

# REVOLUTION or WAR

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Historical Course and Communist Responsibilities

International Situation

US Capitalism's Offensive and the Alternative Revolution or War

Workers' Struggle in Argentina and Canada

How Unions and the Left Parties Sabotage the Extension (Emancipation)

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Statement on the International Communist Current's Platform

What Future for the Internationalist Communist Tendency's New Journal *1919* in North America?

Publication of the Communist Left or Trojan Horse of Leftism?

Leftist "Anti-Capitalism" against the Proletariat (contribution)

E-mail : [intleftcom@gmail.com](mailto:intleftcom@gmail.com), website : [www.igcl.org](http://www.igcl.org)

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*(Our review is also available in French)*

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## Historical Course and Communist Responsibilities

"What is it about, more precisely? It's a question of clarifying the opposition between war and revolution, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; but not in the abstract, with a catch-all formula, but in a new course of situations, proper to the extreme phase of capitalist decadence, where the historical climate remains permanently charged with electricity and where the bourgeoisie can no longer live without maintaining a state of war, while the proletariat cannot be without posing the problem of revolution." (Octobre #2, *Tendances et contradictions de l'évolution capitaliste*, March 1938, journal of the "Italian" Left)

**B**iden the Democrat and, with him, the whole American bourgeoisie have engaged in a generalized counter-offensive. Biden's *America is back?* To defend at all costs the US imperialist leadership against China's aspiration, itself imperialist, to become the dominant power. Suddenly, with both the covid-19 pandemic and a new team coming to power after Trump, the course of events has accelerated sharply. The scale of the economic crisis today demands that the defence of the interests of every national capital be taken to the terrain of direct imperialist confrontation. This is imperative and urgent. No one can escape it. And, just as in wartime, deficits, debts, monetary *orthodoxy*, especially for US capital with the dollar, the world's reserve currency, do not matter. Reviving the war economy to win the arms race, before winning the war itself. Chinese and Russian nuclear missiles can also strike the US, making the possibility of general war all the more credible. Let there be no doubt: the US bourgeoisie will not hesitate to defend its imperialist domination even at the cost of a generalised nuclear war. But let no one doubt that China, gradually strangled by the *containment* policy of US capital, will be tempted to anticipate the asphyxiation by launching into a *Pearl Harbour* of some kind.

Biden the Democrat and the American bourgeoisie are thus imposing their score and giving the tempo to the whole world. The enemies are designated. The result is that the whole capitalist world is forced to position itself for or against the Chinese and Russian *illiberal autocrats*, for or against the *Western democracies*. The ideological themes essential for a generalised imperialist war are being put in place. By pointing to the enemy, America is blocking any European hint for *autonomous sovereignty* – autonomous from the United States – and force its main powers, including the traditionally reluctant France, to fall into line within... NATO.

If it were to be confirmed, this polarisation between China and America would have consequences, for the moment difficult to define precisely, on the capacity of the international proletariat to oppose the war and to engage in the revolutionary path. The historical experiences of its European, North American and Chinese fractions are different. To be convinced of this, it is enough to note the absence – to

our knowledge – of communist groups in China, only the latter are capable of materialising and expressing the indispensable *proletarian internationalism* which can make the ruling class *hesitate* and mobilise the proletariat effectively.

The state of dispersion and numerical weakness of the international communist forces also says a lot about the reality of the current balance of power between the international proletariat and world capital. But more seriously, the political hesitations and confusions of these forces, of the proletarian camp or *the party in the making*, are themselves worrying: hesitations to work decisively and without sectarianism for the real regroupment, that is to say in political clarity, of the international communist forces tending to emerge; confusions in the face of the historical situation and in the face of the ideological and political campaigns and manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie – above all, those carried by leftism.

The end of the social measures that accompanied the lock-downs in some of the *richest* countries has already begun. Inevitably, the existing proletarian anger and combativity will be expressed. However disoriented and passive the proletariat may be at the moment, the ability of the communist groups to orient themselves, and thus to put forward political orientations and slogans is, and will be, a material element and factor in the massive class confrontations that crisis and war are precipitating. Remaining faithful to communist principles, which is indispensable, will not be enough. It is still necessary to *make them be living*. To update not the communist principles which are invariant, but their declension in the face of today's questions, to establish the unity of principles and tactics in the situations which will come, is a crucial moment of the struggle for the constitution of the political party of the proletariat.

The hurricane is coming. The race between the march to war and the revival of proletarian struggles is on. *The party's* slogan for staying on course? To know how to *manoeuvre in the violent winds* that are swelling, the tactics, while keeping our eyes fixed on the compass of communist principles.

Revolution or War, May 4th 2021

**Warning to our English speaking readers :**

We could not translate several articles of this issue by an English speaking comrade. Thus, there can be some unease to read them and, more important, some political mistakes. In that case, or any doubt or questioning, we refer the comrades and readers to the French version.

## International Situation

### US Capitalism's Offensive and the Alternative *Revolution or War*

“Now, after just 100 days, I can report to the nation: America is on the move again. Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength. (...) After 100 Days of rescue and renewal, America is ready for takeoff. We are working again. Dreaming again. Discovering again. Leading the world again. We have shown each other and the world: There is no quit in America. 100 days ago, America’s house was on fire. We had to act. (...) In another era when our democracy was tested, Franklin Roosevelt reminded us—In America: we do our part. That’s all I’m asking. That we all do our part. And if we do, then we will meet the central challenge of the age by proving that democracy is durable and strong. The autocrats will not win the future. America will. The future will belong to America.” (Biden’s Address to the Congress, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2021)

Since March 2020, the inability of capitalism to date to curb the global pandemic of covid 19 and the depth of the global economic crisis have provoked a multitude of dramatic consequences, gigantic events and reactions unthinkable only yesterday, of all kinds, which make everyone dizzy and predict a tragic future. Just as they provoke anxiety, disarray, impotence and passivity among the masses of proletarians. How can we understand what is happening? What are the facts, forces and factors that dominate and determine the course of events? How, in the face of the dramatic conditions that capital is beginning to impose, and will impose even more, can the proletarians of all continents and countries orient themselves and must they respond? How can we resist the attacks of today and the multiplied attacks of tomorrow? What reflections, what analyses, what orientations, even what slogans, can and must communist groups develop and put forwards?

*"The conscious fraction of the proletariat must reject the method of crude empiricism which consists in mechanically recording the facts or in advocating or "letting happen" experiences which will be assessed afterwards. Instead, it must rely exclusively on a rigorous interpretation of the facts based on the contradictory movement of evolution - (dialectics) - an interpretation which often appears to be no more than an "a priori" thesis, a "schema", but which, in reality, is merely the application of the Marxist method of investigation."* (Communisme #21, journal of the Belgium Fraction of the International Communist Left, December 1938)

One year after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pan-

demie and the open economic crisis, the historical rupture no longer poses a question and everyone has understood, if only empirically, that there will be no turning back, that the 2020 Covid and crisis episode is not and will not be a parenthesis. Attached to Marxist theory and principles, the main groups of the Communist Left knew that *the rupture was historic and brutal*, as we announced in March 2020, and that a new period was opening. From what could appear as an *"a priori" thesis, a "schema"*, and which was only our attempt to *apply the Marxist method of investigation*, we could affirm – and most communist groups could do the same – that the outbreak of the crisis could only be a factor of misery and of increased and generalised attacks on the proletariat on the one hand ; and of exacerbation of imperialist rivalries on the other hand, in which the sanitary stakes, the race for vaccines – after that for masks, respirators and other materials necessary to treat in the emergency – would be object and factor of those rivalries too.

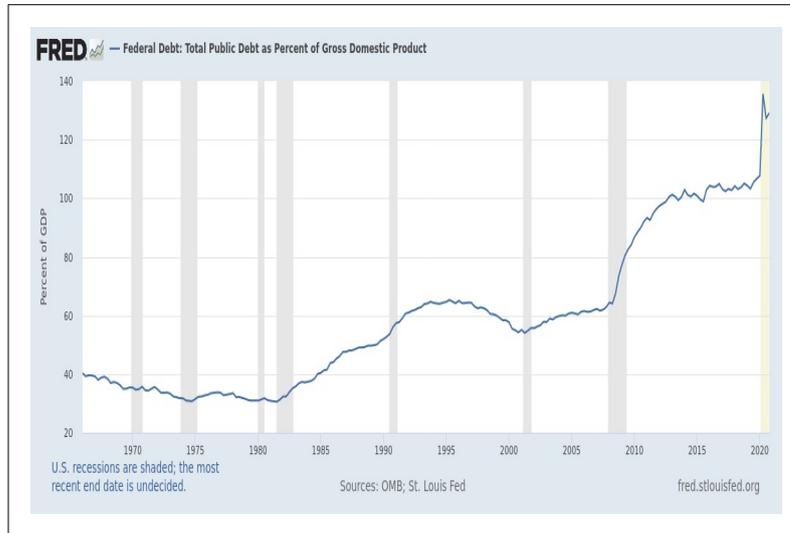
No need to be Marxist to understand – bourgeois economists have also pointed it out – that the monetary policies, the mass printing of paper money, the avalanche of liquidity issued by the central banks – around three trillion dollars –, were only meant to prevent any panic and blockage of the financial system and cascading bankruptcies; just as the maintenance of wages despite the lock-down – in Europe – or the cheques sent by Trump to American households, causing the explosion of budget deficits already in bad shape, was only intended to prevent any social reaction to the stop-

ping of a large part of production and to ensure both a minimum income for the unemployed, confined workers, and the momentary survival of many small and large companies. As a result, world debt has increased by \$24 trillion in 2020, reaching \$281 trillion and raising the world debt/GDP ratio to 355%. Public and private debts, already abysmal, are therefore exploding. The balance sheet of the US central bank – to mention just one – now stands at \$7.4 trillion, up from \$580 billion in 1999<sup>1</sup>. Every month it injects – using *Quantitative Easing* policies, the current version of *money printing* – \$120 billion to buy back government bonds subscribed by private banks and financial funds, a commitment made to ensure that the latter continue to finance the exploding deficits – *privatising the gains, socialising the losses* as some have pointed out. The US deficit reaches 17% of US GDP by 2020, a level only similar to those of the Second World War (20-25%).

No need to be *Marxist* to understand that these generalised debt measures, the same as those adopted during previous crises, but not on the same scale as the last one in 2008, which broke all records, do not solve the crisis and will not resolve it. They merely postpone it, with increasing difficulty, and multiply its consequences and future devastation. Above all, it is highly significant that this gigantic production of paper money sees its greatest share directed into the financial and speculative sphere instead of the productive sphere. Here too, many bourgeois economists recognise that *the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit* makes this profit insufficient in relation to capital as a whole in production, while the

financial and speculative sphere offers higher *returns*. We don't have the space here to reproduce all the graphs of the main economic indicators linked to the generalised indebtedness of world capitalism and which express the growing and yawning gap between real goods production and the mass of capital. All of them, deficit, money stock in circulation, present the same curve since the 1960s, increasing, accelerating, exponential, then abrupt wall, as the one of the US federal debt that we reproduce here.

On the other hand, only the communist groups *applying the Marxist method of investigation, which often appears to be nothing more than an a priori thesis, a schema* – to use the formula of *Communism* – could announce that the historical rupture taking place before our eyes and the capitalist impasse, in addition to the drastic deterioration of the living conditions of the proletariat and the aggravation of the economic and imperialist competition between capitalist powers, meant above all that the "a priori thesis" carried by Marxism and the Communist Left was becoming the determining factor of the situation. That the historical alternative and the perspective of generalised imperialist war dictated the course of events arising from the crisis. In



agreement with the Internationalist Communist Tendency, at least with its platform updated in 2020, we affirm that "*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<sup>2</sup> today [we underline] in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat.*" This fundamental thesis, **the expression today** of the tendency towards generalised imperialist war, which belongs to the international Communist Left and

1 . "Since 2007 the balance sheet of central banks has grown very strongly. The Eurosystem's balance sheet (i.e. the consolidated balance sheet of the European Central Bank and the national central banks) has increased more than fourfold, and those of the Bank of Japan (BoJ) and the US Federal Reserve (FED) by about six and eight times respectively over this period. 7,000 billion at the beginning of 2021, or more than 60% of GDP in the euro area." (Blog éco de la Banque de France, <https://blocnotesdeleco.banque-france.fr/billet-de-blog/c-omprendre-la-croissance-du-bilan-des-banques-centrales>, translated by us).

2 . The Italian version uses "è accompagnata dall'attacco universale..." ["is accompanied..."] and the French one "se matérialise." ["materializes today in the attack..."].

which is always – more or less clearly – defended by its *pro-party* forces, cannot be reduced to a mere declamation of principle. It is, and must be, the compass for identifying the basic tendencies of the current historical course amidst the multiplication of events of all kinds and in all apparent directions and the hurricanes that are looming.

### **US Capitalism Leads the Imperialist Ball**

At first, and *influenced* by the media campaigns, it was believed that China was at the heart of the new situation, that it was the central and dynamic factor and actor, since *democracies had had their day*, according to its president Xi Jinping. Was it not succeeding in controlling the pandemic on its soil as well as its largely proletarianised population, reducing the former and repressing the latter? *Re-opening* its economy before all the others, using and abusing of its dominant position in the production of goods suddenly presented as *essential*, initially the production of masks and others, to develop its imperialist power and its ideological discourse? Were the other so-called *democratic* powers, starting with Trump's US, not sinking into the health and economic crisis without being able to provide an answer? Totally powerless? In short, isn't China emerging from the covid 19 crisis as the real world's leading power? Realising the *Chinese dream* advocated by Xi Jinping in opposition to the *American dream*?<sup>3</sup> In fact, and very quickly, the whole weight, axis and energy of the world and historical situation has shifted, been articulated and powered around and from the initiatives of the American bourgeoisie.

It soon became clear that the core of capital's response to the world situation was defined by the US bourgeoisie's determination to defend its position as the leading imperialist power in opposition to China at all costs, up to and including the ultimate consequences of war; and this on all levels, domestic – towards its proletariat in particular –, political, economic and imperialist. In so doing, by going on the offensive in all directions, US capitalism, historically in decline but having the dollar, the US Army and the mystification of democracy, and the Biden government are leading and imposing on the whole capitalist world, in particular on the other imperialist powers, its priorities, its lines of confrontation, its terrain and its timing on the economic, imperialist and military levels. It is stepping up its military pressure and provocations against China and Russia. It traps the main European powers, Germany and France in the first place, between their aspiration – itself contradict-

ory – to more *European sovereignty and autonomy* and the obligation to *choose a side* that cannot be other than behind America. The more American capital exacerbates the economic, imperialist and military antagonisms with China – and secondly with Russia – the more it forces the Europeans, if only by locking them into the NATO tutelage, to fall in line behind it.

### **First Trapping the American Proletariat between Racism and Anti-Racism...**

It was only from this understanding of the course of events that it was really possible to apprehend the full extent of American capital's first response of a domestic political order, that is to say, *vis-à-vis* the North American and... international proletariat<sup>4</sup>. But above all, much more importantly, it was only from the *a priori thesis* of imperialist war or proletarian revolution "as the element-factor of the immediate situation", that it was possible to grasp the scale and the danger of the ideological and political offensive launched against the proletariat from the racist murder of G. Floyd by the police. Without this compass, it was not possible to understand why and how Trump was to be re-elected before the pandemic and why the US bourgeoisie *changed horses* with it and the anti-racist campaign following the murder of G. Floyd. Why it became necessary for the American bourgeoisie to wear out the Trump card to the point of the buffoonish farce of the *pro-Trumpist* invasion of Capitol Hill. Why it was necessary to put Biden, the Democratic Party, and with them left-wing, even leftist, politics and language into power. And how the political operation could be carried out in the wake of and thanks to the anti-racist campaign and demonstrations. And all this to put in place a new team, a Democratic one, grasping the real stakes of the new historical situation, the extent of the American decline in the face of a China which has become a world imperialist power, capable of mobilising, as far as possible, the whole of the proletariat in the defence of American capital; in concrete terms, to make it accept the preparation for the imperialist confrontation.

### **... Then behind the "Social" Recovery Plans...**

It is only from this understanding of the course of events dictated by the historical alternative that it is possible and necessary to apprehend the meaning of the trillion-dollar stimulus plans that Biden

3 . [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_Dream](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Dream)

4 . See *Revolution or War* #16 et 17 <http://www.igcl.org/Anti-police-brutality-protests-in-627> or still <http://www.igcl.org/Communique-on-The-Situation-in-the-653>.

is putting on the table – over 5 trillion! Many bourgeois media and intellectuals do not hesitate to compare them to Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s. Except that they only see the state capitalist measures of the New Deal as the answer to and the so-called overcoming of the 1929 crisis. Not only do they ignore the limits of these measures from the point of view of the crisis itself, which was no more overcome or resolved in the late 1930s than the 2008 crisis was before 2020. But above all, they totally ignore the real historical significance of the New Deal, as well as of the popular fronts in Western Europe, or of the measures of state capitalism taken by the Nazi German and Fascist Italian states: the preparation of the Second World War both on the ideological and political level, the control, submission, repression and enlistment of the proletariat, and on the economic level, the development and explosion of the war economy and of arms spending.

Whatever dimension of the *post-covid recovery* that the trillions of dollars – and to a lesser degree the more modest stimulus packages adopted by the other capitalist powers – might provoke, if only to compensate for the unprecedented global recession that has just occurred, it will be minimal and insignificant. Apart from the fact that it will be done on the backs of the workers, it will not solve the basic contradiction, the overflow of capital and the overproduction which results from it. Only a massive destruction of value, that is to say of capital and productive forces, a hundred times more devastating than the Second World War, can "solve" the contradiction... unless capitalism is finally destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat.

It is only from this understanding of the course of events dictated by the historical alternative that it is possible to grasp the objective of Biden's *American Jobs Plan*. "It creates jobs to upgrade our transportation infrastructure. Jobs modernizing roads, bridges and highways. Jobs building ports and airports, rail corridors and transit lines. (...) It creates jobs replacing 100% of the nation's lead pipes and service lines (...). It creates jobs connecting every American with high-speed internet (...) It creates jobs by building a modern power grid..." (Biden' Address) What is the purpose and historical significance of this policy of *major public works*, which is typical of state capitalism and whose discourse, including the mass creation of jobs, refers explicitly to Roosevelt's New Deal? Readers will forgive us for repeating the NATO quote we made in the previous issue. "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. (...) So decisions on investments, on supply chains and on ownership are not only economic or financial decisions. **They are critical to our security.**"<sup>5</sup>

### ... And Finally behind Biden "President of the Workers!"<sup>6</sup>

It is only from this understanding of the course of events dictated by the need to prepare and draw the American proletariat into the war effort that it is possible to grasp the purpose of the *Protecting the Right to Organize Act*. "The American Jobs Plan is a blue-collar blueprint to build America. (...) And that's why I'm calling on Congress to pass the *Protecting the Right to Organize Act* – the PRO Act – and send it to my desk to support the right to unionise. By the way – let's also pass the \$15 minimum wage." Just like the New Deal, which saw Roosevelt impose recognition of the *union right* in the workplaces, thereby integrating unions into the war effort and making them permanently anti-worker organs of the state apparatus<sup>7</sup>. Neither Trump nor the Republican Party could carry the left-wing, even leftist, language necessary for this offensive against the proletariat. And without the anti-racist, democratic campaign in the wake of the racist police killing of G. Floyd, it would have been difficult to get... 81 million voters behind Biden and get them to sign up for such drastic and supposedly socialist measures.

5 . Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Global Security 2020 (GLOBSEC) Bratislava Forum, we underline.

6 . The French newspaper *Le Monde* headlines its April 29<sup>th</sup> editorial with a thunderous « Joe Biden, le président des travailleurs » [Joe Biden, president of the workers] or still, April 28<sup>th</sup>, as « le révolutionnaire qu'on n'attendait pas » [the revolutionary we did not expect] ([https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/04/29/joe-biden-le-president-des-travailleurs\\_6078490\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/04/29/joe-biden-le-president-des-travailleurs_6078490_3232.html) [https://www.lemonde.fr/podcasts/article/2021/04/28/joe-biden-le-revolutionnaire-qu-on-n-attendait-pas\\_6078308\\_5463015.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/podcasts/article/2021/04/28/joe-biden-le-revolutionnaire-qu-on-n-attendait-pas_6078308_5463015.html)).

7 . The process of integrating the unions into the bourgeois state apparatus accelerated during the 1930s both in the totalitarian countries, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the Stalinist USSR, with a single union, but also under the New Deal and the Popular Front, with the recognition of unions in workplaces dating from 1936 in France. The experience of the strikes during the First World War and the international revolutionary wave that ended it had shown that the control and discipline of the proletariat were indispensable to production and the war effort. The reconstitution of trade unions by the states themselves after 1945, where they had disappeared during the 2nd World War, definitively closed the chapter of the trade unions as proletariat's organ of struggle.

Only from this understanding of the course of events is it possible to grasp the purpose of the *American Families Plan*: the development of kindergartens, free or nearly free health care for children depending on family resources, twelve weeks of parental leave, financial aid per child raised, the development of Obama-care, etc. “In the 21st century, anything that helps people work and lead productive or fulfilling lives counts as infrastructure. That includes investments in people, like the creation of high-paying union jobs or raising wages for a home health work force that is dominated by women of color.” (New York Times, 5 April<sup>8</sup>) It's not just a matter of strengthening the adherence of proletarian families to the economic and imperialist defence of US capital, but above all of putting everyone to work: “I could not be going to work if I had to take care of my parents.” (idem) The slogan of the President of the workers? “So, let's get to work.”

### Tightening the *Containment* Garrotte around Rival China

No need to be Marxist to see where the course of events will inevitably lead capitalist society if the revolutionary proletariat does not put an end to it: “the mix of economic, military and technological strengths of the two superpowers carried more risks than the cold war with the Soviet Union [and] US-China tensions threaten to engulf the entire world and could lead to an Armageddon-like clash between the two military and technology giants” (Henri Kissinger, *The Guardian*, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2021<sup>9</sup>)

As soon as it took office, the Biden administration displayed an offensive diplomacy with direct language, calling Putin a killer and China a systemic adversary and “threatening global stability”. In the

wake of this, and in continuity with but accentuating Trump's policy, US naval manoeuvres are responding to Chinese naval manoeuvres in the China Sea and around Taiwan, as are the military flights of each, bringing the forces directly face to face and risking an incident with dramatic consequences. The same is true of NATO manoeuvres on Russia's borders, which also respond to Russian manoeuvres on Ukraine's doorstep. The step that is being taken and the dynamics that accompany it are all the more dangerous because the American, Chinese and Russian powers have plenty of means to reach each other with nuclear missiles and an arsenal capable of destroying the planet several times over. All the more dangerous because the American economic, diplomatic and military pressure offensive is only the umpteenth application of the historical American doctrine of *containment* against emerging

powers, particularly in Asia. This doctrine, which consists in strangling the rival little by little on the economic and geostrategic levels, can only lead the latter to want to loosen the deadly grip by a sudden and brutal coup de force. Was this not the case with Japan and its savage attack on Pearl Harbour?

At the same time, and on this point breaking deftly with Trump, the scale and speed of the all-out US offensive led by Biden's Democratic team – historically the left-wing political force of the US bourgeoisie is the most warmonger – is *trapping* the Europeans, Germany and France in particular, who aspired to an *autonomy of sovereignty*, i.e. autonomy vis-à-vis the US, by pushing them to choose between China or the US, between *authoritarian* and *autocratic* countries on the one hand, and *democracies* on the other. The emergence of a European imperialist pole around Germany as an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon American pole seems to be in jeopardy today, to the great displeasure of France, especially since the German bourgeoisie, marked by history, 1918 and 1945, does not dare to assume the world imperialist role that the strength and energy of its capitalism was destined it to play<sup>10</sup>.



8 . <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/05/business/economy/biden-infrastructure.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

9 . <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/01/us-china-doomsday-threat-ramped-up-by-hi-tech-advances-says-kissinger>. H. Kissinger was the United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor under the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

10 . We cannot in the context of this article return to the European contradictions, as well as the German ones,

Nevertheless, it is highly significant that the British and French armies, imperialist and military powers that have become secondary, but nonetheless important, both with nuclear weapons and significant projection capabilities, and with unique military experience and expertise, are adopting new military doctrines. "According to The Economist, there are other signs that the French armed forces are undergoing a transformation. In January, the general staff quietly set up ten working groups to examine the country's readiness for high-intensity warfare. (...) The groups cover everything from ammunition shortages to societal resilience to whether citizens are 'ready to accept the level of casualties we haven't seen since World War II', says one participant. The spectre of high-end warfare is now so pervasive in French military thinking that the scenario has its own acronym: Hem, or hypothèse d'engagement majeur." (La lettre patriote<sup>11</sup>, our emphasis and translation)

Whether on the economic, industrial and capital concentration-relocation, imperialist and military levels, the major world powers are being drawn ineluctably towards adaptation and preparation for a new imperialist world war. And the policies, rhetoric, aggressive diplomatic language and omnipresence in international organisations, huge stimulus and infrastructure plans, reaffirmation and strengthening of NATO, etc., pursued by Biden since his accession to power have accelerated the process and the awareness of imperialist rivals and allies about the US intentions and where they lead.

As we know, the only force that can slow down and then interrupt this process towards war and ultimately its ultimate cause, capitalism itself, is the revolutionary proletariat, the historical antithesis of the bourgeoisie and capitalism. At this time, when covid-19 continues to wreak havoc, when containment and social distancing measures are still in place and used by the bourgeoisie to prevent and stifle proletarian reactions to the crisis as long

as possible, the revolutionary perspective seems more than remote, even illusory, or wishful thinking. With a few rare exceptions, and while an international anger and revolt seemed to assert itself at the end of 2019, just before the pandemic, the international proletariat has remained passive, disoriented, worried and certainly inhabited by a feeling of impotence. For a year now, the course of events, whose illustration and epicentre is given to us by the United States, has been expressing the political mastery of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and seems to be leading the capitalist world towards the dramatic outcome of a generalised and devastating imperialist war.

But is the proletariat ready to accept the level of casualties, that is deaths, we haven't seen since World War II? This is the key to the historical drama that is being played out and which, visibly, also preoccupies the bourgeoisie's think tanks. Because of the crisis and the urgency for each national capital, first of all the main powers, to defend itself against rivals at the risk of succumbing and disappearing, time is no longer on the side of the revolutionary solution. Far from it. A race against time has begun between, on the one hand, the dynamics pushing the proletariat to react to the crisis and the sacrifices that the preparation for generalised war imposes on it and, on the other hand, the increasing strangulation of rivals such as China by the US bourgeoisie and the brutal reactions of the latter to escape the garrotte imposed on them. If the second is undeniably dominant and determines events, it is no less true that, along with the crisis itself, it also exacerbates class antagonisms as never before. Whatever the speed of the march to war, massive confrontations between the classes, the premises of which appeared just before the pandemic, are inevitable.

The question is not whether they will take place, but whether the proletariat will be able to rise to the level of the stakes during these confrontations. In particular, will it be able to fend off the ideological and political traps that will be presented to it, as we have seen with the anti-racist campaign in the US, as well as the sabotage of the unions and the left parties? The longer its response to the effects of the crisis is delayed today, including by simply defending its living and working conditions, the more capital will accelerate its race towards the imperialist abyss and reduce the space still open for the development of its struggles, for the generalisation of the mass strike, then the proletarian insurrection, the destruction of the capitalist state, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the advent of communism.

RL, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2021

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which make the emergence of a European pole, which the opposition to the American war in Iraq in 2003 seemed to announce, appear to be very fragile and unlikely today, at least for the time being. It is, however, worth returning to this issue insofar as the IGCL adopted at its foundation *Theses on the International Situation*, written in 2013, which explained why China could not become a rival world power to the United States and why Europe around Germany was called upon to become one. *A priori*, and even if any dynamic can be reversed or interrupted, the current imperialist polarisation dynamic, which seems to be profound, invalidates our thesis of then. For now, the reader can refer to *Revolution or War #16: Some comments on the ICT text*.

11 . <https://lalettrepatriote.com/selon-the-economist-larmee-francaise-se-prepare-a-une-hypothese-dengagement-majeur/>

## Workers' Struggle in Argentina and Canada

We reproduce here a statement of the revolutionary group Emancipation<sup>12</sup> which draws a number of lessons from workers' struggles in Argentina, both on the conditions for the extension of struggles and its sabotage by the unions. Had we been able to intervene directly, it is highly probable – on reading the document – that we would have found ourselves defending the same orientations and slogans in the assemblies, demonstrations and "pickets" against the unions and the leftists. In the midst of the pandemic and the measures of containment or social distancing, both of which have been used and turned against the emergence of proletarian reactions to the crisis, it seems important to us to point out that the proletariat, although passive and largely disoriented by the immediate situation, can – and must – take up again the path of its struggles for the defence of its working and living conditions. Let's also mention in passing the struggle of the Montreal dockers that the comrades of Klasbatalo, a group affiliated to the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), recounted in their statement The Bosses Assault is the Bosses Recovery<sup>13</sup>.

Some readers, sectarian reflexes no longer surprising anyone, may wonder why we continue to publish statements of Emancipation, previously known as Nuevo Curso for its journal in Spanish, in English Communia, when it has refused to debate and respond to our criticisms of its historical lineage with the Trotskyist Left Opposition of the 1930s, falsely presented as a "Communist Left", and of its claiming of Munis' and the FOR's position on a so-called Spanish revolution in 1936<sup>14</sup>. In spite of this fundamental weakness, which in the long run can only present insurmountable contradictions for the group, Emancipation continues to publish class positions which can shed light on, and help to clarify, current and more theoretical questions from a class point of view. This is why, depending on the axes we intend to present in our journal in relation to the priorities of the situation, we never hesitate to reproduce articles from other revolutionary groups, whether they are part of the Communist Left, such as the ICT, or not, such as Emancipation. Generally speaking, we consider that our journal must also be a journal of the proletarian camp, and more particularly of the "pro-party" forces in it. In so doing, it seems to us that it actively participates in the struggle for the party and the regroupment of communist forces.

One last word: the ICC has renewed its ignominious attacks against Nuevo Curso and especially against our own group, "the gangsters of the IGCL". We are once again presented as a "police like-group" in a fourteen pages litany of slanders. We did not consider it necessary to waste one page of this journal to reproduce the communique we were forced to write. For those interested, or curious, to see how far the ICC will go in its destructive drift and delirium, it is available on our website<sup>15</sup>.

### How Unions and the Left Sabotage the Extension of Struggles (Emancipation – Communia)

The situation in Argentina in recent years has become a laundry list of union and left-wing resorts to divert and prevent the extension of struggles. We saw a first large-scale example in 2019 in Chubut. Then the convergence of struggles in the province around teachers and health workers was neutralized with national union strike calls cutting across the movement. Now in Neuquén we are seeing an alternative –yet no less damaging– strategy. We workers in Argentina and the rest of the world have much to learn from the experience in order to be able to effectively confront the unions and find our own terrain of struggle.

#### The extension of struggles in Neuquén and Río Negro health sector

In the province of Neuquén, Argentina, *autoconvocado* health workers have been demanding wage readjustments from the provincial government for two months, that is, an update on delayed payments and devaluation of their salaries in a country whose inflation will be around 40% this year. In most cases we are talking about losses of 70% of purchasing power.

A group of workers who break with the union on the basis of rejecting the agreements signed by the union and go on strike **alone** is called *autoconvocado*.

There have been a thousand attempts to intimidate

12 . <https://en.communia.blog/>

13 . <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2021-05-04/the-bosses-assault-is-the-bosses-recovery>

14 . See Revolution or War #14 and 15 : Letter to Emancipation (<http://igcl.org/Letter-to-Emancipacion-Nuevo-Curso>) and Spain 1936: Can There be a Proletarian Revolution without Insurrection and Destruction of the Bourgeois State? (<http://igcl.org/Spain-1936-Can-There-be-a>).

15 . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16981/adventurer-gaizka-has-defenders-he-deserves-gangsters-igcl> and <http://igcl.org/The-Last-ICC-Attack-or-The-Homage>.

these workers, even the national government tried to, after the provincial governors requested the intervention of the Secretary of Labor. Meanwhile, the struggles of health workers spread to the neighbouring province of Río Negro. But in Río Negro the unions partook in the demands from the beginning, clashing with a part of the workers who sought to join up with the striking Neuquén workers.

The key: the extension of struggles cannot be limited to additional struggles in the same sector, even in several ones. The extension of struggles to be effective requires centralization in assemblies of all.

### **The left is engaged in breaking down coordination among workers**

The left's mobilization tactic is to keep the workers moving and scattered. A lot of picketing, a lot of roadblocks and mobilizations separated by categories and trades. All in order to avoid the call for open assemblies, which would make the extension of struggles real and bring together the workers in struggle in the health sector with gingers, teachers, oil workers, miners, fishermen, governmental workers and involve the entire community of working families that uses hospitals and schools.

This is precisely the opposite way of what may successfully impose a position of force on the part of the workers.

Read our pamphlet: "Understanding Capital" on why extension of struggles and their centralization in open assemblies is the only way to advance them in a situation like the current one.

### **Atomization allows the instrumentalization of the workers**

However, the multiplication of struggles threatened several governors who, on a daily basis, see the emergence of new strikes and struggle plans. The business associations asked Governor Gutiérrez to break up the conflict and shut it down. They all see their businesses in danger. From the gas stations suffering shortages to the hoteliers and the tourist sector whose clients are scared away by the picket lines. For them, the extension of struggles means *anarchy and chaos*.

But meanwhile, picketing tactics continue to wear workers down in isolated and pointless scuffles. Chilean truckers crossing the cordillera with merchandise try to lift the picket lines by force. The *autoconvocados* are isolated in these battles on empty roads. But they resist and appeal to the

recognition and prestige gained in the months of pandemic to summon the community to reinforce the picket lines rather than to extend struggles.

Instead of solidifying the extension of struggles by building assembly structures of all workers, the basis of class power, the *autoconvocados* further fragment the workers on the roads by dispossessing them of even numerical strength and their ability to halt production.

The workers are worn out and slowly simmering. Weakened and atomized by the picket tactics, they can already be instrumentalized by the government of the Nation, which delays the resolution of the conflict as a way to intimidate the Neuquén government, which, while also a Peronist government, is part of the opposition.

### **The role of the left, Trotsko-Stalinism and the *autoconvocados***

The ATE, UPCN, ATSA unions intervene in the promotion of these tactics, which break the extension of struggles. The trotsko-stalinist left bound in the FIT-U and its fringes, is apparently missing. But if we spend a minute studying the situation, it is easy to discover that it emerges in those strikes in which the unions are unable to handle the strike situation. Otherwise, they turn a blind eye to it with the regularity and predictability of a physical law.

The contrast with the indefinite strikes that, in other provinces, are carried out by sovereign assemblies of workers is striking. Because there, the same political groups **ignore and invisibilize them**, directing workers from other centers only to the conflicts managed by these groups or by the union bureaucracy and in which they impose their tactics.

### **The division of labor in the Argentine left**

Promoting the emergence of *autoconvocados* is the tactic preferred by the PTS, but in their hands it becomes indistinguishable from atomizing and scattering workers across the territory. In Neuquén alone there are 25 roadblocks. The assemblies of public health centers are systematically directed to engage in strikes isolated from the rest of the workers, including other health workers. They vote for marches, caravans, encampments in public buildings. All of them separately sector by sector and hospital by hospital.

And this is occurring at the same time as strikes by oil workers, private health, judicial and public and civil service workers who are also on strike.

It is not innocent for the left to sell the picketing

tactics of the *autoconvocados* as a great example of struggle. They can see that it leads headlong into a dead end. It is clear that this is a tactic which destroys the spread of struggles by atomizing them. It is impossible not to see that by causing fuel and food shortages under these conditions tends to further isolate the mobilized workers from those of other sectors who were not even invited by imposing a worsening of the situation of the workers of the province as a whole. ... even in Covid cases.

The Argentine left, like any other country's left wing, creates a real *cordon sanitaire* around the working class, through which it tries to contain and disperse the working class' movements when they exceed the first line of control: the trade unions.

Their only particularity is the profusion of trends and the high degree of specialization of each one in specific sectors, usually linked to the local control of public subsidies (social plans).

Maoism and other Stalinist weeds, run thousands of organizations of unemployed and cooperatives; these are not really *classical* worker cooperatives, but groups of ultra-precarized and unemployed workers grouped in a legal framework they cannot control – it is not even the custom to have public statutes – and who receive social plans as if they were a worker cooperative. It is a way of ensuring that if they leave the framework of the party leader and his deals with the current local politician, they will be definitively excluded and starved. A sector of Trotsko-stalinism (MST, PO, IS) also leads sectors of the unemployed through the distribution of social plans, soup kitchens and maintains its own groups in some unions. Another sector of the same stem (PTS) which does not manage social plans, specializes in leading *combative* unions and in some cases co-leads official unions with other leftist organizations or with Peronism in all its variants.

### **Why did the *autoconvocados* attract so much political apparatus and state intervention?**

But even within this framework, what is striking in the case of Neuquén is the tremendous amount of political apparatus mounted on the *autoconvocado* health workers. Why so much effort to control the health workers in order to avoid the extension of the struggles in a province which does not usually attract the attention of the state or its left wing?

In fact, the issue is that, unintentionally, the *autoconvocados* were left in the middle of the disputes between the national government and the Neuquén government for the control of the Vaca

Muerta field, which is the golden goose of the Neuquén bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie fears having the national government take advantage of the conflict to impose its will over the oil and gas basin.

A piece of evidence is enough: when the *autoconvocado* workers started to picket the road to Vaca Muerta, the oil workers of state and private contractors refused to accept the wage increase that the bourgeoisie wanted to give them and voted to go on strike. ... which lasted as long as a candy in front of a school, since almost at the same time the courts –that is, the state– ordered the compulsory settlement and lifted the conflict.

And for a semi-colonial national capital such as Argentina's, Vaca Muerta is today one of the few sectors that can bring in new foreign currency through genuine investment, exploiting labor power. The mere threat of the possibility of a real extension of the struggles mobilized state and capital. The mere idea that Vaca Muerta would not be capitalized enough due to the fear of a real extension of the struggles, was understood by the Argentine bourgeoisie as the ghost of a *great collective failure* as a (ruling) class.

In short, for the Argentine bourgeoisie, the profitability of Vaca Muerta is not to be messed with!

### **The way out for the workers**

If the *autoconvocados* fail to break the isolation imposed by the union bureaucracy and the left, failing to make their struggle converge with that of other sectors and with the community of which they are part, the picket lines have their days numbered and everything will end in accepting the crumb they are offered or parading to the slaughterhouse of repression.

The tradition of the Trotskyist-Stalinist left in Argentina depicts the pickets and roadblocks as an example to follow in the struggle for better conditions. Nothing could be more destructive.

With these methods, they scatter and weaken our class, which can only assert itself in the factories, in the schools, in the hospitals and in the neighborhoods through sovereign assemblies, electing its own representatives and taking coordinated steps.

So much energy put into the picket lines has to be brought to the productive units and the neighborhood to be able to self-organize and fight as a class. Not as cliques, crews, or trades, but as a class.

Nuevo Curso, April 24th 2021

## Debate within the Proletarian Camp

### Statement on The International Communist Current's Platform

The ICC platform<sup>16</sup> was adopted at its first congress in 1976. Since then, it has undergone some "rectifications decided at the 3rd, 7th and 14th Congresses in 1979, 1987 and 2001" (Introduction to the Platform<sup>17</sup>). It should be noted that the version available and on which we base our position does not incorporate the opportunist Decomposition theory introduced in the 1990s. It is only in the Basic Positions<sup>18</sup>, synthesising the positions of the platform, that it appears publicly: "*Since the First World War, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition.* »

The 1976 text begins by historically situating the constitution of the ICC on the fact that "*after the longest and deepest period of counter-revolution that it has ever known, the proletariat is once again discovering the path of class struggle*". And indeed, the late 1960s were marked by the end of the post-war reconstruction and an international workers' revival, the signal for which was given by the mass strike of May 1968 in France. "*Since the 1968 events in France, the workers' struggles from Italy to Argentina, from Britain to Poland, from Sweden to Egypt, from China to Portugal, from America to India, from Japan to Spain, have become a nightmare for the capitalist class*". The historical rupture was real. The result was the emergence, also international, of a new generation of revolutionaries, some of whom regrouped more or less clearly around the positions of the Communist Left. Among them, many did so on the positions that the ICC ends up synthesising in this programmatic document. In this sense, the platform represented a moment in the historical struggle for the party and, as such, it requires a critical look and balance.

Unfortunately, the influence of the student revolt, the anarchist and petty-bourgeois spirit of the late 1960s, to which we should add the reaction to Stalinism, in particular within the working class, meant that the so-called *German-Dutch* Communist Left was the *councilist* bias that allowed a large part of this generation, especially those who were to form or join the ICC, to re-appropriate the class

positions. As it itself had always recognized, the rupture in organic continuity with the fractions of the Communist Left coming from the Communist International, in the case of the ICC from the *Gauche Communiste de France* (GCF) and more widely with the so-called Italian Left, could not be overcome by the mere presence of Marc Chirik, a member of the Italian fraction from 1938 onwards, then of the GCF<sup>19</sup>. The ICC's platform suffered enormously from this, to the point of claiming not only, and rightly so, "*the Communist League, the First, Second and Third Internationals*" but also currents as opposed as "*the German, Dutch, and Italian Left*." We will see that ultimately, the spirit of synthesis of the platform left little place, if any, to the *Italian left*, and a lot to the *German-Dutch* one. In fact, the synthesis, an illusory quest in the long run, could only be a moment of international regrouping and historical re-appropriation which corresponded in part to that particular period and which should have been overcome afterwards. Nothing of that sort happened.

### Coherence and achievements of the 1976 platform...

The positions of the ICC platform are undeniably class ones. They correspond to those put forward by the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) platform, so that often young or inexperienced comrades do not see any real difference between the two. To date, and despite its inadequacies, which we will come back to later, both the ICC and the ICT platforms still represent the most advanced programmatic achievements. Moreover, the ICC platform has the advantage of a systematic, distinct and clear exposure of the *class frontiers*. It thus allows any reader and militant to clearly position him/herself *for or against*, which is essential for this type of document serving as a basis for the adhesion of new members and underlying the unity and action of the communist organisation, of the party.

"*Any defence of [the so-called socialist countries, ex-USSR, China, etc], no matter how 'critical' or 'conditional', is a completely counter-revolutionary*

16 . <https://en.internationalism.org/platform>

17 . <https://en.internationalism.org/introduction>

18 . <https://en.internationalism.org/basic-positions>

19 . The participation in the French group *Révolution internationale* of another GCF member, Moussou (Robert Salama), was partial and ephemeral due to his isolation in French Guiana and his death in 1979.

activity. (...) All political strategies aimed at 'using', 'regenerating', or 'reconquering' trade union type organisations serve only the interests of capitalism [and are] fundamentally non-proletarian. (...) The disastrous results of ["revolutionary parliamentarism"] tactics show that they are profoundly bourgeois. (...) Any political tendency which tries to make the class leave that [class] terrain [through any tactic of frontism, united front, anti-fascist front, etc] is directly serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. (...) Any position of 'unconditional' or 'critical' support for these [national liberation] struggles is (...) thus totally incompatible with coherent communist activity. (...) Any political position which (...) defends self management is, in fact, objectively participating in the preservation of capitalist relations of production. (...) [The] bourgeois governments and political parties have learned to recuperate and use [the "partial struggles" such as anti-racism, feminism, etc] to good effect in the preservation of the social order. (...) All the so-called 'revolutionary' currents [Maoism, Trotskyism, Anarchism] which today places itself in the framework of an identical approach by defending a certain number of positions of the Socialist and Communist Parties, such as 'anti-fascist alliances' belong to the same camp: the camp of capital." These positions are indeed minimal class frontiers that will be an integral part of the political platform of the future world party of the proletariat and indispensable to its political and militant unity.

Moreover, the document aims at a certain methodology and coherence both in the orderly exposition of the different points and in their argumentation. The first, *The Theory of The Communist Revolution*, defends that "Marxism is the fundamental theoretical acquisition of the proletarian struggle [and] has been from its very inception the **only framework** from which and within which revolutionary theory can develop". It reaffirms the principle of class struggle, "Marxism (...) explaining the unfolding of history through the development of the class struggle", and the revolutionary character of the proletariat. The second, *The Nature of The Proletarian Revolution*<sup>20</sup>, defines the communist finality. "The proletarian revolution is to replace relations of production based on scarcity with relations of production based on abundance. This is why it signifies the end of all forms of property, privilege and exploitation." For that, "it is the first revolution to have a world-wide character; it cannot achieve its aims without generalising itself to all countries."; "the seizure of political power by the proletariat necessarily precedes the period of transition" between capitalism and

communism; "the development of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is conditioned by the deepening and generalisation of its struggle as an exploited class" and not by the negation of its character as an exploited class. Even if we wouldn't formulate them all like that today – the formula seizure of political power is too vague for a programmatic document – these points are an integral part of the communist principles and program.

The next point is *The Decadence of Capitalism*. It is the one that gives its theoretical coherence to the whole platform and provides the unity of its class positions as the then ICC understood and defended them. This is the strength and the weakness of the document, and its limit today. With the end of the 19th century, the historical period of ascendancy of capitalism initiated in the 16th century comes to a close and the outbreak of the 1st imperialist World War definitively signals the entry into its period of decadence. The recognition of a different historical dynamic and a fundamental break for capitalism is a lesson of the workers' movement, which Lenin was able to define as *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and which the Communist International considered indispensable and central to include in its own platform: "A new system [the French version says *epoch*] has been born. Ours is the epoch of the breakdown of capital, its internal disintegration, the epoch of the Communist revolution of the proletariat." That the ICC explains this historical break from the crisis theory put forward by Rosa Luxemburg, mainly the absence of extra-capitalist markets for further capital accumulation, and that there are other theories and analyses, does not change the fact that its position on the historical decline of capitalism is part of the programmatic framework emerging from the CI and the Communist Left on this point.

### ... But a Mechanical, Economicist and Non-Marxist Coherence

"In the decadence of capitalism the general tendency towards state capitalism is one of the dominant characteristics of social life... [If it] manifests itself in all countries in the world, it is more rapid and more obvious when and where the effects of decadence make themselves felt in the most brutal manner; historically during periods of open crisis or of war..." The incessant and widespread development of state capitalism throughout the 20th century, and especially from World War II to the present days, corresponds essentially to three priorities for each national capital: to centralize and unify as much as possible all fractions of national capital in view of

20 . The French version uses *The Conditions of The Communist Revolution*.

international competition; “develop the military force necessary for the defence of its interests in the face of growing international conflict”; and social discipline directed above all against the proletariat. It is regrettable that this passage does not make more explicit the link between state capitalism and the needs of the generalized imperialist war. This tends to reduce the phenomenon of state capitalism to its economic dimension only, whereas it is above all a **political** response against the proletariat and for the needs of imperialist war – itself the only bourgeois response to the economic contradictions and impasse of capitalism in its period of historical decline. We will see that this economicist, vulgar materialist and therefore non-marxist tendency runs across the whole platform. Let us note nevertheless that the platform insists on the fact that, whatever the form of state power, dictatorial or democratic, “the tendency towards state capitalism expresses itself in the increasingly powerful, omnipresent, and systematic control over the whole of social life exerted by the state apparatus”, which should have opened the way to the **historical** and **political** understanding of a certain number of class positions of today, in particular those linked to the conditions of proletarian struggle such as the trade union question.

*The Proletarian Struggle under Decadent Capitalism* is characterized by the fact that “**the struggle for reforms** has become a hopeless utopia.” In formulating it so, the document reduces the new conditions of proletarian struggle to the single economic dimension, and even to its simple expression or reforms or impossibility of reforms. It thus neglects and ignores the historical and political dimensions, namely the exercise by the state apparatus of “increasingly powerful, omnipresent, and systematic control over the whole of social life”, even though underlined in the previous point. It is fundamentally this concentration of the forces of capital around the state and against the proletariat, in particular against any expression of permanent struggle such as its mass organisations, that defines the new conditions of proletarian struggle, including the secondary, but nevertheless real, phenomenon of the growing impossibility of lasting reforms. “The mass strike [as] a universal form of the proletarian class struggle resulting from the present stage of capitalist development and class relations” was identified by Rosa Luxemburg in *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions* (1906)<sup>21</sup>, by Trotsky in his book *1905*, and others. Lenin and the Bolshevik

party demonstrated with brilliance, oh how much!, their mastery of the phenomenon and the dynamics of the mass strike between February and October 1917 and the indispensable and crucial role of political leadership that the party can and must exercise during it to lead the proletariat to its insurrection and the exercise of its class dictatorship.

The unions have become inoperative because “as capitalism entered its decadent phase it was no longer able to accord reforms and improvements in living conditions to the working class.” Once again, the mechanical and economicist explanation of or reforms or impossibility of reforms comes back to base the view, which we share, that the unions have become “true defenders of capitalism, agencies of the bourgeois state within the working class (...) by the relentless tendency within decadence for the state to absorb all the structures of social life.” As a result, and insofar as the passage of the trade unions into the bourgeois camp would have been mechanically fatal from an economic point of view alone, and not the result of a class confrontation conditioned by the passage into the new historical period, the struggle that the communist minorities waged from 1918 until, roughly speaking, World War II in the trade unions is neglected and rejected<sup>22</sup>. The ICC should have questioned the reasons of principle and method which based the trade union intervention and activity of its ancestor, the *Gauche Communiste de France*, still in 1945.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, we must salute the ability of the *historical* ICC to clearly understand that the unions have become full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state and, in the 1980s at least, to draw all the implications from this for its intervention in real class struggles, i.e. struggles in which the unions and the bourgeois political forces of the left are present and active. Far from expecting a pure struggle liberated from

21 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1906/mass-strike/index.htm>

22 . This explains the difficulties that the ICC may have had in the 1970s in freeing itself from the *infantile* anti-unionist vision of the German Left, the KAPD, of the years 1919-1920 and its consequences for intervention in workers' struggles, such as the vain expectation of "pure" struggles, arising spontaneously and free from the influence and sabotage of the unions.

23 . “We also have to fight the tendencies which, starting from the existence of an extremely strong trade union bureaucracy, forming a reactionary layer with homogeneous interests opposed to the class interests of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, claim that the trade union organizations are outdated as instruments of anti-capitalist struggle. The communist trade union fraction is formed by all the militants of the communist organization belonging to the same trade union.”

(*Internationalisme* #1, Resolution on The Union Question, 1945, on the ex-Internal Fraction of the ICC's website : [http://fractioncommuniste.org/internationalisme/fra/i01/i01\\_4.html](http://fractioncommuniste.org/internationalisme/fra/i01/i01_4.html)).

the unions by *the grace of the Holy Spirit*, it then fully understood that the communist vanguard groups and the party had to be at the forefront of the political struggle against union and leftist traps and sabotage and for the political leadership of workers' struggles. For its part, the ICC of today has turned its back on this fundamental position for at least two decades and prefers to devote itself to the fetish of self-organisation and assemblyism, in the name of the *genuine assemblies* free of trade unions, to mask its defeatism. "*The profoundly proletarian character of the movement [of the 2006 students in France] is also demonstrated in the forms of struggle adopted, notably the sovereign general assemblies which express a real life that has nothing to do with the caricatures of general assemblies so often called by the unions*" [*in the workplaces*], adds the original French version.<sup>24</sup> In other words, real life is not class struggle, here the confrontation with the unions, the real assemblies are not those of political confrontation between bourgeois and proletarian forces. A refrain well known to the petty bourgeois, real life according to the ICC of today is the one where class struggle has disappeared.

*"As the capitalist system entered its decadent phase, parliament ceased to be an instrument for reforms. As the Communist International said at its Second Congress". The Platform refers to the Theses on The Communist Party and Parliamentarism adopted in 1920, according to which "at present, parliament, for communists, can in no way become the arena for the struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the position of the working class, as was the case at certain times in the previous period."* But the theses do not limit the question to the impossibility of reform in decadence, far from it. "*The attitude of the Communist International towards parliamentarism is determined, not by a new doctrine, but by the change in the role of parliament itself. In the previous epoch parliament performed to a certain degree a historically progressive task as a tool of developing capitalism. Under the present conditions of unbridled imperialism, however, parliament has been transformed into a tool for lies, deception, violence and enervating chatter. In the face of imperialist devastation, plundering, rape, banditry and destruction, parliamentary reforms, robbed of any system, permanence and method, lose any practical significance for the toiling masses.*"<sup>25</sup> As we

can see, the International encompasses it in a much broader vision and understanding that is at the forefront **political**, i.e. at the level of the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat under the conditions defined by the *imperialist* phase of capital..

*"If in the nineteenth century revolutionaries gave their support to certain national liberation movements, (...) they supported such movements because in the ascendant phase of capitalism the nation represented the most appropriate framework for the development of capitalism, and the establishment of new nation states, by eliminating the constricting vestiges of pre-capitalist social relations, represented a step forward in the development of the productive forces on a world scale and thus in the maturation of the material conditions for socialism. As capitalism entered its period of decline, the nation together with capitalist relations of production as a whole, became too narrow for the development of the productive forces."* Once again, the ICC platform considerably reduces the scope of the question to its simple "economic" dimension, even if the development of the productive forces is historically decisive. If Marx and Engels were led to support certain national demands and struggles, it was above all and essentially for political historical questions, to promote as best the conditions of the proletarian class struggle, "*to the country's historical progress towards economic and political revolution.*"<sup>26</sup> The reasons put forward by Marx and Engels for supporting the independence of Ireland and Poland have little to do with the development of the productive forces in these specific countries. "*It is consequently the most important object of the International Working Men's Association to hasten the social revolution in England. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.*"<sup>27</sup> The same was true for the national struggle in Poland, which "*is situated in the centre of the continent, and the maintenance of its partition is the very tie which binds the Holy Alliance [then the armed wing of the European counter-revolution uniting Austria and*

n/2nd-congress/ch08a.htm#v2-p49

26 . Engels, letter to Gerson Trier, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1899, [https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1889/letters/89\\_12\\_18.htm](https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1889/letters/89_12_18.htm)

27 . Marx, letter to Meyer and Vogt, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1870, [https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70\\_04\\_09.htm](https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_04_09.htm). We invite the reader to read Marx's argument in this letter, which never refers to the need for the *development of the productive forces* in Ireland, but to the link between "*the downfall of the English aristocracy in Ireland [implying] as a necessary consequence its downfall in England [and, doing so, the creation of] the preliminary condition for the proletarian revolution in England*", if only because the division and hostility between English and Irish proletarians could then be overcome.

24 . ICC, Theses on The Spring 2006 Student's Movement in France, *International Review* #125, [https://en.internationalism.org/ir/125\\_france\\_students](https://en.internationalism.org/ir/125_france_students)

25 . Theses on The Communist Parties and Parliamentarism, 1920, 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the International Communist, our emphasis, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/cominter>

Prussia around Tsarist Russia] together again and again. (...) So long as Poland is partitioned and subjugated, therefore, neither a strong socialist party can develop in the country itself.”<sup>28</sup>

We have underlined the coherence of the ICC platform provided by the distinction between ascendancy and decadence, here essentially reduced to **or reforms or impossibility of reforms**. The resulting unity and clarity in exposing the *class frontiers* is the strength of the document. The mechanical and economicist approach and understanding is its weakness. It is typical of the vulgar materialism proper to councilism, which develops a fatalistic and mechanical vision of history to the detriment of its dynamic – Marxist – vision, which places class struggle at the centre and as the motor of history.

“According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results (...) juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants (...) also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.”<sup>29</sup>

It should be underlined that the point on *The Counter-Revolutionary Character of The "Workers' Parties"*, modified – and enriched in our opinion – in 1987 after the ICC's struggle against *centrism vis-à-vis councilism* of the previous years, differs from this councilist approach. It does not explain the passage into the bourgeois camp of the Socialist and Stalinist Communist Parties by the impossibility for mass parties of the proletariat to exist because of the impossibility of *reform* in the decadence of capitalism, but from the class struggle itself, the very processes of opportunistic degeneration that the 2nd and 3rd Internationals went through, followed by their death as Internationals with the First World War for the 2nd and the adoption of *Socialism in a Single Country* for the 3rd, and ended by the final integration of the

national parties, SP and CP, "into (often important) cogs in the bourgeois state apparatus in their respective countries.”

### **The Organization of Revolutionaries and The ICC's Congenital Weaknesses of Councilist Kind**

The evident mechanical and economicist approach of the ICC's platform – the openly councilist character of the platform's final points, especially on *The Organisation of Revolutionaries* – will come as no surprise. We will not linger on *The First Great Revolutionary Wave of the World Proletariat*, which has the advantage of defending – too timidly for our taste – the proletarian character of the October 17 Revolution in Russia and the constitution of the Communist International as the world party of the proletariat. We could debate some specific points put forward, many of which relate to the historical debate, still "open" in our opinion, on the period of transition between capitalism and communism. *The Dictatorship of The Proletariat* reaffirms the need for “the total destruction of the apparatus of the bourgeois state” and the proletariat's use of “its own revolutionary class violence”. But it completely ignores the role of the party – the word *party* is not even used once in this point! – as much in the workers' insurrection – itself ignored – as in the exercise of the dictatorship itself. Yet, the very experience of October 1917 and of the 1917-1923 international revolutionary wave definitively validated the position of principle displayed by Marx and Engels: without a party, neither victorious insurrection nor dictatorship of the proletariat are possible.

The last point, the longest of the whole platform, on *The Organisation of Revolutionaries*, clearly reveals the contradiction which has inhabited the ICC since its beginnings between its approach and its congenital councilist weaknesses and its desire to reappropriate the lessons of the workers' movement, particularly of the Communist Left. Admittedly, the party is mentioned as such, formally, abstractly, in fact reluctantly: “The organisation of revolutionaries whose most advanced form is the party (...). One can then speak of the party to describe the organisation of the communist vanguard. (...) the proletarian revolution confers the same world-wide and centralised character on the party of the working class...” But nowhere is the role and function of the party as vanguard and political leadership of the proletariat evoked.

The ICC rightly defends that “*though the class and the organisation of its vanguard are two distinct things, they are not separate, external or opposed to one*

28 . Engels, letter to Kautsky, February 7<sup>th</sup> 1882, [https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1882/letters/82\\_02\\_07.htm](https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1882/letters/82_02_07.htm)

29 . Engels, letter to J. Bloch, September 21-22, 1890, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90\\_09\\_21.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm)

another as is claimed by the 'Leninist' tendencies on the one hand and by the workerist-councilist tendencies on the other." In doing so, the ICC distinguishes itself from the Bordigist current, which was the only expression of the Italian Left for the post-1968 younger generations of revolutionaries (the Damenist current, *Battaglia comunista*, was then almost unknown outside Italy), and from the councilist current, which was in fashion in the anti-Stalinist, anarchist and student atmosphere of that time, and which saw the emergence of a number of groups claiming councilism and the German-Dutch Left. Many passages of this point are right in themselves, but they are contradicted by others of an openly councilist nature and content. For example:

*"The self-organisation of workers' struggles and the exercise of power by the class itself is not just one of the roads to communism which can be weighed against others: it is the only road. (...) The organisation of revolutionaries (whose most advanced form is the party) is the necessary organ with which the class equips itself to become conscious of its historic future and to politically orient the struggle for this future."* It is councilism to substitute **the workers' councils as organs of the proletarian insurrection and of the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat** by the self-organisation of struggles and the exercise of power – needless to say that every leftist, especially anarchist, even a little bit radical, recognizes him/herself enthusiastically in this anarchistic verbiage, which is more than confused from the Marxist and class points of view. It is councilism to reduce the role of the party to the sole dimension of becoming conscious and orientating for the future instead of the historical dimension, broader, and concrete, more immediate, of political leadership both towards this future and in the daily struggles of the revolutionary class.

This reduction of the role of the party to a mere adviser or guide of the class<sup>30</sup> is based on the central thesis of economism and councilism, which is unfortunately present in the platform. *"Class consciousness develops along a tortuous path through the struggle of the class, its successes and defeats."* This economist position is the same one that Lenin rightly fought against in *What is to be done* and that

30 . The paradox of a passage from a mechanical materialist approach to idealism is only apparent. The inconsistent councilist who does not go so far as to deny absolutely the necessity of political organisation is forced to reduce its role only "to spread insight and knowledge, to study, discuss and formulate social ideas, and by their propaganda to enlighten the minds of the masses" (Anton Pannekoek, *Cinq thèses sur la lutte de classe*, 1947, in Pannekoek et les conseils ouvriers, EDI Paris, 1969, translated by us).

the ICC in turn had to fight within its own ranks in the 1980s. "By presenting consciousness as a **determined** and never a **determining** factor in the class struggle; by considering that the "one and only crucible of class consciousness is the massive, open struggle", [this thesis] leaves no place for revolutionary organizations (...). The only major difference between this vision [centrist towards councilism] and councilism is that the latter takes the approach to its logical conclusion by explicitly rejecting the necessity for communist organization whereas our comrades did not go as far as this."<sup>31</sup> It was following this internal debate that the ICC adopted a Resolution in January 1984 specifying, among other things, that "the condition for coming to consciousness by the class is given by the historic existence of a class capable of apprehending its future, not by its contingent, immediate struggles." In doing so, it was in contradiction with this point of the ICC platform, which nevertheless has never been rectified.

### **A Platform Today Outdated and Unsuitable to The Current Period**

It is therefore the entire ICC platform that is traversed by a councilist approach. The dynamics and enthusiasm provoked by the massive proletarian struggles of the post-1968 years, at least until the mid-1980s, remained sufficiently lively for tendencies – never materialized, nor personalized, except for a few exceptions which were themselves hesitant and inconsistent – seeking to free themselves from the councilist origins and fetters to emerge and even prevail on occasion, at least formally. Mainly during the 1980s, there were advances and a struggle to which every militant can today refer to in the *International Review* of this organisation. Just as one can refer to its experiences of practical intervention in the massive proletarian struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, which, for its part, the IGCL claims and which it takes up on its own account.

Unfortunately, the *partidist* or anti-councilist tendencies, or dynamics, which were expressed, won only ephemeral and superficial victories. They did not know how to fight the battle to the end. The maintenance of the openly councilist positions of the platform and the inability to reappropriate the theoretical and programmatic heritage of the Italian Left as a whole, were the main expressions of this powerlessness. As a result, the failure to overcome this contradiction, *councilism-partidism*, led to... – we do not resist it and the *connoisseurs*

31 . Centrist Slidings Towards Councilism, *International Review* #42, 1985, <https://en.internationalism.org/content/2978/internal-debate-centrist-slidings-towards-councilism>

will appreciate – the ICC's *rotting on its feet* from the 1990s onwards, opening its phase of political *decomposition*, of which the organisational crisis of 1995 and 2001 were its most extreme expressions and aggravating factors.

Nonetheless, the 1976 ICC Platform allowed the gathering of multiple forces and militants around the world, on all continents, who recognized its positions in the 1970s and 1980s. As such, it represents an experience whose contributions and lessons should not be underestimated by the younger generations. Today, it is outdated, if only because the present historical situation demands the abandonment of this councilist legacy and the fullest possible reappropriation of the main

theoretical and political contributions of the Communist Left of Italy<sup>(a)</sup>. In this sense, the *centrist towards councilism* platform of the ICC belongs to the past, to a moment and a possibility that history has closed definitively, probably with the exhaustion of the all-powerful Stalinist and anti-Stalinist ideologies that were prevailing until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the death of the USSR.

The IGCL, February 2021

note <sup>(a)</sup>: Even if the other lefts, the German-Dutch in particular, cannot be ignored, it is not so much because of their theoretical and political contributions – they are rare and partial – but because of the struggle that the *pro-party* – to use Lenin's expression – Communist Left had to wage against them and the resulting lessons.

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### What Future for the ICT's 1919 Journal in North America? Publication of the Communist Left or Trojan Horse of Leftism?

*"Revolutionary ideas are not the property of any single organization, and the affairs of any component part of the proletarian camp are of interest to it all. While reserving our right to criticize, we unreservedly must welcome any moves in other organizations which we feel express a positive dynamic... The issues raised by the WR Congress are too important to remain the private affair of any single organization, and are, and must visibly become, the concern of the whole proletarian camp."* (**Workers' Voice** 20, journal of the CWO in the 1980s).

The new North American sections of the ICT<sup>32</sup> which present themselves as "*affiliates of the Internationalist Communist Tendency*" have begun publishing a journal called *1919*. It is said to be the result of a process of political discussion and clarification around the former journal *Intransigence*. If, in itself, any new publication *affiliated* to a group of the Communist Left is welcome and to be saluted, the reading of its first issue leaves us doubtful, to say the least. We fear that it is far from representing a real step forward for the political presence of the Communist Left in North America. Indeed, on the one hand, there is no reference to the political points and positions on which the comrades have regrouped, to the content of the debates that have animated *Intransigence*, no reference either to the programmatic positions of the Communist Left and even to the platform that the ICT has just updated and published. As Lenin defended in his fight against the Mensheviks: "*But now that I have become a member of a party, I am obliged (...) to cite a formally established principle of our programme...*"<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, and even though there are many aspects to be dealt with, from the sometimes interesting analysis of the imperialist interests behind the vaccine race to the thinly veiled defence of the principles of Christian charity<sup>34</sup>, the political analysis and position adopted on the class struggle in the US is politically very worrying. Indeed, in its analysis and political stance on the riots and demonstrations arising from the tragic murder of George Floyd as well as the invasion of Capitol Hill by Trumpist militias, *1919* is unable to distinguish itself from the ideological and political campaign being waged by the entirety of the parties and groups on the left of US capital. Again, explicit mention and reference to programmatic issues and class frontiers, especially for a first issue, would

[estep/q.htm](#)

32 . See our salute to the "2nd" Klasbatalo's adhesion to the ICT and our critical comments in regards to the lacks we already pointed out in the process of political clarification (<http://igcl.org/Greetings-to-Klasbatalo-s>).

33 . Lenin, *One Step towards, Two Steps Backwards* (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/on>

34 . One has to see it to believe it: "*We extend our solidarity to all other workers around the world and urge for them to take any measures that they can to keep themselves and others safe. We encourage giftgiving and handing on any unwanted presents and leftover food to those who are on the streets or are otherwise struggling to make ends meet – rather than throwing things out. All of the food that you will not eat before it expires? Someone else will. (...) It is through building ties with other workers and recognising that the real 'all in this together' is our common, but varied, struggle that we can not only help better combat any daily feelings of alienation, helplessness, and loneliness, but can also work towards the revolutionary overthrow of the present state of things.*" (<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-12-31/new-year-same-crisis>).

likely have helped the new affiliates limit the extent of concessions to the capitalist left that are put forwards in this journal.

The journal sees the riots and demonstrations that followed the assassination of G. Floyd as an authentically class movement, as "an intense working class response... against the police state and the capitalist state."<sup>35</sup> It bases its assertion on a narrowly sociological view of the protests, "the class composition of these initial protests was also largely proletarian."<sup>36</sup> The individuals participating in the riots are largely proletarians. Thus, it must be a class movement! But in making this reductive analysis, 1919 turns its back on the lessons of the Communist Left. The social composition of a movement can certainly have its significance, but what counts in the first instance is its political orientation. For example, the Communist Left denounced the false alternative between fascism and anti-fascism during the Spanish Civil War because the fighting on the military fronts, whose soldiers were largely proletarian, was in defence of the bourgeois republic. How can it be so blind to the same false alternative between racism and anti-racism that is currently being played out in the US? "While the slogan of and movement to "abolish the police" has some issues (...), it is clearly a threat to the capitalist class as it challenges the institution of policing."<sup>37</sup> How can an ICT publication take on its own account such a caricature of petty-bourgeois radical anarchism? How can 1919 later complain that in a second phase the movement adopted the less "proletarian" slogan, according to it, of "defund the police"? How can it be so ignorant of the leftist manoeuvres of movements like *Black Lives Matter* and the entire state apparatus, starting with the Democratic Party? This movement aims only to renovate bourgeois democracy by purging it of its racist baggage and has largely succeeded in turning many proletarians back to bourgeois democracy since the vote participation in the last presidential elections reached a level not seen for decades.

The failed reappropriation of the positions of the Communist Left leads 1919 to adopt the radical phraseology of anarchism: "The slogan of "abolish the police" was substituted with the reformist slogan of "defund the police." While some defended this move as being in line with the abolition of the police, as defunding was supposedly the method to reach the goal

of abolition, the adoption of the latter slogan clearly signaled a shift away from any sort of radical politics and back towards bourgeois and institutional terrain. The police were from then on not meant to be combatted or abolished in the streets, or at the hands of the working class' own independent and revolutionary self-organization, but instead this was meant to take place in the halls of government of the capitalist state. (...) These protests ceased being a threat to the capitalist class (...). This new class orientation of the protests is another useful tool for examining why there were such disparities in police presence between the June BLM protests and last week's storming of the Capitol." (*idem*)

Do the new ICT members in the US realise that their leftist argument leads them to defend that the protests called and organised by *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) in June were proletarian, or at least "a threat to the capitalist class"? Do they realize today that the protesters' so-called questioning of "the institution of policing" was in fact, from a class perspective, an expression of and factor in the maintenance of the capitalist political and ideological order against proletarians and aimed at mobilizing them on the bourgeois terrain of interclass anti-racism and identitarianism, i.e., behind the Democratic Party and the state? Do they realise that they have found themselves, not in the vanguard of the proletariat, but at the tail end of petty-bourgeois leftism and the campaign launched by the Democratic Party and its leftist satellites, the BLM and other anarchist identitarians from American universities?

The role of communists is to defend at all times the historical interests of the proletariat. In concrete terms, this means intervening in proletarian struggles by responding to the needs and necessities of the struggles themselves. In other words, we must always put forward the independence and political autonomy of the proletariat, the "working class independence from capital" as the ICT platform itself emphasises, as well as the necessary extension of struggles beyond their basic geographical premises. It is also necessary for communists to assume the political leadership of the confrontation with the bourgeois state, which is always implicit in every struggle that starts from the defence of proletarians' living conditions. It is politically harmful and dangerous to run after the ideological campaigns of the left of capital, hoping to make them proletarian by the magic of the Holy Party. On the contrary, the "revolutionary political organisations need to be in a position to lead the necessary political and organisational battles against the forces of the left bourgeoisie [which] are the material instruments of

35 . *Against Police Reform, for the Abolition of Capitalism* (<https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-09-01/against-police-reform-for-the-abolition-of-capitalism=>).

36 . "Democracy under Assault", *Democracy for Whom?* (<https://mcmxix.org/2021/02/02/democracy-under-assault-democracy-for-whom/>)

37 . *idem*

capital's totalitarianism", as the ICT platform rightly points out.

We must be clear on the question of racism. As with fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, the only struggle that will be able to defeat racism is *the struggle for the destruction of capitalism by the proletariat and from its class terrain, its class demands*. The modern ideology of bourgeois anti-racism based on *identity politics* resembles in many ways to the inter-class coalitions defending bourgeois democracy against fascism in the inter-war period. Movements like *Black Lives Matter* only aim at turning all proletarians, and particularly the black proletarians whose feelings of revolt against racist killings are absolutely legitimate, towards the defence of a non-racist democracy and capitalism, while their real enemies are precisely democracy and capitalism.

The political orientation of the groups of the Communist Left must not be to try to radicalise the left of capital further. It is not a kind of vanguard of the class struggle which only lacks more political clarity. The left of capital has a historical function: to lead the proletariat astray from its class path and to lead it back to illusory capitalist "solutions": sacred union and war. The class frontier between them and us must be perfectly defined. We therefore call on 1919 not to adapt to the local positions of the left of US capital, but to defend the positions of the international proletariat on the basis of the positions and political platform of the international organisation that heads the journal, that is the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

Robin, April 2021

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### **Contribution : Leftist "Anti-Capitalism" against the Proletariat**

We publish below an individual contribution by a comrade which aimed to denounce the bourgeois character of the "anti-capitalism" advocated by many left and leftist parties. It also wanted to point out the use and recuperation by leftism of today's councilist theses, based on the fetishism of self-organisation and on the opposition to the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the leading role that the communist party must play in it. Unfortunately, apart from being difficult to read at times, the contribution has two major weaknesses: the first is the use of formulas that are often imprecise and, on several occasions, make political concessions to leftism, which weakens its denunciation; the second is that it equates councilism with leftism, as illustrated in particular by the title of the contribution.

Indeed, formulations such as "the anti-capitalist movement (... ) cannot resist the confusion between anti-liberalism and anti-capitalism", the NPA (a leftist group of French Trotskyist origin) would "distort", "theoretical distortion", Marxism or its "thinking-acting" of a thousand and one Marxisms is nothing other than the abandonment of Marxist principles", or "leftist infantilism" suggest that contemporary leftism would have had, or would still have, something "Marxist"; that the NPA, in this case, would have defended, or would still defend, Marxist principles since it could "abandon" them...

Moreover, it is a mistake to equate the councilist current of the 1920s and 1930s, the "council communism", with the gramscist current. The former was a reaction, "infantile" but class-based to use Lenin's expression, to the betrayal of social democracy and the opportunism winning over the Communist International, whereas Gramsci was the agent and actor of the Zinovievist Bolshevisation first, and then of the victory of Stalinism, within the CP of Italy. Secondly, and if councilism maintained itself as a current of the Communist Left until the 1970s and 1980s, and could still serve as a reference and bridge for the generations of that time to the positions of the Communist Left, it is undeniable that it has since become, particularly since the disappearance of formal "councilist" groups, a vector of the democratic ideology within the proletariat, thus allowing "modern" leftism to claim to Rosa Luxemburg, Pannekoek and councilism against Lenin. Articles on both of them multiply in leftist publications, especially in the United States and Europe, trying, among other things, to assimilate them to... Gramsci<sup>38</sup>, by underlining their link with the fetish of self-organisation and their opposition to... Lenin, and behind his figure to the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia. However, this "recuperation" does not make today's councilism, even if sclerotic, a bourgeois current as such.

We have proposed political corrections to the writer. In case he was not convinced of their validity, we told him that

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38 . For instance, the American journal *The Jacobin* : <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/02/anton-pannekoek-socialist-history-lenin> : " However, Pannekoek differed from many other "ultra-lefts" by predicting that this revolutionary struggle would be protracted. In a way that was reminiscent of Antonio Gramsci's later argument in his Prison Notebooks (...) While Pannekoek eventually found himself overtaken by history, his earlier insights into spirit, self-organization, and the importance of the socialist goal remain valuable contributions to the movement for working-class emancipation"

we would publish the article with a critical presentation, thus opening a public confrontation. Initially, the comrade accepted some corrections which he incorporated; this is the version we publish here. But then, after having expressed our remarks to him, the comrade broke all links with our group overnight, to the point that we can no longer contact him; and without giving any real explanation for his gesture, apart from a "no doubt you will feel frustrated by a more political argument which could be a vector for overcoming".

Despite this unfortunate and incomprehensible decision from a militant point of view, we decided to maintain the publication of the article. The fact remains that the banner of anti-capitalism and movementism is being waved more and more by leftist movements and parties, especially in the US and Europe. In fact, we are now witnessing an adaptation, and a preparation, of the political forces of the left to the exacerbation of class antagonisms produced by the crisis. In doing so, in the name of a so-called radical "anti-capitalism", leftism is preparing to occupy the terrain of workers' struggles, to sabotage them, and to divert them onto the democratic terrain, whether in the name of anti-racism or identity theories, as we have seen in the United States from May to December 2020 until Biden's election, or of... self-organisation or assemblyism in the workers' struggles themselves, as we saw during the massive workers' mobilisation in France from September 2019 to January 2020, and the two months of strikes, mainly in transport, in December-January. It is therefore time for the Communist Left to be even clearer and to denounce as clearly as possible the counter-revolutionary character of all forms of leftism. Above all, don't let our guard down!

Revolution or War, April 2021

### **Leftist " Anti-Capitalism against the Proletariat From the Democratic Myth of Council Communism to the Democratist Mystification of Councilism (Benjamin)**

In a previous article in our journal *Revolution or War* No. 17<sup>39</sup>, we denounced *identity politics* and the theorisation of *intersectionality* as a production of dominant thought. This article on leftist *anti-capitalism*, council communism and councilism today is above all the fruit of reflections and debates which animate the discussion and highlight the contradictions which ultimately run through the objective history of the workers' movement, so it is not in itself definitive or sententious; on the contrary, it invites us to prolong the debate, particularly within the Communist Left. Leftist anti-capitalism, whose strategy is none other than that of invalidating the class dimension of the proletariat as the historical subject of emancipation, is reduced to the democratic and identitarian dimension of sociological categories, whose modernity is expressed through a so-called experimentation with specific struggles (anti-racism, anti-fascism, feminism, ecology, degrowth, etc.) against the struggle of the proletariat, against the self-organisation of the class. In this sense, leftist anti-capitalism is nothing more than an appendage of the bourgeois camp whose strategy must be fought, along with its political dimension, by the proletariat, by its self-organisation and by its centralised class organ, **the party**. The anti-capitalist movement, however heterogeneous it may be, through its Trotskyist and anarchist components, cannot resist the confusion between

anti-liberalism and anti-capitalism, it nevertheless finds its homogeneity as soon as it is a question of undermining at the base any organisational strategy aiming at the unity of the proletariat, any strategy of workers' struggles as a revolutionary political practice; this homogeneity is the historical definition of its belonging to the bourgeois camp, it is its leftist expression. Democracy, pluralism, the real credo of the assembleist fetishism which characterises leftist anti-capitalism and alterglobalism which is its international dimension (it is easy to understand the difference we make between the international dimension and internationalism, in the first instance it is a pure formalism separated from the political and strategic dimension of the class, in the second, it is the class, the proletariat which, on the terrain of history, appropriates and defines itself as an emancipating and revolutionary class without distinction or national reference), **the proletarian camp** is an organised all fighting for the seizure of power and not for a redefinition of a right improving the living conditions of the exploited, implying that capitalism would be reformable and therefore likely to be humanised; the proletarians know that capitalism is the opposite of humanity and of the free historical and egalitarian development of each and every one. The humanity of proletarians is the practical translation of the fight they lead against the capitalist class for the construction of the communist society, the proletariat as an internationalist historical subject subjectives itself, realises itself in and through the

39 . <http://igcl.org/Intersectionality-an-Ideological> (*Intersectionality: an Ideological Product of Capitalist Thought*)

class struggle.

Leftist anti-capitalism, as real parliamentary or extra-parliamentary backing of the bourgeois left and consequently anti-proletarian, is reduced to an organisational conception tinged with universalism referring to the ideology of human rights, whose key words are: pluralism and democracy. But democracy only makes sense for domination, it is historically linked to the bourgeois class and its capitalist system, which accommodates it very well in order to perpetuate the exploitation of the working class; democracy is also, by semantic slippage and by the diffuse use that is made of it, a mummification of the social contract which is often translated by pluralism. Pluralism is the moral backing of democracy, this democracy being historically and politically only the expression of the absolute reign of the bourgeoisie, of the capitalist class. We said heterogeneity in form but homogeneity in substance, differentiated ideologies in form (between a thousand and one Marxisms, Keynesianism and libertarian-style federalism) but theoretical-practical agreement around democratism and pluralism; All this is the real strategy of leftist anti-capitalism where interclassism, which is its pathology and poison, is not only a blow against the proletariat, it is also the pure and simple negation of the class struggle as the motor of history. An economic struggle is generally defined by its specificity in terms of demands relating to wages, working conditions, etc., but it cannot be reduced to this simple dimension which separates it from its other dimension which is political. If the current struggle, by its uneven development, does not always allow to valorise the intrinsic political content of the struggle that the proletariat is leading, it is the principle of it and conditions the extension, the expansion of this struggle; all economic struggle is a political struggle, all economic struggle is a movement of the working class in the making for its emancipation. Leftist anti-capitalism, through its different forms of fragmented strategies, is at the service of categorical, identitarian, isolation; in this sense, it is mechanically an act of separation and reification of struggles. The leftist anti-capitalist milieu is the armed weapon of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, it is entirely at its service.

This is how the difference between the party of the proletariat, its programme, its avant-garde role of political leadership within the class from which it cannot be separated because it is dialectically linked to it, and anti-capitalist leftism which, in the name of democratism and pluralism, does not

operate a strategic overtaking of struggles under the cover of particular experimentations (as if particularism could be revolutionary), but politically acts against the class, is not on the terrain of workers' struggles but objectively on the terrain of the bourgeois state. Leftist anti-capitalism as a negation of the historical task of the proletariat, in the name of democratism and its pluralist avatar, is situated on the bourgeois terrain of separation, it is from this point of view the field of activity separated from the objective conditions, i.e. from the class political dimension whose strategy is the conquest of power by the crushing of the bourgeois state and the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat

After the completion of the experience of the misnamed "real socialism", whose political translation is none other than Stalinism referring to socialism in a single country against the Marxist invariant universalising internationalism, the proletariat finds itself confronted with the ferocious assaults of the bourgeoisie, with its strategy of eradicating communism and Marxist principles. A real leaden blanket hangs over the working class and the disintegration of its organisational possibilities is going to be concretised by the emergence of new forms of contestation that the left of capital is going to put in place. In the continuity of the eradication of communism in the 1930s and the Stalinism which is its consecration, the world bourgeoisie will only complete, in the name of democracy and sacrosanct human rights, the destruction of the Marxist corpus reducing the class struggle to an obsolete form whose history must be that of a past which has become unnameable. The proletariat, as the only revolutionary class and historical subject of human emancipation, must be reduced to a simple societal abstraction whose concept is based on the interaction of different factors of domination, which, by their particular and identity-based multiplicity, no longer refer to the class struggle and to the violent confrontation which must characterise the seizure of power by the proletariat but to the intersectional ideology (see our article on intersectionality *RG#17*).

Whatever its form or name (party or movement), leftist anti-capitalism, with its quasi-religious cult of assembleism, is an instance where the heteroclitite is combined with the "unitarian" gesture. Trotskyists, anarchists, feminists, antifas, anti-racists, ecologists and other perfectly integrated elements of the left of capital, publicists of informal and spontaneous "meeting mania", of local action without centralised consultation, of

direct democracy, etc., are all leftist arguments which constitute the breviary of the tenors of immediatism and interventionism. "We want the NPA to be fully democratic, in the image of the society we want. This implies that everyone has a place in it, whatever their level of commitment. This implies that we are all equal when it comes to making decisions, that the governing bodies are clearly mandated and duly controlled and revocable, that a political formation is organised, that **the plurality of points of view is guaranteed** in the same way as the right of the majority to act on behalf of all."<sup>40</sup> Whether this is the case with the founding principles of the NPA in France or any other similar organisation around the world does not interest us at all, we can only observe that what characterises this or these alter-globalisation organisations is their unity to carry out anti-proletarian actions in which identitarianism, when it is not individualism, is a factor and a reason for pluralism and democracy

The language of the class struggle, and this is not insignificant, must disappear in the name of event novelty, conjunctural, there is this working class "which has not disappeared but which has become invisible", and the unpronounceable dictatorship of the proletariat assimilated to the Stalinist dictatorship. So it is with this theoretical distortion animated by the Jesuits of modernity whose intellectualism of a "thinking-acting" of a thousand and one Marxisms is nothing other than the abandonment of Marxist principles, the rhetoric of the "intellectualised committed" to use a formula that the founder of the LCR and the NPA Daniel Bensaïd liked, is an illustration of this

If it is not our intention to stigmatise the anti-capitalist militant who is often inhabited by the best intentions, the fact remains that anti-capitalism, as conceptualised, does not educate itself with ineffable paradoxes but with a paradigmatic conception built on the appearance of an untraceable unity from which the artifice of unitarianism emerges, **it is openly anti-proletarian in its practice**. The abstention, which has been exponential for several years now, the game of political alternation which does not coincide with the aspirations of the "popular strata", to use a bourgeois terminology referring to sociological positivism; a formal stratification of

civil society, subsumed by the citizenship ideology (ecology, feminism, defence of public services<sup>41</sup> and therefore of the omniscient state, localism, cooperatives and other self-management nonsense, etc.), denatured of its class nature, the proletariat (people in the mouth of the worldly anti-capitalist leftist), which has become unnameable as a class and revolutionary subject of human emancipation, is reduced to the mere contingency of separate formal experiments.

Anti-capitalism, as a bourgeois production of contestation through its informal structuring, co-opts everything that leftism (Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists, degrowth ecologists, feminists, antifas, anti-racists, etc.) and its various associative satellites develop in terms of strategy or rather interventionism in struggles. Whether on the local level by demanding the creation of economic sectors with local production, a localist economy where production and distribution are geographically determined with the aim of developing local trade, the refocusing of activity around the place of life, or whether on the scale of a country, a continent and, beyond that, on the global level. **For there is an international dimension to anti-capitalism, alterglobalism, this "other" world of "united nations", which is not a new form of internationalism but exactly the opposite of internationalism, which can only be proletarian. Note that there are several worlds, anti-capitalism gives itself the appearance of a nascent universalism at the service of all the exploited.** To accompany this oft-tested slogan "another world is possible" and more recently "other worlds are possible", on the nationalist and left-wing terrain (nationalisation, etc.), one can hardly do worse than Mélenchon, the chauvinist franchouillard movement. The usual reference is to the French Revolution, the Age of Enlightenment, and, closer to home, to the declarations of the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) after the Second World War. Thus alterglobalism is this nebulous grouping of the radical left and its petty bourgeois leftist dross. What characterises this grouping is its unity against the proletariat beyond the apparent and false divergences of a class point of view and its

40 . <https://nouveauantiparticipantcapitaliste.org/node/2215> Funding principle of the NPA, 2009. See also the two articles of the ICC whose analysis we do share : [https://fr.internationalism.org/ri401/naissance\\_du\\_npa\\_nouveau\\_parti\\_antiparticipantcapitaliste\\_ou\\_nouveau\\_parti\\_antiouvrier.html](https://fr.internationalism.org/ri401/naissance_du_npa_nouveau_parti_antiparticipantcapitaliste_ou_nouveau_parti_antiouvrier.html) [https://fr.internationalism.org/ri401/que\\_veut\\_le\\_npa\\_reforme\\_ou\\_revolution.html](https://fr.internationalism.org/ri401/que_veut_le_npa_reforme_ou_revolution.html)

41 . The defence of public service is intrinsically linked to citizenship ideology, it is consubstantial with it. Citizens' rights are nothing more than the dictatorial nomenclature of dominant thought, always in contempt of the real and essential needs that condition human life. Public service is nothing but the institutional mechanical function of social organisation which reduces human rights to the mere expression of duty towards the authority of the bourgeois state.

consensual recasting in all forms of activism and spectacular interventionism, notably during European summits or other global institutional manifestations. A simple academic definition is sufficient to understand its meaning: *"alterglobalism refers to movements that promote the idea that another organisation of the world is possible and that, without rejecting globalisation, propose to regulate it. The heterogeneity and diversity of alterglobalist associations leads one to speak more of alterglobalist movements in the plural than of a movement in the singular. In general, the movement opposes economic liberalism and the economic globalisation of financial practices in favour of a more social and better distributed economy. These demands translate into a search for global and systemic alternatives to the international order of finance and trade. Marked by a culture that could be linked to the libertarian tradition or to radical ecology, the movement oscillates between reformism (for example through the demand for a Tobin Tax proposed at the creation of Attac) and radicalism."*<sup>42</sup>

If there is a fundamental unity within the anti-capitalist movement, it is that of gathering around an anti-proletarian strategy that does not hide its real intentions, the perpetuation of the capitalist system whose development is not dissociated from the reforms acquired through hard struggle, a kind of "capitalism with a human face". *"Thus, the alterglobalists can speak of another world without even once referring to two centuries of struggle and theoretical construction by the working class about precisely this other world."*<sup>43</sup> (L'altermondialisation : un poison contre la perspective révolutionnaire, *Révolution Internationale* n° 339, French journal of the ICC).

Experimentation rather than experience, this confers to suppress the historical dimension of the revolutionary subject and of its principal task, the seizure of power and the exercise of its dictatorship. This confers to distort the very meaning of the working class struggle by subordinating it to economism, the paragon of the "alter" organisations and other anti-capitalists in the pay of the bourgeois state, it sends back to the dustbin of history the controversy between reform or revolution, freezing the struggle of the exploited in a purely economic dimension, denaturing it from its political dimension; this "other possible world" of the alterglobalists and other anti-capitalists is nothing other than this world as it is, where we preach rather than fight, where we get

drunk on "human rights" discourse, where we aspire to a return to the welfare state and to strategies of nationalisation of the sectors most affected by the crisis. The old Stalinist remedies, under the guise of protectionist measures, are the breeding ground of this left of capital. *"The claim of a 'real left' can thus find its way in, and exploit its old recipes, especially the criticism of the excesses of capitalism, avoiding criticism of capitalism itself."*<sup>44</sup>

The operational and strategic field of alterglobalism and its anti-capitalist component generally finds its most spectacular expression at European summits and other social forums, thus on a totally bourgeois terrain, which is not that of proletarian struggles. In this sense, it is not the terrain of the atomisation of struggles, but of their negation. The emergence for several decades of what sociologists call the new social movements (NSM), *"In a context marked by the decline of the classic figure of the workers' movement, the expression 'new social movements' (NSM) refers, from the mid-1960s onwards, to all forms of collective action that developed outside the industrial sphere, suggesting a significant and widespread change in the logic of mobilisation. The fight for the rights of black Americans and the rise of environmentalist, regionalist, feminist, pacifist, student and homosexual demands seem to augur, for some observers, a period characterised by the emergence of relatively specific issues, opposed to the traditional political and social system. The proponents of this thesis point to a number of distinctive dimensions, foremost among which is the identity of these actors, which largely escapes the class cleavages on the basis of which the conflicts of industrial societies have been progressively structured and regulated since the end of the 19th century. While the right-left axis is the dominant political translation of this historical situation - which constitutes the framework and matrix of the democratic debate - these struggles refer to different principles and are most often based on a limited sense of belonging to a particular group, whose properties are sometimes defined ascriptively. Based on a circumscribed community and cause, these mobilisations generally seek to preserve the autonomy of the actors concerned and to facilitate the individuation of behaviour..."*<sup>45</sup> Rid of the "classist" dimension, which in the eyes of the actors of these NSM marks the end and ultimately the negation of more than a century and a half of workers' struggles, whose strategy, class against class, oriented the political struggle towards the seizure of power by the

42 . [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altermondialisme#La\\_formation\\_du\\_mouvement](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altermondialisme#La_formation_du_mouvement)

43 <https://fr.internationalism.org/ri339/alter.html>

44 *Ibid.*

45 . Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux, Nouveaux mouvements sociaux, Didier Chabanet, 2020, pp. 403 à 410.

proletariat after the destruction of the bourgeois state, these new social movements are nothing more than a strategy of refocusing bourgeois democracy in the debate and action where the emancipating and revolutionary class, the proletariat, is relegated, as we said above, to the expression of a becoming citizen in the best of all worlds; a reformed capitalism, in the sense that capitalism would be reformable and in the end the one and only possibility of evolution, since democracy and its parliamentary corollary would be its guarantors. This is the case with the denunciation of the financialisation of the economy, which takes the place of the global critique of political economy led by Marx and Engels, nothing more than a political will of the left of capital which does not say that finance is a consequence of the logic of the market and of abstract labour. The multitude is the expression of these movements such as *Occupy Wall Street*, *Podemos* or *Nuits Debout* without forgetting *Syriza* in Greece, and whatever their organisational form, parties or movements. They are the expression of the bourgeois offensive against the proletariat, the revolutionary class, they complete, by claiming a right and a citizen consciousness, the democratic mystification at the service of parliamentarianism, even in the participation in the elections under the cover of a grasp of reality which does not come from the class but from the institutional game allowing this contestation, including sometimes in its violent outbursts. Where the historical awakening of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for the seizure of power is the only condition for the overthrow of capitalism, anti-capitalism, even if it claims to be of the people and sometimes of the class, is only a pure mystification whose only strategy coincides with the defence of capital. The question of emancipation, so present in the soothing discourse of the so-called radical left and its alter leftist satellites, Trotskyists, Anarchist and *degrowth ecologists*, does not escape this other question, "*what emancipation is it about? What conditions follow from the nature of the emancipation being demanded?*" To use Marx's words in *The Jewish Question*, even if the question refers to the assimilation of the Jew as a citizen, it nevertheless poses the centrality of human emancipation that only political emancipation can guarantee, the real emancipation of proletarians. This is the conscious recognition of the class as a revolutionary subject historically determined by objective conditions.

Nevertheless, and since it is not a question of a simple posture but of an argued analysis of the

various and confused strategies of the anti-capitalist sphere, the rest of this article has the ambition, not to reformulate a history of the different councilist experiences of the workers' movement, which is not the object of this one, but to approach the critical dimension developed by the Communist Left, and in particular the ICC in the 1980s, in order to raise this other question which is not the least important: the denaturation of class boundaries and the semantic and practical shift towards assemblerist mystification and its anarchist corollary, a real poison for the working class<sup>46</sup>.

### The Democratic Myth of Council Communism

Council communism is a component of the objective history of the Communist Left. If the object of the development which follows is not to retrace the critical history of the various contradictory debates which for decades have opposed what we call "councilists" and "partidists", retaining only the Manicheism of an all or nothing, at least we are obliged to dialectically identify the insufficiency of such an approach leading to the worst theoretical aberrations. The argument can only feed the sophism so dear to the enemies of the proletariat whose only ambition is to instil the poison of democratism into the organisation of the class by sending it back to the illusion of its own consciousness as separate and thus separating it from its historical becoming. It is the illusion of a spontaneity of independent consciousness relying on the particular and the fragmentary to the detriment of a global analysis which aims at the final goal and whose seizure itself is done by the political struggle of the proletariat. Councilism as a particular and particularising expression is an obstacle to the development of consciousness, it is a disfigurement of the possibility of this consciousness whose general movement is inscribed in the objective necessity of the gathering of the proletarian camp as a whole, an appropriation in and for itself of the class by the class; the realisation of a historical subjectivity knowing itself for itself and by itself.

The origin of the councilist strategy **or rather council communism** (we will see below that councilism is and constitutes the ideological dimension of council communism) is closely linked to the experience of the German revolution in 1919;

<sup>46</sup> . It should be noted that the ICC of today, sclerotic with its theory of decomposition and labelling as parasites those who denounce its theoretical and intellectual imposture, has turned its back on the ICC of the 1980s.

the revolutionaries conscious of the opportunism of the trade unions and the social democracy openly passed into the camp of the bourgeoisie consciously and practically organised their organs of struggle by reappropriating and defining the class boundaries necessary for the strategy of the overthrow of capitalism through insurrection and the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the political leadership of the organisation, the party. "However, it's not enough merely to reappropriate class positions on the theoretical level. Without a clear concept of revolutionary organization, all these groups and individuals are condemned to the void... It's not enough to proclaim yourself a revolutionary in words and in a purely individual manner; you have to defend class positions collectively, in an organized framework. The recognition of the necessity for and organization that has an indispensable function in the class and that operates as a collective body is the precondition for all militant work. Any hesitation or incomprehension about the necessity for organization will be severely punished and result in a disintegration of political forces. This is particularly true for the 'councilist' groups today."<sup>47</sup>

To attempt to criticise council communism without criticising the myth of democratic experimentation is simply to evade the Marxist principles which define the class struggle in terms of a radical break with everything that could contingent the old world. The proletarian revolution not only abolishes the old social relations, it also abolishes any illusion of a social organisation whose democratic principle, as historically tested in the class struggle, would be the guarantor of the free fulfilment of each individual, because being the free fulfilment of all, bourgeois domination only guarantees the free fulfilment of its domination over the immense majority. If there is a break, and there is, the organisation of the councils makes a mistake by reappropriating democratism as a mode of operation and in fine can only reproduce the alienating conditions of the expression of the workers' struggle subjected to a bourgeois

conception of its fulfilment, notably by claiming rights whose legitimacy does not call into question the capitalist system, let's listen to Lenin: "The workers know perfectly well, too, that even in the most democratic bourgeois republic "freedom of assembly" is a hollow phrase, for the rich have the best public and private buildings at their disposal, and enough leisure to assemble at meetings, which are protected by the bourgeois machine of power. The rural and urban workers and small peasants—the overwhelming majority of the population—are denied all these things. As long as that state of affairs prevails, "equality", i.e., "pure democracy", is a fraud. The first thing to do to win genuine equality and enable the working people to enjoy democracy in practice is to deprive the exploiters of all the public and sumptuous private buildings, to give to the working people leisure and to see to it that their freedom of assembly is protected by armed workers, not by heirs of the nobility or capitalist officers in command of downtrodden soldiers."

"Only when that change is affected can we speak of freedom of assembly and of equality without mocking at the workers, at working people in general, at the poor. And this change can be affected only by the vanguard of the working people, the proletariat, which overthrows the exploiters, the bourgeoisie. [...] Another theoretical and political error of the Socialists is their failure to understand that ever since the rudiments of democracy first appeared in antiquity, its forms notably changed over the centuries as one ruling class replaced another. Democracy assumed different forms and was applied in different degrees in the ancient republics of Greece, the medieval cities and the advanced capitalist countries. It would be sheer nonsense to think that the most profound revolution in human history, the first case in the world of power being transferred from the exploiting minority to the exploited majority, could take place within the time-worn framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, without drastic changes, without the creation of new forms of democracy, new institutions that embody the new conditions for applying democracy, etc."<sup>48</sup>

The genuine question implies to think bourgeois democracy, not as a method of undifferentiated functioning, adaptable in any point and universally recognised as such (participative, direct and even popular democracy, reference made to Stalinism, whether it is of liberal or state form), but to think it as a strategy of the bourgeoisie, as a dictatorship of the ruling class, that is to say as a negation of democracy in law and in fact for the dominated,

47 . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/2963/conception-organization-german-and-dutch-left> (*The conception of organization of the German and Dutch Left*). The reader will refer to our position, in this same issue, concerning the platform of the ICC adopted at its first congress in 1976, and he/she will appreciate in what measure the ICC disqualifies itself as regards a critique of councilism (and this well before its speculative elucubrations on parasitism crowned by its theory of decomposition), in what, as we point out, this organisation, unable to overcome its congenital weaknesses, remains mired in the morass of its blindness which leads it to reduce the necessity of the party to a mere rhetorical and agreed dimension; in what the ICC has been unable to appropriate the communist critique of the Italian left on the necessity of the party and its political leadership as the most conscious vanguard of the proletariat.

48 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/comintern.htm>, *Thesis and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Lenin, March 4th 1919.

the exploited; it is in the name of democracy, equality and freedom that the capitalists send millions of workers to be massacred on the war fronts.

We start from the Marxist principle that every historically realising subject must eliminate itself, the proletariat, the revolutionary class has the political task of realising communism and it is through the withering away of the state during the transitional period and the exercise of its dictatorship that it creates the conditions of a classless society and thus the conditions of its own disappearance as a class. What is the formula for this realisation of communism is the formula of a praxis (development of Marxist revolutionary tactics and strategy), the communist programme. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the single necessity after the seizure of power by the class, it is upstream the tool of struggle which dialectically defines the relationship of the class and its political leadership, the party. The question is therefore not to be anti-democratic or democratic but to return the "category democracy" to its own historical, political and semantic development, to finish with this figure of an unsurpassable logos. It is a misuse of words to speak of democracy being realised through the political conquest of power when the only conquest is not so much a transition of a democratic type, even if it were to be called workers' democracy, but the establishment of the conditions for the disappearance of this form of pseudo-universalism, which is replaced, because it is outdated, by communism at last realised, or what Marx called *Gemeinwesen*, the human community at last realised. The only reality of the transition period is the proletarian dictatorship, the only organisational reality of the councils is the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of the communist party. In the dictatorship of the proletariat, communism is not reduced to its becoming, it is already conscious of its becoming, **the movement which produces it is already the moment of its possibility**. This means that the communists present in all the soviets or workers' councils have the task of assuming the leadership in order to exacerbate the internal contradictions with a view to their overcoming, only the party, as a centralised organisation and emanation of the class at its most conscious and therefore most advanced degree, is able to maintain the revolutionary programmatic principles, the Marxist invariants. There is no exteriority of the party to the class, the party is in the class and represents the highest conscious

expression of the stakes and strategy in the revolutionary period.

The objective history of council communism and councilist ideology which is an emanation of it, is from the start a victim of its own weaknesses and the leftist recuperation of councilism today is one of the symptoms. The confusion and mechanical grasp of the party-class relationship led to the worst theoretical aberrations, considering that the class organised in councils in the mode of a form of democracy glorifying the spontaneity of the masses thus achieved workers' democracy. The step was taken to undo the central organisation of its principal task, to be the political direction of the proletariat by the intervention of the communists in these same councils and to bring to the class a strategy faithful to the Marxist invariants. It is this mechanical grasp that made people say that the party is outside the class, and that its constituted vanguard is only represented by some intellectuals who only theorise the action, reducing it to a simple executory dimension of fixed principles. These are the same weaknesses that led to a false interpretation of Lenin's *What is to be done?* seeing it as the elaboration of a leadership separated from its revolutionary object to the point of falsifying its intention, to the point of disqualifying the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and transforming it into a kind of quasi-military leadership. " ... *The Marxist party cannot, on the other hand, reduce the question of insurrection to a military plot...*". Lenin argues only in this sense, on the necessity of centralised organisation and the no lesser necessity of rallying the proletarian camp. " *These accusations are the result of a twofold misunderstanding. First, the history of the revolutionary movement is so little known among us that the name "Narodnaya Volya" is used to denote any idea of a militant centralised organisation which declares determined war upon tsarism. But the magnificent organisation that the revolutionaries had in the seventies, and that should serve us as a model, was not established by the Narodnaya Volya, but by the Zemlya i Volya, which split up into the Chorny Peredel and the Narodnaya Volya. Consequently, to regard a militant revolutionary organisation as something specifically Narodnaya Volya in character is absurd both historically and logically; for no revolutionary trend, if it seriously thinks of struggle, can dispense with such an organisation. The mistake the Narodnaya Volya committed was not in striving to enlist all the discontented in the organisation and to direct this organisation to resolute struggle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was its great historical merit. The mistake was in relying on a theory which in substance*

was not a revolutionary theory at all, and the Narodnaya Volya members either did not know how, or were unable, to link their movement inseparably with the class struggle in the developing capitalist society. **Only a gross failure to understand Marxism (or an “understanding” of it in the spirit of “Struveism”) could prompt the opinion that the rise of a mass, spontaneous working-class movement relieves us of the duty of creating as good an organisation of revolutionaries as the Zemlya i Volya had, or, indeed, an incomparably better one. On the contrary, this movement imposes the duty upon us; for the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine “class struggle” until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries.**<sup>49</sup> (underlined by us) A re-reading of *What is to be done?* is never a waste of time.

To close this first part concerning council communism without mentioning the Luxemburg-Lenin polemic would be a mistake, as it has fed the leftist palaver that Rosa is the theoretician of mass spontaneity and the muse of council communism, and Lenin the infamous hyper-centralising partyist with a barrack mentality. The problematic of Lenin's text deals with opportunism and the split with the Mensheviks, but beyond that it raises the question of the party and its political leadership, the reader might think that this takes us away from the question of councilism, but to see things like that would be reductive, the implications of this text go far beyond their own object and pose the problematic of a centralised leadership in the face of the rout of a form of spontaneity that Rosa Luxemburg develops. It is in her article *Organisational Questions of The Russian Social Democracy*<sup>50</sup>, that Rosa Luxemburg makes a critical and acerbic commentary on Lenin's *One Step forward, Two Steps Back*<sup>51</sup>, criticising the organisational principles advocated by Lenin in the struggle that the party must lead against opportunism. It is out of the question in our article to go into the details of this controversy, but it is of interest to anyone who looks at the problematic of councilism and contradicts the a-historical and dialectically inconsistent manicheism, namely councilism or party. When reproaching Lenin for an essentially mechanistic approach to the development of the party forced to fight against

opportunism by a strategy imposing a firm discipline within it, is not Rosa Luxemburg herself in her contradiction the victim of a mechanistic process? Resolutely opposed to the "discipline" dimension in the period, she qualifies it as counter-productive in the case of the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, she denounces a purely formal measure reduced to statutory principles which the historical movement can only disqualify. Thus it poses the question of the development of consciousness, stressing that this is inseparable from the proletarian dynamics in the struggles, that the fluctuations of these struggles are concomitant with the development of this consciousness; there is nothing shocking in this assertion, and no doubt we could learn from it, but it shows an insufficient analysis. The proletarian dynamic cannot be separated from the inescapable goal which characterises it, communism, the struggle in itself, at the moment when it takes place, cannot be considered only as a punctual fact relativised by its dimension, the extent of its demands, it is a moment of the fight which leads to the emancipation of the proletariat and the exercise of its dictatorship. There is thus a reductionist dimension to Rosa Luxemburg's argument, which considers the development of consciousness and its heterogeneity as a function of the objective conditions of the period, of the particular situations inherent in the uneven development of capitalism. This too is not wrong, but how is it reductionist? In what way do the objective conditions alone not determine the consciousness of the proletariat, class consciousness, consciousness of consciousness within the class. To understand this, it is not a question of referring to a metaphysics of consciousness subordinating analysis to abstract speculation, but of thinking of the substance of the class not as a sociological category but as a political category whose strategic reality rests on its organisation and the internationalist consciousness which characterises it, necessity obliges: only the partyist dimension answers this problematic. The moment of the party is also the moment of the class, for the first as a vanguard in its organisational dimension as a political leadership, for the second, not as a simple executor of orders coming from above, but as a revitalising dimension of the moment of the indissociability of the struggle of the proletariat and of its centralised organisation. The party is not external to the class, it is the organisational principle which guarantees the Marxist invariants, i.e. the political content to which the class is organically linked. To Rosa

49 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iv.htm> *What is to be done? IV. The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries*, Lenin,, 1902.

50 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/index.htm>

51 . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/onestep/index.htm>

Luxemburg's conclusion, which must be considered with great care, that is to say by not separating it from its context as leftists and other anarchists do: "Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee." Let us add these few lines from Lenin in response to Rosa Luxemburg: "Comrade Luxemburg says that in my view 'the Central Committee is the only active nucleus of the Party'. Actually that is not so. I have never advocated any such view. On the contrary, my opponents (the Second Party Congress minority) charged in their writings that I did not sufficiently uphold the independence of the Central Committee, that I made it too subordinate to the editorial board of the Central Organ and the Party Council, bodies located abroad [...] She repeats naked words without troubling to grasp their concrete meaning. She raises bogeys without informing herself of the actual issue in the controversy. She puts in my mouth commonplaces, general principles and conceptions, absolute truths, and tries to pass over the relative truths, pertaining to perfectly definite facts, with which alone I operate. And then she rails against set formulas and invokes the dialectics of Marx! It is the worthy comrade's own article that consists of nothing but manufactured formulas and runs counter to the ABC of dialectics."<sup>52</sup>

### The Democratist Mystification of Councilism

The figure of Gramsci, and his Ordinovism, is today a legendary and charismatic figure for all leftist, anarchist and other apologists of councilism. However, it is politically necessary and right to distinguish between council communism as a political strategy of the German-Dutch Left, clearly affirming class boundaries, and Gramscian councilism, which is reduced to the dimension of the factory council, where only immanentism is a vector of consciousness (consciousness is not the result of the overcoming of contradictions, but the dimension of an absolute ideality in which experience recognises itself as the principle of this absoluteness, the seizure of reality is nothing other than the seizure of the quasi-revealed consciousness in the theological sense of the term); this culture of democratism and localist experimentation, where immediatism is combined with assemblyism with a thousand interclassist virtues. All the ingredients of class collaboration are gathered there under various terms such as: self-management, advanced democracy, anti-party

councilism and all this in the radiant light of a thousand and one Marxisms so dear to the Trotskyists without forgetting the self-management fetishism, the real Grail of Anarchists and other anarcho-councilists. A councilist myth, no doubt about it, but also a democratist mystification at the service of a petty bourgeois councilist ideology driven by the sole contingency of evolutionism, of gradual transformation, or even of the seizure of power which would be the sublime act of the spontaneity of the masses; so many political and strategic incurabilities which characterise the movementist dimension of struggles atomised by the discrediting of the centralised organisation of the class, the party, by the repudiation of the proletariat itself as class consciousness and revolutionary subject. "It can truly be said that Gramsci synthesised and formulated with the greatest relief, at successive moments, the respectively leftist, centrist and right-wing aspects of opportunism (immediatism), aspects which nevertheless mutually imply each other and therefore coexist in power. It is easy to understand why "historiographers" have fought so much over the "real Gramsci" (claimed by Stalinists and de-Stalinists alike, by Trotskyists, anarchists, social democrats, liberal-socialists, radicals...), each time succeeding in presenting the "real Gramsci" in a different light. ) succeeding each time in presenting the image of a Gramsci "different" in tone, emphasis, particular proposals, but always and necessarily characterised, in all these interpretations, by democratism and pragmatic and voluntarist concretism."<sup>53</sup> Councilism today (and the anarchist roseola which is its fabric) by its democratist dimension and by the cult of assemblerism is, in fact, a gateway to leftist infantilism: today's anti-capitalism and its alter-globalism is the finished expression of this, and it must be fought as a real poison by the class. The Communist Left, confronted with its objective history through the historical expression of the German-Dutch Left and the Italian Left, must lead the fight against councilism, which today has become the ally and the gateway to the penetration of the movement of leftist anti-capitalism, and reappropriate the invariance of Marxism developed by the Italian Left, the only one that has known how to lead a real revolutionary struggle, which was and is at all the barricades.

Benjamin , April 2021

52 .  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/sep/15a.htm> (Reply by N. Lenin to Rosa Luxemburg) *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*.

53 .  
<http://www.sinistra.net/lib/upt/prcomi/rope/ropemsebof.html> *Programme communiste n° 71, 1976*, translated by us.

### **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).

## **Summary of the journal #16 and #17**

### **#16 September 2020**

Capitalist Crisis and Bourgeois Offensive against the Proletariat  
GCCF-IGCL Declaration on the Anti-Racist Protest in the US (June 5<sup>th</sup> 2020)  
The False Opposition Racism-Antiracism and the Threat for the International Proletariat  
The Real Fight against Racism is the Fight against Capitalism: Lenin on the Attitude on Religion (1909)  
Global Pandemia and Imperialist Competition (ICT)  
Reflections on the ICT Article : Is China the Main Imperialist Rival of the USA?  
Against Gossips on Social Networks and Defense of the Public Political  
Debate on the Period of Transition: Letter to the IGCL

### **#17 January 2021**

In The Midst of Widespread Confusion, The Compass of The Proletarian Struggle  
Election of Biden: Successful democratic, identity and anti-racist campaigns against the US and international proletariat  
Lessons from the Teachers' Struggle in the USA: Left-Racialism as a Tool of Union-Sabotage (GCCF)  
Intersectionality: an Ideological Production of Capitalist Thought  
The Struggle of the Communist Left against "Gramscism"  
Statement on the Internationalist Communist tendency's Platform  
About the Theses of the *Gauche Communiste de France* (GCF) on The Nature of the State and the Proletarian Revolution (*Internationalisme* #9, 1946)

## 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.