (leftcom.org), which has an affiliate in the US (Internationalist Workers' Group), and Nuevo Curso (nuevocurso.org). We also know of other groups that claim the tradition of the communist left and that have a presence in the US, such as Workers' Offensive (workersoffensive.org) and Communist League of Tampa (communistleaguetampa.org). That being said, we do not necessarily agree with all of the positions or statements of these groups, but we do consider that they are on the same side of the barricades as us, the side of the international working class. Therefore, we aim to be part of the process of consolidation of these various Left communist groups. We encourage you to contact these other groups as well. We do not consider Stalinist, Maoist, Trotskyist, or Anarchist groups to be in the revolutionary camp. For us, these traditions have long since betrayed the working class and are now historically-objectively against the working class.

(...) In the meantime, could you describe to us the evolution of your political convictions and what your goals are politically? What is the nature of your interest in the Communist Left? Warm regards, Stavros for the IGCL

Comrade P's response:

I greatly appreciate you taking the time to respond, even if there are delays. I would like to apologize for the delay in my response to you as well, I have been meeting with my reading group here in order to answer these questions; as I believe they are better answered in a group than on one's own. Our group has not yet met face to face with our comrade in [my city], due to schedule conflicts, and me being tight on money because I've been laid off from work. We are still engaged in conversation with them and we are hoping to meet in the near future. In the mean time, the reading materials you have provided have been a great benefit and have given us much to discussion within our group.

The party itself must be, from the outset, an international organization and be centralized around its program and theory. As we work towards rebuilding the program the party operates on, we are also, in turn, rebuilding the party itself; as those who dedicate their time to the recreation of this program participate in the party itself. Our biggest hurdle is then to develop a program that both accounts for the historical demands and actions of the proletariat, but also takes into consideration the present demands and a path towards the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, while retaining an international perspective (something you have already touched on and I echo here). The size of the party is dependent on the historical period that it finds itself in; these periods correspond to a time with greater or lesser activity in the party - from the dissemination of Communist propaganda and the program of the party to the entire mass of the working class, to actively participating in militant action when the situation calls for it. The party will only ever be a small minority of the class, and even during circumstances such as these will it be embryonic in size and function in comparison to a revolutionary situation. But even so, the party still makes no massive change in content between revolutionary and non-revolutionary situations, save for tactics and action.

We must be weary and heavily critical of small groups attempting to form the party. Those who wish to bring the development of the party back to the circles phase. This would be equal to a step backwards in history, where multiple parties had grown from their respective national contexts, and thusly had differing theories and programs from each other. The collision of these different theories and programs necessarily resulted in the obsfication of what was national and international in character within this mosaic of theoretical material. This obsfication made the international susceptible to the weight of one national party over the others and the generalization of its program and theory without holding a critical view to it at the international level; we speak here of the stalinization of the third international.

This isn't to say that there won't be geographically dependent groups in the party. These groups must still follow the program and theory developed at the international level, but will also need to take into consideration material conditions dependent on their geographic context. Changes in the international program and theory, spurred on by changes in the social relations of capitalism, will also still need to be done at the international level. Geographic groups will need to adjust their practical action and how they approach their geographic context accordingly. These groups will also relay the material contexts they operate in to the international to inform it of the developments in the communist movement in each respective area. I suppose the short of it is, though there are groups based on geographic location, and they might conduct different actions than another group in a different location, they all must follow and uphold and develop the program of the party.

Having said that, what do you mean by concessions to localism? I fear that our conception of geographic groups might fall into this category, depending on what is meant by this. Would you also explain what you mean by the hesitation of more experienced groups in relation to less experienced groups in regards to critique? If any group is not following the program of the party, or advocating for a deviation from it, they must be confronted by the rest of the party and a discussion must be had; And, if it is the cas

En camaradería, P

Our second response [extracts] :

Dear comrade P,

In your most recent emails you further developed your positions on how the Party is to come about. You mentioned that the Party “must be, from the outset, an international organization and be centralized around its program and theory”. This position is shared by all members of the IGCL. You also stated that:

“ We must be weary and heavily critical of small groups attempting to form the party; Those who wish to bring the development of the party back to the circles phase. This would be equal to a step backwards in history, where multiple parties had grown from their respective national contexts, and thusly had differing theories and programs from each other.”

The problem is that the revolutionary milieu is composed of a large number of just such circles, as well as several small Bordigist groups that claim to be the one and only Party. In terms of our intervention in the

revolutionary camp, that is what we have to work with. We maintain that it is necessary to intervene in the revolutionary camp with the ultimate goal of consolidation of the forces that do exist, a process that inevitably implies also a decantation or a separation of the groups and traditions that are politically harmful or counterproductive from the point of view of the objective interests of the class. In this it is a question of, among other things, purging the party in becoming of eclecticism. An example of this eclecticism is those failed attempts to reconcile Marxism and Anarchism. Moreover, these multiple different groups, which often coexist in the same region, are frequently not the result of their supposedly particular national contexts since in some cases they have sections in the same city. It is not clear to me from your emails how you view the emergence of the Party from the starting point of the concrete situation.

You wrote that there will still need to be some geographically dependant groups in the Party. I prefer to call them national sections of an international and internationalist Party. Having sections is not a concession to localism, because the proletariat of a given country is most directly confronted by “its own” national bourgeoisie. What we must be wary of are any assertions that specific parts of the Communist Program do not apply to a given section because of supposed national particularities, or “special tasks” (e.g. establishing a bourgeois democratic republic in countries with authoritarian systems of government) that the proletariat must accomplish there.

“The party itself must be, from the outset, an international organization and be centralized around its program and theory. As we work towards rebuilding the program the party operates on, we are also, in turn, rebuilding the party itself; as those who dedicate their time to the recreation of this program participate in the party itself. Our biggest hurdle is then to develop a program that both accounts for the historical demands and actions of the proletariat, but also takes into consideration the present demands and a path towards the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, while retaining an international perspective...” (my emphasis).

We agree wholeheartedly with the first part of the statement, that the party must be international and centralized around its program. I also want to firmly salute the part of your formulation above that I put in bold. We could not have said it better ourselves. However, at the risk of being accused of being a pedant, I take issue with the formulation “rebuilding the program”. Perhaps it would be more correct to speak of reappropriating it. The program is already largely complete. Questions that were controversial in the 2nd and 3rd Internationals -- such as the national question and the role of the unions -- have been adequately dealt with by the various Communist Lefts that emerged in response to the Stalinist counterrevolution. Certainly, it is important to demonstrate the correctness of these programmatic positions in light of current events. For example, we don’t simply denounce the unions in the abstract; we back up our arguments by pointing to their actual policies of accommodation to management as well as the statements of their leadership that betray economic nationalism, such as the support given by the AFL-CIO for trade war with China³¹. The major hurdle is not in developing the Program, but in organizing a framework, fundamentally linked to the Program, that the present groups of the Communist Left can use to regroup into something more closely approximating “the Party”, which will require overcoming many of the weaknesses that affect our camp, such as sectarianism/opportunism.

You mentioned also that “Changes in the international program and theory, spurred on by changes in the social relations of capitalism, will also still need to be done at the international level.” A minor quibble here. While there can be differences in the Program of the Party during different stages of capitalist development, for example between the ascendant and decadent epochs of capitalism, the *method* for determining what is in and what is out is invariant. Basically, while concrete policies may change according to the level of development of capitalism, or according to the balance of forces between the classes, the method for determining the correct course of action – dialectical materialism – is a constant.

[...]

Communist greetings, Stavros for the IGCL.

PS: We encourage you to get in touch with all of the groups that claim the tradition of the Communist Left, but in particular the Gulf Coast Communist Fraction (GCCF), with which we hope to continue corresponding, and the IWG, which (as far as we know) has a militant that is not far from where you live.

31 <https://aflcio.org/press/releases/strategic-tariffs-against-china-are-critical-part-trade-reform-create-more-jobs-and>

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

What is the Party ? (Nuevo Curso)

We have taken the initiative to translate the following text from the group Nuevo Curso on the issue of the class party for two main reasons. First, the party is a central and fundamental subject for all revolutionaries. Political positioning on this aspect is therefore one of the essential elements that separate the real revolutionaries from the anarchists and semi-councilists. On this point, Nuevo Curso resolutely positions itself in the partyist camp. Secondly, the group Nuevo Curso is just as firmly part of the dynamic of the regrouping of revolutionaries to form the World Communist Party. Translating its positions will therefore help to spread them and thus make them known in the proletarian milieu.

We want to underline the quality and clarity of the text on the political character of the class struggle, i.e. that the proletariat tends to organize itself in its struggle against the bourgeoisie and its state in an autonomous political party. Moreover, the text adopts the simple and effective definition of the party by the Italian left: it is a fact of consciousness and effort towards a goal. This effort requires the active intervention of communist groups and the Communist Party in order to play the role of political leadership, which the Party exercises as an avant-garde towards the rest of its class.

We also appreciate the "party in process" formula for its dynamic character and its dialectical vision. Indeed, the regrouping of revolutionaries into a party is a constant struggle and concern for revolutionaries. Even in periods of full counter-revolution when the party no longer formally exists, the militants who have been able to resist must therefore lay the foundations for the party of tomorrow. Similarly, all the current groups of the communist left form the "party in process". Far be it from us to think that the class party will be born from their democratic addition. But it will certainly be the result of the confrontation of their political positions, where the good communist grain will regroup "naturally" and will be able to separate itself from the opportunistic and sectarian chaff.

What is the Party ? (Nuevo Curso)

In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), there are two passages that almost always surprise today's reader. The first, when recounting how wage struggles in each workplace are transformed into class struggles and demands such as the reduction of the working day arise, the proletariat is constituted for the first time as a political subject, as a politically independent class.

This organization of the proletariat "into a class, and, consequently in a political party", is constantly being compromised by competition between the workers themselves. But it reappears, and always stronger, firmer, more powerful.

The second, in the second chapter, *Proletarians and Communists*, begins by stating that "the communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working class parties".

The two uses of the term form a dialectical pair, contradictory and at the same time complementary, both directly related to the conception of what the class is and each light years away from the static image that sociology gives us of social classes and political parties. As Bordiga points out in *Party and Class* (1921):

"Therefore the concept of class must not suggest to us a static image, but instead a dynamic one. When we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, then we can recognise the

existence of a class in the true sense of the word. But then the class party exists in a material if not yet in a formal way. A party lives when there is the existence of a doctrine and a method of action. A party is a school of political thought and consequently an organisation of struggle. The first characteristic is a fact of consciousness, the second is a fact of will, or more precisely of a striving towards a final end. Without those two characteristics, we do not yet have the definition of a class. As we have already said, he who coldly records facts may find affinities in the living conditions of more or less large strata, but no mark is engraved in history's development." ³²

Bordiga uses the two formulations of the *Manifesto*, distinguishing between the party as a moment of consciousness of the class and the party as a formal organization. On the one hand, we have the class which, insofar as it becomes aware of its own interests and sets them under its own programme in the political space, becomes an independent political subject "and therefore a political party". The class becomes a party, an autonomous part of capitalist society. On the other hand, we have "the parties", the small secretions of the class, ferments of the development of its consciousness, crystallizations of this will to extend and deepen it.

³² <http://www.sinistra.net/lib/upt/compro/lipe/lipedibioe.html#text>

Workers constitute themselves "into a class, and, consequently in a political party" when their own struggles, independent of any fraction of the bourgeoisie, convert them into their own political subject.

The Class Party

Thanks to the lessons of the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and even of May 1937 in Spain or the revolutionary strikes of 1942 in Italy, we know that it is at these times that the formal organizations, the "workers' parties" that bring together the militants, are pushed by the class movement itself to coincide and merge to be useful... or they explode and die. The small Bolshevik party not only grew but also absorbed other militant groups such as the important 'inter-district group' of the RSDLP in which Trotsky was active, and even individual militants who until then claimed to be anarchists or populists, to become the Communist Party of Russia from the decantation that Lenin's "April Theses" imposed in what is the key point in the Russian revolutionary process. And more importantly, from April onwards, the party in formation month after month brings together ever larger sectors of the class until in October it integrates a significant part of the most conscious and involved workers in the revolutionary movement.

It is then that we can properly speak of a "class party": a formal organization that gathers numerically significant sectors of workers who form its vanguard and which does so on the basis of the program that makes possible the development of this constitution of the proletariat into class, in political subject, in antagonistic party and actor of the revolutionary transformation of the capitalist society. As Marx had announced in *The German Ideology* (1845), this elevation of the class into a party and the consequent appearance of a formal party of proletarian revolution could only take place during the revolution itself, through struggle of class against class, because only then can the bonds that hold the development of consciousness relax sufficiently to make them possible:

"Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." (K. Marx, *The German Ideology*).

The famous "class party" can only exist in revolutionary times when a significant part of the workers adopt the historical class program as the only form for its struggle to continue to develop.

On the other hand, it is clear that the class program is not an occurrence or a salutary vision born in the heat of battle, but the result of a long and constant work of criticism in continuity with the first workers' communist groups that begins with the Icarian communists of Cabet and Weitling's League of the Just and takes solid form with the transformation of the latter into a Communist League with Marx and Engels. But of course it doesn't stop there. In the Russian case, it is obvious that the party is formed around the Bolshevik fraction within the Social Democratic Party. Without all the theoretical work of elaborating the past and intervening over the years, without an organized form that was then new and useful for the new conditions that appeared with the war, it would have been unthinkable to even arrive at the *April Theses*. In the opposite sense, the weakness of the vanguards in the short Spanish revolution of 1936-1937 (Bolsheviks-Leninists, "friends of Durruti" and individual militants of the POUM and the CNT) not only directly expressed the weakness of the class at the moment of truth, but also the inability of the communist fractions opposed to the reigning counterrevolution to provide useful answers to the class' needs in the previous decade.

That is to say, in periods when the class has not succeeded in emerging as a political subject, the capacity of revolutionaries to constitute solid organizational and political ferments is **essential** so that at the revolutionary moment the class can develop its consciousness and materialize its own political course.

The "class party" of revolutionary moments does not draw its program from nothing but from a long theoretical work and intervention of revolutionary groups in periods of weakness, defeat and retreat.

The Party as a Formal Political Organization in the Class

Of course, not everything that is called "communist" or "worker" or claims to be so is a political organization of the class even if it has many workers among its members. There are borders that are fundamental outside of which there can be no class reflection, independent of the bourgeoisie, even if those who animate them are well intentioned. These borders are in fact very basic: not having called on the workers to massacre each other under the national flags of each bourgeoisie in defence of national capital, for its impossible "independence" or any other conceivable cause. In 1975, this is how G. Munis highlighted the political criteria for defining a class organization:

"All of them are encompassed in internationalism. Their abandonment, in 1914, by the Second International in favour of patriotic defence (capitalist, cannot be any other) was a great disaster for the proletariat. Once again set in motion by the Russian revolution, it gave rise to the first world

revolutionary wave, which was contained in one country after another until it was defeated in Spain. The direct cause of this elimination of the proletariat as a class in struggle was the betrayal of internationalism by the Third International, a betrayal that came from the interests of state capitalism erected in Russia and hypocritically labeled socialist.

Internationalism therefore gives us the key to understand all the problems and to adopt in conclusion the theoretical notions necessary for the next offensive of the proletariat.

It allows to distinguish merits and errors of the Russian revolution, to understand its retreat until the Stalinist counterrevolution, the reactionary worldwide role of the same one through its parties, the defeat of the Spanish revolution, the victory of Franco and his duration in the power, the war of 1939-45, the national-imperialist resistances and all subsequent wars or national movements of the same nature, the conversion of what were communist parties into anti-communist parties, the degenerative industrial growth both in the West and in Russia, China and backward countries, the long marasmus of the proletariat since the war here and the growing reactionary importance of the trade unions; It also allows us to understand the current retrograde stupidity of Trotskyism, and even the primitivisms, charlatanism, theoretical errors or indignities of numerous groups that are more posing than plainly revolutionary." (G. Munis, translated by us directly from Nuevo Curso's blog).

The fundamental boundary that distinguishes class political groups is internationalism, the refusal to subordinate the class movement to any faction or interests of capital under any circumstances, especially war.

There is a whole series of groups which, having learned the lessons of counter-revolution, the evolution of capitalism in its decadence and all the advances and defeats of the movement, define themselves according to the principles of internationalism. In their majority, they form what we call the historical avant-garde: they are the result of the evolution of the lefts of the Second and Third Internationals. There are also other "new" internationalist groups that are trying to learn their own lessons from the class' past experiences. They have different positions on different issues, traditions, tactical models and organizational forms, but always within the framework of a common achievement. In general, their success will depend on their ability to reclaim and make useful the class program, all those lessons of the past that emerge from the very history of the labour movement, for the "contingent avant-gardes". We call "contingent avant-gardes" all of the layer of workers who question the lies and traps continuously bombarded by the right and left through the media and state apparatus in the world and whose

response, if it develops coherently, can only lead them to the communist program.

Together, historical avant-gardes, workers' groups that reappropriate the program and contingent avant-gardes that seek answers, form the real movement "towards" the party. In all modesty, they are the party of the proletariat of today, the "party in process", the party that has never ceased to exist and is in a permanent process of formation. As a whole and insofar as it is based on the communist programme, it is the 'historical party'. The 'class party' or 'revolutionary party' in its current embryonic form, although composed of various 'parties' as formal and contingent organizations.

Like any living and contradictory movement, not all its tactics will work, nor all its current organizational forms will meet the historical needs that will arise in the years to come and of course all their positions today, some contradictory between the groups, will not be maintained. Each of these groups is and will continue to be increasingly confronted with the reality and needs of class struggle if the class movement gains momentum. In these, they will have to correct themselves and forge themselves as forces capable of effectively orienting the class to overcome the different levels of resistance and confrontation. This will not happen by academic discussion, by stubbornly "growing", or by entering into quarrels specific to leftism. Neither sectarianism nor numerical obsession, less contradictory than they appear, will bring nothing but obstacles.

Internationalist groups, both historical and new, and workers seeking answers to move forward, are now forming this "party in process" that aims at the future class party.

There is no other secret than to contribute with old and new forms, answers and ways to the development of class consciousness in its conflicts and aspirations. Because in the end, the party, in all its meanings, is nothing more than the program of the class discovering itself and materialized, embodied, in the most conscious part of the workers. This is why the work of all these groups, now small and seemingly modest, is nevertheless of immense importance because they are the link between the knowledge developed in the past and the future that must give meaning to the whole human epic. As the *Pro Second Communist Manifesto* said in 1961:

"The objective conditions of the communist revolution are not sufficient to guarantee its victory, and the subjective conditions will not necessarily be engendered by the former. Subjective conditions are nothing other than the theoretical consciousness of previous experience and of the maximum possibilities offered to the proletariat; it is the knowledge longing for human action and ready to change its subjective existence into objective existence."

Nuevo Curso, March 18th 2018
(translated by the IGCL).

What Party? Which Future International? How to Raise the Question?

We reproduce below a text of the ICT (www.leftcom.org), which continues the internal debate that this organization has been conducting for some time now on the question of the revolutionary party of the proletariat³³. At a time when new communist forces (and a new generation of militants) are emerging at the international level, it is of the utmost importance that the whole proletarian camp, or at least its most dynamic forces, refer to and gather in the debates and the process of political clarification around the positions embodied by the communist left. As the text reminds us³⁴, because of its direct historical affiliation with the Italian CP and what is commonly referred to as the 'Italian Left' on the one hand and, on the other, as the main international communist organization, the ICT plays a de facto role as a referent and international pole. It is therefore no coincidence that the international dynamic of the emergence of new revolutionary forces, particularly in Spain and on the North and South American continent, of which the *Nuevo Curso* blog is to date the most active expression and factor, is based on and asserts itself around the ICT pole. *Nuevo Curso*'s initiative to translate this text into Spanish and publish it on its blog is an illustration of this. Thus, this text becomes a direct tool of reference and discussion for these new forces and a moment in the struggle for the consolidation of communist forces with the aim of establishing as best as possible a genuine political clarification and, in the long term, the best possible programmatic, theoretical and political conditions for the future world political party of the proletariat. For our part, we intend to participate to the maximum of our capacities in this dynamic. That is why we follow the ICT text with comments and observations, some of which are critical, to stimulate reflection and the necessary confrontation of the various approaches and political positions that still exist today.

The IGCL, August 2018.

On the Future International (Internationalist Communist Tendency)

The following article was originally published as draft for discussion by the CWO in **Revolutionary Perspectives 11**. After further discussions and revisions the version published here has now been adopted by the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) as a whole. As originally stated it is intended to be part of a longer document or pamphlet of the ICT. It should thus be read in the context of earlier documents which we have already published on the party and class issue which put the issue in its wider context. Particularly relevant is the document from **Revolutionary Perspectives 08** on the role and structure of the revolutionary organisation at leftcom.org as well as a document subsequently published on our site at leftcom.org. We hope with these articles (and others to follow) to stimulate a discussion amongst the new elements who have recently come to the tradition of the communist left ideas, as well as to state clearly for those we have discussed for some time the basis of our perspectives on the critical issue of party and class.

Today we find ourselves with a capitalism in deep crisis and a proletariat so fragmented and disorganised that it only resists the imposition of war, austerity and increased poverty in sporadic fashion. It may thus seem premature to be contemplating a process by which we might arrive at a future working class International. However, even in this dire situation there are many new elements around the world who recognise the stagnation, if not

bankruptcy of the system. They are debating and discussing online and face to face in small groups here and there precisely how, if ever, the proletariat will emancipate itself. In doing so they are, like us attempting to re-acquire the experience of past workers struggles. What follows is our contribution, based on what we consider to be the historical lessons learned by the proletariat, to that necessary discussion.

The current cycle of capital accumulation entered its downward spiral more than 40 years ago. After the longest boom in capitalist history (c. 1948-71) we have now lived through the slowest bust. This almost stagnant economic system has been sustained by an unprecedented state intervention which has allowed the system thus far to avoid total meltdown. Much of this time it has reduced the average wage of the majority of workers, but their losses have not been enough to stimulate recovery, let alone prevent the massive accumulation of debt, the widespread creation of fictitious capital and mini-booms and busts throughout that time.

It has also produced the dislocation and disorientation of the one class that constantly stands in objective opposition to the capitalist system. Many lament that throughout this period revolutionaries have not done more to unite as if revolutionaries had an existence independent of the rest of the working class. The divisions amongst revolutionaries until

33 . See in French and English on our website: <http://igcl.org/Prise-de-position-sur-le-texte-du> and also on the TCI website <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-08-28/the-revolutionary-party-and-the-working-class>.

34 .“Because of this political heritage the ICT is a component of the future party as it hopes to keep alive the lessons from the working class struggles of the past for new generations.”

now have largely been a function of the weakness of the class movement as a whole. This has not happened just in this epoch but throughout working class history. When the class is reforming itself in new conditions after a period of retreat the first responses are inevitably stumbling and various. It is only when the movement really begins to become widespread and take on a mass form that a tendency for revolutionaries to bury past differences and abandon old shibboleths becomes more pronounced. As the path the working class takes becomes clearer the demand for the creation of a political organisation of the class with a clear vision of communism becomes louder.

Some will argue that this is not necessary. They will argue that the “spontaneous” movement of the class will be enough to take it to victory. We have great confidence in the emergence of an elemental movement of a working class which will finally decide one day that it can no longer go on living in the old way and under the old conditions. The first assault on the system will inevitably be unforeseen and of this nature. Such a movement can go far, but that is not the end of the matter. The forces acting against it will not give up easily. They will seek all means possible to derail the movement from both overthrowing the state and going on to found a new way of organising economic and social life. At a certain point they will put on masks, adopt false ideologies and attempt to direct the movement onto a course consistent with the continuation of the system.

We know this from history. If they are not fought politically by the working class then they derail the movement. Let’s take two contrasting examples. In the Russian Revolution the spontaneous movement overthrew the Tsar in February but whilst the workers were still fighting on the streets the bourgeoisie and its allies were setting up a government which intended to rob the workers’ soviets of the fruits of their victory. But the workers were not taken in by this and more and more put their trust in the one organised presence which unambiguously supported soviet power and internationalism – the Bolshevik Party. Although it was a small minority it had existed in the working class for years before the revolution, and two thirds of its members were workers. Its slogans helped orient the movement to go beyond the parliamentary system that the capitalist class was trying to impose. Ultimately the working class made the Bolshevik Party their instrument and after it had gained a majority in the soviets across the country it became the spearhead of the revolutionary insurrection.

Contrast this with Poland in the 1980s. Here the workers spontaneously occupied shipyards and rejected the authority of the Stalinist state. However in a supposedly communist country there was no revolutionary political party they could turn to. Into this vacuum came the Catholic Church and Polish nationalists (and behind them all the CIA). They

directed the movement away from being about workers to being about “democracy”. In short their struggle became the victim of an inter-imperialist rivalry.

We know too that amongst the working class its awareness of the need to destroy capitalism will strike some (a minority) before others and any coming together of these rejectionists of capital will remain a minority. The domination of the bourgeoisie over the means of production (including of ideas) means that the political instrument of the class conscious workers will always remain a minority before the outburst of revolution. The more this minority delivers a consistent political message with a coherent organisational shape and seeks to operate within the wider working class it can become part of the living class movement. When the movement needs to be clear about its aims and the direction it needs to take the revolutionary minority, or in other words the political party, has a key role to play in combating bourgeois ideology by putting forward a programme before the whole class based on the historical lessons and acquisitions of its own previous struggles.

These acquisitions tend to be forgotten over time. One of the key elements in the Communist Manifesto was

“The communists are distinguished from the other proletarian parties by this only:

1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independent of all nationality.

2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole. (Communist Manifesto” (Pekin 1975 edition) p.49) (our emphasis)

From its earliest days the modern communist movement has centred on the universal and internationalist character of the working class. When the First International was founded in 1864 Marx and Engels considered it to be their greatest achievement. Marx announced that at last the working class had an instrument independent of all bourgeois parties which could now boast that “The emancipation of the working class will be the task of the workers themselves”. However this was a little premature. The First International was riven by divisions between English trades unionists, Proudhonist mutualists and the shadowy rivalry of Bakunin’s Alliance for Social Democracy. Some individual Internationalists played a role in the Paris Commune but by then it had virtually ceased to exist as a real organisation.

It was to be another twenty years before its successor, the Second International emerged. This was explicitly based on national sections which were

far more dominant than the International Socialist Bureau which nominally coordinated it. It brought together various traditions in the workers movement and was not exclusively Marxist. Indeed the Marxist wing of the movement was increasingly marginalised by the rising power of the Social Democratic trades unions. In the end it dissolved into its national components as party after party (with the exception of the Russian, Polish, Rumanian, Serbian and Bulgarian parties) all voted war credits to their respective nations at the start of the First World War.

Despite efforts to reunite socialists against the war (Zimmerwald and Kienthal) no new international arose to replace the Second International. It was only with the triumph of the Russian proletariat and the October Revolution as the first step in the world revolution that the question of a new international was once again seriously posed. However in war-torn Europe establishing a revolutionary or Communist International was not easy, and it was not until 1919 that it held its first meeting in Moscow.

The new International promised much. Under the influence of the Russian Revolution communist parties began to appear across the world which then sought affiliation to the International on the basis of its 21 conditions. However these parties were largely new, often with young leaders and certainly in awe of the achievements of the Russian comrades. As a result the Russian party dominated the International from the start (just as the German Social Democratic Party was seen as “the Party” (Trotsky) of the Second International). This was to have disastrous consequences for the Third International and its constituent parties.

As the revolution in Russia retreated from its original promise – mainly due to the fact that new revolutions, especially in Europe, did not come to its aid – the Russian Communist Party increasingly saw the International as a means for garnering support for “Russia” – i.e. the new Russian state order that was ambivalently and ambiguously equated with the Russian Revolution. But support for a state whose priority was increasingly to survive in the (stabilising) capitalist world order increasingly meant abandoning the goal of world revolution. World revolution was the only thing that could have revived the revolutionary potential in Russia. In 1921 the International adopted the policy of going “to the masses” which in practice meant trying to make a common front with the various social democratic parties of the revived Second International. They had stood as the bulwark of the capitalism against the workers’ revolution in every country (especially in Germany where they were complicit in the murder of Luxemburg and Liebkecht and hundreds of communist workers). A year later the Comintern transformed “going to the masses” into the policy of the “united front” which demanded that the new young communist parties seek alliance with those that they had just split from a few months before.

The Third International thus became a tool of the new rising class in Russia and ceased to be a vehicle for international revolution.

What does the experience of the last revolutionary wave demonstrate? By its very nature the struggle of the working class to overcome capitalism will be a lot different from that of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against feudalism. The bourgeoisie developed its form of property under feudalism and built up its wealth and power inside the old system before it replaced it. The proletariat’s revolution is different. We have no property to defend. Our strength comes from our capacity for common collective action. And the proletarian revolution cannot come about through a mere chasing of immediate interests. The proletarian revolution has to be a conscious revolution. Under capitalist conditions though, some workers will come to the recognition of the need to overthrow the system before others. It is only natural that this minority form a political organisation expressing their conscious aim of creating a new society.

Under social democracy the working class was organised in national parties which acknowledged their membership of the Second International. But this International was a mere postbox rather than a coordinated leadership of an international class. In any case it built a mass movement overwhelmingly dedicated to reformism. The revolutionaries in it were largely marginalised as the outcome in August 1914 demonstrated. This left the revolutionary working class without an International until the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The Third International arrived too late to act as it was intended – as the vanguard of the world revolution. Given the enormous prestige of the one working class that had succeeded in throwing over its ruling class and thus became the beacon of world revolution it was not unnatural for the Russian party to wield considerable influence in the International. But as the Russian Revolution turned in on itself the International very quickly abandoned world revolution for policies to defend a Russian state which by now was detached from its original class base. The imposition of “bolshevisation” on the new parties denuded them of their real revolutionaries and turned the International into just another agency of the USSR in its fight for a place amongst the “concert of nations”.

The lesson is clear. In advance of any revolutionary outbreak anywhere there needs to be an International of some kind. This

...“cannot be a Federation of more or less independent parties with differentiated policies based on claims for different national situations. Therefore it is more correct to speak of an International Party. The nature, structure and statutes of this International Proletarian Party must homogeneously shape each and every national section. Its political platform must be the common patrimony, homogeneously developed together by all

sections and all militants" (M. Stefanini *The New International Will be the International Party in Internationalist Communist* 20 (2001))

Homogeneity here does not mean a total identity of agreement on every issue but does mean agreement on a common platform and ultimately a common programme. This can only be thrashed out by the widest discussion within the International. The International Party (or whatever it comes to be called) has to have a centralised unity in action to defeat the class enemy but a meaningful unity is not arrived at without constant dialogue between its members. The Bolshevik Party, contrary to Stalinist mythology, was full of factional debate but, despite all the differences, this did not prevent its various sections from demonstrating their capacity for initiative or from becoming the vehicle the working class seized upon and transformed into the spearhead of revolution. On the contrary it was the fact that so much debate had been created by the direct and concrete connection that the mass of the members had inside the working class that helped it to become an instrument of the wider working class movement in 1917. Members of the future International thus cannot contribute to the real movement of emancipation unless they have direct links to the class as a whole. Communists have to win the right to be listened to.

The militants of this International will participate and attempt to guide any future revolution, to encourage the autonomy of the workers' struggle through the establishment of class wide organs. They will participate at every level as far as possible but the International will not be a government in waiting. Its task remains the spreading of world revolution. This means that although its militants may accept delegation by the class wide bodies in any area the International as a body does not rule. As Onorato Damen wrote in the 1952 *Platform of the Internationalist Communist Party*

"There is no possibility of working class emancipation, nor of the construction of a new social order if this does not emerge from the class struggle ... At no time and for no reason does the proletariat abandon its combative role. It does not delegate to others its historical mission, and it does not give power away, not even to its political party."

This is our vision of the shape of the future International but where do we start from today? After forty years of restructuring the fragmentation of the class today is reflected in the dispersal of revolutionary energies. Some have been discouraged by the divisions amongst revolutionaries which they put down to each defending their own parochial views. However these differences have been real differences and are based on the various efforts that have been made to deal with the counter-revolutionary legacy of the failure of the post-World War One revolutionary wave. Over time some differences have come to be recognised as less

important than they once seemed but the road back to a revolutionary revival of the working class is a long one. This should not be seen as a negative factor but as a necessary part of the process of the development of class consciousness. Along the way important debates have been, and are still, necessary. Without sharp debate to clarify issues the proletariat will never be in a position to have a solid programme on which to fight the next big onslaught on capitalism.

At the same time the tenuous links between revolutionaries and the mass of the class have to be deepened and strengthened. Each local political organisation has to adopt means to maintain its contact with wider layers of workers who may not yet consider themselves revolutionary but do know that they want to fight the misery that capitalism brings. In the post-war boom, in the light of their understanding that the trade unions are antagonistic to organising anti-capitalist resistance, a key strategy put forward by the Internationalist Communist Party was that of factory groups which included members of the party and non-members in several workplaces (including FIAT). However with the decline of the huge factory concentrations of workers "territorial groups", sometimes comprising a collective of militant groups from local workplaces, sometimes groups fighting on other issues (e.g. war, housing and jobs) have been adopted. The key here is that the political organisation must still aim to exist in the places where the mass of the class itself is present: The Internationalist groups are not spontaneous creations by the class, but rather political tools adopted by the party to root itself in the life of the class where it acts as a guide and intervenes wherever it can. The party is not an entity which is formed at the last minute and not something that only turns up when a struggle takes place. It has to be part of the life of the class but without succumbing to the cancer of reformism to make artificial short term gains.

At present the presence of revolutionaries in the class is very embryonic but as the crisis deepens, as more workers come to realise that there are no capitalist solutions to their problems then the possibility to work more widely will present itself to revolutionaries. Once the working class begins to move then the practical movement will tend to take on board that programme which most meets its real needs. However this does not mean that revolutionaries wait around with folded arms until the great day. There will be no great day unless those who are already communists struggle for that perspective as widely as possible inside the fighting organisations the working class itself creates.

The International (or at least a large nucleus of it) has to be in existence in advance of the outbreak of the revolutionary crisis. It is "narrow" in the sense that its Platform and programme are based only on the revolutionary lessons of the class struggle so far. Within that framework all debate is possible and the

party is organised along democratic centralist lines (i.e. ultimately all issues are voted on by the members). At the same time the party will also allow for the existence of different tendencies over issues which have not already been settled or when new aspects of the existing programme arise. They must have the full right of debate and publication of minority opinion since there will be many new challenges on the road to revolution and there are still many issues which history has not yet answered for us. The health of the organisation depends on the robust exchange of opinions. Ultimately such exchanges should resolve themselves into a common policy but where a debate forces a vote then the minority accept the verdict of the majority in order not to undermine the unity of action of the organisations. This is the only healthy way in which the party can develop if it is to act as a centralised force when required to by the situation of the world revolution.

Without a shared understanding of the general lines of march (even if there is not totality of agreement) no meaningful policy will be carried out. At the same time, discussion and debate prepares each individual party member to act autonomously as a revolutionary should when required by the immediate local situation. There is no statutory mechanism for ensuring this. It lies in the preparation and consciousness of individual members and this can only come about through a party which has a lively culture of education and discussion.

Although we have adopted these principles in our statutes the Internationalist Communist Tendency, as we have repeated many times, is not that party, nor even the sole nucleus of a future party, since the conditions for it do not yet exist. However, we have not just appeared from nowhere. We are in the tradition of the Communist Left of Italy which founded the Communist Party of Italy, section of the Third International in 1921. When our predecessors were then removed from leadership of that party by the process of so-called “Bolshevisation” (in reality the antithesis of everything that was revolutionary about Bolshevism) they continued to fight for internationalism and revolutionary politics in the factories of France and Belgium as well as the prisons of Fascist Italy. It was from the confluence of these two currents that the Communist Left reunited

in the Internationalist Communist Party in Italy in 1943. It kept alive and even developed revolutionary politics despite attempts to annihilate it by the henchmen of Stalin and survived through the post-war boom to act as a focal point for the establishment of the Internationalist Communist Tendency. The Internationalist Communist Party has a long history of trying to find common ground with other groupings and tendencies even though these did not often result in agreement the door to dialogue has always been kept open. It is in that tradition that the Internationalist Communist Tendency operates today.

Because of this political heritage the ICT is a component of the future party as it hopes to keep alive the lessons from the working class struggles of the past for new generations. This is so they do not have to go through all the past errors of the working class before understanding what they should do next. At the same time we recognise that the situation of the working class today, and in the future, is and will be, different to that of the past. This why we are open to new thinking in view of the problems that the future revolutionary wave will pose to any political minority of the class.

The ICT does not consider itself a mere centre for discussion, but one core of the future international party, which is why it looks closely at other experiences that can contribute to its construction. The ICT's adherence to a common and clear political platform, its constant attempt to keep in touch with the wider class and become rooted in it within the obvious limits of the existing objective and subjective conditions, defines its work towards the creation of such a party.

In our fight for communism we have constantly raised the issue of the International, or International Party. Unless the world working class forges this political tool as part of the rise in its revolutionary consciousness it will face yet more defeats in the future. Our earnest hope is to engage with new groups who become conscious of the need to overthrow the system, to give them a political compass to rally around. At the same time we seek dialogue with existing groups, to actively cooperate where possible, agree to disagree where necessary, and ultimately to unite as history inexorably moves on and a real class movement develops.

Internationalist Communist Tendency, June 2018

Pamphlets of IGKlasbatalo and the IFICC (orders at [intleftcom@gmail](mailto:intleftcom@gmail.com))

Student Struggle and Assemblies of Neighbourhood (Internationalist Communists - Klasbatalo)

La dégénérescence de l'IC : le PCF (1924-1927) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

Groupe des Travailleurs Marxistes (Mexique, 1938) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French and Spanish)

La question de la guerre (1935) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

Morale prolétarienne, lutte de classes et révisionnisme (IGCL from the IFICC, only in French and Spanish)

Unions Against the Working Class (1976, reprinted from the ICC Pamphlet).

Some Comments and Observations on the ICT Text

The following comments are intended to provide some clarifications and elements of reflection with respect to certain shortcomings, or even confusions, that we find in this text of the ICT. We thus intend to respond concretely, positively and fraternally to the ICT's call *"to stimulate a discussion amongst the new elements who have recently come to the tradition of the communist left ideas"*. The text displays the classic positions of this organization on the question of the party with which we are essentially in agreement so that we can endorse what the presentation of Nuevo Curso says: *"We would first report very important common elements: the coincidence on the role of the political organization, the function of the "spontaneous" movement of the class and the need for the construction of the class party so the class can be formed into a party. But also the contributions which integrate the experience developed by the revolutionary political groups these last forty years"*³⁵. We also welcome the ICT text because it is part of the historical struggle for the party and a moment of this fight. In particular, we fully share the understanding and vision of the party-class relationship that belongs specifically to the historical legacy of the so-called Italian Left such as presented in the text: *"The more this minority [the party or the International] delivers a consistent political message with a coherent organisational shape and seeks to operate within the wider working class it can become part of the living class movement"*. Nevertheless, it is precisely on this point that we want to intervene because we believe that this dynamic understanding of the party-class relationship is partly contradicted, or at least weakened, by some emphases developed by the text itself.

The article insists, on several occasions and in different formulations, on two characteristics, or dimensions, necessary for the constitution of the future International: the *"direct links to the class"* as a condition *sine qua non* to *"contribute to the real movement of emancipation"*; and the fact that *"a meaningful unity [within the party] is not arrived at without constant dialogue between its members"*.

The Presence of the International within The Class

For us, the first dimension must be understood more broadly than merely "physical connection or rooting" in the class. It refers to the political capacity of the party to put itself at the political forefront – i.e. as a priority in terms of orientations and slogans – of the class struggle. The link of the party with the class as a whole, which this text of the ICT tends too much to reduce to simply *"direct links to the class"*³⁶, is

essentially of a political order and the simple "physical presence" of the revolutionaries, organized in party, in the proletarian masses is not enough, far from it, to strengthen this link. This presence is as much the product as a factor of the direct, that is to say political, influence of the party in the proletarian masses. In the end, it is the political and militant capacities – the will and the effort of intervention and direct political presence in the class – of the party to be at the forefront of the political class struggle, at every moment of it, that will enable the real development of the link between the two, party and class, and the influence of the former upon the masses.

« *By displaying the maximum continuity in upholding a programme, and in the life of its leading hierarchy (apart from individual replacement of disloyal or worn out leaders), the party will also perform the maximum of effective and useful work in winning the proletariat to the cause of revolutionary struggle. This is not simply a question of exerting a didactic effect upon the masses; and even less is it a desire to exhibit an intrinsically pure and perfect party. It is rather a question of achieving the maximum yield in the real process whereby – as will be seen better below – through the systematic work of propaganda, proselytism and above all active participation in social struggles, the action of an ever increasing number of workers is caused to shift from the terrain of partial and immediate interests to the organic and unitary terrain of the struggle for the communist revolution. For only when a similar continuity exists is it possible, not merely to overcome the proletariat's mistrustful hesitations with respect to the party, but rapidly and effectively to channel and incorporate the new energies gained into a common thought and action, thus creating that unity of movement which is an indispensable revolutionary condition.* » (Theses on Tactics, known as Theses of Rome adopted by the Communist Party of Italy in 1922, our emphasis³⁷).

The International and The dynamics of The Class Struggle

This dimension *"presence and influence within the class"* also refers to the understanding of the party-class relationship and more broadly to that of the very dynamics of the proletarian struggle. *"The party is not an entity which is formed at the last minute*

merely to the physical sense, that is "having members in the workplaces".

37 . Available in English on the website of one of the "Bordiguist" groups, the International Communist Party : <http://www.international-communist-party.org/BasicTexts/English/22TeRome.htm>. On the understanding and the definition of the relationships of the party to the whole proletariat, we can refer with great interest to the text *Party and Class Action*, 1921, another "Bordiguist" group, the ICP-Proletarian (Programme Communiste) : <http://www.pcint.org/>.

35 . <https://nuevocurso.org/sobre-la-futura-internacional/>.

36 . It is common that the CWO, the English group of ICT, uses the term "rooting in the class" understood and partly reduced

and not something that only turns up when a struggle takes place. It has to be part of the life of the class but without succumbing to the cancer of reformism to make artificial short term gains". This wording of the ICT text – the first sentence is quite correct in itself – is confusing and ambiguous by opposing, at least by dissociating, the struggles of the class and the "life of the class" as two distinct moments". From the communist point of view, most of the life of the class is "struggle" because it is *movement*, whatever its expression or form, or indeed its intensity, revolutionary period, mass mobilization, strike, demonstration, assembly, committee, collective conflict with the foreman, resistance to quotas, individual discussion between a party member and a proletarian at the workplace or elsewhere, etc... "The concept of class must not suggest to us a static image, but instead a dynamic one" (*Party and Class*, CP of Italy, 1921). In this sense, the distinction, even the separation, between "struggle" and "life of the class" is to be rejected at the risk of falling into a metaphysical vision, fought by Lenin in his time (*What Is To Be Done?*) against *Economism*, of the proletariat as a class and in a mechanical understanding of the party-class relationship.

This tendency to a static vision of the class is expressed in the rapid and summary presentations of the revolution in Russia and the mass strike of 1980 in Poland. They tend to summarize the outcome of these class fights to the presence or absence of the party without taking into account the very dynamics of each confrontation between the classes – of course the party and the revolutionary minorities, including when they are "physically absent", being one of its material elements as product and factor at the same time. There would be little point, or sense, in pointing out this tendency of the text – in the author's defense, it is difficult to summarize in a few lines these two historical events – if sometimes it had not practical consequences for the ICT political statements, as, for example, was the case with the Catalan question during the Fall of 2017. The first ICT article, *Catalonia: Competing Nationalisms against the Working Class*³⁸, which rightly denounced the nationalist trap in which Catalan separatists and the Spanish unionists tried to drag the proletariat, left the door open for the nationalist stoppage of work, the "strike", of October 3rd to turn into a genuine class movement, internationalist therefore, under the influence of the party: "we need an international organisation, a party, **which can effectively intervene in events such as the strike in Catalonia – to push the** [nationalist, we add] **struggle beyond the control of unions and institutional parties**". To consider that a "movement" on the bourgeois terrain, in this case in support of the independence of Catalonia, called by all Catalan bourgeois forces up to the leftist and anarchist

unions, including the CNT and CGT, because workers may participate in it, can be *pushed beyond* by transforming itself into a workers' struggle, reveals this tendency to ignore the very dynamics of the class struggle, its process and its course, to consider the working class as static, from a sociological point of view, as dead material to be "worked" by the party. As if it were enough in this case to vie and compete with the influence of nationalist and leftist forces by the sole will of the party and its members. Certainly, and most welcome, a second article of the ICT – but unfortunately not translated to French – corrected this error by recalling that "The process of consolidating the independence and unity of the working class does not arise from the spontaneous evolution of inter-class movements, much less is it a proletarian way forward."³⁹.

The Political Unity of the International

The second dimension refers to the political homogeneity and unity of the party, of the International. One of its factors, among others and much less important than the program or political platform that the whole party has adopted, is the discussion and confrontation of the positions and possible differences. "Internal" discussions, debates and confrontations are not necessary to respect any democratic principle in itself, but to better develop the internal life of the party and thus to foster political clarification and the development of its real unity – its political homogeneity – that itself is essential to the accomplishment of the first task, that of effective political leadership of the proletarian struggle. That is to say, the one that establishes the real "direct link to the class". In particular, the struggle for political clarity and homogeneity is the basis of the understanding of the proletariat, or communist, discipline, not on obedience in itself to the democratic majority, which can only be an immediate and limited means of resolving occasional tactical disagreements, but on the political conviction and unity of the party members. "The democratic criterion has been for us so far a material and incidental factor in the construction of our internal organization and the formulation of our party statutes; it is not an indispensable platform for them. Therefore we will not raise the organizational formula known as "democratic centralism" to the level of a principle. Democracy cannot be a principle for us. Centralism is indisputably one,

39 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-10-23/on-the-catalan-%E2%80%99revolution%E2%80%9D>. The

correction of the initial position – *de facto* or has a debate been developed within the ICT? – manifests three things: that the ICT is a living organization that is able to rectify occasional errors; two, that like any living organization, it is constantly traversed by various understandings provoked by the constant pressure of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology within communist organizations; three, that this static view of the class and the mechanic one of the party-class relationship leaves in its ranks and re-emerges regularly.

38 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-10-07/catalonia-competing-nationalisms-against-the-working-class>.

since the essential characteristics of party organization must be unity of structure and action"⁴⁰ (*The Democratic Principle*⁴¹, 1922, Communist Party of Italy).

These two factors or dimensions, as presented by the text – "to maintain its contact with wider layers of workers" and "the widest discussion within the International" as, according to the text, sole guarantor of the homogeneity and the "agreement on a common platform and ultimately a common programme" – can only be taken into account to the extent that they are understood as moments of the fight for the party, and not as organizational recipes. It is only on this condition that they are indeed indispensable to the development and, above all, to the **effectiveness** of the party as the organ of political leadership of the proletariat. But besides the fact that they are only two conditions among others, and still not the most important, the particular emphasis on the two in this text gives rise to concessions to the democratic ideology: for example in the phrase according to which, to obtain the unity of the International, it is necessary to establish a "constant dialogue between its members [and that] all issues are voted on by the members"; or in the argument that the "discussion and debate prepares each individual party member to act autonomously as a revolutionary". These emphases are not necessarily false *per se*, nor to reject in themselves, although they are not very useful to solve the problem of political homogeneity understood as a process and a struggle. But as they are put forward by the text, they tend to reduce the political homogeneity of the International to the sum of its members, that is to say from the "individual-unit", the core of the bourgeois democratic mystification as it was criticized in its time, 1922, by the CP of Italy.

A large, very large, part of the theoretical and political problems that our generations are confronted with, or will be, have already been addressed and solved, not always of course, by the Left fractions from the Communist International; and in our opinion especially by the Italian Left. That is why we will finish these too short comments by this quotation of the *Theses of Lyon* presented by what had become the Left of the CP of Italy at its 1926 congress in France. Of course, they were then fighting the *labourist or workerist vision of the party* developed by the CI to "win the masses" and justify the "united front" policy with social democracy, which is not, of course, what the article, of which

some weaknesses we point out here, advances. But these Theses underline how the conception of the party's relationship with the class when reduced to its simple immediate "physical" relationship, leads to opportunistic deviations of a democratic order within the party itself. In this sense, this quote invites us to reflect on the opportunistic dangers that lie behind the reduced, mechanical, non-dialectical visions or understandings of the party-class relationship and the revolutionary class itself.

"The definition of the party as class party of the working class has a final and historical value for Marx and Lenin — not a vulgarly statistical and constitutional one. Any conception of the problems of internal organisation that leads to the error of the labourist conception of the party reveals a serious theoretical deviation, inasmuch as it substitutes a democratic vision for a revolutionary one, and attributes more importance to utopian schemes for designing new organisations than to the dialectical reality of the collision of forces between the two opposed classes. In other words, it represents the danger of relapsing into opportunism."⁴² (Draft theses for the 3rd Congress of the Communist Party of Italy presented by the Left – "Theses of Lyon", 1926).

RL, Août 2018.

What is To Be Done? (Lenin)

"The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of Social-Democracy. (...) Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness."

40 . We do not believe that the proletarian camp as a whole can at present resume and clarify the debate between *democratic centralism* and *organic centralism*. The latter was subsequently developed by the Bordiguist current in the 1950s, often in a caricatured way. This does not detract from the need to reflect and reclaim the debate of the 1920s and the method and lessons advanced by the Italian Left.

41 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1922/democratic-principle.htm>.

42 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1926/lyons-theses.htm>.

History of the Working Class Movement

Supported by the media and the state apparatus in many countries, the bourgeoisie organized major feminist demonstrations, particularly in Spain (also in North America), for Women's Day on 8 March 2018. The event was rarely repeated in other countries such as France for example. On this occasion, Nuevo Curso's comrades published the following text, which recalls the position of the workers' movement on feminism, which is intended to be above the classes and which, in fact, advocates interclassism, acting only as a totally bourgeois "movement" and ideology, against the unity of the proletariat.

Rosa Luxemburg against Feminism (Nuevo Curso)

Feminism appeared throughout Europe in the late 1890s as "suffragism." The suffragettes defended the extension of the right to vote for women under restricted suffrage, that is, the right of women of the propertied classes to participate in the political leadership of the established state and society. In their struggle to make an entry-point into the management of businesses and the government for petit-bourgeois and upper-class women, the suffragettes soon tried to win over working women, much greater in number and above all much more organized. The feminists proposed an interclassist front of "women," whose objective would be to obtain female bourgeois deputies within the system of restricted suffrage. They promised to represent the "common interests of women" that supposedly unite female workers with those bourgeois women of radical English liberalism.

The left wing of the Second International, with Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin at the head, was radically opposed. A year before the formation of the first suffragist group in England, Zetkin had presented in Gotha, the true founding congress of the German Socialist Party, a report on "The question of women and the tasks of social democracy," which was unanimously approved. Since then, the German Socialists had dedicated themselves to organizing and training thousands of working-class women, promoting mass mobilizations for universal suffrage for both sexes. From the Stuttgart Congress of the International, the Left, with Zetkin and Luxemburg at the helm, took the fight to a global level. Not against the supposed sexism of party leaders, but against concessions to feminism by some parties, like the Belgian, which had approved at one of its congresses supporting the extension of restricted suffrage to the women of the upper classes:

"The Congress of the Second International held in Stuttgart committed the social democratic parties of all countries to initiate the struggle for universal female suffrage as an essential and indispensable part of the general struggle of the proletariat for the right to vote and for power, in contrast with feminist aspirations." (Clara Zetkin)

Rosa Luxemburg and the Left Wing of the International against Feminism

The ideological struggle became increasingly intense as time wore on. In her correspondence, Rosa Luxemburg shares her intimate rejection of the "moral and spiritual" argument of feminism and the invocations of "the development of one's own personality" when what feminists were really demanding was equality between the men and women of the social layers that were in power within that very same power. She was clear that "women" are not a historical subject above or outside social classes and that is why she profoundly rejected the struggle for a so-called "right of women" that would benefit female workers, separated from the evolution of the workers' movement in general and the fight against capitalism.

For Luxemburg, feminists were trying to use workers' rejection of the issue of women's oppression as a way to derail the struggle and consolidate a system whose historically progressive phase was ending, in the same way that nationalism manipulated resistance to cultural-national oppression:

*"The duty of mobilizing against and combating national oppression, which corresponds to the class party of the proletariat, does not find its foundation in any particular "right of nations," nor does the political and social equality of the sexes emanate from any "right of women" to which the movement for the emancipation of bourgeois women refers. These duties can only be deduced from a generalized opposition to the class system, to all forms of social inequality, and to all power of domination. In a word, they are deduced from the fundamental principle of socialism." (Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question and Autonomy*, 1906)*

In *Die Gleichheit*, the newspaper edited by Zetkin, she made it clear that the power of the women who benefited from restricted suffrage is born out of their social position in the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie and that the legal reform of the right to vote they proposed would strengthen that power; however, working women could only be affirmed through labor struggles hand in hand with their male

class comrades:

"Those who defend the rights of bourgeois women want to acquire political rights in order to participate in political life. Proletarian women can only follow the path of labor struggles, the opposite of setting foot in real power through basically legal statutes."

That is why she denounced any organization "of women" and every "front of women's organizations," because she realized that organizing in a deceitful interclassist space only served to increase the power of the petit-bourgeois (and, as we shall see, nationalist) social layers that supported feminism and dividing the working-class movement.

March 8 against Feminism

Luxemburg is so clear that the organization of groups made up exclusively of women should not open the door to class collaborationism nor to the separation of the class that when Clara Zetkin invites her to the first congress of socialist women, she mocks in a letter to Luisa Kautsky: "Are we feminists now?" she writes. But Luxemburg knew that if Clara Zetkin organized groups of socialist women, it was for the same reason that the Second International created youth groups: to reach the working class as a whole and not only the workers who were concentrated in large workplaces. Although in Germany at the time there were many women in the factories, most working-class women were engaged in non-industrial work, raising their own children, and industries based on domestic work.

"There is only one movement, a single organization of communist women — formerly socialist — within the communist party together with communist men. The goals of communist men are also our goals, our tasks." (Clara Zetkin)

The creation of March 8 as a day of struggle in 1910 under the name of "Day of International Solidarity Among Proletarian Women," a proposal by Zetkin, is a part of that. It is about affirming the socialist and working-class character of the movement for truly universal suffrage, that is, including the acquisition of the right to vote for women. That is to say, the creation of March 8 was part of the struggle of the women of the Left of the Second International for the democratic rights of all workers and against the feminist idea of the "union of women" — "against which I have fought my entire life," Rosa Luxemburg would write.

The Moment of Truth

The moment of truth that would demonstrate the context and the reason for the struggle of the Left of the Second International against feminism came with the first world war.

The suffragettes literally "demanded" governments to incorporate women into the war effort and the capitalist bloodbath. In return, the British government granted the vote to eight million women from the wealthiest families in 1918, still far from universal suffrage. This is what the press now celebrates as "conquest of the right to vote by women," forgetting to mention that these women were few.

By contrast, Zetkin and the organizations of working-class women convened the first international conference against the war in the middle of the most savage repression of internationalists by all governments. It was the first political act organized by a group of the Second International against the war at a time when Luxemburg, Rühle, and Liebknecht were all in prison.

"[We must] lead proletarians to liberate themselves from nationalism and the socialist parties to recover their freedom for the class struggle. The end of the war can only be achieved by the clear and unbreakable will of the popular masses of the belligerent countries. In favor of action, the Conference makes an appeal to socialist women and socialist parties of all countries: War against war!" (Declaration of the International Conference of Socialist Women Against the War, 1915)

The demonstration of March 8th in Petrograd — which, as was traditional, was organized by groups of working-class socialist women, mobilizing workers

regardless of their sex and making demands for the class as a whole — became the trigger of the Russian Revolution.

The war removed any doubt or confusion: feminists "demanded" governments to be part of the war effort and participated in recruiting for the butchery; Petrograd's socialist March 8 was the beginning of the World Revolution. [⁴³]

Nuevo Curso, February 2018.
(translated by *Intransigence*)



The suffragettes "demanded" the women's participation to the war effort and actively contributed to the recruitment for the slaughter (Nuevo Curso)

43 . This last paragraph has not forgotten by the *Intransigence* translation, note of the IGCL

OUR POSITIONS

- Since World War 1, capitalism has been a decadent social system which has nothing to offer the working class and humanity as a whole except cycles of crises, wars and reconstructions. Its irreversible historical decay poses the single alternative for humanity : **socialism or barbarism**.
- The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- The stratified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba, etc., and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.
- All the nationalist ideologies -'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination', etc.- whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.
- In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.
- All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist', and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organizations (Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organization, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.
- In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organization through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

- Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organized mass action by the proletariat.
- The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.
- The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalization of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.
- The revolutionary political organization constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalization of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organize the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

OUR ACTIVITY

- Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.
- Organized intervention, united and centralized on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.
- The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

OUR ORIGINS

- The positions and activity of revolutionary organizations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organizations have drawn throughout its history. The IGCL thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the Communist League of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the International Workingmen's Association, 1864-72, the Socialist International, 1884-1914, the Communist International, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts, and the groups of the Communist Left which had specially developed in the 1970s and 1980s and which were stemming from these fractions