

REVOLUTION or WAR

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Crisis and Perspective of Generalized War? Only One Answer: Proletarian Internationalism

International Situation

Revival of The Proletarian Struggles and Pushes towards Generalized War or
The Question of the Historical Course

Ukraine and Taiwan: Flashpoints of an Uncertain World (CWO-ICT)

Struggle against Opportunism

24th Congress of the ICC: The Row Boat of Decomposition Takes on Water

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

First comments and debates about our Platform

Correspondence about our Platform: Why Claiming Exclusively the Left of Italy?

Contribution: Marxism and Knowledge

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Crisis and Perspective of Generalized War? Only One Answer: Proletarian Internationalism

The past two years have been especially grim for the working class. Based on estimates of excess mortality attributable to Covid, 20 million people have died from the disease in the almost exactly two years since the pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization in February of 2020 (as of February 13th, the 95% confidence interval is 14-23.1 million)¹. During this time, inequality has risen risen drastically as the ten richest people on Earth have doubled their wealth². So obscene is the present accumulation of wealth that the International Monetary Fund has warned of the prospect of mass unrest as one of the principal drivers of instability in the coming years. These capitalist technocrats articulate this concern from the standpoint of the implications it will have for continued capitalist accumulation, not for any humanitarian reasons.

This is useful context for understanding the ideological role played by the populist right, which denies the reality of the pandemic and opposes vaccination and non-pharmaceutical interventions in the name of individual liberties. These are the same elements for whom the American Occupational Health and Safety Administration³ would be an example of tyrannical overreach. They would like individual capitalists to be as unrestrained as possible in their pursuit of profit. Therefore, they naturally oppose any restrictions on gathering in indoor commercial venues as well as any mandatory vaccination policy for workers in crowded, poorly ventilated workplaces. We have to be clear that vaccination, as well as non-pharmaceutical interventions – like improving ventilation and mandatory masking to reduce transmission of respiratory infections, or improving drainage to prevent standing water to reduce incidence of mosquito-borne diseases – are not a question of individual choice. Epidemics and

pandemics of all kinds are a social problem that can only be dealt with socially. On the other hand, by denying the very reality of the Covid pandemic, this right-wing populist ideology serves to allow the capitalist class to wash its hands of the social murder for which it bears sole responsibility.

In the context of this socially explosive situation and the irreconcilable class antagonism that determines it, the leaders of two of the leading imperialist powers, the United States and Russia, openly discuss the prospect of world war. It hardly needs to be said that such a war would almost certainly result in a nuclear confrontation and mutual ruin. The consequence would be catastrophic; a genuine population bottleneck from which humanity would not recover for decades, in the most optimistic case. We are very far from the conditions of WWI, when the pace of war was relatively slow and when military operations were based on trench warfare and waves of infantry advancing under cover of artillery

fire. War between states today is fought with combined arms and relies on air superiority, electronic warfare and overwhelming firepower. If such a war were to be fought by nuclear powers, say a hypothetical war between Russia and NATO, whichever side was in danger of losing the conventional fight would likely resort to the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield or against the airbases of the opposing side. Once this

rung on the escalatory ladder is reached, few military strategists think that the result would not be a nuclear holocaust.

This is why the current crisis concerning Ukraine and NATO's eastward expansion is so dangerous. It is not so much that this particular crisis is likely to be the immediate catalyst for WWIII but that the crisis has the potential to result in a consolidation of mutually antagonistic imperialist blocs. If the US successfully goads Russia into attacking Ukraine, for example to prevent the pro-Russian regions of Donbas being overrun by the Ukrainian armed forces, the US will be in a position to demand the western



Russian Iskander Mobile Missile Launcher. From Kalinigrad, they can strike Berlin for example.

¹ . <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/coronavirus-excess-deaths-estimates>

² . <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/billionaires-double-wealth-covid-pandemic/>

³ . The same is true for all national state health agencies.

European economies disentangle themselves from Russia. If Russia is cut off from being able to sell their hydrocarbons in US dollars, it will be forced even more into China's orbit, just as western Europe will be forced into greater dependency on the US. This dynamic explains the difference in tone between the US/UK and Germany/France in regards to the Ukraine crisis, the latter having a lot more to lose should crippling economic sanctions be introduced against Russia. This is not, however, the whole picture.

Proletarian Internationalism against Imperialist War

The only response the working class can give to the prospect of generalized imperialist war is a generalized struggle for its own immediate and historical interests. Indeed, there is no opposition between immediate and historical proletarian interests. The historical role of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject is a function of the proletariat's immediate condition under capitalism as an exploited class.

Concerns relating to cost of living are top of mind for working class people around the world. In the US, workers on average lost purchasing power despite wages nominally increasing. The situation is similar in many parts of the world, including in the UK where there have been protests against the rising cost of living⁴. Despite being organized by a Labour Party affiliated pressure group, this is indicative of the growing discontent fuelled by rising living costs. The loss of purchasing power combined with increased national insurance costs could lead to a further 30% of UK households being unable to buy basic essentials⁵. The situation is not better in Russia, where household disposable incomes are lower by an average 10% compared to 2013⁶. Yet, predictably, this real problem – literally a matter of life and death for many people – is all but ignored in the media. Instead we are subjected to an incessant chorus of warmongering propaganda. Proletarian internationalism is not an abstract principle to uphold faced with the threat of war. It is the revolutionary policy that corresponds to the immediate needs of billions of people around the globe.

Workers must rally in defence of their class interests. The mass strikes in Iran and Kazakhstan, despite their considerable limitations, indicate the

way forward for workers in the capitalist metropolises. The conditions are ripe for mass strike in the main powers. Already, an international dynamic – still limited – of workers' struggles and strikes, particularly in the United States, is emerging. These strikes mainly aim to respond to the reduction in purchasing power by demanding higher wages. The stage is set for a desperate class struggle, which will decide whether we will move towards world war and barbarism or towards worldwide proletarian revolution.

Revolutionary minorities have a responsibility to begin building the skeleton of the future international. This will inevitably entail a process of debate and clarification as diverse currents consolidate into a genuine world party of the proletariat, in a dynamic process that is also heavily influenced by the development of the working class struggle. It is historically unprecedented that an International would form on the basis of a single revolutionary current. This does not mean that we simply ignore the real differences between currents but that we debate them and clarify them through praxis, through verification in the class struggle. The contemporary revolutionary organizations are not monolithic. Pretending that they are is to obfuscate the real divergences that exist within these organizations and is objectively a sectarian obstacle to regroupment.

A little more than 100 years ago, revolutionaries who would go on to form the Third International had many important divergences but they shared certain fundamental political positions. Foremost among these were proletarian internationalism, revolutionary defeatism, as well as the role of leadership of the party in the working class struggle and in the dictatorship of the proletariat. While many of the questions, such as on unionism and parliamentarism, have been settled by history, the above three fundamental positions continue to be a sensible basis for international regroupment. They are certainly not the only important positions but they are fundamental.

The stakes could not be higher and the formation of the main tool of the proletariat's emancipation, the international revolutionary party, on the basis of the principled unity of revolutionaries around the world is becoming an increasingly urgent necessity.

Revolution or War, February 13, 2022

⁴ . <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/feb/12/uk-cost-of-living-protesters-demonstrate-peoples-assembly>

⁵ . <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/feb/09/national-insurance-rise-could-mean-1m-destitute-households-in-uk-says-thinktank>

⁶ . <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/01/13/russias-2021-inflation-more-than-double-official-target-a76025>

International Situation

Renewal of The Proletarian Struggles and Pushes towards The Generalized Imperialist War or The Question of the Historical Course

“Quantum mechanics teaches us not to think of the world in terms of things that are in this or that state, but in terms of process. A process is the passage from one interaction to another. The properties of things manifest themselves in a granular way only at the moment of the interaction, that is to say at the edges of the process, and are such only in relation to other things; they cannot be predicted univocally, but only probabilistically.”

(Carlo Rovelli, physicist, specialist in quantum gravity, *Par-delà le visible, la réalité du mode physique et la gravité quantique*, Odile Jacob sciences, 2014)

For the bourgeoisie, the proletariat does not exist or is no longer. At best, for the most “enlightened”, it is only a fixed and passive category, an object. Some revolutionaries join this vision of a proletariat as a passive object, of a *thing in this or that a state*, by proclaiming its disappearance, or its absence, or by reducing its existence to that of the communist party. In doing so, some by class interest, others by incomprehension or discouragement, do not see that the class struggle is a permanent and moving fact of the capitalist society, a *process*, and that the proletariat is only *interaction* with the bourgeoisie and vice versa. Even at the height of the periods of counter-revolution, the struggle between the classes, and therefore the proletarian struggle, however weak and limited it may be, continues to exist and to be one of the factors of the situation whose course can be, and must be, foreseen not in a *univocal* way but only in a *probabilistic* way. It is therefore not a matter of affirming in a *univocal* way that the course of events leads to revolution, but in a *probable* way that it leads to a frontal confrontation between classes, that *the course is towards massive confrontations between classes*. To determine in a *probabilistic* way the historical course of events, here towards a confrontation between classes in the context of ever stronger pushes towards imperialist war, is one of the essential tools of revolutionaries to be able to establish orientations and slogans adapted to the historical as well as to the immediate, international, national, local or even particular situations and to their different moments.

Today, and despite the persistence of the pandemic and the pretext it provides to the States to reinforce the measures of control and social repression in the name of the fight against the Covid, it is undeniable that a renewal of workers' struggles has been manifesting itself for some months on all continents. The dynamic of proletarian struggles that had started in

the autumn of 2019⁷ had been halted and interrupted by the explosion of the coronavirus, the generalized lockdown measures and the paralysis of a large part of the world's productive apparatus. All the more so as the richest capitalist states, mainly in Europe and North America, had hastened to decide either to maintain salaries, or to grant unemployment benefits and other benefits, sometimes simple cheques as in the United States, in order to prevent any generalized social explosion that respect for capitalist laws, known as “market”, would have inevitably and dramatically provoked. Today, the bill – “whatever it costs” said French president Macron – which is presented mainly to the proletarians⁸, if only in the form of wage freezes and inflation for the time being, provokes the first proletarian reactions. This bill, that of the gaping hole in the public finances and of the gigantic generalized debt that comes on top of the increased exploitation of labor due to the accelerated fall in the profit rates of productive capital, is the signal, the first battle of magnitude, of the massive confrontations between the classes. These will decide the historical course leading either to the generalized imperialist war or to open – without guarantee of success – the door to the revolutionary and communist perspective of the international proletariat. This is the *probable* forecast that Marxism and the revolutionaries, the *party*, can and must advance today if they want to stand effectively and efficiently in the vanguard of their class struggle. This is the *probable* historical course of the present situation. Is it verifiable? Can it be verified?

The renewal of struggles must clear the proletarian perspective

The list of recent proletarian struggles is long. Ac-

⁷ . The highest point of which was the two months of strikes in different sectors, mainly transport, in France in December 2019 and January 2020 (see *Revolution or War #14* and the communiques we published at that time).

⁸ . But also in part to important strata of the petty-bourgeoisie thrown into misery.

According to the revolutionary group Emancipation, the year 2021, which saw almost 17,000 strikes, “saw the end of the ‘Covid strikes’, but also the promising appearance of mass struggles in new regions”⁹ of the world, in fact on all continents. Most of the “Covid strikes and struggles” responded only to health concerns, certainly legitimate ones, mainly to the dangers of infection in the workplaces. They remained therefore very limited, without real perspectives of massive and generalized struggle. The proletarian struggles of these last months tend to be situated on a firmer class terrain, in particular on the wage terrain in the face of growing inflation and, as such, they are of direct interest to the whole exploited and revolutionary class. Every worker can only recognize themselves in these demands and struggles. The revolutionary and communist press has reported on this new dynamic, has welcomed it, of course, and has actively supported it, in particular by intervening with leaflets when the opportunity arose. To verify the reality of the facts, we refer our readers to the websites of the Internationalist Communist Tendency, the group Emancipation, the ICP-Proletarian, and – for once – the International Communist Current, to name only the main ones that have reported and informed about the different workers’ struggles of the last few years.

It should be noted that, while pointing out their limitations, all groups agree on the new dynamic, the awakening, of proletarian struggles. “*The ongoing strike of 1,400 Kellogg’s workers throughout the US is a continuing source of inspiration to other workers in this country and abroad who are joining in what is a fragile but significant reawakening of our class.*” (ICT)¹⁰ After these two years of extreme confusion and generalized disorientation, favored and aggravated by the petty bourgeois revolts of all kinds that we have witnessed, the reappearance of the proletariat as the only force antagonistic to capital and the only one in a position to offer an alternative to it is in itself a fundamental fact that changes – tends to change – the setting given by Covid for the last two years ; that is to say, it opens a new dynamic of the evolution of the world relation of forces between classes, between capital and labor, between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The concrete affirmation of the proletariat as a class in the defense of its living and working conditions makes equally concrete, factors of the situation, the affirmation and the defense of the historical slogans of the communist movement,

the mass strike, the proletarian insurrection, the destruction of the bourgeois state, the class dictatorship and communism itself. These principles of communism carried and materialized by the communist groups, the *party in the making*, from simple propaganda objects tend to become weapons and slogans on the occasion of the proletarian thrusts, even incipient and timid, because they are the only ones allowing to guide with success and efficiency the action, the means and the goals of the daily fights. This is the first stake of the present situation.

What Defines The Current Historical Course?

But it is still necessary to grasp the real dynamic and its potentialities, general as well as particular, local or temporal, in order to define orientations and more immediate slogans of each moment and situation of the workers’ struggles. It would be a mistake, it seems to us, to see in the current revival only the simple – mechanical – reaction to the crisis and to the attacks that capital is forced to carry out against the exploited class in order to maintain at all costs a minimum of its profits and the continuation of capitalist accumulation. The error would be only a small one if it did not risk having consequences for the understanding of the real course of the confrontation between the classes and therefore in the capacity, which falls to the communist groups, to the party tomorrow, to orient itself in the coming turmoil.

It is not possible to understand today the full significance, the full extent of the policies adopted by the different bourgeoisie towards the crisis and the proletariat without taking into account the deep tendencies of capital towards generalized imperialist war. The pressures towards it on the bourgeoisie are just as pressing as those directly due to the crisis, forcing it to attack the proletariat more and more. The present historical course is determined, and will be determined for the whole period of massive confrontation between the classes that is opening, by the relationship between the proletariat and war as a *probable* perspective, that is, by the alternative of proletarian revolution or generalized imperialist war.

This imperative – due to the crisis – of the generalized imperialist war for the ruling class determines each time more the content and the violence of its attacks against the proletariat and therefore the terms and terrain of the confrontation. As the platform – updated in 2020 – of the Internationalist Communist Tendency perfectly states, “*once again the question of imperialist war or the proletarian revolution is being placed on the historical agenda and imposes*

⁹ . <https://en.communia.blog/from-the-covid-strikes-to-confrontation-with-unions/>

¹⁰ . December 5th 2021 Leaflet distributed by the IWG, affiliate of the ICT in the US , <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2021-12-05/striking-kellogg-s-workers-don-t-settle-for-crumbs>.

on revolutionaries throughout the world the need to close ranks. In the epoch of global monopoly capitalism no country can escape the forces which drive capitalism to war. Capitalism's ineluctable drive towards war is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat."

It is therefore not only the crisis itself that determines the content and the extent of the attacks to which the proletariat must respond, but also the future of the generalized war. This is why every workers' struggle is opposed to the whole state apparatus, the organ of the class dictatorship uniting all the bourgeois fractions, all united against the proletariat. This is why any workers' struggle that is even slightly consistent is presented as the work of *irresponsible* people, or very often now of *terrorists*, such as the "criminal" steelworkers of Cadiz during their strike last November. Any wage or other demand aiming at loosening the grip of the capitalist exploitation of labor does not only limit the profit of this or that capitalist, nor even only the competitiveness of the national capital on the world market, but also hinders *de facto* – tends to hinder – the industrial, economic, social, political and ideological preparation of each national capital in view of its participation in the generalized war, the only way for it in the end to "defend its piece of the pie", the only way to keep its head above water in the generalized catastrophe. Thus, for the bourgeoisie, any workers' struggle that is at least consistent, that is to say, that defends the needs and necessities of the workers without any bourgeois economic consideration, is irresponsible, selfish, anti-national or anti-patriotic. We will not deny it: any strike today becomes in fact an expression, a germ, of revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism.

It is therefore crucial to link the actual materialization, and in the making, of imperialist polarization with the conditions and potentialities of workers' struggles and to deduce, predict and anticipate their particular dynamics. If we retain as probable the imperialist configuration such as it seems to be taking shape at the moment, that of a polarization around the United States on one side and China on the other, to the detriment of another such as a Europe-America polarization for example¹¹, then the role and the responsibility of the proletariats of China and Europe vis-à-vis the international proletariat as a whole and in front of the march to war will differ. Likewise, the ideological themes for mobilizing the

American proletariat, which are essentially of democratic order, will not have the same effect if it matters to mobilize against China or against Europe. In Europe, the proletariat, which has the greatest historical experience of struggle, of generalized war and of the pitfalls of bourgeois democracy, will not be able to intervene directly on the two main imperialist protagonists. Will it be able, because of its historical experience, to clear the revolutionary path and present the perspective of communism to the international proletariat? In America, the experience against war is less – the first two world wars did not touch the country – and the democratic illusions are probably more anchored, but the American proletariat is at the heart of the historical situation because it is directly opposed to the most powerful bourgeoisie and the one which is the most warlike. Whatever the final imperialist configuration and the course of the class struggle, its role will be central and will undoubtedly tip the balance on one side or the other of the historical alternative. In China, one can assume that the proletariat has even less experience, although it is massively concentrated in large factories. Will it be able to oppose the class war to the imperialist war as the proletariat was able to do in Russia in 1917 and thus become the trigger of an international revolutionary wave?

In fact, without underestimating the importance and the absolute necessity that the proletariat of the more peripheral countries and continents, whether they are "rich" – Australia or New Zealand for instance – or "poor" as in Africa or Asia, engage in the fight for communism and join the whole international proletariat, and without excluding in an absolute way the possibility that one or the other could momentarily take the lead, its role in relation to the generalized imperialist war will be peripheral as well. Underlining these differences in the situations of the different fractions of the world proletariat should not make us forget that the action of each of them intervenes, influences, inspires, when they do not guide the other fractions of the world proletariat. In the end, there is only one international class struggle and one universal proletariat.

Mass strikes and massive confrontations between the classes will see their dynamics being influenced as much by the evolution of the economic crisis itself as by the evolution of the imperialist polarization, just as they will influence in one form or another the dynamics towards war. In fact, a race of speed is engaged between the two, revolution or war, knowing that the bourgeoisie will not be able to avoid confronting the proletariat frontally and brutally in order to impose political, ideological and physical bloody defeats.

¹¹ . The same one that seemed to emerge during the Iraq war of 2003 and that saw Germany and France polarize around them the opposition, in particular of Russia and China, to the American adventure, which was supported by the Anglo-Saxon countries.

Workers' Struggles in the United States and Their Relationship to War

However limited the struggles and strikes of last autumn in the US were, the fact that they developed in the first imperialist power, moreover the one that pushes most towards imperialist polarization and war, is already in itself a first response of the proletariat and, in fact, a hindrance, a brake to the march to war, certainly still largely insignificant in its current state but significant if considered in movement, as a process. The October 2021 strikes of the 10,000 workers of the agricultural equipment manufacturer John Deere and of the employees of Kelloggs, the latter lasting two months, as well as the struggle of “more than 24,000 nurses and other health workers in California and Oregon”¹² are the clearest expressions of this. The fact that they have denounced the company agreements signed by the unions and that they have asserted unitary demands, integrating *legacy workers* and *transitory workers* – because two-tiered wage system – in the same demands, bringing them together in the strike, even though the *legacy* ones could “benefit” from the contract signed by the unions, expresses not only solidarity, which is certainly elementary, but above all a will and determination to fight in the defense of class interests that are contrary to the interests of capital and of the American nation. Equally important is the fact that they come to disprove the idea that America is divided between pro-Trump fascist racists on the one hand and pro-democracy anti-racists who are followers of identity and racist theories on the other, knowing that some unions, in education in particular, had not hesitated to put forward specific demands according to the workers' skin color and origin. In this sense, they are also a denial and proletarian response to the whole ideological and political campaign that had been massively bludgeoned in 2019 after the police murder of G. Floyd and that had ended with an unequalled massive electoral participation.

That the U.S. proletariat can free itself, essentially through its struggles, from the grip of democratic and nationalist ideology, the one of the “American dream” and the “self-made man”, will be crucial in holding back the armed and bloody arm of U.S. imperialism, whether against another imperialism or against any victorious proletarian insurrection in another part of the world. The U.S. bourgeoisie, even less than the others, will not hesitate to launch missiles and atomic bombs on any country or group of countries in which the proletariat will have taken power. This is why we say that the proletariat of

North America will be at the heart of the historical situation: either it will give the signal of the generalized workers' insurrection by its own action¹³; or in the case that one or more other proletariats will take the initiative of the insurrection and will exercise the class dictatorship in other regions, it will be in the first line to paralyze the main armed wing of the international counter-revolution. Already, the proletarian struggles in the country, however limited they may be, are calling out to the international proletariat and setting an example to follow. Just as it gives the signal to the American bourgeoisie that it will have to account for it; that is to say, to confront and inflict a minimal defeat on it in order to have its hands free enough for its warlike imperialist designs. The proletariat of America is not a passive object *in this or that state* but a subject of history because of its *interaction* and its opposition to its own bourgeoisie. The massive confrontations between the classes will also, and we hope *especially*, pass through the United States.

International Dynamic of Working Class' Struggles

The renewal of the workers' combativity is international and crosses all the continents. In countries without a democratic tradition and where the unions appear openly for what they are everywhere, that is to say the organs of the capitalist state, the proletarians have no other choice than to launch themselves boldly into the struggle and to try to extend it as quickly as possible before the repression can be exerted on them. These are real examples of *mass strike* in action that the proletarians of Iran, last summer, or of Kazakhstan, at the beginning of January, have been able to launch. The demands are always the same: higher wages to cope with price increases. In countries with a democratic tradition and where the unions present themselves as independent of the authorities, as in Europe in particular, the strikes that have broken out and are still breaking out are based on the same type of demands. If the unions keep control over these and still manage to sabotage the extension and generalization, the dynamic of the *mass strike* is well present. The strike of the metalworkers of Cadiz in Spain illustrates at best the recovered combativity and this dynamic. In this, it does not differ fundamentally from the struggles

¹² . ICT, USA: “Striketober”, *An Unprecedented Wave of Strikes*, <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2021-11-25/usa-striketober-an-unprecedented-wave-of-strikes>

¹³ . This, without ruling it out absolutely, seems unlikely to us today for reasons that we cannot go into here. On this question, we refer the reader to the critique of the *weakest link theory* developed in particular by the ICC in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, one can refer to the internal debate reported in the *International Review* 57, 1984 (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/2962/debate-critique-theory-weakest-link>)

in the United States or in Iran or elsewhere. We allow ourselves to reproduce the account that the Spanish group *Barbaria*¹⁴ gave of the strike in Cadiz, which overlaps with what other groups, Emancipation and the ICC, which were able to follow this struggle closely, also reported.

“What this means is that any mobilization will be dismantled if it does not follow the principles which have marked the successes of our movement (it should be pointed out that there have also been some), and which are none other than internationalism and the independence of our class, which in a strike is concretized on the one hand by extending it to other sectors – and not isolating it in just one –, a tendency which has been seen in the Cadiz strike, which had a marked tendency to go beyond the framework of the factory, spreading to the urban environment of Cadiz and San Fernando through demonstrations and neighborhood assemblies, and on the other hand handing over all the power of decision on the strike to the assembly formed by the workers themselves, and not to unions alien to them and with interests different, if not opposed, to those of our class.” (translated by us)

It is worth noting several common characteristics that have emerged in the struggles, whether in the United States, in Spain (Cadiz) or elsewhere such as in Iran. Most of them tend to oppose the unions, in particular the agreements they sign with the management, to impose the strike in spite of them, to reject any division between proletarians, in particular between those with a fixed contract and those with a precarious contract¹⁵, and finally to seek – even if still too timidly – the extension of their struggle to other sectors.

The dynamic of renewal of struggles is thus well present. It presages confrontations more and more massive; and brutal because of the state repression which becomes systematic and generalized. In this sense, the measures of control of the population taken on the occasion of the pandemic come at the same time to reinforce the measures of surveillance and repression but also prepares, accustoms, the *public opinion* to it. The bourgeoisie is also preparing

for the confrontation.

Fighting for The Political Leadership of The Struggles

Even so, the first and main obstacle that the proletarians in struggle encounter is the unions, whether it is the big trade union or the grassroots unionism, as all the above-mentioned revolutionary groups have concretely and rightly denounced. It would be a mistake to advance only self-organization in itself, in particular the holding of General Assemblies, as an antidote or guarantee against the various and sundry sabotages of trade unionism and leftists. If we can note certain formulas opening the door to what we call *fetishism of self-organization* and that we criticize because putting this as a prerequisite to the struggle – such as *“the ability to push forward the struggles will depend increasingly on the initial forms of organization”*¹⁶ – it is important to support the political orientation that makes the organizations with which the proletarians in struggle equip themselves as organs of such or such task and orientation.

*“The metalworkers’ strike in Cádiz shows us that we need to fight in a different way. And that means, from now on, to take control of the assemblies today monopolized by the unions. And to do so in order to extend the struggles, open the assemblies and make joint demands that go beyond all the divisions by sector, province, region or contract type.”*¹⁷

However, in order to realize this orientation of extension and generalization, whether by means of assemblies, massive delegations, picket lines, street demonstrations, etc., it is still necessary that the proletarians in struggle assume the inevitable confrontation with the unions and the leftists. This is a political struggle against the forces of the state in the working class milieu, without which neither extension nor generalization, and therefore neither retreat of the bourgeoisie on this or that demand, is possible. It is therefore up to the most combative and conscious proletarians to take charge of this confrontation for the direction and orientation of each workers' struggle at the expense of the unions and leftism. And when it is possible, to prepare for it by regrouping in struggle committees or other.

But contesting the leadership of the unions to counter their sabotage is not simply a matter of “rank-and-file workers” versus “bureaucrats” and the union apparatus. It is also necessary to oppose the latter with orientations and slogans, including

¹⁴ . <http://barbaria.net/2021/12/11/la-huelga-de-cadiz-y-las-flores-en-la-guadana/>. *Barbaria* is a revolutionary group in Spain that appeared in 2018. Its website publishes a few pages in English to which the non-Spanish-speaking reader can refer if needed.

¹⁵ . Whether at John Deere or Kelloggs in the United States or in Cadiz, proletarians with fixed contracts or status did not hesitate to fight alongside precarious workers, even when the agreement signed by the unions did not directly affect them. This phenomenon had already manifested itself during the strikes of autumn-winter 2019 in France: a large part of the strikers of the railways or urban transport, as in Paris, were not directly affected by the “reform” on pensions. This had not prevented them, on the contrary, to strike for two months.

¹⁶ . Emancipation, *From the “Covid strikes” to confrontation with unions*, (<https://en.communia.blog/from-the-covid-strikes-to-confrontation-with-unions/>)

¹⁷ . Emancipation, *Metalworkers strike in Cadiz* (<https://en.communia.blog/metalworkers-strike-in-cadiz/>)

sometimes demands, that correspond to each situation and moment, to each particular battle or issue. In short, it is necessary to be part of the real process, to be an active factor in it and not to base one's positioning *on this or that state* of the different elements in themselves, forgetting that they are in *interaction*. The political direction of struggles cannot be decreed. It is disputed and won, or not, in the capacity of the most combative proletarians to clear and impose the concrete ways for the development and the generalization of their struggle. And this even in the most isolated and immediate struggles. This is where the function of communist organizations or political groups, whether or not they have militants on the spot, is not only essential but even crucial. As will be that of the party of tomorrow.

Equipped with the principles of communism and armed with the understanding that the course of history leads to class confrontations in order to resolve the alternative of proletarian revolution or generalized imperialist war, they are the best, if not the only ones, able to evaluate the particular and general relations of forces and their dynamics and, thus, to put forward orientations and slogans corresponding to the needs of each moment of struggle. In doing so, they prove the daily and historical efficiency of the principles of communism, of its theory of historical materialism, and therefore of the party, if not of the communist groups, which materialize program, principles and method. In this way the party, today the forces of *the party in the making*, assumes and finally wins the effective political leadership of the proletariat.

It is the *sine qua non* condition, but not the absolute guarantee, of the victorious insurrectional capacity of the proletariat and of the exercise of the class dictatorship to put an end to capital, misery and war. In a more immediate way, that is to say today in the dy-

namics of renewal of the workers' struggles, the fight for the effective political direction of the proletarian struggles still remains in an embryonic state, largely in the making, in spite of the efforts of all the revolutionary groups. Even so, we are convinced that there is **already today** a link – that we will dare to qualify as *dialectical* – between the very dynamics of the struggles that are emerging and the intervention and propaganda of the proletariat's political vanguards. And it is not so much the degree reached by the economic crisis that reinforces this link – historically there are many cases where economic crisis and development of workers' struggles do not correspond – but the pushes to generalized imperialist war that is the fundamental, historical reason. This dynamic link between the two has for content, reality, the defense and the implementation of the principle of *proletarian internationalism extended to the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat* as Lenin said. For it is in the real, concrete, in-process relationship of the international proletariat to the perspective of generalized war, through its struggles, and through the active and decided intervention of the communist groups and militants of today in these struggles, that the party will be able, at the price of efforts and struggles just as hard, to constitute itself and to guide the revolutionary class until the insurrection, the dictatorship of the proletariat and, at the end, to communism.

The revival of the current struggles, besides expressing the inevitable defense of the living and working conditions of the proletarians, which are deteriorating in an accelerated way, is the first expression of this perspective. It allows us to verify that the historical course is indeed towards massive confrontations between classes.

RL, January 31st 2022

Pamphlets (orders at intleftcom@gmail.com)

IGCL Platform

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).

Ukraine and Taiwan: Flashpoints in an Uncertain Imperialist World (Extracts, Communist Workers Organization -ICT)

We decided at the last minute to change the contents of this issue in order to take up and translate part of the article as soon as possible Ukraine and Taiwan: Flashpoints in an Uncertain Imperialist World, () only a part of it because it is too long for our journal, which the CWO has just published. Armed with the principle of proletarian internationalism, the CWO forcefully denounces imperialism and the growing sounds of the jackboot. “Certainly if we believed all the stories in the Western press about the threat of Russian expansionism towards Ukraine or China’s imminent invasion of Taiwan, then the threat of global war is as close as it has ever been in the last six decades. During the last three of them of course, it has been the Western powers, under their alias of “the international community”, who have led the way in invasions, as in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. This does not prevent them claiming to be the “good guys”, promoting democracy and human rights against corrupt dictatorships. Let’s just state it bluntly: in an imperialist world all the actors are driven to become rapacious powers fighting their own corner. There are no “good guys”.*

After a rather complete and argued history which traces the difficulties of Russian imperialism since 1945 – the part we cannot reproduce for lack of space – the article highlights the imperialist polarization of recent years and its current acceleration. In the new imperialist configuration, a central polarization between the US and China is emerging. The CWO comrades clearly show how Russia, seeking to counter and react to the American and NATO "containment" which it also suffers on its own borders, here with Ukraine, is led to move closer and closer to China to counter the US. If it goes all the way, this dynamic leads to the constitution of a Chinese-Russian imperialist bloc against the latter.

*No mention is made of the present and concrete relationship between the proletariat and the perspective to war. There is no doubt that the comrades of the ICT defend that the proletarian struggle is the only real alternative to generalized war. But we also know that they do not share our conception of the historical course, that is, of the relationship of the proletariat to the question of war. However, at a time when an organization like the International Communist Current continues, in the name of Decomposition, to reject any possibility and even dynamic towards generalized imperialist war – throwing away a fundamental position of Marxism and the Communist Left and thus sowing confusion and opportunist confusion – the fact that the main organization of the proletarian camp, the ICT, is clear and determined on this question is of the utmost importance; it is to be encouraged and welcomed. In fact, in addition to the aggravation of the economic crisis, the dynamics of imperialist rivalries have concrete and immediate implications for the development and content of the struggle between the classes. Faced with the alternative of revolution or war, only the proletarian camp, the party in the making, and the pro-party forces within it are able to defend the principle of proletarian internationalism **in a consistent and efficient manner** – that is, extending it to those of revolutionary defeatism, of proletarian insurrection and dictatorship – and **in a practical way** by putting forward orientations and slogans indispensable to the development and unity of proletarian struggles. No one else will be able to do it in their place.*

** <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2022-02-06/ukraine-and-taiwan-flashpoints-in-an-uncertain-imperialist-world>*

The New World Order (CWO-ICT)

In a Kremlin speech in 2005 Vladimir Putin characterised the collapse of the USSR as the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the Twentieth Century.”¹⁸ The years that followed the break up of the USSR were characterised by triumphalism in the West, summed up in the ironic echo of Stalinism that we had arrived at “the end of history”.¹⁹ A KGB officer in Berlin at the time, Putin subsequently had to observe the Eastward march of NATO and the EU right up to the old Russian borders. Russia not only lost the satellites of East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria but also Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Azerbaijan and

the Central Asian republics. The Russian state could do little at this point as its economy was undergoing “shock therapy” on the advice of prominent US economists. Following the economic stagnation of Gorbachev’s perestroika, Yeltsin attempted to impose a more deep-seated restructuring of the Russian economy, one that had taken the West 20 years to accomplish, in a matter of months. It was a disaster which not only saw Russian GDP fall by 40% by 1999, it also saw 45,000 state enterprises sold off for a song to those who already had strong political (as well as criminal) connections, creating a class of oligarchs who were literally a law unto themselves. It culminated in a financial crash in 1998 which led to the devaluation of the rouble, and further misery for a population whose life expectancy was falling. Putin regards this period as one where the West

¹⁸ . See "Putin deplores collapse of USSR". BBC News. 25 April 2005.

¹⁹ . Marx had always argued that the establishment of communism would be “the beginning of real human history”.

“blatantly tricked” Russia by promising not to extend NATO right up to Russia’s borders.²⁰ Instead NATO and the EU enthusiastically integrated all the former Eastern bloc states, and parts of the old USSR, apart from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, into their orbits. It is something Putin is determined to halt, and, if possible reverse, which is why he now talks of defending Russia’s “historic territories” like Ukraine.

[Here follows a rather long, detailed and very interesting passage, which we had to cut due to lack of space, which traces the history of Russian imperialism from the fall of the USSR to Putin's arrival in power, through the Yeltsin years. We encourage English-speaking readers to read the whole article.]

So why is Putin mustering large bodies of troops on the Ukrainian border for the second time this year? It all started with the Biden administration signing an agreement to supply Ukraine with \$125 million of weaponry in April 2021. The Pentagon openly declared that this was for “defence against Russian aggression”.²¹ This was put on hold in June so Russian forces began to stand down, only for half the package to be reaffirmed by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, on a visit to Kyiv in October. The Russian troop build-up thus resumed. And the USA is not the only NATO power arming Ukraine. Turkey has sold drones which Ukraine used in October to destroy separatist artillery in Luhansk.²² And the British, ever seeking arms deals around the world, have also got in on the act by selling missiles to Ukraine. And to affirm their loyalty to the Western Alliance (i.e. curry favour in Washington) the Royal Navy sent the Type 45 destroyer, HMS Defender, on a deliberately provocative route within 5 miles of the Crimean coast.²³

Both Putin and the West are thus playing at what used to be called in the first Cold War, “brinkmanship”. It is part theatre and part serious, and of course always leaves room for “misunderstandings”. What Putin has seen is that the US has retreated from its previous position as the world’s policeman. In the last decade or so it has withdrawn from Syria (Russia has saved the Assad regime as a result), Iraq and Afghanistan, leaving behind only chaos and misery. He is aware that the West, and the Europe is

divided over how to deal with his pushback against the last 30 years of NATO expansion. He is also aware of Russia’s relative weakness against the combined forces of NATO. The Ukrainian conscript army itself is the third largest in Europe (over 700,000 troops), and is undergoing reform and reorganisation, which, with new and sophisticated weaponry from NATO powers, will make it more effective. Putin worries that Ukraine may soon be strong enough to recover the Donbass. He knows too that there are some situations in which neutrality is more important than action. Thus, in the Caucasus in 2020 he remained neutral in the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, allowing Erdoğan’s unconditional support for Azerbaijan to bring about the rapid defeat for Armenia.²⁴ It seems he has learned from Afghanistan – via both Brezhnev’s adventure in the 1980s and the twenty year US debacle there – that any military action has to be sudden, short and sharp. The added advantage of this is that the Western powers have no settled policy on how to deal with a more aggressive Russian policy in its own backyard, and where there is always the possibility of exploiting the differences between them over such issues as Nord Stream 2.

Trump famously made these divisions worse by his criticism of some of the most important NATO “allies”. Biden has since mended some fences with European allies, but there are still fears in Europe that the US will make some deal with Putin without consulting them, and then leave them to sort out the consequences. Blinken, the US Secretary of State has already conceded that Nord Stream 2 will come on line in 2022 (although the new German government has so far not sanctioned it) although it did get outgoing Chancellor Merkel to agree to the threat of more joint sanctions if Russia starts cutting off supplies of gas to Ukraine.

The USA really wants to concentrate on the far more dangerous threat to its global dominance that comes from China. Although the rhetoric is different, “the pivot to Asia”, and the need to cut the *faux frais* of its imperialist reach elsewhere, are about the only issues which unite the bulk of the US ruling class (from Trump to Biden). As part of the need to concentrate on China, the ignominious retreat from Afghanistan was negotiated by the Trump administration whose concessions to the Taliban undermined the Afghan government²⁵ to the point that only a massive re-commitment of US troops would have preserved it. Biden was just as critical of the futility of the Afghan adventure as Trump, so did nothing to prevent the Kabul debacle. Although there is much bluster about “red lines” and “serious

²⁰ . A point he repeated recently as reported in the *Financial Times*. See [digital.olivesoftware.com](https://www.digital.olivesoftware.com)

²¹ . [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com)

²² . [themoscowtimes.com](https://www.themoscowtimes.com)

²³ . The British Government at first tried to deny that the route was provocative and that it was just a matter for the Royal Navy but the discovery of MOD documents at a bus stop in Surrey left by the candidate ambassador to NATO revealed that this is precisely what was discussed “at the highest levels” [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk) The ambassador did not get the job!

²⁴ . See [leftcom.org](https://www.leftcom.org)

²⁵ . See [leftcom.org](https://www.leftcom.org)

consequences on both sides, the prospect of meetings in Geneva in January and a face to face between Biden and Putin in February, should ensure that the current theatre around Ukraine will go on into the new year. As a token of this Putin withdrew 10,000 troops from the “exercises” on Christmas Eve, which still leaves an estimated 90,000 on Ukraine’s eastern border and in Crimea. However, whilst the US is more focussed on “the threat from China”, and wants to deal with Russia separately, the distinction may be harder to maintain given recent developments between these two states. In the last year in particular Russia and China have been seeking closer cooperation.

Russia/China and the USA

[We had to remove here two paragraphs that trace the relations between the late USSR and China, then present the development of close and growing economic relations between Russia and China in recent years.]

Since 2014 US sanctions against both states have ensured that China-Russia rapprochement has gone beyond economic cooperation. Whilst the US was scrambling to get people out of Kabul in August, the two countries were engaging in “large-scale joint exercises for the first time inside China”.²⁶ In October, Chinese and Russian warships held joint manoeuvres in the Pacific completing a near circle around Japan’s main island in the process. Then on November 19, both militaries sent bomber flights into Japanese and South Korean air defence zones, “forcing Seoul to scramble its fighter jets in response”.²⁷ Four days later the Defence Ministers of Russia and China then signed a “roadmap of closer military cooperation” for the next four years citing US aerial threats as the reason.²⁸ It adds that the two countries share a desire to counter a perceived U.S. ideology “of militarism, interventionism and the forcible imposition of U.S. values on other countries.”²⁹ And of course this new military alliance is “a contribution to peace”.

If that sounds familiar it is because we have been subjected to exactly the same propaganda from the US and its allies. Although they remain the most powerful forces on Earth, both economically and militarily, together accounting for 60% of the world’s expenditure on arms, they want to keep it that way. As Biden made clear earlier this year: “*On my watch China will not achieve its goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world, and the most powerful country in the world.*”³⁰

However in the Indo-Pacific the US does not have any alliance like NATO, with its integrated command and control structures. In fact, the only one of America’s Asian treaty alliances that has such a structure, is the one with South Korea. During the Cold War the US did try to set up a NATO-equivalent in the region called the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation, or SEATO. This however never became a real military alliance, and lacked the common foe the USSR represented in Europe, so it was wound up in 1977. The US is now trying to nudge the NATO allies to take up more of the cost of the military expenditure in their own backyard against Russia, whilst it is also trying to build towards a series of alliances against China that might, in time, amount to the kind of close cooperation enjoyed by NATO states.

It is not difficult for the US to build a picture of “a Chinese threat”. Stories of Chinese military exercises simulating an invasion of Taiwan, or the constant overflying of Taiwan’s airspace, all add to a genuine picture of a much more assertive China.³¹ The building of artificial islands in the South China Sea, the insistence that this is virtually China’s Mare Nostrum and the disputes with Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines and other states in the region are real enough. China’s maritime militia (hundreds of fishing boats with guns) are used to enforce China’s claim to control various islands whilst not being officially part of the state apparatus.³²

At the same time the US is stepping up the ideological issue too. The repression of the Uighurs in Xinjiang and the dismantling of democratic opposition in Hong Kong, as well as the increasingly authoritarian control which President Xi wields over the Chinese Communist Party, all fit the US “we defend democracy” narrative. In February 2021 Biden made this more explicit. “*We’re at an inflection point between those who argue that ... autocracy is the best way forward and those who understand that democracy is essential.*”³³

By playing on these military and ideological threats the US has been ratcheting up alliances, both formal and informal, as part of its manoeuvring to hold on to its position in the great game for world domination. These include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) which includes the USA, Australia, Japan and India, the Five Eyes intelligence sharing organisation of the English-speaking states of the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and most recently, the US controversial deal with Australia and the UK, AUKUS.

²⁶ . [militarytimes.com](https://www.militarytimes.com)

²⁷ . [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com)

²⁸ . [militarytimes.com](https://www.militarytimes.com)

²⁹ . *idem.*

³⁰ . Quoted in [amp.theatlantic.com](https://www.amp.theatlantic.com)

³¹ . For a more detailed analysis of what is going on around Taiwan see [leftcom.org](https://www.leftcom.org)

³² . [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com)

³³ . Also quoted at [amp.theatlantic.com](https://www.amp.theatlantic.com)

The Five Eyes operation is basically the US keeping its allies informed about what it has learned of Chinese advances but the Quad has organised joint naval manoeuvres annually throughout the Asia Pacific region since the 1990s. The 2020 exercise took place off the Malabar coast and significantly had the added presence of the navies of New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam. It was during this exercise that the creation of a “NATO” for the Asian-Pacific region was first openly discussed. A further step towards a new anti-China dominated alliance in the Pacific came this year with the formation of AUKUS. Our comrades in Australia summed up its aims:

*“On September 15th, as part of revamped efforts by the US under Biden to gather its allies against China, Biden, Morrison and Johnson signed the AUKUS pact, which not only involves Australia to now be building nuclear submarines at the Corp in Osborne, South Australia, but also entails enhancing military interoperability, new forms of meetings and engagements between defence and foreign ministers and officials, and deeper cooperation across cyber, applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.”*³⁴

And to round 2021 off Japan and the US have now concocted a plan in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan: *“Under the plan, the US marine corps would set up temporary bases on the Nansei island chain stretching from Kyushu – one of the four main islands of Japan – to Taiwan at the initial stage of a Taiwan emergency and would deploy troops...”*³⁵

These alliances enormously help to consolidate US power particularly against the perceived growing challenge from China. There are many ironies in this contradictory situation into which imperialism has stumbled. Not least is that the rise of China was predicated on the injection of massive doses of Western capital which could not find sufficient profit levels at home after the 1970s. Cheap Chinese commodities produced by the highly exploited Chinese working class, not only allowed Western economies to restructure in the face of a global economic crisis of accumulation, but also led to the creation of an economic giant which openly claims it will become the world’s dominant power by 2049, challenging the very country from where its initial capital came in

the first place. It certainly undermines the capitalist notion that trade, especially “free trade” promotes enduring peace, but then the whole history of imperialism has already amply demonstrated this. The shock in the West is that China’s embrace of “the market” has not automatically led to the collapse of the Communist Party’s rule. It was assumed it would go the way of the USSR. More than thirty years since the Tiananmen massacre, Party rule seems as strong as ever.

The real fear for the US is that China’s economic growth will give it a basis for transforming power relations. At the moment this seems a long way off and the dollar still rules supreme in world trade with no serious rivals, just as it has since 1945. However there are worrying signs for the US. China’s much trumpeted Belt and Road initiative has been analysed in these pages before, but now 142 states are signed up in various ways to it. There are problems with many of these countries but the project continues. At the same time, Trump’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership has opened the door for

China to sponsor an alternative trade bloc, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

“The RCEP trade bloc is the world’s largest, both in terms of population and GDP, roughly accounting for 30 per cent of the global total for each. The RCEP member countries are Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. This equates to a market

*value of close to US\$25 trillion and a total consumer base of about 2.5 billion, of whom an estimated one billion are middle-class consumers. That is roughly the equivalent of 3 x the United States.”*³⁶

The trade bloc aims to reduce tariffs to zero on 92% of traded goods of its members so, although there are many economists who think it will not amount to much, it is a potential game changer. China has recovered from the pandemic faster than expected. Its annual exports were up 22% in November 2021 which is its highest growth in a decade. On the other hand the Chinese real estate sector is in crisis after the 6 December default of the Evergrande conglomerate. The Chinese property sector accounts for



Russian Vladimir Putin and Chinese Xi Jinping in Beijing, last February 4th 2022

(Alexei Druzhinin, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Source: AP)

³⁴ . leftcom.org

³⁵ . theguardian.com

³⁶ . silkroadbriefing.com

about a third of total economic output so this is bound to have a detrimental effect on overall growth figures for 2022.

Even without the pandemic, the current situation thus lacks some of the predictability of the post-war rivalry between the USSR and the USA. Whilst Putin is openly trying to redress the balance of power on the Southern and Western borders of Russia³⁷, the US has also dubbed China a “revisionist” power. On its own the US still has, at least on paper, enough military might to take on not only Russia and China, but the next 5 ranked powers in the world as well. Its military budget will rise to \$750 billion this year but whereas this was 6% of its expenditure in Reagan’s time that figure now represents 15% today. It is unlikely to diminish given both the seriousness of the perceived threat (naturally talked up by the military and the industries that get the contracts) and the constant development of new types of weaponry. There is in fact an arms race in cyber warfare, in drone warfare and in missile defence systems going on at some pace, all driven by the fear of losing a strategic advantage in any field.

Most worryingly is the increased notion in all the military forces that low yield tactical nuclear weapons can be used on the battlefield. In February 2020 the US conducted a military exercise which simulated using a submarine-launched nuclear weapon against Russia³⁸ (which US intelligence believes is also looking at the same possibility). Additionally China is credited with new weapons which could override the US 5-1 superiority in aircraft carriers such as the Dongfeng-41 (“East Wind”) “carrier-killer” missile³⁹, while its recent test of a hypersonic glide vehicle⁴⁰ which it is claimed launched a missile whilst travelling at five times the speed of sound, has only added more intensity to the arms race. The question begged by all this is “where is it leading us”? You cannot eat weapons nor can they be used to create anything. As tools they have limited use for hunting down the Earth’s declining wildlife, but other than that they only make money for those who sell them to the many warring parties in the world’s “local” conflicts from the Sahel and Syria to Ethiopia and Yemen. They bring misery to millions but the scale of today’s suffering will be nothing compared to what the system is now preparing.

The boom after the Second World War was predic-

ated on the massive destruction of capital which allowed a new cycle of accumulation to begin. The extent of that destruction was enough to ensure that no power would lightly engage in generalised warfare. The costs had to be weighed in the balance. However the boom came to an end in the early Seventies, and the system has staggered from one expedient to the next to survive. The transfer of much productive capacity to China was just one of these, but today this has simply reproduced an imperialist rivalry of the most dangerous kind, with new alliances and a new, highly sophisticated, arms race in many fields. It cannot be predicted when this will lead to a more generalised conflict, although Admiral Davidson, the outgoing head of US command for the Indo-Pacific, openly declared that it would be within “the next six years” (as he, of course, called for an increase in the military budget).⁴¹ The system is inexorably taking us down that more than dangerous road. The actual flashpoint might not be either Ukraine or Taiwan, but in these uncertain times nothing can be ruled out. This is a struggle for mastery over the planet, and it will not go away. As our Italian comrades concluded in a recent article on Taiwan:

“It is obvious that capitalism is preparing a new conflict of global significance and is not afraid of pushing the planet to the brink, not only on the environmental level, but now openly also on the economic and social level. Even if sometimes unconsciously, capitalism pursues the idea which every sensible human being instinctively hates and rejects: the idea of destruction, as its salvation, its resurrection. By devaluing capital and obtaining the much desired “creative destruction” according to the famous Schumpeter definition, capital would then have paved the way to restart a new cycle of accumulation as after previous wars, regardless of the effects that this “regeneration” would have on the planet and on its population.”⁴²

Communist Workers’ Organisation, February 2022

³⁷ . Of which the rapid use of Russian and Belarusian troops to save the government in Kazakhstan from a “popular uprising” is another example.

³⁸ . [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

³⁹ . [businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com)

⁴⁰ . [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

⁴¹ . [news.usni.org](https://www.news.usni.org)

⁴² . [leftcom.org](https://www.leftcom.org)

Struggle against Opportunism

ICC 24th Congress: The Row Boat of Decomposition Takes on Water

The following article on the 24th Congress of the ICC will certainly consolidate those who believe that we are obsessively fixated on this organization. However, it is not our fault if the other components of the proletarian camp hold few congresses, conferences or general meetings. When they do, we try to read them, to discuss them and to state on their results⁴³. Indeed, consistent with our position on the historically crucial question of the international communist party, we consider the congresses and conferences of other communist and revolutionary groups to be among the highest moments of the proletariat's life and the struggle for the party. So, it is our duty to take part and intervene in the "political affairs" of the other groups of the proletarian camp in which the essential part of the theoretical, political and organizational battle for the party of tomorrow is being fought. There is no better way to confront and clarify the political positions of each other, including one's own, and thus prepare the programmatic armament of the future world party of the proletariat.

The ICC published on its web site four reports⁴⁴, a Resolution on the international situation⁴⁵ and a Balance-sheet of the congress⁴⁶. Normally, the latter should present us the balance that has been drawn of the organization's activities, the Congress' own stakes and the perspectives it puts forward for the coming period.

A "Positive Balance-Sheet"? Really?

From the outset, the reader, and we with them, are reassured on the first point: "*the ICC held its 24th International Congress and we can draw a positive balance sheet from it.*" But in terms of the balance of activities since the 23rd Congress in 2019, the text merely states that "*the Congress drew a positive balance of the activity of the organisation in the last two years, in partic-*

ular the solidarity with all the comrades affected by the pandemic." Nothing else. This is rather meager in terms of the actual political activities of the ICC, although we are very happy – who wouldn't be? – to learn that the comrades reached by Covid were supported by the others. But what about the political orientations that the previous congress had adopted: "*defence of the organisation, combat against parasitism, development of marxism, capacity for analysis and intervention confronted with the evolution of the world situation.*"⁴⁷?

Has the ICC succeeded in countering the "parasitism" that has been successful "*to build a wall around the ICC, to isolate it from other communist groups and turn newly emerging elements away from engaging with [it].*"? Was it able to successfully develop "*a determined and unrelenting struggle against parasitism (as) essential, long term axis of the ICC's intervention [that] must be an open and continuous political and organisational combat against parasitism in order to eliminate it [we emphasize] from the proletarian milieu*"? Has it also been able to correct its own sectarian and opportunistic deviations in its fight against parasitism that it had pointed out at the previous congress⁴⁸? This is what it says about it today: "*the experience of the last two years of the defence of the organisation against the attacks of parasitism and for breaking the cordon sanitaire it tries to erect around the ICC shows that the struggle against opportunism and sectarianism is synonymous with the knowledge and defence of our history.*" (Balance-Sheet of the Congress) This is called *talking without saying anything*. It is one of the many empty, pompous and vacuous phrases, and the litany of which we will spare the reader. It is therefore difficult to draw a positive balance about the *defense of the organization and the combat against parasitism*.

So there is no doubt that the *positive* must be found in the *capacity for analysis and intervention confronted with the evolution of the world situation* – for the moment, let us leave aside the ambitious *development of marxism*. The balance sheet text does not say much about this. But the Report on the international class struggle⁴⁹, if one takes the trouble and the time to

⁴³ . See *Revolution or War #5, On the General Assembly of the PCInt-Battaglia comunista*, 2016 (<http://igcl.org/General-Assembly-of-the-PCInt>)

⁴⁴ . On the Pandemic and the Development of Decomposition; on the International Class Struggle; on the Economic Crisis; and one specific on the imperialist tensions, called *November 2021 Report*.

⁴⁵ . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17062/resolution-international-situation-adopted-24th-icc-congress>

⁴⁶ . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17105/balance-sheet-congress-understanding-historical-situation-and-preparing-future>

⁴⁷ . Balance-Sheet of the 23rd Congress by the ICC (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/16807/different-facets-fraction-work>)

⁴⁸ . Idem. And see also *Revolution or War #12, Balance-Sheet and Perspectives of the 23rd Congress of the ICC*, 2019 (<http://igcl.org/Balance-sheet-and-Perspectives-of>)

⁴⁹ . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17054/report->

read it, provides some precious indications on this aspect of the ICC's activities. It points out “weaknesses in the application of our political framework”, the “absence of the framework of decomposition”, going back well before the 23rd Congress, and “more general weaknesses of the organisation determining its analyses and statements of position.” In particular, it highlights an immediateist approach that “was certainly the antechamber to opportunism, the point of departure for a slide towards opportunism and the abandoning of class positions.” The weaknesses are far from minor. The report, which is decidedly critical, notes that “the [ICC] deviation on the youth movement against ecological destruction showed a forgetting of point 12 of our platform. (...) The leaflet and the article of the ICC in Belgium are glaring examples of opportunism. This time, it is not opportunism on organisational matters, but opportunism in relation to the class positions as expounded in our platform.” That alone? It even goes so far as to draw a negative balance sheet of the previous congress. “We can say that the report on the class struggle to the 23rd Congress was not without ambiguities at this level [the ecological movement].” In addition, this report – adopted by the Congress, let us recall – “is in contradiction to what is said in point 12 of the platform.” Please do not add any more, the row boat is full.

So, to read the reports, the balance of the ICC activities since the 23rd Congress is far, very far, from positive. According to the very Congress, the ICC has fallen regularly into opportunism, both in the defense of the organization and in the analysis and intervention in the situation. To the point of betraying its platform! We could be satisfied to see that at last the ICC itself is taking up the opportunistic drifts that we have been denouncing since our constitution and in the following of the ex-ICC internal Fraction. But the opportunism mentioned here is only the “forgetting of the framework of decomposition and parasitism” and not the framework itself.

What is at Stake? Plugging the Gaps in the Hull of the Row Boat Decomposition...

“The 24th Congress of the ICC (...) had the responsibility of confirming the framework of analysis of the decomposition of capitalism” (Balance of the Congress) and “to ‘test’ the theoretical framework of decomposition” displays the Preamble of the **Resolution on the International Situation**⁵⁰. All the reports are centered on the defense of this theory. Taking up the method of *idealist speculation* exposed in their time by Marx and Engels, they reduce all the events of the

historical situation to the category Decomposition. An example? “China's extraordinary growth is itself a product of decomposition”, to quote only one of the most caricatural. No doubt its *dialectical* dimension might escape many, including internally. However, since the last congress, a member⁵¹ has ventured to question some of the positions derived from Decomposition on the course of the historical situation. Obviously, his empirical recognition of the facts does not allow him to fit them into the categories of *chaos* and *every man for himself*, the main characteristics of Decomposition according to the ICC. This is how the Balance article summarizes the terms of the divergences:

“Isn't the polarisation of imperialist tensions, mainly between the US and China, paving the way for a Third World War? Wouldn't the brutal measures taken by the states of confinement etc. be a covert means of preparing the populations for imperialist war? Is the pandemic a "socio-natural" phenomenon that the states can take advantage of for population control purposes or does it express and accelerate, above all, the general decomposition of capitalism? How can the proletariat face up to this grave historical situation? Does it first need a consciousness of itself and the development of its historical perspective? Or would this require the development of a struggles on its own class terrain, the maturing of its consciousness and the strengthening of the capacity of its communist organisations to intervene?”

In doing so, while affirming his agreement with the dogma of Decomposition, he questions its political implications. Let us limit ourselves here to the first three questions – the last ones on the class struggle and the proletariat requiring developments and a radical critique of the two positions that would go beyond the limits of this article. In the name of Decomposition, didn't the ICC definitively rule out any prospect of a third world war at its 17th Congress in 2007? With *chaos* and *every man for himself* causing “the rise of populism and the loss of political control by the ruling class”, how could the ruling class, losing all control, “prepare the people for imperialist war” and use the pandemic against the proletariat? Nor can we return here to our critique of the theory of Decomposition. Let us just mention that *chaos*, or *anarchy*, as well as *every-man-for-himself* are not peculiar to the present so-called Decomposition period, but to the capitalist mode of production as a whole, from its origins – “*man is a wolf to man*” (Hobbes) – up to the dominant imperialism and state capitalism of our time. In this sense, today and since the beginning of the 20th century, *chaos* and *every man for*

international-class-struggle-24th-icc-congress

⁵⁰ .
<https://en.internationalism.org/content/17062/resolution-international-situation-adopted-24th-icc-congress>

⁵¹ . Yet having actively participated in imposing the opportunistic course that took hold of the ICC decisively from its 2001 crisis.

himself do not exclude imperialist polarization and the perspective, or dynamic, towards generalized imperialist war, but are, on the contrary, factors and moments of it. The more exacerbated and profound the *anarchy* and the *every-man-for-himself* in the defense of each national capital against the others, the stronger the pressure towards imperialist polarization and generalized war.

The exposure of the metaphysical method, therefore anti-dialectical, used to defend Decomposition is enough to evaluate the realization of the orientation "development of marxism". Here too, the failure is obvious and the balance sheet *negative*. So, after examining the published documents, only "the solidarity with all the comrades affected by the pandemic" remains in the *positive* column of the balance sheet...

What perspectives? To liquidate the class struggle...

"The perspective of communism is in the preparation of the future. (...) The central aim of the 24th Congress was the preparation of the future" concludes the article on the balance of the congress. One could just as well say "the preparation of the future is in the perspective of communism" as the emptiness of the statement would not be less. The perspectives of the class struggle? "The central question is whether the proletariat has already been so overwhelmed by the remorseless advance of decomposition that its revolutionary potential has been effectively undermined." Another empty sentence? No, here is introduced the idea that the proletariat is opposed not to the bourgeoisie, real material historical force, but to Decomposition, its idea, its concept – we come back to it below. And as for the construction and defense of the organization, "the struggle against opportunism within the organisations of the Communist Left, linked to the struggle against parasitism, is going to be important in the next period." In short, as the only concrete orientation, we have exactly the same, the fight against parasitism, as at the previous congress.

The 24th had therefore nothing to say to the proletariat. Its only object: to defend Decomposition for the ICC's own survival. For the day it collapses, in addition to the definitive condemnation of two to three decades of opportunist politics and sectarian practices carried out in its name, it is the organization itself that will explode or implode. Now, this theory of an idealist order – as we have never stopped saying and repeating – leads to a dead end from the proletarian point of view because it liquidates the fundamental principle of Marxism and of the workers' movement, that of the class struggle as the motor of history. In this, the ICC can still pollute

the reflection of the young generations of revolutionaries in search of historical reappropriation and programmatic coherence, but without experience. Highlighting and denouncing the liquidation of the principle of class struggle by the ICC can help their reflection; and warn all the components of the proletarian camp against any concession, or absence of vigilance, on the idealistic and opportunist themes advanced by the ICC.

"The phase of decomposition indeed contains the danger of the proletariat simply failing to respond and being ground down over a long period – a 'death by a thousand cuts' rather than a head-on class confrontation." (we emphasize). The proletariat could therefore be defeated not by the bourgeoisie, a real and active social force, but by Decomposition, by the "internal disintegration" of capitalism. A clumsy formula? No, a position constantly reaffirmed: "the workers' resistance to the effects of the crisis is no longer enough: only the communist revolution can put an end to the threat of decomposition" – and not an end to the one of the ruling class and its solution to the crisis, that is the generalized war. This idealistic and speculative approach, reducing everything to decomposition, inevitably leads the ICC to an a-classist and moralizing terrain, to the bourgeois terrain: "thus, the drama facing humanity is indeed posed in terms of order against chaos [!]." (Resolution on the international situation, we emphasize)

The class struggle – the struggle between classes – disappears in favor of the one between *order* and *chaos*. The dream of the petty-bourgeois fearful of the chaotic reality – from his point of view – due to the exacerbation of capitalist contradictions and the real class struggle is thus finally realized by the ICC, apostle of *Order* and nostalgic of a bygone and mystified time. But capitalist *order* and *chaos*, far from excluding each other, feed each other to maintain the domination of capital and the exploitation of the proletariat. *Order* and *chaos* of the proletarian struggle – to use the categories used by the ICC of the Decomposition – will feed each other so that the international proletariat carries out its violent insurrection against the bourgeois state, destroys it, and then establishes and exercises its class dictatorship, a new proletarian *order* – and certainly an *anarchic chaos* for the ruling class – as long as communism is not definitively established. But in this case, the ICC and its Decomposition will have long since been swallowed up by the tumultuous waves of history. This is precisely the fatal outcome announced by the waterways flooding the row boat of Decomposition and which the 24th Congress tried to plug.

December 2021

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

First Comments and Debates about our Political Platform

The publication of our platform (PF) has induced numerous reactions and comments. It is still premature to make a useful presentation in this issue of the journal, if only because of their diversity and heterogeneity. The immoderate use of Facebook and other social networks, which do not allow for the development of real arguments, does not help, far from it – the numerous "likes" are not very interesting from the point of view of confrontation and clarification of positions, and even less from a militant point of view, of militant commitment. Undoubtedly also the reflection of many is still in progress. Among the argued reactions, sufficiently developed and whose length allows publication, we have selected the following letter with our response.

Beforehand, we would like to point out two observations, potential criticisms, which are addressed to our document in order to try to clarify the real meaning of its adoption and publication. For the most part, they come from groups, circles, or even militants belonging, or having belonged, to the proletarian camp. In this sense, they have a very particular value for us. The first one, made by several⁵², assimilates our platform to that of the ICC: the PF "lacks in my eyes a certain theoretical uniformity: if the first paragraphs (1-9) are free of any trace of "Luxemburgism", "councilism" and "kaapedism" that one finds in the ICC and in its democratic and mechanistic conceptions of the relations between the party and the class, however, in the second part of the document certain formulations and conceptions seem to me to be taken from the doctrinal corpus of the ICC." (Jr) The second: by adopting a new platform, the IGCL would present itself and aspire to be a new pole of international regroupment, as an alternative, even in competition – for those most contaminated by sectarian vision and disease – with the Internationalist Communist Tendency. It would thus break with its previous orientations towards the proletarian camp and the fight for the party.

Both observations deserve reflection and clarification. The first may have some relevance, at least on a cursory reading of the PF, and we do not reject it out of hand. Even so, our intention – and we believe that

the PF responds to our expectation – was, and continues to be, to put all the positions, or class frontiers, that most of the communist groups of today share, into a programmatic framework and a political approach different from that of the ICC's platform, of economist-councilist order, and with a greater coherence and firmness of principle than that of the ICT⁵³. In this sense, from a programmatic and political point of view, we believe that the former is no longer adapted to today's situation, that of the 2020s, and the latter is incomplete and insufficient. The reader who has read our critique of the ICC's PF⁵⁴ will have noted that the main, central weakness that makes it unsuitable today is its economic approach, which can be summarized by the presentation and explanation of class frontiers, on trade unions, parliamentarianism, national liberation struggles, etc., only by the opposition between the periods of ascendancy and decline of capitalism, an opposition reduced, moreover, and principally, to the fact that *capitalism was able to grant reforms* and that *capitalism is no longer able to grant reforms*. The undeniable coherence of the PF of the ICC is based on an economicist and fatalist vision that is also coherent with its councilist vision, which is evident in its points on the party and class consciousness. Our PF, on the contrary, tries to base the coherence and explanation of the class frontiers from and around the question of the party and class consciousness, and therefore from the history of the class struggle itself. We have not invented anything. We have just been convinced of the political correctness of the principled approach of the successive PFs that the so-called Left of Italy had adopted, in particular in 1945 and in 1952. And we tried to take it up again for the contemporary period, judging that the party of tomorrow could only be based on this approach and these principles.

The second observation is also relevant, and we ourselves have been concerned about the political implications and responsibilities that a relatively developed and argued platform, claiming to supersede the historical inadequacies of the platforms of the 1970s (ICC) and 1980s (ICT)⁵⁵ could and would have

⁵² . The journal *Présence marxiste* (only in French), largely unknown today insofar as the comrades who animate it do not use the internet, nor even digital technology, has sent us eighteen typed pages that we cannot reproduce in our journal . It also makes this critical observation.

⁵³ . *Revolution or War #17*, Statement on the ICT 2020 Platform (<http://igcl.org/Statement-on-the-ICT-2020-Platform>)

⁵⁴ . *Revolution or War #18*, <http://igcl.org/Statement-on-The-International>

⁵⁵ . Basically, the 2020 platform of the ICT is the platform that was adopted during the constitution of the IBRP in 1982 by

objectively on our political orientations and activities. If from the constitution of the IGCL in 2013, we were aware that the basic positions we had adopted to establish orientations and interventions, would “require greater development and argumentation in the future”, it was above all the evolution of the historical situation that made the elaboration of a new document indispensable and urgent: the discussions with comrades willing to join the group forced us to distance ourselves from the most councilist positions in our basic positions taken from the ICC; the development of the historical situation, in particular the increasingly strong and direct pressure of the alternative revolution or war on the immediate situation, especially on the conditions of the development of the class struggle, revealed the insufficiencies of the PFs to which we had been referring until then, in particular on the question of class consciousness and the party, in order to be able to orient ourselves in the face of the first gusts of the coming storm.

The decision to adopt the platform was therefore not guided by any pre-established will or plan, but was in fact imposed on us as an urgent necessity. Added to this, of course, was the limited balance-sheet of one of our main orientations, adopted in 2013 and which was partly the basis for the constitution of the group, that of *regrouping around the ICT, the only one able to exercise the central role of an international regrouping pole*.⁵⁶ It must be admitted that we have never succeeded in convincing the comrades of the ICT to assume in a more consistent and "historical" way the task that circumstances conferred on it, **and still confer on it today**, that of an active and decisive pole of regroupment – the comrades of the ICT rather use the term of *reference*. In our opinion, too often the ICT is satisfied with the simple adhesion of new members to its ranks and neglects to take charge of and direct the debates and the process of political clarification, as well as that of historical re-appropriation of the patrimony of the Communist Left, **towards all the forces and militants that emerge**, including those who are not likely to join its ranks immediately. There is little doubt that this weakness – of the proletarian camp as a whole, not

just of the ICT – forces us to try, much more modestly, to fill this absence. In this sense too, we needed a sufficiently developed and precise platform, even if we do not despair of convincing the ICT one day, and above all – even more likely – that it will be convinced by the very development of the historical situation.

Even so, assuming in part what we believe should be the primary responsibility of the ICT, does not detract anything from the particular and central position and responsibility that it still occupies today in the proletarian camp. In this sense, the adoption of our platform only induces an immediate and secondary tactical change of our general intervention towards the proletarian camp. If we were to pretend to be the historical pole, or one of the poles, of international regroupment, that would be to pay oneself with words and not taking into account the reality of the proletarian camp, of the *party in the making*, and our own reality. We have concluded, for some time now, and the informed reader will have realized it, that we should try to *debate* and *confront* the positions present in the proletarian camp, including those of the ICT, without... the components of this camp, including the ICT. This results in a lack and a weakness for the camp as a whole. But we are convinced that without the confrontation of positions – which the comrades of the ICT consider only useless polemics – the struggle for the party and therefore for its program and platform can only fail miserably.

An example? It is enough to see the conditions that prevailed at the constitution of most of the communist parties at the very beginning of the 1920s and the congenital disease of opportunism that resulted in most of the parties of the International. Two exceptions: that of the Bolshevik fraction gathered around the figure of the insatiable polemicist Lenin; and that of the Communist Party of Italy following the polemics and the incessant fights of the abstentionist Fraction gathered around the figure of Bordiga. Our platform responds therefore to two necessities: that the party of tomorrow can be at the level of the historical stakes thanks to the clarity of its program and its positions; to prepare the historical regroupment of the communist forces by assuming from today the confrontation and clarification of the existing positions which, in the last instance, always correspond to problems and stakes that the proletariat finds and will find on the way of the insurrection and of its class dictatorship.

Revolution or War

the PCInt-*Battaglia comunista* and the CWO (Communist Workers Organization).

⁵⁶ . We cannot make a precise balance-sheet of our relations, always fraternal we must say, with the ICT. All the more so as the latter displayed successively contradictory positions and attitudes towards us, asking us to dissolve during its first reaction to the constitution of the IGCL – which it saw as a direct competitor to its Canadian group of the time, the IWG – then welcoming our honesty and our expressions of militant fraternity, answering some of the debates that we raised, only to see us again as rivals in the search for militants, in particular in North America.

Comrade Achille's Letter: Why Ignore The Legacy of the German-Dutch Left?

First of all, I take my hat off to the IGCL because it is a remarkable document, both clear and precise and with the usual rigor of the IGCL texts. On many points, I find it a real advance, in particular on the function of the party and its relationship with the class, the role of each before the revolution and during the transition period. The points concerning class frontiers (except for the one on partial struggles, I will come back to that) are particularly well written and complete. I would not change anything in the points about trade unionism and national liberation struggles. Despite all this, I still have some questions.

The first is the abandonment of the claim to the heritage of the German-Dutch Left. This is not so much a surprise, especially in view of your last criticism of the ICC platform, but I do not quite understand this position. The German-Dutch Left cannot be reduced to the ideology it produced in the 1930s under the weight of counter-revolution and the demoralization that followed: councilism. I don't think this is your point of view, so why? The contribution of the German-Dutch Left is considerable, and many lessons can be drawn from its practical and theoretical experience. We owe it in particular the first criticisms of trade unionism (despite its limits), a vision of the party that breaks with that of social democracy... Gorter's *Open Letter to Lenin* was an essential text in my path, as were others by Pannekoek. Some detractors of the (original) ICC reproached it for the impossible synthesis between the German-Dutch Left and the Italian Left, I find this criticism facile and incorrect. Moreover, this distinction between the two Lefts is too schematic in my opinion. Both, in different contexts, are expressions of our class's attempts to pursue the revolution and then to confront the counter-revolution. Both made mistakes but remained faithful to the project of proletarian emancipation. On parliamentarianism, the question of democracy and fascism, both currents come to similar conclusions. So why claim to belong to only one of them? It would seem to me that it would be more accurate to claim to be part of all the left fractions that opposed the degeneration of the CI.

Another point, subject to questioning, concerns the period of transition. On this subject, one can essentially base oneself on past experiences (the Russian

revolution and to a lesser extent the Paris Commune) to determine what the transition period should not be, on the other hand, to describe it positively, it is difficult to go further than to state some principles. One of the essential lessons is the fact that the proletariat cannot delegate the taking of power to anyone, not even to its party; the revolution is the fruit of the conscious action of the majority of the class. Another lesson: the party and the proletariat must not identify themselves with the proletarian state (semi-state or commune-state). But what is this semi-state? if it is not the workers' councils, then who composes it? What is its role? On this the platform does not say anything.

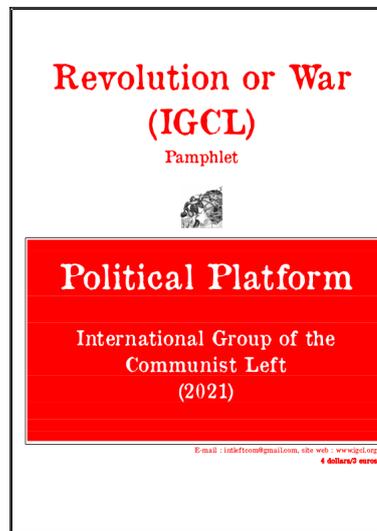
Still concerning the period of transition you add "*this period will still inevitably see the exchange of goods between these strata and the proletariat...*" The commodity exchange will be maintained only between the non-exploitative social strata and the proletariat and

not within the proletariat, is that right? How do you see it working within the proletariat?

I admit that I haven't given enough thought to the question of the transition period, if you have any readings to recommend, I'm a taker.

Finally, the last point I want to address, for now, is that of partial struggles. Identity issues, whether they are based on skin color, gender, sexual orientation, etc., are a poison for the proletariat. The current jargon and attitude of the proponents of intersectionality is unbearable to me. So I understand perfectly why you thought it necessary to devote a point to it. However, I find, first of all, that there are some unfortunate formulations such as "the domination of woman" or "the liberation of woman" and not "of women" and, above all, that when reading it, one has the feeling that you are implying that the revolution will solve everything, hence the impression of a certain indifferentism. I am convinced that all these questions are obstacles to unity and to the constitution of the proletariat as a revolutionary force. But it also seems to me that when a part of the proletariat is discriminated or oppressed, revolutionaries must intervene, on a class basis and by putting forward common interests. How to do this concretely is not obvious. I'll stop here for now.

February 2022, Achille



Our Response to Comrade Achille: Why Claiming Exclusively The Left of Italy?

Dear comrade,

First of all, thank you for your letter and the *tip of the hat* to our political platform. If it is always encouraging to receive greetings, it is especially important to be able to display political agreements before differences, or even questions. If only to be able to address these and confront them with the greatest possible clarity thanks to the framework thus delimited. The debate can only be as efficient as possible. We will try here to answer mainly to the disagreement that you express, and above all to try to explain to you our position regarding our exclusive claim of the fight of the Left of Italy. Let's quickly and succinctly address the other points you raise and which seem to us to be, at least for the moment, nothing more than simple questioning.

"The platform does not say anything" about what makes up the semi-state of the transition period. The observation is correct. The fundamental reason for what may appear to be a weakness in itself is that we believe that many of the questions about the transitional period, based on the experience of the Russian Revolution, are still "open" questions, not definitively decided by history. In the same way, we don't think that the platform is the place, for the reasons previously mentioned, to make the question of *labor vouchers* in exchange for the work provided by each proletarian, non-accumulable, non-hoarded coupons, directly exchangeable for consumer goods, a definitively clear-cut question today. In this sense, and within the limits of a certain framework of principles and method, the one provided by the platform mainly on the question of the party and class consciousness in the case of the IGCL, the absence of a clear-cut position on these points does not limit, nor does it alter (for the moment) the political unity and homogeneity indispensable for the *party* action of the communist groups. In particular, the possible positions on these points are not discriminating as for the adhesion to the group, tomorrow to the party, of any militant. Nevertheless, the task of the communist groups today is to prepare and establish the most favorable conditions for the resolution of these questions at the very moment of the class dictatorship, not being afraid to debate and confront the different positions. But this is not the function of a platform today. For our part and on our own scale, that is to say modestly, we have already tried in the journal to advance and to contribute to the clarification of questions and interrogations that the period of transition raises⁵⁷.

It seems to you that we seem to show a certain indif-

ference towards the question of particular discriminations, such as racism or the domination of women, in the expectation that *"the revolution will solve everything"*. We will have to come back to this question and be more convincing. Nevertheless, we draw your attention to the fact that the platform defends that *"it is in the proletarian struggle, in its extension, in its generalization, i.e. in the fight for its unity in order to make it as effective as possible, that the proletariat in struggle overcomes, and in fact tends to abolish, all divisions..."* We try precisely there to reject any indifference and to show that the real fight against any social, racist, gender or other discrimination, can have for framework only that of the proletarian fight to be *effective*, even if only partially or momentarily. It follows that the action – and responsibility – of communists as well as of the most combative proletarians also opposes and fights against any form of racism or sexism that inevitably accompanies class society. Including by denouncing the anti-racist or feminist campaigns led by the bourgeoisie and aiming at bringing the proletarians back to the field and the defense of the state and the bourgeois democracy.

Let's turn now to the main question we wanted to answer: our *"abandonment of the legacy of the German-Dutch Left."* How can we understand it? In the first place, claiming exclusively the struggle of the Left of Italy does not mean that we ignore other historical currents, in particular the German-Dutch Left and the contributions it had made. Among these, and to give just one example, it is undeniable that Pannekoek, even when he became a *councilist*, was able to provide important elements of clarification on various issues.⁵⁸ In the same way, and as you underline it, the two Lefts, of Italy and German-Dutch, *"remained faithful to the project of proletarian emancipation"* and, let us add, to the fundamental principles of the workers' movement, in particular *proletarian internationalism*.

We are much more reserved, not to say openly crit-

⁵⁷ . See RoW #8, 9, 13, 15, 16 et 17.

⁵⁸ . Just one example on the trade union question and which refers to the debate on the mass strike within the German social democracy in the years preceding 1914, of which Pannekoek, greeted by Lenin, was one of the principal theoreticians at the side of Rosa Luxemburg: *"the impotence of trade unionism is not surprising, because if a group of isolated workers can appear in a right relationship of force when it opposes an isolated employer, it is impotent in front of an employer who is supported by the whole of the capitalist class. This is what happens in the present case: the state power, the financial power of capitalism, the bourgeois public opinion, the virulence of the capitalist press concur to defeat the group of combative workers."* (Anton Pannekoek, *Le syndicalisme*, 1936, Éditions 10-18, 1973, translated by us)

ical, about the contributions it would have left on the question of the party as well as those of Gorter's pamphlet, *Open Letter to Lenin*. The fact that the latter may have been for many, especially in the 1970s⁵⁹, a moment of their break with anarchism towards Marxism does not detract from its councilist and anarchist character, if only by its prism of the opposition *mass-leader*.

But if we do not ignore the German-Dutch Left, the fact remains that in our daily struggle we have been led to refer almost exclusively to the experience of the Left of Italy, to its positions but above all to its method and principles, in order to elaborate our analyses, positions and struggles. The essential part of our platform is based and relies on the historical thread drawn by this Left from the Theses of the abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party, those of Rome of the CP of Italy, those of Lyon and the fight, carried by it alone, within the CI against Zinovievist opportunism first, then Stalinist, while remaining faithful to the principles and achievements of the first two congresses of the International. The thread then stretches to the Italian fraction in exile with the review *Bilan*, the constitution of the *Partito Comunista Internazionale* in 1943-1945, up to our days. The question of method is here fundamental.

Let us take a concrete example, that of the trade union question precisely. At first sight, it can appear that the German-Dutch Left understood much earlier than the Left of Italy that the unions had become counter-revolutionary. But what was the answer that the KAPD, and we are talking about those more "partyist" fractions, not the one around Otto Rühle, gave to the effective betrayal of the German trade unions? The AAU and AAUD, i.e. new *de facto* trade unions, which, moreover, prohibited themselves from being unitary organs of the class, since it was necessary to adhere to their political platform to become a member. "*The task of the AAU is the revolution in the enterprise*" proclaimed point 10 of its program (1920) after having affirmed that it did not recognize "*the justification for the existence of political parties because the historical evolution pushes towards their dissolution.*" (*La Gauche allemande, La vieille taupe*, 1973) Needless to say, these two points of the AAU's program are totally councilist and above all contrary to the principle of proletarian insurrection

⁵⁹ . Our critique of the ICC platform attempts to explain how councilism could be a moment, a bridge, for the new generation of '68, towards the discovery and, for many, towards the reappropriation of the programmatic and political corpus of the international Communist Left. It also explains why it seems to us that this moment is definitively over and why councilism as such can no longer play such a role today.

and the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Our denunciation of the trade unions, which today have become full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state apparatus, is based not on the practical German experience of the AAU-AAUD, but on the experience of the Italian Left, which within the CI defended the unity of the workers in struggle in their unitary organizations of struggle. That at that time and until the 2nd World War, it continued to consider the unions as such bodies does not change the fact that it is on the principles it defended and the method it used that we can today not only denounce the unions in themselves, but in practice, namely to fight their sabotage of the struggles and to contest their leadership in it. Whereas the legacy of the German Left only allows a formal or abstract denunciation of the unions without breaking with either the syndicalist and workers' ideology or the fetish of self-organization and assemblyism. As you can see, on this central question, the two currents differ in a fundamental way and, in the end, oppose each other on the questions of principle of the party-class relationship, of the unitary organizations that the class equips itself with, and the task of political leadership that the party must exercise; not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat... If in the years 1970-1980, these differences could still, in their own historical circumstances, present a community of approach, a more or less united camp, mainly against the counter-revolution and Stalinism, the situation of the 2000s means that today's councilism has become one of the main vectors for the introduction of democratic ideology, in particular of the anti-Lenin and anti-dictatorship of the proletariat, or of the fetishism of self-organization, in the proletarian milieu. This is why we continue to think that the fight against councilism, which is not a current that has passed to the bourgeoisie, is today one of the priorities of the struggle for the party within the proletarian camp.

In a few words that are all too brief, this is the basis of our exclusive claim to the struggle of the Left of Italy. We do not doubt that this little answer will not be enough to close the debate between us on these questions, even if only the one about the contributions and the heritage of the German-Dutch Left. But perhaps it would be useful for you to clarify your agreements and your understanding of the points of the platform dealing with the question of the party and its relationship to the class, because we think that there is a link, a coherence, between the two.

Looking forward to your comments, receive our internationalist greetings.

The IGCL, February 2022

The text published here is the continuation of the contribution begun in the previous issue on Communism and Community. It will be followed by a third part of this study in the next Revolution or War. We submit this contribution to the critical reflection of all. Any comment or even contribution, critical or not, will be welcome. And as far as possible, we will not hesitate to publish them.

Marxism and knowledge

To reflect on the function and the nature of the communist party necessarily implies to reflect on the status of human knowledge. Obviously, the knowledge of modern society is the fruit of the scientific method which took off in parallel with the rise of capitalism itself. But science was certainly not the only way to establish knowledge throughout history. The members of classless pre-capitalist societies all learned what they needed to learn about the way of life, for example the basics of hunting and gathering, through an education not separated from general socialization. In the same way, the medieval peasant possessed some knowledge of agronomy by the simple daily experience of agriculture. From the historical point of, science does not have the monopoly on knowledge, but appears more as a dominant and specific mode of acquiring knowledge that is dominant and specific to capitalism.

We will therefore try to clarify the nature and status of human knowledge in general from a Marxist point of view. The political stake behind this contribution is to put back on the agenda the Marxist imperative to transform society. Indeed, it is a question of better understanding the link between social transformation and knowledge, a link that has been formulated in an abstract way in the bourgeois philosophical tradition in the following dualistic way: being and consciousness or matter and Spirit.

Method : continuity of Marxism

Before trying to put on paper the main lines of a Marxist theory of knowledge, it is important to make explicit a notion which will be constantly in the background of our development. It is the notion of the continuity and the theoretical unity of Marxism. This may seem at first sight as an attempt to freeze Marxism in the form of an immutable dogma, but we will try to show that it is on the contrary an important conception for a good understanding of what knowledge is from both a materialist and a historical point of view.

In the background of all the great polemics and debates in the ranks of what is conventionally called Marxism, there always appears a doubt about the validity of the Marxist analysis in front of the appearance of new facts. Most of the time, this doubt appeared within the most right-wing currents of the workers' movement: it is what we call revisionism,

an acute form of opportunism. Many militants tried to dispel this doubt by showing that the validity of Marxism is not restricted to 19th century England, but that the theory is valid for the whole of the capitalist historical course. At the end of the 19th century, did Engels⁶⁰ not defend Marxist theory in its entirety against Dühring, who sought to purge socialist thought of all traces of dialectic? At the beginning of the 20th century, did Luxemburg⁶¹ not defend the entirety of the Marxist theory of catastrophic economic crises against Bernstein, who claimed that the new evolution of capitalism allowed it to solve its economic contradictions? Did Lenin⁶² not defend the revolutionary political program in its entirety against Kautsky, who advocated a peaceful passage to socialism made possible by new facts such as the constant democratization of European political regimes? What emerges from these examples of historical polemics concerning Marxism is that Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin did not defend Marxism as a series of divine writings to which one must subscribe with faith. On the contrary, the principle they implicitly put forward is quite simple: Marxism, as a theory of the revolutionary transformation of societies and a critical theory of capitalism, remains valid as long as capitalist social relations persist. This is already an implicit form of the notion of theoretical continuity of Marxism. This being said, the principle of invariance - even if valid in itself - should not be used as a pretext to defend positions made obsolete by the very experience of the communist movement. Indeed, we can see some groups of the proletarian camp using this principle as a fig leaf to hide opportunist positions such as the red unions, the national liberation struggles, etc.

This notion, although always defended implicitly by the left fractions of the communist movement against the revisionist right, will be especially systematized by the current of the so-called Italian Communist Left. For it, the notion of continuity - or invariance - is in some way a methodological posture

⁶⁰ Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/index.htm>

⁶¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or revolution*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/index.htm>

⁶² Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/state_rev/index.htm

of Marxism in relation to itself. In fact, "we use the expression 'Marxism' not in the sense of a doctrine discovered or introduced by the person Karl Marx, but in reference to the doctrine which arose with the modern industrial proletariat and which 'accompanies' it throughout the course of a social revolution⁶³." Marxism is therefore a historical product, and not the thought of an isolated individual, however brilliant he may be. It is a theory that is born at the same time as the class in which the negativity against capitalism is affirmed, that is to say, the proletariat.

Being a theory that, like any theory, emerges from the materiality of social relations, Marxism cannot be modified according to individual wills and passing fashions, otherwise it will betray its premises and, above all, its objectives: "It is precisely because Marxism denies any sense to the search of the 'absolute truth' and sees in the doctrine not a given of the eternal spirit or of the abstract Reason, but an 'instrument' of work and a 'weapon' of fight, that it postulates that one doesn't abandon his weapon or his instrument in the middle of the effort or at the height of the battle to 'repair' it : it is by wielding good tools and weapons from the start that one emerges victorious, in peace as in war⁶⁴."

This is an implacable critique of the dominant ideology that makes Reason a continuous progress towards infinite knowledge, but also of the corollary theory according to which human beings invent ideas that are then constantly improved by successive generations until perfect knowledge of the world is achieved. In short, it is an arrow shot at the ideology of the constant progress of Reason associated with the Enlightenment. On the contrary, from the Marxist point of view, ideas are historically specific and are ultimately determined by the different modes of production.

We could be reproached for not seeing the eminently dynamic character of capitalism. Indeed, it is constantly changing and transforming itself. After all, we have gone from the artisanal workshop to the Taylorist scientific factory, from the individual entrepreneur to the joint-stock company, and from the primacy of the industrial sector to the explosion of the tertiary sector. So many changes that Marx and other theorists could not perceive in their time, would argue the past and present Dühring, Bernstein and Kautsky. If we consider the problem from the point of view of Marxist methodology, capitalism only develops further by remaining absolutely faithful to its intrinsic functioning. All the changes that have taken place in its history are determined by its

very nature, by what makes capital capital. Thus, Marx and Engels "showed that this evolution of capitalism, far from modifying it, tended on the contrary to bring it ever closer to pure capitalism; they answered in advance to the discoverers of new facts too eager to declare obsolete what they do not know: the Marxist analysis of capitalism with all its political implications cannot be surpassed, it can only become truer and truer!⁶⁵"

Basic principles of Marxism

In order to tackle specifically the Marxist theory of knowledge, it is necessary to make a brief exposition of the principles which form the foundation of the Marxist edifice. It is these same principles that will then allow us to clearly define what knowledge is.

Materialism can be conceived as a philosophy that affirms that all phenomena have their source in matter. Thus, Darwin's theory of the evolution of species can be qualified as naturalistic materialism. Indeed, this theory locates the motor of the evolution of species in their ability to adapt to their natural environment. The existence of the diversity of living species derives from the organic functioning of nature itself, not from an original intelligent design of God. The philosophical postulate of materialism is therefore to get rid of a dualistic view of the world where matter and Spirit are two separate and autonomous elements.

Marx, for his part, brings the social field into materialism. Indeed, according to him, class social relations linked to the way in which human beings produce and reproduce their lives constitute the material basis of social life. It is precisely this material basis that determines the consciousness and the ideas that human beings have of their own practices. Thus, Spirit, consciousness, ideas, knowledge and even Reason are not what determines the way of living in society, but they are instead determined by the way human beings organize their social relations. According to Marx, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."⁶⁶ or, in other words, it is not thought acting autonomously that determines the modalities of social relations, but it is the modalities of social relations that determine the thought of human beings.

It is thus precisely the material social relations that determine the consciousness that human beings have of their own existence. Marx adds that "con-

⁶³ "The historical invariance of Marxism", thesis #1, <https://www.international-communist-party.org/BasicTexts/English/52HistIn.htm#Hist>

⁶⁴ Ibid., thesis #13.

⁶⁵ *Marxisme et science bourgeoise*, Lyon, Éditions Programme communiste, 2002, p. 9. Our translation.

⁶⁶ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook, Section A. Idealism and Materialism, "4. The Essence of the Materialist Conception of History. Social Being and Social Consciousness", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>

consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process⁶⁷" to further set aside the dualistic conception between matter and Spirit, between being and thought. This methodological posture necessarily implies a certain form of determinism. Indeed, "this method of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists⁶⁸."

This conception leaves little room for the contingent. Such relations of production will imply such social relations of classes which will necessarily produce such consciousnesses, ideas and knowledge. Said in an even simpler way, "the 'rationality of the world', it is the fact that the phenomena and the events of the world are not independent and incoherent but linked between them, that it is possible to discover these relations and the laws which govern them, to understand the world. It is quite simply the notion of determinism⁶⁹."

From the Marxist point of view, "It is absurd to ask whether the laws of the universe agree with the 'laws of reason': there are no a priori and immutable 'laws of reason', our reason and its laws are a product of the world and of our activity in the world; they reflect our effort to understand, represent and master the phenomena of the world. It follows that there is nothing stable about reason; like the whole of man, it changes as the conditions of existence, the needs, the activities and the knowledge of the human species change. Things that were 'rational' yesterday are no longer so today, and vice versa; likewise, in a society divided into antagonistic classes, each of them has its own 'rationality'⁷⁰."

History is not, therefore, an infinite deployment of Reason, of the Idea or of human consciousness. In fact, the meaning of these notions is constantly changing precisely because the changes of social relations determine the transformation of their meaning. To imagine the unfolding of history as the progress of Reason is therefore historically incorrect and has more to do with ideological mystification. On the contrary, "the knowledge that the human species possesses has developed through contact with matter and nature, never through the autonomous work of thought⁷¹."

⁶⁷ Idem.

⁶⁸ Idem.

⁶⁹ *Marxisme et science bourgeoise*, Op. cit., p. 9. Our translation.

⁷⁰ Idem., Our translation.

⁷¹ « Relativité et Déterminisme : À propos de la mort d'Albert Einstein », *Invariance*, Série 1, Numéro 8 (1969), p. 44. Our translation.

The other equally important aspect of Marxism is the dialectical method. To bridge the gap between materialism and the dialectical method, Engels asserted that "motion is the mode of existence of matter⁷²." As we have just seen, the Marxist tradition is very critical of bourgeois philosophical traditions that make certain categories such as Reason stable, unchanging, even eternal. On the contrary, in the Marxist conception, every category is historically specific. Beyond the traditional triad thesis-anti-thesis-synthesis which expresses in itself the movement, it is the foundation of the Marxist dialectic, that is to say that in the social field, nothing is stable. Everything is movement whose engine is the antagonism of classes.

This movement of the history or this social dynamic results from the fact that each mode of production in history until now was neither stable nor immutable. Each mode of production contains within itself its negation. Just as feudalism saw the birth of a class that tended to affirm its negation - the bourgeoisie - the rise of capitalism also creates a class that tends to negate it - the proletariat. The dialectical conception is methodologically led to analyze contradictions, conflicts, tendencies to negation, in short social transformation. This emphasis on movement is completely at odds with other strictly empirical methodologies typical of the social sciences promoting capitalist society, which try to demonstrate that each society includes social institutions that aim at the proper functioning, the durability and the stability of the social totality.

Marx's dialectic implies a certain position in relation to knowledge. Indeed, he posits the appearance of new knowledge as the result of material changes in society, of a revolutionary transformation of social relations. This posture requires a differentiation of dialectic with regard to the traditional science: "to make work of descriptive science means that one records the facts considered in a static, eternal and immutable table; to make work of dialectic, of revolutionary program, means that one draws from the facts the science of their inexhaustible dynamics⁷³." Do we not find here under another formulation the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach of Marx, thesis that affirms that "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it⁷⁴."?

⁷² Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Chapter VI: Philosophy of Nature. Cosmogony, Physics, Chemistry, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch04.htm>

⁷³ « La guerre doctrinale entre le marxisme et l'économie bourgeoise », *Le fil rouge*, numéro 5 (2019), p. 65. Our translation.

⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *Theses On Feuerbach*, thesis #11, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/these>

From the point of view of the method, the Marxist dialectic imposes the transformation of the society as a task of knowledge. But it is necessary to be careful here not to fall again in the dead-ends of idealism, that is to say to make depend the transformation of the society on a global and preliminary rise of knowledge. As we have seen, being precedes consciousness. So, in a way, the social transformation precedes the new knowledge. Let us now try to disentangle these complex links between social transformation and knowledge, which may at first sight appear to be paradoxical.

Marxist theory of knowledge

In order to resolve conclusively this apparent paradox between knowledge and the imperative of social transformation, let us take a moment to try to understand the nature of Marxism in relation to human knowledge in general.

It is quite true that Marx and Engels were quick to claim the scientific method in the elaboration of their militant writings. However, it was not a question for them of taking up in an uncritical way all the usual canons of science such as objectivity, neutrality or truth. The scientific character of the Marxist method is elaborated first of all in opposition to the previous socialist currents - the Utopian Socialism - that Marx and Engels, while recognizing its important legacy, try to surpass. It is important to emphasize what distinguishes the two socialist traditions to better understand the scientific character of Marxism: *"Utopianism consists in 'proposing', from a construction elaborated in the author's head and dictated by a supposed rationality, a new form of society that should be implemented through the adherence of other thinking men to the dissemination of these wise proposals, or, in its most degraded version, through a decision of existing powers and governments"*⁷⁵.

To simplify, utopian socialists generally proposed to first change the consciousness of individuals. These new individuals, now transformed by rational socialist education, would then in turn be able to transform society in the image of their ideas. Therefore, consciousness would precede being. In contrast, *"Scientific socialism consists in foreseeing, not according to rational plans, nor sentimental or moral preferences, the unfolding of the phenomena of the bourgeois social form as well as the historical processes that it will accomplish, as well as the new dynamics of the economic forces, all different, that will not only succeed them but will oppose them, in the dialectic of doctrinal research and*

*revolutionary combat"*⁷⁶.

In other words, socialism becomes scientific with Marx and Engels in that it derives the necessity of social transformation, not from brilliant ideas, but from the material characteristics of the class struggle itself. The possibility of communism does not exist as an idea in the heads of a few enlightened militants, but in the material reality of capitalist society. Therefore, being precedes consciousness.

Marxism is thus scientific compared to Utopian Socialism. But, what about its scientific character in relation to science in general? *"Indeed, if Marxism is not a science in the usual sense of the term, it is nevertheless scientific, i.e. founded on the real knowledge of the real laws of the real world. While bourgeois sociology, which claims to be a science, does not dare, and for good reason, to venture beyond the flattest empiricism. The scientific as well as revolutionary rigor of its analysis has allowed Marxism to foresee, a hundred years ago already, all the subsequent development of capitalist society and the general aspects of the society that will succeed it"*⁷⁷.

In fact, the currents of the social sciences conceive the social realities as static and transhistorical facts according to a method that limits itself to want to *"interpret[...] the world in various ways"*⁷⁸, showing themselves incapable to conceive the social transformation. In doing so, the claim to scientific character of many currents of thought in the social sciences is in fact *"the apology of the eternity of bourgeois society"*⁷⁹. They do the work of social conservation. And this is precisely the distinction that Marx makes between valid knowledge and ideology, a distinction that goes beyond the framework of what science would be and what it would not be. Valid knowledge aims at the social transformation whereas ideology aims at the perpetuation of the current social relations and political order.

In capitalist society, the social sciences produce more ideologies than valid knowledge. This is explained by the fact that, *"In a society where productive activity is determined not by human needs but by the laws of the extended reproduction of capital, the same is true of science, which sees the objects it deals with and the goals it pursues determined by the capitalist relations of production and the social relations that flow from them. Moreover, even the scientific method does not escape social determination, insofar as the ideology of the dominant*

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⁷⁵ « La guerre doctrinale entre le marxisme et l'économie bourgeoise », *Le fil rouge*, numéro 5 (2019), p. 65. Our translation.

⁷⁶ Idem., Our translation.

⁷⁷ « La société communiste », *Programme communiste*, Numéro 17 (1961), p. 10. Our translation.

⁷⁸ Karl Marx, *Theses On Feuerbach*, thesis #11, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>

⁷⁹ « Programme du communisme intégral et théorie marxiste de la connaissance », *Invariance*, Série 1, numéro 8 (1969), p. 48. Our translation.

*class intervenes in the work of theorization, or else imposes on science to consider as natural, irreducible objects, products of social activity*⁸⁰."

Despite its objectivity and neutrality, science as a social phenomenon cannot credibly claim to be above the social determinations that are at its very basis. To deny and ignore the reality of class interests and antagonisms is for science to admit the acceptance of the world as it is and its will to protect such a social order. In opposition, to recognize the existence of the social conflict and to put itself in the service of the exploited ones poses for science the necessity to transform the current social order. This is again what separates ideology from knowledge. For example, bourgeois economists demonstrate, with the help of a scientific and objective method which from their point of view is absolutely rigorous, that the price of a commodity on a market varies according to the law of supply and demand. It cannot be disputed that this is a true fact. But economists ignore the fact that behind the relationship between things (commodities) on a market there are social relationships between human beings⁸¹. This true fact - the law of supply and demand - therefore hides equally true social relations of class oppression. To deny the reality of these social relations of exploitation, under the pretext of making an objective analysis, is then to pass from the domain of knowledge to that of ideology.

We have tried to sketch a differentiation between what belongs to knowledge and what belongs rather to ideology. We should now determine who is the subject of knowledge. Indeed, it is frequent to represent human knowledge as a kind of flash of genius which was produced by an isolated individual brain and which is thereafter transmitted to the other individuals through education in its broad acceptance. But such a conception, which is more of an ideological nature, legitimizes a panoply of highly capitalist practices and ideologies: the "entrepreneurial spirit", intellectual property, the myth of the self-made man, meritocracy, etc.

These kind of conceptions are very far from the social reality. In fact, all knowledge is absolutely the result of social processes. It is the social contradictions that push society towards new knowledge. The brilliant individuals that bourgeois society always puts on stage are, to use a funny expression, only "on a hide into nothing"⁸²." This implies that in a society

where not only the individual is socially produced, but also where his or her practice serves as a social bond, the individual considered brilliant will receive all the credit for a work that is the result not only of the current set of social relations, but also of the knowledge accumulated previously in human history.

This conception of the social nature of knowledge may be difficult to grasp at first sight, so much so that the individualistic conception that ideas arise from particularly bright isolated cranial cavities is taken for granted at present. But Marx had already tried to conceptualize the social aspect of knowledge, in particular in the Grundrisse: "On this point, Marx has a magnificent expression: the 'social brain'. Technology first, then science, are transmitted from generation to generation as an endowment of the Social Man, of the Species that has worked and collaborated in the person of the individuals that compose it. Following our construction, the Prophet, the Priest, the Discoverer, the Inventor walk towards their common liquidation. In these pages, the Social Man is also called Social Individual, not in the sense of 'human person', cell of the Society, but on the contrary in the sense of human society treated as a unique organism, living of a single life. (...) This organism whose Life is History has its brain, an organ which is the product of its millenary function and not the heritage of a Head or a Skull. Even more than Gold, the Knowledge of the Species, Science, could not be for us private inheritances; in Potential, they belong entirely to the Social Man"⁸³."

Knowledge is thus an attribute of human society as a whole. Like any result of human activity - production, reproduction, art, etc. - it cannot be appropriated by an isolated individual. It is capitalist social relations that individualize human practices, thus alienating humanity from its own fruits for the benefit of a class of supposedly brilliant and meritorious individuals: the capitalists.

Praxis : the revolutionary practice

We have seen that Marxism obtains its scientific character among other things from its dialectical method, that is to say, from the conception according to which every social fact is conceived in its movement and as a moment of a radical transformation past or to come. Moreover, all knowledge is the result of the whole of the social relations and thus belongs in reality to the whole of humanity. However, we have not yet resolved the apparent paradox between knowledge and social transformation. In-

⁸⁰ *Marxisme et science bourgeoise*, Op. cit., p. 7. Our translation.

⁸¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 1: Commodities, section 4: The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S4>

⁸² "The Battilocchio in History",

https://www.quintern.org/lingue/english/historical_en/tbreadoftime/112_1953_the_battilocchio_in_history.htm

⁸³ « La guerre doctrinale entre le marxisme et l'économie bourgeoise », *Le fil rouge*, numéro 5 (2019), p. 86. Our translation.

deed, would it not be to fall back into this idealism so much criticized by Marx to make all social transformations depend on a new knowledge of which the majority or even the totality of the individuals should learn beforehand in order to prepare the "great evening"?

Marx is often criticized for having a teleological conception of history, i.e. for conceiving that history moves by itself according to an already known finality. However, Marx repeated several times that history as such does not do anything. On the contrary, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living"⁸⁴. History is not, therefore, a kind of machine that functions autonomously; rather, it is the result of all human practices, or more precisely of the material confrontation between social classes. These confrontations are determined precisely by past and present social conditions. In other words, and to take up the thread of our exploration of human knowledge, the individual will never act as the motor of history. What pushes history to transform itself is precisely the struggle between these collective social facts that we call social classes.

Thinking of human knowledge in this way, i.e. from the materialist point of view, implies an implacable critique of the various conceptions of social change based on education and the prior conscientization of the individual. Indeed, most of the supposedly reformist conceptions have in common that they want to change first the individuals as a means to change the society. They forget, however, that the alternative education given to individuals is always conditioned and branded by the present society⁸⁵. In

⁸⁴ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Chapter 1, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>

⁸⁵ Karl Marx, *Theses On Feuerbach*, thesis #3, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>

doing so, such approaches can only result in superficial changes that never challenge the root of the problem, the capitalist social relations. From the Marxist point of view, the relation between individuals and society is reversed: if the individual is determined by their society, society must first be changed in order for a transformation of individual consciousness to take place afterwards. Obviously, as we have already indicated, the impulse of change cannot come from the individual themselves, since they are constantly subjected to the weight of the "ideas of the ruling class [which] are in every epoch the ruling ideas"⁸⁶. Where then does the impulse for social transformation come from?

"Because it is dialectical and historical, it [Marxist determinism] rejects all apriorisms and doesn't claim to be able to apply, regardless of the historical epoch or the human groupings under consideration, one abstract solution to every problem. If the current development of the sciences does not allow for a complete investigation of what induces the individual to act, starting with physical and biological facts to arrive at a science of psychological activity, it is nevertheless possible to resolve the problem in the field of sociology by applying to the problem, like Marx, the methods of investigation appropriate to experimental and positive science fully inherited by socialism and which are quite different from the self-styled materialistic and positivist philosophy adopted during the historical advance of the bourgeois class."

Theses of Lyon, 1926

The emergence of new knowledge thus always depends on radical social transformations linked to changes in the mode of production. The revolutions that occurred in history and that allowed the emergence of new knowledge were rather the result of the material clash between classes where ideas were never the triggering element. That being said, revolutionary episodes do see the emergence of knowledge critical of the established order which, because of the power of the ideology of the ruling class, is always in the minority: "Only after long and painful clashes of interests and needs, after long physical

struggles provoked by class conflicts, does the subject class forge a new opinion and doctrine of its own capable of opposing the reasons given in defence of the constituted order and proposing its violent demolition"⁸⁷. But this new critical knowledge does not form in the head of each individual, one by one, until it smoothly replaces the dominant ideology and gradually becomes the majority way of thinking.

On the contrary, Marx locates the new critical knowledge of the present society in a unitary and collective body representing the interests and de-

⁸⁶ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook, Section B. The Illusion of the Epoch, "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm#b3>

⁸⁷ "Straightening the Dog's Legs", philosophical thesis #1, https://www.quinterna.org/lingue/english/historical_en/t_hreadoftime/094_1952_dogs_legs.htm

fending the needs of the whole exploited class under capitalism and expressing a certain knowledge of the future society. This is obviously the Communist Party. "Hitherto even the ruling classes and their agents have only expressed their historical task in a confused way. The first class to express it clearly is the modern proletariat; but not the entire proletariat, not some particular person who guides and leads them, but rather a minority collective: the class party⁸⁸." The apparent paradox between the imperative of social transformation and human knowledge - between being and consciousness, between matter and Spirit - is thus resolved by this political and militant organism that is the Communist Party. Its task is to produce on the historical level a revolutionary practice: "Thus, whilst determinism denies the individual the possibility of achieving will and consciousness prior to action, the reversal of praxis does allow it within the party, and only within the party, as a result of a general historical elaboration. However, although will and consciousness can be attributed to the party, it is not the case that the party is formed by a concurrence of the consciousness and will of individual members of a group; and nor can such a group be in any way considered as free of the determining physical, economic and social factors weighing on the class as a whole⁸⁹."

The notion of revolutionary practice is important in that it grants a degree of will and consciousness prior to the social transformation that can arise in great social crises of historical magnitude, but only within the framework of a collective organism that exceeds individual consciousnesses. "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change [Selbstveränderung] can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice⁹⁰."

On the other hand, it would be wrong to imagine the history of revolutions as a material clash between classes in which ideas are absolutely absent from the scene. The new critical knowledge itself has a certain effect on the course of history. Indeed, according to Marx, "the weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses⁹¹." The theory is fatally and unfortunately, al-

ways because of the pugnacity of the capitalist ideology, shared only by a minority militant community constituted as a political party. It is only afterwards, that is to say after the political confrontation between the classes, that the new critical knowledge will be absorbed by the whole of the society then rid of the social classes. As Marx masterfully stated, "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 anew⁹²..."

Social transformation thus starts from the radical needs of the exploited class. The whole class does not necessarily have an absolutely clear critical consciousness of the political acts it undertakes. But during this process, a minority of the exploited class emerges with a clear consciousness of the need to transform society and organizes itself into a political party. This minority will then have the task of pushing for the most radical transformations possible, assuming the political leadership of the proletariat; that is to say, it aims at dragging in its wake a large mass of proletarians. It is precisely this critical communist consciousness that becomes, after the revolution, the patrimony of humanity, much like the philosophy of the Enlightenment was integrated into the patrimony of humanity as the dominant ideology of the bourgeois class after the French and American revolutions, to name only these examples, thus relegating the old knowledge often based on religion to the dusty shelves of human history. However, unlike the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which after having carried out its historical task of destroying the feudal mode of production became in its turn the dominant ideology of a new exploitation and a new class society, the current communist movement representing the historical interests of the proletariat does not intend to establish a new form of exploitation after its revolution. It aims at the establishment of the human community free from the state, from social classes, from money, from nations, in short from any form of exploitation of the human being by the human being.

Robin, October 2021

⁸⁸ "Carlylean Phantoms", Section "One, no-one, and one hundred thousand", https://www.quintern.org/lingue/english/historical_en/treadoftime/114_1953_carlylean_phantoms.htm

⁸⁹ "Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine", Section "Commentary on table VIII", https://www.quintern.org/lingue/english/historical_en/theory_and_action.htm

⁹⁰ Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, Thesis #3, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>

⁹¹ Karl Marx, *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of*

Hegel's Philosophy of Right, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>

⁹² Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook Section D. Proletarians and Communism, "The Necessity of the Communist Revolution", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01d.htm>

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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).

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Communism and Community

OUR BASIC POSITIONS

- The IGCL considers and defines all its activities, both internal and external, in relation to and as moments of the struggle for the constitution of the world political party of the proletariat, indispensable tool for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society.
- In addition to intervening in the proletariat's struggles, the IGCL leads this struggle especially in the international proletarian camp. This camp is composed of revolutionary political groups defending and sharing the class positions of the proletariat, in particular proletarian internationalism and the necessity of the class dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The IGCL claims the First, Second and Third Internationals and the struggle of the left fractions within them. In particular, it claims the struggle of the left fraction of the CP of Italy within the Communist International against its Stalinist degeneration and for the programmatic contributions that it has been able to develop and pass on us to this day.
- Only the proletariat, exploited and revolutionary class at the same time, is able to destroy capitalism and to establish communism, the classless society. The consciousness of this revolution, the *communist consciousness*, is produced by the historical struggle of the proletariat. So that it can materialize, defend and develop itself, the proletariat produces communist minorities who organize themselves in parties and whose permanent function is to carry this communist consciousness and to return it to the whole proletariat.
- As the highest expression of this consciousness, the party – or, in its absence, the communist fractions or groups – constitutes and must assume the political leadership of the proletariat. In particular, the party is the only organ that can lead the proletariat to the insurrection and to the destruction of the capitalist state, and to the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The party is organized and functions on the basis of the principles that govern the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *proletarian internationalism* and *centralism* as moments of its international unity and struggle. From the start, the party constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized party. From its very start, the IGCL constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized group.
- The party, as well as the IGCL, bases its program, its principles, its political positions and its action on the theory of *historical materialism*. By explaining the course of history through the development of the class struggle and by recognizing the proletariat as the revolutionary class, it is the only world view that places itself from its point of view. It is the theory of the revolutionary proletariat.
- Only after the victorious insurrection and the disappearance of the bourgeois state will the proletariat be able to organize itself as a ruling class under the political leadership of its party. Its class domination, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is exercised by means of the workers' councils, or soviets. These can only maintain themselves as a unitary organization of the proletariat if they become *organs of the insurrection* and *organs of the class dictatorship*, that is to say, by making the party's slogans their own.
- The dictatorship of the proletariat consists in using the class power of its mass organizations, the councils or soviets, to abolish the economic power of the bourgeoisie and ensure the transition to a classless communist society. The state of the transition period, of the class dictatorship, between capitalism and communism is destined to disappear with the disappearance of the classes, of the proletariat itself and of its party, and the advent of the communist society.
- Since the First World War in 1914, generalized imperialist war and state capitalism have been the main expressions of the historical phase of decadence of capitalism.
- In face of the unceasing development of state capitalism, the proletariat can only advance the research for its unity in all its struggles, even the most limited or localized ones, by taking charge of their extension and generalization. Every workers' struggle, even the most limited, confronts the state apparatus as a whole, against which

the proletariat can only advance the perspective and the weapon of the *mass strike*.

- In the era of dominant state capitalism, the trade unions as a whole, the leadership as well as the base sections, are nowadays full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state within the working class milieu. They aim at maintaining the capitalist order within its ranks, at framing the working class and at preventing, counteracting and sabotaging any proletarian struggle, in particular any extension, generalization and centralization of proletarian fights. Any defense of the trade unions and trade unionism is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, all fractions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called workers', "socialist", "communist" parties, leftist organizations (Trotskyists, Maoists, Anarchists), or even those presenting themselves as anti-capitalist, constitute the left of the political apparatus of capital. All the tactics of popular front, anti-fascist front or united front mixing the interests of the proletariat with those of a fraction of the bourgeoisie, only serve to contain and divert the struggle of the proletariat. Any frontist policy with left parties of the bourgeoisie is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, parliament and electoral campaigns, and in general bourgeois democracy, can no longer be used by the proletariat for its affirmation as a class and for the development of its struggles. Any call to participate in the electoral processes and to vote only reinforces the mystification presenting these elections as a real choice for the exploited and, as such, is counter-revolutionary.
- Communism requires the conscious abolition by the proletariat of capitalist social relations: commodity production, wage labor and classes. The communist transformation of society through the dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean self-management or nationalization of the economy. Any defense of one or the other is counter-revolutionary.
- The so-called "socialist" or even "communist" countries, the former USSR and its Eastern European satellites, China, Cuba, Vietnam, or even Chavez's Venezuela, have only been particularly brutal forms of the universal tendency to state capitalism. Any support, even critical, for the so-called socialist or progressive character of these countries is counter-revolutionary.
- In a world now totally conquered by capitalism and where imperialism imposes itself on every state, any national liberation struggle, far from constituting any kind of progressive movement, is in fact a moment in the constant confrontation between rival imperialisms. Any defense of nationalist ideology, of the "right of peoples to self-determination", of any national liberation struggle is counter-revolutionary today.
- By their very content, the *partial* struggles, anti-racist, feminist, environmentalist, and other aspects of everyday life, far from strengthening the unity and autonomy of the working class, tend on the contrary to divide and dilute it in the confusion of particular categories (race, gender, youth, etc.). Any ideology and movement that advocates *identitarianism*, anti-racism, etc., in the name of the *intersectionality* of struggles, are counter-revolutionary ideologies and movements.
- Terrorism is an expression of social strata without a historical future and of the decomposition of the petty-bourgeoisie, when it is not directly the emanation of the war that the States are permanently waging against each other. It always constitutes a privileged terrain for the police manipulations and provocations of the bourgeoisie. Advocating the secret action of small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which is conditioned by the conscious and organized mass action of the proletariat.
- The IGCL fights, from today, so that the future party is constituted on the programmatic basis of the principles and positions that precede. The formal constitution of the party is necessary at the latest when the intervention, the orientations and the slogans of the communist groups or fractions become permanent material elements of the immediate situation and direct factors of the balance of power between the classes. Then, the immediate struggle for the formal constitution of the party is necessary and becomes urgent.