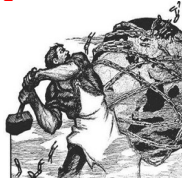


REVOLUTION or WAR

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September 2024



Charleroi, Detroit, Boeing, Volkswagen...

Local Strikes and the March towards Generalized Imperialist War

International Situation

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Internationalism "in Action" or Internationalism "in Word"

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The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism (Anton Pannekoek, 1934)

History of the Workers Movement

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

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

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Charleroi, Detroit, Boeing, Volkswagen... Local Strikes and the March to Generalized Imperialist War

The first fifteen days of September have been marked by dramatic developments. Work stoppages, followed by a management lock-out, took place at the Audi plant of the Volkswagen (VW) group in Brussels on the 9th and 10th. The same night, an umpteenth bloody bombardment by the Israeli air force resulted in nineteen dead and sixty wounded, adding to the macabre list of victims in Gaza. On the 11th, the American Anthony Blinken and the British David Lammy were in Kiev to discuss with Ukraine the use of Western missiles on Russian soil. On Thursday 12th, a strike broke out at Charleroi airport in Belgium. Putin has declared that the use of Western missiles that require Western satellites and specialists to strike territory NATO countries consider to be part of Russia would put NATO countries in a state of war with Russia. The spiral of imperialist war and direct confrontation between the great nuclear powers is accelerating.

Also in September, following the breakdown of contractual agreements signed with the unions and the announcement of plant closures, workers at several VW plants in Germany demonstrated in front of the workshops. Employees at major hotels in the USA and Canada are preparing to strike. At the same time, support and arms supplies from Western countries to Ukraine on the one hand, and from Iran, China and North Korea to Russia on the other, continue to grow ; as does the slaughter at the front and in the rear and as it does in Gaza and now Lebanon.

Rallies and protests at Boeing's Seattle plants, particularly over wage demands, were large enough to force the IAM union to call a strike.¹ The rejection of the union's agreement with management and the 96% vote in favor of strike action left it with no other option for the time being, at the risk of being out-flanked by workers and discredited. These demonstrations of workers' combativeness, however limited, are taking place at a time when, in the United States, Europe and the rest of the world, every government and state is exploding budget deficits to urgently rearm at all costs, to adapt the production apparatus to the necessities of preparing for generalized war.

The mobilizations we are witnessing are, in fact, the beginnings of a response to the bill for the crisis and the war, which is being presented to workers. In the U.S., Bidenomics aims to reorient and restructure

¹ . Which is still going on as we write.

the entire U.S. production apparatus towards the new necessities defined by the march to war. China and Russia are already in a *de facto* war economy, due to the historical conditions of their own capitalist development. The European powers, the big losers in the current imperialist polarization, are seeing their imperialist, military and economic power collapse.

The former President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, has written a report on *The Future of European Competitiveness*² for the European Union. Broadly speaking, it echoes the themes and objectives outlined by French President Macron in his *Europe Speech*³ on April 25, 2024. It advocates a European plan that would be the counterpart of the American *Bidenomics*, to catch up with the USA and China in new technologies, AI, semi-conductors, etc., in capital competitiveness and labor productivity, and finally in armaments and defense capabilities. Both the report and its presentation⁴ to the European Parliament speak volumes about what is at stake today between the imperialist powers, and in passing about the weakening of Europe, as well as the fact that the question of imperialist war is taking precedence over purely economic considerations:

*"The starting point is that Europe is facing a world undergoing dramatic change. World trade is slowing, geopolitics is fracturing and technological change is accelerating. It is a world where long-established business models are being challenged and where some key economic dependencies are suddenly turning into geopolitical vulnerabilities. Of all the major economies, Europe is the most exposed to these shifts."*⁵

To counter this fatal decline, Draghi proposes a kind of European plan, the counterpart of the plans put forward by Biden in the USA, to be financed by Euro-

² . https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en?filename=The%20future%20of%20European%20competitiveness%20_%20A%20competitiveness%20strategy%20for%20Europe.pdf

³ . <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2024/04/24/europe-speech>

⁴ . https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/fcb7ada-213b-4679-83f7-69a4c2127a25_en?filename=Address%20by%20Mario%20Draghi%20at%20the%20Presentation%20of%20the%20report%20on%20the%20future%20of%20European%20competitiveness.pdf

⁵ . It is interesting to note that its conclusion, "*in this setting, we are all anxious about the future of Europe*", is the same as Macron's last April: "*our Europe, today, is mortal. It can die.*"

pean loans.⁶ In so doing, the Draghi report illustrates how the issue of war, of “security” and military defense, has become the central factor in determining the policies to improve.

“Security threats are rising and we must prepare. For Europe to remain free, we must be more independent. We must have more secure supply chains for critical raw materials and technologies. We must increase production capacity at home in strategic sectors. And we must expand our industrial capacity in defence and space. But independence comes at a cost.”

This cost? It will be paid by the proletariat. *“The cost of developing our defence capability will be substantial. (...) In the defence sector, this consolidation of spending should be matched by selective integration and consolidation of EU industrial capacity, with the explicit aim of increasing scale, standardisation and interoperability.”*

In other words, in addition to paying for the explosion in budget deficits, the proletariat will also have to pay for the restructuring of European capital, its increased concentration through the closure of factories and production sites unsuited to the accelerating race to war, and the increase in labor productivity. This means lower wages, directly or indirectly through taxes and cuts in insurance and other social benefits to “reduce deficits”, increased exploitation of labor and, for many, lay-offs – particularly in sectors that have become obsolete, or not “essential” to the war effort.

For the proletariat today, there is only one slogan and one way out if it wants to escape misery and war: start by refusing to pay the bill.

On September 10, some two hundred workers at Detroit's Marathon refinery went on strike for higher wages. Dare we say it: this tiny strike shows the way. Or rather, to be as precise as possible, all these proletarian demonstrations show what the first step is for the world proletariat to rise up and assert its response to the capitalist crisis and imperialist war.

Let us be clear: we have little hope, or illusion, that any of the Detroit workers are aware of the historic significance of their participation in the strike. We cannot rule out the possibility that a tiny minority of VW or Boeing workers make the connection between their resistance to the attacks on their living conditions and the crisis of capital, but we doubt very much that there are many who are also aware that in so doing they are tending to rise up against and slow down the race towards generalized rearmament and war.

This is all the more true as these mobilizations are still very limited, localized, and initiated and controlled by

the unions. They remain within the legal confines of the “right to strike”. They can be banned and repressed at any time. Is this not what the Canadian government has just shown once again last August in the face of a railway strike?⁷ Bourgeois democracy generously grants the “right to strike” on condition that it remains ineffective from the point of view of working-class struggle. In particular, that there is no risk of it being extended and generalized beyond sectors and corporations. So it is not just in China and Russia that strikes are banned and repressed.

Whatever the degree of “consciousness” of the strikers themselves, and however pronounced and great the limits and weaknesses of these few proletarian reactions are, they open the door – barely, we are aware – to the only path the proletariat can and must take: that of defending its economic class interests; that of collective resistance to the inescapable worsening of capital's exploitation of labor. In so doing, the two hundred Detroit strikers are **objectively** pressing the brake, or adding a tiny grain of sand in the gears, in American capital's preparation for the war effort.

Refusing collectively the sacrifices is the first step we must take. The path is very long to the only alternative to the generalized war: the workers' insurrection, the destruction of the bourgeois states and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These can only be realized if the international proletariat is equipped with its political party, the only material force capable of advancing these slogans. Politically, in terms of the balance of power between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the path to an effective party is still far too long, but to progress on this march requires the proletariat to start by taking the first step: that of struggle. That is the slogan of today. The other marches and slogans, carried by the communists, and provided that they are carried out *en masse* by the proletarians, will then follow as experiences develop. There is no other alternative to the barbarism of capital and the bloody tragedy that it promises.

Editorial Team, September 20th 2024

⁶ . This is far from unanimous among European powers, especially Germany. The immediate defense of each national capital is not without its limits and contradictions within the EU.

⁷ . The strike involved Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City.

International Situation

Editorial of *Revolutionary Perspectives* 24 – Series 4 (Communist Workers Organisation – Internationalist Communist Tendency)

We share the essential of the political orientations of the editorial of *Revolutionary Perspectives* issue 24, published by the Communist Workers Organisation, the affiliate group of the Internationalist Communist Tendency in Great Britain. Part of this text introduces the issue of the journal and may seem inappropriate for our columns. Yet, in passing, it is worth drawing attention to the contents of this issue of RP.

Above all, we feel it would be pointless to draft our own position statements, which would defend the same overall analysis and understanding of the current historical situation, and the same political orientations as those put forward by the comrades in this editorial. The bourgeois-proletariat antagonism, the international class struggle, is increasingly materializing, directly and indirectly, in the bourgeois attacks against the proletariat in preparation for and march to generalized imperialist war. Day after day, the capitalist class confirms that it intends to impose on the international proletariat – and on populations in general – sacrifices and mobilization for war in every country. In these dramatic times, chapel and sectarian interests have even less place within the proletarian camp. If our adoption of this article can encourage and broaden its reading, so much the better. And if, as a bonus, it gives a positive, non-sectarian, dynamic and unitary image of the Communist Left, what may appear as a “fading out” or sidelining of our group will in reality only be **a moment... in the fight for tomorrow's party**. This is another fundamental orientation we have in common with the CWO and ICT, in the knowledge that “more than ever that means we need a credible international political force to unify the class around a clear programme.”

We follow the *Revolutionary Perspectives* editorial with two statements of our own on the national political situations illustrated by the outcome of the French legislative elections last July and the presidential campaign in the United States.

An "Age of Chaos" or of Deepening Capitalist Crisis? (CWO)

Since we began preparing this issue, Russian missiles have struck a paediatric hospital and Israeli bombs have flattened yet another UNRWA school, this time in Nuseirat, Gaza; the news reminds us that, in this year of electoral distraction, war continues to devastate lives in at least fifty countries across the world. These don't get the prime time coverage of the Ukraine “meat-grinder” or the devastation in Gaza but they bring the same amount of misery to those in the firing line. In Sudan, for example, the war between the ruling factions, which began 15 months ago, rages on with the support of the local and not-so-local imperialist powers. No-one knows the real death toll (way over 15,000) but the cemeteries are now full. Here the particular humanitarian services targeted are health centres. According to the WHO, 60 attacks in a few months have disabled 70% of health services. Imperialist total warfare allows no “collateral damage”. They are cut-throat fights to the finish in which the annihilation of the “other” in terms of both variable and constant capital is the object of the exercise. As the Secretary General of the United Nations said in February, the world is now entering “an age of chaos” where war means “a dangerous and unpredictable free-

for-all with total impunity”. He even went so far as to say that unlike during the Cold War, when “well-established mechanisms helped manage superpower relations”, those mechanisms are missing “in today's multipolar world”. His observations are incontestable but his solution, of course, was simply to suggest making the UN more effective, ignoring the fact that far from being a body for peace it has always been just another forum for acting out inter-imperialist rivalry. To understand the current drift to a more generalised war we have to look elsewhere.

Namely, we need to go to the material basis of society and this means having an in-depth analysis of the economic situation. This means digging a little deeper than the UN Secretary-General. In the Cold War to which he refers, a “nuclear stand-off” was not the chief reason for preventing an all out world war. The fundamental point was that the two powers that emerged dominant from the Second World War were largely satisfied with the status quo. Moreover, the war had destroyed so much value that it was followed by the greatest boom in capitalist history. Both super-powers had more to lose than gain from all-out war. It was the end of that boom in the early 1970s, and the

rise of working class resistance to the attempts by capitalist states everywhere to make us pay for the crisis, that gave birth to organisations like the CWO. Since our foundation almost fifty years ago, we have been attempting to understand the material basis of all the shifts and turns in capitalist development and the latest contribution to this is the fifth part of our series on capitalism's economic foundations in this issue.

This not only explains why globalisation occurred but what it has done to the world working class in the process. The old massive plants of the Fordist era in the “advanced” capitalist world have been replaced by smaller units as even the monopolies farm out services to ancillary companies. This new class composition means greater challenges for revolutionaries. Some theories have been overtaken by events. The idea of syndicalists and council communists, that by simply taking over their production units workers can go on to destroy the capitalist state and its social order, has lost its force as we show in our review article on Anton Pannekoek. Pannekoek was right about one thing however – the key to the liberation of the working class lies in its consciousness. Capitalism won't simply be superseded by super-militancy. The overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the foundations of a new communistic world can only come about through the conscious action of millions of workers across the world. More than ever that means we need a credible international political force to unify the class around a clear programme. Given the threats to human existence posed by capitalism's continuing destruction of the environment and the prospect of a generalised imperialist war emerging from any one of the wars going on across the planet today, this is more urgent than ever. Pannekoek lived through the disasters of the Second and Third Internationals which had both ended up betraying the working class. In the counter-revolutionary period of the 1930s with the fossilisation of a state capitalist ‘Marxism’ by the Stalinist regime in the USSR he came to see “the party” as a brake on the developing revolutionary consciousness of the class

and put his trust more and more in “spontaneity”. He was well aware that the elemental struggle of the working class had to involve the development of revolutionary ideas but did not explain how these could be retained through time. He also viewed the councils (soviets) in themselves as only arenas for the struggle between ideas, albeit often embodied by parties, but he did not see the party as a collective emanation of the consciousness of the workers themselves before the revolution. Today we can see that an organised international political body with a clear revolutionary programme based on the acquisitions of the working class' own history of struggle are essential factors in the fight to overthrow the system. We are not talking here of a party which aspires to government (that is the task of the councils: the Russian workers' historically discovered form of how to operate a mass society whilst guaranteeing the maximum of participation of all its members). We are talking here of an International capable of taking on not only the false friends of the workers who peddle the reactionary ideologies of Stalinism and social democracy (today embraced by many Trotskyists), but new political dangers which will emerge to sidetrack and undermine the independent struggle of the working class.

It is in this framework that we are ready to cooperate in building workers' resistance to war by first of all rejecting nationalism and engaging with all those who recognise that the working class, which produces the wealth of nations everywhere, is the one global force that has the potential to halt the imperialist drive to world war. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine we knew that this would be

no easy task. Identification with the nation has always been an easy option for the capitalists and in this sense preparations for a wider war are already well underway. Part of the preparation is ideological and this was reflected in the recent elections in the EU, the UK and France where the “choice” before electors was all about the best way to step up military preparations and stopping the immigration of the victims of war and economic crisis around the world from bringing in their “alien values”. The role of identity politics was



In Gaza ruins
UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan (CC BY-NCND 2.0),
flickr.com

more obvious than ever in these elections. In France the rise of the Rassemblement National gave a green light for racist attacks against French citizens with origins in North Africa or France's other former colonies. Today the party of Le Pen, which once was so anti-semitic that it dismissed the Holocaust as "a detail of history", now lines up with Israel as fellow fighters against Islamism. In the UK in seats like Batley and Dewsbury, supporters of the Palestinian national cause were elected by Muslim voters whilst thousands of white workers turned to the racist Reform Party. Such polarisation is a product of the decades old capitalist crisis which today finds almost half of UK adults, 20.3 million people, living hand to mouth on credit just to survive. In the sixth richest capitalist nation on the planet almost 3 million use food banks regularly. Throughout the richer OECD countries real wages have fallen since 2021 and this comes on top of the long decline of wages as a share of GDP since 1979. In these circumstances it is not immediately apparent to workers that their wretched quality of life is caused by some abstraction like "the capitalist system". How easy and cheap to blame migrants or Muslims or Jews or anyone else who can be made a scapegoat.

But that is not our only problem in building a class movement. There are also the divisions in the revolutionary movement that 100 years of counter-revolution have produced, as our article on Pannekoek shows. This not only produces fake or part-time internationalists like the Stalinists who will use "revolutionary defeatism" as cover for support for Russia in Ukraine but it also has left a legacy of suspicion amongst revolutionaries who see all attempts at political organisation as "rackets" (à la Camatte). Others simply do not see the seriousness of the current situation even when taking correct internationalist stances. At the Arezzo meeting every other delegation argued that our concerns over generalised war were exaggerated or that "the working class is holding back war". In Prague the main difference was between those (primarily anarchists it has to be said) who argued that exemplary actions ("propaganda by the deed" in the nineteenth century) were the ways to fight militarism and those (like us) who argued that it was only the wider working class beyond the revolutionary minorities who could stop war by stopping capitalism. Our work has to be to spread propaganda about exactly where capitalism is taking us and this means building a widespread enough movement to reach the rest of the working class. It is in this spirit and with this motive that we have joined with others in the No War but the Class War committees to provide a concrete step towards a wider class resistance. It was in this spirit that we also attended the international gathering in Prague reported in this issue, as well as the smaller

gathering in Arezzo.

And as a salutary warning of what playing political games instead of working in the wider class brings, we have translated an article by Onorato Damen on the murder of Giacomo Matteotti on its hundredth anniversary – a murder which led to a political crisis and the Fascist takeover of Italy. The Communist Party of Italy, with Gramsci by then installed at its head by the Comintern, neglected a seething class movement throughout the peninsula, and played parliamentary games with social democrats and liberals in the farcical so-called Aventine Secession. This allowed Mussolini to survive months of crisis and eventually declare the dictatorship in January 1925.

Finally, and sadly, this issue of *Revolutionary Perspectives* is slightly late as we only received news of the death of our comrade Olivier in the course of its preparation. Olivier, despite suffering from prostate cancer for two years or so, and knowing he may not survive, devoted his last energies to the establishment of the Groupe Révolutionnaire Internationaliste (GRI), the French affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency. His dedication, determination and courage and dignity throughout his political life were unequalled, and our condolences go to his comrades in the GRI and his partner Françoise, and their family.⁸

Communist Workers' Organisation, July 2024

⁸ . IGCL note: see our tribute on our website (<http://www.igcl.org/Comrade-Olivier-Has-Passed-Away>) and the ICT's (<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2024-07-17/in-memory-of-olivier>)

Political Capacity and Ideological Strength of the Western Bourgeoisies

In so-called revolutionary circles, particularly in anarchist and radical circles, it is not uncommon to simply denounce the “electoral circus” on the occasion of each election, especially in Western countries with a democratic tradition. A kind of political indifferentism is then expressed with regard to the moment and the political stakes that campaigns can, on certain occasions, represent for the bourgeoisie itself and for the proletariat. To argue that the proletariat no longer has any interest in taking part in elections and that, on the contrary, participation represents a trap for the proletariat, in no way detracts from the need to grasp the political significance of these moments. Last July's elections in Great Britain and France, which saw new parliamentary majorities and new governments, the regional elections in East Germany and the current presidential campaign in the United States, are not only moments of democratic mystification for proletarians, particularly through the polarization for or against “populism”. They have also made it possible, or will make it possible, to settle debates specific to each national bourgeoisie, particularly in the choice of imperialist strategies, the orientation of the national productive apparatus, the “tactics” for imposing sacrifices on the proletariat, and in the choice of the political personnel, or even the person, best able to implement these policies.

The following article on the US presidential campaign attempts to present the issues behind the Democrat-Republican opposition today, between the candidacy of Kamala Harris and that of Trump. It highlights how the use of the racist and populist Trump will once again help to foster massive voter turnout, as was the case in 2020, with the ideological and political campaign on the occasion of the protests and riots that followed the murder of G. Floyd. Next, we return to the political situation of “governmental instability” that seems to be opening up in France, and which was provoked by President Macron's dissolution of parliament last June.

The Political Stakes of the US Presidential Election

The attempted assassination of Donald Trump may not have been a political attack, but it certainly had political implications. The shooting initially allowed the former president to simultaneously present himself as a force for “unity” and as a martyr of left-wing persecution. It has also perhaps emboldened him to select J.D. Vance as his running mate. For American politics this is a curious choice as Vance is not from a “swing-state”⁹ nor does he appeal to demographics that the Republican party are trying to court such as Latinos or suburban women. It appeared that Trump did not think he could lose, and therefore selected the candidate who would be best positioned to carry the torch of “MAGAism.” Combining evocations of economic populism with social conservatism, Vance united the new voters Trump is bringing to the Republican Party with traditional evangelical voters and young conservatives who are increasingly interested in the cultural war.¹⁰

Joe Biden's withdrawal from the race in favor of his Vice-President, Kamala Harris, has upended the specter of a Trump landslide. While it would be too far to suggest that Kamala is the favorite, the fact that this election is in a dead-heat while most Americans feel poorly about the economy indicates that the Democratic wing of American Capital still has the capacity to maintain political power.¹¹ From the quick embrace by both important Democratic leaders, including its most leftist leaders,¹² and the liberal media to the dismissal of dissent regarding the slaughter of Palestinians, the Democratic Party has never been more unified. Bidenomics still marches on with its evocations of unions and promises to ensure that America has the “most lethal force in the world.” Unsurprisingly many former Republicans are rallying around Harris' imperialist vision. Several have called for Condoleezza Rice to endorse Harris after her essay for *Foreign Affairs* on the supposed dangers of Trump's “isolationism”.¹³ Meanwhile Dick Cheney, one of the masterminds behind the American invasion of Iraq, endorsed Harris

⁹ . The few “key” states that make the difference in the American electoral system. As a result, the presidential election can be decided by tens of thousands of votes cast for one candidate or the other. Needless to say, this makes it easier to control the electoral game and choose the final president.

¹⁰ . The would-be assassin seems to have the motivations of a typical school shooter as opposed to an ideologue. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-assassination-attempt-trump-motive-investigation-phone-suspect/story?id=112057259>, There is perhaps a wider conversation about whether the bleak nihilism of these mostly male shooters is its own form of political ideology, but it would be foolish to pretend that this case was motivated by strong feelings of anti-fascism or support for the Democrats; <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump->

[give-rnc-keynote-hell-stress-unity-after/story?id=112037786; https://x.com/MiraLazine/status/1812928817507283223](https://x.com/MiraLazine/status/1812928817507283223), Vance's appeal to Proud Boys as “more radical than Maga” seems to suggest that Trump's lackadaisical approach to abortion and LGBTQ politics upsets conservative youth.

¹¹ . <https://www.carlbeijer.com/p/why-polling-on-bidenomics-is-still>.

¹² . Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio Cortez for instance.

¹³ . <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/perils-isolationism-condoleezza-rice>. A Republican, Condoleezza Rice was National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State in the Bush administrations from 2001 to 2009.

to “defend the Constitution.”¹⁴ The Democratic Party is no longer the party of “hope and change,” but of normalcy in the face of disgruntled Trump supporters.¹⁵

The picture of Donald Trump’s foreign policy is becoming slightly clearer with the selection of J.D. Vance. Vance has strongly denounced American support for Ukraine and denounced NATO “freeloaders” in his speech at the Republican National Convention. Trump’s “peace through strength” approach may not entirely be good news for Russian foreign policy. By incentivizing NATO members to pay more for their defense, Trump’s threats may only further militarize the West as a whole. It may perhaps secure a Russian victory in Ukraine but beyond this conflict a Trump presidency cannot overturn US imperial interests. Trump’s threat to Taiwan to pay more can also have the same effect. While Kamala’s insipid speeches may try to militarize the world through the traditional American imperial evocations of democracy and diplomacy, Trump’s ramblings about building an Iron Dome for the United States during the debate and obsession with strength point to an alternative imperial ideological apparatus.¹⁶ This is not to say that Trump did not have an effect on foreign policy, indeed his insistence on the self-sufficiency of America’s military industrial complex seems to have been the germ that setup Bidenomics, but that a Trump reelection will not break the current trajectory of American imperialism even if it is currently headed by a Democratic president.

“History repeats itself. First as a tragedy, second as a farce.” Marx’s statement perfectly epitomizes the state of the American election. Both Trump and Kamala Harris have already been in office, but most promise the electorate that a second term will allow them to deliver the peace and prosperity that they had initially failed to supply. This would almost be amusing if it were not for the human cost. For example, it is hard to imagine the situation in Gaza getting better under the current circumstances. Benjamin Netanyahu is strongly incentivized to continue the war as a means of maintaining his hold on the country, and neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have much incentive to decry the IDF’s destructive campaign. It is worth

considering that in spite of these barbaric outcomes, American workers will still participate in this election in greater numbers due to these events. The attempted assassination of Donald Trump brought a great deal of attention to this election and Harris’ nomination has energized the Democratic Party.

While one would have been correct to initially suspect a low turnout for this election following Biden’s lackluster performance at the presidential debate, this can no longer be assumed. The use of the Trumpian populist threat, anti-Trumpism, the “defense of democracy against the autocrat”, already allows us to assert that, barring a fortuitous event, in particular a sudden explosion of significant workers’ struggles, voter turnout will be massive. The bourgeoisie will have won a victory over the proletariat. It is highly probable that democratic mystification will be strengthened on this occasion.

Frederick Geyer, September 14th 2024

¹⁴ . <https://www.rawstory.com/condoleezza-ric-endorse-harris-kinzinger/>;
<https://www.npr.org/2024/09/07/nx-s1-5104718/dick-cheney-voting-kamala-harris-trump-election>.

¹⁵ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/will-ensure-america-always-has-strongest-most-lethal-fighting-force-kamala-harris/articleshow/112728608.cms?from=mdr>;
<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/29/politics/turnout-2024-election-analysis/index.html>.

¹⁶ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/now-gop-policy-build-us-iron-dome-trumps/story?id=111853708>.

Dissolution of the French Parliament and Governmental Instability: Expressions and Factors of the Weakening of French imperialism

By dissolving Parliament following the European elections on June 9 French President Macron surprised everyone, especially within the political forces of the state apparatus, starting with his own supporters. Above all, he made a political error. Nothing forced him to dissolve the government. A poor political strategist, his calculation was certainly not that the left-wing parties, divided between “moderate” socialists and “radical” *France insoumise*, would immediately unite to present single candidates in all electoral districts. However, it could not be otherwise, without risking the almost complete disappearance of left-wing elected deputies as a result of the majority electoral system – contrary to the proportional system.¹⁷

Macron's hope was undoubtedly to get left-wing voters to vote for his party in the second round, once the left candidates were defeated, in the face of the danger from the far-right, and thus succeed in winning an absolute majority – which he did not have – in parliament. However, beyond his petty calculation, the risk was that the first and especially the second round of the elections would see a fall in voter turnout in a situation of anger and social despair. Such a situation presented a whole series of uncertainties, both for the “legitimacy” and authority of the government to come, and in the event of a possible working-class struggles. The forces of the left would then have been severely weakened to control it.

By uniting on the evening of the dissolution in a “New Popular Front” and presenting a left-wing program – abolition of pension reform, wage increases, etc. – the French left helped limit the consequences of Macron's stupid act. In so doing, and by focusing on the danger of a far-right majority from Marine Le Pen's *Rassemblement national* and calling for a “Republican Front”, voter turnout rose from 47% in 2022 to 67%! In the absence of a united left, it is highly likely that the far-right party would have won an absolute majority and formed the government. This would have risked the further weakening of the realization of French capitalism's present imperialist, anti-worker policy orientations in the current historical period. Above all, it would also have further cleared the social terrain.

¹⁷ . For instance, the Communist Party of France, which has got just 2% of the vote in various elections (presidential, European, etc.), manages to maintain a parliamentary group with nine deputies. Without a coalition of the left, it would have disappeared, further weakening the ability of what would remain of the CP to play a sabotaging role in workers' mobilizations.

As of the time of writing, Macron ended up appointing a right-wing prime minister, whose party *Les Républicains* only got 6.5% of the vote in the first round and only because Le Pen's *Rassemblement national* [RN] hinted that it might not censure him in the national assembly from day one. The bourgeoisie has certainly entered a period of relative governmental instability. What is more, its international capacity and credibility have been weakened, whereas in recent months, under Macron's impetus, it had managed to regain a little space and initiative in the face of the war in Ukraine and vis-à-vis its European rivals.

However, what we are presented with as a political crisis of the French bourgeoisie is, at best, a political difficulty in the face of a personnel that is now proving inadequate. From the point of view of the proletariat, to speak of a political crisis would mean that the proletariat is a direct actor in the situation, which is far from being the case. Finally, given that a large part of the working class votes RN, the expression of this crisis would be the irresistible rise of the vote for it and the danger of “populism”. However, a significant part of the working class has always voted for the “hard” right since the Second World War. In the 1960s, the Gaullist party, like the Republican party in the USA, won around 30% of the working-class votes. That, in the absence of massive struggles and proletarian, i.e. revolutionary, perspectives, a third of the least “conscious” proletarian individuals, isolated and hopeless, inclined to fall for the racist and anti-immigrant scapegoat politics, vote for a right-wing party with a discourse that is both “firm” and partly left-wing – the RN proclaiming that it will cancel the pension reform if it comes to power – can come as no surprise. It also changes nothing about the stakes and prospects of class struggle *per se*, except that anti-Le Pen polarization diverts the proletariat from the terrain of collective struggle onto bourgeois political terrain.

We should not be surprised that, in the current historical situation, capital's contradictions are exploding at every level, including the political. Still less should we be led to believe that the power of the bourgeoisie and capital has been weakened, or is even in crisis. It is not a question of denying contradictions are arising. The question is whether or not the bourgeoisie can master these contradictions and “surf” on them.

Macron has just revealed himself as a pitiful surfer. Yet, the French bourgeoisie as a whole is far from having lost control of the situation. This is borne out by the

level of voter turnout. Moreover, it is confirmed by the occupation of the “social” terrain and streets by the left, leftists and trade unions, if only by organizing demonstrations to “enforce the election result and demand a left-wing government.” *France insoumise's* obvious refusal to allow the “united” left to accede to the government can also be explained by the need to maintain a left-wing force, more or less “radical”, that can occupy the social terrain, the streets, working-class struggles. This is occurring at a time when the new Prime Minister, Michel Barnier, is announcing a policy of drastic austerity to reduce the country's now abysmal deficit and debt. Without touching the 40% increase in the defense budget, of course.

to come at the time of writing – the new political configuration ensures the French bourgeoisie the stability of its imperialist and national policies, even if they have been weakened somewhat by Macron's ill-fated initiative. The proletarians should make no mistake about it: the anti-worker set-up that plays on false oppositions – Le Pen-anti-Le Pen, right-left, moderate left-radical left, leftist – remains in place. Greater attacks on workers' living and working conditions are to come, whatever is the government. Whether a left, a center, a right or “populist” government, it will intend to make them pay the bill of the defense of French capitalism and its preparation to war.

Whatever the longevity of the new government – still

RL, September 15th 2024

Thesis on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (Lenin, extracts)

““ The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated, even before the war, what this celebrated “pure democracy” really is under capitalism. Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the “purer” democracy is, the more naked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes, and the “purer” the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship. The Dreyfus case in republican France, the massacre of strikers by hired bands armed by the capitalists in the free and democratic American republic —these and thousands of similar facts illustrate the truth which the bourgeoisie are mainly seeking to conceal, namely, that actually terror and bourgeois dictatorship prevail in the most democratic of republics and are openly displayed every time the exploiters think the power of capital is being shaken.

The imperialist war of 1914-18 conclusively revealed even to backward workers the true nature of bourgeois democracy, even in the freest republics, as being a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Tens of millions were killed for the sake of enriching the German or the British group of millionaires and multimillionaires, and bourgeois military dictatorships were established in the freest republics. This military dictatorship continues to exist in the Allied countries even after Germany's defeat. It was mostly the war that opened the eyes of the working people, that striped bourgeois democracy of its camouflage and showed the people the abyss of speculation and profiteering that existed during because of the war. It was in the name of “freedom and equality” that the bourgeoisie wage the war, in the name of “freedom and equality” that the munitions manufacturers piled up fabulous fortunes. Nothing that the yellow Berne International does can conceal from the people the now thoroughly exposed exploiting character of bourgeois freedom, bourgeois equality and bourgeois democracy.

In Germany, the most developed capitalist country of Continental Europe, the very first months of full Republican freedom, establish as a result of imperialist Germany's defeat, have shown the German workers and the whole world the true class substance of the bourgeois-democratic republic. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is an event of epoch-making significance not only because of the tragic death of these finest people and leaders of the truly proletarian, Communist International, but also because the class nature of an advanced European state—it can be said without exaggeration, of an advanced state, on a worldwide scale —has been conclusively exposed. If those arrested, i.e., those placed under state protection, could be assassinated by officers and capitalists with impunity, and this under the government headed by social patriots, in the democratic republic where such a thing was possible is a bourgeois dictatorship. Those who voice their indignation at the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg but fail to understand this fact are only demonstrating their stupidity, or hypocrisy. “Freedom” in the German republic, one of the freest and advanced republics of the world, is freedom to murder arrested leaders of the proletariat with impunity. Nor can it be otherwise as long as capitalism remains, for the development of democracy sharpens rather than dampens the class struggle which, by virtue of all the results and influences of the war and of its consequences, has been brought to boiling point.

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

Internationalism “in Action” or Internationalism “in Word”



The concept of “adherents of internationalism” is devoid of all content and meaning, if we do not **concretely** amplify it”
(Lenin, *Under a False Flag*, 1915)

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine undeniably marked a rupture and the opening of a dynamic towards World War 3, which only the international proletariat, as both exploited and revolutionary class, can oppose. *Proletarian internationalism* has thus once again become a central issue: theoretical and principled for revolutionaries; political and practical for the international proletariat. Since then, this dynamic towards generalized war, the development of “war economy” and the ideological, political and military preparation for imperialist war determines, and will continue to determine, the scale, content and timing of the attacks that each national bourgeoisie is led to make against “its” proletariat. The conditions of class confrontation are increasingly dictated by the needs and demands of the march to war – and no longer simply by the economic defense of each national capital, in the face of economic contradictions alone.

The experience of the First Imperialist World War is essential for the best possible orientation in the coming turmoil of war. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were undoubtedly the clearest, most determined and consistent defenders of proletarian internationalism from 1914 onward. The conditions of the time, in particular the betrayal of the mass social-democratic parties who, despite their position of principle adopted at the congresses of the Socialist International,¹⁸ adhered to national unity and defense, largely determined the concrete application of the internationalist principle: in addition to the slogan addressed to the proletariat masses for “*the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war*”, the fight against opportunism, i.e. against the betrayal of the majority of social-democratic parties, but also

against all forms of pacifism and inconsistent internationalism, i.e. against “centrism”, demanded and involved the organizational break with the Socialist International and the fight for the establishment of a new international. This is what Lenin's quote in the preamble reminds us.

Today, the concrete conditions for fighting in defense of proletarian internationalism are no longer exactly the same. On the one hand, the war is not yet generalized and the proletariat masses are not mobilized on the front or in the rear. In itself, the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war does not correspond to the present moment as a “direct call to action by the masses”.¹⁹ *Refusal to make any further sacrifices in preparation for war, against all national and class unity in the name of defending democracy*, would be more appropriate to the present situation and the reality of the balance of forces between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

On the other hand, there are no longer any proletarian mass organizations – whether parties or unions – and the development of mass workers' strikes in the face of the march to war will take place, not without “them”, but against the unions and left-wing parties, all of which have become fully-fledged organs of the capitalist state. The fight against opportunism no longer concerns the Socialist, Stalinist, Trotskyist and even Anarchist currents that have supported capital and national defense since their betrayal in 1914, the 1930s or 1939-45. They are now definitively in the camp of the bourgeoisie and counter-revolution, and communists must denounce and fight them as such. Opportunism in relation to proletarian internationalism is expressed today among

¹⁸ . Resolutions of the Stuttgart and Bâle congresses.

¹⁹ . Except perhaps, and this is up for debate, in war-torn countries such as Ukraine and Russia, or even Israel and Palestine...

revolutionary minorities and within the proletarian camp itself. The different “understandings” of internationalism that have emerged in the wake of the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the Middle East are clear for all to see. We have listed three in particular: the appeal to the Prague anti-war congress of May 2024²⁰; the Joint Statement of groups of the Communist Left,²¹ in fact signed only by the ICC, Internationalist Voice and the Istituto Damen; and, most recently, the so-called Arezzo Internationalist Statement,²² to which we must add a so-called Milan Internationalist Conference of July 2023.

We do not mention here the Internationalist Communist Tendency's call for the formation of a *No War But Class War* committee, which we supported and responded to to the best of our ability. This call, dated April 6, 2022, is of a different nature. These committees are nothing more than struggle committees aimed at bringing together the most combative minorities of proletarians to develop workers' responses to the intensification of labor exploitation demanded by the march to war. In this sense, and as with any unitary organ for struggle – general assembly, strike committee, strike itself, etc. – the criterion for participation is the willingness of each individual to commit to such and such a mobilization or struggle, regardless of the political positions they may hold, whether revolutionary or not. It is an “action” slogan, “*call to fight for the wider working class.*”²³ In this sense, the call to the NWBCW is not an alternative to any internationalist grouping or conference. It does not exclude it, but represents another dimension of communist intervention and struggle in the situation that has opened up since 2022.

The Milan So-called Internationalist Conference

First, let us take a look at the cycle of so-called internationalist meetings in Milan. The first took place in July 2023, the second in February 2024. Readers can refer to the *Internationalist Correspondence Bulletin*, which gathers together the various contributions of the participating organizations.²⁴ The vast majority were Trotskyists and anarchists. The conference was

initiated by *Lotta comunista*, which took charge of the practical organization. *Rivoluzione comunista*, a group that emerged from the Left of Italy and more specifically from the PCI-Programa comunista in 1964, was also present.²⁵ Already, and from the point of view of the Communist Left, the class and non-internationalist nature of most of the participants annihilates any internationalist and class pretensions to these meetings, whatever their precise position on the war in Ukraine may have been.

Formally, the positions put forward are not on the terrain of overt bourgeois pacifism, for a ceasefire and democratic peace or otherwise. As a Trotskyist blog points out, « *the central political issue that prompted the call for this meeting was the war in Ukraine. There was a discussion among the organisers as to whether only those forces of the anti-capitalist left who took an independent, class, internationalist position (i.e. against both NATO and the Russian and Ukrainian ruling classes) should be invited to the meeting, or whether all views should be invited. In the end, the second view prevailed, which in the course of events proved to be correct.* »²⁶ In other words, from the outset, this supposedly internationalist meeting included organizations with a “no to Nato, no to Russia” stance, which may appear formally internationalist, and others defending one imperialist camp against the other, some supporting the Ukrainian camp and others the Russian camp: “*On the nature of the war underway in Ukraine, there were, to put it simply, three different positions: one characterizing the conflict as inter-imperialist, implying defeatism on both sides of the warring forces; another as a war of aggression and U.S. expansion, to which Russia would respond defensively; and, finally, an analysis of the conflict as the potential start of a generalized war, but one in which several conflicts were superimposed, and in which the Ukrainian national question remained essential.*”²⁷

However, what interests us here is not so much the fact that Trotskyist and anarchist groups can support one imperialist camp against the other, but the political significance of the seemingly “internationalist”, formally “internationalist” positions taken by the majority of the leftist, and therefore bourgeois, participants at the meeting. They define the war in Ukraine as imperialist, and reject any participation in or support for either imperialist camp. « *Now the confrontation is among imperialist powers of all sides. Russia*

²⁰ . See RW #27, *The Prague "Anti-War Congress": Influence and Danger of So-Called "Internationalist" Anarchism*

(<http://www.igcl.org/The-Prague-Anti-War-Congress>)

²¹ . <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17159/joint-statement-groups-international-communist-left-about-war-ukraine>

²² . <https://www.leftcommunism.org/spip.php?article536>

²³ . ICT's letter to the ICC, March 2, 2022, <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17240/correspondence-joint-statement-groups-communist-left-war-ukraine>

²⁴ . <https://www.internationalistbulletin.com/>

²⁵ . <https://www.rivoluzionecomunista.org/index.php/storia-di-rivoluzione-comunista-dalla-nascita-ad-oggi>

²⁶ . <https://www.internationaliststandpoint.org/the-meeting-of-internationalist-organisations-and-currents-in-milan-july-2023/>

²⁷ . <https://npa-revolutionnaires.org/la-conference-de-milan-une-premiere-avancee-qui-necessite-detre-consolidee/?fbclid=IwAR3SDd83JtNtnr0nwRoTj7nQH0W4ATcMP6EX5gJorVNGEp-V129CoS6sHXg> (translated by us)

and China are full participants in the imperialist order », according to the International Trotskyist Opposition, to name just one of the contributions. The reality of this “internationalism” is quickly exposed. Without going into the analysis and denunciation of the arguments accompanying the “internationalist” position on the war in Ukraine, it is enough to take a look at the positions taken by this organization and most of the other Trotskyist participant groups on the war, also imperialist, in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and more widely in the region. They all support Palestinian nationalism. Their “internationalism” is of variable geometry, and stops at the limits of their defense of national liberation struggles and other “support for oppressed peoples”.

This type of *internationalist conference*, bringing together mainly, not exclusively, leftist groups, is intended to complement the occupation of the ideological and political terrain by bourgeois, mostly left-wing, pacifist forces. These initiatives are therefore openly anti-worker and anti-internationalist. They are all the more dangerous – and we ask the reader to bear this in mind – as leftist, counter-revolutionary groups may well adopt a formally internationalist stance on this or that imperialist war on the occasion of these events.

The Antiwar Congress of Prague

Several revolutionary groups around Tridni Valka²⁸ called for and “organized”, together with anarchist groups, the Prague anti-war congress held at the end of May. As soon as we received the call for the congress, we took a position on it and strongly criticized its approach.²⁹ Strongly imbued with the individualist and rebellious ideology of anarchist kind, the appeal, in itself “internationalist”, rejected the choice of one imperialist camp against the other in both Ukraine and the Middle East, and called for “*the struggle against the bourgeoisie of all warring sides.*” Our criticism focused on the political content and orientation of the congress: “*sabotaging the war machine by coordinating individual direct actions*”, ignoring the reality of the balance of forces between classes, the dynamics of the current class struggle, and the proletariat as such.

“*Consequently it is the absolute duty of the socialists of all belligerent countries immediately and resolutely to carry out the Basle resolution, viz.: (...) a call to the workers of all the belligerent countries to wage an energetic class struggle, both economic and political, against the bourgeoisie of their country (...) [and] that an international committee be set up, together with them, for the conduct of agitation for the*

cessation of the war, not in the spirit of the pacifists, the Christians, and the petty-bourgeois democrats, but in inseparable connection with the propaganda and organisation of mass revolutionary action by the proletarians of each country...” (Lenin, emphasis added)³⁰.

While our public statement on this congress met with a certain, generally positive response, some comrades and groups did not understand or share our approach. For one comrade, “*refusing to take part in this meeting and considering it as pacifist-bourgeois was a mistake on the part of the IGCL.*” Yet we did not refuse to participate: on the one hand, the organizers excluded so-called pro-party groups; on the other, and despite this ban, we did take part – unless one considers that without a physical presence it is impossible to intervene. Our document was addressed “*to all participants*”, and proposes an alternative to the political orientation contained in the Call to the Congress. The choice not to “*make the effort of a physical presence*”, essentially due to our numerical weakness and the need to make the best use of our real capacities, seems to us to have been validated – in terms of our priorities in relation to our strengths – by the unfolding of the congress itself. We hesitated to go and could have made a mistake. Yet the reports we received or read – the ICC's in particular – clearly show how “*very poorly organised and indeed chaotic*” the congress was.³¹ Nevertheless, the fact that organizations from the Communist Left, the Internationalist Communist Tendency, the International Communist Current and *Programa Comunista* sent delegations is to be welcomed and supported, whatever secondary differences we may have with the content of their interventions.

In fact, as we announced in our Address to the Antiwar Congress Participants,³² the congress itself was a failure, at least from a proletarian and internationalist point of view. “*We do not believe that the call for the congress*

³⁰ . To the Editors of *Nashe Slovo*, 1915, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/feb/09a.htm>. We have the weakness of thinking that the purpose of the NWBCW committees is in line with this political perspective.

³¹ . We feel it is important to quote this passage from the ICC to assess the reality of the congress itself, its organization and its “internationalism”: “*Although the organisers insisted that the protest was not calling for support for Palestinian nationalism, it attracted a number of people waving Palestinian flags and could thus only appear as a small adjunct to the pro-Palestine demos going on around the world, notably in the universities of the USA and Europe. Equally important: while there was no sign of the organising committee, the small number of “Action Week” attendees who took part quickly realised that this was an illegal protest and had their IDs noted by the police. Since most of them were foreign nationals, this could have led to their deportation.*” (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/17524/prague-action-week-activism-barrier-political-clarification>)

³² . *Revolution or War* #27, Op. Cit.

²⁸ . <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/>

²⁹ . See *Revolution or War* #27, *The Prague “Anti-War Congress”: Influence and Danger of So-Called “Internationalist” Anarchism*, <http://www.igcl.org/The-Prague-Anti-War-Congress>

constitutes a step forward in the current situation.³³ At best, it can only be a source of political confusion and leftist, activist adventurism. We call on political groups and individuals wishing to position themselves on the real terrain of proletarian internationalism to break with the content and spirit of the Appeal, while proposing a new one based unequivocally on class struggle. We know that our proposal can only lead to a very clear delimitation and separation from most of the anarchist groups present.”

According to the ICC report and other information, a relative polarization tended to emerge during the “action week” itself: faced with the chaos and the inability of the organizers to materially – and politically – assume the congress, a minority of participants, under the influence of the ICT and Programa delegations, it seems, and other comrades, attempted to hold a “parallel congress”, which enabled contacts to be established between consistent internationalists. Unfortunately, this minority was unable to adopt even a document or resolution around which consistent proletarian internationalism could have rallied.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for this relative political impotence is due to political hesitation and confusion as to what proletarian internationalism actually means today. Indeed, we maintain that the *direct action* slogans that the congress intended to organize and launch, however radical they may appear to the most inexperienced, were not on the terrain of proletarian internationalism: “*the only way out of the nightmare of capitalist wars and capitalist peace is a collective awakening: we must see and sabotage the whole machinery of war, overthrow its representatives and reclaim our power as creators of the world*”, concludes the call to the congress.³⁴ The first sentence does not call for proletarian struggle, it is not based on class struggle, but on awakening consciences. And for what purpose? To call for class struggles, the insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat? Not at all, but to sabotage and “*reclaim our creative power*”! The first sentence turns its back on proletarian internationalism, which can only be in connection – that is, “extended” – to the slogans of class struggle, insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Preceded by the first, the second sentence is nothing more than a petty-bourgeois radical phrase...

³³ . In contrast to the Zimmerwald Conference of 1915, to refer to the experience of the time and the struggle of Lenin and the Left at the conference who, despite their strong criticism of the pacifist weaknesses of the Manifesto adopted, had marked it as “*representing a step forward.*”

³⁴ . <https://actionweek.noblogs.org/anti-war-congress-en/>; In fact, there seem to be two “calls” to congress, the other being on <https://actionweek.noblogs.org/english/>.

Joint Statement of Groups of the Communist Left

Also dated April 6, 2022, this declaration, initiated by the ICC, was signed by *Internationalist Voice*, the Istituto Damen and the Korean group *Internationalist Communist Perspectives*.³⁵ The position taken is undeniably internationalist in form. In denouncing the imperialist war and calling for revolutionary mass struggle by the proletariat and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the declaration is situated on the terrain of proletarian internationalism: “*The war in Ukraine is being fought according to the conflicting interests of all the different imperialist powers, large and small – not in the interests of the working class, which is a class of international unity. (...) The latest war, the biggest in Europe since 1945, warns of capitalism’s future for the world if the working class struggle doesn’t lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and its replacement by the political power of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat.*”

It therefore distances itself from the Prague anti-war congress, to the extent that any consistent internationalist can identify with the principles put forward. It is, however, largely inadequate. And this for a very simple reason: it opportunistically leaves aside the fundamental historical challenge facing the proletariat, namely the dynamic towards generalized imperialist war that has opened up with the war in Ukraine. In so doing, “*the proposed statement contains several flaws (...) and is inadequate as a political guide for the working class as to how we can fight against the war. In the first place it does not address itself to the actual significance of this war at this point in time. It also lacks a coherent analysis of what is actually going on. As such it provides no guide. It is a purely paper declaration and we need to offer more than this*”, rightly writes the ICT in one letter, March 21st 2022.³⁶ In another letter, April 30th 2022, it refers explicitly to the divergence over the prospect of generalized imperialist war: “*we do not think you really share our concern about the gravity of the current situation. We note that there is an article on your site which states that there will be no general imperialist war as ‘the blocs have not been formed’.*”

As a result, the Statement displays an abstract, general internationalism, valid in all circumstances, the very one Lenin defined as “*internationalism in words.*” In fact, the ICC has found itself in a theoretical and political impasse ever since it rejected any possibility of generalized imperialist war at its 15th International

³⁵ . *Internationalist Communist Perspectives* distinguished itself by echoing the ICT's call for the formation of NWBCW committees.

³⁶ . The ICC has published the correspondence with the ICT concerning the Declaration: <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17240/correspondence-joint-statement-groups-communist-left-war-ukraine>.

Congress in 2003. Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine, and in the face of the evidence, it has contorted itself as best it can to try to mention and take into account the reality of imperialist war, while denying any dynamic towards generalized war. The result is articles and positions that are either contradictory, or... general and abstract in the face of the real situation at hand, of which this statement is an expression.

As soon as it is pushed to its limits, the contradiction between historical reality and its theory of Decomposition explodes violently: “For a world war to take place, two imperialist blocs would have to be formed, which is not currently on the agenda and **probably never will be**. On the other hand, irreversible decomposition is a much more tangible threat, in the making, and just as catastrophic **but probably even more terrible than world war**”³⁷, it wrote in June 2024. How can we arm the proletariat and take part in its struggles, the conditions of which are and will be determined by the march to generalized war, if we deny the latter? Worse still, if we present the real threat as the *idea of Decomposition*, which is not brought about by any class, unlike generalized war, which is brought about and embodied by the bourgeois class? We have here a typical case of internationalism in words, abstract internationalism, which ultimately disarms the proletariat by letting it believe that war is not the current reality, nor the danger – as the ultimate expression of the crisis of capital – nor even the factor, today the main factor, in the worsening of the conditions of exploitation.

However, we could have signed this declaration, just as Lenin and the Zimmerwald Left had signed the conference Manifesto, insofar as it would have represented “a step forward...”, while maintaining our criticism and our struggle, and while promoting our intervention in the NWBCW committees. However, for this declaration to represent such a step forward, the ICC should not have excluded a good part of the proletarian camp, if not the majority, in the name of “the struggle against the parasitic groups” and by decreeing, in a totally biased or subjective way, who is and who is not “internationalist.”³⁸ Another

³⁷ . We won't dwell on this article, given the inanity and stupidity of the arguments, which is supposed to denounce “our” lies and which, forced to put forward a minimum of arguments, largely confirms our criticism of the ICC's positions. : <https://fr.internationalism.org/content/11390/face-aux-mensonges-et-embrouilles-du-gigc-defense-lintervention-du-cci-face-a-guerre>

³⁸ . ICT Letter, March 21st 2022: “ ‘Controverses, IGCL, Internationalist Perspective, Matériaux Critiques and some others belong to the parasitic milieu and have nothing to do with proletarian internationalism, even if they write about it and even if they put forward exactly the same position. Their activity is characterised by the sabotage of the communist activities and stands in the way of the possibility of united

contradiction for the ICC, because of its theory of parasitism this time, which reduces the participants in its Declaration to the Istituto Damen alone, knowing that *Internationalist Voice* has become its satellite and clone in “its fight against parasites”.

What is the outcome of this “*Joint Statement of Groups of the Communist Left*”, which in the meantime has become “*of the Communist Left*”? Let us read the ICC itself: “*these internationalist initiatives of the ICC don't seem to have been a success since they didn't lead to a united response of the entire or even majority of the Communist Left currents...*”³⁹

The Internationalist Statement of the Arezzo Meeting

We have read about an Internationalist Statement⁴⁰ on several “councilist” websites, which had been adopted at a meeting in Arezzo in Italy last June. “*In early June, on the last day of the anti-war congress in Prague, we agreed on the need of a short statement on capitalism and war that expresses our common positions and can serve as a base for further networking and common action. This statement was drafted after the congress ended. It was discussed, amended and approved at the internationalist meeting in Arezzo (Italy) where the hope was expressed that it will be further discussed by the participants of the Prague congress and those who will gather in Poznan later this month.*”

The text, which has a councilist political tone, if only because of what it does not say, is nonetheless internationalist. It has the merit of making the link between the dynamics of imperialist world war and the class struggle: “*in fighting against [austerity], workers fight against the war, consciously or not.*” The proclamation should have confined itself to this last sentence and the framework it delineates for defining the political orientations to be put forward. Instead, it ventures to repeat some of the orientations of the Prague anti-war congress which, in the absence of clarification, can only

action by the authentic Communist Left. The groups that belong to the Communist Left are: Il Partito Comunista, Il Programma Comunista, Istituto Onorato Damen, Program Communiste, Internationalist Communist Tendency, and Internationalist Voice.’ So what you are asking us to sign up to is your own particular definition of who is, or is not, in the Communist Left and, moreover, your long time rationale that any organisation formed by those who left the ICC must be guilty of “parasitism”. We have long criticised you for this destructive labelling.” (Correspondence published by the ICC, Op.cit)

³⁹ . Two years on from the *Joint Statement of the Communist Left on the war in Ukraine*:

<https://en.internationalism.org/content/17492/two-years-joint-statement-communist-left-war-ukraine>

⁴⁰ . On A Free Retriever Digest :

<https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2024/07/13/arezzo-meeting-june-2024-an-internationalist-statement-on-capitalism-and-war/>

lead to impasse and impotence: “We support proletarians on both sides of any war who refuse to fight, who desert, who fraternize instead of killing each other. We support sabotage of the war machine and collective resistance against conscription, mobilization and the militarization of society.”

In reality, the conditions for internationalist conferences or declarations common to the Communist Left as a whole, for a Zimmerwald adapted to 2024, are not present today. Firstly, such a conference or gathering would not encounter the same historical conditions as Zimmerwald and Kienthal in 1915 and 1916. One, the war has not yet become generalized; secondly, there are no longer any mass organizations of the proletariat, trade unions or parties, which would betray us again, as we pointed out in our introduction.

On the other hand, the divided and minoritarian reality of the proletarian camp and the historical weaknesses, particularly sectarianism, of its components do not enable today to envisage the formation of a consistent internationalist initiative by the camp as a whole, if not by the entire camp, i.e. its communist organizations and groups. Before this can happen, the proletariat in massive struggle will have to push, if not force, its political minorities to break with sectarianism and rise to the stakes and their historical responsibilities – if only by reopening the question of the party, of which any internationalist conference or initiative should be the prelude, as Zimmerwald was for the Communist International. A decantation within the proletarian camp, particularly on the question of proletarian internationalism, is also required. In the final analysis, and to be consistent, proletarian internationalism is “in words alone” if it does not extend to the principles of class struggle, proletarian insurrection and the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The unity of these principles is the first condition for the principle of proletarian internationalism to be articulated, applied to concrete situations and to the real dynamics of the relationship of forces between the classes.

The so-called internationalist leftists in Milan reject these principles and base the conference, among others, on the principles of democracy, anti-fascism and national liberation struggles. The result is that, despite certain positions on the war in Ukraine, the conference is on the bourgeois terrain. The initiators of the Prague anti-war congress ignored the proletariat's struggle, substituting it with the direct actions of agitating minorities. Prague was, at best, a modern variant of opportunism vis-à-vis internationalism, substituting it with “radical idealism”. The Arezzo Internationalist Proclamation is on the centrist terrain in vis-a-vis radical idealism, making concessions to the

anarchists and the Prague Congress on “direct actions” – not forgetting that it “does not extend” its recognition of class struggle to that of workers' insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Declaration of the ICC and the Istituto Damen, by ignoring generalized imperialist war as a central factor of the situation, remains abstract and general, valid at all times, and is largely insufficient in the face of the race towards generalized imperialist war that the bourgeoisie is seeking to impose today, concretely, in the material reality of the class struggle. Nevertheless, it could have represented a step forward, but the sectarianism and opportunism of the ICC, its main initiator, completely sabotaged its political value and interest by excluding the majority of the revolutionary camp.

For the moment, this is the “sad” reality of the internationalist camp. However, capital's headlong rush into generalized war will directly challenge the international proletariat on its living conditions, and international forces on the meaning and function of proletarian internationalism. The struggle to defend proletarian internationalism has only just begun. Insofar as proletarian internationalism can only be consistently carried forward by the communist movement, the fight for its affirmation is fully part of the struggle for the world proletarian party. Is that not the main lesson of Zimmerwald?

“It becomes the duty of the proletarian party all the more urgently, therefore, to clearly, precisely and definitely counterpoise internationalism in deed to internationalism in word.” (Lenin)⁴¹

RL, August 2024

⁴¹ . *The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution*, 1917, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/tasks/ch10.htm>

Debate on the Theory of Capitalism's Crisis

The following text by Anton Pannekoek dates from 1934. We republish it from *Marxist.org*. Its main purpose is to criticize the theories of the automatic or mechanical collapse of capitalism due solely to its economic contradictions. This excludes, explicitly or otherwise, the revolutionary intervention of the proletariat. Pannekoek attacks and debunks Henrik Grossman's⁴² theory of the collapse of capitalism, set out in *The Law of Accumulation and Collapse of the Capitalist System*. The book had just been published in 1929, and groups of the German-Dutch Communist Left – including Paul Mattick in particular – had embraced it in the early 1930s. For his critique, Pannekoek was led back to the schemas of the reproduction of capital put forward by Marx in Volume 2 of *Capital*, and the critique by Rosa Luxemburg in her own book, *The Accumulation of Capital*, published in 1913 just before the First Imperialist World War.

Roughly speaking, for her, expanded accumulation can only continue on the condition that extra-capitalist markets exist, which explains the development of imperialism. Starting from the schema of reproduction, she argues that the realization of surplus value, necessary for expanded accumulation, cannot take place within the framework of capitalist relations alone. In so doing, Rosa Luxemburg's theory can also lead to the idea of an automatic final crisis: once extra-capitalist markets have been exhausted, accumulation would no longer be possible, and the blocked capitalist system could only collapse of its own. However, according to Pannekoek, her error is not of the same order as Grossman's: it is “a simple scientific mistake”, whereas “Grossman's mistake is that of a bourgeois economist who has never had practical experience of the struggle of the proletariat and who is consequently not in a position to understand the essence of Marxism.”

From the point of view of the theoretical explanation of the crisis, and whatever the correctness or otherwise of Rosa Luxemburg's position, which we shall not go into here,⁴³ she has the merit of exposing how crises of overproduction of capital – and therefore commodities – emerge as a result of capital's inability to realize the surplus value produced in the production process – prosaically speaking: during a crisis, selling and buying are disjointed. This is not the case with Grossman's theory, which tends to posit a continuous, progressive fall of the rate of profit, until surplus-value becomes insufficient for further accumulation. From a political point of view, she is and remains on the terrain of class struggle, while Grossman distances himself from it, or even denies it. “The theory of the economic catastrophe is thus ready-made for intellectuals who recognise the untenable character of capitalism and who want a planned economy to be built by capable economists and leaders.”

The interest of this text is not limited to a critique of Grossman from a Marxist and class point of view. It sets out clearly and precisely some of the foundations of Marxist theory that can help more or less “experienced” readers to get to grips with the Marxist critique of political economy. It is for this reason, in the first place, that we have decided to re-publish it and contribute to its circulation. Secondly, we would like to draw attention to the “historical-materialist” method that Anton Pannekoek advances against Grossman, and which we believe he succeeds in applying and developing here. Readers accustomed to our criticisms and our “fight against Councilism” will be surprised by our salute to the most eminent theorist of Councilism. All the more so as the conclusion of this text ends with a crude rejection of the necessity of the party.

Nevertheless, we feel it is important to emphasize the general approach of the text, which turns its back on the typical method of councilism or economism. In 1934, in opposing the idea of a final economic crisis, Pannekoek rejects all automatism or purely economic determinism of an “economistic” or councilist order:

“Capitalism, as it lives and grows, becomes more and more unbearable for the workers and repeatedly pushes them to struggle until the will and strength to overthrow the domination of capitalism and establish a new organisation grows in them, and then capitalism collapses. (...) The workers' movement has not to expect a final catastrophe, but many catastrophes, political – like wars, and economic – like the crises which (...) become more and more devastating.”

In rightly advocating “the removal of old illusions”, he unfortunately labels as an illusion that “capitalism can be overthrown in assault under the leadership of a revolution-bringing Communist Party.” The councilist Pannekoek, the one that creates a dichotomy between the party and the mass development of consciousness, contradicts the Marxist Pannekoek. How can we encourage and animate “the will and strength to overthrow” capitalism if we eliminate its privileged material expression, i.e. the organized minorities of the proletariat and its political party? However, that is another question, which in no way detracts from the interest and Marxist value of the text that follows. Moreover, this issue only serves to underline the historical impasse of the German-Dutch Left, despite its immense merits and the respect we owe its militants, especially Anton Pannekoek.

August 2024

⁴² . Henrik Grossman was a member of the Polish Communist Party in the 1920s, until his exile to Germany and then the USA. After the war, he returned to Europe and became a member of the East German Stalinist CP. We have chosen to adopt the spelling of his name from the *marxists.org* website as “Grossman” and not “Grossmann”.

⁴³ . It is an internal debate we only just begin.

The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism (Anton Pannekoek, 1934)

The idea that capitalism was in a final, its mortal, crisis dominated the first years after the Russian revolution. When the revolutionary workers' movement in Western Europe abated, the Third International gave up this theory, but it was maintained by the opposition movement, the KAPD, which adopted the theory of the mortal crisis of capitalism as the distinguishing feature between the revolutionary and reformist points of view. The question of the necessity and the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism, and the way in which this is to be understood, is the most important of all questions for the working class and its understanding and tactics. Rosa Luxemburg had already dealt with it in 1912 in her book *The Accumulation of Capital*, where she came to the conclusion that in a pure, closed capitalist system the surplus value needed for accumulation could not be realised and that therefore the constant expansion of capitalism through the trade with non-capitalist countries was necessary. This means that capitalism would collapse, that it would not be able to continue to exist any longer as an economic system, when this expansion was no longer possible. It is this theory, which was challenged as soon as the book was published from different sides, which the KAPD has often referred to. A quite different theory was developed in 1929 by Henryk Grossman in his work *Das Akkumulations und Zusammenbruchsgesetz des Kapitalistischen Systems* (The Law of Accumulation and Collapse of the Capitalist System). Grossman here deduces that capitalism must collapse for purely economic reasons in the sense that, independently of human intervention, revolutions, etc., it would be impossible for it to continue to exist as an economic system. The severe and lasting crisis which began in 1930 has certainly prepared people's minds for such a theory of mortal crisis. The recently published manifesto of the *United Workers of America* makes Grossman's theory the theoretical basis for a new direction for the workers' movement. It is therefore necessary to examine it critically. But to do this a preliminary explanation of Marx's position on this question and the past discussions connected with it cannot be avoided.

Marx and Rosa Luxemburg

In the second part of *Capital* Marx dealt with the general conditions of capitalist production as a whole. In the abstract case of pure capitalist production all production is carried on for the market, all products are bought and sold as commodities. The value of the

means of production is passed on to the product and a new value is added by labour. This new value is broken down into two parts: the value of the labour power, which is paid as wages and used by the workers to buy means of subsistence, and the remainder, the surplus value, which goes to the capitalist. Where the surplus value is used for means of subsistence and luxury goods then there is simple reproduction; where a part of it is accumulated as new capital there is reproduction on an extended scale.

For the capitalists to find on the market the means of production they need and for the workers to likewise find the means of subsistence they need, a given proportion must exist between the various branches of production. A mathematician would easily express this in algebraic formulae. Marx gives instead numerical examples to express these proportions, making up cases with selected figures, to serve as illustrations. He distinguishes two spheres, two main departments of production: the means of production department (I) and the means of consumption department (II). In each of these departments a given value of the means of production used is transferred to the product without undergoing any change (constant capital, c); a given part of the newly added value is used to pay for labour-power (variable capital, v), the other part being the surplus value (s). If it is assumed for the numerical example that the constant capital is four times greater than the variable capital (a figure which rises with technical progress) and that the surplus value is equal to the variable capital (this ratio is determined by the rate of exploitation), then, in the case of simple reproduction, the following figures satisfy these conditions:

$$\text{I. } 4000c + 1000v + 1000pv = 6000 \text{ (product)}$$

$$\text{II. } 2000c + 500v + 500pv = 3000 \text{ (product)}$$

Each of these lines satisfies the conditions. Since $v+s$, which are used as means of consumption, are together equal to a half of c , the value of the means of production, Department II must produce a value equal to a half the value produced in Department I. Then the exact proportion is found: the means of production produced (6000) are just the amount needed for the next turnover period: 4000 c for Department I and 2000 c for Department II; and the means of subsistence produced in Department II (3000) are exactly what must be supplied for the workers (1000+500) and the

capitalists (1000+500).

To illustrate in a similar way the case of capital accumulation the part of surplus value going to accumulation must be indicated; this part is added to the capital in the following year (for reasons of simplicity a production period of a year is assumed each time) so that a larger capital is then employed in each department. We will assume in our example that half the surplus value is accumulated (and so used for new c and new v) and that the other half is consumed (consumption, k). The calculation of the proportion between Department I and Department II becomes a little more complicated but can of course still be found. It turns out that, on the assumptions given, this proportion is 11 : 4, as is shown in the following figures:

I. $4400c + 1100v + 1100pv (= 550k + 550acc (= 440c+110v)) = 6600$
II. $1600c + 400v + 400pv (= 200k + 200acc (= 160c+40v)) = 2400$

The capitalists need 4400+1600 for the renewal and 440+160 for the extension of their means of production, and in fact they find 6600 means of production on the market. The capitalists need 550+200 for their consumption, the original workers need 1100+400 and the newly engaged workers 110+40 as means of subsistence; which together is equal to the 2400 in fact produced as means of subsistence. In the following year all the figures are increased by 10 per cent:

I. $4840c + 1210v + 1210pv (= 605k + 484c + 121v) = 7260$
II. $1760c + 440v + 440pv (= 220k + 176c + 44v) = 2640$

Production can thus continue increasing each year in the same proportion. This is of course a grossly oversimplified example. It could be made more complicated, and thus nearer to reality, if it is assumed that there are different compositions of capital (the ratio $c:v$) in the two departments, or different rates of accumulation or if the ratio $c:v$ is made to grow gradually, so changing the proportion between Department I and Department II each year. In all these cases the calculation becomes more complicated, but it can always be done, since an unknown figure — the proportion of Department I to Department II — can always be calculated to satisfy the condition that demand and supply coincide.

Examples of this can be found in the literature. In the real world, of course, complete equilibrium over a period is never found; commodities are sold for money and money is only used later to buy something else so that hoards are formed which act as a buffer and a reserve. And commodities remain unsold; and there is trade with non-capitalist areas. But the essential, important point is seen clearly from these reproduction schemes: for production to expand and steadily progress given proportions must exist between the productive sectors; in practice these proportions are approximately realised; they depend on the following factors: the organic composition of capital, the rate of exploitation, and the proportion of surplus value which is accumulated.

Marx did not have the chance to provide a carefully prepared presentation of these examples (see Engels' introduction to the second volume of *Capital*). This is no doubt why Rosa Luxemburg believed that she had discovered an omission here, a problem which Marx had overlooked and so left unsolved and whose solution she had worked out in her book *The Accumulation of Capital* (1912). The problem which seemed to have been left open was who was to buy from each other more and more means of production and means of subsistence; this would be a pointless circular movement from which nothing would result. The solution would lie in the appearance of buyers situated outside capitalism, foreign overseas markets whose conquest would therefore be a vital question for capitalism. This would be the economic basis of imperialism.

But from what we have said before it is clear that Rosa Luxemburg has herself made a mistake here. In the schema used as the example it can be clearly seen that all the products are sold within capitalism itself. Not only the part of the value transmitted (4400+1600) but also the 440+160 which contain the surplus value accumulated are brought, in the physical form of means of production, by the capitalists who wish to start the following year with in total 6600 means of production. In the same way, the 110+40 from surplus value is in fact bought by the additional workers. Nor is it pointless: to produce, to sell products to each other, to consume, to produce more is the whole essence of capitalism and so of men's life in this mode of production. There is no unsolved problem here which Marx overlooked.

Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Bauer

Soon after Rosa Luxemburg's book was published it was criticised from different sides. Thus Otto Bauer wrote a criticism in an article in the *Neue Zeit* (7-14 March 1913). As in all the other criticisms Bauer showed that

production and sales do correspond. But his criticism had the special feature that it linked accumulation to population growth. Otto Bauer first assumes a socialist society in which the population grows each year by five per cent; the production of means of subsistence must therefore grow in the same proportion and the means of production must increase, because of technical progress, at a faster rate. The same has to happen under capitalism but here this expansion does not take place through planned regulation, but through the accumulation of capital. Otto Bauer provides as a numerical example a schema which satisfies these conditions in the simplest way: an annual growth of variable capital of five per cent and of constant capital of ten per cent and a rate of exploitation of 100 per cent ($s = v$). These conditions themselves determine the share of surplus value which is consumed and the share which must be accumulated in order to produce the posited growth of capital. No difficult calculations are needed to draw up a schema which produces the exact growth from year to year:

Year 1 :	$200.000c + 100.000v + 100.000pv$	$(= 20.000c + 5.000v + 75.000k)$
Year 2 :	$220.000c + 105.000c + 105.000pv$	$(= 22.000c + 5.250v + 77.750k)$
Year 3 :	$242.000c + 110.250v + 110.250pv$	$(= 24.200c + 5.512v + 80.538k)$

Bauer continues his schema for four years and also calculates the separate figures for Departments I and II. This was sufficient for the purpose of showing that no problem in Rosa Luxemburg's sense existed. But the character of this criticism was itself bound to call forth criticism. Its basic idea is well brought out by Bauer's introduction of population growth in a socialist society. Capitalism thereby appears as an unplanned socialism, as a wild and kicking foal that has not yet been broken in and which only needs to be tamed by the hands of the socialist trainer. Accumulation here serves only to enlarge production as required by population growth, just as capitalism has the general function of providing mankind with means of subsistence; but, because of the lack of planning, both these functions are carried out badly and erratically, sometimes providing too much, sometimes too little, and causing catastrophes. A gentle growth of population of 5 per cent a year might well suit a socialist society in which all mankind was neatly lined up. But for capitalism, as it is and was, this is an inappropriate example. Capitalism's whole history has been a rush forward, a violent expansion far beyond the limits of population growth. The driving force has been the urge to accumulation; the greatest possible amount of surplus value has been invested as new capital and, to set it in motion, more and more sections of the

population have been drawn into the process. There was even, and there still is, a large surplus of workers who remain outside or half outside as a reserve, kept ready to serve the need to set in motion the accumulated capital, being drawn in or rejected as required by this need. This essential and basic feature of capitalism was completely ignored in Bauer's analysis.

It was obvious that Rosa Luxemburg would take this as the target for her anti-critique. In answer to the proof that there was no problem of omission in Marx's schemas, she could bring forward nothing much else than the scoffing declaration that everything can be made to work beautifully in artificial examples. But making population growth the regulator of accumulation was so contrary to the spirit of Marxian teaching that the sub-title of her anti-critique "What the Epigones have done to Marxian Theory" was this time quite suitable. It was not a question here (as it was in Rosa Luxemburg's own case) of a simple scientific mistake; Bauer's mistake reflected the practical political point of view of the Social Democrats of that time. They felt themselves to be the future statesmen who would take over from the current ruling politicians and carry through the organisation of

production; they therefore did not see capitalism as the complete opposite to the proletarian dictatorship to be established by revolution, but rather as a mode of producing means of subsistence that could be improved and had not yet been brought under control.

Grossman's reproduction schema

Henryk Grossman linked his reproduction schema to that set out by Otto Bauer. He noticed that it is not possible to continue it indefinitely without it in time coming up against contradictions. This is very easy to see. Otto Bauer assumes a constant capital of 200,000 which grows each year by 10 per cent and a variable capital of 100,000 which grows each year by 5 per cent, with the rate of surplus value being assumed to be 100 per cent, i.e., the surplus value each year is equal to the variable capital. In accordance with the laws of mathematics, a sum which increases each year by 10 per cent doubles itself after 7 years, quadruples itself after 14 years, increases ten times after 23 years and a hundred times after 46 years. Thus the variable capital and the surplus value which in the first year were each equal to half the constant capital are after 46 years only equal to a twentieth of a constant capital which has grown enormously over the same period. The surplus value is therefore far from enough to ensure the 10 per cent annual growth of constant capital.

This does not result just from the rates of growth of 10 and 5 percent chosen by Bauer. For in fact under capitalism surplus value increases less rapidly than capital. It is a well-known fact that, because of this, the rate of profit must continually fall with the development of capitalism. Marx devoted many chapters to this fall in the rate of profit. If the rate of profit falls to 5 per cent the capital can no longer be increased by 10 per cent, for the increase in capital out of accumulated surplus value is necessarily smaller than the surplus value itself. The rate of accumulation evidently thus has the rate of profit as its higher limit (see Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, p. 236, where it is stated that “the rate of accumulation falls with the rate of profit”). The use of a fixed figure — 10 per cent — which was acceptable for a period of a few years as in Bauer, becomes unacceptable when the reproduction schema are continued over a long period.

Yet Grossman, unconcerned, continues Bauer’s schema year by year and believes that he is thereby reproducing real capitalism. He then finds the following figures for constant and variable capital, surplus value, the necessary accumulation and the amount remaining for the consumption of the capitalists (the figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand):

	c	v	s	accumulation	k
Commencement	200	100	100	20 + 5= 25	75
After 20 years	1222	253	253	122+13=135	118
After 30 years	3170	412	412	317+21=338	74
After 34 years	4641	500	500	464+25=489	11
After 35 years	5106	525	525	510+26=536	-11

After 21 years the share of surplus value remaining for consumption begins to diminish; in the 34th it almost disappears and in the 35th it is even negative; the Shylock of constant capital pitilessly demands its pound of flesh, it wants to grow at 10 per cent, while the poor capitalists go hungry and keep nothing for their own consumption.

“From the 35th year therefore accumulation — on the basis of the existing technical progress — cannot keep up with the pace of population growth. Accumulation would be too small and there would necessarily arise a reserve army which would have to grow each year” (Grossman, p. 126).

In such circumstances the capitalists do not think of continuing production. Or if they do, they don’t do so; for, in view of the deficit of 11 in capital accumulation they would have to reduce production. (In fact they

would have had to have done so before in view of their consumption expenses). A part of the workers therefore become unemployed; then a part of the capital becomes unused and the surplus value produced decreases; the mass of surplus value falls and a still greater deficit appears in accumulation, with a still greater increase in unemployment. This, then, is the economic collapse of capitalism. Capitalism becomes economically impossible. Thus does Grossman solve the problem which he had set on page 79:

“How, in what way, can accumulation lead to the collapse of capitalism?”

Here we find presented what in the older Marxist literature was always treated as a stupid misunderstanding of opponents, for which the name ‘the big crash’ was current. Without there being a revolutionary class to overcome and dispossess the bourgeoisie, the end of capitalism comes for purely economic reasons; the machine no longer works, it clogs up, production has become impossible. In Grossman’s words:

“...with the progress of capital accumulation the whole mechanism, despite periodic interruptions, necessarily approaches nearer and nearer to its end....The tendency to collapse then wins the upper hand and makes itself felt absolutely as ‘the final crisis’” (p. 140).

and, in a later passage:

“...from our analysis it is clear that, although on our assumptions objectively necessary and although the moment when it will occur can be precisely calculated, the collapse of capitalism need not therefore result automatically by itself at the awaited moment and therefore need not be waited for purely passively” (p. 601).

In this passage, where it might be thought for a moment that it is going to be a question of the active role of the proletariat as agent of the revolution, Grossman has in mind only changes in wages and working time which upset the numerical assumptions and the results of the calculation. It is in this sense that he continues:

“It thus appears that the idea of a necessary collapse for objective reasons is not at all in contradiction to the class struggle; that, on the contrary, the collapse, despite its objectively given necessity, can be widely influenced by the living forces of classes in struggle and leaves a certain margin of play for the active intervention of classes. It is for this precise reason that in Marx the whole analysis of the process of reproduction leads to the class struggle” (p.602).

The “it is for this precise reason” is rich, as if the class struggle meant for Marx only the struggle over wage claims and hours of work.

Let us consider a little closer the basis of this collapse.

On what is the necessary growth of constant capital by 10 per cent each time based? In the quotation given above it was stated that technical progress (the rate of population growth being given) prescribes a given annual growth of constant capital. So it could then be said, without the detour of the production schema: when the rate of profit becomes less than the rate of growth demanded by technical progress then capitalism must break down. Leaving aside the fact that this has nothing to do with Marx, what is this growth of capital demanded by technology? Technical improvements are introduced, in the context of mutual competition, in order to obtain an extra profit (relative surplus value); the introduction of technical improvements is however limited by the financial resources available. And everybody knows that dozens of inventions and technical improvements are not introduced and are often deliberately suppressed by the entrepreneurs so as not to devalue the existing technical apparatus. The necessity of technical progress does not act as an external force; it works through men, and for them necessity is not valid beyond possibility.

But let us admit that this is correct and that, as a result of technical progress, constant capital has to have a varying proportion, as in the schema: in the 30th year 3170:412, in the 34th year 4641:500, in the 35th year 5106:525, and in the 36th, 5616:551. In the 35th year the surplus value is only 525,000 and is not enough for 510,000 to be added to constant capital and 26,000 to variable capital. Grossman lets the constant capital grow by 510,000 and retains only 15,000 as the increase in variable capital – 11,000 too little! He says of this:

“11,509 workers (out of 551,000) remain unemployed; the reserve army begins to form. And because the whole of the working population does not enter the process of production, the whole amount of extra constant capital (510,563) is not needed for the purchase of means of production. If a population of 551,584 uses a constant capital of 5,616,200, then a population of 540,075 would use a constant capital of only 5,499,015. There, therefore, remains an excess capital of 117,185 without an investment outlet. Thus the schema shows a perfect example of the situation Marx had in mind when he gave the corresponding part of the third volume of Capital the title ‘Excess Capital and Excess Population’ (p. 116)”.

Grossman has clearly not noticed that these 11,000 become unemployed only because, in a complete arbitrary fashion and without giving any reason, he makes the variable capital bear the whole deficit, while letting the constant capital calmly grow by 10 percent as if nothing was wrong; but when he realises that there are no workers for all these machines, or more correctly that there is no money to pay their wages, he prefers not to install them and so has to let the capital lie unused. It is only through this mistake that he arrives at a “perfect example” of a phenomenon which

appears during ordinary capitalist crises. In fact the entrepreneurs can only expand their production to the extent that their capital is enough for both machinery and wages combined. If the total surplus value is too small, this will be divided, in accordance with the assumed technical constraint, proportionately between the elements of capital; the calculation shows that of the 525,319 surplus value, 500,409 must be added to constant capital and 24,910 to variable capital in order to arrive at the correct proportion corresponding to technical progress. Not 11,000 but 1,326 workers are set free and there is no question of excess capital. If the scheme is continued in this correct way, instead of a catastrophic eruption there is an extremely slow increase in the number of workers laid off.

But how can someone attribute this alleged collapse to Marx and produce, chapter after chapter, dozens of quotations from Marx? All these quotations in fact relate to economic crises, to the alternating cycle of prosperity and depression. While the schema has to serve to show a predetermined final economic collapse after 35 years, we read two pages further on of “*the Marxian theory of the economic cycle expounded here*” (p. 123).

Grossman is only able to give the impression that he is presenting a theory of Marx’s by continually scattering in this way throughout his own statements comments which Marx made on periodic crises. But nothing at all is to be found in Marx about a final collapse in line with Grossman’s schema. It is true that Grossman quotes a couple of passages which do not deal with crises. Thus he writes on page 263:

“It appears that ‘capitalist production meets in the development of its productive forces a barrier..’ (Marx, Capital, Vol. III, p. 237)”.

But if we open Volume III of *Capital* at page 237 we read there:

“But the main thing about their [i.e., Ricardo and other economists] horror of the falling rate of profit is the feeling that capitalist production meets in the development of its productive forces a barrier...”

which is something quite different. And on page 79 Grossman gives this quotation from Marx as proof that even the word “collapse” comes from Marx:

“This process would soon bring about the collapse of capitalist production if it were not for counteracting tendencies, which have continuous decentralising effect alongside the centripetal one (Capital, Vol. II, p. 241)”.

As Grossman correctly emphasises, these counteracting tendencies refer to “soon” so that *with* them the process only takes place more slowly. But was Marx talking here of a purely economic collapse? Let us read the passage which precedes in Marx:

“It is this same severance of the conditions of production, on the one hand, from the producers, on the other, that forms the conception of capital. It begins with primitive accumulation, appears as a permanent process in the accumulation and concentration of capital, and expresses itself finally as centralisation of existing capitals in a few hands and a deprivation of many of their capital (to which expropriation is now changed)”.

It is clear that the collapse which thus results is, as so often in Marx, the ending of capitalism by socialism. So there is nothing in the quotations from Marx: a final economic catastrophe can be as little read from them as it can be concluded from the reproduction schema. But can the schema serve to analyse and explain periodic crises? Grossman seeks to join the two together: *“The Marxian theory of collapse is at the same time a theory of crises”* – so reads the beginning of Chapter 8 (p. 137). But as proof he only provides a diagram (p. 141) in which a steeply rising ‘accumulation line’ is divided after 35 years; but here a crisis occurs every 5 or 7 years when in the schema everything is going smoothly. If a more rapid collapse is desired it would be obtained if the annual rate of growth of constant capital was not 10 per cent but much greater. In the ascendant period of the economic cycle there is in fact a much more rapid growth of capital; the volume of production increases by leaps and bounds; but this growth has nothing at all to do with technical progress. Indeed, in these periods variable capital too increases rapidly by leaps. But why there must be a collapse after 5 or 7 years remains obscure. In other words, the real causes which produce the rapid rise and then the collapse of economic activity are of a quite different nature from what is set out in Grossman’s reproduction schema.

Marx speaks of over-accumulation precipitating a crisis, of there being too much accumulated surplus value which is not invested and which depresses profits. But Grossman’s collapse comes about through there being too little accumulated surplus value.

The simultaneous surplus of unused capital and unemployed workers is a typical feature of crises; Grossman’s schema leads to a lack of sufficient capital, which he can only transform into a surplus by committing the mistake mentioned above. So Grossman’s schema cannot demonstrate a final collapse, nor does it correspond to the real phenomena of collapse, crises.

It can also be added that his schema, in conformity with its origin, suffers from the same defect as Bauer’s: the real, impetuous pushing forward of capitalism over the world which brings more and more peoples under its domination is here represented by a calm and regular population growth of 5 per cent a year, as if capitalism was confined in a closed national economy.

Grossman versus Marx

Grossman prides himself for having for the first time correctly reconstructed Marx’s theory in the face of the distortions of the Social Democrats.

“One of these new additions to knowledge” he proudly says at the beginning of the introduction, *“is the theory of collapse, set out below, which represents the portal column of Marx’s system of economic thought”.*

We have seen how little what Grossman considers to be a theory of collapse has to do with Marx. Nevertheless, on his own personal interpretation, he could well believe himself to be in agreement with Marx. But there are other points where this does not hold. Because he sees his schema as a correct representation of capitalist development, Grossman deduces from it in various places explanations which, as he himself had partly noticed, contradict the views developed in *Capital*.

This is so, first of all, for the industrial reserve army. According to Grossman’s schema, from the 35th year a certain number of workers become unemployed and a reserve army forms.

“The formation of the reserve army, viz., the laying off of workers, which we are discussing, must be rigorously distinguished from the laying off of workers due to machines. The elimination of workers by machines which Marx describes in the empirical part of the first volume of Capital (Chapter 13) is a technical fact . . . (pp. 128-9) . . . but the laying off of workers, the formation of the reserve army, which Marx speaks of in the chapter on the accumulation of capital (Chapter 23) is not caused – as has been completely ignored until now in the literature – by the technical fact of the introduction of machines, but by the lack of investment opportunities...(p. 130)”.

This amounts basically to saying: if the sparrows fly away, it is not because of the gunshot but because of their timidity. The workers are eliminated by machines; the expansion of production allows them in part to find work again; in this coming and going some of them are passed by or remain outside. Must the fact that they have not yet been re-engaged be regarded as the cause of their unemployment? If Chapter 23 of *Capital* Vol. I is read, it is always elimination by machines that is treated as the cause of the reserve army, which is partially reabsorbed or released anew and reproduces itself as overpopulation, according to the economic situation. Grossman worries himself for several pages over the proof that it is the economic relation $c:v$ that operates here, and not the technical relation means of production:labour power; in fact the two are identical. But this formation of the reserve army, which according to Marx occurs everywhere and always from the commencement of capitalism, and in which workers are replaced by machines, is not identical to the alleged formation of the reserve army according to

Grossman, which starts as a consequence of accumulation after 34 years of technical progress.

It is the same with the export of capital. In long explanations all the Marxist writers – Varga, Bukharin, Nachimson, Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Rosa Luxemburg – are one after the other demolished because they all state the view that the export of capital takes place for a higher profit. As Varga says:

“It is not because it is absolutely impossible to accumulate capital at home that capital is exported....but because there exists the prospect of a higher profit abroad” (quoted by Grossman, p. 498).

Grossman attacks this view as incorrect and un-Marxist:

“It is not the higher profit abroad, but the lack of investment opportunities at home that is the ultimate reason for the export of capital” (p. 561).

He then introduces numerous quotations from Marx about overaccumulation and refers to his schema, in which after 35 years the growing mass of capital can no longer be employed at home and so must be exported.

Let us recall that according to the schema, however, there was too little capital in existence for the existing population and that his capital surplus was only an error of calculation. Further, in all the quotations from Marx, Grossman has forgotten to cite the one where Marx himself speaks of the export of capital:

“If capital is sent abroad, this is not done because it absolutely could not be applied at home, but because it can be employed at a higher rate of profit in a foreign country” (Vol. III, p. 251).

The fall in the rate of profit is one of the most important parts of Marx’s theory of capital; he was the first to state and prove that this tendency to fall, which expresses itself periodically in crises, was the embodiment of the transitory nature of capitalism. With Grossman it is another phenomenon which comes to the fore: after the 35th year workers are laid off en masse and capital is at the same time created in excess. As a result the deficit of surplus value in the following year is more serious, so that yet more labour and capital are left idle; with the fall in the number of workers, the mass of surplus value produced decreases

and capitalism sinks still deeper into catastrophe. Has not Grossman seen the contradiction here with Marx? Indeed he has. Thus, after some introductory remarks, he sets to work in the chapter entitled “The Causes of the Misunderstanding of the Marxian Theory of Accumulation and Collapse”:

“The time is not ripe for a reconstruction of the Marxian theory of collapse (p. 195). The fact that the third chapter of Volume III is, as Engels says in the preface, presented, “as a series of uncompleted mathematical calculations” must be given as an external reason for the misunderstanding”.

Engels was helped in his editing by his friend, the mathematician Samuel Moore:

“But Moore was not an economist....The mode of origin of this part of the work therefore makes it probable even in advance that many opportunities for misunderstanding and error exist here and that these errors could then easily have been carried over also into the chapter dealing with the tendency of the rate of profit to fall...”

(NB: these chapters had already been written by Marx!)

“The probability of error becomes almost certain when we consider that it is a question here of a single word which, unfortunately, completely distorts the whole sense of the analysis: the inevitable end of capitalism is attributed to the relative fall in the rate instead of in the mass of profit. Engels or Moore had certainly made a slip of the pen (p. 195)”.

So this is what the reconstruction of Marx’s theory looks like! Another quotation is given in a note which says:

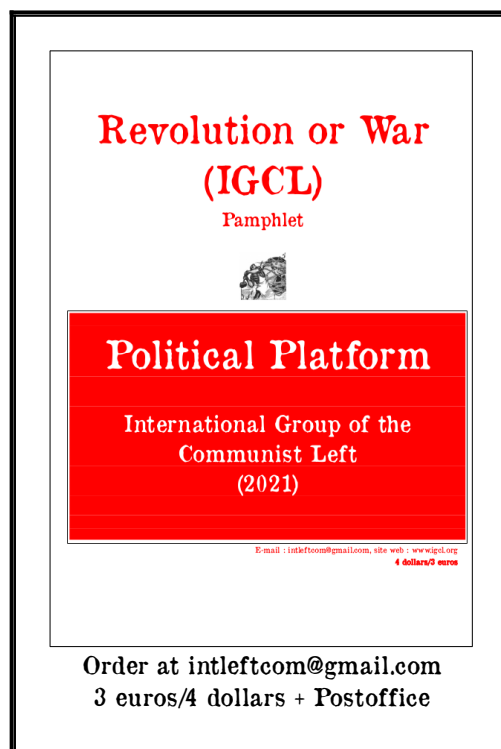
“In the words in brackets. Engels or Marx himself made a slip of the pen; it should read correctly and at the same time a mass of profit which falls in relative value”.

[Translator’s note: Grossman refers to the passage on p. 214 of Vol. III which reads: “Hence, the

same laws produce for the social capital a growing absolute mass of profit, and a falling rate of profit”].

So now it is Marx himself who makes mistakes. And here it concerns a passage where the sense, as given in the text of *Capital*, is unambiguously clear. Marx’s whole analysis, which ends with the passage Grossman finds necessary to change, is a continuation of a passage where Marx explains:

“...the mass of the surplus value produced by it, and therefore the absolute mass of the profit produced by it, can,



consequently, increase, and increase progressively, in spite of the progressive drop in the rate of profit. And this not only can be so. Aside from temporary fluctuations it must be so, on the basis of capitalist production” (Vol. III, p. 213).

Marx then sets out the reasons why the mass of profit must increase and says once again:

“As the process of production and accumulation advances therefore, the mass of available and appropriated surplus labour, and hence the absolute mass of profit appropriated by the social capital must grow” (Vol. III, p. 214).

Thus the exact opposite to the onset of the collapse invented by Grossman. In the following pages this is repeated yet more often; the whole of Chapter 13 consists of a presentation of

“the law that a fall in the rate of profit due to the development of productiveness is accompanied by an increase in the mass of profit...” (Vol. III, p. 221).

So there can remain not the slightest doubt that Marx wanted to say precisely what was printed there and that he had not made a slip of the pen. And when Grossman writes:

“The collapse cannot therefore result from the fall in the rate of profit. How could a percentage proportion, such as the rate of profit, a pure number, bring about the collapse of a real economic system!” (p. 196).

he thereby shows yet again that he has understood nothing of Marx and that his collapse is in complete contradiction with Marx.

Here is the point at which he could have convinced himself of the instability of his construction. But if he had allowed himself to be taught by Marx here, then his whole theory would have fallen and his book would not have been written.

The fairest way of describing Grossman’s book is as a patchwork of quotations from Marx, incorrectly applied and stuck together by means of a fabricated theory. Each time a proof is required, a quotation from Marx, which does not deal with the point in question, is introduced, and it is the correctness of Marx’s words which is supposed to give the reader the impression that the theory is correct.

Historical materialism

The question which in the end merits attention is how can an economist who believes he is correctly reconstructing Marx’s views, and who further states with naive self-assurance that he is the first to give a correct interpretation of them, be so completely mistaken and find himself in complete contradiction with Marx. The reason lies in the lack of a historical materialist understanding. For you will not understand Marxian economics at all unless you have made the historical materialist way of thinking your own.

For Marx the development of human society, and so also the economic development of capitalism, is determined by a firm necessity like a law of nature. But this development is at the same time the work of men who play their role in it and where each person determines his own acts with consciousness and purpose — though not with a consciousness of the social whole. To the bourgeois way of seeing things, there is a contradiction here; either what happens depends on human free choice or, if it is governed by fixed laws, then these act as an external, mechanical constraint on men. For Marx all social necessity is accomplished by men; this means that a man’s thinking, wanting and acting — although appearing as a free choice in his consciousness — are completely determined by the action of the environment; it is only through the totality of these human acts, determined mainly by social forces, that conformity to laws is achieved in social development.

The social forces which determine development are thus not only purely economic acts, but also the general-political acts determined by them, which provide production with the necessary norms of right. Conformity to law does not reside solely in the action of competition which fixes prices and profits and concentrates capital, but also in the establishment of free competition, of free production by bourgeois revolutions; not only in the movement of wages, in the expansion and contraction of production in prosperity and crisis, in the closing of factories and the laying off of workers, but also in the revolt, the struggle of the workers, the conquest by them of power over society and production in order to establish new norms of right. Economics, as the totality of men working and striving to satisfy their subsistence needs, and politics (in its widest sense), as the action and struggle of these men as classes to satisfy these needs, form a single unified domain of law-governed development. The accumulation of capital, crises, pauperisation, the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the working class form together, acting like a natural law, an indivisible unity, the collapse of capitalism.

The bourgeois way of thinking, which does not understand that this is a unity, has always played a great role not only outside but also within the workers’ movement. In the old radical Social Democracy the fatalist view was current, understandable in view of the historical circumstances, that the revolution would one day come as a natural necessity and that in the meantime the workers should not try anything dangerous. Reformism questioned the need for a ‘violent’ revolution and believed that the intelligence of statesmen and leaders would tame capitalism by reform and organisation. Others believed that the proletariat had to be educated to revolutionary virtue

by moral preaching. The consciousness was always lacking that this virtue only found its natural necessity through economic forces, and that the revolution only found its natural necessity through the mental forces of men. Other views have now appeared. On the one hand capitalism has proved itself strong and unassailable against all reformism, all the skills of leaders, all attempts at revolution; all these have appeared ridiculous in the face of its immense strength. But, on the other hand, terrible crises at the same time reveal its internal weakness. Whoever now takes up Marx and studies him is deeply impressed by the irresistible, law-governed nature of the collapse and welcomes these ideas with enthusiasm.

But if his basic way of thinking is bourgeois he cannot conceive this necessity other than as an external force acting on men. Capitalism is for him a mechanical system in which men participate as economic persons, capitalists, buyers, sellers, wage-workers, etc., but otherwise must submit in a purely passive way to what this mechanism imposes on them in view of its internal structure.

This mechanistic conception can also be recognised in Grossman's statements on wages when he violently attacks Rosa Luxemburg –

“Everywhere one comes across an incredible, barbarous mutilation of the Marxian theory of wages” (p. 585).

– precisely where she quite correctly treats the value of labour-power as a quantity that can be expanded on the basis of the standard of living attained. For Grossman the value of labour-power is *“not an elastic, but a fixed quantity”* (p. 586). Acts of human choice such as the workers' struggles can have no influence on it; the only way in which wages can rise is through a higher intensity of labour obliging the replacement of the greater quantity of labour-power expended.

Here it is the same mechanistic view: the mechanism determines economic quantities while struggling and acting men stand outside this relation. Grossman appeals again to Marx for this, where the latter writes of the value of labour-power:

“Nevertheless, in a given country, at a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known” (*Capital*. Vol. I, p. 171);

but Grossman has unfortunately once again overlooked that in Marx this passage is immediately preceded by:

“In contradiction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element”.

Starting from his bourgeois way of thinking Grossman states in his criticism of various Social Democratic views:

“We see: the collapse of capitalism is either denied or based, in

a voluntarist way, on extra-economic, political factors. The economic proof of the necessity of the collapse of capitalism has never been produced” (pp. 58-59).

And he cites with approval an opinion of Tugan-Baranovsky that, in order to prove the necessity for the transformation of capitalism into its opposite, a rigid proof of the impossibility for capitalism to continue existing must first be produced. Tugan himself denies this impossibility and wishes to give socialism an ethical basis. But that Grossman chooses to call as witness this Russian liberal economist who, as is known, was always completely alien to Marxism, shows to what degree their basic way of thinking is related, despite their opposed practical points of view (see also Grossman, p. 108). The Marxian view that the collapse of capitalism will be the act of the working class and thus a political act (in the widest sense of this word: general social, which is inseparable from the take-over of economic power) Grossman can only understand as 'voluntarist', i.e., that it is something that is, governed by men's choice, by free will.

The collapse of capitalism in Marx does depend on the act of will of the working class; but this will is not a free choice, but is itself determined by economic development. The contradictions of the capitalist economy, which repeatedly emerge in unemployment, crises, wars, class struggles, repeatedly determine the will to revolution of the proletariat. Socialism comes not because capitalism collapses economically and men, workers and others, are forced by necessity to create a new organisation, but because capitalism, as it lives and grows, becomes more and more unbearable for the workers and repeatedly pushes them to struggle until the will and strength to overthrow the domination of capitalism and establish a new organisation grows in them, and then capitalism collapses. The working class is not pushed to act because the unbearableness of capitalism is demonstrated to them from the outside, but because they feel it generated within them. Marx's theory, as economics, shows how the above phenomena irresistibly reappear with greater and greater force and, as historical materialism, how they necessarily give rise to the revolutionary will and the revolutionary act.

The new workers' movement

It is understandable that Grossman's book should have been given some attention by the spokesmen of the new workers' movement since he attacks the same enemy as them. The new workers' movement has to attack Social Democracy and the Party Communism of the Third International, two branches of the same tree, because they accommodate the working class to capitalism. Grossman attacks the theoreticians of these currents for having distorted and falsified Marx's teachings, and insists on the necessary collapse of capitalism. His conclusions sound similar to ours, but their sense and essence are completely different. We also are of the opinion that the Social Democratic theorists, good theoretical experts that they often were nevertheless distorted Marx's doctrine; but their mistake was historical, the theoretical precipitate of an early period of the struggle of the proletariat. Grossman's mistake is that of a bourgeois economist who has never had practical experience of the struggle of the proletariat and who is consequently not in a position to understand the essence of Marxism.

An example of how his conclusions apparently agree with the views of the new workers' movement, but are in essence completely opposed, is to be found in his theory of wages. According to his schema, after 35 years, with the collapse, a rapidly climbing unemployment appears. As a result wages sink well below the value of labour-power, without an effective resistance being possible.

"Here the objective limit of trade union action is given" (p. 599). However familiar this sounds, the basis is quite different. The powerlessness of trade union action, which has been evident for a long time, should not be attributed to an economic collapse, but to a shift in the balance of social power. Everyone knows how the increased power of the employers' combines of concentrated big capital has made the working class relatively powerless. To which is now added the effects of a severe crisis which depresses wages, as happened in every previous crisis.

The purely economic collapse of capitalism which Grossman constructs does not involve a complete passivity by the proletariat. For, when the collapse takes place the working class must precisely prepare itself to re-establish production on a new basis.

"Thus evolution pushes towards the development and exacerbation of the internal oppositions between capital and labour until the solution which can come only from the struggle between the two classes is brought about" (p. 599).

This final struggle is linked also with the wages struggle because (as was already mentioned above) the catastrophe can be postponed by depressing wages or

hastened by raising them. But it is the economic catastrophe that is for Grossman the really essential factor, the new order being forcibly imposed on men. Certainly, the workers, as the mass of the population, are to supply the preponderant force of the revolution, just as in the bourgeois revolutions of the past where they formed the mass force for action; but, as in hunger revolts in general, this is independent of their revolutionary maturity, of their capacity to take power over society and to hold it. This means that a revolutionary group, a party with socialist aims, would have to appear as a new governing power in place of the old in order to introduce some kind of planned economy.

The theory of the economic catastrophe is thus ready-made for intellectuals who recognise the untenable character of capitalism and who want a planned economy to be built by capable economists and leaders. And it must be expected that many other such theories will come from these quarters or meet with approval there. The theory of the necessary collapse will also be able to exercise a certain attraction over revolutionary workers. They see the overwhelming majority of the proletarian masses still attached to the old organisations, the old leaders, the old methods, blind to the task which the new development imposes on them, passive and immobile, with no signs of revolutionary energy. The few revolutionaries who understand the new development might well wish on the stupefied masses a good economic catastrophe so that they finally come out of the slumber and enter into action. The theory according to which capitalism has today entered its final crisis also provides a decisive, and simple, refutation of reformism and all Party programmes which give priority to parliamentary work and trade union action — a demonstration of the necessity of revolutionary tactics which is so convenient that it must be greeted sympathetically by revolutionary groups. But the struggle is never so simple or convenient, not even the theoretical struggle for reasons and proofs.

Reformism was a false tactic, which weakened the working class, not only in crises but also in prosperity. Parliamentarism and the trade union tactic did not have to await the present crisis to prove a failure; this has been shown for the last hundred years. It is not due to the economic collapse of capitalism but to the enormous development of its strength, to its expansion over all the Earth, to its exacerbation of political oppositions, to the violent reinforcement of its inner strength, that the proletariat must take mass action, summoning up the strength of the whole class. It is this shift in the relations of power that is the basis for the new direction for the workers' movement.

The workers' movement has not to expect a final catastrophe, but many catastrophes, political – like wars, and economic – like the crises which repeatedly break out, sometimes regularly, sometimes irregularly, but which on the whole, with the growing size of capitalism, become more and more devastating. So the illusions and tendencies to tranquillity of the proletariat will repeatedly collapse, and sharp and deep class struggles will break out. It appears to be a contradiction that the present crisis, deeper and more devastating than any previous one, has not shown signs of the awakening of the proletarian revolution. But the removal of old illusions is its first great task: on the other hand, the illusion of making capitalism bearable by means of reforms obtained through Social Democratic parliamentary politics and trade union action and, on the other, the illusion that capitalism can be overthrown in assault under the leadership of a

revolution-bringing Communist Party. The working class itself, as a whole, must conduct the struggle, but, while the bourgeoisie is already building up its power more and more solidly, the working class has yet to make itself familiar with the new forms of struggle. Severe struggles are bound to take place. And should the present crisis abate, new crises and new struggles will arise. In these struggles the working class will develop its strength to struggle, will discover its aims, will train itself, will make itself independent and learn to take into its hands its own destiny, viz., social production itself. In this process the destruction of capitalism is achieved. The self-emancipation of the proletariat is the collapse of capitalism.

Anton Pannekoek

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1934/collapse.htm>

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Unions Against the Working Class (1976, reprinted from the ICC Pamphlet).

History of The Workers Movement

The Tactics of the Comintern from 1926 to 1940 (Part 4, chap. 5)

We are continuing the publication of Vercesi's text on the stages of the degeneration of the Communist International from 1926 onwards, and the class political alternative that the Left Fraction of the CP of Italy then presented to the proletariat and to other oppositions – that around the figure of Trotsky – and communist lefts – German-Dutch. The chapter we are publishing here, The Tactics of Anti-Fascism and the Popular Front, covers the period from 1934 to 1938. It was published in two parts in Prometeo #6 of March-April 1947 and #7 of May-June 1947. We do the same in this issue. The second part of this chapter will be published in our next issue.

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

Hitler's coming to power (January 30, 1933) did not immediately bring about a radical change in the Comintern's tactics, which continued to focus on the formula of *anti-fascism* that we examined in Chapter 4.

The Second International launches a proposal to boycott German products and invites the Comintern to participate in an international campaign designed to raise the indignation of the “civilized world against Nazi tyranny”. The Comintern refused, but did not present any objection in principle, which it could hardly have done since in 1929, at a time when the tactic of alliance with social democracy had not yet been abandoned, it was the Comintern that proposed a vast international action for the boycott of Fascist Italy. And at that time it was the Second International that hesitated to go through with it, thus providing the pretext for the use of the same method by the Comintern after the advent of Hitler in power.

The “boycott” of German products, since it implies the incorporation of the proletarian movement into the bosom of “anti-fascist” capitalism, remains fully within the logic of social-democratic policy, which since 1914 had appealed to the working masses to throw themselves into the war between the capitalist States by making common cause with that imperialist alliance which claimed to be fighting “for freedom and civilization”. The class which, both in the field of production and in the field of international trade, could decide to boycott or not a given sector of the world economy, was evidently the bourgeois class. The appeal to this class by Social Democracy was nothing new, but the confusion which already reigned in the ranks of the proletarian vanguard was made evident by the fact that the trotskyist movement, which was moving towards the entryist tactics – that is to say, of joining the socialist parties in order to reinforce their left wings – and the SAP (Sozial Socialist Party), born from the conjunction of the left-wing currents of the German Communist and Socialist parties, adhered to this campaign.

We have already said that the Comintern had not taken

a direct and class-based position against the proposal of the Second International. And that's rather natural if one takes into account that the whole tactic of “social-fascism” had been ultimately a tactic of competing with Nazi movement rather than destroying it, and that the advent of Hitler implied a better organization of Russian-German economic exchanges. In correspondence with the increasing intervention of the State also in the economic field, special provisions were made by Hitler for a State guarantee in favor of industrial groups that received orders from Russia and had to wait a very long time for payment.

On the international level, Russian diplomacy acted on a peripheral line and Litvinov met with the Italian and German delegations at the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva, to support the “pacifist” thesis of disarmament by plans, of immediate realization, against the French thesis, equally “pacifist” and based on the formula of the pre-eminence of the notion of security (i.e. trying to guarantee that the victors of Versailles remained on top) over the notions of arbitration and disarmament.

It was at this time that Mussolini conceived the idea of the Four-Power Pact (France, Germany, England and Italy); the idea of the Four Greats, which would be taken up by the arch-democratic Byrnes in 1946 and supported by the Labourite Bevin, although the actors had changed.

The Four-Power Pact signed in Rome on June 7, 1933 states: “The High Contracting Parties agree to consult on all questions which appertain to them and to pursue within the framework of the League the policy of effective cooperation between all Powers with a view to the maintenance of peace”. The Pact is signed for ten years and contains the hypothesis of a revision of the treaties. This hypothesis had already become a reality, since, after the moratorium proclaimed in 1931 by Hoover, at the Lausanne Conference in 1932 – when there was still a “democratic” government in Germany – Germany was explicitly released from the payment of reparations.

It is well known that Hitler dismantled the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles one by one, not through parliamentary-type consultations, but through major twists and turns. Four months after the signing of the Four-Power Pact, Hitler left the League of Nations and held a spectacular plebiscite. This system of the “fait accompli”, of the “fist on the table” fully responded to the needs of the accentuated preparation of the masses for war and Hitler was forced to resort to it by the fact that the German economy could find no other way out of the situation than an immediate intensification of war industry. And, for this, it was necessary a contemporary and plebiscitary adhesion of the masses. The “democratic” powers temporarily left it at that, waiting for the international situation to reach the point of saturation needed for the unleashing of World War II.

But the essence of the Four-Power Pact consisted above all in a maneuver of distancing Russia from Europe and at the same time in an orientation of support to Germany so that it would overflow not towards the French-English West, but towards the Russian East and particularly towards Ukraine.

It is in these particular international contingencies that the new tactics of the Comintern of anti-fascism and the Popular Front mature: Russia is oriented towards the “democratic” powers. In the fall of 1933, the United States *de jure* recognized Russia, and the *Rundschau* wrote an article entitled: *A victory of the USSR – A victory of the world revolution*.

On the political level, the first symptom of the change of tactics is seen in the Leipzig trial in December 1933. The Dutch anarchist Van der Lubbe, who had set fire to the Reichstag building on February 27, 1933, one month after Hitler had seized power, was to be tried. The Comintern and the Second International immediately unleashed an obscene demagogic campaign: it's Fascism, Nazism, that has destroyed the sanctity of German democracy; a counter-trial will be organized in the epicenter of the most conservative capitalism, in London; a “Brown Book” will be published by the anti-fascists and Hitler, who magnificently grasped the real meaning of this filthy world farce, will add additional notes to the sacred universal indignation against this attack on the seat of bourgeois democracy: the foreign press will be admitted to the Leipzig trial where one of the defendants, the centrist Dimitrov, will conclude by saying, “*I demand, in consequence, that Van der Lubbe be condemned because he acted against the proletariat.*” And the Nazi judges “avenge” the proletariat, since Van der Lubbe is sentenced to death and then executed, while the other centrist defendants will be acquitted and washed of the “infamous accusation”.

In the shadow of all this international outrage,

meanwhile, Hitler's ferocious repression of the German proletariat develops. While the campaign around the Leipzig trial reached the height of its publicity, only a few lines are devoted to the simultaneous Dessau trial (November 28, 1933), reduced to an insignificant episode of news: “*Ten death sentences were pronounced by the Court of Dessau against communists accused of having killed a Hitlerite paramilitary soldier.*”

We have seen, in the 4th Chapter devoted to the “social-fascism” tactic, that Hitler followed tactics different than that of fascism in Italy in 1921-22, and thus his actions largely revolved around a legalitarian plan of progressively dismantling the German democratic institutions of his social-democratic accomplices. Thus an incredible opportunity was presented to Marxist revolutionaries to set up an international action aimed at arresting the hand of the Nazi executioner who fell on the anarchist Van der Lubbe responsible for having set fire one of the fundamental institutions of capitalism, which moreover had served so well to facilitate Hitler's rise to power! But Marxist revolutionaries had been reduced to the small circle of the Italian Left current which imposed the struggle on class bases both against the victorious Nazism and against the succumbing democracy in Germany, as even trotskists ran to the defense of of social democracy by deciding to join the socialist parties.

As we have said, it's on the international level and on the level of the particular and specific interests of the Russian State that the new tactics of the Comintern are based on. The formula of “social-fascism” will be succeeded by its complete opposite, the formula of anti-fascism, of the democratic bloc, of the defense of democracy, of the struggle against the factionists (the fascists), a tactic which passes through the defense of the Negus of Ethiopia, the anti-Francoist struggle, and finally falls into the establishment of voluntarism through the movements of the “Resistance” in the course of the Second World Imperialist War.

In Russia, in 1932, the first Five-Year Plan had achieved complete success. Realized in four years instead of five, it had, in heavy industry, surpassed the goals set at the beginning. In the first chapter of this examination of the Comintern's tactics, we pointed out that if we cannot imagine any opposition between the first plans conceived by Lenin in 1918 and the considerations of principle which induced Lenin to make the retreat which goes by the name of the NEP, on the other hand an opposition of principle exists between Lenin's first economic plans, the NEP, and Stalin's five-year plans. Following in the footsteps of Marx and his schematizing

on the capitalist economy, Lenin's idea on the indispensable planning of the economy was based on the development of the consumer industry to which the development of productive industry had to adapt itself to. The NEP itself is based on this consideration of principle, and there would have been no need to carry it out if the objective had been not the elevation of the living conditions of the workers, but the other one of a purely capitalist type – of an intense accumulation for the development of heavy industry. Lenin would have had no need to make concessions to the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie – economic and political elements not useful but harmful to the achievements of large-scale industry – but these concessions were necessary in order to keep the orientation of the Soviet economy on the line of a constant improvement of the living conditions of the workers. Stalin broke with Lenin's Marxist principles both on the internal economic terrain in Russia, when he instituted the five-year plans which could only reach the heights of industrialization through an intensified exploitation of the workers, and on the political terrain with the expulsion from the Comintern of every tendency that remained on the international and internationalist level by opposing the theory and the national and nationalist policy of "socialism in one country".

The first Five-Year Plan thus meets with total success. Following in the footsteps of his capitalist cronies in all countries, Stalin embarks on the Second Five-Year Plan (1932-1936) claiming that it is now a matter of realizing objectives that in reality have completely different aims to those declared. Since its rise to power, capitalism has always said that the improvement of the general living conditions of the workers depends on the development of the economy and that the greater the amount of production, the greater will be the share reserved for the workers. When the Second Five-Year Plan was being prepared, Stalin said the same thing: heavy industry had been reconstructed, it was now a question of reconstructing the other branches of the Soviet economy and consequently of improving the standard of living of the workers. It was in the course of the Second Five-Year Plan that the new deity, Stakhanov, was born; the essence of socialism became a race for the maximum output of labor and at the same time for the strengthening of the economic and military possibilities of the Soviet State, on the altar of which every demand of the workers regarding wages had to be sacrificed.

This economic orientation does not find any possibility of Marxist push-back from within the Russian Party, and when, at the end of 1934, Nikolayev resorts to an assassination attempt on the Secretary of the Leningrad Party, Sergei Kirov, a ferocious repression befalls the "Leningrad Center". Stalin, anticipating the

procedures that Nazis and democrats will apply during the Second World Imperialist War, goes on to enact reprisals. No trial and 117 people shot. In the meantime, Litvinov joined, in Geneva, a motion that condemned terrorism and supported "Marxist" arguments according to which Marxism and terrorism are irreconcilable. Russia, in order to finance the second plan and obtain the essential raw materials must export wheat. By virtue of the invoked prospects of improvement of the workers' conditions, the CC of the Russian Party abolishes on January 1, 1935 the bread charter and the rationing of agricultural products. Thus the workers were forced to increase their work effort so that their salaries would allow them to obtain supplies on the free market, since the "proletarian" State no longer guaranteed – through the State warehouses – the control of basic necessities.

It is therefore by force of considerations inherent to the Soviet State on the international level, and in growing opposition to the interests of the Russian workers, that the change in the Comintern's tactics matures.

The cruel Chinese defeat of 1927 had definitively dragged the Communist International into the vortex of betrayal: only those who wanted to fight for the national and nationalist program of "socialism in one country" could now belong to the International of the Revolution. The others, the internationalists, were first expelled and then, in Russia and Spain, massacred; in other countries they were put on the Index, and insofar as the connivance of the Communist Parties with the apparatus of the bourgeois State was accentuated – this "democratic State" was asked to prove by deeds its "anti-fascist" virtues by abandoning all prevarication and employing repressive violence against the "trotskists". Everyone who opposes the counter-revolutionary direction of the International is accused of "trotskism". As in the epoch that followed the liquidation of the First International, the political scene was now occupied by a single signifier which not only increases the dispersion of the movement and adds to its ideological confusion but tends to polarize the attention of the few revolutionary proletarians who survived this tragic massacre around an absolutely inoffensive banner.

In 1866-70 everyone was called an anarchist, Marx included, and it's known that Marx's proposal to move the headquarters of the First International from Europe to America was due to his conviction that the new historical situation determined by the defeat of the Commune did not contain the possibility of maintaining an international organization of the proletariat. Its maintenance could only favor the victory of anarchist tendencies against those which were truly proletarian and revolutionary. After 1927 the

epithet in vogue was that of “trotskist”. Worst of all, Trotski himself fell into this trap and let the international organization of the Opposition qualify itself as “trotskist”. When Marx had said that he was not a Marxist, he wanted to show that the theory and politics of the proletariat are enucleated in the course of the class struggle, that they constitute a method of knowledge and interpretation of history, not a set of biblical verses to be recited after employing all the sacraments necessary to establish the will of the creator. And Trotski – definitively breaking with what had been the division of Marx, Engels and Lenin, on the fundamental problem of the construction of the Party of the proletarian class – noted that Hitler’s victory nullified the possibility of “straightening out” the Communist International and after an analysis of the situation where an exposé on the Comintern replaced the Marxist understanding of reality, he launched himself into entryist adventures in the left-wings of the Socialist parties. On the political level he gets stuck in the historical hypothesis that not Stalin but Hitler is the super-Wrangel that will concentrate the attack of international capitalism against a Russia that’s been brought to ruin by the impossibility of the realization of the five-year plans. While this political scheme was to be fully denied by the events, the concentration of the proletarian vanguard on the defense of the Russian State, brought to disaster by Stalin, made the political noise that Trotski and his organization made in every country completely harmless: not only could Stalin, from the moment he had been able to bend the Russian proletariat over and force it to endure intense exploitation, carry out the five-year plans, but the Soviet State, incorporated into the system of world capitalism, was to know not disaster but victory in the course of the 1939-45 war. By seeing everywhere – even in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia – an episode of the struggle of world capitalism against Russia, when this Russian State was by then – in the same way as the democratic and fascist States – an instrument of the world counter-revolution, Trotski, who had been one of the greatest leaders of the October Revolution, had become completely impotent in his fight against capitalism; and the epithet of trotskist affixed to everyone was an additional element of the ideological confusion in which the proletariat lay; and all the more so since Trotski and his organization saw growing revolutionary success in the fact that their political merchandise saw great successes in newspaper publicity.

After the outbreak of the world economic crisis of 1929, the Comintern completely reversed terms of the political maneuver that led to the immobilization of the proletarian class: first alliance with the trade-union leaders and Chang-Kai-Shek, then the struggle against

“social-fascism”. Although the terms change, the substance remains the same. And, in the course of these two phases of the tactics of the progressive dismantling of the proletarian class both in Russia and in other countries, the Comintern relies on a multiplicity of subsidiary bodies which foster the ideological and political dispersion of the proletariat. In the course of the first period these subsidiary bodies are polarized around the slogan of anti-fascism, in the course of the second period – that of social-fascism – the polarization is made around the formula of the struggle against war and the defense of the USSR.

* * *

After Hitler’s victory, we move towards the tactics of the Popular Front and the social-fascists of yesterday become “progressive democrats” of today. But the evolution of the economic and political situation demanded a corresponding advance on the road to the inclusion of the working masses in the capitalist State. Until 1934 the Comintern found in all peripheral bodies a good-enough vehicle for advancing its counter-revolutionary positions; from 1934, when the capitalist world can find no other way out of the formidable economic crisis which devastates it besides preparing for the second world imperialist conflict, it must go further and make the masses accept as their objective the modification of the form of government of the bourgeois class. The movement of the masses must be reunited with and welded to the capitalist State, and this is the new tactic of the Popular Front, whose experimental center is first in France and then in Spain. It is not at all surprising that the Soviet State, which had decisively and definitively broken with the interests of the Russian and international proletariat in 1927, can so casually make such radical and contradictory changes, and that the Comintern’s policy follows the same line. Mussolini had already made it clear, in 1923, when he boasted of having been the first to *de jure* recognize the Russian State, that this didn’t commit him to making the slightest modification to his fiercely anti-communist policy. Hitler reiterated the same thing after taking power.

In fact, the point of welding between the politics of the bourgeois States is on a class basis, and in this respect the conjunction is perfect between Stalin’s anti-communist policy and that of all the other capitalist governments which re-establish “normal” relations with the Russian State which has become a “normal” State of the international capitalist class. The reflection in the international field of this anti-communist policy, which is common to both democratic and fascist States and as well as to the Soviet State, is one that formally is expressed in contradictory terms, while substantially

the line followed is the same and tends towards the outcome of the imperialist conflict where all “ideals” will be magnificently commercialized to stuff the brains of the workers to manage to get all the proletarians of different nations to slit each others’ throats in a grand new imperialist conflict.

Marx, in “Critique of the Gotha Program”, refutes the Lassallian idea of the existence of a single reactionary bourgeois class, because Lassalle’s simplistic analysis led not only to the impossibility of understanding the intricate social process that capitalism manages to polarize to its advantage, but also the impossibility of welding the proletarian movement to those purely capitalist forces that do not belong to a category qualified as “conservative”. Those who are moving along the line of Lassalle, who conceived a statist socialism based on Bismarck, are the political forces who claim that they want to “correct” the abuses of capitalism when in fact they ensure the success of these abusive forms, the only forms that can exist in capitalism in its historical phase of decadence, the phase of imperialist and monopolist capitalism.

Despite the fact that in Germany and Italy these forces are called fascist, while in France they are called socialist and communist, the political program is the same, and if Blum can’t carry it out, while Hitler above all obtains indisputable successes in State interventionism, this depends on the different particularities of the two capitalist States and on the place they occupy in the process of the progression of capitalism in its international expression.

As for the contrasting formal expression of a process which is international and unitary, as for the fact that one State is called fascist and the other democratic, that bourgeois domination is exercised in one country under one particular form, in another country under another form, the matter presents no difficulty of understanding for Marxists. The bourgeois class, which is a whole, a whole of which we cannot – unless we leave the straight path of Marxism – separate one section from the whole and to present in opposition against the whole, has seen, in the period of development coinciding with the end of the last century, a clash between its political and social forces of right and left (the conservative and the democratic), but in the historical phase of its decline it can only use the old division into right and left for the purposes of propaganda and the interests of its domination over the proletariat.

Both the Popular Front of France and Nazi Germany are on the same plane imposed on capitalism by history, and if one resorts to anti-fascist ideology while the other resorts to Nazism, the aim is the same: to frame

the masses under the firm discipline of the State in order to launch them into war massacres. The relations between the different bourgeois States have no fixed character since they’re dependent on their evolution in the international field and on the impossibility of the intervention of an element of conscious and voluntary guidance of the different bourgeoisies. Churchill is an example of how one can remain consistently and fiercely anti-communist while very easily going from fighting to being allied to Russia or Germany.

In this becoming of the unitary process of the State in the imperialist phase of capitalism, we witness the fact that certain States find in the States opposed to them for the defense of their interests the political material that facilitates the mobilization of the masses away from their class-based goals and into their station wagon of war. In January 1933, in correspondence with Hitler’s rise to power, we see the realization in France of a government formula that seemed as leftist as could be, given the contingencies of the moment, while Daladier is called to government by a parliament that had known, in 1932, an electoral victory of the left.

As for the politics of the Russian State and the corresponding tactics of the Comintern, they were everywhere counterrevolutionary but took on contradictory expressions over time. It is that of “social-fascism” in 1930-33, because the objective of international capitalism is then concentrated in the victory of Hitler. Once this terrible defeat was inflicted on the German and world proletariat, and this victory was solidly established, the objective shifted to other countries and particularly France. The result is the policy that will be specified in the formula of the Popular Front, a policy that will do the business of both French and German capitalism, as well as the capitalisms of all other countries. The idea of fatherland will be positively invoked by both sides, since it is clear that on both sides of the barricade there is now only one aim: to threaten “national integrity” with war.

The essence of the new tactic is therefore the integration of the proletariat into the respective State apparatuses, while the constant changing of international objectives of capitalism is what really determines the anti-fascism or pro-fascism of the Soviet State and the formal expression of the Comintern’s tactics: alliance with social democracy, then “social-fascism”, then the Popular Front.

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- Against Individualism and the Circle Spirit 2.0. of the Years 2020s
- The Tactics of the Comintern: Anti-fascism and Popular Front (1934-38)

OUR BASIC POSITIONS

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

the *mass strike*.

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