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In The Midst of Widespread Confusion, The Compass of The Proletarian Struggle

International Situation

Election of Biden: Successful Democratic, Identity and Anti-Racist Campaigns against The US and International Proletariat

USA: Left Racialism as A Tool of Union Sabotage

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Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Statement on the Internationalist Communist Tendency’s 2020 Platform

Debate on the Period of Transition:

Correspondence on The Theses of the “Gauche communiste de France”
on The Nature of the State (*Internationalisme* #9, 1946)

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In The Midst of Widespread Confusion, The Compass of The Proletarian Struggle

“The criteria that guide us in the examination of social antagonisms limited to a sector of the capitalist world are of two kinds: first of all, it is a question of identifying, from an international point of view, the elements that generate the modification of social relations in order to bring out the fundamental antagonism governing the class struggle of a given period; secondly, it will be necessary to discern, through appearances, secondary and contingent facts, surface contradictions, the tendencies that dominate social evolution, the elements that characterize the nature and function of the classes in question” (Communisme #20, 1938, bulletin of the Fraction belge de la Gauche communiste internationale¹).

The historical break that occurred in early 2020 with the global spread of Covid-19 is no longer questioned today. The before and after is clear for everyone, regardless of the respective class points of view, bourgeois and proletarian. Only the various petty-bourgeois strata who are powerless, and according to many today desperate, can still delude themselves about a return to yesterday's situation. The open economic crisis, which was smouldering and was bound to erupt, exploded in an unexpected form as a result of the pandemic. The paralysis of a large part of world capitalist production was unprecedented in its suddenness, simultaneity and magnitude. Ten months later, company closures are multiplying, lay-offs exploding and unemployment intensifying. And for the proletarians who still keep their jobs, the conditions of exploitation deteriorate brutally and dramatically. Yet the bill for the trillions of dollars and euros issued and thrown on the markets to avoid the even more brutal paralysis of the economy and the financial sector is not yet presented to them. It will be painful. For all of them, misery and widespread suffering are the future. In addition to the cost of the crisis, there will also be the one of imperialist and war tensions, military spending, inevitably destined to increase and presented under the guise of various so-called "recovery" plans, "major works" or "relocation" of national production.

Let's admit it, like many, we thought that the pandemic would only be a parenthesis, a contingency, the match that had set fire to the powder keg that was just waiting to explode. But it has become an integral part of the crisis and of the exacerbation of social antagonisms, one of the elements *“that generate the modification of social relations [allowing] to bring out the fundamental antagonism governing the class struggle”* of the current period. As a contingent and sudden factor, it led to the rupture of the international dynamic of workers' struggles that was just beginning to prevail and develop, and of which the two months of strikes and violent street demonstrations in France in the winter of 2019-2020 had been the advanced point. The proletariat then found itself disoriented and powerless in the face of the first

outbursts of the crisis, unable to respond to it on its own class ground because of health fears and generalized confinement. The bourgeoisie was able to use the pandemic to its political advantage against the proletariat by sowing both confusion and fear in its ranks, preaching national unity and developing as never before its social and police control over the population. To this day, and even if some struggles are beginning to emerge here and there, particularly against redundancies or, as in India, where workers' strikes and peasants' demonstrations have multiplied, there is no significant proletarian reaction to the crisis that can indicate a real workers' recovery.

Nevertheless, the fact that the bourgeoisie felt the need to launch, starting from the United States, a successful large-scale ideological and political offensive, including at the international level, on identity and racialism aimed at sowing confusion and division in the proletarian ranks according to origin and skin colour, indicates that the instrumentalization of the pandemic will not be enough to postpone indefinitely the proletarian reactions to the scale of the attacks. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the international proletariat, there is no doubt that there will be massive confrontations of historical scale between the classes. The real question is whether the proletariat will be able to thwart the various traps that will be set up on its road and clear, even minimally, the way to its insurrection, to the destruction of the capitalist state and to the exercise of its class dictatorship.

This is where the sticking-point actually lies. The dispersion and weakness of the revolutionary minorities of the proletariat, sometimes even their sectarian failings, do not allow us to envisage in the immediate future an effective dynamic towards their grouping in party. Now, what but a party, if not at least communist groups speaking with a united voice on essential questions, is able to thwart the various traps and obstacles and to light the way towards communist revolution? To orient and direct the class struggle against the world bourgeoisie and capitalism? For our part, this is our main concern and priority.

December 25th 2020

1 . The FBGCI was the Belgian group of the minority of the Ligue des communistes internationalistes who split with it and joined the Italian Fraction in 1937.

International Situation

Communiqué on The Situation in the United States – November 7th, 2020 Election of Biden: Successful Democratic, Identity and Anti-Racist Campaigns against The US and International Proletariat

Trump is beaten. After a week of counting the pro-Biden ballots sent in by mail, the announced electoral "remontada", including by Trump himself, did take place. The American bourgeoisie can legitimately shout of success. Isn't this proof of its political mastery? Didn't it succeed in imposing the presidential change that it had obviously deemed necessary since the outbreak of the economic crisis and the pandemic? And to appoint Biden? Wasn't he supported by practically all the different bourgeois factions and the state apparatus, including, and publicly, by the highest military officers, some of the Republicans themselves, and even Fox News, the pro-Trump news channel? But, perhaps more importantly for its success, did it not succeed in mobilizing as never before for these elections? In a country where voter turnout has always been historically low, around 50%, all records since 1900 have been broken and 67% of the American electorate voted.

The electoral and democratic mystification comes out strengthened after months of tensions, devastating pandemic, anti-racist demonstrations and armed provocations by paramilitary militias, mostly from the extreme right. And this at a time when the U.S. proletariat, like the international proletariat, is suffering the full brunt, brutally, dramatically and massively, of the explosion of the capitalist economic crisis through unprecedented attacks on its living and working conditions. To this day, and since the outbreak of the pandemic and the crisis, the ideological and political offensive² of the American ruling class – at the instigation of the Democratic Party, its most left-wing fractions, such as the *Black Lives Matter* and leftists of all kinds – on questions of racism-antiracism, identity, etc., and more broadly around the defense of democracy and the state, has succeeded in masking class antagonisms, occupying the street and the social terrain and thus preventing any proletarian expression, any significant workers' struggle, against the brutal and dramatic effects of the crisis. For all those who may have fallen into the trap, or the illusion, of believing that the proletariat could benefit from the anti-racist and identity campaign and demonstrations, especially because they

were violent and radical, the lesson is a harsh and the balance is ruthless.

At the time of writing, we cannot predict in full detail the immediate aftermath of the defeat of Trump and the conditions of the transition period between now and January, in particular the possibility of violent street demonstrations, including bloody clashes between armed militias. Nevertheless, the end of the electoral process itself, the victory of the Democrats and of Biden, signals the end of a period, of a particular episode, which had begun with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its accelerating and brutal consequences on the outbreak of the economic crisis that had been in the making for months. The bourgeoisie emerges victorious in this mainly ideological and political battle, which it wins against the American and international proletariat. It suffices to remember that just a year ago, social revolts exploded on all continents and many tended to be on proletarian ground, on the terrain of the defense of living and working conditions, as one of the longest proletarian strikes in France was maturing, made up of street demonstrations, sometimes violent, general assemblies, opposition to the unions, which went on to paralyze a large part of the country for two months. A year ago, the dynamic of class confrontations was different and was situated on the terrain of the exploited and revolutionary class, or class against class, capitalism against proletariat. Today, the bourgeoisie has succeeded in imposing its own terrain, that of the defense of democracy behind the state and the forces of the left, where the internationalist class criterion has given way to the nationalist one of the people. The electoral victory of Biden and the massive participation of voters only concludes the success of this bourgeois offensive.

With The Crisis, The Wearing Out of The Trump Card

For many, including Marxist revolutionaries, the election of the *unpredictable* Trump as president was an accident illustrating the loss of political control of the American bourgeoisie and its state, and for some even the expression of a political crisis. This was not so³. Faced with the powerlessness of previ-

2 . See our June 5th, 2020, joint statement with the GCCF : <http://igcl.org/Anti-police-brutality-protests-in-627>

3. See in particular our articles in *Revolution or War #7*, for instance: <http://igcl.org/The-Proletarians-Must-Respond-to>.

ous policies, including those of Obama, to halt its historical decline, American capital demanded a reaction seeking to break the uninterrupted dynamic of weakening on the world stage; economic and industrial weakening of course; imperialist weakening and of its global leadership and authority. It was therefore necessary to find a disruptive personality capable of embodying and assuming the necessary rupture.

*“No doubt that if most Trump supporters had been asked back in 2015, “Of all the 300-plus million Americans, who would you like to become president?” their first answer wouldn’t have been “Donald J. Trump.” But no other national politician has displayed the gut-level awareness that nothing less than **policy disruption was needed** on many fronts, combined with **the willingness to enter the arena** and the ability to **inspire mass support** (...). If the price is more bombast and even downright vulgarity, and less regard for policy procedure and for the legitimate sensitivities of many genuinely aggrieved groups, than even many Trumpers would like to see, given American politics’ failure to date to provide a more reassuring disruptor, it’s sadly one that’s worth paying.” (The National Interest, Why Trump Deserves Reelection?, Oct 10, 2020, we underline).*

The author of the article arguing for Trump's reelection did not understand, or does not want to understand, that his arguments, valid in 2016 and probably still in early 2020, are no longer valid today. Until last February, Trump seemed destined to be re-elected, even if the more "refined" sectors of the bourgeoisie on the East and West coasts, in New York-Boston and Los Angeles-San Francisco, would have to hold their noses in face of Trump's vulgarity. The explosion of the pandemic and the sudden outbreak, as well as the sheer magnitude of the economic crisis due to the former, reshuffled the cards and changed the priorities for the American bourgeoisie. To face the emergency and prevent the rise of proletarian reactions, even suffocating the few that arose in the face of the dangers of the coronavirus in the workplace, the Trumpian fury and fracas as well as his crass infantil stupidity - "Is there a way we can do something, by an injection [of disinfectant] inside or almost a cleaning?" the virus - were played one last time and until exhaustion. The incessant and repeated provocations both in the face of the pandemic, refusal to wear masks, support for armed militias to counter the confinements, his reactions in the face of the murders of black Americans by the police, his racist support for white supremacists, his call for the mobilization of extreme right-wing militias and their armed occupation of public buildings, and his announcement that he would not respect the electoral result if he lost, have contributed to

polarizing and exacerbating tensions and the political "debate" between racism-antiracism, extreme right and extreme left, fascism and the defense of democracy, up to "stop counting the ballots" against "count every vote". Trump the racist and the anti-racist left came together hand in hand, dancing the nauseating ballet of identitarianism, to impose a polarization on the bourgeois democratic terrain, that of the defense of the state, diverting attention from class antagonisms. The defeat of Trump the fascist-racist and the victory of Biden the anti-racist-democrat signal the ideological and political victory won by the offensive that the ruling class has launched against the American proletariat since the assassination of G. Floyd. To win it, given the circumstances, the bourgeoisie had to use the *unpredictable* and *disruptive* Trump until he could no longer be of use and had to be discarded.

The abandonment of Trump was all the easier since what was necessary in 2016, a certain rupture, including in the choice of political personnel linked to economic liberalism and so-called globalization and of which the Clinton clan was the personification, is no longer necessary today, neither in terms of both economic policy and imperialism. Trump was therefore not a parenthesis, or even an accident. He responded and corresponded, in part thanks to his, let's say, *fragile* and rather *troubled* personality, to the language of rupture that was to accompany the fundamental turn of the economic and imperialist policies of American capital.

“It is evident that his most enduring economic legacy may not rest in any statistical almanac, but in how much he has shifted the conversation around the economy. Long before Mr. Trump appeared on the political stage, powerful forces were reshaping the economy and inciting deep-rooted anxieties about secure middle-income jobs and America’s economic pre-eminence in the world. Mr. Trump recognized, stoked and channeled those currents in ways that are likely to persist whether he wins or loses the election. (...) He scrambled party positions on key issues like immigration and globalization, and helped topple sacred verities about government debt. He took a Republican Party that preached free trade, low spending and debt reduction and transformed it into one that picked trade wars even with allies, ran up record-level peacetime deficits and shielded critical social programs from cuts” (New York Times, Trump’s Biggest Economic Legacy, Oct. 24, 20).

Biden to take over Trump's legacy

The same is true of economic as well as imperialist policies. Trump sanctioned a certain rupture that Obama had announced but was unable, or unwilling, to accomplish. Democrats and Republicans are ho-

mogeneous on the main orientations of U.S. capital, another element that denies the belief in a political crisis of the U.S. bourgeoisie. *"The arrival of a Democratic administration would not change a fundamental fact about the international system: its increasing polarization owing to the rise of China. There will be an urgent need to find the right balance between defending the transatlantic relationship against the impacts of Beijing's state-capitalist system and preserving the benefits of existing trade and investment ties with China"* (*The National Interest*, What Happens to America's Transatlantic Relations After the US Elections, Oct. 30, 2020). The probable return of the United States to a certain multilateralism abandoned by Trump, the withdrawal from the WHO and systematic obstruction at the WTO, their return to the Paris agreements on climate change, or even the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, etc., will only be of a tactical nature. In particular, a more diplomatic and policed language vis-à-vis Europe would allow the United States to seek to no longer find itself alone in confronting China and to engage Europe at its side.

The European bourgeoisies, of the EU, are not mistaken. The Trump years have gone by. *"Even before the election, officials in Brussels also had few expectations that trans-Atlantic relations would return to the way they were before Donald Trump's presidency. With the outcome of the election, it is now all the more clear that the EU must prepare to represent its interests independently on the world stage in the future"* (*Der Spiegel*, Reactions in Berlin and Brussels to the US Elections, Nov. 6, 2020). As usual, the French bourgeoisie is more explicit: *"We should have no illusions: the United States has not been a friendly partner of Europeans for many years. They are in rivalry sometimes even in confrontation when we are hit by American sanctions (...) So whether the Americans choose Donald Trump or Joe Biden, it will not change this strategic fact (...) it is time for Europeans to finally take their political and economic responsibility for trade with Europe"* (B. Le Maire, the French Minister of Economy on Radio Classique, Nov. 4, 2020).

Biden to Bring about The Sacrifices Necessary for The March to War

The liberal and monetarist policies that had prevailed since Thatcher and Reagan are a thing of the past. Their end had been foretold since the 2008 crisis and capitalism's inability to truly overcome it – unlike previous financial crises. But the precipitation of the fall into the crisis triggered by the pandemic, and the conditions of this collapse, the paralysis of a large part of world capitalist production, a sudden recession of unprecedented magnitude even before the explosion of the financial crisis, forced all the capitalist states and ruling

classes to surrender to the vice of widespread and immeasurable indebtedness and deficits and the delights of printing money paper. Their replacement by more protectionist and public spending policies means their replacement by policies that can be compared to the New Deal and Popular Front policies of the 1930s, the same policies that prepared economies for generalized war. The very ones in which the left and radical leftism identify themselves and of which they are the most ardent defenders. The object of these policies is, in the end, war.

« We need robust infrastructure and systems. Power grids, ports, airports, roads and railways. Our deterrence and defence depend on it. For example, for large operations, around 90% of military transport relies on civilian ships, railways and aircraft. Our digital infrastructure is also fundamental, not just to our ability to communicate. But also to our ability to operate and act together. Practically every piece of data on the internet is transmitted via a network of undersea cables. Imagine the potential damage to our security, and to our daily lives, if those cables were cut. Just as fundamental are safe supply lines. COVID-19 has highlighted our dramatic dependence on distant providers of face masks and other essential medical equipment. We are also reliant on a small number of providers of rare earth materials for our electronic infrastructure. From phones to satellites. So decisions on investments, on supply chains and on ownership are not only economic or financial decisions. They are critical to our security.» (Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Global Security 2020 (GLOBSEC) Bratislava Forum).

Trump's election in 2016 had also manifested and his personality had materialized this basic trend. His policy of America first and industrial relocation, however weakly he was able to really accomplish it, and his policies of deficits and public spending, especially on the country's infrastructure, anticipated what had become the general rule. *"No matter who spends the next four years in the White House, economic policy is likely to pay more attention to American jobs and industries threatened by China and other foreign competition and less attention to worries about deficits caused by government efforts to stimulate the economy."* (*New York Times*, op. Cit).

If Trump made the initial shift, Biden's Democratic government will continue this policy, economically of course - Biden the liberal of yesterday will become the protectionist of today. But also on the political level, that is to say in front of the proletariat, which Trump could not assume with a minimum of credibility to... drag behind him the sectors, petty-bourgeois, the ones in university in particular, and proletarians under the influence of the left or

leftism; "to inspire mass support" to use the words of the *National Interest* article quoted above.

Now the crisis that is breaking out and exacerbating class antagonisms does not play in favor of *mass support*, even if for the moment, in this first phase of the economic crisis, the bourgeoisie has been able to stifle any class reaction. But this will not be enough if it does not succeed in anchoring this support and making it more active. Let's take the example of Obama Care, health coverage for the poorest. The opposition, although raging within the American bourgeoisie, between Republicans and Democrats, on this issue goes far beyond a simple opposition between supporters of private or public health care accessible to the greatest number. It illustrates the need for the states to gain a minimum of support for the war economy within the proletariat under the pretext of so-called social measures and, at the same time, of a greater and more efficient control of the labor force, of the proletariat, which must be able to remain a minimum in its capacity to respond to the demands of production and the intensity of exploitation that... any economy preparing for war requires. Historically, it is the forces of the left that prepare the proletariat for war. In the United States, historically, it is Roosevelt's Democratic Party that responded to the crisis, reorganized American capital around the state and orientated its production, and first calmed the reactions of the proletariat, particularly against mass unemployment, and then led it to war through massive hiring for it. Whether people, proletarians or not, poor and without social security coverage can have access to health care, all the better, even if it is and will always be a question of access, free or not, to a deteriorated health care system. But most importantly, Obama Care aims above all to strengthen the control and management of the population, over its health, and thus over the productive capacity it induces. Like the important left-wing social measures taken in the 1930s with the New Deal or the Popular Fronts, the so-called social measures – of the Keynesian, left-wing type – that the various bourgeoisies would take would only be moments of both anti-worker mystification and preparation for war.

Biden's election, therefore, does not mean a return to pre-Trump normality, nor does it mean a slowing down of the succession of events, both American and international, which are increasingly tragic and which express, while aggravating them, contradic-

tions and antagonisms that are deeper and deeper and without solution... except to fight against capitalism and its states, to destroy them and overcome them through proletarian insurrection and the exercise of its class dictatorship.

We are not there yet. Historical factors, the crisis and the pandemic that aggravates it, as well as the prospect of generalized war, play "objectively" in favor of the proletariat by forcing the bourgeoisie to attack its conditions of existence and exploitation again and again and provoke its fight back. Subjectively, by its struggles and its conscience, by the weakness of the former and by the isolation of its political minorities, of its *party in the making*, for the latter, the proletariat is still far from being able to respond to what is at stake. The success achieved by the bourgeoisie to date, especially in the United States, to occupy the entire social, political and ideological space with identity issues and democratic mystification, is real. But this is a mere battle, one of the first in the period of massive class confrontation that has opened up, the outcome of which will largely determine the resolution of the historical alternative of revolution or war. Even if they bring divisions and bloody confrontations, democratic and identity-based policies and campaigns will not be able to mask and make people forget the reality and depth of the crisis on the proletariat for long.

It is highly probable that, **for the immediate present**, the response of the proletariat cannot come from the U.S. given the success of the bourgeoisie and the historical limits of proletarian experience on the North American continent. The answer lies elsewhere. Probably in Western Europe where, despite the terrorist attacks and the democratic and national unity campaigns that accompany them, the proletariat suffers less from anti-racist mystifications – which in no way detracts from the reality and danger of racism on the old continent – and, above all, has the experience of the past generalized imperialist wars still present in the current generations as well as the experience of the mass strike.

To take up the thread of workers' struggles as they developed last year, the tone of which was set by the strikes in France from December 2019-January 2020, while raising them higher in order to respond to the crisis and the totalitarian type of state repression set up under the pretext of the pandemic and the attacks. This is the path to take.

The IGCL, November 7th, 2020

We publish below a statement by a comrade of the Gulf Coast Communist Fraction on union action against the proletarian reactions by teachers in the United States to the health risks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is followed by our denunciation of the so-called "intersectionality" theory at the base of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies of identity and race. There are passages or expressions in the GCCF comrade's article that deserve to be clarified and discussed. But the essence and the interest of this position is elsewhere. Apart from exposing the classic manoeuvres of the unions to prevent and sabotage any initiative of proletarian struggle - in particular by playing on the legal framework governing official strikes, the use of strike notice - the text illustrates how the unions, including the leftist and so-called "grass-roots" unions, and the left of the Democratic Party as well as the various leftist groups, concretely use identity and racialism directly against the struggle and proletarian unity in the immediate reality of class struggle. One then understands better the exact extent of the success of the ideological and political bourgeoisie offensive launched following the murder of G. Floyd and the street demonstrations that followed it, which concluded with an unprecedented massive voter turnout and the election of Biden. The importance of political clarity and rigour and of the struggle that revolutionaries must have and lead against these leftist theories, both in their press and in their concrete interventions, is then better understood.

Lessons from the Teachers' Struggle: Left-Racialism as a Tool of Union-Sabotage

In the beginning of August, *Jacobin Magazine* published an article by union-steward and DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) member, Ben Beckett, which is a great example of how the delusions peddled by the DSA/Jacobin helps keep the workers in a state of defeat⁴. As stated in the article: "*the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) planned to call a strike authorization vote to keep students from returning to schools in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. A few hours later, the city government cancelled a plan to bring students back to schools two days a week and announced that fall classes would instead be held entirely remotely. ... Quite literally, the lives of enormous numbers of children, teachers, school staff, and parents have been saved thanks to teachers threatening to strike.*" What these gross falsifications of a supposed victory on the part of the schoolteachers exposes is the DSA functionally propagandizing for the Democratic Party-backed unions. Schools all over the United States are re-opening amidst a pandemic that has yet to show any signs of subsiding, and the unions have successfully prevented a strike, thus any possible generalization of the struggle, from happening; meanwhile, the so-called leading voice of socialist politics in America is cheerleading this strangulation from the sidelines. It could be said the credible threat of a teachers' strike motivated the unions and local governments to preemptively reverse school re-openings in cities where the deeply intertwined relations between the Democratic Party and unions are hegemonic, such as Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago; on the other hand, schools are still widely re-opening outside of those select cities, meaning a strike is still a necessity, and all the unions did was extinguish the initiation of such an action. A strike initiated by those schoolteachers, regardless of whether schools

in those few major cities remained closed or not, is a necessary means for extending itself to other regions and demanding all schools throughout the country either not re-open or at least take drastic safety measures, such as drastically reducing classroom sizes, until the pandemic has significantly weakened (even when distance-learning is in place, we cannot accept anything less than a reduction of class sizes). The maneuver illustrated in this *Jacobin* article is a successful containment strategy to keep the energies of the class confined to localization, as opposed to generalization. At best, what can be taken away from this is that the proletariat is far from a merely passive factor in the dynamic of this situation, but *Jacobin's* framing ultimately serves capital by obscuring the real lessons to be drawn.

The confinement of workers' struggles to remain within particular and separate local/regional, or sectoral interests is the signature death-trap imposed by the unions, and symptomatic of their definitive integration into capital after the two world wars. Capitalism is a totalizing system that can easily compartmentalize losses in one of its parts, therefore the working class can only challenge capitalism as a single unified class, not an amalgam of particular sections divided along region/locality or economic sector/industry. By the unions ceasing their feigned threats of a teachers' strike in major metropolitan cities like Philadelphia and Chicago upon the first concession granted by the city-governments, they have attempted to construct a barrier between the teachers in the most populated urban centers and teachers in others areas of the country where schools are still re-opening, which prevents the unification and centralization necessary to advance the struggle of the teachers to keep schools safe and continue classes through online education, in turn ultimately enforcing the separation of teachers from the rest of the class.

⁴ . <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/08/chicago-teachers-strike-covid-19>

Against the union-framework, teachers in the highly-populated urban centers of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Chicago going on strike to demand school-closures or radical safety-measures across the country, and not just in their own cities, could spark a wave of struggle and would strengthen the revolutionary capacity of the working class to meet universal needs and threaten the capitalist order to a greater extent; it only makes sense that certain sections of the municipal bourgeoisie, utilizing the unions as their pawns, were willing to reverse school re-openings in their residence if it meant preemptively squashing a strike wave in the most populated cities in the United States, and stopping it from spreading and unifying with other mobilizations throughout the country. The task is not merely to unify teachers across regional boundaries, it is only a necessary component of the more primary task of uniting workers across sectors, through geographic extension and unlimited intensification of the strike. Instead of agitating for the development of the class struggle through the initiation, extension, and intensification of the mass strike, the Democratic Socialists of America worked with the unions and racialist-activist groups to organize an impotent day of protest on August 3rd.⁵

Although a street protest of workers raising class demands can be a terrain within the political boundaries of the proletariat, the mobilization and its slogans advancing the dynamic of the struggle is the sufficient condition for deeming it a political terrain conducive to the proletariat, otherwise it is a terrain antagonistic to the class; and the protest jointly organized by the DSA and the unions does not meet the sufficient condition just defined, because mobilizing teachers onto this terrain was detrimental to the dynamic of the concrete situation at the time. The unions and their left-capitalist sycophants in the DSA mobilized teachers into a street protest, while calling for an authorization vote, in order to defer and delay the outbreak of a strike until the agitation for one fizzled out. So what Eric Blanc, DSA grifter who has profited from the defeat of the last teachers' strike wave by publishing a book on its supposed victories, has described as the American Federation of Teachers (most prominent schoolteacher union) providing a "morale boost" by announcing it would be considering 'safety strikes', is actually a union-manuever that can only result in containment and demoralization of the workers⁶. Emancipation aptly exposes this strategy of 'safety strikes' as something

*"that the union would authorize - and therefore legalize - as a last resort after studying them on a case-by-case basis. In other words, they could allow spontaneous strikes where the number of cases would grow to unbearable levels. The aim would be to prevent a mass exodus by forcing workers to work in schools where the number of cases would be more manageable."*⁷ So the union will only accept some sporadic, isolated strikes when they absolutely have to in the most severe circumstances, rather than supporting the clear need for a mass strike across the country, then and now.

Given that these left-capitalist entities don't have any serious commitment to the slogans of "safe schools" and "no re-openings" they claim to identify with, what remains in their positive political content, or is it only sabotage *sans* positive content? Having a look into some of the elements taking part in the campaign lauded by the *de facto* propaganda organ of the DSA reveals what positive agenda is being propounded through these demonstrations and "rank-and-file" lobbying of the union-apparatus. For example, the Philadelphia-based Caucus of Working Educators' platform has a peculiar subset of demands among the generic workplace demands, the latter of which the caucus appears to have no real commitment to, considering its role in these maneuvers, which contain a racial-identitarian content:

- *"Paid mentorship programs for veteran teachers of color to support new teachers.*
- *Pathways to encourage high school and college students of color to enter the field of education.*
- *Annual publication of employee demographic information by the District, in order to show growth towards this goal."*⁸

These are not demands that speak to universal human needs, but redistributive racial patronage that segregates the class into particular identities, thus denying its essential character as a universal political subject. A program to pay certain teachers extra salary based on racialized divisions is to accentuate the exclusionary effects of the racial categories constructed and imposed by capital.

Another example of the type of racialist politics present in this campaign is one of the organizations making up the activist-coalition behind the demonstrations on August 3rd: Journey for Justice.⁹ It declares itself a grassroots community organization dedicated to fighting against the privatization of schools and for racial/social justice in the education

5 . <https://truthout.org/articles/teachers-and-students-mobilize-in-more-than-35-cities-to-demand-safe-schools/>

6 . *ibid*

7 . <https://en.communia.blog/unions-and-the-reopening-of-schools/>

8 . <https://www.workingeducators.org/platform>

9 . <https://www.demandsafeschools.org/about/>

system. Its platform also contains some revealing racist demands, such as “*proposing federal and local equity mandates that will penalize districts that refuse to address racial inequity in course offerings, implementation of discipline policies and access to opportunity.*”¹⁰ The phrasing of this is vague enough that what constitutes “racial inequity in course offerings” could mean courses deemed insensitive to the so-called cultural experience of ethnic minority students, thus calling for alterations in curriculum by petty-bourgeois technical experts educated by graduate programs in ethnic studies, like what the Democratic Party and its activist-machines associated with Black Lives Matter have actually been trying to do with pushing *The New York Times’s 1619 Project*, and other racist propaganda, into some public school curriculum¹¹. This isn’t to defend the sanctity of the present-day curriculum, which exists to indoctrinate children into bourgeois ideology, but to reveal the mobilization of workers by the unions as fodder for a new ideological strategy being pushed by the bourgeoisie. Even putting aside the possible directions the meaning of these slogans could be taken, and putting aside the problems with the racist framing of the other slogans, the enforcement of this “National Equity Assessment” would require a proliferation of new salaried-positions in the state-bureaucracy to be filled by petty-bourgeois professionals. Not only this, these state-bureaucrats would be charged with “penalizing” school districts that don’t submit to their mandates (this is ironically the most concrete formulation in the above quoted portion of the platform), and what would the penalty be except for de-funding schools, and who could be more impacted by this than the teachers themselves? Therefore, an organization whose nominal purpose is to oppose the de-funding and privatization of schools, and thus places workers on the false terrain of the public/private ownership dichotomy, promulgates a policy that would wield the exact attacks on education workers typically associated with privatization, but cloaked in an “anti-racist” veneer. It is yet further evidence that workers protecting their interests isn’t a matter of nationalization vs. privatization, falling onto such a terrain only leads to defeat. On top of all this, Journey for Justice advocates an outright segregationist ideology when their platform states “*we know that students do better overall academically when they are taught from someone in their own racial*

group” as a justification for another proposed program that would materially transfer income to the state petty-bourgeoisie and divide teachers along racial lines.¹² Curiously, this section of the platform condemns the privatization of schools because their proliferation correlates with a decline in black teachers, as if school privatization would be acceptable if it produced ‘racial equity’ in employment. What is observed here is not a struggle that resulted in a partial victory for workers, but a mobilization that contributed to the new racial-identitarian ideological campaign of the bourgeois faction represented by the Democratic Party.

If that wasn’t enough, another member of the coalition organizing the day of protest is glaringly reactionary in political character: Center for Popular Democracy. The Center for Popular Democracy is a component of the Democratic Party’s political machine, being a recomposition of ex-chapters of the now defunct (since 2009) ACORN, which itself had the same function as its successor. This advocacy group receives direct funding from the Ford Foundation and the Democracy Alliance, the latter of which includes billionaires Georg Soros and Tom Steyer in their membership.¹³ It’s hard to understand how one could rationalize bourgeois endowment groups somehow being on the same side as the working class, but it has already been demonstrated what political interests are really being served.

While the Left was congratulating itself over the farcical victory of “almost, but not actually, going on strike”, schoolteachers have still been on the forefront of the struggle to not accept sacrifices for capital. In August 15th, Arizona teachers executed a ‘sick-out’ to force schools to cancel classes and proceed the year with distance-learning.¹⁴ This action was not initiated by the union, but by the teachers themselves, despite an attempt by the union to take credit for it after the fact in negotiations¹⁵, though silent during the time of the sick-out.¹⁶ There was even some reported minor rumblings of desire for a “nationwide sick-out” by

10 . <https://j4jalliance.com/project-details-5/>

11 . <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/how-some-educators-are-teaching-antiracism-to-the-youngest-students> and <https://pulitzercenter.org/lesson-plan-grouping/1619-project-curriculum>

12 . <https://j4jalliance.com/project-details-6/>

13 . <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/inside-the-vast-liberal-conspiracy-108171>

14 . <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/15/world/coronavirus-covid-19.html#link-190065df>

15 . https://www.thecentersquare.com/arizona/arizona-teacher-s-union-guiding-sick-out-in-district-per-leaked-video/article_6d39f936-e0de-11ea-a220-d3b8c1a9c6d8.html

16 . Right-to-work and no-strike laws are often cited as an excuse for why the union appears absent from, or even hostile towards, an action. However, it is an unacceptable excuse only selectively used for convenience. As seen in Massachusetts, the union did not hesitate to make its presence known in backing an action deemed an ‘illegal strike’, as long as it was completely under the union’s control.

the teachers.¹⁷ It didn't take long for the unions to respond with their strategy of the 'safety strike', as can be seen in what took place in Andover, Massachusetts on August 31st. The publication called *Labor Notes* presents a day of sitting-out staged by the teachers' union as an example of the workers flexing their muscles as a class, and concludes its report with the union passing a 'vote of no confidence' (impotent gesture of condemnation) against the local superintendent and marched in the building in protest.¹⁸ What is conveniently left out by *Labor Notes* is that the union did not only vote to condemn the superintendent, but also voted to return to work back inside the school-buildings! After the single-day of working outside the building, the union officially decided that "educators will reluctantly enter school buildings on Tuesday under duress and hope that the School Committee will begin to negotiate reasonable health and safety benchmarks with us in good faith".¹⁹ Workers in struggle should never delude themselves with expecting "good faith" from the bourgeoisie, and the unions enforce this delusion! What happened in Andover, Massachusetts was that the union had voted to authorize a pre-planned one-day action a couple of days before the sit-out, amid increasing concerns among teachers and frustrations with the reopening plans being negotiated.²⁰ The action could have only resulted in exactly what it did: an undermining of demands, demoralization of the teachers, and a return to in-person classes with no real safety-measures. The union maneuvers to assure that workers don't act until it grants permission, and once it grants permission it inevitably strives toward capitulation and sabotage; it 'withdraws' permission. It was no different in Andover when the union authorized a one-day sit-out to garner legitimacy among the teachers, and then voting to re-enter schools "in protest", putting a brake on the drive to actually win the demands. Unlike the previously mentioned action by teachers in the J.O. Combs District of Arizona²¹, the union-representatives in Andover rushed to speak on behalf of the teachers who were evidently too busy working outside during the sit-out to speak for themselves.²² ***The practical lesson to***

be drawn from all of this is to impose solidarity strikes against the union-framework of the 'safety strike', or rather to counterpose the mass strike to the 'safety strike'; that is, to intervene and agitate for unlimited extension of the strike, not just on the basis of workers in the same sector uniting from different regions, but also on the basis of all workers, regardless of sector, in a geographic area. Against safety strikes, for solidarity strikes!

Some months have passed since the occurrence of these events, and despite hopes for an upcoming vaccine, the virus still rages. The United States has elected a new President, but it won't reverse the drive for premature re-openings of schools; to again quote Emancipation: "For the unions, linked to the Democratic Party, the main problem with the Trumpist plan has nothing to do with the fact that it puts our lives in danger. Not at all. The whole problem would be that it's not well planned and it's not a real plan. They point out that there's a danger that the workers might distrust it and refuse to carry it out. In other words, it may cause too much social instability, ... Therefore, the aim of the unions is to embellish the reopening plan with complementary measures to restore confidence... and maintain the final goal of reopening the schools no matter what." The schools in Chicago are planned on being re-open by January²³, while schools in Los Angeles had already long been re-opened since the original publication of the *Jacobin* article cited in the beginning of this article. Unsurprisingly, the situation of the pandemic has become too severe to bare, causing the State of California to resort to the typical authoritarian measures that avoid addressing the real issue of unsafe workplaces. Meanwhile, in New York City, although teachers had reported that they were unwilling to wait for a union-authorization vote to grant permission for a strike²⁴, the chaotic policy of the city-government going back-and-forth on school openings/closures has weakened the ability for teachers to act. They have, so far, only done isolated single-workplace actions.²⁵ The confusing alternation of schools re-opening/re-closing has effectively pit parents and students against teachers, eroding the ability of the latter to take leadership in this struggle.²⁶ It is no surprise

17 . <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/15/us-schools-reopening-teachers-sickout-arizona>

18 . <https://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2020/09/ready-work-not-indoors-educators-bring-lawn-chairs>

19 . <https://patch.com/massachusetts/andover/andover-teachers-union-votes-enter-school-buildings>

20 . <https://whdh.com/news/andover-teachers-refuse-to-enter-school-buildings-following-union-vote-to-begin-the-year-remotely/>

21 . <https://www.abc15.com/news/getting-back-to-school/teachers-staff-stage-sick-out-in-j-o-combs-school-district-forcing-monday-classes-to-be-canceled>

22 . <https://www.boston25news.com/news/health/andover-educators-stage-safety-sit-out/IGP2RJVTKBCC5GIK775NPC3YPA/>

23 . <https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-public-schools-cps-return-to-school-reopening-plan/8048985/>

24 . <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2020/09/16/nyc-public-schools-first-day-of-remote-learning/>

25 . <https://nypost.com/2020/09/11/teachers-work-outdoors-at-nyc-after-colleague-gets-covid-19/>

26 . <https://abc7ny.com/nyc-schools-closing-coronavirus-reopening-covid/8089049/#:~:text=Outraged%20parents%2C%20lawmakers%20lash%20out%20over%20New%20York%20City%20school%20closure&text=New%20York%20City%20schools%20are,rollback%20of%20the%20city's%20reopening.&text=Parents%20angry%20with%20Mayor%20Bill,outside%20City%20Hall%20on%20Thursday.>

that the racist-propagandist behind the *1619 Project* jumped on the first opportunity to condemn the closing of schools and to claim that they are low-risk; further proof of the alignment between the push for school-openings and the bourgeois racial ideological campaign. (Note ^(a) at the end of the text) Additionally, the Chicago Teachers Union posted a tweet, quickly deleted afterwards, declaring that the ‘push to re-open schools is rooted in racism and sexism’.^(b) The meaning of this statement is that school re-openings are unjustified on the basis of being ‘rooted in racism and sexism’, therefore schools can be re-opened if the re-opening plan isn’t ‘racist’ or ‘sexist’. Basically, schools should re-open according to the advancement of the bourgeois

racial ideological campaign, not based on the needs of workers. If the vaccine does turn out to be successful, then the question posed will be according to whose needs will schools be re-opened? According to the needs of capital, or according to universal human needs (which can only be met through the specific terrain of the proletariat)? The question can only be answered by the active struggle of the classes.

Antonio Lakhan (Gulf Coast Communist Fraction),
December 2020

^(a). <https://twitter.com/nhannahjones/status/1329149143068127235?s=28> and <https://twitter.com/nhannahjones/status/1329145528379207694?s=28>

^(b). <https://patch.com/illinois/chicago/amp/29128089/ctu-loses-credibility-blaming-push-for-reopening-school-on-racism>

Intersectionality: an Ideological Product of Capitalist Thought

The concept of intersectionality originally refers to *Black feminism*²⁷, a term coined in the late 1980s by the American jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw. The following argument is directly addressed to the proletariat and its organizational forces of the Communist Left. A Marxist critique of this ideology is essential in the period when we see an intensification, particularly in the United States, we will come back to this, of an essentialist categorization of struggles whose strategic reality rests on *identity politics*. Let us note that this ideology of intersectionality is a product of these *identity politics*, and the anti-proletarian dimension of this product results in an exacerbation of essentialist categories such as the antiracist or antifascist struggle as a whole. Thus begins the disqualification of the class, in this case the proletariat, as an actor of the emancipatory struggle; we are not here in a simple manoeuvre of substitution of the interests of the class but in a pure and simple negation of the class struggle as the motor of history. This empirical approach based on identitarianism represents, at the same time as a real danger for the dialectical understanding of the historical movement in general, a revelation of what leftist practices are likely to produce in terms of strategy in the field of class struggle. It is a question of identifying a specific relationship of domination resulting from a cultural, religious, racial or sexual conditions or states by targeting the interaction of the different modes of domination. It is therefore a question of identifying a particular condition or state as a function of a universalisable identity.

The central issue of this article is to raise the question of the use of a notion whose purpose is to authenticate a multitude of reified sub-categories.

These sub-categories are criteria for a hierarchy whose effectiveness is based on dominant taxonomies. We don't have to give in or make any academic concession to the intellectualism of the agents of domination engaged in a speculative study of the notion of intersectionality; we must denounce its scope and incidence on the ground of the multiple struggles led by the proletariat.

Previously in our journal *Revolution or War* n° 16²⁸, we had denounced the false polarization racism/antiracism in an article entitled *Protests and Electoral Campaign in America: The False Opposition Between Racism and Anti-Racism and the Threat it Poses for the International Proletariat*. This article is part of a Marxist critique of the situation in the United States, a situation which, to say the least, was explosive following the murder of Georges Floyd, and which led to a wave of demonstrations and scenes of urban guerrilla warfare that were heavily and savagely repressed by the police. These demonstrations and the violence they convey interpellate. It is no pure chance that these events are occurring mainly in the United States at a time when the gap between exploiters and exploited is widening. The Covid-19 pandemic, if it favours the acceleration of the global systemic crisis of capitalism, is not, as we are being told, the real cause of the global economic and financial crisis. This systemic crisis is that of the process of accumulation and of the increasingly inextricable contradictions between overproduction and distribution.

If we have to pay particular attention to the almost daily events that punctuate the American life, it is precisely because the economic situation of the first world power is in such a dilapidated context that only a strategy of preparation for a generalized war,

27 . https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_feminism.

28 . <http://igcl.org/Protests-and-Electoral-Campaign-in>

as we can see in particular in the various strategies of development of the imperialist conflicts in progress, can at least momentarily delay the revolutionary process and the victory of the world proletariat. Thus, the US must be seen as the site of the first battle of the class confrontation and its development on a world level. The answer is probably to be found in Western Europe where, despite the terrorist attacks and the democratic and national unity campaigns that accompany them, the proletariat suffers less from anti-racist mystifications – which does not take anything away from the reality and danger of racism on the old continent – and, above all, has the experience of the generalized imperialist war still strongly present in the present generations as well as the experience of the mass strike. But who says this in the end does not claim in any way that this development takes place under the condition of a proletariat conscious of its interests, that the class struggle in its effectiveness indicates that the revolutionary process is underway; far from it. The events which we have been able to follow indicate that the movement in the current period is of a completely different nature. It is precisely here that *identity politics* intervene, whose intersectionality theorizes the movement as being the result of racial contingencies, which we know in the United States take on a particular significance as a consequence of the objective history of the construction of a set of states which was largely based on the slavery of the black population.

What is partly developed below has the task of demonstrating, particularly in the United States, in what and how this notion only serves the spheres of domination, in what way by categorising it reifies into a multitude of sub-categories by *re-naturalising* them in all the specificities and particularisms with the sole aim of diverting the class struggle, the proletariat from its true goal, the seizure of power and the establishment of its dictatorship. These reified subcategories include the class in the whole of the *identity politics*, they essentialize the class, they separate it from its historicity, they deny it and oppose it. The *Black Lives Matter* movement is an illustration of this categorization, of the reified subcategorizations of the so-called dominant taxonomies. If the notion of intersectionality can be complex, voluntarily complexified by the various agents of domination, its approach and its verification on the ground of reality are no less transparent. We have said that, in any case, it is through essentialization and *re-naturalization* into a multitude of reified categories, be they racial, cultural or sexual, that the class struggle as the

motor of history is rendered obsolete. So let us understand that, for example, the black female worker is racially categorized, she is characterized by this essentiality of being black; she is black before she is a worker. This social status of being a worker being only one social characteristic among many others that do not constitute her essentiality, based on her being black, is decisive as to her real place in society. She is subject to pressures of domination which determine her in a particular otherness. The white female worker, under the condition of her (dominant) race, is herself subject to domination (she is however considered privileged according to some proponents of intersectionality), in the same way as the black female worker, she is dominated by a boss in terms of proximity, but this domination in the blind spot of the ideology of intersectionality is of a completely different nature and, this other nature, also comes under an otherness which corresponds to a particular category, a reified sub-category. It is easy to understand that the real condition in this case, that of being workers, leads us to think of class struggle as the motor of history from the moment that the class is determined by the relation of exploitation and that this determination is inscribed in a relation of force. The condition of the exploited female worker is seen through the lens of intersectionality; she is extracted from her socio-economic contingency as a woman exploited by a system of production, she is expelled from the class as an actor of it. Beyond this and consequently, it is the class itself which is de-substantialized from the consciousness it has of itself; it is the social fact which is itself de-substantialised. It is nothing other than an operation of atomization of the proletariat confronted with the particularism separating it from its historical future as a revolutionary class. This atomization does not, however, come from a simple entropy but concedes to individuation the possibility of its own subjectivity, so that the relation of domination no longer reflects a social relation strictly speaking but presents itself as "a free market of identities" where only the principle of group identity (races, homosexuals, women, etc.) is recognized and recognizes itself as such.

The fact of being black, female, homosexual, indigenous and, why not, Amish has become, in terms of identity and symbolism, the terrain on which most of the actors of sporadic revolts, often violent and duly repressed by the bourgeois state apparatus, surf, while at the same time decision-makers, trade unions and parliamentarians speak out in terms of the fight against inequality, the defence of women in the face of discrimination in the workplace, legislate on the issue of racism and

the havoc it wreaks on societies.

A hasty conclusion in the face of such a development would consist in saying that finally it is through the negation of particularities and social differences within the class that the proletariat homogenizes itself. But in reality it is the opposite. It is through the organization of the proletariat and with the party that is its political leadership that these contradictions or particularities are dialectically overcome by the consciousness of the class of its historical and universal future as an emancipating class.

The aim here, in the restricted limits of an article that does not allow us to develop all the evolutionary aspects of what some people wrongly call "Theory of Intersectionality", is to demonstrate how this "theory" purely and simply denies the inescapable class confrontation defined by Marxist theory. Thus one can read or hear that Marxist theory suffers from a conceptual insufficiency limiting it to economic determinism, which does not allow it to embrace the totality of the historical process.

This reductive accusation aimed at Marx in particular attempts to annihilate Marxism as a theory of the proletariat, whereas the proletariat has constantly demonstrated that, well beyond the economic function and its technical aspects, it is indeed a social relation that Marx studies, this relation being determined by a central figure of the process of production/distribution and the social relations that it engenders. Reducing Marxist thought in this way is at best a matter of carelessness or a vulgar conception of Marxism when it comes to sincere individuals who have fallen into the terrain of leftism, the worst being voluntary falsification, a strategy well known to leftist bourgeois forces.

But the criticism is not limited to these terms. Marx would never have been interested in the racial dimension and in slavery in our societies and the cleavages it causes in civil society. Voluntary or involuntary ignorance is not enough to hide the reality :

“Freedom and slavery constitute an antagonism. There is no need for me to speak either of the good or of the bad aspects of freedom. As for slavery, there is no need for me to speak of its bad aspects. The only thing requiring explanation is the good side of slavery. I do not mean indirect slavery, the slavery of proletariat; I mean direct slavery, the slavery of the Blacks in Surinam, in Brazil, in the southern regions of North America.

Direct slavery is as much the pivot upon which our present-day industrialism turns as are machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery there would be no cotton, without

cotton there would be no modern industry. It is slavery which has given value to the colonies, it is the colonies which have created world trade, and world trade is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry. Consequently, prior to the slave trade, the colonies sent very few products to the Old World, and did not noticeably change the face of the world. Slavery is therefore an economic category of paramount importance” (Letter from Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov, Dec. 1846²⁹).

In this letter to Annenkov, Marx links the racial and slavery phenomenon to the development of capitalism. It was also Marx who, addressing Abraham Lincoln on behalf of the IWA (International Workingmen’s Association, the 1st International) in 1864, congratulated the American people on his re-election, whose "war cry" was "death to slavery":

“While the workingmen, the true political powers of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation.” (Address of the International Working Men's Association to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, November 1864³⁰).

Note that in this letter, Marx congratulates the American people who have just re-elected a president (Abraham Lincoln) whose programme is based on an abolitionist policy denouncing the blacks’ slave trade and the slavery of which they are victims. This is not a ceremonial, diplomatic letter consecrating the person of Lincoln for his re-election, but a message addressed entirely to the American people, or more precisely to the workers, to the working class, by placing it in front of its historical future. Let us note, moreover, that Marx does not limit the term slave to a simple semantic occurrence which would only qualify the condition of blacks, but underlines the difference between the direct slavery of the black slave who does not have the possibility of selling his labour-power since he is under the rule of a master-owner, and the indirect slavery of the proletarian who has the possibility of selling his labour-power, which makes him a wage slave. In both cases slavery is posed as a condition of the black or white exploited. It must be understood that in Marx the particularity of the condition of

29 . http://hiaw.org/defcon6/works/1846/letters/46_12_28.htm
1

30 . <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1864/lincoln-letter.htm>

blacks is part of the general movement of capitalist exploitation, that colonialism and imperialism are inherent in the development of the system itself. These two differentiated conditions, direct slavery and indirect slavery, are two terms of the same process. The dialectic thus proceeds from overcoming these two contradictory conditions (identification of two terms whose negativities are themselves differentiated, the direct slave is absolutely constrained and totally reduced to the state of a commodity, the proletarian, whatever his skin colour, has the possibility of making money and earning a living sufficient to reproduce his labour power), by overcoming these contradictions in the process of the capitalist system. We deduce that although there is a differentiated form, the centrality of the process in question refers us back to the exploitation exercised by the dominant class constrained by the process of accumulation, the exponential realization of profits. This goes far beyond, not to say invalidates, the segmentation induced by intersectionality with regard to a hierarchization of the criteria and/or factors of domination.

In *The German Ideology*³¹, Marx tells us that “*the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force*”.

The Identity Politics are at the origin of this a-historical tinkering of the dominant thought armed with its "theory of intersectionality", the class becomes an identity among many others, in that it is differentiated only by its entirely subjectivized nature in the market of ideas. Reduced thus to a subcategory, the class is denied an emancipatory dynamic, it is relegated to a mere collection of inert groups that have every reason to confront each other as the various competing economic consortia do on the market. Thus the dominant thought shifts the global character of class domination according to the class-against-class process that refers to Marxism onto the terrain of the sociological empiricism that separates identity from the movement that produced it.

In short, intersectionality is a pure negation of historical materialism.

The class, the proletariat in its struggle for human emancipation, that is to say, communism, reaching a certain level of consciousness, endows itself with its organization, the world communist party, a vanguard that is inseparable from the historical movement that produces it. Though the path

towards social revolution and socialism is tortuous, though we suffer the setbacks of the complexity of the period, though our defeats send us back each time to the dialectical understanding of the objective conditions, this is the task of the proletariat, this is the task of its political leadership, this is the task of the communist party. At the VII Congress of the Communist Party, Lenin pronounced on the revision of the program and the change of the party's name. It is not a question here of comparing what is not, but of highlighting an invariance of Marxism in the face of this concept or theory of intersectionality, in the face of the multiple attempts, especially during the 20th century but also at the beginning of the 21st century, to reduce Marx's thought to an economist conception of historical development, where finally we can see an economy of thought generally promoted by what is called the humanities. This text by Lenin is timely. The readers will judge for themselves:

“That is how things were and how they are, for commodity production begot capitalism and capitalism led to imperialism. Such is the general historical perspective, and the fundamentals of socialism should not be forgotten. No matter what the further complications of the struggle may be, no matter what occasional zigzags we may have to contend with (there will be very many of them— we have seen from experience what gigantic turns the history of the revolution has made, and so far it is only in our own country; matters will be much more complicated and proceed much more rapidly, the rate of development will be more furious and the turns will be more intricate when the revolution becomes a European revolution)—in order not to lose our way in these zigzags, these sharp turns in history, in order to retain the general perspective, to be able to see the scarlet thread that joins up the entire development of capitalism and the entire road to socialism, the road we naturally imagine as straight, and which we must imagine as straight in order to see the beginning, the continuation and the end—in real life it will never be straight, it will be incredibly involved—in order not to lose our way in these twists and turns, in order not to get lost at times when we are taking steps backward, times of retreat and temporary defeat or when history or the enemy throws us back—in order not to get lost, it is, in my opinion, important not to discard our old, basic Programme; the only theoretically correct line is to retain it.” (Lenin, Report on the Review of the Programme and on Changing the Name of the Party, March 8th 1918³²).

Intersectionality under its theoretical cover as a critical theory of the various factors of domination

31 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm#b3>

32 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/7thcongress/09.htm>

and interactions identifiable within civil society and even in the institutions of the bourgeois state apparatus has become a "science" in defiance of the real movement which produces the totality and defines the relation of domination as the historical factor of class domination, which dialectically and historically refers us to the development of the class struggle. Here we are confronted with what dominant thought is capable of producing in order to deny what capitalist economic development is in its reality. Once again Marx did not write an economic theory which would be content with highlighting the mechanisms of exploitation. He studied the theory of bourgeois economics in the terms of a political critique of the economy. In doing so he made it clear that the relation production-distribution, far from being a mere mechanical relation, is a social relation determined by the capitalist mode of production, that there is no "beyond" of this relation but that it is immanent to the mode of production itself. In the face of historical materialism which is the very essence of Marxist theory, a theory which targets the contradictions inherent in the capital/labour relationship, the dominant thought all dressed up in the democratic chasuble and through these pseudo-sciences known as the humanities reduces the totality to an always extensive sum of specialities. Thus, in its institutional form, intersectionality has become the leading argument of economists, sociologists and even some philosophers, particularly with regard to gender theory. But a specialization of particularities, gender, feminism, and for some time anti-fascism and anti-racism, (let us understand that the list can only evolve) is nothing other than a politically assumed denial of the concept of alienation defined by Marx, a concept which he links to the development of the capitalist mode of production.

In its leftist version, which is none other than the laboratory for the study of the various demands and/or other contestations, denunciations, we find the anti-capitalist movement, whose memorable actions refer us notably to their interventions during successive European and G7-8-20 summits. This term anti-capitalism qualifies as the rallying point of the anarchist, Trotskyist and ecologist leftists, in short the "armed" wing of the bourgeois left. But even beyond the semantic insistence to disqualify and deny the Marxist linguistic corpus (working class, proletariat, dictatorship of the proletariat, the communist party and its political leadership, the interdependence of the party and the soviets or councils), it is indeed the negation of the class as the motor of history that is at issue. We

should be interested here in a development of what is represented as *movementism* and the specificity of the anti-racist, antifa, feminist, ecologist struggles of the *identity politics* which are the fragmented terrain in which the *movementist* dynamic is inscribed. We are afraid to tackle here a subject whose importance requires another article aimed at demonstrating that these different figures of leftism, referring to the experimentation of struggles constrained by a horizontal democratism articulated around an emphatic and inconsequential discourse on direct democracy, are the instruments of dominant thought and its bourgeois left. Moreover, we cannot spare ourselves the analysis which leads to consider the party as the antidote for these heterogeneous identitarian groupings in contradiction with the historical goal of the proletariat: the seizure of power and the exercise of its dictatorship. It is within the party that the contradictions borne of particularisms are resolved; the party does not deny particularities, it historicizes them by overcoming the contradictions dialectically through confrontation and political clarification. That is to say, it awakens within the class itself the historical consciousness of its future as a class.

“ It is elementary – or rather it was before – to affirm that before starting a class battle, it is necessary to establish the objectives that one sets oneself, the means to be employed, the class forces that can intervene favourably. There is nothing "theoretical" in these considerations, and by this we mean that they do not expose themselves to the easy criticism of all these elements jaded of "theories", whose rule consists, beyond all theoretical clarity, in tinkering in movements with anyone, on the basis of any programme, as long as "action" remains. We are of course those who think that action does not derive from "shouting" or individual goodwill, but from the situations themselves. Moreover, for action, theoretical work is indispensable in order to preserve the working class from further defeats. And one must grasp the meaning of the contempt affected by so many militants for theoretical work, because it is always a question, in reality, of introducing, in secret, in the place of proletarian positions, the principled conceptions of the enemy: of social democracy, within revolutionary circles, while proclaiming action at all costs for a speed "race" with fascism. (Bilan #7, L'antifascisme, formule de confusion [Antifascism, a formula of confusion], May 1934, translated by us)³³ .

The Institutional Intersectionality

Can we say that there is no smoke without fire? We

33 . http://www.collectif-smolny.org/article.php?id_article=780. *Bilan* was the journal in France of the Left Fraction of the CP of Italy during the 1930.

believe that anti-capitalism in the form developed above is the experimental laboratory of the institution, of the state. Beyond even the recuperation that is being made of it in the framework of parliamentarianism and its allies on the left of capital, we are witnessing an ever more pressing will of the domination to want to complete this notion of intersectionality, not hesitating to formulate its scientific content. Domination reinvents itself in the circumstance in a multiplicity of interactions subject to categorical separations and gives itself the mission (in the theological sense of the term) to constrain its effects. Thus, specialists and other eminent slavish thinkers are at work not to decide what is class domination, but to methodically and "intersectionally" study the cross-processes of domination, their interactions. Based on a study of facts, events and social movements in general, the pseudo-science of intersectionality announces a return to theology and metaphysics as the only response to real contingencies; democratism and the sanctification of inequalities is its absolution. A new religion is born, intersectionality.

Conclusion

It is the events in the United States and the emergence of *Black Lives Matter* that led us to question this concept or notion of intersectionality. We consider that the dynamic set in motion in North America following the murder of George Floyd and the events that took place, violent demonstrations followed by a repression establishing a climate of civil war, deserve our full attention. As for the history which does not repeat itself, it can however stutter and its immediate echo raises the problem of anti-racism and anti-fascism which is nothing other than the result of a false consciousness about the

immediate interests of the proletariat. And well beyond a false consciousness such as the proletariat could appropriate it, it is inscribed in the genes of the bourgeoisie which, strategically, prepares the generalized war. Intersectionality, at the service of the bourgeoisie and its representatives of the bourgeois left, as an ideological product of the bourgeoisie, as a tool of persuasion, constitutes a real offensive against class consciousness through the atomization of the proletariat. Its ramifications in Europe are manifold through feminism, ecologism, anti-racism and anti-fascism. Anti-capitalist movementism is the mould in which the categorization of struggles is formed, classifying them hierarchically according to criteria of domination which we could qualify as transversal. It is a blow against the proletariat and the inescapable necessity of the international consolidation of its forces to lead the only struggle of which it is the historical subject, that is the struggle for communism. Intersectionality is also a spiritual power by the socio-empirical identification it makes of the different groups present in civil society. It proceeds from a political de-substantialization of the class in favour of a purely identity-based seizure of it, it denies *a fortiori* the dialectical relation between domination and struggle of the emancipating class, it subordinates the objective conditions to the mere appearance of their manifestation, thus reifying the dynamic movement of emancipation by relegating it to democratism and parliamentary cretinism of which Marx spoke.

Our will is the following: to gather the class under the political leadership of the communist party. It is our principled task to strategically explain the communist programme.

Benjamin

Pamphlets (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).

The Struggle of the Communist Left against “Gramscism”

We publish below a contribution, originally intended for our internal discussion, on the English-language book published by the International Communist Tendency, *Gramsci Between Marxism and Idealism*³⁴. The latter brings together a series of articles from the Partito Comunista Internazionalista-Battaglia Comunista, the ICT group in Italy, written by Onorato Damen and also available in Italian on its website. It develops and argues both the classic criticism by the Communist Left of the militant Gramsci, the one who was actually councilist in 1919-1920 and then the main actor of the Stalinization that brought to heel the Communist Party of Italy from 1924, and the denunciation of Gramscism as a bourgeois ideology.

Today, Gramsci has become an ideological and political reference for multiple political currents and bourgeois thought that seek to disguise and liquidate the revolutionary theory of the proletariat and to justify anti-proletarian and counter-revolutionary leftist policies. “Myths about Antonio Gramsci are endless. (...) Gramsci’s voluminous writings are now the basis of academic studies throughout the world. From linguistics through anthropology to politics, sociology and ‘subaltern studies’ Gramscian ideas on ‘hegemony’, ‘passive revolution’, the ‘modern Prince’, the ‘war of positions’, ‘philosophy of praxis’, are flourishing in the post- truth epoch which denies the existence of an objective social reality and reduces society to a collection of individuals” (Foreword of the book). At a time when the economic crisis is breaking out and can only exacerbate class antagonisms, the promotion of radical, pseudo-revolutionary, and leftist ideologies is one of the axes of the class offensive that the bourgeoisie is developing, and will develop even more, against the international proletariat in order to divert it from any reaction to the crisis, or, if it reacts anyway, to sabotage its struggles. Isn’t this precisely what the anti-racist and identity campaigns in the United States teach us? And what better than the mystification of Gramsci’s figure and Gramscian ideology – his theorization of cultural hegemony in particular as the basis for identity and racist policies – to add a little flavour to the classic social democratic soup to those leftists who find it too bland?

It is therefore fortunate and very timely that the ICT has decided to release this publication – can we expect further translations? In French? In Spanish? We invite all those who read English and Italian to read carefully this work of demystification of the person of Gramsci and Gramscism in order to be able to arm themselves effectively at the theoretical-political level against the radical bourgeois left-

wing ideologies that are being vigorously reborn. To this day and to our knowledge, except in Italian, there was no completed, clear and argued position on the person of Gramsci by the international Communist Left that was really available, except for the articles in French that appeared in *Programme Communiste*, starting with its number 71 of 1976. We can even say that the two statements, both as serious and profound as each other, each anchored on Marxist principles, should serve as a theoretical and political reference for the whole Communist Left and for any militant or group seeking to regroup around it, or even to join it. Both demonstrate with precision and rigour the foreign character to historical materialism, opposed to Marxism, of Gramsci’s theoretical and “philosophical” approach of an idealistic order and the opportunism of his political positions.

For beyond the myth on the figure, faced with the imperialist war in 1914, Gramsci positioned himself on the right of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), which remained pacifist, and thus found himself far removed from the revolutionary position of revolutionary defeatism, to the point of finding himself practically on the same position of “active and operative neutrality” put forward by... Mussolini. Faced with the outbreak of massive workers’ struggles in Italy in 1919-1920, the occupation of factories and the emergence of workers’ councils in particular in Turin which followed the October Revolution in Russia, Gramsci and his group the Ordine Nuovo positioned themselves de facto on the side of the PSI, in the name of self-management councilism which they theorized, to divert the proletariat from the confrontation with the bourgeois state and thus lead it to defeat. Finally, once he was bureaucratically appointed to the party leadership by the Communist International as it began its degenerate course, he became the main vector and the leading actor of the Zinovievist Bolshevization of the party, then of its Stalinization, by excluding without hesitation the Left through manoeuvres and other low blows that were worthy of the Stalinists of the other communist parties.

In the absence of a translation into French or Spanish, we hope that the following reflection will provide readers of these languages with elements of Marxist criticism of Gramscism and an idea of the theoretical work carried out by the PCInt. For the reader will have understood it: we welcome this publication, its content of course, but also its timing, and make it our own. On Gramsci, the Communist Left is united and speaks with one voice. In doing so, the ICT assumes its central role within the proletarian camp and in the historical struggle for the party. We, who do not hesitate to raise it when it doesn’t, at least not enough in our opinion, don’t hesitate either to support it when it fully assumes its place and role.

34 . The book is available on <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-08-07/gramsci-between-marxism-and-idealism>.

About Onorato Damen's *Gramsci Between Marxism and Idealism*

The publication of the book *Gramsci Between Marxism and Idealism*, based on articles by Damen in his original Italian and in its English translation at the initiative of the ICT, has particularly appealed to us, arousing an interest that we would like to share with the reader of *Revolution or War*³⁵. It is not our intention to go back over Gramsci's thought, which is considerably touched upon by the author; reading the book we are talking about is sufficient and enlightening on what was at once a mutilated life, that of Gramsci, and on the intellectual whose eclecticism constitutes the central aspect of his path. A thought between idealism and materialism, between philosophical speculation on an ontology of becoming and a Marxism revisited in the light of Gramscian historicism, which dilutes the historical materialism of Marx and Lenin in the context of a universal in the making; this universalism renders contingent the individual or the group in the expression of a cultural hegemony, which is built metaphysically by a grasp of reality and material conditions instead of materializing the domination of social phenomena according to objective economic and social conditions.

"If we had to locate Gramsci's doctrinal position, we would undoubtedly place it in that field of European thought which has moved from Hegelian idealism and reached its logical continuity in neo-idealist historicism" (p.16).

It would be futile to seek in Gramsci an appropriation of the revolutionary dialectic as formulated by Marx and Engels, but rather the expression of an eclecticism that is resourced by the thousand heads of pre-Marxist idealism. It is not only a thought whose instability would be due solely to a scattering but to an a-dialectical conception of the world and social relations. Damen's insistence on this point is not anecdotal. It is necessary for the understanding of the Gramscian scheme; in his case, the analysis of history is based on the observation of molecular processes, unequal consciousness dynamics, developing within society (series of integration/disintegration), an immanentist and serial vision that he calls "spirit of division". This "spirit of division" does not coincide with the organizational structure of the party, with its tactics and its strategy. It constitutes a programmatic and strategic rupture which invalidates the revolutionary Marxist policy of seizure of power by the proletariat, giving way to a "democratist" conception in its councilist version which becomes autonomous within the "factory councils",

transforming the party into an organ aggregating intermediate forces, a tactic of united front and opportunism.

"Given such a theoretical premise (i.e. trasformismo considered as a basic part of the political life of parties), one wonders how much Gramsci is responsible for the future events of the party that was born in Livorno. What began as a party of the revolutionary proletariat ended up in the muddy political waters of the most despicable and devious parliamentary 'trasformismo' whose aim is to gain entry to the corridors of power as the last bulwark of defence for the current system of capitalist production." (p. 30)

It is important to understand Gramscism as the movement of a split thought that freezes contradictions. The concept of hegemony and its "theory of praxis" perfectly illustrates its molecular conception of history, a mechanistic conception of the development of consciousness. While Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, as early as 1914, elaborated a revolutionary theory on the problem of war, Gramsci remained indecisive; this indecision reveals nothing other than his inability to understand the real nature of war, to analyse imperialism from the point of view of the class, to develop the alternative revolution or war. Gramsci denounces the formula of "absolute neutrality" preferring that of "active operative neutrality". This modelization of the period under the rule of Gramscian thought, which translates into a militant position, leads us straight to Mussolini's theory of the war, the class being dissolved in the concept of the people. This ideological resurgence of the *Risorgimento* is the prelude to the fascist dictatorship. The experience of the Workers Councils of Turin, and their corollary "factory councils" where workers' control would represent a conquest, in this case the organization of the class by factory, realizing "a communist economic form before the conquest of political power of which the party is the specific organ" (see *Bilan* n° 4, February 1934)³⁶, is a councilist experience deprived of political leadership, which cannot be compared to the soviets of 1917 in Russia under the political leadership of the Bolshevik party with the dictatorship of the proletariat as its programme. *"The Council experience, more theoretical than practical, was clearly ditched by Gramsci at the Imola Convention of the Communist fraction (1920) and he would no longer speak of them in the Ordiovisti terms as organs of proletarian power"* (p.35). They will be reduced to a permanent instrument of trade union policy whose

35 . <http://igcl.org/-Revolution-or-War->

36 . http://www.collectif-smolny.org/article.php3?id_article=332 *En marge d'un anniversaire.*

nature is based on corporatist demand and paralysis, outside any revolutionary perspective.

“The events of this historical period add weight to the line of the Italian Left which, through the voice of Bordiga, recognised that the crucial point was not to occupy the factory just to remain prisoners if the State structures were not conquered and broken. (...) The defeat of the workers’ factory occupations effectively and miserably closed the experience of the Councils. And then came fascism.” (p.35)

Gramsci's obsessive insistence supporting the experience of the councils, which in this case would be the prefiguration of class hegemony, says a lot about the nature of the state as he conceives it. This concept of hegemony is none other than a leftist conception whose strategy rests on the sabotage of the dynamics of class struggle. Much more than an adventurist drift, Gramscism is a class betrayal whose conclusion formulates opportunism *“with an ever-wider inclusion of the proletariat into the capitalist frame, such as turning it into the progressive spearhead of a combined bourgeois front”* (p.36).

The Marxist theme is not only foreign to him, it is hostile to him.

While the Theses of Rome³⁷ in 1922 gave the Communist Party of Italy, born in Livorno, a programmatic and strategic basis and at the same time were part of the proletarian internationalism of the Communist International, Italy was to face a coup de force initiated by Mussolini's fascists in October 1922, the March on Rome to counter the revolutionary wave. Not that it was a seizure of power by force, but rather a symbolic act whose exaltation would create the conditions for the Duce's accession to power that same year; it wasn't the Italian fascists who put Mussolini in power but the leaders of the government in power who entrusted it to him, a fascist dictatorship was promulgated, which lasted until 1943. At a time when Europe was confronted with the rise of fascism and imperialist tensions, when the communist parties were entering a new phase of their opportunist development after the death of Lenin in January 1924 and when the Communist International intended to align them with the sole discipline of Moscow, the "Bolshevization" of the parties, a slogan launched by Zinoviev at the V Congress of the CI, would concretize a strategy of purging the left-wing opposition or any attempt to challenge it would be assimilated to fractionalism.

From 1924 onwards, Gramsci and his "ordinovism",

an abstract and a-historical conception, which, excluding any possibility of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, will benefit, in the state of confusion that characterises the relations of the party at its base, i.e. a party separated from its base, to this post-Leninist strategy of Bolshevisation.

“Bolshevising the party meant splitting it, breaking the bonds between its various social components and categories, depersonalising³⁸ it and fragmenting it in the factories and workplaces. The unacknowledged objective was to establish a strong network of functionaries to dominate the party from above and so extinguish any capacity for critical vision, every bit of initiative and any groundswell of the class.” (p.38).

In this opportunist dynamic, the left, of which Bordiga remains the illustrious animator, does not disarm in the face of a right, whose strategy of gaining space in the instances of the party, reinforces the strategy of the CI and a centre represented by Gramsci incapable of political clarification, whose tactics will be that of a united front policy which is decided from above and whose aim, no less than consensual, rests on a will to gather the masses, a strategy just as adroitly adopted by the CI. The party cornered by the Zinovievist orders of the leadership of the CI tried to rebound with its left by the installation of the *Committee of Intesa* whose existence didn't exceed a few weeks, which was qualified as fractionist by the party's EC under the direction of Gramsci, and therefore, by the reframing that the Bolshevization was carrying out, as counter-revolutionary.

“We have never seen in our party the most daring flouting of the most basic rules of organisation and discipline of a Communist Party. (...) [It is] a criminal act which deserves the most severe sanctions and the most severe blame. (...) Anyone who puts themselves on the same road as the members of the self-styled ‘Committee of Intesa’, goes straight out of the Party and of the Communist International. And to put oneself outside the Party and the International means to stand against the Party and the Communist International, that means strengthening the elements of the counter-revolution. (...) And it will also be necessary to shed light on the manoeuvre that is hidden in the absence of the name of Comrade Bordiga, with whom the initiative of the ‘Committee of Intesa’ is certainly

37 . <https://www.international-communist-party.org/BasicTexts/English/22TeRome.htm>

38 . We think that there is a mistaken translation from Italian. This one uses the word “spersonalizzarlo” which is, according to our dictionary, “personalize” and not “depersonalize”, which we hardly politically understood while translating. Actually, this opportunist “personalization” of the relations within the party is opposed to the *Italian Left's* conception of the party, which was also fighting the stalinist “personalization” and even idolatry to the *Big Leaders* in general and Stalin in particular (IGCL's note).

agreed. It is painful to have to make such observations when amongst the signatories we find the name of comrades who were with us amid the founders of the party and fought and worked for it". (Communique of the Executive Committee of the party under Gramsci's leadership, undated, quoted p.107-108)

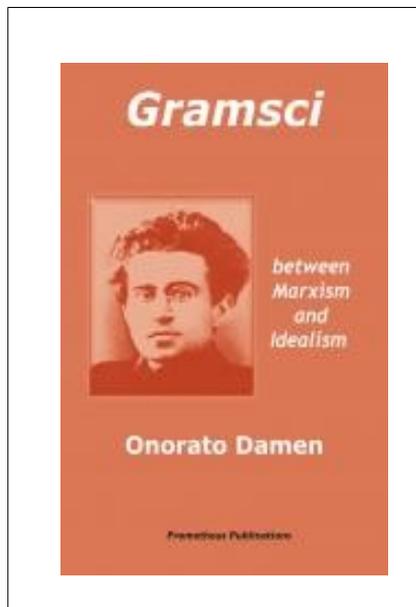
The programmatic and strategic lessons of the Theses of Rome are echoed by the resolutions taken by the Committee of Intesa whose task is to refocus the party on the basis of the Marxist invariants. The difficulty lies not in convincing the party's base, which remains largely faithful to the founding spirit of the party, but in combating the opportunism of a CI-supported leadership and its policy of bolshevization. This strategy, far from being fractionalist, works to defend a political apparatus emptied of its revolutionary component and subjected to united-front strategies. The party must fight any return to social democracy.

"In reality we are the only ones who are taking account of concrete circumstances in the revolutionary sense because we are incorporating the work of the moment into the general action plan of the party so that it develops with the dialectical unfolding of the situation." (p.110, platform of the Committee of Intesa).

The fact remains that every attempt at disintegration, disembodiment, has its own language. The question of the conquest of power by the proletariat refers to the exercise of its dictatorship and, at the same time, to the decline of the state as a condition of communist society, so there can be no question, under the guise of an approximate management of language, of taking refuge behind hollow but implicitly imprecise qualitatifs, which is why *"on the 'Workers' Government', we reaffirm that this is a synonym for the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' and that it is a so-called agitational slogan. We are against formulating slogans which do not have any real meaning. On the other hand, if what is meant is something different from the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' we oppose it all the more fiercely since this is a sign of the most dangerous parliamentary divergences, if not the direct denial of the elementary principles of revolutionary marxism"* (idem,,

p. 112).

The left will not cease to fight opportunism within the party, just as it will denounce the personalisation of leadership activity, which only accentuates the gap between the base and its political leadership. Ordinovism is a constituent of this separate leadership, a doctrine foreign to the principles of Marxism. The search for political and organisational stability at the expense of historical materialism, which determines the economic and social foundations and the dialectical link with the development of the class struggle in terms of evolution or involution, characterises this period. And the clerics are active, Togliatti is a representative of them; didn't the person of Gramsci and his painful history serve as a springboard, wasn't he a perfectionist of the shenanigans and prevarications at the time of the Bolshevization? Togliatti was the man of low blows in the service of Moscow, he was the man who created the conditions for the marginalisation of the left, depriving it of any material possibility of defending itself. The ICT book is an essential document. It allows us to apprehend Gramsci's thought without any concession to the eclectic intellectualism that characterises it. It allows us to confirm that the Communist Left is at the programmatic and strategic antipodes of Gramscism, whose charismatic leader became an almost mystical figure of the bourgeois left and leftists more



generally. Where historicism seems to contingent the development of consciousness through immanentism and the development of social processes qualified as "molecular", the answer is and can only be Marxist. A definite contribution with regard to the history of the Communist Party of Italy, but also a document that should allow us to elaborate a consequent critique of councilism and its various anti-capitalist substitutes in the "mouvementist" sphere. The choice of the ICT to publish this book in its original language and to propose an English translation deserved our full attention.

Benjamin

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Statement on the ICT 2020 Platform

The Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) has written a new "updated" version³⁹ of the platform adopted in 1996 by its antecedent, the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP)⁴⁰. Whoever is convinced that it is appropriate to work centrally in the struggle for "the class party [which] is indispensable to the proletariat's revolutionary struggle for the very reason that it is the political and organised expression of class consciousness", can only consider the congresses, conferences, etc., as well as the programmatic documents of other communist groups, as particular moments, among the most important, of the class struggle which, unless we give in to the sirens of sectarianism, it is appropriate to debate and pronounce.

The platform of the ICT is totally within the framework of the positions of the Communist Left and the proletarian camp. As such, it is, and must be, a reference for all groups, circles and individuals who want to reappropriate the class positions and lessons of the Communist Left; especially for those who want to engage in the communist struggle and join the organizations that are in its vanguard. For our part, conscious of the central role that this organization occupies today among the *pro-party* forces within the proletarian camp, we consider essential to draw the attention of the greatest number to this text and to encourage reflection and political clarification around the principles and positions put forward in it. This approach and these positions and interventions, critical or not, are, and must be considered, as **indispensable and precious moments in the struggle for the regroupment of revolutionary forces and for the party.**

The Proletarian Camp and the Historical Alternative Revolution or War

Before addressing the main positions put forward by the platform, it is important to note and welcome two points. The first one is the claim of the existence of a proletarian camp and the clear definition of its contours and stakes: "*the broad proletarian camp*"⁴¹ (...)

39 . All the quotations to follow that are not referenced are quotations from this platform: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/node/36775>

40 . In *Revolution or War #2*, we have already published a text sent by a comrade, who has since joined our group, who took position on the ICT and CCI platforms : <http://igcl.org/Statement-on-the-ICT-and-ICC>.

41 . This recognition by today's ICT is all the more noteworthy

can be defined as those who stand for working class independence from capital; who have no truck with nationalism in any form; who saw nothing socialist in Stalinism and the former USSR, at the same time as recognising that October 1917 was the starting point for what could have become a wider world revolution. Amongst the organisations which fall within this broad framework there remain significant political differences, not least over the vexed question of the nature and function of the revolutionary organisation." We would like to welcome this passage and to underline the fact that one of the main issues – for us it is even the main one – that this camp is facing touches on the central question of the party. It constitutes the main line of confrontation which delimits the "partidist", pro-party forces and dynamics, those which not only claim the party as an **indispensable** organ of political leadership of the proletariat but above all those who work and struggle effectively for its constitution, and those who oppose it, or even deliberately seek to sabotage it, and who are, explicitly or not, linked to the *councilist* and *economist* theories and positions.

The second point is the Marxist thesis, particularly highlighted by the Communist Left of Italy, according to which "*once again the question of imperialist war or the proletarian revolution is being placed on the historical agenda and imposes on revolutionaries throughout the world the need to close ranks. In the epoch of global monopoly capitalism no country can escape the forces which drive capitalism to war. Capitalism's ineluctable drive towards war is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat.*" As any reader accustomed to reading us will have noticed, we may have written this passage ourselves. It reaffirms the historical alternative, revolution or war, a principle that is denied and rejected today within the proletarian camp itself, by the ICC in particular. Above all, it highlights the topicality of the perspective of generalized imperialist war "*on the historical agenda*" as a **factor of today's situation** imposing on "*revolutionaries to close ranks*" and as a **factor of the very course of class struggle** which "*is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat*". This

as there was a time when the IBRP tended to reject the existence of this camp, particularly in its text *Towards the New International* in 2000: "*In other words we think that, under present conditions, the category "proletarian political camp" is no longer valid*" (<https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2000-10-01/towards-the-new-international>).

passage illustrating and applying the method of dialectical materialism, a passage which the ICT has rightly deemed useful to introduce into its platform, must serve as a principle and a guiding thread for the action and intervention of all communist groups and organizations today, and the party of tomorrow.

The Class Positions of the Platform

Let's move on to the platform's class positions. We cannot within the limited framework of this statement present and argue our agreements on each of them. We will therefore concentrate in priority on the few critical observations, which do not call into question the class character of the document. The new 2020 version is essentially the same as the IBRP version. It does not systematically present, point by point, the principle positions of the IBRP-ICT and which are globally common to all the Communist Left groups, except the so-called *Bordigist* current. This choice weakens the emphasis on and the political clarity of the principles that any platform must put forward. The chapters touching on these positions – *Capitalism, State Capitalism, Parliament, Trade Unions, National Liberation Struggles, The Degeneration of the Russian Revolution, Party, State and Class* – are scattered in the midst of other parts, *The Present Period, China or Social Democracy*, which, in themselves, do not enable to apprehend and underline the full scope and extent of the principles underlying the communist position on each one of these two last questions. Not having treated China in the framework of the point on *State Capitalism* as well as Social Democracy in a specific point on the currents which belonged to the workers' movement and passed into the bourgeois camp, *The Left of Capital*, seems to us to weaken, by diluting it, the scope of the denunciation of state capitalism and the currents of the bourgeois left – we return to this point below. In the same way, we can regret that there is no specific point on the denunciation of *Frontism*, while it is a class position peculiar to the Communist Left of Italy which was the only one to oppose it within the Communist International. Just as no mention is made of the question of terrorism.

The platform presents the trade unions as "*organisations that work for the preservation of capitalism [and] will be bastions of the counter-revolution*". This position is central today so that the communist groups and the party can stand in the vanguard of the struggles by assuming, and taking the lead, of the political confrontation with the unions and the bourgeois political forces of the left and its satellites of the extreme left, Trotskyists, Anarchists, etc, in the strikes, assemblies, demonstrations, etc. We disagree with the presentation of the unions as "*organs of mediation between labour and capital*" which reduces the scope

of their denunciation as full-fledged political organs of the bourgeois state. This leaves the door open to the position, or the idea, that they can still *mediate* between the classes, express the immediate interest of labour against capital, even defend the value of labour-power while they participate fully in its reduction to the maximum... by opposing and sabotaging workers' struggles.

Weakness of the Class Characterization of Leftism

The point on *Social Democracy* is the one we are most critical of, even though we believe that the ICT expresses a class position, which puts us on the same side of the class barricade on this issue. Even if it defends that "*there is a marked difference between proletarian political organisations of the period before October [the 1917 proletarian insurrection in Russia] and those in the period following it*", without explicitly specifying the class nature of this difference⁴², it seems to us that it is a source of political confusion that we cannot fully address here. There is, however, one crucial aspect that we would like to point out. The English and French versions explain this "*marked difference*" by "*the bankruptcy of the majority of the old parties of the Second International*" (emphasis added)⁴³. But it is not their collapse, their *bankruptcy*, or their diverse weaknesses that make proletarian parties and currents pass into the bourgeois camp, into that of counter-revolution, but their effective **betrayal** of the proletarian class. The characterization as *bankruptcy* instead of *betrayal*, that is to say **betrayal of the proletariat**, does not include a class characterization. As a result, the programmatic document that is the platform does not close the door to opportunist concessions on the question of leftism and authorizes avoiding the indispensable, and sometimes even painful effort among those that have in the past militated within leftist organizations, towards an effective political break with leftist ideology, policies and practices.

Actually, it might have been preferable to have a specific point on the question of the old proletarian currents, social-democracy, Stalinism, Trotskyism – nothing is said in the platform about Anarchism, nor even about the bourgeois class nature of leftism in general – having successively passed into the service

42 . Since we worked these comments from the French version, we noticed this one translated "*marked difference*", which is also utilized in the Italian version, "*netta differenza*", by « *une différence de nature* » [a difference of nature]. Even though without any class characterization of this "nature", one can suppose it is "class nature", this formulation is more precise according to us than the English and Italian ones.

43 . We are obliged to point out here that the Italian version uses *tradimento*, which translates into English as *betrayal* and into French as *trahison*.

of counter-revolution. This would have made it possible to underline the fundamental reason for their passage into the bourgeois camp: the effective betrayal of proletarian internationalism and/or proletarian revolution, for example in opposition to the Russian Revolution of 1917; and to clearly set out the method for assessing the class nature of the currents and organizations claiming to be part of the workers and/or revolutionary movement. This would help the whole ICT to arm itself more effectively against any concession to leftism, each part of the organization being compelled to refer to a "formally established principle of our programme" (Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*); and would impose on its new members a more formal and profound break with leftist positions, ideology, and practice⁴⁴.

Without offering an absolute guarantee, which cannot exist, a greater clarity and precision of the platform on this issue could serve as a reference and offer a method to orient oneself in the heat of the events. In this way, the new ICT members in North America could have avoided, from their first concrete experience in the demonstrations following the murder of G. Floyd, getting caught in the nets of radical and anarchist leftism. Did they not see in the street demonstrations of revolt, in itself legitimate, a reaction of the working class itself pushing "back against state repression [and responding] in defiance to the crooked social order [the police] murder for"⁴⁵? For these comrades then, at the very moment when the bourgeoisie goes on the offensive on the political and ideological level by supporting and framing these manifestations of revolt, "the struggle continues [and] the urban rebellion needs to be transformed into world revolution"⁴⁶. In fact, the intervention of the comrades did not find itself at the vanguard of the class struggle but at the tail of the radicalized petty-bourgeoisie, behind and at the service of the anti-racist and democratic campaign launched by the left of

the state apparatus, concretely behind *Black Lives Matter* and the Democratic Party. Is there any need here to recall that this campaign ended with a record electoral participation and the strengthening of democratic and identity ideologies, that is to say with an important political success for the bourgeoisie?

The Legacy of the Partito Comunista Internazionale on the Party Question

The last parts of the platform that deal with the *Party, State and Class* and *The Revolutionary International* are essential and, without doubt, represent its points of strength. They reaffirm the indispensable character of the party for the success of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat because "it is the political and organised expression of class consciousness. It contains the politically most advanced part of the working class organised to defend the programme of emancipation for the entire proletariat and to lead the whole class towards the overthrow of capitalism. By definition the revolutionary party will always be a minority of the proletariat and yet the communist programme it defends can only be implemented by the working class as a whole [knowing that] the only real guarantee of victory is the class consciousness of the working masses themselves and the continuous spreading of the international revolution." The section on *The Revolutionary International* puts forward general principles with which we agree, while raising points of disagreement of a secondary nature, which are not of principle. In particular, the platform argues that the constitution of the world party, of the International, will be accomplished through "the dissolution of the various "national" or regional organisations ". For our part, we consider, following the example of the original ICC and the *Bordigist* current, that the party must constitute itself from the outset as an international party and that its future components – divergence here with the *Bordigist* current –, groups and currents, which will inevitably be called upon to form it, must constitute themselves as international groups from on the outset, whatever the reality and limits of their location. The political expressions of the proletariat, its minorities as isolated and dispersed as they may be, including geographically, are and must be above all expressions of the international proletariat and not the expressions of local or national proletariats. If only because they carry and defend the programme of the proletariat which can only be one and international. This difference with the ICT leads us to have different practices and interventions in our policies of international regroupment, which are not "opposed" in themselves and which would not be opposed in practice if the weight of sectarianism

44 . Isn't it precisely this vagueness of the platform that allowed the integration and maintenance for some twenty years of members who had not really broken with Maoism and Anarchism and who constituted the first Canadian ICT group, the IWG, with practices and interventions that were leftist, sometime even dubious, and that ended up in the confusion and some unfortunate discredit of the ICT itself in the Montreal's political milieu?

45 . *On Minneapolis: Police Brutality & Class Struggle*, leaflet distributed by the comrades (<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-05-30/on-minneapolis-police-brutality-class-struggle>)

46 . More seriously, the question which had been posed at the time of the strike called by the Catalan independentists in October 2017 rises again on this occasion: is it possible that a movement of a non-proletarian, nationalist and petty-bourgeois nature can be transformed into a class movement under the impulse of the revolutionary party? Historically, the Italian Left had settled this question in the negative.

were to be combated when it is expressed.

The Need to Refer to the 1952 Platform

This platform does not bring out the class principles and positions, sometimes also called *class frontiers*, as clearly as in the original platform of the ICC⁴⁷ for example, whose "coherence" on the points is given by its position on the "decadence of capitalism", or in that of the PCint-Battaglia Comunista of 1952 and 1982, whose coherence is given by the nature and role of the party. We can now regret that, when the IBRP was set up, it considered useful to draft a new platform instead of taking up the PCint platform, even if it could require updating it. The result was a document which appears to be a collection of positions and concerns, sometimes even eclectic, instead of a coherent and homogeneous text which displays the programmatic unity of all the positions. Is this due to the very conditions of the then grouping within the IBRP, understood as an addition of national experiences? And the regrouping as "*the dissolution of the various 'national' or regional organisations*", each one bringing its own experience and making the adopted platform a synthesis of supposedly different experiences?

For us, the 1952-1982 document had and still has such universal value that we can still claim it today. The positions appear not as a succession adding up to each other, but as determined by the main party question. The affirmation of the principle on the party from the very first points of the platform is precisely what gives all the positions their unity, coherence and political rigour that any programmatic document requires in order to be able to best arm the concrete action of the party and its capacity to anticipate events.

"The party activity cannot and must not be limited to maintaining the purity of theoretical principles and the organisational network, nor to achieving immediate and numerical success at all costs. The party is both a product and a factor of class struggle. The tasks of the party can be summarised as follows:

a) *propaganda for its principles and the continual elaboration according to their development;*

b) *the active participation in all workers' struggles for immediate demands;*

c) *the leadership of the insurrection for the revolutionary assault on power;*

d) *it is under the active leadership of the class party that the proletariat exercises, by means of dictatorship, the management of power and builds the socialist economy.*

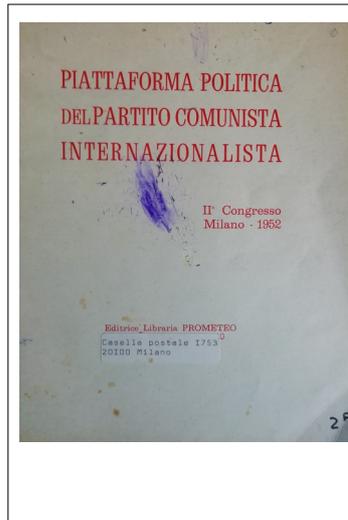
In all situations where the direct struggle for the conquest of power is not yet possible, the party must jointly develop the first two tasks; its absence in the struggles of the proletariat, even partial and immediate, is inconceivable." (Piattaforma politica del PCint, 2^e Congresso Milano, 1952, Editrice Libreria Prometeo, we translate from the original French version published at that time by the PCint).

But, *what's done is done*, there is no going back today on the adoption of the more confused platform of the IBRP and the ICT. At the end, our agreements with the points of the current platform are essentially on questions of principle and class positions; our disagreements on secondary, even tactical, issues. By distinguishing the two dimensions, it is not a question of denying the reality and importance of these differences, but of clarifying where they lie and making it possible to understand what the ICT and our

group have in common, why they find themselves most of the time on the same side of the multiple class barricades that each event raises.

Recent experience teaches us that it costs today's ICT members to accept critical comments as anything other than attacks aimed at weakening the organization. However, we are certain that the strength of the material facts, which also includes positions and criticisms, in relation to the development of the historical situation, also contribute, at least indirectly, to the reflection, clarification and development by the ICT itself of its own positions, those that belong to its heritage. The exposition of our critical comments should also allow readers, militants and sympathizers of the Communist Left to better understand the meaning and object of our struggle within the proletarian camp, and even to join it. And to the pro-party forces of the proletarian camp, of which the ICT and we ourselves are part, to work together in the best possible way in the historic struggle for the party.

The IGCL, November 2020



47 . In our discussions with contacts who are approaching with a view to joining our group, we systematically discuss the ICT and ICC platforms. No doubt we will have the opportunity to come back to the latter – its original version – which is marked by the weight of the councilist origins of this organisation and which the current version based on the opportunist decomposition theory has only worsened.

About The Theses of *Gauche Communiste de France* on The Nature of The State and The Proletarian Revolution (*Internationalisme* #9, 1946)

Here we continue the debate we opened in our columns on the period of transition between capitalism and communism by publishing the letter of a comrade. He criticizes the theses of the group *Gauche Communiste de France* which served as a basis for the position developed and adopted in the 1970s by the ICC. Since his initial letter, the comrade sent us an appendix which we add after his letter. We preface our correspondent's comments with an extract from the theses – which we have not been able to republish in extenso here for lack of space – so that the reader can understand where the criticism lies. We encourage him/her to read all the theses which are available in French and English, in particular on the ICCI website^(a). Finally, we follow this with a brief presentation of the state of our internal discussions on the issue, noting that the comrade's contribution has helped to polarise two divergent positions on the issue.

^(a). The theses are reproduced in English after an introduction on the ICC website: <https://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/201403/9523/aftermath-world-war-two-debates-how-workers-will-hold-power-after-re>

Extracts of The Theses Adopted by The *Gauche communiste de France*

Thesis 1: The state appears in history as the expression of antagonistic interests which divide human society; it is the product and result of antagonistic economic relations. Although the state has played an active role in history, it is above all directly determined by the process of economic development. It appears to stand above classes but in reality it is the juridical expression of the dominant economic system; it is the super-structure, the political dressing of the economic rule of a given class in society. (...) Thus the state fulfils an important function in society, ensuring the security and order indispensable for the maintenance of production. But it can only do this through its essentially conservative character. In the course of history, the state has appeared as a **conservative** and **reactionary** factor of the highest order, a fetter which the evolution and development of the productive forces has constantly had to confront.

Thesis 4: (...) In reaction to the proletariat and its historic mission of creating a socialist society, the capitalist state takes on the appearance of a Goliath. By its very nature the state represents the whole past history of humanity, of all the exploiting classes and reactionary forces in history. Its very character, as we have shown, being one of **conservatism, violence, bureaucracy, the defence of privileges and of economic exploitation**, it is the incarnation of the principle of oppression and is irreconcilably opposed to the principle of liberation, incarnated by the proletariat and socialism.

Thesis 6: (...) The state, the incarnation of class rule and economic oppression, cannot be conquered by the proletariat in the classic sense. On the contrary, the first step towards the proletariat's emancipation is the revolutionary destruction of the state. Not having any economic power, nor any economic property, the proletariat draws its strength from the

consciousness which it acquires from the objective historical laws of the economic process. Its strength lies exclusively in its **consciousness** and its capacity for **organisation**. The class party, which crystallises the consciousness of the class, represents the indispensable precondition for the realisation of the proletariat's historic mission, just as its unitary organs of struggle represent its practical material capacity for action. (...).

Thesis 7: (...) The period of transition expresses an economic continuity with the pre-socialist epoch in the sense that it cannot yet satisfy all the needs of society and contains within it the necessity of continuing accumulation. But any policy which bases itself on the maximum accumulation in order to expand production has no proletarian content and is simply the continuation of the capitalist economy. There economic policy of the proletariat, therefore, is based on a necessary accumulation which is compatible with, and conditioned by, the improvement of the workers' living standards, with a relative and progressive increase in variable capital.

After its victory over the bourgeoisie, the proletariat on the one hand becomes the politically dominant class, which with its class party assures its class dictatorship throughout the period of transition in order to lead society towards socialism; on the other hand, the proletariat remains a class in production which has particular immediate economic interests to defend and it must, therefore, continue to make these interests prevail through its own economic organisations – the unions – and its own methods of struggle – the strike – throughout the period of transition.

Thesis 8: (...) The proletariat must above all safeguard the independence of its own class organisations, preventing them from being deformed by taking up tasks and functions which do

not correspond to their real nature. The party, which represents the consciousness of the historic mission of the class and of its final goal, exercises the dictatorship in the name of the proletariat; the trade union, the unitary organ of the class which expresses its economic position and which has to defend the immediate interests of the class, must not identify with the state or become integrated into it.

Thesis 9: The dictatorship of the proletariat, expressing the will of the revolutionary class to crush the resistance of the enemy and to ensure the movement towards a socialist society, also expresses its fundamental opposition to the idea of the proletarian nature of the state, the error of identifying the dictatorship of the proletariat with the utilisation by the proletariat of this instrument of coercion, the state. The state, insofar as it is reconstituted after the revolution, expresses the immaturity of the conditions for a socialist society. It is the political superstructure of an economic base

which is not yet socialist. By its nature it is opposed to and hostile towards socialism. Just as the period of transition is an historically inevitable stage which the proletariat has to go through, so the state is for the proletariat an unavoidable instrument of violence which it must use against the dispossessed classes, but with which it cannot identify itself. "And the least one can say is that the state is a necessary evil which is inherited by the proletariat in its struggle for class domination" (Engels, Preface to The Civil War in France).

(...) The dictatorship of the proletariat, expressing the will of the revolutionary class to crush the resistance of the enemy and to ensure the movement towards a socialist society, also expresses its fundamental opposition to the idea of the proletarian nature of the state, the error of identifying the dictatorship of the proletariat with the utilisation by the proletariat of this instrument of coercion, the state.

Correspondence : Critical Comments on the GCF Theses

To the IGCL,
Dear comrades,

The following comments aim to continue our discussion about the role of the state during the period of transition and the Stalinist transformation of the state in the USSR, based on some personal reflections occasioned by the reading of the text "The Nature of the State and the Proletarian Revolution" published in *Internationalism* No. 9 (April 1946).

In order to make the thread of my thought transparent to you, I would like to make it clear from the outset that the theses set out there presented, as far as I could understand, an *anarchist deviation* making its way through ideas and quotations taken from the Marxist corpus.

It is a historical law of the workers' and communist movement that each opportunist crisis within its political organizations gives rise to theoretical quarrels between its militants trying to find the line of the historical programme of the proletariat. But the resolution of such crises does not take the most direct and simple path. At the time of the Second International, the conformity of the legal and reformist practice of the socialist parliamentary groups, accepted by the Bernsteinian current as being the "parliamentary way to socialism", had received as an answer a non-conformity of anti-political facade carrying just as much of an opportunistic danger. Right-wing opportunism and left-wing opportunism revealed their twin character

by standing arm in arm during the Sacred Union of 1914.

This was repeated at the time when centrist opportunism was at the head of the Third International, except that this crisis differed from the previous one in its breadth and depth, as much for the political results of the workers' movement prepared to be thrown into the imperialist war as for the prevailing theoretical confusion about the nature of the Soviet regime. In the aftermath of the Second World War, a whole range of democratic-humanist and anti-totalitarian propaganda was disseminated by the organs of the Western bourgeoisie and succeeded in penetrating groups claiming proletarian revolution. In fact, these theories were largely based on the judgements of the intellectual petty-bourgeoisie of Western Europe, whose most prominent representatives at the time were Kautsky, Adler and Bauer, about the October Revolution of 1917, which they considered already too "authoritarian". Against the exactions and crimes of Stalinism, its use of terrorist methods and its headless diplomatic *volte-face*, the opposition of Democracy and Dictatorship, even of the soft and free Civil Society against the Monster-State, always on the lookout for violating the imprescriptible rights of the former, was revived.

The Russian revolution showed a new historical fact, that of a state erected by a working class that became the ruling class in a country, then passed to the side of bourgeois and imperialist forces. Above

all, when one wants to elucidate such problems and find the causes of the historical process, it is necessary to avoid falling into the "infantile left" intellectual reflexes which approach practical problems with too much formalism. Such a method led to condemnations of the role of the leaders "in general", of the party "in general", with the pretext that there were mediocre leaders or that a workers' party had rallied to the interests of the bourgeoisie, and that the conclusion to be drawn was to declare these forms "rotten", "corrupt" or "outdated". In reality, parties, leaders and the masses maintain relations whose qualities, *content*, are not intrinsic to them, but above all a function of the surrounding conditions and social dynamics at work in their historical milieu. It is in these terms that Lenin posed the explanation of the opportunism of the leaders of the Second International, linking it to the colonial expansion of capitalism opening a period of relatively "peaceful" relations between the European proletariat and the capitalist class, inciting the labour aristocracy to find grounds for agreement and collaboration with the latter. Betrayal is not a phenomenon reducible to the morality or psychology of its personal author, but a social fact.

It is in a very different spirit that *Internationalisme* seems to have posed the question of the State, and its relations with the Party and the Class, although it claims to draw lessons from the "Russian experience", and brings with it considerations which are far removed from Marxism.

As early as in Thesis #1, the State is declared to be "a **conservative** and **reactionary** factor of the highest order" whose "only reason for being is to codify and sanction an already existing economic state of affairs", a function which it assumes as a weapon of the ruling class to defend its interests. Notice that, starting from this classical definition of the state as an instrument of oppression of the dominant class over the dominated class, insisting on the *class social structure* underlying its existence, another determination is added *a priori*, this time designating a *direction*, a way with regard to the development of the productive forces of history.

Should we then conclude that the Jacobin state was reactionary in confiscating Church property, just as the Union state was reactionary in its war against the Confederate slave states? What, then, are we to think of Engels' judgements on the policy of national unification which Bismarck (*JUNKER* Bismarck) pursued, albeit from "above", but which was no less revolutionary? The state sanctions and codifies pre-existing economic relations, but its action is not limited to this sphere: it is also an *economic agent* and impacts economic conditions through its activity.

The wars led by the capitalist states cause material and human destruction which are not without influence on the economic process (devaluation of capital, disorganization, etc.); the state decides on taxes, transfers of surplus value between possessing classes, can make itself the owner and invest capital in enterprises, etc. The state also decides on the economic conditions. But I would like to add here expressly, because you might see this as a position that brings us back to Dühring's way of looking at the role of violence in the history of mankind, that this does not imply any autonomy of the state from the economic base! It is of course beyond its power, legally or physically, to create or invent the laws of the economic infrastructure to which it is also subject, as are individuals, categories, parties or classes. Only, to consider as *Internationalisme* that the State would be content to apply a "buffer" on economic and social relations and thus validate them is reductive.

Thus, the conservative, reactionary or revolutionary character of the state depends on the way it uses the force of its physical or ideological apparatus of coercion on the prevailing social relations. To remove *a priori* any revolutionary potential from this superstructure is to lead to practical contradictions concerning the process of proletarian revolution.

Internationalisme goes on to write that socialism [more exactly, it would rather be a question of saying integral communism, socialism designating the transitional phase in which the existence of classes, national divisions, etc., persists] is irreducibly opposed to the state: "as social institution the state (...) remains alien and hostile to socialism" [to integral communism]. What exactly is it trying to say by this? That the state cannot exist in the upper communist phase? This is a theoretical certainty, an obvious fact for Marxists who have never questioned it. Or that the use of the state would defeat the purpose of reaching the upper phase? Then in that case, we would commit the idealistic error of Anarchism to base the criteria of class praxis on *imaginary or ideal conditions* and not on *real and present conditions*. This is to confuse the *mental* representation of the goal with the *real order* in which we live.

By considering the state as a *purely reactionary* machine, defending an "order" and seeking to preserve already existing social relations, then its necessity for the proletariat becomes illogical: because the dictatorship of the proletariat has the task of *destroying* the old bourgeois relations of production and at the same time of building the new communist relations, because we only have at hand, at the moment of revolution, the premises, the

preconditions of the communist mode of production. The state plays the role of centralizing pole in this work of economic transformation.

Internationalisme, in order to protect against the danger of the state, only proposes as a safeguard the basics of the Commune, taken up by Engels and then Lenin: civil servants receiving a pay the same as that of a worker, broad participation of the masses in the administration, etc. These are measures to be taken to build the new state and mark the first step in its absorption into society. It was on this model that the Soviets in Russia were formed. But the problem does not lie in the *form of organization*, and no such precaution is a *guarantee in itself*! The famous "Russian experience" is totally evacuated here: one does not study the evolution of the state organism within its real environment. But what is the major process that affected it? The revolutionary energy released by the explosion of October, not being able to spread to Western Europe because of the failure of the German Revolution, slowly dies of asphyxiation in a backward country, surrounded by a petty-bourgeois and merchant economic formation; world capitalism stabilizes and regains strength; the Russian proletariat, bending under the economic contradictions, loses social power which falls into the hands of another class; the historical course of Russia takes another turn, of which Stalinism is the political manifestation. (Much has been said, in the heat of events as well as afterwards, about the "bureaucratization" of the state. But if I am not mistaken, Lenin identified the cause of this phenomenon in the dispersal of the Russian economy, not in the brutal character of Stalin or in an organizational vice!). And this analysis (drawn in broad strokes) perfectly respects the codes of Marxism: the economic factor, the productive forces, decide in the last instance.

To conclude, with regard to the internal evolution of the Third International, and to evaluate the extent to which its politics may have participated in the revolutionary failure, I think that, **on a very general scale**, it should be seen as a *secondary factor*. The marked retreat between the principles displayed at its creation and its tactics of United Front, Workers' Government, Socialism in a single country, etc. carried out afterwards are more the marks left by the general tendency to the ebb of the revolution than the cause of the failure of the European revolution. It would undoubtedly be contrary to the conceptions of the Communist Left of Italy to see in bad tactics the reason for the failure of a revolution, which would mean in the opposite case that a good tactic could have led to a reversal of the situation! Criticisms of the CI tactics must be

seen only in the context of the problem of safeguarding and maintaining a revolutionary party when the historical course is unfavourable to it, and how it can avoid becoming an opportunist political organization.

Appendix

I propose here to present some comments on the reflection carried by *Internationalisme* (#9) on which certain slag from systems of ideas foreign to the Marxist worldview have been deposited, to expose and eliminate them, so that the question of the state of the transition period does not rest on erroneous theoretical premises.

1. To consider that the state, by virtue of its function of maintaining order, would be antithetical to all changes and transformations, bears witness to a loss of dialectical sense in the intelligibility of things. Following the metaphysical mode of thinking, according to which the starting point is ideas, words, definitions and proceeds *a priori* on the basis of these materials, order and change are opposed, are external to each other, one necessarily excludes the other. The dialectical method deals with real things, real relationships between things, and abandons the soporific pendulum movement that takes the reflection from A to its negation B, and the negation of B returns to A.

A Joseph de Maistre⁴⁸ or others can undoubtedly delude themselves and think of the Order as a stoic power invested with an eternal and supernatural Principle (God, Tradition, etc.) capable of keeping the world in an immutability, an incorruptibility where "everything is only order and beauty". Marxist analysis, however, has taken away from the State the sacred garments that its cold mechanisms used to wear, and has reduced its nature to material, human and historical data.

2. The attribution of an absolutely conservative and reactionary character to the state is nothing more than a profane expression of this same metaphysical and religious background, the political vocabulary replacing the moral vocabulary here. If the state is "a fetter which the evolution and development of the productive forces has constantly had to confront", it remains to explain this great mystery of the appearance of the state at a given stage of their

48 . "A key figure of the Counter-Enlightenment, Maistre regarded monarchy both as a divinely sanctioned institution and as the only stable form of government. He called for the restoration of the House of Bourbon to the throne of France and for the ultimate authority of the Pope in temporal matters. Maistre argued that the rationalist rejection of Christianity was directly responsible for the disorder and bloodshed which followed the French Revolution of 1789". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_de_Maistre).

development... which has by no means ceased since! The philosophical side of this thesis defended by *Internationalisme*, and which swears by the materialist content of its general analysis, is clearly mistaken and moves away from a correct understanding of the role of state superstructures in history.

3. From the definition of the state acting as an instrument of oppression of a ruling class over a dominated class (thus giving us the essence of the state and the *social structure* on which it is based) cannot be deduced *a priori* its reactionary character, a determination which relates to a *direction* and a *path* with regard to a determined evolution of the economic infrastructure. This determination relates to the application of the state force on the ambient social relations, depending on whether it is directed towards the preservation or destruction of outdated forms; and conversely: acts to stifle or, on the contrary, to strengthen new forms.

4. The *antithesis of order and change* is thus merely a hollow play on words and apparent contradictions, and devoid of conceptual underpinnings. The association of ideas "state = order = conservation" is limited to a phenomenal and non-objective appreciation. Communist society will know the

order and harmonious organization of its productive forces, while the state will have disappeared; conversely, bourgeois society knows the state, but its system of production is *anarchic* and *antagonistic*. This thus demonstrates that these links established in thought have no real foundation.

In reality, therefore, we are not dealing with such entities, but with determined material factors affecting each other in an equally determined, measurable and evaluable way. And by scrutinizing the substance of things, scientific socialism arrives at "paradoxical" conclusions such as "communism will emerge from the bowels of capitalism", although everything opposes these two economic types, and the semblance of paradox collapses once the process of capitalist formation is studied and understood. In the same vein, the ambiguity of the assertion "*as social institution the state (...) remains alien and hostile to socialism*" is removed and it is no longer inconceivable that a new post-revolutionary state can be a positive agent in the construction of a *stateless* society.

"Why do we fight for the political dictatorship of the proletariat if political power is economically impotent?" (Lettre d'Engels à Schmidt, 27 octobre 1890).

Jr (July and November 2020)

Premises for A Contradictory Debate within The IGCL on The Period of Transition

To date, the IGCL has not adopted a particular position on the historical debates on this issue within the Communist Left. The articles that we published in our journal were only contributions that were opening up reflection and discussion among us and that we thought it would be useful to make public. If they tended to refer to the position of the GCF and the ICC, they tried above all to distinguish themselves from the *councilist* approach which can accompany, or found – according to some comrades – the position of the GCF and the ICC on the rejection of the notion of the proletarian state and the identification of the proletariat with the state of the period of transition.

The publication of the 1979 PCint-Battaglia comunista critique⁴⁹ of the ICC's position, our public debate with comrade Fredo Corvo⁵⁰ and today's discussions with contacts and sympathizers have further developed our common reflection and two positions have become clearly polarized on the basis of the correspondence of comrade Jr.

One disagrees with the position of the comrade: "He

takes the historical experience of the bourgeois state, for example Bismarck's, as a basis for arguing about the proletarian state. There is a fundamental difference between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution. The place and condition of the proletariat is not the same as that of the bourgeoisie in their respective revolutionary processes – the proletariat always remains an exploited class. He says that the state is an economic factor. This is to be taken with prudence and caution. The state has mainly "negative" functions such as repression, while the "positive" functions are not the work of the state of the transition period but of the proletariat itself. It is the proletariat which carries and promotes communism through its party. His criticism of the theses of the GCF (and the ICC) according to which they are anarchist theses is facile and forgets the main concern of the GCF and the ICC" (minutes of an internal meeting), namely that the proletariat, even in the period of transition, and even though it exercises its class dictatorship, remains an exploited class, making it impossible for it to identify itself totally with the state. The other agrees "with Jr. when he says that the notion of an intrinsically conservative state is an anarchist/councilist deviation. (...) The argument [distinguishing] between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the semi-state, which has a repressive function but which the proletariat

49 . *Révolution ou Guerre* #9, <http://igcl.org/Debate-on-the-Period-of-Transition>

50 . *Révolution ou Guerre* #13 : <http://igcl.org/Origine-et-signification-des>.

still controls without the state being a workers' state, is that this double nature of the transition period would be the ABCs of Marxism. However, this double nature is determined by the progress made towards the abolition of classes and the inclusion of the whole of humanity in socialized production. It does not imply two distinct entities coexisting simultaneously. (...) The CWO's criticism of the ICC's position (article "40 years...") on this issue is in fact correct".

The divergence is clear and obliges us to develop at best an internal debate on the transition period. We invite all the other forces of the Communist Left, groups and sympathizers to participate. Any

contribution or criticism is and will be welcome. As far as we are able, we will try to report publicly. The framework of this debate? *"The proletariat needs the state (...). But [the opportunists] "forget" to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away. And, secondly, the working people need a 'state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class'."* (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 1917)

The IGCL, November 2020

Summaries of the journal #16 and #15

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GCCF-IGCL Declaration on the Anti-Racist Protest in the US (June 5th 2020)
The False Opposition Racism-Antiracism and the Threat for the International Proletariat
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2 nd Communiqué (March 19th 2020) Coronavirus and Crisis, The Tragic Responsibility of the Communists
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What is America Trying to Do? (Nuevo Curso, May 12th 2020)
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Spain 1936: Can There Be a Proletarian Revolution without Insurrection and Destruction of the Capitalist State? Excerpts of Bilan #18 (April 1935) on the "Proletarian State".
Text of the Workers Movement
Where to Begin? (Lenin, 1901)

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 statified 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.