

REVOLUTION or WAR

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Content

Capitalism on the Brink: Only the International Working Class Can Provide an Historical Alternative to WW3

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Ten Years of the IGCL: What Balance?

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History of the Workers Movement

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

Part 2: the Chinese Question

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Capitalism on the Brink: Only the International Working Class Can Provide an Historical Alternative to WW3

The past four months have seen a preponderance of events that confirm that the ruling classes of the main powers take the prospect of a generalized war as a given. The historically unresolvable contradictions of global capitalism mean that the defense of each national capital becomes a matter of life and death for each of them. As a result, competition has gone from being purely economic and commercial to becoming increasingly political, i.e. imperialist. With no economic solution in sight, for the still not over 2008 financial crisis, imperialist antagonisms are pushing ahead and setting the stage for yet another world war.

The event that marked a turning point in terms of the concreteness of the prospect of a third world war was the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We had previously argued that, sooner or later, the US' policy of containment of Russia and China would provoke one or the other to lash out and attempt to break the stranglehold militarily. This is exactly what we are seeing play out with the war in Ukraine. While there were initial expectations among many for a quick resolution, either a rapid Russian military victory or a financial and political collapse in Russia due to Western sanctions, the war has played out quite differently. It has become a war of attrition, one in which Ukraine by itself is hopelessly outmatched against Russia, and there are increasing signs and admissions from pro-West media that Russian military-industrial production outmatches the entire West (EU plus US) in key items like artillery shells, guided bombs, and drones. Also, crucially Russia is logistically in a better position to sustain a war on its borders than the Western sponsors of Ukraine. Effectively, Russia has already put itself on a war footing¹ and the US and its allies are eager to close the gap, which will entail greater sacrifices from the working class globally but in particular in Europe and North America, the historical heartlands of capitalism.

Neither Russia nor the US and its European allies see the war from the point of view of an isolated conflict. Even if NATO were to stop supporting Ukraine at a level that would allow it to continue to wage a conventional war, it would not make the necessity for Western countries to prepare for war with Russia less urgent. Quite the contrary. Likewise, Russia's projected preparation of a force of around 1 million contract soldiers is more than a means to deliver a crushing blow in Ukraine, but preparation for a possible war against NATO.

Although it has been about a decade since US military strategic thinking definitively shifted from emphasis on

counter-insurgency or high-intensity policing operations to conflict with “near-peer rivals” (ie China and Russia), the economic, industrial, political and social preparation for such a conflict is still playing out in the US, where a key component of this preparation is the so-called *Bidenomics*. To take the example of military-industrial production, it will probably take several more years for the US and European countries to increase their military-industrial production capacities to the necessary levels for a conflict with Russia or China, let alone both at the same time. Military industry will have to increasingly come under the direct control of the state. Civilian factories may be re-tooled for military production. Production of commodities that are of military importance will have to be repatriated. The functioning of the national economy will have to be rationalized to some extent, for the more effective functioning of the state in the context of inter-imperialist war. In short, we are faced with a radical social transformation marked by the end of the neo-liberal policies and ideology of recent decades, and characterized by greater austerity for the working class in the name of fighting an imperialist war. An essential part of this process for the bourgeoisie is to politically and ideologically subjugate the working class, not just as passive consumer-individuals observing the spectacle of bombardment of a third rate power by a major military power, but as collective active participants in a process that will be painful for the working class, as it entails a direct clash between economic and military super-powers. The stakes and the costs for the working class of a war between nuclear-armed super-powers are vastly greater than a lower intensity regional war or a counterinsurgency operation. Consequently, from the point of view of the ruling class, the political prerequisites for the two types of wars are also vastly different. It is the difference between securing passive consent – the minimum necessity for a powerful state to wage a counterinsurgency war or any other “local” imperialist war – and ensuring the massive active participation of the working class as such in the project for a major war. The latter is much more painful for the working class and raises the stakes in the class struggle as the ruling class is forced to go on the offensive at home in order to be able to pursue its interests abroad.

¹. Historically, under the impetus of Stalinism, Russian national capital developed on the basis of a war economy.

We can see the barbarism that a major war has in store for humanity foreshadowed by the war of collective punishment and forced displacement that Israel is currently waging against Gaza, which it unleashed following the October 7th murderous and barbaric rampage carried out by Hamas militants and supporters in southern Israel. This slaughter also did not spare civilians. The fact that there is a disproportion between the 1,600 victims “on the Israeli side” and the 20,000 counted at the time of writing “on the Palestinian side” does nothing to alter the horror of the killings and the terror suffered by the populations, and even less to alter their class, capitalist and imperialist, i.e. anti-proletarian, character. This disparity is simply an expression of the real military balance of power between the capitalist, and so imperialist, state of Israel and the political project for a Palestinian state, which cannot be other than capitalist and imperialist too, not of any supposed humaneness or progressive nature of Hamas and other fractions of the Palestinian bourgeoisie.²

Israeli officials have not shied away from comparisons of their current military campaign to the bombings of German and Japanese cities in WWII, which were designed to kill large numbers of civilians. The leader of the Israeli settlement movement has openly called for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza, which would solve the “Palestinian question” for Israel in Gaza. Leading Israeli officials have made dehumanizing and genocidal remarks about Palestinians. The brutality of the Israeli campaign in Gaza and the extreme chauvinism that is apparent in Israel are confined to a relatively small geographic area, but that will not be the case in a hypothetical world war. At least in this regard, Israeli political leaders are quite astute in their reading of the global situation. They understand that the present global situation bears within it the germs of a catastrophic future war, like WWII but potentially much

². For those who doubt this, let them turn to the inhabitants of Gaza who were savagely repressed by Hamas at the end of July/beginning of August, and on other occasions by the PLO, when they were demonstrating “against rising prices and living conditions”, it means in class terms, against the misery imposed by the Hamas fraction of the bourgeoisie in power in Gaza.

worse, and are not hesitant to remind US and European leaders that in a total war, the belligerents make little or no distinction between civilian and military targets.

To effectively struggle against war, we cannot limit ourselves to symbolic protests of moral outrage at the atrocities that are being perpetrated. The only way to resist this dynamic of world war and the barbarity it implies is for the working class to fight on its own

ground to refuse the sacrifices necessary for war, and this in every country, whether directly at war or not, in Ukraine, Russia, Gaza and Israel as everywhere else. As the class that materially reproduces daily social life, and whose material interests are diametrically opposed to imperialist war, only the working class can prevent a catastrophic world war. The most effective weapon against war in the arsenal of the working class is today the *mass strike*, the geographically wide-spread strike beyond the framework of the company, the union, or the sector, that attempts to progressively encompass as great a part of working class as possible and pursues unifying, class-wide objectives. Only *mass strikes* in the major powers can impose a class balance of forces that would force the main ruling classes to put their imperialist ambitions on hold in order to confront their main enemy, the international working class.

Adopting and implementing slogans suited to the development of mass strikes – slogans that only communist groups can consistently put forward – is the way to be “effective”, i.e. to “scare” the bourgeoisie, if only a little. The mass

strike and opposition to all capitalist states, until their final destruction by workers' insurrection, is the only alternative to the threatened generalized war.

The editorial Team, December 25th 2023

“Situazione de guerra e situazione rivoluzionaria” [War Situation and Revolutionary Situation] – 1938

“The antagonism between capitalism and proletariat always manifests itself in the economic field and the duty of communists is to participate in all struggles for immediate demands. (...)”

To encourage every movement of proletarians' immediate demands, because they objectively oppose the imperialist war, alarming the proletarians to the facts, clearly highlighted by the events of 1937 in France, is only possible under the condition of making the agitation a moment of the struggle against the imperialist war and for its transformation into civil war.”

Prometeo #152, February 1938, Italian Fraction of the Communist Left

International Situation

United States: Workers' Defeat, UAW's Victory and Preparations for Generalized Imperialist War

“The UAW has announced that their dedicated union members who fought together, stood together, and walked the picket line together have now voted together to ratify their record contracts. These historic contracts reward the autoworkers who have sacrificed so much with record raises, more paid leave, greater retirement security, and more rights and respect at work. I want to applaud the UAW and each of our Big Three auto companies for their good faith negotiations to reach this record contract. These contracts show that when unions do well, it lifts all workers. Following the UAW's historic agreements, we've seen Toyota, Honda, Hyundai, and Subaru announce significant wage increases as well. The UAW is fighting hard to ensure that all auto jobs are good, middle-class jobs – and I stand with them in that “fight.”

(Statement from President Joe Biden on the Ratification of the UAW's Historic Agreements with the Big Three Automakers, November 20th 2023)

A 25% wage increase. That is what any proletarian in America or elsewhere who cannot get to grips with the reality of the contracts signed between the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the heads of the *Big Three* US car companies, General Motors, Ford and Stellantis, will remember. UAW union leader Shawn Fain, the American and international media, particularly European, and US President Biden all stressed that the agreement reached following the six-week strike launched by the union is a victory for workers, for the UAW and for trade unionism in general. Along with the heads of General Motors, Ford and Stellantis, they emphasized that they were “pleased to have reached a tentative agreement on a new labor contract with the UAW covering our U.S. operations.” (Jim Farley, Ford's CEO³). To hammer home the point about employers' alleged backsliding, the same Farley was quick to declare that “the reality is that this labor agreement added significant cost, and we are going to have to work very hard **on productivity and efficiency** to become more competitive.”⁴ (emphasis added) The reality of the agreement, which Biden describes as “historic”, is already becoming clearer. The increase in productivity and competitiveness announced by Ford's CEO already gives a better idea of what the agreement will mean for workers. Now we better understand why and how Biden “stand[s] with them [the UAW] in that fight” and came in person, and in front of the media, to support the picket lines at the factory gates.

A Victory for Auto Workers?

Among the various “gains” obtained by the deal, the 25% increase in wages, spread over the four-and-a-half-year duration of the contract, has met with the international media response it deserved from the bourgeois point of view after more than a decade of continuous wage cuts. But then how to explain that the agreement was ultimately approved by only around 60% of UAW members who took part in the vote⁵? In fact, 47% of the production members themselves voted against it. Entire assembly plants in Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky rejected it, sometimes by as much as 69%, according to the Trotskyite site WSWS. A worker at the Stellantis plant in Toledo, quoted by the same website, translates part of the agreement's content into working-class language for us: “We've got two shifts, and we're working 10 hours a day and 50 hours a week. They're planning to go to three shifts, eight hours a day. We're going to lose overtime pay we need to make ends meet.” By the way, this is reminiscent of the 1930s and the New Deal: “The NRA has set the minimum weekly wage at \$12 in the South and \$13 in the North, but this minimum becomes a maximum because it does not stipulate the minimum number of hours per week: a worker who previously worked 48 to 54 hours per week now works only 35 to 40 hours; the hourly

³. <https://www.autoblog.com/2023/10/25/uaw-appears-to-be-moving-toward-a-potential-deal-with-ford-that-could-end-strike/>

⁴. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/11/22/pslc-n22.html>

⁵. Many did not take part for a variety of reasons, including the obstacles put in place by the union and the government to the participation of all those who could legally take part, and the manipulation of ballots, or even pressure and threats from the union on workers who voted “wrong”. Add to this the fact that many cannot vote because they are not members of the union, and as such are not considered workers of the company, but “temporary” or “subcontracted” to use a status or contract category understandable to the non-American reader.

wage is increased, but the overall wage is lower than that paid previously, amounting to \$16.71.” (*Bilan #3*⁶, *Roosevelt au gouvernail* [Roosevelt at the helm], 1934, translated by us) So what is the real and immediate picture? Have workers gained anything?

The 25% increase spread over more than four years will barely compensate for the 22% loss of purchasing power in recent years, according to official sources, largely due to the post-Covid explosion in inflation. Moreover, during the 2007 crisis in the US auto industry, when General Motors declared bankruptcy, proletarians in the auto industry saw their wages and working conditions deteriorate sharply. The Obama administration “saved” GM and the other automakers with a financial bailout and sacrifices for the workers that the UAW had imposed on its members. In fact, at the end of the new contract in 2028, and without knowing future inflation, the hourly wage of \$40 will still be below that of 2007 in constant dollars. And that is without taking into account the reorganizations announced in many plants. Obviously, the agreement touches on various provisions that are difficult to summarize and present – even more so for the non-American reader. For example, the COLA system of indexing wages to inflation remains the same as in 2007, i.e. without taking current inflation into account, and will be cut by \$0.10 an hour by companies to pay for rising healthcare costs. The dual “career” advancement system (the Tier System) was introduced in 2007 when the car industry was restructured and rescued by the state. The salary scale and pension levels are different for new recruits. This system is maintained, as are the sacrifices imposed in 2007 on retirement pensions and health insurance. Few full-time temps will be hired under local contracts. Paid \$20 an hour, the temptation will be strong for their employers to lay them off before the nine-month period after which they are supposed to be eligible for another status.

In itself, then, this “historic victory” will, at best, only temporarily slow the deterioration in workers' purchasing power that has been underway for the past fifteen years, and then only for those current employees who will keep their jobs. It is easy to understand the UAW's difficulties in ensuring that the approval vote, which law imposes, is in favor of the agreement. Remember that 95% of workers eligible to vote had voted in favor of the strike. And above all, imagine what the result would have been if the agreement had had to be discussed and voted on by general assemblies in the workplaces: there is little doubt that it would have been rejected in most factories.

In fact, the proletarians of the auto industry and, with

them, the proletariat as a whole in America, have just suffered a new setback, a new defeat – albeit limited – on top of those suffered during the mobilizations, sometimes strikes, of railway workers, UPS employees, Amazon workers, etc. in the post-Covid years. Expressions of a renewal of proletarian combativeness in the country, these struggles and mobilizations were all totally controlled, framed, and rendered harmless by the unions. The rare gains were akin to the 25% wage increase over four years that President Biden and the UAW hailed as a “historic victory”.

The Legislative and Repressive Corseting of Any Consistent Workers' Struggle

Let us look for a moment at the conditions imposed on the proletariat by the American state and bourgeoisie, which effectively prohibit any proletarian struggle, and in particular any attempt to extend, generalize and unify the struggle to other sectors, companies and even sometimes within the workplace itself. Labor legislation and the right to organize were established between the American state and the AFL and CIO unions in the 1930s. The “closed-shop” system effectively prohibits any meaningful proletarian struggle. They cannot be in “solidarity” or “political”, and these qualifications rest on the judgment of any judge. Apart from participation in picket lines, organized and centralized by the union, proletarians cannot meet and form general assemblies to decide together on actions to be taken, or even on the strike itself. The legislation imposes very strict and codified strike notices, “individual” votes organized by the union for or against the strike, sometimes via Internet from home, a period of several weeks of negotiations before the strike, then rotating and rolling strikes, the signing of the agreement by the companies and the union signifying the end of the strike where it was taking place, and then, a few weeks later, the individual and isolated vote of some of the workers, those who are unionized. In fact, the state prohibits any proletarian struggle that aims to be effective, and if need be, i.e. if the union fails to keep control on workers' combativeness, then the government adopts a decree declaring the strike illegal in the name of *the national interest* or whatever, and launches open repression.

The only alternative to this iron corset around the body of the American proletariat is for proletarians to break it by force, through the fastest possible extension of all class struggle, through the *mass strike*. In other words, to oppose directly bourgeois legality, and therefore to confront the state and its organs in the working class environment, the unions, just as directly. The bar for entering into effective combat is therefore high and risky. We cannot go into any more detail here on the political preconditions and fight – in particular the role of workers' groupings in struggle committees or other-

⁶. *Bilan* was the journal in French of the Left Fraction of the Communist Party of Italy in the 1930s.

wise, and of communist minorities – required to unleash such a dynamic of struggle, even if it were to explode “spontaneously”.

Union “Victory”: an Integral Part of the *Bidenomics*

In reality, and to return to the strike in the American automobile sector, there is a much more important facet to the new contracts between the UAW and the *Big Three* of the car industry. They pave the way for the transition to electric car production, and thus for a restructuring of the workforce. Tens of thousands of jobs will be lost. Already, the agreement signed with the UAW provides buyouts for workers agreeing to leave the company, early retirement and automatic transfers from one plant to another, i.e. from one region to another, for thousands of workers. According to the WSWS, “*new workers at the battery plant will be paid \$26 an hour.*” The role of the trade union, in this case the UAW, in the American system needs to be strengthened in this period of industrial transition. While the main role of the unions, as political organs of the capitalist state, remains first and foremost to control and sabotage any inclination or dynamic of workers' struggle, they can, depending on the moment, be important cogs in any breakthrough in industrial policies, requiring discipline and increased proletarians' support, which is essential for these breakthroughs and new production techniques. Here, opening new factories to manufacture electric vehicles requires a workforce ready to accept and able to “train” in new technologies. As Ford's CEO stated “*we can't build vehicles in the U.S. without the UAW.*”⁷ In this sense, it seems that the omnipotence of managerial ideology and managerial framing, which had relegated unions and trade unionism to the sole role of controlling and sabotaging struggles since the 1980s, is no longer sufficient in the new times that are emerging and the storms that threaten. The US ruling class is clear about this: “*Furthermore, the theory and empirics are clear on the ways in which unions have, in the past, and could, in the future, increase productivity more substantially: through increasing the voice effect of union members and increasing workers' happiness and connection to their jobs. Unions are well positioned to target these goals in their negotiations and to emphasize the benefits that could come both workers and firm owners alike with productivity-enhancing actions.*”⁸

The “Pro-Middle Class” Discourse

In fact, as the UAW strike illustrates, the new times heralded by the covid pandemic, and confirmed by the

⁷. Jim Farley, September 29th 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/ford-ceo-we-cant-build-vehicles-in-the-u-s-without-the-uaw/>

⁸. US Department of the Treasury, *Labor Union and the Middle Class*, August 2023

wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, are forcing the bourgeoisie to adopt “*a new economic philosophy*”, as Jake Sullivan, US President Biden's National Security Advisor, announced as early as 2020⁹. It advocates to “*organize the return of a state at the service of the American middle classes.*”¹⁰ The American bourgeoisie, Biden and the Democrats in particular, prefer to use the term *middle class* to that of working class. Biden's support for the strike and the UAW and his salute to the “historic union victory” mark a break with the official discourse that had prevailed since the Reagan years, including under the Democratic presidencies of Clinton and Obama. In fact, Trump had already made a break here too, presenting himself as the defender of “blue-collar workers”. What does all this left-wing language and support for the working *middle class* mean? It would be a mistake to see it only as mystifying and demagogic rhetoric – albeit real – aimed at the proletariat in America, or even as a simple maneuver to win their vote for the 2024 presidential election.

“*Persistent inequality in the United States is slowing down economic growth and risks fracturing the democratic stability upon which our economic success depends.*”¹¹ Admittedly, the political and ideological dimension, mystifying towards American workers, is present and aims to avoid reproducing the “anti-democratic” excesses that accompanied Trump's defeat in the 2020 elections. But above all, this “pro-middle class” language aims to make the productive apparatus of American capital, and especially the living labor force, the proletarians, more efficient and productive. The function of “pro-middle class” social measures is to make the latter both economically more efficient and ideologically more willing.

“*This is about strengthening the public systems that connect our roads, our bridges, our ports, universal access to high-speed Internet, affordable high-speed Internet, a modernized power grid, a transportation system and power system that work together toward a zero-carbon future, new schools and childcare facilities that allow – that are the elements that allow people and parents to work.*”¹² (emphasis added) The aim here is clear, putting more people to work, and to win the support of as many workers as possible, which the renewal of trade unionism is sure to encourage.

This left-wing discourse thus responds to the rupture announced by Jake Sullivan, among others, and... Trump himself, in “his” way. And the outcome of the

⁹. Jake Sullivan, *America Needs a New Economic Philosophy*, Foreign Policy, février 2020, (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/07/america-needs-a-new-economic-philosophy-foreign-policy-experts-can-help/>)

¹⁰. Laurence Nardon, *Les Bidenomics : contours et critiques de la nouvelle politique économique américaine*, Notes de l'Ifri, Potomac Paper #48.

¹¹. Brian Deese on Biden's vision for a twenty-first-century American industrial strategy, Online Event at Atlantic Council, June 23, 2021.

¹². *idem*.

UAW strike illustrates the class purpose of the break-away economic policy being pursued by Biden's Democratic administration.

The End of Neoliberalism

“As in the past, the United States needs to move beyond the prevailing economic ideology of the past few decades (sometimes imperfectly termed neoliberalism) and re-think how the economy operates, the goals it should serve, and how it should be re-structured to serve those goals—and this is a geopolitical imperative as well as an economic one.”¹³

The *Bidenomics*, as Biden himself calls them, are multi-faceted. As soon as he came to power, he began implementing state plans corresponding to what the same Jake Sullivan had called for back in 2020: *“the investments in infrastructure, technology, innovation, and education that will determine the United States’ long-term competitiveness vis-à-vis China.”¹⁴* The purpose of the state's return to the service of the middle classes is to re-establish an efficient labor force adaptive to the needs of American capital in the face of the challenges it faces, particularly in the face of China's rise to economic, political and above all imperialist and military power.

The *American Rescue Plan Act*, passed in March 2021, as soon as Biden took office, succeeded the CARES Act passed under Trump to “help families” following the covid pandemic and containment. *“In total, a staggering \$5.2 trillion was distributed to American households during Covid-19.”¹⁵* The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, November 2021, \$1200 billion, is intended *“to renovate all traffic-related infrastructure (...) the drinking water distribution network, the electrical grid (...) and the installation of high-speed internet throughout the country.”* The *CHIPS and Science Act*, passed in August 2022, aims to revive research programs and relocate high-tech production to the United States. This program in particular focuses on the production of microprocessors, semiconductors, CHIPS, with the obvious aim of securing control over them in relation to China, which is lagging behind in this area – let us remember here that Taiwan is the main current producer. And finally, the *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)*, whose official aim is to ensure America's “ecological transition” through subsidies and other tax breaks. One of its priorities is to develop the transition to all-electric vehicles by creating electric battery factories. The very plan that UAW union has just given its approval and participation for. There is another reason

for its name: inflation is set to fall as a result of higher taxes on the highest-income companies and a drug price cap imposed on pharmaceutical companies. As a result, spending on Medicare – the American social security system – will fall, and many patients with chronic illnesses will be able to take care of themselves – good for them for sure – and... become productive again.

“Finally, both the IRA and the CHIPS Act are part of a certain Bidenomic economic nationalism, fully assumed by its designers. In April 2023, Jake Sullivan gave a speech at the Brookings Institution detailing the international aspect of the new US economic policy. (...) He confirmed that the principle of free trade was being challenged at the highest level, in contradiction with WTO rules. For example, the IRA contains strong protectionist measures.”¹⁶

According to the canons of neoliberalism and monetarist orthodoxy, the United States' abysmal indebtedness and chronic budget deficit would, in theory, make it impossible to finance such spending. But this is no longer the time for budgetary and financial balances. *“Policy makers should recognize that underinvestment is a bigger threat to national security than the US national debt.”¹⁷* In fact, unlike the other powers, particularly the Western powers, only the United States is in a position to ignore its deficit and indebtedness. As the dollar remains the international reserve currency, the US deficit and indebtedness are largely covered by the rest of the world, which is forced to use the dollar for the majority of international trade, and whose capital is attracted by US treasury bonds¹⁸. It is precisely this dollar tourniquet on all other powers that China, and others around it, starting with Russia, are trying to escape by attempting to impose their exchanges without using the American currency. In short, and to put it simply, *Bidenomics* will be largely financed by the rest of the world.

Bidenomics or the New New Deal

“This is the first time since the New Deal that such large federal investments have been launched to renovate the country's infrastructure.”¹⁹

Here we have what has historically been called a *policy of great public works*. This is where the break lies. This policy is reminiscent of Roosevelt's *New Deal* and Nazi Germany's policies of the 1930s, both of which – among others, including the *Popular Fronts* – prepared for war by developing “war economies” and rearmament. The *New Deal* prepared the United States economically, ide-

¹³. Jake Sullivan, *op.cit.*, emphasis added.

¹⁴. *idem.*

¹⁵. Laurence Nardon, *op.cit.*

¹⁶. *idem.*

¹⁷. Jake Sullivan, *op.cit.*

¹⁸. Even though this “attraction” is reducing lately for reasons we cannot develop here..

¹⁹. Laurence Nardon, *op.cit.*

ologically and politically for World War II. It is particularly important to recall how *Rooseveltian* policies definitively concluded the historic process of integrating the American unions, AFL and CIO, into the state apparatus for the purposes of World War 2. It is always easy and tempting, but also dangerous, to understand the events of the present as a simple repetition of the past, and to turn them into fixed schemas. Yet there are striking similarities between the *New Deal* of yesterday and the *Bidenomics* of today. Here too, it would be a mistake to see only economic considerations. The American bourgeoisie is quite clear on the fact that the purpose of *Bidenomics* is to maintain America's imperialist superpower and contain its rivals, primarily China. We should remember that this policy of *containment* was already the one that the United States developed towards Japan in the 1930s, until the latter tried to escape the progressive suffocation by war and the attack on Pearl Harbor. To a lesser extent, this is also the policy pursued by the United States towards Russia, bringing NATO to its borders and forcing it to loosen the noose by invading Ukraine. In fact, American economic policy must serve the interests of American imperialism. Is this not precisely what happens in wartime, as the first two world imperialist wars proved? And this is the historic function of state capitalism: to prepare and ensure the centralization and control of the productive apparatus, and social and national cohesion, for and during the war. And for this, unions are indispensable.

*"In such a world, economics, at least as much as anything else, will determine the United States' success or failure in geopolitics. (...) History is again knocking. The growing competition with China and shifts in the international political and economic order should provoke similar instinct within the contemporary foreign-policy establishment. Today's national security experts need to move beyond the prevailing neoliberal economic philosophy of the past 40 years."*²⁰

Preparing for Generalized Imperialist War

As we said, the break came at the end of Obama's term

and with the election of Trump. It was then that the entire American bourgeoisie, Republican and Democrat alike, realized that China was increasingly establishing itself as the main commercial and imperialist rival and with an increasingly threatening military force. Far from being the expression of a loss of political control of the American state apparatus – as many, including Communist minorities, understood – the election of a disruptive figure like Trump indicated the extent of the break to be made.

"With Trump, the masks come off'. His language is rough, vulgar, rude, insulting, far from the usual subtle diplomatic language. It is a language of war; of trade war; of imperialist war, and of class war. 'Does this sound like a remake of the 1920s and 1930s? It does – 100 years later.' (The Guardian, 17/1/2017). In hardly a few weeks of presidency, the "unthinkable and unpredictable" Trump has become an active factor of acceleration of the historical situation and basic contradictions of capitalism which have provoked his very election. With Trump's election, the American ruling class engages itself in a march towards generalized war." (Revolution or War #7, The Proletarians Must Respond to Trump and to All Capitalist States, February 2017)



Roosevelt signs the Tennessee Valley Authority Act in 1933.

"It was created as part of the New Deal (...) to generate electricity and ensure the navigability of the river in order to attract industry. (...) Numerous hydroelectric dams were built on the Tennessee River in the 1930s and 1940s, as the war effort increased demand for energy." (Quotation and photo French-wikipedia)

The American bourgeoisie apparently found no better way to ensure the historic break than with the, shall we say, *disturbed* personality of Trump. Once this had been achieved, at least ideologically, and given the state of the Republican Party, only the Democratic Party – historically the "war party" in the USA – could implement a coherent overall policy. Only it could adopt a policy of direct state intervention through the adoption of various plans for a policy of great public works. Only it is capable of adopting a "left-wing" language aimed at the proletariat – sorry, the *middle classes*. Only, it can mobilize the unions without discrediting them too much in the eyes of the workers. Only the Democratic Party, and certainly not Trump and today's Republican Party, is in a position to address and mobilize "minorities" of all kinds.

"Prior economic transformations in the United States have not brought everyone along. By doing it different this time, we will enhance our economic competitiveness. We know that

²⁰. Jake Sullivan, *op.cit.*

by prioritizing racial and gender equity we can reduce the yawning gaps in wealth and opportunity and unleash stronger growth. *We know that by investing in all of America, particularly in those regions that have suffered from decades of deindustrialization, we can avoid further geographic entrenchment and polarization and unlock more of our innovative capability. And by ensuring labor standards for all and incorporating worker voice into the process, American industry will be more resilient for the long term.*²¹

Today, with the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022, followed by war in the Middle East, the economic policies announced and implemented by the *Bidenomics* take on their full historical significance: it is time to prepare for confrontation and contain the military rise of China and its modern-day allies, Russia, Iran, North Korea... Whether it be the *Infrastructure Act*, the *CHIPS Act* and, above all, the *Inflation Act*, all work together to prepare American society for a frontal imperialist and military confrontation with the only rival capable – today – of constituting a pole and, ultimately, a rival imperialist bloc.

In this sense, *Bidenomics* is a direct attack on the proletariat of America, which seeks both to subject it to the intensification of exploitation for the needs, no longer merely economic, of American capital's defense, but now and above all for its imperialist and military needs. *“Past assumptions led, among other things, to domestic dislocation and to weaknesses and blind spots in the United States’ approach to China. It’s time to discard them. The foreign-policy community should actively reach for a new economic model. America’s national security depends on it.”*²²

The first significant battle in the U.S. bourgeoisie's offensive against its proletariat was the UAW-organized strike in the auto industry. Far from representing a workers' advance, this strike on the contrary reinforced the ideological and political stranglehold of unionism on the working class, while seeking to subject it to the imperatives of the technological transition essential for the defence of national capital and preparation for war.²³ There will be other class battles, and nothing is yet inevitable. But it is important to recognize this defeat and its real historical significance. If only to warn the international proletariat and revolutionary and communist minorities.

We've seen that the *Bidenomics* are simply continuing and amplifying the path opened up by the Trump administration. A possible return of the latter, or even of a Republican, to power in the 2024 elections will not call into question the historic turn taken by the American bourgeoisie. *“The outcome of the forthcoming presidential elections is unlikely to change the course of what has become a resolutely post-liberal economic policy in the United States. The European Union and the rest of the world must continue*

*to adapt to this new situation.”*²⁴

Just as in the 1930s, Roosevelt's *New Deal*, with the Popular Front policies in Western Europe, set the tone for the policies to be pursued by all bourgeoisies in the “democratic” countries, in preparation for war against the “fascist” countries. Today's *Bidenomics*, with their pro-middle-class “left” policies, point the way for the bourgeoisies of the old historical centers of capitalism, mainly in Western Europe. The only difference is that they do not have the monetary weapon and tool of the dollar – the euro has never been able to really compete with the dollar to date – to increase their budget deficits and indebtedness without risk; and that imposing on the proletariat the sacrifices that the development of the war economy will undoubtedly be even more difficult than in the United States.

As for the rivals – China, Russia, etc. – national capital has historically really developed on the basis of the war economy under cover of “building socialism”. In a certain sense, they are already ready for war, as Russia's ability to sustain its war in Ukraine seems to prove. Nevertheless, on both sides of the imperialist polarization, the historical key remains in the hands of the proletariat. Faced with attacks that the bourgeoisie can only redouble, will it be able to respond to the height of events and the historical dilemma? That's what is at stake. To do so, it must not lose too many battles, like the one it has just lost with the UAW's “historic victory”.

RL, November 30th 2023

²¹. Brian Deese, *op.cit.*, emphasis added.

²². Jake Sullivan, *op.cit.*

²³. And in a way, it's the bourgeois response to the massive proletarian mobilizations of 2022-2023 in Britain and France.

²⁴. Laurence Nardon, *op.cit.*

The Union Obstacle in the United States: an ICC Article We Support

Many will be surprised. Below, we publish a recent article from the ICC, which we support for its **political** criticism of the intervention of the “Bordiguist” group *Il Partito Comunista Internazionale* (www.international-communist-party.org). This group has recently expanded into the United States, where it publishes *The Communist Party*. The – obviously relative – echo that this group has in the United States may come as a surprise. All the more so as the “orthodoxy” of its bordigism means that the political positions it defends remain fixed at the... Second Congress of the Communist International. In particular, this group continues to defend the union as the unitary organs of the working class. It calls for the re-conquest of the unions, their leadership and “red syndicalism”. And it is no doubt this position that explains why it is so well received by the new, inexperienced forces emerging in the country. The fact that the North American proletariat’s experience of the mass strike dynamics remains particularly remote – the 1930s – and limited – essentially to the demonstrations by the unemployed of that time – means that the union question remains a much more assertive obstacle than in Europe or the rest of the world. If only because any kind of workers’ struggle is inconceivable for the vast majority of workers and militants in America without unions. By comparison, and even if memories of them are fading, the wildcat strikes of the 1960s-1970s in Western Europe, particularly the mass strikes in France in 1968 and Italy in 1969, or the mass strike in Poland in 1980, are part of the proletarian tradition. Roosevelt and the New Deal of the 1930s sanctioned the total and definitive integration of American trade unions into the capitalist state, in preparation for the 2nd imperialist world war and to ensure the control and discipline of the proletariat before, during and after the war. Recognition of “union rights” in the workplace was accompanied by the adoption of repressive, anti-worker legislation. Any meaningful strike seeking a modicum of efficiency and success is prohibited and repressed, and if necessary officially banned by government decree, as was the case during the 2022 mobilization of American railway workers.

There are several reasons for our publication of the ICC article criticizing the Partito’s position and intervention. The first is that we had planned an article criticizing this group’s intervention^(a) in workers’ struggles, particularly that of UPS in the United States. When we read the ICC article, and realized that we shared its essence, it became unnecessary – and wasteful of our energies – to write our own statement instead of reproducing and supporting the ICC statement. Secondly, as anyone accustomed to reading the ICC in the 2000s would know, the tone and political content of this article differ considerably from the sectarian and stupid polemics with which this organization usually graces the proletarian camp as a whole, especially lately. Supporting this statement can only encourage the less sectarian forces that may still exist, or even emerge, within it to continue along this path. Finally, the political content of various arguments should be emphasized and supported. This is not only because they echo the approach and argumentation on various points that we develop in our own political platform and in many of our public statements. But above all, because they tend to break with the councilist approach and argumentation that the ICC of the 2000s systematized and to which its platform opens the door.

No doubt this explains why this article, written by an English speaking member, has not yet been translated into French or Spanish. So we translated it ourselves. To help readers and militants focus on points of interest for debate and intervention in workers’ struggles, we have included our comments of support or criticism in the body of the ICC article. They are placed in brackets and underlined in bold.

November 17, 2023

Note ^(a) : See *The Communist Party* #53, https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/TheCPart/PDF/TCP_053.pdf

An opportunist intervention towards workers’ struggles in the USA

Since the summer of 2022 the intervention of revolutionaries in the struggle of the working class has become a more concrete prospect because, after three to four decades of a deep retreat of the combativity and the consciousness in the class, the proletariat has finally raised its head again. This resurgence of the struggles, which started with the “Summer of Discontent” in the UK, was followed by strikes, demonstrations and workers’ protests in various other countries, including the USA²⁵.

The International Communist Party, which publishes *Il Partito Comunista*, one of the organisations of the Communist Left, has written about its intervention in some of the workers’ struggles in the past year in the US, among which was a strike of 600 municipal workers at the water treatment plant in Portland Oregon that started on Friday 3 February 2023. This strike was greeted with expressions of solidarity from other municipal workers, some of whom also joined the picket lines. During this strike *Il Partito* published one article and distributed three leaflets in which it denounced capitalism as a dictatorial system of exploitation and drew the lesson that: “It is only through the uniting of arms above sectors and borders that the working class can truly struggle to end its exploitative condition under capital-

²⁵. We have removed the notes in the ICC article, including the one at this point in the text, which referred to texts in this organization. We have retained the notes indicating the source of the quotations made by the article. Our own notes are also in bold brackets as our comments.

ism”²⁶.

In the present conditions of an international and historically significant resurgence of the struggles after decades of disorientation and fragmentation, to engage in the struggle is in itself already a victory. That’s why it is certainly important to signal that, as *Il Partito* did, in response to intimidation, criminalisation and threats by the bourgeoisie, the municipal workers in Portland were able to develop their unity and solidarity.

But revolutionaries cannot stop there. In the intervention with the press, leaflets or otherwise they have to put forward concrete perspectives such as calling for workers to extend the struggle beyond their own sector, by sending delegations to other workplaces and offices. As one of our recent articles underlines, already today workers should “*fight together, acting in a unified way and avoiding getting bogged down in local struggles, within one’s own company or sector.*”

[This point is right. If this were to correspond to future interventions by the ICC, then it would represent a break with those that have prevailed for over twenty years now. These consist of making the *recovery of class identity* the precondition for any significant development of workers’ struggles: “*recovering (...) class identity [is] the basis of all class solidarity, and it will be the basis if, in the future, struggles are to rise to a higher level through their extension and unification.*”²⁷]

But to do so, to strengthen the struggle, the main question revolutionaries must state clearly to the workers is who is on the side of the workers and who is against them. And on this question, the ICP diffuses a mystifying fog.

[If the second sentence is right, the first is less so. In the reality of the class struggle and revolutionary intervention, this proposal to enlighten the masses on the nature of the unions and left forces, as the *main question*, is tantamount to making it the precondition for *strengthening the struggle*. This contradicts the previous proposal, which we welcomed: to put forward orientations and slogans, as precise and concrete as possible, with a view to the development, extension and generalization of all struggles. It’s not by denouncing the unions per se that these orientations can be con-

²⁶. https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/TheC-Part/TCP_051.htm

²⁷. [We could not find this article in the English pages of the ICC website. It is translated by us. But we could quote many similar articles and leaflet of the ICC with this “orientation” and kind of slogans. It was quoted by *Révolution internationale* #345, *Face à l’aggravation des attaques capitalistes, la classe ouvrière reprend le chemin de la lutte* (https://fr.internationalism.org/ri345/greve_Grande_Bretagne.htm). For a broader critique of the ICC’s position on this question, we refer our readers in particular to our statement on the ICC’s polemic on the PCI-Le Prolétaire’s intervention in the fall-winter 2019 mass mobilization in France in *RW* #19: <http://www.igcl.org/About-the-ICC-s-Polemic-against.>]

cretized and put into practice by the workers. On the contrary, it is the struggle and the positions taken for or against their realization that will push proletarians to take up the political struggle against the various maneuvers and operations of union sabotage, and thus to reject unions and unionism as ideology and practice. And it is in this concrete – i.e., political – field of class confrontation that the Communist Party, and today’s Communist groups and political leadership, are essential.]

Opportunism on the trade union question ...

For the Communist Left, trade unionism as such, and thus not only the union leadership but also the rank and file structures of the unions, have become a weapon of the bourgeoisie against the working class. Trade unionism, which is by definition an ideology that keeps the struggle within the confines of the economic laws of capitalism, has become anachronistic in the century of wars and revolutions, as the revolutionaries of the First World War and the revolutionary wave that began in 1917 clearly demonstrated. The new conditions of the present era require that the struggles go beyond the particularity of the workplace, the region and the nation and take on a massive and political character. While unions are no longer of any use for workers’ struggles, they have been taken over by the bourgeoisie and used to counter the tendency towards the extension and self-organisation of struggles. In such a period, defending the trade unionist method of struggle as an authentic means of promoting the combativity of the working class is nothing less than a concession to bourgeois ideology, a form of opportunism.

[By the way, let us note the seriousness and the “tone” of the polemic, which allow us to tackle and confront theoretical-political issues, and thus enlighten readers and militants on the opposition of fundamental political positions.

We must stress the importance of this point and, above all, of the article’s argument. We support it, and encourage those within the ICC who share it to develop it further, and to take up the internal political battle it is bound to raise. Indeed, in arguing that trade unions “*has become anachronistic in the century of wars and revolutions*”, the article touches on the fundamental historical reason, the period of *revolution or war*, the factor of generalized imperialist warfare necessitating the universal development of state capitalism, which has since determined “*the new conditions of the present era*” for the class struggle. We refer to our platform on this point. In so doing, the article goes beyond the councilist limits of the ICC platform, which explains the death of the trade unions and proletarian mass organizations for the revolutionary class – and their integration into the bourgeois state – by the simple economist explanation:

*“capitalism entered its decadent phase [and] it was no longer able to accord reforms and improvements in living conditions to the working class...”*²⁸]

Faced with the problem of the forms of organisation needed for the defence of the living conditions of the working class, whether it calls them class unions, networks or coordinations, *Il Partito* defends an opportunist position that it justifies as follows: it acknowledges that, *“since the end of the nineteenth century, the progressive submission of the trade unions to bourgeois ideology, to the nation and to the capitalist states”*²⁹ has been a real tendency. But it does not explain how it is possible that all trade unions were integrated in the bourgeois state in the first decades of the 20th century. For *Il Partito* this seems to be pure coincidence, since it does not argue that the objective conditions have fundamentally changed since then. In contrast, it claims that the economic attacks on the workers *“will lead to the rebirth of new trade unions freed from bourgeois conditioning”* and *“directed by the communist party”*. These unions will even be *“a powerful and indispensable instrument for the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois power”*³⁰.

[Totally secondary comment on the first part of this paragraph: a debate could be held on the definitive and integral integration of the trade unions as organs of the capitalist state as the final result of the process and of the class political struggle. The process began with the 1st World War, for its needs. But when did it finally end? The 1920s? 1930s, with the New Deal-Front Populaire and fascist policies in the run-up to WW2? Or when the unions were reconstituted in 1945? Even if secondary, this question refers back to the historical experiences of the left fractions of the Communist International and to the historical claim - or thread - of today's communist groups. Roughly speaking, and to put it clearly: German-Dutch left or left of Italy, or both at once and in "synthesis"?)

In other words: after the betrayal of the old unions, new working class unions will emerge and, in good Bordighist tradition, it is assumed that, directed by a proper revolutionary party, they will fulfil a revolutionary role. But here it is necessary to wake *Il Partito* out of its dream, for the conditions of the working class struggle have completely changed since the beginning of the 20th century. This means that the struggle can no longer *“be prepared in advance on the organisational level [for] the proletarian struggle tends to go beyond the strictly economic category and becomes a social struggle, directly confronting the state, politicising itself and demanding the mass participation of the class. (...) The success of a strike no longer depends on financial funds collected by the workers,*

but fundamentally on their ability to extend the struggle”.³¹

[We fully agree with this quotation of a 1980 text. In particular, with the insistence on “directly confronting the state”, even if we wouldn't use the phrase “politicising itself”. Since its formation, the IGCL puts forward this approach and position, which it has included in its own platform.]

And because of this new content, trade unions no longer meet the needs of the proletarian struggle, and even being directed by a revolutionary party would not change this fact. **[Minor remark: this is a curious and even contradictory argument in itself: how could an organ of the bourgeois state be run by a revolutionary, i.e. proletarian, party? It is rather this argument that should have been put forward...]** The attempt of *Il Partito* to defend the existence of permanent organs of struggle, during open expressions of struggle as well as in periods of absence of any struggle, will inevitably lead to failure. A rebirth of unions as real working class organisations is only possible in the imagination of *Il Partito*, for whom the role of the party in the struggle is not only decisive, but even seems able to summon the supernatural power to adapt the unions to the real needs of the workers' struggle.

... leads workers onto the wrong track

The first leaflet that was distributed at a demonstration on Saturday 28 January was called *“Portland municipal workers: Fighting for freedom to strike”*, a “freedom” attacked by the proclamation of the state of emergency by the municipality.

With the demand for the “freedom to strike” this leaflet immediately put the workers on the wrong track. In the 19th century, when the unions were still unitary organisations of the working class whose role was to improve working and living conditions inside capitalism, such a demand was undoubtedly valid. But today, when the unions have become part of the capitalist state, workers have nothing to gain from supporting a campaign to defend the right to strike. For such a struggle is in reality a fight for the rights of the union to control the workers' struggles. The working class doesn't need to fight for the legalisation of its own strikes, because in the conditions of totalitarian state capitalism any strike likely to create a real balance of power against the bourgeoisie is by definition illegal. The purpose of this campaign for the freedom to strike is mainly to guarantee that the struggles remain confined within the narrow legal limits of bourgeois politics and trade union control. When the bourgeoisie grants the right to strike its purpose is only to reduce the workers' struggle to ineffectual protest in order to put pressure on one of the “negotiating partners”.

²⁸. [Platform of the ICC, point 7 on the unions, see our criticism of the ICC platform in RW #18.]

²⁹. Questions from the USA on the SI Cobas and the Trade Unions

³⁰. *idem*.

³¹. *The proletarian struggle under decadence, International Review* no.23

[Exactly. We particularly developed this point in the editorial of the last issue of this journal.³²]

After the strike of the municipal workers in Portland the comrades of *Il Partito*, in the spring of this year, “promoted, together with other trade union militants, a coordination they have called the Class Struggle Action Network (CSAN), aimed at uniting workers’ struggles”.³³ This CSAN intervened for instance in the nurses’ strike in late June. But what is actually the nature of the CSAN? What might be the perspective of such a Network, “aimed at uniting workers’ struggles”?

This CSAN has not emerged in reaction to a particular need of the workers to take the struggle into their own hands, to send massive delegations to other workers, to organise general assemblies open to all workers or to draw lessons in order to prepare new struggles. No, nothing of that kind; the Network has been created completely outside the concrete dynamic of the struggle by the comrades of *Il Partito* “inspired by the same principles and methods on which the *Coordinamento Lavoratorie Lavoratrici Autoconvocati* was formed in Italy”³⁴ in the mid-1980s. And on the website of this Network³⁵ one can read, not by accident, an article by *Il Partito*, which makes clear that the aim is to work “towards the Rebirth of the Working Class Trade Union”.

[There is no room, and it would be unfair to criticize this article for failing to elaborate on the ICC's historical position on struggle committees. While the criticism leveled here against the Partito's initiative is partly valid, it leaves other parts of the question in the dark, which would require further explanation. For example, can a communist organization initiate struggle committees?]

As we argued above, trade unions are today instruments of the bourgeois state and any rebirth as working class organisations is impossible. Thus, *Il Partito's* policy can only lock combative workers into a totally vain and discouraging struggle. In this context CSAN will suffer the same fate as any artificially created or-

³². [“the “right to strike” boils down to the right to strike, provided that the strike is impotent and ineffective. The extension and development of mass strike is de facto illegal and a subject to repression. (...) Faced with this situation, the top priority is not to remain isolated, but to spread any strike or struggle as quickly as possible. The mass strike, as Rosa Luxemburg recognized and described it, and as Lenin and the Bolshevik Party brilliantly led from February to October 1917, is more necessary than ever, both to impose demands and develop the struggle, and to paralyze all forms of repression.” (RW #25, *Hollywood Screenwriters on Strike vs Oppenheimer and Barbie : Proletarian Struggle or March to Generalized War*, <http://www.igcl.org/Hollywood-Screenwriters-on-Strike>)]

³³. In Italian, A Portland, in Oregon: Una Rete per la Lotta di Classe (<https://www.international-communist-party.org/Partito/Parti422.htm#PortlandRete>)

³⁴. idem.

³⁵. <https://class-struggle-action.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Final-Zine-Towards-the-Rebirth-of-the-Working-Class-Trade-Union-Booklet-Superimposed.pdf>

gan: either to remain an appendix of *Il Partito*³⁶ or to become a radical expression of bourgeois trade unionism. But most likely it will disappear after *Il Partito* has tried to keep it artificially alive. Then it can bury this still-born child in silence, without the need to draw further lessons from this experience.

In the strike of the municipal workers “comrades participated in the picket lines, helping the workers to strengthen them”.³⁷ The report of the intervention in the nurses’ strike only speaks of the intervention of the CSAN organising “participants for picket-line solidarity”. This gives the impression that there was no intervention of *Il Partito*, distinct and separate from the Network. Thus the comrades of *Il Partito* participated on an individual basis in the picket lines in February as well as in June. But why? Because workers cannot take on this task? Or were the comrades participating as delegates from other workplaces? The answer to these questions is not present in the articles of *Il Partito*. Fundamentally, behind *Il Partito's* intervention, we must point out a great ambiguity about the role of the revolutionary vanguard of the class.

The responsibility of revolutionaries

In the first place, the task of the political organisation of the class is not to help the class to strengthen the picket line, to collect money in order to financially support a strike, or to fulfill other practical tasks for the striking workers. The workers are quite capable of doing these things on their own, without anyone taking their place. A communist organisation has another task, which is not technical, or material, but essentially political. The working class struggle needs to be strengthened by the organised political intervention of the revolutionary organisation.

[Exactly. It is difficult to know the immediate-physical reality of the Partito's intervention in these struggles in the United States. Its website features various leaflets, including one addressed to UPS workers³⁸, and the editorial article in its newspaper also appears to be a leaflet. We can conclude from this that both these leaflets were circulated and that the Partito intervened as such, at least during the UPS strike. Was the same true in the Portland strike? In any case, the ICC's criticism of “helping workers on the picket line” is fair in itself. This is not the specific function of communist organizations. If it is important for them to mobilize themselves, or their local members and the ones in the workplaces, to take part in all gatherings of proletari-

³⁶. The first “Class Unionist” newsletter of the CSAN of October already makes report of the “CSAN Organizing Collective September monthly meeting [which] itself shall operate on a model of democratic centralism”.

³⁷. ICP intervention in the Portland City Workers’ Strike

³⁸. [https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/TheC-Part/TCP_054.htm#UPS]

ans in struggle, including picket lines, it is above all to put forward the orientations and slogans needed to extend and generalize the fight against their sabotage by the unions. Because they are the only ones who can do that.]

In line with this orientation, that of being an active political factor in the development of the consciousness and autonomous action of the working class, communist organisations must put forward an analysis of the conditions of the class struggle, lucidly and with a clear method, while being able to denounce and fight against these enemies of the working class – the trade unions. *Il Partito*, which irresponsibly justifies the possibility of rehabilitating trade unionism or fighting through the unions, despite decades of the limitation and sabotage of struggles by these organs, can in this way only weaken the workers' class combat. Not only does this kind of opportunism sow confusion, it can only lead workers into a dead-end.

ICC, Dennis, Nov. 15 2023

[To be complete with *Il Partito's* intervention, it is nevertheless worth noting a general orientation that we share under the conditions prevailing in the U.S. today: "Of course, we understand that the conditions in America are such that it is standard practice for a strike to be conditional on a vote. Under the current system, voting takes place online where the voter remains anonymous and isolated. Organize with your coworkers, demand that an open discussion take place on the work floor, and demand that voting take place in assemblies of workers." (https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/TheCPart/TCP_054.htm#UPS)

[Given the particularly repressive and syndicalist conditions imposed on the proletariat in North America, the fight to impose assembly votes is undoubtedly essential if workers are to be able to decide for themselves, collectively, whether or not to strike. The *Partito* is right to put forward this orientation, provided it does not fall into any "fetishism of self-organization". It therefore needs to be advanced concretely according to time and place.]

« Nevertheless, revolutionaries must not remain indifferent to the maneuvers and actions of the unions in the expectation of hypothetical proletarian movements spontaneously rid of their presence. When the latter are called upon, in fact forced, by their anti-proletarian function in the working class environment to occupy the terrain of proletarian struggles, to take initiatives and to call on the proletarians to participate in them, assemblies, strikes, demonstrations, in order to keep a minimum of credibility in workers' eyes or even to prevent and anticipate any real dynamic of extension and unity in the struggle, the party and its members must not desert the imposed terrain, the assemblies, strikes, demonstrations, etc. simply because it would be called by the unions. On the contrary, they must seize these occasions of workers' regroupment to fight against the orientations, the sabotage, and the syndicalist impasses by advancing slogans and demands favoring the development of the class struggle and by seeking to regroup around them the most combative proletarians. The party must be at the forefront of the daily political struggle that the proletariat as a whole must take up in its struggles against the bourgeois, particularly its trade unionist and left forces. »

IGCL Platform

Proletarian Camp

Ten Years of the IGCL: What Balance?

“ In the imperialist phase of capitalism, and from a general point of view, there are only two ways out: one capitalist: war; and the other proletarian: revolution. Only workers' insurrection can prevent the outbreak of war. This fundamental consideration, if it is not to remain a theatrical statement of political ornamentation, must become the criterion for the establishment of all our political activity, **however minimal it may be.**”

(Bilan #2, 1933, *Une victoire de la contre-révolution mondiale : les États Unis reconnaissent l'Union soviétique*, [A Victory of the World Counter-Revolution, the USA Recognized the Soviet Union], emphasis in the original.)

The IGCL was formed in November 2013. Ten years ago. It was formed after several years of contact and debate between the *Communistes internationalistes de Montréal-Klasbatalo* (CIM) and the Internal Fraction of the ICC (IFICC), then the Internal Fraction of the Communist Left (IFCL), which succeeded the former in 2010. The members of the first group had been “ousted” from the then Canadian group of the ICT, the GIO, the same group that was dissolved by the latter in 2017. Following a process of political debate and clarification that began in 2007³⁹, the two nuclei decided to dissolve and form the IGCL.

The new group shared the *class frontiers* that the ICT and the ICC have in common. In order to provide itself with a minimum framework of principles, it adopted the ICC's “basic positions” document of the 1970s, i.e. without the reference to the theory of Decomposition. The particular history of the two nuclei⁴⁰ would not, in itself, have been sufficient to found and justify the formation of the IGCL. The defense of specific political po-

³⁹. « For over 6 months, we've engaged in a regroupment process aimed at forming an international and internationalist group based on the positions and experience of the international Communist Left. And in trying to ensure the solidity and political clarity of this new organization, this process cannot but be a long one, especially since the two nuclei have different histories and experiences. The beginning of this process was announced in the Presentation of the International Communist Bulletin #10 (February 2013) after the October 2012 conference of the Fraction. The reader can take a look at the summaries of the various issues as well as at the K-IC's blog (<http://klasbatalo.blogspot.fr/>) to get an idea of the development of the relationship, of the discussions & debates, of our past disagreements, of our convergences, and common collaborations & interventions since 2006 (see the IFICC's Bulletin #41, 2007 : http://www.fractioncommuniste.org/index_eng.php?SEC=b41). » (Éditorial of International Communist Bulletin #11, October 2013, http://fractioncommuniste.org/eng/bci11/bci11_1.php). Interested comrades can refer to the summaries of the 49 IFICC bulletins from number 41 onwards and to the *International Communist Bulletin* of the IFCL: http://fractioncommuniste.org/index_eng.php?SEC=b00.

⁴⁰. The members of both nuclei had been excluded from their “original” organizations, and faced open hostility from the ICC and the GIO, forbidding any further communist involvement within them.

sitions gave it a space and a *raison d'être* authorizing its particular existence, as a *fraction* of the proletarian camp as a whole. The Theses on the Historical Situation⁴¹ adopted at the founding conference put forward two orientations specific to our group in 2013:

- the reaffirmation of the reality and perspective of the historical alternative of *revolution or war* – to the point of making it the name of our journal – and thus to recognize the perspective of generalized imperialist war as a central element and determining factor of the historical situation and of the class struggle ;

- and the fight for the party within the proletarian camp, making the *Internationalist Communist Tendency* the axis of this struggle, as the sole pole of reference and international grouping.

To achieve and materialize these two orientations, the IGCL “*decided to develop a printed international journal, 'Revolution or War' – to be published initially on a semi-annual basis – (...) so as to conduct the group's general work on a regular basis and to develop a political presence internationally and locally, when and where it's needed*”⁴² and a website. In addition to these two clearly defined orientations adopted in the Resolution of Foundation, there was a third which we were aware of, but whose exact terms and political content we were unable to define at the time: “*the platform will require greater development and argumentation in the future*”⁴³ and to which we return below.

Pushes towards Generalized Imperialist War and the Alternative of *Revolution or War*

The IGCL was therefore founded on the conviction that the historical alternative of *revolution or war* was at the

⁴¹. Theses on the Historical Situation, July 2013, *Revolution or War* #1, <http://www.igcl.org/Theses-on-the-Historical-Situation>

⁴². Resolution on the Foundation of the IGCL, RW #1, <http://www.igcl.org/Resolution-on-the-foundation-of>

⁴³. *Idem*.

core of the historical situation and, above all, that it was the main factor determining the course of the events, in particular of the imperialist and class antagonisms.

“2013: as the deadline approaches, the historical alternative increasingly materializes for billions of human beings and the social classes involved. As the working class also bears the burden of preparation for generalized war, its resistance against the effects of the economic crisis simultaneously tends to oppose the logic of war. And thus the course of class struggle is in massive confrontation with this. These clashes will be as decisive for the exploited class, and at the same time the revolutionary class, because depending on whether it will come out of it defeated or not, the dynamics of the class struggle of the new relation of forces will turn towards one or the other term of the historical alternative. The working class holds the keys to this historical dilemma.”⁴⁴

The theses have enabled to *“provide the new group with a general framework in dealing with the historical situation, [allowing] it to develop a united, homogeneous political intervention for the class struggle.”⁴⁵*

Since then, the war in Ukraine has verified our thesis on the reality and topicality of the perspective of generalized imperialist war – of a *Third World War* – as one of the two terms of the historical alternative⁴⁶. It also dispelled any remaining doubts or hesitations within the proletarian camp regarding this perspective.⁴⁷ The convergence, and even relative homogeneity *in the making*, on this question with the Internationalist Communist Tendency – and others – led to a political and militant rapprochement between our two organizations, manifested in the call for the creation of NWBCW committees and the polarization of the dynamic communist forces around this organization. In so doing, the confirmation of the validity of our general orientation with regard to the historical situation, and the growing acuity of the historical alternative, also confirmed the validity of our second orientation, that towards the proletarian camp and the ICT, and of the struggle for the communist party of tomorrow.⁴⁸

The political position that only the international proletariat can slow down and then oppose the dynamic towards war by refusing the sacrifices, starting with the economic sacrifices, that capital is forced to impose on it in the name of crisis and now war, or its preparation, is a principle of Marxism – of the revolutionary theory

of the proletariat. The proletariat is not fighting against the *idea* of war, but against the misery and increased sacrifices it adds to those already imposed by capital's economic crisis. This position is accompanied by the one equally of principle that only the destruction of capital and capitalist states by the international proletariat through its class dictatorship will also put a definitive end to war and misery. It is on this basis and from these principles that we have tried to assume a “political vanguard” intervention within the proletarian struggles that have developed over the last ten years. Whether we can intervene physically and directly – unfortunately all too rarely – or in a general and “international” way, does not change the imperative need for us to take a position and intervene in a “centralized” way in all the international struggles that arise, and to define orientations and slogans of action according to the times and places of the struggles of our class. We refer our readers to the various positions, leaflets and balances of struggles – particularly during the mass mobilizations in France in 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2023 – and to the debates on revolutionary intervention that we have tried to stimulate, in particular with the ICT in RW #24 about the struggles in Great Britain and France, or our critique of the ICC's councilist interventions in RW #19.

The Mistake of our Theses on the future of Chinese Imperialism

As we can see, the general framework of our theses and most of them have been confirmed by the historical development right up to the present day. However, not all our theses have been verified. One in particular has been disproved. *“Capitalist ideology serves us up with real imperialist fracture lines extending towards Asia and China in opposition to the United States and Western countries. This is not the case. Since the Second World War, China – even when considered a ‘third world country’ – has always been a regional imperialist power. And in its participation in the Second World War, and in all the imperialist conflicts that followed, it never ventured beyond Asia. The same goes for a power like Russia. Today, we can affirm that neither one nor the other can be candidates for leadership of a block – their opposition against American intervention in Iraq in 2003, for example, forced their alignment with Europe and showed their lack of autonomous, alternative political position throughout this major conflict in the first decade of the 21st century.”*

Our rejection of any possibility of China becoming a direct rival to the United States was based both on historical experience and on the polarization dynamic initiated by the 2003 Iraq war. It has to be said that we never went back over the possible errors of method that may have led to this assertion, which now appears to have been belied by the facts. No doubt we were still

⁴⁴. Theses on the Historical Situation, *op.cit.*

⁴⁵. Resolution on the Foundation of the IGCL, *op.cit.*

⁴⁶. Largely confirmed since then by the explosion of war in the Middle East – at the time of writing, limited to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

⁴⁷. Alone among the forces claiming to be of the Communist Left, the ICC continues to deny any danger of “Third World War” and therefore to ignore the dynamics and forces that are leading to it.

⁴⁸. See our article in this issue: *Our Policy towards the Proletarian Camp and the ICT.*

trapped in an underestimation of China's economic development. We were probably still trapped in a vision that excludes any possibility of the emergence of a new economic and imperialist power in the historical period of *capitalist decadence*. This is a point, at least of method if not of theoretical understanding, that we have not been able to return to.⁴⁹ A comrade in our ranks had, however, **indirectly** questioned this aspect of our theses following the Russian intervention in Syria. We reported on this in our issue no. 5, *On the Development of the Imperialist Rivalries since the Russian Military Intervention in Syria*⁵⁰. Based on the ICT positions of the time, the comrade emphasized the dynamic of Russia's imperialist opposition to the Western powers, first and foremost the US, expressed by its military intervention in Syria in support of Assad. In so doing, he challenged our vision of the polarizing dynamic between America and Europe that had tended to assert itself during the Iraq war in 2003. Unfortunately, the comrade we had asked to write a contribution on this point for the journal resigned shortly afterwards. As a result, the debate that could have “forced” us to reflect further, did not take place.

Nevertheless, this “error of prediction” was not ignored, nor denied, in face of the course of imperialist events. The determined opening of a US anti-Chinese “containment” policy, like the one the same power imposed on Japan in the 1930s, quickly convinced us that the polarization between the United States and China was becoming central and would articulate the imperialist positions of the ones and the others. The election of Trump, then the policies pursued during the covid pandemic, and finally the war in Ukraine – and today in the Middle East – have come to confirm that the dynamic of imperialist polarization has found – at least for the present period, let's not be definitive again – the axis around which it must revolve. Far from invalidating the dynamic of generalized war that our theses put forward, the emergence of China as a potential “imperialist block leader” against American power has confirmed it by making it even more topical, more rapid, more direct, more concrete. Unlike Germany or any other European country, has not China become the only one that can quickly claim to rival the USA and Nato militarily – especially if allied with Russia? Or does the China-US opposition not more “naturally” carry the ideological themes for such polarization and eventual generalized war than an opposition between the Western democracies themselves? The defense of “democracy” against “dictatorships” finds more credence in a polarization between the USA and China-Russia than between Europe and the USA, in order to win the sup-

port of the proletariat in the historic centers of capitalism for war. The war in Ukraine, and now the one between Israel and the Palestinians, have verified the polarization dynamic around an “anti-Western axis”, of which China and Russia are the most active factors. Far from calling into question the *historical alternative of revolution or war*, the imperialist assertion of China as America's main rival has further confirmed its validity and accelerated its process.

Our Intervention in the Struggle between the Classes

To defend these orientations effectively, concretely, in the historical struggle between the classes, i.e. both in the immediate proletarian struggles and in the proletarian camp, twenty-five issues of our journal have been regularly published in English and French and, in reduced form, in Spanish and, more recently, Italian. Our “biannual” journal has been published three times a year since its issue 12. We dare to think that it has become a reference – among others, of course – at the international level for the entire proletarian camp and for the revolutionary energies that are emerging. We have organized our website around it and its frequency. In other words, we have rejected the temptation to turn the site into a “blog” that would publish our articles and positions as immediate events unfolded, without any political hierarchy or priority. Indeed, while the political vanguards of the proletariat have the duty to “follow” the current events and respond to the challenges and obstacles facing the proletariat as a whole, they must also guard against being dragged into the terrains and deadlines – the tempo – that the bourgeoisie, particularly its media, are trying to impose. In this sense, it is essential to ensure that every communist publication has its own rhythm and frequency. Our press – limited though it may be – must dictate both the centralized internal and external activities at international level for its own realization, and the priorities of intervention, propaganda and statements. This is a political and “organizational” choice that enables us to guard against the danger of immediatism as best we can – although there is no absolute guarantee of course. And to intervene as best we can – even if we can always make political mistakes of analysis – and “accelerate” when an international or even territorial event occurs, requiring communists to take an immediate stand by means of a leaflet or “communiqué”. In the space of a decade, we have issued over sixty of these, mainly during workers' struggles and strikes, or during imperialist wars⁵¹.

⁴⁹. Any reader and/or comrade, or indeed any organization, wishing to contribute a critical viewpoint is welcome to do so.

⁵⁰. <http://www.igcl.org/On-the-Development-of-the>

⁵¹. See the rubric « Previous statements and leaflets” on our website igcl.org

A Political Platform for the 2020s

Finally, the final adoption of a “developed” platform in 2021 was a response to the last orientation we had set ourselves: to go beyond the false debates, often of a sectarian nature, which set the main currents of the Communist Left against each other on the one hand⁵²; and on the other, to pose and push forward the questions, issues and stakes facing the international proletariat, which are expressed and materialized in the positions and differences of the existing communist groups⁵³. The updating of the ICT platform in 2020 provided us with the opportunity for an internal debate on it and a statement in this review. At the same time, we rediscussed the ICC's 1976 platform on the basis of the weaknesses and shortcomings that the IGCL had pointed out at the time of its constitution, in particular the passage and formulas on the party that marked an undeniable “hesitation” of councilist nature. The discussion of the two platforms⁵⁴ enabled us to note the latter's “economist-councilist” approach, making it a programmatic tool belonging to the past, to the post-68 years, and responding to the weight that Stalinism represented at the time. While we reject the ICC's platform as completely and definitively unsuited to the historical period, we recognize ourselves in the programmatic framework of the ICT's platform. In our view, its shortcomings are not programmatic, but rather formal. Its presentation seems to us less coherent and systematic than that of ICC, and the exposition of the class frontiers suffers as a result. But its theoretical approach is marked by the programmatic documents of the Communist Left of Italy. In fact, it appears to have been the result of a compromise between *il Partito-Battaglia comunista* and the CWO when the IBRP was set up in 1983. Regrettably, the grouping was not

⁵². For example, the criticism always voiced by the ICC, and in part by the Bordiguist current, of the mistake made in forming the *Partito comunista internazionalista* in 1945, even though all the constituted groups of the Communist Left at the time, including the ICC's ancestor the *Gauche communiste de France*, were in favor of forming the party.

⁵³. In particular, the question of class consciousness and the party as organ of political leadership of the proletariat, the dynamic of the class struggle these days, intervention of revolutionaries, relationship between the political and economic dimensions of workers' struggles, etc.

⁵⁴. See RoW #17 and 18 : Statement on the ICT 2020 Platform and Statement on The International Communist Current's Platform.

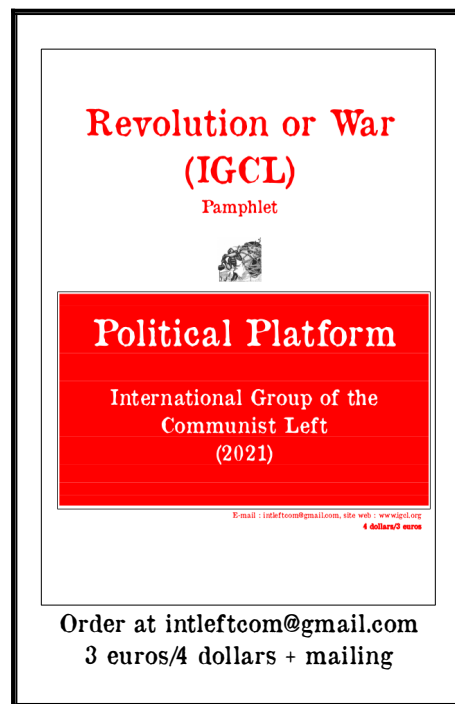
based on the former's platform of 1952 which was articulated and based its coherence on the question of the party.

It is precisely this approach that has animated and dictated the elaboration of our own platform. In this sense, we consider that, although it contradicts and even opposes that of the ICC, it is situated within the same programmatic framework as that of the ICT. It simply “goes further” and is more precise in terms of principles, theory and policy. We believe that our platform goes beyond those conceived in the 1970s and 1980s. By putting the question of the party back at its center, as the factor of coherence of all its *class positions*, it responds to the dramatic historical stakes of the 2020s and the massive confrontation between classes that is beginning.

On reading the foregoing, the reader will understand that we are drawing a positive balance from ten years of the IGCL's activities. But it also brings with it a new set of responsibilities. Will we be up to the task? Paradoxically, the verification of the general political orientations that were our own in 2013, and the political attraction that our group can and does exert on new revolutionary militant forces, and sometimes even on older ones, present us with new challenges. The same applies to the other most dynamic communist forces, mainly the ICT. The very nature of communist activity is that every “success”, however relative, raises new questions and new responsibilities. However, the verification of previous orientations and the – always more or less relative – correctness of political positions in no way guarantee the verification of today's orientations or the correctness of future political positions.

Intervening in proletarian struggles by assuming their political leadership and fighting as effectively as possible within the proletarian camp for the world communist party of tomorrow are two responsibilities that the proletariat itself has entrusted to the political minorities it has produced. Given the worsening situation, and the march towards war that capital is trying to impose, they are more topical than ever. And for the very future of humanity.

IGCL, November 2023



Our Policy towards the Proletarian Camp and the Internationalist Communist Tendency

“The aims of our interventions are to participate in the struggle for the consolidation of communist forces in order to constitute the world party of the proletariat. Today, the fight for the communist party requires that we push both for consolidation and polarization around the Internationalist Communist Tendency and as well to fight against the manifestations of opportunism and sectarianism within the camp, especially against apolitical and ‘anti-party’ tendencies.”

(Resolution on the Foundation of the International Group of the Communist Left, 2013, RW #1)

Since the formation of our group in 2013, many people have been asking questions about our policy towards the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT). Why do we call for a *regroupment* around it without joining it? This question often raises interrogations about our approach: either it is understood as being rooted in a democratist concern, or as a renunciation of the numerical development of our group; or it would simply be a tactical maneuver to get into the good graces of the ICT. Another potential factor for confusion and misunderstanding is the recent attacks by the ICC on the ICT and ourselves. Among these, it has taken the liberty of publishing short e-mails that it had exchanged with the ICT in 2019-2020 concerning the Spanish group *Nuevo Curso*. These e-mails were published **without the consent of the ICT**, which says a lot about the practices and aims of the current ICC. Especially since the ICT correspondent stated that “*this is my personal opinion but will argue for it in our deliberations.*”⁵⁵ These e-mails contained some psychological considerations about our group and its intentions. Insofar as they are now public, we can refer to excerpts that may be of interest here for our readers little acquainted with the vicissitudes of the proletarian camp: “*The IGCL ceased its “flattery” of the ICT some time ago. They have substituted it for blackmail about the ICT having to live up ‘to its responsibilities.’*”⁵⁶

Before coming back to our political orientation, it is worth reassuring all those who might be worried about a possible deterioration in our relationship of **confidence** with the ICT with this publication – was that not the aim of the ICC? First of all, we were aware of these e-mails, which were also sent to us at the time. We then wrote a letter to the ICT, and **together** we clarified the need to distinguish between political differences and subjective considerations of supposed intentions. We responded publicly, but indirectly, in *Revolution or War* #16 of September 2020, in an article entitled *Against*

⁵⁵. In this exchange of mails between the ICC and the ICT (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/17403/gaizka-should-adventurer-be-publicly-exposed>), any attentive reader (and one who would like to follow all this very closely, as a historian of the vagaries of the Communist Left) will note how the ICC is in fact exerting constant and progressive pressure for the ICT to denounce the IGCL...

⁵⁶. (*idem.*)

*Gossip on Social Networks and for Public Political Debates*⁵⁷:

“These practices and the use of psychological and personalized criteria in the political relations between communist groups offer a privileged terrain for opportunist and liquidationist forces such as the ICC of Decomposition and Parasitism. The fact that the ICC is rushing into the breach opened by considerations of a psychological, non-political nature, the very terrain of its theory of parasitism, should come as no surprise to anyone: it had announced this at its last international congress and we had warned the whole camp (see RW #12). It is necessary to recognize its ‘quality’: the liquidator ICC is consequent. It steadfastly pursues its objective of destroying the proletarian camp. This is why it is necessary to call on the pro-party forces of the camp, organizations, groups and individual sympathizers or militants, to reject this terrain of networks and approaches of a personal and psychological nature in order to judge the positions and real political intentions of other communist groups.

Let us be read and judged on what we write. **No**, we do not reproduce the texts of *Nuevo Curso*⁵⁸ or the ICT, or others, as an opportunistic tactic, to coax them, flatter them or gain their sympathy. **No**, we do not continue to defend the fact that the ICT is still the only material force in a situation where it can exercise its historical and international role as a pole of regroupment in order to blackmail it (incredible, isn’t it?).

Yes, we will continue to debate and try to confront the different positions publicly as we are trying to do in our own ranks. With or without the other communist forces. This is a necessity for us. But so is it for the other communist forces, whatever they may think, and even if it must disturb the daily routine and the comfort of absolute certainties. Debates and political confrontations are the blood that must irrigate the communist political bodies. Otherwise there is a risk of thrombosis. Ultimately, it is a matter of life and death.”

Having clarified this point, which should reassure readers, supporters, militants, and most certainly our

⁵⁷. RW #16, <http://www.igcl.org/Against-Gossip-on-Social-Networks>

⁵⁸. To judge our policy towards the *Nuevo Curso* group, we invite the reader to also refer to our critique of its position and that of Munis, which it claims, on the Spanish war: *Spain 1936: Can There be a Proletarian Revolution without Insurrection and Destruction of the Bourgeois State?* (RW #15, <http://www.igcl.org/Spain-1936-Can-There-be-a>) and our latest position on the recent developments in this group, *Erratic Flight into Activism of The Group Emancipation (Nuevo Curso)*, in RW #24 (<http://www.igcl.org/Erratic-Flight-into-Activism-of>)

friends of the ICC itself, about the state of our relations with the ICT, let us return to our regroupment policy.

How the Proletarian Parties of the Past were Formed

The history of the workers' movement teaches us that the proletarian political parties are not formed from a single current or organization that gradually grows to become the party. It teaches us that they are formed by a grouping of several currents and groups around a particular pole that plays the role of an active, central and decisive factor in this political process and struggle. This is not a process that claims to be “democratic”, “federative” or “egalitarian” between political currents. It is a process and a struggle that expresses both the heterogeneity of class consciousness within the proletariat itself, of which the various proletarian currents, circles, groups, organizations and political parties are expressions; and the dynamic of homogenization of this consciousness as the proletariat unifies in the struggle against capital, of which the communist currents, groups and political parties are the main factors and vectors. The 1st International was formed around the pole represented by Marx and Engels; the second around German social democracy; the third around the Bolshevik party.

The same applies to national parties. If we take the example of the formation of communist parties, the Russian Communist Party was officially founded in 1918 around the Bolshevik fraction, and integrated other currents, in particular Trotsky's. The German party was formed around the Spartacus League of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and included other currents such as the Bremen Left and others. The Italian party was formed around the Absentionist Fraction, led by Bordiga, and included various currents such as Gramsci's Ordinvists. We see this phenomenon repeated in virtually all the processes leading up to the formation of Communist parties joining the International between 1919 and 1921. As we can see in the German case, but also in the French and other cases, it is not always the most left-wing, clearest current that constitutes the axis around which the party is formed. Without making this an absolute schema, it is highly probable that the constitution of tomorrow's world party of the proletariat will follow the same path. There is nothing *material* in the current situation of revolutionary forces to indicate that it could be otherwise, contrary to the classic position of “Bordigism”, which believes that it is already the party of tomorrow and refuses to consider any participation of other currents in its formation.

The Post-1968 Proletarian Camp

In the 1970s, the “Bordigist” International Communist Party and the International Communist Current repre-

sented the two main poles of international regroupment. This was due as much to their programmatic and political positions as to their growing international presence, their militant dynamism and their claim to the fractions of the Communist Left that had emerged from the Communist International. The fact that these two organizations grew in number of militants and territorial sections on several continents was a manifestation of the political and historical attraction that these two currents exerted on emerging revolutionary forces. The regularity and seriousness of the ICP publication *Programme communiste* served as a reference and formation tool for many militants, including those from other currents. The same was true, perhaps to a lesser degree, of the ICC's *International Review*. The Partito Comunista Internazionale publishing *Battaglia Comunista* and *Prometeo* was then a virtually unknown organization outside Italy. It was not until the Communist Left's conferences in the late 1970s, and its regrouping with the Communist Workers Organization to form the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP) in 1983, that the “Damenist” current – from its best-known member, Onorato Damen – became a genuine international grouping.

The explosion of the “Bordigist” ICP during its internal crisis in 1982 into multiple small groups, each claiming to be the party, and the inadequacy of its basic positions – support for national liberation struggles, reconquest of the trade unions and, above all, the party as a substitute for the class (to put it simply here) – for the period, means that this current is still today incapable, probably for ever, of playing any kind of international reference and regrouping role.⁵⁹ Up until the late 1980s/early 1990s, the ICC was still the main pole of the proletarian camp, integrating dozens of militants and setting up new sections in Mexico and Switzerland. However, with the adoption of the theory of decomposition and parasitism and the internal crises of 1995 and 2001, the organization embarked on a sectarian dynamic aimed, in the name of the fight against parasitism, at destroying the other components of the proletarian camp, especially those seen as “rivals”. To the point of adopting a resolution at its 16th congress in 2005 calling for the destruction of the IBRP!⁶⁰

⁵⁹. The relative development of *Il Partito Comunista – The Communist Party* [the name of its publication], the so-called “Florence” ICP, in the United States in recent years does not seem to us to profoundly alter this observation and trend. We cannot develop here

⁶⁰. “The organization has to be the clearest and the most homogeneous on our aim of our policy towards the IBRP : what matters is to **discredit** the IBRP (...) **that it disappears** at the political level. If this policy ends up with its physical disappearance, **it is all the better** (...). We must utilize the difficulties of the IBRP forum for **discrediting it**. (...) If we say that the Proletarian Political Milieu has a destructive attitude towards the new elements, our attitude has to be different, **we must render it harmless**.” This document was never made public, and with good reason! It was given to the International Fraction of the Communist Left (ex-IFICC), which

Situation of the Proletarian Camp in 2013

When the IGCL was formed, we were forced to note that only the IBRP, which later became the ICT, was still capable of effectively fulfilling this role of international reference and grouping. How can we define that a current or an organization can be, **and must assume to be**, a pole? We cannot reduce the criteria to international reach and influence alone, or even to the number of members. Of course, international militant capacity is undoubtedly an element – not always linked to membership numbers, but that is another matter. Numbers are, above all, the result of other factors that enable this militant and numerical development; in particular, the clarity and coherence of programmatic and political positions as well as general orientations; and the link with past organizations, which favors political clarity and coherence and establishes the “political authority” of the group or organization.

The result for us in 2013 was that *“to date, only the ICT could, and still can, constitute this historical, political and organizational reference pole around which the rest of the camp, the party in the making, can and should meet. (...) However, this role, this place, is granted to it by history, both by the direct organic link – albeit now tenuous – with the Communist Party of Italy since its foundation and by the state of the other currents of the Communist Left. For our part, we have neither this organic link, nor the programmatic corpus, nor thus the political legitimacy and authority, much less the material organization – of which the number of members is only one aspect – to be able to claim such a role. To claim it today would be a political mistake that could only further divide this camp, hinder its regrouping and unity in process, and disorient new generations and groups.”*⁶¹

It was on the basis of this approach and understanding of the proletarian camp and the political process leading to the formation of the party that, from 2013 onwards, we developed our orientation towards the proletarian camp. The fact that the ICT did not share our conception of the process and struggle for regroupment and party formation, and that it rejected our understanding of its particular role as a pole of regroupment, meant that it did not always assume the task that history has given it as we wished. That is why, on several occasions, we have highlighted, and even criticized, what appeared to us to be inadequacies, or even errors, on its part. We cannot get into the validity or otherwise of our criticisms at the time. Insofar as they were valid or not, they took nothing away from the historic place this organization occupied **at these moments**, whatever was the understanding of its mem-

bers at that time.⁶²

The War in Ukraine and the... Polarization of the Proletarian Camp

The war in Ukraine, capitalism's first significant step towards generalized imperialist war, has not only provoked and accelerated the dynamics of imperialist polarization, but also... the dynamics of polarization underway within the proletarian camp, between its *pro-party* forces who all recognize the reality and actuality of the historical alternative of *international proletarian revolution or generalized imperialist war*, and its *anti-party* forces who tend to ignore it, or even reject that there are any pushes towards war and dynamics of imperialist bipolarization. The ICC is the most caricatural expression of this. At this pivotal moment, the ICT has risen to its task as a pole of regroupment, clearly recognizing that the dynamic towards generalized war is becoming a central factor in the situation, and focusing its orientations on this question; for example, by calling for the constitution of NWBCW committees at the international level.

It is still too early to assess the impact of the ICT's appeal to form these committees, especially as it covers the whole of the coming period. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the ICT's political authority and international organizational existence explains in great part the international response to its appeal. It could not have been on the same scale, and would not have met with the same success, if a group like ours, or others, had done it alone. This has reinforced our political conviction of the centrality of the ICT within the proletarian camp today.

Divergence with the ICT on the Conception of Regrouping

But what do we mean by *regroupment*? For us, back in 2013 and still today, *“speaking of the process of regroupment around the historical and international pole, that the ICT represents, does not therefore mean that we can reduce this process to a pure and simple adhesion to the ICT. If that's the case, fine! But it is not always possible, nor even desirable in itself, particularly when a certain number of non-clarified, or at least ‘unidentified’, political divergences remain. A process of regroupment from the communist point of view, presents diverse dimensions of which the adhesion and organizational regroupment are but one expression amongst others; and quite often they are merely the end, the last stage, the result, of other dimensions. Amongst these, exists the fundamental one, especially today, of developing debates at the international level around the positions of this pole and aiming to reinforce and support it as much as possible at the po-*

published it in its *International Communist Bulletin* #6, https://fractioncommuniste.org/eng/bci06/bci06_3.php.

⁶¹. *Revolution or War* #12, 2019, *The Battle for the Reconfiguration of the Proletarian Camp, the "Party in the Making", is Launched* (<http://www.igcl.org/This-issue-of-the-journal-is-a>)

⁶². We refer the interested reader to the editorial of our journal #12 (see previous note) for a brief presentation of our main critique ismat the time.

litical and organizational levels as well as in its international intervention towards the working class and within the revolutionary milieu, or camp.”⁶³

Here, it is worth mentioning the two main divergences we have with the ICT, which may seem incompatible with, or at least make difficult, our formal regroupment in its ranks **today**⁶⁴: our methods of analysis of the class struggle and the intervention of revolutionaries that ensues from it, even if they tend to converge because of the historical situation⁶⁵; and our conception of the process of forming communist groups, ultimately the party.

For the ICT, “the formation of the new International, i.e. the Party, as it would be understood today, coincides with ‘the development of the real political forces which emerge, regroup and mature **within the theoretical and political struggle in the different countries**.’”⁶⁶ Consequently, it believes that “the Bureau [the ICT] doesn’t intend to artificially accelerate the time when the international unity of the revolutionary forces will take place beyond the “natural” period of the political growth of the communist organisations in different countries.”⁶⁷ In so doing, the reality of the ICT's functioning and intervention at national and local levels leaves a certain “freedom” or “autonomy” to the “affiliated” territorial groups, thus respecting the *natural rhythms of political growth in the various countries*, to use its formula. The risk is that each affiliated group does what it wants in its own corner, without the rest of the organization knowing about it and controlling it: “this whole affair and our discussion with various comrades in Canada **has revealed** that the GIO for most of its history (it affiliated to our tendency in 2001) has never been a coordinated organisation but a group of individuals each with their own take on our

platform.”⁶⁸ (emphasis added)

For our part, we consider that the next International, the world party of the proletariat, should immediately constitute itself as a centralized international party, without any particular phase of national or local development – this can and should only be achieved on the basis of the centralized and international dimension. Consequently, the IGCL already functions and acts as a centralized international group, including in national and local situations. In so doing, all parts of the IGCL – however modest its reality today – consider themselves to be expressions of the international proletariat, not of local or national experiences. *Their natural rhythm must be* – this is a political struggle against localism and immediatism – *determined by the program and the international organization, itself a historical expression of the international proletariat*. They function and intervene as a delegation of the whole and under its organizational and political direction. Its militants must see themselves first and foremost as militants with international responsibilities. They are not part of a local or national group, but of the IGCL as a whole. This effective centralization means that we are **already** compelled to adopt a genuine *party method* in our actions and internal functioning.

However, the arguments and vision of the ICT must be taken into account. We do not reject them out of hand. While its conception may open the door to confused positions, or even to concessions to leftism on certain occasions, it can also allow the processes of political clarification to be respected and to mature. On condition, however, that divergences or differences are accepted and confronted internally and publicly. As for our centralizing vision, if misunderstood or “dogmatically applied”, it can lead to a desire to impose political unity by decree, or even by discipline, without allowing questions to clarify and the maturing of positions to take place in the different parts of the organization. This can lead to the “creation” of a superficial or artificial political unity that will unravel, or even explode, at the slightest gust of history.

For those who are wondering, the conditions for a regroupment today would mean that the ICT could accept within its ranks militants who intervene on all international and national questions and debate – possibly criticize – this or that local or national intervention. In particular... the analysis of situations and interventions in workers' struggles. For the time being, we intend to see ourselves as a *sister organization* – a kind of *fraction* or *tendency*, since we share the same programmatic corpus and the same *class frontiers* – of the ICT which, while supporting common positions and developing its own,

⁶³. RW #1, Correspondence on the regroupment of revolutionaries (<http://www.igcl.org/Correspondence>)

⁶⁴. As we made clear in the previous article on *Ten Years of the IGCL*, the platform we have adopted is not in contradiction with that of the ICT – unlike that of the ICC. We believe that ours is more coherent and precise in the presentation and understanding of the *class frontiers*, and that it is better adapted and more responsive to the historical issues of the current 2020s period. As a result and according to us, the two platforms would not in themselves be an obstacle to a formal regroupment within the ICT, should the situation require it and conditions permit.

⁶⁵. See for instance in RW #24 the debate we opened with the ICT and *Bilan et perspective*, today Groupe révolutionnaire internationaliste, about the analysis of the struggles in France and Great Britain and the communists' concrete intervention (<http://www.igcl.org/France-and-Great-Britain-Workers>) and (<http://www.igcl.org/Unions-and-Social-Assistance>).

⁶⁶. Emphasis added. The vision is not always clear in its ranks, so much so that the French translation of this text argues that “the new International must not **remain** a Federation of parties for long either”, as if it had to pass through a *federative* stage. The other versions explicitly reject this vision: *Towards the New International*, a text that can be described as “programmatic” for the ICT (<https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2000-10-01/towards-the-new-international>)

⁶⁷. *Idem*.

⁶⁸. ICT Statement on the GIO Dissolution, 2016, (<https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2017-01-06/ict-statement-on-the-dissolution-of-the-gio-canada>)

does not hesitate to debate political differences, trying to make them as positive as possible for the ICT, ourselves and the whole camp.

Our Practical Orientation and the Divergence

Faced with the misunderstandings and disagreements the ICT was expressing about our policy on the one hand, and, on the other, faced with the deleterious and hostile relations that the ICT-affiliated group in Canada at the time was developing towards our group from the moment it was formed⁶⁹, we had specified our orientations towards it in a letter back in 2014:

*“Since we consider that the ICT remains the ‘only international pole of regroupment’, and since the IGCL carries on thinking it would be counter-productive (anti-regroupment to take back your expression) today to aspire to be another international pole even if it also intends to regroup around itself, we’ll do all we look necessary to gather around the ICT as a pole, or axis if you prefer, and to attempt to convince it to assume this task **despite itself** if so we can say. Consequences:*

- we will carry on supporting the ICT when it will develop correct statements and interventions (for instance by reproducing its articles, or leaflets, on our web site, even in our public diffusion, or still by supporting and helping it when it will develop interventions such as public meetings in France or Canada, indeed in any country where the IGCL will be able to develop itself and intervene);

- we will develop **more than before** (than the fractions⁷⁰) our fraternal criticisms – i.e. underlining too our fundamental point of agreement – on theoretical, political, and even “organizational” questions which we agree with as we have started to do in the second issue of the review with our introduction to the text on anarchism in response to the CWO article;

- finally, we’ll firmly and publicly criticize, in relation with our general orientations and priorities of intervention, the positions and the leftist kind of “adventures” that the ICT (or some of its parts) may develop sometimes, in particular the IWG... ” (letter of the IGCL to the ICT, October 14th 2014)

Readers who are accustomed to reading us, or who glance at the summaries of the journal's 25 issues, can only note the consistency of this effort and of our policy since our constitution. One may not agree with it. One may feel that it has been poorly applied on this or that occasion. But it cannot be said to have been haphazard or subject to maneuvering or immediatist rever-

⁶⁹. In addition to developing open hostility toward us, some members from the first GIO developed dubious practices and often confused and sometimes openly leftist positions.

⁷⁰. “The fractions”, i.e. the Internal Fraction of the ICC (IFICC) and the International Fraction of the Communist Left (IFCL), the latter having taken over from the former in 2010. Its website is still open, and all 60 issues of its *Communist Bulletin* are available to anyone who needs references: <http://fractioncommuniste.org/>. For the English pages, which are not complete: https://fractioncommuniste.org/index_eng.php.

sals – quite the contrary – even when immediate facts and events seemed to contradict us.

How did we Develop this Orientation?

We constantly reproduced the ICT statements with which we agreed – leaflets, statements, articles – to the point of choosing to support and endorse such or such a position, rather than publishing “our own” article or leaflet when we would have been defending basically the same position. And we have succeeded in establishing a relationship of confidence and mutual support, including concretely, particularly in Canada and France. With regard to the second orientation, we have on several occasions raised points for debate and clarification based on differences of analysis or otherwise. A number of debates setting out our respective positions have been held in public, on the question of the party, the intermediary groups, the intervention of revolutionaries, the transition period, the method of analyzing the situation and the course of the class struggle...⁷¹

Many think that these debates are pointless if they do not immediately conclude with an endorsement of one of the two theses. What a mistake. For example, let us take the debate on the method of analysis of the situation and the historical course, a concept and notion that the ICT rejects and criticizes as idealist. See *Revolution or War* #11 and 21-22 in particular. This debate refers not only to the method of analysis, but also to the question of the party and its responsibility as the political vanguard of the proletariat, and therefore also to its intervention in proletarian struggles. By giving us a better grasp of the ICT's critique and arguments, it enabled us to specify and even clarify our own method and a few specific points on the question – in particular, to take care not to fall into any form of idealism or dogmatism on this issue. It also made it clear that generalized imperialist war was not the simple sum of local imperialist wars, which some ICT texts tended not to distinguish. Since then, this question has been clarified by the war in Ukraine and the step towards generalized war that it expresses, to the point where the positions of our two organizations on the current historical situation, on the historical alternative that presents itself and on how it presents itself, are very close, if not identical.

Finally, and fortunately, we have had few opportunities in recent years to criticize positions that make concessions to leftism. Only the position and intervention of the newly-formed North American group – Klabatalo – during the demonstrations following the murder of G. Floyd particularly worried us, to the point of being the subject of a critical statement in *RG#18, What Future for the ICT's 1919 Journal in North America? Publication of the Communist Left or Trojan Horse of Leftism?*^(a) Since then,

⁷¹. In issues #7, 8, 9, 10, 11 17, 21, 22 and 24.

this journal has no longer presented such leftist mistakes, as we pointed out in RW #23 in our salute to *Bilan et perspectives*.^(b)

As we can see, there is nothing surprising here, nor is there anything we did not announce in advance in our orientation and its elaboration according to the moment and the situation. What is more, nothing has come to demonstrate the inanity of the former, nor the historical ineffectiveness of the latter. The situation opened up by the war in Ukraine, the march towards war which only the proletariat can oppose by destroying capital, has not rendered our conception and orientation obsolete. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Consequently, no one should be surprised by our policy towards the ICT or the proletarian camp as a whole – which we cannot go into here. There is no tactical maneuvering, *flattery*, *blackmail* or anything else in our policy towards the ICT and, more broadly, the proletarian camp. And let us warn once again: as long as the historical situation remains fundamentally determined by the current course and the conformation of the camp remains the same, we do not intend to change this orientation, and will continue to try to implement and develop it the best we can.

IGCL, October 2023

Note ^a et ^b : <http://www.igcl.org/Bilan-et-perspective-21-Renewal> and <http://www.igcl.org/What-Future-for-the-ICT-s-1919>

The Proletarian Camp as Privileged Place of the Struggle for the Party (IGCL Platform)

While the fight for the political party of the proletariat is at the center of its activities and interventions, the IGCL is not the party. It is only one component among others of the *proletarian camp* within which the forces called to form the party will define themselves, emerge and select themselves not on the basis of their numerical growth in itself, but on the basis of their programs, political positions and capacities of effective intervention in the proletarian struggles. The political forces and currents that belong *de facto* to this camp are those that still claim and have not betrayed in the past the principles of *proletarian internationalism* – “*the working class has no fatherland*” – and of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* – “*the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions*”. These currents advocate proletarian political independence from – and class opposition to – capital and its political forces; they reject any support to this or that bourgeois fraction, including the left, any anti-fascist *frontism* or other, any form of nationalism, any so-called socialist character to the Stalinist ex-USSR. They also recognize that the Russian Revolution of 1917 was, far more than the Paris Commune in 1871, the first real experience of the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat with universal value.

This proletarian political space is, in fact, the privileged place of political confrontation and clarification between the political forces of the class. This process is a prerequisite for the elaboration and adoption of the principles, positions, program and the platform of the party. Consisting of groups, circles and organizations with different political positions and traditions, the dynamics of this camp are defined mainly by the evolution of the balance of forces, the opposition and confrontation, between what Lenin defined as *pro-party* and *anti-party* forces. Along with the intervention in workers' struggles, the proletarian camp is the other privileged field of intervention and struggle that the IGCL develops in view of the regroupment of militant forces and the formation of the party.

Public Meeting of Bilan et Perspectives (ICT) in Paris

At the end of September, *Bilan et Perspectives*, the group in France that has since become the Groupe révolutionnaire internationaliste (GRI), affiliated to the Internationalist Communist Tendency, held its first public meeting on the theme *Against Imperialist War, the Future Belongs to International Class Struggle!* Around thirty comrades attended the meeting, including a strong ICC “delegation” of some fifteen members and sympathizers. We come back on this in the following.

The presentation on the international situation aimed at being complete. It was. In so doing, it was long and too *politically dispersed* in our opinion⁷². Nevertheless, the political position put forward was correct, and we supported it during the discussion. Our first intervention sought precisely to correct this dispersion, in order to focus the political discussion on what is essential today for the international proletariat and communist intervention: is there a dynamic, pushes, towards generalized imperialist war? Indeed, we share the ICT's view that the war in Ukraine is a first step for capital and the bourgeoisie towards generalized imperialist war, towards a Third World War, and that the urgent need is to develop proletarian struggles to halt and oppose this march towards holocaust.⁷³ The first speakers were more or less explicitly in line with this perspective, clearly taking up the alternative of revolution or war, which is already presenting itself dramatically and concretely today. Among them, comrades presenting themselves as sympathizers of the Communist Left clearly argued that “*crisis and war feed on each other*” and that “*the dynamic towards imperialist polarization is underway, even if it is not, and cannot be, linear.*” This situation can only spur the working class to respond, “speak out” and act. Especially as the war in Ukraine is set to last.

Some of the speakers, who were not “ICCists”, asked the ICT about the situation and its assessment of the NWBCW committees, some of which had been dissolved or had disappeared. The ICT told them that other committees were being maintained and intervening, and that it was not a question of waiting for immediate and widespread success to judge the political validity of its call to form them. “*It's a question of preparing ourselves and providing tools for the whole period ahead.*” One of them asked us and the ICT about the NWBCW initiative: was not it tantamount to excluding other initiatives like the one launched by the ICC? We replied that we would

⁷². One can refer to the *Bilan et Perspectives* report, which reproduces this presentation *in extenso* and provides additional details on the discussion and the various speakers. : <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-10-10/presentation-and-reports-from-the-public-meetings-in-paris-and-saint-nazaire>

⁷³. This dynamic has since been confirmed by the war in the Middle East, in Israel and Gaza.

have been ready to sign the ICC's internationalist appeal, even if it was “insufficient” since this organization rejects any possibility of generalized imperialist war and even denies any dynamics of imperialist polarization; and all the while knowing that the ICC's declaration had among its objectives, that of excluding the so-called parasites – and therefore the IGCL – from its initiative. But the call for the formation of NWBCW committees seemed to us, and still seems to us, to respond more concretely to the current situation.

It was at this point that the ICC began its action to sabotage the meeting⁷⁴. Far from defending its position on the absence of dynamics and the danger of generalized imperialist war⁷⁵, and thus allowing the two antagonistic positions on the historical situation to be debated, it engaged in one intervention after another to prevent this political confrontation on this question. After systematically and grossly misrepresenting the ICT's positions, particularly on trade unions, it ended by denouncing the B&P member and the member of our group (Olivier and Juan) whom he had excluded in 2002 as “*agents provocateurs, cops, gangsters, Nazis...*”, and so on.

We denounce this policy, which can only disorientate and disgust new and young participants, who are often inexperienced and new to the Communist Left. Instead of finding an internationalist camp united and debating its differences of analysis and position, they find themselves in a sect-like atmosphere amidst an avalanche of *ad hominem* denunciations and false criticisms that can only disgust them and turn them away from the Communist Left. But is not that the real aim of today's ICC?

RL, October 2023

⁷⁴. It repeated this policy of “invasion”, worthy of the worst Trotskyites, the Lambertists [Fourth International, ICR], a week later at the B&P public meeting in Saint-Nazaire. (see the last part of the ICT report already mentioned)

⁷⁵. Just as we are finishing this issue, the ICC has published in French a corrective – sorry, a “**complement**” – to the Resolution on the International Situation adopted last spring. It rejected any danger or dynamic of generalized imperialist war. The contortions used to reduce imperialist reality to the dogma of decomposition are pathetic. The only remaining question is: when will there be an open explosion of this organization's increasingly glaring contradictions? (December 25, 2023)

History of the Workers Movement

The Tactics of the Comintern from 1926 to 1940

We are continuing the publication of Vercesi's contribution *The Tactics of the Comintern*, written for the Internationalist Communist Party's *Prometeo* journal in 1946-1947.

The Chinese question, which culminated in the massacre of the proletariat perpetrated by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang in Shanghai in 1927, was a key element – at first a product, then an accelerating factor – in the degeneration of the Communist International (CI). “As in England, a highly developed country, with the Anglo-Russian Committee [cf. the first part of the contribution published in RW #25], so also in China the International showed itself to be the decisive instrument of the counterrevolution.” In addition to its historical interest in understanding this process of degeneration through to its conclusion, the text reaffirms the internationalist principles that the CI, won over by Stalinist opportunism, betrayed at the time. It also exposes and criticizes Trotsky's opportunist, albeit formally internationalist, position. Caught up in his adherence to the united-front policy launched by the International at its 3rd and 4th Congresses, he defended the Chinese CP's adherence to Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang. “Our current, on the other hand, departing from an analysis in line with Trotsky's, defended the fundamental thesis of non-adherence to the Kuomintang.”

In so doing, and this is the hallmark of Italy's Communist Left, the contribution reminds us that the Left – which became a fraction of Italy's CP in 1928 – was far from content with the general defense of principles per se, but articulated them to the real situation, i.e. to the class struggle, establishing orientations and slogans that could have made it possible to draw up lines of defense both for the international proletariat and for China's.

“In the situation that opened up after the “Canton Insurrection” a violent controversy was established between our fraction and Trotsky. (...) Our current, on the other hand, argued that if the non-revolutionary situation did not allow the fundamental slogan of dictatorship [of the proletariat] to be raised, (...) that this was not the reason why the party program should be revised, but that it should be reaffirmed in its entirety on the theoretical and propaganda level, while the retreat could only be carried out on the basis of the immediate demands of the masses and their corresponding class organizations.”

In our view, it is precisely this historical experience – the uncompromising defense of principles and their articulation into concrete orientations and even slogans, even in periods of proletarian retreat – that we need to recall and reappropriate today.

In addition, the contribution raises a whole series of theoretical, historical and political questions that should be revisited almost a century after the failure of the “Chinese revolution”. Among these, the reader will note the position that tends to reject “any prospect of raising China to the level of a great national and independent State”, despite recognizing, following Trotsky, “the direct domination of capitalist relations in China.” We can't go into this question here, as it refers on the one hand to the role played by Maoism, i.e., Stalinist state capitalism, in both the crushing of the Chinese proletariat and the development of national capital around the war economy until the 1970s. On the other hand, China's affirmation as a leading imperialist world power comes after the disappearance of the USSR and its imperialist bloc, and its integration into the WTO in 2001, encouraged by the Western powers. Here, it would be appropriate to return to capitalism's response, what the bourgeoisie has called “globalization”, to overcome the unprecedented historical impasse caused by the disappearance of the generalized war to which the West-East imperialist antagonism was leading. The Communist Left, in this case the Left of Italy, remained convinced of the validity of the cycle “crisis-war-reconstruction-new-crisis...” Has it been belied by the collapse of the USSR?

Let us humbly admit that, for our part, we do not have the militant and political strength at the moment to do such a job.⁷⁶ But that is not the purpose of our republication of Vercesi's contribution. Nor our priority. Readers will have understood.

The editorial team

⁷⁶. We have noted that there have been some initial attempts to return to this issue. In many cases, they have been made by political “forces” claiming to be more or less part of the Communist Left, and by comrades who have been members of Communist Left organizations – in particular the ICC. We do not share their current political approach, which, to put it simply, is far removed from the fight for the party. Among these, we feel that the contributions in the book *Capitalism's Endgame, Historical Materialism and Capitalism in Decline and Accumulation of Catastroph* are worth a look, if only for the work they have accomplished and the questions they may raise. : <https://files.libcom.org/files/2023-03/CapitalismEndgame-ebook.pdf>.

The Chinese Question (1926-27) (Prometeo #3, October 1946)

“If the English reactionary trade unions are willing to form with the revolutionary trade unions of our country [Russia], a coalition against the counter-revolutionary imperialists of their country, why would this bloc not be approved?” (Stalin at the joint session of the CC of the Russian Party and the Central Control Commission, July 1926). Trotsky rightly retorted, “if the reactionary trade unions were capable of fighting against their imperialists, they would not be reactionary.”

If Chiang-Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang were willing to fight for the revolution.... But the piles of proletarian corpses that concluded the epic struggle of the Chinese workers were to prove lugubriously that Chang-Kai-Shek and Kuomintang could be nothing more than the executioners of the proletariat and peasantry of that country.

In his book *The Third International after Lenin*, Trotsky rightly characterizes the general situation in China in the following terms: “Large and middle scale landed estates (such as obtain in China) are most closely interlinked with city capital, including foreign capital. (...) The extraordinarily rapid growth of home industry on the basis of the all-embracing role of mercantile and bank capital; the complete dependence of the most important agrarian districts on the market; the enormous and ever-growing role of foreign trade; the all-sided subordination of the Chinese village to the city – all these bespeak the unconditional predominance, the direct domination of capitalist relations in China.”⁷⁷

In a study that would be devoted to trotskism, the journal would explain the reasons that eventually lead Trotsky, despite his analysis that highlighted the determining relations of the entire Chinese economic order (including feudal and pre-feudal relations numerically far superior to capitalist ones) to absolutely inadequate tactical conclusions such as those of participation in the Kuomintang and throwing a series of democratic slogans which Trotsky defended against Stalin after the final defeat of the Chinese proletarian revolution, that is, after the failure of what the Comintern called “the Canton insurrection” (December 1927).

Our current, on the other hand, departing from an analysis in line with Trotsky’s, defended the fundamental thesis of non-adherence to the Kuomintang and, while it fought the Comintern’s tactic of the “revolutionary offensive”, it maintained in full its previous positions against “democratic slogans”, remaining firm on the thesis that the only slogan that should be raised on

the question of State power was that of the proletarian dictatorship.

Indeed, events were to confirm that neither a revolutionary situation presented itself in China after 1927, nor could a democratic era of bourgeois independence and anti-imperialist China open up after and despite the revolutionary defeat of 1926-27.

It was in 1911 that the Manchurian dynasty abdicated in favor of the Republic and it’s also in this era that the Kuomintang is founded. The policy of Sun-Yat-Sen, the founder of the Party, even though he proclaimed anti-imperialist claims, for the “independence of China”, was nevertheless forced to limit himself to verbal declarations that did not worry foreign imperialists. History thus condemned China as unable to rise to the function of a great nation-State, and Sun-Yat-Sen is so convinced of this that, after China sided with the Entente in the first world war, in 1918 he turned to the victors to help China’s economic development, and tried to lean on the closest and at the time least intrusive imperialism, Japan, to loosen the grip of British imperialism that held the most important positions.

With capitalist relations dominating the interior of the country in the historical framework of capitalism’s financial imperialism, which does not leave any opening for colonial and semi-colonial countries to rise up and become truly independent nation States, the Chinese events begin in 1925, develop in 1926, and end with the violent suffocation of the so-called “Canton insurrection”.

Can these events, which take above all the form of a military march that starts in the South and goes from victory to victory towards the North, until it conquers the whole country, be characterized as a “democratic-revolutionary, anti-imperialist war of the Chinese bourgeoisie”? Obviously, in the course of these tumultuous events there were attacks against foreign concessions, but, apart from the fact that each time these attacks were never due to decisions of the Kuomintang leadership, but were the result of local initiatives which, in fact, as events got worse, were even disavowed by the central leadership of the Kuomintang – the question is rather different, and answering it correctly is a matter of characterizing it as a whole for what it really turned out to be instead of characterizing it according to episodes which had no real decisive effects in the overall scheme of things.

At the end of 1927 the victory of the counter-revolution was decisive, and this victory was unfortunately not short-lived, because twenty years later we find our-

⁷⁷. Trotsky, *The International after Lenin*, Summary and Perspectives of the Chinese Revolution (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/index.htm>)

selves in the same situation where, despite the Japanese defeat, we do not see at all an affirmation in an autonomous State of the Chinese bourgeoisie, which, if it can dispute with France the rank of the IV or V among the five Greats, still cannot avoid the fact that China, after the defeat of the revolutionary movement of 1926-27, has been reduced to becoming an immense territory where all the foreign capitalisms fight for their share of the pie, but not on a front where the Chinese bourgeoisie stands against all of these capitalisms. Against Stalin and also against Trotski, the answer of history is absolutely unequivocal; it was not, in 1926-27, a matter of a revolutionary anti-imperialist war susceptible to evolve into a purely proletarian and communist movement, but of a gigantic uprising of hundreds of millions of exploited people who could only find their leadership in the proletarian vanguard, which, by establishing the proletarian dictatorship in China, would then be intertwined with the development of the world revolution.

The role of Chang-Kai-Shek and of the Kuomintang could not be the one played by the French bourgeoisie in 1793, but only the same role that Noske and company had played in the most developed countries. From the very beginning they represented the defense line against the gigantic revolt of the exploited Chinese people and the Kuomintang was the effective instrument of the cruel and victorious resistance of the Chinese and world counter-revolution.

As for the Chinese bourgeoisie, like the bourgeoisies of India and other colonial and semi-colonial countries, its function was not to strive for national autonomy, but to fit in with the organization of the dominant imperialist and foreign bourgeoisies. Chang-Kai-Shek had to show a terrible brutality against the Chinese proletarians as soon as the circumstances (the ebbing of revolutionary flow) allowed him to do so, at the same time that an angelic genuflection capacity towards the most powerful foreign imperialisms.

Moreover, at the 7th Enlarged Executive at the end of 1926, the Chinese delegate Tang-Ping-Sian stated in his report about Chang-Kai-Shek: *“He has a passive demeanor, in the full sense of the word, in the field of international politics. He is not willing to fight against British imperialism; as for the Japanese imperialists, under certain conditions, he is willing to establish a compromise with them.”*

And as Trotski suggestively points out, *“Chiang Kai-shek waged war against certain Chinese militarists, the agents of one of the imperialist powers. This is not at all the same as to wage a war against imperialism.”*⁷⁸

At the core of the struggle between the revolutionary masses and the counter-revolution, the war which the

generals of the South and the North will wage will find, fundamentally, no other resolution besides crushing the insurgent proletariat and, secondly, of striving for the unification of China dispersed in a thousand provinces under a central authority. Central authority, we repeat, without any prospect of raising China to the level of a great national and independent State.

The imperialisms, on the other hand, did not prefer this or that general, but, conscious of the revolutionary reality in China and of the danger it represents for their class domination in the world, they will let the counter-revolutionary intervention of the International develop in full. After the interruption caused by the events of the war, the interweaving of capitalist relations will be re-established, starting from the metropolis, annexing the Chinese bourgeoisie and extending its domination over the immensity of the Chinese lands.

* * *

From the programmatic point of view, the International had, as its fundamental document, the Theses of the Second Congress (September 1920). The last paragraph of the 6th Additional Thesis says: *“Foreign domination constantly obstructs the free development of productive forces; therefore the revolution’s first step must be the removal of this foreign domination. The struggle to overthrow foreign domination in the colonies does not therefore mean underwriting the national aims of the national bourgeoisie but much rather smoothing the path to liberation for the proletariat of the colonies.”*⁷⁹

As we can see, the perspective that permeates many documents of the foundation of the International, which is also contained in the same Manifesto (when Marx speaks of the bourgeoisie opening its own grave by extending its rule to all countries) this perspective has not been confirmed by events. In fact, faced with a movement of the magnitude of that of China in 1926-27, which will see hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants in armed struggle, a movement that has the unquestionable connotations of the untameable forces of history, if the alleged goal of liberation from foreign domination had been likely to determine the events we would have witnessed a struggle of these masses that, under the direction of the indigenous bourgeoisie, would have come to a decisive clash against foreign imperialism, or this same movement which, overriding the primitive bourgeois leadership, would have as-

⁷⁹. We could not find the English version of these “Additional Theses” to the Theses on the national and colonial question of the 2nd Congress of the IC on marxist.org (<https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch05.htm#v1-p177>). They can be found in the French pages (https://www.marxists.org/francais/inter_com/1920/ic2_19200700f.htm). We translate them ourselves from French.

⁷⁸. Trotski, *op.cit.*

sumed the force of a proletarian revolution intercalating with the world revolution.

Now not only did the collision against imperialisms not take place, but the historical function of the Chinese bourgeoisie turned out to be exclusively that of a powerful counter-revolutionary bastion to tame with the masses which had risen up with extreme violence, and this while foreign imperialisms could only rejoice at the excellent work done by their commissioners: the Kuomintang and all its tendencies, the right wing of Chang-Kai-Shek, the center of Dai-Thi-Tao, as well as the self-styled communist left directed by the delegates of the Communist International in China.

The Theses themselves do not limit themselves to formulating a perspective, but, after having formulated the guiding criterion for the analysis of historical situations, they determine guarantees which, needless to say, have been shamefully betrayed by the International.

As a guiding criterion, Point 2 of the cited Theses reads: *“the Communist Party should not place the main emphasis in the national question on abstract and formal principles, but in the first place on an exact evaluation of the historically given and above all economic milieu. Secondly it should emphasise the explicit separation of the interests of the oppressed classes, of the toilers, of the exploited, from the general concept of the national interest, which means the interests of the ruling class. Thirdly it must emphasise the equally clear division of the oppressed, dependent nations which do not enjoy equal rights from the oppressing, exploiting, privileged nations, as a counter to the bourgeois democratic lie which covers over the colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world’s total population, by a tiny minority of the richest and most advanced capitalist countries, that is characteristic of the epoch of finance capital and imperialism.”*⁸⁰

As for the guarantees, Thesis 5 [actually point e of the thesis 10. ndr] will say: *“A determined fight is necessary against the attempt to put a communist cloak around revolutionary liberation movements that are not really communist in the backward countries. The Communist International has the duty to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies only for the purpose of gathering the components of the future proletarian parties – communist in fact and not just in name in all the backward countries and training them to be conscious of their special tasks, the special tasks, that is to say, of fighting against the bourgeois-democratic tendencies within their own nation. The Communist International should accompany the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the backward countries for part of the way, should even make an alliance with it; it may not, however, fuse with it, but must unconditionally maintain the indepen-*

dent character of the proletarian movement, be it only in embryo.”

The application of these fundamental directives in the course of the Chinese events would certainly have determined a progressive clarification of some of the hypothetical elements contained in the Theses, which was moreover clearly foreseen in the first line of the 2nd thesis we have quoted, where it speaks of the necessity of basing analyses of the situation *“on an exact evaluation of the historically given and above all economic milieu.”* This notion could only lead to the recognition of the exclusively counter-revolutionary character of the Kuomintang and the lack of any historical possibility of it waging anti-imperialist struggle in function of the development of those economic forces (Thesis 6).

Our current, in violent opposition to the leadership of the International and to Trotsky’s tendency as well, maintained the thesis of non-adherence to the Kuomintang from the very beginning, qualifying this *“People’s Party”* for what it really was and for what it later cruelly revealed itself to be after the massacres of proletarians and peasants in 1927. It thus related to what Lenin said, in 1919, when he wrote: *“The strength of the proletariat in any capitalist country is infinitely greater than the proportion of the proletariat in the total population. This is due to the fact that the proletariat is in economic command of the central points and nerve centers of the entire capitalist system of economy, and also because the proletariat expresses economically and politically the real interests of the vast majority of the toilers under capitalism.”*⁸¹ And as for the capitalist nature of economic relations in China, remember what we have already said marking our agreement with the analysis made by Trotsky.

Let us now take a brief look at the tactical approach of the International. It can be summarized in the formula of the *“bloc of four classes”* (bourgeoisie, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie, proletariat), a formula which was expressly written in the resolutions of the International.

The review of the Communist International in its No. 5 of March 10, 1927 (note, just a month later Chang-Kai-Shek will unleash his white terror against the proletarians of Shanghai), contains a particularly striking article by Martinov. After premising that *“the national liberation of China must necessarily, in case of success, turn into a socialist revolution, that the liberating movement of China is also an integral part of the world proletarian revolution, differing in this from the previous liberating movements which were an integral part of the general democratic movement”*, after giving this movement, which is of *“national liberation”* only in the minds of the leaders of the International, a characteristic far more advanced than those that preceded it in the history of the formation of bour-

⁸⁰. Theses on the National and Colonial Question (<https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch05.htm#v1-p177>)

⁸¹. Quoted by Trotsky in *The International after Lenin*.

geois nation States in Europe. Martinov arrives at the confusion that while “in Russia, in 1905, the initiative of the leadership emanated from the proletarian party” and “the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, during a certain time, dragged along in its wake striving at each temporary halt of the movement to conclude an agreement with the czarist autocracy”, in China “the initiative emanates from the industrial bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intellectuals» and therefore «the Chinese Communist Party must strive **to not create obstacles** (emphasized by us) to the revolutionary army against the great feudal lords, against the militarists of the North and against imperialism.”

For his part, Stalin, in a polemical article against the Russian opposition (see *Stato Operaio* of May 1927) wrote: “In the first period of the Chinese revolution, in the period of the first march to the North, when the national army approaching the Yang-Tze river went from victory to victory, a powerful movement of workers and peasants had not yet developed, and the indigenous bourgeoisie (excluding the “compradors”) marched together with the revolution. **This was thus the revolution of a single front that extended to the entire nation** (emphasized by us). This doesn’t mean that there weren’t contrasts between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the revolution. It only means that the indigenous bourgeoisie, by giving its support to the revolution, endeavored to exploit it for its own ends by directing its development essentially along the line of territorial conquests and sought to limit its developments in another direction.”

The events were to cruelly prove, through the unleashing of terror beginning in April 1927, that the “revolution of the single front of the whole nation” was in reality the subjection of the insurgent masses to the direction of the generals, and that finally there was sharp, strident, violent opposition between the “military march to the North under the direction of the Kuomintang” and the class struggles of the Chinese workers and peasants. All the Comintern’s pussyfooting was ultimately summed up in the directive that Martinov had specified: “do not create obstacles to the national army” (see quotation above).

Finally, as to the tactical approach of the International, let us recall Tan-Pin-Sian’s statement to the Seventh Enlarged Executive: “As soon as trotskism arose, the Chinese Communist Party and Communist Youth immediately adopted, unanimously, a resolution against it.”

It is well known that under the label of trotskism were included all the tendencies that opposed the direction of the International. If we have quoted this quote, it is to prove that the Chinese Party had been vigorously “purged” in order to carry out, with full success, its counter-revolutionary policy.

The second half of 1926 and the first quarter of 1927

were characterized by a the peak of militancy of the events in China. During the whole of this period – which is purely revolutionary – the International violently opposes the tendencies which are manifested in the bosom of the proletarian vanguard towards the constitution of the Soviets; it stands firm on the directive of the bloc of four classes.

The Russian delegation in China, which lived in direct contact with the events, wrote a letter addressed to the Center in Moscow, in which it criticizes the policy of the Chinese Party and from which it appears with how much counterrevolutionary vigilance the tactical arrangements which were to lead to the collapse of this great movement were carried out. It reads: “According to the report of the Chinese Communist Party of December 13, 1926 on the dangerous tendencies of the revolutionary movement, the statement states that **‘the greatest danger consists in this: that the movement of the masses will progress to the left.’**” (emphasis added).

On the question of the relations between the Party and the masses, we can deduce what they were from this passage:

“The relations between the Party leadership, the workers and the peasants were formulated in the best possible way, by Comrade Petrov, a member of the CC, on the occasion of the examination of the question of recruiting students for the special course (Communist Workers’ University of the East). It would have been necessary to obtain the following distribution: 175 workers and 100 peasants. Comrade Petrov told us that the Central Committee decided to designate only students and intellectuals.”

On the peasant question: “At the December Plenum (1926, ed.) of the CC, with the participation of the representative of the EC of the International, a resolution concerning the peasant question was adopted. In this resolution there is not a single word about a program and the agrarian struggle. The resolution only responds to one of the most irritating questions, the question of peasant power, and it responds to it negatively: it says that the word of peasant power must not be launched in order not to frighten the petit-bourgeoisie. From this, it follows that the Party’s organs ignored the armed struggles of the peasantry.” (They did not, in fact, ignore it, since they pushed the armed peasants into the arms of the Kuomintang generals, ed.).

On the question of the labor movement: “More than a million organized workers are deprived of central leadership. The trade unions are detached from the masses and, for the most part, remain staff organizations. Political and organizational work is replaced always and everywhere by compulsion, and the main fact is that reformist tendencies are growing inside as well as outside the revolutionary trade union movement. Friendly familiarity with the entrepreneurs, participation in the benefits, participation in the increase of labor productivity, subordination of the unions to the entrepreneurs and the bosses, these are the usual phenomena.”

On the other hand, they refused to defend the economic demands of the workers. Being afraid of the elementary development of the workers' movement, the Party allowed compulsory arbitration in Canton and later in Hangzhou (the very idea of arbitration belongs to Borodine, the official delegate of the Comintern). Particularly serious is the fear of the leaders of the Party of the non-industrial workers' movement. After all, the overwhelming majority of the organized workers in China were non-industrial workers.

The CC's report to the Plenum of December 1926 says: *"It is extremely difficult for us to define the tactics with respect to the middle and petty-bourgeoisie, because the strikes of the artisans and the strikes of the clerks are nothing but conflicts within the same class. And since both sides in the struggle (i.e. the entrepreneurs and the workers) are necessary for the single national front (the front of the revolution, as Stalin says, see quote above), we can neither support one of the two contenders, nor remain neutral."*

On the army: *"The characteristic of the Party's demeanor toward the army was given by comrade Tchou-En-Lai in his report. He says to the members of the Party: 'go to this national-revolutionary army, strengthen it, elevate its fighting capacity, but do not conduct any independent work in it.' Until recent times there were no cells in the army. Our comrade political advisers were exclusively concerned with the political-military work of the Kuomintang." And further on: "The CC Plenum of December took the decision to create cells in the army, cells formed only of commanders with the prohibition of soldiers entering them."*

The noose tied around the nooses of the masses of insurrectionary Chinese workers is solid and, unfortunately, indestructible. The whole movement is incorporated in the framework of the unity of all, exploited and exploiters, for an insubstantial war of "liberation". At the bosom of the "purged" Party the proletarians are shoved all the way to the back, behind the intellectuals, in the unions it is proclaimed that the struggle between capitalist entrepreneurs and proletarians is a conflict "within the same class", the armed peasants must be disciplined into the "national" army, while the "communist" cells are reserved for officers.

The noose was ready. It was pulled in Shanghai on April 12 of 1927, when Chang-Kai-Shek unleashed white terror against the masses.

Before discussing the events that follow, it's necessary to highlight the spontaneous coupling, which should be defined as natural (to use terminology employed by Engels in his study on the course of the class struggle), between the movement of the masses and the Communist International. This is in order to answer to the many builders of revolutions, parties and Internationals that are swarming everywhere in other countries, and that in Italy fortunately do not come to light, who would

like to suggest that in light of all this, that it's clear that the Left made the mistake of not separating from the International before, and founding another organization.

The Chinese revolutionary movement is part of the same historical complex that had its origin in the Russian revolution and the Communist International. The precedents (the German defeat of 1923 and the events within the Russian party that followed) explain why this counter-revolutionary direction had become an inescapable historical necessity. And this same counter-revolutionary direction didn't have to directly evoke the antagonistic force likely to overthrow it, but only to determine the premises for a much more distant reconstruction of the international organization of the proletariat, so distant that even today the historical possibilities do not present themselves, nor can they be determined by revolutionary militants.

The violent actions of Chang-Kai-Shek on April 12, 1927 closes the phase of the greatest revolutionary intensity in China. The Eighth Enlarged Executive of the International of May 1927 and the Plenum of the CC of the Chinese Party of August 7, 1927 would inaugurate a turning point in the tactics of the International.

When the situation goes to the left, as it did until April 1927, the bloc of the four classes repressed the masses under the discipline of the Kuomintang. The situation changes, it goes to the right, the International will go to the left, and in the two meetings mentioned above one can already see premonitions of what would be come to be known as the Canton "insurrection" of December 1927.

The united Kuomintang flows into the anti-worker terror of April 1927. A split is made in the "People's Party" and a left-wing Kuomintang is formed in Ou-Thang. The Communists even enter the government while Stalin will proclaim that the *"core of the Chinese revolution consists in the agrarian upheaval."* The CC of the Chinese Party in the previously mentioned session declared that *"we are in the presence of an economic, political and social situation favorable to insurrection, and that since it is no longer possible to start revolts in the cities (Chang-Kai-Shek, thanks to the Comintern's tactics, was in charge of enforcing this impossibility), it is necessary to transport the armed struggle to the countryside. It is here that the hotbeds of the insurgency are to be found, while the city must be an auxiliary force."* And the CC concludes: *"it is necessary, wherever this is objectively possible, to immediately organize insurrections."*

The result of this turn, characterized on one hand by an analysis that affirms the existence of a revolutionary situation while at the same time denying that it exists in the urban centers, and on the other hand by the participation of the communists in the government, was

not long in manifesting itself through the terror of the left Kuomintang against the peasants who continued the struggle.

* * *

Thus we find ourselves at the “insurrection” of Canton in December 1927. The political evaluation that preceded this “insurrection” will be found in the Plenum of the CC of the Chinese Party of November 1927, about which the resolution of the Jiangsou Province of the Chinese Communist Party of May 7, 1929, provides interesting indications.

We recall that the sacrifice of the masses to the Kuomintang had led to the violent crushing of the labor movement in the cities, that the sacrifice of the peasant masses to the left Kuomintang had led to a similar violent repression of the peasants in the Hunan. And on that route we thus approach the final chapter of December of 1927.

Was it really an “insurrection”? The Ninth Enlarged Executive of the International which was to be held shortly thereafter, in February 1928, made “*comrade N. responsible for the fact that there was no elected soviet in Canton*” (underlined in the text of the resolution). In the communist movement there could be no doubt that the soviets appear only in the course of a revolutionary situation and that therefore either political conditions exist which create them, and then they can only be elected (apart from the formal and trivial question of the election, what matters is that they’re the spontaneous product of the movement of the masses in upheaval), or they do not exist and what exists is artfully constituted bodies that do not correspond in the slightest to a real possibility of the exercise of power by the proletariat that are then titled “Soviets”.

But, in fact, all we were witnessing was the maturing of the new turning point of the International, whose primitive elements are found in the 8th Enlargement and in the meeting of the CC of the Chinese Party of August 1927. The “insurrection” will be decided by the central organs precisely when the pre-requisites for its success no longer exist. It is only then that there’s will talk of a Soviet, of that most crucial word which had been strictly forbidden at the height of the revolutionary offensive of the masses, in the second half of 1926 and the first quarter of 1927. The proletarians of Canton (it should be noted that it was precisely the least proletarian city in China) were struggling against all the tendencies of the Kuomintang, and the “insurrection” was limited to a single center, historically isolated (since the revolutionary movement was obviously declining), and thus the only possible result was its quick defeat. In the meantime, the International gave itself a third counter-revolutionary medal (after those of

Chang-Kai-Shek and Hunan) since a mortal blow was given to the revolutionary aspiration of the Chinese masses who now convinced themselves of the impossibility of the realization of their Soviet power.

Here, in the tactics followed in Canton, we have an anticipation of the tactics that will be followed in all countries from 1929 to 1934, the tactics of the “revolutionary offensive” of which we will speak in the next chapter. Our current at that time could only limit itself, on the one hand, to pointing out that the proletarian movement could only encounter, even in colonial China, the violent opposition of every landowning classes in the country and of all their political formations, on the other hand, to emphasize that the reasons for the immediate defeat weren’t due to the fact that proletarian power was impractical, but to the fact that these directives were given not when the objective conditions for revolutionary victory existed but precisely when they had already been sacrificed by the counter-revolutionary tactics of discipline to the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Beginning in 1928 the situation in China will take a leap backwards. Fragmentation will become even more serious than that which existed before the revolutionary movement of 1926-27, the generals will rule their own established zones as warlords, and “Communist China” will also arise. These are among the most backward regions of China where, alongside with the rudimentary forms of the primitive economy, persists the necessities of an even more intense exploitation of the masses than in other zones. The “communist” ruling clan will establish, together with the payment in kind of wages (a real market does not exist and the current system is that of barter), the compulsory conscription extended to the whole population, since the army has not only the military task of defending “the communist country”, but also the other economic and social task of sharing the products. At the current moment we cannot exclude the possibility of seeing a mobilization of the masses in defense of these extra-reactionary regimes, if the evolution of the capitalist world were to go through a phase of conflict between the United States and Russia in the Asian territories.

In the situation that opened up after the “Canton Insurrection” a violent controversy was established between our fraction and Trotsky. The respective fundamental positions are not new, but they were continuations, regarding the Chinese question, of the divergences which were determined at the IV and V Congress of the International. In the new circumstances which evidently no longer permitted the launching of the slogan for the proletarian dictatorship, Trotsky maintained that a transitional slogan must be raised in the question of power: that of the Constituent Assembly and of a demo-

cratic constitution in China. Our current, on the other hand, argued that if the non-revolutionary situation did not allow the fundamental slogan of dictatorship to be raised, if, therefore, the question of power no longer arises in an immediate form, that this was not the reason why the party program should be rabeled, that it should be reaffirmed in its entirety on the theoretical and propaganda level, while the retreat could only be carried out on the basis of the immediate claims of the masses and their corresponding class organizations.^(a)

In the course of all this controversy, voices reached our current that an opposition had been determined within the trotskist organization itself, but there was no possibility of establishing links with these militants; for while the possibilities of communication are being extended, the forms of cloistered solidification of non- and counter-revolutionary organizations are also being extended, and these will form a wall against the establishment of links between the forces of the revolution.

We have endeavored to give – within the narrow limits

of an article – the most documented report on these formidable events which, taking place in an extremely backward economic environment, had shown the revolutionary possibilities of the proletarian class even in faraway China. As in England, a highly developed country, with the Anglo-Russian Committee, so also in China the International showed itself to be the decisive instrument of the counterrevolution, since it alone had the authority and the possibility to counter a revolutionary movement of incalculable historical importance, which ended in a disastrous failure of the communist movement.

(Prometeo #3, 1946, from *The Communist Party*'s website, to be followed)

Note ^(a): We had to change the English version of this last sentence. The translation made by *The Communist Party* from which we took back here makes a political counter-sense: "Our current, on the other hand, argued that if the non-revolutionary situation did not allow the fundamental slogan of dictatorship to be raised (...), **that does not mean that the Party's program should be reaffirmed in its entirety on the theoretical and propaganda level...**" (<https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/Texts/46CominTact.htm>)

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OUR BASIC POSITIONS

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

mass strike.

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