

REVOLUTION or WAR

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Faced with the Course to War,
Establish a Line of Defense Grouping the Most Combative Proletarians

International Situation

IGCL's Communique on Trump's Electoral Victory

What Changes with Trump in the White House (ICPProletarian)

The Crushing of the German Proletariat and the Advent of Fascism (Bilan #16, 1934)

Down with the War (Leaflet of the NWBCW committees in Canada)

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Debate within the Proletarian Camp

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The Tactics of the Comintern (Communist International), 1926-1940 (*Prometeo*, 1946-1947)

The Tactics of Anti-Fascism and the Popular Front (1934-38, 2nd part)

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Faced with the Course to War, Establish a Line of Defense Grouping Together the Most Combative Proletarians

“The degree reached by the crisis and the resulting impasse for capital, makes the dynamics of the generalized imperialist war, which was until then only a perspective playing an indirect role – if one can say so – in the course of events, a direct, immediate factor today of the policies, decisions, reflections of the governments and capitalist classes of each nation and imperialist powers. The war in Ukraine is its first clear and obvious illustration for all.”

(Theses on the Significance and Implications of the Imperialist War in Ukraine, March 2nd 2022),
cf. RoW #21)

Not yet in power¹, Trump is threatening to buy, if not invade, Panama, Greenland and even Canada! Just as Putin invaded Georgia and Ukraine. Just as Israel is seizing the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights. As China's Xi claims Taiwan. Just as Hitler invaded Austria and Czechoslovakia. Mussolini, Ethiopia. Whether he means it or not, whether he realizes it or not, it is a sign of the times and of the course towards generalized war opened up by the outbreak of imperialist war in Ukraine.

The mere announcement of his victory has accelerated and triggered a cascade of events; in Ukraine and the Middle East, where butchery and massacres are unleashed, while others are being prepared, in Asia for example. Governmental political instability, particularly in Western countries such as Canada, Korea, Germany and France, is taking hold, so to speak. And the widespread rise of so-called “radical” or “illiberal” right-wing parties, with their nationalist, chauvinist and xenophobic rhetoric, is generalizing. Like fascism in the 1930s, today's radical right-wingers “are expressing, through an upsurge in their activity, the full complexity of troubled situations moving towards war.”² Trump's threats of protectionism and all-out trade and currency wars are sowing panic among all economic rivals.

In 2016, Trump's motto *Make America Great Again* was

¹ . We are writing before his actual accession to power.

² . *Bilan* #24, Vers une consolidation du front capitaliste en France [Towards a Consolidation of the Capitalist Front in France], 1935 (we translate). Let us say that we do not confuse the fascism of the 1930s with today's “radical” right-wing movements, which do not correspond to the same historical situations. Similarly, we reject the view that yesterday's fascism and today's “populist” right-wingers are petty-bourgeois movements reacting to their impoverishment. If they draw on the frustrations of the desperate petty-bourgeoisie, or even of workers among the least combative and most “reactionary” strata of the proletariat, fascism and other “extreme” right-wingers are bourgeois parties in their own right.

the American bourgeoisie's response to the predicted and, in part, begun decline of its power in the first two decades of this century. His previous term and that of Biden largely made America *great again*. Trump's re-election means both that the American bourgeoisie is committed with determination and violence to the confrontations announced and that it has taken into account its current limits.

*“In a potential conflict with China, U.S. forces would blow through their munitions inventory in a matter of weeks, and it would take years for the U.S. defense industrial base to produce replacements. Rising personnel costs, along with an endless array of peacetime missions, are stretching U.S. forces thin.”*³

This finding was certainly the main reason for choosing Trump over Kamala Harris and the Democrats.⁴ Buying time to prepare – economically, politically and ideologically – and to rearm up to the military stakes of the widespread conflict to come. The situation also calls for a “disruptive” discourse, involving provocations and aggression on all fronts, and transgressions of the classic rules of bourgeois democracy and, if need be, of the American Constitution. Just like international rules. Even geographical: Trump wants to rename the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America. For all these “transgressions” that the situation imposes, it needs to find characters who are sufficiently “megalomaniacal” to embody and carry out the violation of the rules governing the existing imperialist order. Watching and listening to Trump, how can we not fail to think of Charlie Chaplin's *Dictator*? Not to laugh at it – although sometimes... – but for the historical parallel. Trump? *The right man in the right place*.

³ . *Foreign Affairs*, Michael Beckley, The Strange Triumph of Broken America, January 7th 2025.

⁴ . We refer the reader to the communique we published following last November's electoral victory, and to the PCI-Le Prolétaire article that follows.

Generalized world war is not inevitable

“This era looks to some analysts more like the 1930s, with its collapse of the global order, than the decades after the second world war.” (The Guardian, Editorial, January 1st 2024)

In the international bourgeois press, there are numerous references to the 1930s and the pre-WWII period, as well as parallels drawn with today's situation. While we should be wary of schematic historical comparisons, at the risk of copying yesterday's situation to today's, the fact remains that past experience must serve us – proletarians and revolutionary communists – well and shed light on the new situations we have to face – particularly if we want to assume the role of a political vanguard of the international proletariat. But is this not the fundamental reason why the proletariat produces political minorities and its party?

The situations in the 1930s and today have many features in common: they were preceded and heralded by the economic crises of 1929 and 2008, which capital was unable to “overcome”, let alone “resolve”; the result was heightened imperialist tensions, forcing the least “well-stocked” imperialists – yesterday Germany defeated in 1918, today Russia, yesterday Japan, tomorrow China – strangled by the US policy of “containment” for the latter, to embark on warlike adventures and territorial conquests in order to loosen the stranglehold imposed on them; the dynamic towards generalized war is then set in motion, inevitably causing upheavals of all kinds – economic, political, social, ideological, etc., to adapt all production and state apparatuses as quickly as possible to the preparation for the war that lays ahead. The analogy with the 1930s is therefore valid as far as these characteristics are concerned.

There's another factor to take into account: the class struggle. If only because the bourgeoisie must “*make the workers pay the costs of a terrible economic crisis in order to meet the necessities of war.*”⁵ Here too, the analogy works. But there are a few differences, one of which seems crucial to the resolution of the historical dilemma: the dynamics of class struggle and the situation of the exploited and revolutionary class, the proletariat. In the 1930s, the proletariat had just suffered, and was still suffering, a series of bloody political and ideological historical defeats following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the international revolutionary wave of 1917 to 1923 that followed it. Although what some call the “class instinct” remained predominant in the proletarian ranks, it was essentially identified with the defense of the USSR and Stalinism, or the defense of democracy against fascism. The proletarian masses tended to side with the counter-revolution. Today,

⁵ . *Bilan* #22, September 1934, « La situation en France ».

there is no “class instinct” attached to any particular ideology. Certainly, proletarians at the international level are largely subject to bourgeois ideology and the economic and political attacks of their respective national bourgeoisies. Certainly, they are not in a position, except sporadically⁶, to launch open struggles against capital, if only for economic objectives. But the very course of class struggle is not as marked or defined by counter-revolution as it was in the 1930s. It is noteworthy that, to date, there have been no nationalist and chauvinist street demonstrations or other significant mobilizations in support of the war. Not in Russia, Ukraine, Europe or anywhere else...

And there is another fundamental factor of political order. Yesterday, the liquidation of the class party – the Communist International – by Stalinism and counter-revolution, and the seizure of the masses by left-wing parties, especially Stalinist parties, only served to accentuate their disorientation, the generalization of their defeat and the course towards war. Today, if there is still no class party – far from it – there are no left-wing bourgeois parties to which the working masses adhere en masse and behind which they mobilize. While the proletariat's relationship with capital in 2025 may not look much better than it did in the 1930s, the dynamics of this relationship are not the same.

The way forward is resisting all attacks on living and working conditions, refusing all sacrifice in the name of defending the company and the country, breaking the isolation of struggles and seeking to extend them, as we said in the previous issue. Establishing a line of defense is essential to bring together the most combative and dynamic forces of the proletariat. These are the very ones who will offer the proletarian alternative to war and unite the less combative sectors and fractions in the struggle. This is the slogan – albeit a general one – that today's communist vanguards, in the absence of a party, must make their own, defend, propagate and... apply – with more direct and concrete slogans – to immediate and local situations.

The Editorial Team, January 8th 2025

⁶ . Last summer's strikes in America, at Boeing, the dockers on the West Coast, at Amazon and elsewhere, the postal workers in Canada, the reactions of workers at Volkswagen or Opel in Germany, in the public services just about everywhere, or the workers in Great Britain in the summer of 2022, and so on...

International Situation

Communique on Trump's Election Victory : The American Bourgeoisie to Accelerate its Preparations for War

Trump's massive election to the US presidency is neither accident, nor a coincidence, nor the result of a crisis or deep division, let alone chaos, within the American bourgeoisie and its political and state system. Nor is it the result of any madness on the part of the voters, nor of any irrationality taking hold of the world's leading imperialist power. His massive victory demonstrates the mastery of the electoral game and its political system by the American state apparatus. If there were any doubts, the immediate acknowledgment of defeat by the Democrats and Kamala Harris herself, and the assurance that the transition to the presidency will be as smooth as possible, would be enough to remove them definitively.

The election – or re-election – of the outrageous and vulgar Trump is simply an expression of the acuteness of the economic and historic impasse and the pressure it exerts towards war. Fifteen years after the financial crisis of 2008, the level of the crisis is forcing into ever more exacerbated competition, into a fight to the death for the survival of each national capital, which in turn can only provoke and aggravate imperialist rivalries and polarization.

The election of Trump indicates that the race towards generalized war is gathering momentum and that the American bourgeoisie is committed to it with determination. The main fractions of the American bourgeoisie feel that time is running out. They have agreed on the urgent need to speed up the adaptation of the entire U.S. military-industrial apparatus to the demands of “high-intensity” warfare. They have agreed on the need to step up the pressure on China, to exert even greater “containment” on it and, incidentally, on the countries of the European Union, by stepping up the trade war and protectionism. Time is running out for the American bourgeoisie, and it needs to shake up both American society itself and “international relations”, i.e. imperialist relations.

Given the pace of the spiral into which the economic contradictions and imperialist rivalries are throwing the capitalist world, it has to move even faster and with even greater determination. Trump's election victory does not herald a break with the Democratic policies pursued since 2020. Nor does it call into question the protectionist economic policy aimed at repatriating on American soil a large part of the production apparatus for so-called essential goods – “essential” for war. Still

less is it a challenge to the American imperialist policy pursued by the Democrats and Biden. Just as the *Bidenomics* and the imperialist policies pursued by Biden did not call into question the protectionist measures launched by Trump during his first presidency from 2016 to 2020 and his imperialist focus on China, the economic and imperialist policies to be pursued by the new Trump administration will not break with those of the Biden years. There is not, nor will there be, a break. There is continuity, and there will be continuity around the central axes of the imperialist policies of American capital. On the other hand, and this is the reason for choosing Trump and not Kamala Harris, the new Trump presidency heralds a violent and brutal acceleration, assumed and decided by US imperialism, of the trade war, imperialist pressures, and above all military competition on the one hand; and an acceleration of the reorganization of the entire industrial production apparatus – already underway with *Bidenomics* – and especially the military-industrial one. This “acceleration” must, paradoxically, mean gaining time to raise military production to the level required for “high-intensity” warfare, as expressed by Trump and the “isolationist” Republican Party.

There was therefore a real issue, or “debate”, on the axes and priorities of American imperialist policy, which this presidential election had to settle. Should we pursue the Democrats' “internationalist” policy of confronting Russia in Ukraine, Iran in the Middle East and China in Asia and the China Sea? Or adopt the so-called “isolationist” policy of the Republicans, i.e. refocus primarily on the China question, let Israel wage its wars in the Middle East, with Iran as a target, and possibly let Putin benefit from his territorial gains in Ukraine? The debate was not war or peace, but what priority and what pace to prepare for war.

To rush and provoke, to engage the whole of American society in the decided preparation and march to war, a disruptive, provocative, outrageous, brutal and even vulgar figure is needed. A character, no matter how ridiculous, who embodies strong power and who does not hesitate to break free from the rules – understood as shackles – of classical democracy. For the American bourgeoisie, time is of the essence, and fate and rivals must be forced. Harris could not embody this character. Trump could. Did he not prove himself in this four

years ago? Preparing for all-out war requires political personnel who are adapted to the situation and able to free themselves from the shackles of democratic and diplomatic decorum. “Talking about his enemies as the enemy within, talking about using the expression vermin or poison blood – these are terms that are directly taken from the 1930s.” (Anne Applebaum, *The Atlantic*, November 7, 2024)

The election result seems to have settled the issue of the strategy to be employed to reassert American supremacy with force and violence. Trump's re-election corresponds to the choice of both accelerating internal preparations for war and stepping up the offensive of “countainment” against imperialist rivals. This accelerated adaptation could – we use the conditional tense, these are only hypotheses – pass for American imperialism through:

- acknowledge Ukraine's powerlessness in the face of the Russian army and halt massive support for it;
- allow, in other words encourage, Israel to extend its regional war to Iran.

And it will certainly go through:

- impose an intensified trade war on China – and to an already weakened Europe – through protectionism brandished like a banner;
- force European countries to assume the costs of maintaining NATO, and by the way, to buy American armaments, at the risk of disengagement and the end of the American nuclear umbrella.

Rising tariffs and open protectionism can only rekindle the global trade war. It can only exacerbate China's current economic difficulties and its feeling of being caught in the vice of American policies, which in turn can only provoke increasingly aggressive, even military reactions on its part – Chinese naval and air pressure is steadily increasing on Taiwan. Just as it frightens the European bourgeoisie, starting with Germany.

“Trump's re-election (...) is also a game-changer for America's allies.” (*Financial Times*, Nov. 6)⁷ Trump's victory has already caused, or at least accelerated, the break-up of the coalition government in Germany. And this at a time when France itself has entered a period of governmental instability. As soon as it was announced, Trump's victory exacerbated contradictions and polarized positions. The stakes are becoming clearer. And the European bourgeoisies seem to have been seized with a veritable panic at what Trump's second term heralds for capital and imperialism of the Europeans: the continuation of the historic weakening, already all but definitive.

The real historical interrogation has to do with the

American and international proletariat and the level of adherence of the great masses to the nationalist, racist, xenophobic, etc. theses carried by Trump. The same applies, of course, to those proletarian masses who follow the far-right parties in Europe and elsewhere. Is there a particular **dynamic** – and one that would be worrying – of widespread support for nationalism and war among the great proletarian masses?

Let us note that there was no gain in the number of voters who voted for Trump in 2024 compared to 2020.⁸ More broadly, and at all times since the post-war period, significant fractions of the working class have voted for right-wing parties – on the order of 30% in both the USA and Western Europe. In itself, the pro-Trump workers' vote therefore gives no indication of any particular **new** dynamic of adherence to a genuine march to war that would break with previous years. Similarly, and in the other direction, no significant indication can be drawn from recent expressions of proletarian combativeness. Breaking with a decade-old sluggishness, this combativeness, even if still well framed by the unions, has expressed itself and developed significantly over the last two or three years in the United States, even during the election campaign, among dockworkers and at Boeing, for example.

That is the real question. Therein lies the real calculation. Will there emerge a fraction of the American, or even international, proletariat capable of offering a class alternative, i.e. one of struggle, and a revolutionary perspective, to the false, bourgeois choices, to that of Trump... or the Democrats and to repugnant nationalism? Will they be able to lead the rest of the working class to the defense of its living conditions and internationalism? Thus forcing it away from the stultification and intoxication of nationalism, sometimes hateful and racist, and the collective stupor of shouting *USA! USA!...* ?

Acceleration of war preparation, we have qualified the meaning of Trump's electoral victory. In the U.S. bourgeoisie's equation, does not imposing on the proletariat the sacrifices necessary for trade war and war preparation also require acceleration, to gain speed over any vestige of proletarian response?

Whether vis-à-vis imperialist rivals or the proletariat, Trump's electoral victory means that the American bourgeoisie wants to accelerate the tempo and win everyone over with speed. Kamala Harris was right about one thing: “we are not going back”.

The IGCL, November 9th 2024

⁷ . Quoted by *Courrier international* nov.7, translated from French by us)

⁸ . 74 millions in 2020 and 2024.

What changes with Trump in the White House ? (ICPProletarian)

We reproduce here an extract from an ICP-Proletarian article, “Russian-Ukrainian war: imperialist peace on the horizon...”, which essentially echoes the political analysis and content of our previous communiqué on Trump's election. Its particular interest lies in the fact that it goes further than our position, and puts forward some serious hypotheses about the “debate” within the American bourgeoisie as to the imperialist strategy to be pursued in the present period: while no Western power, starting with the United States itself, “are currently ready for a Third World War”, Trump's election would be aimed at “ensuring that ties between China and Russia do not grow stronger.” This is a hypothesis that our communiqué (above) does not envisage, and which deserves to be taken into account.

Many assumptions have been and are being made with respect to Trump's electoral victory in the U.S. presidential election. In his election campaign, which began since the mass assault on Capitol Hill in January 2021, Trump, boasting that under his presidency America has not gone to war with anyone, announced that “in 24 hours” the war between Russia and Ukraine would end. Beyond the bluster, characteristic of a braggart like Trump, it must be said that personal relations with Putin may also play a certain role with respect to this war. Obviously, the international interests of U.S. imperialism far outweigh the personal relations between the head of the White House and that of the Kremlin. But in the background, one can point out a difference between the bourgeois factions that supported Biden and the war in Ukraine and the bourgeois factions that support Trump. The latter have a priority interest in containing Chinese expansionism and preventing the strengthening of an anti-Western bond between China and Russia, which would create many headaches for both America and Western Europe. According to Trump, the war between Russia and Ukraine might not have broken out, but he has not said how and does not say clearly how he plans to end it. One thing is certain, however: the real enemy, current and future, of the United States is not Russia, but China. And the real problem for Washington is to ensure that ties between China and Russia do not grow stronger.

According to Biden, this outcome could have been arrived at through the economic and financial weakening of Russia achieved through the war in Ukraine for which European countries compacted by suffering/accepting the Anglo-American ukases on sanctions against Moscow and Ukraine's incorporation into NATO. This outcome would have weakened Russia to such an extent that it would no longer be a “reliable” ally for China, thus distancing Moscow from Beijing and bringing it closer again to the West. It was on the other hand clear that, with respect to the Russian-Ukrainian war, beyond former Prime Minister Medvedev's rantings about the use of the atomic bomb against the West should the war in Ukraine turn into a NATO war against Russia, the real interest of the Western powers has never been to engage in a war against Russia. One

only has to take into account the status of the arms stockpiles by the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union countries starting with Germany and France to understand that none of these powers are currently ready for a Third World War. This does not mean that they are not preparing – as on the other hand are Russia, China and even “peaceful” India – for a world war. In fact, the Russian-Ukrainian war has served, much more than the war in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya, to test on the real terrain of war the military, political and organizational capacity of the different protagonists, even if all this has in a sense emptied Western arsenals, but at the same time provided an opportunity to get rid of old and obsolete armaments, to test new-generation armaments, to field and test the warfare of unmanned aircraft – the famous drones – and to field test the resilience of ground troops in a war that has rapidly turned into a war of attrition, into trench warfare, proving that it is on the ground, in the end, that war can be won or lost.

With Trump in the White House, beyond his unpredictability, a number of issues of decisive importance with respect to the future of the imperialist powers return to the forefront. The Europe question, that is, of the attempt at political and military compacting that the member countries of the European Union would or could implement and the interest on the American side in keeping Europe in general subservient to Washington's policies. The question of Germany, which in united or disunited Europe has and will always have great importance. The question of Russia, that is, whether this power will become the weak link or the strong link in the Western bloc led by the United States, or the Eastern bloc led by China. The question of NATO, that is, the question of a military organization that will or will not hold up in the face of sharpening contrasts between the various imperialist powers, contrasts that will, inevitably, form the basis for the rupture of current alliances and their reshaping. The question of the Middle East, where economic, financial, political and military contrasts are concentrated that can turn into *casus belli* both local and of world order at any moment – as on the other hand is already happening with Israel's initiatives not only against the Palestinians, but also against every

force and every country under the influence of Iran, the “enemy at the doorstep.” The question of the Indo-Pacific, an area that will weigh more and more heavily in the relations and contrasts between all imperialist powers and that, in all likelihood, will assume the weight that the Atlantic did in the last century. The question of Africa, a continent swollen with natural riches that advanced capitalisms are greedy for and in which China and Russia have been advancing for some time now, taking territories from the influence of the old colonial powers, and in which the United States has not defined a major plan of investment and intervention; indeed, with the first Trump government, and then with the Biden government, it has consistently reduced its economic and diplomatic commitment to this continent. On the other hand, the protectionist policy that will characterize the Trump Administration, as per election pledges, will probably tend to keep Africa still on the back burner among American priorities.

And finally, the domestic issue in the United States, for which Trump, in order to attract the vote of the working class and middle class, has pressed hard on the need to improve their living conditions, fighting against inflation, thus against the rising cost of living, and against foreign imports (particularly from Germany, Europe in general and China) by raising tariffs. The other horn of the problem concerns immigration, toward which the White House in Trump's hands will adopt a much more direct repressive policy than Biden did; the announced vast deportation of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants, which has been one of his campaign warhorses, will in all likelihood be scaled back quite a bit because the American economy – as indeed the economy of any other country – needs to exploit vast strata of proletarians illegally present in the country both because the cost of their labor is significantly cheaper than that of native-born proletarians both because they are blackmailable not only economically, but socially, and because they are used as a weapon to pressure the labor costs of regularly contracted and unionized proletarians.

For America, as on the other hand for Europe or China, the coming years do not present themselves as years of economic expansion, but as years in which the struggle against the overproduction crisis will be even harder than it has been so far. The long-awaited growth, which is increasingly measured in a zero-point more or less than the previous year, will not be the common denominator of the most advanced economies; instead, it will be the worry of all advanced economies and will force the ruling bourgeoisies to press ever harder on the proletarian class to extort more and more surplus value from its labor and to counter foreign competition

by every means, including the military. And as social tensions will tend to rise, war will become the permanent situation not only in areas outside Europe or North America, but also within them. The various bourgeois factions will be forced to do battle against each other to overwhelm opposing interests, which does not mean that there will be war of all against all, but that, just as monopolies, trusts, and multinational corporations have developed in the economy, so will the blocs headed by prevailing imperialism develop and continue to develop on the politico-military terrain. One bloc, which the media has become accustomed to calling “Western,” formed since the Second World Imperialist War around England and France, has developed with the primacy of the United States. The other imperialist bloc that opposed this, was formed around Hitler's Germany and Hirohito's Japan, with a historically unreliable Mussolinian Italy serving as a counterbalance, as proved as soon as the war turned in favor of the Allies. Another bloc was the Stalinized USSR. It was these three blocs that battled each other, first on the terrain of political and economic competition, then on the terrain directly military reducing, in fact, into two contrasting blocs with Russia's move from an understanding with Germany, once Germany suddenly attacked it, to an understanding with the United States. It may not happen again in a future world war clash, perhaps not in the same form. And it is perhaps in the latter perspective that Trump's America is aiming for a future reversal of sides: it would in fact be much more convenient for America to clash with China by having Russia on its side than by having to face China and Russia in a solid adversarial bloc.

After imperialist war, imperialist peace

The imperialist peace that Trump says he is striving for in the Russian-Ukrainian war could go in this direction: to draw Russia into the Western area of influence in order to draw it away from the Chinese area of influence. Of course, in order to lure Russia to the West, given its inevitable hunger for economic territories that prompted it to wage war on Ukraine, and given that the war is going in Russia's favor and against the much-ballyhooed Ukrainian and Western “victory,” the armed conflict must be ended in order to get into negotiations. For peace negotiations to have a chance of succeeding, and since neither the United States nor Europe, let alone Russia and China, have any interest today in going to war, the only thing at stake is the pieces of Ukraine that Russia has already annexed: Crimea and part of the Donbass.

We are entering the third year of the war, and the most bogged down and without a victorious way out are the Westerners; the Americans, British and Germans are

admitting it, more or less openly. Ukraine, in all of this, has actually played a secondary role from the very beginning with the illusion that it could one day sit at the table of the powerful as an equal, given the hundreds of thousands of dead put on the scales and a good part of the country to be rebuilt, all to the benefit of the Euro-American capitalists who have already set about to start dividing up the pie. There is nothing better than a destroyed country to be rebuilt to give breath to the capitalist economy. So, what will happen from now on is more about how than when to end this war. Obviously, it will be the Americans and the Russians who will dictate the terms, they are the ones who have to find common ground, and this can only be to the detriment of Ukraine, which will be able to go back to basking in its “independence,” its “territorial sovereignty,” and an economic and “peaceful” recovery on a territory that is stumped compared to 1991. It could end up, probably, as in 1953 between North and South Korea, with a red line not to be crossed by either side; however, it is more likely to resemble an ever-ready-to-bounce separation, not accepted by either the Ukrainians of the Donbass or the Russophones of the Donbass, and on which the Russians could behave like the Israelis toward the Palestinian territories. Russian-Ukrainian peace will be more of a war truce than a period of peaceful development of either country.

Lacks the class struggle of the proletariat

No agreement between ruling and imperialist bourgeoisies has brought and brings benefits to the people involved in inter-state confrontations, much less does it bring the peace and prosperity hypocritically extolled as the result of the goodwill of rulers. Only the class struggle of the proletariat of the countries going to war and supranational proletarian solidarity have a chance of stopping the imperialist war, turning it into the only war by which true peace can be achieved: civil war, the class war of the proletariat against its own bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisies of the other belligerent countries. The proletarian revolution in Russia in October 1917, in the midst of the world imperialist war, demonstrated, precisely by the proletarian class struggle and civil war against the warmongering classes at home, by coming to seize political power, that it could impose peace with the “enemy” even at the cost of losing territory; a peace, on the other hand, that had to be strenuously defended against constant attacks by the imperialist armies, calling the proletarians of all countries to revolution in their own countries.

The current historical situation in which wars are being waged, decade after decade, in every corner of the world, is quite different from that in which the

European and Russian proletariat struggled, in the first two decades of the last century, on revolutionary ground against their respective ruling bourgeoisies. The Russian, European and world proletariat, betrayed by social-democratic and Stalinist opportunism in those years, were systematically bent to the interests of their own national bourgeoisies – whether fascist, democratic or falsely “socialist” – under the illusion that they could participate in widespread prosperity thanks to the greatness and economic power of the “fatherland,” accepting even the highest sacrifices as every war requires. The proletarians of the most advanced capitalist countries, after the carnage of World War II, benefiting from the crumbs that the most powerful imperialists decided to distribute to them in order to silence their most pressing needs, no longer had the strength to reconnect with the great classist and revolutionary tradition of previous proletarian generations. Continually titillated by peaceful development in democracy and benefited by all sorts of social buffers, generation after generation, they have become accustomed not only and not so much to thinking like the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, but to having the same ambitions to build their individual futures on their personal careers and to regard proletarians from other industries, other companies, and other nationalities as competitors against whom they adopt the same means that capitalists and, in general, the bourgeoisie, adopt in the struggle of competition against opponents and other bourgeoisies. Not only has the sense of belonging to the same class been obliterated and buried by decades of interclass collaborationism, but also the proletarian solidarity that once fraternized proletarians of all conditions and nationalities has been completely lost. The millions of proletarians bombed and mangled in the bourgeois wars seem to belong to other worlds, holed up in the four walls of their homes and jealous of their individual interests. Nothing worse could have happened to the international proletarian class that made all the chancelleries of the world tremble in the 1920s.

But the war, with its horrors and disastrous consequences for the daily lives of proletarians will ruthlessly bite into their apathy, pushing them to react for sheer survival. It will be their vanguards who will have to reconnect with the class struggle of the last century, and it is not certain that this will not happen thanks to the young Eastern or African proletariat.

November 15th 2024

(Final part of the article *Guerra russo-ucraina: pace imperialista all'orizzonte*, <http://www.pcint.org>, translated by the IGCL)

The Crushing of the German Proletariat and the Advent of Fascism (*Bilan*#16, 1935)

We have already said that we do not confuse today's "populist right", such as Trump or Meloni in Italy, with the fascism of the 1930s. Nor do we believe that today's situation is simply a remake of the 1930s. Nevertheless, there are certain parallels between the political instability of governments and the rise of the "radical" right that prevailed before the war and what is happening today. They should help proletarians understand and clarify the significance of the electoral successes of these nationalist, often xenophobic and racist right-wingers.

There are two visions that should be rejected right now, and which are unfortunately prevalent in the proletarian camp today: the first argues that the rise of the "populist" right and Trump's election are the result of Decomposition and Chaos: for example, the latter "represents a crushing defeat for the American bourgeoisie." The second, less stupid, is undoubtedly even more dangerous in the long term. It is the one that argues that "populist" or "extreme" right-wing political parties are the product of the petty-bourgeoisie, rather than bourgeois parties and organs of the bourgeois state in their own right. It is of the utmost importance for all those who claim the Communist Left of Italy to reappropriate the position it was able to adopt and defend in the face of fascism and anti-fascism. The following short extracts from *Bilan* #16, 1935, respond to both visions. They should encourage this effort at historical reappropriation.

[Because the difference of length of the very text between French and English versions, the following quotation is much larger than in the French version.]

“ However, it was during this period of rationalization and the creation of gigantic Konzerns that the economic foundations and social necessities for the advent of Fascism in 1933 emerged in Germany. The accentuated concentration of the proletarian masses as a result of capitalist tendencies, social legislation thrown out to avoid dangerous revolutionary movements, but too costly, permanent unemployment disturbing social relations, heavy external burdens (reparations) necessitating continuous attacks on wages already very low since inflation. Above all, what called for fascist domination was the threat posed by the proletariat in the post-war period – a threat from which capitalism was able to escape thanks to the respite provided by social democracy, but which required a political structure to match the disciplinary concentration achieved in the economic sphere. Just as the unification of the Reich was preceded by industrial concentration and centralization in 1865-67, the advent of Fascism was preceded by a highly imperialist reorganization of the German economy, necessary to save the **entire** class cornered by Versailles. When we speak today of Fascism's economic interventions, of "its" planned economy, "its" autarky, we misrepresent reality. It only represents the social structure which, at the end of an economic and social evolution, was necessary for capitalism. Appealing to fascism after 1919, when German capitalism was decomposing miserably, was not an option, especially as the proletariat was there, threatening. That is why Kapp's putsch was fought by the fractions of capitalism, as well as by the Allies, who understood the invaluable help of the social traitors.

(...)

In short, all Fascism's innovations, from an economic point of view, lay in the accentuation of economic "disciplinization", the linking of the State and the major Konzerns (appointment of commissioners to the various branches of the economy), and the consecration of a war economy.

Democracy, as the flag of capitalist domination, cannot correspond to an economy cornered by war, shaken by the proletariat, and whose centralization is a position of resistance in the expectation of new carnage, a way of transposing its internal contradictions onto the world stage, all the more so as it presupposes a certain mobility in economic and political relations, a capacity to displace groups and individualities which, although gravitating around the maintenance of the privileges of one class, must nevertheless give all classes the perception of a possible elevation. In the post-war period of German economic development, the Konzerns linked to the state apparatus, demanding repayment of the concessions they were forced to make as a result of workers' battles, removed any possibility of democracy surviving, since the prospect was not of exploiting colonies with plentiful profits, but of a hard, bitter struggle against Versailles and its reparations system, and for a right to world markets. This was the path of brutal, violent struggle against the proletariat, and here, as in the economic sphere, German capitalism showed the way for other countries to follow by entirely different means. It is obvious that without the help of world capitalism, the German bourgeoisie would never have achieved its goals. To allow the workers to be crushed, it was necessary to remove all

⁹ . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17598/neither-populism-nor-bourgeois-democracy-only-real-alternative-worldwide-development> (10 janvier 2025)

American labels hindering the German bourgeoisie's exclusive exploitation of the workers; to grant moratoria; and finally to remove the burden of reparations. It also required the intervention of the Soviet state, which abandoned the German workers for its five-year plans, blurring their struggle and finally becoming part of the fascist victory.

An examination of the situation from 1923 to March 1933 shows that from the Weimar Constitution to Hitler, a process of perfect, organic continuity is unfolding. The defeat of the workers came after the full flowering of the bourgeois and “socializing” democracy expressed by Weimar, and enabled the reconstitution of capitalist forces. Then, gradually, the noose tightened. Soon, in 1925, it was Hindenburg who became the defender of this Constitution, and while capitalism rebuilt its ever-growing armature, democracy became more restricted, expanded in moments of social tension, and even saw some socialist coalition governments (H. Müller), but insofar as socialists and centrists increased the disarray of the workers, it tended to disappear (Brüning government and its decree laws) to make way, finally, for fascism, which met with no opposition from the workers. There was no opposition between democracy, with Weimar as its crowning glory, and fascism: one allowed the revolutionary threat to be crushed, dispersed the proletariat and confused its consciousness, while the other, at the end of this evolution, was the capitalist iron heel that consecrated this work, rigidly realizing the unity of capitalist society on the basis of the stifling of any proletarian threat. (...)

German fascism can be explained neither as a class distinct from capitalism, nor as an emanation of the exasperated middle classes. Rather, it reflects the form of domination exercised by capitalism, which is no longer able, through democracy, to bind all classes of society around the maintenance of its privileges. (...) The fact remains that the petit bourgeois, immersed in a historical environment where the productive forces, by crushing him and making him understand his powerlessness, determine a polarization of social antagonisms around the main players: the bourgeoisie

and the proletariat, no longer even has the possibility of swinging from one to the other, but instinctively moves towards those who guarantee him the maintenance of his hierarchical position on the social ladder. Instead of rising up against capitalism, the petit bourgeois, whether a starched collar worker or a shopkeeper, gravitates towards a social shell that he had like to see solid enough to ensure “order, calm” and respect for his dignity, in opposition to dead-end

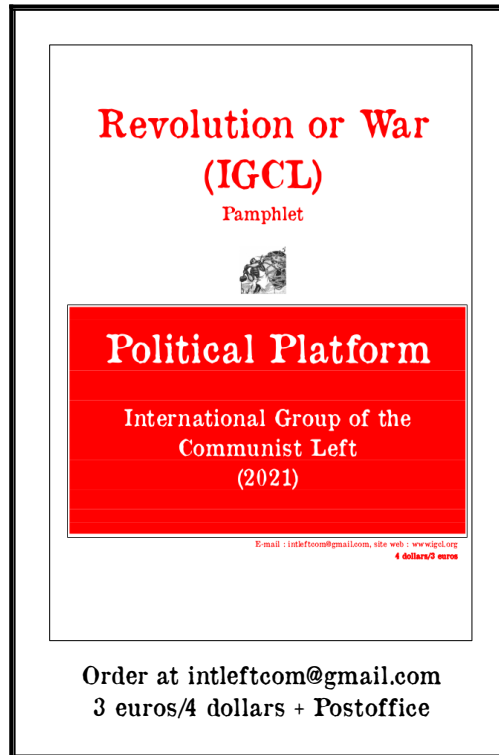
workers' struggles that irritate him and confuse the situation. But if the proletariat rises up on its feet and goes on the attack, the petty bourgeois can only cower and accept the inevitable. When fascism is presented as a movement of the petty bourgeoisie, historical reality is violated by concealing its true terrain. Fascism channels all the contradictions that endanger capitalism and directs them towards its consolidation. It contains the petty bourgeois desire for calm, the exasperation of the starving unemployed, the blind hatred of the disoriented worker and, above all, the capitalist desire to eliminate any element of disruption from a militarized economy, to reduce to a minimum the maintenance costs of an army of

permanently unemployed. (...)

In short, Hitler's victory in March 1933 needed no violence at all: it was the ripe fruit of socialism and centrism, a natural outcome of an outmoded democratic form. Violence only had a *raison d'être* after the advent of the Fascists, not in response to a proletarian attack, but to prevent it forever. From a disaggregated, dispersed force, the proletariat was to become an active element in the consolidation of a society all geared to war. This is why the Fascists could not simply tolerate class organizations led by traitors, but had to extirpate the slightest trace of class struggle, the better to pulverize the workers and turn them into blind instruments of the imperialist aims of German capitalism.”

Bilan #16, 1935, “L'écrasement du prolétariat allemand et l'avènement du fascisme”

[“The Crushing of the German Proletariat and the Advent of Fascism”, translated by us]



Resolution adopted by the NWBCW committees in Canada – *Down with the War!*

Partly in response to a strike of postal workers in Canada and the work of sabotage carried out by the unions in the country, the Toronto and Montreal No War But the Class War committees jointly adopted the resolution reproduced below. The text of this resolution is adapted from the resolution proposed by the Petersburg committee of the Bolshevik Party and adopted at many workplaces in 1916. At the time, there were severe food shortages and economic hardship that resulted from wartime conditions. The Bolshevik resolution¹⁰ linked these conditions to the war and argued that the only way to combat them was to fight against the war and against the ruling classes which profited from it. Similarly today, we can observe a marked deterioration in workers' living conditions caused by the devastation of war and the economic consequences of it, so much so that some populations – such as in Gaza and Sudan – are faced with famine. The resolution ends with slogans that attempt to provide a way forward for combative workers. A previous draft version of the resolution, proposed by one of our members, included the slogan “spread the strikes to nearby workplaces”. However, the majority of participants – among them ICT militants – in the NWBCW committees in Canada objected to this phrasing on the grounds that it is an unrealistic tactic to propose to workers given the current balance of class power in Canada. This slogan was therefore modified to “a generalized crisis requires a generalized response”, which in our opinion weakens and waters down the orientation. Nevertheless, we believe that the resolution in the form in which it was adopted represents a step forward for the NWBCW committees because it explicitly spells out the connection between the war, the economic consequences of it, and the terrain on which the proletariat can resist these.

DOWN WITH THE WAR!

- (1) The worldwide deterioration of workers' living conditions is an inevitable consequence of the current drive to World War and the resulting global economic dislocation.
- (2) The continuation of war preparations entails a deepening of the cost-of-living crisis, famine, poverty and degradation of living conditions of the working class.
- (3) All piecemeal ways of fighting against the deterioration of our living conditions (e.g. food banks; subsidized housing) can only mitigate the effects of the crisis and not eliminate its causes.
- (4) The existence of nuclear weapons makes global catastrophe a realistic prospect if the warmongering designs of the ruling class are not opposed.
- (5) The only effective means of struggle against the crisis is a struggle against the causes producing it, i.e. a struggle against the war, the preparation for war, as well as the ruling classes which plotted it and which stand to benefit from it.

The only way forward for the working class is to take the road of decisive struggle against the capitalists and their state. To win, workers must set up struggle and strike committees that can advance the slogans:

REJECT THE SACRIFICES FOR THE WAR!

THE GENERALIZED CRISIS CAN ONLY BE FOUGHT WITH A GENERALIZED STRUGGLE!

A COMMON STRUGGLE FOR COMMON DEMANDS!

No War But Class War Canada, 12 December 2024

¹⁰ The text of the 1916 resolution can be found on page 30 of *Russia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, 1905-1924 - A View from the Communist Left*. <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2021-09-09/russia-revolution-and-counter-revolution-1905-1924-a-view-from-the-communist>

Public Meeting of the “Groupe révolutionnaire internationaliste” (ICT) in Paris

Last November, a public meeting was held in Paris organized by the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) group in France. Readers wishing to gain a fuller picture of the debates that took place can refer to the GRI's report¹¹, which provides an excellent summary of the discussions. And if they wish to verify or add to their knowledge, they can also read the article¹² dedicated to the subject by the ICC, which, in turn, gives an accurate – albeit obviously from its own point of view – account of the discussion. We won't dwell here on the content of the discussions, but rather on the political significance and lessons of this meeting for the proletarian camp in France and its sympathizers, who were relatively numerous.

Unlike previous public meetings organized by the GRI-ICT, the ICC delegation had not come to sabotage the meeting. A 180-degree turnaround that we, for our part, emphasized and welcomed at the end of the meeting. As a result, as the GRI writes, “*the discussion took place in a fraternal atmosphere, allowing everyone to defend their positions and to distinguish points of agreement and divergence between the different organizations*”, i.e. the ICT, the ICC, the PCI-Le Prolétaire [Bordiguist] and ourselves the IGCL. For us, the political balance-sheet of this meeting lies in its holding and in its implications: by not giving in to the ICC's earlier sabotages, and by continuing to ensure a political presence in Paris, the ICT is in fact opening up an inclusive proletarian political space to which any revolutionary element in search can come. And where the main organizations of the proletarian camp can confront, and thus clarify, their respective positions. This is the essential point we wish to emphasize.

Secondly, the discussion of the national question – support for the Palestinian nationalism or proletarian internationalism – clearly demarcated two camps: the PCI on one side, the ICT, the ICC and the IGCL on the other. On the other hand, the Marxist position on the march to generalized imperialist war today, or on the historical alternative of revolution or war, pitted the PCI, the ICT and the IGCL on one side against the opportunist position of the ICC, according to which the alternative no longer exists and generalized war is impossible today due to decomposition. It is worth noting in passing that we had to insist for the ICC defend its position on the subject, even though its interventions sought, to say the least, to “drown out

the fish” and avoid political confrontation, with grand, abstract declamations on proletarian internationalism, and on its “agreement” with the ICT.

The final point concerns the strengths and weaknesses of the proletarian camp and their respective dynamics as revealed by this meeting. The desire for political research and coherence on the part of a number of “young” comrades, the willingness and ability of the ICT to hold public meetings, the support and help provided by the IGCL, and the active presence of the PCI, all force the ICC to submit to political debate and confrontation. In so doing, it is exposing itself to sharpening political contradictions between its position on the current historical situation – denying any risk of generalized imperialist war – and the reality of the very course of events; and between its theory on parasitism – linked to decomposition – and its participation in these meetings.

Indeed, on this last point, and insofar as the IGCL is among the most convinced of the current dynamic towards generalized imperialist war, the ICC was **indeed** obliged to respond and “debate” with the so-called parasitism. The result is an impasse illustrated, oh so well, by the last part of its article on the meeting.

“*The individual J. [our delegate to the meeting] took part in the debate in a clear and dynamic way, and he made some very good interventions that enabled the collective reflection to move forward. It's true that J. was eloquent, that his speeches were even brilliant... But appearances are often deceptive.*”¹³ And as proof of the deception, a new and unprecedented accusation: “*J. started laughing at a comrade because he knew that the latter had just nearly died of a heart attack, rejoicing in his misfortune.*” Pathetic or hallucinating? *Both, sir!*

Let us summarize. Here is someone, along with all the members of the former ICC Internal Fraction, denounced by the ICC for 24 years now as a cop, agent provocateur, gangster, thief, lumpen, Nazi, Stalinist, etc., etc., actively participating, “*in a clear and dynamic way*”, eloquently and brilliantly, and enabling “*the collective reflection to move forward*”. And now the ICC is deepening the theoretical question of parasitism: it can even have a positive effect on the proletariat! It is easy to understand why the ICC forbids us access to its public meetings, and why it tried to discourage the ICT from holding any in Paris. Open political confrontation precipitates it into a situation that is becoming inextricable for it.

The IGCL, December 2024

¹¹ . Only in French so far:
<http://www.leftcom.org/fr/articles/2024-12-14/bilan-de-la-r%C3%A9union-publique-du-231124>

¹² . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17594/necessary-debate-clarification-positions-and-principles>

¹³ . Our own balance-sheet of our participation is much more measured and critical...

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Programmatic theses (Barbaria)

We have read and discussed the programmatic theses recently published by the revolutionary group Barbaria.¹⁴ They are available on its website and translated into various languages. We thought it would be useful to send Barbaria our critical comments. In themselves, they may seem “very” critical. Certainly, we seem to share the main class positions – seem, we say, because the theses do not explicitly affirm them as “class frontiers”, as we do for example in our own platform. But we differ sharply on both the approach and method and on the programmatic and theoretical framework that result from the former. First and foremost, the theses ignore the historical dimension specific to the method of historical materialism, i.e. Marxism. The political and class positions presented are based more on a revolutionary will, or even feeling, than on a materialist understanding of the class struggle. The result is two major weaknesses that we intend to combat: an approach we would describe as “anarchistic”, and a significant underestimation, if not oblivion, of the class struggle and the revolutionary class proletariat, which are not at the heart of the theses.

We know that the origins, if not of the group itself, of some of its members, lie in the influence of the former Internationalist Communist Group (IGC-GCI).¹⁵ We have also noted that, since its foundation, Barbaria has been trying to break away from this movement and reappropriate the acquisition of the Communist Left, particularly the one of Italy. If one takes a look at the group's website, one will see that this dynamic towards “the left” and this effort to reappropriate it are very clear. It is this effort and this theoretical-political struggle to which we intend to contribute to the best of our ability. We have no doubt that the publication of these theses and our criticisms will be of interest far beyond our two groups and their mutual clarifications. We call on the entire revolutionary camp to take part in this fraternal “debate-combat”. The confrontation of programmatic positions is essential to best prepare the conditions for the formation of the world party of the proletariat. All the more so as time is running out in the face of the historical drama that is about to unfold.

*We have chosen to keep the form or presentation of our criticisms as we have issued them for our own internal discussion. We therefore reproduce Barbaria's theses and include our critical comments, in the form of notes, in brackets and bold. This method has the advantage of facilitating the expression and exposition of each criticism thesis by thesis. It can help the reader find his or her way around. It has the disadvantage of giving partial answers and at the risk of obscuring the general approach of both the programmatic theses themselves and our critique. We hope, however, that readers and militants will be able to benefit from it. It is in this form that we have sent our comments to Barbaria. Given the length of the theses and our comments, we cannot publish all in a single issue of our journal. This first part will therefore be followed by a second in the next issue of *Revolution or War* #30.*

The IGCL, November 2024

1. Historical Materialism

The desire for revolution is intuitive. It is enough to have experienced the violence of this system in one of its various forms and to have projected, ephemerally or with conscious resolve, the need for a radical transformation of things. On the other hand, acting as revolutionaries is not intuitive. It entails putting our feet on a social reality that appears inverted to us in order to know not only how to put an end to this system, but above all what it means to put an end to it. That is why the method we use to interpret the functioning of society is fundamental.

Historical materialism understands the evolution of human societies through the concept of the mode of production, i.e. the idea that we can only understand a society, its institutions, its cultural, religious and ideological expressions through the way it produces and reproduces its material life: the means it uses and the way in which its members organise themselves to do so. In short, social and historical being determines consciousness.

The mode of production defines the social totality. Its intrinsic contradictions will mark the historical development of society. In capitalism, the inability to overcome these contradictions, synthesised in the clash of the productive forces and the social relations of production, gives rise to the next mode of production, communism, in a catastrophic way, i.e., not gradually or in a curve of ascent and decay. However, it does not appear out of nowhere: the transition to a new mode of production does not take place without its historical foundations, the conditions of its emergence, having been gestated beforehand. Thus capitalism, the most destructive and alienating mode of production our species has ever known, nevertheless prepares the material basis for communism.

[The claim to historical materialism is in itself to be welcomed. This claim is indispensable for any revolutionary

¹⁴ . <https://barbaria.net/>

¹⁵ . <https://archivesautonomies.org/spip.php?rubrique440>

group, bearing in mind that the application of historical materialism is also a permanent struggle for all communist organizations always subject to the pressure of bourgeois ideology and metaphysics, at the level of method.¹⁶

Unfortunately, the exposition of this thesis does not seem to us to fit in with the approach and method of historical materialism. In the first place, it starts from the point of view of the individual, “*acting as a revolutionary is not intuitive*”. We shall see that this approach has a number of political consequences and, above all, that it has a negative impact on the entire document.

Secondly and most importantly, nothing is said in this first thesis about social forces, i.e. classes, and in particular about the proletariat as an exploited and revolutionary class. A programmatic document claiming to be based on historical materialism should first and foremost assert that “*class struggle is the motor of history*.”

As a result, insofar as the revolutionary class is not explicitly mentioned, this thesis does not close the door on the position, or “*idea*”, of the possibility of a mechanical or automatic transition from capitalism to communism, albeit “*catastrophically*”.

This thesis on historical materialism is at best too vague for a programmatic text. In order to anchor all the theses on the terrain of class struggle, it would have been necessary to start from the point of view of classes, not individuals, as the fundamental basis of society, by affirming that historical materialism is the revolutionary theory of the proletariat.]

2. Capitalism

Capitalism is, among class societies, the ultimate mode of production, existing today all over the planet. It is not merely a system of economic exploitation, which accompanies or intersects with other systems of domination such as race, gender or techno-industrialism. It is the way in which society produces and reproduces its life—in all its aspects—on the basis of commodity production. It is not a trivial matter that the social purpose is the production of commodities and not of goods destined to the satisfaction of needs, since that same imperative induces an automatism where social relations take the form of things and where the movement of the products determines the movement and life of the producers. Reality is inverted: it is commodity fetishism.

The international nature of capitalism is expressed in terms of competing nations competing with each other for the world market and the political-military predominance that come with that. In other words: it expresses itself in national bourgeoisies competing with each other for a larger share of the surplus value exploited from the world proletariat. Like any struggle, there are stronger and weaker nations. The international dimension of capitalism is fragmented and hierarchical, but this does not mean that there are oppressed nations and oppressor nations; there are only nations that perform better than others within global competition. This configuration makes nationalism and racism a structural feature of capitalism. It also makes every state imperialist and war between states a necessary and permanent product of the system.

Capitalism is the last class society: it presents continuities and discontinuities with the previous ones. The emergence of private property and social classes demanded a patriarchal structure of reproduction, whose basic cell is in the family and where control of women’s bodies is key. Capitalism, as a class society, continues to have a patriarchal structure, but it reproduces it according to its mercantile and abstract logic, which separates production and reproduction, public and private space, and makes the biological an obstacle to the unlimited production of value or, at best, a cost to be borne.

Therefore, a mode of production that has turned human beings into a commodity cannot be any less destructive for the natural environment. The more capitalism develops, the more it boosts its productive capacity, the more labour it expels and the more raw materials and energy it requires in its production: in short, the development of capitalism is accompanied by an increase in social misery (surplus population) and the rapid destruction of the natural world, thus undermining the very foundations of our existence as a species.

At the basis of this is the exhaustion of value. The high degree of socialisation and development of productive capacity that this system has reached renders historically obsolete not only the specific categories of capitalism (value, commodity, wage labour), but also those that have been the backbone of the class modes of production (pri-

¹⁶ . “The dialectical method is opposed to the metaphysical method. This, a tenacious legacy of the flawed way of formulating thought, derived from religious conceptions based on dogmatic revelation, presents the concepts of things as immutable, absolute, eternal and reducible to some first principles, unrelated to each other and having a kind of independent life. For the dialectical method all things are in motion, not only that, but in their motion they influence each other, so that even their concepts, that is, the reflections of things themselves in our nothingness, are connected and related to each other. Metaphysics proceeds by antinomies, that is, by absolute terms that are opposed to each other. These opposite terms can never mix or reach each other, nor can anything new arise from their connection, other than the simple affirmation of the presence of one and the absence of the other, and vice versa.” (Sul metodo dialettico, *Prometeo*, Serie II, n°1,1950, translated by us)

vate property, family, state). However, this exhaustion does not imply a slow decline towards a new mode of production, but rather increases the catastrophic consequences of persevering with it: since the productive forces cannot stop growing, their contradiction with the relations of production—that is, the contradiction between an increasingly social production and a private appropriation of the product—becomes more and more violent. Capitalism is an automatic machine that dies by killing, and it will not stop unless we revolutionarily subvert the existing social relations.

[This second thesis on “capitalism” actually tackles several questions, in a somewhat scattered fashion. But above all, it suffers from the approach of the previous one, which does not place class antagonism at the heart of the document and method. This results in concessions to leftist ideology and some of its political positions, particularly with regard to feminism.

1) underestimation of the principle of class struggle

Its first paragraph mentions that capitalism is “*among class societies, the ultimate mode of production*”. But in itself, this is not enough, especially as it seems to be primarily concerned with “distinguishing” itself from leftist, and therefore bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, ideologies, in particular feminism and “intersectionality”. Affirming the principle of “*class struggle as the driving force of history*” – unfortunately ignored, or at least underestimated, let us repeat – would have been enough to reject any proletarian character to “partial struggles” and other “social movements” linked to the leftist and counter-revolutionary theory of intersectionality. The result is an approach that tends to accept the terrain and the leftist framework on these issues. This conciliatory approach to the leftist terrain is reflected in the third paragraph, which again focuses on the “patriarchal structure” of capitalism.

2) Ignorance of the historical method

The absence of a historical reference and framework for the development of these theses, the absence of the historical method that is so characteristic of “historical materialism”, opens the door to the terrain and even in part to the penetration of leftist positions: patriarchy and racism are said to be “structural” to capitalism.

Historical materialism explains how this destroys the very foundations of the family and patriarchy. “*Only among the oppressed classes, that is, at the present day, among the proletariat, (...) all the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here, there is a complete absence of all property, for the safeguarding and bequeathing of which monogamy and male domination were established. Therefore, there is no stimulus whatever here to assert male domination.*”¹⁷ The remnants of patriarchy, and above all sexism and other forms of discrimination against women and homosexuality, are “*as much a reactionary remnant of the ‘dead past as the reign by Divine Right on the throne.*” They are perpetuated because they have become (...) “*powerful tools of interests inimical to the people*” as Rosa Luxemburg points out¹⁸. It is no coincidence, then, that they are widely nurtured by bourgeois ideology, particularly on the most backward fractions of the proletariat, as we have just seen again with Trump's election campaign in the USA. In the absence of a significant proletarian movement, these “reactionary after-effects” exacerbate to the point of becoming pure sexism, machismo, contempt and even violence on and against women, including among the most backward layers and individuals of the working class; and above all to the point of imposing a-classist oppositions racism-antiracism, feminism-patriarchy, which can only divert and attack the unity of the proletariat through and in its struggles.

The same applies to racism, also presented as “structural” to capitalism. Yet, capital makes each proletarian similar to the next, to the point of denying his or her singularity, including skin color, gender and origin, in the production process and as a salaried worker, a proletarian. And what about anti-racism? The bourgeoisie is perfectly capable of using and promoting both racist and anti-racist sentiments as a function of and against the development of proletarian struggle. This is what a communist programmatic document must affirm. This is what both the principle of class struggle and the method of historical materialism teach us.

As for the rest of this thesis, its second paragraph makes the development of imperialism quite clear, and pronounces, it seems, on the bourgeois and counter-revolutionary character of national liberation struggles and imperialist war. On this question of national liberation struggles, we are on the same side of the barricade as Barbaria, if its position is indeed the one that tends to emerge from the writing, namely that these national liberation struggles are counter-revolutionary *today*. Nevertheless, and once again, the absence of historical method and the lack of precision on the subject, makes us fear that the sharing of the same class position is not done with the same understanding and the same militant approach. Indeed, there was a time when the proletariat could, under certain conditions, support national liberation struggles, and when wars were not imperialist, thus determining proletarian positions different from those of today. We are not sure that Barbaria shares this view.

¹⁷ . Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884, Marx-Engels, Collective Works, vol. 26.

¹⁸ . Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle*, 1912.

But what does “exhaustion of value” mean?]

3. Communism

This next mode of production, communism, has nothing to do with the Soviet Union, Maoist China or Castro and Guevara’s Cuba. What the counter-revolution has presented as communism is the direct negation of the revolutionary programme that had begun to develop from the League of Communists and the IWA out of the struggle of the proletariat, especially with the great historical experience of the Paris Commune, and which Marx and Engels synthesised theoretically. There has been nothing worse for our revolutionary movement than for the counter-revolution to present itself in the garb of revolution and to invert, point by point, the terminology of communism. We claim for ourselves those comrades who made a physical and programmatic fight against opportunism in the Second and Third Internationals and against the Stalinist counter-revolution, and who drew from the midnight of the century the indispensable lessons for the next revolutionary assault of our class: we speak especially of the Italian communist left, but also of the earlier contributions of the Bolsheviks and Lenin, of Rosa Luxemburg and the German-Dutch left, as well as the positions of the internationalists who broke with the Fourth International during World War II, such as G. Munis, who later founded the FOR, Agis Stinas and Ngo Van Xuyet.

[There are two very important political positions, which have become principles, which are put forward here and which we share: the capitalist character of the so-called socialist countries, from the USSR to Cuba through China; and the claiming of the struggle of the left fractions within the 2nd and 3rd Internationals. This claiming is fundamental for laying the programmatic foundations of the communist program and for a revolutionary group to participate in its elaboration, as well as in the struggle for the party and for the political “leadership” of class struggles.]

At the risk of appearing too fussy, we regret the claim of comrades – *“we claim for ourselves those comrades ...”* – that is, individuals – however respectable and admirable they may be – in place of the claim – reduced to a “reference” in the thesis – of the political currents that were the Left. This criticism refers back to the observation we made in the first paragraph of the first thesis. The starting point of any materialist – Marxist – and communist approach cannot be the individuals, not even revolutionary individuals, i.e. even when they are organized militants. The starting point can only be classes and their political expressions; the proletariat and its revolutionary minorities, currents, groups and parties.

*“Setting out from the individual-unit in order to draw social conclusions and to construct social blueprints or even in order to deny society, is setting out from an unreal supposition...”*¹⁹

That is why, for our part, we “claim the battles” of the League of Communists, the 1st International, the 2nd International, the 3rd International and all the left-wing currents and fractions that have assumed the historical continuity of the communist program by fighting opportunism within them. Claiming the struggles? In other words, to “claim” not the positions taken per se, but the moment and circumstances in which they were taken; that is, to be on the same side as the Marxist Left on the different barricades or successive struggles on the political, theoretical, organizational, etc., to which it participated. And, in this sense, we can also “refer” to the most eminent militants, starting with Marx and Engels, of course to establish our historical claim and our arguments.]

Communism is a society without money, commodities and private property, and therefore without social classes, family and state. The only way to abolish these categories is through the constitution of a world community in which all borders are destroyed, production is planned according to human needs on the basis of the different capacities of its members, and the product of labour is distributed according to these members’ needs. In contrast to capitalism, which is based on production for production’s sake because it aims at a permanent increase in value; communism is anti-productivist, because it is aimed at the human needs of present and future generations. The transition to communism will involve a process of both the reduction and transformation of production and the elimination of the permanent wastefulness of consumption in this system, one of the central elements of which is the separation of town and country.

[We share the undeniably communist conception of communism expressed here, which refers to questions of class principle.]

Communism is not only desirable and possible; it is more relevant than ever today. The very cause of the social and ecological crisis we are increasingly experiencing: the depletion of value, is the confession that human development can no longer maintain the existence of private property and its logical derivations (commodity, money, wage labour, social classes, family, state). There is less and less work, we are surrounded by worthless money, the capitalist class is becoming more and more impersonal, the family is in permanent crisis, the state sees its

¹⁹ . The Democratic Principle, *Rassegna Comunista*, year II, n 18, 28 February 1922.

sovereignty challenged from within by nationalist forces and by the compulsion of international capital from without. Capitalism itself is calling its social categories into question. No mode of production arises out of nothing but is rather built upon the contradictions of the previous one. Communism has been possible for over a century, but today its actuality is manifest and peremptory.

[We think it is a mistake to consider that nationalist forces, we imagine “extreme-right” forces, just like international capital, could “challenge” the sovereignty of states. Imperialism can reduce the sovereignty of even the weakest capitalist states to the benefit of the strongest. But the far right, including American libertarians and others, are involved in strengthening the state, as is international capital, i.e., capital in constant competition, which needs the national state more than ever to defend its interests: is not this the case in countries like China and Russia? And even more so in the “free market” countries of the West, starting with the United States and the role of the state in economic policy, *bidenomics* for example, or with capitalists like Elon Musk, who have only been able to develop thanks to state support and public orders.

Presenting “nationalist” right-wing forces as challenging the state runs the risk of misunderstanding the political stakes ahead, and in particular the significance of their coming to power when it does.]

4. World Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

It is not possible to transform existing relations from within the bourgeois state, through slow legislative work that expands workers’ power within this system. Nor can they be transformed in parallel to the state, through the slow social work of building cooperatives, ecovillages, squats and similar formulas: self-management is a trap that makes us internalise capitalist exploitation with the idea that if there is no boss, there is no exploitation. The only way to end capitalism is through a violent insurrection in which the proletariat establishes its own organs of power—class assemblies and the communist international—takes up arms and destroys the bourgeois state to establish its class dictatorship.

[We share the class position on parliamentarianism today. But, again, apart from the fact that its character as a class “frontier” is not explicit (as with self-management), it is displayed without historical reference.

The position on proletarian insurrection and the “class dictatorship”, that is “the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”; is fundamental, even if the presentation of “organs of power” lacks precision: why not explicitly speak of workers’ councils as organs of insurrection and power?

On the other hand, the Communist International as an “organ of power” raises a debate within the proletarian camp, particularly on the question of the role of the party in the exercise of power. Whatever the position adopted, can or should the party exercise power or not, how can we imagine that the International, or the international party, is an “organ of power”, assumes power, as an International as long as class dictatorship has not extended to the whole planet? But this question would deserve, and deserves today – demands ? – an in-depth debate, which we have begun within the IGCL, but have not yet been able to bring to a conclusion, and which should be taken up by the proletarian camp as a whole.]

Capitalism has an international nature. As long as the revolution does not spread worldwide, it is not possible to do away with value in any territory: there is no socialism in any one country. For the same reason, the existence of social classes cannot be ended and a class dictatorship is necessary. Within the insurgent territory, this dictatorship must impose itself authoritatively against bourgeois reaction and against the development of mercantile relations, starting from day one with the maximum reduction and distribution of working time, the free provision of the basic means of subsistence, the disinvestment in the production of means of production and their redirection towards consumption. Outwardly, as the only safeguard against the process degenerating, the International must by all means push for the extension of the world revolution and the extension of the class dictatorship without borders to cover the entire capitalist world. To this end, the International cannot be a federation of national parties, but a single world party with a single programme to which its various sections, especially those where the proletarian insurrection has been victorious, are subordinated. Only then, the revolution having triumphed internationally, will it be possible to put an end to value and, consequently, to social classes. And thus, the organ which was born to manage a society fractured into classes, the state, will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

[Here again, the vision of communism and the transition period is clearly set out. In particular, the objectives that the class dictatorship must set itself. In order of priority, in our view: 1) class dictatorship against the bourgeoisie; 2) extension of the revolution; 3) maximum improvement in the living and working conditions of the proletariat - which remains an exploited class as long as the mode of production has not disappeared on a world scale; 4) planning of production in the direction of this improvement in proletarian conditions, in the knowledge that the proletariat in power will face civil war and armed counter-revolution. We know, especially from the Russian experience,

that the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat in more or less isolated countries or groups of countries will be confronted with a contradiction between the necessities of the extension of the revolution and the civil war that the bourgeoisie will impose, and the defense of the living and working conditions of the proletariat, i.e. between producing for workers' consumption in a situation of scarcity and war, even of massive destruction, for one hand and, for the other the defense of proletarian power and the state of class dictatorship.

We share the position that the International cannot be formed on the basis of a federation of different national parties, but on that of a single world party with a single program. ”]

5. Minimum Programme and Maximum Programme

Communism is the minimum that we must realise: since the first world assault of the proletariat which began in 1917, preceded by the revolutions of 1848 and 1871, the communist revolution is materially possible all over the world. Any bourgeois-democratic or reformist demand will work against the revolution, because it will serve to re-establish a system which should already be dead. Consequently, revolutionaries cannot take up these demands as part of their minimum programme, if they do not want it to end up working against their maximum programme: the struggle for communism.

[We share these positions – maximum program, bourgeois or reformist demand versus revolution – today. In so doing, we find ourselves on the same side of the barricade on these questions today. That is, for the epoch of imperialism or decadence of capitalism, and that in broad strokes since the 1st World War in 1914. But the a-historical way in which they are put forward amounts to an “anarchist” rather than a Marxist vision, contrary to historical materialism. Indeed, by equating the revolutionary wave of 1848 in Europe with the revolutionary wave initiated by the Russian Revolution in 1917, Barbaria seems to reject the political positions taken by the League of Communists and Marx: in 1848, the proletariat could and should participate, while remaining autonomous, in “bourgeois democratic” demands in order to favor, not the establishment of this or that national capital per se, but the emergence of the proletariat itself and the development of class struggle. Marx and Engels' positions on Ireland and Poland at their time are very clear on this point.

As a result, this abstract, a-historical approach, weakens not only the argumentation itself, but above all Barbaria's future ability to inscribe and orient itself in the class struggle, as an avant-garde, not from an ethical or moral point of view, but according to the shifting reality of the relationship of forces between classes.]

That is why we are oppose support for any national “liberation” movement which, by definition, promotes the constitution of a new bourgeois state and bases its struggle, not on the confrontation between classes, but between races and nations, dividing the proletariat, pushing it to defend the interests of “its” bourgeoisie in its imperialist struggles, and confusing internationalism with “solidarity between peoples”, i.e., with support from abroad for that bourgeoisie.

[Same observation and criticism: we share the position itself, we are on the same side of this barricade today. But this is a position of “historical” value, not eternal.]

The defence of democracy, as the most characteristic form of organisation of the capitalist state, always entails the reinforcement of that same state and is always against the interests of the proletariat: whether this defence is given directly, by promoting parliamentary participation or legislative changes, or indirectly as a “lesser evil” in the face of a military or fascist dictatorship. Historically, anti-fascism was a profound defeat for the proletariat. It implied its union with the liberal bourgeoisie—for the defence of the state which it had itself left in the hands of fascism—the abandonment of internationalism and its use as cannon fodder in a new imperialist war.

[We are on the same side of that barricade, that of anti-fascism as a weapon of counter-revolution.]

Trade unionism is not the same as the struggle of the proletariat in the workplace: it consists in the specialisation of militant activity in labour demands, leading a few workers to build permanent bodies which end up autonomising themselves from the rest and constituting themselves, with greater or lesser success, into negotiating bodies—that is to say, mediating with capital. Whether through trade unions or other more horizontal formulas, trade unionism has always implied a tendency to separate workers' immediate interests from their historical interests. The trade union is the form which consolidates this separation: since its function consists in negotiating the value of labour power with capital, it will never have an interest in fighting against wage labour, to which it owes its existence. If the trade unions are against the revolution, it is not because of the trade union leaderships, but because of the very activity that generates them again and again.

[No doubt we are also on the same side of the barricade when it comes to trade unions as non-proletarian, counter-revolutionary organs... today. But the theses' critique of syndicalism is once again a-historical in itself. Their counter-revolutionary function would be linked to their “autonomization” and their function as negotiators

of labor power, as *mediators*... between labor and capital, i.e. between classes. From their inception in the 19th century, trade unions and even syndicalism would have been “antinomic” to proletarian struggle.

This understanding of the trade union differs completely from that held by Marx and the entire labor movement in his day: “*Trade unions are the schools of socialism. In the unions, workers become socialists because they see the struggle against capital with their own eyes every day.*”²⁰ Here, trade unions were seen as organizations for the proletariat's fight against capital. Contrary to Barbaria's thesis, Marx highlights the link, not the separation, that the trade union made possible between immediate and historical interests; or, if one prefers, between the economic and political dimensions of the proletarian struggle. Behind this question lies an important divergence in our understanding of class struggle, and proletarian struggle in particular.

*“There are not two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a political one, but only one class struggle, which aims at one and the same time at the limitation of capitalist exploitation within bourgeois society, and at the abolition of exploitation together with bourgeois society itself.”*²¹

The two dimensions, economic and political, are an integral part of the proletariat's revolutionary struggle, and they “feed” off each other. This was already true of the trade union struggle in the 19th century, as it is even more so today. Understanding and taking a stance on this question, as well as on the question of “mediating” unions, i.e. mediating between classes, therefore has important political implications for revolutionary intervention in workers' struggles.²²

Today, trade unions are no longer unitary organizations of the proletariat. The conditions of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have also developed and changed over the course of history. In the conditions of struggle prevailing in the 19th century, they were genuine organs of defense and struggle for the working class. The development and assertion of state capitalism, particularly in view of and for the purposes of generalized imperialist war, gradually stifled before the First World War, and then brutally during the war itself, any possibility of permanent life and struggle for the proletariat and its mass organizations. The phenomenon of the *mass strike* was the proletarian response to the growing impasse and impotence of trade union struggles by corporatism. Then to their progressive integration into the state apparatus from and for the needs of the 1st imperialist world war. The mass strike, its phenomenon, its dynamic or process, is all the more necessary today, in 2024, in a situation of crisis and generalized march to war, as any strike or workers' struggle that seeks to be at least “effective”, i.e. to broaden and extend in order to impose a balance of power as favorable as possible to the bourgeoisie, is immediately banned and repressed...

This divergence between “mediating unions” and “unions as political organs of the state” has concrete implications both in terms of understanding workers' struggles, their own dynamics, and the actions that unions carry out or even call for, and in terms of the relationship between the economic and political dimensions of the struggle; for example, in the intervention and stance to be taken vis-à-vis economic and political demands. Indeed, far from adopting an indifferent attitude towards economic demands, revolutionaries have a duty to lead the fight, against the trade union forces, to put forward the most unitary demands possible, which can interest the maximum number of proletarians and workplaces, in order to broaden and generalize their struggle; and thus impose a balance of power as favorable as possible to the bourgeoisie. The choice of economic demands must be a moment for extending and unifying struggles, not dividing them. In this sense, the struggle to establish the most unified demands possible, depending on time and place, becomes a political struggle against bourgeois forces in the working class milieu and, more broadly, against the state.

*“[In the mass strike,] it is impossible to separate the economic factors from one another . (...) With the spreading, clarifying and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organises and becomes involved in equal measure. Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action.”*²³

As a result, the function of today's trade unions is not to “negotiate” the value of labor power more or less well, as supposed mediators. On the contrary, their role is to participate in capital's permanent lowering of the value of labor power, while maintaining a minimum of political – and ideological – credibility and effectiveness, so as to be able to continue to manage the proletariat and, if necessary, sabotage its struggles and prevent any mass strike dynamics. The unions must therefore be understood and denounced as fully-fledged political organs of the capitalist state.]

(To be followed in the next issue)

²⁰ . Marx's interview to the *Volkstaat* in 1869 republished by *La Révolution prolétarienne* #26 of 1926, translated by us from French.

²¹ . Rosa Luxemburg, *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Union*, emphasis added by R. Luxemburg (marxists.org).

²² . See our debate with the ICT on the strikes in the UK of Summer 2022 in *Revolution or War* #24 (<http://igcl.org/Unions-and-Social-Assistance>)

²³ . Rosa Luxemburg, *idem*.

Debate on Capitalist Crisis: Comments on an IBRP article (IFICC, 2004)

We publish here an article from the Internal Fraction of the ICC (IFICC) dating from 2004. It was published in its bulletin 26. The political aim of this republication is several-fold. Firstly, we are continuing our effort to re-appropriate and reflect on crisis theory and the debates it has provoked, which we began in the previous issue by reproducing Anton Pannekoek's text on The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism. Secondly, the IFICC text is based on an article in the then IBRP, now Internationalist Communist Tendency, which returned to the question of decadence, reaffirming its reality while warning against any mechanical or fatalistic vision of the crisis of capital that would see it collapse by itself, or at least be so weakened that a simple flick of the proletariat's wrist would be enough to destroy it. Obviously, we share and support the then-IBRP's vision and position.

This article also has the merit of presenting not only the debate between Pannekoek and Paul Mattick, which took place in the councilist milieu of the 1930s on the crisis itself, but also the political issues behind it: or how the catastrophic or fatalistic vision of the crisis is linked to councilism, that modern form of economistic opportunism which Lenin combated at the beginning of the 20th Century; how the vision, carried by Mattick, according to which the catastrophe of the crisis itself and its repercussions on the living conditions of the proletariat would mechanically lead the latter to revolutionary struggle. The result is an underestimation of both the role and the dimension, or scope, of class consciousness – and therefore of the proletarian political party – and therefore also Rosa Luxemburg's position, as set out in her book *The Accumulation of Capital*.

Had the text stopped there, the reasons for its republication today would have been largely fulfilled. But as an added bonus, the IFICC text also returns to the theory of the decomposition of the ICC. It clearly shows that this is a modern version of the opportunist theory of the automatic collapse of capitalism. Of course, the IFICC's critique remains within the programmatic framework of the original ICC – particularly its 1970s platform. It could not be otherwise, since it defined itself and intervened as an “internal fraction” of this organization. In this respect, the text clearly shows the “qualitative” leap that took place between the framework of decadence defined by the ICC in the 1970s and the adoption of the theory of Decomposition and, above all, the *de facto* substitution of the former by the latter. That the original ICC's analysis of decadence had councilist weaknesses is hardly in doubt. But the transition to Decomposition did mark the beginning of a process of questioning the organization's historical positions.

Today, other critics of the ICC's theory of Decomposition are beginning to appear, such as the Counter-theses on decomposition that appeared on the “opposition-communiste.org” website – in English on *Breath and Light* website, (<https://markhayes9.wixsite.com>) –, or on that of the councilist journal *Controverses*. In the case of *Controverses*, it is regrettable that this was late in coming, since the editors – or the main editor – could not have been unaware of the IFICC's struggle at the time, since they were still members of the ICC and defended its position of that time against the fraction.

But precisely the interest of this last part of the IFICC text is to demonstrate how Decomposition theory is typically linked to Councilism and its Councilist political implications. For us today, the theory of Decomposition was both a product of the ICC's congenital councilism – which it was never really able to overcome, despite its efforts in the late 1970s and early 1980s – and a factor accelerating this councilist opportunist drift. We refer readers to our critique of the ICC platform and to our own platform.

Footnotes are from the IFICC. Otherwise, they are enclosed in square brackets and 2024 is indicated.

The Editorial Team

Automatic Collapse of Capitalism or Proletarian Revolution (Internal Fraction of the ICC, 2004)

Under the title *For a Definition of the Concept of decadence*,²⁴ the IBRP recently published, first in Italian in *Prometeo* 8 December 2003, then on its website in English and French, an article where it presents its position on the concept of capitalism's decadence in a very open and succinct manner. The article not only recognizes that this concept has a “value”, but it also discusses the difference between a clear notion of the decadence of capitalism and what would be a “false perspective”. It explicitly recognizes the existence of an ascendant and another decadent phase in capitalism.

“The value of the term decadence lies in the identification of those factors which, in the process of the accumulation of capital and in the determining of cyclic crises, as in every other form of expression of the economic and social contradictions of capitalist society, render all these phenomena more acute, less administrable to the point of putting the very mechanisms which rule over the process of valorisation and accumulation of capital. (...) The investigation of decadence either individuates these mechanisms which regulate the deceleration of the valorisation process of capital, with all the consequences that that brings with it, or it remains within a false perspective, which prophesies in vain, or, worse still, is teleological, lacking any objective confirmation.”

²⁴ . <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2003-12-01/for-a-definition-of-the-concept-of-decadence> [2024 IGCL's note]

We would like to welcome and underline the importance of this article because it opens up the possibility of a serious and profound discussion of the agreements and differences on this issue which, in view of the perspective opened on 11 September 2001, is more current than ever and requires the greatest possible clarification from revolutionaries²⁵. The best way to do this is by expressing our critical reflections and comments, while calling on the groups and elements of the proletarian camp to participate in this necessary debate²⁶.

In so far as various aspects are dealt with, we will begin by returning here only to the first concern expressed by the IBRP in its text regarding a confusion that existed in the proletarian camp between the notion of "decadence" and that "economic collapse" of capitalism. Let the word to the IBRP (emphasis added):

"The term decadence, inherent to and in the form of the relations of production and the bourgeois society being referred to, presents itself with both valid and ambiguous aspects. The ambiguity lies in the fact that the idea of decadence, or the progressive decline of the capitalist form of production, proceeds from a kind of ineluctable process of self-destruction whose causes are traceable to the essential aspect of its own being, and this auto-destructive decline is exemplified by the role that a neutron plays in the meeting of atoms, in a kind of obligatory course where two forces, which are mutually contradictory, progressively approach one another to the point where they produce their reciprocal destruction. The atomic encounter matches the teleological one, where, for this way of posing the question, the disappearance and destruction of the capitalist economic form is an historically given event, economically ineluctable and socially predetermined.

This, as well as being an infantile idealistic approach, ends up by having negative repercussions on the political terrain, creating the hypothesis that, to see the death of capitalism, it is sufficient to sit on the banks of the river, or, at most, in crisis situations, and only then, to create the subjective instruments of the class struggle as the last impulse to a process which is otherwise irreversible. Nothing is more false. The contradictory aspect of capitalist production, the crises which are derived from this, the repetition of the process of accumulation which is momentarily interrupted but which receives new blood through the destruction of excess capital and means of production, do not automatically lead to its destruction. Either the subjective factor which has in the class struggle its material fulcrum and in the crises its economically determinant premise intervenes, or the

economic system reproduces itself, posing, once more and at a higher level, all of its contradictions, without creating in this way the conditions for its own self-destruction."

Yes! The idea that with the entry into its phase of decadence, capitalism could self-destruct, collapse by itself under the weight of its purely economic contradictions, on the margins of class struggle, had to be fought consistently throughout history in the Marxist camp. We have already addressed this question, by the way, in different parts of our series on decadence. Let us recall here, for example, how Rosa Luxemburg had already had to warn against this possible interpretation of her theory:

"But by this process capital prepares its own destruction in two ways. [on the one hand, by extending itself at the expense of non-capitalist forms of production, it advances the moment when all humanity will no longer] consists of capitalists and proletarians, further [expansion and therefore] accumulation will become impossible. At the same time, [as it moves forward, it aggravates...] the absolute and undivided rule of capital aggravates class struggle throughout the world and the international economic and political anarchy to such an extent that, long before the last consequences of economic development, it must lead to the rebellion of the international proletariat against the existence of the rule of capital." (Rosa Luxemburg, *Anti-Critique*, The Question at Issue²⁷)

"Rosa Luxemburg pushes her theoretical reasoning to the limits where any accumulation would be 'impossible'. Right after, as if to prevent false conclusions, she specifies that 'long before (...) the rebellion of the international proletariat' will come. This point of limit is only a theoretical recourse, a kind of "point of view on the horizon" inaccessible, whose sole meaning is to underline the historical limit of capitalism. This was all the more necessary because at that time it was necessary to fight against the dangerous theory of "unlimited and peaceful development" of capitalism. It was only later, in other historical circumstances, those of the Stalinist counter-revolution, and in front of another political struggle, that of the struggle against the theory of the "stabilization" of capitalism, that the theory of the "fall" developed of capitalism, sometimes wrongly attributed to Rosa Luxemburg, theory according to which capitalism could collapse, collapse by reaching a point of "economic" contradiction, without the mediation of class struggle, which Rosa Luxemburg explicitly rejects." (*Guerre impérialiste ou révolution prolétarienne*,²⁸ Bulletin n°19 of our Fraction,

²⁵ . This is what we have tried to show in the series of articles on the history of the theory of decadence published in our bulletin (n°19, 20, 22 and 24).

²⁶ . This necessity is felt in the proletarian camp as evidenced not only by the recent debate around the ICC (the Argentine NCI, the Russian group) but also by the recent publication of other articles on the subject by other groups or individuals.

²⁷ . The translations in different languages differ quite a lot. There, it is the case for the French version and the English one we found on marxists.org. We have put in parentheses the passages of the French version that are not in the English version. And we have highlighted those in English that are not in the French version of Maspero editions (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/anti-critique/ch01.htm>)

²⁸ . https://fractioncommuniste.org/ficci_fra/b19/b19-6.php and in Spanish https://fractioncommuniste.org/ficci_esp/b19/index-6.html.

June 2003, not in English)

Grossmann's "Theory of the Collapse of the Capitalist System"

But it is surely from the second half of the 1920s, and with the work of Henryk Grossmann, *The law of Accumulation and Collapse of the Capitalist System*, that merged the main source of confusion between the notion of "decadence" and that "economic collapse" of capitalism.

Grossmann tried to fight theories that defended the possibility of capitalism reaching a situation of equilibrium, peaceful development, unlimited and without crisis. However, in doing so he has erected a particular theory which, despite its claim to be the first to "reconstruct the method and clarify Marx's theoretical system", actually contained such profound deviations from the materialist-method as historical theory of capitalist accumulation formulated by Marx:

- firstly by rejecting the previous theoretical developments of the revolutionary camp in relation to the historical limits of capitalism and decadence (especially Rosa Luxemburg's theory but not only) as simple "erroneous" interpretations of Marx without trying to understand their historical significance, the specific class struggle they expressed, nor the historical truth relating to a given period that they contained ;

- secondly, by speculatively deducing his theory not from the actual historical development but from a new interpretation of Marx's famous "schemes of reproduction" and then taking some real events as "proof" of this theory. Indeed, Grossmann takes the schemes elaborated by Otto Bauer to refute Rosa Luxemburg and he continues them arithmetically for several decades showing that from these schemes one finally arrives at a paralysis, at a "collapse" of capitalist accumulation. With this "verification", Grossmann could have just as easily arrived at the same conclusion as R. Luxemburg: that the problem of the historical future of capitalism is not solved by means of the elaboration of any scheme. Instead, Grossmann starts to develop a whole theory of "collapse of capitalism" caused by a "lack of valorization in relation to over-accumulation", by a "decrease of the mass of surplus value", which is a pure deduction from the scheme he has worked out. But in this way he shifted the crucial problem of political economy that Marx had succeeded in explaining critically, that is, the tendency of the fall in the rate of profit as a product of the fundamental contradiction between the tendency to unlimited development of productive forces and capitalist relations of production limited by the pursuit of profit, accumulation; he has precisely left aside the tendency behind which we discover the existence of a historical

limit of capitalism;

- third, by concluding from his own theory the collapse of capitalism only from its economic contradictions, Grossman comes to the point that accumulation becomes "useless" for capitalists:

"Despite the periodic interruptions that repeatedly defuse the tendency towards breakdown, the mechanism as a whole tends relentlessly towards its final end with the general process of accumulation. As the accumulation of capital grows absolutely, the valorisation of this expanded capital becomes progressively more difficult. Once these countertendencies are themselves defused or simply cease to operate, the breakdown tendency gains the upper hand and asserts, itself in the absolute form as the final crisis." (H. Grossmann, *The law of Accumulation and Collapse of the Capitalist System*²⁹, emphasis added)

This notion of "economic collapse" is repeated throughout Grossmann's book to the point that it becomes the typical model for the conception of an "automatic" end of capitalism even if Grossmann himself (and his defenders like Paul Mattick) try to push back this notion. Thus, in the last chapter of his book, he effectively considers the question of class struggle as the framework within which the whole economic question unfolds. However, Grossmann reduces the class struggle to wage increases, to the pressure that wage struggle exerts on the tendency towards economic collapse: the tendency towards collapse is reduced if wages are falling and accelerated if they are rising. And, in the same sense, it reduces the significance of the revolution:

"The ultimate objective for which the working class fights (...) consists, as indicated by the law of collapse set forth here, in the result produced by the immediate everyday class struggle, and whose materialization is accelerated by these struggles." (idem, Final Considerations, translated from Spanish³⁰)

That is to say, the struggle for wages ("the immediate daily struggle") "accelerates the materialization" of the economic collapse of capitalism. In the end, Grossmann reduces the class struggle (once already reduced to the wage struggle) to a variable within his economic theory of collapse, and this until revolution. He does not deny "the political question concerning power", he does not deny the necessity of the proletarian revolution, but he identifies them "simply" with economic collapse. It dilutes them in the latter. But then as the IBRP points out:

"This, as well as being an infantile idealistic approach, ends up by having negative repercussions on the political terrain,

²⁹ . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/grossman/1929/breakdown/ch02.htm>

³⁰ . We did not find in English this final chapter of Grossmann's work in marxists.org. We translate it from Siglo XXI Editores, 1979.

creating the hypothesis that, to see the death of capitalism, it is sufficient to sit on the banks of the river, or, at most, in crisis situations, and only then, to create the subjective instruments of the class struggle as the last impulse to a process which is otherwise irreversible.”

The “Councilist” Current and The Theory of Collapse

Grossmann’s theory was the focus of important discussions in the proletarian camp of the 1930s, especially within the current of the Communist council.

Anton Pannekoek rejected it and criticized it not only from the theoretical point of view but also from the method. According to Pannekoek, Grossmann maintains a mechanistic position in which the social and economic laws are imposed on men as if they were an independent “superhuman power”. For Marx, on the other hand, there is a dialectical relationship between laws and social needs and the will and action of men:

*“For Marx the development of human society, and so also the economic development of capitalism, is determined by a firm necessity like a law of nature. But this development is at the same time the work of men who play their role in it and where each person determines his own acts with consciousness and purpose — though not with a consciousness of the social whole. (...) For Marx all social necessity is accomplished by men; this means that a man’s thinking, wanting and acting — although appearing as a free choice in his consciousness — are completely determined by the action of the environment; it is only through the totality of these human acts, determined mainly by social forces, that conformity to laws is achieved in social development.”*³¹

In other words, while the production relationships that men establish between them constitute the axis of social development, social relations are not reduced to these production relationships, nor are they the only ones that determine them. All intervene, especially political relations and class struggle. Against the deduction “that capitalism must collapse for purely economic reasons in the sense that, independently of human intervention, revolutions, etc., it would be impossible for it to continue to exist as an economic system,” Pannekoek defines the collapse of capitalism as nothing but the result of the proletarian revolution:

“The contradictions of the capitalist economy, which repeatedly emerge in unemployment, crises, wars, class struggles, repeatedly determine the will to revolution of the proletariat. Socialism comes not because capitalism collapses economically and men, workers and others, are forced by necessity to create a new organisation, but because capitalism, as it lives and grows, becomes more and more unbearable for the workers and repeatedly pushes them to

struggle until the will and strength to overthrow the domination of capitalism and establish a new organisation grows in them, and then capitalism collapses.” (A. Pannekoek, *Ibidem*)

For his part, Paul Mattick, in defending Grossmann’s book, not only rejects the criticism made of him on a “collapse for purely economic reasons” and “independently of human intervention”, but reaffirms that “the analysis of capitalist accumulation leads to class struggle” and that the end of capitalism will be the product of the proletarian revolution. It even goes as far as to take up R. Luxemburg’s notion, between the prospect of arriving at a point where accumulation becomes “impossible” and the historical reality in which will occur “long before” the proletarian revolution:

“The theoretical recognition that the capitalist system, because of its internal contradictions, must necessarily go towards collapse, does not at all lead to consider that the real collapse is an automatic process, independent of men (...). Before the «limit point» obtained theoretically on the basis of a set of abstractions meets its parallel in reality, the workers will have already realized their revolution.” (P. Mattick, *On the Marxist Theory of Accumulation and Collapse, Rätekorrespondenz* n°4, 1934, *idem*, translated by us from Spanish)³²

In reality, Mattick develops here a political position which is unique to him and in which he separates himself from Grossmann since for the latter “economic collapse” is not a separate “theoretical limit point” of the “revolution” as Mattick asserts. On the contrary, it is precisely the point where coincide, identify, “the impossibility of continuing accumulation” and the passage of control of society into the hands of the proletariat.

Thus, the substance of the debate between Pannekoek and Mattick on Grossmann’s work does not rest on the possibility, or not, of an “automatic collapse” of capitalism since both, besides explicitly rejecting this notion, clearly reaffirm that the end of capitalism will come only with the proletarian revolution. Their real divergence, on the other hand, focuses precisely on the conditions of that, on the conditions for the development of the struggle and revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat.

P. Mattick reproaches Pannekoek for ignoring the material conditions necessary for a revolutionary situation to open up, a course towards the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat: conditions of deep crisis, without a way out of capital which would lead to an unbearable pauperization of the working masses which would be pushed into a definitive struggle against capital – condition that Mattick, taking up Grossmann’s concepts, calls

³¹ . A. Pannekoek, *The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1934/collapse.htm>.

³² . We did not find any English version of this text.

“tendency or beginning of collapse”. Indeed, for the Pannekoek of the 1930s, the catastrophic situations of capitalism (crises, wars), although they push to “lose illusions” on a possibility of improvement within capitalism and the class struggle of the proletariat, are only a constant of capitalism that ultimately determines the opening of a course towards revolution. The determining factor, according to Pannekoek, is the consciousness, the “self-education” of the proletarian masses:

“That the present crisis, deeper and more devastating than any previous one, has not shown signs of the awakening of the proletarian revolution. But the removal of old illusions is its first great task (...). The working class itself, as a whole, must conduct the struggle (...) make itself familiar with the new forms of struggle. (...) And should the present crisis abate, new crises and new struggles will arise. In these struggles the working class will develop its strength to struggle, will discover its aims, will train itself, will make itself independent and learn to take into its hands its own destiny, viz., social production itself. In this process the destruction of capitalism is achieved. The self-emancipation of the proletariat is the collapse of capitalism.” (Pannekoek, *Op.cit.*)

On the contrary, for Mattick it is precisely the tendency towards the economic collapse of capitalism, towards the worsening of the living conditions of the proletariat, which will lead, in a natural and spontaneous way (we could even say mechanical) to the revolutionary struggle of the class:

“Class struggles depend on the class position of the proletariat. They will always and necessarily have an economic character. It will not be before the collapse begins, that is to say when capital can continue to exist only on the basis of absolute and continuous pauperization of the masses, when this economic struggle transforms itself, whether or not it is conscious for the masses, in political struggle that raises the question of power (...). The revolution is imposed on men through this economic situation.” (P. Mattick, *Op.cit.*)

And so, while for Pannekoek class consciousness is the determining factor, for Mattick on the contrary class consciousness is simply a product, a reflection of material conditions and spontaneous activity of the masses. And it does not play any active role in the transformation of “economic” struggles into “political” struggles. For Mattick, revolution arises only from the economic “necessity” of which consciousness is merely a passive reflection:

“... consciousness must ultimately prevail, but under such conditions [under capitalism] it can only do so by materializing. Men do by necessity what they would do by free will under free relations (...). The insurrection of the masses cannot develop from “intellect-consciousness”; capitalist conditions of life exclude this possibility since the conscience is in the end always that of the existing practice. And yet the material needs of the masses drive them to

actions as if they were really educated revolutionarily; they become «aware of the facts». Their vital needs have no other possibility of expression than revolutionary. The revolutionary action of the proletariat cannot be explained by any other motive than that of its vital material necessities. But these depend on the economic condition of society. If capital has no objective limit, then neither can one count on a revolution.” (P.Mattick, *Ibidem*)

On the one hand, Pannekoek comes to the conclusion that the notion of “economic collapse” is nothing but another subterfuge to introduce the justification for the necessity of a party which leads the proletarian masses because, from this notion, one tends to accept that the revolutionary uprising could take place without the proletarian masses having “ripened revolutionarily”, that is to say without the necessity of having reached class consciousness. It is sufficient then that a party take power on their behalf:

From Grossmann’s theory, it can be deduced that the revolution “is independent of their [the workers’] revolutionary maturity, of their capacity to take power over society and to hold it. This means that a revolutionary group, a party with socialist aims, would have to appear as a new governing power in place of the old in order to introduce some kind of planned economy.” (Pannekoek, *Op.cit.*)

On the other hand, Mattick concludes that the absolute pauperization that accompanies “economic collapse” would be sufficient for the opening of a revolutionary course since consciousness would only be something of a later and passive, a reflection of the activity proper to the masses which would arise from pure economic “necessity”.

Thus, behind the controversy about the “collapse”, we see how, within the “councilist” current, the dialectical relationship between material (“economic”) conditions and organizational and consciousness (“political”) conditions, which is indispensable for the opening of a course towards revolution, has been ideologically separated. But, as the IBRP comrades rightly point out:

“Either the subjective factor which has in the class struggle its material fulcrum and in the crises its economically determinant premise intervenes, or the economic system reproduces itself, posing, once more and at a higher level, all of its contradictions...”

The New ICC Theory on “The Automatic Collapse of Capitalism”

We cannot finish this quick overview of the theories of “collapse” without mentioning the theory on “social decomposition” that the current ICC defends. We do not intend to return here to the general criticism of this theory which we have already discussed on several occasions.³³ Here we just want to draw attention to how

³³ . See for example “The random evolution of what was a Marxist

this theory, in so far as it has become the standard of a degenerating organization, has increasingly become a theory with characteristics analogous to those of the theories of collapse of the past.

Generally expressed, this theory argues that, in the face of the historical impasse reached by the two fundamental classes of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the persistence of the economic crisis opens the way to a “terminal” phase the decadence of capitalism. The historical impasse is due to the fact that both social classes, the proletariat having managed to stop the outbreak of a new imperialist world war but remaining at the same time unable to raise its struggles to the level of an international revolutionary movement, they are blocking each other’s passage to their respective historical solution to the chronic economic crisis of capitalism. The “terminal” phase of decadence leads to a growing decomposition of the social fabric, to an increasing disintegration of social relations in all fields and classes, to “each for himself”, to chaos, irrationality and calamities of every kind (aggravated and uncontrolled terrorism, regional wars and conflicts, disasters caused by natural phenomena, famines, epidemics, gangsterism, etc...). But the most important consequences of decomposition are at the level of social classes. On the one hand, the tendency to each for himself within the bourgeoisie opens the possibility that it will no longer succeed in organizing itself into imperialist “blocs” which definitively closes the alternative of a new world war; on the other hand, the influence of decomposition within the proletariat leads to the danger that it permanently loses its capacity to unify, to become aware and expand its revolutionary struggle, opening the way to a third “path” : the end of humanity through decomposition.

It is certain that the theory of decomposition contains from its origin an element “collapse”: the possibility that capitalism (and with it the whole humanity) comes to an end not as a product of the class struggle but as a product of the indefinite and hopeless prolongation of the crisis, of the simple impossibility of continuing to go forward as a system. However, it should be noted that at the beginning – and for years – alongside the notion of “decomposition”, the ICC has maintained – in a contradictory way – the “classical” Marxist analysis of crisis, imperialist struggles and class struggle. For example, in the 1990 theses on decomposition, it was

(and therefore deterministic) organization”, bulletin 21 of our fraction, October 2003, “Imperialist war or proletarian revolution: the decadence of capitalism and Marxism” (part 4), [IGCL in 2024: both in French or Spanish; and in English:], “Nonsense in the theory of decomposition and steps towards opportunism” (http://fractioncommuniste.org/ficci_eng/b24/index-3.html), bulletin 24, April 2004.

still considered a phenomenon of the “superstructure”, that is to say an “effect”, while the economic crisis was still seen as the determining factor of the social situation: **“unlike social decomposition which essentially effects the superstructure, the economic crisis directly attacks the foundations on which this superstructure rests; in this sense, it lays bare all the barbarity that is battering on society, thus allowing the proletariat to become aware of the need to change the system radically, rather than trying to improve certain aspects of it...”** (Theses on Decomposition, Thesis 17, *International Review* 62, 1990, emphasis added)³⁴

Currently, however, the ICC has not only come to the conclusion that decomposition has become a “decisive factor in society’s evolution” or that it is “the central factor of the evolution of the whole of society”, but that **“Decomposition signifies a slow process of destruction of the productive forces up to the point at which communism would no longer be possible.”** (“Marxism at the roots of the concept of capitalism’s decomposition”, *International Review* 117, 2004, underlined by us)³⁵

Here, the ICC does not refer to the destruction of productive forces caused by the capitalist crisis, but to capitalism as a whole in the phase of decomposition in which it would have entered. It refers to a general process that **“the process of the destruction of humanity, under the effects of Decomposition, even though long and disguised, is irreversible.”** (*idem*) That is to say, for the ICC **the capitalist mode of production no longer implies a tendency towards the development of productive forces.**

But the opposite is true. It involves a process of destruction of the productive forces. Thus, the present ICC denies its own theory of decadence which, rejecting Trotsky’s thesis that **“the productive forces of humanity**

³⁴ . https://en.internationalism.org/ir/107_decomposition

³⁵ . This article

(https://en.internationalism.org/ir/117_decompo.html), which claims to lay down **“the Marxist roots of decomposition”**, attempts to close the revisionist loopholes opened by the 15th Congress Resolution on the international situation that we have highlighted (cf. our bulletin 21). Our critic has caused some trouble among many ICC militants and sympathizers. The illustrious liquidationist who wrote the article is therefore forced, in order to try to cut short the criticism, to state that **“Marxism has always posed in alternate terms the denouement of historical evolution”** and that **“more than ever, the class struggle of the proletariat is the motor of history.”** It will not eat bread and satisfy the followers of the family faction. But the resolution of the congress is still there and has not been corrected by the 16th RI Congress that just took place. And above all, as our reader will be able to see in this part of our text, the opportunistic drift in the theoretical plane and the revision of Marxist positions continue more beautiful in the article of the *International Review*. Trying to close some opportunistic gaps, it opens new ones. The Marxist foundation of the notion of decomposition is more than shaky from the first article in the series announced on the subject.

have ceased to grow”, defended that “absolute halts in the growth of the productive forces do, in fact, appear during the phases of decadence. But these stoppages appear only **momentarily** in the capitalist system because the economy cannot function without a constantly increasing accumulation of capital. They are the violent convulsions which regularly accompany the progression of decadence.” (ICC pamphlet on *The Decadence of Capitalism*, ch.4 A total halt to the productive forces?, emphasis in the original version)

But with its new definition, the current ICC not only denies its theory of decadence but also simply rejects that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism as it was stated by Marx himself even for whom this contradiction consists in the fact that “the capitalist mode of production involves a tendency towards **absolute development of the productive forces** (...) while, on the other hand, its aim is to preserve the value of the existing capital and promote its self-expansion to the highest limit (...). The limits within which the preservation and self-expansion of the value of capital resting on the expropriation and pauperisation of the great mass of producers can alone (...) come continually into conflict with the methods of production employed by capital for its purposes, which drive towards unlimited extension of production, towards production as an end in itself, **towards unconditional development of the social productivity of labour.**” (K.Marx, *Capital*, Tome III, ch. XV, *Conflict Between Extension of Production and Production of Surplus-Value*, emphasis added)

In the same sense, originally the ICC was able to analyze and recognize, at the level of the life of the bourgeoisie, that there existed both “the tendency to each for himself and chaos” and the tendency to form a new set of imperialist blocs as contradictory tendencies acting simultaneously. Today, in exchange, the ICC is increasingly passing the idea that the great powers are no longer heading towards a generalized imperialist war but that they would be more and more – and in the first place the United States – the main promoters of peace and social order by their attempts to prevent countries and regions from falling on the periphery of capitalism into chaos and local wars. This is how it opens the doors wide open to opportunism, that is to say a policy of collaboration between classes.

And finally, in relation to the proletariat, whereas originally decomposition meant “additional difficulties” for its struggle, now the ICC is developing more and more the notion of “loss of identity” of the working class to introduce the idea that with decomposition, we would have entered a phase of disintegration and dismemberment of the working class, sector after sector, that is to say in a process of practical disappearance of the working class as such.

Finally, the erosion of the foundations of Marxism in the “economic” field has its counterpart in their

erosion also in the “political” field:

“Decomposition obliges the proletariat to develop its weapons of consciousness, unity, self-confidence, its solidarity, its will and its heroism,” says today’s ICC. However, according to the same ICC, decomposition produces exactly the opposite: “the effects of decomposition...have a profoundly negative effect on the proletariat’s consciousness, on its sense of itself as a class (...). They serve to atomise the class, increase the divisions within its ranks, and dissolve it (...)” (“Marxism at the roots of Decomposition”, *op.cit.*)

How then can one say that “Decomposition obliges the proletariat to develop its weapons of consciousness”, etc... ? When, for example, Marxism (and with it the “old” ICC) asserts that the crisis, by aggravating the living conditions of the proletariat, “obliges” it to rise up, to struggle, it expresses an objective necessity, a product of the very material conditions of capitalism. On the other hand, now, when the ICC states that “Decomposition obliges the proletariat to develop its weapons of consciousness”, it does not express an objective necessity. What it expresses is simply the desire of the ICC itself that the proletariat “develop its weapons of consciousness” etc., a desire which however has no material substance (because according to the ICC itself what produces decomposition in an objective way is precisely the opposite). Thus, the ICC reduces historical determinism to a mere moral imperative.

This whole “evolution” of the theory of decomposition within the ICC, and in particular in recent years, can only be explained as a mere reflection of the multiplication and extension of the phenomena it tries to explain. It is true that at the end of the 1980s, we witnessed a period of “historical impasse” which was confirmed by the fall of the imperialist bloc of the East. With it, not only the danger of a third world war was temporarily removed but, above all, the proletariat, without going as far as suffering a historical defeat of the magnitude of that which it experienced from the middle of the 1920s, entered a period of confusion, demoralization and the decline of its struggles as a product of the implosion of the Eastern bloc and the campaign developed by the bourgeoisie on “the end of communism”, “the final victory of democracy” and “the end of history”. And it is in the interpretation of this period that lies the origin and explanation of the theory of “social decomposition”.

However, and especially from 2001 (marked by the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York), with the new open expression of a tendency towards imperialist bipolarization and generalized war on one side, and on the other side with demonstrations by the proletariat of an international revival of its class struggles (Argentina, France, Great Britain, Italy...), that is to say with the return to the fore of the historical scene of the

alternative of “war or revolution”, it is well known that the ICC has not only been unable to analyse this change, nor to recognize that “the historical impasse” could only be momentary, but it even goes so far as to deny – and even consciously and voluntarily hide – these expressions of the historical alternative of class and to abandon more and more up to the basic notions of Marxism in exchange for supporting, introducing and imposing the theory of decomposition even if it proves each time more inconsistent and absurd.

Thus, as in the other cases of theories of “collapse”, the dogmatic predominance of the theory of “decomposition” to the detriment of Marxist analysis is not only explained by the “objective” social conditions, and even less so when the latter tend to change and disprove more clearly the theory that tried to explain them. This is only understood by the internal difficulties of the organization within which this theory arose, by the loss of critical and analytical capacity, because in its interior there are obstacles to question this theory and, finally, because this theory has become an instrument to justify a determined political orientation, positioning and attitude.

It is noteworthy that the political attitude of the current ICC also presents some analogies with that of the old “councilists”. Indeed, the councilists considered that the working class did not need a political organization to orient it, to direct it politically (or, in the last instance as in the case of A. Pannekoek, they reduced the role of revolutionaries to a kind of educators or counsellors), a position which itself entailed the dissolution of the councilist organizations themselves. For its part, the current ICC is increasingly

adopting an attitude of passivity and contempt towards workers' struggles which implicitly denies its function as an active factor of orientation and impulse within the working class (or which reduces its role to “cultivate and develop these qualities in a profound and extensive way” [(sic) *The Marxist roots of the notion of decomposition, idem*] of the working class to counteract the effects of decomposition), which contains in itself its liquidation in the long run. And it is certain, as the IBRP points out, that both the “collapse” and the “decomposition” theories “ends up by having negative repercussions on the political terrain, creating the hypothesis that, to see the death of capitalism, it is sufficient to sit on the banks of the river.”

Finally, the theory of “social decomposition” has also gained the field of the functioning of the organization of revolutionaries. According to it, social decomposition also contains a tendency of the militants to be carried away by individualism and bourgeois ideology in general, to form clans and bands within the organization; this is the reason why the theory of decomposition which has been introduced and dominates the ICC in recent years, has also served, above all, to justify the policy of “bolshevization”, disciplinary type, of “laminating” divergent opinions, of the suffocation of debates and of the prohibition of oppositions (fractions) under the pretext of the fight against the “clans” and the “troublesome elements”. Thus, as in the other theories of “collapse”, behind the theory of decomposition we discover the tendency to liquidation – in one form or another – of the revolutionary organization.

The Internal Fraction of the ICC, June 2004

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).

History of The Workers Movement

The Tactics of the Comintern from 1926 to 1940

The first part of the chapter - see our previous issue - on anti-fascism and the Popular Front in Vercesi's text, The Tactics of the Comintern, had dealt specifically with the Comintern policy following Hitler's accession to power in Germany; with the shift from the "struggle against social fascism" to that of "anti-fascism", as a moment of the advance of counter-revolution and the historic defeat of the international proletariat. This second part, published in Prometeo #7, May-June 1947, addresses the ensuing situation in Europe. In particular, it revisits the bloody defeat of the 1934 Vienna proletarian insurrection in Austria, and the political defeats that concluded the May-June 1936 strike waves in France and Belgium for the international proletariat. In so doing, it dispels the myth, still alive and well today, of the strikes of May-June 1936 and the Popular Front in France. The final chapter of the text we shall be publishing in the next issue deals with the final defeat that definitively paved the way for World War 2, with the massacre of the proletariat in the Spanish Civil War.

There is another topical interest in this section. The text reminds us how the march towards generalized imperialist war is accompanied by, and requires, an exacerbation and radicalization of the language of bourgeois political forces, be they left or right, extreme right or left. The result, more or less depending on the country and circumstances, is growing political instability. The parallels with what is happening today are striking. The political lessons that, through Vercesi's pen, the Communist Left of Italy was able to draw remain totally valid for orienting oneself, defining and establishing lines of proletarian defense in the period ahead - while anticipating and working towards the possibility of moving from defense to class offensive against the bourgeoisie and its state apparatus.

The Tactics of Anti-Fascism and the Popular Front (1934-38-second part)

We have seen in the first parts of this chapter, in what the essence of the Comintern's new curve-ball from "social-fascism" to "anti-fascism" consisted. The economic crisis which first appeared in New York in 1929 and then spread to all countries had found no other solution after 1934 than the preparation of the second imperialist war. In correspondence with the economic reality that imposed on capitalism the need for the radical solution of war, the communist parties had also to become extreme, having become instruments of counterrevolution and accomplices of the other bourgeois forces, whether they be fascist, socialist or democratic. If previously the communist parties oriented their moves towards an inevitable defeat, now they channel their energies into the outlet of their respective capitalist States.

Just as the theory of social-fascism had no direct bearing on countries not threatened by a fascist attack, and its international character resulted from the fact that Germany - where this tactic was of decisive importance - was at that time the pivot of world capitalist evolution, so did the new anti-fascist tactic have no direct impact on the countries where fascism was firmly established (Germany, Italy), but it was of great importance in France at first, and then in Spain, i.e. in the two countries where not only where the classes there engaged in furious struggle, but where an apparatus for keeping international order was being developed, which was to work to its full capacity during the 1939-45 war.

In the course of this period (1934-38) the particular

character of the political evolution in which we are still immersed in becomes apparent for the first time. Contrary to what generally happened in all countries and particularly in 1898-1905 in Russia, when the impetuous strikes generated the affirmation of the class party, the powerful Austrian, French, Belgian and Spanish movements not only did not determine the affirmation of a proletarian and Marxist vanguard, but leave the Italian communist left, which remained faithful to the revolutionary postulates of internationalism against the anti-fascist war and of the destruction of the capitalist State and of the founding of the proletarian dictatorship against the participation or the influence of the State in an anti-fascist direction, in fatal isolation.

Parallel to the success of the maneuver that was supposed to lead the capitalist State to tighten its tentacles on the masses and its movements, we witness the detachment between these movements and the vanguard, if not the total non-existence of the latter. The events confirm in an unequivocal way the thesis masterfully developed by Lenin in "What Is To Be Done?", that the socialist consciousness cannot be the spontaneous result of the masses and their movements, but is rather the result of the importation in their very core of the class consciousness elaborated by the Marxist vanguard. The fact that this vanguard is unable to influence situations of great social tension, in which huge masses take part in an armed struggle, as was the case in Spain, does not alter in any way the Marxist doctrine, which does not consider that the proletarian class exists because a social and political bloc passes to

the armed struggle against the one in power, but it only directs the proletarian class if its objectives and postulates are those of the developing social agitation. In the case where the masses go into struggle for objectives which, not being theirs, can only be those of the capitalist enemy, this social convulsion is but a moment in the confused and antagonistic development of the capitalist historical cycle which – to use an expression of Marx – has not yet matured the material conditions of its negation.

Marxist analysis allows us to understand that if social-fascism was a tactic that was inevitably meant to facilitate and accompany Hitler's victory in January 1933, the tactic of anti-fascism was even more critically the case, because its objective went far beyond and from falsely siding with the masses in their struggle, still nonetheless explicitly against the capitalist State, it passed, with the tactic of anti-fascism, to advocate the integration of the masses in the core of the anti-fascist capitalist State.

It is not strange that, in the face of such a powerful and formidable capitalist organization comprising democrats, social-democrats, fascists and communist parties, the resistance of the Austrian proletariat in February 1934, which at times took on heroic aspects, was not capable of even putting a dent to the evolution of world events that had been definitively consecrated by the violent degeneration of the Soviet State, which had become, under the leadership of Stalin, an effective instrument of world counterrevolution.

On February 12, when the proletarians of Vienna rebelled, it was the very Christian Dolfuss who had the cannons aimed at the workers' city of Vienna, the "Karl Marx" district, but behind these cannons stood the Second and Third International. The former had constantly restrained the proletarian reactions against Dolfuss' plan of corporatist organization, the latter, which had previously excelled in mounting international demonstrations set up on purely artificial bases, let the proletarians be slaughtered and took care not to launch an appeal to the proletarians of all countries to show their solidarity in favor of the Austrian proletariat.

In the first days the organs of the Belgian and French socialist parties try to appropriate the heroism of the Vienna insurgents, but a few days later the synchronization is perfect.

Bauer and Deutsch, the leaders of the Schutzbund (the paramilitary organization of Austrian social-democracy) in a February 18 interview with the organ of Belgian social democracy, "Le Peuple", stated:

"For many months our comrades had endured provocations of all sorts, always hoping that the government would not push things to the brink so that a final collision could be avoided.

But the last provocation, that of Linz, brought the exasperation of our comrades to a boiling point. It is known, in fact, that the Heimwehren had threatened the governorship of Linz with resignation from their functions and with the decapitation of all municipalities with a socialist majority. It is understood that on Monday morning, when the Heimwehren attacked the Linz People's House at gunpoint, our comrades refused to allow themselves to be disarmed and defended themselves energetically. In consequence, the Central Directorate of the Party could only obey this signal of struggle. That is why it launched the order for the general strike and the mobilization of the "Schutzbund". This purely proletarian explosion was not at all in the political line of Austrian and international social democracy. They were perfectly aligned on the front of a diplomatic action of the left-wing French government, whose foreign minister Paul Boncour wanted to make the Austrian workers' movement serve the interests of the French State: this was meant to hinder Hitler's expansionism and was supported – at that time – even by Mussolini who, in July 1934, when Dolfuss was assassinated by the Nazi Pi-anezza, made the inconsequential (for Hitler) blunder of sending Italian divisions to the Brenner Pass.

A few days before the insurrection in Vienna, on February 6, 1934, Paris was the scene of important events. The political scene had for some time been soiled by all the scandalous pornography about collusion between financial adventurers, high State officials and government personnel, particularly those of the left-wing parties. There is no need to point it out: the so-called proletarian parties – the socialist and communist parties – are thrown into this scandalistic fray and the proletarians will be uprooted from the revolutionary struggle against the capitalist regime, to be dragged into the struggle against some financial adventurers and mainly against Stavisky. The right wing of Maurras and Action Française takes the lead in a struggle against the government presided over by the radical Chautemps who, on January 27, gives way to a more pronounced left-wing government headed by Daladier and where Frot, who had until recently been a militant in the SFIO (French Socialist Party, French Section of the Workers' International), occupied the post of Minister of the Interior. The Prefect of Police Chiappe, also compromised in the Stavisky scandal, was chosen by socialists and communists as a scapegoat, and was dismissed from the Police Prefecture and transferred to the "Comédie Française". This was the occasion chosen by the Right for a demonstration in front of Parliament where they demanded the resignation of the Daladier government.

Daladier yields, resigns, in spite of Leon Blum's advice to resist, and on February 9 two counter-protest demonstrations take place: one called by the Communist Party in the center of Paris where the arrest of Chi-

appe and the dissolution of the Fascist Leagues are demanded, the other called by the Socialist Party and held in Vincennes where the flag of “defense of the republic threatened by the Fascist uprising” is raised. The memory of the struggle against “social-fascism” was not yet definitively extinguished, but if there are two distinct demonstrations, there is nevertheless a single uniformity: it is no longer a question of affirming the autonomous class positions of the masses, but of directing them towards that modification of the form of the bourgeois State which will be realized only two years later when, following the elections of 1936, we will have the government of the Popular Front under the direction of the head of the SFIO, Leon Blum.

But immediately after these two separate demonstrations, another united demonstration takes place, that of the CGT with similar slogans to those of the two parades that had preceded it. In effect, through the general strike, it will be demanded that “*the sectarian, riot provoking people*” be repressed because “*the offensive that has been projected for some months against political freedom and democracy has broken out.*”

The Communist Party, which still held a dominant position in the industrial center of Paris, did not use it to direct operations and allowed the socialists and the CGT to lead the initiative. As for the CGTU³⁶, which had long ceased to be a trade union organization capable of organizing the masses for the defense of their partial demands and had become an appendage of the Communist Party, it did not come into the open even when preparing the general strike, which was a complete success.

In the meantime, the socialist-communist grouping and a governmental evolution that became more and more pronounced to the left became more precise.

On July 27, 1934 a pact of unity is signed between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, on the basis of the following points: a) defense of democratic institutions; b) abandonment of the strike movements in the struggle against the full powers of the government; c) workers’ self-defense on a front that will also include the socialist radicals.

* * *

And in the international field the new orientation of the foreign policy of the Russian State is accentuated, which triumphantly enters the League of Nations.

Here is what Ossinsky’s theses of the First Congress of the Communist International in March 1919 say: The

³⁶ . [Note of the IGCL: To put it roughly, the CGT-U, which split off from the CGT in 1921, quickly became the PCF’s trade union and the French expression of the trade union split advocated by the IC to create a “red trade union international”. The Italian Left opposed this tactic, which split the unitary organization of the class. The CGT-U rejoined the CGT in 1936 for the purposes of the Popular Front.

revolutionary proletarians of all the countries of the world must wage an implacable war against the idea of Wilson’s League of Nations and protest against the entry of their countries into this League of plunderers, exploiters and counter-revolution.

Here is what fifteen years later, on 2-6-1934, the organ of the Russian Party, *Pravda*, wrote: “*The dialectic of the development of imperialist contradictions has led to the result that the old League of Nations, which was to serve as an instrument for the imperialist subordination of the small independent States and colonial countries, and for the preparation of anti-Soviet intervention, has appeared, in the process of the struggle of the imperialist groups, as the arena where – Litvinov explained this at the recent session of the Executive Central Committee of the Soviet Union – the current interested in the maintenance of peace seems to triumph. Which perhaps explains the profound changes which have taken place in the composition of the League of Nations.*”

Lenin, when he spoke of the League of Nations as a “society of plunderers”, had already taught us that this institution should serve to maintain “in peace” the predominance of the victorious States sanctioned at Versailles.

But *Pravda*’s articles were nothing but rhetoric. In fact Litvinov immediately and radically changed his position. From supporting the German and Italian theses for progressive disarmament, he passed to the open declaration that it was not possible to find a guarantee of security, and he supported the French thesis which, by making the realization of disarmament depend on the proclaimed impossible security, sanctioned the policy of arms development.

At the same time another radical change of course occurred with the Sarre question. The Communist Party, which had previously struggled with the word of the “Red Sarre at the core of a Soviet Germany”, advocates, on the occasion of the plebiscite, the status quo and that is, the maintenance of French control over this region.

Laval, the foreign minister of the Flamin Cabinet, comes up with the plan of isolating Germany. He couldn’t claim this nationalist achievement for himself at the trial where he was condemned to death: but it’s certain that he, a thousand times more and better than his nationalist and chauvinist cronies in the French Resistance, attempted the realization of the defense of the “French homeland” against Hitler. If France has been definitively degraded to the role of a vassal and second-rate power, this is due to the characteristics of the current international evolution, while all the hubbub around the defense of the “land of liberty and revolution” could only have one objective, however, which was fully achieved: the massacre of the French and international proletariat. The Third French Democratic

Republic, born under the baptism of the alliance with Bismarck and the extermination of 25,000 communards at Père Lachaise³⁷, finds its worthy and macabre epilogue in the Popular Front, solidly based on the radical republican-socialist-communist trinity.

The essential points of Laval's maneuver to isolate Germany are: 1) The meeting with Mussolini in Rome on January 7, 1935. 2) The meeting with Stalin in Moscow on May 1, 1935.

In the first one, there was an attempt to solve the Italian demands in Ethiopia through compromise, which had to be accepted by the English minister Hoare.

In the second, Poincaré's move, which was to lead to the Franco-Russian alliance in the war of 1914-17, will be renewed, and on the occasion of the new Franco-Russian pact Stalin declares that he fully realizes the necessity of the policy of armaments for the defense of France.

On July 14, 1935, at the demonstration of the Bastille to honor the birth of the bourgeois republic, the communist leaders, next to Daladier and the socialist leaders, wear a tricolor scarf; the red flag is united to the tricolor, while against the "fascist danger" Joan of Arc and Victor Hugo, Jules Guesde and Vaillant are evoked, and we go so far as to speak of the "Austerlitz sun" of the Napoleonic victims. We have already said why all this chauvinism was inconclusive and ineffective since France, like Italy, Spain and all the other former powers outside the current Big Three, had to play the role of giving away concessions while being occupied by this or that great power; let us now add that when war broke out in September 1939 between France and Germany, the pact of May 1935 was not applied by Russia.

But all these are secondary questions in the face of the essential which is the class struggle on a national and international scale. And on this class front, the Bastille Manifestation, its precedents and the events that resulted from it were of capital importance not only for the French proletariat but also for the Spanish and international proletariat.

When, in March 1935, Mussolini went on the offensive against the Negus of Ethiopia, everything was ready to unleash an international campaign based on the application of sanctions against "fascist Italy". A simultaneous action against Mussolini and the Negus was not even to be considered by the socialist and communist parties. Both of them are fighting in defense of the Negus' feudal regime, which is, at the same time, a magnificent defense of Mussolini's fascist regime. In fact, Mussolini could not have found better justification for the formation of that atmosphere of national unity favorable to his Ethiopian campaign than in the applica-

tion of deliberately harmless sanctions.

Leon Blum proposed to the League of Nations, the supreme bulwark of "peace and socialism", the arbitration of the conflict and wanted to entrust Litvinov, who, at that time, was President in office; after the Laval-Hoare compromise failed, the League of Nations sided, in its overwhelming majority, against Mussolini. Needless to say, the Italian "émigrés" aligned themselves with this action in defense of the Negus and British imperialism: at the Brussels Congress of September 1935, a motion was voted whose sloppy and servile terms show how far – one year after would come the Spanish War and four years after another World War – the masses had already arrived in joining the bourgeois bandwagon. Here is the text:

"To Mr. Benes, President of the SdN" [League of Nations]

The Congress of Italians which, in the present circumstances, has had to meet abroad to proclaim its attachment to peace and freedom, bringing together hundreds of delegates of the popular masses of Italy and of Italian émigrés in a single will to fight against the war, from Catholics to liberals, from Republicans to socialists and communists, notes with the greatest satisfaction that the Council of the SdN has clearly separated, in condemning the aggressor, the responsibilities of the fascist government from those of the Italian people; affirms that the war in Africa is the war of Fascism and not that of Italy, that it was unleashed against Europe and Ethiopia without any consultation with the country and in violation not only of the solemn commitments made to the SdN and Ethiopia, but in violation also of the sentiments and true interests of the Italian people; confident of interpreting the authentic thought of the Italian people the Congress declares that it is in the duty of SdN, in the interest of both Italy and Europe, to erect an unbreakable dam to the war and undertakes to support the measures that will be taken by the SdN and the workers' organizations to impose the immediate cessation of hostilities."

The Comintern disciplined to the decisions of the SdN. Here was a result from which Mussolini could only be victorious.

In the meantime, the atmosphere was being prepared that would lead to the dispersion of the formidable strikes in France and Belgium and to the crushing of the powerful insurrection of the Spanish proletariat in July 1936, in the imperialist and anti-fascist war.

At the end of 1935, the French Parliament, in a session qualified as "historic" by Blum, was unanimous in its acknowledgment of the defeat of Fascism and of the "reconciliation" of the French people. At the same time, the strikes of Brest and Toulon are attributed, by the same united front of all the "reconciled", to the action of "provocateurs"; and in January 1936 Sarraut – the same one who in 1927 had stated "communism, here is the enemy" – will benefit from the fact that, for the

³⁷ . [Note of the IGCL: Paris cemetery]

first time, the communist parliamentary group abstains from voting on the ministerial declaration. The attack against Blum in March 1936 pushes the Communist Party to launch the formula of the fight “against the Hitlerites of France”, a formula that will later be held against it, after the signing of the Russian-German treaty in August 1939.

On March 7, 1936, Hitler denounced the Treaty of Locarno and remilitarized the Rhineland. In the backlash that ensues in the French Chamber, the chauvinist fury displayed is as sensational as it is inconsequential in its international repercussions.

The events forced French capitalism to use the reaction to Hitler's *fait accompli* only in the field of domestic politics and the Communist Party excelled in this action: recalling the time when the French legitimists fled France during the revolution, it speaks of the “emigrants of Coblenz, of Valmy”, evokes again “Napoleon's Austerlitz sun”, and went as far as to make use of the words of Göthe and Nietzsche about “Germany still submerged in the state of barbarism” without hesitating to falsify Marx himself whose phrase “the German resurrection will be announced by the crowing of the French rooster” whose meaning changes in its social and class context of the French proletariat to the national and nationalist camp of France and its bourgeoisie.

Russian diplomacy strengthened the patriotic position of the French Communist Party at the same time that it remained very cautious – as did England – about the response to Hitler's coup. Litvinov limits himself to declaring that “the USSR would associate itself with the most effective measures against the violation of international commitments” and to explaining that “this attitude of the Soviet Union is determined by the general policy of struggle for peace, for the collective organization of security and the maintenance of one of the instruments of peace: the League of Nations.” Molotov is even more cautious, and, in an interview with the journal {Temps}, says: “We are aware of France's desire to maintain peace. If the German government were also to testify to its desire for peace and respect for treaties, particularly those concerning the League of Nations, we would consider that, on this basis of the defense of the interests of peace, a Franco-German rapprochement would be desirable.”

The leaders of the French Communist Party reasoned in this way: Russia is in danger; to save her we'll use our capitalism as a shield.

And with the usual shameless demagogic spirit they did not hesitate to support this theory by referring to Lenin's action; Lenin himself who in 1918, in order to save Russia from the attack of all the capitalist powers, called for the proletarians of every country against the capitalism of their own country in a revolutionary attack aimed at its destruction. The contrast between the

two positions is as fundamental as the contrast between revolution and counter-revolution.

It is in this atmosphere of national unity, of reconciliation of all French people, of struggle against the “Hitlerites of France” that the wave of strikes matures, beginning on May 11 at the port of Le Havre and in the aviation workshops of Toulouse. The victories of these two first movements is then combined by the immediate extension of the strike to the Paris region, to Courbevoie and Renault (32,000 workers), on May 14, to the whole Parisian metallurgy on the 29th and 30th. The demands are: the increase of wages, payment for the days of strike, workers' vacations, collective agreement. The strikes lasted for a long time, extended first to the mining North and then to the whole country, and took on a new aspect: the workers occupied the workshops despite the appeal of the Confederation of Labor, the Socialist and Communist Parties. One appeal reads that they were resolved to keep the movement within the framework of discipline and tranquility, the trade union organizations declare themselves ready to put an end to the conflict wherever the just working-class demands are met.

But how different were these from the Italian factory occupations, in September 1920! In Paris the red flag and the tricolor wave together, and in the workshops there was only dancing; the atmosphere had nothing of a revolutionary movement. Between the spirit of national unity that animated the strikers and the radical weapon of the occupation of the workshops there was a stark contrast. However, the facts leave no possibility for misunderstanding: both the Confederation of Labor, which had already reabsorbed the CGTU back into it, and the Socialist and Communist Parties had no initiative in these huge strikes. They would have opposed them if this had been possible, and it is only the fact that they have spread to the whole country that imposes on them declarations of hypocritical sympathy for the strikers.

The fact that the bosses are archly disposed to accept the demands of the workers does not determine the end of the movements. A decisive blow is needed. The May elections had given a majority to the left-wing parties and among them to the Socialist Party.

So here we are at the Popular Front: well before the deadline set by parliamentary procedure, Blum's government was formed on June 4. The Delegation of the Left, the parliamentary body of the Popular Front, in an order of the day, “notes that the workers defend their bread in order and discipline and want to keep to their movement a claiming character from which the ‘Croix-de-Feu’ (Colonel La Roque's paramilitary movement) and the other agents of reaction will not succeed in detaching them.” *L'humanité* for its part publishes in its headlines that “order will ensure suc-

cess” and that “those who go outside the law are the bosses, those Hitler’s agents that do not want the reconciliation of the French and push the workers to go on strike.”

On the night of June 7 to 8, what will later be called the “Matignon agreements” (the residence of Prime Minister Blum) is signed and it consecrates:

- a) the collective agreement;
- b) the recognition of the right to join a trade union;
- c) the establishment of union delegates in the workshops;
- d) the increase in wages from 7 to 15% (which is then 35% since the work week has been reduced from 48 to 40 hours);
- e) paid vacations. This agreement would have been signed even earlier if in some factories those who were called “reactionaries” had not proceeded to the arrest of some directors.

On June 14, Thorez, the head of the French Communist Party, launched the formula that would make him famous: “We must know how to end a strike as soon as the essential demands have been achieved. It is also necessary to reach a compromise in order not to lose any strength and above all not to facilitate the panic campaign of the reaction.”

After two weeks French capitalism succeeds in extinguishing this powerful movement, powerful not because of its class significance, but because of how extensive it was, the importance of the occupational demands, and the extent and degree of the means employed by the workers to achieve success.

The pseudo-proletarian organizations which had had no responsibility in the unleashing of the movement were the very ones who would take it upon themselves to put an end to it. The French Communist Party had to play a role of the first order in stifling any revolutionary possibility which might have arisen, and it succeeded in doing so to astonishing effect by contemptuously defaming the few workers who tried to make the occupation of the factories converge with a revolutionary approach to the struggle as “Hitlerites”. And in this alone consisted the tactical problem that the French Party had to solve.

Almost simultaneously, strikes broke out in Belgium. They began at the Port of Antwerp and then spread throughout the country. The manifesto immediately launched by the Belgian Workers’ Party is significant: “Port workers, don’t commit suicide. There are people inciting you to stop work. Why? They are demanding a wage increase. We are not saying anything different in this regard at a time when the Belgian Transport Workers Union is discussing its policy of wage increases. And we will not be thrown a curveball by irresponsible people. We don’t want to see the same disastrous consequences in Antwerp that occurred after the Dunkirk strike. We have a regulation that must be respected.

Those who incite you to strike do not care about the consequences. Port workers, listen to your managers. We know what your wishes are. Onwards with our union! Don’t strike unreasonably. We’ll still discuss things with the bosses today.”

Despite a similar appeal from the Trade Union Commission (the equivalent of the Confederation of Labor), on June 14 the Miners’ Congress was forced to accept the situation and gave the order to strike. The day before, the organ of the Socialist Party communicated its agreement with the government decisions to avoid the occupation of the workshops.

On June 22, in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Van Zeeland, who presided over a coalition with the participation of the Socialists, an agreement was signed where the following was established: a) a 10% wage increase; b) 40-hour week for unhealthy industries; c) 6 days of annual vacation.

The Belgian Communist Party uses what little influence it has among the masses to profit from a tactic similar to that followed by the French Party: it blocks the strike along the Workers Party and the Trade Union Commission which monopolize the leadership of the movement. It had no initiative in starting the strikes and all its activity consisted in demanding that the government intervene in favor of the strikes.

As for the results, these were far inferior to those obtained by the French workers. But, in both countries, these union successes, moreover ephemeral, far from signifying a resumption of the autonomous and class struggle of the proletariat, favor the development of the maneuver of the capitalist State which, thanks to the arbitration of conflicts, succeeds in gaining the confidence of the masses and it will use this confidence to tighten the net of its hegemonic control over them.

The sanctioning of State authority in the labor contract represents not a victory but the defeat of the workers. In reality this contract is but an armistice in the class struggle and its application depends on the relations of force between the two classes. The mere fact that State intervention is accepted radically reverses the terms of the problem since the workers thus entrust their defense to the fundamental institution of capitalist rule: the class unions are now replaced class collaborationist unions intertwined with the officials of the Ministry of Labor who control the application of the law.

The French and Belgian strikes precede by just one month the outbreak of social unrest in Spain and the opening of the imperialist war in that country. We will explain the course of these events in the next chapter.

Prometeo #7, May-June 1947

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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.