

# REVOLUTION or WAR #8

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by Destroying Capitalism

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## ***Call on Support***

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

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

## **Capitalism is Crisis and War. Only the International Proletariat can Oppose it by Destroying Capitalism**

The succession of various unheard of events and upheavals that trouble the capitalist world since the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris on January 2015 (to set an arbitrary temporal point of reference) is the expression of capitalism's contradictions and the dead-end in which it brings the whole of humanity. Also, more directly, it is the product of the 2008 economic crisis and the incapacity of world capitalism to provide even a temporary response that could “seriously revive the economy”. All these contradictions lead inescapably to generalized imperialist war, if this process is not interrupted by the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat. Increasingly, they compel the different ruling classes to struggle desperately, and therefore with tenfold rage, to defend their economic and imperialist interests against their rivals and their own proletariat. Crisis and war now combine directly, feeding off one another, to the point that today the international proletariat has to pay directly, at the level of its living and working conditions, both for the capitalist crisis and the preparation for the imperialist war – when it does not already suffer it on its flesh.

Except as a result of an “accident” – what F. Engels called *contingency*, which the revolutionary theory of the proletariat does not oppose to the historical law ruling the societies of classes – capitalism is not in a condition to launch a generalized imperialist war. Not only because the imperialist polarizations are not yet defined, but above all because the international proletariat, passive, weakened, disorientated at the political and ideological levels though it may be – to date does not adhere to any war-mongering ideologies, such as anti-fascism 1930s.

Certainly, an “accident” is always possible. The missile launches and the nuclear tests of North Korea and the American reactions and threats – likewise the military “incidents” in the China Sea – are a real danger, which expresses well that capitalism is war, as Lenin said. The risks of a military slip between North Korea and the USA are the result of the imperialist antagonisms in the region, particularly between China and the USA. Kim Jong-un's “paranoia” and Trump's “narcissism” – the *contingency* – are not because of their supposed madness, but the product (and an aggravating factor) of the level reached by capitalism's contradictions. Nevertheless, the slip is not the most likely. A military confrontation, indeed a nuclear one, with

Korea, with the bloody and dramatic consequences, would put the ruling class as a whole in a situation of historical weakness with respect to the revolutionary proletariat, because the latter is not historically “defeated”, and the rest of the world population. It would brutally and suddenly expose the even more barbaric future of capital and the absolute necessity of destroying it. However fractions of the bourgeoisie, including around the “unpredictable” Trump, do “think” and attempt to more or less ensure their management of the events, even though their dynamic escapes them.

To open up the path to generalized war in a way that best suits its best interests, capitalism must intensify its aggression against the proletariat, not only at the economic but also at the political level, to be able to impose on it a bloody historical defeat, because only the international proletariat, as both exploited and revolutionary class, can bring down capitalism. In this sense, the shake-up of the traditional political apparatus of the French bourgeoisie, which has occurred with Macron's election, means firstly the setting up of a directly anti-working class device of the bourgeois political forces. Indeed, the rise of a new so-called “radical” left around Melenchon and the *France Insoumise* is the other striking fact of this upheaval. Far from limiting itself to an opposition on the bourgeois democratic terrain, like the anti-Trump and anti-racist (and other “antifa”) oppositions in the United States, Melenchon positions himself on the social terrain, the one of the working class struggle, “against the social *coup d'État*” of the government. In so doing, he attempts to mark out and lock down in advance the scope of the working class reactions to the bourgeois terrain, for the defence of the “Social Republic”, as he says; and thereby to sabotage them “from the inside”, alongside the unions. No doubt that this model will be applied elsewhere: *Die Link*, *Podemos*, *Democratic Socialists for America*, etc.

It is against these political forces of the left with a “radical” language, on this first front line, that the political confrontation between the classes will mainly take place in the massive confrontations that the ruling class prepares and will provoke; that they already provoke. The class fight is above all a political fight, in which the most militant minorities of proletarians and the communists must resolutely stand at the vanguard.

September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## International Situation

### ***After the Brexit, Trump's and Macron's elections... About the Political Upeavals within the Bourgeois State Political Apparatus***

**T**he communiqué that we publish below was realized the very day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the French presidential election, before the results were known. Nevertheless, Emmanuel Macron's victory over Marine Le Pen of the “extreme” right was beyond any doubt since the 1<sup>st</sup> round, as well as its essential political meaning: the reconfiguration of the traditional political apparatus of the French bourgeoisie to the benefit of a new and “young” team in power, which did not hide its willingness to directly attack the working class of this country – the “liberalization of the labour market” since adopted by the government – to enable France to “become a great power once again”. For the new president, “we cannot claim to play this role unless we provide the means. Without economic and social transformation, let's forget the greatness” (Emmanuel Macron's interview to the journal *Le Point*, August 31<sup>st</sup> 2017). It is clear : the proletariat in France will have to make new sacrifices for the French bourgeoisie to regain its “imperialist greatness”.

We received a number of observations and critical comments after the publication of this communiqué. Let's mention the two main criticisms:

- our analysis, and in particular the denunciation of the rise of a radical left opposition around the person of Mélenchon, would express a view, if not of a conspiracy, at least of an all-powerful staff working in secret and manipulating the decisions of the ruling class and its political forces<sup>1</sup>;

- while Le Pen's failure has falsified ideas of a crisis of the French bourgeoisie, on the other hand Trump's election, as well as the Brexit surprise and the hesitations and contradictions of the British bourgeoisie, would be the expression of a loss of control of these ruling classes over their political apparatus and their decisions, even a crisis of their political system, due to the incapacity of the capitalist system to really overcome the effects of the open crisis that began in 2008.

It is these two questions, above all the second, to which the text that follows the communiqué tries to respond.

### **Communique on the French Presidential Election : Mélenchon and the Radical Left Prepare to Paralyze the Working Class Fightback against the Coming Government's Attacks (May 7<sup>th</sup> 2017).**

**F**inally, and as expected based on the polls from months ago as well as on the result of the first round of April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the “centrist” Emmanuel Macron has won the French presidential election. Marine Le Pen, the Front National extreme-right

candidate, has been defeated by a large margin. Since the first round, we could bring out the main political significance of these elections for the proletariat and the revolutionaries: the rise of a radical Left around the person of Mélenchon and his movement *La*

1 . We call the attention of all our readers to the statement by the group Robin Goodfellow (only in French), *La situation politique en France après les élections de 2017* (<https://defensedumarxisme.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/analyse-france-2017-robin-goodfellow.pdf>), published July 13<sup>th</sup>, which criticizes our formulation on this point. Above all, the interest of this text is that it provides an argued Marxist analysis on the situation of French capitalism, its recent history and its particularities, which explain the present situation, Macron's election, and the stakes for the French ruling class. Moreover, the statement of the comrades opposes those, including within the proletarian camp (without mentioning the infallible ICC and its theory of decomposition, according to which it is the fear of Le Pen and of so-called populism that would have compelled the French bourgeoisie to choose Macron) who believe that the ruling class is losing control of the situation because of the crisis (the Brexit and Trump being the most striking expressions of it according to them). As such, they are among those, which includes us, who believe that the crisis obliges the ruling classes to adapt their political apparatus (to put it simply). Our main reservation with regard to the statement from Robin Goodfellow is that the comrades do not make the link between the perspective of generalized imperialist war, and therefore between the imperialist necessities that impose themselves on the French bourgeoisie, and the attack against the proletariat in this country. The attack against the working class is not simply due to the “economic” necessity, that is to make French capitalism competitive in relation to its rivals through the reduction of value of the labour force of this country, but also to the necessity to “regain its rank” at the imperialist level in relation to its European allies, primarily Germany: “His [Macron's] foreign policy seeks to restore France's central position on the world stage, while remaining firmly committed to Europe. Macron's foreign-policy effectiveness will depend on his ability to bring about a domestic economic turnaround” (*Asia Times*, July 9th 2017, <http://www.atimes.com/article/macron-doctrine-frank-ambitious-open-compromise/>). Far from us the idea to oppose the economic dimension to the imperialist war. The two dimensions, as processes determined by the contradictions of capitalism and accelerated by the consequences of the 2008 crisis, reinforce one another compelling the capitalist classes to confront more and more the proletariat.

*France Insoumise* [Unbowed France] whose function will be to sabotage from “within”, alongside the unions, the inescapable working class reactions to the attacks that the new government is going to launch brutally and rapidly:

*“The insurrectional spirit instilled by Mélenchon and hovering over the country can endure and even increase: an educated but precarious fraction of the youth could help the union movement when Emmanuel Macron, if he is elected, will start the announced reforms”*<sup>2</sup> (Web site Slate.fr).

The new President wants to re-initiate as soon as possible the offensive against the working conditions of the workers, which had begun in Spring 2016 with the “El Khomri Labour Law”: liberalization of the labour market with a stronger reform of the Labour Code, 150 000 public sector job cuts, new reform of the pensions, etc. The class war is thus going to be relaunched starting in the summer, if not before, by the French bourgeoisie. The brutality of the measures it wants to impose, and the political disrepute of the traditional Left, of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party descended from Stalinism (PCF), required it to adapt the configuration of its state political apparatus to face the inescapable working class reactions; above all after the mobilization and the massive and violent street demonstrations of 2016 against the “Labour Law” which is remembered by all. This electoral term gave it the opportunity<sup>3</sup>. The legislative elections of next June will clarify the exact outlines of this recomposition of the ensemble of bourgeois political forces, from the extreme right, through the old right and left traditional parties (Les Républicains and the Socialist Party), to the extreme left around Mélenchon.

In this situation, Mélenchon and his political movement *France Insoumise* have been the striking fact of these elections. Beyond the electoral success<sup>4</sup>,

he has been the main actor of this campaign and he is the advanced point of the political reconfiguration under way.

### **Mélenchon : Main Architect of the Success of the First Round**

The radicalism of Mélenchon's leftist language has enabled the success of the bourgeois political operation under way with these elections. He has been the main architect of the high level of participation (almost 80%) in the first round while, before his rise in the polls, it seemed it was going to be unusually weak – they feared 70%, even less. So he has succeeded in bringing back onto the electoral terrain one part of the proletariat, the very one which continues to identify with the 2016 struggle against the “Labour Law”.

### **Mélenchon : The Bourgeoisie Occupies the Ground of Abstention**

Later, while waiting for the second round, Mélenchon refused to appeal for a vote for Macron. The media and the rest of the political apparatus screamed and pretended to be scandalized faced with the break of the “Republican Front”: “*Mélenchon plays into the National Front's hands*”. This was the main topic between the two rounds. By refusing to support Macron, he positioned himself as the main opponent of the future government:

*“In my opinion, France is going to get rid of Marine Le Pen in this election and, within one month, we will all together get rid of Mr Macron's policy”* he claimed April 30<sup>th</sup> as an explanation for his stance<sup>5</sup>.

So, the campaign between the two rounds revolved around the question of abstention that Mélenchon took over. Behind him, the entire ruling class openly seized this question to distort any class character from it in front of the unprecedented increasing mistrust towards the electoral participation; at least in France. Thus, thanks to Mélenchon, today's democratic mystification was not expressed through the false alternative *Republican vote-Le Pen vote, Democracy-Extreme Right*, but through the one, likely false since it is on the bourgeois ground, *Vote-Abstention*.

2 . Slate.fr, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, *Comment Mélenchon a ravi le vote de la jeunesse* (<http://www.slate.fr/story/145035/melenchon-ravi-le-vote-de-la-jeunesse>) : « *L'esprit insurrectionnel insufflé par Mélenchon et planant sur le pays peut perdurer ou même s'accroître : une fraction éduquée mais précarisée de la jeunesse pourrait porter mains fortes au mouvement syndical lorsqu'Emmanuel Macron, s'il est élu, entamera les réformes annoncées.* »

3 . In the first round, Macron got 24% of the votes, Le Pen 21%, Fillon the “classical” right candidate 20%, Mélenchon 19.6%, and Hamon from the Socialist Party... 6%! On the day of writing, Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup>, date of the second round, the first projections of the polls for the National Assembly deputies election seems to confirm this political reconfiguration, in particular the end of the bipartisanship, which had prevailed since the 1970s, and the collapse of the Socialist Party.

4 . While he was at less than 10% in January according to the polls, he has got 20% of the votes in the first round (the Socialist Party collapsing to 6%). Thirty percent of his electors are less than 30 years old (he is the one who received the greatest number of votes among the young, keeping in mind that many of them don't vote). He has also received around 20% of the so-called “workers” votes, that is the “non-qualified workers” (blue collar, in the North American vernacular) and even “regained” some of them from Le Pen. He

came in first place in the great cities famous for their combativity such as Marseille and Toulouse and in many important cities of the Paris working class suburbs; in Lille and Montpellier too. He was second in Nantes, Strasbourg, Bordeaux. He got the greatest part of the “public”, “technicians”, employees..., proletarians' votes. In brief, he has been successful in reproducing a “fighting working class vote” by gathering a great part of the sympathy of the most militant fractions of the working class, the very ones which mobilized and were radicalized during the 2016 Spring street demonstrations against the El Khomri Labour Law.

5 . [http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/30/melenchon-met-en-garde-ses-electeurs-contre-la-terrible-erreur-d-un-vote-fn\\_5120390\\_4854003.html#G43zcttOcEUCtl0p.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/30/melenchon-met-en-garde-ses-electeurs-contre-la-terrible-erreur-d-un-vote-fn_5120390_4854003.html#G43zcttOcEUCtl0p.99)

### **Mélenchon and the Radical Democratic Mystification Typical of “Nuit debout”**

In a general manner and in the long term, we must notice – and warn – that Mélenchon does not call for setting up a party but a movement which would function a little like the unions, as he has said, which know how to regroup different positions while remaining united: the call for the members to state their views on a vote for Macron vote or not allows a “party” practice, which issues slogans and instructions, to be avoided. Thus he has put forward the mystifying theme of direct democracy, already largely promoted during the campaign by the two Trotskyist candidates who called for “the power to revoke the elected” such as during the Paris Commune they were saying. It means that, beyond the terrain of abstention, Mélenchon and *France Insoumise* already occupies the ground of “direct” democracy and the General Assemblies..., that is the ground of “self-organization”, to be capable in the given moment to void the workers assemblies and the strike and struggle committees of their class political content, that is the organization of the extension and the real unification of the working class struggles, exactly as was accomplished by the democratic ideology of *Nuit Debout* during the Spring of 2016.

### **Mélenchon : Assertiveness of a Radical Left in Europe**

With *France Insoumise* and the political reconfiguration under way after the first round, the bourgeoisie has found the political formula corresponding to the countries of the historical centres of capitalism, to face the new situation into which it throws the world. While it remains to be seen what precisely will be the final political device given by the legislative elections next June, the formula is the same for the main European bourgeoisies, indeed at the international level as in North America: is not Mélenchon often presented as the French Bernie Sanders? The next European elections, in particular in Germany, will verify the degree of the international validity of this formula today which obviously has to adapt and be defined according to the national characteristics of each country.

Already, the main European so-called radical lefts, Die Linke in Germany, Podemos in Spain, Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal, the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, the Vansterpartiet in Sweden, the Sinistra Italia and Altra Europa of Italy, members that split from Syriza in Greece, gathered late March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> to “offer an alternative to the European peoples (...): to protect our people, our democracy and nature against the free trade zones and against a national market which only serves the profit of the banks and the multinationals and the oligarchies’ wealth. We must get rid of a European Union which is a war machine against Labour and at the service of the financial capital”<sup>6</sup>). Is it worth to underline the nationalist and pro-state, that is anti-working class and counter-revolutionary, character of the alternative which is presented here?

As brutal and massive as it will be, the repression alone won't be able to control the revolts in the streets and workplaces that capitalism is going to provoke in all countries. Each ruling class is compelled to set up and develop “new” political forces which can sabotage “from within”, on “behalf of the people”, and if necessary “on behalf of the working class”, the inescapable struggles and the process of taking consciousness that can go with them amongst the workers. The unions won't be enough. To derail and sabotage the proletarian fight, the ruling class must also be able to “offer” political bourgeois pseudo-

alternatives of a “radical left” variety, above all when “the questioning of his [Macron's] social-liberal policy (flexibility of the labour market, continuation of the competitiveness efforts, acceptance of the European budget constraints...) in the street looks likely”<sup>7</sup> (the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps*). This is the role that Mélenchon and *France Insoumise* are preparing to play.



6 . <https://www.lepartidegauche.fr/3031/>

7 . Journal suisse *Le Temps*, 7 mai 2017, <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/2017/05/07/un-president-transformer-france> : « offrir aux peuples européens une alternative (...) : protéger notre peuple, notre démocratie et la nature contre des zones de libre-échange et un marché intérieur servant uniquement le profit des banques et des multinationales et la richesse des oligarchies. Nous devons nous débarrasser d’une Union européenne qui est une machine de guerre contre le travail et au seul service du capital financier.»

**Macron : Assertiveness of the French  
“Pro-European” Imperialist Orientations**

Admittedly, the French elections have not been limited to preparation of the political conditions for the class confrontation that the French bourgeoisie is looking for. There is another dimension of the electoral process to underline: French capitalism's ability to select the most “pro-European” candidate to power, Emmanuel Macron. As he has strongly pointed out in various occasions, he won't stand *against* Merkel but *with* Merkel. Macron's victory is the first response from Europe, in terms of adaptation of the European political apparatus, to the Brexit and Trump's election – both meaning the anglo-saxon imperialist polarization against the European Union. The accession to power of the “pro-European” Macron is already, in itself, a reaffirmation of the European imperialist pole which induces a reinforcement of the political, economic and military alliances around Germany that are its basis. And this in the perspective of the inevitable worsening of the world imperialist antagonisms which are exacerbated by the open crisis which started in 2008.

Only the world proletariat can oppose the dynamic of these imperialist antagonisms which lead towards generalized war. Besides the pressures of the crisis and the wars which require an increasingly brutal exploitation of the labour force, the main and first stake for the whole of world capitalism is not only to impose economic sacrifices upon the working classes of the different countries but, still more, to inflict on them political and even bloody physical defeats to be able to definitively free the path towards generalized

war, as in the 1930s, from the proletarian obstacle.

**The French Bourgeoisie Prepares to  
Massively Confront the Proletariat**

Faced with these historical stakes, namely the massive confrontations between the classes provoked by the ruling classes, the French bourgeoisie's capacity to prepare itself for them, including for the months to come, is an example for the all of the national ruling classes, particularly the European ones.

That is why the striking point of these elections from the proletariat's point of view is the confirmation and a greater political preparation of a radical capitalist Left around Mélenchon. As it has already been the case during the 2016 Spring mobilization against the Labour Law, the *France Insoumise* around its leader and all the political and unions forces in its orbit, *Nuit Debout*, the Trotskyist, Stalinist, Anarchist groups, are getting ready to sabotage the coming working class struggles, by adopting the most radical language and by occupying all the domains of the class fight to distort them.

That is why the proletarians who are the most conscious of these traps and dead ends, and who wish to engage themselves in the extension and the unification of the class struggles against capitalism and its state, have to aim to regroup and organize to lead the political struggle against these forces and their sabotage all the more since these political forces already adopt, and will increasingly adopt, a radical, working class, and anti-capitalist image.

The IGCL, May 7<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Public Meeting Sunday November 5<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Montreal:  
1.30 pm at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Provigo, 2925 Rachel Est (Métro  
Préfontaine)**

The topic of the meeting is the Russian Revolution, its proletarian character, its isolation and the nature of the Stalinist Counter-Revolution.

## **What Significance and Implications Do the Parliamentary Elections in France Have for the French and International Proletariat ?**

**(June 30<sup>th</sup> 2017)**

The second round of the French Parliamentary Elections has ended an entire year of the electoral campaign during which few people could have imagined the outcome and the degree of transformation, of upheaval to tell the truth, of the political apparatus which has occurred. This “revolution”, the name of the new President Emmanuel Macron's book presented as his program, is the latest electoral surprise that has taken place in the main imperialist powers since June 2016, with the British referendum for the Brexit and Trump's election in November. Rather than believe in pure “chance”, these political shocks demand a reflection to determine the causes and the link which relates them and to draw the implications for the proletariat and its class fight. Evidently, the historical situation is not the same with the prolongation of the effects of the 2008 economic crisis and the sharpening of the imperialist rivalries and wars which ensue from the former, in Syria in particular, and of which the terrorist attacks in the core of Europe, particularly in France and Paris beginning in January 2015, are an essential component and mark.

The reflection we present here comes within the same framework of analysis of the situation that we had already put forwards with our communiqué *Élection présidentielle française : Mélenchon et la gauche radicale se préparent à paralyser les réactions ouvrières face aux attaques du futur gouvernement* (<http://igcl.org/Election-presidentielle-francaise>). One can also refer to the statement (in French) of the PCI-Programme communiste, *Le Prolétaire* #524 with which we share the rejection of the idea according to which the ruling class is tending to lose control of its political game with the increase in the vote for the so-called “populists” of the extreme right<sup>8</sup>. This thesis that the media have delivered during the French electoral campaign has also served, and continues to serve, as an explanation for the Brexit and Trump's election. It is not only erroneous but also dangerous from the point of view of the proletariat because it fosters the belief in a

8 . « The electoral rise then the victory of Macron cannot be attributed to the media as if it were a fashion of the day, a kind of temporary passion towards a young man. Beyond the contingencies and the diverse events, they are explained by the wear, the lost of efficiency, in a word the growing inability of the “old politics”, as the Macronists say, to respond to the general needs of French capitalism” (Bilan des élections présidentielles : recomposition du théâtre politique bourgeois pour mieux défendre le capitalisme - Balance-sheet of the presidential elections: reorganization of the bourgeois political theater to better defend capitalism, *Le Prolétaire* #524, [www.pcint.org](http://www.pcint.org)).

political weakening of the bourgeoisie while the political changes under way within the ruling classes are on the contrary the expressions and moments of adaptation and reinforcement of their state political apparatus, in particular against the proletariat.

### **Mélenchon : A Radical Left to Control and Sabotage the Working Class Reactions to the Massive Attacks Announced by Macron's Government**

The election of 308 pro-Macron deputies and the disintegration of the opposition into a multitude of parliamentary groups in the French national assembly have definitively extinguished the traditional political apparatus of the French bourgeoisie which had prevailed since 1958. This organization alternated to power the classical right party coming from *Gaullism* (called today Les Républicains) and the Socialist Party. But above all, that is from the working class point of view, the important aspect is the new president's and his government's intention to go further still in the attacks against the proletariat in France by pursuing the “liberalization of the labour market” that the 2016 El Khomri law had already started, and this as quickly as possible. To do so, the setting up of parliamentary majority goes along with the emergence of radical left opposition with the election of 17 deputies of the La France Insoumise, *France Unbowed*, (LFI) of Mélenchon – plus ten of the French Communist Party (PCF) – with which some deputies of the Socialist Party are likely to ally. In fact, what is being set up is a pincer manoeuvre meant to facilitate the attack on the living and working conditions of the proletariat. On one side a government striking hard and quick. And on the other a political left opposition with a radical discourse which aims to relay and complete at the political level the union control and sabotage of the inescapable working class reactions. The dealings between the government and the unions have already begun. The day after Macron's victory, May 9<sup>th</sup>, but also June 19<sup>th</sup> after the second round of the Parliamentary election, the newly set up Social Front, which regroups mainly radical union sections of the CGT and the Sud-Solidaire union as well as some others, had already called for street demonstrations. For his part, Mélenchon did not wait more than one hour and a half, the very night of the elections, to play his part of main radical political opponent of the government. He claimed the 61.5%

of the electorate<sup>9</sup> who either abstained or cast blank votes during the second round of the legislative election and “offered” a political outlet, the referendum, for the future mobilization:

*“The overwhelming abstention which was expressed today has an offensive political significance. Our people have entered into a kind of civic general strike in this election. In this abstention, I see an available energy if we know how to call on it to fight through the forms and the words which will suit the possibilities of everyone. It is La France Insoumise [the parliamentary group at the Assembly, editor’s note] which will call on the country in the given moment to a social resistance and I inform the new power that not a single metre of the terrain of social rights will be ceded without struggle. The “bloated majority” of Emmanuel Macron’s majority has not, according to him, “the legitimacy to commit the social coup d’état which is prepared, that is the destruction of the whole social public order by the abolition of the Labour Law. All the contrary, it is the most total resistance which is legitimate and that is why I say that if the new power believes it is really a necessity for the country and that it corresponds with its interest, then it should proceed through the most democratic path which is in its power, that is that the French people be consulted by referendum whether they want, yes or no, what this minority intends to impose on it » (Mélenchon’s declaration the night of the elections, *La Tribune*, Swiss newspaper, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2017<sup>10</sup>, translated by us. We did not find the interview text in *The Guardian*).*

He appropriates the unheard of level of abstention and turns it to his own utilization by declaring it as being a “civic strike”, raising the slogan and demand for a referendum. This already shows the obvious willingness to participate in the work of division and sabotage of the struggles that the unions are going to try provoke from next September with their “unions’ days of action”. It is precisely to derail the future class mobilization against the state and capitalism onto the democratic and state terrain through the slogan of referendum, a genuine trap and guarantee of bitter defeat if the workers yield to it. By the way, it matters to point out that he succeeds in taking over the terms of “strike” and “abstention” to void them of their working class nature and meaning. Only the

radical capitalist left can allow such a diversion of the language while the extreme right is totally incapable, or at least would not be credible on this ground. This is another reason why, in the present period, the danger for the proletariat does not lie in the so-called “populism” of the extreme right (even though numerous workers among the less conscious and less militant, but more racist and chauvinist, vote for it) but actually in the capacity of the so-called radical left to occupy the terrain and appropriate the language of the working class mobilizations where the active forces and most conscious fractions of the proletariat are expressed – the ones which will drag along the others.

The bourgeoisie thus lays its cards on the table, without waiting until after the summer holidays, to mark out and quarantine, even quicker than the decrees [ordonnances]<sup>11</sup>, the political ground of the class confrontation and of the future possible working class mobilization. The proletariat and the genuine revolutionaries are warned.

### **Adaptation and Control by the French Bourgeoisie of its Political System**

According to us, the parliamentary elections have thus confirmed and increased the political significance of the Presidential elections of May. The shake-up of the political apparatus of the French bourgeoisie responds to its needs faced with political personnel and parties which no longer correspond to the present time. This is true with regard to the proletariat and the necessity to return to a competitiveness, as well as a renewal of the productive apparatus of French capital, which essentially requires greater exploitation and depreciation of the labour force.

It is also true at the international level. Before the German elections next September, the choice of the most pro-European of the presidential candidates actually opens the possibility of a restart of the German-French alliance<sup>12</sup> aiming to pull the

9 . By the way, we can point out that Macron’s parliamentary majority of 308 deputies of 577, that is 53% of them, has been elected with 16.5% of the electorate (and without taking into account the estimated 10% of the French “citizens” who are not registered to vote and thus are not part of this electorate).

10 . <http://www.latribune.fr/economie/legislatives-2017/melenchon-elu-pour-la-premiere-fois-a-l-assemblee-se-pose-en-chef-de-la-resistance-sociale-740648.html>

11 . To avoid a parliamentary debate which would last months and thus allow time for working class mobilization, Macron has decided to decree the new law by “ordonnances” which means that the Parliament “allows” the government to change the labour law by decree which can be applied rapidly [ndt].

12 . “On trade, as well as on defence, the Union is developing. It is due to the international uncertainties created by Donald Trump, the Middle East and Vladimir Putin as well as the national leaders’ willingness to bridge the gap which has widened between the Europeans and Europe. Yes, the Union is on a new start and this is so clear that Ms Merkel has just said she was open to the French ideas of reinforcement of the Euro zone with the setting up of a Finance Minister and a common budget which will enable it to oversee structural investments. She has not explained further but she will have

European Union in its wake. Macron's election is thus one of the first political responses of one of the main European ruling classes, following the results of the last national elections in the Netherlands and Austria, to the British Brexit and to the hostile anti-European and anti-German declarations of Trump. The exacerbation of the economic dead-end of capitalism and of its contradictions stirs economic and trade competition and, consequently, the imperialist rivalries: a growing polarization between the two sides of the Atlantic which is promises to become central on the international scene, is under way. The recent setting up by the EU of a Defence European Funds with 500 millions euros to enable *“the Union to equip itself with the most modern weapons without depending on the United States nor anyone else. In the medium term, it is towards a common armament industry, on the Airbus model, that the Europeans are marching and the effects of this effort will be multiple”* (Bernard Guetta, radio France Inter<sup>13</sup>) is just its last practical expression.

Faced with these objective historical necessities, the French bourgeoisie has “pulled it off” and shown great political management (which is not always the case). Thus it provided an example for all of the ruling classes, particularly the European ones. Therein lies the international impact of Macron's coming to power. Far from the discourses before the elections of an uncontrolled danger of the so-called populism of the extreme right – as if an important percentage of “blue collar” workers voting for an authoritarian right was something new and irrational<sup>14</sup> and illustrated a “losing of grips” on the

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*to after the German election next September”* (Bernard Guetta, radio France Inter, <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/geopolitique/geopolitique-e-21-juin-2017>). Even if this journalist, famous in the French media, former trotskyst of the LCR (4<sup>th</sup> International), is for long one of the most fervent supporters of the European Union, his analysis reflects quite faithfully the debates and reflections within the bourgeoisie.

13 . <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/geopolitique/geopolitique-e-21-juin-2017>

14 . In the years 1960 and the following decades, there was around 30% of the workers who voted for De Gaulle and the nationalist and authoritarian right that he represented. From this point of view, the “blue collars” vote to Marine Le Pen is less important than the De Gaulle's in the 1960... just before and after the massive strike of May 1968. In the United States, « *In the 1980 and 1984 elections, Reagan averaged 61 percent support among the white working class, compared to an average of 35 percent support for his Democratic opponents, Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale* » (*The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class*, Ruy Teixeira, Brookings Working Paper, April 2008, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04\\_demographics\\_teixeira.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_demographics_teixeira.pdf)) . Nothing new thus, nor qualitatively different, in the “blue

part of the bourgeoisie – the capitalist class (above all in the central countries of capitalism) knows very well how to build on the expressions of the contradictions of its system, economic crisis in particular, to use them and turn them against the proletariat at the economic as well as political level.

However, it is not a question of believing in a meeting of the general staff in the governmental Palaces or belonging to any “think tank” which would govern and dictate its willingness in a Machiavellian plan, indeed a plot. The Marxist theory, that is the proletariat's revolutionary theory, the method of historical materialism, enables us to understand how the objective necessity due to the worsening of capitalism's contradictions constrains each national capital to take such or such decision to be able to survive on the imperialist scene and to impose upon the proletariat an ever greater level of exploitation. Still it is necessary – that it can also find the political personnel that is capable of implementing the adaptation of the state policies and apparatus to the new situations; that is to the new contradictions of all kinds and importance that ensue from these. As any contradictory process, the choice of political staff or decisions can turn out not to be the best possible – we can discuss it in the case of Trump's choice and the Brexit decision – but it is precisely peculiar to the most experienced and powerful bourgeoisies to tend to be able to “deal with it” and to turn the effects of weakness that some choices may present into a new strength.

### **Faced with Trump, the Restart of the European Union Goes Through the Confrontation with the Proletariat in France**

To defend its place as power at the international, that is imperialist, level France can only do so in alliance with Germany and in the framework of the European Union – indeed around a “hard core” of it. The seriousness of the economic dead-end since the 2008 crisis and the imperialist imperatives which ensue from it (Trump, Brexit, etc.) compel it to do so. Whether it is totally conscious of it or not; whether fractions within its ranks are conscious or not of it. The needs of capital dictate their law and impose themselves. In order to assume the development of a solid and active alliance with Germany and Europe, the French ruling class cannot avoid a confrontation and “levelling” of the conditions of exploitation of its national proletariat to that required by the international trade competition<sup>15</sup>.

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collar” vote pro-Trump contrary to the media campaigns on this topic.

15 . *“France won't have any motive capacity if it does not have*

As damaged as they are already in regards to the past, the drastic reduction of the living and working conditions of the proletarians in France – the so-called “liberalization of the labour market” – to the level of the European proletariat, German in particular, is today an imperative not only to face the economic crisis but also the imperialist necessities: that is for the rise of a European imperialist pole around Germany capable of competing on the imperialist scene, in particular at the military and diplomatic levels. For its part, the German bourgeoisie is conscious that a weakened France would accordingly diminish the expression of its imperialist interests, independently of the fact that French capitalism would better compete with it at the trade level, because it would limit the emergence and the dynamic of a European pole around it. This is why it attaches so much importance to the goal of the French ruling class to realize “the structural reforms” of its labour market. It is the European proletariat which will pay for the first 500 million euros for the European Defence Funds as well as the additional funds which will follow to develop the planned weapons industry. This is why it matters that the proletariat in France pays to the level of the rest of the European proletariat.

Today, economic crisis and imperialist war (as perspective and dynamic towards the generalized imperialist war) come directly to impact the living conditions of the international proletariat. The French political situation following the elections which were a success for the bourgeoisie, nevertheless is a concrete, practical illustration of the historical class contradiction between capital and labour, between bourgeoisie and proletariat, such as they express themselves in the present historical situation.

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*a clear discourse and a lucid look at the world. But it won't have it neither if it does not reinforce its economy and its society. That is why I have asked the government to engage the fundamental reforms which are indispensable for France. Our credibility, our efficiency, our strength are at stake. But the strength of some cannot be nourished by the weaknesses of the others for long. Germany which made its reforms fifteen years ago, notes today that this situation is not viable. My wish is thus that we can build a common force. My method for the German-French couple is the one of a trustful alliance. (...) But Germany is lucid on the limits of an action which is not fully European, in particular regarding military intervention. **It knows that our fate has become again tragic.** It requires France to protect itself, to protect Europe and ensure our common security” (Emmanuel Macron's interview to many European newspaper of June 21<sup>st</sup>, we underline and translate from the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps*, <https://www.letemps.ch/monde/2017/06/21/emmanuel-macron-leurope-nest-un-supermarche-leurope-un-destin-commun>, since we could find the whole interview in English).*

## **Trump and the Brexit Don't Express a Crisis of the American and British Bourgeoisies**

If it is clear today since Macron's election that the French ruling class is not passing through a crisis of its political system, it apparently goes differently for the British and American cases. At least if we believe the media of all countries: the English bourgeoisie would be fully lost with the Brexit and the American one would not know how to get rid of the dangerous clown Trump. But whatever is the degree of division of the American ruling class faced with the election of Trump, his warlike and provocative discourse basically corresponds to the situation of historical weakening of the United States at the economic and imperialist levels, which drives them straight forward to be the main actor of the march towards generalized imperialist war.

*“Certainly, the political personnel and background can play a role within the strategic political framework of a government. They can take diverse decisions on questions of foreign and economic policies according to internal and external situations but also according to personal inclinations coming from previous political positioning. But it is the pressure of the economic conditions of the life of capital which dictates the basic choices, the strategies to follow, the better recipes to face its crisis and support at any cost the needs of valorization whether on the internal (...) or international front (...). It is also certain that one can make a mistake of interpretation of the necessities of capital and set up erroneous economic policies and counter-productive international strategies. But it nevertheless remains that nobody, not even a President or a government worth its name and responsible for the indispensable source of profit, cannot detach from the law of life and survival of capital. And to look at it, the difference between Obama and the new Trump administration, beyond the obvious differences of style and communication, is not so deep: in both cases, the two administrations serve American imperialism in regards to the two historical phases that, to simplify the discourse, we define as 'before and after the subprimes crisis'”(Guerra in Siria e riposizionamenti imperialistici, *Prometeo* #17, theoretical journal of the PCint-Battaglia Comunista, the Italian group of the Internationalist Communist Tendency<sup>16</sup>,*

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16 . We call on our readers to read this article, unfortunately only in Italian at the time being, which rejects the idea according to which the clown Trump's election would represent a loss of control, indeed a crisis, of the American bourgeoisie, but would rather correspond to an adaptation to the situation opened up “before and after the 2008 crisis”.

translated by us)

The decision of the Brexit, which the British bourgeoisie could easily come back on with, for instance, a new referendum, as France and the Netherlands did after the victory of the “No” to the 2005 referendum on the Rome treaty, is on the contrary taken in charge by the main political parties despite the immediate difficulties of all kinds. Fundamentally, from the point of view of the historical imperialist interests of the British capitalism, this corresponds to its long-time opposition to a continental European power and its long-time alliance since World War 1, and even more since the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with North-American imperialism. As such, the Brexit expresses the present exacerbation of the historical imperialist antagonism between Europe and North America reopened since the collapse of the USSR. And in its turn, contradictory process too, it comes to exacerbate even more this antagonism between the two sides of the Atlantic. In the final analysis, of course it is the inability of capitalism to overcome the 2008 crisis and its consequences, the “stagnation”, which still prevails, and the ceaselessly growing generalized debt, as immediate expressions of the insuperable economic contradictions of capitalism, which indirectly impose its rule and exacerbate the class and imperialist contradictions.

Far from being politically weakened in front of the working class, the main world ruling classes all prepare to confront even more violently their own proletariat to, firstly, ensure their economic, political and military ranks internationally, that is at the level of imperialist rivalries; and in secondly to engage a fight to the death, massive and frontal, against the proletariat to inflict on it bloody defeats which would open the door to generalized imperialist war. To this end, they equip themselves more or less easily, because this puts into question particular interests of some economic and political fractions of the ruling class, with political tools and systems adapted as well as they can be.

For the proletariat and the revolutionaries, to believe that the most experienced and powerful bourgeoisies of the world are in political crisis represents a danger: to delude themselves about the potentialities of the proletariat and the easiness of the class fight, even the inevitability of its final victory. The historical experience, in particular in 1918-1919 in Germany,

teaches us that this illusion can quickly turn into tragedy and catastrophe. The connected thread for the understanding of the evolution of the situations is not in the immediate following of the economic crisis, in its ups and downs, in the open recession or recovery for instance, but in the process leading to the evolution of the relation of forces between the classes which, in the last instance (and not directly or mechanically) is determined by the crisis. For instance, to believe that the inability of the bourgeoisie to overcome the effects of the 2008 crisis would provoke mechanically a crisis of the political systems of the main bourgeoisies of the world, in particular through the uncontrolled emergence of fascistic extreme right, seems to us erroneous and dangerous.

The stakes are clear, at least for the most militant and conscious proletarians and the revolutionaries. It is up to them to assume these inescapable confrontations through their own preparation starting today. The former by gathering in struggle or mobilization committees, in particular in the struggles, to be able to fight in a collective and organized manner against the unions' sabotages and the political traps that the radical lefts, such as Mélenchon in France, will set for them. The latter, the revolutionaries, by looking to regroup, not formally in itself, but by assuming the debates and the political confrontations around the revolutionary groups in general, and communist in particular, and by participating in their interventions in the class struggles, including the struggle and mobilization committees. Both have to get closer in the struggles to be able to join and unite their efforts. Without regroupment and organization of the different minorities – minorities which constitute in fact the “political vanguard” – both to lead the immediate fights in the struggles and to lead the political and even theoretical fights for the preparation of the class political party, which is indispensable for the historical united confrontation against the capitalist states, the international proletariat will let itself be dragged and deceived by “the Mélenchons” and others who are going to flourish almost everywhere with the universal development of massive confrontations between the classes.

Such is also the international significance of the result of the French elections.

The IGCL, June 30<sup>st</sup> 2017

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Even if this article does not utilize exactly the same arguments as us, in particular it emphasizes more on a direct link between the economic necessities and the political decisions, the method of analysis is close to our own. Both seek to apply historical materialism for the analysis and the following of the situations: <http://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/2017-05-30/guerra-in-siria-e-riposizionamenti-imperialistici>.

## Working Class Struggles Around the World

**T**he current that reduces the role of the revolutionaries to the simple propaganda for the idea of revolution does not see the dialectical link between the spontaneous dimension of the class struggle and its political dimension. During a strike or any other act of resistance, the proletariat can be faced with the state, which will utilize different sectors of its apparatus in a coherent division of work. The workers can be faced with a combination of unions, of propaganda, media campaigns with their different nuances, with various political parties, the police, the social services and sometimes the army. For instance, in an imperialist power like France, there are daily more than 270 strikes involving tens of thousands proletarians (*Encore plus de grèves, mais plus de dispersion!* [More strikes still but more dispersion!] <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-marc-b/blog/090717/encore-plus-de-greves-mais-plus-de-dispersion>). These strikes are censored by the media, isolated by the unions and sometimes repressed by the law and police. This is the case in all the great imperialist powers with 150 to 300 strikes daily involving anywhere from a few proletarians to several thousands.

**Canada:** In the province of Quebec, 175 000 construction workers were on strike at the end of May for one week. The state declared the strike illegal and made the workers criminals. As for the unions, they sabotaged, as usual, a greater mobilization and the continuation of the strike by appealing to lawyers. The *Alliance Syndicale* presented a legal proceeding for dishonest negotiation against the *Association Patronale de la construction du Québec* [the construction boss association of Québec] and its negotiator.

**USA:** some 37 000 workers of the AT&T launched a three days strike in May. It was the first time these workers from the mobile phone division of AT&T were on strike. They account for around 14% of the total employees of the second largest mobile phone operator in the United States. The workers, who are members of the Communications Workers of America union (CWA), demanded a pay raise that would enable them to face the increased cost of health insurance, and better work schedules. After three days of strike, the CWA ordered a return to work. In addition, at the time of writing 1800 technicians, workers of the warehouse and engineering department of the Spectrum cable company in New York and in north New Jersey are on strike since three months. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union maintained the workers within the legal framework and accepted the nomination of a federal mediator and important financial concessions.

**Greece:** May 17<sup>th</sup>, thousands of Greek workers demonstrated and were on strike against the government's planned measures, particularly against pension reduction and tax increases. Let's recall that Tsipras, the Greek Melenchon (or Corbyn), had promised to stop the austerity measures but that, once elected, he has done the opposite. To date, he has accepted multiple tax measures, a 14<sup>th</sup> reform of the pensions and a liberalization of the labour market.

**Italy:** the April 14<sup>th</sup> agreement between the national

union confederations CGIL, CISL and UIL and the Alitalia airline has been rejected by 67% of the workers. The agreement required employees' sacrifices: 1700 job losses as well as a 8% salary drop and a reduction from 120 down to 108 days of rest.

**France :** see the *Parti Communiste Internationaliste – Le prolétaire's* article (in French) on the French Guyane strike movement *Only the break with the interclassist alliance and the class organization can enable the proletarians to reap the rewards of their mobilization*

([http://www.pcint.org/01\\_Positions/01\\_01\\_fr/170417\\_guyane.htm](http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/170417_guyane.htm)).

**United Kingdom :** after the January 2017 strikes (see *Working Class Struggles around the World* article in the previous issue (<http://igcl.org/Working-Class-Struggles-Around-the-277>), a union witch-hunt against the “trouble-makers” has been made. The union leaders secretly warned the bosses of the large companies against contracting specific workers because they were considered as politically embarrassing. They helped so much that they succeeded in getting their own members to be excluded from their job because they wanted to prevent perturbations on the industrial sites, describing their members as “militants” and “trouble-makers”, or else with a warning to be “careful” with them. After the Manchester bombing and for the electoral period, the British unions have suppressed or suspended many strikes among the train tickets inspectors, workers of the BMW car industry, the staff of the Manchester Metropolitan University, the computer giant Fujitsu, and of other places.

In Durham, there was a struggle of the teachers assistants against the bosses and the unions. After the sabotage of their struggle they set up an activist committee open to all. This committee aimed to organize the struggle and to counter the union's negative action. On the other hand, they kept their hands tied since they let the Unison union negotiate

on their behalf (see <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-07-28/durham-teaching-assistants-fight-on-%E2%80%93-against-labour-and-their-unions>).

**Brazil:** April 28<sup>th</sup>, millions of strikers and tens of thousands demonstrators in several cities protested against the austerity measures which, amongs other things, make increase the retirement age, from 60 to 65 for men and 55 to 62 for women. There have been also demonstrations denouncing the politicians' corruption in May. The demonstrations were of such magnitude that, for the first time since 1986, the army intervened alongside the anti-riot police in Brasilia.

**Ireland:** there were strikes in March in the railway and bus companies. The transport union boss of the SIPTU, Greg Ennis, declared that the unions had not organized and do not tolerate the illegal action which disrupted the trains and the buses : *“We regret the perturbation which has seriously affected those who wanted to utilize the Iarnrod Eireann and Dublin Bus services. This unions does not tolerate a no official action of this kind”*. Afterwards, the union organized a vote to make the strike legal and to better control it.

**Egypt:** 17 000 workers of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company society were on strike August 12<sup>th</sup> in Mahalla al-Kubra. They demanded the annual bonuses which often are never paid. After having waited a month, the strike began with a larger list of demands including a 10% wage raise. These workers of the MSWC had organized massive strikes in 2006 and 2008 against the former dictator Mubarak's regime and had played a determining role in the 2011 struggle that toppled Mubarak falling. In December 2012, these same workers declared themselves “independent” from what they called the “Muslim Brotherhood state” of Morsi (see <http://www.leftcom.org/en/news/2017-08-13/17-000-workers-strike-in-the-textile-sector-at-mahalla-al-kubra-nile-delta-egypt>).

**Tunisia:** the social protest in Tunisia is continuing non-stop to such a point that the month of January was called never ending (see the *Working Class Struggle* article in the the previous issue) in reference to the different movements which has marked the country's history for decades. The Tunisian President, Béji Caïd Essebsi, announced May 10<sup>th</sup> that he had ordered the deployment of the army to protect the phosphate production sites and the gas and petrol installations after the demonstrations that broke out, particularly in the South part of the country. These

demonstrations aimed to disrupt the production of some central sectors of the Tunisian economy. The economic difficulties and the frustrations of the young, which was at the origin of the “Jasmin revolution” of 2011, remain relevant in Tunisia, in particular in the centre and the West of the country where the high unemployment leaves few opportunities to the inhabitants. In the city of Tataouine, demonstrators denounced the unemployment rate. In late May, a demonstrator lost his life and more than three hundred persons were wounded during confrontations with the police.

**Morocco:** for eight months, there have been demonstrations in the region of the Rif. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, there was a strike with a high participation rate. The liberation of the arrested since the beginning of the movement has been added to region's inhabitants' social and economic demands. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, confrontations in Al-Hoceïma with the police led to 80 injuries on both sides (see in French *Grève générale dans le Rif Le prolétariat et les masses rifaines surexploitées donnent une leçon qui doit dépasser les frontières*, [http://www.pcint.org/01\\_Positions/01\\_01\\_fr/170617\\_greve-rif.htm](http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/170617_greve-rif.htm)).

**Iran:** the Iranian President Hassan Rohani has been taken to task by angry miners in a rare demonstration of force against the highest elected official of the country while he was leaving the private mine of Azad Shahr in Northern Iran where 26 miners were killed in an explosion that occurred May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Myanmar:** More than 12 000 workers on strike in thirty factories of Yangon gathered June 9<sup>th</sup> to protest against their low salaries and their working conditions and reiterate their demands: basic daily wage of 3000 kia (1,9kia/2.75 dollars canadiens), the end of the dismissals with no reason and the obligatory overtime. These strikes as the February riots are to be linked with the similarly movements in China, Vietnam and Cambodia. Increasingly, the capitalist states of these countries think to legalize the unions as the ones of Europe and America to control the struggles and maintain them in the legal framework. It is already the case in Myanmar but the proletarians are very distrustful towards these unions.

**Serbia:** 2000 proletarians of the Fiat-Chrysler factory protested the poverty wages and inhuman working conditions. On strike since June 27<sup>th</sup>, they agreed to end their strike and to return to work after two weeks under the joint pressure of the bosses, the government and the unions.

August 15<sup>th</sup>, Normand

## Correspondence

### **On the Real Class Political Positions of the Movement *Interventionistische Linke* in Germany and on the “Black Bloc” and “Antifa” Movement in General**

**L**ess than a year ago, one comrade got in touch with our group. He claimed his agreement with our programmatic positions and wanted to participate to our activities. Besides a physical encounter, we developed a correspondence which revealed, according to us, differences of approach and understanding of the concepts and the categories, of the “Marxist” words and language, we utilized. In particular, the confusion appeared in regards with the radical political scene such as the “black-block” or the “radical Left” and, most notably, in regards with a German group *Interventionistische Linke*. Our comrade believes the political approach of this group (or movement) is compatible with the international Communist Left and its positions.

Given the growing influence that this political so-called radical scene seems to get on a significant part of the young (and not so young) who are sincerely revolted and who look for a path for breaking with capitalism, we believe important to make public our correspondence with the comrade and our own reflection.

#### **Comrade Dusan Samuel's Letter**

Dear comrades,  
(...).

My reflection has gone on and has been fuelled by a stay in Germany and meetings with the German left. Indeed, I am still in agreement with the orientation and the positions of the group, particularly from the point of view of the historical affiliation and the constancy of the communist positions of the left within the communist movement. Yet, from these observations, I finally arrived at the conclusion that it is essential to now develop a convergence of the overall radical left on an “extra-parliamentary” basis. This does not necessarily mean “anti-parliamentary” even though it is obvious that some analysis and positions will no doubt be in opposition to the bourgeois political practice. Thus I’m convinced that the only viable tool we must develop is a “platform” of the different radical left tendencies which may be capable to efficiently intervene in the public space, be visible and equip themselves to fight the ruling class’ hegemony. This reflection is fuelled by the approach developed by the “German interventionist left” (*Interventionistische Linke*), which succeeded in gathering around political events of struggle different groups, which all, according to their methods and militant forces, contribute to a genuine emergence of an extra-parliamentary counter-power. I’m interested in know how you perceive this approach.

In preparation, I’m presently writing an article based on an analysis of the practices and the development of this German movement with an historical perspective of the extra-parliamentarism on the two banks of the Rhine.

So, if I fundamentally share the positions of the Communist Left, what I pompously call the “hypothetical imperative of strategic reason” comes to take the upper hand in the development of my reflection. Consequently to respond to the questionings in regards to the nature of my engagement towards you, I think it is possible to affirm that I formally adhere to the group through an activity of active sympathizer although the political will that I’ve just formulated can be understood as “a different political definition but remaining on the class terrain”. I don’t believe there is a “class disagreement” even though I’m not sure of the meaning of these words.

My reflection fits in the perspective that you described in your last letter : “no organisational rule ‘of party’, nor any ‘party discipline’ can respond to a weakening of the militant conviction, absent the capacity of the organization, the collective body, circle, group, organization, party, proletarian camp as a whole, to maintain an effective internal political life”. Thus, I don’t think that the conclusion which I get to contradicts the requirements linked with the weakening of the “militant conviction”. Once more, your position on this point would enrich my thought. (...)

May 16<sup>th</sup> 2017, Dusan Samuel

## Our Response to the Comrade DS

The IGCL to the comrade Dusan Samuel,  
Dear comrade,

We recently noticed (after the Hamburg anti-G20 demonstrations) that *Interventionistische Linke* (IL), <http://www.interventionistische-linke.org>, had translated some texts into English, French and even one in Italian. This enables us to give you a first political assessment without waiting any longer for a translation from German, and to provide you, we hope, some elements of critical reflections. Our response is essentially based on the following texts : the late June call for the anti-G20 demonstrations in Hamburg No complacency in the face of the injustice and irrationality of war<sup>17</sup> ; the one for the May 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 demonstration Berlin, Let Us begin the Offensive, Get Ready for May day ; one text in French Pour une fin de la tristesse<sup>18</sup>, which announces the setting up of the IL group in Berlin in September 2015 ; and No Submission. An Answer to Paris Lies in Athens<sup>19</sup>, after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris and just before the electoral victory of Syriza in Greece.

Firstly, the different political assessment we have on IL in regards with yours comes to confirm one of the conclusions we had drawn after our meeting of late February : *“this first discussion has revealed different understandings and approaches of the political positions and principles”* (report of our discussion of February 6<sup>th</sup> 2017). This first observation obliges us to debate and clarify the political positions and concepts we utilize in common, but which cover different political comprehensions and approaches. More generally, the question you raise about the *Radical Left* is even more important to tackle since we have been confronted with it, or at least with one of its components, during the mobilization against the El Khomri law [the 2016 attacks against the legal “labour market” in France, editor’s note], and lately during the two rounds of the French presidential election. The “head of the demonstration”<sup>20</sup> were in

great part animated by “young” (often presented by the press as “black-blocs”), though not exclusively, who favour violent confrontations with the cops and more widely a form of political “radicalism” displayed on banners or shouted through anti-capitalist, revolutionary, communist, etc., slogans. Later, between the two rounds of the French presidential election, the slogan *“neither Macron, nor Le Pen, nor banker, nor fascist”* could be heard, which seems to join, at least at first glance, the abstention political position put forwards by the Communist Left. This milieu, at least in Paris, remains quite “closed” and above all very unwilling to any serious political and theoretical debate, and rather inclined, as far as we could see, to a so-called “radical” street activism<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, this immediate report on these movements does not take away our political position on the street demonstrations against the El Khomri law (see Reflections and Balance-Sheet of the Spring 2016 Working Class Struggle in France<sup>22</sup>, *Revolution or War* #6), which had expressed an important moment of the class fight in this country.

### 1) *Interventionistische Linke* and the Communist Left

What do the IL texts that we could read reveal? The declaration of constitution of the Berlin group Pour une fin de la tristesse [For an End of Sadness only in German and French] puts forwards that *“making the Black Bloc more colourful is not enough. We want to contribute to the setting up of a radical social left that helps to bring real social changes and that, at the same time, is capable again to concretely question the post-capitalist society. (...) We want a radical left turned towards a revolutionary break with national and world capitalism, with the power of the bourgeois state and all the forms of oppression, of privation and discrimination. In brief, we want a new radical social left that fights against the political hegemony and organizes itself as counter-power. (...) So as to play our role in the struggle for the social hegemony of a left bloc, we*

17 . <http://www.interventionistische-linke.org/en/beitrag/no-complacency-face-injustice-and-irrationality-capitalism>

18 . <http://www.interventionistische-linke.org/en/beitrag/berlin-let-us-begin-offensive-get-ready-may-day> et <http://www.interventionistische-linke.org/fr/beitrag/pour-une-fin-de-la-tristesse>.

19 . <http://www.interventionistische-linke.org/en/beitrag/no-submission-answer-paris-lies-athens>

20 . Translator’s note : since the working class mobilization in 2003 against one of the repeated attacks on the pension system, at every “big mobilization” such as 2007 or 2010, the place of the unions’ leaders in the first ranks, the “head of the street demonstration” [“tête de cortège”], have been increasingly questioned and disputed by many demonstrators. They don’t want to protest behind or within the “official union processions”. Some times they are specific militant part of the working class such as the Paris suburb teachers in

2003, other time they are just hundreds and thousands of individuals, and regularly they are joined by the “radicals” and anarchists who used to fight the anti-riot police at the end of the demonstrations and now are in the first ranks. In 2016, there were thousands of workers, some times up to 1/3 of the Paris demonstrations, who stand side by side with the “radical leftist” such as the “black-bloc” against the anti-riot police violent repression and who forced the unions officials to the far back. Since then, the “head of the demonstration”, which has been a political stake in 2016 tends to become a fetish and a dogma for every demonstration, which will be certainly used to empty it of any possible class political significance...

21 . We won’t deal here with the IL call for the anti-G20 demonstrations in Hamburg.

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

*focus on these great alliances that create social experiences and political success, without dominance policy and with honesty towards our political partners”* (translated from the French version by us).

The reference to the Black Bloc enables any reader to set what political scene IL intends to be part of. On the other hand, the terms of “radical social left”, of “post-capitalist society”, to “fight against the political hegemony and organize itself as counter-power” are apparently much looser and general for most of them even though any serious reader can understand that the “focus on great alliances for a left bloc” aims to constitute a kind of... united front of all the organizations and movements of the so-called radical left (without specifying its political extent... up to and including the Stalinists, Die Linke, the Trotskyists... ?). We can already state that the terms or categories utilized are very loose and that they differ from the much more precise categories utilized by the working class movement and more particularly by the communist movement, which always refer to the contradiction between Capital-Labour and bourgeoisie-proletariat, that is to the class struggle and the history of the working class.

On the “programmatic” level, this declaration of revolutionary “good will” remains fundamentally, from the proletarian and communist point of view, within the framework of capitalism (some would call it “reformist”). Actually, it is of the same order as any somewhat “radical” declaration of the classical capitalist left. For instance, in terms of “radicality”, it is even below the former French President Mitterand’s speech at the 1971 congress of the French Socialist Party (as the response of the bourgeois “radical left” after the massive general strike of May 1968), which appealed even more directly for “breaking with capitalism” and the “seizure of power” – we can read it again today with interest<sup>23</sup>.

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23 . « Reform or Revolution ? I want to say – don’t accuse me of demagogy, it would be easy in this congress – yes, revolution. And straight away, I want to be precise, because I don’t want to lie to my deep thought, that for me, without playing with words, the daily struggle for the categorical reform of the structures can be of revolutionary nature. But what I’ve just said could be an alibi if I don’t add a second sentence: violent or peaceful, the revolution is at first a break. The one who does not accept the break – the method comes after – the one who does not agree the break with the established political order, it goes without saying, it is secondary... with the capitalist society, this one, I’m saying it, can’t be a member of the Socialist Party. (...) I would like us to be disposed to consider that the transformation of our society does not start with the seizure of power, it starts at first with the consciousness of ourselves and the consciousness of the masses. But it goes too through the conquest of the power” (Mitterand’s speak at the Epinay congress of the Socialist Party, 1971, translated by us, <http://miroirs.ironie.org/socialisme/www.psinfo.net/entretiens/mitterand/epinay.html>).

But it matters to verify the concrete application of these declarations of “revolutionary good will” on the very ground of the class struggle, that is in term of real political positions, orientations and activities. And there the conclusion is clear:

*“ We will express our radical critique of the G20 and of global capitalism, but especially our ties to the Kurdish struggle for freedom in Rojava (...) where our Kurdish and international comrades fight against ISIS ”* (No complacency in the face of the injustice and irrationality of capitalism, the call for the anti-G20 demonstrations in Hamburg, July 2017). Under cover of a so-called radical critic of the G20 summit and of capitalism (why “global”?), in the footsteps of numerous Trotskyists and Anarchists, who are always in search of new anti-fascist international brigades since Spain 1936, IL calls for support to the nationalist Kurdish forces of Rojava, who participate in an imperialist war (whether it is “local” or not does not change anything in its imperialist nature) alongside... the American and European military forces; that is to say that IL calls for participation in an imperialist war and opposes proletarian internationalism.

*“ Syriza makes the election on January 25 a real referendum. In this sense Syriza and Podemos are placeholders for the social desires that wrote history in the movement of the indignant in Spain and at Syntagma Square in the heart of Athens (...). To bet on Syriza is to vote out of power the Greek parties of order and to deselect the fascism of Golden Dawn ”*] (No Submission..., January 2015). Instead of seeing that Syriza and Podemos (in Spain) are political expressions whose so-called left radicality only aims to maintain the working class discontent and struggles on the bourgeois and capitalist state ground, and whose anti-proletarian class character is to be denounced, on the contrary IL greets them as being steps forwards... like the leftists, Trotskyists or “classical” Anarchists, and supports Syriza (and Podemos certainly too).

*“We collect signatures for referendums [and we] lead an anti-fascist work in the neighbourhood”* (Pour une fin de la tristesse, the document announcing of the founding of the group). In no way does IL reject participation in elections and it fights on the anti-fascist ground. Thus, IL brings its “radical” credit to the bourgeois democracy and submits, if it does not actively participate in them, to the timings (for instance the electoral periods) and ideological themes (defence of the bourgeois democracy against the extreme right wing “populism”) dictated and launched by the ruling class, its political staff, its left and media forces.

Political conclusion : *Interventionistische Linke*

supports a national liberation struggle (Kurdish); calls for participation in an imperialist war and in the elections; displays a frontism with the bourgeois left forces; proclaims itself anti-fascist; and carries out a leftist kind of activism that wants to substitute itself for the movement of the proletariat<sup>24</sup>... Yet, and contrary to what you seem to believe, all these points are rejected and denounced by the whole Communist Left, not only by the so-called “Italian” left, after its fights against the degeneration of the Communist International, against Stalinism, Trotskyism and Anarchism of the 1920s and 1930s until today. It means that in the reality of the class struggle, the IL positions belong to the bourgeois and capitalist camp and not to the proletarian and communist one, whatever is the revolutionary sincerity and devotion of the individuals adhering to the movement.

## **2) Need for a the Greatest Theoretical and Political Rigour**

From the communist and revolutionary proletariat’s point of view, the only “radicalness” that matters is the theoretical and programmatic rigour; or more modestly and to tell the truth, at least for ourselves, the search for the greatest theoretical and programmatic rigour. The theoretical and political confusion and eclecticism, as radical as they may appear, and above all if they place themselves in such a light, are a great danger for the revolutionaries and for the proletariat. The historical experience have largely shown it<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, today, and we could verify it in during the 2016 mobilization and demonstrations against the El Khomri law in France, the bourgeois ideology succeeded to derail the most militant parts of the proletariat, including the ones who participated in this milieu and at the “head of demos”, from any real political and theoretical interest based on the experience of the working class movement and communism, a variant of the “apoliticism” that benefits so much the bourgeois camp. And when it is not the case, for tiny minorities, it succeeded to swap the proletariat’s revolutionary theory, that is historical materialism (Marxism) and its political program, the Communist Program, for eclectic theories with a radical language that leads the militants who yield to it toward a theoretical dead-end (confusion and idealism) and to the political bourgeois ground (the cult of the Assemblies and the democratic fetishism like the *Indignados* in Spain, today *Podemos*, or *Nuit Debout* in France).

24 . The sole reference and claim to the history of the working class movement that we found in the IL texts, is precisely the catastrophic putschist action of 1923 in Hamburg launched by the already degenerating Communist International and by the German Communist Party (KPD) ...

25 . Particularly in the early 1920s in Germany.

It is not a question of adhering to a dogma or a written law, we have already expressed it, but to reclaim in a critical manner (through the debate and the confrontation) the Communist Program that the communist organizations of the past have developed and specified for long, starting from Marx and the Communist League until our days, and that it belongs to us to take up (modestly and patiently) the banner. This does not mean to retreat in our ivory tower and to wait until the proletarian masses are on strike, in the streets and in revolt (on the ground of their own class demands and not for blocking in itself a G20). On the contrary, this work of theoretical and political reappropriation and clarification can only be done closely linked with the reality of the class struggle (whatever be its level and intensity) and thus, also, through the militant intervention, as modest and limited as it may be, as moments and means of verification of the theory and the principles. It is also in this way that the revolutionaries regrouped in the communist organizations, circle, group, or party, can develop their capacity to orient themselves in the very events and, above all, in the midst of the revolutionary storm when it is launched and when it will be important to adapt the slogans and orientations from week to week, day to day, indeed hour to hour. And above all when it matters ‘not to make a mistake’ as it had been the case, for instance, with the bloody defeat in Berlin in January 1919 whose dramatic historical consequences are still paid today by humanity with its misery, its tears and its blood.

Yet, without revolutionary theory and firmness of principles (reciprocally strengthening each other), the revolutionaries themselves, as “radical as they may present themselves”, can only fall into all the traps that the bourgeois ideology and political forces will set for them and already set for them daily.

*“What appears to characterise this practice above all? A certain hostility to ‘theory’. This is quite natural, **for our ‘theory’, that is, the principles of scientific socialism, impose clearly marked limitations to practical activity – insofar as it concerns the aims of this activity, the means used in attaining these aims and the method employed in this activity.** It is quite natural for people who run after immediate ‘practical’ results to want to free themselves from such limitations and to render their practice independent of our ‘theory’.” (Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, we underline).*

It is peculiar to activism and leftist adventurism to ignore “our theory” (“our” meaning those who want to set themselves on the ground of the proletarian struggle) and thus to “free themselves from the limitations to practical activity that the proletariat’s

revolutionary theory marks”.

### **3) The Struggle between the Classes as Method of Analysis and Intervention**

The most striking aspect of the IL texts and similar Anarchist or more or less anarchistic movements is the absence of reference to the real class struggle. Yet the recognition and the constant reference to the struggle between the classes and the participation in the proletariat’s historical fight, as exploited and revolutionary class, are the connecting thread for any revolutionary activity against capitalism, the ruling class and its state. “*The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves*” is one of the main political principles of communism that defines, as Rosa Luxemburg said, the terrain and the methods of the class fight, and that “marks the limits”, among which is the rejection of any action of activist, putschist or adventurist substitution by a minority whatever it be, to the very action of the proletarians. But let’s go back to your letter.

For instance, you speak of a “radical left”. We speak of Communist Left. What do you mean by “radical left”? “Radical” does not refer to any class notion. Communist Left is based on the proletariat as exploited and revolutionary class and on the fight against opportunism and the degeneration of the Communist International, later against Stalinism during the deepest of the counter-revolutions.

A platform with the different tendencies of the “radical left”? Unless you include the Stalinist CP and the Trotskyists, which we don’t believe, the political formula and intention are particularly confused (in the first case, it is very “clear” since it is openly counter-revolutionary). But maybe you can clarify so that we can debate it?

We don’t understand why you speak of an “extra-parliamentary basis”. What do you mean by this term? The communist position, that is of the Communist Left, about the participation in the elections is the one of abstention since the 1917-1919 revolutionary wave. On the basis of this position of principle, “extra-parliamentarism” or abstentionism as ideology or fetish are at best factors of confusion when they are not traps (see the bourgeois character of the campaign on abstention during the two rounds of the 2017 presidential election in France).

An “extra-parliamentary counter-power”? Counter-

power? Of who? Of what? According to us, the experience of the working class movement on which we base our positions and verify (attempt to verify) the validity of the principles and the theory teaches us that only one counter-power can exist: the one of the working class during the period which prepares the proletarian insurrection. In this, the historical experience has come to confirm the theory developed by the historical materialism and concentrated at first into the Communist Manifesto. Moreover, the 1917 Russian experience has taught us that the only class counter-power that can rise in front of the capitalist state is the one of the workers’ councils in preparation for the insurrection.

There are other formulas that you utilize that seem to us at least lacking in precision (“to dispute the hegemony to the ruling class”). We too note that the working class, the proletariat, exploited and revolutionary class, is absent in your reflection about the “counter-power”, about “disputing the hegemony”, etc. It is the same in the IL texts which speak of “people”. For us, for the Communist Left, the proletariat is at the core of our reflections and our fights. It is the subject of the revolution: the principle quoted previously on “*the emancipation of the workers...*” is not only an abstract or ethical, nor “democratic”, formula. It is at the core of the theoretical and political method of analysis and intervention whose connecting thread is the class struggle that the communists can’t leave aside, not even for an instant, at the risk of losing any compass. (...).

There, dear comrade, is our first reaction to your letter. We sincerely hope that you will accept to reflect and discuss our political criticism, continue to debate and confront our positions so that we can clarify them and, if possible, make them public. We are convinced that the political approach you submit to us is a

topical question and the subject of a political and theoretical fight between the classes on the cusp of an historical situation which, obviously, announces great confrontations between them because of the economic crisis and the war into which capitalism precipitates the whole of humanity. As such, and far for any immediatism, that is the search for immediate results and “successes”, we are convinced that our debates apparently between a few more or less isolated militants, are of a crucial historical importance.

Fraternally, the IGCL.



## Debate within the Proletarian Camp

### About the Intermediary Groups between the Party and the Working Class

#### The Role and the Structure of the Revolutionary Organization (PCint-Battaglia Comunista, 1978, 2<sup>nd</sup> part).

**W**e publish here the last part of the 1978 text by the PCint-Battaglia Comunista (Internationalist Communist Tendency, [www.leftcom.org](http://www.leftcom.org)) on The Role and the Structure of the Revolutionary Organization. In our previous issue, we had accompanied each point of the two first parts of the text with a statement that our internal discussions had allowed us to adopt quite homogeneously. Thus we could state our general agreement with these points. The final part addressed here deals with the intermediary organs between the party and the working class on the basis of the historical experience of the PCint with the factory communist groups set up in the 1940s-1950s and the territorial communist groups set up more recently. It is, no doubt, on this question that the debate, which was called for by the British group of the ICT, the CWO, when it recently published this text in English, raises the most interrogations, nuances, even disagreements, within the proletarian camp as a whole and within our ranks. The ICT itself had to clarify and adapt its approach to the question over time and from experiences, as the CWO footnote to the text highlights. The ICT correctly stresses that the question of the intermediary organs are a full part of the understanding of the revolutionaries' role and, more specifically, of the party. Whether they are organs that the party sets up on its own initiative, factory or territorial communist groups, or whether they are struggle or action committees (whatever the name they adopt), which gather minorities of militant workers desiring to organize for the class mobilizations. No doubt that both will appear and assert themselves as means of the class struggle during the massive confrontations to come between the classes. For instance, during the 2010 massive working mobilization in France, organs had reappeared such as the “interpro [for interprofessional] general assembly” which actually was not a “unitarian general assembly” of the class but a very large “struggle committee”.

For our part, while we share the political approach of the text, including this part, we are not capable today of collectively taking a position on some precise points and arguments. We continue to reflect on the “struggle committees” (to put a label on one form of organ), which would be the direct product of the minorities of the working class and the “factory or territorial communist groups”, which would be on the initiative of the party or the communist groups. It is not a matter of opposing ones to the others of course, but to grasp the conditions and in what political framework the communists can (have the force to...) today set up the latter kind of groups. Meanwhile, we publish after this text an “internal” individual contribution to invite readers, as well as communist militants, to participate as much as possible in our own reflections and in the debate with the ICT.

#### The Class and the Party (PCint, 1978)

**T**he notion that the party is only forged immediately before the revolution and even during it completely deforms the concept of the party. If in effect the class is capable of carrying through the revolutionary offensive – which demands a particular level of political homogeneity in the class without the intervention of the politically unifying factor represented by the party, then the party itself is superfluous. If it is the class which, at a certain moment in the development of its struggle “equips itself” with the party, then the latter becomes an operational instrument which has no connection with the problem of consciousness. Once again we

are back at the famous theory of the councilists.

This is why, within the left communist movement it's necessary to fight against the conception which, while recognising the necessity of the party in carrying out the revolution, postpones the constitution of the party to a “riper” period. It is based on an underestimation of the practical tasks of the party (or organisation of revolutionaries as certain comrades like to express it). We have seen that one of the essential tasks of the party is to equip itself with operational instruments which can, in the most concrete way possible, return to the class the programme of working class emancipation,

elaborated by the party on the basis of the historical experience and existence of the proletariat. The formula “the party acts as part of the class in the class itself” says nothing, because all it means is that revolutionary militants are part of the proletarian struggle wherever they happen to be present and thus bring to it the critical positions and general orientations of the party. This is necessary but not sufficient if the party is to fulfil its role as a guide, unless one is saying that the party will undergo such numeric growth that it has a mass presence everywhere which contradicts the generally held idea that it is a ‘minority’ of the class.

It is a definitively acquired revolutionary principle that intermediary organs between party and class must exist for the entire period before and after the revolutionary offensive. These are organs the party uses to extend as far as possible the influence of its platform and orientations throughout the entire class. The class moves and struggles on the level of economic or, one might say, contractual demands. Only revolutionaries have a precise awareness of the limitations of these struggles, their inability to emancipate the class. Communists distinguish themselves from the mass of workers by the fact that even while they fight alongside the whole class in its defensive struggles they denounce the limitations of these struggles and use them to propagandise the necessity for revolution. Communists have to link the struggles of the class to a political strategy for attacking the bourgeois state. They must prepare the instruments which the party will use concretely to orientate the proletariat’s offensive when the whole system is in crisis and the struggle is becoming generalised.

The party would be failing in its fundamental duties – indeed it would be unable to function as an organisation of revolutionaries, as a party – if it neglected to work within the class with all the necessary instruments in the period leading up to the revolution, It would mean that, when the situation was objectively favourable, it would be unprepared and isolated from the class, which would result in the class being disarmed and disorientated.

The concrete possibility of making progress in the

arming of the party is naturally closely linked to the degree of maturation of the class struggle and the real relationship in the class between revolutionaries and the agents of the left wing of the bourgeoisie. This does not mean that the kinds of tools to be used cannot be exactly envisaged in the programme of the party. The proof of this is that the ‘internationalist factory groups’ envisaged in our programme, and which must be an integral part of the platform of the international party whose creation we want to contribute to, may have a difficult life today, but in other times they have had an enormous importance (from 1945 to 1948 for example). Their task is not to simply ‘incite the struggle at the economic level’ as certain comrades seem to believe, but to transmit to the class the general political principles of the party, solidifying a sympathetic layer of the class and

creating a reference point for future revolutionary struggles. The difficulty of the present situation, the low level of class consciousness, is reflected in the enormous difficulty of strengthening and extending this workers’ network. But if we miss out this point in the programme, putting it off to better times, we will render ourselves incapable of carrying out our duties when the time is ripe, since we will lack the cadre and the experience which the party can only develop through a long and combative presence in the working class.

Among the instruments which the party must equip itself with in its work towards the class and towards the revolution, the network of factory groups is the most urgent and important, but others must be studied and prepared [6] even though they don’t yet seem to be necessary

owing to the numerical weakness of revolutionaries and the unpropitious political situation. On the other hand, other organisations, such as the ‘communist youth’, must be considered products of a previous phase in both bourgeois society and the revolutionary movement and are thus now superfluous.

We reaffirm the principle that there is no class party without the instruments which really link the central organisation of the party to the class; those who



*70 years against all odds, 70 years of the PCint – Battaglia Comunista history through its main programmatic texts (in Italian). Order to the ICT : [info@leftcom.org](mailto:info@leftcom.org)*

underestimate or deny this affirmation are not working for the party.

1. The dialectical relationship between the class and its party does not disappear or go through qualitative changes during the seizure of power and the construction of the proletarian 'semi-state'. Both are only possible when the class is concentrated and united around this objective.

2. The proletarian 'semi-state' will be characterised by the soviet form discovered by the proletariat itself during the experience of the Russian revolution. The gradual disappearance of classes carried out by the practical revolutionary movement of the proletarian masses will be accompanied by the mass production of communist consciousness and, consequently, by

the gradual disappearance of the party.

3. The party will in no way identify its own structure with the structure of the "workers' state", but will accomplish its role as a political guide as long as the class recognises its own interests in the orientations it defends.

4. The need for groups of the communist left to deepen their understanding of the problems of the transition period must begin from the clear and fundamental affirmation that without a party there can be no revolution and proletarian dictatorship, just as there can be no proletarian dictatorship and workers' state without the workers' councils.

**Internationalist Communist Party (*Battaglia Comunista*)**, October 1978

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## Reflections on the Intermediary Groups between the Party and the Working Class

In the text *Nature and Tasks of Factory Groups and the Role of the Class Party*, O Damen (1965) strongly criticizes a certain "economist" viewpoint popular at the time, according to which the working class can gradually attain power by conquering the world of work, workplace by workplace, supposedly obviating the need for eventual insurrection and even rendering the party redundant. He draws on the experience of defeat of struggles led by unions to argue for the need for political leadership. He extends this criticism of the limitations of trade union struggles to struggle committees organized during the struggles outside of the unions. These transient struggle committees would also be infected by the corporatism that is inherent in every economic struggle.

It is impossible for the working class to gradually conquer power. The role of leadership of the Communist Party<sup>26</sup> is fundamental, and ultimately the political struggle of the working class leads it toward a full-on confrontation with the bourgeois state.

The two core questions are what kind of interaction is necessary between the party and the class and what is the relation between the economic and the political struggle?

*"it makes no sense for an organisation defining itself as communist to regard action among the workers as an activity to be carried out only in certain historical periods or a future circumstance of greater*

*numerical strength. The intervention of communists among the workers must always be an integral part of the activity of revolutionaries."* (Internationalist Communist Tendency, *The Unions, the Class Struggle and Communists*)<sup>27</sup>

It is reasonable to agree with this statement and still grant that workers are more or less sensible to revolutionary ideas depending on whether they are in active struggle or not.

### What kind of intervention?

The PCInt informs us that territorial and workplace workers' groups are an integral part of their program and the concrete way in which the party exercises influence within the working class. These are necessary for the political organization to become organically rooted within the class. This allows it to adapt its intervention on the basis of the class balance of power within a specific workplace or neighborhood, rather than just repeating abstract principles. The workers' groups are to be permanent organizations whose main task is political education as opposed to economic demand struggles, although party militants may participate in struggles for economic demands<sup>28</sup>.

The insistence on the need for such intermediary organs is not without precedent. It recalls of Kautsky's discussion, later adapted by Lenin in *What is to be Done?*, on trade union vs communist consciousness. Indeed, some groups today that we

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26 . By this we mean the revolutionary political vanguard of the world proletariat, not to be confused with the bourgeois political formations of the same name

27 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2011-10-27/the-unions-the-class-struggle-and-communists>

28 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2012-09-12/our-intervention-within-the-working-class>

consider to be part of the proletarian milieu (i.e. the Bordigists) continue to agitate for the formation of red unions, essentially unions under the direction of the communist party. The tactic of attempting to conquer the leadership of the trades unions was adopted by the third international, and was pursued also by the PCI before the split with *Programa Comunista*. Today the organizational framework that is to act as an intermediary between class and party is no longer the unions, but rather the internationalist workplace and territorial groups that are under the direction of the revolutionary organization.

The blatant sabotage of workers' struggles by the unions leads to the conclusion that it is their role as mediators in the sale of wage labour during a period when capitalism has become historically obsolete that leads to their eventual integration into the capitalist state. One apparent solution to this problem is precisely the organization of permanent political bodies controlled by the party within workplaces and neighbourhoods.<sup>29</sup>

### **The political struggle, the struggle for economic demands, and the role of the unions as apparatus of the capitalist state**

It's not that the unions are an ineffective tool for waging the economic struggle by the working class. Rather, they are apparatuses of the capitalist state whose function is to enforce labour discipline and to systematically sabotage workers' struggle. There was a change in the function of the unions from being genuine, though reformist, representatives of workers' interests in the ascendant phase of capitalist development, in which capitalism still had a progressive role to play in relation to the vestiges of feudalism, to ideological and repressive apparatuses of the capitalist state in the decadent phase of capitalism. This integration into the state inevitably occurs when an economic struggle of workers leads to the formation of a permanent organization devoted exclusively to demands relating to wages and conditions of work. Thus, the formation of rank and file unions is not the solution.

Therefore, it is not the complete picture to note that the unions' role of mediators of the sale of wage labour is the reason why they are today in the service of capitalism. There is a qualitative difference between the role of the unions in the period of capitalism's ascendance and today in the period of capitalism's obsolescence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was possible and necessary for the working class to struggle to reform capitalism and favour the

development of the bourgeois republic in relation to feudalism. This is no longer the case today since capitalism has outlived its usefulness. Its continued existence threatens to plunge humanity into barbarism, and the present property relations have become an obstacle to rational development. A failure to grasp this historical difference could lead to doubting the potentialities of spontaneous economic struggles that adopt modes of organizing themselves in response to the needs of the struggle.

It is the task of revolutionaries to intervene in working class struggles wherever they appear, including in struggles waged by unionized workers or organized by the unions themselves, particularly to contest the leadership of the unions in these, and to draw out the political implications that are immanent in such economic struggles. It is the position of the working class in the economic system that compels its members to engage in struggle for the improvement of their immediate condition. The economic and political struggles are dialectically related and it is through the intervention and leadership of the revolutionary organization that the political program of the working class is discovered by the workers in struggle. The solution to the apparent paradox that workers are moved to struggle due to their economic position as wage slaves for the valorization of capital and the inherent limitations of the purely economic struggle is precisely the revolutionary political organization.

*"...the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political centre to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilisation of the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually change places; and thus the economic and the political factor in the period of the mass strike, now widely removed, completely separated or even mutually exclusive, as the theoretical plan would have them, merely form the two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle..."* (Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike*)<sup>30</sup>

The problem of the interaction between the economic and political in the working class struggle has important political and organizational implications. Where and how should the revolutionaries focus their intervention?

The intervention does not come like a bolt out of the blue from self-styled revolutionaries completely divorced from the realities of their class, because one of the tasks of the party is that of political education of its cadre and sympathizers. The organization of

29 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2011-10-27/the-unions-the-class-struggle-and-communists>

30 . *The Mass Strike*, chapter IV, by Rosa Luxemburg. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1906/mass-strike/ch04.htm>

workplace and territorial groups is how the PCint tries to respond to this need. However, it may be worth raising two points here. If a group is constituted by members of a particular workplace, is this not itself a concession to corporatism? Why should they be insulated from their class comrades in other workplaces? Territorially based groups are an improvement in this regard. Territorially based party organizations, essentially sections, can do the work of political education by holding regular public meetings, educational workshops, by attending demonstrations and pickets, selling literature, distributing agitational propaganda, and through their interactions with workers' groups (circles, nuclei) that spontaneously organize themselves following or during a period of heightened class struggle. The other point would be to caution against underestimating the potential of struggles that begin in the workplace as economic struggles to become politicized and generalize to the streets and subsequently to other sectors of production. For such an evolution to lead to a revolutionary outcome, there needs to be an organized expression of the communist programme, an expression that is visible to the workers in struggle, and that is taken up by them. Therefore, the Party of tomorrow, the communist groups of today, should reach out to the circles, nuclei, committees of politicized workers that emerge more or less spontaneously as a result of the objective needs posed by given struggles, and not try to artificially create them where workers are not actually in struggle.

*“Communists must give out propaganda, proposals, be an active part in the organs of self-organised struggle: the workers' assemblies, agitation committees. In doing so they must always try to provide a communist political framework.”* (ICC, *International Review* #21, 1980)<sup>31</sup>

The permanent work of political education is what allows the Party to be rooted in its class. Then during periods of explosive class struggle, when the working masses tend to be more sensible to their newly discovered political weapon that is the communist program, the Party intervention can be most effective. And it is the result, in terms of balance of power between classes, that determines whether the confrontation was a (partial) victory or defeat for the working class. This is reflected in an increase or decrease in revolutionary consciousness.

*“The class struggle in the period of capitalist decadence advances explosively. Sudden eruptions appear which surprise even those elements who were the most combative in the proceeding round of*

*struggle, and these eruptions can immediately go beyond previous experience in terms of the consciousness and maturity developed in the new struggle. The proletariat can only really organise itself on a unitary level within the struggle. To the extent that the struggle itself becomes permanent, it causes the unitary organisations of the class to grow and become stronger.”* (idem)<sup>32</sup>

One intervention revolutionaries ought to make, given an assessment of the objective social conditions, would be to argue for the sending of mass delegations to other places of work to spread the struggle on a territorial basis, and thus to break the sectoral and local confines. This is precisely where the struggle of the working class demands the formation of territorial workers' councils (not the factory councils argued for by Gramsci) that are the means by which the class exercises its power, with its revolutionary political organization assuming leadership of the councils. The critical battle does not occur within the walls of the factory, though it often starts here, but when the struggle begins to transcend the confines of a particular workplace, factory, or sector. It would be erroneous to think that permanent organizations of economic mediation, which trap workers in the confines of their workplace, sector, enterprise, could be used as a shortcut to politicize the working class in revolutionary manner, and it is impossible for the vanguard to organize in a premeditated manner the explosions of class struggle that do occur.

The interaction between party and class is not one-directional, the party teaching the class. The political lessons borne by the party are the product of the historical struggle of the working class, history being an ongoing process. Yet one of the functions of the political organization is to bring back to the class the lessons of its previous fights including on the political nature of the class struggle. One of these lessons is that in the historical epoch of capitalist decadence, struggles for economic demands are best served by instruments that are adapted to the particular situation and that arise as a result of a concrete need. As a result, they are necessarily transient phenomena. For the purpose of the struggle to defend, at least temporarily, working and living conditions, strike committees and neighbourhood assemblies are well suited as was demonstrated by the Telefonica workers in 2015 and the Montreal student mobilization in 2012, respectively. Furthermore, the strike committees and general assemblies that are organized in response to the

31 . [http://en.internationalism.org/ir/021\\_workers\\_groups.html](http://en.internationalism.org/ir/021_workers_groups.html)

32 . The organisation of the proletariat outside periods of open struggle (workers' groups, nuclei, circles, committees) [http://en.internationalism.org/ir/021\\_workers\\_groups.html](http://en.internationalism.org/ir/021_workers_groups.html)

needs of a given struggle are the genuine “schools of socialism”, not unions in one form or another.

*“communists must be inside the struggle to give out propaganda, proposals, be an active part in the organs of self-organised struggle: the workers’ assemblies, agitation and strike committees and on the picket line. In doing so they must always try to provide a communist political framework at the same time as supporting every initiative which tends to the development of the self-activity of those involved. There is no magical formula in the demand struggles of the working class that can open the way to greater class consciousness as the Trotskyists for example claim. It is not the task of communists to raise demands but to support those demands that extend the struggle and criticise those that don’t.”* (ICT, *Theses on the Role of the Communists in the Economic Struggle of the Working Class*)<sup>33</sup>

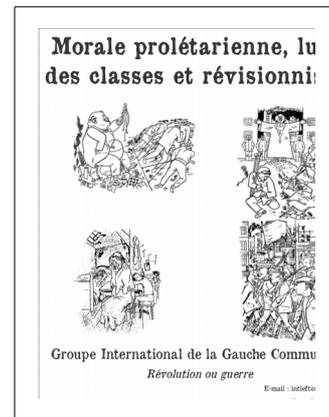
The fight of the Spanish telecom workers in 2015 did not occur as a result of political action organized by the revolutionary Party, through a red union or another intermediary organ between Party and class that is under the direction of the Party. What motivated it was the recognition by a group of workers of their economic position and their immediate collective interests. It occurred in the context of outright sabotage by the unions. Moments such as these are critical because the social realities, plain as day to the participants in the struggle, make it so they are more receptive to and can respond dynamically to a political program that they recognize as its own. There is a confluence between the lived reality of workers around the world, and the perspective that is provided by the revolutionary groups.

In the current historical period, global capitalism is in the midst of a crisis for which there is no solution short of massive devaluation of assets and physical destruction of a large portion of the constant and variable capital through a world war. The way that the ruling classes try to resolve this crisis in the meantime, before the political preconditions<sup>34</sup> are in place for this mutual mass slaughter, is by increasing the rate of profit by intensifying exploitation. As the economic imperatives of the capitalist system impose themselves more and more, the ruling class will be constrained to attack the working class in an increasingly brutal fashion. The working class will respond by engaging in defensive struggles, organizing itself in mass assemblies, strike

committees, as well as circles and nuclei of militant workers, as it does so. The nuclei of militant workers that emerge from these struggles are the intermediary organs between party and class. In addition to having a political presence in the unitary organizations of the class, the communist organizations must connect with the militant workers’ groups that will emerge from the struggles to come, and provide them with a revolutionary political perspective.

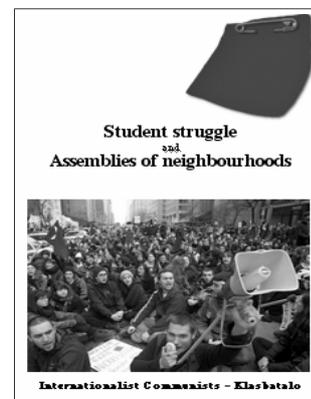
Stavros

## **Proletariat Morality, Class Struggle and Revisionism**



**Against the opportunist theories of the International Communist Current of the years 2000... Read our pamphlet in French *Morale prolétarienne, lutte des classes et révisionisme* !**

## **Student Struggle and Assemblies of Neighbourhoods in Québec (2012)**



**(Internationalist Communists – Klasbatalo)**

33 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-02-26/theses-on-the-role-of-communists-in-the-economic-struggle-of-the-working-class>

34 . Definitive subjugation of the proletariat of the main industrial powers.

## **Internal Debate on the Period of Transition between Capitalism and Communism**

**A**gainst those who wait for the sudden “Revolution” and who conceive it thus as an “event” instead of seeing it as a political process, the Communist Left has always put forwards, in the tradition of Marx and Engels, the conception of the inevitability of a period of transition between capitalism and communism. As well, the Communist Left has rejected as a counter-revolutionary conception the revisionist position according to which it suffices to infiltrate the bourgeois state from inside to set in motion a gradual change in society. Historically these political currents, which have always represented the influence of the bourgeois ideology upon the proletariat, were in particular Anarchism and the Social Democracy.

Our tradition thus takes over the political lessons that the communist parties and organizations of the past were able to draw from the history of the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution in particular. These lessons can be simplified to some points of importance:

- between the capitalist society and the communist society, there will be a period of transition which can't be other than the Dictatorship of the Proletariat;
- the revolutionary proletariat does not use the bourgeois state but destroys it from top to bottom to substitute it by a proletarian state, a Commune state or a half-state, which is to disappear with the abolition of the social classes;
- the fate of the revolution is not linked to the development of an economy of the period of transition but to the development of the world revolution.

These points are class frontiers which are the common heritage of the whole Communist Left, in particular the “Italian” tradition, and which enable us to define the revolutionaries from the different kinds of capitalist lefts.

So, the aim of these theses<sup>35</sup> will be to go further than these three “class frontiers” mentioned above and to study more deeply the question of the period of transition within the framework of our political tradition, that is the Communist Left. We have no claim to know all, even less to be right on everything, nor to set up here definitive positions. But we have the firm conviction to be part of a debate within a political tradition that still exists, against all odds, and that this debate is part of the process of formation of the world communist party.

Finally, these theses are just a starting point for the discussion and the debate in our organization and, we hope, more widely within the Communist Left. For this, the text attempts to pose the basic of discussion. There are thus questions which are not necessarily dealt with here but that will be for sure in future contributions as the discussion will develop.

### **Draft Thesis on the Period of Transition**

#### **Thesis #1**

The goal of the Communist movement is the abolition of the social classes and the state which appeared historically as mediator between the different classes of the successive modes of production (ancient, asiatic, feudal, capitalist). The function of the state is thus double: it must at first ensure that the inescapable conflict between the antagonistic social classes does not come to the point where the society tears to pieces, that is that it ensures the order through the use of violence. Nevertheless, this “social order” ensured by the state is a society divided into social classes whose interests are fully contradictory since one class exploits another one. In other terms, the state – whatever the type appeared in history whether as the monarchy by divine right or the modern democratic

state – is an organ for maintaining the class exploitation and domination.

#### **Thesis #2**

As the proletariat is fully dispossessed within the capitalist society, its revolution does not aim to establish a new society of exploitation based on new class formations but to, on the contrary, abolish the society of class and its institutions, in particular the state. Indeed, this is unlike the nascent bourgeoisie under feudalism whose economic activity within feudalism could enable it to slowly establish itself within the feudal mode of production despite its limitations and its hindrances. Thus while the bourgeois revolution only ratified and removed the constraints to a process already under way, the proletariat does not possess anything, no power and no privilege, which could enable it to establish a new

35 . Having utilized the format “thesis”, we think more appropriate not to make direct references to historical texts of the Communist Left. That being said, this does not mean that the thesis do not come within the scope of this tradition. The reader can refer to the bibliography at the end of the text for the theoretical and political affiliation.

class domination. Thus, the proletarian revolution is the abolition of all classes.

**Thesis #3**

Between the bourgeois society and communism there is a period of transition during which, again unlike the bourgeois revolution, the proletariat must first and foremost conquer the political power. The conquest of the political power enables the proletariat to ensure its domination and willingness upon the society. Indeed, the present ruling class won't give up its privileges without a fight. The political power makes it possible to prevent any attempt of bourgeois restoration and enables the proletariat to initiate economic and social changes to society that the abolition of capitalist society requires. This period of transition is none other than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

**Thesis #4**

The conquest of political power by the proletariat is not to be confused with the conquest of democracy, of a parliamentary majority, in brief with the conquest of the bourgeois state. Within the bourgeois state apparatus, it is only possible to modernize and reorganize the capitalist society. Historically, this has always been the final aim of the capitalist left (Social-democracy and Stalinism) and has always served the interests of capital in general against the proletariat. As such, these reorganizations only increased the contradictions of capitalism while postponing momentarily its fall.

**Thesis #5**

The conquest of the political power by the proletariat, thus the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat, above all implies the destruction of the bourgeois state and the institutions which are linked to it (permanent army, bureaucracy, police, etc.). In its place, the revolutionary proletariat will establish a "Commune state", a half-state, which is not called to perpetuate itself, unlike the other types of states of humanity's history, but must on the contrary extinguish with the abolition of the classes.

**Thesis #6**

The proletariat will inescapably resort to violence and to authority during the revolution to break the bourgeois institutions, oppose the bourgeois counter-revolution and ensure at least the neutrality of the middle strata. Nevertheless violence within the proletariat must be avoided as possible.

**Thesis #7**

From the political point of view, the dictatorship of the proletariat will establish the destruction of the permanent armies and the general arming of the proletariat (red army) as first measures. The

traditional liberties of the modern democratic regimes will be abolished for the bourgeoisie; essentially the freedom of press, the right to vote, the freedom to pursue economic activities, etc. Obligatory work will be enforced for the idlers, that is for the bourgeoisie.

**Thesis #8**

The workers' councils are historically the organs of the proletarian insurrection. Other forms of struggle can be associated to them, for instance the strike committees or other forms of political power that history will produce. The important point is that these forms of organization set themselves as proletarian power against the bourgeois state. In other terms, there are no absolute forms of organization. On the other hand, these must permanently enable the expression of the communist program, otherwise they have no more use for the proletariat and pass to side of the bourgeois state. The best example of this remains the workers' councils during the German revolution of 1919 that, under the leadership of Social Democracy, laid down their arms and restored political power to the bourgeoisie.

**Thesis #9**

Even though abolished for the rest of civil society, democracy can be utilized in the workers' councils to expose and settle the inescapable divergences within the class in regards with the revolutionary process. Nevertheless, we can't make democracy a principle. It cannot be an antidote to bureaucracy and opportunism. The famous measures of the Paris Commune (workers' wage for the state employees, revocability, etc.) are necessary but not sufficient. The only proletarian antidote against the danger of degeneracy is the faithfulness to the communist program whose responsibility belongs to the class party, and the ever-widening geographical extension of the revolution.

**Thesis #10**

The party being both the political organ of the class and its militant vanguard, it is clear that its members will assume front-rank political functions in the various organs that the revolution will set up. According to this conception, the debate to know whether the party or the class takes the power becomes artificial. Nevertheless, the party does not make the revolution in place of the class. It is the vanguard of the class. Thus, it must constantly work for the spreading of class consciousness within the proletariat and at the same time assume its role of political leadership within the organs of the revolution, such as the workers councils.

**Thesis #11**

The state of the period of transition has no proletarian character. On the contrary, like all other kinds of states, it keeps a clearly conservative character. This is due to the double function of the state. Firstly, it ensures the proletariat's political domination over the bourgeoisie. But secondly, and from this it derives its conservative character, it tends to maintain order. Yet, the period of transition, as its name shows, is transitory. Thus there is no order to maintain or classes to ensure the mediation for the interest of a ruling class. On the contrary, the more the revolution spreads, geographically, economically and socially, the more the struggle of the classes increases until the abolition of the classes.

**Thesis #12**

The proletariat must make sure to maintain political control over the "Commune-state" and to distrust it. This distrust is expressed above all in the full autonomy that the communist party must keep in relation to the state. Indeed, a party-state fusion must be definitively prohibited since thereby the "logic of the state" would ultimately prevail over the communist program in case the revolutionary movement slows down. The party would be voided of its revolutionary content as occurred in Russia in the 1920s.

**Thesis #13**

The workers' councils and the strike committees are not state organisms strictly speaking. First and foremost, they are organs of insurrection and later, when the political power will be conquered, they'll become the basis for new common institutions of the communist society. For its part, the "half-state" will only be in charge of the repression and violence and will be administrated according to the principles of the Paris Commune (workers' salaries, revocability, etc.) by "state employees" chosen by society. It won't hold any political autonomy and will constantly be controlled by the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat does not identify itself with the state of the period of transition, the latter being one aspect of the former whose bad sides<sup>36</sup> must be absolutely limited.

**Thesis #14**

The period of transition is not a mode of production. It is a society in transition between capitalism and communism. The development of the revolution is

36 . "In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another (...) an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy" (Engels, Postscript to the Introduction on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Paris Commune, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1891, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm>).

not measured by the degree of improvement of the period of transition or by the rapidity of the construction of socialism, but first and foremost by the extension of the revolution at the international level. All the class energies must overcome the first territorial limits of the revolution and focus towards the international. The international spreading of the revolution is the premise for the economic and social changes that will lead to the abolition of the classes.

**Thesis #15**

To accelerate the extension of the revolution at the world level, the tactic of the revolutionary war is to be avoided since it tends to substitute the natural antagonism of the bourgeois society, proletariat vs bourgeoisie, with the antagonism between the bourgeois states vs the "proletarian state". But, as we have seen above, the interests of the revolution are not totally identifiable with the interests of the state of the period of transition. The main enemy of the proletariat in a given country is not such or such other "imperialist ruling bourgeoisie" but directly its own "national" bourgeoisie.

**Thesis #16**

The programs of 1848 in Germany and 1917 in Russia proclaiming the necessity of state capitalism (centralization of the economy by the state according to the Communist Manifesto and state ownership according to *The State and the Revolution*<sup>37</sup>, was a transitory program adapted to countries little developed from the capitalist point of view while waiting for the world revolution. Since 1871, it is outmoded for Western Europe according to Marx, but was still justified in countries like Russia in 1917 where, despite a very concentrated proletariat, the rest of the national economy was almost at the first stage of capitalism. The development of a state capitalism under the control of the communist party awaiting for the world revolution aimed to develop and industrialize the economy.

**Thesis #17**

Thus, the mystery of the nature of the USSR is simply resolved. The USSR was a society in a period of transition during which the class party established a state capitalism awaiting for the extension of the revolution to other countries. So there has never been any socialist economic basis (for instance the nationalizations) or socialist conquests to preserve as Stalinism and Trotskyism argued, their function being ultimately to give a "workers'" endorsement to a system which was no more. The only proletarian

37 . "Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State." (Engels and Marx, *Communist Manifesto*).

content in USSR was thus the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is the workers councils with, acting in their rank, a party having a clear vision of the process of the world revolution. Once this party rejected its fundamental principle while adopting the counter-revolutionary principle of socialism in one country, it only remained in USSR a state capitalism led by a party having passed to the other side of the barricade.

#### **Thesis #18**

Today, most of the geographical areas of the world are industrialized and developed. The “state capitalism” program is fully obsolete. This means too that the state of the period of transition must not assume an economic function. The land, the factories, etc. need not be nationalized by a “proletarian state” but must be directly socialized by the community. Nevertheless the Commune-state remains indispensable to repress the bourgeoisie and so enable the socializations.

#### **Thesis #19**

The risk of an antagonism between the proletariat and the state, as in Kronstadt or St Petersburg during the 1921 strikes, becomes small given that the half-state does not assume a role of economic management as it does in the case of the state-owner<sup>38</sup> advocated by Lenin in *The State and the Revolution*.

#### **Thesis #20**

The first economic-social measure that the dictatorship of the proletariat will take is to drastically reduce the duration of the working day. This measure can be realized through the setting to work of the idlers (essentially the ruling class) and through the reorientation of the parasitic jobs associated with the new middle classes (advertising, insurance, management, police, public services, etc.). The reduction in the working day will allow the proletariat to devote itself to other activities, for instance to political militancy. In the period of transition, the principle of the labour vouchers<sup>39</sup> will be temporarily put forwards to replace the salary and the money. At the same time, the socialization of the

production and distribution and the extension of the collective institutions will enable the spreading of free distribution, thus making the labour vouchers useless in the superior phase of communism.

#### **Thesis #21**

With the extension of the world revolution, the development of the economic and social transformations will be verified above all in the extension of the satisfaction of the proletariat's needs. Indeed, there is no competition between capitalism and the first stage of the communist society. Communism does not have to be more democratic or more productive than capitalism. These are capitalist criteria which won't be able to describe how the communist society functions. The only criteria that counts is the satisfaction of the proletariat's needs.

#### **Thesis #22**

The period of transition and the Commune-state that is associated to the former have played their historical role when the society has come to be able to function according to the principle “*from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs*” and “the administration of the human beings” associated to the democratic bourgeois state is replaced by “the administration of things”. Then, the state extinguishes and the era of liberty opens up for humanity.

Robin.

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38 . “Accounting and control, that is mainly what is needed for the “smooth working”, for the proper functioning, of the first phase of communist society. All citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. All citizens becomes employees and workers of a single countrywide state ‘syndicate’” (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*).

39 . To deepen the notion of the labour certificates, one can read the *Critique of the Gotha Program* by Marx, the *Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* by the Group of International Communists (GIC) and above all the criticism of this text in the journal *Bilan* of the Italian Left fraction.

## Text of the Working Class Movement

**F**aced with the misinterpretations and incomprehensions of numerous epigones, Friedrich Engels had to clarify in various correspondences what the method of historical materialism that K. Marx and himself had developed was. Still today, and more than ever, it is highly useful to read or re-read them to attempt to make this method our own, so that we can grasp and understand the various shake-ups that the capitalist world has gone through since 2008. Evidently, it is not a question of making it into a dogma, which, in fact, would already be giving it up and betraying it. There is no recipe or list of criteria to understand it, to apply and develop it for each particular situation. On the contrary, it is important to utilize “this materialist dialectic” that Engels defined as “our best working tool and our sharpest weapon” (*L. Feuerbach and the End of Classical Philosophy*) to try to understand the fundamental meaning of the events and the dynamic which underlies them; to grasp the motive force that provokes what are presented to us as “irrational accidents”, like the Brexit victory, Trump’s election, or still the threats of nuclear war with North Korea...; so that we don’t allow ourselves to “be imposed upon by the antithesis, insuperable for the still common old metaphysics, between true and false, good and bad, identical and different, necessary and accidental” (*idem*) and rational and irrational, we are tempted to add...

### F. Engels, Letter to Borgius, (January 25<sup>th</sup> 1894)

Here is the answer to your questions!

(1) What we understand by the economic conditions, which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society, are the methods by which human beings in a given society produce their means of subsistence and exchange the products among themselves (in so far as division of labour exists). Thus the *entire technique* of production and transport is here included. According to our conception this technique also determines the method of exchange and, further, the division of products, and with it, after the dissolution of tribal society, the division into classes also and hence the relations of lordship and servitude and with them the state, politics, law, etc. Under economic conditions are further included the geographical basis on which they operate and those remnants of earlier stages of economic development which have actually been transmitted and have survived – often only through tradition or the force of inertia; also of course the external milieu which surrounds this form of society.

If, as you say, technique largely depends on the state of science, science depends far more still on the *state* and the *requirements* of technique. If society has a technical need, that helps science forward more than ten universities. The whole of hydrostatics (Torricelli, etc.) was called forth by the necessity for regulating the mountain streams of Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We have only known anything reasonable about electricity since its technical applicability was discovered. But unfortunately it has become the custom in Germany to write the history of the sciences as if they had

fallen from the skies.

(2) We regard economic conditions as the factor which ultimately determines historical development. But race is itself an economic factor. Here, however, two points must not be overlooked:

(a) Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the *cause and alone active*, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself. The state, for instance, exercises an influence by tariffs, free trade, good or bad fiscal system; and even the deadly inanition and impotence of the German petty bourgeois, arising from the miserable economic position of Germany from 1640 to 1830 and expressing itself at first in pietism, then in sentimentality and cringing servility to princes and nobles, was not without economic effect. It was one of the greatest hindrances to recovery and was not shaken until the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars made the chronic misery an acute one. So it is not, as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic position produces an automatic effect. Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through

them and alone leads to understanding.

(b) Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will or according to a collective plan or even in a definitely defined, given society. Their efforts clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by *necessity*, which is supplemented by and appears under the forms of *accident*. The necessity which here asserts itself amidst all accident is again ultimately economic necessity. This is where the so-called great men come in for treatment. That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at that particular time in that given country is of course pure accident. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute, and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found. That Napoleon, just that particular Corsican, should have been the military dictator whom the French Republic, exhausted by its own war, had rendered necessary, was an accident; but that, if a Napoleon had been lacking, another would have filled the place, is proved by the fact that the man has always been found as soon as he became necessary: Caesar, Augustus, Cromwell, etc. While Marx discovered the materialist conception of history, Thierry, Mignet, Guizot, and all the English historians up to 1850 are the proof that it was being striven for, and the discovery of the same conception by Morgan proves that the time was ripe for it and that indeed it *had* to be discovered.

So with all the other accidents, and apparent accidents, of history. The further the particular sphere which we are investigating is removed from the

economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more shall we find it exhibiting accidents in its development, the more will its curve run in a zig-zag. So also you will find that the axis of this curve will approach more and more nearly parallel to the axis of the curve of economic development the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with.

In Germany the greatest hindrance to correct understanding is the irresponsible neglect by literature of economic history. It is so hard, not only to disaccustom oneself of the ideas of history drilled into one at school, but still more to rake up the necessary material for doing so. Who, for instance, has read old G. von Gülich, whose dry collection of material nevertheless contains so much stuff for the clarification of innumerable political facts!

For the rest, the fine example which Marx has given in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* should already, I think, provide you fairly well with information on your questions, just because it is a practical example. I have also, I believe, already touched on most of the points in *Anti-Dühring* I, Chapters 9-11, and II, 2-4, as well as in III, I, or Introduction, and then in the last section of *Feuerbach*.

Please do not weigh each word in the above too carefully, but keep the connection in mind; I regret that I have not the time to work out what I am writing to you so exactly as I should be obliged to do for publication.

F. Engels

([https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894/letters/94\\_01\\_25.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894/letters/94_01_25.htm))

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

*Student Struggle and Assemblies of Neighbourhood* (Internationalist Communists - Klasbatalo)  
*La dégénérescence de l'IC : le PCF (1924-1927)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)  
*Groupe des Travailleurs Marxistes (Mexique, 1938)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French and Spanish)  
*La question de la guerre (1935)* (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)  
*Morale prolétarienne, lutte de classes et révisionnisme* (IGCL from the IFICC, only in French and Spanish)  
*Unions Against the Working Class* (1976, reprinted from the ICC Pamphlet).

## OUR POSITIONS

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

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

## OUR ACTIVITY

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

## OUR ORIGINS

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